

EXPLORING THE ATTITUDES AND PERCEPTIONS OF EDUCATORS
REGARDING DISABLED STUDENTS IN THE
INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM

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ABSTRACT

This mixed methods study was designed to investigate teachers' perceptions and attitudes regarding students with disabilities in the inclusive classroom. According to Hogan, Lohmann, and Champion (2013), inclusive classrooms are now the norm in many K-12 schools across the United States, which has made the job of general education teachers all the more difficult. This study examined educator attitudes and perceptions in three northeast Tennessee school districts, regarding disabled students in the inclusive classroom. Teachers with a clear understanding of their perspectives toward inclusion are better able to establish classrooms with full inclusion and provide students with disabilities an education equal to that of their peers (Zaretsky, 2005). Many educators are feeling totally unprepared from a professional training perspective and need professional development to build their self-confidence to better serve students with disabilities (Crişan, Albulescu, & Turda, 2020). The participants in this study completed the Attitudes Towards Teaching All Students (ATTAS-mm) survey to assess their attitude towards teaching all students. A sample of six participants volunteered for the interview portion of the study to get a deeper understanding of educator attitudes and perceptions. Findings indicated where teachers' attitudes and perceptions are regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities. This study provided the data needed to discern which theoretical constructs educators are aligned in order to

create professional development to be utilized by a school district to assist in transitioning to a more inclusive environment.

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my family for their loving support during my journey in completing my research. My wife, Denise, has been my rock and constant encourager throughout this process and I am forever grateful. She has endured through this process with me and deserves just as much credit for its completion. My children, Ashley, Tiffany, and Christopher for their patience and understanding when I could not be available or attentive to them because of my commitment to completing my dissertation. I hope to make up for lost time with them by enjoying some quality time together. I love you all immensely and am thankful to have each of you supporting me throughout this process. Lastly, I would like to honor my late father Howard Francis Closson, who showed me by the way he lived his life how I can accomplish anything with perseverance and hard work. He instilled in me the desire to finish what I started and to never quit, which was crucial in finishing my doctorate.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ATTAS-mm, Attitudes Towards Teaching All Students Full Scale Measure

FAPE, Free and Appropriate Public Education

LRE, Least Restrictive Environment

IEP, Individualized Education Plan

SEL, Social Emotional Learning

SWD, Students with Disabilities

UDL, Universal Design for Learning

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The inclusion movement began in the 1980s as a result of parents and advocates for students with disabilities (O'Dell & Schaefer, 2005). The focus of inclusive settings is to include all students, just as society strives to function outside of the classroom in a nondiscriminatory way. Inclusive education was mandated in 1975 when Congress passed the Education of All Handicapped Children Act (1975). This law was replaced in 1990 with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (1990), which guarantees a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) for students with disabilities. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act was reauthorized in 1997 and again in 2004, stating that schools have a duty to educate children with disabilities in general education classrooms or what is determined to be the least restrictive environment (LRE).

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEIA) requires that children with disabilities be educated in regular education classrooms unless their disability is so severe that even services and aids are not able to meet those students' needs within the general education classroom. In other words, "Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires mainstreaming or inclusion when the general education setting can provide an appropriate education" (Yell, Shriver, & Katsiyannis, 2006, p. 311). Schools are expected to include students with disabilities in the general education classroom to ensure the LRE. The

emphasis on accountability for all students has been continued in the Every Student Succeeds Act (2015).

Background to the Problem

The success and failure of the special education laws hinge on the knowledge and attitudes teachers portray in the inclusive classroom (Ross-Hill, 2009). In social cognitive learning theory, much of human learning occurs in a social environment (Merriam & Bierema, 2014). Students learn from one another both socially and academically, therefore students with disabilities need to be given the opportunity to be with their same age peers in the general education classroom (Sailor, 2015). According to Sailor, McCart, and Choi (2018), the perception of individuals with disabilities is shifting from deficit theory, which is based on the medical model of what individuals with disabilities cannot do, to the human capability theory, which is based on what individuals with disabilities are capable of doing. Under deficit theory, students with deficits in content areas are assumed to have a structural problem within themselves, which needs to be addressed through an extraordinary intervention. This theory was the impetus behind removing students from the general education curriculum to remediate their weaknesses. According to Taylor (1988), “both P.L. 94-142 statute and regulations legitimate segregated educational settings and envision instances in which removal of handicapped children from the regular educational environment may be justified” (p. 223). These basic assumptions have guided the delivery model in special education for many decades (Burrello, Tracy, & Schultz, 1973). This model has proven unsuccessful for individuals with disabilities, thus providing motivation for the inclusive movement.

Statement of the Problem

Transitioning a school district to a more inclusive environment to better serve all students is a complex issue. Sailor (2017) noted the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom exemplifies the definition of a wicked problem. Morris (2011) defined a wicked problem as “problems that are tough, hard to handle, and do not lend themselves to simple or simplistic solutions” (p. 201). This type of problem would necessitate a strategic response based on system two decision-making (Kahneman, 2011). This type of organizational change requires a culture change that must be planned and aligned with strategy and leader behavior (Burke, 2018). Burke (2018) defined the climate of an organization in terms of the perception individuals have of how their local work unit is managed and how effectively they work together with their colleagues daily.

The horns effect is when people “see one attribute that predisposes them to disfavor one alternative and they are more likely to interpret additional information in a way that supports their conclusion” (Hubbard, 2014, p. 308). The horns effect may be impacting this process because some teachers still believe certain students with disabilities cannot learn or will be a distraction in general education classes. In overcoming bias, Hubbard (2014) posited, “the first level of protection is acknowledging the problem” (p. 313). The current culture within special education allows for and, in some instances, supports this type of bias, which creates a pattern of exclusion.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the appropriate steps to transition a school district to a more inclusive environment when serving disabled students. This study examined

educator perceptions in a school district regarding disabled students in the inclusive classroom. Teachers with a clear understanding of their perspectives toward inclusion are better able to establish classrooms with full inclusion and provide students with disabilities an education equal to that of their peers (Zaretsky, 2005). Contributing to this perception is a lack of understanding on the part of general education teachers. Many educators are feeling totally unprepared from a professional training perspective and need professional development to better serve students with disabilities to build their self-confidence (Crişan et al., 2020). The successful education of all students requires everyone within schools to make changes, to not only the way students are taught, but how they are perceived as successful learners (Pearman, Barnhart, Huang, & Mellblom, 1992). Assessing how educators in a school district perceive disabled students can be instrumental in the implementation of inclusive practices.

Research Questions (Appendix A)

The research questions that guided this study:

1. Is there a significant relationship in a teacher's gender and their attitudes and perceptions of serving all students, disabled and nondisabled, in an inclusive environment in the general education classroom?
 - a. Is there a difference, based on gender, in teachers' attitudes and perceptions of serving all students, disabled and nondisabled, in an inclusive environment in the general education classroom?
2. Is there a significant relationship in a teacher's years of experience in the profession and their attitudes and perceptions of serving all students, disabled and nondisabled, in an inclusive environment in the general education classroom?

- a. Is there a difference, based on years of experience in the profession, in teachers' attitudes and perceptions of serving all students, disabled and nondisabled, in an inclusive environment in the general education classroom?
3. Is there a significant relationship in the number of college (or higher) courses completed in special education by a teacher and their attitudes and perceptions of serving all students, disabled and nondisabled, in an inclusive environment in the general education classroom?
4. What concerns do teachers have about implementing an inclusive environment in the general education classroom?
5. What incentives do teachers perceive could positively influence their attitudes and perceptions in serving all students, disabled and nondisabled, in an inclusive environment in the general education classroom?
6. What is an individual educator's view/definition of disability?
7. What is the school district's view/definition of disability, as identified by participant perceptions?

Rationale for the Study

In the study by Cope and Ward (2002), teacher perceptions impacted the integration of learning technology into classrooms. Teachers are expected to provide inclusive services, however some general educators do not believe they have the needed skills and this uncertainty will impact their efficacy (Gregory & Noto, 2018). Avramidis and Norwich (2002) concluded that teachers were generally positive towards inclusion, but this is not to assume that they share a total inclusion approach. According to Hogan et al. (2013), inclusive classrooms are now the

norm in many K-12 schools across the United States, which has made the job of general education teachers all the more difficult. Although the movement for inclusive education is part of a broad human rights agenda, many educators have serious reservations about implementing full inclusion. Lambe and Bones (2006) posited positive attitudes towards inclusion by practitioners will be essential to ensuring successful implementation.

Jordan, Schwartz, and McGhie-Richmond (2009) asserted teachers who believe students with special needs are their responsibility tend to be more effective with all their students. Problems occur when teachers have the perception that a student with a disability is the primary responsibility of the special education teacher only. The research indicated teacher perceptions regarding students with special needs can affect the success of disabled students in an inclusive classroom. Horne and Timmons (2009) noted teachers must look beyond the disability and see the child for the positive qualities that s/he has to offer. Another way of stating this would be looking at students with disabilities for what they can do, applying the human capability theory.

Exploring the attitudes and perceptions of teachers concerning the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education can lead to the development of professional training and experiences that may help provide the needed support for inclusive practices. Further research on whether general education teachers feel prepared to teach in an inclusive classroom was needed. The research has suggested there is a lack of knowledge about inclusion strategies by general education teachers. The research also indicated teachers' negative perceptions about inclusion can have an adverse effect on its success. This researcher envisioned the results of this study may be used to develop training to foster the mindset of the human capability theory in educators throughout the school district. This research may also be used by members of the

administration to help them provide the resources their teachers need to be successful teaching all students in an inclusive environment.

Importance of the Study

Allowing all students to be educated together would need a concerted system of support to ensure all students are receiving what they need. Sailor (2015) advocated “a useful way to conceptualize instruction in terms of equity is to differentiate it according to measured student need through a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS)” (p. 94). Providing individual students with disabilities the supports they need in the general education classroom allows them to be educated with their same age peers and to be exposed to the regular standards.

Definition of Terms

For the purposes of this study, the following terms are defined as:

- Disability is a natural part of the human experience and in no way diminishes the right of individuals to participate in or contribute to society. Improving educational results for children with disabilities is an essential element of our national policy of ensuring equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency for individuals with disabilities (Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, 2004).
- Free appropriate public education (FAPE) is special education and related services that have been provided at public expense, under public supervision and direction, and without charge. Those services meet the standards of the State educational agency, include an appropriate preschool, elementary school, or secondary school education in

the state involved; and are provided in conformity with the individualized education program required under section 1414(d) of this title (Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, 2004).

- Least Restrictive Environment (LRE), is defined as the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are not disabled. Special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability of a child is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily (Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, 2004).
- Inclusion is defined as the placement of students with disabilities in the general education classroom with peers without disabilities (Yell et al., 2006).
- Multi-tiered System of Support (MTSS) embeds the special education multi-tiered concept within the broader systematic framework of school-wide applications (Sailor, 2015).
- Special education means specially designed instruction, at no cost to parents, to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability, including (A) instruction conducted in the classroom, in the home, in hospitals and institutions, and in other settings; and (B) instruction in physical education (Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, 2004).

Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

The objective of many K-12 schools is to strive towards achieving higher scores on standardized assessments to create a viable workforce for the economy. Current educational thinking stems from the human capital development agenda that “gauges the merit and worth of a person by his or her capacity to contribute to economic productivity” (Lashley, 2013, p. 54). The problem with the current educational system is it is designed for standardization (Christensen, Horn, & Johnson, 2008). The education system in the United States is built on the concept of standardization from the time of the industrial revolution and impacts the way teachers are trained, students are grouped, and curriculum is designed. Under this model, only those with average to above average intelligence can succeed, which often ignores the needs of minority and underserved populations.

Overview of the Methodology

It is assumed participants completed the survey truthfully and accurately within the timeframe given. The survey was sent out to approximately 1000 educators with the assumption 475 to 550 individuals would complete and return it. It was emailed to all educators in each of the chosen school districts to complete in order to have a larger sample to draw inferences. It is assumed participants answered completely and accurately based on their current knowledge. It was also assumed all protocols and procedures were followed regarding the use of the survey instrument. It was anticipated an equal number of participants from elementary, middle, and high school educators were represented in the sample. It was also assumed both teachers and administrators were included in the sample.

The study utilized a mixed methods research approach. The quantitative part was set up as a nonexperimental survey design utilizing the comparative research approach. This design was utilized to explore the independent variables of gender, experience, and courses taken in special education and the impact that has on the dependent variable and the development of an inclusive environment within a particular school district. A total of three school districts were utilized in the hope that at least 475 participants would choose to participate. The intent was to get a diverse sample from all levels (elementary, middle, and high) in order have a representative sample to generalize to the entire district. This type of design led to the data analysis chosen to determine if there was a significant relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variables.

The qualitative aspect of this research study included open-ended questions added to the survey and included interviews. The purpose was to uncover the value judgements of educators to determine any participant biases. The inquiry looked to uncover the information or resources educators have utilized that may have led to those biases. It was an accepted reality within this study that participants may have multiple perspectives rather than a singular view of individuals with disabilities.

It was understood by this researcher, having worked many years in the education field, there was more than one perspective to support students and teachers. This study was open to exploring a multitude of perspectives. The researcher also explored the social constructivist framework and its impact on teacher perceptions. In social constructivism, individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work (Creswell & Poth, 2018). It was the intent to draw this information out of the teachers that chose to participate in the interview process. By determining how and where teachers are getting an understanding of inclusion was

an important aspect of this study. In today's technological society there is a lot of accessible information about inclusive practices as well as various strategies utilized throughout a district, neither of which may be appropriate nor current evidence-based practices. It was also assumed participants in this study had prior basic knowledge of inclusive education and professional development practices. Each educator brought a unique background and opinion from both personal and professional experiences. This topic was covered in greater detail in Chapter III of this dissertation.

Delimitations/Limitations of the Study

A delimitation of this research study was that it only included educators in one geographic area in Northeast Tennessee. This may have impacted the external validity where the findings may not be generalizable to other populations and settings (Gliner, Morgan, & Leech, 2017). Another delimitation to this study is survey responses were limited to choices based on the Likert scale and multiple-choice questions. To delve deeper into participant responses, this study included open-ended questions, in addition to the survey and an interview process, with a limited number of participants volunteering for the interview. Another potential delimitation to this research study was this researcher's bias. This researcher is passionate about providing students with disabilities the opportunity to be educated with their peers in the general education setting. Administering the survey in a district where the researcher has not previously worked in a leadership capacity served as another means to eliminate potential bias.

A limitation of this study was the influence social desirability may have on the results. Socially desirable responding is defined as the tendency to give answers that make the respondent look good (Paulhus & Reid, 1991). The recent popularity in educational research

regarding attitudes towards inclusive education has found social desirability to have a negative impact on studies (Lüke & Grosche, 2018). It has been demonstrated that the attitude of an individual or organization conducting the study could influence participant responses (Lüke & Grosche, 2018). It is assumed that participants are not being purposefully malicious, but like the Hawthorne effect (Patten, 2014), individuals are influenced to tell a researcher what they think they want to hear.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

In reviewing the literature on inclusive education, a consistent connection appears in the research of the attitudes and perceptions of educators and the impact those have on the inclusive environment in elementary, middle, and high school. This review begins by providing a historical perspective of inclusive education and then transitions to the impact educator attitudes and perceptions have on the environment. Next, an in-depth review of the theoretical constructs of deficit theory and human capability theory will be covered as it relates to this research study.

Historical Background of Inclusive Education

The inclusion movement began in the 1980s as a result of parents and advocates for students with disabilities (O'Dell & Schaefer, 2005). Yell et al. (2006) defined inclusion as the placement of students with disabilities in the general education classroom with peers without disabilities. According to Gafoor and Asaraf (2009), inclusion is the concept that almost every child starts in a general education classroom. The focus of inclusive settings is to include all students, just as society strives to function outside of the classroom in a nondiscriminatory way.

According to Skrtic (1991), the new revolution has come to be known as the regular education initiative (REI), where achieving the spirit of the Education for All Handicapped

Children Act (1975) can be accomplished by extending its rights and resources to all students. Sailor and Burrello (2013) cautioned that it is imperative to avoid jumping into “new structures and instructional practices without the deliberation of values and purpose” (p.30). The objective is to strike a balance by providing equal access to all but also not compromising the gains achieved for the rights of disabled children.

According to Carrington and Elkins (2002), inclusive education is much more than the presence of students with disabilities in regular classrooms. This concept indicates a need to change the mindset of individuals within the organizational culture of school districts. Schein (2017) described the climate of an organization as the “product of some of the underlying assumptions and is therefore a manifestation of the culture” (p. 17). The research indicated many teachers and building administrators are stuck in the old medical model based on deficit theory, where disabled children should be served in a self-contained special education classroom. Pearman et al. (1992) indicated many special educators believe only they have the expertise and knowledge to serve students with special needs. Many of those same individuals believe children with significant disabilities need to be educated in a separate environment from their average age peers to accommodate for their disability.

The research done at the University of Kansas (UK) to develop the Schoolwide Integration for Transformation (SWIFT) showed how an equity-based school reform model can be effective within a multitiered system of support (MTSS) (Choi, McCart, & Sailor, 2020). Sailor (2015) advocated a way to conceptualize instruction in terms of equity is to differentiate it according to student need through a multi-tiered system of support. Providing individual students with disabilities the supports they need in the general education classroom allows them to be educated with their same age peers and be exposed to the general education standards.

When MTSS with embedded social emotional learning (SEL) is applied in concert with an equity orientation, it functions as a driver for reorganizing schools in a manner that contributes to solving the problems of including students who need additional or intensive instruction and services (Giangreco & Suter, 2015; McCart, Sailor, Bezdek, & Satter, 2014; Stelitano, Russell, & Bray, 2020).

Sailor and Burrello (2013) suggested a fully integrated education system of supports and services that include special education and second language learner programs, creating a schoolwide MTSS similar to response to intervention (RTI). This concept can be utilized within current structures already in place with RTI by incorporating it within the general education classroom to serve all students. Bray and McClaskey (2013) advocated for personalization of instruction for all students where instruction is “paced to learning needs, tailored to learning preferences, and to the specific interests of different learners” (p. 2). Personalization thus encompasses differentiation and individualization (Bray & McClaskey, 2013). Christensen et al. (2008) provided an example of disruptively deploying computers that can bring about computer-based learning and student-centric technology. By implementing these tools, the idea is to personalize education to meet the needs of the student instead of the other way around.

Those with special education needs must have access to regular schools, which should accommodate them within child-centered pedagogy capable of meeting these needs (Ruijs & Peetsma, 2009). According to Murawski and Scott (2019), “in an inclusive classroom that values all learners, students don’t have to be educated in a different setting to get what they need” (p. 7). In other words, providing students with disabilities the needed supports and accommodations within the general education classroom allows all learners to be educated in the same inclusive setting.

Attitudes and Perceptions of Educators

Avramidis and Norwich (2002) concluded teachers were generally positive towards inclusion, but this is not to assume they share a total inclusion approach. According to Hogan et al. (2013), inclusive classrooms are now the norm in many K-12 schools across the United States, which has made the job of general education teachers all the more difficult. Although the movement for inclusive education is part of a broad human rights agenda, many educators have serious reservations about implementing full inclusion (Avramidis, Bayliss, & Burden, 2000). Lambe and Bones (2006) posited positive attitudes towards inclusion by practitioners will be essential to ensuring successful implementation. Jordan et al. (2009) asserted teachers who believe students with special needs are their responsibility tend to be more effective with all their students. According to Sharma, Forlin, and Loreman (2008), teachers with positive attitudes towards inclusion are more likely to adapt the way they work to benefit all their students. Problems occur when teachers have the perception that a student with a disability is the primary responsibility of the special education teacher only. The research indicated teacher perceptions regarding students with special needs can affect the success of disabled students in an inclusive classroom.

General education teachers expressed confidence to teach students with special needs when they have adequate training to meet their needs (Ross-Hill, 2009). According to Rasskazov and Muller (2017), the majority of teachers are not prepared to work effectively with disabled students in inclusive classrooms. To assist general education teachers, they need the appropriate training to be effective teaching all students in the inclusive classroom. Hogan et al. (2013) asserted general educators have limited knowledge of inclusion strategies. Obiakor, Harris, Mutua, Rotatori, and Algozzine (2012) contended “educators must diversify their goals,

assessment, and instruction to accommodate and meet the range of developmental and educational needs present in today's classrooms" (p. 482). The research pointed to two remedies to ensure the success of all students in an inclusive classroom: consultation and collaboration between general education and special education teachers and training for general education teachers on inclusion strategies (Algozzine & Anderson, 2007; Allan, 2016; Edwards, Carr, & Siegel, 2006; Hogan et al., 2013; Idol, 2006; Jordan et al., 2009; Scruggs, Mastropieri, & McDuffie, 2007). Taking a measured approach to implementing evidence-based inclusive practices could result in an environment to better serve all students.

Christensen et al. (2008) asserted heavyweight teams can create the separation needed to look beyond the status quo to envision other possibilities. Heavyweight teams enable individuals to rise above the boundaries of their functional organizations and interact in different ways (Christensen et al., 2008). The heavyweight teams can establish a change in mindset and be instrumental in leading effective change to provide a fresh perspective. Kahneman (2011) referred to this perspective as the outside view and asserted this view is imperative to avoid a planning fallacy that often occurs from an ingrained philosophy from individuals that work to maintain the status quo.

Christensen et al. (2008) noted there are two mechanisms of movement, the first is success, and the second is a common language. It is difficult to transition to a more inclusive environment because many believe it cannot be successful or believe that the current program is sufficient. According to Christensen et al. (2008), "a prerequisite for getting agreement is having a common language and a shared framing of the problem" (p. 185). Throughout the research (Ainscow & Sandill, 2010; Christensen et al., 2008; Schein, 2017), the importance of having a common language is crucial to the successful implementation of any initiative. Without a

common language, teachers find it very difficult to experiment with new possibilities (Ainscow & Sandill, 2010). There is no shared framing of the problem nor a shared solution of how to solve the problem. Schein (2017) noted, all planned change starts with the recognition of a problem, a recognition that something is not going as expected. This lack of understanding of the problem can create a culture that continues to work to maintain the status quo and makes it difficult to implement meaningful change. This lack of understanding leads to thinking that current processes are adequate to meet the needs of students with disabilities. The research indicated this is a common issue in school districts because many educators receive minimal training or exposure to special education and special education law and policy (Sumera, Pazey, & Lashley, 2014).

Once an inclusive mindset is established, DeHartchuck, Kruse, and Whittaker (2019) proposed a three-step process in creating inclusive schools. First, they suggested establishing common beliefs by building educators' sense of self-efficacy. According to Zee and Koomen (2016), teachers with a higher sense of self-efficacy are more likely to use instructional knowledge and skills they have gained in professional development. Algozzine and Ysseldyke (1983) noted, the unintended consequence of special education was general classroom teachers were led to believe they were incapable of teaching struggling students. Second, establishing a school culture that welcomes diversity and all learners is crucial in creating an inclusive environment because "in an inclusive classroom that values all learners, students do not have to be educated in a different setting to get what they need" (Murawski & Scott, 2019, p. 7). Lastly, DeHartchuck et al. (2019) suggested the need to implement effective instructional practices to create inclusive schools. Determining the perceptions and attitudes of educators and clarifying their concerns can provide school district leadership with the needs analysis to develop

professional development to overcome specific issues. Highlighting educator concerns can also help district leadership recognize possible incentives to help propagate a more inclusive environment in schools.

Theoretical Constructs

According to Sailor et al. (2018), the perception of individuals with disabilities is shifting from the medical model based on deficit theory, of what individuals could not do, to the human capability theory, of what individuals with disabilities are capable of doing. Nussbaum (2000) described human capabilities as “what people are actually able to do and be, in a way informed by an intuitive idea of life that is worthy of the dignity of the human being” (p. 222). The individual view under this approach is to respect and accept others’ abilities not an attitude of condescension because of their inabilities.

Under deficit theory, students reflecting measured deficits in content areas are assumed to have a structural problem within themselves, which needs to be addressed through an extraordinary intervention. This theory was the impetus behind removing students from the general education curriculum to remediate their weaknesses. According to Taylor (1988), “both P.L. 94-142 statute and regulations legitimate segregated educational settings and envision instances in which removal of handicapped children from the regular educational environment may be justified” (p. 223). These basic assumptions have guided the delivery model of special education for many decades (Burrello et al., 1973). This model has proven ineffective for individuals with disabilities, thus providing the impetus for the inclusive movement.

There is a tendency to place students in specialized classrooms because of a misunderstanding of the continuum of services where “intensity of service is often confused with

segregation” (Haines & Turnbull, 2013, p. 73). This has been a long-held belief that fuels deficit theory and the need to separate disabled students from their peers. The National Commission on Excellence in Education noted in 1983 that educationally disadvantaged students may require special curriculum materials, smaller classes, or individual tutoring to help them master the material presented. Their intent was to distinguish the need to improve education for the benefit of all, but it may have further segregated students with disabilities because it appears to favor individualized instruction (Pugach & Sapon-Shevin, 1987).

Wolfensberger (2013) posited individuals with disabilities are not given valued social roles in society, and are therefore devalued. Wolfensberger (2013) noted devalued individuals are often viewed as objects of pity, and, therefore, people want to make things easier for the afflicted. This devaluing of individuals with disabilities eventually leads to fewer demands on those individuals for performance, learning, or growth (Wolfensberger, 2013). This type of thinking is what led to individuals with disabilities being placed in institutions because it was thought to be in their best interest (Wolfensberger, 1989). This thinking can be described as ableism, which is the belief that it is better or superior to not have a disability and to do things in a way that nondisabled people do (Storey, 2007). Ableism has been historically present in schools and society and is tied in part to the medical model that seeks to fix people with disabilities (Longmore, 1995).

Human capability theory calls for a shift away from focusing problems of learning on the individual and instead examines the learning context in its entirety (Sailor et al., 2018). This theory is related to the principle of normalization, which posits making available to all people with disabilities patterns of life and conditions of everyday living that are as close as possible to the regular circumstances and ways of life or society (Wolfensberger, 1980). Allowing all

students to be educated together would need a concerted system of support to ensure all students are receiving what they need.

According to Carrington and Elkins (2002), inclusive education personifies an attitude of accepting, valuing, and respecting all students. This attitude is indicative of the culture and climate of an organization and whether it is embraced. The research indicated teacher perceptions regarding students with special needs can affect the success of disabled students in an inclusive classroom. Horne and Timmons (2009) noted teachers must look beyond the disability and see the child for the positive qualities that s/he has to offer. This is another way of emphasizing the human capability theory by seeing students with disabilities for what they can do.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Description of Population/Sample

The population of interest in this study includes elementary, middle, and high school educators. Included in the population could be administrators who work at the various levels in a particular district. This study will utilize a sample of up to 1000 educators from three separate districts in Northeast Tennessee. Permission was requested and granted from the leadership at each of the three school districts. It was anticipated a total sample of up 475 educators would choose to participate from all three districts, with at least 75-100 from each educational level. This type of sampling was utilized to ensure a diverse sample of educators was captured at all levels (elementary, middle, and high) within the study. To ensure anonymity, a process was implemented where the names of each educator in the population was not known, therefore maintaining individual confidentiality. The interview portion of this study included individuals who completed the survey and agreed to participate. Those who volunteered for the interviews were asked a variety of questions to expand on their survey responses.

Identification of Variables

In a nonexperimental design, attribute independent variables are typical and will be utilized in this study. The independent variables utilized will be gender, experience, and amount of special education courses completed by an educator. It was determined if there was a significant relationship with the dependent variable related to the inclusive environment. The dependent variable for this study is teacher attitudes, positive or negative, of serving all students, disabled and nondisabled, in an inclusive environment in the general education classroom. The independent variables of college (or higher) courses completed in special education and experience are ordinal, whereas gender is a nominal scale of measurement. The dependent variable is an interval scale of measurement because the data came from the Likert scale provided by the survey and will indicate whether an educator has a negative or positive attitude towards serving all students, disabled and nondisabled.

Survey Instrument

The Attitudes Towards Teaching All Students (ATTAS-mm) survey was used for the research study. The ATTAS-mm is a nine-item scale with strong reliability and validity that measures educator attitudes (Gregory & Noto, 2018). The full-scale measure was utilized to determine an educators' attitude level and provided a raw score based on their responses. The lower the raw score on the ATTAS-mm indicates a positive attitude toward teaching all students, while a higher raw score indicates a negative attitude towards teaching all students. The ATTAS-mm has three components: cognitive, affective, and behavioral. The cognitive component includes thoughts, ideas, or beliefs, such as stereotyping. The affective aspect of attitude includes feelings or an emotional response to something or someone. The behavioral

component describes the tendency to act in a way towards something. While the three components are not independent of each other, they are measurably distinct constructs (Gregory & Noto, 2012).

This researcher input the ATTAS-mm into Qualtrics to deliver to participants via email. The results were then directly collated by the system as participants completed the survey. There were open-ended questions added to the survey to delve deeper into participant responses. A question was added to elicit participation in the interview portion of the research.

An element of potential concern was related to the cognitive submeasure where the factor loadings are strong, but the alpha is low. This researcher used the ATTAS-mm in its entirety but was prepared to address validity issues later in the process. To mitigate these issues a couple of qualitative questions were added. This is where participants can express their experience of social cognition to see if themes relate to the measurement of interest as a means of ensuring validity beyond the psychometrics. The additional questions were:

1. Please describe in detail an effective classroom environment.
2. Describe the types of behavior you would expect from an educator teaching in the inclusive classroom.

Data Collection

Surveys were sent out to participants via email and were confidential to limit identifying the respondent. When surveys were completed, the data were tabulated by the researcher which could have introduced the possibility of bias. Data were entered and analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) once the surveys were completed. SPSS is a widely used program for statistical analysis in research. Once the data were collected and analyzed the

information could be used to develop training to help encourage educators to be effective in serving all students in the inclusive classroom.

To analyze this information, a Point Biserial Correlation was utilized to determine if there was a significant relationship between an educator's gender and their attitude, positive or negative, in serving all students in the inclusive environment. An Independent Samples *t*-test was run on those same variables to determine if a difference existed. A Spearman's Correlation was run to determine if there was a significant relationship between the groups of experience and an educators' attitude, positive or negative, in serving all students in the inclusive environment. An Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was then utilized to determine if there was a difference between those same variables. A Pearson's Coefficient Correlation was utilized to determine if there was a significant relationship based on the amount of college (or higher) courses completed in special education and an educators' attitude, positive or negative, in serving all students in the inclusive environment.

During this study, interviews were conducted for data collection. Permission from each participant was granted to record the interviews via Zoom. The interviews were used to elicit additional details from responses in the survey. This allowed the researcher to verify an accurate understanding of participants' responses. Participants were asked to volunteer to be interviewed, after completing the survey, it was hoped at least five individuals would volunteer to take part in the interview. Questions were structured to delve deeper into participant responses to the survey to encourage a discussion of educators' concerns about inclusion and the supports they feel is necessary. This enabled participants to share their personal experiences and opinions regarding the inclusion of children with disabilities in the general education classroom. The list of interview questions are as follows:

1. What concerns you about having to implement a more inclusive environment?
2. What training do you feel you need to be more effective in an inclusive classroom?
3. What supports are needed to properly support disabled students in the inclusive classroom?
4. Why do you feel the support of your building administrator is pertinent to the success of an inclusive classroom?
5. How would you define the term disability?
6. How do you perceive your school district defines the term disability?

It is understood by this researcher, having worked many years in the education field, there is more than one perspective to support students and teachers. This study was open to exploring a multitude of perspectives. The researcher also explored the social constructivist framework and its impact on teacher perceptions. In social constructivism, individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work (Creswell & Poth, 2018). It was the intent to draw this information out of the teachers who volunteered for the interview process. By determining how and where teachers are getting an understanding of inclusion is an important aspect of this study. In today's technological society, there is an overabundance of information about inclusive practices as well as various strategies utilized throughout a district, neither of which may be appropriate nor current evidence-based practices.

A critical theory and pragmatic approach were undertaken in interpreting the data. A logical approach was utilized in comparing the findings in this study to the deficit and human capability theories available on inclusion. Once the data were collected and reviewed, it was determined whether the educators in the study were aligned with the human capability theory or deficit theory. After it was determined which theory most educators were aligned, a process can

be initiated to develop appropriate professional development to foster the human capability theory to support inclusive education.

The findings from the survey will be reported in two parts: (1) attitudes, beliefs, and opinions about inclusion; and (2) areas of concern for educators. Tables will be utilized to depict the survey results. Interview questions were detailed in this section and a sample of answers provided. After receiving the completed surveys, data were immediately analyzed and coded. Data from the surveys was compiled into tables and then depicted graphically to give a visual representation of the results. Shortly after interviews were completed, they were transcribed, coded, and categorized into themes. The transcribed document was uploaded to qualitative data analysis software (QDA Miner™), where data were coded and broken down into emergent themes. The interview data were then presented in tables to display the themes and secondary codes that developed. Creswell and Poth (2018) noted, “the process of coding is central to qualitative research and involves making sense of the text collected from interview, observations, and documents” (p. 190). In making sense of the data, the researcher sought out peer feedback on the early data interpretations to avoid any bias (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In detailing the results of this study, connections were made with related research.

Research Design

The study utilized a mixed methods research approach. The quantitative part was set up as a nonexperimental survey design utilizing the comparative research approach. This design was utilized to explore the independent variables of gender, experience, and the amount of special education courses completed by an educator and the impact that has on the dependent variable and the development of an inclusive environment within a particular school district.

This study utilized a potential sample of up to 1000 educators from three separate districts in Northeast Tennessee. It was anticipated a total sample of up 475-550 educators would choose to participate from all three districts, with at least 75-100 from each educational level. A diverse sample from all levels (elementary, middle, and high) was sought in order have a representative sample to generalize to the entire district. This type of design led to the data analysis chosen to determine if there is a significant relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variables.

The qualitative aspect of this research study included open-ended questions added to the survey and included interviews. This research was conducted from the axiological paradigm, as described by Creswell and Poth (2018), where inquirers admit the value-laden nature of the study and actively report their values and biases as well as the value-laden nature of information gathered from the field. This researcher recognized the value of providing students the opportunity to be educated with their average age peers, as a former special education teacher for 20 years. This researcher journaled throughout this study to reflect on the research process to be conscious of potential bias. A record of a researcher's work can assist in taking stock of biases, feelings, and thoughts, to understand how these may be influencing the research (Watt, 2007). The research incorporated pragmatism for interpretation using multiple methods of data collection to best answer the research questions by focusing on the outcomes of the research (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

This chapter has explained the methods used in this mixed methods study of the attitudes and perceptions of educators working with students with disabilities in the inclusive environment. Utilizing the ATTAS-mm with additional open-ended questions, as well as interviews, will give a clearer understanding of the mindset of educators working with students

with disabilities in the three chosen school districts. The next chapter presents the results obtained with those methods in order to determine if the data correlates with the current research.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Introduction

This results section includes a description of the findings in words, tables, and figures. The purpose of this study was to explore educator attitudes and perceptions of students with disabilities (SWD) in the inclusive classroom. The data collected can be used to determine the theoretical perspective of educators and assist in developing the appropriate steps to transition a school district to a more inclusive environment when serving disabled students.

Statement of the Problem

According to Odongo and Davidson (2016), the attitudes, perceptions, and concerns of teachers influence their commitment to the implementation and success of inclusive practices. As noted by Zaretsky (2005), teachers with a clear understanding of their perspectives toward inclusion are better able to establish classrooms with full inclusion and provide students with disabilities an education equal to that of their peers. The successful education of all students requires everyone within schools to make changes, to not only the way students are taught, but how they are perceived as successful learners (Pearman et al., 1992). Assessing how educators in a school district perceive disabled students is instrumental in the implementation of evidence-based inclusive practices.

Review of the Methodology

Permission was received from three northeast Tennessee school districts to administer the survey instrument. An application was made to receive approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB), and it was granted (Appendix D). The ATTAS-mm was input into Qualtrics, and a link was provided for easy access for participants. Permission was received from the author of the ATTAS-mm to make minor modifications to meet the specific needs of this research study (Appendix B). District administrators were emailed a document to copy and paste to send to all educators inviting them to participate in the survey. Participants were asked to include their name, email, and phone number if they were interested in participating in the interview portion of the study. District administrators were sent an email every Monday for two weeks prompting them to send out the invitation to educators to participate in the research. The survey was originally slated to be open for two weeks but was extended another three days until the end of the week to elicit more responses. Participation was limited in the first 10-12 days and the decision was made to extend the open period another few days to encourage participation.

Quantitative Summary of the Results

There was a total of 66 educators in three Northeast Tennessee school districts who completed the ATTAS-mm. A total of 17 participants chose multiple responses on the Likert scale questions. This caused a coding problem with the Likert scale questions which was attributed to how it was input into Qualtrics. In consultation with the Chair and Methodologist, the decision was made to average those responses that had more than one selection in an effort to correctly identify the participant's choice. One participant had selected all Likert scale choices,

but later indicated on one of the open-ended questions their desired response. This response was corrected since the participant identified the item they had intended to select.

Reliability measures whether an instrument can be interpreted consistently across different administrations (Field, 2013). The survey used in this study, the ATTAS-mm (see Appendix C), was utilized with permission from the author (see Appendix B) who reported an overall Cronbach's alpha of $\alpha = .833$ for the nine Likert scale questions. According to Gliner et al. (2017), a reliable alpha should be above .70, with greater than .90 being considered high. The survey was employed to measure the overall scale construct and then three subscales. The overall scale construct measured educator's attitude level toward teaching all students and revealed an alpha of $\alpha = .854$, which indicated a strong internal consistency (see Table 1).

The first subscale of the ATTAS-mm was used to examine educator attitudes toward believing all students can succeed in general education classrooms. The reported Cronbach alpha for the first subscale by Gregory and Noto (2012) was $\alpha = .720$, which included the first three Likert scale questions. The reliability of the first subscale indicated an alpha of $\alpha = .794$ for questions one, two, and three (see Table 1).

The second subscale of the ATTAS-mm was used to examine educator attitudes toward developing personal and professional relationships. The reported Cronbach alpha for the second subscale by Gregory and Noto (2012) was $\alpha = .928$, which included the next three Likert scale questions. The second subscale indicated an alpha of $\alpha = .749$ for questions four, five, and six (see Table 1).

The third subscale of the ATTAS-mm was used to examine educator attitudes toward creating an accepting environment for all students to learn. The reported Cronbach alpha for the third subscale noted by Gregory and Noto (2012) was $\alpha = .837$, which included the last three

Likert scale questions. The third subscale indicated an alpha of $\alpha = .785$ for questions seven, eight, and nine (see Table 1).

Table 1
Reliability Statistics for the Administration of ATTAS-mm

	Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
Full Scale	0.854	0.863	9
1st Subscale	0.794	0.795	3
2nd Subscale	0.749	0.751	3
3rd Subscale	0.785	0.826	3

A point-biserial correlation was run on the first research question to determine if there is a significant relationship between gender and an educators' attitude, positive or negative, toward teaching all students in the inclusive classroom. The assumption of normality was not violated as evidenced by the Shapiro-Wilk test when $p > .05$. The variables male and female were found to be normally distributed, males $p = .628$ and females $p = .158$ as illustrated in Figure 4.1. It was found in the data there was a significant correlation between educator gender and their attitude level toward teaching all students $r_{pb}(64) = -.247, p = .045$ (see Table 2). The results indicated a significant relationship between females and a positive attitude toward teaching all students.

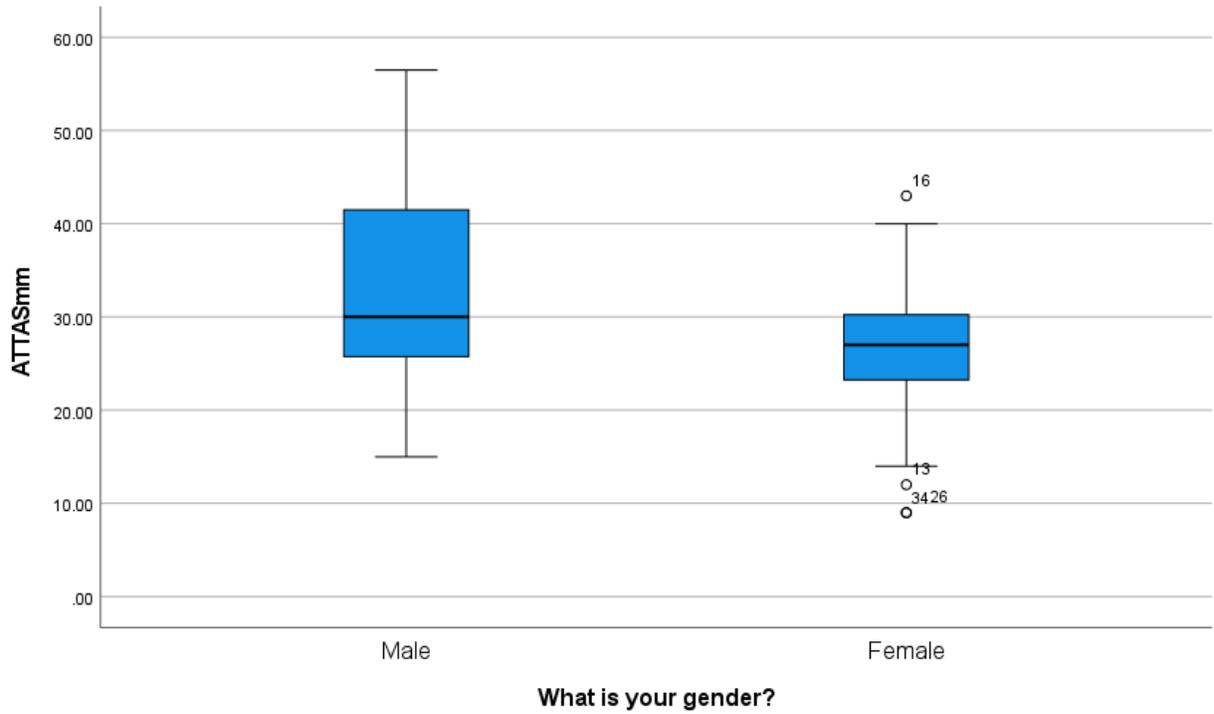


Figure 4.1. Box and Whisker Plot of ATTAS-mm by Gender

Table 2

Point-Biserial Correlation for ATTAS-mm by Gender

		What is your gender?	ATTASmm
What is your gender?	Pearson Correlation	1	-.247*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.045
	N	66	66
ATTASmm	Pearson Correlation	-.247*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.045	
	N	66	66

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

An independent samples *t*-test is used to determine if a difference exists between the means of two independent groups on a continuous dependent variable (Field, 2013). A *t*-test was run to address sub research question 1a to determine if there was a difference between male and female educator's and their attitude, positive or negative, toward teaching all students. Each level of gender was normally distributed, as assessed by Shapiro-Wilk's test ($p > .05$). The assumption of homogeneity of variances was violated, as assessed by Levene's test for equality of variances ($p = .007$). There were 11 male and 55 female participants in this sample. The mean of having a positive attitude toward teaching all students appears lower in female educators ($M = 26.58, SD = 7.10$) than male educators ($M = 32.14, SD = 12.73$) (see Table 3). The female mean score on the full-scale ATTAS-mm was 5.56, 95% CI [.12 to 10.99] lower than the male mean. After conducting an independent samples *t*-test, the data indicated there was not a statistical significance in mean attitudes towards teaching all students between males and females, $t(11.275) = 1.405, p = .187$.

Table 3
Group Statistics for ATTAS-mm by Gender

		Cases					
		Valid		Missing		Total	
What is your gender?		N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
ATTASmm	Male	11	100.0%	0	0.0%	11	100.0%
	Female	55	100.0%	0	0.0%	55	100.0%

A Spearman's Rank Order Correlation was conducted for the second research question to assess if a relationship exists between the amount of experience an educator has in the profession

and their attitude, positive or negative, toward teaching all students. A Spearman's correlation coefficient is a nonparametric statistic based on ranked data and can be useful to minimize the effects of violations of assumptions or extreme scores (Field, 2013). Preliminary analysis showed the relationship to be monotonic, based on the visual evidence indicated by a scatterplot. The data indicated that there was no significant correlation between educator experience and an educator's attitude, positive or negative, toward teaching all students, $r_s(64) = .077, p = .539$ (see Table 4).

Table 4
Spearman's Correlations of ATTAS-mm by Years of Educator Experience

			How many years of experience do you have as an educator?	ATTASm m
Spearman's rho	How many years of experience do you have as an educator?	Correlation	1.000	.077
		Coefficient		
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.539
		N	66	66
	ATTASmm	Correlation	.077	1.000
		Coefficient		
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.539	.
		N	66	66

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted for sub research question 2a to determine if an educator's attitude, positive or negative, toward teaching all students was different for groups with different amounts of experience. The one-way ANOVA compares

several means, when those means have come from different groups of people (Field, 2013).

Participants were classified into five ordinal groups: 0-4 years (n=6), 5-9 years (n=13), 10-14 years (n=14), 15-19 years (n=10), and 20 years or more (n=23) (see Figure 4.2).

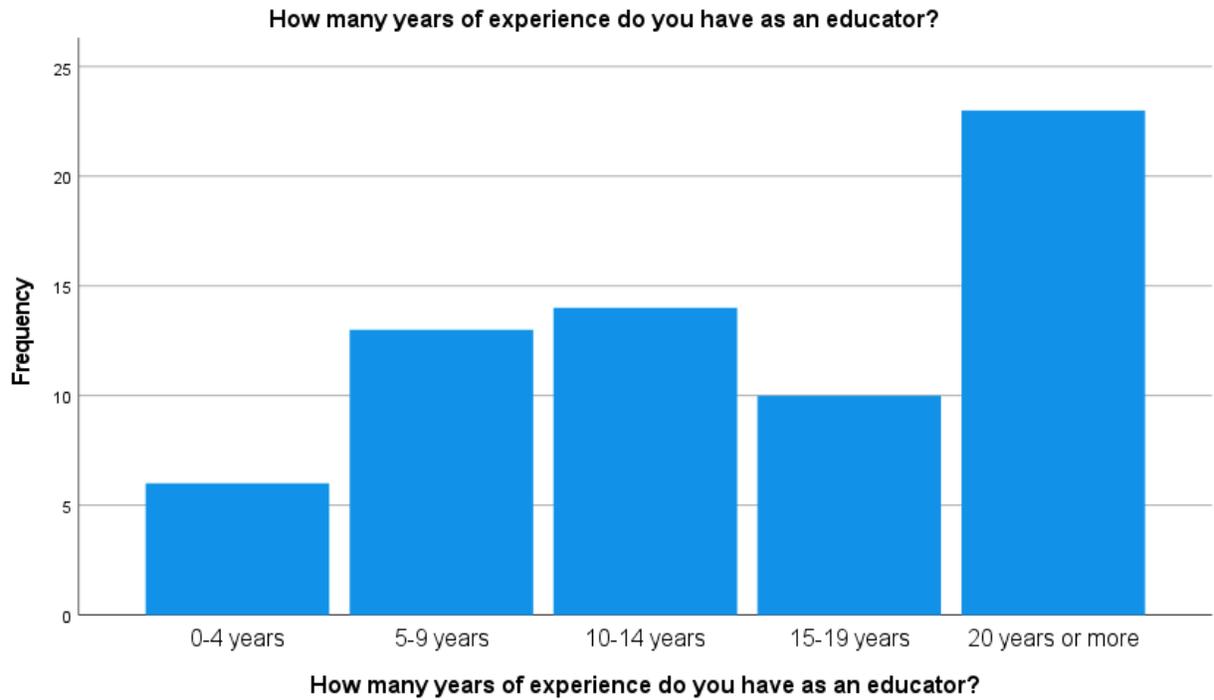


Figure 4.2. Educator Experience by Years

Next, a test for homogeneity of variance was completed using Levene's test (see Table 5). Since the significance threshold for Levene's test is greater than .05 ($p = .78$) the homogeneity of variance has been met. When the data has met the assumption of homogeneity of variances, the data can be analyzed using the one-way ANOVA (Field, 2013).

Table 5

Tests of Homogeneity of Variances of ATTAS-mm by Years of Educator Experience

		Levene	df1	df2	Sig.
		Statistic			
ATTASm	Based on Mean	.445	4	61	.776
m	Based on Median	.373	4	61	.827
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	.373	4	52.182	.827
	Based on trimmed mean	.429	4	61	.787

In the table labeled ANOVA of ATTAS-mm (see Table 6) the value in the column labelled *Sig.* is greater than .05 which indicates the groups are similar. Therefore, there are no differences between educator attitudes towards educating all students and the different groups of educator’s experience, $F(3,61) = .468, p = .759$.

Table 6

ANOVA of ATTAS-mm by Years of Educator Experience

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	137.539	4	34.385	.468	.759
Within Groups	4485.989	61	73.541		
Total	4623.527	65			

A Pearson Product-Moment Correlation was used for research question three because it provides an indication of strength of the linear relationship between two continuous variables (Gliner et al., 2017). Preliminary analyses showed the relationship to be linear with both

variables normally distributed, as assessed by Shapiro-Wilk's test ($p > .05$), and there were no outliers. The correlation was run to assess the relationship between the number of college (or higher) courses completed in special education and an educator's attitude, positive or negative, toward teaching all students. The analysis of the data on the third research question indicated there was no statistically significant relationship found between the number of college (or higher) courses completed in special education and having a positive or negative attitude toward teaching all students: $r(64) = -.14$, $p = .265$ (see Table 7). The closer to zero an r value is, indicates no association. The data indicated there was no statistically significant relationship between these variables since $p > .05$.

Table 7

Pearson's Correlation of ATTAS-mm by the Amount of College (or higher) Courses Completed in Special Education

		How many college (or higher) courses have you completed in special education?	ATTASmm
How many college (or higher) courses have you completed in special education?	Pearson Correlation	1	-.139
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.265
	N	66	66
ATTASmm	Pearson Correlation	-.139	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.265	
	N	66	66

A Spearman's rank order correlation was run next to further assess the relationship between an educator's attitude, positive or negative, toward teaching all students and how many

college (or higher) courses completed in special education. Preliminary analysis showed the relationship to be monotonic, based on the visual evidence indicated by a scatterplot. It was found that there was no significant correlation between how many college (or higher) courses in special education completed and an educator’s attitude, positive or negative, toward teaching all students, $r_s(64) = -.162, p = .195$ (see Table 8). These results further confirm the results found from running Pearson’s Correlation on these variables.

Table 8

Spearman’s Correlations of ATTAS-mm by the Amount of College (or higher) Courses Completed in Special Education

			How many college (or higher) courses have you completed in special education?	ATTASmm
Spearman's rho	How many college (or higher) courses have you completed in special education?	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.162
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.195
		N	66	66
	ATTASmm	Correlation Coefficient	-.162	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.195	.
		N	66	66

Qualitative Summary of the Results

The qualitative component of the study consisted of two parts, the first part was the interview portion, and the second part consisted of open-ended questions added to the survey. Educators volunteered for the interview portion by indicating their willingness to participate on one of the open-ended survey questions. Seven individuals indicated a willingness to take part in the interview portion of the study, but only six participated. Each participant was asked the following interview questions:

1. What concerns you about having to implement a more inclusive environment?
2. What training do you feel you need to be more effective in an inclusive classroom?
3. What supports are needed to properly support disabled students in the inclusive classroom?
4. Why do you feel the support of your building administrator is pertinent to the success of an inclusive classroom?
5. How would you define the term disability?
6. How do you perceive your school district defines the term disability?

Once the interviews were completed, they were transcribed and uploaded into QDA Miner™ to code. The process of coding is central to qualitative research in making sense of the text collected (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The coding report identified four emergent themes from the six questions that were asked educators. The four primary themes that emerged from the coding report were concerns, training, supports, and mindset.

Research question four asked what concerns an educator had in implementing a more inclusive environment. The data were sorted under the theme concerns and was broken down into six secondary codes: concern add staff, concern money related, concern nondisabled students, concern disabled students, pace/ standards, and behavioral concerns. The first secondary code dealt with educator concern about not having additional staff in the classroom, such as a paraprofessional or a special education teacher to assist in serving all students in the

inclusive classroom. Participants' noted concerns about the short period of time that additional staff are in the inclusive classroom and the frustration of waiting on getting another special education teacher hired due to shortages in the profession. The following are examples from the eight cases that came under the secondary code of concern, add staff (see Table 9).

Table 9
Concern Additional Staff Secondary Code and Participant Responses

Code	Case	<i>Text</i>
Concern Add Staff	Participant #1	"while we wait on another sped teacher because there's such a shortage"
Concern Add Staff	Participant #4	"I have an aide who comes in for 45 minutes. But that's working with three different students. So, I mean, they're not going to be pulled up to where they need to be with that little bit of support"
Concern Add Staff	Participant #6	"That's when, you know, I don't know that there's enough training sometimes, because there's no better resource than people, in my opinion."

The second secondary code dealt with concerns related to money, where educators alluded to concerns regarding the school district not providing the finances to provide the resources, they perceive are needed to implement an inclusive classroom. Participants' noted shortages, and issues related to budget shortcomings leading to limited resources. There were nine cases that emerged under this secondary code with the following examples of participant responses listed (see Table 10).

Table 10

Concern Money Related Secondary Code and Participant Responses

Code	Case	Text
Concern Money Related	Participant #1	"if we had the resources, while we wait on another sped teacher because there's such a shortage"
Concern Money Related	Participant #5	"And my big thing was budget, we, I mean, it just drives me nuts how the almighty budget runs everything in the school system"
Concern Money Related	Participant #5	"So, you know, if we had more people, if we had now thankfully, you know, we're pretty good about if I say to the special ed department, I think I need this, you know, item or resource for my students, they usually get it to me. But you know, personnel really, so a lot of it comes down to budget, we just need more funding, we need to be fully funded"
Concern Money Related	Participant #6	"If there's not an assistant, because sometimes, you know, resources are limited"

The third secondary code dealt with concerns of nondisabled students, where educators mentioned their concerns about nondisabled students being distracted by disabled students or not being challenged properly in an inclusive classroom. Participant #4 asked the rhetorical question “What about those highfliers” referencing nondisabled students with average to above average ability, wondering if they will be properly challenged in the inclusive classroom. There were three cases that emerged in the data with examples of participant responses related to this secondary code listed below (see Table 11).

Table 11

Concern Nondisabled Students Secondary Code and Participant Responses

Code	Case	<i>Text</i>
Concern Nondisabled Students	Participant #4	"What about those highfliers that we're also supposed to be growing?"
Concern Nondisabled Students	Participant #6	"So, when I see it becoming a problem is when the at large population, their education is impacted, by disruptions that occur from the exceptional child"

The fourth secondary code dealt with concerns of disabled students, where educators voiced their concerns about disabled students not receiving the support they need. There was a total of ten cases that emerged in the data under this category. Participants' noted, "being at a loss to help everybody" alluding to not being able to properly accommodate for disabled students in the inclusive classroom. One participant also asked a rhetorical question "what is going to happen when they go to high school and are still reading at a first-grade level" alluding to a disabled student not achieving the same level of progress as nondisabled students. Examples of participant responses related to this secondary code are listed below (see Table 12).

Table 12

Concern Disabled Students Secondary Code and Participant Responses

Code	Case	Text
Concern Disabled Students	Participant #1	"not forgetting about the students who are below grade level"
Concern Disabled Students	Participant #4	"we're just at a loss of how to help everybody"
Concern Disabled Students	Participant #4	"What is going to happen when they go to high school, and they are still reading and they're reading at a first-grade level? And they're still put in the regular ed classroom? Like, what is that kid, what is that child going to do when they graduate from high school? And those support school supports are gone"
Concern Disabled Students	Participant #6	"The areas where I have concern is when it impacts what is best for that student who is who has the IEP, or who has the 504"

The fifth secondary code dealt with concerns of pace/standards, where educators voiced their concerns about not being able to maintain a challenging pace to ensure meeting all the state standards. Participant #3 noted how “overwhelming” it is to have a disabled child in the general education classroom because of the “different things they have to focus on” making it difficult to maintain a pace to meet the standards. There was a total of eight cases that emerged in the data under this secondary code with examples of participant responses listed below (see Table 13).

Table 13

Pace/Standards Secondary Code and Participant Responses

Code	Case	Text
Pace/Standards	Participant #1	"I think the hardest thing, or the greatest concern is always being able to keep the pace that's required for the state standards and for preparation for state assessments"
Pace/Standards	Participant #3	"But it's like, I feel like it's very overwhelming to have this child in your classroom that has all these different things that they have to focus on"
Pace/Standards	Participant #4	"The difficult part I have is when, like, right now I'm teaching first grade, and I have kids come in with IEP s, who can't write their name, can't count to 10, um, their skills are so far behind"

The sixth secondary code dealt with behavioral concerns educators voiced about students with disabilities misbehaving in the inclusive classroom. Participants' referenced "behavioral IEP's" how it becomes a problem for the rest of the class because of disruptions from the "exceptional child". An Individualized Education Plan (IEP) is the contractual document created for a student certified in special education. There were two cases that emerged in the data under this category with examples of participant responses related to this secondary code listed below (see Table 14).

Table 14

Behavioral Concerns Secondary Code and Participant Responses

Code	Case	Text
Behavioral Concerns	Participant #4	"And then it's also we have a lot of behavioral IEP's. And to see, to see aids being kicked and bitten and screamed at in the hall on a daily basis."
Behavioral Concerns	Participant #6	"So, when I see it becoming a problem is when the at large population, their education is impacted, by disruptions that occur from the exceptional child"

Research question five asked what incentives do educators' perceive could positively influence their attitudes and perceptions of serving all students in the inclusive classroom. This question was not directly asked but could be inferred from participant responses. Participants seem to allude to training and supports as incentives that could positively influence educator attitudes in serving all students in the inclusive classroom.

The second emergent theme, training, was broken down into three secondary codes of inclusive, differentiation, and coteaching. The first secondary code of inclusive training indicated when educators referenced a need for training to better serve students with disabilities in the inclusive classroom. Participants' noted how they want to help students with disabilities, but do not feel adequately prepared. Educators' referenced they do not feel they have the appropriate "tools in their toolbox" to serve students in a nontraditional way. There was a total of eight cases that emerged in the data under this category with examples of participant responses related to this secondary code listed below (See Table 15).

Table 15

Inclusive Training Secondary Code and Participant Responses

Code	Case	Text
Inclusive	Participant #1	"That's hard. As an English teacher, I'm overthinking that probably. It would be something that impedes your ability to do something in what's considered a traditional means or by traditional means, I guess"
Inclusive	Participant #3	"But they do want to help they want to they're worried about these kids, and they want to provide that, but maybe it could be done in new and different ways that maybe they haven't thought of that's not so stressful"
Inclusive	Participant #4	"And how do we help everybody? in between?"
Inclusive	Participant #5	"They don't have the tools in their toolbox that they need to do their job. So, there's still some sort of a gap there between what we're asking teachers to do what they feel like they're capable of doing."

The next secondary code under training was differentiation. This is when educators indicated a specific type of training to differentiate instruction to meet the needs of all students. There was a total of sixteen cases that emerged in the data under this category. Participants' noted needing "some more new ideas, and ways to implement things" to better serve all students in the classroom. There was a total of 15 cases coded under differentiation with examples of participant responses related to this secondary code listed (see Table 16).

Table 16

Differentiation Training Secondary Code and Participant Responses

Code	Case	Text
Differentiation	Participant #2	"working on teachers and helping with differentiating instruction and, you know, kind of seeing where kids are just some ideas"
Differentiation	Participant #3	"So, I guess for me, it's just maybe just some more new ideas, and ways to implement things that are more teacher based, that I want to figure out how to help them the most, because I don't want like, I don't want to put any more stress on them. But I want to, maybe I can do things that are more functional for academics, you know, and I know that I teach discrete skills, and they're supposed to carry them over into the classroom."

The third secondary code under the theme of training was coteaching. This is when educators indicated coteaching as a strategy to meet the needs of all students. Participants' noted the need for training on "how they can work together" to better serve the students in their classroom. There was a total of seven cases that emerged in the data under this category with examples of participant responses related to this secondary code listed (see Table 17).

Table 17

Coteaching Training Secondary Code and Participant Responses

Code	Case	Text
Coteaching	Participant #1	"I think the hardest thing is actually knowing how to properly utilize a co teacher when you do have that available to you. So, I would say I have the least training in that portion of it"
Coteaching	Participant #3	"So, I feel like maybe like a training to teachers and SLPs on how they can work together"
Coteaching	Participant #6	"will say that one of the best tools, in my opinion, are exceptional, special education, teachers and assistants, when you have an exceptional Special Ed assistant, the flow of the class goes"

The third emergent theme uncovered in the data were supports, which alludes to the supports educators believe would assist them in successfully implementing an inclusive classroom. This theme was broken down into two secondary codes which included class size and additional staff. The first secondary code under supports was class size where educators noted a smaller class would be more conducive to meeting the needs of all students in an inclusive classroom. There were two cases that emerged in the data under this category by only one participant with the examples of the participant responses related to this secondary code listed (see Table 18).

Table 18

Class Size Secondary Code and Participant Responses

Code	Case	<i>Text</i>
Class Size	Participant #1	"smaller class sizes needed"
Class Size	Participant #1	"determines everything from class size"

The next secondary code under the theme of supports was administrative support, where educators noted the support of the building principal or assistant principal would assist them in implementing an inclusive classroom. Educators noted the importance of having administrative support to get “classroom support for valued educational time” as well as believing that any meaningful change is going to come from the top in a “trickle down” type of manner. There were sixteen cases that emerged in the data under this category with examples of participant responses related to this secondary code listed (see Table 19).

Table 19

Administration Secondary Code and Participant Responses

Code	Case	<i>Text</i>
Admin	Participant #1	"they make so many decisions that affect your daily life"
Admin	Participant #2	"So, it's important that they support the classroom and making sure you've got the support in there and valued educational time where you have that support, because a lot of times, like, we'll all be given a person to help"
Admin	Participant #1	"that's like the main person, I mean, it's going to be trickled down"

The third secondary code under the theme of supports was additional staff where educators noted the support of additional staff in the classroom, such as a paraprofessional or special education teacher, in implementing an inclusive classroom. Participants noted the need to have “just extra people to help” in supporting all students in the classroom. They also noted how the “flow of the class goes smoother” with the additional staff member in the classroom. There were fifteen cases that emerged in the data under this category with examples of participant responses related to this secondary code listed (see Table 20).

Table 20
Additional Staff Secondary Code and Participant Responses

Code	Case	<i>Text</i>
Additional Staff	Participant #4	"I hate saying that, but a lot of is just extra people to help"
Additional Staff	Participant #5	"So, I feel like, to be able to do like to be able to support them in inclusive environments, I really feel like I need more. I wish I could clone myself, basically."
Additional Staff	Participant #6	" I will say that one of the best tools, in my opinion, are exceptional, special education, teachers and assistants, when you have an exceptional Special Ed assistant, the flow of the class goes smoother."

Research questions six asked educators’ their definition of disability and research question seven asked how they perceived their district defines the term disability. These two research questions were intended to provide insight into an educator’s mindset and the perceived mindset of their district. The fourth emergent theme uncovered from the data were mindset. This theme alludes to the perceived mindset of participants and fellow colleagues. Based on the

responses, it appears they are aligned with either the human capability theory, a proinclusive mindset or deficit theory, a mindset based on the old medical model of segregating students with disabilities. The two secondary codes were named for each of these theories under this theme.

The first secondary code under human capability theory is where educators noted in their responses a proinclusive mindset. Participant #3 noted how they “wish everybody could see that it’s beneficial for everyone” when describing their experience of an inclusive classroom. Participant #5 noted how much progress has been made to include students with disabilities but acknowledged that “we’re still fighting that battle” to include all students. There were seventeen cases that emerged in the data under this category with examples of participant responses related to this secondary code listed (see Table 21).

Table 21

Human Capability Theory Secondary Code and Participant Responses

Code	Case	<i>Text</i>
Human Capability	Participant #3	"So, I'm, I'm trying to figure out the best way to be more inclusive in the actual settings so that I can do like more functional stuff, and find out, you know, exactly how they are in the classroom"
Human Capability	Participant #3	"I wish everybody could see that it's beneficial for everyone."
Human Capability	Participant #4	"I am very much pro inclusion. Like really, at this point, um, and so for us who love our kids and mean we welcome them in"
Human Capability	Participant #5	"Because it feels like we've made so much progress with inclusion, but we still have so far to go. You know, we're still fighting that battle of those" are your students, these are my students."
Human Capability	Participant #6	"But disabilities sometimes can be limited by your expectations, and the kids grit"

The next secondary code under the theme of mindset was deficit theory. This is where educators noted in their responses a mindset aligned with the old medical model of separating students to remediate their deficits. Participant #3 noted how in their school the model is “based off of old methods” alluding to separating students with disabilities from being with their same age peers in the general education classroom. Participant #4 questioned why they are “not putting them together in class where the aid can meet their needs” alluding to serving those students in a self-contained special education classroom. There were 21 cases that emerged in the data under this category with examples of participant responses related to this secondary code listed (see Table 22).

Table 22
Deficit Theory Secondary Code and Participant Responses

Code	Case	<i>Text</i>
Deficit Theory	Participant #2	"Well, any student who tests lower than a certain baseline is what they do"
Deficit Theory	Participant #3	"it's so based off of old methods, and they do things the same way that they've always been done".
Deficit Theory	Participant #4	"Why are we then placing like an aid with them and not putting them together in a class where that aid could be meeting all their needs together like are certified teacher because right now, my students do get pullout time they have 45 minutes of pullout time"

Summary of Triangulated Survey Results

The second part of the qualitative component of the study consisted of open-ended questions added to the survey. There were two open-ended questions added to the survey in which 49 of the 66 participants who completed the survey chose to answer. The purpose of the additional open-ended questions were to delve deeper into participants attitudes and perceptions as emergent themes about serving all students in the inclusive classroom. The two open-ended questions were as follows:

1. Please describe in detail an effective classroom environment.
2. Describe the types of behavior you would expect from an educator teaching in an inclusive classroom.

There were three themes in the data that emerged from these two questions. Those themes were titled inclusive strategies, effective classroom, and educator behavior.

According to Patton (2015), mixed methods studies are valued as more credible because they provide cross data consistency checks. The quantitative data were included in this part of the analysis to provide mixed methods triangulation. The raw score and standard deviation participants' received on the survey were added to the tables with the examples of open-ended responses. The raw score was labeled on the tables as ATTAS-mm Raw Score, and the standard deviation was labeled as ATTAS-mm z-score. The data gave further evidence of where an educator was, in terms of their attitude, positive or negative, towards serving all students. The descriptive statistics indicate a $M = 27.50$ and $SD = 8.43$. The lower the raw score on the ATTAS-mm indicates a participant is more likely to have a positive attitude towards serving all students.

The first emergent theme, inclusive strategies, had five secondary codes that included collaborative learning, Universal Design for Learning (UDL)/student centered, differentiation,

coteaching, and peer tutor/mentors. The first secondary code, collaborative learning referred to when educators noted “cooperative learning” and a classroom that “demonstrates cooperation”. Participants under this secondary code are referring to classrooms that encourage students to work collaboratively where students can learn from each other. There were three cases that emerged in the data under this category with all examples of participant responses related to this secondary code listed (see Table 23). All participants listed had an ATTAS-mm raw score close to the mean which along with their responses provides further evidence of the consistency of these two data sets.

Table 23

Collaborative Learning Secondary Code with Participant Responses, ATTAS-mm Raw and z-Scores

Code	Case	ATTAS-mm Raw Score	ATTAS-mm Z-Score	<i>Text</i>
Collaborative Learning	Case #5	27	-0.06	"cooperative learning"
Collaborative Learning	Case #17	28	0.06	"opportunities for collaboration"
Collaborative Learning	Case #35	25.5	-0.24	"A classroom where students are engaged, on-task and demonstrate cooperation."

The second secondary code under inclusive strategies was UDL/student centered. This secondary code refers to universal design which allows for student choice and a voice, where teachers need to provide clear objectives and work with students to select ways to learn, engage, and demonstrate mastery of those objectives (Murawski & Scott, 2019). This model allows

students to choose how they want to meet a particular standard and is utilized to accommodate all students. Participants' noted under this secondary code "using universal design to provide support to all students" and "UDL strategies should be used in multiple ways to complete assignments". Both participant responses along with their raw score and z-score provide further evidence of the consistency between the qualitative and quantitative data sets. There was a total of 12 cases that emerged in the data under this secondary code with examples of participant responses listed (see Table 24).

Table 24

UDL/Student Centered Secondary Code with Participant Responses, ATTAS-mm Raw and z-Scores

Code	Case	ATTAS-mm Raw Score	ATTAS-mm Z-Score	Text
UDL/Student Centered	Case #23	29	0.18	"Using universal design to provide support to all students and give opportunities for all different learning styles"
UDL/Student Centered	Case #45	15	-1.48	"UDL strategies should be used, multiple ways to complete an assignment (by hand, digitally, orally, etc.), I do we do you do modeling"
UDL/Student Centered	Case #50	23.50	-0.47	"Effective classrooms are those in which student learning is at the center of all decisions, activities, and lessons. Students learn from the teacher, each other, and independently."

The third secondary code under inclusive strategies was differentiation. Teachers who differentiate believe that every student is unique, with different learning styles and preferences

(Algozzine & Anderson, 2007). Educators that differentiate make the necessary accommodations for all students to learn based on their specific needs. Participants’ noted under this secondary code “every lesson should have differentiation as well as scaffolding” alluding to the fact that successful educators must differentiate instruction in the inclusive classroom. The participant’s response in Case #14 along with a z-score of -0.65 from the survey provides further evidence of the consistency of these two data sets. There was a total of ten cases that emerged in the data under this secondary code with examples of participant responses listed (see Table 25).

Table 25

Differentiation Secondary Code with Participant Responses, ATTAS-mm Raw and z-Scores

Code	Case	ATTAS-mm Raw Score	ATTAS-mm Z-Score	Text
Differentiation	Case #3	25	-0.3	“An educator teaching in an inclusive classroom knows how to differentiate for all students.”
Differentiation	Case #14	22	-0.65	“Every lesson should have differentiation as well as scaffolding embedded in it which benefits all students.”
Differentiation	Case #50	23.50	-0.47	“Teachers must also exude patience and determination as lesson objectives may need to be taught multiple times or different ways.”

The fourth secondary code under inclusive strategies that emerged in the data were coteaching. Coteaching is when two or more educators co-plan, co-instruct, and co-assess (Murawski & Scott, 2019). Participants’ noted under this secondary code the need for educators to work cooperatively in meeting the needs of all students. It was noted that “regular and special

education teachers share responsibilities” in this model. Each participant response along with their raw score and z-score provided further evidence of the consistency between the qualitative and quantitative data sets. There was a total of four cases coded under this secondary code with participant examples listed (see Table 26).

Table 26

Coteaching Secondary Code with Participant Responses, ATTAS-mm Raw and z-Scores

Code	Case	ATTAS-mm Raw Score	ATTAS-mm Z-Score	Text
Coteaching	Case #13	26	-0.18	“Willingness to coteach and co-plan with general education teacher. Teacher actively supports students with disabilities while gen ed teacher delivers direct instruction.”
Coteaching	Case #21	9	-2.19	“Time for small group instruction/work for reteaching/help with concepts when needed where the regular and special ed teacher share responsibilities.”

The fifth secondary code under inclusive strategies that emerged in the data were peer tutors/mentors. Peer tutors/mentors are same age peers that support students with disabilities in the inclusive classroom. Participants’ noted under this secondary code when “students are grouped in heterogenous groups, the higher achieving students can help the lower achieving students”. Educators’ noted under this model students work together to achieve lesson objectives. The examples of open-ended participant responses along with their raw score and z-

score provide further evidence of the consistency of these two data sets. There was a total of seven cases coded under this secondary code with participant examples listed (see Table 27).

Table 27

Peer Tutor/Mentor Secondary Code with Participant Responses, ATTAS-mm Raw and z-Scores

Code	Case	ATTAS-mm Raw Score	ATTAS-mm Z-Score	Text
Peer Tutor/Mentors	Case #16	25.50	-0.24	"I am in favor of quite a bit of teamwork and peer tutoring when possible."
Peer Tutor/Mentors	Case #28	9	-2.19	"Students are grouped in heterogenous groups so that higher achieving students can help lower achieving students."
Peer Tutor/Mentors	Case #39	29	0.18	"Lessons should be given with multiple formats and should allow for small group work with peers and the teacher."

The first emergent theme, effective classroom, dealt with educator perceptions of what is an effective inclusive classroom environment. There were five secondary codes under this theme, including safe, respectful of all, equitable, disciplined, and small class size. The first secondary code safe, referred to when educators mentioned an environment that was inclusive for all learners and made each individual feel safe in the learning process. Participants under this subheading referred to a classroom environment that is an “encouraging space” where all can “share with one another” and not feel judged in the learning process. The examples of open-ended participant responses in Table 29, along with their raw score and z-score provide further evidence of the consistency of these two data sets. There were eleven cases that emerged in the

data under this category with examples of participant responses related to this subheading listed (see Table 28).

Table 28

Safe Secondary Code with Participant Responses, ATTAS-mm Raw and z-Scores

Code	Case	ATTAS-mm Raw Score	ATTAS-mm Z-Score	<i>Text</i>
Safe	Case #5	27	-0.06	"An effective classroom environment is one that allows all students to have success and failure in a safe, encouraging space."
Safe	Case #6	21.50	-0.71	"A safe classroom is a classroom where students can share with one another."
Safe	Case #47	31	0.41	"An environment that produces high quality and safe leaning for all students."

The next secondary code under the theme of effective classroom is respect for all. Educators noted the importance of all students feeling respected, valued, and welcome in the inclusive classroom. Participants referenced the need for “all students to feel respected and comfortable” in an effective classroom. The examples of open-ended participant responses in Table 30, along with their raw score and z-score provide further evidence of the consistency between the quantitative and qualitative data sets. There were nine cases that emerged in the data under this category with examples of participant responses related to this secondary code listed (see Table 29).

Table 29

Respect for All Secondary Code with Participant Responses, ATTAS-mm Raw and z-Scores

Code	Case	ATTAS-mm Raw Score	ATTAS-mm Z-Score	<i>Text</i>
Respectful of All	Case #24	29	0.18	"An effective classroom environment is one in which all students are respected and made to feel like they belong. Students know and understand the routine, so their environment is predictable."
Respectful of All	Case #28	9	-2.19	"ALL students feel respected and comfortable to ask questions, voice opinions, and seek help."
Respectful of All	Case #43	25	-0.3	"One in which all students are valued respected and cared for."
Respectful of All	Case #44	18	-1.13	"An effective classroom environment is welcoming and inviting to all students. It has a respectful culture with students showing kindness to all."

The third secondary code under the theme of effective classroom is equitable. Equitable is when inclusive opportunities to learn are made available to all with the necessary supports and accommodations for student success (Sailor et al., 2018). Educators noted the effective classroom is “where fairness is exercised”. Fairness is where students receive what they need, not necessarily receive the same thing. The examples of open-ended participant responses in Table 31, along with their raw score and z-score provide further evidence of the consistency of these two data sets. There were seventeen cases that emerged in the data under this category with examples of participant responses related to this secondary code listed (see Table 30).

Table 30

Equitable Secondary Code with Participant Responses, ATTAS-mm Raw and z-Scores

Code	Case	ATTAS-mm Raw Score	ATTAS-mm Z-Score	<i>Text</i>
Equitable	Case #3	25	-0.3	"and a place where fairness is exercised"
Equitable	Case #9	12	-1.84	"An effective classroom environment is one in which all students are welcome despite income status, disabilities, and intellect."
Equitable	Case #15	18	-1.13	"An environment where all students are valued, treated with equity, and given every opportunity to gain access to all instruction."

The fourth secondary code under the theme of an effective classroom is discipline. Educators referred to overall classroom management and the daily structure when describing an effective inclusive classroom. Participants noted under this subheading there is “great classroom management” and “discipline is enforced”. The examples of open-ended participant responses in Table 31, along with their raw scores and z-scores provide additional evidence of the consistency between the qualitative and quantitative data sets. The ATTAS-mm raw score and z-score also provide further clarification as to the statement made by the participant in Case #26. There were six cases that emerged in the data under this category with examples of participant responses related to this secondary code listed (see Table 31).

Table 31

Disciplined Secondary Code with Participant Responses, ATTAS-mm Raw and z-Scores

Code	Case	ATTAS-mm Raw Score	ATTAS-mm Z-Score	<i>Text</i>
Disciplined	Case #17	28	0.06	“Clearly communicated expectations/routines.”
Disciplined	Case #26	56.5	3.44	“One in which there is respect and discipline is enforced.”
Disciplined	Case #44	18	-1.13	“There is also great classroom management with defined expectations.”

The fifth secondary code under the theme of an effective classroom is small class size. This was a divergence in the data, since only one educator referenced a need for a smaller class size. The participant noted under this secondary code an effective inclusive classroom would have a “low student/teacher ratio.” The example of the open-ended participant response in Table 33, along with their raw score and z-score provide further evidence of the consistency of these two data sets. There was only one case that emerged in the data under this category with the participant response related to this secondary code listed (see Table 32).

Table 32

Class Size Secondary Code with Participant Responses, ATTAS-mm Raw and z-Scores

Code	Case	ATTAS-mm Raw Score	ATTAS-mm Z-Score	<i>Text</i>
Small Class Size	Case #7	40	1.48	“An effective classroom environment would have a low student/teacher ratio, like 6:1 at the most.”

The fourth emergent theme uncovered in the data were coded under educator behavior. This theme was related to the open-ended question that asked participants to describe the types of behavior they would expect from an educator teaching in an inclusive classroom. There were four secondary codes associated with this theme including, kind/loving, accommodating, mindset/human capability theory, and mindset/deficit theory.

The first secondary code under educator behavior was kind/loving. Under this secondary code participants described the ideal educator behavior within the inclusive classroom. Participants’ described patient, caring, and acceptance as ideal behaviors along with effective communication. The examples of open-ended participant responses in Table 33, along with their raw scores and z-scores provide additional evidence of the consistency between the qualitative and quantitative data sets. There was a total of ten cases that emerged in the data under this secondary code with examples listed (see Table 33).

Table 33

Kind/Loving Secondary Code with Participant Responses, ATTAS-mm Raw and z-Scores

Code	Case	ATTAS-mm Raw Score	ATTAS-mm Z-Score	Text
Kind/Loving	Case #4	21	-0.77	"I would expect a teacher to be kind, patient."
Kind/Loving	Case #30	40	1.48	"Acceptance, love, caring, respectful."
Kind/Loving	Case #47	31	0.41	"Professional, effective communication, and one who treats all students with love and respect."

The next secondary code under educator behavior was accommodating. Under this secondary code participants’ described the importance of providing the necessary accommodations in an inclusive classroom. Participants’ described an “environment that is welcoming and adaptable to all students”. They also described the need to hit on many different modalities in a lesson, such as kinesthetic and visual, to ensure all students needs are met. The examples of open-ended participant responses in Table 34, along with their raw scores and z-scores provide further evidence of the consistency of these two data sets. There was a total of 14 cases that emerged in the data under this secondary code with examples listed (see Table 34).

Table 34

Accommodating Secondary Code with Participant Responses, ATTAS-mm Raw and z-Scores

Code	Case	ATTAS-mm Raw Score	ATTAS-mm Z-Score	<i>Text</i>
Accommodating	Case #11	24	-0.42	"This includes providing accommodations for students with disabilities like guided notes or copied notes, small group activities with more one-on-one instruction, and examples or sentence starters."
Accommodating	Case #25	26	-0.18	"An environment that is welcoming and adaptable to the needs of all students."
Accommodating	Case #39	29	0.18	"There should be kinesthetic, pictorial, and modeling portions of lessons. Technology that fosters engagement and that adds to the content should also be used."

The third subheading under educator behavior was mindset/human capability theory. Under this subheading participants responses were aligned with the human capability theory which advocates all students are capable of learning and achieving success. Participants described ideal educator behavior as believing “all students have the ability to learn”. They also described an environment where "every student is accepted and supported in the pursuit of learning”. The examples of open-ended participant responses in Table 35, along with their raw score and z-score provide further evidence of the consistency of these two data sets by providing an indication of the participants mindset. There was a total of 19 cases that emerged in the data under this secondary code with examples listed (see Table 35).

Table 35

Mindset/Human Capability Theory Secondary Code with Participant Responses, ATTAS-mm Raw and z-Scores

Code	Case	ATTAS-mm Raw Score	ATTAS-mm Z-Score	<i>Text</i>
Mindset/Human Cap Theory	Case #21	9	-2.19	"High expectation for all students."
Mindset/Human Cap Theory	Case #22	25	-0.3	"One in which every student is accepted and supported in the pursuit of learning."
Mindset/Human Cap Theory	Case #27	14	-1.6	"All students have the ability to learn."
Mindset/Human Cap Theory	Case #40	29	0.18	"One in which all students feel welcome, included, special, and can be and find success."

The fourth subheading under educator behavior was mindset/deficit theory. Under this subheading participant responses were aligned with the deficit theory where the belief is that disabled students have a structural problem within themselves that requires remediation to overcome. Participants' described educator behavior where they do not expect anything from disabled students or their parents. They also alluded to working with students with disabilities as being "total frustration and exhaustion". The examples of open-ended participant responses in Table 36, along with their raw score and z-score provide additional evidence of the consistency of the qualitative and quantitative data sets and the mindset of these participants. There was a total of two cases that emerged in the data under this secondary code with each example listed (see Table 36).

Table 36

Mindset/Deficit Theory Secondary Code with Participant Responses, ATTAS-mm Raw and z-Scores

Code	Case	ATTAS-mm Raw Score	ATTAS-mm Z-Score	<i>Text</i>
Mindset/Deficit Theory	Case #7	40	1.48	“They're just going to fuss a lot and sit the kid off on their own and not expect anything from them or their parents.”
Mindset/Deficit Theory	Case #26	56.5	3.44	“Total frustration and exhaustion.”

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study was conducted to explore the relationship between educator attitudes and perceptions regarding students with disabilities in the inclusive classroom. A review of this mixed methods study will be presented along with study limitations and recommendations for future research. This chapter presents a summary of the results along with a discussion of the implications in the field.

There were seven research questions along with two sub research questions that guided this mixed methods study (see Appendix A). A total of 66 educators from three Northeast Tennessee school districts participated in the study by completing the Attitudes Towards Teaching All Students survey (ATTAS-mm). The nine item Likert scale questions were utilized to answer the three quantitative research questions. There were two open ended questions added to the survey to elicit further information from participants. Those results were coded into emergent themes and used in a mixed methods analysis with the survey data to cross validate between the qualitative and quantitative data sets through triangulation. Participants were asked in the survey to volunteer to take part in the interview portion of the study. Seven participants originally volunteered for the interviews with six choosing to participate. The interview data were transcribed and then coded and analyzed into emergent themes.

Quantitative Research Questions

Research question one was used to determine if there was a significant relationship in a teacher's gender and their attitudes and perceptions of serving all students, disabled and nondisabled, in an inclusive environment in the general education classroom. The full scale measure for the ATTAS-mm provided results based on participant input on the nine Likert scale items. The full-scale measure of the ATTAS-mm offered insight in regard to an educator's attitude level toward teaching all students. The lower a participant's raw score on the full scale measure indicates an educator is more likely to have a positive attitude toward teaching all students. Conversely, the higher the raw score on the full scale measure an educator is likely to have a negative attitude toward teaching all students.

A point-biserial correlation was run on the data to determine if there was a significant relationship between an educator's gender and their attitude, positive or negative, toward teaching all students. The data indicated an educator's attitude towards teaching all students was significant based on gender. A *t*-test was run on sub research question 1a to determine if a significant difference existed between these two variables. The results from the *t*-test indicated there was no significant difference between an educator's gender and their attitude, positive or negative, towards teaching all students.

The significant relationship found from running the point-biserial correlation indicated females were more likely to have a positive attitude towards teaching all students. These results correspond with the study of Ahsan, Deppeler, and Sharma (2013) where it was found female preservice teachers showed more positive attitudes towards inclusive education. The research done by Saloviita (2020) also found female teachers were more positive towards inclusion than their male counterparts. The meta-analysis completed by Van Steen and Wilson (2020)

suggested men hold more negative attitudes towards inclusion than women. The research indicated the results based on gender are inconclusive, which may be because most studies have samples that include more females than males. The prior research samples, as well as the sample in this study, appear typical because females generally outnumber males in the profession, but this could also skew the results in a study. The significance found in this study may be skewed due to the disproportionate number of males who participated in the study in which only 17% of the sample self-identified as male.

Research question two was used to determine if there was a significant relationship in a teacher's years of experience in the profession and their attitudes and perceptions of serving all students, disabled and nondisabled, in an inclusive environment in the general education classroom. A Spearman's rank order correlation was run to assess if there was a significant relationship between an educator's attitude, positive or negative, toward teaching all students and the amount of experience an educator has in the profession. The results of the Spearman's correlation indicated there was no significant relationship found in the data. A one-way ANOVA was utilized for sub research question 2a to compare means of the groups of educators based on experience. The data in this study indicated there was not a significant difference between these two variables.

The research breaks down experience into length of service in the profession and experience working with students with disabilities (SWD). This study focused on length of service in the profession when assessing for experience. Similar studies indicated teachers that are new to the profession with little experience were found to have significantly more positive attitudes toward inclusion (Boyle, Topping, & Jindal-Snape, 2013; Parasuram, 2006; Supriyanto, 2019). It appears with a larger sample size there may have been a significant finding between

these two variables. A total of 71% of the participants in this study had 10 years or more of experience, which may have influenced the results. A more diverse sample of educators with less experience may have resulted in similar findings as previous studies.

Research question three was used to determine if there was a significant relationship in the number of college (or higher) courses completed in special education by a teacher and their attitudes and perceptions of serving all students. This includes attitudes and perceptions of disabled and nondisabled students in an inclusive environment in the general education classroom. A Pearson's Correlation was used to analyze the data and it indicated there was no statistically significant relationship found between the number of college (or higher) courses completed in special education and a positive attitude toward teaching all students. A Spearman's Rank Order Correlation was run next to further explore the data between these two variables and the results indicated no significant relationship, confirming the results of the Pearson's correlation.

According to Boyle et al. (2013), it was found that completing a course in special education significantly increases an educator's positive attitude towards inclusion. Teachers who are new to the profession with little experience were found to have significantly more positive attitudes toward inclusion (Boyle et al., 2013; Parasuram, 2006). This could be the result of the preservice training now expected in many teacher training programs, where coursework in special education is required for all subject area teachers. As with the previous research question, a larger and more diverse sample may have yielded more significant results. It appears the sample in this study, which consisted of educators with considerable experience, may have limited the generalizability.

Qualitative Research Questions

There were four qualitative research questions that guided this study through emergent themes within the data (Patton, 2015). The first qualitative research question was addressed directly through a question in the interview portion of the study, but concerns were also brought up in the open-ended questions added to the survey. The second qualitative research question was not directly asked either in the interview nor the open-ended questions of the survey, but it can be inferred through participant responses. The third and fourth qualitative research questions were posed to gain knowledge into where educators are developing their attitudes and perceptions of serving all students in the inclusive environment.

Research question four asked educators their concerns about implementing an inclusive environment in the general education classroom (Appendix A). Through the interview process, there were six secondary codes that emerged in the data. The concerns participants noted were the need for additional staff, money related, nondisabled students, disabled students, pace/standards, and behavior concerns.

The concerns noted under the secondary code of additional staff was related to the need for more certified special education teachers as well as teaching assistants or aides to support SWD's in the inclusive classroom (see Table 9). Avramidis and Norwich (2002) found school factors, like availability of support in the classroom including learning support assistants, special education teachers, and speech therapists have been found linked to teachers' inclusion attitudes. The data from the interviews in this study would seem to support that finding and would appear to be an influential factor in assisting educators develop a positive attitude toward serving all students in the inclusive classroom. The next secondary code that emerged out of the interviews was money related concerns. The secondary code was similar to the first because educators'

responded (see Table 10) similarly by noting schools and districts are not providing the funding to hire additional staff to support SWD's in the general education classroom. Funding shortages to provide needed support could be used as justification by school systems to avoid implementing inclusive classrooms.

The secondary code of class size was noted by only one participant in the interview data but was mentioned twice by this same participant (see Table 20). There was also a singular mention of class size by a different participant in the open-ended survey responses (see Table 32). The research indicated class size is a concern for educators in order to meet the needs of all students, but does not appear to be a factor in contributing to teacher attitudes and perceptions of SWD's in the inclusive classroom (Saloviita, 2020; Sargeant & Berkner, 2015). The current finding of this study on class size seems to be consistent with the findings in the research.

The next four secondary codes involved concerns for nondisabled students, disabled students, pace/standards, and behavioral concerns are all related. Educators noted concern about how nondisabled students would be affected by SWD's being in the same classroom (see Table 11). Participants noted additional assistance needed to support SWD's and behavior issues could become a distraction and have a negative impact on the progress of nondisabled peers. These concerns are related to the secondary theme of pace/standards where educators noted the difficulty in maintaining a challenging pace to meet state standards with SWD's in the general education classroom (see Table 13). Lastly, educators noted concerns for disabled students not receiving the support they need in the inclusive classroom with some participants alluding to SWD's may be better served in a segregated special education classroom (see Table 12). These concerns may be linked to an educators' attitude, positive or negative, towards serving all students in the inclusive classroom.

There was one secondary code from the emergent themes in the qualitative data from the open-ended survey questions related to educator concerns. The secondary code of discipline emerged regarding behavior management of the classroom (see Table 31). This relates to behavior concerns brought up by participants in the interview portion of the study. Educators often noted concerns about the behaviors of SWD's in the general education classroom and how that can distract from peers in the classroom. This secondary code is a good example of how triangulation was utilized in this study to add richness and validity of the data (Patton, 2015). In this instance, a mixed methods triangulation was utilized which involves comparing and integrating data through qualitative and quantitative methods (Patton, 2015). Under the secondary code of discipline Case #26 wrote a statement "One in which there is respect and discipline is enforced" in response to the open-ended prompt of describing in detail the effective classroom (see Table 31). The raw score on the ATTAS-mm was added to the table responses to provide additional depth. The raw score on the ATTAS-mm for the participant noted under Case #26 was 56.5, indicating an educator with a negative attitude towards teaching all students. The triangulation of the data provides additional insight into this participant's response (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Research question five addressed incentives teachers perceive could positively influence their attitudes and perceptions of serving all students in the inclusive classroom (Appendix A). Although this question was not asked of participants directly, it can be inferred from participant responses. The emergent themes that developed out the data were related to support and training which participants noted could assist them in serving all students in the inclusive classroom.

There were three secondary codes from participant interview responses regarding training. Participants noted the need for inclusive training generically, noting teachers needed

additional tools in their toolbox (see Table 15). The next two secondary codes participants alluded to specific types of inclusive training such as differentiation and coteaching (see Tables 16, 17). Educators noted the need to get additional training to assist them in supporting all students in the inclusive classroom. Ross-Hill (2009) found that teachers expressed they are confident to teach students with special needs when they have adequate training to serve students with diverse needs. The emergent themes regarding training in this study are consistent with findings throughout the research to develop educator self-efficacy in working with SWD's (Savolainen, Engelbrecht, Nel, & Malinen, 2012; Supriyanto, 2019; Urton, Wilbert, & Hennemann, 2014; Vaz et al., 2015). It would seem the findings in this study are consistent with the findings in previous research on how training can be a factor in an educators' attitudes and perceptions of serving all students in the inclusive classroom.

Inclusive strategies were noted throughout the responses to the open-ended questions added to the survey. In responding to the prompt, participants mentioned the importance of providing a kind and loving environment that was equitable in serving all students. Participants mentioned the need to utilize differentiation and coteaching, cross validating participant responses from the interviews. In addition, participants mentioned the importance of utilizing collaborative learning, peer tutors and mentors, and universal design for learning. The findings in the qualitative data from the survey would seem to support the findings in the interviews where training could be a factor in developing a positive attitude to serve all students in the inclusive classroom.

The next two secondary codes that emerged in the interview data had to do with support, specifically in terms of administrative support and the support of additional staff. Educators noted the importance to have the support of their leadership in implementing inclusive

classrooms, such as the building principal or district administration who often set policy for the school or the entire district (see Table 19). The finding in this study is like what was found in the research where teachers need encouragement and administrative support in the implementation of inclusive practices (Sargeant & Berkner, 2015). Additional staff is a secondary code that was noted previously under concerns by participants and appears again as a needed support. Educators noted the necessity of having additional staff, such as a special education teacher or aide, in the inclusive classroom to adequately support SWD's (see Table 20). It would appear educators see additional staff as an important component to the inclusive classroom and a factor in developing a positive attitude of serving all students in the inclusive classroom.

Research questions six and seven were related, as the purpose was to elicit information to help determine educator mindsets and how their mindset was developed. These two research questions asked for participants to define the term disability and to relate what they perceive is their school districts definition of disability. The two secondary codes that arose out of the emergent themes from the interview data as well as the data from the open-ended questions were related to the human capability theory and deficit theory. The intent was to relate participant responses to these two theories to get a clearer understanding of participants mindset as it relates to the inclusive classroom.

Deficit theory is grounded in the concept of normality as reflected in statistical averages from educationally relevant metrics (Rose, 2016). Under deficit theory, students reflecting measured deficits in content areas are assumed to have structural problems within themselves (Sailor et al., 2018). The human capability theory is based on what people are actually able to do and be, worthy of the dignity of the human being (Nussbaum, 2000). Human capability theory is

a proinclusive mindset that considers an individual's abilities, whereas deficit theory considers an individual's disability, and is based on the old medical model which often advocates for separate special education classrooms for SWD's.

Individuals answered these last two research questions directly in the interview portion of the study. The six individuals who were interviewed had various responses, but there was a noticeable difference in the individual educators' definition of disability and what they perceived as their school or districts' definition of disability. Four of the six participants' definition of disability was akin to the human capability theory, a philosophy based on how a SWD can benefit from the provision of specialized educational supports and services (Sailor et al., 2018). One of the participant's responses was problematic, as it appeared biased since she alluded in her response that this was how the district wanted her to respond. The participant was reassured all responses were confidential and would not link back to the individual nor school. It would appear in this instance, this participant was influenced by how her district would like her to respond, which impacted this participant's mindset of serving all students. The final participant's definition of disability was related to deficit theory. Each of the six participants' responses regarding the perception of the school districts' definition of disability all fell under deficit theory. Educators appear more closely aligned to the human capability theory when it comes to attitudes regarding the inclusive classroom, whereas school districts seem to be coming from a different perspective related to deficit theory, based on a participant's perception of the district's policy. It would seem these differing views could negatively impact an educator's attitude towards serving all students in the inclusive classroom over time.

Participant responses through the interview and open-ended questions indicated human capability theory relates to a proinclusive mindset. Participants noted the advantages of

inclusivity are beneficial for everyone (see Table 21). The mixed methods analysis with the survey data indicated how a low raw score on the ATTAS-mm, which indicates a positive attitude of serving all students, seems to correlate with the human capability theory with the proinclusive responses. These areas of convergence increase confidence in the findings (Patton, 2015). Educator responses noted the importance of high expectations for all students (see Table 35). There was a total of 19 cases that emerged in the survey data and 17 cases that emerged in the interview data under the secondary code of human capability theory, indicating most educators in this study appear to have a proinclusive mindset.

Participant responses through the interview and open-ended questions may indicate deficit theory relates to a mindset that is less positive towards the inclusive environment. One participant response noted “total frustration and exhaustion” (see Table 36). This statement along with the triangulation from the ATTAS-mm raw score of 56.5 indicated this individual appears to have a negative attitude towards serving all students. This provides further evidence in the findings with this convergence of data. Participants mentioned old methods in responses under this secondary code referring to when SWD’s were segregated into specialized classrooms (see Table 21) confirming the connection to deficit theory.

Limitations

This research study may have been limited by the number of participants in the sample and the disproportionate number of males to females. As mentioned previously, a larger and more diverse sample may have led to more significant findings. This study may have also been limited by how experience was measured. The current study utilized length of time in the profession to measure experience and found no statistical significance with having a positive

attitude of serving all students in the inclusive classroom. Previous studies found a relationship between the positive attitude of an educator and the amount of experience an educator has working with SWD's (Avramidis & Kalyva, 2007; Priyadarshini & Thangarajathi, 2017). It appears the more experience an educator has in working with diverse populations the more positive they are towards the inclusive environment. The study by Odongo and Davidson (2016) came to a similar finding; the greater experience in inclusive education the more positive an educators' attitude is toward the education of children with special needs.

Lastly, asking educators how many college (or higher) courses taken in special education may have skewed the results, toward or against veteran teachers. Most veteran teachers may have never taken any college courses in special education but may be very effective teachers and open to working with students with disabilities in the inclusive classroom. As mentioned previously, most preservice teacher programs now require all subject area teachers to take some course work in special education. A better question may have been to ask how many professional development hours an educator has completed on inclusive practices. The research by Avramidis and Kalyva (2007) indicated educators engaged in continuous professional development on inclusive practices have positive attitudes towards serving students with disabilities in the inclusive environment.

Implications for Practice

Including educators in the process of implementing a more inclusive environment appears to be linked to the success of the initiative. Educators generally have positive attitudes towards the philosophy of the inclusive classroom but often have difficulty with how it is implemented (Gonzalez, 1999). Pearman et al. (1992) noted that all too often more inclusive

settings are planned and implemented, but building administrators and teachers are not involved in this process.

A participant in this study noted the importance of support from their building administrator because those decisions affect their daily life as an educator. The participant shared how their building principal determines class sizes, supplies, and professional development training. Another participant noted leadership decisions are made from the top and then trickle down to those working in the classrooms. According to Darling and Nurmi (2009), strategic leadership is not just delegating the strategy from top to bottom but, collecting data and information that emerges from within the organization. Including all stakeholders in the process of implementing a more inclusive environment would be beneficial in collecting input from all levels within an organization.

The adaptive leadership approach could be a useful leadership model to assist in implementing an inclusive environment because it is follower centered. Adaptive leadership focuses on the adaptations required of individuals in response to the changes being undertaken within an organization and the support a leader can provide during the transition (Northouse, 2016). Heavyweight teams can be incorporated into the process, as noted previously. Christensen et al. (2008) noted heavyweight teams are tools to create new ways of working together, made up of members throughout the organization that have collective responsibility to figure out a better way to meet the organization's goals. This process can be instrumental in establishing common beliefs throughout the organization (DeHartchuck et al., 2019).

Recommendations for Future Research

The development of a quantitative assessment to measure an educator's mindset as it relates to the human capability theory or deficit theory would be helpful for districts to develop a baseline of their staff. A quantitative assessment would be quick and easy for school districts to assess educator mindset and then create professional development to assist educators to align with a proinclusive mindset and the human capability theory. It may be beneficial to explore further if a relationship exists between an educator's mindset and the integration of evidence based inclusive practices. Further research would be beneficial on developing a mindset aligned with the human capability theory in educators and determining the variables that influence that mindset to better integrate an inclusive environment. The hope is further research in this area could lead to a theoretical framework to outline the steps in developing a proinclusive mindset aligned with the human capability theory.

The research indicated educators new to the profession with less experience often have a more positive attitude towards the inclusive classroom. This could be related to the requirement of special education coursework in many preservice teacher programs for teachers in all subject areas. Instilling the basic knowledge in preservice programs could be influential in building educator self-efficacy in working with SWD's in the inclusive environment. Future research may be needed to determine if there is a relationship between educator attitudes with inclusive professional development or course work in special education.

The research also indicated teachers with training on teaching SWD's had positive attitudes towards the inclusive environment (Vaz et al., 2015). It may be beneficial to explore educator mindset related to the human capability theory or deficit theory in working with SWD's. Once a baseline is established, determine the type and amount of professional

development needed to assist an educator to develop a mindset aligned with the human capability theory. The research seems to indicate older educators struggle with an inclusive mindset, so instead of inundating them with professional development on inclusive practices it may be beneficial to help them develop a proinclusive mindset with training on the human capability theory.

Conclusion

The findings of this study indicate they are consistent with previous findings in the research. This study indicated such things as supports and training on inclusive practices can have a positive influence on educator attitudes toward the inclusive classroom. Participants indicated a need for further training to assist them in serving all students effectively. It was also found that educators value the support of additional staff in the classroom as well as the administrative support of building principals and district leaders. Lastly, it was found in this study there is a significant relationship between gender and having a positive attitude toward serving all students.

An additional finding unique to this study is the relationship between the proinclusive mindset and the human capability theory, through the use of triangulation. The development of a mindset aligned to the human capability could be beneficial in the implementation of a more inclusive environment. Individuals who espouse this perspective recognize the issue is not with the individual with a disability but in the need to accommodate the learning to adapt the needs of the individual.

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APPENDIX A

IDENTIFICATION AND ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Identification and Analysis of Research Questions

This table may take on a size commensurate with the demands of the dissertation in question. Because some studies may be mixed methods design or you may have differing variables for the research questions, you should complete an analysis for *each* research question.

Insert each research question as it appears in your prospectus/proposal. Begin each with RQ# where # is the number if the research question (1, 2, 3 etc.). You may copy and paste the RQ table as needed.

Quantitative

RQ1: Is there a significant relationship in a teacher’s gender and their attitudes and perceptions of serving all students, disabled and nondisabled, in an inclusive environment in the general education classroom?

	Variable Labels	Levels of the Variable	Scale of Measurement
Dependent Variable(s)	Teacher attitude and perceptions of serving all students (disabled and nondisabled) in an inclusive environment in the general education classroom.	7	Interval
Independent Variables	Gender	3 (male/female/and a text field for other)	nominal

RQ1a: Is there a difference, based on gender, in teachers’ attitudes and perceptions of serving all students, disabled and nondisabled, in an inclusive environment in the general education classroom?

	Variable Labels	Levels of the Variable	Scale of Measurement
Dependent Variable(s)	Teacher attitude and perceptions of serving all students (disabled and nondisabled) in an inclusive environment in the general education classroom.	7	Interval

Independent Variables	Gender	3 (male/female/and a text field for other)	nominal
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RQ2: Is there a significant relationship in a teacher’s years of experience in the profession and their attitudes and perceptions of serving all students, disabled and nondisabled, in an inclusive environment in the general education classroom?

	Variable Labels	Levels of the Variable	Scale of Measurement
Dependent Variable(s)	Teacher attitude and perceptions of serving all students (disabled and nondisabled) in an inclusive environment in the general education classroom.	7	Interval
Independent Variables	Experience	6 (0-5, 6-10, 11-15, 16-20, 21-25, 26-30)	ordinal

RQ2a: Is there a difference, based on years of experience in the profession, in a teachers’ attitudes and perceptions of serving all students, disabled and nondisabled, in an inclusive environment in the general education classroom?

	Variable Labels	Levels of the Variable	Scale of Measurement
Dependent Variable(s)	Teacher attitude and perceptions of serving all students (disabled and nondisabled) in an inclusive environment in the general education classroom.	7	Interval
Independent Variables	Experience	6 (0-5, 6-10, 11-15, 16-20, 21-25, 26-30)	ordinal

RQ3: Is there a significant relationship in the number of college (or higher) courses completed in special education by a teacher and their attitudes and perceptions of serving all students, disabled and nondisabled, in an inclusive environment in the general education classroom?

	Variable Labels	Levels of the Variable	Scale of Measurement
Dependent Variable(s)	Teacher attitude and perceptions of serving all students (disabled and nondisabled) in an inclusive environment in the general education classroom.	7	Interval
Independent Variables	Hours of professional development in inclusive practices	6 (0-5, 6-10, 11-15, 16-20, 21-25, 26-30)	ordinal

Qualitative

RQ4 (Qualitative): What concerns do have about implementing an inclusive environment in the general education classroom?

Data Point/Element	Source for Data	Data Gathering Method	Data Analysis Method
Teacher Concerns	Teacher feedback	Interviews	Thematic analysis

RQ5 (Qualitative): What incentives do teachers perceive could positively influence their attitudes and perceptions in serving all students, disabled and nondisabled, in an inclusive environment in the general education classroom?

Data Point/Element	Source for Data	Data Gathering Method	Data Analysis Method
Incentives	Teacher feedback	Interviews	Thematic analysis

RQ6 (Qualitative): What is an individual educator’s view/definition of disability?

Data Point/Element	Source for Data	Data Gathering Method	Data Analysis Method
Does answer align with deficit theory or human capability.	Teacher feedback	Open ended question	Thematic analysis

RQ7 (Qualitative): What is the school district’s view/definition of disability, as identified by participant perceptions?

Data Point/Element	Source for Data	Data Gathering Method	Data Analysis Method
Does answer align with deficit theory or human capability.	Teacher feedback	Open ended question	Thematic analysis

After all research question variables have been listed, please list any attribute variables to be gathered.

Attribute Variables:

	Variable Labels	Levels of the Variable	Scale of Measurement
Educational Level	Highest degree completed	Associates, Bachelors, Masters, Masters +30, Doctorate	nominal
Grade Level	Grades	K-12	Ordinal/nominal
Socio-Economic Status of School Community	Poor, Moderate, Affluent	3	nominal

APPENDIX B

PERMISSION LETTER TO UTILIZE SURVEY INSTRUMENT

APPENDIX C

ATTITUDES TOWARDS TEACHING ALL STUDENTS (ATTAS-mm)

Attitudes Towards Teaching All Students ATTAS-mm

Jess L. Gregory
Southern CT State University

Lori A. Noto
University of Bridgeport

Directions: The purpose of this survey is to obtain an accurate and valid appraisal of your perceptions of teaching all students including students identified with mild to moderate disabilities. Because there are no "right" or "wrong" answers to these items, please respond candidly.

Definition of Full Inclusion: For the purposes of this survey, full inclusion is defined as the integration of students with mild to moderate disabilities into regular classrooms for 80% or more of the school day. Under federal special education law, mild to moderate disabilities include: learning disabilities; hearing impairments; visual impairments; physical handicaps; attention deficit disorder; speech/language impairments; and mild/moderate emotional disturbance, mental retardation, autism, or traumatic brain injury.

Respondent Information:

1. What is your current role in education?
 - Student not yet in the field
 - Intern
 - Substitute Teacher/DSAP
 - Paraprofessional
 - Certified Teacher
 - Other _____
2. What is your gender?
 - Male
 - Female
3. What is the highest degree you have completed?
 - Associates
 - Bachelors
 - Masters
 - Masters +30 (6th year)
 - Doctorate
4. How many years of experience do you have as an educator?
 - 0-4 years
 - 5-9 years
 - 10-14 years
 - 15-19 years
 - 20 years or more
5. How would you describe the community in which you work/intern?
 - Rural
 - Suburban
 - Urban
 - N/A (not currently in the field)
6. How many college (or higher) courses have you completed in special education?
 - None
 - 1-3
 - 4 or more courses
7. Describe the extent of your experience working with individuals with disabilities in schools and/or human service agencies.
 - Minimal (1 hour or fewer per month)
 - Some (2-10 hours per month)
 - Considerable (11-80 hours per month)
 - Extensive (more than 80 hours per month)
8. Which of the following best describes the school in which you work/intern?
 - Elementary (k-2, k-3, k-4, k-5, or k-6)
 - Middle (4-6, 5-6, 4-8, 6-8, 7-8)
 - High (7-12, 8-12, 9-12)
 - Other _____
9. How would you describe the socioeconomic status of the community in which you work/intern?
 - Poor (income/education in the lowest 20%)
 - Moderate (income/education in the middle 60%)
 - Affluent (income/education in the highest 20%)
10. How long do you plan to teach?
 - fewer than 5 years
 - 5-10 years
 - 11-20 years
 - Greater than 20 years
11. I want to become an administrator. yes no

Attitudes Towards Teaching All Students ATTAS-mm

Jess L. Gregory
Southern CT State University

Lori A. Noto
University of Bridgeport

The purpose of this survey is to obtain an accurate and valid appraisal of your perceptions of teaching all students including students identified with mild to moderate disabilities. Because there are no “right” or “wrong” answers to these items, please respond candidly.

	Agree Very Strongly	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree Very Strongly
1. Most or all separate classrooms that exclusively serve students with mild to moderate disabilities should be eliminated.	(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	(f)	(g)
2. Students with mild to moderate disabilities should be taught in regular classes with non-disabled students because they will not require too much of the teacher’s time.	(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	(f)	(g)
3. Students with mild to moderate disabilities can be more effectively educated in regular classrooms as opposed to special education classrooms.	(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	(f)	(g)
4. I would like to be mentored by a teacher who models effective differentiated instruction.	(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	(f)	(g)
5. I want to emulate teachers who know how to design appropriate academic interventions.	(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	(f)	(g)
6. I believe including students with mild/moderate disabilities in the regular education classrooms is effective because they can learn the social skills necessary for success.	(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	(f)	(g)
7. I would like people to think that I can create a welcoming classroom environment for students with mild to moderate disabilities.	(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	(f)	(g)
8. Students with mild to moderate disabilities can be trusted with responsibilities in the classroom.	(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	(f)	(g)
9. All students with mild to moderate disabilities should be educated in regular classrooms with non-handicapped peers to the fullest extent possible.	(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	(f)	(g)

APPENDIX D

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

Institutional Review Board

Dept 4915

615 McCallie Avenue

Chattanooga, TN 37403

Phone: (423) 425-5867

Fax: (423) 425-4052 instrb@utc.edu <http://www.utc.edu/irb>

TO: Christopher Closson **IRB # 22-007**
Dr. David Rausch

FROM: David Deardorff, Interim Director of Research Integrity
Dr. Susan Davidson, IRB Committee Chair

DATE: 1/28/2022

SUBJECT: IRB #22-007: Exploring the Attitudes and Perceptions of Educators Regarding Disabled Students in the Inclusive Classroom

Thank you for submitting your application for exemption to The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga Institutional Review Board. Your proposal was evaluated in light of the federal regulations that govern the protection of human subjects.

Specifically, 45 CFR 46.104(d) identifies studies that are exempt from IRB oversight. The UTC IRB Chairperson or his/her designee has determined that your proposed project falls within the category described in the following subsection of this policy:

46.104(d)(2)(ii): Research only includes educational tests, surveys, interviews, public observation and any disclosure of responses outside of the research would NOT reasonably place subject at risk

Even though your project is exempt from further IRB review, the research must be conducted according to the proposal submitted to the UTC IRB. If changes to the approved protocol occur, a revised protocol must be reviewed and approved by the IRB before implementation. For any proposed changes in your research protocol, please submit an Application for Changes, Annual Review, or Project Termination/Completion form to the UTC IRB. Please be aware that changes to the research protocol may prevent the research from qualifying for exempt review and require submission of a new IRB application or other materials to the UTC IRB.

A goal of the IRB is to prevent negative occurrences during any research study. However, despite our best intent, unforeseen circumstances or events may arise during the research. If an unexpected situation or adverse event happens during your investigation, please notify the UTC IRB as soon as

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possible. Once notified, we will ask for a complete explanation of the event and your response. Other actions also may be required depending on the nature of the event.

Please refer to the protocol number denoted above in all communication or correspondence related to your application and this approval.

For additional information, please consult our web page <http://www.utc.edu/irb> or email instrb@utc.edu. Best wishes for a successful research project.

The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga is a comprehensive, community-engaged campus of the University of Tennessee System. 

2 of 2

VITA

Christopher T. Closson was born in Utica, NY, to Howard and Lucille Closson. He began his academic career at St. Bonaventure University earning a Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy Pre-Law. After spending a short time substitute teaching in special education classrooms, Christopher decided to pursue a career in teaching. A year after receiving his bachelor's degree he entered the College of Saint Rose to pursue a Master of Science in Education with a focus in Special Education.

Christopher earned his provisional teaching license in New York State (NYS) and after 5 years earned his permanent teaching license in NYS in special education. He taught in NYS for thirteen years, pioneering a new classroom in the high school he worked. Christopher then transitioned with his family to Chattanooga Tennessee and taught in the county school system for a few years before being promoted to a Lead Teacher. It was at this time he learned the impact of leadership in an organization and decided to pursue his doctorate at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga in Learning and Leadership. After a couple of years as a lead teacher Christopher was promoted to a supervisor position in which he was responsible for the special education services in several schools throughout the county. He was instrumental in leading the coteaching initiative in many of the schools that he supervised to promote a more inclusive environment for students with disabilities. Christopher will become part of the faculty at the

State University of New York at Fredonia as an Assistant Professor in the College of Education starting in the fall semester.