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## Teacher Attitudes of Inclusion and Academic Performance of Students with Disabilities

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The University of Southern Mississippi

TEACHER ATTITUDES OF INCLUSION AND ACADEMIC  
PERFORMANCE OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

by

Jonathan Earl Sutton

Abstract of a Dissertation  
Submitted to the Graduate School  
of The University of Southern Mississippi  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

May 2013

## ABSTRACT

### TEACHER ATTITUDES OF INCLUSION AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

by Jonathan Earl Sutton

May 2013

Since the integration of the inclusion model, supported by the IDEA (1997), within public schools, teacher resistance and frustration has risen (Hardy, 1999). The climate of general education teachers' classrooms furthermore, has not been the same (Liu & Meyer, 2005). Key elements ensuring success of inclusion and the implementation of inclusive education are the views, perspectives, and attitudes of the personnel who have the responsibility for implementing it; the teachers (Shade & Stewart, 2001). Avramidis and Norwich (2002) argued that successful implementation of any inclusive policy or programming is extremely dependent upon the educators being receptive and positive. Hines (2011) stated that as teacher accountability became more widespread and assessed, teacher resistance, misconceptions, and attitudes not favorable to the idea of educating students with disabilities within the general education classroom/inclusion setting became more prevalent.

This study identified whether their relationship between teacher attitudes about inclusion and their attitudes about the academic performance of students with disabilities. A survey was conducted resulting in 105 participants whom were all general education teachers of an inclusion setting within an elementary or middle school. After receiving questionnaires for this quantitative study, responses were analyzed using SPSS reports of

descriptive statistics, ANOVA, and Pearson Correlations.

Findings of this study indicated participants of this study consisted mostly of novelty teachers who exemplified strong, positive beliefs of the capabilities of students with disabilities, especially when support and on-going training is available. The findings of this study indicated that professional development, years of inclusion teaching experience, and college preparation do not have a significant relationship with teachers' attitudes of student performance. The results of this study suggest that there is a significant relationship between teachers' attitude of student performance and the support and training received by the general education teacher. The teachers' attitudes of student performance and their perception of the effect of teacher student ratios have no significant relationship. The results of this research suggest that a significant relationship does exist between teachers' attitudes of student performance and their perception of student behavior concerns. From this study, recommendations for policy, practice, and future research were addressed.

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A Dissertation  
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May 2013

## DEDICATION

In John 15:5, Jesus states, “for without Me you can do nothing.” I would like to give honor and thanks to God for his faithfulness and the grace, patience, and dedication He has afforded me throughout my educational studies. This work is dedicated to my wife, Courtney Sutton, my three children, Jerbria, Corbyn, and Jayden, and my parents, Angela Young and Henry Sutton, who have all sacrificed and encouraged me throughout this journey. My wife’s and children’s sacrifices, patience, and understandings are extremely appreciated and shall never be forgotten.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

As the years have progressed, the education of students has changed. Prior to the signing of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1997, students with disabilities were looked upon by educators and society as being incapable of performing educationally and as successful as general education students without disabilities (Wright & Wright, 2007). The signing of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1997 (IDEA, P.L. 105-17) changed the perspective of public education with regard to students with disabilities who were not being afforded equal educational opportunities and rights as those students occupying the general education setting (Turnbull, Turnbull, Shank, & Leal, 1999). Thanks to the IDEA (1997), there has been an effort to bridge this gap. Since the passage of IDEA (1997), students with disabilities should be receiving the equal expectations and opportunities of the K-12 educational curriculum. Within IDEA, the idea of educating students with disabilities in a setting with nondisabled students to the maximum extent possible has been classified as ensuring that disabled students are receiving the educational curriculum in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (1997) ensures that the LRE of students with disabilities is implemented with considerations to the continuum of services (range of services which must be available to disabled students of a school district which ensures these students are served in an environment resembling the general environment to the maximum extent possible). Students with disabilities are expected to receive the educational curriculum in the general classroom unless the additional support of supplementary aids and services are not successful (Individuals with Disabilities

Education Act Amendment, 1997). The notion of students with disabilities remaining in the general education classroom with nondisabled peers is referred to as the term *inclusion*. Rogers (1993) defines inclusion as the commitment to educate each child, to the maximum extent appropriate, in the school and classroom he or she would otherwise attend if not having a disability. Rogers argued that inclusion involves bringing the support services to the child and requires only that the child will benefit from being in the class rather than having to keep up with the other students. Although inclusion is not identified in IDEA, it is practiced consistently from district to district to ensure compliance with the regulations of LRE, which is in fact a component of IDEA (Wright & Wright, 2007).

Dr. Rebecca Hines (2011) shared that in the 1960s, although schools became gradually more receptive to inclusion, the atmosphere resulting from the civil rights movement was largely responsible for creating a society who believed that everyone should be in a mainstream society with a collective conscience. Mainstreaming was the belief and practice that students with disabilities performing at or near grade-level could learn in the general education classroom with minimum support (Hines, 2011). These students had to *earn* their way in the general education setting. Hines stated that in mainstream settings general and special education teachers engaged in very few collaborative opportunities to support the needs of the students with disabilities. In 2011 the Bureau of Education and Research found that as time progressed, mainstreaming students with disabilities became an overwhelming task for general education teachers, and as a result many general education teachers began to question their qualifications and in many cases resented the educational practice as a whole. In 1986, a complete merger

of general education and special education was enforced and supported when former and then Secretary of State Madeline Will found that instead of simply placing students with disabilities in the general education classroom without the needed support, she envisioned and enforced a plan that would ensure individualized opportunities for all students.

Will's plan consisted of bringing both the best of general education and exceptional (special) education together to enhance expert content and strategies to ensure that all students would benefit from the inclusive design (Bureau of Education and Research, 2011).

The Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Service's *Thirty-five years of progress in educating children with disabilities through IDEA* (2010) agreed as a whole that special education has not produced the desired results, yet progress has been made. In spite of the funding spent to support special education, outcomes and benefits for students in special classes have shown little to no benefits to students (Hines, 2011). Unfortunately, sometimes the lack of funds and resources has had detrimental effects for those students placed in separate settings for special education (Turnbill & Turnbill, 1998). Turnbill and Turnbill (1998) argued that even when considering those students with severe disabilities in comparison to the special education classrooms, general education classrooms have the benefit of providing more instruction. Also within the inclusive setting, more whole class instruction is utilized, a pleasant amount of one-to-one instruction is provided, academic content is addressed more, and nondisabled peers are utilized more as special education teachers are utilized less (Smith, Polloway, Patton, & Dowdy, 2008). However, new policies such as those detailed in No Child Left Behind and IDEA (1997) state that the accountability of the performance of students with

exceptionalities rest on the shoulders of the general education teacher, as special education is a subset of general education. Along with the pressure from teacher accountability came teacher resistance, misconceptions, and attitudes not favorable to the idea of educating students with disabilities within the general education classroom/inclusion setting (Hines, 2011).

Avramidis and Norwich (2002) argued that successful implementation of any inclusive policy or programming is extremely dependent upon the educators (implementers) being receptive and positive. Turnbull, Turnbull, Shank, and Leal (1999), Webber (1997), and Voltz, Brazil, and Ford (2001) have sought to examine the attitudes teachers have towards the inclusion of students with special educational needs/disabilities. Just in recent years, the notion of inclusive education has gained momentum. It has been found that key elements in the success of inclusion and the implementation of inclusive education are the views, perspectives, and attitudes of the personnel who have the major responsibility for implementing it, which are teachers (Shade & Stewart, 2001). It has been argued that teachers' beliefs and attitudes are critical in ensuring the success of inclusive practices since teachers' acceptance of the policy of inclusion is likely to affect their commitment to implementing it (Norwich, 1994).

Many teachers have found it difficult to fully embrace inclusive educational practices. For example, in a study conducted by Coates (1989) it was determined that general education teachers in Iowa schools did not have a negative view of pull-out programs; yet, they were not supportive of full inclusion. Pull-outs have been said to relieve general education teachers of their duties and exposure to students with special

needs (Shade & Stewart, 2001). During a pull-out, typically the special needs students are exited from the general education classroom with another educator (generally a special education teacher) for some remediation and tutorials on skills and objectives not mastered by the student (Hines, 2011). Pull-outs limit the student's exposure within the general curriculum and in many cases may be extended for several hours, which interferes with the concept of full inclusion (Hines, 2011). Semmel, Abernathy, Butera, and Lesar (1991) conducted a study where they surveyed a combination of nearly 390 general and special education elementary educators in Illinois and California school districts. Their findings reported that teachers understood they could not override the inclusion policies and were not dissatisfied with a special education system that operated pullout special education programs. In the schools studied, students were not fully included and missed a vast amount of exposure to the general curriculum and classroom, leaving the general education teacher somewhat relieved and excused, so to speak, from his/her responsibility and accountability of the students with disabilities (Semmel et al., 1991).

Another relevant study was conducted by Vaughn, Schumm, Jallad, Slusher, and Samuell (1996) and it examined mainstream and special education teachers' perceptions of inclusion through the use of focus group interviews. The majority of teachers participating in the focus group interviews were not active participants of the inclusive program, yet they were characterized as having strong, negative feelings about inclusion and felt that the policy and decision makers were out of touch with the realities of the classroom (Vaughn et al., 1996). These teachers were adamant as they argued that class size, inadequate resources, extent to which all students would benefit from inclusion and

the lack of adequate teacher preparation would all be factors that would negatively affect the success of inclusion (Vaughn et al., 1996).

Teachers are vital components for ensuring that inclusion programs are being implemented successfully with the presence of equal opportunities that will promote the success of all students (Anderson, 2007). As general education teachers work with a more diverse population, they may find it difficult to work with the differing learning styles and disabilities adequately, mainly because of the lack of knowledge, training, and preparation (Sze, 2009). As a result, general education teachers may begin to form attitudes and beliefs that are not favorable to the inclusion program. According to Pace (2003), substantial studies have been conducted that support the idea that the attitudes of teachers are essential to the inclusion program. Van Reusen, Shoho, and Barker (2001) supported the concept of teachers supporting inclusion programs but that the realities of this model within daily practices are conflicting. Many teachers support the idea of students with disabilities receiving instruction in a general setting but when administrators assign teachers to instruct the inclusion classrooms, their attitudes may become questionable (Van Reusen et al., 2001). The Director of the National Center on Educational Outcomes, Martha Thurlow (2004), testifies:

We know how to educate all children, including those with disabilities, if we have the will to do so. The discussion should not be about whether students with disabilities can learn to proficiency – and thus, it should not be about whether they should be included in assessment and accountability measures – it must be about whether we have the will and commitment to make it happen. (p. 41)

Inclusion has a variety of benefits for those students with disabilities (Goldstein, 2006). For inclusion to be effective, all stakeholders, especially teachers, must have a strong desire to educate students with disabilities in a general setting and believe that these students are capable of high educational achievement (Burstein, Sears, Wolcoxon, Cabello, & Spagna, 2004). If the will of the teachers is in place, the assumption would be that the teachers' attitude about the performance of the students with disabilities is consistent with their will and as a result students will perform at high levels.

#### Statement of the Problem

Since the integration of the inclusion model, supported by the IDEA (1997), within public schools, teacher resistance and frustration has risen (Hardy, 1999). The climate of general education teachers' classrooms furthermore, has not been the same (Liu & Meyer, 2005). The educational arena had been identified by Liu and Meyer (2005) as mediocre and non-inclusive to every student within the classroom. Those students with disabilities within the general education classroom are often overlooked and in many cases are isolated with a worksheet to complete, never receiving the same education as the general population (Beglieri & Knopf, 2004). As a result, these students receive the minimum exposure to the general curriculum and are unable to perform successfully on state assessments, and in turn, may be unable to receive a diploma (Etscheidt, 2007). Teachers' attitudes and poor practices towards this special population are responsible for lowered self-esteem of students with disabilities (Martinez, 2004). As students become more dissatisfied with their education, ultimately, society may be faced with the continuation of rising dropout rates and less skilled future workers (Kluth, Villa, & Thousand, 2002). If the problem is addressed correctly, many benefits could result.

For example, teachers would embrace inclusion and students with disabilities, and in turn, those students would be afforded the same opportunities as their nondisabled peers. Society as a whole would become more experienced with embracing and accepting diversity. Student assessment scores would rise; therefore, creating better educated and skilled workers.

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify the relationship between teacher attitudes about inclusion and their attitudes about the academic performance of students with disabilities. The study sought to describe the attitudes of general education teachers at the elementary and middle school levels who used the inclusion practice in their classrooms. Furthermore, this study sought to understand the influences of teachers' attitudes, regarding inclusion.

### Research Questions

First this study measured the attitude of general education teachers of the inclusion programming and then it measured the impact that inclusion may have on the teachers' attitude regarding the academic capabilities of students with disabilities. The following research questions were examined in this study:

1. Is there a significant relationship between teacher's attitude of student performance and the variables of inclusion experience, special education courses taken, minor in special education, and professional development hours?

Hypothesis: There is no significant relationship between teachers' attitude of student performance and the variables of inclusion experience, special

education courses taken, minor in special education, and professional development hours.

2. Is there a significant relationship between teacher's attitude of student performance and the teacher's perception of support and training?

Hypothesis: There is no significant correlation between teacher's attitude of student performance and the teacher's perception of support and training.

3. Is there a significant relationship between teacher's attitude of student performance and their perception of the effect of teacher student ratios?

Hypothesis: There is no significant relationship between teacher's attitude of student performance and their perception of the effect of teacher student ratios.

4. Is there a significant relationship between teacher's attitude of student performance and their perception of the student behavioral concerns?

Hypothesis: There is no significant relationship between teacher's attitude of student performance and their perception of the student behavioral concerns.

#### Definition of Terms

*Accommodation:* The Florida Inclusion Network (2011) defines accommodation as a teaching support or service that a student needs in order to meet expectations or goals of the general education curriculum. It addresses the questions of 'how' the student will learn.

*Behavior concerns:* Turnbull et al., (1999) stated many students with learning disabilities also have attention deficit disorder or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. The authors state that these students must have a structured environment and may

become disruptive if not provided. Constant disruptions, defiance, and inattentiveness may constitute as behavior concerns in this study.

*General education:* The classroom environment where students without disabilities are generally taught.

*Inclusion:* The Florida Inclusion Network (2011) defines inclusion as the practice of educating all students together, students with and without disabilities, regardless of their abilities or readiness. It is more than placing students with disabilities in a room with their peers without disabilities. With true inclusion, students with disabilities can access the general curriculum, classrooms, and typical school activities. Rather than having the student go to a segregated setting for specialized instruction and support, the student receives these supports in the general curriculum. Within an inclusion setting, no more than forty-nine percent of the students in that particular general education classroom have disabilities (National Center for Education Statistics, 2002).

*Individualized Education Plan (IEP):* Describes the educational program that has been designed to meet a child's unique needs. Each child who receives special education and related services must have an IEP. Each IEP must be designed for one student and must be a truly individualized document. The IEP creates an opportunity for teachers, parents, school administrators, related services personnel, and students (when age appropriate) to work together to improve educational results for children with disabilities. The IEP is the cornerstone of a quality education for each child with a disability and is a legally binding state and federal document (Sack, 2000).

*Large classroom size:* 1:27 (student: teacher ratio)

*Learning Disabilities (LD)*: “Including disorders involved in understanding or in using spoken or written language that result in substantial difficulties in listening, speaking, reading, written expression, or mathematics” (Turnbull et al., 1999, p. 123).

*Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)*: To the maximum extent appropriate, school districts MUST educate students with disabilities in the regular classroom with appropriate aids and supports, referred to as supplementary aids and services, along with their non-disabled peers, unless a student’s IEP requires some other arrangements (National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities, 2010).

*Modification*: The Florida Inclusion Network (2011) defines modification as a change in the general education curriculum. It addresses ‘what’ a student will learn; instructional level, content, and performance criteria.

*Other Health Impairment (ADD/ADHD)*: Having limited strength, vitality, or alertness, including a heightened alertness to environmental stimuli, that results in limited alertness with respect to the educational environment, that:

a. is due to chronic or acute health problems such as asthma, attention deficit disorder or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, diabetes, epilepsy, a heart condition, hemophilia, lead poisoning, leukemia, nephritis, rheumatic fever, sickle cell anemia, and Tourette syndrome; and

b. adversely affects a child’s educational performance [34 *Code of Federal Regulations* §300.8(c) (10)].

*Smaller classroom size*: 1:20 (student: teacher ratio)

*Special education*: IDEA (1997) states Special Education is specifically designed instruction, at no cost to parents, to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability,

including instruction conducted in the classroom, in the home, in the hospital and institutions, and in other settings, and instruction in physical education.

*Special education background experience:* prior exposure to special education practice and law through special education college courses and/or degree(s), professional development, and the teaching of students with special needs.

*Supplemental aids and services:* Aids, services, and other supports that are provided in regular education classes, other education-related settings, and in extracurricular and nonacademic settings, to enable children with disabilities to be educated with nondisabled children to the maximum extent appropriate (National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities, 2010)

*Support and training:* Support, training, and resources provided by the principal, special education director and department, and special education teacher with the goal of allowing the general educator to become comfortable and at ease with working with students with disabilities.

#### Delimitations

This study is limited to understanding the attitudes of third through eighth grade general education teachers working in the inclusion setting within the school districts of the Metro Jackson area.

#### Assumptions

It is assumed the participants of the study honestly completed the questionnaire.

#### Justification

Identifying the attitudes of the general education inclusion teachers is extremely vital to the school culture and academic environment. Van Reusen et al., (2001) believed

the attitudes which teachers, administrators, and other school personnel hold towards inclusion and the learning ability of students with disabilities may influence school learning environments and the availability of equitable educational opportunities for all students. Administrators, parents, students, general education inclusion teachers, and special education teachers may all be potential beneficiaries of this study. This study may provide ideas that may be useful in formulating a more effective inclusion program that is favorable to student learning. General education inclusion teachers may thoroughly articulate their ideas and concerns for improvement, introducing issues and blemishes unknown to administrators. Administrators may conclude from the study those areas in which professional development may be needed to improve teacher morale and performance, familiarity of various disabilities, and strategies for teaching students with disabilities. According to a study conducted by McLeskey and Waldron (2002), in order for general education inclusion teachers to prepare and have a sense of competence in educating students with disabilities they need additional training. Identifying the factors influencing the attitudes and beliefs of teachers may construct useful information that may be utilized by administrators and central office personnel to address the need for possible updates and changes of existing policies and procedures surrounding the current format of the inclusion program. Students will benefit from the trainings and knowledge presented to teachers during professional development workshop which articulates the concept that all students can learn and perform academically to high standards.

#### Summary

No Child Left Behind (2001) and IDEA (1997) both provide guidance on how to educate students with disabilities. Although neither law specifically mentions inclusion,

the laws do state that students with disabilities should be placed in the least restrictive environment (LRE) and should have access to the general education curriculum and settings, and in most cases this is the inclusion setting. Inclusion is based upon the belief that all students can learn (Rogers, 1993). Rogers (1993) argued that inclusion has to be embraced and will be ineffective if students are placed without preparation, isolated, and their needs are ignored. In order for inclusion to be successful, beliefs, feelings, attitudes, and perceptions of teachers must be in support of the model (McLeskey & Waldron, 2002). These attributes are charged with enabling teachers to respect the model (McLeskey & Waldron, 2002). In the inclusion setting, teachers become more willing to ensure flexible approaches towards teaching and learning as they alter their approaches to ensure instruction and assessment are adapted for different kinds of learners (Karten, 2005). Furthermore, teachers become more willing to engage themselves in collaborative, professional learning opportunities regarding the inclusion model (Karten, 2005).

Kochhar, West, and Taymans (2000) argued that the benefits of inclusion far outweigh the difficulties it presents. The authors believed inclusion offers to students without disabilities the advantage of having an extra teacher or paraprofessional to help with the development of their own skills, greater acceptance of students with disabilities, facilitates understanding that students with disabilities are not easily identified, and promotes better understanding of the similarities among students with and without disabilities. For those students with disabilities, inclusion facilitates more appropriate social behavior because of the climate of higher expectations within the general education classroom (Dubin, 2006). Moreover, it promotes a level of achievement above those

educated in a self-contained classroom, offers a wide range of support such as the social support from nondisabled peers, and improves ability of students and teachers to adapt to different teaching and learning styles (Dubin, 2006).

Thus, the many benefits of the inclusion model should inform the educational arena that the practice can be successful when implemented correctly, and with the right attitude and support.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

#### Introduction

This chapter will review literature relating to general education teachers providing instruction within the inclusive setting. The literature relating to attitudes and beliefs general education teachers have about the inclusion program and the academic performance of students with disabilities will also be reviewed within this chapter. Additionally, literature reviewed in this chapter will address statistics relating to educational disabilities defined by IDEA, and give an overview of inclusion and its intent. Also reviewed will be the impact that IDEA (1997) and No Child Left Behind (2001) have on the inclusion program, instructional practice, and teacher attitudes of inclusion.

Literature utilized in this chapter was retrieved from peer reviewed articles collected from a variety of academic databases. In addition, textbooks and journals from professional organizations relating to special education and its components, educational leadership, and state and federal educational regulations were also reviewed for relevant literature.

The literature review serves the purpose of establishing a rationale for the study by examining the knowledge and attitude general education teachers have regarding the inclusion program and the belief general education teachers have of the academic abilities of students with disabilities. A rationale for the study will also be established by discussing the results of studies which investigated general education teachers' attitudes, and acceptance or lack of acceptance, towards inclusion, and examining the possible

relationship that may exist among attitudes of inclusion and beliefs of student's academic ability.

### Theoretical Framework

The practices of teachers and preferences for students are constructed strongly by the values and theories of teachers (Kagan, 1992). Bernard Weiner's attribution theory is emphasized as the basis of this study. Attribution theory seeks to provide a rationale for how individuals interpret situations and/or actions (Weiner, 1974). Applications of this theory seek to explain why people do what they do (Weiner, 1974). Within the current study, the goal is to gain an understanding of the attitudes of teachers working within the inclusion program, why particular attitudes exist, and whether the effects of the attitude of the teacher contributes to the academic performance of students with disabilities.

When teacher attitudes of inclusion and the academic performance of students with disabilities are examined through the lens of the attribution theory, intrinsic causes may be identified to better understand the effect it may have on the attitudes of teachers and ultimately the impact on special needs students' success.

Weiner's (1974) attribution theory was focused upon achievement. Task difficulty, ability, effort, and luck were identified as the internal factors Weiner found to affect the attributions of achievement. Within this study, teacher special education background experiences are limited, and as a result, general education teachers' attitudes are unfavorable to the concept of the inclusion model and the performance of students with disabilities.

The theory of attribution consists of three dimensions: locus of control, stability, and controllability (Weiner, 1974). Within the locus of control dimension, the internal

controllable factors are in conflict with the external uncontrollable factors (Weiner, 1974). The stability dimension focuses upon whether cause changes over time or not (Weiner, 1974). For example, an internal cause such as ability may be stable, but effort may be unstable and internal. The difference of the causes that one can control versus that one cannot control is the controllability dimension (Weiner, 1974). Attitudes of general education teachers are formed by internal and external forces that are influenced by change (Weiner, 1980). For teachers who cannot control or adapt to change, efficacy is challenged resulting in special needs students struggling with academic success in the general education classroom (Weiner, 1980).

Educators were believed to have perceptions and formulate attitudes about their students, have self-confidence in their students' work, and display their ability to promote academic success (Pajares, 1992). According to Weiner (1980), a correlation exists between self-concept and achievement. Weiner (1980) suggested that success and failure are products of casual attributions. As concepts exist within schools that are different from the attitudes that teachers portray and beliefs in which they hold, conflict will arise; however, expectations of the schools must be implemented and teachers must practice them in their classrooms (Macnab & Payne, 2003).

Attribution theory is helpful in identifying and, in many cases, understanding the attitudes of general education teachers with regard to the concept of inclusion. It underlines the causes responsible for the attitudes general education teachers portray. Mavopoulou and Padeliadu (2000) argued that the expectations that teachers hold about students will attribute to instructional goals and methods being implemented. Attributes that teachers illustrate when portraying their lack of competence and skills of instructing

students with disabilities are likely to impair the academic success of students (Jobe, 2000). Gerber (1995) found that teachers have to step outside of their normal way of doing things in order to structure and simplify their instructional approaches that will accommodate those students with additional needs.

Lampert (1985) agreed with the foundation of the attribution theory as he states that teachers are expected to manage predicaments that are strongly vague and unpleasant. As a result, attitudes and beliefs are formulated and the effects of such are incorporated into the classroom (Lampert, 1985). Attitudes held by general education teachers of the inclusion model are attributes of the transitions deriving from new policies and mandates of schools, districts, and state standards (Karten, 2005). Recruitment and Retention Project (2001) stated that many of the new policies and mandates governing today's educational system are responsible for instructing educators of the *how to* and *how not to* instruct with the educational setting. Teachers are willing to reach a consensus, yet argue that much thought should be given into the notion that all students are to be placed in the general classroom (Shade & Stewart, 2001). They believed that all students receive adequate education but there should be alternative placements (Waldron, McLeskey, & Pacchiano, 1999). Research conducted by Lee-Tarver (2006) found that teachers attribute a significant increase in their level of stress when they are asked to cope with students with special needs in an inclusive setting.

As a support to understanding the attitudes of teachers about inclusion, and academic performances of students with disabilities, the attribution theory provides a lens to understand why teachers believe and react as they do. Also, the attribution theory

helps to draw a relationship between general education teachers' attitude of inclusion and student performance.

## Students with Disabilities

### *Learning Disabilities*

A variety of disabilities are exhibited in students within the educational arena. According to the United States Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs *Twenty-Fourth Annual Report to Congress* (2002), one out of five people in the United States has a learning disability, and nearly three million children are identified as having a disability. In the United States, learning disabilities represent over half of the population receiving special education services (Turnbill & Turnbill, 1998). Also, Turnbill and Turnbill (1998) found that students who are mentally disabled have been prevalent in the educational arena and many have been identified as having a learning disability. McIntosh, Vaughn, Schumm, Haager, and Lee (1993) identified learning disabilities as learning problems in areas such as reading, writing, listening, speaking, math, and reasoning. A learning disability may also cause interference when attempting to focus and concentrate (McIntosh et al., 1993). These learning problems or disabilities may vary from person to person in intensity. For example, one individual may exhibit mastery in mathematics, but have difficulty with reading. Another may be a brilliant reader and speaker, but have very poor comprehension. The Division for Learning Disabilities (1992) stated that learning disabilities are present as a result of how the brain processes, receives, analyzes, or stores information, which makes it difficult for a diagnosed individual to learn and perform as swiftly as an individual not exhibiting the disability. IDEA (1997) defines learning disabilities as

...a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using spoken or written language that may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations, including conditions such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. (p. 21)

Also, many students with learning disabilities exhibit Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), a behavior condition promoting difficulty with focusing and concentration (Turnbull et al., 1999). Learning disabilities and ADHD contribute to increased issues such as difficulty with skill mastery and student performance (Division of Learning Disabilities, 1992).

Because students with learning disabilities have average and above average intelligence, they are capable of performing in the general curriculum (Bos & Fletcher, 1997). Students with learning disabilities are taking more academic courses in the general curriculum than they have in the past (Bos & Fletcher, 1997). The National Longitudinal Transition Study 2 conducted in 2002 revealed that there has been a 10% increase in enrollment of general education academic courses since 1987, and a 12% decrease in the special education settings (Newman, 2006). According to Levine and Wagner (2003), students with learning disabilities made up roughly two-thirds of the population receiving special education services. Nearly 80% percent or more of these students' day is spent inside the general education classroom where they are receiving the general curriculum (Levine & Wagner, 2003). The United States Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (2002) conducted a study that found

the bulk of the courses taken by students with learning disabilities are those courses that are supported by their academic performance and socialization.

*Students with Disabilities Access the General Curriculum*

Walther-Thomas, Bryant, and Land (1996) conducted research which examined a change initiative to include students with disabilities in general education classrooms. This study examined the commencement and implementation of the co-teaching model of one school district. Walther-Thomas, Bryant, & Land (1996) concluded that the inclusion program promotes appropriate social behavior and higher academic achievement levels for students with disabilities. Being involved in the inclusive setting does not mean that students with disabilities will be just present within the setting, but that these students will be held to high expectations of the same curriculum as those students without disabilities (Walther-Thomas et al., 1996). Furthermore, inclusion suggests additional resources will be available to those with disabilities to promote comprehension and benefits of the general curriculum (Nolet & McLaughlin, 2000). Within the general education curriculum, nationwide about 35% of the students with disabilities receive the standard curriculum, over 52% of those with disabilities receive modifications to the general curriculum, while 11% receive substantial modifications to the general curriculum, and nearly 2% have the need for a specialized curriculum (Newman, 2006). Access to the general curriculum has a direct effect on the performance of students with disabilities. Common instructional materials such as those common to the general education classroom such as textbooks, workbooks, worksheets, the use of libraries and computer labs, and hands on activities have all been effective in

increasing the academic performance of students with disabilities (Gunter, Denny, & Venn, 2000).

*Academic Performance of Students with Disabilities*

The education system seeks to prepare citizens, workers, and potential leaders for future aspirations, and the schools have been charged with promoting student learning (Warger & Pugach, 1996). Academic performance has received much attention over the past recent years with regard to accountability and assessment. No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 was introduced by the United States Department of Education to monitor schools and ensure that accountability and improvement of student academic performance is measured and shows growth (Linn, Baker, & Betebenner, 2002). Within NCLB (2001), the academic performance of students with disabilities is addressed with respect to the need for specialized services. An array of studies and arguments have existed among educators, policymakers, and assessment experts with regard to the appropriate approaches to take when measuring the academic performances of students with disabilities (Ahearn, 2000; Elliot, 1999; Johnson, 2008; Koretz & Hamilton, 1999; McGrew, Vanderwood, Thurlow, & Ysseldyke, 1995). Whether it be a district, state, and/or graduation exit, or summative or formative assessment, all are surrounded by much controversy and questioning (Heubert & Hauser, 1999; Minnema, Thurlow, Bielinski, & Scott, 2001). Due to the requirements of NCLB (2001) and the evolving accountability approaches, it has been deemed critical that the measurement of students with disabilities performance be studied and monitored in order to understand those factors that contribute to increased academic performance (Etscheidt, 2007).

Just as students without disabilities are assessed by standardized tests, so too are students with disabilities. These tests allow educators and professionals to understand the academic performances of students with disabilities, comparing them to those students without disabilities (Thurlow & Johnson, 2000; Thurlow et al., 2000). Students with disabilities were usually introduced to the Woodcock Johnson Test of Achievement (WJIII) as a standardized test that will measure their academic performance in the core subjects of math and reading (Woodcock et al., 2001). The WJIII was also utilized by districts to assess and assign eligibility to students who are suspected to be in need of special services (Woodcock, McGrew, & Mather, 2001).

The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) funded the Special Education Elementary Longitudinal Study (SEELS). SEELS was part of the national assessment IDEA (1997). SEELS was a study of school-age students which documented the school experiences of students as they matriculated from elementary to secondary schools. To gather information about the experiences of students with disabilities, data was collected through direct assessment, parent interviews, and school staff. According to SEELS conducted in 2002 WJIII measures the performance of students with regard to passage comprehension and mathematical calculations. SEELS passage comprehension section of the instrument illustrated that students with disabilities were not performing academically as well as those without disabilities. SEELS (2002) found that students with learning disabilities scored three percent above the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile while over 73% of the students with learning disabilities scored below the 25<sup>th</sup> percentile. On the mathematical calculations portion of the achievement test, it was reported that students with disabilities performed better than they do in the area of passage comprehension.

However, SEELS 2002 revealed that there is still a significant gap existing between the performances of those students with disabilities versus that of students without disabilities. Nearly 40% of these students with disabilities scored below the 25<sup>th</sup> percentile, and 30% scored above the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile (SEELS, 2002).

The National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2) was funded by the United States Department of Education. NLTS2 was conducted in 2000 and documented the experiences of students ages thirteen to sixteen as they transitioned from secondary schools into postsecondary, adult roles. NLTS2 targeted extracurricular activities, independent living, high school coursework, academic performance, employment, education and training, and community participation. Results of the NLTS2 illustrated that just as there are benefits for students participating in general education settings, due to the high expectations and rigor of the standards disadvantages are also present which in turn place students in situations affecting their future postsecondary, adult roles. NLTS2 showed that those students with disabilities taught within the general education classroom receive lower grades overall, but substantially higher grades than those students who remained in the special education setting. NLTS2 reported that the grades of those students with disabilities are also closer to grade level performance in the core reading and mathematical areas. Because the general education classes are normally larger than special education classrooms, special needs students with stronger academic skills are generally successful (Levine & Wagner, 2003; Newman, Marder, & Wagner, 2003). This finding of the NLTS2 has implications for students with disabilities who are taught in smaller special education settings. Transitioning these students to a larger setting may sometimes alter their academic growth (Goldstein, 2006). However, some

students may benefit from a smaller setting which ensures the enhancement of their academic ability and in turn prepares students for the larger setting (Levine & Wagner, 2003). Decisions regarding the provision of services, programs, and additional supports are essential factors that schools facilitate and influence the academic performance of students with disabilities (Newman et al., 2003).

#### *Characteristics and Factors of Student Performance*

Individual characteristics such as disability, functioning ability, and demographics are vital in the academic performance and achievement of students with disabilities (Sperry, 1998). Understanding the exact disability assists educators in understanding what approaches to make when delivering instruction and providing grades (Wood, 2002). Because students with learning disabilities normally display Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), it is critical that educators are knowledgeable of the characteristics of such and that the appropriate approach, accommodations, and modifications are available to promote academic success (D'Alonzo, Giordano, & Vanleeuwen, 1997). In terms of functioning ability, special needs students with self-care and functional cognitive and social skills are rated to obtain higher academic scores (Stiggins, 2007). When considering demographics, the National Center for Education Statistics, which is the primary federal unit utilized for collecting, analyzing, and reporting data related to the United States educational system, is used to further explore the factors of the academic performance of students with disabilities. The National Center of Education Statistics (2000) found that African American students produce lower academic scores in reading and mathematics than Caucasians. This finding supports the notion that a relationship does exist between the demographics and

academic performance of students with disabilities. The NCES (2000) illustrated how older youth perform worse than younger youth, and that young women with disabilities perform better than young males with disabilities in mathematics. When considering the household characteristics such as single parents and low-income homes, SEELS (2002) suggested that there is a strong correlation between household characteristics and the academic performance of students with disabilities. SEELS (2002) argued that parental involvement and household income are critical to the academic performance of students with disabilities. Students with disabilities from higher income homes perform better than their peers who do not have the advantages of financial stability (SEELS, 2002). Furthermore, SEELS 2002 reported that students perform better than their peers who do not have parents who hold high expectations for them. The National Council on Disability (2004) expressed the hope that parents of students with disabilities have high expectations for the future education of their children and should work diligently with professional and paraprofessionals to ensure that their child's academic performance is superior and on grade level in order to ensure a promising post secondary education for them.

For many years, the academic performance of students with disabilities has been debated amongst policymakers, which in turn has been foundational in the legislators formulating and updating policies that are in the best interest of the student (Murdick, Gartin, & Crabtree, 2007). Although students with disabilities who are included in the general education classroom are required to be assessed in the core subject areas just as those peers without disabilities, factors must be taken into considerations when accurately measuring their academic performances. When individual characteristics, disability, and

demographics are considered, it is noted in Bishop, (1995), Leatherman, (2007), and Smith et al. (2008) that students with disabilities perform better and have potential academic futures when serviced in the inclusion setting.

## Inclusion

### *What is Inclusion?*

The practice of inclusion has been emerging in schools across the nation. Inclusion has been looked upon by society as the bridge responsible for the mixture of a diverse population which seeks to participate with and care for each individual of the population. Forest and Pearpoint (1990) viewed the term *inclusion* as an invitation to parents, teachers, students, and community members who seek to create a new culture, through unity, that will bring forth new realities. Inclusion seeks to leave no one standing alone but to allow all to come in and bring their uniqueness to the platform for the design of a structure that will support the notion of partnership (Webber, 1997). Educational concepts such as cooperative learning, critical thinking, and computer technology are being promoted through the concept of inclusion (Wood, 2002).

Wood (2002) stated that social inclusion, physical inclusion, behavioral inclusion, academic inclusion, emotional inclusion, and inclusion by assessment standards are the six elements comprising the concept of inclusion. Wood's philosophy derived from the idea that the inclusive setting will not only affect students in academic areas but also in other developmental areas. The appropriate social skills according to society's norms are taught when in the general education classroom as the student becomes socially accepted by peers (Goldstein, 2006). Wood stated that physical inclusion refers to the actual educational placement of the student; this element is common. However, academic

inclusion focuses on whether the student is being taught at the appropriate level, and this area, according to Wood needs growth. Emotional inclusion may develop due to the transition or shock students and, in many cases, teachers may experience as a result of the transition from the special education classroom to the general education classroom (Schearman, 2007). Behavioral inclusion is similar to emotional inclusion in that both the teacher and student are affected. Both student and teacher have to adjust to new expectations relating to behavior. Learning how to accept the new student behavior becomes a major focus for the teacher (Wood, 2002). Lastly, the problem of how to assess and grade students once they are in the inclusive setting has been a leading concern of inclusion (Wood, 2002)

*Inclusion: Where Did It Come From?*

According to Arends (2000), inclusion is a practice that goes far beyond the notion of being just a physical placement for students with disabilities; but it serves as a practice that has been gaining attention for over a decade. Andrews et al., (2000) stated that inclusion has been gaining momentum for over fifteen years. It is not a new concept, but one that has received much controversy and attention. Inclusion was believed by Arends (2000) to be relevant in daily living practices of society. Citizens work and live within communities that include a variety of disabilities, races, and religions. Children should be educated in a similar environment and manner (Ritter, Michel, & Irby, 1999). Because children develop and become citizens of society, receiving the benefits of an environment that resembles that of the normal inclusive world may promote successful futures that are centered on equal learning and positive developmental environments (Ritter et al., 1999). Society has begun to support innovative concepts that allow students

to receive skills that promote student learning and development, such as the concept of inclusion (Leatherman, 2007). *Oberti v. Board of Education of the Borough of Clementon School* (1993) and *Board of Education of Sacramento City Unified School District v. Rachel Holland* (1992) are among the court cases that have assisted in the establishment of modifications and implementation of inclusion services.

Inclusion derives from a variety of challenges in the education arena. Kavale and Forness (2000), and Will (1986) found that the high costs of educating students in special education (self-contained) classrooms along with the drastic increase in the identification of students who need special education services were challenges being faced by the education arena. Also demands for equality, and poor academic performance of the students in special education classrooms, promoted the idea of reconstructing the delivery of the services (Burstein et al., 2004).

High-quality inclusion services are critical to the success of both the program and students. Those children who are in need of inclusion services will not stand out if a good inclusion program is in place (Bishop, 1995). The inclusion model seeks to educate students with disabilities in the general setting without creating any additional attention towards specific students with disabilities (Arends, 2000). Best inclusion practices include teaching all students within the general education classroom setting, which is said to decrease the amount of attention on a particular group of students or disabilities (Arends, 2000). Effective inclusion programs may consist of administrative support that promotes a warm culture, welcomes strong parental support, encourages teacher and student empowerment, and encourages a variety of teaching strategies conducive to all

learning styles of students (Kochhar et al., 2000).

### *Benefits of Inclusion*

Inclusion is composed of many benefits that promote success of both students with and without disabilities. Studies conducted by D'Alonzo et al. (1997) illustrated the advantages connected with inclusion. The studies conducted found that benefits were plentiful with regard to academic and social performance. When students are placed with age appropriate peers, learning may increase through the exposure of peer tutoring and peer acceptance (National Council on Disability, 2004). The National Council on Disability also found that students with disabilities are given opportunities to formulate relationships that are beneficial to their basic need: feeling belonged. A study conducted by Hendrickson et al. (1996) examined middle and high school students' friendship with peers with disabilities. The study also examined the willingness of students to make friends with students with disabilities, and the perceptions of students with regard to how schools and parents may facilitate friendships. Findings of Hendrickson, Shokoohi-Yekta, HamreNietupski, and Gable's (1996) study showed that the inclusion setting was conducive to the development of interpersonal relationships, social networks, and friendships that all contributed to the increase of self-esteem with the feeling of being a part of the educational environment. Students in the inclusion program are not faced with the notion that their world is surrounded with nothing but individuals with disabilities, but they are given hope that the world is beautiful and accepts who they are and the disabilities that they have (Webber, 1997). Students with disabilities within inclusion settings are receiving a variety of experiences that are motivating and promoting their need and desire to learn (Webber, 1997). Hunt, Farron-Davis, Beckstead, Curtis, and

Goetz (1994) stated that students with disabilities were found to participate and engage themselves more in learning when away from a special setting. In an inclusive setting, students may be given opportunities that present hope and exposes their capabilities.

Inclusion has the advantage of increasing the academic abilities of those students with disabilities (Smith et al., 2008). The National Council on Disability (2004) believed inclusion for students with disabilities promotes competence and confidence within students with disabilities. Students with disabilities are reported to contribute and participate more within the general education setting as a result of competence and confidence gained from the exposure the general education setting provides (National Council on Disability, 2004). Students with disabilities may reassure their competence and develop tremendously from the positive impact that the inclusive instructional setting may offer (Leatherman, 2007). Kochhar et al. (2000) found that the inclusion setting promoted students with disabilities to perform well with varying instructional techniques allowing the level of performance to increase tremendously above that which may have been done within the special setting. The inclusion setting provides the opportunity for students with disabilities to receive a traditional diploma whereas if serviced in the special education setting, alternate certificates would be been issued (Murdick et al., 2007). Students are not settling for the certificates of completion, but because of their involvement in the inclusion program, higher standards are in place to produce self-confidence, and as a result, students with disabilities may display their capabilities and pursue their standard high school diplomas (Kochhar et al., 2000). As a result of effective inclusion practices, many students with disabilities have been reported by the NCES (2000) to have received high school diplomas.

Inclusion is also beneficial to the parents and teachers of those students with disabilities (Bishop, 1995). Because inclusion requires effective collaboration, the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) committee (parents, teachers, and administrators of the student with disabilities) works diligently in formulating strategies for success (Lee-Tarver, 2006). Through this committee, the IEP is formulated, addressing the present level of performances and academic abilities of students (Espin, Deno, & Albayrak-Kaymak, 1998). Also within the IEP, goals are being established for the students that will further challenge them to reach grade-level performances (Lee-Tarver, 2006). Within the inclusion setting, parents are given more knowledge of those resources and agencies within the community that may assist students with disabilities within their communities (Rogers, 1993). More interaction is in place with the school staff and parents of students with disabilities (Kochhar et al., 2000) that increases parental knowledge. As members of the IEP committee, teachers are introduced to experiences that may broaden their strategic approaches in teaching (Smith et al., 2008). Inclusion presents benefits such as in-service training, and strategy, collaboration, and curriculum manuals to teachers (Kochhar et al., 2000). Through inclusion, teachers become more competent in their roles as educators and trained professionals equipped to be effective in curriculum management (Smith et al., 2008).

### *Teachers and Inclusion*

Due to education reforms and policies, accountability measures are being implemented to ensure that the inclusion program is effective in what it was intended to accomplish. In order for inclusion to be successful, a number of factors may be considered. One of the biggest components is that of ensuring that teachers are well-

prepared and trained to work with students with disabilities (Salend, 2001). Teachers throughout districts are voicing their opinions about their concerns and issues with the idea of inclusion. The lack of training and preparation are responsible for the production of negative attitudes of teachers (Hardy, 1999). Many teachers do not favor the inclusion program because they feel as if they are unprepared with no knowledge of how to teach and successfully prepare students with disabilities for future endeavors (Burstein et al., 2004). Studies such as Cook (2001), Cook, Semmel, and Gerber (1999), and Gunter et al. (2000) suggested that teachers have been placed in uncomfortable predicaments that have soured their taste for teaching and towards the new education reforms. Cook et al. (1999) reported that it is essential that teachers be provided with the required development and knowledge of their surroundings in order to promote success.

According to various researches, it has been reported that teachers are becoming overwhelmed with planning and the extreme workloads that exist with the inclusion program (D'Alonzo et al. 1997; McLesky & Waldron, 2002; Shade & Stewart, 2001). Teachers must be sure of what approaches to take in creating lesson plans that would accommodate all students (Wood, 2002). Teachers need additional panel presentations, information relevant to students with disabilities, discussions, and models of what an ideal inclusion setting should look like (Leyser & Tappendorf, 2001). A successful inclusion setting consists of teachers understanding how to manage their classroom to accommodate the disabilities of students and ensure that learning is not deterred for those students with and without disabilities (Wood, 2002). Clearly, teachers must have the necessary support in order for high-quality inclusion to measure and do what is expected of it.

Providing low student-teacher ratios promotes the success of the inclusive setting. Achilles and Finn (2000), Gersten and Dimino (2001), and Thurlow, Ysseldyke, and Wotruba (1989) concluded that low student-teacher ratios are essential in meeting the needs of students and allows teachers to effectively facilitate instruction that involves a substantial amount of communication and individualization. In addition to a low teacher-student ratio, collaboration is vital in creating a successful school culture. Collaboration for problem-solving strategies between the general education and special education teacher is critical to the education of students with disabilities (Salend, 2001). In fact, it was suggested by Leyser and Tappendorf (2001) that both the general education and special education teachers receive training together that will assist in providing adequate services. Training together may help build the knowledge of each other's role as educators of students with disabilities. Working together in trainings may reduce the negative attitudes that teachers may have about the inclusion program, and promote team building, group ideas, suggestions, concerns, and any other structural issues that exist (Smith, 2001). Teachers need to have positive attitudes in order for inclusion to be successful (D'Alonzo et al., 1997). In the pursuit of ensuring that the attitudes of teachers are positive, much preparation and on-going training may need to be incorporated in the practice of inclusion programs. As the years have progressed, inclusion has proven itself to be an effective program that enhances the development of students with disabilities, however, differing attitudes exist.

## Teacher Attitudes

It has been required by special education policies, such as IDEA and Free Appropriate Public Education, that students with disabilities be educated in their least restrictive environment. This requirement has been identified as one of the most controversial in the field of special education (Artiles, 2003; Smith 2001). Wood (2002) argued that the attitude of the teachers toward students is the major catalyst affecting interaction and achievement within the general education classroom. As inclusion is becoming more familiar and increasingly incorporated within schools, Jones, Thorn, Chow, Thompson, and Wilde (2002) found that positive attitudes within the inclusion setting is increasing. Teachers are beginning to accept the notion that inclusion is becoming the norm and that students with disabilities deserve the right to equal opportunities; however, these teachers shy away from the responsibility of teaching within the inclusive setting (Jobe, Rust, & Brissie, 1996). Studies have been conducted that show that teachers believe that students with disabilities should be educated in the general education classroom setting (Semmel et al., 1991, Taylor, Smiley, & Ramasamy, 2003). However, general education teachers believe that they will not be successful in teaching students in the inclusion setting, and that they would not be able to meet the needs of students with disabilities (Stahl, 2002). Teachers have also argued that the inclusive setting would require additional planning and preparation that they were not willing to submit themselves to doing because of their fear for depriving those students without disabilities (Rose, 2001).

Many studies support the argument that general education teachers have mixed perceptions about educating students with disabilities (Artiles, 2003; Avramidis, Bayliss,

& Burden, 2000; Gaskins, & Labbo, 2007). Studies have shown that only those teachers who had additional training and in-service education in special education were receptive to teaching students with disabilities (Van Reusen et al., 2001). Those teachers with no experience and knowledge of inclusion displayed negative attitudes about teaching students with disabilities (McLeskey, Waldron, So, Swanson, & Loveland 2001).

Bacon and Schultz (1991), Leyser and Tappendorf (2001), McIntosh et al.(1993), and Schumm, Vaughn, Gordon, and Rothlein (1994) were among the many researchers responsible for studies concluding that elementary teachers make adaptations more often than middle or high school teachers to the concept of inclusion. In one study, after a middle school teacher was given data reflecting no student progress, and upon hearing her response to inclusion described as poor, the teacher decided not to alter or adapt her instructional approach to ensure the struggling students were reached (Deno, Foegen, Robinson, & Espin, 1996). General education teachers rather use the whole group approach with the material and curriculum they would normally use with the nondisabled students (Espin et al., 1998).

Although the benefits of inclusion are believed to plentiful, teachers reported their concerns about the behavior, academic, and social transitions of the students with disabilities, which resulted in teachers questioning the advantages of inclusion (Heiman, 2002; Priestley & Rabiee, 2002). Because teachers are receiving the required knowledge and skills needed to make the inclusive setting a success, teacher commitments are becoming positive (Kalyva, Gojkovic, & Tsakiris, 2007); however, many still question the advantages of inclusion. As the population of inclusion students grows, teachers

introduce new concerns underlying the stresses they have with coping with the social and emotional aspects intertwined within the setting (Idol, 1997).

Teli Heiman (2004) conducted a study that focused upon teachers coping with the changes inclusion may bring. The study examined both British and Israeli teacher perceptions, needs, and expectations with regard to the inclusion model. As within the United States, both countries support the inclusion movement and believe that the educational rights of special needs students should be identified and met through legislation, ensuring equal opportunities. The sample within this study consisted of 116 Israeli teachers and 140 British teachers of the inclusion classroom. The teachers received questionnaires consisting of open-ended questions regarding the theoretical concept of inclusion, advantages and disadvantages of inclusion, and indicators of the teachers' current situation in their classroom. As inclusion was proposed to teachers for implementation, teachers produced reasons why they have negative beliefs and attitudes about the concept. This study found that teachers often had difficulty coping with the excessive workloads and enlarged class sizes, evaluating students with disabilities, and receiving resources that would support the teacher's attempts to accommodate students with disabilities without limiting students without disabilities when they are asked to teach in the inclusive classroom (Vaughn et al., 1996). Within this study, the attitudes of teachers of the inclusion classroom illustrated that inclusion was not supported by all stakeholders and had very little teamwork, which led teachers to becoming overwhelmed, introducing a negative attitude towards the inclusion program (Danne & Beirne-Smith, 2000). Teachers attempted to escape the practice of inclusion due to the negative attitudes that had been developed. Teachers argued that they chose the route they wanted

to pursue within the teaching discipline, and that it was not special education; yet, newly reformed policies forced them to escape their comfort areas and enter those areas that they were neither competent nor interested in (Vaughn et al., 1996).

In past years, it was reported that general education teachers could not adequately and successfully teach students with disabilities (Giangreco and Cravedi-Cheng, 1998). In 1998, Giangreco and Cravedi-Cheng gave advice and pertinent information of inclusion with regard to curriculum adaptations, instructional strategies, augmentative and alternative communication, secondary transition, and administration of inclusive schools. The authors stated that both special education and general education teachers reported that general education teachers of the inclusion program were incapable of successfully teaching students with disabilities. The attitudes teachers reported in Giangreco and Cravedi-Cheng's (1998) research were the cause for disabled students spending the majority of their time in a self-contained, special education classroom where lowered expectations existed, very little socialization with nondisabled peers existed, and exposure to the general curriculum was absent.

Findings of the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 conducted in 2000, reported that nearly 69% of general education teachers support the placement of students with learning disabilities within the general education setting. The teachers found the placement to be appropriate. It is important to keep in mind that 96% of the students with disabilities of the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 consisted of teachers who were well prepared with credentials and certifications that created an atmosphere suitable for learning. The National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 of 2000 also revealed that

only 62% of general education teachers received knowledge of the characteristics of students with learning disabilities.

A study conducted by Ali, Mustapha, and Jelas (2006) concluded that as teachers' competency is increased the more successful the inclusive program will come to be. However, it seems teachers often do not appreciate being a part of practices that they are not comfortable with implementing, although they do favor the practice of inclusion (Burstein et al., 2004). Ali et al. (2006) proposed that those highly-experienced teachers partake in additional training and as a result, mentor teachers who were unfamiliar with educating students with disabilities. Ali et al. (2006) believed that this effort is to provide support that will produce collaboration to formulate knowledge and build acceptance of the concept of inclusion. Bender, Vail, and Scott (1995) argued that the success of the inclusion program rests upon the willingness and the abilities of general education teachers to provide accommodations for students with disabilities. Because teachers do not have knowledge of the policies surrounding inclusion and a clear definition of an ideal inclusion program, the willingness to be a part of the inclusion team is not favorable (Etscheidt, 2007). However, a variety of research has supported the notion that the teachers can identify the need and importance of the inclusion setting, but would not like to take on the role of implementing it due to their perception that implementation is difficult (Hammond, Helen, Ingalls, & Lawrence 2003).

#### *Teacher Attitude about Student Performance*

Despite the negative attitudes and beliefs that teachers display about the inclusion program, it seems they do believe that students with disabilities are capable of learning and can perform academically well. However, according to McGrew and Evans (2003),

there are many educators who believe that students with disabilities are struggling to master grade-level achievement standards that are measured by statewide assessments. Many educators are unsure what to expect from students with disabilities (Hardy, 1999). Many are aware of the conflicting concepts of whether or not students with disabilities can perform academically according to state standards (Goldstein, 2006). Goldstein (2006) also stated that many individuals have voiced their arguments of students with disabilities being able to perform to high academic standards. If only the teachers would present to the appropriate access to high-quality instruction and curriculum practices, students may perform well. Arguments supported by McGrew and Evans (2003) supported the notion that the levels of proficiency of students with disabilities would increase if high quality is presented in the instructional setting by teachers who exhibit positive expectations. Special education advocates argue that the perceptions that teachers hold of student performance will positively grow as the expectations and accountability for student progress excels (D'Alonzo et al., 1997). On the other hand, other educators argued that the disabilities of students will prevent the success of students (Deno et al., 1996). Teachers of the inclusive setting believe that the disabilities of the students will prevent students from attaining grade-level achievements even with highly qualified instruction, services, and accommodations (Bender et al., 1995). Cotton (2001) stated that teachers such as those who do not believe that methods can be put into place in order to educate all students are rarely acting out of malice, and are normally unaware that their perceptions have been created based upon false reasoning. Negative perceptions of students with disabilities were considered to be unethical and inappropriate for teachers (Babad, 1993).

Research from Silva and Morgado (2004) suggested that when considering the beliefs of teachers about the academic achievement of students with disabilities, one must take into consideration the attitudes and attribution patterns of the teacher. Those negative and unexpected outcomes of student performances are products of teacher attribution patterns (Cooper & Burger, 1980). Graham (1990) stated that students' academic ability is the indicator as to whether a student with disabilities succeeds or fails. Silva and Morgado (2004), Sze (2009), and Wood (2002) found that the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that teachers display affect students' academic performances. Findings from Olson, Chalmers, and Hoover (1997) showed that teachers believed that their perceptions produced higher levels of academic achievement. In this particular study, teachers were interviewed, reporting that they exhibited individualized beliefs and attitudes about what they believe their students were capable of achieving. Rolinson and Medway (1985) conducted a similar inquiry that supported the notion that teachers took responsibilities for the achievements of the students with disabilities, however, when students did not perform to standards, teachers pushed those responsibilities off on the students instead of themselves.

#### *Factors Accompanying Teacher Beliefs*

Studies show that teacher perceptions of students with disabilities do not stand alone in many cases, but that there are several factors that accompany how teachers perceive the academic achievements of students with disabilities (Leatherman, 2007). Fullan and Miles (1992) stated that the reluctance of teachers to alter their traditional practices and cultures, and impose innovative practices, contribute to how they perceive the academic performance of students with disabilities. Fullan and Miles (1992) shared

that teachers are committed to their teaching style and believe that if their teaching style was effective in the past, it is effective currently, and will be effective in the future. Because students with disabilities are often not successful with the teaching styles, teachers may conclude that students with disabilities are incapable of performing highly according to state standards (Fullan & Miles, 1992). Teachers are forming their perceptions and beliefs about the academic performance of students with disabilities out of fear and anxieties attached to their opposition to change (Liu & Meyer, 2005). Teachers may believe that the needed support and funds for an adequate, effective inclusion program are not available and that these students will not meet standards (Welch, 1989). Teacher beliefs of students with disabilities are also related to the availability of technology (Kauffman, Lloyd, & McGee, 1989). Teacher may believe that without the appropriate technical assistance, students with disabilities will find it difficult to succeed academically (Smith et al., 2008).

When teachers become aware of the traits of the students and characteristics of the students' disabilities and educational needs, they formulate perceptions of whether students will achieve the academic standards of the curriculum (Semmel et al., 1991). Many teachers label students and their academic performance as soon as they learn of what student's disability (Thurlow, 2004).

### Summary

In summary, as the years have progressed and the signing of the amendments to the IDEA (2004) and No Child Left Behind (2001) mandate, students with disabilities are recipients of general education curricula. Research has become extensive with regard to inclusion and providing students with disabilities a free and appropriate public education

in their least restrictive environment. Studies have been conducted to give insight of special education disabilities, general education teachers' knowledge and understanding of special education, disabilities, and inclusion, general education teachers' perceptions of the academic abilities of students with disabilities, and the attitudes of general education teachers towards inclusion. Much literature was presented to address inclusion and its benefits for students with disabilities and attitudes general education teachers have about inclusion. However, limited research is available to address the impact of the attitudes of general education teachers has on student performance. This study sought to fill the gap in literature concerning the impact these attitudes have on teacher beliefs of student capability/performance.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

#### Introduction

This chapter describes the context of the study, the participants, the instruments, and the methods used for data collection. The chapter concludes with an explanation of the analysis of the data. The purpose of this study is to identify the relationship between teacher attitudes about inclusion and the academic performance of students with disabilities. The teachers who participated in this study were those who instructed inclusion classes with students who are classified as Learning Disabled and Other Health Impaired at the elementary and middle school levels. These two disabilities constitute those students who are placed within the general education/inclusion setting in effort to comply with Least Restrictive Environment. To investigate this problem, the following research questions and research hypotheses were analyzed:

1. Is there a significant relationship between teacher's attitude of student performance and the variables of inclusion experience, special education courses taken, minor in special education, and professional development hours?

Hypothesis: There is no significant relationship between teachers' attitude of student performance and the variables of inclusion experience, special education courses taken, minor in special education, and professional development hours.

2. Is there a significant relationship between teacher's attitude of student performance and the teacher's perception of support and training?

Hypothesis: There is no significant correlation between teacher's attitude of student performance and the teacher's perception of support and training.

3. Is there a significant relationship between teacher's attitude of student performance and their perception of the effect of teacher student ratios?

Hypothesis: There is no significant relationship between teacher's attitude of student performance and their perception of the effect of teacher student ratios.

4. Is there a significant relationship between teacher's attitude of student performance and their perception of the student behavioral concerns?

Hypothesis: There is no significant relationship between teacher's attitude of student performance and their perception of the student behavioral concerns.

### Research Design

This was a quantitative study which used a correlational research design that measured the results of a questionnaire designed specifically for this study, based on the research questions and hypotheses. Analyses were conducted to evaluate significant relationships between the scores of the survey.

### Participants in the Study

After the approval of the study from the Institutional Review Board at the University of Southern Mississippi (Appendix D), the participants consisted of general education teachers of grades three through eight who were currently or who have taught within the inclusion setting. Within the inclusion setting, this study focused upon those general education teachers who were deemed responsible for ensuring a free, appropriate, and adequate education for those students classified as Learning Disabled and/or Other

Health Impaired. To find the participants, the researcher communicated with the principals of elementary and middle schools within the metro Jackson area to gain permission to conduct the research. Within the area, there were a total of six school districts (nearly ninety schools) where inclusion was used. The six school districts are very different from each other in terms of size, and the socioeconomics and racial composition of students.

Potential participants received an informed consent form (Appendix C) with detailed information regarding the study. Teachers were notified that their participation was completely voluntary and at any time, and that he or she may have withdrawn from the study with no penalty. Teachers were assured that the study was completely confidential and anonymous. There were be 100+ participants in this study who were at least 21 years of age and are deemed certified educators by the state of Mississippi. Race, gender, and socioeconomic level were not factors for participant selection.

#### Instrumentation

The “Inclusion: What Teachers Have to Say” questionnaire (Appendix A) was designed by the researcher solely for this study. The questionnaire attempted to capture the attitudes of general education teachers with regard to the inclusion model and the academic performance of students. The instrument addressed special education background experiences, teacher attitudes of the performance of special need students, support and training of the inclusion model, the impact of teacher-student ratio on the model, and the impact which behavior concerns may have on teacher attitudes. Support and training were defined as the support, training, and resources provided by the principal, special education director and department, and special education teacher with

the goal of allowing the general educator to become comfortable and at ease with working with students with disabilities. Smaller student-teacher ratios were defined as 20:1 and larger student-teacher ratios defined as 27:1. Special education background experience was defined as prior exposure to special education practice and law through special education college courses and/or degree(s), professional development, and the teaching of students with special needs. As Turnbull et al., (1999) stated many of the students with learning disabilities also have attention deficit disorder or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. The authors stated that these students must have a structured environment and may become disruptive if not provided. Constant disruptions, defiance, and inattentiveness may constitute as behavior concerns in this study.

The instrument addressed special education background experiences in questions 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6. The attitudes teachers have of student performances were addressed in questions 5, 21, 24, 25, 26, 27, and 28. Questions numbered 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15 addressed the support and training of general education teachers of the inclusion model. To approach behavioral concerns of students with disabilities, questions 16, 17, 18, and 19 were introduced. Student-teacher ratio/classroom size was addressed in questions 20, 22, and 23. Many of the questions were based on a 5 to 1 point Likert-type scale (Strongly Disagree – Disagree-Neutral- Agree – Strongly Agree). The 5-point Likert-type scale was created with questions that were opinion-based as its main agency for collecting information. There were also categorical questions which addressed basic special education background experiences. The questions were both negative and positive as it relates to attitudes of general education teachers who had the responsibility of providing a free, appropriate, and adequate education to students who are deemed to be

other health impaired and/or learning disabled. Questions 9, 12, 17, 18, 21, 24, and 26 were negative questions used in the questionnaire. The questions were generated from the reviewed literature.

Because the questionnaire was generated solely for this study, a test was conducted prior to data collection to establish reliability and validity. To ensure reliability and validity, a panel of experts was utilized to read and provide feedback on the instrument and its appropriateness towards its desired purpose. After feedback and criticism had been received and analyzed, the instrument was then reconstructed based upon the critiques of the panel of experts. Afterward, a pilot study was conducted using 15 to 20 participants with similar characteristics of the subjects required for the study. The results of the pilot study were analyzed for Cronbach's Alpha to examine the reliability. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient reliability test was performed for all five subscales of the questionnaire. Each subscale was above the acceptable score of 0.70 with the exception of student performance, a score of 0.69, which was retained because it was slightly below .070. Table 1 shows the result of the pilot test.

Table 1

*Cronbach's Alpha for the Pilot Study*

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Cronbach's Alpha	Subscale
.93	SPED background
.69	Student Performance
.75	Support and training
.71	Behavior concerns

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Table 1 (continued).

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.89	Classroom size
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#### Data Collection

Permission to perform the study was first obtained from the superintendent of the school districts within the metro Jackson area. The principals of the selected schools were notified of the permission given by the superintendent. Once the permission was granted by both superintendent and principal, the principal was contacted for a list of teachers meeting the criteria and to discuss the distribution of the surveys. The principals were also asked for a reliable individual who would dedicate him/herself to assisting with ensuring the questionnaires were completed and submitted. Each identified teacher received an email from the researcher describing the purpose of the study and a request (informed consent) for their participation. Teachers were offered an incentive for participation. In terms of the incentive, it was explained that the researcher will provide breakfast for the participants from schools having a questionnaire return rate of 50% and above. Teachers were notified that the questionnaires were going to be collected two weeks from the distribution date.

A questionnaire was addressed to each teacher in a sealed envelope and accompanied by a returned envelope addressed to the researcher to ensure confidentiality and anonymity of the participants. The questionnaires were placed in each teacher's mailbox. There was a box positioned in the main office of the school for the return of the questionnaires. Each school was coded using numbers to assist with the identification of the return rate from the specific school. An email was sent at the completion of one week

of distribution of the questionnaires to remind teachers of the questionnaire and incentive, and to check to see if any teachers may need another questionnaire in case of misplacing the original survey. The second email was sent one day prior to the retrieval date of the questionnaire to thank teachers for their participation, remind them of the retrieval date as well as the incentive. The questionnaires were personally collected by the researcher and taken for analyzing and coding. The researcher will notified the principal of those schools with the return rate of 50% or more to ensure their incentive was scheduled and provided. Teachers' names were not be used in the study. When writing results, only pseudonyms for schools and districts will be used. Approximately one year from the date of retrieval of the completed questionnaires, the questionnaires will be shredded and discarded.

#### Data Analysis

To test hypotheses of the study and evaluate the research questions, all appropriate descriptive statistics ran and calculated. The results of each hypothesis and research question were tabulated, creating a percentage and reporting it using tables, charts, and statistical terms to further describe the results. The correlation coefficient (Pearson  $r$ ) was utilized to calculate the correlation coefficients of the survey. The Pearson  $r$  was evaluated to determine if the results were statically significant for each of the relationships evaluated in the hypotheses.

## Quantitative Hypotheses

Table 2

*Data Analysis*


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Research Question	Hypothesis	Survey Item
Is there are a significant relationship between teacher's attitude of student performance and the variables of inclusion experience, special education courses taken, minor in special education, and professional development hours?	H1 There is no significant relationship between teacher's attitude of student performance and the variables of inclusion experience, special education courses taken, minor in special education, and professional development hours taken.	1-6, 21, 24, 26, 27, 28
Is there a significant relationship between teacher's attitude of student performance and the teacher's perception of support and training?	H2 There is no significant relationship between teacher's attitude of student performance and the teacher's perception of support and training.	7-16
Is there a significant relationship between teacher's attitude of student	H3 There is no significant relationship between teacher's	20, 22, 23

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Table 2 (continued).

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<p>performance and the teacher's perception of the effect of teacher student ratios?</p>	<p>attitude of student performance and the teacher's perception of the effect of teacher student ratios.</p>	
<p>Is there a significant relationship between teacher's attitude of student performance and their perception of the student behavioral concerns?</p>	<p>H4 There is no significant relationship between teacher's attitude of student performance and their perception of the student behavioral concerns.</p>	<p>16-19</p>

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### Summary

To evaluate the relationship between the attitudes of general education teachers about inclusion and the beliefs general education teachers have about the academic performance of students with disabilities, the quantitative research design was utilized. Data was obtained through a self-administered survey from public general education teachers teaching within the inclusive setting. The results of the disaggregated data will be found in Chapter IV.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

#### Introduction

As years have progressed, the Individual with Disabilities Education Act of 1997 has been credited for ensuring maximum opportunities for students with disabilities (Wright & Wright, 2007). As perspectives began to change in regards to the public education system and equal opportunities for those with disabilities, much controversy still exist among teachers (Turnbull et al., 1999). Since the integration, teacher resistance and frustration has risen (Hardy, 1999). The purpose of this study was to identify the relationship between teacher attitudes about inclusion and their attitudes about the academic performance of students with disabilities. The study sought to describe the attitudes of general education teachers at the elementary and middle school levels who used the inclusion practice in their classrooms. Furthermore, this study sought to understand the influences of teachers' attitudes, regarding inclusion.

This was a quantitative study which used a correlational research design that measured the results of a questionnaire designed specifically for this study, based on the research questions and hypotheses. Data were gathered from questionnaires created solely for this study. General education elementary and middle school teachers who have taught within the inclusion setting were the participants of completing the questionnaires. The questionnaire focused on the attitudes of general education teachers with regard to the inclusion model and the academic performance of students. The areas of focus included special education background experiences, teacher attitudes of the performance of special need students, support and training of the inclusion model, the impact of

teacher-student ratio on the model, and the impact which behavior concerns may have on teacher attitudes. Each questionnaire was coded and its results entered in statistical software for analysis. This chapter consists of two parts: descriptive analysis and the results of hypothesis testing.

### Results of Descriptive Analyses

Table 3 shared the descriptive statistics of each question of the questionnaire. The table is presented in order from the highest mean of 4.55 to the lowest mean of 2.11 with standard deviations ranging from .693 to 1.229. Based upon the means, the top five questions which participants mostly agreed with were collaboration promotes success (Q8) with a mean of 4.55, professional development is beneficial (Q15) with a mean of 4.39, teachers have the ability to motivate students in smaller settings (Q20) with a mean of 4.16, special education teachers provide helpful information (Q7) with a mean of 4.10, and students with disabilities participate when class sizes are smaller (Q23) with a mean of 4.00. Those questions which the general education participants least agreed with were students with disabilities are not capable of performing as well as those students without disabilities (Q24) with a mean of 2.11, the school's principal is not a regular visitor (Q9) with a mean of 2.59, students with behavior concerns have special education eligibility rulings (Q18) with a mean of 2.61, students with disabilities are capable and should be tested on grade level (Q25) with a mean of 2.72, and the administration ask of concerns of the general education teacher (Q11) with a mean of 2.77. It is also necessary to note the large standard deviation of 1.229 for question 25 which indicates that there was a wide range of values or a possible outlier for this question.

Table 3

*Descriptive Statistics*

	Teacher (N=105)	
	Mean	Std. Deviation
Collaboration promotes success	4.55	.747
PD would be beneficial	4.39	.791
Teacher have the ability to motivate when ratios are smaller	4.16	.856
SPED teacher provides helpful information	4.10	.960
Students w/dis participate when class sizes are smaller	4.00	.693
Students receptive to strategies when student-teacher ratio is smaller	3.99	.714
Teaching inclusion will not be a disappointment	3.57	1.073
Students w/dis respond to resources	3.49	.822
Students will reach IEP goals as a result of inclusion	3.49	.991
Teachers concerned that SPED students lower class performance	3.49	1.020
Teacher anticipate students will perform well on weekly test	3.47	.889
Students w/behavior concerns are able to participate	3.37	1.085
Teachers understand how to implement resources	3.37	.835
Resources are inadequate	3.22	.990
Teachers are concerned students w/dis may disrupt	3.22	1.085
Teaches are knowledgeable of disabilities	3.14	1.096
Students w/behavior concerns adapt to inclusion	3.03	.904
Administration ensures training	2.96	1.126
Standardized test should not be given to students w/dis	2.95	1.1095
Administration ask of teacher's concerns	2.77	1.04

Table 3 (continued).

Students w/dis are capable and should be tested on grade level	2.72	1.229
Students w/behavior concerns have SPED eligibility	2.61	.935
Principal not a regular visitor	2.59	1.007
Students w/disabilities are not capable as students w/out dis	2.11	.993

Note: 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neutral, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree

The descriptive statistics presented in Table 4 show the five components of the questionnaire and its results. Special education background experience consisted of questions 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6. The attitudes teachers have of student performances were addressed in questions 5, 21, 24, 25, 26, 27, and 28. Questions numbered 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15 addressed the support and training of general education teachers of the inclusion model. Student-teacher ratio/classroom size was addressed in questions 20, 22, and 23. To approach behavioral concerns of students with disabilities, questions 16, 17, 18, and 19 were introduced. The special education background experience questions used 1 as the lowest scale rating and 3 as the highest rating. Teachers' attitudes of student performance, support and training of general education teachers, and behavioral concerns of students with disabilities held by teachers are all scored using the 5-point Likert scale where *1-strongly disagree, 2-disagree, 3-neutral, 4-agree, and 5- strongly agree*. The highest rating was 4.05 (student teacher ratios) and the lowest 1.32 (special education background experience).

Table 4

*Descriptive Statistics*

	Mean	Std. Deviation
SPED background experience	1.32	.64
Student Performance	3.28	.61
Support	3.53	.42
Behavior	3.14	.64

Note: 1=strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3=neutral, 4=agree, 5= strongly agree

Of the 105 general education teachers, it can be conclude that the participants of this study did not have intensive exposure with special education during collegiate studies. The study reveals that 81 (77.1%) teachers had taken zero to three special education college courses, 14 (13.3%) teachers had taken four to seven special education courses, and 10 (9.5%) teachers had taken eight or more special education college courses. Results are shown below in Table 5.

Table 5

*Frequency of Special Education College Courses Taken*

SPED College Courses	Frequency	Percent
0-3	81	77.1
4-7	14	13.3
8+	10	9.5

Table 5 (continued).

Total	105	100.0
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To serve as support to the previous table, general education teachers' exposure to special education has been limited during their collegiate studies. This table shows that of the 105 participants, 12 general education teachers majored or minored in special education during collegiate studies while 93 (88.6%) general education teachers did not. Results are shown in Table 6.

Table 6

*Frequency of Major/Minor in Special Education*

Major/Minor in SPED	Frequency	Percent
Yes	12	11.4
No	93	88.6
Total	105	100.0

Of the 105 participants of this study 73 (69.5%) of the participants had not received at least five hours of professional development in special education prior to teaching inclusion. It is reported that 32 of the 105 general education teachers have received 5 or more hours of special education prior to teaching within the inclusion setting. Results are shown in Table 7.

Table 7

*Frequency of Professional Development prior to teaching inclusion*

5+ hours of PD	Frequency	Percent
Yes	32	30.5
No	73	69.5
Total	105	100.0

## Hypothesis Results

*Research Question 1*

To evaluate research question one, an ANOVA was used to analyze whether the independent variables: professional development hours in special education prior to teaching, years of teaching experience, a major or minor in special education, and the number of special education college courses taken were predictors of the dependent variable: teachers' attitude towards students performance. This test revealed that there is not a significant relationship between teachers' attitude of student performance and the variables of inclusion experience, special education courses taken, minor in special education, and professional development hours. As indicated by the F-test where the  $F$  is the average amount of variability and test for the significance of the model, the ANOVA table indicated that the relation was not significant with  $F(4,100) = .871, p = .484$ . The model summary reported an R square of .034 which indicated that the variability

explained by the model was 3% for teachers' attitudes of student performance. Results are shown in Table 8.

Table 8

*Coefficients of Student Performance*

Variables	Standardized Coefficients Beta	T	Sig.
(Constant)		6.011	.000
Years of teaching inclusion	-.085	-.810	.420
SPED college courses taken	.007	.053	.958
Majored/Minored in SPED	-.026	-.288	.820
5+hours of SPED prof development prior to teaching inclusion	-.162	-1.345	.182

Note: Dependent Variable: Student Performance

*Research Question 2*

The second research question was: Is there a significant relationship between teacher's attitude of student performance and the teacher's perception of support and training? To analyze the second research question, the Pearson correlation coefficients were used. The model reported that there was a significant relationship between the teacher's attitude of student performance and the teacher's perception of support and training as indicated by  $r = .326$ ,  $p = .001$ .

### *Research Question 3*

The third research question was: Is there a significant relationship between teacher's attitude of student performance and their perception of the effect of teacher student ratios? To analyze the third research question, the Pearson correlation coefficients were used. This model reported that there is no significant relationship between the teachers' attitudes of student performance and the perceptions teachers have on the effect the student teacher ratios as indicated by  $r = .086$ ,  $p = .386$ .

### *Research Question 4*

The fourth research question was: Is there a significant relationship between teacher's attitude of student performance and their perception of the student behavioral concerns? To analyze the fourth research question, the Pearson correlation coefficients were used. This model reported that there was a significant relationship between the teachers' attitudes of student performances and their perception of the student behavioral concerns as indicated by an  $r = .387$ ,  $p < .001$ .

### Summary

This study investigated whether there was a relationship between teacher attitudes about inclusion and their attitudes about the academic performance of students with disabilities. This study included 105 participants who were all general education third through eighth grade teachers who have taught within the inclusive setting. Data were gathered and entered into SPSS for statistical analysis of this quantitative study. Descriptive statistics, ANOVA, and Pearson correlation coefficients were all used to identify the statistically significant relationships among the variables. Frequency data

indicated that the participants of the study were fairly new teachers with limited experience or knowledge of special education.

This study also indicated that there were significant relationships between teachers' attitudes of student performance and support and training, and as well as between teachers' attitudes of student performance and teacher's perception of student behavior concerns. This study indicated that there was no significant relationship between the class size and the teachers' attitudes of student performance. This study also indicated that background experiences of teachers are not significant predictors of their attitudes of student performance.

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to identify the relationship between teacher attitudes about inclusion and their attitudes about the academic performance of students with disabilities. The study sought to describe the attitudes of general education teachers at the elementary and middle school levels who used the inclusion practice in their classrooms. Furthermore, this study sought to understand the influences of teachers' attitudes, regarding inclusion.

The intent of this study was to identify correlations between the attitudes held by teachers about inclusion and the beliefs they have of performances of students with disabilities. Identifying the attitudes of the general education inclusion teachers is extremely vital to the school culture and academic environment. This study may provide ideas that may be useful in formulating a more effective inclusion program that is favorable to student learning and success.

#### Summary of Procedures

Permission was granted by the University of Southern Mississippi's Institutional Review Board to conduct surveys within the Metro Jackson area school districts. Of the survey, there were 105 participants whom were all general education teachers of an inclusion setting within an elementary or middle school. Questionnaires were delivered to schools mid December 2012 and collected the third week of January 2013 from a designated representative at each school.

After receiving questionnaires for this quantitative study, responses were analyzed using SPSS reports of descriptive statistics, ANOVA, and Pearson Correlations.

Cronbach's Alpha correlation coefficient tests were also conducted on each subscale of the questionnaire during the pilot study for a test of reliability.

### Major Findings

The data collected in this study indicates that the majority of the general education elementary and middle school teachers of the inclusion setting respondents had 0-5 years of experience teaching within the inclusion setting. The data also indicates that the majority of the respondents had very little college preparation in the area of special education. The respondents also reported very little exposure to special education professional development prior to teaching within the inclusion setting, yet they strongly agreed that professional development in the area of special education would be beneficial to them. The respondents also strongly agreed that the collaboration and assistance from the special education teachers would promote success. This indicates that although there is a lack of knowledge for special education, a desire for knowledge and exposure to the discipline is prevalent among the participants. As expected, those with little experience with the discipline are looking to the special education teachers for helpful information and guidance. The participants have shared that they believe the students can perform academically to standards when administration is present to ensure teacher and student success.

Research question one asked if there is a significant relationship between teacher's attitude of student performance and the variables of inclusion experience, special education courses taken, minor in special education, and professional development hours. The ANOVA used to test the hypothesis indicates that there is no significant relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variables.

Professional development, years of inclusion teaching experience, and college preparation do not have a significant relationship with teachers' attitudes of student performance.

Research question two asked if a significant relation between teacher's attitude of student performance and the teacher's perception of support and training exist. To test this hypothesis of research question two, a Pearson Correlation test was used. The test indicated that there is a significant relationship between teachers' attitude of student performance and the support and training received by the general education teacher.

Research question three asked if a significant relationship between teacher's attitude of student performance and the teacher's perception of the effect of teacher student ratios exist. To test the hypothesis of question three, Pearson Correlation test was used. The test indicates that there is no significant relationship between the teachers' attitudes of student performance and their perception of the effect of teacher student ratios.

Research question four asked if a significant relationship between teacher's attitude of student performance and their perception of the student behavioral concerns exist. To test the related hypothesis, Pearson Correlation was used. The results indicated that a significant relationship does exist between teachers' attitudes of student performance and their perception of student behavior concerns.

### Discussion

Much of results of this study concur with the literature reviewed, which asserts that teachers recognize the advantages of inclusion, yet are still somewhat skeptical with the responsibility of inclusion practices when the support and knowledge is absent. The

results suggest that teachers believe that students with disabilities can perform well academically when the support, knowledge, and meaningful collaboration are prevalent.

The participants of this study strongly agreed with question eight which stated that special education and general education teachers need to collaborate in order for inclusion to be successful. Studies of Leyser and Tappendorf (2001) and Voltz, Brazil, and Ford (2001) indicated the importance of meaningful collaboration between general education teachers and special education teachers. The participants of the survey believed that they would do well in the inclusion setting as they work to academically prepare students with disabilities. However, the participants are somewhat apprehensive with diving in without acquiring the knowledge, expectations, and strategies needed within the inclusion setting. Participants of this study concurred with studies such as D'Alonzo, Giordano, and Vanleeuwen (1997) which reported the general education teachers needed support and training to better prepare themselves and have a sense of competence in providing adequate instructional practices to students with disabilities within their classrooms. The participants' response rated that professional development would be beneficial to general education teachers of the inclusion model. The responses suggested that with the needed professional development, support, and assistance, the teachers believed that they would be better equipped and more successful with their approaches to the inclusion model.

The literature states that many teachers do not favor the inclusion program because they feel unprepared with little or no knowledge of how to teach and successfully prepare students with disabilities for future endeavors (Burstein et al., 2004). The results of this study are inconsistent with the literature and it is interesting to see that the

background experience and exposure to special education is not of significance. In the study conducted by McLeskey, Waldron, So, Swanson, & Loveland (2001) teachers with no experience and knowledge of inclusion displayed negative attitudes about teaching students with disabilities. This study suggested that teachers with little or no experience and/or prior knowledge to inclusion and teaching students with disabilities tend to have positive attitudes of inclusion and student performance. This study shows that they are more apt and willing to get on board and educate all as long as the collaboration, support, and professional development are available. These teachers appear to be more innovative. The participants of this study were all rather new teachers who believed that if they mastered behavior concerns and received the needed support and training needed to become an effective general education teachers, inclusion would be embraced and there students with disabilities would perform successful academically. Fullan and Miles (1992) discussed veteran teachers versus new, innovative teachers. The authors shared that veteran teachers are committed to their teaching style and believe that if their teaching style was effective in the past, it is effective currently, and will be effective in the future. The authors found that because veteran teachers were not willing to adjust their approaches, students with disabilities were not successful. Woods (2002) reported that a successful inclusion setting consist of teachers who understand how to manage their classroom to accommodate the students with disabilities and ensure that learning is not deterred for those students without disabilities.

Question 25 which stated that students with disabilities are capable and should be tested on grade level was a question of interest in that it had one of the lowest means, yet the highest standard deviation throughout the entire questionnaire. This supports the

literature and it's widespread of controversy surrounding teachers' beliefs of student academic capabilities. Hardy (1999) stated that educators are unsure what to expect from students with disabilities. Goldstein (2006) stated that many are aware of the conflicting concepts of whether or not students with disabilities can perform academically according to state standards and that they have voiced their arguments of students with disabilities being able to perform to high academic standards. McGrew and Evans (2003), findings suggested that many educators believe that students with disabilities are struggling to master grade-level achievement standards that are measured by statewide assessments. This study is not consistent with the literature as teachers strongly believed that students with disabilities could perform as well as students without disabilities and these students should be tested on grade-level. Many educators are unsure what to expect from students with disabilities (Hardy, 1999). This study also contradicted Bender, Vail, and Scott's (1995) position which stated that teachers of the inclusive setting believe that the disabilities of the students will prevent students from attaining grade-level achievements even with highly qualified instruction, services, and accommodations. Teachers of this study appear to be confident that their students with disabilities can and will perform as well as students without disabilities; however, there were some outliers which questioned the students ability to perform to grade-level standards successfully.

This study suggested that teachers are passionate about the need for smaller classroom sizes. Achilles and Finn (2000), Gersten and Dimino (2001), and Thurlow, Ysseldyke, and Wotruba (1989) concluded that low student-teacher ratios are essential in meeting the needs of students and allows teachers to effectively facilitate instruction that involves a substantial amount of communication and individualization. Participants

of this study supported the literature and suggested that they believed that students with disabilities actively participate better when classroom sizes are smaller and found that they could better motivate the performance of students with disabilities better when the class size is smaller. Participants reported that students are more receptive to instructional strategies when the student-teacher ratio is smaller; however, the Pearson Correlation coefficient test conducted indicated that the relationship between teachers' attitudes of student performance and student-teacher ratios are not significant.

#### Limitations

The limitations of this study include the possibility that the participants answered more positively due to their belief of the affect they believe the survey would have on their school or principal and, in some cases, some may have responded less positively for similar reasons. Participants of this study were limited to general education elementary and middle school teachers of the Metro Jackson school districts. The representations was limited and confined to school districts of similar demographics.

#### Recommendation for Policy and Practice

From the results of this research, a number of recommendations are proposed to ensure inclusion is effective and student with disabilities' academic performance is successful. The results from this research identified the attitudes of the general education inclusion teachers and the impact teacher attitudes and beliefs have on the school culture and the academic environment. Researchers such as Van Reusen et al. (2001) believed the attitudes which teachers, administrators, and other school personnel hold towards inclusion and the learning ability of students with disabilities may influence school learning environments and the availability of equitable educational opportunities for all

students. This research is a form of awareness to administrators, parents, students, general education teachers, and special education teachers.

This study proposes that teachers agreed that special education and general education teachers need to collaborate in order for inclusion to be successful. The results of this study also suggest that when general education teachers ask for support from the special education teacher, helpful information is provided. The participants of this study also believed that professional development would be beneficial to general education teachers of the inclusion model. The recommendation would be for administration to ensure general education and special education teachers the time needed for effective collaboration. Administrators should provide time for collaboration consisting of common planning time where the special education teacher is providing on-going training and support to the general education teachers. Because the respondents strongly agreed upon their need for helpful information and quality collaboration with the special education teacher, the research suggests to Special Education Directors and principals to revisit and train the special education teachers to ensure they are very knowledgeable, articulate, and able share the vision and goal for educating students with disabilities. Both groups of educators should be grouped and receive on-going training on quality collaboration and updated special education and general education policies and curricula.

General education inclusion teachers were thoroughly able to articulate their ideas and concerns for improvement, introducing issues and blemishes unknown to administrators. This study shows that general education teachers complained that administrators are not regular visitors in the inclusion classroom and that administrators do not routinely ask general education teachers of any concerns that he or she may have

regarding the inclusion model. Results of this study also shared that teachers believed that administrators do not ensure general education teachers are provided with on-going training and in-services in order to prepare them to feel competent in teaching students with disabilities in the general education classroom. The recommendation would be for administrators to become more supportive to the teachers of the inclusion program. This study suggested to administrators that they must become aware of those areas in which professional development may be needed to improve teacher morale and performance, familiarity of various disabilities, and strategies for teaching students with disabilities. According to a study conducted by McLeskey and Waldron (2002), in order for general education inclusion teachers to prepare and have a sense of competence in educating students with disabilities, they need additional training. It is essential that self assessments are taken and constant communication is prevalent between the general education teachers and administrators to ensure the administrator is aware of any concerns and possible frustration or burn-out.

#### Recommendation for Future Research

The following recommendation for future research to better grasp additional understanding of the impact teachers' attitudes of inclusion have on their beliefs of the academic performance of students with disabilities are as followed:

1. The findings of this study suggested teachers without any prior experience or knowledge of special education was not a predictor of the teacher's belief of the student's academic performance. Future research should explore the impact that prior knowledge and experience have on the ability to perform a job/duty within the educational profession.

2. The research suggested that many of the participants were rather newer, inexperienced teachers who were more apt to working within the inclusion setting. It is recommended that future studies explore the differences between veteran teachers and new teachers, and the ability and desire to better equip students for today's competitive workforce.
3. The findings of this research suggested teachers were exposed to no or very little special education college curricula. It is suggested that future studies examine if general education teachers with a substantial amount of special education college curricula perceived inclusion and student performance differently from those with no or limited exposure.
4. School districts of a variety of demographics were not presented in this study. It would be interesting to compare the attitudes and beliefs of teachers among school districts that have varying economic, parental, and community support statuses.
5. Classroom management appears to be an issue across the field of education. Future studies should explore whether teachers' performance change when a difference exist between students with disabilities and behavior concerns, and those students without disabilities that have behavior concerns.
6. Examining the effectiveness of professional development and support on the profession and teacher retention should also be considered.
7. In order to receive a deeper understanding of the reasoning behind the teachers' responses, it is recommended that this study be conducted through qualitative research.

## Summary

The purpose of this study was to identify the relationship between teacher attitudes about inclusion and their attitudes about the academic performance of students with disabilities. The study sought to describe the attitudes of general education teachers at the elementary and middle school levels who used the inclusion practice in their classrooms.

Of the survey, there were 105 participants whom were all general education teachers of an inclusion setting within an elementary or middle school. After receiving questionnaires for this quantitative study, responses were analyzed using SPSS reports of descriptive statistics, ANOVA, and Pearson Correlations.

Several major findings came from this research. The findings indicated professional development, years of inclusion teaching experience, and college preparation do not have a significant relationship with teachers' attitudes of student performance. The research also indicated that there is a significant relationship between teachers' attitude of student performance and the support and training received by the general education teacher. Findings also revealed that there is no significant relationship between the teachers' attitudes of student performance and their perception of the effect of teacher student ratios. The results also indicated that a significant relationship does exist between teachers' attitudes of student performance and their perception of student behavior concerns.

Although there were a few limitations of the study, there were recommendations for future policy and practice which would be beneficial to teachers, administrators, and special education directors. The recommendations would afford administration to

formulate inclusion settings with innovative individuals who received exceptional training and support from principal, special education directors, and special education teachers.

Recommendations for future research included the implementation on further studies regarding the impact of the experience of teachers have on the profession. Another recommendation was to compare the attitudes and beliefs of teachers among school districts that have varying economic, parental, and community support statuses. Other researches included examining the effect of professional development on teacher retention, conducting this study through qualitative research for more in depth reasoning, and comparing the behaviors of students with and without disabilities and examining the difference they have on teacher performance.

APPENDIX A  
 INCLUSION: WHAT TEACHERS HAVE TO SAY  
 QUESTIONNAIRE

The purpose of this questionnaire is to gather knowledge and understanding of your attitude about inclusion and the academic performance of students with disabilities.

1. Number of years teaching within the inclusion program \_\_\_\_\_
2. Number of Special Education college course(s) taken: \_\_0-3 \_\_4-7 \_\_8+
3. Do you have a college degree or minor in special education? \_\_ Yes \_\_ No
4. I had participated in five or more hours of special education professional development prior to teaching students with disabilities: \_\_ Yes \_\_ No
5. Teaching within the inclusion model for the next 3 years would not be a disappointment to me.  
 Strongly Disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly Agree
6. I have an in-depth knowledge of special education disabilities.  
 Strongly Disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly Agree
7. When asking for support from the special education teacher, helpful information is provided.  
 Strongly Disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly Agree
8. Special education and general education teachers need to collaborate in order for inclusion to be successful.  
 Strongly Disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly Agree
9. The principal is not a regular visitor in the inclusion classroom.

Strongly Disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly Agree

10. Administration ensures general education teachers are provided with ongoing training and in-services in order to prepare them to feel competent in teaching students with disabilities in the general education classroom.

Strongly Disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly Agree

11. Administration routinely asks the general education teacher of any concerns he/she may have regarding the inclusion model.

Strongly Disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly Agree

12. Resources are inadequate in assisting the general education teacher in the inclusion setting.

Strongly Disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly Agree

13. The general education teacher understands how to implement resources given to assist within the inclusion setting.

Strongly Disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly Agree

14. Students with disabilities respond positively to those resources utilized.

Strongly Disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly Agree

15. Professional development would be beneficial to general education teachers of the inclusion model.

Strongly Disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly Agree

16. Students with behavioral concern are able to participate productively in the general education classroom learning activities.

Strongly Disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly Agree

17. General education teachers are concerned that having students with disabilities in their classrooms may disrupt the education of students with disabilities.

Strongly Disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly Agree

18. Students with behavioral concerns normally have special education eligibility.

Strongly Disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly Agree

19. Students with behavioral concerns adapt academically to inclusion.

Strongly Disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly Agree

20. General education teachers have the ability to motivate the performance of students with disabilities better when the student-teacher ratio is smaller.

Strongly Disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly Agree

21. General education teachers are concerned that having students with disabilities in their classrooms will lower their overall class academic performance.

Strongly Disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly Agree

22. Students with disabilities are receptive to strategies and ideas that I present when my student-teacher ratio is smaller.

Strongly Disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly Agree

23. Students with disabilities actively participate in classroom activities with their peers without disabilities when classroom sizes are smaller.

Strongly Disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly Agree

24. Students with disabilities are not capable of performing as well as students without disabilities.

Strongly Disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly Agree

25. Students with disabilities are capable and should be tested on grade level.

Strongly Disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly Agree

26. State standardized test should not be given to students with disabilities.

Strongly Disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly Agree

27. When creating weekly assessment, the general education teacher anticipates that inclusion students would perform well.

Strongly Disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly Agree

28. Students with disabilities will more than likely reach their IEP goals as a result of inclusion.

Strongly Disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly Agree

APPENDIX B  
PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

*(School's Letterhead)*

Upon approval of The University of Southern Mississippi's Institutional Review Board (IRB), Jonathan Sutton has my permission to survey teachers of the Rankin County School District in order to collect data for his dissertation, *Teacher Attitudes of Inclusion and Academic Performance of Students with Disabilities*.

I understand that all participation is voluntary and that individual responses will be kept confidential. Further, any changes in the research protocol must be approved by the University of Southern Mississippi's Institutional Review Board.

Sincerely,

Superintendent of Education

## APPENDIX C

## INFORMED CONSENT &amp; PARTICIPANT LETTER

Research Title: *Teacher Attitudes of Inclusion and Academic Performance of Students with Disabilities*

You are being asked to participate in a study that seeks to identify the relationship between teacher attitudes about inclusion and their attitudes about the academic performance of students with disabilities. Through this study the researcher seeks to describe the attitudes of general education teachers at the elementary and middle school levels who use inclusion in their classrooms, regarding this practice. Furthermore, this study seeks to understand the influences of teachers' attitudes, regarding inclusion. The study uses a questionnaire, "Inclusion: What Teachers Have to Say," which was designed by the researcher solely for this study. The questionnaire will attempt to capture the attitudes of general education teachers with regard to the inclusion model and the academic performance of students. The instrument will address special education background experiences, teacher attitudes of the performance of special need students, support and training of the inclusion model, the impact of teacher-student ratio on the model, and the impact which behavior concerns may have on teacher attitudes. The questionnaire consists of twenty-eight questions and may take approximately twenty minutes to complete. Your participation is completely voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time with no penalty.

**Benefits:** The results from this study may provide ideas that may be useful in formulating a more effective inclusion program that is favorable to student learning. General education inclusion teachers may thoroughly articulate their ideas and concerns for improvement, introducing issues and blemishes unknown to administrators. Administrators may conclude from the study those areas in which professional development may be needed to improve teacher morale and performance, familiarity with various disabilities, and strategies for teaching students with disabilities. Identifying the factors influencing the attitudes and beliefs of teachers may construct useful information that could be utilized by administrators and central office personnel to address the need for possible updates and changes of existing policies and procedures surrounding the current format of the inclusion program.

**Risks:** There are no known risks associated with this research. However, teachers may have concerns of possible awareness of their responses to their administrators. Participants will be reminded that the research is completely confidential and anonymous. Each participant's given name will be replaced with a pseudonym. Anonymity will be maintained by not releasing names of the teachers or the school at any point in reporting

results. The research is totally voluntary and the participant may withdraw at any time without penalty.

Alternatively, if you have questions or would like to learn the results of this study, you may contact me, Jonathan Sutton at [mr.jonsutton@gmail.com](mailto:mr.jonsutton@gmail.com).

Thank you for your participation. Your responses are very valuable.

This project has been reviewed by the Human Subjects Protection Review Committee, which ensures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations. Any questions or concerns about rights as a research subject should be directed to the chair of the Institutional Review Board, The University of Southern Mississippi, 118 College Drive #5147, Hattiesburg, MS39406-0001, (601) 266-6820.

## APPENDIX D

## INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL LETTER



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI

**INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD**

118 College Drive #5147 | Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001

Phone: 601.266.6820 | Fax: 601.266.4377 | www.usm.edu/irb

**NOTICE OF COMMITTEE ACTION**

The project has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services (45 CFR Part 46), and university guidelines to ensure adherence to the following criteria:

- The risks to subjects are minimized.
- The risks to subjects are reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
- The selection of subjects is equitable.
- Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.
- Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.
- Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
- Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.
- Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered regarding risks to subjects must be reported immediately, but not later than 10 days following the event. This should be reported to the IRB Office via the "Adverse Effect Report Form".
- If approved, the maximum period of approval is limited to twelve months. Projects that exceed this period must submit an application for renewal or continuation.

PROTOCOL NUMBER: 12103101

PROJECT TITLE: Teacher Attitudes of Inclusion and Academic  
Performance of Students with Disabilities

PROJECT TYPE: Dissertation

RESEARCHER(S): Jonathan E. Sutton

COLLEGE/DIVISION: College of Education & Psychology

DEPARTMENT: Educational Leadership and School Counseling

FUNDING AGENCY/SPONSOR: N/A

IRB COMMITTEE ACTION: Expedited Review Approval

PERIOD OF APPROVAL: 12/13/2012 to 12/12/2013

**Lawrence A. Hosman, Ph.D.**  
**Institutional Review Board**

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