

**Inclusion of Students With Disabilities:
Is There a Best Way?**

by

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Aim of the Study

The purpose for this study is to examine the literature regarding the inclusion of students with special needs in fully inclusive and in part-time resource room settings. The efficacy of each model will be explored and the perceptions of students, teachers, and parents will be examined. The findings from this literature review will be summarized and then used to develop a practical framework for effectively planning the inclusion of any student with special needs. The inclusion framework will provide a systematic plan to follow as the students' programs are being developed.

The Problem underlying the study

For years, education experts have been challenged by the appropriate inclusion of students with special needs. At the core of this issue are the many different views and beliefs as to what inclusion should look like. The debate focuses on how and where educators should be providing the education for students with special needs. Full inclusion is one of these models that has the support of many experts (Wang, Reynolds, Walberg, 1995; Lipsky & Gartner, 1989; Stainback & Stainback, 1992; McLeskey & Waldron, 2000). The full inclusion advocates believe that all students, regardless of disability, should be educated in a regular classroom in their neighborhood school. As McLeskey and Waldron state, "...inclusion is no

longer about ‘special’ education for a ‘special’ group of students, but it is about improving the education for all students.” (p.16). Stainback, Stainback, and Jackson (1992) agree,

The problem or dilemma is no longer how to mainstream or integrate some students who were previously excluded but rather how to develop a sense of community and mutual support within the mainstream that fosters success among all members of a neighborhood school. (p. 4).

As well as encouraging a merger of regular and special education (Stainback & Stainback, 1992; Lipsky & Gartner, 1989), the proponents of full inclusion view disabled students as an equal and integral part of the whole school community. “Many students do not fit into traditional general education classrooms and schools, and inclusion must be about how schools and classrooms become more accommodating of this diversity.” (McLeskey and Waldron, 2000, p.16). The focus in the full inclusion model is shifted away from the individual disabled student and is placed fully on how to support all students in a regular classroom.

As can be expected, many of the opponents of full inclusion see many flaws with this model (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994; Jones, Thorn, Chow, Thompson, & Wilde, 2002; Zigmund & Baker, 1996; Shanker, 1995; Mamlin, 1999; Marston, 1996). To varying degrees, these experts possess a more traditional view of inclusion and of special education, most often using the principles of Public Law 94-142 as the basis for their arguments. They believe that supporting students with special needs in the least restrictive environment (Deno & Reynolds, 1970, in Cartwright et al, 1985, p.25) possible continues to be the most effective model and that there could not possibly be a single cure-all model that would support the unique needs of

each disabled student. In their book, The Illusion of Full Inclusion, Kauffman and Hallahan (1995) make a bold statement against the full inclusion model:

A single structure, critics argue, can be made sufficiently strong to support some students with disabilities in regular schools and classes, but it cannot offer equally effective support in the same place at the same time for all students; a special, supplementary structure is required to keep many students with special needs from dropping through the floor of public education.(p. ix-x preface).

This author assumes that the ‘special, supplementary structure’ that Kauffman and Hallahan refer to is the special education teacher providing some specific, directed instruction in a resource room type setting. The opponents believe, then, that full inclusion should not be the only option but just one option along a continuum of services.

In our classrooms today, there continues to be a struggle between those who believe that all students with special needs should be educated fully in their regular classrooms and those who believe in the more traditional continuum of services idea where students may receive varying amounts of their instruction in a resource room setting. Despite all that has been written about the inclusion of students with special needs, an inclusion idea or theory that a majority of teachers, students, and parents would support seems to be lacking. For this reason, this project will attempt to answer the following questions: 1. What does the literature say about the effectiveness of and the perceptions towards the full inclusion model and the resource room type model? 2. What are the implications of the literature review for effectively planning the inclusion of a child with special needs and for creating an effective inclusion model? 3. Based on the literature

review, can a practical inclusion framework for the inclusion of any special needs student be developed?

Research Methods

This study will be restricted to a literature review. Various research studies, theories, and application ideas will be utilized to present the strengths and weaknesses of both the full inclusion and resource room type models.

Significance of the study

Despite the vast amount that has been written about the inclusion of students with special needs, there exists a lack of a simple, step-by-step planning framework and an effective inclusion model that would gain the support of the majority of special and regular education teachers, students, and parents. Once the results of this literature review are summarized, their implications for best inclusion practices will be synthesized into a framework that can be utilized immediately by any school-based team in effectively developing an inclusion plan.

Definitions

Although the term ‘inclusion’ can have different meanings depending on who you ask, the term ‘full inclusion’ seems to have a more consistent definition. For the purposes of this study, ‘full inclusion’ will refer to the idea that all students, regardless of their disability, should be educated

exclusively in a regular classroom. (Wade, 2000; Smelter & Rasch, 1994; Chow, Blais, Hemingway, 1999; Winzer & Mazurek, 2000; Stainback & Stainback, 1992).

On the other hand, the term ‘resource room’ will refer to a part time placement in a classroom outside of the regular classroom where the student would receive intensive, individualized instruction. (Vaughn & Klinger, 1998; Madge, Affleck, Lowenbraun, 2001). The amount of time spent in the resource room would be dependent on the individual’s needs.

Limitations & Delimitations

This study intends to use the literature to develop a usable framework that will increase the chances of school success for all of those involved. It does not intend to examine specific instructional strategies that may make inclusion of children with special needs into a regular classroom more successful. Because of the vast amount of literature written on the topic of inclusion, this author will attempt to utilize a diverse range of studies and articles written on the topic. It will not be possible to report on all of the literature reviewed for this study due to the word limitation.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

In examining the literature regarding inclusion, the research will be categorized in the following way: Student academic achievement effects;

Student social effects; Student perceptions and attitudes; Teacher perceptions and attitudes; and Parent perceptions and attitudes. The conclusions resulting from the studies in each of these categories will be summarized and their implications for effective inclusion planning will be discussed.

Student Academic Achievement

A large body of research has been completed that examines the efficacy of the full inclusion and resource room type models. A key area of investigation is the academic achievement of students with special needs in these different settings.

Carlberg and Kavale (1980) completed a meta-analysis of fifty primary research studies of special versus regular class placements for students with disabilities. Once the results from these 50 studies were transformed into usable, statistical data, the authors' overall conclusion was that regular class placements for special needs students were superior to special class placements. However, Carlberg and Kavale also discovered that the category of exceptionality had a significant impact on the placement effects. While those students with a low IQ benefited significantly from being in a regular class placement, students with Learning Disabilities (LD) and students with Behavior Disorder / Emotional Disorder performed better in a special class placement. "This finding suggests that the present trend towards mainstreaming by regular class placement may not be appropriate for certain children." (p. 304).

Manset and Semmel (1997) compared eight inclusive programs for elementary students with mild disabilities. Overall, the studies showed that

inclusive programs are effective for some students with mild disabilities but not all. Because only 2 of 8 studies showed that the LD students made a significant gain in their reading scores, the authors suggest that the effects of inclusive programming are “relatively unimpressive for most students with mild disabilities, especially in view of the extraordinary resources available to many of these model programs.” (p.177). They conclude their analysis by stating:

In fact, collectively these studies highlight the importance of maintaining the opportunity for direct services by a specialist. If anything, results suggest that specialized programming should be expanded to maintain opportunities for intensive, individualized instruction that may prove beneficial to students with special needs, particularly on basic skills. (p. 178).

Zigmund, Jenkins, Fuchs & Fuchs, Deno, and Baker (1995) studied three innovative models that provided special education services in the regular classroom. The three projects, which came from the University of Pittsburgh, the University of Washington, and Vanderbilt University, involved implementing more inclusive practices. As this reform was being implemented, reading achievement was assessed periodically using the Basic Academic Skills Samples (BASS). Over the year, an average of 37% of the LD students made average or better gains. Overall, the authors conclude that for about half of the LD students in the study, reading achievement results, after one year of fully inclusive programming and services, were unsatisfactory.

Clearly, the research evidence to date, including the data aggregated in the three research projects described here, provides no basis for eliminating the continuum of services for students with learning disabilities and no basis for the conclusion that satisfactory outcomes can be achieved in the general education setting. (p.539).

In response to this study by Zigmund et al., McLeskey and Waldron (1998) replicated and expanded upon the Zigmund study. The study involved comparing the academic achievement of 71 LD students (grades 2-6) in an inclusive setting against 73 LD students who were not in an inclusive setting. McLeskey and Waldron utilized the BASS as did Zigmund et al.. They found that the LD students in the inclusive settings made “significantly more progress on a curriculum-based measure of reading than did students who were educated in non-inclusive, resource settings.” (p.402). Although the findings in both of these studies indicate that about half of these LD students make progress that is comparable or greater than those made by grade-level peers, McLeskey and Waldron take this as encouraging news. The students with severe LD made similar gains in both inclusive and segregated settings, which lead McLeskey and Waldron to conclude that all severe LD students should also be in inclusive settings (the least restrictive environment).

Rea, McLaughlin, and Walther-Thomas (2002) conducted another study that compared inclusive and pull-out programs and their effects on the academic and behaviour outcomes for students with learning disabilities. They studied two middle schools from the same district, one with an inclusive program and one without. They found that LD students in inclusive classes earned higher grades in Language Arts, Math, S.S., and Science than pull-out students. The included students also scored higher on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. Their study also found that LD students in inclusive classrooms received fewer suspensions and had better attendance rates. The obvious limitation to this study is the fact that only two schools were examined.

Visser, Cole, and Daniels (2002) studied 10 primary and secondary schools to determine effective practices in including students with emotional and behavioral difficulties (EBD). Their findings can be summed up in the following quote. “We did not find one dominant approach which, if transplanted to all schools, would meet all the needs of every pupil with EBD. There is not a single ‘one size fits all’ approach to the different needs of pupils with EBD.” (p.24). They agree that while many EBD students can be effectively included in mainstream classes, many of these students can not have all of their learning needs met in an inclusive setting.

Marston (1996) compared the academic effects of inclusion only, pull-out only, and combined service models on students with mild disabilities. He utilized a curriculum-based measure in the fall and spring to determine the reading improvement of 240 LD students. Marston discovered that the students served in combined services made significantly higher reading gains. His concluding comments based on the results of his study reflect his beliefs: “What is needed in special education is not a retreat from the basic principles that support a continuum of services for students with disabilities, but rather a renewed commitment to the thoughtful deployment of these ideas.” (p.131).

Saint-Laurent et al. (1998) examined the effects of an in-class service model on students with and without disabilities. This study involved 606 white, french-speaking grade 3 students in 13 different schools. The PIER model (Intervention Program for Student at Educational Risk) was implemented for one year and the academic achievement effects were measured. The PIER model involved collaborative consultation, cooperative teaching, parent involvement, and adapted/scaffolded instruction. The study found that at-risk students showed a significant improvement in their writing

scores and the general education students showed a marked improvement in their math and reading scores. There were no significant improvements in any subject area for the students with learning disabilities. The authors concluded that this in-class service model was very beneficial for some students but not for the lowest achieving students: "...this type of service may not be sufficient to help these students significantly, and it may therefore be necessary to add pull-out services." (p. 251).

Directly related to student academic achievement outcomes is the method by which students with disabilities are receiving their instruction. Zigmund and Baker (1995) studied five different sites that were approaching inclusion in different ways. Overall, they found that the LD students were receiving a good general education, with accommodations made and with support from both the regular and special education teachers. However, the authors observed very little 'traditional' special education services: "We saw almost no specific, directed, individualized, intensive, remedial instruction of students who were clearly deficient academically and struggling with the school work they were being given." (p.178). In a second article, Zigmund and Baker (1996) continue the discussion about the lack of direct, focused, goal-directed instruction observed in these school sites: "These classrooms were not organized or managed in ways that would have sustained direct and focused interventions for a select few students." (p.32).

Espin, Deno, & Albayrak-Kaymak (1998) studied the Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) of 108 students with mild disabilities, 50 in resource settings and 58 in inclusive settings. They found that the resource teachers "allocated 1 1/2 times the number of service minutes for students with disabilities as teachers in inclusive programs, and nearly 1 1/2 times the number of long-range goals." (p.171). Overall, they conclude that resource

teachers are attempting to tailor programs to meet the individual needs of the students whereas inclusive teachers are using more general information that compares one student to another or to a specified curriculum.

These studies clearly show that full inclusion is a desirable goal, but one that cannot possibly accommodate the academic needs of all students with special needs. The studies by Carlberg & Kavale, Manset & Semmel, Zigmund et al., Visser et al., Marsten, and Zigmund & Baker all conclude that there is a place for traditional special education resource room type programs. Their research, along with McLeskey & Waldron and Rea et al., indicates the benefits of inclusion towards academic achievement are proven for some students; however, most also indicate that not all students can be serviced in the same way all the time. Students with disabilities are as unique as any other human being and need to have their education programs tailored to their unique needs. Many of the previously discussed studies support this idea of having a continuum of services available to all students with disabilities. The debate should not be full inclusion or resource room but rather a carefully planned inclusion where the academic needs of the student can be met using a variety of placement options along a continuum.

Student Social Effects

Of equal importance as the academic achievement effects of full inclusion versus resource room type service, are the social effects. One of the major features of the full inclusion model according to Stainback, Stainback, and Jackson (1992) is that “ all children need to be included in the educational and social life of their neighborhood schools and classrooms,

not merely placed in the mainstream.” (p.3). Thus, along with the academic achievement effects of the various inclusion models, the social effects of these models become another vital question in determining the efficacy of these distinctly different approaches.

Sale & Carey (1995) conducted a study to determine the sociometric status of students with disabilities in a full inclusion school. They interviewed 524 students from the elementary school, asking each student whom they liked most/least and to provide reasons why. The students who were currently eligible for special education services and those who were likely eligible, scored much lower social-preference scores than the regular control group. They also found that those students who were likely eligible for special education services had the fewest most-liked nominations, leading the authors to state that “This finding seems to indicate that not identifying students does not positively affect their sociometric status.” (p.17). In other words, removing the labels does not necessarily improve the social standing of students with disabilities. The authors’ findings allowed them to conclude that full inclusion strategies did not help the sociometric status of students with disabilities.

Madge, Affleck, and Lowenbraun (2001) studied the social effects of inclusive classrooms and resource room/regular class placements on LD students. One group of LD students were fully included in a regular classroom that had an experienced teacher and three hours of teaching assistant time per day. The comparison group of LD students received part of their instruction (average of 2.3 hours per day) in the resource room and spent the remainder of their day unsupported in the regular classroom. The study was completed over a three year period in four different schools. The authors used a modified peer rating method that involved having students

choose pictures of students whom they would give stickers to. Overall, the study found that all LD students were less accepted, but that the fully included students have a better opportunity to be socially accepted than their part-time resource room peers. They conclude that the inclusive program provides some social benefit for LD students but that not all social problems are alleviated because of this placement.

This demonstrates yet again that real social problems may accompany the learning disability. It would appear that some students with learning disabilities will not be well accepted regardless of their placement, others will be better accepted in a less stigmatizing environment, and very few will be accepted regardless of placement.” (p.444).

In another study, Kennedy, Shukla, and Fryxell (1997) compared the social effects of a regular class placement versus a special education placement on severely disabled students. The authors of this study examined two groups of students with severe disabilities, one group received their education in a fully inclusive classroom and the other in a special education classroom. The results indicated that the student in the fully inclusive classroom displayed significant social benefits. The authors found that these students interacted more frequently with non-disabled peers, provided and received a higher proportion of social support, and had larger, more durable networks of peers without disabilities.

In an evaluation of a first year inclusion program, Tapasak & Walther-Thomas (1999) found that there were no significant differences between the disabled k-2 students and the non-disabled students with respect to peer acceptance. The teachers surveyed, however, indicated that a good improvement in social skill development was observed in the students with disabilities in the inclusive settings. The authors attributed this improvement

to the ongoing interactions with appropriate peer models and the higher performance expectations found in the inclusive classrooms. On the other hand, the study also found that the students with disabilities have “limited academic and social confidence, inaccurate or negative self-perceptions, and inadequate social skills.” (p.222). This conclusion then raises the question of whether or not the opportunity to receive some direct instruction in a smaller group setting where success is ensured would have an impact on these areas of deficiency.

Hunt and Goetz (1997) reviewed nineteen studies pertaining to inclusive educational programs and outcomes for students with severe disabilities. A consistent theme that emerged from their study is that students with severe disabilities can achieve positive academic and social outcomes in inclusive settings. “Students with severe disabilities realize acceptance, interactions, and friendships in inclusive settings.” (p.26).

The social effects of an inclusion model plays a large role in determining how effective the model is. In reviewing these studies, one can conclude that there are significant social benefits to full inclusion practices. The interactions with positive peer role models seems to encourage social skill development. However, many of these studies involving inclusive classrooms indicate that the students with disabilities have significantly lower sociometric status and lack the social skills and confidence to attain the same social standing as their non-disabled peers. Again, although the social acceptance and social skill development of students with disabilities shows some improvement in fully inclusive classrooms, there continues to be a need for intensive, direct instruction of social skills. Individual students will not respond in the same way to full inclusion; some will thrive socially and others will withdraw further or act out behaviorally. Similar to Salend

and Duhaney's (1999) findings, the results of these studies regarding the social outcomes for students with disabilities is varied. Although many cite the improvements in social skills or peer interactions, students with disabilities continue to face rejection and are not fully accepted by their peers. These varied results may be indicating, again, that inclusion should be encouraged for the social positives it provides but to allow the individualization of the inclusion method so that any social deficiencies could be taught in an effective manner.

Perceptions and Attitudes

The perceptions and attitudes of students, teachers, and parents towards full inclusion and resource room type programs are another important aspect in determining the efficacy of an inclusion model. As with any heated issue, the perceptions and attitudes of those directly involved will vary depending on their own personal situation. These perceptions and attitudes of those most directly affected need to be heard and should be taken into consideration as the education program is developed. In this part of the study, then, the literature will be reviewed to determine what the perceptions and attitudes of the students, teachers, and parents are when it comes to full inclusion versus resource room type placements.

Student Perceptions and Attitudes

Vaughn and Klingner (1998) examined the perceptions of LD students regarding their educational placements. The authors synthesized the results

of 8 studies that included 442 students, who were surveyed and/or interviewed. They established five overall findings:

1. The majority of LD students preferred specific instruction outside of the regular classroom.
2. Most stated that they liked the resource room because the work was easier and help was readily available
3. Many LD students liked their regular classes because it was easier to make friends.
4. Most students valued the support of the special education teacher in the regular education class
5. Most students were unsure how they were placed in special education and who was responsible for their decisions. (p.79)

In concluding their review of the different studies on student perceptions of inclusion models, the authors state: “ The important lesson is that no one educational model will meet the needs of all students with learning disabilities; thus there is an advantage to providing a range of educational models.” (p.86).

More specifically, in one of the 8 studies that Vaughn and Klingner studied, Jenkins and Heinen (1989) interviewed 101 special education students with mild disabilities, 236 remedial students, and 349 general education students. They found that 72% of the students from pull-out programs preferred this model over the fully inclusive classes.

In another one of the 8 studies reviewed, Klingner, Vaughn, Schumm, Cohen, and Forgan (1998) interviewed 32 students, 16 with LD and 16 without LD, who had spent at least one year in an inclusive setting. Overall, 18 students said that they preferred the pull out program. Interestingly, half of the LD students preferred pull out and half preferred their inclusive classrooms, with none of the students seeming to care much about which

program they were a part of. Again, these results were summarized by Klingner et al. in the following statement:

We believe that the results of this study provide additional support for maintaining a continuum of service delivery options and that the placement of each child should be considered individually, based on his or her unique needs.

Shoho, Katims, & Wilks (1997) conducted a survey of 76 high school students with learning disabilities to find out what their perceptions were of inclusive classrooms and resource rooms. The results showed that the fully included students showed a significantly lower level of isolation, normlessness, and powerlessness. The students who were pulled-out for small blocks of time for remedial work reported higher levels of alienation than similar students who spent the whole day in a segregated classroom. This study shows that the age of the student with disabilities must also be taken into consideration when planning an inclusive program.

Jones, Thorn, Chow & Thompson, and Wilde (2002) studied the attitudes of 98 special needs and regular classroom students towards the idea of inclusion and a more student-centered inclusion approach. The authors found that the special needs students showed more acceptance of the idea of inclusion than their regular education peers and the parents surveyed. It must be stressed that the students with special needs were in support of inclusion that was based on their individual needs.

Overall, the studies that examined the students' perceptions of inclusion varied. Although a majority of students preferred a pull-out model, they also found that their inclusive classrooms benefited them socially. The studies also showed that there is a large number of students with disabilities that prefer to be in their inclusive classrooms only. The conclusion can be

made that, predictably, students have differing perceptions of inclusion and that they will almost always prefer a program where they achieve success in school. The students that can cope with the regular class environment with some supports and enjoy the company of their peers will be successful in being fully included while those students who cannot cope academically and socially will prefer the resource room setting, at least in a part time situation. Nevertheless, the perceptions and attitudes of the student with special needs, where appropriate, should be taken into consideration when planning their educational program.

Teacher Perceptions and Attitudes

The regular classroom teacher determines the success of any inclusion model. As well as having to deal with all of the challenges the non-special needs students provide, the regular classroom teacher, in a fully inclusive setting, is also expected to provide an appropriate education to special needs students. Because of the important roles that regular and special education teachers play in any inclusion model, this part of the study will investigate studies regarding teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards inclusion.

Minke, Bear, Deemer, and Griffin (1996) surveyed 185 regular education teachers in traditional classrooms, 71 regular education teachers, and 64 special education teachers who co-taught in inclusive classrooms to determine their attitudes towards inclusion. Overall, they found that teachers with experience in an inclusive setting were more positive about inclusion and felt more competent in dealing with special needs students than did the teachers from more traditional classes. The teachers surveyed supported the

idea of full inclusion as long as the resources (special education co-teacher and teaching assistance support) were available to successfully adapt the inclusive setting for the student with disabilities. Without these resources, the teachers surveyed found the adaptations desirable but not feasible. Interestingly, the teachers in the inclusive classrooms “supported inclusion through the co-teaching arrangement, but not full inclusion. That is they clearly saw some children with mild disabilities as inappropriately placed in the inclusive classroom, even with the resources provided, and expressed the need for continued availability of the cascade of services.” (p.183).

Scruggs and Mastropieri (1996) completed a literature review regarding teachers’ perceptions of inclusion from 1958-1995. From the 28 studies and over 10000 teacher responses, they determined that 2/3 of teachers supported the idea of inclusion. Furthermore, a smaller majority of teachers indicated that they would be willing to include students with disabilities into their own classrooms. On the other hand, a majority of teachers felt that they did not have the skills, time, or resources to do an adequate job.

Jobe, Rust, and Brissie (1996) conducted a study to determine teachers’ attitudes towards full inclusion. They used a randomly selected national sample of 162 classroom teachers who voluntarily responded to the survey. Like Minke et al., the authors of this study found a correlation between special education experience/inclusion in-service training and a positive attitude towards inclusion. They also found, as did Cook (2001), that the disability type and severity would have an influence on the teachers’ views of inclusion and its effectiveness. Overall, the authors found the teachers’ attitude to be neutral. Because they predicted a more negative

attitude, they cautiously viewed this as being positive for the support of full inclusion.

Taylor, Smiley, and Ramasamy (2001) surveyed 180 general and special education preservice and inservice teachers about their views on inclusion for students with mild and severe disabilities. The teachers agreed that the total exclusion of students with mild disabilities is inappropriate and were neutral on the idea of fully including these students into their regular classrooms. They also argued that placing a student with severe disabilities into a fully inclusive setting was also inappropriate but were neutral about the idea of full exclusion or partial inclusion.

These data also indicate that the teachers, both general education and special education, do support the inclusion of some students with disabilities, but are against having all or no students taught in the general education classroom. This implies that they support the LRE concept rather than a blanket policy that either includes or excludes all students with disabilities in the general education classroom. (p.9).

Coates (2001) conducted a study to determine classroom teachers' views of the Regular Education Initiative, which calls for interventions within the regular classroom. The author surveyed 88 k-12 teachers in northwest Iowa. The questionnaire contained 15 items, all asking the teachers to agree or disagree with the assumptions of REI. Overall, the results indicated that the teachers surveyed did not agree with many aspects of the REI.

The strongest disagreement was with items 14 and 2, suggesting that teachers do not view the practice of identifying students for special education as discriminatory, and feel that resource rooms are an effective model for meeting the needs of students with mild handicaps. (p.534).

In a study that investigated the perspectives of parents of children with disabilities and inclusive teachers regarding parent involvement and factors contributing to successful inclusion, Bennett, Deluca, and Bruns (1997) found some interesting results. Teachers surveyed had a less positive view of inclusion than the parents and cited positive attitudes, confidence in skills, availability of support staff, additional training, planning time, and smaller class sizes as required elements for successful inclusion.

In a review of the literature regarding the impact of inclusion on educators, Salend and Duhaney (1999) found common concerns among educators.

Concerns identified by general educators included the negative attitudes of others, the fear that education of students with disabilities might suffer, the inability of GE staff to address severe health and medical and behavioral challenges of students with disabilities, the lack of funds to support personnel and instructional needs, the rigid requirements associated with the GE curriculum, the limited amount of time for collaboration and communication among staff members, and the limited availability of financial resources. (p.123).

These findings were echoed in studies conducted by Glomb & Morgan (1991); Grider (1995); Heflin, Bullock, & Monahan (1999); and Marino & Miller (2000).

Marston (1996) and Cook, Semmel, & Gerber (1999) conducted studies to determine the perceptions and attitudes of special education resource teachers. Marston surveyed 80 specially trained resource teachers about their satisfaction with three different types of special education services: inclusion only, pull-out only, and combined service. The special education resource teachers, who had experience in both inclusive and resource room type settings, were more satisfied with the combined service model (71%). 59% were satisfied with the pull-out model and 40% were

satisfied with the inclusion only model. The results indicate a preference to provide students with disabilities an opportunity to learn in regular classrooms while taking advantage of more specialized instruction in a resource room type setting, depending on the students' needs. Cook, Semmel, and Gerber also surveyed 64 special education teachers, along with 49 principals, to gain a clearer picture of their attitudes towards the concept of inclusion. Their study found that two thirds of the special education teachers disagreed with the statement that inclusion would increase the academic achievement of students with mild disabilities. The authors have concerns about full inclusion implementation when special educators have grave concerns about its appropriateness and its effectiveness. They also suggest that the significant differences in attitudes towards inclusion that principals and special educators have may be the reason that inclusion has not produced improved outcomes for students with disabilities.

Villa, Thousand, Meyers, and Nevin (1996) examined the perceptions of 680 general and special education students and administrators with regards to full inclusion of all students. Overall, the authors found that regular and special education teachers favored the move towards full inclusion and believed that the achievement level of students with disabilities does not decrease in general education classes. Most of the teachers also agreed that the following elements were needed for full inclusion to be successful: inservice training, administrative support, collaboration between the general and special education teachers, time structured for collaboration, and concomitant restructuring initiatives within the school.

In an analysis of the studies presented, some interesting and important similarities emerge with regards to teachers' attitudes and perceptions

towards inclusion. It is clear that the majority of teachers agree with the concept of inclusion and its potential benefits. However, most teachers agree that full inclusion, as a single programming option, is inappropriate and irresponsible. The studies indicate that balancing inclusion in the regular classroom with specialized instruction in a resource room type setting (depending on the needs of each student) would ensure the success of each student with disabilities. In other words, the majority of experienced teachers, regular and special education, that were surveyed in these studies support a continuum of services based on the unique needs of each student. Another commonality found in the studies is the critical need for an appropriate level of resources given to the regular classroom to support inclusion efforts. Most teachers agree that support in the form of: collaborative teaching with the special education teacher; teaching assistant support; training for regular classroom teachers; smaller class sizes; planning time; and specialized instructional materials are needed to ensure success in the regular classroom. Another interesting theme to emerge from the literature review of teachers attitudes and perceptions of inclusion is that teachers with previous experience with inclusion tend to have more positive attitudes about the concept. Thus, a carefully planned inclusion that would ensure teacher success as well as student success would go a long way towards more fully inclusive classrooms.

Parent Perceptions and Attitudes

How the parents of students with disabilities perceive inclusion significantly influences the success of any inclusion plan. Because parental

involvement is a key element of educational programming for any special needs child, their feelings about inclusion into a regular classroom, knowing the needs of their own child best, is crucial to the efficacy of the model chosen. This part of the study, then, will examine the literature regarding parent perceptions and attitudes towards full inclusion or resource room type models.

Garrick Duhaney and Salend (1999) reviewed the literature about parents' perceptions of inclusive educational programs. The studies gathered the views of both parents of children with special needs and parents without. Overall, the authors found that the parent perceptions and attitudes were "varied, complex, and multidimensional, and affected by a variety of interacting variables." (p.121). After reviewing 17 studies, the authors found that parents generally had a positive perception of inclusive placements. The parents surveyed positively agreed that inclusive programs promote acceptance, aid academic/social/emotional development, improve self image and confidence, provide access to positive role models, and prepare children for the real world. On the other hand, parents also had some concerns about inclusive programs. They were concerned about: the lack of qualified personnel; the lack of specialized/individualized instruction; and the mistreatment and isolation of their children by their peer group. Garrick Duhaney and Salend conclude that the varied parental perceptions are a result of the parents' own unique children and their specific needs. "Parental perceptions about inclusion also may be related to their beliefs about the curricular goals of their children's educational programs and the placement that is most likely to facilitate those goals." (p. 126).

Palmer, Borthwick-Duffy, and Widaman (1998) conducted a study to determine parent perceptions of inclusive programs for their children with

significant cognitive disabilities. They surveyed 460 parents who had at least one child, aged 3 to 22 years, being served in public school special day classes. The results reflect the many views that parents may have regarding inclusive placements and how those views may be affected by a number of variables. “Parents can be expected to hold strong and often divergent beliefs about the efficacy of inclusion placements based on perceptions of how these programs will specifically impact their own child.” (p. 280). The authors suggest that parents who view social outcomes as most important may view full inclusion positively and may not be as concerned about inclusion obstructing their child from receiving specialized instruction. Like Garrick Duhaney and Salend, Palmer et al. agree that views on inclusion will always vary according to the needs of their own children. “In sum, parent perception of inclusive practices may be largely a function of the value placed on particular skills and beliefs regarding where those skills can best be nurtured.” (p. 280). The results of this study imply that parent views on inclusion are another critical component of planning an appropriate, supported, and effective educational program.

Green and Shinn (1994) interviewed 21 parents/guardians of students with learning disabilities to gather their views about special education resource room services. The students were in grades 3, 4, or 5 and spent less than half a day in a resource room setting. All of the parents surveyed reported a high degree of satisfaction with the resource room service. Most of these parents were also reluctant to reintegrate their children into the regular classroom for reading instruction. The authors conclude that the parents are satisfied with the resource room service because of the individual attention, the characteristics of the teachers, and the increased self esteem in their children. Improved academic outcomes was not provided as a reason

for their high degree of satisfaction. Although the number of parents/guardians interviewed was small, the overwhelmingly high satisfaction levels with the resource room program offers a completely different viewpoint from the studies focusing on parent perceptions of fully inclusive programs.

Palmer, Fuller, Arora, and Nelson (2001) surveyed 460 parents of students with severe disabilities and analyzed 140 written comments to determine parent perceptions on inclusion for their severely disabled children. The results of the survey showed that about half of the parents expressed positive perceptions of inclusion but only 13% of the comments reflected a positive perception. As Bennet et al.(1997) found in their surveys, parents positively commented that inclusion results in higher academic/functional skills development due to the higher expectations and the presence of higher functioning role models. On the negative side, many parents believe that the type or severity of their children's disability precludes benefit from participating in regular classes. The second most frequently made negative comment involved the overburdening of the regular classroom teacher and the negative impact their child may have on the education of the other students. Although other comments were made about the downside of inclusion (fear of neglect, mistreatment by peers, lack of trained personnel, etc.) the third most common comment made involved the regular classroom environment being incapable of meeting the needs of their child. Surprisingly, only one positive reason statement was given about the opportunity (in an inclusive class) to improve social skills, a basic tenet of the full inclusion advocates. Another interesting aspect of this study's results is that the large number of negative comments about inclusion contradicts the opinions and views of the advocacy groups, like The

Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps, that are pushing for the full inclusion of severely disabled students (in Kauffman and Hallahan, 1995, pp. 314-318). Again, as was stated in two of the other studies, the authors of this study believe that parent perceptions are largely influenced by the needs of their own children.

Parents who are making important decisions regarding what is best for their child are unlikely to be influenced by what may be perceived as social or educational experimentation with their child's well-being at stake. Rather, these decisions are likely to be based on a contemplative and subjective evaluation of a specific child's attributes, circumstances, and needs. (p.481).

The following comment made by one of the surveyed parents supports the authors' statement: "I consider mainstreaming as something that must be decided on a case-by-case basis. Like any other fad, it is being evangelized as a cure-all. It isn't. It is terrific in some cases. In others, it is child abuse." (p.482).

Grove and Fisher (1999) interviewed 20 parents of students with severe disabilities about their experience with inclusive programs. The parents interviewed wanted an inclusive education for their children and believed that their children would benefit academically and socially from full inclusion. The parents found that they needed to be involved in every aspect of inclusion, from providing information and materials about their child's disability to assisting with the modification of the curriculum: "...parents obtain information from a variety of sources before making placement decisions, work to gain access to the general education class environment, and then work to ensure the ongoing success of their children in general education classrooms." (p. 210). The study also found that the parents who wanted full inclusion were caught in the middle of the ideology

of inclusion and realities of the school site; as a result, situations were created where the parents were forced to be the advocates and the experts of inclusive education. Unfortunately, the realities of the school site, such as the lack of resources and expertise, have a significant effect on the effectiveness of an inclusive program. “When placement begins, parents confront a chasm between educational visionaries and the philosophy and resources of the school staff. It is clear from this study that many districts lack the resources to appropriately support students in inclusive settings.” (p. 214). Despite the pressure and insistence by these parents for inclusive education, the success of the programs has been hampered by the resistance of school staff; a resistance that is the result of not providing the necessary resources (i.e. training, planning time, specially trained personnel) for proper implementation. Parent involvement and perceptions of inclusion are critical to the success of any program. However, this study shows the need for effective planning where the wishes of the parents and the resources in the school are acknowledged in planning an inclusion program.

In reviewing the results from all of these studies regarding parent perceptions of inclusion, there are two common themes that emerge. One of these themes involves the varied perceptions of inclusion that parents have that are dependent on their own unique circumstances. The continual sentiment that no one model will meet the needs of all students is echoed by the parents. Parents just want what they perceive as being the best program for the needs of their child. The second common theme regarding parent perceptions is that parent views of inclusion are critical to the planning of an appropriate inclusive program. Their thoughts and feelings regarding the inclusion of their own child must be acknowledged and utilized in the process of educational programming. Parental involvement, as a member of

the school's special education team, is a key component to establishing a plan that will allow a student with disabilities to achieve success at school.

Chapter 3

Analysis, interpretation, discussion of the findings of the literature

Although the debate about full inclusion versus resource room placements has continued over the last several decades, this review of the literature clearly indicates the need for appropriate, common-sense inclusion of students with disabilities. All inclusion decisions need to keep the needs of the student at the center of the process and all directly affected members need options for placement or continuum of services. However, as was determined by this review, the ideals of full inclusion, having students with special needs function socially and academically within the regular classroom, are not to be dismissed. The goal of achieving a maximum rate of inclusion where the students are getting their needs met and are an accepted and contributing member of the class is what all inclusion programs should be striving for. The idea of full inclusion is achievable for some students with special needs but should be just one of many options available for these children. Most of the directly affected people, the students, the teachers, and the parents, agree with the benefits of full inclusion; however, the idea of full inclusion as a single, cure-all solution is where the opposition begins.

The author of the present study supports this opposition. Students with and without special needs are too unique to have any one inclusion model, or any model for that matter, produce the same effects in every case. Shanker

(1994) agrees and calls the full inclusion of all children with special needs unrealistic and harmful. In his article, Full Inclusion is Neither Free Nor Appropriate, Shanker states,

We need to discard the ideology that inclusion in a regular classroom is the only appropriate placement for a disabled child and get back to the idea of a “continuum of placements”, based on the nature and severity of the handicap. Make the ability to function in a regular classroom, given the necessary support services, a condition for placement. (p.21).

His message to include students with disabilities in all regular classroom activities where they have the skills to function is a common sense solution. If the inability to function meaningfully is present, then alternative services are required to teach those skills.

Zigmund and Baker (1996) agree with Shanker:

Nevertheless for students with LD, there are skills and strategies that need to be acquired if instruction in the mainstream is to be meaningful and productive, and these skills and strategies must be taught explicitly and intensively. Providing a venue and resource for delivering this instruction is not only our moral obligation to students with LD, it is also our obligation under the law. (p.33).

In another article, Zigmund and Baker (1995) state, “We must find a way to balance the values of inclusion with the commitment to teaching individual students what they need to learn.” (p.250).

In an article titled Inclusion or Delusion: Can One Size Fit All?, Hornby (1999) concludes,

Therefore, the conclusion of this analysis is that policies of working towards including all children with SEN in mainstream schools and classes should be abandoned. Instead, the level of inclusion, either locational, social, or functional, should be decided on the needs of each individual child and the exigencies of each situation. Once the

necessity for this is accepted, then the focus of special educators can return to that of meeting the individual needs of children with SEN rather than attempting to make “one size fit all”. (p.173).

In many of the studies involving inclusive classrooms, it became clear that all of the efforts went towards making the child fit the program instead of tailoring the program to meet the specific needs of the child. Again, this last comment made by Hornby contains a strong message to make inclusion decisions based on the student’s needs and what that particular classroom and school can offer to support that child.

Deno, Foegen, Robinson, and Espin (1996) completed a case study involving a middle school math teacher’s attempts to implement an inclusive program for students with mild disabilities. After nine weeks of observing limited student progress, the authors, who support the concept of inclusive programming, state,

How do we resolve the apparently conflicting goals of including students with mild disabilities in general education classes and meeting their individual instructional needs? Classroom teachers currently have difficulty meeting the needs of low-achieving students. Is it realistic to expect that with currently available resources, general educators can modify their programs so that the needs of students with mild disabilities are met within the context of heterogeneous classes of 30 or more students and limited support from others, including special education staff? (p. 351).

Although the authors “believe with most of our colleagues that school should be caring and nurturant places with a strong sense of community where all children and youth belong, where diversity is valued, and where the needs of all students are addressed.” (p.350), they also believe that there exists evidence that resource rooms can be an effective component of a program. “We are concerned that by supporting the ideals of inclusion we

will encourage schools to rapidly create drastic reforms that will result in eliminating potentially helpful services.” (p. 352). Overall, Deno et al. believe in inclusive programming but also understand the realities of the regular classroom environment.

What is needed, then, is an inclusion model that allows a student with disabilities to be a contributing and accepted member of their regular classroom while receiving the specific, direct instruction that will make their interactions in the regular classroom more meaningful and purposeful. The much debated resource room model, with some modifications, would allow for maximized inclusion with available pull-out service for more specific and individualized instruction. The key modifications would be to encourage the fullest rate of inclusion possible, to focus on the student’s needs, and to consider the resources in the school. The implication for best inclusion practice, then, is a compromise or a balance between the extreme models of full inclusion and a segregated resource room (Mazurek & Winzer, 2000; Zigmund et al, 1995; Fuchs & Fuchs, 1995; Smelter, Rasch, & Yudewitz, 1994).

According to the results of this literature review, the planning of an inclusion program should involve: keeping the student’s needs at the center of the planning process; encouraging the fullest inclusion possible given the needs of the child; providing a variety of program options; consulting with students, parents, and teachers to get their views; and identifying the resources available in the school to support that student. These ideas are far from being new as there are many “middle-of-the-road” models that utilize these inclusion planning ideas. This author’s findings provide more support for the following student-centered inclusion models.

TEAM model

An example of a more student-centered inclusion model is the TEAM model that was proposed by Wong (in Lupart, McKeough, & Yewchuk, 1995):

The TEAM model represents moderate inclusion in that it targets mainstreaming only of high-incidence special needs students; that is, those identified as having learning disabilities, emotional disturbances, and behaviour disorders, those with educable mental retardation, and those at-risk non-special-needs students in regular classrooms. Further, it proposed implementing such mainstreaming through team teaching between the classroom teacher and the specialist teacher. (p. 198).

This model has elements of the full inclusion ideals (direct service in the regular classroom and cooperative teaching by the regular education and special education teachers) while providing specific pull-out services to those students in need. Because this model provides direct support to the regular classroom teacher through cooperative teaching, direct consultation/collaboration, and specific pull-out instruction, students would receive the best aspects of full inclusion and pull-out models depending on their needs. Furthermore, teachers would be more willing and more confident to include special needs students when they have this type and level of support. Also, as this study showed, the parents of special needs students would also be more willing to support this type of service because it provides many options for the educational programming for their child.

Despite focusing on the provision of direct service to special needs students in the general education classroom, the TEAM model allows for the pull-out of these students. Specifically, the purpose of pull-out is:

(1) to provide intensive remediation of deficiencies in, for example, phonics, word recognition, spelling, reading comprehension, math, and other academic deficiencies; and (2) to teach prerequisite skills to prepare special needs students for particular integrated classes, such as language arts, social studies, or the sciences. (p.199).

This pull-out component addresses the thoughts of Shanker and Zigmund & Baker who both cite the importance of providing direct instruction of the skills needed to make inclusion into the regular classroom meaningful and functional. Furthermore, the pull-out component provides more options or continuum of services, dependent on the needs of each student with special needs. As was made clear in the review, the majority of students, teachers, and parents want these options available to them. Another important aspect of the TEAM model's pull-out option is that it utilizes the skills and knowledge of the special education teacher effectively. As well as co-teaching in the regular classroom, the special education teacher utilizes their skills to set up individual education programs and provide specific, direct, and individualized instruction to those in need.

Wong, in agreement with the teacher's perceptions presented in this study, believes that the necessary resources need to be available for the TEAM model to have success. The resources to have special education teachers available in schools and to provide in-service training through specialized consultants are two of the vital components needed to foster success. She also indicates that the success of this model would be dependent on having teachers who willingly volunteer to participate in such a model and to somehow ensure that the regular and special education teachers are compatible in personality and working style.

Although the TEAM model lacks the empirical efficacy data to support its ideas, the model does attempt to utilize the strengths of both the full inclusion and resource room type models. The TEAM model is clearly student focused and provides the teachers and parents with the support and options to meet the unique needs of their students.

Equifinality

Another student-focused inclusion idea is provided by Chow, Blais, and Hemingway (1999). They propose a concept known as Equifinality – or equal outcome:

An alternative approach for providing education lies not in providing equal treatment to all irrespective of learning abilities, rather the objective might be adaptation of education to the needs of each learner group to ensure more equal access to education to achieve “equifinality” – equal outcome. (p.462-3).

The idea, according to Chow et al. is to provide a learning environment that would allow students the opportunity to maximize their individual development. The authors agree that “The principle of equifinality can be established through both inclusion and special education classes.” (p.463). In a further discussion of this concept, Jones et al. (2002) explain that equifinality:

Maintains that each and every student should be given the necessary supports and opportunities to benefit meaningfully from the education he or she is receiving. Students are like audience in a big auditorium listening to a speaker. In order for all to hear (equifinality – an equal outcome), an elaborate sound amplification system is installed. Equifinality in education may be accomplished by placing special needs students in both the inclusion classroom and the segregated

classroom so that they could hear the speaker (to utilize the aforementioned metaphor). Placement of these students into inclusion or segregated classrooms would be based on the individual's needs (as established by parent, student, teacher, and counselor) rather than type of disability. (p.629).

This inclusion idea supports the concept of providing an education that meets the individual needs of each student. It, too, supports the provision of a continuum of services and encourages the involvement of students, teachers, and parents in the planning process. Jones et al. say it best in the conclusion to their study of parent and student attitudes towards inclusion:

The debate of total inclusion versus total exclusion may not be resolved by a dichotomous decision which strictly endorses only one of these two extremes. Perhaps it can be resolved by adopting a policy that optimizes the outcome of each special needs students given their needs. It is time for us to dispose of the dichotomous inclusion/exclusion frame of thinking and view the issue of integration on a continuum upon which placement of students is based on the criterion of student-centered equifinality. (p.632).

Responsible Inclusion

A third idea that supports a more middle-of-the-road, common sense inclusion model is what Vaughn and Schumm (1995) call responsible inclusion. They define responsible inclusion “as the development of a school-based education model that is student centered and that bases educational placement and service provision on each student's needs.” (p. 265). They go on to describe responsible inclusion in this way:

The goal of responsible inclusion is that all students be placed in the general education classroom unless their academic and/or social needs cannot be adequately met there. The model is accountable first and foremost to the student not to maintaining the educational programs or

beliefs of the faculty in the school. Responsible inclusion provides for a continuum of services, so the issue becomes not the place in which the child is educated (e.g. the general education classroom), but the effective procedures and outcomes that reflect appropriate instructional practices for each child with disabilities. (p.265)

Again, like the two previous inclusion models, responsible inclusion supports the findings of this present literature review. It puts the student's needs at the center of decision making and supports the continuum of services. Responsible inclusion recognizes that some students can be successful in a full inclusion setting but that others need more direct and intensive support.

Vaughn and Schumm (p. 267) provide these nine components for responsible inclusion:

1. Putting the student's needs first.
2. Teachers choose to participate in inclusive classrooms.
3. Adequate resources are considered and provided for inclusive classrooms.
4. Models are developed and implemented at the school-based level.
5. A continuum of services is provided.
6. Service delivery model is evaluated on an ongoing basis.
7. Ongoing professional development for teachers and other support staff is made available.
8. Teacher and other key personnel discuss and develop their own philosophy on inclusion.
9. Curricula and instruction that meet the needs of all students are developed and refined.

These nine components fit very closely with the findings from this literature review on effective inclusion. The only aspect that is missing, from this author's point of view, is the importance of involving parents in the process.

These three inclusion models provide solutions for ways to effectively plan the inclusion of special needs students, and all meet the requirements

for effective inclusion as determined by this literature review. These models and any others that are focused on the student's needs, encourage inclusion into the regular classroom, provide for pull-out services when needed (continuum of services), involve students and parents in decision making, and that call for the provision of necessary resources deserve consideration when choosing an inclusion model to adopt in any school.

Inclusion Framework

In conducting the literature review, there seemed to be a lack of an easy-to-follow, practical framework that any school team could use as a basis for effective inclusion planning. For an inclusion planning framework to be effective, it needs to incorporate the major findings from this literature review: focus on meeting the needs of the student; encourage maximized inclusion into the regular classroom; provide the regular classroom teacher with the necessary supports; acknowledge and utilize the wishes/views of students and parents; consider the resources available in the school (continuum of services); and ensure that continual evaluation of the inclusion plan is done so that adjustments can be made along the inclusion continuum. Thus, a framework for effective inclusion planning will be proposed using these findings from the literature review. The goal is to create a user-friendly framework that any education professional could use to ensure an organized, well-thought out, and collaborative inclusion program for any student with special needs.

The first step in the planning framework is to get all directly involved members together for a meeting. Because this inclusion framework will be meshed closely with the student's Individual Education Plan (IEP), the

initial IEP planning meeting, 4-6 weeks into the school year, will be used to implement the framework. Those first weeks of the school year will see the continuation of the plan from the previous school year, will allow the regular classroom teacher to get to know the student, and will provide the time needed to collect some assessment data. The regular classroom teacher, the special education teacher, the parents, the student (if appropriate), the school administrator, the teaching assistant, and any other involved professional support staff should be present at the meeting.

The second part of the inclusion planning framework will involve establishing the major components of the student's IEP: identifying the student's strengths/needs and establishing goals/objectives for the school year. Because the focus of this planning framework is to ensure that the student's needs are met, this step is crucial to the success of the process. Dragow, Yell, and Robinson (2001) believe that all placement decisions should be based on the student's needs and that these decisions should be made after the student's program is set. "Thus, the goals, benchmarks, STOs, special education and related services, and supplementary aids and services must be determined prior to making any placement decision." (p.364). Once the needs and goals are established then the inclusion plan can be tailored to meet these goals in the most productive and effective manner.

Once the goals and objectives are set, the next step involves a discussion about how these goals and objectives could best be met. This discussion would involve where instruction might take place, which materials might be used, who might provide the instruction, when this instruction will take place, and what specialized equipment might be needed. Prior to this discussion, however, all of the available resources in the school need to be identified. These resources might include: special education

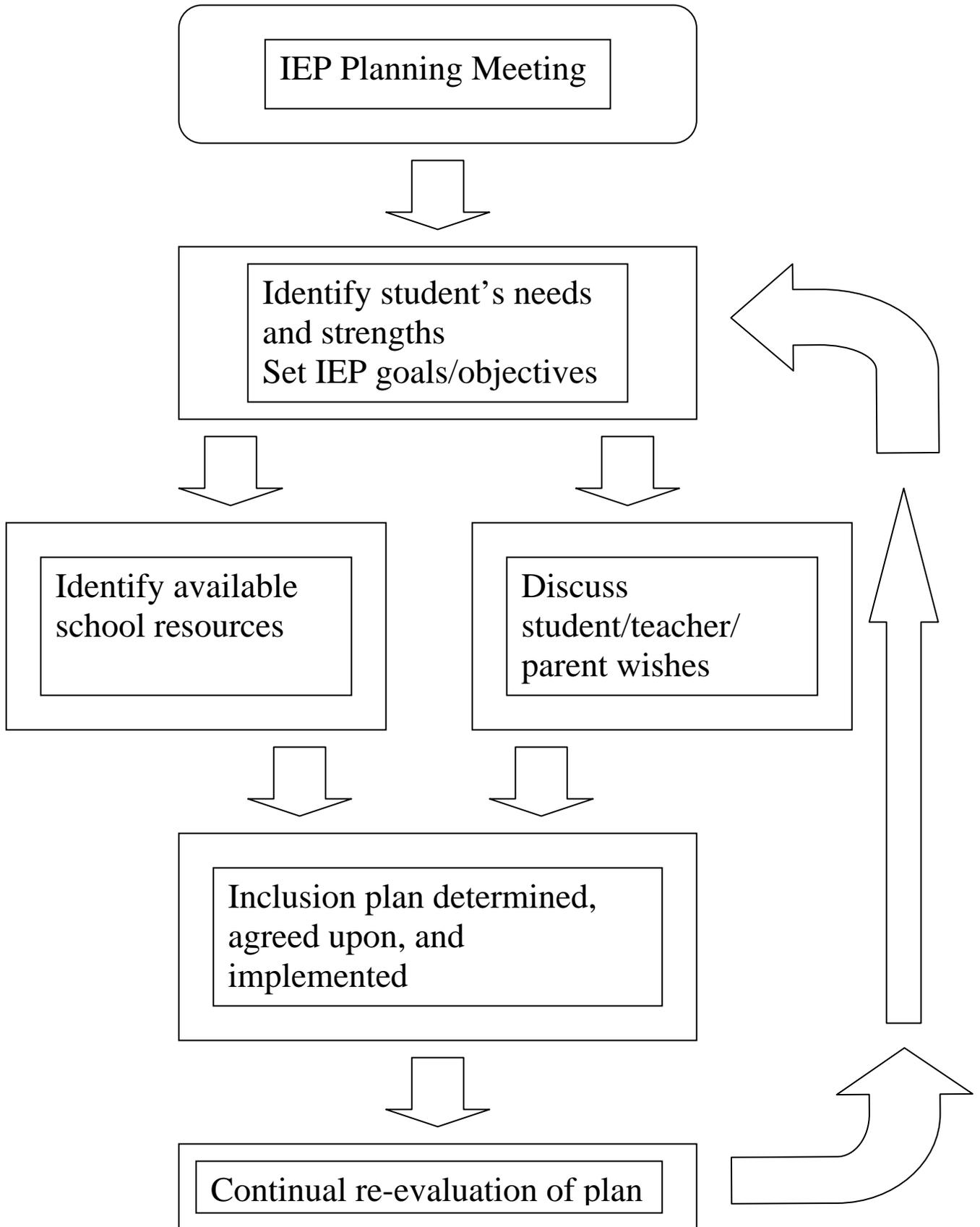
support in the form of a special education teacher; teaching assistant time; consultation time; teacher experience/expertise with inclusion of special needs children; instructional materials and equipment; other professional support staff; and professional development funds. Knowing what resources a school has available to support the student with disabilities provides the team with various options for program delivery. It also serves to make the regular classroom teacher feel supported and avoids the fear that some teachers may have about having a student with special needs ‘dumped’ into their classroom. Once the resources available to that particular student are known, then a discussion regarding student, teacher, and parent views and wishes regarding the inclusion plan must be expressed. Is full inclusion the wish of the parents? Does the teacher feel sufficiently trained to effectively teach the disabled student? Does the student prefer working on their academics in the quieter setting of the resource room? Is a special education teacher available to co-teach in the classroom? These types of questions need to be answered and/or discussed at this stage of the framework. Once the goals/objectives are known, the school resources have been identified, and the student, teacher, parent wishes are known, then the inclusion plan can be established. Again, for some students, this process will proceed quickly if they are able to function fully in a classroom with minimal support. On the other hand, this stage of the framework could be quite involved if the needs of the student are significant.

The fourth stage of the framework involves the development of the specific inclusion plan; who will teach the specific objectives; where instruction will take place; what modifications are needed for regular classroom participation; how will the teaching assistant support the student; and other specific inclusion details. At the end of this stage, all team

members must agree on the inclusion plan. Without the full support of all members, the success of the plan would be compromised. The purpose for identifying the goals/objectives, identifying the school's resources, and identifying the views of the directly involved members is to ensure an inclusion plan that meets the needs of the student and will allow the student to achieve success at school. Once an agreement is reached, the plan can be implemented. Because of the contributions from all team members, ownership of the plan would be strong and the strong support of the plan will help to ensure its success. As part of the implementation, ongoing observations should be recorded to serve as information for program modification. All of the available resources should be in place prior to the implementation of the inclusion plan.

The final stage of the inclusion planning framework is paired with the continual evaluation of the IEP. The inclusion plan needs to be evaluated on a consistent and frequent basis. The evaluations can result in small or significant changes depending on how the plan is meeting the ever changing needs of the student. For most students with disabilities, meaningful and functional participation along side their regular classroom peers will be a primary goal, and changes to the plan should reflect this. The following diagram displays the inclusion planning framework that has been proposed.

Inclusion Planning Framework



Summary

As the review of the literature regarding full inclusion and resource room type (pull-out) models was being completed, it became increasingly evident that this debate had no substantial reason to be so heated. The full inclusion advocates have very little empirical evidence (Feiler & Gibson, 1999) to back their claims that full inclusion should be the only inclusion option for students with disabilities. The predominant ideal of the full inclusion model, for all students with disabilities to be participating, accepted, and contributing members of their neighborhood schools and classrooms, has the support of most students, teachers, and parents. The difficulties lie in ensuring, in the fully inclusive classroom, that the needs of the student are being met. The harsh realities of the regular classroom (large class sizes, teacher inexperience or lack of expertise in including special needs children, lack of resources) make the task of full inclusion for students with any disability a tremendously difficult one. The idea of full inclusion being a “one-size-fit-all” cure for all students regardless of their disability is the other aspect that weakens the advocates arguments. All students are unique and need equally unique programming to meet their needs. Upon completing this review of the literature, it was difficult to understand what all the fuss was about.

Reviewing the literature regarding the efficacy of resource room type models where a continuum of services was available, clearly demonstrated that the student’s needs should come first when determining an inclusive program. Common sense says that the successful inclusion of a student with a mild learning disability would be easier to accomplish than the inclusion of a student with significant cognitive, emotional, or behavioral disorders.

Having a continuum of services available allows the inclusion to be controlled in order to ensure success, while providing opportunities to improve academic and social skills. Full inclusion of students with significant disabilities may be accomplished, but it would be done, in many cases, to the detriment of the student, the teacher, and the student's peer group. A carefully planned inclusion would be tailored to meet the student's needs and preferences, teacher needs, and parent preferences. Resource room supported inclusion just makes more sense and the empirical data and attitudinal survey data is available to support its claims. To conclude, this study supports a more traditional role for special educators and an adherence to the least restrictive environment principle of the P.L. 94-142. Simply put, full inclusion is not appropriate in all situations. Students, teachers, and parents need options along a continuum of services to ensure that students with disabilities receive an appropriate and individualized education. As the debate continues over how we can best meet student's needs in special education, hopefully, changes will be made that consider the diverse needs of students with disabilities, the demands on the regular classroom teacher, the wishes of students and parents, and the importance of providing the necessary resources to make it all work. Kauffman makes the following analogy in support of student-focused inclusion models:

Diversity among students is often described as something to be celebrated. If diversity of students is to be celebrated, then perhaps the diversity of services, programs, and environments providing appropriate education and habilitation should also prompt celebration. (p. 203).

Fuchs and Fuchs (1994) get the last words as they sum up their thoughts on special education reform and, coincidentally, provide an effective summarizing comment for this literature review:

Now is the time for leadership that recognizes the need for change; appreciates the importance of consensus building; looks at general education with a sense of what is possible; respects special education traditions and values and the law that undergirds them; and seeks to strengthen the mainstream, as well as other educational options that can provide more intensive services, to enhance the learning and lives of all children. (p.305).

A common sense vision that would benefit all students with disabilities.

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