

Spring 5-2016

The Perceptions of General Education Teachers on the Inclusion of Students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing in the General Education Classroom

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Running Head: PERCEPTIONS OF DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING STUDENTS

The University of Southern Mississippi

The Perceptions of General Education Teachers on the Inclusion of Students who are
Deaf or Hard of Hearing in the General Education Classroom

by

Rebecca L. Roppolo

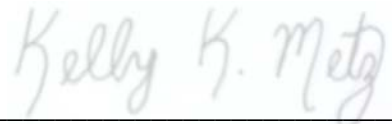
A Thesis
Submitted to the Honors College of
The University of Southern Mississippi
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Bachelor of Education of the Deaf
in the Department of Speech and Hearing Sciences

May 2016

PERCEPTIONS OF DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING STUDENTS

PERCEPTIONS OF DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING STUDENTS

Approved by

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Abstract

Many deaf and hard of hearing (D/HH) children receive their education primarily in the general education classroom with the majority of their academic instruction provided by a general education teacher. The purpose of this study was to investigate how general education teachers in the southeastern region of Mississippi perceive D/HH students included in the general education classroom. Specifically, this study was designed to explore the attitudes of general education teachers toward the inclusion of students with hearing loss, evaluate their feelings of preparedness to teach this unique population, and to identify the type and quality of services currently being provided to D/HH students in this region. Data for this research study was collected through an anonymous online survey that was electronically sent to general education teachers throughout southeastern Mississippi. The results from this study suggest that general education teachers have an overall positive attitude toward the abilities and characteristics of D/HH children and the inclusion of D/HH students in the general education classroom. Despite reporting a positive attitude, many general educators surveyed indicated feeling unprepared to teach students with hearing loss. They also reported that the students with hearing loss at their schools are receiving adequate services, although the majority of students are not receiving services from a teacher of the deaf. Study results suggest that better education is needed for all educators to be aware of the importance of D/HH children receiving services from a teacher of the deaf.

Keywords: deaf education, inclusion, deaf and hard of hearing students, teacher of the deaf

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Dedication

I dedicate my thesis to my loving, supportive parents, Nicholas and Tiffanie Roppolo.

Thank you for always supporting me in my academic endeavors.

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Acknowledgements

I would first like to thank my thesis advisor, Dr. Kelly Metz, for all of the valuable guidance and support she has provided me with throughout the process of writing my thesis. This research study would not have been possible without Dr. Metz's encouragement. Dr. Metz has not only been an excellent advisor, but also an extraordinary mentor throughout my college career.

Finally, I would like to thank Marietta Paterson, and my other past professors in the department of speech and hearing sciences who provided me with a foundational knowledge of the educational experiences of children with hearing loss. The education I have received through the Education of the Deaf program at the University of Southern Mississippi has provided me with the valuable insight that inspired this thesis paper.

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List of Abbreviations

D/HH	Deaf and Hard of Hearing
IEP	Individualized Education Plan

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Chapter 1:

Introduction

Since the 1975 Education for all Handicapped Children Act, children with hearing impairments have the opportunity to receive a free and appropriate public education. For some students who are deaf or hard of hearing (D/HH), a free appropriate public education means placement in the general education classroom. The process of children with disabilities receiving their education in a general education setting is known as mainstreaming, or inclusion. Students who are deaf or hard of hearing in an inclusive setting may receive instruction from an itinerant teacher, who specializes in teaching children with a hearing loss. Other D/HH students may receive some of their academic instruction from a cross-categorical resource teacher. However, for many D/HH students, the majority of educational instruction comes from a general education teacher. General Education teachers are not taught an extensive amount of information about hearing loss or how to successfully teach these students in their preparation programs. Instructing students with hearing impairments can be challenging and may require extra time and effort. Thus it is important to examine the general education teachers' preparedness for and attitude toward educating D/HH students in the general education classroom.

I will examine the perceptions of general education teachers about students who are deaf and hard of hearing that are placed into the public school system through inclusion. I will also determine whether these teachers feel prepared to teach students with hearing loss. Additionally, I will explore the expectations that general educators have for their hearing impaired students. A similar study has been conducted on this subject in Canada. In this study, researchers found that the surveyed general education

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teachers had a positive attitude toward the inclusion of students with hearing loss (Eriks-Brophy & Whittingham, 2013). Eriks-Brophy and Whittingham's study was conducted in the Ottawa-Carleton region of Canada. This region is well known for the high quality of services and supports given to D/HH children. I believe that the results of conducting a similar study in Southeastern Mississippi will yield very different results because Mississippi has not been similarly recognized for the services provided to students with hearing loss. I hypothesize that general education teachers in Mississippi will have low expectations for D/HH students, as well as perceiving their hearing loss negatively. I also believe that the teachers will report that they do not feel prepared to teach students with hearing loss. Ultimately, this study will provide useful insight into the inclusion of students who are deaf and hard of hearing in Southeastern Mississippi.

Chapter 2:

Review of Literature

Inclusion and Deaf Education

Section 504 of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 ensures “that all children with disabilities have available to them a free appropriate public education that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living” (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). Determining what constitutes a free and appropriate education for each child with a disability is determined by a team of specialists. These specialists create an Individualized Education Plan, or IEP, that defines which educational placement is appropriate for the child. The IEP also outlines accommodations and modifications that are legally required to be executed.

For children with a hearing loss, there is a continuum of placement options. Some D/HH children attend residential and day schools for the deaf; others receive their education in a self-contained class on a public school campus. However, many students who are deaf or hard of hearing are included in the general education classroom. According to Gallaudet’s Annual Survey of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children and Youth, approximately 51.1% of students with hearing loss receive their education in an inclusive setting with their hearing peers. (Gallaudet University, 2013).

In a nationwide study assessing the services provided by itinerant teachers in the United States, researchers found that included D/HH students spend approximately 76% of the school-day in the general education classroom (Luckner & Ayantoye, 2013, p. 415). They receive the majority of their educational instruction from a general education

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teacher. Additionally, it is common for these students also to receive services from an itinerant teacher of the deaf and hard of hearing. In some instances, the itinerant teacher only acts as a consultant or specialist, who guides and advises the general education teacher. Itinerant teachers typically consult with the general education teacher for about 25 minutes per week (Luckner & Ayantoye, 2013 p. 415). In most cases, however, students who are deaf and hard of hearing receive some degree of direct instruction from an itinerant teacher (Powers, 2001 p. 184).

D/HH students receive instruction from an itinerant teacher through either the pull-out model or the push-in model. The pull-out model of service entails the itinerant teacher removing the D/HH student from the general education classroom for a period of time to provide one-on-one or small group instruction. Roughly 71% of students with a hearing loss spend some time receiving direct instruction from the itinerant teacher outside of the general education classroom (Luckner & Ayantoye, 2013, p. 415). The push-in model occurs when the itinerant teacher provides service to the child with a hearing loss in the general education classroom. The push-in model allows for full inclusion. However, the noisy atmosphere of the typical classroom can often be distracting and counterproductive. Overall, choosing a model of service ultimately depends on the individual needs of the student (Rabinsky, 2013). Both the push-in model and the pull-out model require collaboration and support from the general education teacher.

Responsibilities of the General Education Teacher

The general educator has many obligations in regard to the education of students with hearing loss. These responsibilities range from accommodating the individual needs

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of their students, using alternate strategies of instruction, learning to effectively use the educational interpreter, and tracking academic progress (Antia, 1999). In a study by Eriks-Brophy, et al (2009) that investigated the facilitators and barriers to the inclusion of children with hearing loss, the participants whose average age was 19.7, indicated that they sometimes had difficulties obtaining cooperation from their teachers to provide necessary accommodations. Legally, the teacher is required to make the necessary accommodations for the D/HH student, even if it is inconvenient to do so. In a case study on the roles of special educators and classroom teachers in an inclusive school in a rural school district in the southwestern region of the United States, Antia (1999), found that general education teachers are more willing to make accommodations that will benefit the whole class. However, "Sometimes teachers felt that the adaptations that were suggested were not practical, or unnecessary, or conflicted with other practices" (Antia, 1999 p.212). Differentiating instruction based on the academic needs, interests, and learning styles of D/HH students is also the responsibility of the classroom teacher. Using multiple teaching strategies to fulfill the individual needs of each learner is necessary for the successful inclusion of students with disabilities (Tobin, 2007). Execution of these responsibilities by general education teachers is critical for the effective inclusion of students with a hearing loss.

Positive Attitudes Toward Inclusion

As a result of the prevalence of students with disabilities being included in the general education classroom, classroom teachers have assumed the responsibility of being the primary educator of many exceptional children. There have been many

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conflicting studies regarding the attitudes of general education teachers towards inclusion, and more specifically the inclusion of students who are deaf or hard of hearing.

In a case study of two D/HH students included in secondary schools in the Netherlands, Vermeulen, Denessen, and Knoors (2012) found that many classroom teachers had positive attitudes about the inclusion of students with hearing loss, especially if the students behaved well and put forth their best effort to succeed academically. Additionally, research in Germany on the attitudes of principals and teachers about the inclusion of students with disabilities indicates that principals generally help increase positive attitudes about the inclusion of students with disabilities, and that there is a strong correlation between the principal's attitude and the attitudes of the teachers of his/her school (Urton, Wilbert, & Henneman, 2014). Most of the teachers studied in the Ottawa-Carleton region of Canada by Eriks-Brophy and Whittingham (2013) felt that including children with hearing loss was beneficial. The authors also noted that a positive attitude toward D/HH students is an important factor in the success of the inclusion model (Eriks-Brophy & Whittingham, 2013). Likewise, in a study of young D/HH adults, their parents, and itinerant teachers in the Ottawa region of Canada, Eriks-Brophy, et al (2009) reported that "Classroom teachers who had positive attitudes toward the concept of inclusion, who were flexible in their attitudes toward assignments and testing, open to suggestions of the itinerant teachers, and sensitive to the needs of students with hearing loss, were seen as essential to facilitating inclusion" (p. 65).

Negative Attitudes Toward Inclusion

As previously mentioned in regard to positive attitudes, researchers have reported conflicting results on whether general education teachers have negative attitudes about

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inclusion. Eriks-Brophy, et al (2014) characterized general education teachers with negative attitudes toward inclusion as “inflexible in their teaching and evaluation strategies” and “unwilling to maintain communication with parents and solicit their involvement in the educational progress” (p.66). Eriks-Brophy and Whittingham found no indication of general educators holding negative attitudes towards the inclusion of D/HH students. (Eriks-Brophy and Whittingham, 2013). Dissimilarly, the previously mentioned study by Vermeulen, Denessen, & Knoors (2012) found that while many teachers held a positive attitude, others had a more negative stance on the inclusion of D/HH students. Some of these teachers also indicated that they felt pressured by the government and school administrators to have a positive attitude toward inclusion (Vermeulen, Denessen, & Knoors, 2012).

Impact of Training on Meeting the Needs of D/HH Students

One common cause of a negative attitude toward the inclusion of children with hearing loss is a feeling of unpreparedness. Even a study in which researchers found that the majority of teachers had a positive attitude toward inclusion, many teachers still indicated that they did not feel prepared to fulfill all of the educational needs of a student with a hearing loss. These general education teachers reported that they felt that their teacher preparation program did not teach the implications of hearing loss on learning, or the skills necessary to educate students with hearing loss (Eriks-Brophy & Whittingham, 2013). Many researchers suggest that in-service training for general education teachers can increase teacher preparedness, in addition to improving attitudes toward inclusion (Cook, 2004 Sari, 2007 Powers, 2001). A study by Sari examined the effect an in-service teacher-training program had on general education teachers’ attitudes toward inclusion of

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students who are deaf. The in-service training proved to positively influence teacher attitudes and perceptions, in addition to helping them feel prepared. The teachers studied explained that the in-service course gave them more insight on the unique needs of children with hearing loss, as well as information concerning hearing loss as a whole (Sari, 2007).

Expectations for Student Performance

Teacher expectations are essential for the effectiveness of inclusion. Researchers have reported that teachers are more likely to have lower expectations for students with disabilities than for students without disabilities, and are less likely to uphold accountability for students with disabilities than for their non-disabled classmates (Cook, 2004). However, in the study by Luckner and Muir conducted in a western U.S state, the researchers found that high expectations were a recurring factor in successfully included students (Luckner & Muir, 2001). High expectations are important in the education of D/HH children because they encourage students to strive to reach their full potential.

Critique of Past Research

Previous researchers have explored the attitudes and perceptions of classroom teachers on the inclusion of deaf and hard of hearing students. While past studies gave insight into many causes of teacher attitudes, I believe that more factors contribute to teacher attitudes than have been described. Researchers have reported conflicting results. I believe that my re-examination of this topic will give useful insight into how general education teachers perceive inclusion of D/HH students within the demographics of southeastern Mississippi. Also, past studies have been limited by small sample sizes and cannot accurately represent all general education teachers. My research will survey all

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general education teachers in my target area, as opposed to only including teachers who have taught a D/HH student in the past. The purpose for this expanded inquiry is to gather insight on the expectations, attitudes, and feeling of preparedness of teachers without any prior experience in the inclusion of students with hearing loss. My research will also explore classroom teachers' attitudes related to the services provided by the itinerant teacher of deaf and hard of hearing students, an area of research which thus far has not been explored in great depth. My research study will reexamine many of the same features of past research, while widening knowledge on the factors contributing to teacher attitudes.

Research Questions

1. What attitudes do general education teachers have regarding the inclusion of deaf and hard of hearing students in their classroom?
2. Do general education teachers feel that they have received sufficient preservice or inservice training on meeting the needs of deaf and hard of hearing students in their classroom?
3. What special education or support services are being provided to D/HH students in the general education classroom, and how do the general education teachers perceive the quality of these services?

Chapter 3:

Methodology

Data for this research study was collected through responses to an anonymous online survey. The online survey was presented to potential participants through an email featuring an invitation to participate in the research study and a link to the Google Doc form survey. Only certified, licensed general education teachers currently working in southeastern Mississippi were invited to fill out the survey. A copy of the invitation to participate in this research study can be found in Appendix A. Approximately 3240 general education teachers from 106 different schools from the southeastern region of Mississippi were contacted through their public, school email addresses and were invited to participate in this study.

The survey used in this study consisted of three sections: The first section established consent and gathered demographic information about the general education teachers surveyed, including region, school size, and years of experience as a teacher. The second section consisted of questions with multiple choice responses or responses on a Likert Scale. This section was designed to gather information on the perspectives of all general education teachers, regardless of whether or not they have taught a D/HH student. The last section was only completed by teachers who have instructed a student with a hearing loss in the general education classroom. This section identified information on the teacher's experiences while having a D/HH student in the general education classroom, including the services and supports received by the student. The questions used in this survey were designed with the intention of measuring the perceptions and attitudes of the participants toward the inclusion of D/HH children without requiring the

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participants to directly define their attitudes and perceptions. The items used in this survey were created with the input from a seasoned teacher of the deaf. The researcher-created survey used in this study can be found in Appendix B.

The data collected in this study will provide insight into the education of included deaf and hard of hearing students in Mississippi. It will also help assess the quality of services and supports that these students are receiving in the general education classroom. A list of the districts and schools surveyed for this study can be found in Appendix C. Additionally, my research will examine the preparedness of general education teachers in educating D/HH students. Ultimately, the information collected in my research will help identify the areas of D/HH inclusion that need improvement, which could improve the field of deaf education.

Chapter 4:

Results

Demographic Information

Of the 3,240 general education teachers invited to participate in this study, 105 responded and consented to participate. All participants are certified teachers, with a varied range of years of teaching experience. The participants teach various grade levels and subjects at schools of a variety of sizes and settings. Thus, the participants of this study represent a diverse sample of the educators currently teaching in the southeast region of Mississippi. See Tables 1.1 - 1.4 for specific demographic information.

Table 1.1

Demographic Information: Setting

	Rural	Urban	Suburban	Other
Participants	49%	26.9%	22.2%	2.8%

Table 1.2

Demographic Information: Student Enrollment

	200 or less	500 or less	800 or less	1100 or less
Participants	8.3%	33.3%	33.3%	8.3%

Table 1.3

Demographic Information: Years of Teaching Experience

	Up to 3 years	4-6 years	7-10 years	11-15 years	16 + years
Participants	13%	13.9%	15.7%	22.2%	34.3%

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Table 1.4

Demographic Information: Grade Level

	Preschool	Kindergarten- 2 nd Grade	3 rd -5 th Grade	6 th -8 th Grade	9 th -12 th Grade
Participants	0	13.9%	25%	25%	35.2%

Perceptions about Deaf and Hard Of Hearing Students

The data collected from this survey on general educators in southeastern Mississippi indicates that there is an overwhelmingly positive attitude toward the inclusion of deaf and hard of hearing students in the general education classroom. The responses from the participants regarding their attitudes about D/HH students show that the majority of general education teachers believe that at least some D/HH students should be educated in the general education classroom. (See Table 2.)

Table 2

Perceptions about Educational Placement of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students

Survey Questions:	All	Most	Some	None
Regarding students with disabilities in general, when asked whether all, most, some, or none of them should be educated in the general education classroom for most of the school day, teachers' responses were as follows:	7.5%	60.7%	30.8%	0.9%
Regarding students who are deaf and hard of hearing, when asked whether all, most, some, or none of them should be educated in the general education classroom for most of the school day, teachers' responses were as follows:	21.5%	42.1%	32.7%	3.7%
Regarding students who are deaf or hard of hearing, when asked whether all, most, some, or none of them should attend schools for the deaf, teachers' responses were as follows:	6.5%	16.8%	70.1%	6.5%

Additionally, only seven participants (6.5%) indicated that all D/HH students should receive their education in a school for the deaf, which further suggests that the majority

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of general education teachers feel that the general education classroom is an appropriate educational placement for students with hearing loss. Furthermore, there was no significant difference between the attitudes of general education teachers toward the inclusion of students with hearing loss and their attitudes toward the inclusion of students with general disabilities.

The general education teachers who participated in this study perceived D/HH students in a very positive manner. Results indicate that many general education teachers perceive students with hearing loss as capable learners. The majority of general education teachers believe that their students who are deaf or hard of hearing are as academically capable and will make as good of grades as their hearing peers. The respondents' positive perceptions of the academic ability of D/HH students were also evident in the participants' responses to the prompt on whether students who are deaf or hard of hearing will go to college, as the majority of participants agreed that students who are deaf or hard of hearing will pursue postsecondary education. (See Table 3)

Furthermore, the general education teachers who participated in this study expressed positive attitudes toward the inclusion of deaf and hard of hearing students, as the majority of participants indicated that they would like to have a D/HH student in their classroom. Only a few participants felt that including students with hearing loss in the general education classroom takes away instructional time from the other students. Respondents also expressed a willingness to cooperate with the professionals who provide specific services to students who are deaf or hard of hearing, such as working with an interpreter in the classroom or team-teaching with a teacher of the deaf.

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Table 3

Perceptions about Characteristics of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students

When asked to indicate whether they strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree to these statements, teachers' responses were as follows:	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
D/HH students are as smart as their hearing peers.	88.9%	7.4%	0.9%	2.8%
D/HH students will most likely go to college.	37%	51.9%	10.2%	0.9%
D/HH students will make as good of grades as their peers.	50.9%	41.7%	6.5%	0.9%
Students with hearing loss are good students.	60.2%	36.1%	1.9%	1.9%
Including students with hearing loss in the general education classroom takes away instructional time from the other students.	3.7%	14.8%	32.4%	49.1%
I would like to have a student with a hearing loss in my classroom.	28.7%	42.6%	20.4%	8.3%
I would feel comfortable having an interpreter in my classroom.	64.8%	22.2%	10.2%	2.8%
I would feel comfortable having a teacher of the deaf and hard of hearing co-teaching in my classroom.	63.6%	26.2%	9.3%	0.9%

Preparedness for Teaching D/HH Students

While the majority of participants held positive attitudes toward including children with hearing losses in the general education classrooms, many general education teachers indicated that they felt unprepared. Despite responding that they understand the implications that hearing loss has on education, the majority of participants (63%) indicated that they did not feel prepared to teach students with hearing losses. The general educators surveyed continued to express their feelings of unpreparedness to teach students with hearing loss through additional responses, which can be seen in Table 4. The majority of respondents expressed that neither their teacher preparation programs nor pre-service teacher training programs have adequately prepared them to teach D/HH students. Additionally, most general education teachers reported that they do not know

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how to handle assistive listening devices, such as hearing aids, cochlear implants, and FM systems.

Table 4

Perceptions about Preparedness for Teaching Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students

When asked to indicate whether they strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree to these statements, teachers' responses were as follows:	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I know how to handle hearing technology, such as hearing aids, cochlear implants, and FM systems.	10.2%	9.3%	19.4%	61.1%
My teacher preparation program prepared me to teach students who are deaf and hard of hearing.	3.7%	3.7%	25%	67.6%
I understand the implications hearing loss has on education.	32.4%	40.7%	16.7%	10.2%
I feel prepared to teach students who are deaf or hard of hearing.	13.9%	23.1%	36.1%	26.9%
My pre-service teacher-training program included adequate information about teaching D/HH students in the general education classroom.	1.9%	9.3%	24.1%	64.8%
My in-service staff development activities have included information on teaching D/HH students in the general education classroom.	5.6%	8.3%	20.4%	65.7%

After cross-analyzing the responses of teachers who either disagreed or strongly disagreed to the prompt asking if they would like to have a deaf or hard of hearing student in their classroom with the responses of the same teachers to the prompt asking if they felt prepared to teach students with hearing losses, there was a clear relationship between the two factors. I found that 96.7% of teachers who indicated that they would not like to have a D/HH student in their classroom expressed that they do not feel prepared to teach these students. The results from this research study suggest that a feeling of unpreparedness to teach D/HH students is related to a negative attitude toward

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the inclusion of students with hearing loss. A feeling of unpreparedness may be one factor that influences general education teachers' desires to have a D/HH student in their classroom.

Type and Quality of Services Being Provided To D/HH Students

Fifty percent of general education teachers surveyed for this study reported that they are currently teaching or have taught a student who is deaf or hard of hearing in the past. Of the 50% who had experience teaching a student who was deaf or hard of hearing, 98.1% expressed that they had taught 1-3 students with hearing losses in the past three years. The majority of general education teachers expressed that they believed that the deaf and hard of hearing students in their school are receiving adequate services to meet their needs and ensure their progress in the general education curriculum.

Participants in this research study were asked to identify all of the services that students with hearing losses at their school receive. Many general educators reported that their students with hearing loss receive services from the speech language pathologist or general special education teacher. More responses regarding specific types of services can be found in Table 5. While the responses to this prompt indicate that D/HH students are receiving an array of different services, many are not receiving services from a teacher of the deaf. Initially it appears that 66% are receiving some type of services from a teacher of the deaf. However, after investigating the individual responses to the prompt on types of services D/HH students are receiving, I was able to identify the overlap of participants who indicated that their students were receiving both consult services and direct instruction from a teacher of the deaf. Nine teachers indicated that their D/HH students were receiving consult services from a teacher of the deaf, two reported

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receiving direct instruction from a teacher of the deaf, and twelve responded that their D/HH students were receiving both consult services and direct instruction from a teacher of the deaf. Ultimately the data from this study indicates that 57.4% of D/HH students are not receiving any type of services from a teacher of the deaf, who is trained in the specific educational needs of students with hearing loss.

Table 5

Type of services D/HH Students Are Receiving

Service	Participants who indicated that D/HH students at their school receive this type of service
Consult services from a D/HH teacher	39.6%
Direct Instruction from a D/HH teacher	26.4%
Direct Instruction from a general special education teacher, such as the cross-categorical resource teacher	60.4%
Services from a speech language pathologist or therapist	77.4%
Interpreter in the classroom	18.9%
Note-taker in the classroom	22.6%
Other	24.5%

At the end of the survey, participants were given the opportunity to make any additional comments about the inclusion of deaf and hard of hearing students in their school. A full list of the responses for this question can be found in Appendix D. Many of the teachers who responded to this prompt had very positive comments about the inclusion of D/HH children. One participant stated, “During my 27 years of teaching, I have had one deaf student who required the services of an interpreter. I found this to be a very rewarding experience for me as I was able to look at my methods of teaching in a different light. The two years I had the deaf student and interpreter in my classroom, I

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feel that I probably learned as much as the student did!” Another general education teacher stated, “I believe including deaf and hard of hearing students in the regular education classroom as much as possible is the best thing for those students.” While many of the comments illustrated a positive attitude toward the inclusion of students with hearing loss, some participants expressed the difficulties of inclusion in their responses. For example, one teacher commented, “It is very difficult to teach a foreign language to hard of hearing students. I use subtitles on videos, but they are not always available. It is difficult to test them on oral comprehension in any way.” Through the participants’ additional comments on the inclusion of deaf and hard of hearing students in the general education classroom, one can truly see the successes and struggles that general education teachers feel with inclusion.

Chapter 5:

Discussion

I hypothesized that general education teachers in southeast Mississippi would have low expectations and a negative attitude toward the inclusion of deaf and hard of hearing students in the general education classroom. The data collected indicates that general education teachers in this region of Mississippi actually have an overwhelmingly positive attitude toward inclusion of special needs students in general, as well as of D/HH students. While I believe that many teachers in this region do genuinely have a positive attitude toward the inclusion of D/HH students, I believe that other factors may have contributed to the overwhelmingly positive responses I received. One possible explanation could be that the small number of teachers who chose to respond to this survey may have been particularly interested in or positively predisposed toward working with D/HH children. Additionally, it may have been difficult for teachers to honestly express negative opinions or perceptions about D/HH children because of social desirability bias, which causes participants to not answer questions honestly because of a fear that the researcher will think negatively of their response.

Previous studies conducted in the Ottawa-Carleton region of Canada found that the attitudes that general education teachers hold toward the inclusion of deaf and hard of hearing students is largely a result of their attitude toward deaf and hard of hearing students in general and the concept of inclusion as a whole (Eriks-Brophy & Whittingham, 2013 & Eriks-Brophy, et al, 2009.) The data from this study has illustrated similar results. The participants of this study expressed positive attitudes and perceptions of D/HH students, as a whole. Furthermore, the attitude that general education teachers

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hold toward the concept of inclusion is related to their attitude toward the inclusion of students who are deaf and hard of hearing.

The beliefs and opinions that general educators have regarding children who are deaf and hard of hearing greatly affect their expectations for these types of students. High expectations for students with hearing loss greatly affect attitudes and perceptions toward inclusion, and are ultimately necessary for successful inclusion. The general education teachers who participated in this research study mostly responded in a manner that indicated their opinions about children with hearing losses would result in high expectations for these students. If the participants truly perceive D/HH students to be as cognitively adept and as capable of making as good of grades as their hearing peers, then they will most likely have high standards for their students with hearing loss. Overall, the results from this study indicate that the majority of general educators in southeast Mississippi have positive opinions on the academic abilities of students with hearing loss in the general education classroom, which contribute to their positive attitude toward the inclusion of D/HH students.

While the majority of general educators included in this study have positive attitudes toward the inclusion of deaf and hard of hearing students, as hypothesized, many indicated that they did not feel adequately prepared to teach and meet the unique educational needs of these students. More than half of the general education teachers surveyed, who could have a student with a hearing loss placed in their classroom at any moment, feel that they are not prepared to teach deaf and hard of hearing students. I believe that this feeling of unpreparedness is mostly a result of the absence of services from a teacher of the deaf, in addition to a lack of training in how to educate children

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with hearing losses from both their teacher preparation programs and their preservice teacher training programs in how to educate students with specific disabilities in the general education classroom. If the general education teachers who participated in this study had access to consult services from a teacher of the deaf they may have reported feeling more prepared to teach students with hearing loss.

The majority of teachers who indicated having previously taught a D/HH student in the general education classroom reported that their students were receiving adequate services, despite these students not receiving any services from a teacher of the deaf. This data suggests that many general education teachers in this region may not understand the need for D/HH students to receive services from a professional specially trained in their unique educational needs. In order for students with hearing losses to achieve their full academic success in the inclusive classroom, it is important they receive either direct or consult services from a teacher of the deaf, who is specifically trained to meet the unique needs of this population. Additionally, general education teachers should receive training and consult services from a teacher of the deaf. I believe that many of the teachers who indicated that they did not feel prepared to teach students with hearing losses would feel better equipped if their students were receiving services from a licensed teacher of the deaf and hard of hearing.

Chapter 6:

Conclusion

The most important finding of this study is that many D/HH students are not receiving services from a teacher of the deaf, and yet most of the teachers surveyed indicated that they are receiving adequate services, which suggests a lack of understanding of the importance of services from a teacher of the deaf. Overall, teachers had a positive attitude toward the inclusion of D/HH students. The participants of this study positively perceived students who are deaf and hard of hearing and believed that many students with hearing losses should be included in the general education classroom. Many general education teachers perceived students with hearing losses to be as academically capable as their hearing peers. Furthermore, the majority of general educators expressed a willingness to collaborate and cooperate with other professionals specific to the education of students with hearing losses, such as interpreters and teachers of the deaf. Despite having a positive perception of the inclusion of D/HH students, many general education teachers feel unprepared to have students with hearing loss in their classroom. This lack of preparedness seemed to be, in part, a result of deficiencies in their teacher preparation and pre-service teacher-training programs, in addition to not having access to consult services from a teacher of the deaf. Ultimately, despite receiving little support and feeling unprepared, general educators in southeastern Mississippi still have a positive perception and attitude toward the inclusion of students who are deaf and hard of hearing in the general education classroom. In the future, it is necessary that general education teachers receive more information and training on the educational needs of

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students who are deaf and hard of hearing, as well as information on the critical nature of the services that can be provided by a teacher of the deaf.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Consent Letter

Dear Mississippi Educator:

I am a senior honors student at the University of Southern Mississippi. I am conducting a research project about how general education teachers perceive students with hearing loss in the general education classroom. Your participation would be greatly valued and appreciated.

You have been chosen to participate in this research study because you are currently an educator in Southeast Mississippi. If you choose to participate in this research study, you will be asked 23 - 29 questions on your views and opinions about the inclusion of students who are deaf or hard of hearing. A link to the survey is included below. The survey will take about 5 - 10 minutes to complete. Your participation is completely voluntary. You can withdraw from the survey at any time, and your responses will not be recorded.

The survey is anonymous. If you choose to participate you are consenting to have your anonymous responses reported in aggregate form. The results of the study may be published, but neither your name nor the name of your school will be identified.

If you have any questions or concerns, please email me at Rebecca.roppolo@eagles.usm.edu.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Roppolo
Honors Student
University of Southern Mississippi
504-400-6554

Rebecca.roppolo@eagles.usm.edu

Link to Survey: <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/16jII89NTvhMpyIQcGOngQh->

[L7m3lExQvw02WTSySvD8/viewform?usp=send_form](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/16jII89NTvhMpyIQcGOngQh-L7m3lExQvw02WTSySvD8/viewform?usp=send_form)

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Appendix B

Survey

Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students in General Education Classrooms

1. Please indicate your desire to participate by checking the appropriate box below.

- I agree to participate in the survey. (Continue to question 2.)
 I do not wish to participate in this survey. (Thank you. Please exit the survey now.)

Multiple Choice:

2. How would you describe the school you teach in?

- a. Rural
- b. Urban
- c. Suburban
- d. Other: _____

3. What is the approximate student enrollment at your school?

- a. 200 or less
- b. 500 or less
- c. 800 or less
- d. 1100 or less
- e. More than 1100

4. How many years of teaching experience do you have?

- A. Up to 3 years.
- B. 4 – 6 years
- C. 7 – 10 years
- D. 11 – 15 years
- E. 16 or more years.

5. What grade do you currently teach?

- A. Preschool
- B. Kindergarten – 2nd Grade
- C. 3rd – 5th Grade
- D. 6th – 8th Grade
- E. 9th Grade – 12th Grade

6. If you teach middle school (junior high) or high school, what subject(s) do you teach?

(Circle all that apply.)

- | | |
|-------------------|----------------------------|
| A. Language Arts | G. Art |
| B. Math | H. PE |
| C. Science | I. Shop |
| D. Social Studies | J. Home Economics |
| E. History | K. Foreign Language: _____ |
| F. Music | L. Other: _____ |

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SECTION 1: PERCEPTIONS ABOUT, AND PREPAREDNESS FOR, TEACHING DEAF OR HARD OF HEARING STUDENTS

Please answer all questions in this section, regardless of whether or not you currently have or have ever had a deaf or hard of hearing student in your classroom.

Yes/No and Multiple Choice:

1. I am a certified, licensed teacher.
 - A. Yes
 - B. No

2. My feelings about including students with disabilities in general education classrooms are as follows:
 - A. All students with disabilities should be educated in the general education classroom for the majority of the school day.
 - B. Most students with disabilities should be educated in the general education classroom for the majority of the school day.
 - C. Some students with disabilities should be educated in the general education classroom for the majority of the school day.
 - D. No students with disabilities should be educated in the general education classroom for the majority of the school day.

3. My feelings about including students who are deaf or hard of hearing in general education classrooms are as follows:
 - A. All students who are deaf or hard of hearing should be educated in the general education classroom for the majority of the school day.
 - B. Most students who are deaf or hard of hearing should be educated in the general education classroom for the majority of the school day.
 - C. Some students who are deaf or hard of hearing should be educated in the general education classroom for the majority of the school day.
 - D. No students who are deaf or hard of hearing should be educated in the general education classroom for the majority of the school day.

4. My feelings about students who are deaf or hard of hearing attending a school for the deaf are as follows:
 - A. All students who are deaf or hard of hearing should attend a special school for the deaf.
 - B. Most students who are deaf or hard of hearing should attend a special school for the deaf.
 - C. Some Students who are deaf or hard of hearing should attend a school for the deaf.
 - D. No students who are deaf or hard of hearing should attend a special school for the deaf.

5. Students who are deaf or hard of hearing are as smart as their hearing classmates.
 - 1) Strongly Disagree
 - 2) Disagree

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- 3) Agree
 - 4) Strongly Agree
6. Students who are deaf or hard of hearing will most likely go to college.
 - 1) Strongly Disagree
 - 2) Disagree
 - 3) Agree
 - 4) Strongly Agree
 7. Students who are deaf or hard of hearing will make as good of grades as their hearing peers.
 - 1) Strongly Disagree
 - 2) Disagree
 - 3) Agree
 - 4) Strongly Agree
 8. Students with a hearing loss are good students.
 - 1) Strongly Disagree
 - 2) Disagree
 - 3) Agree
 - 4) Strongly Agree
 9. I know how to use and care for assistive listening devices such as hearing aids, cochlear implants, and FM systems.
 - 1) Strongly Disagree
 - 2) Disagree
 - 3) Agree
 - 4) Strongly Agree
 10. Including students with hearing loss in the general education classroom takes away instructional time from the other students.
 - 1) Strongly Disagree
 - 2) Disagree
 - 3) Agree
 - 4) Strongly Agree
 11. My teacher preparation program prepared me to teach students who are deaf and hard of hearing.
 - 1) Strongly Disagree
 - 2) Disagree
 - 3) Agree
 - 4) Strongly Agree
 12. I understand the implications that hearing loss has on education.
 - 1) Strongly Disagree
 - 2) Disagree

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- 3) Agree
 - 4) Strongly Agree
13. I feel prepared to teach students who are deaf or hard of hearing.
- 1) Strongly Disagree
 - 2) Disagree
 - 3) Agree
 - 4) Strongly Agree
14. I would like to have a student with a hearing loss in my classroom.
- 1) Strongly Disagree
 - 2) Disagree
 - 3) Agree
 - 4) Strongly Agree
15. My pre-service teacher-training program included adequate information on teaching students who are deaf and hard of hearing in the general education classroom.
- 1) Strongly Disagree
 - 2) Disagree
 - 3) Agree
 - 4) Strongly Agree
16. My in-service staff development activities have included adequate information on teaching students who are deaf or hard of hearing in the general education classroom.
- 1) Strongly Disagree
 - 2) Disagree
 - 3) Agree
 - 4) Strongly Agree
17. I would feel comfortable having an interpreter working in my classroom.
- 1) Strongly Disagree
 - 2) Disagree
 - 3) Agree
 - 4) Strongly Agree
18. I would feel comfortable have a teacher of the deaf or hard of hearing co-teaching in my classroom.
- 1) Strongly Disagree
 - 2) Disagree
 - 3) Agree
 - 4) Strongly Agree
19. I am teaching or have taught a student with a hearing loss in the general education classroom.

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- A. Yes (If your answer is yes, please proceed to Section 2 of the survey – you are *almost* finished!.)
- B. No. (If your answer is no, you are finished with the survey. Thank you for your participation!)

SECTION 2: PROVISION OF SERVICES TO D/HH STUDENTS IN MY SCHOOL

Please respond to the following questions only if you are teaching or previously have taught a student with a hearing loss in the general education classroom.

1. Do you currently have any students who are deaf or hard of hearing in your general education classroom?
 - a. Yes (If yes, how many? _____)
 - b. No

2. How many students who are deaf or hard of hearing have you had in your classroom within the past 3 years?
 - a. 1 – 3 students
 - b. 4 – 6 students
 - c. 7 or more students.

3. How many students who are deaf or hard of hearing have you had altogether in your classroom anytime within your teaching career? (Not how many in a given year, but how many total you have ever had during your career.)
 - a. 1 – 3 students.
 - b. 4 – 6 students.
 - c. 7 – 9 students.
 - d. 10 or more students.

4. Deaf and hard of hearing students in my school are receiving adequate services to meet their needs and ensure their progress in the general education curriculum.
 - 1) Strongly Disagree
 - 2) Disagree
 - 3) Agree
 - 4) Strongly Agree

5. What type of services do students with hearing loss in your school receive? (Circle all that apply.)
 - a. Consult services from a teacher of the deaf and hard of hearing (D/HH teacher). (For example a D/HH teacher meets with me to discuss use of amplification devices and/or to provide support for making accommodations or modifications for my D/HH student in my general education classroom.)
 - b. Direct instruction from a D/HH teacher.
 - c. Direct Instruction from a general special education teacher, such as the cross-categorical resource teacher.

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- d. Services from a speech language pathologist or therapist
 - e. Interpreter in classroom
 - f. Note-taker in classroom
 - g. Other: _____
6. Are there any other comments you would like to make about inclusion of deaf and hard of hearing students in your school?

Thank you for your participation!

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Appendix C

School Districts Surveyed

School District	Schools in District
Leake County School District	Leake Central Elementary School Leake Central High School Leake Central Junior High Leake County Elementary School Leake County High School
Forest Municipal School District	Forest Elementary School Forest High School Hawkins Middle School
Newton Municipal School District	N H Pilate Middle School
Meridian Public School District	Crestwood Elementary School George Washington Carver Middle Magnolia Middle School T J Harris Elementary
Enterprise School District	Enterprise Elementary Enterprise High School Enterprise Middle School
Smith Country School District	Mize Attendance Center Raleigh Elementary School Raleigh High School Smith County Career Center Taylorsville Attendance Center
West Jasper School District	Bay Springs Elementary school Bay Springs High School Bay Springs Middle School
Quitman School District	Clarke Co Career & Technology Center Quitman Alternative School Quitman High School Quitman Junior High School Quitman Lower Elementary School Quitman Upper Elementary School

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Laurel School District

Laurel High School
Laurel Middle School
Maddox Elementary School
Mason Elementary School
Nora Davis Magnet School
Oak Park Elementary school

Jones County School District

East Jones Elementary school
Glade Elementary School
Moselle Elementary School
Northeast Jones High school
Pine Belt Educational Center
South Jones High School
The Star Reach Center
West Jones High School

Wayne County School District

Beat Four Elementary School
Buckatunna Elementary School
Clara Elementary School
Wayne County High School
Waynesboro Elementary School
Waynesboro Middle School

Richton School District

Richton Elementary School
Richton High School

Hattiesburg Public School
District

Blair Center Hattiesburg High
Burney Elementary School
Grace Christian Elementary school
Hawkins Elementary School
Mary Bethune Alternative
N R Burger Middle School
Rowan Elementary School
Thames Elementary School
Woodley Elementary School

Forrest County Schools

Rawls Springs Attendance Center

Lumberton Public School
District

Lumberton Elementary School
Lumberton High School

Jackson County School District

East Central High School
East Central Lower Elementary
East Central Middle School
East Central Upper Elementary

PERCEPTIONS OF DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING STUDENTS

	St. Martin East Elementary School St. Martin High School St. Martin N Elementary School St. Martin Upper Elementary St. Martin Middle School Vanceleave High school Vanceleave Lower Elementary Vanceleave Middle school Vanceleave Upper Elementary
Biloxi Public School District	Biloxi High School Gorenflo Elementary School Jeff Davis Elementary School North Bay Elementary School Popps Ferry Elementary School
Gulfport School District	Anniston Avenue Elementary School Bayou View Elementary school Bayou View Middle School Central Elementary Gaston Point Elementary School Gulfport Central Middle School Gulfport High School Pass Road Elementary School Twenty Eighth St. Elementary West Elementary School
Pascagoula Separate School District	Arlington Heights Elementary School Beach Elementary school Central Elementary School Cherokee Elementary School College Park Elementary Eastlawn Elementary school Gautier Elementary School Gautier High School Jackson Elementary School Lake Elementary School Martin Bluff Pascagoula High school Singing River Academy Trent Lott Academy William Colmer Middle School

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Appendix D

Additional Comments

“Naturally, a large part of learning in a regular ed classroom requires being able to hear, but just like with any other disability, there’s always a way for students to learn if everyone is willing to be flexible and put in some extra effort; this includes the student and the teachers/aides. There will always be cases, however, when what is needed to help a student succeed is beyond what is practical in the general ed classroom, in which case the student’s instructional time is better spent in a place/with teachers that are more qualified to help.”

“Now that I see note-taker as an option, I think that would solve the few problems we are coming across.”

“I believe including deaf and hard of hearing students in the regular classroom as much as possible is the best thing for those students.”

“I am also hard of hearing, so I identify with those students. The only time that they may need to be in another classroom is when there are other issues along with deafness.”

“Listening and speaking are important components in learning foreign languages.”

“It is rare that we have hearing impaired students, but our school district is serious about educating students no matter what their disability. Our special ed teachers go the extra mile for each child.”

“I am also an interpreter for the deaf, so I know that these students can excel in any given situation, including sports, when given an appropriate opportunity.”

“It is very difficult to teach a foreign language to hard of hearing students. I use subtitles on videos, but they are not always available. It is difficult to test them on oral comprehension in any way.

“They work very hard, and they are eager to learn.”

“During my 27 years of teaching, I have had one deaf student who required the services of an interpreter. I found this to be a very rewarding experience for me as I was able to look at my methods of teaching in a different light. The two years I had the deaf student and interpreter in my classroom, I feel that I probably learned as much as the student did.”

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Appendix E

IRB Approval Letter



INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

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

Phone: 601.266.5997 | Fax: 601.266.4377 | www.usm.edu/research/institutional.review.board

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: 15101301

PROJECT TITLE: The Perspectives of General Education Teachers on the Inclusion of Students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing in the General Education Classroom

PROJECT TYPE: New Project

RESEARCHER(S): Rebecca Roppolo

COLLEGE/DIVISION: College of Health

DEPARTMENT: Speech and Hearing Sciences

FUNDING AGENCY/SPONSOR: N/A

IRB COMMITTEE ACTION: Exempt Review Approval

PERIOD OF APPROVAL: 12/09/2015 to 12/08/2016

Lawrence A. Hosman, Ph.D.

Institutional Review Board