Teacher Attitudes Toward the Use of Accommodations in the Classroom and on Standardized Tests

Michele Penny Meadows

University of Southern Mississippi

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TEACHER ATTITUDES TOWARD THE USE OF ACCOMMODATIONS IN THE CLASSROOM AND ON STANDARDIZED TESTS

by

Michele Penny Meadows

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 2012
ABSTRACT

TEACHER ATTITUDES TOWARD THE USE OF ACCOMMODATIONS IN THE CLASSROOM AND ON STANDARDIZED TESTS

by Michele Penny Meadows

May 2012

Educating students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment necessitates the use of accommodations and modifications to help these students have better access to the general education curriculum. As a result of inclusion, general education teachers are required to teach students with disabilities in their general education classrooms. Even though regular education teachers have assistance from special education teachers, not all general education teachers (and some special education teachers) believe they have the education, experience, or support to teach these students effectively. This study measured general education teacher and special education teacher attitudes toward the use accommodations for special education students in the regular education classroom and in standardized testing situations. A likert-type survey instrument was used to collect data from general education teachers and special education teachers in public schools containing grades K-12 in south Mississippi schools. The data collected through the study showed varying attitudes among teachers. When teacher attitudes were compared by position (regular education or special education teacher), there was a statistically significant difference in attitudes with special education teacher attitudes being more positive in both the classroom and on standardized tests. Teacher attitudes by grade level taught and position did not differ significantly in either the classroom or on standardized tests. Teachers with a master’s degree or higher did not
have a more positive attitude toward the use of accommodations in the classroom, but teachers with a master’s degree or higher did have a more positive attitude toward the use of accommodations on standardized tests. Teachers with 16 or more years experience tended to have more positive attitudes toward the use of accommodations than those with lower levels of experience both in the classroom and on standardized tests. Teachers at the elementary level had a more positive attitude toward the use of accommodations in the classroom but on standardized tests there was not a statistical difference. Teacher attitudes were more positive toward the use of accommodations in the classroom than toward the use of accommodations on standardized tests.
TEACHER ATTITUDES TOWARD THE USE OF ACCOMMODATIONS IN THE CLASSROOM AND ON STANDARDIZED TESTS

by

Michele Penny Meadows

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

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Dean of the Graduate School

May 2012
DEDICATION

I would like to thank my husband, Steve, for believing I could do this and continuing to encourage and support me throughout the process. I would also like to thank my mother for instilling a belief in education in me. Also, thanks to my many coworkers and friends for listening to my complaints throughout the process.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) raised the expectations for all students, including those with disabilities. Students with disabilities are now required to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in all areas: mathematics, reading, and writing, just like their non-disabled peers. Student AYP is measured through the use of standardized test scores. In order for students with disabilities to make AYP in all areas, they require certain accommodations to access the general education curriculum.

Accommodations are defined as “changes in how test or classroom work is administered that do not substantially alter what the test or assignment measures; appropriate accommodations are made to level the playing field in the identified skill deficit area” (Wright & Wright, 2009, p. 423). The Individuals with Disabilities Act provides for the use of accommodations for students with disabilities. These accommodations are delivered by both regular and special educators in general education and special education classrooms.

This study sought to better understand the differences in teacher attitudes toward the use of accommodations in the classroom and on standardized tests. In order for students with disabilities to exhibit their academic skills, they must receive the accommodations included as part of their individualized educational plans (IEPs). Understanding general education and special education teacher attitudes toward the implementation of IEP accommodations gives school administrators and all educators a better picture of how the practice can be improved to the benefit of students with disabilities. Several studies have examined the perceptions of students toward
accommodations they receive in the general education classrooms (Heimdahl-Mattson & Roll-Petterson, 2007; Loreman, Lupart, McGhie-Richmond, & Barber, 2008). In Canada, Loreman et al. (2008) interviewed students with Learning Disabilities (LD) in Grades 1-12 as to their perceptions about the accommodations process within their public schools. Similarly, Heimdahl-Mattson and Roll-Petterson (2007) interviewed secondary students about the accommodation process in Sweden. Steffes (2010) surveyed secondary educators about their perceptions of accommodations for students with learning disabilities in inclusive classrooms. The literature also addresses the perceptions of general educators at the elementary and postsecondary levels (Grodsky, Warren, & Felts, 2008; MacLean, 2008; Skinner, 2007). Current literature does not examine and compare the attitudes of general and special educators at various grade levels toward the use of accommodations in the classroom and on standardized tests.

Theoretical Framework

Maslow’s hierarchy of needs was propounded in 1943 by Abraham Maslow and was widened to encompass his personal observations of the inherent curiosity of humans. Maslow observed exemplary individuals such as Frederick Douglass and Albert Einstein, among others, instead of psychologically impaired people, based on his assertion that studying of handicapped people can yield only a handicapped psychology and a handicapped philosophy. He, therefore, observed the most vigorous 1% of the school population. His observations led to the development of Maslow’s pyramid and it should be noted that some people consider this pyramid as being ethnocentric because Maslow’s hierarchy of needs does not consider an illustration and expansion of the divergence
between the intellectual and social demands of those brought up in individualistic, social spheres and those brought up in collectivist spheres (Maslow, 1943).

Maslow’s hierarchy of needs is typically depicted in a pyramidal form (Figure 1), with the biggest and most universal tiers of needs at the base, and the top is occupied by the imperative for self-actualization. It should be understood that Maslow's hierarchy of needs is imperative to understanding the orientation of differentiated instruction as a result of its definition of the fundamental and specialized needs of individuals that could be applied in developing effective inclusion strategies for efficient, differentiated education. Maslow’s deficiency needs or d-needs are contained in the most universal four layers of the pyramid and are depicted below (Wahba & Bridwell, 1976).
Background of the Problem

Not until the early 1970s did public schools begin educating students with disabilities in general education classrooms (Murray & Naranjo, 2008). These original
attempts produced few positive results for students. Over the past decade, NCLB has required more inclusion of students with disabilities into general education settings and schools have adapted programs to meet the distinctive needs of the individual students (Trainor, 2007). As a result, more and more students with disabilities have been shifted from self-contained, separate, special education classrooms into general education classrooms where they receive access to the general education curriculum through the use of accommodations of the IEP.

After a student is identified as having a disability, an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) is developed to address the student’s individual needs in the classroom. The IEP includes a list of accommodations and modifications that may be used in the classroom and on standardized tests. Accommodations help a student with a disability to have the same access to the general curriculum as their nondisabled peers.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (2004) allows for students with disabilities to access the general education curriculum through accommodations. A wide variety of accommodations are available for use in the classroom and on standardized tests. The use of accommodations varies depending on the needs of the student. Table 1 contains a synopsis of the most common classroom accommodations used by students along with a brief description of how each accommodation is implemented (Bowden-Carpenter & Dyal, 2007).
Table 1

*Most Common Classroom Accommodations for Students with an IEP*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accommodation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extended time on assignments and tests</td>
<td>Student is allowed extra time to complete assignments and on tests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scribe to complete written work</td>
<td>Someone besides the student writes down written responses for the student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Break large assignments or projects into smaller segments</td>
<td>Assignments that require completion over longer periods of time are broken into daily segments with daily due dates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignments or tests read aloud</td>
<td>Text from books, tests, or worksheets is read aloud to allow for better comprehension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preferential seating</td>
<td>Student is seated close to instructor to minimize distractions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequent breaks during instruction</td>
<td>Student is given brief breaks to improve on task learning time during long instructional periods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of calculator</td>
<td>Student uses calculator for math assignments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher copy of notes</td>
<td>Teacher provides student with a copy of notes prior to lesson to decrease time spent on transcription</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of notes on assignments or tests</td>
<td>Student is allowed to use notes on assignments or tests to improve comprehension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small group instruction</td>
<td>Students are given instruction or concepts are re-taught in a small group setting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For students with disabilities to fully take part in the general education curriculum, accommodations must be allowed. As evidenced in the literature, students with disabilities have difficulty making academic gains especially in the secondary level.
Cummings, Atkins, Allison, & Cole, 2008; Woods, 2007). Students with disabilities require accommodations in general education classes to help them achieve academic success, this is especially true in secondary classes (Biddle, 2006; Elbaum, 2007). Without classroom accommodations, students with disabilities fail at a higher rate than their nondisabled peers (Bateman, 2007). Classroom accommodations are key factors in helping students with disabilities have greater academic success at all levels.

In public schools today, classroom accommodations are administered by the general education teacher with assistance from the special education teacher. Many regular education teachers have little to no training in special education (Wasta, 2006). Special education teachers are available to define accommodations and how to administer them; however, they are not in the general education classrooms 100% of the time to oversee the administration. Because general education teachers have numerous other responsibilities involved with teaching and a wide array of student skill levels in any given class for which to differentiate, the implementation of accommodations for students with disabilities often falls by the wayside (Heimdahl-Mattson & Roll-Petterson, 2007). General educations teachers may work with numerous special education students daily each with different needs. Understanding the accommodations necessary for each special education student can be an overwhelming task (MacLean, 2008). Many general education teachers struggle to implement the required accommodations for students with disabilities for a variety of reasons (Bowden-Carpenter & Dyal, 2007). In any given classroom, there will be students performing significantly below or above grade level and students who are somewhere in between (Senge, 2000). The general education teacher is challenged to educate students at all skill levels while maintaining an adequate teaching
pace to meet the required state standards. Implementation of the IEP accommodations has a causal effect on a student with a disability’s success in academic classes (Bateman, 2007; Elbaum, 2007).

Teachers often do not realize the importance of IEP accommodations for students with disabilities and are not comfortable implementing the needed accommodations. In order to support both regular and special education teachers in the accommodation process, research is needed as to the attitudes of teachers toward the use of accommodations in the classroom and on standardized tests. Results of such research may be used to provide much needed staff development in the proper implementation of IEP accommodations.

Statement of the Problem

Students with disabilities are often not getting their assigned IEP accommodations from their general education teachers. Regular education teachers often do not put into practice the assigned IEP accommodations because of barriers to the implementation process (Maccini & Gagnon, 2006). These barriers include class size, lack of special education training, deficient accommodation implementation systems, and a large spectrum of learning levels within the classroom (Skinner, 2007). In addition, special education teachers often lack the essential training necessary to assist the regular education teacher with accommodations in the larger regular education classroom setting. Both special and regular education teachers have attitudes that may affect their use of the needed accommodations.

Various groups in a school are affected by the improper implementation of special education accommodations including regular education teachers, special education
teachers, administrators, and students with disabilities. Regular education teachers struggle with these students’ progress in the regular education curriculum. Special education teachers who write the IEP, including accommodations to target a student’s needs, are faced with student failure due to the lack of accommodation in the regular education classroom. Additionally, the problem impacts administrators (principals, assistant principals, special education directors) who oversee IEP practices in their buildings and district and can be held accountable when a free and appropriate education is not provided for students with disabilities. Most importantly the problem impacts the students with disabilities the most. These students are often struggling to keep up with their nondisabled peers and need the assigned classroom IEP accommodations to help balance their educational opportunities.

Purpose of the Study

Accommodations are not only required by law; they are necessary for students with disabilities to be successful inside a general education classroom. Teacher attitudes are very important in the implication of any practices in a classroom, including accommodations. Teacher attitudes can affect how, when, and where an accommodation is actually used. Accommodations can make an enormous difference in a student’s ability to function in a regular education classroom and can increase a student’s access to the general education classroom. Special education teachers and regular education teachers are involved in the writing of IEPs and the use of accommodations in the classroom and on statewide assessments such as the Mississippi Curriculum Tests (MCT) and the Subject Area Testing Program (SATP). Do these two subgroups of teachers have
different attitudes about the use of accommodations, especially on the MCT and SATP, and do these attitudes affect the way accommodations are used?

Research Hypotheses

For the purposes of this study the following research hypotheses were used:

1. Special education teachers have a more positive attitude toward the use of accommodations in both the classroom and on standardized tests.
2. Regular education teacher attitudes toward the use of accommodations differ from special education teachers across grade levels.
3. Teachers with more advanced education levels have a more positive attitude toward the use of accommodations than teachers with a bachelor’s degree.
4. Teachers with more teaching experience have a more positive attitude toward the use of accommodations than teachers with less experience.
5. Elementary teachers have a more positive attitude toward the use of accommodations than secondary/middle school teachers.
6. Teachers have a more positive attitude toward the use of accommodations in the classroom than the use of accommodations on standardized tests.

Definition of Terms

The following terms were operationally defined to provide a better understanding of what was studied:

*Accommodation* is defined as a change in how test or classroom work is administered that does not substantially alter what the test or assignment measures;
appropriate accommodations are made to level the playing field in the identified skill deficit area (Wright & Wright, 2009, p. 423).

Modification is defined as a change is what is being taught or expected from the student (Supports, Modifications, and Accommodations for Students, 2010).

Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a plan intended to meet the exceptional educational requirements of one child as defined by federal regulations (Yell, 2006).

Regular education classroom (or general education classroom) is a classroom consisting of education that typically developing children should receive, based on state standards and evaluated by the annual state educational standards test (typically containing more than 50% students without disabilities) (Special Education, n.d.).

Regular education teacher (or general education teacher) is a teacher trained to provide education in a regular education classroom (Special Education, n.d.).

Special education teacher is a teacher trained to provide specialized services for students with disabilities (Special Education, n.d.).

Student with a disability is a student with a disability at the elementary and secondary level who is at an age at which students without disabilities are provided elementary and secondary educational services or of an age at which it is mandatory under state law to provide elementary and secondary educational services to student with disabilities (What is a qualified student with a disability?, 2011).

Standardized tests refer to tests that are administered and scored by a uniform method. The test questions, scoring measures, and analysis are consistent and
administered in a standard approach (Definitions: Standardized Test Law and Legal Definition, n.d.).

Delimitations

1. Only teachers in Southern Mississippi public schools were surveyed.
2. This study will only examine teacher attitudes toward the use of accommodations on two standardized tests, the MCT2 and Mississippi’s Subject Area Tests.

Assumptions

The researcher assumes that teachers participating in this study felt they could be honest with their answers and that they responded truthfully. The researcher also assumes teachers correctly understood the instructions given on the survey instrument while they answered each question.

Justification

The significance of this study is to explore the attitudes of teachers toward the use of accommodations in the classroom and on standardized tests. The study can also help create a greater understanding of whether or not teachers understand the use of accommodations. The information derived from this study can help to provide educational leaders and teachers with a greater understanding of what the needs for professional development are in the area of special education accommodations. As a result of this understanding, professional development sessions for accommodations can be created with teachers’ attitudes in mind. Teachers and administrators can determine if time and money should be spent on professional development in implementation of accommodations.
CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

History of Special Education

The Bureau of Education for the Handicapped (now known as the Office of Special Education, OSEP) was created in 1965 by Title VI of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Title VI did not authorize education for all handicapped students (Title VI, 1964). In 1973, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act was enacted that sheltered individuals with disabilities from discrimination, but few people realized this applied to education at the time (Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, 1973). In 1975, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA), also known as P. L. 94-142, mandated that all public school districts must educate all students including those with disabilities. In 1977, the final regulations of EAHCA were made available which set out guidelines for schools to follow when educating students with disabilities (Education for All Handicapped Children Act, 1975). EAHCA was amended in 1986 with the Handicapped Children’s Protection Act that gave students and parents’ unmistakable rights under EAHCA. In 1990, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was enacted which included Section 504 regulations (Americans with Disabilities Act, 1990). Also in 1990 EAHCA was amended and became known as the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The amendments added transition services for students with disabilities (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 1990). In 1997, IDEA was reauthorized requiring that students with disabilities be involved in the district and state assessments (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments, 1997). In 2001, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, also known as the No Child Left Behind
Act (NCLB), was enacted which requires that all students, including those with handicaps, be proficient in reading and math by 2014 (Elementary and Secondary Education Act, 2001). In 2004, IDEA was reauthorized requiring more accountability and requiring districts to ensure adequate education for students to help keep them out of special education (Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, 2004).

**Individuals with Disabilities Education Act**

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1977 required that all students, including those with disabilities, be provided with a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). This legislation required that a student’s education must be individualized to meet each student’s needs. IDEA also obligated schools to involve parents in the educational planning for students with disabilities. IDEA required that schools refer any student having educational difficulties, have a qualified evaluator access the student, determine if a student is eligible for special education, identify student as educationally handicapped with a specific disability, write an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) for the student, place student in the appropriate educational environment with supplementary aids and services as needed to ensure an appropriate education (this placement can range from a regular education classroom to a separate special education classroom), and monitor the student’s progress in the general curriculum at least annually (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments, 1997).

Mississippi has numerous policies that are a result of IDEA. Mississippi’s goal is to provide all students with disabilities full educational opportunities from birth through 21 years of age (*Full Educational Opportunities Goal*, n.d.). Mississippi regulations for the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) for students with disabilities require that the IEP
must contain a statement of supplementary aids and services that will be provided to a student, as well as any accommodations and/or modifications that are necessary for the student to achieve the goals of the IEP. The IEP must also include any accommodations or modifications needed for the student to participate in state or district-wide assessments. Any student who is deemed unable to participate in a statewide or district-wide assessment must be tested by some alternate means (Individualized Education Plan, n.d.).

Mississippi also requires that students with special needs be educated to the fullest extent possible in the regular education classroom. The regular education curriculum should be modified to meet the individual student’s needs, and the student should be provided with supplementary aids and services in the regular education environment (Least Restrictive Environment, n.d.).

No Child Left Behind Act

In considering strategies aimed at providing contextually focused education for challenged students, it is only rational to consider the contribution of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act to the concept of differentiated instruction. Therefore, a review of the literature reveals that the NCLB was a U. S. parliamentary act enacted in January 2001. It should, however, be understood that the NCLB was an initial proposition by the Presidential administration of George Bush a short while after his assumption of office and is popularly considered as one of the most widely accepted legislations of his presidential era.

The NCLB bill moved through congress under the radar while being largely supported and sponsored by distinguished U. S. senator Ted Kennedy. It should be noted
that the bill received considerable acceptance and endorsement from both Republicans and Democrats alike. Additionally, the NCLB bill was passed into law by the U. S. House of Representatives in May 2001 with subsequent passage into law by the U. S. Senate in June of that year. Progressively, President Bush formally appended the passage of the NCLB into law on January 8, 2002 (McCarthey, 2008).

According to the position presented by Fuller, Wright, Gesicki, and Kang (2007) in their literature, the NCLB Act is one of the most recent federal legislations that places the fluid and consistently changing theories of standardized instruction reform into practicality, based on the assertion that the creation of optimum standards and establishment or development of explicit goals has the capacity to enhance the quality of individual results with the educational field. The NCLB Act also makes it obligatory for individual states to develop and design assessments in basic competencies offered to all pupils in particular grades, and this is to be used as a yardstick for the reception of federal funding for educational institutions.

It is also important to consider the literature by Ho (2008) who maintains that the NCLB Act is not intended to exist as a standard for national educational progress and achievement, but he states that educational standards should be distinctively established by the respective states according to the contextual demands and challenges of the respective state. According to Apple (2007), after the congressional adoption and presidential passage of the bill into law, in 2001, the U. S. Congress elevated the amount of federal budgetary expenditure dedicated to school funding, from the initial $42.2 billion in 2001 to a massive $54.4 billion in the year 2007. It should, therefore, be
understood that this carries the attendant implication that the NCLB act progressively enjoyed a 40.5% raise from $17.5 billion in 2001 to $24.5 billion.

The NCLB contains clauses which make it mandatory and obligatory for all public institutions to provide a standard-oriented test each year for all pupils within the state and the act also makes it mandatory and obligatory for all pupils to pass through the same tests administered under the same environmental settings (Hursh, 2007). The outcomes from the administered tests are employed as a standard for determining if the educational institution in question has provided appropriate and sufficient educational instruction to the pupils that took the tests. An Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in test score is required of Educational institutions that receive Title I financial allocation through the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, and this AYP requires that annually, pupils in the 5th grade from such educational institutions must have superior performances according to standardized tests when compared to previous annual results (Darling-Hammond, 2007).

Nevertheless, Apple (2007) stated that in a situation in which the yearly academic outcomes in such aforementioned educational institutions are persistently below required standards, then a progression of approaches and protocols are employed for the purpose of ensuring that the situation improves preferably with regards to the academic performance of the educational institution in question. In line with the tenets of the Act, an educational institution that is found to be unable to make the required AYP for more than one year are officially designated as requiring improvement and such a school is subsequently obligated to establish and implement a regime for improving its performance within two years within the specific subject in which such an educational
institution has a recognized deficiency on the basis of instruction. Such a situation also makes it feasible for pupils to exercise the inherent option of being transferred to an institution that is deemed more proficient in educational instruction as far as the school is not outside the educational district—if any superior school exists. Furthermore, the legislation states that the inability of a school to have academic performance outcomes that are not in fulfillment of AYP requirements for a third year makes it obligatory for such an institution to offer free educational services to the obviously struggling pupils.

Nevertheless, it should also be noted that in the likely event that the educational institution is still unable to have academic performance standards that fulfill its AYP target benchmark for four consecutive years, such an educational institution is designated as requiring corrective action, and such a corrective action may imply a total change of educational personnel, overhauling the existing or previous curriculum with a replacement by a new curriculum, or even extending the daily class time for pupils.

Additionally, if however a certain educational institution does not fulfill its AYP target benchmark for the fifth year, the provisions of the legislation make it imperative for appropriate planning so as to restructure or reorganize the educational institution in its entirety. It is also worthwhile to understand that the regime is implemented based on the premise that the educational institution is unable to fulfill its AYP Benchmarks for the sixth year (Gandara & Baca, 2008). Nevertheless, it should also be noted that some options exist as provided by the tenets of the NCLB which make it mandatory for educational institutions to be closed down, converted into a charter institution, outsourcing the academic management of the educational institution to a private firm, or calling upon the state educational establishment to usurp the operational and managerial
aspects of the educational institution (McCarthey, 2008). Irrespective of the
aforementioned orientation of the NCLB as a precursor to differentiated learning in the
United States, it should be noted that there are nevertheless differing views as to the
efficacy or success of the NCLB with regards to being touted as a panacea to the
problems that necessitate effective, differentiated instruction regimes.

On the side of proponents of the efficacy of the NCLB, Darling-Hammond (2007)
maintains that one of the foremost reasons for an optimistic and positive perspective to
the NCLB is that, in the years since the implementation of the NCLB, there have been
some apparent increases in the academic results and progress of educationally challenged
pupils. This academic progress is apparent on the results from standardized testing with
an increase in passes for math courses when compared to the previous years before the
implementation of NCLB.

Cawthon (2007) also maintains the positive perspective that the NCLB act has
actually improved local academic standards with an attendant increase the level of
accountability in public, educational institutions also offers parents an extended array of
educational options with regards to the provision of quality education for their children.
Additionally, he maintains that the NCLB has ensured that the achievement gap
separating the academic outcomes between educationally challenged pupils and
indigenous pupils is reduced. On a larger note, the NCLB act increases the quality of
education via its ability to compel educational institutions to elevate their respective
academic performances with regards to challenged pupils.

On the part of those that are not so optimistic about the success and efficacy of
the NCLB act, Apple (2007) maintains that some people are of the opinion that the
NCLB has some failures with regards to loopholes in the law that are exploited by school administrators. One of such positions is that the NCLB act has some inherent requirements that are massive motivation for school and educational administrators to intentionally manipulate or alter the results from tests for the purpose of avoiding the inherently specified penalties of the NCLB for non-compliance and in order to receive federal funding. These antics and manipulations by school and educational administrators provide an inaccurate and embellished nature of the school’s performances and therefore, an embellished idea of the efficacy and success of the NCLB as a whole with a particular emphasis on the purported success of the minority and educationally challenged demographic.

Furthermore, it should also be noted that, based on the will of the school and educational administrators to appear before the NCLB in a performing light, class teachers are compelled to embark upon an underhanded strategy of ‘test teaching’ the students. This test teaching entails, teaching the students within the confines of the test coverage instead of covering the whole curriculum. This test teaching regime is employed for the purpose of ensuring that students pass the tests instead of imparting wider knowledge into the students provided by the wider curriculum (Hursh, 2007).

However, irrespective of what has been said, it should be understood that as of September 23, 2011, the presidential administration of Barak Obama decided to provide a waiver for the cornerstone benchmarks of the NCLB Act, and these encompass the 2014 deadline for every U. S. pupil to have an optimum proficiency in mathematics and reading arts. This waiver will also make states more capable of designing and establishing their contextual objectives with regards to student-achievement and come up
with their contextually oriented regimes for failing educational institutions. Additionally, in exchange for such an elasticity, the government shall make it obligatory for states to proceed with the adoption of standards for university and future career readiness, place emphasis on improving 15% of the most failing educational institutions, and establish vivid yardsticks for instructor evaluations based partly on the performances of students (McNeil & Klein, 2011).

The Mississippi Department of Education applied for a waiver from NCLB requirements on February 24, 2012. The waiver will apply to all school districts in Mississippi (since all receive federal Title 1 funds), which includes 720 Title 1 schools and may include another 129 schools that do not actually receive Title 1 funds but are located in districts that receive these funds. The Mississippi waiver requested relief from current adequate yearly progress goals, required school improvement activities, and required district improvement activities. In exchange for this relief, Mississippi will implement college and career ready standards and assessments, differentiated statewide accountability standards, and educator evaluation based on student growth (ESEA Flexibility Request, 2012).

The Mississippi Department of Education implemented a statewide improvement plan to meet NCLB requirements in 2003. The plan included a goal to increase the number of students with disabilities that score Proficient or above on the Mississippi Curriculum Test in both reading and math (Mississippi State Improvement Plan, Accountability/Assessment Performance, n.d.). The statewide improvement plan also included the goals to increase the number of students with disabilities who are included in the general curriculum and decrease the number of students with disabilities who are
removed from the general education setting (Mississippi State Improvement Plan, Least Restrictive Environment, n.d.).

**Common Core Standards**

In 2010, Common Core State Standards were made available which deal with what all students are expected to know to be successful in college and careers. Common core assessments will be quite unlike current methods used to assess these state standards. It will be necessary for students to use higher order thinking skills, apply what they have learned to unique situations, and bring together knowledge from a variety of content areas to solve real world problems. Students will participate in performance-based assessments which will take place over long periods of time and will use various technologies with which students must have become familiar during the class lessons. In addition educators will be expected to screen progress using a variety of formative assessments. Data from which will be used along with end-of-course assessments to make instructional choices in the classroom to improve student performance (McNulty, & Gloeckler, 2011)

Special education students are also expected to be challenged to excel within the general education curriculum based on the Common Core State Standards. To guarantee special education students participate in a meaningful and complete way and experience success in the general education curriculum, developer of the Common Core State Standards propose additional supports and services be granted when needed. These supports may consist of instructional strategies which assist student engagement by providing information in various ways and permitting students to access the curriculum in a variety of ways, accommodations that do not change the standards nor lower
expectations for students, and/or assistive technology devices to allow increased access to the standards.

**Process of Identification of Student with a Disability**

In Mississippi, the Multidisciplinary Educational Team (MET) of a Local Educational Agency (LEA) is given the task of beginning the evaluation for eligibility process. The MET may consist of regular educators, special educators, pyschometrists, school administrators, nurses, and psychologists. The process of identifying students for special education eligibility may begin in several ways:

1. Parent request for evaluation
2. Teacher request for evaluation
3. Student failure to respond to interventions (RTI).

After a request is made for an evaluation is made to the MET, the team reviews all data and either recommends a comprehensive evaluation be completed or refuses the request. If an evaluation is recommended the MET then has a total of 60 days to complete the evaluation and determine if the student is eligible for special education services. The MET reviews many data through this process which may include; hearing/vision screening, teacher narratives, behavior logs/checklists, intelligent quotient scores, achievement scores, physicians reports, doctor diagnoses, academic grades, standardized test scores, and response to intervention data. After a thorough review of all pertinent data, the MET can find a student eligible for services in one of thirteen distinct categories:

1. Developmentally delayed
2. Orthopedically impaired
3. Other Health Impaired
4. Specific Learning Disability
5. Traumatic Brain Injury
6. Mental retardation
7. Speech or Language impairment
8. Emotionally Disabled
9. Autism Spectrum Disorders
10. Hearing impairment (including deafness)
11. Visual impairment (including blindness)
12. Deaf-blindness
13. Multiple disabilities

Information obtained during the comprehensive evaluation is used to compose the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) for the student. The IEP contains specific accommodations to be used in the classroom and on standardized tests (State Policies Regarding Children with Disabilities Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2009).

Differentiated Instruction

In the consideration of the issues concerning the education or instruction of challenged children, it becomes imperative to consider the mediating or remedial tool referred to as Differentiated Instruction. Differentiated instruction, which is also called differentiated learning, concerns the provision of divergent means for assimilating educational content including the ability to process, construct or comprehend ideas; and the development of instructional resources in such a manner that all students in a
particular class can learn rapidly and efficiently irrespective of their individual and collective differences in capacities and educational competences.

Ellis, Gable, Gregg, and Rock (2008) maintains in their literature that Differentiated Instruction is the process of making sure that the what and how of a student’s learning and how the particular student demonstrates this aforementioned learning is parallel to the student’s level of readiness, interests and preferential means of comprehending instruction or learning. Anderson (2007) maintained in his own literature that differentiation is derived from or is rooted in notions concerning disparities among students, their individual manner of learning, learning preferences, and personal interests. According to research by Neihart, Reis, Robinson, and Moon (2002) a lot of the emotional or social challenges experienced by gifted students vanish when their educational settings are adapted to their own individual level and speed of assimilation. It should, however, be understood that differentiation within the context of education can also encompass the way in which a learner is able to demonstrate mastery of a particular concept or learned idea. This could be achieved via podcast, role play, diagram, research paper, or a graphic poster. The pivotal factor to differentiation is determining how a particular student learns and demonstrates his or her learning parallel to contextual needs.

Bigio (2010) maintains that in differentiated instructions, the learners are positioned in the middle of the teaching and learning processes respectively. Bigio defines differentiation as the inherent right of every student to be instructed in a manner particularly conditioned and designed to suit their respective demands based on the fact that each student requires education on the basis of his or her own contextual needs and demands. Some examples of such individually specific demands are divergent
educational, individual and collective contexts, and divergent levels of educational skill enhancement. Differentiated teaching requires that the instructor progressively prepares numerous teaching methods in order to be more efficient at facilitating efficient learning experiences that are adapted to numerous learning demands on the part of the instructor.

Tomlinson (2001) states that in seeking this basic end, differentiated educational methods try to qualitatively, in direct opposition to using quantitative measures, place the competencies of learners in par with suitable resources; encompass a combination entire-class group, and individual teaching; employ various methods to facilitate input, processing and output as well; and consistently adapting to the contextual demands of the learners on the basis of the progressive assessment of the instructor with regards to all pupils. Differentiated instruction is usually referred to as educational philosophy and is concerned as the progressive approach to teaching and a concept that has numerous other facets as practitioners. The construct of differentiated instruction requires that instructors structure and adapt their various teaching and curricula to the contextual demands of individual students instead of expecting students to adapt and conform to the curriculum. In this particular vein, teachers that have a strong commitment to the aforementioned approach are of the belief that those they teach shape their manner of teaching based on the fact that the personality of the students informs how they individually learn and assimilate teaching.

Differentiated instruction necessitates the instructor to have sufficient and suitable knowledge of the students he or she is teaching, in addition to the capacity to schedule and provide appropriate instruction efficiently, in order to assist all students individually optimize their learning and comprehension, irrespective of their individual condition.
(Bigio, 2010). It should also be noted that differentiation is not slow-paced instruction for all students to catch up, or expecting some pupils to perform better than other pupils and referring to it as differentiation by result. According to Bigio, caution must be taken with respect to understanding the concept of differentiation based on the assertion that it is not embarrassing the slow-paced learners by highlighting their shortcomings of challenges.

Allan and Tomlinson (2000) maintain that the most effective construct of differentiated teaching is saddled upon a viable, pupil-oriented, meaningful approach to instruction. The theoretically oriented and philosophical impacts inherently associated with differentiated teaching buttresses the three vital facets of differentiated teaching on its own: interest, readiness and learning mode.

Allan and Tomlinson (2000) cited the work of Lev Vygotsky which demonstrated that people learn more effectively in line with their willingness to learn. Such a theoretical impact offers a reinforced basis for differentiated teaching. The willingness of a pupil is to congruous with what the pupil learns, how the pupil learns it, and how the pupil shows what he or she has learned via the use of differentiated teaching. It should be considered on the basis of this assertion that the philosophical notion that interest-oriented options capitalize upon inherent motivation, reinforces the second pivotal facet of differentiated teaching; pupil interest. The authors also maintain that, upon tapping interest, learning has a higher likelihood of being profitable and the pupil becomes a more independent learner.

Allan and Tomlinson (2000) also cited the work of Howard Gardner, a U. S. psychology researcher who coined the theory of multiple intelligences. The chronology of the aforementioned theory maintains that individuals have divergent intelligences and
assimilate instruction in divergent manners. According to this particular theory, educational institutions should provide individual-oriented instruction, with a curriculum structured to pupil’s intelligence disposition. As a matter of fact, the researchers support the view of Gardner for the third pivotal facet of differentiated education, which is responsible for divergent student learning modes.

It is important to consider the contribution from Anderson (2007) that differentiated teaching incorporates constructivist learning theories, learning pattern, and brain improvement with studies in factors that are responsible for influencing pupil readiness, pupil attention and intelligence dispositions with regards to the motivation, commitment and educational development of the student within the educational institution. Nunley (2006) maintained in her literature that, differentiated education turned into a vital component of U. S. educational curriculum as the composition of the general class within the school progressed from identical groupings of pupils in the 1970s, to the progressively rising difference in pupils considered in the heterogeneous class setting composition in the last 4 decades.

Levy (2008) stated that, via the use of differentiated teaching, school teachers and administrators are able to fulfill all the contextual needs of individual students and surpass laid down guidelines. Additionally, Rebora (2008) maintained that the perceived imperative for differentiated teaching is inherent in the basis that pupils differ in various manners and pupil populations are increasingly becoming divergent. The probabilities are considerably encouraging that the trend of divergent learner demographics will persist all through life. On a more concise note, differentiated teaching is making use of numerous educational apparatuses and regimes for the purpose of fulfilling the respective and
individual demands and challenges of pupils and learners in a particular class. This makes sure that a like measure and scheme of educational opportunity are provided to all pupils in the class. It now, however, becomes imperative for this literature review to consider pre-assessment as a factor to be considered in understanding the orientation of differentiated learning.

**Pre-assessment**

On the part of some educationists, the final and most imperative phase in differentiated education concerns the determination of what the knowledge already possessed by the pupils in order not to handle resources that have been already grasped by the learners or use approaches that would be inefficient for learners. A pre-assessment can be official or un-official. It could come in the form of a game, quiz, debate, or other activities that require pupils to provide answers to some of the posited questions that would be employed in evaluating the respective performances of the individual pupils at the ending of the forthcoming lesson or module. It could also be in the guide of a learning record, such as an inventory of multiple intelligences—still skeptically considered among many academics—so the instructor will be capable of determining the preferences of the pupils in the classroom with regards to learning (Morgan, 1996).

Nunley (2006) adds that some constructs of differentiation entail a pre-assessment; nevertheless have pupils self-assess on a daily basis via oral defense, like is found is Layered curricula. The objectives of differentiated teaching are geared towards the development of challenging and commitment intensive tasks that induce and promote the development of comprehension and knowledge acquisition for the individual student (from low-level pupil to high-level pupil). It is also imperative to note that educational
activities are flexibly oriented and dependent upon and evaluated on the basis of process, content and matter. This educational regime and preference of instructional matter are informed by the orientation and structure of the data from the assessment outcomes of the pupils and from the results of other screening apparatuses. Rational pre-assessment and post-assessment result in efficient differentiation via the production of outcomes that demonstrate the individual needs of the pupils. Based on the aforementioned, it is apparent that assessment is intended to be employed as an apparatus for the creation of rational teaching and education.

Content

Matthews (2009) states that the content or inherent matter of teaching modules may be differentiated on the basis of what is already known by the pupils. The most fundamental content of a learning module should encompass the standards of academic instruction put in place by the educational district or state. It should also be noted that some pupils in a classroom may find the concepts in a learning module to be totally unfamiliar, while some pupils may grasp some portions of the learning matter—or show misplaced understanding of the particular content matter, and some pupils may demonstrate considerable understanding of the content matter even prior to the commencement of the lesson. The instructor may differentiate the instructional content via the planning of class activities for groups of pupils that encompass various fields of a particular topic. An example can be seen in a scenario in which pupils who are not familiar with the particular concept may be called upon to tackle tasks on the lower degrees of the particular subject area: knowledge, understanding and application. Additionally, pupils with unwholesome comprehension and grasp of the subject area may
be required to tackle tasks in the application, assessment and evaluation fields, and pupils with high degrees of comprehension and grasp of the content may be given tasks in evaluation and construction.

Anderson (2007) states that when an instructor differentiates instructional content they may precede with an adaptation of their requirement for the learning of the pupils or the manner in which the students shall acquire knowledge, comprehension and skills. Instructors are not changing pupil goals or reducing performance yardsticks for pupils. They employ divergent texts or storybooks at a reading level suitable for each pupil. Instructors can employ elastic groups and assign pupils to similar groups listening to short stories on cassette or particular web sources. Pupils could also have an option to work in individually, in twos or groups of more than two pupils, but all pupils are striving towards a common standard or objective.

Process

Matthews (2009) widens the perspective to differentiated learning by providing insight into the imperative facet of the process. According to the literature, the process of learning may be differentiated for pupils according to their respective learning patterns and dispositions, taking into consideration the required milestones of performance for the age grade. This level of differentiation permits pupils to learn on the basis of either the easiest method of acquiring knowledge or what may serve as a higher challenge for them: some pupils may have a preference for reading a particular topic while others may have a preference for listening, of acquiring knowledge via the manipulation of objects related to the particular content matter. Information may also be put forth to the pupils in numerous other ways by the instructor and may be founded upon any existing approaches
or resources for learning. Fields of Multiple Intelligences are used by a lot of instructors in the provision of opportunities for learning.

De Jager (2011) states that similarities in the results of the assessment lead to categorization practices that are formatted to conform to the contextual demands and challenges of individual students. The manner in which an instructor intends to deliver teaching on the basis of assessment outcomes that reveal or demonstrate the demands, challenges learning dispositions, interests and degrees of previous knowledge. The categorization and pupil collection practices must be elastic based on the fact that groups will be altered with regards to the imperative that will be tackled accordingly. Nevertheless, irrespective of if the differentiation of teaching is founded upon pupil willingness to learn, interests and commitments or the fluid flux of categorization and re-categorization is one of the bases on which differentiation instruction is built upon. It is, however, intrinsically imperative for a differentiated class to permit some pupils to perform individually, if this is the pupil’s most preferable approach for a specific task.

Anderson (2007) also adds that differentiating by process concerns or relates to the manner in which a pupil succeeds in comprehending and assimilating facts, ideas and skills. After providing tutoring on a particular lesson, an instructor may divide pupils into small ability groupings on the basis of their respective willingness to learn. The instructor would then allocate each selected group a progression of questions, depending on the suitable level of readiness of each group in relation to the goal or aim of the particular lesson. Another manner of grouping the pupils may be according to the learning patterns of the pupils. The major notion behind this is that pupils are at various degrees and assimilate information or teaching in divergent ways, so an instructor cannot provide
instruction or teaching to them in the same manner or via the use of the same teaching regime. Layered Curriculum is another important construction of differentiation, and it simply provides pupils an option of class tasks but entails demonstration of learning so as to have a pass in a task. This eradicates the imperative for pre-assessment and is imperative for instructors with large classroom populations like can be found in high schools.

**Product**

In understanding differentiated learning, it is also important to have an intrinsic understanding of the facet of product. Thus, it should be noted that, with regards to differentiated instruction, the product is basically what is produced by the pupil at the end of the learning module to show the grasp of the learning matter: reports, tests, evaluations and other class activities. On the basis of the skills and educational milestones of the pupils, instructors may allocate pupils to handle activities that show or portray grasp of a particular educational topic or in an approach that is preferred by the pupil. The product is an intrinsically imperative facet of the differentiated construct, as the preparation of the class assessments shall basically inform both all parameters of the delivery of instruction. In a situation in which an instructor differentiates on the basis of outcome, result and product, they are providing students with means for portraying the knowledge they have acquired in the course of the class lessons or teaching modules (Anderson, 2007). Nevertheless, Nunley (2006) maintains that this is achieved via the use of menu unit layouts, option sheets or multiple option expressions of ending product choices. It is intended to enable pupils to demonstrate the knowledge acquired on the basis of their instruction preferences, competences and interests. It should also be understood that in
differentiated instruction, instructors react to the willingness, learning demands and interests of students in addition to providing opportunities for pupils to work in differentiated instructional frameworks. A class that makes use of differentiated instruction is a student-oriented, instructor-enhanced class in which all pupils have the opportunity to conform to curriculum based goals. Lessons could be on problem oriented, inquiry based ad project oriented teaching.

In a class where instruction is founded upon differentiated instruction, students are expected to feel comfortable and secure. The instructor teaches for success and equality, and this orientation is apparent. The instructor and pupils work together for collective progress and development. In a differentiated class, there is reinforced reason for differentiating teaching on the basis of assessment outcomes, student’s willingness, commitment, interest and learning pattern. All teaching is vividly stated in a manner that makes it easy for pupils to comprehend. Pupils have knowledge for the class guidelines and regulations and are aware of the daily procedure and routines. There is a routine for all class activities carried out in class. These routines should be for the purpose of promoting the least noise, reduce irrational movement, promote classroom etiquette, have a strategy for pupils who complete their tasks and assignments early, and encourage autonomous work and individual responsibility. It should also be noted that differentiated education is very hands-on, practical, qualitative, pupil-oriented and flexible (de Jager, 2011).

Response to Intervention

Response to intervention (RTI) is a means of academic intervention employed in the United States for the provision of timely, systematic educational instruction to pupils
with learning challenges. RTI tries to prevent low academic results via timely intervention, recurrent progress quantification, and progressively thorough research-oriented educational interventions for pupils who still have problems with learning. The general belief is that pupils that fail to respond to effective interventions have the higher likelihood of having biologically-oriented learning handicaps and require specialized instructional regimes. On the basis of the identification of educational disabilities, the RTI regime was designed as an option to the model of capacity – achievement discrepancy. Thus, is a model that obligates pupils to demonstrate a divergence in their IQ-based individual competency and academic achievement. An objective of the RTI protocol is the application of accountability to educational regimes via emphasis on regimes that are effective instead of regimes that are just apparently appealing (Bowe, 2005).

It should also be noted within the processes of the RTI that there are three tiers of support in service delivery, and within each of these tiers, the amount of interventions increases. Level 1 focuses inside the central curriculum, with students being the target of interventions and instruction. It is expected that about 80% to 85% of the entire pupil population should make the expected result benchmarks for that particular grade without any extra assistance past the first level. Pupils who serially underperform within the norms through level 1 teaching are then offered extra remedial interventions at level 2, and this entails a characteristically minimal group teaching. Nevertheless, approximately 3% to 6% of pupils will still have problems after level 2 remedial instruction; these pupils will subsequently receive level 3 intervention services. This is usually a one-on-one kind of intervention and is very intense in nature. It should, however, be noted that
based on the fact that RTI is a regular academic paradigm, all levels of instructional service are designed to be offered as supplementary services and not as replacements for, the conventional academic curriculum although some people consider level 3 as specialized education (Shinn, 2007).

School-wide screening

It should be understood that the first level of data in the RTI intervention regime is acquired from harmonized screenings across all schools. The aforementioned screening tests are characteristically provided to all pupils within specified grade levels. Additionally, these also encompass fundamental class subjects like math. A large proportion of screening approaches are focused on practicality and efficiency in administration, with the objective of determining pupils who may need additional or extra interventions and assessments. In the evaluation of pupil outcomes on the screening approaches, results are compared to particular yardsticks or to wider norms. In a situation in which particular criteria are employed, there is an establishment of cut scores for evaluating pupils over a particular proficiency level. However, in a comparison on the basis of norms, a comparison of pupils is made over those of a wider group. It should be understood that screenings are carried out three times in a year, and the accrued data from the assessments are used in guiding instruction for all the three levels of the RTI intervention. This is intrinsically imperative not just for determining pupils with problems or challenges, but also in the determination of possible fields of improvement in the wider class instruction where too many pupils perform below par (Healy, Vanderwood, & Edelston, 2005).
Progress monitoring and delivery of level-oriented service

With regards to RTI, it should be noted that progress monitoring is a highly imperative process. It is a collection of assessment protocols for ascertaining the degree to which pupil or pupils are progressing as a result of class teaching and for monitoring the efficiency of the class curriculum. One of the means for gathering data on intervention and their efficiency is known as Curriculum Based Measurement (CBM), and it is employed in determining what is more preferable and effective for a certain pupil. Other approaches are employed till the pupils demonstrate a positive response to the contextual intervention implicit in skill improvement. Nevertheless, pupils who fail to improve at considerably low rates could be designated as having biologically-oriented learning handicaps, instead of just learning challenges (Fuchs, Compton, Fuchs, Bryant, & Davis, 2008).

It is important to note that progress monitoring is the regular, consistent, and objective assessment of the academic performances of pupils for three major intents:

1. For determining if pupils are sufficiently benefiting from the instructional regime, encompassing the school curriculum
2. For developing more efficient regimes or the pupils who do not merit from the initiative.
3. For estimating rates of pupil improvement (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006).

Effective Inclusion Strategies

With regards to RTI processes, it is important to consider the vital position of inclusion strategies in ensuring effective academic instruction to challenged pupils. Therefore, it should be understood that inclusion is a process or initiative for providing
educational instruction to pupils with special academic challenges. Within the model of inclusion, pupils with special demands spend the majority of their time with pupils who do not have these handicaps. It should also be noted that the implementation of these regimes is divergent in nature. Academic institutions often employ them for specific pupils with needs that are not severe (Simpson & de Boer, 2009).

Inclusive instruction varies from formerly existing conceptions of mainstreaming and integration, which were usually related to handicaps and special academic needs, carried the implication of pupils transforming or deserving of acceptance into the mainstream. Conversely, inclusion concerns the right of the pupil to take part and the obligation of the educational institution to accommodate the pupil. Inclusion does not allow the employment of special institutions or classes for separating handicapped pupils from pupils without handicaps. There is an established premium for holistic participation by pupils with handicaps and is based on respect for their fundamental human rights to equity. It should be noted that holistically inclusive educational institutions which are not very popular, do not differentiate between general educational instruction and special instruction regimes; rather, the educational institution is reformed to enable all pupils acquire learning collectively (Stainback & Stainback, 1995).

There are two types of inclusion: regular/partial inclusion and full inclusion respectively. Partial/regular inclusion is not consistently inclusive but is actually a kind of integration. For instance, pupils with special challenges are taught in a conventional class for almost the whole day or maybe just a little more than half of the school day. If the need arises, and is feasible, the pupils are given extra assistance or special teaching in the conventional or collective class, and the pupil is handled and considered like a regular
member of the conventional classroom. Conversely, in full inclusion, the pupils with special learning challenges are always taught together with pupils without any handicaps or learning challenges, as the preferential option while keeping suitable services and supports. Full inclusion is usually considered by school administrators as the efficient regime for pupils with leaning challenges and their contextual demands (Simpson & de Boer, 2009).

There are numerous strategies for effective inclusion and this encompasses the following:

1. Placing pupils in groups with their sequential age-mates, irrespective of whether the pupils are learning and performing above or under the characteristic academic benchmark for their age group (Bowe, 2005).

2. Placing emphasis on the formation of friendship bonds within the class to foster a sense of belonging and show the pupils that an assorted group of pupils constitutes a community and that no single pupil is better than any other pupil (Strully, & Strully, 1996).

3. Openly tackling individual disparities via open discussion (Bowe, 2005).

4. Teaching pupils to devise means for helping one another (Strully & Strully, 1996).

5. Encouraging pupils to assume the role of class instructor and deliver teaching to the rest of the class (Bowe, 2005).
Special Education Accommodations

Why allow accommodations?

Students with disabilities may take part in state assessments in three different ways: take the assessment without accommodations, take the assessment with accommodations, or through the use of alternate assessments. Accommodations are provided to allow the student to perform to the best of their ability on assessments. Theoretically accommodations equalize the chance for students with disabilities to access the general curriculum as well as their nondisabled peers. Frequently students with disabilities require accommodations that are non-allowable on statewide assessments. These students are usually assessed with an alternate assessment. (Mississippi State Improvement Plan, Accountability/Assessment Performance, n.d.)

Determining Appropriate Accommodations

Accommodations should be individualized to meet an individual student’s needs. Appropriate accommodations are determined by the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team. The IEP team usually consists of the special education teacher, the regular education teacher, the student’s parents, a representative of the Local Education Agency (LEA), the student (if appropriate), and any other IEP team members deemed appropriate. The team carefully examines the student’s eligibility information and previous education information when writing the IEP. Accommodations that will be used for a statewide accountability assessment should be designed to meet the student’s individual educational needs in the general education classroom. Accommodations that are used on assessments must be the same accommodations that are used in the classroom each day. States have lists of allowable and non-allowable accommodations for
assessments. If a student’s IEP includes the necessity of a non-allowable accommodation for testing, the student’s scores will not be included in accountability calculations (Individualized Education Plan, n.d.).

According to Bolt and Thurlow (2004), five accommodations are allowed most commonly in state assessment policies. These accommodations are dictated response, large print, Braille, extended time, and interpreter for instructions. Dictated response involves the student dictating their answers to a scribe who writes or marks the response (often used on written assessments.) Large print provides students with visual problems access to the assessment in large print version. Braille provides legally blind students with a Braille edition of the assessment. Extended time is interpreted in various ways, but basically provides the student with the extra time to complete the assessment (the IEP team determines how much extra time). Interpreter for instructions provides someone to read and paraphrase instructions for the assessment.

Accommodation decisions should be made by the IEP team, but according to Ketterlin-Geller, Alonzo, Braun-Monegan, and Tindal, (2007) this is not how these decisions are being made. They found that Local Educational Agency (LEA) policies differ greatly. This study found that most accommodation decisions were made by individual teachers without input from the IEP team. In addition, they found that there was little correspondence between accommodations listed on the IEP and the accommodations actually used in the classroom. Teachers often recommended the use of accommodations that were not listed on the IEP and the IEP frequently contained accommodations that were not used in the classroom. The results of this study suggests
that errors such as these can lead to severely inaccurate measurements of students’ actual knowledge and skills.

Fuchs and Fuchs (2000) looked at teachers’ judgments with regard to whether or not students required accommodations for assessments. Their research compared teachers’ accommodation decisions for students based on their own judgment versus data-based decisions for accommodations. Teachers awarded two times as many accommodations as did the data-based decision making. The results of this study suggest that more data should be used to effectively make accommodation decisions for students with disabilities.

Are testing accommodations valid?

The validity of accommodations is often questioned. Some teachers (especially regular education teachers) believe that accommodations give students an unfair advantage on assessments and in the classroom. Three techniques for scrutinizing the validity of test accommodations were identified by Tindal, Heath, Hollenbeck, Almond, and Harniss in 1998. These are descriptive, experimental, and comparative. The descriptive test of validity analyzes the nature and severity of the disability that the accommodation is being used with as well as the characteristics of the test the accommodation is being used on. According to Phillips (1994), one descriptive indicator used is differential boost which refers to whether an accommodation actually increases the performance of a student with disabilities more than the accommodation increases the performance of students without disabilities. An experimental technique looks at how accommodations affect students with and without disabilities through a controlled study (Tindal et al., 1998). One of the most controlled experimental studies was carried out by
Tindal et al. in 1998. This study found that on a test of reading ability, no difference was found between allowing students to mark answers in the test booklet and requiring students to mark answers on a separate answer sheet. This study also showed that read aloud accommodations on mathematics tests did produce significant results for students with disabilities. A comparative technique uses existing databases to study how accommodations affect students with disabilities.

Fuchs and Fuchs (2000) proposed a fourth technique for determining the validity of testing accommodations: individual diagnosis of accommodation validity. This method examines accommodations for students on an individual basis according to that student’s disability and needs. The Fuchs completed an experimental research study with 373 students, half with a learning disability and half with no disability. The students were given three different Curriculum Based Measurements (CBMs) in mathematics: computation, concepts and applications, and problem solving. All CBMs were administered without accommodations under standard directions and with varying accommodations. Computation was given with an extended time accommodation. Concepts and applications were given with the accommodations of extended time, calculator use, and read aloud. Problem solving was given with the accommodations previously listed in addition to an encoding accommodation, in which answers were written for the student. The CBM scores were used to establish whether or not the accommodations produced a differential boost for students with disabilities.

On CBMs of computation and concepts and applications neither students with or without disabilities obtained a statistically significant benefit from the accommodations allowed. Students without a learning disability actually benefited more from an extended
time application than did students with disabilities. On CBMs of problem solving, students with disabilities did benefit more from extended time, reading aloud, and encoding accommodations than did their non-disabled counterparts. The use of a calculator by disabled students also improved performance marginally on problem solving tests. Even though states continue to use conventional methods of assessment for all students in mathematics, the Fuchs’ study shows that accommodations benefit students with learning disabilities more on tests which require students to read more and provide written responses to questions (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2000).

Elbaum (2007) examined how an oral testing accommodation affected the performance of high school students with and without disabilities on mathematics assessments. Research was conducted on a group of 643 public school students in grades 6 through 10. About 60% of the students had a documented learning disability. A mathematics test consisting of 60 questions chosen from various practice materials for a statewide assessment was utilized in this study. All test items were based on fifth grade state standards and were presented in a multiple choice format with four answer choices. The test covered the mathematic domains of number sense, number operations, data analysis, geometry, probability, measurement, and algebraic concepts. Each student was given two forms of the mathematics test, one in a standard administration form and one in which the test items were read orally to students. Students were only identified by the presence of a learning disability or the absence of a learning disability (no other identifying information was included on test forms.) The results of the research showed that both students with and without a learning disability did benefit from a read aloud accommodation on tests of mathematics. Students without a learning disability did
benefit more than students without a disability. These results indicate that the read aloud accommodation does not focus on specific disability related traits of students. The results seem to indicate that the oral reading accommodation is not a valid accommodation for students with learning disabilities because students without disabilities benefitted more from the accommodation.

Hale, Skinner, Winn, Oliver, Allin, and Molloy, (2005) investigated the effects of read aloud accommodations on secondary students with emotional disorders. The researchers examined the learning-while-reading (LWR) method in which a student follows along while a teacher reads the testing material and a listening only accommodation. LWR has been shown to boost a student’s reading rate (Daly & Martens, 1994) which is imperative for a read aloud accommodation to be effective. Four male high school students with emotional disorders were given timed passages to read with the listening only accommodation, the LWR accommodation, and with no accommodations. Each reading passage had 10 reading comprehension questions. All students had IQs between 80 and 100 as well as reading grade equivalents between 3.4 and 5.1. The LWR accommodation was shown to improve all students’ comprehension rates while the listening only accommodation improved two students’ rates. This study indicates that a LWR accommodation and a listening only accommodation may both improve comprehension, but LWR is more consistent across students. These read aloud accommodations may be effective for secondary students in the regular classroom settings and on standardized assessments.

Confusing accommodations
Several research studies have documented the confusion that teachers experience when faced with providing accommodations for students with disabilities. Macinni and Gagnon (2006) found that secondary general education teachers used accommodations less frequently than special education teachers and were more confused about the correct use of accommodations. Some of this confusion comes from the ambiguity of some accommodations. Byrnes (2008a) found that special and regular educators had very different interpretations of some of the most frequently used accommodations. The Byrnes study anonymously surveyed all faculty members regarding their interpretations of three frequently used accommodations: *extended time*, *preferential seating*, and *scribe*. Teachers were asked to give their interpretations of each of the accommodations. The responses to the surveys were examined for similar words and ideas. *Extended time* was interpreted in six different ways by general and special education teachers. *Preferential seating* provided 25 different interpretations. Ten interpretations were given for *scribe*. Among the regular and special education teachers only two interpretations of one accommodation were consistent. Most agreed that *extended time* indicates a provision of “extra time to complete assignments/work/tasks and/or it could mean providing extra time for tests and quizzes” (Byrnes, 2008a, p. 311). These teachers gave differing observations about timing, scheduling, and setting for *extended time*, which indicates further differences in interpretations. As this study indicates, educators must be very careful when writing accommodations for students with disabilities. Accommodations can be very successful in helping removing barriers for these students but only if they are written in specific terms to accommodate the student’s specific disability.
According to Byrnes (2008b) teachers can avoid ambiguity by following five steps: state the disability, describe the impact the disability has on the student’s education, contemplate the educational tasks the student will be facing, identify any situations that may block the student’s access to education, and write unambiguous, explicit accommodations to meet the student’s specific needs. Byrnes gives additional suggestions for ensuring that accommodations are effective and implemented the way they were intended to be. These suggestions are: limit the number of accommodations, detail when the accommodation should be used, review the accommodations at regular intervals, and clarify the accommodations during times of transition. The writing of clear, unambiguous accommodations can insure that the IEP team’s objectives are met.

*Individualized Education Plans and Assessment Accommodations*

Shiner and Destefano (2003) examined the connection between IEP documentation and curriculum choices as well as the accommodation and presentation methods intended for statewide assessments in Illinois. This research study looked at three separate school districts in Illinois. IEP’s were inspected before and after IEP training was provided to teachers. After training was presented the IEP’s assessment participation and accommodation documentation changed. All districts were more likely to contain complete documentation of accommodation scenarios to be used on statewide assessments and IEPs showed that all districts were planning for more participation in statewide assessments. In two of the districts, IEP’s also indicated a higher partial participation rate in assessments for students with disabilities. This change points toward an increase in students who were alternately assessed on at least some areas of the statewide assessment either because of significant differences in their education program.
or because of the use of accommodations that are not allowed on the statewide assessment. This study also showed that many teachers actually deviated from the accommodations listed on the IEP because of their perception of a student’s actual needs. Many times these IEPs were written close to a year from the date of the actual statewide assessment. Some teachers believed that, after a year, the student’s needs had changed. Very few of the IEPs were formally changed to include the new accommodations. One district actually changed the time of the year for IEPs to be written from spring to fall. Even after training was provided intended scenarios for accommodations on tests where often quite different from what actually happened.

Sireci, Scarpati, and Shuhong, (2005) reviewed 28 studies that involved empirical analysis of how accommodations affect the assessment of students with disabilities. According to this study the interaction hypothesis asserts two separate ideas; assessment scores will be higher for students with disabilities who are given appropriate accommodations (when compared with scores if the assessment is taken without accommodations), and students’ scores will not be higher as a result of the use of accommodations. Their review indicates that not only is extended time an effective accommodation for students with disabilities, but is also useful for all students. Extended time did provide greater gains for students with disabilities. Fifty percent of the studies on oral presentation (presented by different methods such as teacher read, student read, and computer read) on mathematics test showed significant gains for students with disabilities, but studies that looked at oral presentation on other subject areas found no significant gain for students with disabilities or similar gains for students with and without disabilities.
Effects of accommodations

Cox, Herner, Demczyk, and Nieberding (2006) analyzed data from various states for the 2000-2001 school year. This study looked at data dealing with accommodation policies, participation rate of students with disabilities, and discipline rates for these students. Data was available for elementary, middle, and high school students. The goals of the research study were to compare state accommodation policies with student participation rates and discipline rates. Many educators believe that more accommodations equal higher assessment participation rates for students with disabilities, even though no evidence has supported this belief. The researchers also looked at how the number of accommodations affects other school issues such as discipline of students with disabilities. The results of this study showed that at the elementary level states that allowed more unrestricted accommodations had more students with disabilities participating in statewide assessments of reading and mathematics. Participation of elementary students was shown to be more dependent on accommodations than was the participation of middle and high school students. States that allowed a variety of response and setting accommodations were also shown to have a higher participation rate for students with disabilities. States with more unrestricted accommodations were also found to have lower discipline rates (removing students from school for more than 10 days) for students with disabilities. This research study indicates that allowing students with disabilities more accommodations may increase the participation rate, which is a requirement under NCLB. The results also suggest that allowing more unrestricted accommodations can lead to fewer behavioral problems in the classroom and in other school environments.
Teacher Attitudes

Accommodations in the regular education classroom are an integral part of inclusion of students with disabilities in the regular education classroom. Teacher attitudes are very important when a student with disabilities is placed in a regular education classroom. Jobe and Rust (1996) surveyed teachers nationwide to determine their attitudes toward the inclusion of students with disabilities. They compared attitudes toward inclusion between male and female teachers, six or less years of experience and more experience, in-service training and teacher experience. The results showed no significant differences in attitudes among the different subgroups. Most teachers in the study did comment that their responses to the survey would depend on the student’s disability.

Dupoux, Wolman, and Estrada (2005) compared teacher attitudes toward students with disabilities being included in the regular education classroom. Numerous variables were used for comparison in this study including; gender, number of students, experience, type of teacher, number of students with disabilities, advanced degree, and categories of disabilities. The results of the study indicate very little (significant) difference between teachers in Haiti and the United States. Positive correlations were found between teacher attitudes and the variables of teaching experience and advanced degree held. Attitudes were not correlated to class size, gender, or country but in Haiti special education tended to have a better attitude toward accommodations. Overall the attitudes were not different between teachers in Haiti and the United States, but attitudes toward inclusion of students with disabilities were generally positive throughout the study.
Yara (2009) found that teachers’ attitudes concerning the teaching of mathematics play an important part in shaping the attitude of students towards the learning of mathematics and that teachers’ attitudes towards science education can be a predictor of students’ achievement in science. Students’ attitudes and achievement were influenced by teachers’ attitudes and, therefore, their learning was affected. The relationship that teachers form with students can be very critical because teachers’ attitude can impact a student’s educational progress in negative or positive ways (Mississippi State Improvement Plan, Accountability/Assessment Performance, n.d.). McCoss-Yergian (n.d.) found that overall teachers do harbor attitudes toward implementation of instructional strategies and that those attitudes can affect how these strategies are implemented.

Summary
The individual needs of students in the classroom may be addressed through the use of differentiated instruction. When differentiated instruction fails to meet those needs, the three tier structure of Response to Intervention (RTI) is utilized to focus specific interventions on the student’s area of needs. If interventions in the classroom are repeatedly unsuccessful over time, a student may be referred for a special education evaluation. When a student is found eligible for special education services an Individualized Education Plan is implemented to provide the student with accommodations to meet the individual needs of their disability so that he/she can be successful in the classroom. Often these accommodations are delivered in an inclusion classroom with the assistance of a special education teacher. Attitudes of teachers can affect how the accommodations are implemented. Laws concerning students with
disabilities require the use of accommodations in both the classroom and on standardized tests. With the implementation of No Child Left Behind, the use of accommodations for special needs students is even more important because all students are required to meet Adequate Yearly Progress in both mathematics and language arts.
CHAPTER III
METHODOLOGY

Overview

In this study, the purpose was to analyze regular education and special education teachers at all grade levels on their attitudes toward the use of accommodations in the classroom and on standardized tests. Ultimately, the goal was to understand these teachers’ attitudes. This knowledge can be beneficial in adapting an in-depth professional development plan to train teachers on the use of accommodations. With the continued pressure of accountability, it is essential for IEP accommodations to be implemented correctly by both regular education and special education teachers.

Research Design

In this study, quantitative data was used to analyze the dependent and independent variables. The dependent variables were teacher attitudes toward the use of accommodations both in the classroom and on standardized tests. The independent variables were teacher type (regular education versus special education), teacher level of education, teacher experience, and grade level taught. Teacher attitudes were measured through the use of a Likert scale survey instrument created by the researcher. The teachers in this study teach kindergarten through twelfth grade in south Mississippi school districts.

Participants

The participants of this study consisted of kindergarten through twelfth grade teachers, both regular education and special education, in school districts in south Mississippi. In order for a teacher’s survey to have qualified for this study, he or she must
have been a teacher during the current 2011-2012 school year. All teachers were from public school districts in south Mississippi.

Instrumentation

The instrument that was used to access teacher attitudes toward the use of accommodations in the classroom and on standardized tests is a survey instrument created by the researcher for use in this study. When developing the survey instrument, the researcher reviewed pertinent literature to determine appropriate items to help measure teacher attitudes. The survey instrument for this study was a Likert scale type questionnaire which is broken down into four separate sections. The first section contained demographic questions, which will be used as independent variables, including gender, type of teacher (regular or special education), grade level taught, education level, and teaching experience. The second section of the questionnaire contained eleven items relating to teacher attitudes toward using accommodations in the classroom. The third section contained five items related to teacher attitudes toward using accommodations on standardized tests. The fourth section contained five items related to the teachers’ actual frequency of use of specific accommodations. The instrument was pilot tested as part of the research study with a group of twenty one regular education and special education teachers chosen by the researcher.

Procedures

After approval of The University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board (IRB) (appendix D) the study proceeded. The researcher conducted a pilot study with 21 teachers, both regular and special education, who were teaching in a south Mississippi school. Permission was obtained from the Superintendent of the school district in which the teachers were employed (Appendix E). The pilot study participants
were asked to read the directions, questions, and answer choices very carefully and note
any concerns they have regarding the wording, spelling, clarity, or any other issues which
inhibit their understanding of the questionnaire. The survey was found to be valid, few
changes were made. Twenty one additional teachers were given the survey to test for
reliability.

The data collected from the pilot study was entered into a SPSS data file to calculate
the reliability of the survey instrument. For the section on the use of accommodations in
the classroom Cronbach’s alpha was calculated at .872 and for the section on the use of
accommodations on standardized tests Cronbach’s alpha was calculated at .734 after
removing question 12 from the calculation. (Questions 4, 6, 7, 10, 13, and 16 were
reverse coded for data entry.) After the pilot was completed the researcher continued with
the remainder of the study. The researcher requested the permission of superintendents
(Appendix A) of four school districts in South Mississippi to send out questionnaires
(Appendix B). After receiving permission from three superintendents, the researcher
distributed the questionnaires during faculty meetings at the participating schools. The
questionnaire had a letter explaining the purpose of this study as a cover page (Appendix
C) to the questionnaire. The teachers were asked to complete the questionnaire and return
them within two weeks to the building principal. After two weeks of the questionnaires
being at each school, the principal of each school returned the questionnaires in a self-
addressed envelope to the researcher. Each teacher voluntarily answered the
questionnaire and was advised that they do not have to answer any questions they felt
uncomfortable answering. All teachers were reassured that their questionnaires were kept
confidential and were only used for the purpose of this study. Questions were numbered
to make data entry easier. After all the questionnaires were analyzed, they were kept in a locked filing cabinet until the completion of the study.

Limitations

The limitations of this study are as follows:

1. The attitudes that were gathered from teachers were limited to those teachers of the school districts in South Mississippi.

2. The attitudes of the teachers were only how the teachers felt at the time they answered the questionnaire and may not have been honest or may have had an unknown bias.

3. The attitudes of the teachers were limited to public school teachers.

Data Analysis

Once all questionnaires were collected, the data was entered into an excel spreadsheet. The data was then transferred into an SPSS data file and analyzed with SPSS version 18.0. The data from these questionnaires were coded into the computer for the researcher to analyze. Data was entered in for all demographic questions as independent variables. All other items from the questionnaire were entered as dependent variables and were divided into three subgroups, in the classroom, on standardized tests, and frequency of use of accommodations. Using SPSS, the items were analyzed to find out if there was a difference between the teachers’ attitudes. Data was analyzed using means, standard deviations, t-tests, and one way ANOVAs.
CHAPTER IV
ANALYSIS OF DATA

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine if there was a difference between regular education and special education attitudes towards the use of accommodations in the classroom and on standardized tests. This research was also designed to determine if regular education teacher and special education teacher attitudes differ across grade levels, with different educational levels, and with different years of experience. A researcher-created Likert scale survey questionnaire was used to gather data relating to teacher attitudes. This chapter includes the descriptives of the respondents to the questionnaires and the data analysis was used to test the stated research questions.

Data was collected from the questionnaires, which were given to the participating k-12 teachers. The questionnaires were completed by 298 public school teachers. These questionnaires were given to teachers in three separate school districts in Southern Mississippi. Of the 450 questionnaires given out, 298 were returned completed, for a return rate of 66%. Questionnaires were completed for all three school districts included in the process.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 2 consists of descriptive data for the study participants. The study sample that was represented for this research was 298 teachers in grades K-12 in public schools who completed the survey questionnaire. Demographic data for gender, position within the school district, grade level taught, level of education achieved, and years of teaching experience where collected. The 26 male teachers comprised 8.7% of the surveyed
population and the 268 female teachers comprised 91.3% of the population. Regular education teachers made up 77.9% (n=232) of the population and special education teachers made up 22.1% (n=66) of the population. For education, 47% (n=140) of the teachers had a Bachelor’s degree, 45% (134) of the teachers had a Master’s degree, and 8% (n=24) had a Master’s degree or higher degree. For experience, 21.5% (n=64) teachers had less than five years of teaching experience, 26.2% (n=78) had between five and ten years of teaching experience, 17.4% (n=52) had between eleven and fifteen years of teaching experience, and 34.2% (n=102) had more than 16 years of teaching experience. For grade level taught, 116 teachers taught grades kindergarten through fifth grade, 78 teachers taught sixth grade through eighth grade, and 80 taught ninth through twelfth grade. (For grade level taught the total is 274 teachers because 24 teachers marked grades that fell within more than one category and, therefore, were excluded).
Table 2

*Population Descriptives*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>272</td>
<td>91.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>298</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Position</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular Education</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>77.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Education</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>22.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>47.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>45.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s +</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 5 years</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>21.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-10 years</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>26.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-16 years</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>17.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 16 years</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>34.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade level category</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K-5</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>38.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-8</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>26.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-12</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>26.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>excluded</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Regular education and special education respondents of the survey questionnaire answered questions concerning their attitudes toward the use of accommodations in both the classroom and on standardized tests. On the classroom section, teachers rated 11 items on a scale of one (strongly disagree) to five (strongly agree) and on the standardized test section teachers rated 5 items on a scale of one (strongly disagree) to five (strongly agree). Teachers also rated their use of five accommodations commonly used to assist special education students. A review of the descriptive data indicated that special education teachers tend to have a more positive attitude toward the use of accommodations in the classroom and on standardized tests (see Table 3). Regular education teachers had a mean attitude of 3.98 with a standard deviation of .64 in the classroom and had a mean attitude of 3.56 with a standard deviation of 1.19 on standardized tests. Special education teachers had a mean attitude of 4.44 with a standard deviation of .41 in the classroom and had a mean attitude of 3.96 with a standard deviation of 1.19 on standardized tests.

Table 3

*Descriptives: Teacher Attitudes by Teacher Position*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classroom</td>
<td>Regular</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td>4.62</td>
<td>3.98</td>
<td>.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Special</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>4.85</td>
<td>4.03</td>
<td>4.44</td>
<td>.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Tests</td>
<td>Regular</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>4.56</td>
<td>5.56</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Special</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>5.15</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>1.19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Scale: 1= strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree*
Teacher attitudes were also compared by position and across grade levels. On both the classroom and standardized test sections of the survey, special education teachers tended to have a more positive attitude toward the use of accommodations across all grade levels. On the classroom section, for teachers who taught kindergarten through 5th grade regular education teachers had a mean attitude of 4.14 (n=92) with a standard deviation of .58 while special education teachers had a mean attitude of 4.44 (n=24) with a standard deviation of .40. On the classroom section, for teachers who taught 6th through 8th grade regular education teachers had a mean attitude of 3.86 (n=68) with a standard deviation of .77 while special education teachers had a mean attitude of 4.27 (n=10) with a standard deviation of .52. On the classroom section, for teachers who taught 9th through 12th grade regular education teachers had a mean attitude of 3.96 (n=64) with a standard deviation of .51 while special education teachers had a mean attitude of 4.39 (n=16) with a standard deviation of .45. On the standardized test section, for teachers who taught kindergarten through 5th grade regular education teachers had a mean attitude of 4.59 (n=92) with a standard deviation of .92 while special education teachers had a mean attitude of 3.95 (n=24) with a standard deviation of 1.24. On the standardized test section, for teachers who taught 6th through 8th grade regular education teachers had a mean attitude of 3.66 (n=68) with a standard deviation of .87 while special education teachers had a mean attitude of 4.20 (n=10) with a standard deviation of .53. On the standardized test section for teachers who taught 9th through 12th grade regular education teachers had a mean attitude of 3.26 (n=64) with a standard deviation of 1.19 while special education teachers had a mean attitude of 4.25 (n=16) with a standard deviation of 1.03 (Table 4).
Table 4

Descriptives: Teacher Attitudes by Grade Level Taught and Position

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Grade level</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classroom</td>
<td>k-5</td>
<td>Regular</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>4.72</td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Special</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>4.04</td>
<td>4.84</td>
<td>4.44</td>
<td>.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6-8</td>
<td>Regular</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>4.63</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Special</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>4.79</td>
<td>4.27</td>
<td>.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9-12</td>
<td>Regular</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>4.47</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Special</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>4.84</td>
<td>4.39</td>
<td>.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stand. Tests</td>
<td>k-5</td>
<td>Regular</td>
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<td>2.75</td>
<td>4.59</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Special</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>5.18</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>1.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6-8</td>
<td>Regular</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>2.79</td>
<td>4.53</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Special</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>4.73</td>
<td>4.20</td>
<td>.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9-12</td>
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<td>2.07</td>
<td>4.45</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>1.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Special</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>5.28</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>1.03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Scale: 1= strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree

Teacher attitudes were also compared according to the education level of the teacher. On the classroom section, teachers with a bachelor’s degree had a more positive attitude while on the standardized test section teachers with a Master’s degree or higher had a more positive attitude. On the classroom section, teachers with a Bachelor’s degree only had a mean attitude of 4.00 (n=140) with a standard deviation of .55 and teachers with a Master’s degree or higher had a mean attitude of 4.06 (n=158) with a standard deviation of .70. On the standardized test section, teachers with a Bachelor’s degree only
had a mean attitude of 3.52 (n=140) with a standard deviation of 1.09 and teachers with a Master’s degree or higher had mean attitude of 3.77 (n=158) with a standard deviation of 1.01 (Table 5).

Table 5

*Descriptives: Teacher Attitudes According to Educational Level of the Teacher*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Educational Level</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classroom</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>4.66</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Master’s and up</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>4.76</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Test</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>4.61</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>1.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Master’s and up</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>4.78</td>
<td>3.77</td>
<td>1.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Scale: 1= strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree

Teacher attitudes were also compared according to the experience of the teacher. On the classroom section, teachers with 11-15 years experience had a more positive attitude while on the standardized test section teachers with 16 or more years experience had a more positive attitude. On the classroom section, teachers with less than 5 years experience had a mean attitude of 4.06 (n=64) with a standard deviation of .50, teachers with 5-10 years experience had a mean attitude of 3.80 (n=78) with a standard deviation of .76, teachers with 11-15 years experience had mean attitude of 4.27 (n=52) with a standard deviation of .49, and teachers with 16 or more years experience had a mean attitude of 4.23 (n=102) with a standard deviation of .57. On the standardized test
section, teachers with less than 5 years experience had a mean attitude of 3.45 (n=64)
with a standard deviation of 1.14, teachers with 5-10 years experience had a mean
attitude of 3.47 (n=78) with a standard deviation of 1.03, teachers with 11-15 years
experience had mean attitude of 3.50 (n=52) with a standard deviation of 1.00, and
teachers with 16 or more years experience had a mean attitude of 4.03 (n=102) with a
standard deviation of .94 (Table 6).

Table 6

Descriptives: Teacher Attitudes According to Experience of the Teacher

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classroom</td>
<td>Less than 5</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>4.56</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>3.04</td>
<td>4.56</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>4.76</td>
<td>4.27</td>
<td>.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16 or greater</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>4.80</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Tests</td>
<td>Less than 5</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>2.31</td>
<td>4.59</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>1.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>2.44</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>1.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16 or greater</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>4.97</td>
<td>4.03</td>
<td>.94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Scale: 1= strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree

Teacher attitudes where also compared according to the school level, elementary
or middle/high school, at which the teacher taught. Teachers at the elementary level
tended to have a more positive attitude than those at the middle/high school level on both
the classroom and standardized test sections of the survey. On the classroom section, teachers at the elementary level had a mean attitude of 4.20 (n=116) with a standard deviation of .56 and teachers at the middle/high school level had a mean attitude of 3.96 (n=158) with a standard deviation of .65. On the standardized test section, teachers at the elementary level had a mean attitude of 3.73 (n=116) with a standard deviation of .99 and teachers at the middle/high school level had a mean attitude of 3.59 (n=158) with a standard deviation of 1.06 (Table 7).

Table 7

*Descriptives: Teacher Attitudes According to School Level*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>School Level</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classroom</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>4.76</td>
<td>4.20</td>
<td>.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Middle/High</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Tests</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>4.72</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Middle/High</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>4.65</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>1.06</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Scale: 1= strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree

Comparisons were also completed for the attitudes of all teachers according to classroom or standardized test attitudes. Teachers in general had a more positive attitude toward the use of accommodations in the classroom than on standardized tests. Teachers had a mean attitude of 4.08 (n=298) with a standard deviation of .63 on the classroom section. Teachers had a mean attitude of 3.65 (n=298) with a standard deviation of 1.05 (Table 8).
Table 8

*Teacher Attitudes: According to Classroom and Standardized Tests*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classroom</td>
<td>298</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>4.71</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Tests</td>
<td>298</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>4.70</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>1.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Scale: 1= strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree

Descriptives were also calculated for individual survey questions 1-16 (Table 9).

Table 9

*Descriptives: By Individual Question*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Question</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I know which students require special accommodations in my classes.</td>
<td>4.68</td>
<td>.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe that accommodations are selected to meet a student’s individual needs.</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is the responsibility of the special education teacher to provide accommodations in the regular classroom.</td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>1.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have difficulty understanding the accommodations my special education students require.</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>1.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel I have the knowledge to provide accommodations in the regular education classroom.</td>
<td>4.19</td>
<td>.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do not feel I have the skills required to provide accommodations in the regular education classroom.</td>
<td>4.16</td>
<td>1.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do not feel I have the experience to provide accommodations in the regular education classroom.</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>1.09</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Scale: 1= strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree
Table 9 (continued).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Question</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am confident that accommodations for special education students are implemented correctly in my classroom.</td>
<td>3.99</td>
<td>.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe accommodations really make a difference in the education of special needs students.</td>
<td>4.26</td>
<td>.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do not believe accommodations are a fair means for helping students with disabilities.</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>1.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe that accommodations are the sole responsibility of the special education teacher.</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>1.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe that accommodations are necessary when testing students with disabilities.</td>
<td>4.30</td>
<td>.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe that testing with accommodations does not help provide an accurate picture of a student’s abilities and knowledge.</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>1.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe that accommodations provided on standardized tests give special education students an unfair advantage.</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>1.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am not confident in my ability to provide accommodations during standardized tests.</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>1.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do not believe that accommodations on standardized tests should be provided only by the special education teacher.</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>1.28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Scale: 1= strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree

Descriptives were calculated for how often teachers use specific accommodations using the scale of 1= daily, 2= at least 2 times per week, 3= one time per week, 4= once every 2 weeks, and 5= once per month or less (Table 10).
Table 10

*Use of Specific Accommodations*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accommodation</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extended time on tests</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td>1.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preferential Seating</td>
<td>1.39</td>
<td>1.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Break large assignments into smaller segments</td>
<td>1.95</td>
<td>1.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small group instruction</td>
<td>1.93</td>
<td>1.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignments or tests read aloud</td>
<td>2.72</td>
<td>1.46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Scale: 1= daily to 5=once a month or less

Test of Hypotheses

An independent samples t-test was used to measure the results of Hypotheses one (1), three (3), and five (5) to determine if there was a difference in the means of the independent variables. A two-way ANOVA was used to measure the results of Hypotheses two (2) to determine if each independent variable had an effect on the dependent variables. A one-way ANOVA measured the results of Hypotheses four (4) to determine if there was a difference in the means of the independent variables. A paired samples t-test was used to measure the results of Hypotheses six (6) to determine if there was a difference between the independent variables. For the statistical results to be deemed significant in the study, the result must have met the \( p=0.05 \) significance level.
Teacher Attitudes by Position

An independent samples t-test measured H₁: There was a statistically significant difference in the attitudes of regular education teachers \( (M=3.98, SD=.64) \) and special education teachers \( (M=4.44, SD=.41) \) in the classroom; \( t(164)=-6.88, p =.000 \). There was also a statistically significant difference in the attitudes of regular education teachers \( (M=3.56, SD=1.00) \) and special education teachers \( (M=3.96, SD=1.19) \) on standardized tests; \( t(92)=-2.72, p=.006 \). These results suggest that special education teachers do have a more positive attitude toward the use of accommodations in both the classroom and on standardized tests.

Teacher Attitudes by Grade Level and Position

A two-way ANOVA measured the results of H₂: An analysis of variance with grade level (k-5, 6-8, and 9-12) and position (regular, special education) as between-subjects factors revealed no main effect of grade level, \( F(2, 268)= 1.94, p=.145 \) on teacher attitudes in the classroom and no main effect of grade level, \( F(2, 268)= .309, p=.735 \) on teacher attitudes on standardized tests. It did show a main effect of position, \( F(1, 268)=16.16, p< .001 \) on teacher attitudes in the classroom and a main effect of position, \( F(1, 268) =13.11, p< .001 \) on teacher attitudes on standardized tests; producing a more positive mean attitude for the position of special education teacher. There was also no interaction between grade level and position on teacher attitudes in the classroom, \( F(2, 268)= 0.38, p = .683 \) and no interaction between grade level and position on teacher attitudes on standardized tests, \( F(2, 268)=1.85, p=.159 \). Regular and special education
teacher attitudes did not differ significantly across all grade levels but some differences in mean teacher attitudes were noted on both sections (Table 11).

**Table 11**

*Mean Attitudes by Grade level and Position*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classroom</td>
<td>k-5</td>
<td>regular</td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>special education</td>
<td>4.44</td>
<td>.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6-8</td>
<td>regular</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>special education</td>
<td>4.27</td>
<td>.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9-12</td>
<td>regular</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>special education</td>
<td>4.39</td>
<td>.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Tests</td>
<td>k-5</td>
<td>regular</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>special education</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>1.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6-8</td>
<td>regular</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>special education</td>
<td>4.20</td>
<td>.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9-12</td>
<td>regular</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>1.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>special education</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>1.03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Scale: 1 strongly disagree- 5 strongly agree*

**Teacher Attitudes by Education Level**

An independent samples *T* test measured $H_3$: There was no statistically significant difference in the attitudes of teachers with a bachelor’s degree ($M=4.11$, $SD=.55$) and teachers with a master’s degree or higher ($M=4.06$, $SD=.70$) in the classroom;
There was a statistically significant difference in the attitudes teachers with a bachelor’s degree ($M=3.52$, $SD=1.090$) and teachers with a master’s degree or higher ($M=3.77$, $SD=1.01$) on standardized tests; $t(296)=-1.99$, $p=.047$. These results suggest that teachers with a master’s degree or higher do not have a more positive attitude toward the use of accommodations in the classroom, but teachers with a master’s degree or higher do have a more positive attitude toward the use of accommodations on standardized tests.

**Teacher Attitudes by Experience**

A one-way ANOVA measured $H_4$: An analysis of variance showed a main effect of experience on teachers’ attitudes in the classroom, $F(4, 293) = 8.17$, $p< .001$ and showed a main effect of experience on teachers’ attitudes on standardized tests, $F(4, 293), p= 6.44, p< .001$. Posthoc analyses using Tukey’s HSD indicated that 5-10 years experience attitudes in the classroom were lower than 11-15 year attitudes ($p< .001$) and lower than attitudes of 16 or greater attitudes ($p< .001$). Posthoc analyses also showed that less than 5 year attitudes on standardized tests were lower than 16 or greater attitudes ($p= .003$), that 5-10 year attitudes were lower than 16 or greater attitudes ($p= .003$), and that 11-15 year attitudes were lower than 16 or greater attitudes ($p=.018$). Teachers with 16 or more years experience tend to have more positive attitudes toward the use of accommodations than those with lower levels of experience both in the classroom and on standardized tests.

**Teacher Attitudes by School Level**

An independent sample t-test measured $H_5$: The independent sample t test found a statistically significant difference in the attitudes of teachers at the elementary level
and teachers at the middle/secondary level \((M=3.96, SD=.65)\) in the classroom; \(t(272)=3.24, p=.001\). There was no statistically significant difference in the attitudes of teachers at the elementary level \((M=3.73, SD=.99)\) and special education teachers \((M=3.59, SD=1.06)\) on standardized tests; \(t(272)=1.08, p=.277\). These results suggest that teachers at the elementary level have a positive attitude toward the use of accommodations in the classroom but on standardized tests there was not a statistical difference.

**Teacher Attitudes by Accommodation Environment**

A paired samples t-test was used to measure \(H_6\): A paired-samples t-test was conducted to compare teacher attitudes toward the use of accommodations in the classroom and on standardized tests. There was a significant difference in the scores in the classroom \((M=4.08, SD=.63)\) and on standardized tests \((M=3.65, SD=1.05)\) conditions; \(t(297)=7.26, p<.001\). Teacher attitudes were more positive toward the use of accommodations in the classroom than toward the use of accommodations on standardized tests.

**Summary**

A survey of 298 special and regular education teachers yielded results for each of the six hypotheses. Respondents in the study indicated that special education teachers do have a more positive attitude toward the use of accommodations in both the classroom and on standardized tests. Regular and special education teacher attitudes did not differ across grade levels. Teachers with a master’s degree or higher do not have a more positive attitude toward the use of accommodations in the classroom, but teachers with a master’s degree or higher do have a more positive attitude toward the use of
accommodations on standardized tests. Teachers with 16 or more years experience tend to have more positive attitudes toward the use of accommodations than those with lower levels of experience both in the classroom and on standardized tests. Teachers at the elementary level have a more positive attitude toward the use of accommodations in the classroom but on standardized tests there was not a statistical difference. Overall teacher attitudes were more positive toward the use of accommodations in the classroom than toward the use of accommodations on standardized tests.
CHAPTER V
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The ultimate goal of special education accommodations is to help students with disabilities have the same access to an education as students without disabilities. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 raised prospects for every student, both with and without disabilities. All students are now required to make Adequate Yearly Progress in mathematics, reading, and writing. In order for special education students to achieve this goal, both special education and regular education teachers provide accommodations for these students in the classroom and on standardized tests.

According to a research by Subban (2006), contemporary classrooms are becoming increasingly diverse and hence the need to accommodate each and every student is created. This study aimed at addressing the question of whether teacher attitudes towards accommodation in the classroom setting and accommodation on standardized tests differ. Teacher attitudes were measured using a likert scale survey created by the researcher. Data collected were analyzed using one-sample t-tests and analysis of variance to establish if there were any differences. Multiple hypotheses were tested using the data collected from the surveys. Teachers’ attitudes were measured in terms of position, by grade level, and experience.

The primary purpose of this study was to determine and examine differences in teacher attitudes toward the use of accommodations in both the classroom and on standardized tests. A survey of regular and special education teachers in three school districts in south Mississippi was used to obtain data related to teacher attitudes about
accommodations and the actual use of accommodations by teachers. Understanding
general education and special education teacher attitudes toward the implementation of
IEP accommodations gives school administrators and all educators a better picture of
how the practice can be improved to the benefit of students with disabilities. This chapter
contains a summary of the study, a discussion of how the findings related to the
literature, a final reflective conclusion, and recommendations for future research.

Summary of Findings

This study asked if differences in teacher attitudes differ in the classroom and on
standardized tests. For this question to be answered, teacher attitudes were measured
using a Likert scale survey created by the researcher. The data collected was then
analyzed using one-sample t-tests and analysis of variance to determine if there were any
differences.

Multiple hypotheses were tested using the data collected from the surveys. When
teacher attitudes were compared by position (regular education or special education
teacher), there was a statistically significant difference in attitudes with special education
teacher attitudes being more positive in both the classroom and on standardized tests.
Teacher attitudes by grade level taught and position did not differ significantly in either
the classroom or on standardized tests. Teachers with a master’s degree or higher did not
have a more positive attitude toward the use of accommodations in the classroom, but
teachers with a master’s degree or higher did have a more positive attitude toward the use
of accommodations on standardized tests. Teachers with 16 or more years experience
tended to have more positive attitudes toward the use of accommodations than those with
lower levels of experience both in the classroom and on standardized tests. Teachers at
the elementary level had a more positive attitude toward the use of accommodations in the classroom but on standardized tests, there was not a statistical difference. Teacher attitudes were more positive toward the use of accommodations in the classroom than toward the use of accommodations on standardized tests. The teachers in this survey noted that the most common accommodations they used were ‘extended time on tests’ and ‘assignments or tests read aloud.

Conclusion

Educators can presume that special education teachers have a more positive attitude toward the use of accommodations than their regular education counterparts as a result of their specialized education and training as special education teachers. These teachers use accommodations correctly and effectively to help improve student learning in the classroom and to improve student performance on standardized tests.

As indicated by the results of the survey, teachers’ attitudes are different with regard to different aspects. Special education teachers tend to be more positive towards the use of accommodations than their regular education counterparts. This can be attributed to their specialized education and training as special education teachers. Regular education teachers need additional training through professional development to help them become more knowledgeable and more comfortable with the use of accommodations. As regular education teachers gain knowledge about accommodations their attitudes toward accommodation use should become more positive.

There is also a more positive attitude by teachers with lower education levels towards accommodation in the classroom. This may be attributed to their enthusiasm in their new found jobs as they strive to impress and to college teacher education programs
that are adapting to current education needs of all students, including those with disabilities. However, their more educated counterparts show a more positive attitude towards accommodation on the standardized tests which could be as a result of their training provided with advanced degrees. More experienced teachers may also have received professional development throughout their educational career that has led to a clearer understanding of why accommodations are needed on standardized tests.

Experienced teachers have been implementing accommodations for a longer time and are, therefore, more comfortable with their use. The more experienced teachers did record a lower attitude toward accommodations in the classroom. According to Maslach and Pines (1984), burnout affects teachers at some point of their teaching profession. Exhaustion could be the reason why they seem to be less accommodative due to the several years in the profession.

Teachers at the elementary and middle school level had a more positive attitude toward the use of accommodations in the classroom but on standardized tests, there was not a statistical difference. The more positive attitudes in the classroom may be attributed to the fact that elementary and middle school teachers work with the same group of students for most of the day and therefore realize how those accommodations actually affect student learning in the classroom but on standardized tests they may not directly see the affect of the accommodations. Cox, et al. (2006) found that at the elementary level states that allowed more unrestricted accommodations had more students with disabilities participating in statewide assessments of reading and mathematics. Standardized test participation of elementary students was shown to be more reliant on accommodations than was the participation of middle and high school students.
Overall teacher attitudes were more positive toward the use of accommodations in the classroom than toward the use of accommodations on standardized tests. This may be ascribed to the idea many teachers have that allowing accommodations on standardized tests gives the students an unfair advantage and does not provide an accurate picture of the student’s ability.

As a result of special education law and No Child Left Behind, teachers are compelled to implement accommodations for students with disabilities, therefore, regular education teachers and special education teachers need concentrated professional development to increase their ability to use accommodations correctly and effectively to help improve student learning in the classroom and to improve student performance on standardized tests.

Limitations

This study only looked at the attitudes of teachers in three school districts in Southern Mississippi. A limited population of teachers was surveyed (only 298 total). The population surveyed contained a very small number of special education teachers compared to the large number of regular education teachers. The population also included a small number of teachers with a master’s degree or higher compared to the larger number of teachers with bachelor’s and master’s degrees.

Recommendations for Policy and Practice

The information gained from this study is intended to assist teachers, principals, special education directors, superintendents, and school boards gain a better understanding of teacher attitudes toward the use of accommodations for students with disabilities and how districts can change and improve teacher attitudes in these areas.
Principals and special education directors must insure that both regular education and special education teachers receive ongoing professional development in the correct and consistent use of specific accommodations. Professional development should be focused on what each accommodation actually means and how it helps students improve their performance. Professional development will help teachers become more comfortable using accommodations and, therefore, teachers will be more confident in providing accommodations for students. Van Laarhoven, et al. (2006) advocate for a program where both regular and special education teachers participate in a simulated lesson plan and a field experience in an inclusive classroom. This will help them shape their attitudes towards accommodations.

Principals should also schedule common planning time for regular education and special education inclusion teachers so that the use of accommodations can be implemented by both teachers in the classroom and in preparation for standardized tests. Additionally, regular education teachers need to be more involved in the decision making process of writing a student’s individualized education plan, which can help the regular education teacher understand individual students need for specific accommodations. This can also be realized through the common planning time. Common planning time should be carefully scheduled and monitored by appropriate administrators to insure that it is used to benefit both teachers and all students.

Principals, special education directors, superintendents and school boards need to enlighten their teachers about the laws in place regarding special students. Teachers need to adhere to the set out laws and implement these accommodations for students with disabilities. Strict guidelines should also be drafted to ensure that standardized tests meet
certain regulations before being administered to students. There is a need to change the emphasis from accommodation in the classroom to accommodation on standardized tests.

The education fraternity also has an obligation to carry out countrywide campaigns seeking to enlighten all the members of the society about accommodations towards children with disabilities. These children may sometimes face discrimination in the various institutions from time to time. Therefore, companies need to play their part in corporate social responsibility by addressing their plight and even accommodating them in their firms.

Accommodations for special needs students are a fact of the educational process that all teachers must embrace. Legal requirements of the Individualized Education Plan necessitate the provision of accommodations to help special education students receive a Free Appropriate Education in the Least Restrictive Environment. More positive teacher attitudes need to be fostered so that students can receive the accommodations they need in order to be successful.

Recommendations for Future Research

A limitation of the current study was the small number of school districts from which the scores were collected and the location of those districts. The study was conducted in three school districts in Southern Mississippi. Differences were found that need to be examined further through a larger study involving more school districts in different locations. Future research may also be conducted to address teacher knowledge about the use of specific, commonly used accommodations and how teachers perceive the effect of accommodations on student learning and student standardized test scores.
Future research needs to touch on the marital status of teachers and how this might shape their attitudes towards accommodations. This should touch on the married, single, and divorced. Teachers who are parents need also to be studied to establish if there is any relation of being a father or mother and attitudes towards accommodations. Another area of research is the place of residence for teachers and if it in any way shapes their attitudes. Different neighborhoods tend to shape a person’s attitudes differently regarding patience, tolerance and accommodation.
November 1, 2011

Dear Superintendent,

I am conducting research for my doctoral dissertation in Educational Leadership at The University of Southern Mississippi. I am interested in the attitudes of regular education and special education teachers toward the use of accommodations in the classroom and on standardized tests. I am concerned about the rising importance of testing students using appropriate accommodations. With a better understanding of teacher attitudes, professional development can be planned to focus on this area.

I would appreciate it if you would grant me permission to send a survey to your teachers within your schools at all levels. Once they receive the survey, they can voluntarily participate or elect not to participate. Please respond below with the appropriate choice, and send this letter back to me. I would greatly appreciate it if you could send it back within one week of receipt. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at work (601) 795-8477 extension 1808, at home (601) 749-0384, cell (601) 365-9385 or contact my research advisor, Dr. David Lee, at 601-266-4580. A self-addressed stamped envelope has been enclosed for you, as well as a copy of the survey instrument.

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 Dr. #5147, Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001, (601) 266-6820.

Thank you in advance for your assistance in this research.

Sincerely,

Michele Meadows, researcher
Dr. David Lee, USM Research Advisor

Enclosure

______ YES, I am granting permission for my schools to participate in this voluntary survey.
______ NO, I am not granting permission for my schools to participate in this voluntary survey.

__________________________________________Signature of Superintendent
APPENDIX B

QUESTIONNAIRE

Accommodation Survey

This is a survey of special education and regular education teacher attitudes towards the use of accommodations for special education students in the classroom and on standardized tests. The completed surveys were collected and examined anonymously. The demographic questions are only asked in order to meet the research study objectives. Your time and participation in this study are greatly appreciated.

Demographics

Please circle the answer that applies to you.

1. Gender: Male Female

2. Your position within the school district: (circle one)
   Regular education teacher
   Special education teacher

3. Grade Level you teach (circle all that apply)
   K 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
   11 12

4. Level of education achieved (circle one)
   Bachelor’s Master’s Master’s +

5. Years of teaching experience (circle one)
   Less than 5 5-10 11-15 16 or greater

Please rate the following statements that indicate your attitude on a scale from 1 to 5. There is a comment section at the end of the questionnaire to write additional comments you have about accommodations.
1= Strongly Disagree
2= Somewhat Disagree
3= Neutral
4= Somewhat Agree
5= Strongly Agree
For the purpose of this study, an accommodation is defined as: A change in how tests or classroom work is administered that does not substantially alter what the test or assignment measures; appropriate accommodations are made to level the playing field in the identified skill deficit area (Wright & Wright, 2009, p. 423).

**In the classroom:**

1. I know which students require special accommodations in my classes. 1 2 3 4 5
2. I believe that accommodations are selected to meet a student’s individual needs. 1 2 3 4 5
3. It is the responsibility of the special education teacher to provide accommodations in the regular classroom. 1 2 3 4 5
4. I have difficulty understanding the accommodations my special education students require. 1 2 3 4 5
5. I feel I have the knowledge to provide accommodations in the regular education classroom. 1 2 3 4 5
6. I do not feel I have the skills required to provide accommodations the regular education classroom. 1 2 3 4 5
7. I do not feel I have the experience to provide accommodations in the regular education classroom. 1 2 3 4 5
8. I am confident that accommodations for special education students are implemented correctly in my classroom. 1 2 3 4 5
9. I believe accommodations really make a difference in the education of special needs students. 1 2 3 4 5
10. I do not believe accommodations are a fair means for helping students with disabilities. 1 2 3 4 5
11. I believe that accommodations are the sole responsibility of the special education teacher. 1 2 3 4 5
On standardized tests:

12. I believe that accommodations are necessary when testing students with disabilities.  
   1  2  3  4  5

13. I believe that testing with accommodations does not help provide an accurate picture of a student’s abilities and knowledge.  
   1  2  3  4  5

14. I believe that accommodations provided on standardized tests give special education students an unfair advantage.  
   1  2  3  4  5

15. I am not confident in my ability to provide accommodations during standardized tests.  
   1  2  3  4  5

16. I do not believe that accommodations on standardized tests should be provided only by the special education teacher.  
   1  2  3  4  5

Please rate the following statements as to how often you provide the following accommodations in your classroom.

1  Daily
2  At least 2 times per week
3  One time per week
4  Once every 2 weeks
5  Once per month or less

17. Extended time on tests  
   1  2  3  4  5

18. Preferential seating  
   1  2  3  4  5

19. Break large assignments into smaller segments  
   1  2  3  4  5

20. Small group instruction  
   1  2  3  4  5

21. Assignments or tests read aloud  
   1  2  3  4  5

Comments:

_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
November 10, 2011

Dear Teacher,

I am conducting research for my doctoral dissertation in Educational Leadership at The University of Southern Mississippi. I am interested in the attitudes of regular education and special education teacher toward the use of accommodations in the classroom and on standardized tests. I am concerned about the rising importance of testing students using appropriate accommodations. With a better understanding of teacher attitudes professional development can be planned to focus on this area.

I would appreciate it if you would take 5-10 minutes to complete the enclosed survey. All responses to the survey will be held confidential. **Once you complete the survey, please place it in the large brown envelope located in the office.** When the surveys are returned and data analysis is complete, the surveys will be destroyed by the researcher.

I have already contacted your superintendent for permission to survey teachers within your school district. Your completion of the survey dedicates consent to participate in the study. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at work (601) 795-8477 extension 1808, at home (601) 749-0384, cell (601) 365-9385 or contact my research advisor, Dr. David Lee, at 601-266-4580.

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 Dr. #5147, Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001, (601) 266-6820. Thank you in advance for your assistance in this research.

Sincerely,

Michele Meadows, Researcher

Dr. David Lee, USM Research Advisor

Enclosure
APPENDIX D

IRB APPROVAL

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
118 College Drive #5147 | Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001
Phone: 601.266.6020 | 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: 11111701
PROJECT TITLE: Teacher Attitudes Toward the Use of Accommodations in the Classroom and on Standardized Tests
PROJECT TYPE: Dissertation
RESEARCHER/S: Michele Meadows
COLLEGE/DIVISION: College of Education & Psychology
DEPARTMENT: Educational Leadership
FUNDING AGENCY: N/A
IRB COMMITTEE ACTION: Expedited Review Approval
PERIOD OF PROJECT APPROVAL: 12/05/2011 to 12/04/2012

[Signature]
Lawrence A. Hosman, Ph.D.
HSPRC Chair

[Signature] 12/28/11
Date
November 28, 2011

Dear Superintendent,

I am conducting research for my doctoral dissertation in Educational Leadership at The University of Southern Mississippi. I am interested in the attitudes of regular education and special education teachers toward the use of accommodations in the classroom and on standardized tests. I am concerned about the rising importance of testing students using appropriate accommodations. With a better understanding of teacher attitudes, professional development can be planned to focus on this area.

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Thank you in advance for your assistance in this research.

Sincerely,

Michele Meadows, researcher

Dr. David Lee, USM Research Advisor

Enclosure

☑ YES, I am granting permission for my schools to participate in this voluntary survey.

☐ NO, I am not granting permission for my schools to participate in this voluntary survey.

Signature of Superintendent
November 28, 2011

Dear Superintendent,

I am conducting research for my doctoral dissertation in Educational Leadership at The University of Southern Mississippi. I am interested in the attitudes of regular education and special education teacher toward the use of accommodations in the classroom and on standardized tests. I am concerned about the rising importance of testing students using appropriate accommodations. With a better understanding of teacher attitudes professional development can be planned to focus on this area.

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Thank you in advance for your assistance in this research.

Sincerely,

Michele Meadows, researcher

Dr. David Lee, USM Research Advisor

Enclosure

[Signature]

YES, I am granting permission for my schools to participate in this voluntary survey.

NO, I am not granting permission for my schools to participate in this voluntary survey.
November 28, 2011

Dear Superintendent,

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Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001, (601) 266-6820.

Thank you in advance for your assistance in this research.

Sincerely,

Michelle Maslow, researcher

Dr. David Lee, IRB Research Advisor

Enclosure

☐ YES, I am granting permission for my school to participate in this voluntary survey.

☐ NO, I am not granting permission for my school to participate in this voluntary survey.

Signature of Superintendent
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