

## AN EXAMINATION OF EDUCATORS' ATTITUDES TOWARD INCLUSION

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**Abstract** :Educators responded to the Principals and Inclusion Survey, measuring the experiences, training, attitudes of educators toward inclusion, and beliefs about the most appropriate placement of students with disabilities. Results revealed that the educators held a positive view of the inclusion model. However, the educators did not believe that general education should be modified to meet the needs of all students. The educators indicated that they believed that most of their students with disabilities could be served appropriately from regular classroom instruction and the resource room. The more positive the educators' inclusive attitude was, the less restrictive the learning environment was seen as most appropriate for specific learning disabilities, EBD, speech/language impairment, and autism/pervasive development disorder. Significant correlations were found between their attitude toward inclusion and the number of special education training courses taken, formal field-based training, and number of years of full-time special education teaching experience.

**Keywords:** attitude, inclusion, special education, experience, training, Principals and Inclusion Survey

A multitude of educational research studies have been guided by the theory of planned behavior framework, which proposes that behavior stems from attitudes (Ajzen, 2011). In the context of inclusive programs, the theory would suggest that the successful implementation of inclusive practices would be dependent upon educators' inherent belief that inclusion is a worthwhile endeavor. For administrators, this means that their dispositions toward inclusion may affect their inclusive policies and resource allocation. In the case of general education teachers, their perceptions regarding their role and responsibilities for their students with disabilities may affect both the quality and quantity of their interactions with them. Research findings have long correlated teachers' beliefs with their classroom behaviors (Babad, Inbar & Rosenthal, 1982; Good & Brophy, 1972) and teachers' expectations with student achievement (Conn, Edwards & Rosenthal, 1968). This paper will examine current research findings of educators' attitude toward inclusion.

### Teachers' Views on Inclusion

While a great deal of research over the past decade has concentrated on principals' attitudes toward inclusion, very few studies have been conducted on teachers' perspectives. Principals' perspectives are important to evaluate, however, the examination of teachers' perspectives is also critical. After all, it is the general education teacher who interacts with inclusive students on a daily basis. Their subconsciously held dispositions may inadvertently guide the number of and quality of instructional accommodations and interactions provided for their students, in addition to the expectations placed upon them.

Just before full inclusion was implemented in a large Southeastern U.S. school district, a study of teachers' dispositions toward inclusion found that while the majority of teachers were willing to make accommodations for their students with special needs, their overall belief in those students to master the general course curriculum was deficient (Santoli, Sachs, Romey & McClurg, 2008). In other words, the teachers in the study were willing to go through the required motions of inclusive practice, but had already set the bar low for their inclusive students' achievement. Their low expectations could have serious implications for the success of their inclusive students.

Several studies have indicated that the way teachers regard their individual students consistently falls within one of the following categories: attachment, concern, indifference, or rejection (Cook, Tankersley, Cook & Landrum, 2000; Good & Brophy, 1972). Attachment students are typically high-achievers, behave appropriately, and demand little of their teacher's time, whereas concern students tend to be low-achieving but are recipients of a great deal of attention by the teacher. While attachment students are preferential, teachers generally don't call on or interact with them more often; they are seen as conforming and are often held up as models to classmates. Conversely, teachers tend to initiate contact frequently and give praise to their concern students. Students regarded with indifference generally avoid teacher attention and receive the same in return and, in that same vein, rejection students are those for whom the teacher has given up hope of success. Students

in the rejection category could often “do nothing right” and are frequently publicly criticized. Research suggests that teachers may regard their inclusive students more often with concern and rejection rather than attachment. These findings corroborate the theory that a teacher’s attitude toward a student will translate into intentional behaviors or, as in the case of the rejection and indifference regarded students, intentional non-behaviors.

**Measuring beliefs.** In the 90’s, a scale was developed for measuring the attitudes and beliefs of educators about inclusion students (Stanovich & Jordan, 1998). Views at one end of the scale are described as pathognomonic (PATH), meaning that learning or behavior issues are perceived as occurring within the student and impenetrable. At the other end of the continuum are interventionist (INT) views, where learning issues are believed to be a result of the interaction between the student and their instructional environment. Results of one study (Jordan & Stanovich, 2001) indicated that teachers with INT views tended to engage their exceptional and at-risk (EX/AR) students more often in one-on-one exchanges than their typically achieving (TA) students; however, the TA students of the INT and MID (middle range of the attitude scale) teachers received significantly more instructional opportunities than students of teachers who believed that learning difficulties were beyond the teacher’s scope (Jordan & Stanovich, 2001). A significant positive correlation was found between INT teachers and their students’ self-concept scores: total scale score ( $p < 0.01$ ), and anxiety ( $p < 0.001$ ), popularity ( $p < 0.001$ ), and happiness ( $p < 0.05$ ) subscales.

Another study found that teacher dispositions regarding their roles and responsibilities for teaching their EX/AR students positively correlated with the number of academic interactions with those students (Jordan, Lindsay & Stanovich, 1997). Teachers with interventionist views of inclusion tended to have more academic (i.e., content-related) interactions at higher cognitive levels with their EX/AR students than teachers with PATH views.

### Roles of Administrators

Teachers’ classroom performance has been linked to their administrators’ dispositions. A significant positive correlation ( $p < 0.01$ ) was found between principals’ views and teachers’ effective instructional practices (Stanovich & Jordan, 1998). Conversely, a later study found that principals’ expectations seemingly had no influence on teachers’ instructional behavior in their classrooms (Kuyini & Desai, 2007). Further research must be performed in order to determine whether principals’ views impact teachers’ instructional practices. Regardless of these contrary findings, school leaders are responsible for developing their school’s inclusive program and procedures, as well as the allocation of time and resources. Therefore, it is plausible to assume that their attitudes toward inclusion are vital to the success of inclusion practices and their overall school program (Ball & Green, 2014).

In a recent study, a significant negative correlation between the training and experience of school leaders and their attitudes toward inclusion ( $p = 0.005$ ) was found (Ball & Green, 2014). The more training and experience that principals had, the more negative their attitudes tended to be toward inclusion. Researchers hypothesized that the reason for the negative correlation may lie within the quality of principals’ experience and training, instead of the quantity.

In 2003, a significant positive correlation was found between principals’ attitudes and inclusiveness ( $p < 0.05$ ) (Praisner, 2003). The results suggest that principals who hold positive dispositions of inclusion are more inclined to place students with disabilities in more inclusive learning environments. Significant positive correlations were also found between principals’ attitudes and their number of years of experience, number of special education classes/workshops attended, and in-service hours ( $p < 0.05$ ). A later study found that principals who are more knowledgeable about inclusion tended to provide additional provisions for inclusion in their school (Kuyini & Desai, 2007).

Although at times contradictory, prior research has suggested the following correlations: between principals’ attitudes and inclusive placements; between general education teachers’ attitudes toward students with disabilities and their in-class behavior; and between teachers’ attitudes and students’ self-concept. Because educators’ attitudes toward inclusion may influence their decisions or behavior, it is important to continue studying these relationships.

### Current Study

As mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), students with disabilities must receive instruction in the least restrictive environment (LRE) to the fullest extent from which they can benefit, hence the emergence of the inclusion model (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). Research has indicated that the expectations and perspectives held by the teacher will inevitably affect student achievement, thus positive attitudes and perspectives must be held by general education teachers to ensure that special education students in the inclusion classroom are afforded the best opportunity for academic achievement. In addition, research has suggested that quality inclusion programs are largely dependent upon the principal’s inclusive placement perceptions (Praisner, 2003). Therefore, educators’ disposition toward inclusive practices and the factors that may contribute to those perceptions are necessary to examine.

The purpose of this study is to examine the currently held dispositions of educators toward inclusion. What are educators' dispositions toward inclusion of students in the general education setting? Do educators believe that all of their students can achieve success in the inclusion model? If the outcome of this study suggests that a negative view is held, it may provide a basis for administrators to consider supporting their staff with increased opportunities for professional development.

Does a relationship exist between educators' attitude toward inclusion and their views on the most appropriate placement of students with disabilities? And if so, does this relationship vary based on the category of disability? If the results indicate that negative views are held, perhaps school districts should consider more targeted training opportunities for educators regarding inclusion of students with these particular types of disabilities.

This study will also examine possible associations between educators' training and experience and their dispositions toward inclusion. Does a relationship exist between the quantity of formal special education related courses attended and educators' attitude toward inclusion? Does formal training that includes field based experience appear to influence educators' perspectives on inclusive practices? Is there a relationship between educators' full-time special education teaching experience and attitudes toward inclusion? If particular factors seem to positively correlate with inclusive attitudes, perhaps teacher preparation programs and school leaders could more adequately support educators by either encouraging or requiring these enriching experiences.

## Method

### Participants

The county where the study took place has been ranked one of the fastest growing and wealthiest counties in the nation (source redacted for anonymity). Out of the county's 181,840 residents in 2011, 85% were Caucasian, with Black, American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, and other race populations of 2.6%, 0.3%, 6.2% and 3.8%, respectively (source redacted for anonymity). In 2010, the median household income was more than \$85,300, and the median home value was \$275,300. Nearly 43% of the county's residents had a bachelor's degree or higher and 90% had at least a high school education.

There were 52 educators that participated in this study: five administrators, 29 general education teachers, four special education teachers, two specials teachers (e.g., P.E., music, or art teachers), two speech language pathologists, and one gifted program teacher, with nine respondents opting out of identifying their current role. Of those participants, twenty-five were employed at elementary schools, two were at middle schools, and twenty-five were at high schools. Thirty-six of the respondents were female, nine were male, and seven opted out of identifying their gender.

### Materials and Measures

The participating respondents completed Praisner's (2003) Principals and Inclusion Survey (PIS). The 32-question survey consists of four sections: demographics, training and experience, attitudes toward inclusion, and beliefs about most appropriate placement. The PIS may be found in Appendix A.

The first section of the PIS focuses on the demographic data of the school in which the respondent is employed. Data gathered in this section includes the gender and age of the respondent, overall student population, average class size, percentage of students with IEPs, and the percentage of those students attending regular education classes for at least 75% of their school day.

The questions in section two inquire about the respondents' training and experience. Respondents were asked to indicate their number of years of full-time regular education and special education teaching experience, current position held, years employed in that position, highest degree earned, approximate number of special education credits obtained in formal training, in-service hours targeting inclusive practices, the specific courses/workshops/courses attended, whether they are special education certified, whether their school has a specific plan in place related to crisis involving special needs students, personal experience with special needs individuals outside of the school setting, and whether the school has a mission statement for inclusion students. The final question in this section asked respondents to rate their experiences from negative to positive (or no experience) with special needs students across eleven disability categories.

The third section of the survey was designed to measure attitudes toward inclusion for students with severe/profound disabilities. The 10 items in this section provide statements concerning inclusion for students with severe/profound disabilities and asked the respondent to choose from five options on a Likert scale that indicates the degree to which they agree or disagree. Stainback (1986) determined the reliability coefficient for this section is 0.899.

The fourth section of the survey was designed to measure perceptions of the most appropriate placements for students across disability categories. In this part of the survey, respondents chose one out of six possible placements that they perceived as most appropriate for students with a particular type of disability. Placement options include special education services outside of the regular school, special classes for most or all of the school day, part-time special class, regular education class instruction and resource room, regular

education class instruction for most of the day, and full-time regular education class with support. This section of the survey has been modified to include all of the current disability categories as outlined in IDEA. Ball & Green (2014) determined the Cronbach's alpha for this section to be 0.863, with an overall reliability coefficient of 0.824.

### **Procedure**

E-mails requesting survey participation were sent to the principals of each of the district's 20 elementary schools, nine middle schools, and six high schools. A link to the survey website and the password were included in the e-mails. Administrators were asked to complete the questionnaire and then to forward the participation e-mail to their teaching staff. Survey responses were requested to be completed within two weeks of receipt of the e-mail, which was the window for data collection.

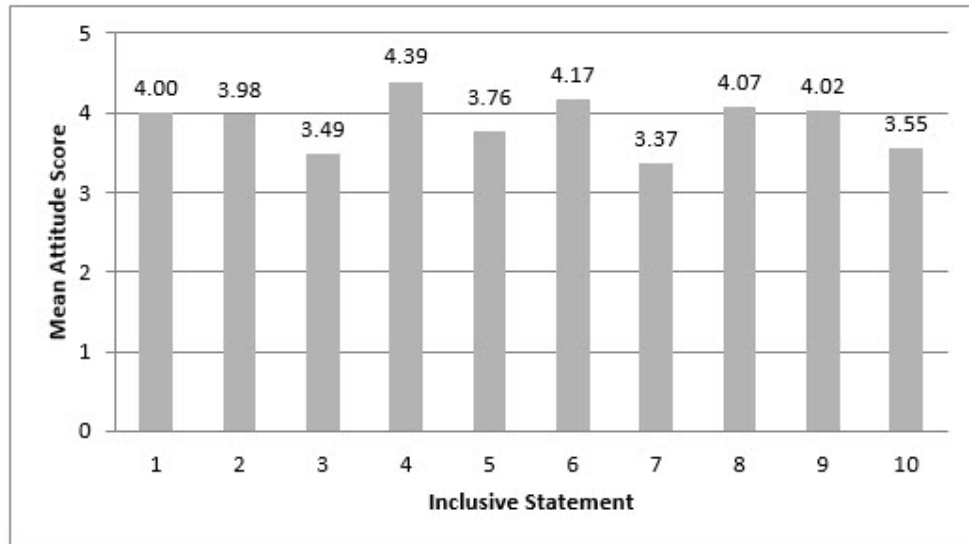
A post was also placed on Facebook, a social networking site, directed at the teachers who currently worked in the district, which requested their participation in the survey. Interested respondents were sent the survey link and password via private message. Several people shared the original post on Facebook.

## **Results**

### **Data Reporting/Analysis**

There were 52 educators who participated in this study. Of those educators, five were administrators, twenty-nine were general education teachers, four were special education teachers, two were specials teachers, two were speech language pathologists, one was a gifted program teacher, and nine opted out of identifying their current role.

The first question posed was: *What are educators' dispositions toward inclusion of students in the general education setting?* In order to determine educators' attitude toward inclusion, responses from Section III of the PIS were analyzed using descriptive statistics. There were ten statements in this section where respondents chose their level of agreement on a one to five Likert-scale where the higher the score, the more positive the educator viewed inclusion. It should be noted that statements 2, 4, 6, 7, and 10 in this section of the PIS were reverse coded. The overall mean total for attitudes toward inclusion was 3.88 out of 5.0 with a standard deviation of 0.56. The statement with the highest mean attitude score (4.39 out of 5) was statement 4 - *An effective general educator can help a student with a disability to succeed*. The statement with the lowest mean attitude score (3.37 out of 5) was statement 7 - *General education should be modified to meet the needs of all students including students with disabilities*. Figure 1 below provides the mean attitude score for each inclusive statement. Figure 1 below provides the mean attitude score for each inclusive statement.



*Note: The higher the mean attitude score, the more positive the attitude toward inclusion.*

1 = Only teachers with extensive special education experience can be expected to deal with students with disabilities in a school setting.  
 2 = Classrooms with both students with disabilities and without disabilities enhance the learning experiences of students with disabilities.  
 3 = Students with severe/profound disabilities are too impaired to benefit from the activities of a regular school setting.  
 4 = An effective general educator can help a student with a disability to succeed.  
 5 = In general, students with disabilities should be placed in special classes/schools specifically designed for them.  
 6 = Students without disabilities can profit from contact with students with disabilities.  
 7 = General education should be modified to meet the needs of all students including students with disabilities.  
 8 = It is unfair to ask/expect general education teachers to accept students with disabilities into their classrooms.  
 9 = No discretionary financial resources should be allocated for the integration of students with disabilities.  
 10 = It should be policy and/or law that students with disabilities are integrated into general educational programs and activities.

**Figure 1: Attitude toward Inclusion**

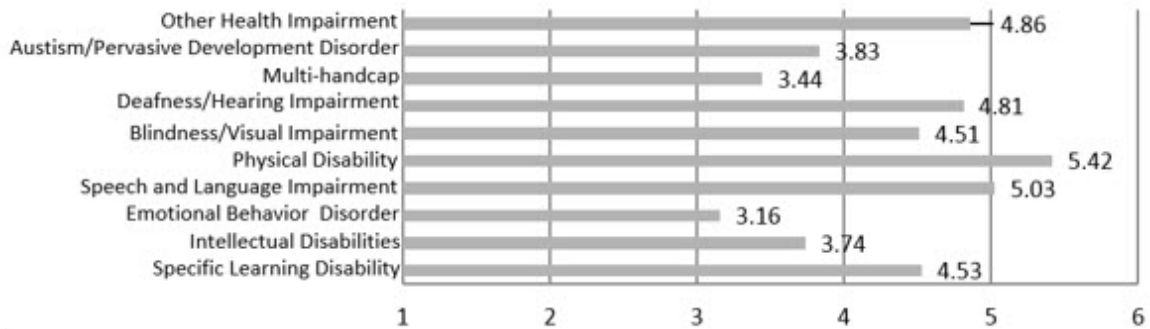
The second question posed by this study was: *Do educators believe that all of their students can achieve success in the inclusion model?* Respondents were asked to choose the most appropriate placement (MAP) for ten different disabilities that ranged from 1 to 6, where 1 indicated the most restrictive learning environment with services provided outside of regular school and 6 indicated the least restrictive environment with full-time regular classroom placement with support. The mean value of the most appropriate placement of all respondents was 4.34 out of 6 with a standard deviation of 0.86. Table 1 summarizes these findings below. The physical disability category had the least restrictive most appropriate placement score (5.42 out of 6.0), whereas the emotional behavior disturbance category received the most restrictive placement score (3.16 out of 6.0). The most appropriate placement mean scores for each disability category are shown in Figure 2.

**Table 1: Most Appropriate Placement (MAP) of Students with Disabilities**

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
MAP Average	39	2.40	6.00	4.3405	.86298
Valid N (listwise)	39				

N = Number of Responses; Std. = Standard





*Note: The higher the most appropriate placement score, the less restrictive the learning environment. 1 = Special education services outside regular school, 2 = Special class for most or all of the school day, 3 = Part-time special education class, 4 = Regular classroom instruction and resource room, 5 = Regular classroom instruction for most of the day, 6 = Full-time regular education with support.*

**Figure 2: Most Appropriate Placement by Disability Category**

The third question posed by this study was: *Does a relationship exist between educators' attitude toward inclusion and their views on the most appropriate placement (MAP) of students with disabilities?* As one might expect, a Pearson Correlation found a statistically significant positive correlation between educators' attitude toward inclusion and their view of the least restrictive learning environment placement of students with disabilities ( $p = .005, r = .439$ ). See Table 2 below for the detailed analysis.

**Table 2: Relationship between Inclusive Attitude and View of Most Appropriate Placement**

Descriptive Statistics			
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Attitude	3.8795	.56188	41
MAP Average	4.3405	.86298	39

Correlations			
		Attitude	MAP Average
Attitude	Pearson Correlation	1	.439**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.005
	N	41	39
MAP Average	Pearson Correlation	.439**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.005	
	N	39	39

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).; N = Number of responses.

The fourth question posed by this study was a follow up to the third question: *If so, does this relationship vary based on the category of disability?* Data analysis using a Pearson Correlation found statistically significant positive correlations between inclusive attitude and the most appropriate placement of students with disabilities in four disability categories: specific learning disability ( $p = .017, r = .395$ ), emotional behavior disorder ( $p = .030, r = .353$ ), speech and language impairment ( $p = .024, r = .370$ ), and autism/pervasive development disorder ( $p = .027, r = .369$ ). These findings are summarized in Tables 3, 4, 5, and 6 below.

**Table 3: Relationship between Inclusive Attitude and Most Appropriate Placement (MAP) of Students with Specific Learning Disabilities (SpLrngDis)**

Descriptive Statistics			
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Attitude	3.8795	.56188	41
MAP SpLrngDis	4.5278	1.27584	36

Correlations			
		Attitude	MAP SpLrngDis
Attitude	Pearson Correlation	1	.395*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.017
	N	41	36
MAP SpLrngDis	Pearson Correlation	.395*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.017	
	N	36	36

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**Table 4: Relationship between Inclusive Attitude and Most Appropriate Placement of Students with Emotional Behavioral Disorder (MAP EBD)**

Descriptive Statistics			
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Attitude	3.8795	.56188	41
MAP EBD	3.1579	1.38576	38

Correlations			
		Attitude	MAP EBD
Attitude	Pearson Correlation	1	.353*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.030
	N	41	38
MAP EBD	Pearson Correlation	.353*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.030	
	N	38	38

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**Table 5: Relationship between Inclusive Attitude and Most Appropriate Placement of Students with Speech/Language Impairment (MAP SpLangImp)**

Descriptive Statistics			
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Attitude	3.8795	.56188	41
MAP SpLangImp	5.0270	1.09256	37

Correlations			
		Attitude Toward Inclusion	MAP SpLangImp
Attitude Toward Inclusion	Pearson Correlation	1	.370*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.024
	N	41	37
MAP SpLangImp	Pearson Correlation	.370*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.024	
	N	37	37

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).; N = Number of responses.

**Table 6: Relationship between Inclusive Attitude and Most Appropriate Placement of Students with Autism/Pervasive Development Disorder (MAP AutPDD)**

Descriptive Statistics			
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Attitude	3.8795	.56188	41
MAP AutPDD	3.9444	1.39272	36

Correlations			
		Attitude	MAP AutPDD
Attitude	Pearson Correlation	1	.369*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.027
	N	41	36
MAP AutPDD	Pearson Correlation	.369*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.027	
	N	36	36

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The fifth question posed in this study was: *Does a relationship exist between the quantity of formal special education training courses attended and educators' attitude toward inclusion?* Using a Pearson Correlation, a statistically significant relationship was found between educators' number of specifically targeted special education training courses taken and their attitudes toward inclusion ( $p = .027$ ,  $r = .354$ ). The results are shown in Table 7 below.



**Table 7: Relationship between Formal Training and Inclusive Attitude**

Descriptive Statistics			
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Formal Training	4.4048	2.50910	42
Attitude	3.8795	.56188	41

Correlations			
		Formal Training	Attitude
Formal Training	Pearson Correlation	1	.354*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.027
	N	42	39
Attitude	Pearson Correlation	.354*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.027	
	N	39	41

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The sixth research question asked: *Does formal training that includes inclusive or special education field based experience appear to correlate with educators' perspectives on inclusive practices?* An analysis using a Spearman's Correlation found a statistically significant positive correlation between an educators' field placement experience and their attitude toward inclusion ( $p = .015$ ,  $r = .387$ ). Details of the results are shown below in Table 8.

**Table 8: Relationship between Field Experience and Inclusive Attitude**

			Field Placement	Attitude
Spearman's rho	Field Placement	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.387*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.015
		N	42	39
	Attitude	Correlation Coefficient	.387*	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.015	.
		N	39	41

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).; N = Number of responses.

The seventh and final question posed in this study was: *Is there a relationship between educators' full-time special education teaching experience and attitude toward inclusion?* A statistically significant positive correlation was found using a Spearman's Correlation between educators' number of years of full-time special education teaching experience and their attitude toward inclusion ( $p = .008$ ,  $r = .407$ ). See Table 9 below for the detailed analysis.

**Table 9: Relationship between Special Education Teaching Experience (SpEd Exp) and Inclusive Attitude**

		Years SpEd Exp	Attitude	
Spearman's rho	Years SpEd Exp	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.008	
		N	45	
	Attitude	Correlation Coefficient	.407**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.008	.
		N	41	41

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).; N = Number of responses.

### Discussion

#### Implications/Findings

The results of this study revealed that the educators had a relatively positive view of the inclusion model with a mean attitude score of 3.88 out of 5.0, which is more positive than the attitudes found by a recent study where the average attitude score was 2.46 out of 5.0 (Ball & Green, 2014). On average, the educators agreed that an effective teacher could help any student with a disability be successful. However, they were not as convinced that general education should be modified to meet the needs of all students, including those with disabilities, which could mean that either the educators believe that general education does not need to be modified because it is currently sufficient for both disabled and non-disabled students, or one could interpret this to mean that the educators do not believe that it is appropriate to modify general education in order to cater to students with disabilities. While the overall attitude toward inclusion was high, there is still room for improving the general outlook on inclusion.

Results of this study also indicated that on average, the educators believe that most of their students with disabilities may be served well from the regular classroom instruction and resource room. While these results show that the educators are open to the notion of inclusion, it also suggests that they believe that most students with disabilities, on average, cannot be fully successful through exclusive full-time regular education. The reasoning for this may lie in how equipped or prepared educators feel to serve students with disabilities full-time or in that serving those students full-time would take the focus away from the general education students. The results also indicated that the educators believe that students with physical disabilities are better suited for full-time regular instruction for the most of the day compared to students with emotional behavior disorders, for whom part-time special education classes are viewed as most appropriate. These findings could be attributed to the educators feeling less prepared in accommodating students with emotional behavior disorders, where perhaps behavioral issues could be seen as more likely to disrupt instruction and affect the learning environment.

The results suggested that the more positive an educators' inclusive attitude is, the less restrictive the learning environment will be seen as most appropriate for students with specific learning disabilities, emotional behavior disorder, speech/language impairment, and autism/pervasive development disorder. One could reason that the positive correlation with these disability categories could perhaps be attributed to educators feeling more prepared to accommodate these students through their previous experiences and/or training. Educators may feel that further intensive training would be necessary in order to confidently and properly serve students with intellectual disabilities, physical disabilities, blindness/vision impairment, and deaf/hearing impairment in the general education classroom full-time. One recent study found that pre-service general education teachers' receptiveness toward teaching visually impaired students was unchanged after taking a single course on teaching students with disabilities across a broad range of disability categories, which may lead one to assume that offering more targeted, long-term training courses could more effectively enhance educators' receptiveness to inclusion (Ajuwon, Sarraj, Griffin-Shirley, Lechtenberger, & Li, 2015).

The results suggest that there is a relationship between the number of specifically targeted special education training courses that the educators have taken and their dispositions regarding inclusion. This finding is not surprising given that the greater number of courses an educator attends, the more knowledgeable and confident they may feel in accommodating students with disabilities.

A correlation was found between the educators' formal training that included field-based experience and their attitude toward inclusion, which is consistent with prior studies. When combined with guided reflection and a mentor who provides positive modeling, studies have found that pre-service field experiences in inclusive

classrooms may increase educators' sense of efficacy with their ability to work with students with disabilities (Atiles, Jones, & Kim, 2012; Swain, Nordness, & Leader-Janssen, 2012).

A relationship was found between educators' number of years of full-time special education teaching experience and attitude toward inclusion. This finding is not surprising since special education teachers interact daily with students with disabilities, may form emotional connections with those students, and are sure to learn from their experiences. In addition, some may even be provided with additional training and/or resources in order to properly support those students. This finding was in line with a prior study on self-efficacy and perceptions toward inclusion which suggested that special education teachers and teachers of inclusive classes tend to have more positive views than teachers of traditional classes (Minke & Bear, 1996).

### Limitations

Several limitations of this study restrict its generalizability to other inclusive programs in other geographic locations. The data for this study was collected from only one school district in one state in the southeastern U.S. with a relatively limited number of questionnaire responses ( $N = 52$ ). Survey responses from both teachers and administrators were analyzed together, therefore perspectives held by one group could have contaminated the resulting views of the other. In addition, there is the possibility that survey responses may be slightly skewed based on the possibility of respondents providing what is popularly viewed as politically correct responses.

### Future Research and Implications

The results of this study suggested that educators with a more positive attitude toward inclusion tended to view less restrictive learning environments as most appropriate for students with specific learning disabilities, emotional behavior disorder, speech and language impairment, and autism/pervasive development disorder. These relationships may have been due to educators' prior knowledge or experience, but it is reasonable to believe that educators may have more positive attitudes toward students with intellectual disabilities, physical disabilities, blindness/vision impairment, and deaf/hearing impairment if they are provided with field experiences with students with those particular disabilities, in addition to disability specific training.

This study found an association between the numbers of years that an educator has worked full-time teaching special education classes and their view of inclusion. A relationship was also found between field placement in inclusive classes and attitude toward inclusion. These findings provide a reason to believe that attitudes toward inclusion would be more positive if educators were required to teach special education classes for some period of time, either through their university or school district prior to teaching inclusive classes.

Future studies that separately obtain the perspectives of general education teachers, special education teachers, and administrators would be useful in determining more specific contributing factors for each group. As new information is gathered through continued research efforts on attitudes toward inclusion, it is imperative that the training, mentoring, and field experiences for pre-service teachers and current educators are continuously reformed so that positivity toward teaching students with disabilities may have every opportunity to flourish. The attitudes and expectations held by administrators and teachers may inevitably manifest through their actions that either provide supportive academic opportunities for those students or serve as a hindrance to achieving their greatest academic potential.

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