

Allyson Dewar  
CEP 822  
Teaching and Research Proposal  
August 19, 2010

### **Focus and Rationale**

**Issue:** Full Inclusion

**Research Question:** Do full inclusion classrooms benefit special education students socially and academically?

This is an issue that has great personal significance to me. I have been a teacher for five years. Two years at the middle school level, and three at the fifth grade level. All five years, I have had a full inclusion classroom. "Inclusion" means all students are in the general education classroom all day. The general education teacher has to modify/accommodate material for certain students. According to the full inclusion policy, if a Special Education student doesn't master grade level content, they won't be penalized. Prior to this year, I've had to work hard and modify/accommodate material for my students and have felt completely confident with them moving on to the next grade. This year, however, was quite different and by far the most challenging year of my teaching career. Out of thirty students, ten were Special Education students. One was Cognitively Impaired, one was at a first grade level, two at a second grade level, and the remaining six were at a third grade level. Keep in mind, I teach fifth grade. On top of their learning disabilities, all had severe behavior and emotional issues. I worked my behind off this year with modifications and accommodations trying to get these students to the next level. Unfortunately, I couldn't sit with them one-on-one as much as I wanted to because I had twenty other fifth grade students to instruct. Out of the ten Special Education students I had, eight were promoted to sixth grade. One was retained due to attendance issues and the other displayed no effort regardless of countless interventions put into place. This is the first year in my career where I do not feel confident promoting students to the next grade level. It is half way through the summer and I have dreams about it! The fourth grade teacher expressed great concern when they were promoted to fifth grade and now, I am doing the same. These poor children are so far behind and I worry about them tremendously. How is it beneficial to keep promoting them from grade to grade eventually until they graduate? How will they be as adults? Did we do enough for them keeping them in a full inclusion classroom? My ten students needed one on one help. I'm not saying they should have been in their own classroom like when I went to school, but they needed the special attention to strengthen certain, crucial skills. This year was a real slap in the face to me. I never put so much thought into the "full inclusion" philosophy until now. Everyday, I thought that these ten students may be farther along if they were pulled out and worked with daily. Also, with all the time and effort I put into modifying/accommodating for ten students, it took me away from the other twenty students on grade level. I know supporters of full inclusion classrooms say that socially, it is beneficial. Well, those ten students made it known they were different from everyone else. They proudly told their classmates they were "Special Ed", and would blurt out "I can't do this because I'm Special Ed." Thus, I question how much it does effect them being labeled "Special Ed."

All general education teachers may find this topic significant, especially general education teachers who teach in “full inclusion” schools with many challenging students. Special Education teachers may benefit from my research as well so they see the other side of the spectrum. My Special Education teacher thought handing me worksheets and walking through my room was “helping.” I teach summer school and a colleague of mine has three of my Special Education students from this past year. She is so frustrated and now realizes why I was so concerned. We are preparing students for the MEAP test. In October, those three have to take the sixth grade MEAP test. She is having them work on third grade MEAP material and they are struggling immensely with it because they lack basic skills. I told her about this assignment and she actually wants to help me with it. Ultimately, with my research, I want to find out in the long run how full inclusion benefits Special Education students. What will the outcome be for Special Education students who spend at least a year in a full inclusion classroom? Will they make progress or decline? What elements are needed for the “full inclusion” philosophy to be effective? Do they have to be consistent or do various methods work?

## **Literature Review**

### **Introduction**

The topic that I am focusing on is full inclusion in the general education classroom. Last year, one third of my students in my 5<sup>th</sup> grade class had an IEP. At the elementary school I work at, we are “full inclusion” which means all students are with me all day and there are no pull-outs. It was a very frustrating and challenging year for me and I was constantly stressed out. I was the only one in the classroom and had to accommodate all of the students by myself. This makes sense because according to Pigeo, 2010, “If a class has 20% or more of its students with IEP’s, there needs to be two teachers in the classroom. Never should a class have more than one third of its students with an IEP.” I questioned myself everyday if the special education students in my classroom were really advancing academically and socially in the inclusive classroom. After last year’s experience, I developed a rather poor attitude toward full inclusion classrooms and wondered if anyone else shared my pain. Apparently, the United States isn’t the only country where educators have a negative attitude toward full inclusion classrooms. In an article by Chhabra, Srivastava, Srivastava, 2010, it states that general education teachers in Botswana complained of overcrowding, lack of preparation, insufficient planning time, and lack of specialist support when it came to full inclusion classrooms. All of those issues I struggled with daily in my situation.

### **Perspectives**

Obviously, by my experience last year, I didn’t quite support full inclusion in the general education classroom. By researching the works of others, I now can see the other side of the issue. Forest and Pearpoint, 2007 compare being labeled “special needs” to the Jewish wearing a yellow star during World War II. Even though I feel the comparison is a bit dramatic, I never stopped to think how that label affects those students because we all don’t like being called something that is hurtful. Also, while researching, I sat back and thought that I’m not the only person related to this issue. What did parents have to see about inclusion? What did students have to say? Davis, 2000 reported that parents and professionals agree that inclusion should start at the preschool level but worry about the teachers being prepared to deal with social and

complex needs. Other parental concerns were raised by Leyser and Kirk, 2006. In this article, parents worry that the general education teacher will allow the label of “special needs” to be stuck on their child, causing them to have low self esteem. Class work is also another parental concern. Many parents feel that reducing homework assignments won’t help their child in the long run. The last major issue mentioned was how the parents were treated themselves. They felt they were treated by the school like they were “special needs” just because they had a special needs child. Students had something to say on the issue of inclusion as well. According to Vaughn, 1998 most special education students preferred to be pulled out. Most would rather work in the resource room because the workload is easier and they get extra help. The majority of special education students liked being included in the general education for social purposes because it was easier to make friends.

### **Pedagogy**

Shockingly some school districts are switching to the inclusion philosophy to cut costs. By doing this, districts are actually hurting those they were supposed to help. In an article, Hechinger, 2007 noted that the Plymouth, Massachusetts school district is actually being sued by a number of families who feel their child isn’t being serviced the proper way in a normal community school. One such case was a boy who had severe depression and tried committing suicide on numerous occasions being taken from his special school and being placed in a general education classroom. Further on in my research, I found a school that was trying to make inclusion work. Vann, 1997 mentioned how the “pull-out” system has been modified. It used to be a time to catch students up with classroom work. Now, it’s a time to teach students coping skills to help them succeed in a regular classroom. The article then goes on to say how special education teachers are now using the same materials as the general education teacher and how their role has switched to an “organizer” where they monitor the special education students to make sure they have all assignments, are turning in homework, and staying on top of things. Wilson, 2000 brings up a unique approach to aide in teachers being able to run and manage an inclusive classroom. According to this article, teachers need to review case studies for real-life examples. First, educators should review specific policies and laws. Second, they should devise ways to modify equipment, the environment, and classroom activities. Lastly, they should review and study a case study related to the policy or law they chose to study.

### **Assessment**

I did find some data that surprised me. Johnson, 2007 mentions a study was done with twenty-seven 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders with special needs. Age, attendance, reading and math equivalence, and the percentage of time spent in the general education classroom were examined. Results showed that there was no significant correlation when it came to age and attendance. However, there was a positive correlation in math and reading scores when the percentage of time spent in the general education setting was higher. In my opinion, the best information in inclusion comes from follow-ups done on high school graduates. According to Sharp, 2005 long term effects of inclusion may be sketchy but there has been some positives found. It has been found that special education students have a greater acceptance for valuing individual differences, have enhanced self esteem, have the capacity for genuine friendship, and can acquire new skills. Continuing on with the social aspect of inclusion, socioeconomic status can play a part in the general education

classroom with special education students. Zindler, 2009 reported on a case study done in a 2<sup>nd</sup> grade classroom in New York City. Seven out of twenty-four students were special education students. Five of those seven came from poor socioeconomic environments. The general school population was upper class. The two special education students that were middle/upper class had no problem blending in socially with the rest of the class. The five students that had poor socioeconomic backgrounds formed a group with themselves and the few general education students with the same background. There was a caste system in the classroom. The students with the poor socioeconomic backgrounds had trouble expressing themselves orally and had language delays. These students also didn't make it to after school activities that involved socializing due to parent work schedules and living too far away.

## **Conclusion**

In my research, I found evidence that inclusion does benefit students socially and even benefits students when it comes to standardized test scores. My opinion has changed and I do feel inclusion is a good idea IF it is done the correct way. There are certain things that need to take place for inclusion to work. I found many resources that stated the same criteria to make inclusion a success. Looking back now, I was frustrated in my situation because inclusion was not being done the correct way. I was missing many key components. Since I was missing many key components, my students were not receiving the equal rights they deserved. I read an article similar to my own situation. Rogers, 2007 explains how educators in England didn't favor inclusion but when it came down to it, they weren't doing it the correct way. Cromwell, 2004 and Sanacore, 1996 discuss many of the same key concepts to have inclusion work for the teacher, student and parent. Certain types of educational technology needs to be integrated. More than one teacher needs to be in the classroom plus an assistant and these teachers need the appropriate training on inclusion. Sufficient funding, adequate support services, time to plan between teachers, and collaboration between teachers, parents, and administrators are all other helpful suggestions. I think if I would have been able to do even just some of these suggestions, my year would have been much smoother.

## **Research and Design** **Research Question**

Do full inclusion classrooms benefit special education students socially and academically?

## **Procedures**

In order to get accurate results from data collection for my research question, data needs to be collected for at least a year if not more. There needs to be certain controls in my environment, which will be my classroom, in order for my data to be reliable. By completing my Literature Review, it was very clear in numerous articles what needs to be present in a classroom for full inclusion to be a success. Common elements mentioned in the articles included Specialist Support, a co-teacher or paraeducator in the classroom, time to plan just for the teacher as well as time to plan with other teachers, resource availability, manageable class size, and effective communication with parents. In order for my data to be as accurate and reliable as possible I have to do my best to make sure these elements are in place or very close to it. I will need to

assess two different aspects, the social aspect and the academic aspect. Monitoring the social aspect can be done just by observation, but I will chose to create sociograms like a teacher did in a case study of her class that I read about (Zindler 2009). These sociograms documented who the special education students communicated with in class, diagramming socioeconomic and ethnicity patterns. For the academic aspect, much more in depth data collection will need to be conducted. In my opinion, ELA and Math are the two most important subjects and they are the ones that are on state standardized tests. I will conduct periodic assessments in Math and ELA and collect support data to answer my research question. According to one article I examined for my Literature Review, Johnson 2007 stated that in a middle school there was a connection between higher standardized test scores with special education students in the full inclusion setting.

### **Assessments**

According to one article I examined by Vaughn, 1998 special education children liked full inclusion classrooms because it makes it easier for them to make friends so I am confident that all students, not just the special education students, will be just fine. However, to document this, I will create sociograms to document friends gained and maintained as well as socioeconomic and ethnic trends. As I mentioned above, in a middle school there was a connection between higher standardized test scores with special education students in a full inclusion classroom. I will be focusing solely on Math and ELA. My school uses an online program called Study Island which is aligned with the MEAP test. The website contains lessons, assessments and games for each benchmark in Math, ELA, Social Studies, and Science for each grade. At the beginning of the year, I will give the special education students the 5<sup>th</sup> grade pretest for Math from the program and record their score on the assessment. The pretest consists of 20 questions. Then, as the school year progresses, and as I cover each 5<sup>th</sup> grade Math benchmark, I will give them a 10 question assessment on each Math benchmark. At the end of the year, I will give them the 5<sup>th</sup> grade post test, which will also consist of 20 questions. I will look at the special education student's scores from pretest to post test and see if there is consistent improvement. I will also compare their scores with the rest of the class. I am trained to give the DRA Reading Assessment. The complete DRA assessment tests accuracy, fluency, and comprehension. The DRA assessment gives a reading level for the student. I will give this assessment at the beginning, middle, and end of the school year and chart the reading level progress for each student. I will also compare it to the progress with the general education students. These two assessment tools will help me track and monitor progress to see if special education students are making strides in the normal general education classroom.

### **Design Rationale**

I believe I have a well suited plan. I have established the controls needed to make this data collection successful and recognize they must be in place in order to have accurate results. Socially, special education students not only like the full inclusion setting, but strive in it. Sociograms can chart friends gained and maintained as well as socioeconomic and ethnicity trends. Math and ELA are the two most important subjects and are the ones that count the most on any state standardized test. I have a Math assessment plan and ELA assessment plan that are both proven effective and used often in the elementary school setting for student data. I will

evaluate data for a whole school year and can even monitor the same students in 6<sup>th</sup> grade if I want to. Every perspective to my research question is fully supported.

### **Annotated Bibliography**

Chhabra, S., Srivastava, R., & Srivastava, I.. (2010). Inclusive Education in Botswana: The Perceptions of School Teachers. *Journal of Disability Policy Studies*, 20(4), 219-228. Retrieved July 20, 2010, from ABI/INFORM Global. (Document ID: 1957418901).

Botswana revised its national policy on education where students, even those with special education needs, are to receive an equal education. Both special education teachers and general education teachers in Botswana do not like the idea of full inclusion classrooms. Special education teachers who were involved with inclusion did not like the class size and said there were few resources and general education teachers lacked the training for special education students. General education teachers complained of over crowding, lack of preparation, insufficient planning time, and specialist support. Teacher training in Botswana is now focusing on making the attitude of general education and special education teachers more positive.

Sharon Cromwell. (2004). Inclusion: Has it Gone Too Far? Retrieved July 29, 2010 from <http://www.educationworld.com/>.

Parents and educators both have concerns when it comes to inclusion. In order for inclusion to work, the whole classroom needs to be restructured. Certain types of technology need to be integrated, more than one teacher needs to be in the classroom, and educators need the appropriate training. When it comes to parents, some don't want to lose the special services they fought so hard for. There are ways to make inclusion work. Sufficient funding, adequate support services, time to plan for educators, and collaboration between teachers, parents, and administrators are all suggestions to make inclusion a success.

Pegi M. Davis. (2000) Seeing Eye to Eye: Are Parents and Professionals in Agreement About the Benefits of Preschool Inclusion? Retrieved on July 28, 2010 from <http://rse.sagepub.com>.

Both parents of special needs preschool students and professionals were questioned at the beginning and at the end of a school year regarding inclusion. They both agreed on 3 major topics. First, both liked the idea of inclusion at such an early age and do feel it serves a purpose. Second, they both agreed that inclusion at the preschool level needs to be done but various needs for the future must be addressed. Finally, they both agreed that the teacher lacked preparation in dealing with students with social and complex needs.

Marsha Forest and Jack Pearpoint. (2007) Quality Education: It's Not a Choice! Retrieved July 27, 2010 from <http://www.inclusion.com>.

Not having inclusion is like segregation. Segregation is uneconomic, immoral, and unethical. In this article, being labeled "disabled" compares to the Jewish wearing a yellow star during World War II. The outcome for people being labeled "disabled" is loneliness, poverty, and joblessness. The biggest thing we all have to overcome regarding inclusion is fear.

John Hechinger. (2007, December 14). Schools Accused of Pushing Mainstreaming to Cut Costs. Wall

Street Journal (Eastern Edition), p. A.1. Retrieved July 26, 2010, from ABI/INFORM Global. (Document ID: 1398412071).

Some school districts are mainstreaming students in efforts to “cut costs” and in ways hurting the children it was supposed to help. In the United States, schools spend almost twice as much on the average disabled student as non-disabled student. Districts such as Plymouth, Massachusetts, are moving students from separate centers to regular community schools. Many families are filing lawsuits. One family is filing a lawsuit because their son, who has serious depression and has tried committing suicide, was being moved from a special center to a regular community school.

Cynthia Johnson. (2007) The Impact of Inclusion on Standardized Test Scores of Learning Support Support Students. Retrieved July 29, 2010 from <http://www.gradworks.umi.com>.

A study was done with 27 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders with special needs in the middle school setting. Age, attendance, reading/math equivalence, and percentage of time spent in the general education classroom were examined. There was no significant correlation when it came to age and attendance. There was a positive correlation in math and reading scores when the percentage of the time spent in the general education setting was higher.

Yona Leyser, & Rea Kirk. (2006, March). Not All Riders of the Education Express Debar At the Inclusion Station. *The Exceptional Parent*, 36(3), 65-67. Retrieved July 27, 2010, from Research Library Core. (Document ID: 1011327831).

Although many parents want their special needs child to be mainstreamed to be treated equally, not all parents agree. There are many concerns that parents of special needs students have when it comes to mainstreaming. The emotional aspect is a major concern. If teachers let other students be mean and label students as “special needs”, this is very damaging. Class work is another parental concern. Many parents feel reducing assignments won’t help their child in the long run. Parents of special needs children don’t like how they are treated by the teacher. They are treated like they are “special needs” just because their child is. One out of three parents who have special needs children in the United States didn’t know whether or not their child was mainstreamed. Principals and school districts need to fix this by providing opportunities for the parents to participate in their child’s education.

Jermaine Pige. (4 November). Teachers Focus on Inclusive Classes. *McClatchy - Tribune Business News*. Retrieved July 26, 2010, from ABI/INFORM Dateline. (Document ID: 1893271431).

This article supported that special education students needed to be in the regular classroom to not only fit in socially, but so they wouldn’t fall behind in class work. However, they mentioned critical components for inclusion to work and be successful. If a classroom has 20% or more of its students with IEP’s, there needs to be two teachers in the classroom, otherwise known as co-teaching. Co-teaching works best for inclusion. It goes on to say a classroom should never have more than 1/3 of its class with an IEP. This causes teachers to burn out, which results in the whole class suffering.

Chrissie Rogers. (2007). Experiencing an 'Inclusive' Education: Parents and Their Children with 'Special

Educational Needs'. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 28(1), 55-68. Retrieved July 28, 2010, from Education Module. (Document ID: 1267963031).

This article focuses on British parents who have children identified with "special education needs" within mainstream education. Expectations can negatively affect parents when a special education student can't maintain their education within a mainstream environment. In England, "inclusion" within a mainstream school is implemented by the current government and promoted as exclusionary. Evidence has shown that actual inclusion, in many cases, is not occurring and special education students are not receiving the equal rights they deserve.

Sanacore, Joseph. (1996). Ingredients for Successful Inclusion. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 40(3), 222-226. Retrieved August 26, 2010, from Children's Module. (Document ID: 10374716).

There are key components that make inclusion work. Staffing is mentioned. Since more districts are "downsizing", special education teachers should act as co-teachers with the general education teacher and each classroom should have a teacher assistant. The second key component mentioned is staff development. The classroom development should be developed more by teachers than administration. The third key component is successful classroom practices. Team teaching and cooperative planning were some examples. Lastly, higher order literacy was mentioned. Students need to be taught reading and studying strategies that will aid them in the general education classroom.

Wesley Sharp. (2005). Special Education Inclusion. Retrieved July 29, 2010 from <http://www.educationworld.com>.

The best information on inclusion comes from follow-up studies done on high school graduates. Long term effects of inclusion may be sketchy, but it has been found special education students have a greater acceptance for valuing individual differences, enhanced self esteem, genuine capacity for friendship, and acquisition of new skills. Inclusion is not a "one size fits all" program. Inclusion is successful if disabled and non disabled students improve, children learn to accept individual differences, students develop new friendships, and parental participation increases.

Allan S Vann. (1997, May). Inclusion: How full? *The Education Digest*, 62(9), 31-33. Retrieved July 29, 2010, from Research Library Core. (Document ID: 11612658).

The strongest inclusion programs include both "push-ins" and "pull-outs." Minor disabilities should be able to stay in the classroom, whereas severe disabilities need to have pull-outs. In the school mentioned, "pull-outs" used to be a time to catch students up with classroom work. Now, it is a time to teach students coping skills to help them succeed in a regular classroom. This is known as the "tutorial focus." Special education teachers now use the same materials and textbooks as the normal classroom and watch over student's organization skills.

Sharron Vaughn. (1998) Students' Perceptions of Inclusion and Resource Room Settings. Retrieved July

26, 2010 from <http://www.sed.sagepub.com>

In this article, 442 special education students were surveyed on their perception of inclusion. Most liked being pulled out. They preferred to get specialized instruction outside of the classroom everyday. Most would rather work in the resource room because the workload is easier and they get extra help. The majority liked being included in the regular classroom setting because it was easier for them to make friends. Finally, most of the students had no idea why they were placed in a general education class instead of being separated from their peers.

Sandy Wilson. (2000). Disability case studies: Learning to Include all Students. *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance*, 71(4), 37-41. Retrieved July 27, 2010, from Research Library Core. (Document ID: 52612439).

In order to accommodate all students, teachers should examine case studies for real-life examples. First, educators should review specific policies and laws. Then, they should devise ways to modify equipment, the environment, and classroom activities. Lastly, they should review a case study related to the policy/law first studied. This method is believed to better aide educators with the mainstreaming process.

Rachel Zindler. (2009). Trouble in Paradise: A Study of Who Is Included in an Inclusion Core. (Document Classroom. *Teachers College Record*, 111(8), 1971-1996. Retrieved July 28, 2010, from Research Library ID: 1861700861).

This article was a case study on a 2<sup>nd</sup> grade classroom in New York City, which was a full inclusion classroom. Seven out of 24 students were special education students. Five of those seven were from the "bad" areas of the city. The general school population was upper middle class. This case study mainly focused on social interactions. The teacher made sociograms to show her findings. The two special education students who weren't from the "bad" areas of the city were socially accepted where as the five from the "bad" areas were not. These five formed a social group with a few other students in the class from the "bad" areas. There was a caste system in the classroom. The students from the "bad" areas had trouble expressing themselves orally and had language delays. Thus, they did less language based play such as fantasy games. These students also didn't make it to extra curricular activities due to parents work schedules and living too far thus they were unable to form social relationships there as well.

## Teaching and Research Revision Summary Sheet

### Focus and Rationale Revisions

In my focus and rationale I made some grammatical corrections. Also, I noticed throughout I used “all inclusive” and “inclusive” and that really didn’t go with my research question. I changed “all inclusive” and “inclusive” to “full inclusion.” I needed to address whether I want to know if the process of full inclusion benefits special education students or if the outcome of full inclusion classrooms proves beneficial to special education students. I wanted to address if the outcome proves to be beneficial and better explained this toward the end of the focus and rationale section. Also in this end section, I brought up the idea of characteristics of full inclusion classrooms. (2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph)

### Literature Review Revisions

I didn’t even remotely cite my sources correctly in my literature review write-up. Even though I like to have the name of the article with the author, I changed all of my sources to author’s last name, date. Even still, I feel I didn’t do it correctly. Under the Pedagogy section, I needed to speak directly to the various inclusion practices people have tried. Three were mentioned-the pullout system, reviewing case studies, and the cost method so I didn’t change anything. Under the Assessment section, I needed to mention methods people have used. Again, I didn’t change anything because sociograms and Math/ELA scores were mentioned.

### Research and Design Revisions

Again, I corrected my citing to APA style. I have socialization in my research question and went on to make it sound like it wasn’t a big deal in this section which was foolish, so I changed that. I also stated how I would assess student’s socialization. If this study was to be replicated, I believe I mentioned all the aspects so that other educators could do it. If they don’t have access to Study Island, obviously another grade level assessment could be used and all teachers should know what DRA is and stands for. I also strengthened up my conclusion to make it more persuasive.

