

Bethel University

Spark

All Electronic Theses and Dissertations

2023

A Literature Review: Creating and Maintaining Inclusion

Emily Goodson
Bethel University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://spark.bethel.edu/etd>

Recommended Citation

Goodson, E. (2023). *A Literature Review: Creating and Maintaining Inclusion* [Master's thesis, Bethel University]. Spark Repository. <https://spark.bethel.edu/etd/981>

This Master's thesis is brought to you for free and open access by Spark. It has been accepted for inclusion in All Electronic Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Spark. For more information, please contact lfinifro@bethel.edu.

A LITERATURE REVIEW: CREATING AND MAINTAINING INCLUSION

A MASTER'S THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY
OF BETHEL UNIVERSITY

BY
Emily Goodson

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS IN EDUCATION
MAY 2023

BETHEL UNIVERSITY

A LITERATURE REVIEW: CREATING AND MAINTAINING INCLUSION

Emily Goodson

MAY 2023

Thesis Advisor: Lisa Silmser, Ed.D.

Program Director: Katie Bonawitz, Ed. D.



Abstract

This literature review examines the different parts that are needed in order to create and maintain an inclusive classroom. The success of students in an inclusive classroom, both special education and general education students, can be affected negatively or positively depending on the teacher's attitudes toward inclusion and the type of methodology that they use in their classrooms. For teachers to have the knowledge of what practices they should use in the classroom and form a positive attitude toward inclusion, they must have proper training. This training can include ongoing professional development, support from the administration, and training from a university. The professional development the teachers receive must include the teacher in the development and planning of it so it is relevant to the teachers and their classrooms.

Table of Contents

Signature Page	2
Abstract	3
Table of Contents	4
Chapter I: Introduction	6
Inclusive Classrooms	6
History of The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act	7
Defining an Inclusive Classroom	7
Chapter II: Literature Review	11
Literature Search Procedures	11
Teacher Preparation Training	11
Professional Development	12
Proper Training and Co-teaching	16
Methodology of the Classroom	21
Classroom Management/Strategies	21
Collaboration	28
Teacher and Student Attitudes	31
Teacher Attitudes Towards Inclusive Classrooms	31
Peer Attitudes Towards Inclusive Classrooms	38
Self-Perceptions of Inclusive Classrooms	40
Chapter III: Discussion and Conclusion	44

Summary of Literature	44
Limitations of the Research	47
Implications for Future Research	48
Implications for Professional Application	49
Conclusion	51
References	53

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Inclusive Classrooms

The topic of the inclusion of special education students in the general education classroom has been a prime discussion topic for years. Special education students deserve to have full access to all materials and social interactions that a general education student would have. The main goal of most classrooms is to create an environment that allows success for all students. However, many general education teachers have not been properly trained on how to work with special education students, and they do not feel as though they have the knowledge to do so (Black-Hawkins, 2012). Since numerous teachers do not have an understanding of inclusive classrooms, many are left attempting to figure out how to create this environment and maintain it over a period of time. General education teachers are left not using proper strategies and techniques that allow for successful inclusion in classrooms. A special education teacher is constantly finding new techniques and interventions to help their students. These strategies need to be continued into the general education classroom, and the teacher needs to be trained in these areas. In order for these strategies and practices to be continued in the general education classroom, there needs to be a collaboration between the special education teacher and the general education teacher. Researchers (Brinda & Chitiyo, 2018) did a study on collaboration and co-teaching. They found that only 44% of teachers are properly trained in co-teaching, which shows teachers are not getting the support and training they need. This shows the large urgency there is in determining what is needed in order to make inclusive classrooms successful.

The guiding research question for this literature review is: How do teachers create and maintain successful inclusion classrooms? Through examining research related to teacher training, methodology of the classroom, and teacher/student attitudes, educators will be able to apply this information in order to create and maintain successful inclusion classrooms.

History of The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

Throughout history, our educational system has progressed, which has led to changes in the laws regarding the rights of special education students. According to the U.S. Department of Education, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which was signed into effect in 1975, ensured that students with disabilities had opportunities to develop and contribute alongside their neurotypical peers (2022). As part of IDEA, the law guaranteed students had access to free appropriate public education (FAPE) in their least restrictive environment (LRE). By definition, LRE means students with disabilities must receive their education alongside peers without disabilities and should not be removed from the general education classroom unless optimal achievement, with the use of accommodations, cannot be. Under IDEA and LRE, teachers now face the challenge of figuring out how to meet the needs of both special education and general education students within the same classroom, therefore, leading to the origin of inclusive classrooms.

Defining an Inclusive Classroom

Inclusion is defined as students with special educational needs participating in the general education classroom with nonspecial educational students. When in the classroom,

they receive supports and services that allow their needs to be met (Yildiz, 2015). Inclusion allows for all special education students to be with their same-age peers and have access to grade-level curriculum and appropriate schooling. Rather than special education students being confined to only special education classrooms, special education students have the ability to be in the general education classroom because of inclusivity. Inclusive classrooms and practices leave the general and special education teacher with the large task of determining how to create and maintain this environment. The teacher can look at the physical environment, function, and instructional materials and make accommodations and modifications if needed. All of these things are known as the classroom management strategies that teachers use (Akalin & Sucuoglu, 2015). There is a direct relationship between the effectiveness of an inclusive classroom and the methods that a teacher uses in their classroom. Differentiated instruction is a very important classroom management strategy that should be addressed. Differentiated instruction means determining what teaching approach the teacher will use to meet the needs of students' learning styles. This allows teachers to plan strategically to meet the needs of every student in an inclusive classroom. Teachers must be able to use multiple teaching strategies in one classroom to ensure that the needs of all students are being met (Onyishi & Sefotho, 2020). Part of differentiated instruction is also allowing students to show their proof of learning in a variety of different ways that meet the needs of the students.

Another method that a teacher needs to look at is the setup of the instructional system that they use. Co-teaching is a very useful tool in inclusive classrooms. Co-teaching is the education approaches where general and special education teachers work together to teach

students in a general education classroom. There is a variety of different ways that this can look. This can include one teaches and one assists, station teaching, parallel teaching, and alternative teaching (Shaffer & Thomas-Brown, 2015). Special education and general education teachers need to collaborate with one another to determine what method of co-teaching is best for their classrooms and their students. Collaboration is the process of working with each other to organize and create a goal. Collaboration is a key part of co-teaching and inclusive classrooms. Special education teachers are trained highly in determining appropriate accommodations and modifications for special education students. When students go to the general education room, the special education teachers need to collaborate and work with the general education teachers to ensure that these accommodations and modifications are being carried over to the general education classroom. Along with collaboration, co-planning is an important part of co-teaching. Co-planning is the initial step to effective co-teaching. Co-planning can be defined as teachers working together to create lesson plans, determine appropriate accommodations and modifications, and determine what co-teaching style they will use in the classrooms (Bendle & Lock, 2017).

In order for teachers to have the ability to know how to use the appropriate methodology in their classrooms, teachers must be given adequate professional development. General education teachers are left not having the appropriate professional development and training that is needed to ensure the needs of special education students and general education students are being met in the same classroom. Professional development is the approach that provides teachers with additional training in meeting any challenges that they have in their

classroom. Professional development should train teachers on specific subject content standards, curriculum, challenges with student behavior, practices of an inclusive classroom, and much more. Along with professional development, teachers need to be given pre-teacher training course in inclusivity. These are courses that are given to teachers when they are in their university programs (Shaffer & Thomas-Brown, 2015).

Guiding Questions

When teachers are given the appropriate professional development, training, and support from administrators, the attitudes/relationships of the teacher and the students increase tremendously, therefore leading to the success of the students. Examining the literature related to inclusion, co-teaching, attitudes/relationships of the teacher and the students, professional development, training, and classroom methodology will be helpful in supporting educators in inclusive classrooms. The relationship between these topics will provide recommendations and guidance on how to answer the guiding research question of: how do classroom teachers create and maintain an inclusive classroom?

|

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature Search Procedures

To locate the literature for this thesis, searches of Education Journals, ERIC, Academic Search Premier, Google Scholar, and EBSCO MegaFILE were conducted. This list was narrowed by only reviewing published empirical studies from peer-reviewed journals that focused on inclusive classroom strategies, the relationship between teachers and students in inclusive classrooms, and professional development in special education content area literacy found in journals that addressed the guiding questions. The keywords that were used in these searches included “professional development,” “inclusion,” “instructional strategies for inclusion,” and “maintaining inclusive classrooms.” The structure of this chapter is to review the literature on inclusive classrooms in three sections in this order: Teacher Preparation/Training, Methodology of the Classroom, and Attitudes/Relationships. A review of the literature will seek to answer the question: How do teachers create and maintain successful inclusion classrooms? Discussion about teacher preparation, classroom methodology including classroom management strategies and collaboration, teacher/students’ attitudes toward inclusion, and teacher/student relationships will provide a blended perspective of the specific strategies that should be applied in order to create and maintain an inclusive classroom.

Teacher Preparation Training

As schools start to implement inclusive practices, teacher training can have a large effect on the success of maintaining an inclusive classroom. Proper professional development

and training in co-teaching are both important aspects to ensure that inclusive classrooms are being maintained.

Professional Development

Researchers Chitiyo et al. (2019) did a study on teachers' professional development needs regarding inclusive classrooms. This study was completed in Ghana with 232 teachers (42% male, 58% female). They aimed to explore the professional development needs of both general and special education teachers in Ghana regarding students with disabilities in an inclusive classroom. Chitiyo et al. (2019) found that teacher training in inclusive classrooms is crucial, and this can be accomplished through professional development and teacher education programs. Teachers lack the knowledge of methodology and principles to teach students with special education needs. This knowledge of methods and skills can be taught to teachers through professional development.

Along with this study, researchers Woodcock and Hardy also studied professional development. This qualitative study asked 120 teachers if they felt they had sufficient professional development in teaching students with special needs in their classrooms. Woodcock and Hardy (2017) concluded that the education system needs to promote professional development on inclusion strategies rather than focusing specifically just on students with special educational needs. By doing so, the teachers would gain skills to pertain to the needs of all their students, which would also pertain to special education students.

Chitiyo et al. (2019) state that it is crucial to include teachers in the development and planning of professional development to improve the quality and relevance. Unfortunately,

teachers are often left out of this process and not involved in creating professional development. Teachers are the ones that are expected to implement the practices that they learn in professional development. For these times to be meaningful to the teachers, Chitiyo et al. (2019) argue that it is significant that teachers are involved in creating professional development. When teachers are involved, they can use their professional judgment to decide what professional development is needed and can make decisions on what professional development is relevant to their classrooms. Having teachers involved in planning professional development is one way to make these times meaningful. Another way to make professional development meaningful is to allow time for teachers to collaborate during these training sessions. Researcher Federico R. Waitoller (2013) did a study on professional development. They point out the large need for collaboration time during professional development. Waitollers (2013) expresses that professional development around inclusive classrooms should aim to support teachers in understanding the importance of inclusion and allow teachers to collaborate with other professionals to overcome the limits that keep certain groups of students from accessing and participating in meaningful learning experiences. Through this collaboration during professional development, educators can pinpoint the core barriers that hinder special education students in inclusive classroom environments.

Researchers Ledoux et al. (2012) agree on the urgency of professional development. These researchers conducted a study in Texas at an Elementary School. The participants comprised seven certified general education 1st-5th teachers, a physical education teacher, and one special education teacher. This study aimed to determine the challenges and needs faced

in an inclusive classroom and figure out how the administration can support teachers in an inclusive classroom. This study found that teachers were ill-prepared to meet special education students' diverse classroom needs. Data was collected through various qualitative and quantitative research methods, and it determined that professional development is one of the most effective ways to help teachers be prepared for inclusiveness. However, those who did participate in professional development stated that the professional development they did receive was minimal, did not apply to their classroom, and was brief. Through this study, Ledoux et al. (2012) found that teachers are aware that they are not fully prepared to teach in inclusive classrooms and state that they need more professional development and training.

To help address this issue, Ledoux et al. (2012) recommend that administrators provide consistent professional development in the areas of disability, behavior, and federal laws and mandates driven by IDEA. According to researchers, general and special education teachers' attitudes around inclusive classrooms are improved when teachers are given consistent professional development. Through more in-depth training and professional development, teachers will be supported in working in inclusive classrooms.

To prove how effective professional development can be, researchers Parson and Miller (2016) studied the relationship between special education teacher training and teacher efficacy for classroom management and inclusion instructional strategies for general education teachers who work in an inclusive classroom. This study was done in the north-central Texas school district on 95 teachers who teach in inclusive classrooms. Researchers used a Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practice scale to collect data for this research project. The Teacher Efficacy for

Inclusive Practice scale was developed in 2011 to evaluate teachers' efficacy in inclusive classrooms. This study showed a close correlation between classroom management and inclusive instructional practices which indicates that teachers with good efficacy in classroom management also have a high level of instructional practices in inclusion strategy use. The findings also state that teacher training levels strongly impacted the teacher's ability to manage their classroom. Training levels influenced both inclusion strategies and classroom management techniques.

From here, Parson and Miller (2016) wanted to determine how much teacher training was needed. They found that teachers with fewer than ten in-service training hours had lower success rates than teachers with more than 10 in-service training hours. They also found educators who had at least one university course demonstrated a higher level of success with using inclusion strategies. "General education teachers typically do not have adequate special education training to effectively manage the academic and behavioral challenges demonstrated by students with an autism spectrum disorder within the classroom. This lack of training has led to poor teacher efficacy regarding inclusion strategy implementation and classroom management, which can cause lifelong academic and social failures for these students" (Parson & Miller, 2016, p. 7).

Parson and Miller (2016) recommend that all general education teachers teaching in an inclusive classroom should receive a minimum of 1 university-level course on special education. They also suggest that teachers receive at least 10 in-service training hours. By using their

recommended strategies, teachers will be more successful in effective classroom management and inclusion instructional strategies.

Researcher Benjamin (2020) did a qualitative instrumental case study in South Carolina to explore rural middle school teachers' experiences incorporating differentiated instruction with special education students in an inclusion classroom. Benjamin (2020) found that providing teachers with meaningful professional development is one of the most valuable tools in supporting teachers in inclusive classrooms. Benjamin (2020) argues that professional development is a vital part of advancing the effectiveness of teachers in raising student success through a sustained, comprehensive, and intensive approach toward classroom success. Professional development needs to help teachers learn and transform their knowledge into practice to improve student skills and experience in class. Teachers need ongoing training to meet the needs of their students. When teachers are given visual models of training, opportunities, and support, they will gain new knowledge to advance their teaching styles. Active professional development allows teachers to be better equipped to meet the needs of the diverse students in their classrooms. Benjamin (2020) found that it is essential that inclusive strategies need to be modeled during training sessions. Modeling inclusive strategies during professional development and supporting educators in implementing inclusive strategies allows for student achievement to increase. The incorporation of professional development enhances the teacher's ability to determine effective instruction within the inclusive classroom (Benjamin, 2020).

Proper training in Co-teaching

The push for inclusive education has been a significant focus worldwide in recent years. The need for collaboration among special education teachers and general educators rises as inclusive classrooms increase. Meeting the diverse needs of students in inclusive classrooms requires methods and instructional practices, which include collaboration between special and general teachers (Brinda & Chitiyo, 2018). This collaboration is known as co-teaching. Co-teaching has become a prevalent approach in inclusive classrooms. For teachers to be able to co-teach effectively, they need to know what co-teaching is and be properly trained in co-teaching. Researchers Brinda and Chitiyo (2018) did a study on teachers' preparedness for co-teaching in inclusive classrooms.

The study consisted of 77 teachers in the northeastern USA. The goal of this study was to determine how prepared teachers are in the use of co-teaching. When doing this study, they found that only 44% of participants had previously learned about co-teaching through either university training or professional development. Most teachers do understand the foundations of co-teaching. However, they need more training regarding how to implement this practice. Through this, Brinda and Chitiyo (2018) concluded that most teachers are not prepared for co-teaching. If teachers are not adequately trained in the use of co-teaching, they will not be able to implement and use this practice fully. If teachers are not using co-teachers, they have limited chances of meeting the needs of all their students. According to Brinda and Chitiyo (2018), teachers who are underprepared in co-teaching are forced to use practices that do not meet

the needs of all the students in their inclusive classrooms. The findings from this study illuminate the need for teachers to be adequately trained in co-teaching.

From here, Brinda and Chitiyo (2018) did research and found research-based strategies that would help teachers be fully trained and prepared in the area of co-teaching. One way this can be done is through professional development. "The training can be in the form of professional development for teachers who are currently on the job, and it has to be provided continually. Cramer and Nevin (2006) reported that professional development is one of the supports needed for the success of co-teaching. Pancsofar and Petroff (2013) found that teachers who frequently participated in in-service training regarding co-teaching were more confident in practice and demonstrated higher levels of interest than teachers with less frequent in-service training opportunities" (Brinda & Chitiyo, 2018, p. 48). Another way that Brinda and Chitiyo (2018) found that teachers can get the proper training on co-teaching is through teacher education programs. These programs can develop and offer mandatory courses with a primary focus on co-teaching. According to Brinda and Chitiyo (2018), a study by Pancsofar and Petroff (2013) disclosed that training teachers on co-teaching prior to them becoming a teacher was positively correlated with teacher confidence in the practice. Through these courses, teachers can learn the important skills of co-planning, communication, problem-solving, and collaboration as a team. All of these skills are a mandatory part of co-teaching. Brinda and Chitiyo (2018) also recommend that co-teaching models be adopted in the courses of teacher education programs. This might include general education and special education faculty teaming up to teach college courses. By doing this, teachers will have a better

understanding and great examples of different ways that co-teaching can be done. The last piece of advice that Brinda and Chitiyo (2018) recommend is field experience opportunities in classrooms that use co-teaching for pre-service teachers in teacher education programs. The importance of teachers getting fieldwork experience that allows teachers to practice co-teaching is essential.

Co-teaching is a crucial part of an inclusive classroom. Without co-teaching, inclusive classrooms will not work, and the success of the students will hinder. There is an urgent need for training teachers in co-teaching. This training can be done through professional development and teacher education programs.

Researchers Shaffer and Thomas-Brown (2015) also discuss the importance of training teachers in co-teaching. Shaffer and Thomas-Brown (2015) reveal that continuous professional development of general education and special education teachers is key to the success of students with disabilities. They studied enhancing teacher competency through co-teaching that included embedded professional development. The study participants included two classrooms that were currently using inclusive strategies. Both classrooms had a general education teacher and a special education teacher. Data were collected through self-report, interviews, and informal conversation. The purpose of their study was to find a meaningful way to use professional development to help train teachers in inclusive classrooms. Shaffer and Thomas-Brown (2015) express that in order for teachers to meet the needs of all their students with disabilities, teachers must take the time to reflect on their practices and have professional development that is relevant to the needs of their classroom. Thomas-Brown (2015) found that

once teachers reflect on their practices, many are aware they need to improve their classroom practices for working with students with special education needs. However, many teachers often believe that the professional development that is offered in their schools has failed to meet the specific needs of their classrooms. The traditional top-down approach to professional development has failed teachers. Most professional development is delivered in a full-day to half-day meeting that covers various topics. There is no follow-up after these workshops. As the needs of the classrooms change, the professional development that teachers are receiving must be changing as well. Through this study, Shaffer and Thomas-Brown (2015) found that the Co-teacher Professional Development (CoPD) model is an extremely useful tool in training teachers in inclusive classrooms. The CoPD approach suggests that the special educator be placed in the general education classroom (as co-instructor with the general education teacher), providing specialized instruction in a general education setting and modeling methods for the general education teacher. The general education teachers will be able to learn these strategies, and they will be able to implement them, also. (Shaffer & Thomas-Brown, 2015).

The CoPD model has great possibilities for enhancing inclusive classrooms. This approach allows for immediate student support while simultaneously providing the general and special education teachers professional development. This approach is extremely hands-on, and professional development is given right in the classroom while the teachers are co-teaching. "Inclusive education environments must address the diverse learning styles of all students, thus requiring schools to support both teachers and students in the context of the classroom. Identifying approaches that will aid this effort is important for the educational

success of all students. COPD is one way to address inclusive education. The availability of two teachers within the classroom increases students' opportunities to succeed. Integrating both a highly qualified general education and special education teacher addresses the need within inclusive classrooms" (Shaffer & Thomas-Brown, 2015, p. 122). Shaffer and Thomas-Brown (2015) found that teachers who use CoPD strategies allowed subject materials to be modified and accessible for students with disabilities. This allowed teachers to make the environment successful for all students while the teachers were learning and being trained in new inclusive strategies.

Co-teaching Professional Development provides teachers with various opportunities to meet the behavioral and academic needs of the diverse student population. CoPD allows for the general education teacher and the special education teacher to increase their knowledge of inclusive education and co-teaching while addressing the needs of the students. CoPD enables teachers to have real learning experiences in their classrooms.

Methodology of the Classroom

Teachers must consider the type of strategies, classroom management styles, and collaboration methods they use when running the classroom. All these pieces play a key part in hindering or promoting the success of an inclusive classroom.

Classroom Management/Strategies

For a classroom teacher to maintain inclusion, a teacher needs to use classroom management strategies classroom to meet the needs of all diverse learners. In Turkey, there is a school where teachers are trained in different classroom management strategies that they

can use in an inclusive classroom. They are then given direct professional feedback on how they are implementing these strategies and what other ways they can grow and develop their classroom strategies. Researchers Akalin and Sucuglu (2015) did a study on this classroom. This study aimed to determine how successful the students are in inclusive classrooms in Turkey, where teachers are given the tools and opportunities to have effective classroom management strategies in place. The experimental study that Akalin and Sucuglu (2015) conducted was done in three general education classrooms in Ankara, Turkey, where all classrooms were inclusive. The results were as suspected. Akalin and Sucuglu (2015) found that "There is a direct relationship between the quality of education and the quality of the teacher: effective teachers who aim to support the development of all students in their classroom are expected to assess the physical environment, function, and instructional materials of the classroom in terms of student needs, and to make necessary adaptations and modifications" (p. 740). There is a strong relationship between classroom management and student achievement. The success of students in an inclusive classroom strongly depends on the management skills that the teacher uses. With effective teacher management strategies, problem behavior will decrease, and academic achievement will increase, making it a successful environment for all students.

Researchers Campbell-Whatley and Brooker (2018) agree with the need for effective classroom management strategies. Teachers must be given the time to prepare for their classes so they can incorporate these strategies. Campbell-Whatley and Brooker (2018) did a study on a university in the Southeastern United States to see what instructional practices are incorporated into inclusive practices. Through this study, Campbell-Whatley and Brooker (2018)

found that one approach to maintaining inclusion is for teachers to establish a sense of community in their classrooms. Students need to see themselves in the content that is being taught to them so they can have relevance to it. This strategy makes students feel connected to what they are learning and motivated to learn. When researching inclusive classrooms, Prasetyo (2021) found very similar results to Campbell-Whatley and Brooker (2018). Prasetyo (2021) explored the general teacher's instructional approaches in inclusive classrooms. This qualitative study was done in ten inclusive classrooms from three provinces in Indonesia. Data were collected through observations and interviews. Prasetyo (2021) found that student engagement and academic success were the highest in classrooms where teachers heightened the excitement of learning of all the students so that they are more willing to encourage and support each other to achieve their goals. One way Prasetyo (2021) suggests that teachers can encourage eagerness to learn is by making the learning environment comfortable and supportive. Students must see themselves in the instruction of the lessons. A teacher needs to cultivate the interest of the students and include these interests in the content area. Doing so will increase the student's motivation to learn.

Along with this, Campbell-Whatley and Brooker (2018) found that part of maintaining an inclusive learning environment is to notice that not all students' proof of achievement will be the same. Faculty must provide students with a variety of different ways to let students show what they have learned in less conventional ways (Campbell-Whatley & Brooker, 2018) to maintain inclusion. Researcher Julie Gosselin did a study and found very similar results to Campbell-Whatley and Brooker (2018). Her goal for this study was to evaluate the impact of

differentiated evaluation on students learning and performance. Gosselin's study was done in Canada on three undergraduate classes, totaling 286 students, where each classroom professor used differentiated evaluation for the assessments of the students. Gosselin (2012) collected data by having the students complete a questionnaire along with a review of the student achievement data. Differentiated evaluation can include, but is not limited to, offering choices to all the students regarding evaluations, an adaptation of the evaluation, and modifications. Gosselin (2012) found that differentiated evaluation had a large increase in the overall grades of the students and resulted in improved performance. Given these findings, it is concluded that differentiated evaluation is a method that should be used in inclusive classrooms.

Effective classroom management is arguably the most important part of an inclusive classroom. Researcher Yildiz did a quantitative study on 54 teachers in Eskisehir, Turkey, who all had students with intellectual disabilities in their classrooms. The purpose of this study was to determine the correlations between general education teachers' classroom practices and academic engagement and off-task problem behaviors of students with special needs. Through this study, Yildiz (2015) found that all students' behaviors are directly related to the teacher's classroom strategies. Yildiz (2015) says that teachers who lead with order in their classroom will have increased amounts of success among the students.

Yildiz (2015) found a variety of strategies that teachers must implement to maintain inclusion. One strategy that Yildiz (2015) found is teachers need to increase students' engagement in classroom activities. This is considered to be one of the most effective tools in successful inclusive classrooms. Teachers can decrease problem behaviors and unproductive

time by planning engaging activities and lessons for the students. Approval and reinforcement are other tools used in managing students' behavior (Yildiz, 2015) that are necessary for maintaining an inclusive classroom. Yildiz (2015) concluded that teachers could use approval by reinforcing students' appropriate behaviors, praising students after an appropriate behavior, and expressing satisfaction about the student's class work. Of these strategies, verbal approval of appropriate behaviors is found to be a very effective classroom management strategy in decreasing student problem behaviors. When running the study, Yildiz (2015) states, "According to the first set of findings of the research, students with mild intellectual disabilities showed academic engagement behavior at the rate of 58.58%, off-task behavior at 34.11%, and problem behavior at 7.31%. The results showed that these students engaged in academic tasks a little more than half of the lesson time and showed off-task behavior and problem behavior in the remaining time. This situation can be interpreted as an indicator of teachers not sufficiently engaging these students in classroom activities" (p. 182).

Studies revealed that there are more academic engagement behaviors and fewer problem behaviors in inclusive classrooms that are managed efficiently by the teacher. Through this study, Yildiz (2015) concluded that effective teachers use lesson time effectively, have meaningful and engaging lessons, and reward students' wanted behaviors. These strategies are all crucial when maintaining an inclusive classroom. The success of students with special education needs is directly related to the classroom management strategies teachers use, and teachers need to be aware of this correlation. Researcher Megan Mackey did a study on inclusive classroom management strategies as well. This qualitative study was done on three

middle school and high school classrooms that all used inclusive practices. The goal of this study was to determine how teachers in inclusive classrooms include students with disabilities. Mackey (2014) collected data through interviews, observations, and document analyses. Mackey (2014) found that some of the most important strategies for maintaining inclusion include: hands-on activities, visuals, supplemental reading materials, alternating between whole-group and small-group instruction, and individual learning. All students have different learning styles. Part of managing inclusivity is solving how students learn and including all types of learner styles in instructional delivery.

Classroom supports are a necessary part of inclusive learning. Researchers Morningstar et al. (2015) set out to identify practices in inclusive classrooms that support participation and learning in general education classrooms for all students. This study was conducted on 65 inclusive classrooms through a variety of surveys, interviews, and site visits. Classroom observations were run using a semi-structured protocol developed specifically for this study. This protocol was called The Inclusive Classroom Observation Tool, and it was designed to help determine effective classroom-inclusive practices. Through this tool, Morningstar et al. (2015) found that five main inclusive practices support student learning and engagement and make maintaining an inclusive classroom successful. The instructional format was the first strategy that Morningstar et al. (2015) found to be effective in maintaining an inclusive classroom.

Having a variety of different classroom arrangements allows for the different learning styles of the students to be met. Some of these different instructional formats can include whole groups, small groups, centers, individual work, and paired learning. Morningstar et al.

(2015) found that peer-supported learning is an important part of an inclusive classroom. Peer-supported learning includes peer tutoring, student-led demonstrations, and partner work. Peer-supported learning allows time for all students to connect and take ownership of their learning. Adult engagement was found to play a large role in the success of inclusive classrooms too. Adults need to be positive, engage with the students, and give students a sense of belonging. Morningstar et al. (2015) found that having positive adult engagement in the room positively affects the students' success. The last piece that Morningstar et al. (2015) found that is important in inclusive classrooms is that all students have access to academic curricular content. Making sure that there is adequate adaptation and modifications for the students so they can access the curriculum is crucial. Some adaptations/modifications may include changes to how the materials are presented (i.e., large print, visuals, graphic organizers, etc.), environmental adjustments (i.e., wearing headphones, seating positions, etc.), reduction of cognitive demand (i.e., completely fewer items, different complexity of problems, etc.), and opportunities to express the knowledge in a variety of ways. These results add insight into instructional strategies and methods that can be used to support inclusive classrooms.

Morningstar et al. (2015) findings from their study stress the importance of teachers using accommodations and modifications to ensure that all students can access grade-level curriculum. Researchers Katz et al. (2002) did a study that examines similar items. Katz et al. (2002) did a study to examine instructional strategies and educational outcomes for students with developmental disabilities in inclusive classrooms. The participants of this study consisted of ten students with special educational needs that were all in inclusive classrooms. Katz et al.

(2002) found that students had the most successful educational outcome when the teacher used the appropriate accommodations/modifications, which included grouping arrangements, type of tasks/how the task is presented, and offering tools/manipulatives (i.e., calculators, number lines, etc.). Accommodations and modifications are an extremely important part of maintaining inclusion. Without accommodations and modifications, special education students would not be able to be included in the general education classroom. General education and special education teachers need to work together to ensure that accommodations and modifications are being correctly implemented to guarantee that the needs of all students are being met.

Collaboration

Inclusive classrooms leave teachers with a lot of responsibilities. As students with special educational needs increase in general education classrooms, effective instructional practices are required for teachers to support all student needs. Requiring teachers to maintain inclusivity with such a large variety of a diverse student population has led to implementing co-teaching in general education classrooms. Co-teaching has been established as a successful instructional method in inclusive classrooms. Co-teaching is where the special education teacher and the general education teacher co-instruct to meet the needs of all the learners in an inclusive classroom. Brendle and Lock (2017) did a qualitative study to investigate two co-taught elementary classrooms in Texas to gain information on implementation strategies of co-teaching. Through this study, Brendle and Lock (2017) found a variety of strategies on how to maintain an inclusive classroom through co-teaching.

One strategy that Brendle and Lock (2017) found in co-planning. The first step to an effective co-teaching model is co-planning. Co-planning is essential to ensure co-teachers determine their roles and method of co-teaching instruction to best meet the lesson goals (Brendle & Lock, 2017). Teachers need to be allowed time to pre-plan how they will teach in the classroom. Co-planning ensures that both teachers understand their roles and responsibilities before implementing them in the classroom. Co-planning also allows the teachers to collaborate to create meaningful lessons and determine appropriate accommodations and modifications that their special education students may need. Along with co-planning, Brendle and Lock (2017) found that co-instructing is an essential classroom strategy involved in co-teaching. Co-instructing is the actual act of co-teaching and how the teachers deliver the lessons. A variety of models can be considered, including one teaching while one observes, station teaching, parallel teaching, alternative teaching, and one teaching while one assists. During the co-planning stage, the teachers can determine which model of co-instructing they are going to use to help maximize the success of their students. Co-instructing involves the teachers providing the instruction based on the most appropriate co-teaching model that lines up with the curriculum demands and student needs (Brendle & Lock, 2017). The last strategy that Brendle and Lock (2017) found that allows co-teaching to be successful is co-assessing. Co-assessing is when the general education teacher and special education teacher both assess student progress to monitor learning. When these components are implemented in co-teaching, a supportive and engaging learning environment is provided for the special and general education teacher (Brendle & Lock, 2017). Researchers Bottge et al. (2017) also

acknowledge that co-teaching is a key part of inclusive classrooms. They did a study comparing intervention effects in inclusive classrooms. The results that Bottge et al. (2017) found showed that the success of the students was dependent on the way that the general education and special education teachers structured their co-teaching arrangements. Classrooms where the special education teacher was involved and helped give support to the students with special education needs, had great success than classrooms where the special education teacher was not as involved (Bottge et al., 2017).

Researchers Fennick and Liddy (2001) also studied collaboration between special and general education teachers. This study used a survey methodology to inspect a group of co-teachers amount of scheduled mutual planning time. The survey was sent out to 186 teachers that use coteaching in their inclusive classrooms. Of the 186 surveys that were sent out, 168 surveys were completed and used for this study. Fennick and Liddy (2001) found that 48% of teachers are not given any mutual planning time daily to collaborate as a team. Only 22% of the teachers were given one hour of collaborating planning time during the week. Regularly scheduled collaborative planning time is an essential part of co-teaching. This planning time allows teachers to plan, coordinate efforts, and replace traditional strategies with inclusive practices. To maintain an inclusive classroom, Fennick and Liddy (2001) recommend that teachers are given daily collaboration time where they can examine their responsibilities and share tasks. Without this type of support and team planning time, teachers will find it extremely difficult to make their classroom inclusive. School districts need to give teachers a supportive environment for pursuing co-teaching for an inclusive classroom to be successful.

Running and maintaining an inclusive classroom can be a challenging task. Researcher Pulschen (2015) did a study on teachers that aimed to help find stress reduction strategies for teachers who teach in an inclusive classroom. This study was conducted in Germany on two different groups of teachers. A model called "Acceptance and Commitment Training" was designed for this study. Acceptance and Commitment Training is a model that helps teachers learn how to implement and use collaboration effectively. One group of participants received the Acceptance and Commitment Training, and the other group did not. The group of participants who did receive the Acceptance and Commitment Training was able to use collaborative teaching in their inclusive classroom with ease. This group of participants had lower stress levels than those who did not get the training (Pulschen, 2015). This shows how critical coteaching and collaboration are in an inclusive classroom. Requiring teachers to maintain inclusivity in classrooms that have a large, diverse group of learners makes collaborative teaching an essential part of inclusive classrooms.

Teacher and Student Attitudes

As time and systems progress, change inevitably occurs. While changes occur, teachers' attitudes and beliefs may not advance at the rate needed to positively implement the changes at hand. However, students typically are more accepting of these "changes" since it is all they know.

Teacher Attitudes Towards Inclusive Classrooms

The success of inclusion classrooms depends partly on the beliefs of general education and special education teachers towards students with disabilities. Inclusion can be viewed as an

educator's belief in the long-term interests of each individual student and that student's larger interest in society and the world (De Silva, 2013). For classrooms to be inclusive, staff need to believe in and value all children belonging in mainstream classrooms. Researcher De Silva (2013) wanted to understand the inclusion and exclusion process and strategies for working toward inclusion by examining norms, habits, and discursive practices that have worked as barriers, constraints, and possibilities when creating an inclusive educational landscape. By surveying 15 special educators who work with students in grades one through nine in a Stockholm suburb, De Silva (2013) found that teachers who believed all students were meant to be in their classroom, teachers who had positive expectations for their students, teachers who had knowledge of new learning difficulties, and teachers who were dedicated to building up their student's confidence had success with advancing their students' academic progress and making them feel as part of the greater whole.

To gain insight into the instructional variables of inclusive classrooms and to investigate how student behaviors are impacted by eco-behavioral characteristics, Sucuoglu et al. (2014) conducted a study by analyzing inclusive classrooms in Turkey. The study is comprised of 44 inclusive classrooms in 23 elementary schools in a newly developed part of Turkey that housed low-income families. All the students who were part of the study were in grades ranging from one to five and ages six to twelve. The general education classrooms consisted of 25-45 students, and the students with disabilities were diagnosed as having mild mental retardation, learning disabilities, and emotional or behavioral disorders. Data were collected using an

ecobehavioral assessment (EBA) tool that is designed to examine and compare the relationships between student and teacher behavior as well as evaluate environmental variables.

Additionally, classes were observed for a minimum of 20 minutes using a computerized observation tool called Code for Instructional Structure and Student Academic Response-Mainstream Version (MS-CISSAR). The data indicated that all teachers delivered instruction to the whole class at once and mostly preferred paper-pen or discussion tasks during instruction. The teachers in Turkey noted they prefer whole group instruction regardless of the students' ability level, despite knowing the importance of providing individual learning opportunities because they have a limited number of support personnel accessible to them.

Overall, results concluded that attention, defined as any time the teacher displayed behavior indicating they paid attention to the student, and academic talk, defined as the teacher talking about or discussing the subject or materials to be used during instruction, were not enough to cause a change in student behaviors. Another teacher variable, teacher focus, defined as when students receive the teacher's focus during instruction, was considered to be an important teacher behavior in improving the academics and engagement of students with and without disabilities. The study completed by Sucuoglu et al. (2014) found that student behaviors did not change according to teacher focus. However, literature focusing on proactive classroom management frequently stated there is a strong relationship between teacher and student behaviors and student behaviors correlated with changes in teacher behaviors.

Ghesquière et al. (2002) sought to explore how inclusive education was implemented and factors that support or hinder an optimal implementation process through their qualitative

multiple-case study done in Flemish primary schools. For this study, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 80 people, including principals, teachers, and representative parents, across ten mainstream primary schools. These people were asked questions regarding the vision of inclusive education, activities in the school, activities in the classroom, cooperation with external support agencies, internal support and consultation, and efficacy expectations. Additionally, some observational data were collected and analyzed both 'within-site' and 'cross-site' to discover similarities and differences between the different cases.

Results found that the interviewees believe mainstream schools have to create opportunities within schools for students with special education needs; however, there were varying opinions regarding which students should be included in these environments. Most of the respondents agreed that students with physical or sensory impairment should be included in regular primary schools, but teachers requested specific additional support. Additionally, the level of comfort teachers had with inclusive classrooms was defined by the student's intellectual abilities; the gap between students with disabilities and without disabilities should not be too large. Respondents in this study believe all students in the class should be able to follow the regular classroom curriculum, and if they are unable to, they are not being offered the best chance of optimal development in said environment. The respondents also stressed the importance of a school principal's role in the inclusion process, stating they need to be open to the opinions and attitudes of staff and consult prior to inclusion and throughout the implementation process in order to help teachers feel supported. Inclusive classrooms end up

being a greater stress to teachers in schools where consultation is not an everyday part of their culture.

In a different study, Onyishi and Sefotho (2020) set out to examine how differentiated instruction (DI) implemented by teachers supported inclusive classrooms. There has been a shift towards inclusive classrooms worldwide. However, research tends to indicate that differentiated instruction is poorly implemented in general education schools. Differentiated instruction is defined as giving students multiple options for taking in information by modifying and adapting instruction, materials, content, projects, and assessments and meeting the learning needs of each student. Differentiated instruction is critical in inclusive classrooms, and research shows a lack of inclusive classrooms leads to students with special needs dropping out, losing motivation, getting bored, failing to learn, and not maximizing their potential (Onyishi & Sefotho, 2020). In this study, researchers investigated 382 teacher perspectives about DI in inclusive classrooms across Enugu East, Enugu West, and Enugu North in Nigeria. Quantitative data was collected using a questionnaire called "Teachers' Use of Differentiated Instruction Questionnaire (TUDIQ)." The first part of the questionnaire gathered demographic information, while the second part of it consisted of 23 items split into four clusters. Cluster A examined the extent teachers implemented differentiated instruction in regular school, B looked at difficulties with implementing DI, C asked about areas teachers would like more information about in order to better implement DI, and D asked about the perceptions of teachers on what could be done for them to improve their use of DI.

The results of the study found the majority of teachers who participated in the questionnaire use DI to a low extent, with only about 20% using differentiated instruction strategies, such as varied instructional materials, curriculum compacting, learning centers, flexible grouping, tiered assignments, and individualized teaching, in the classroom. The teachers reported time being the top constraint to the use of DI in the classroom. More specifically, they find it difficult to cover curriculum content within certain timeframes. Additionally, they reported it could be challenging to use DI with too many children in one classroom, unavailability of teaching and learning materials, classroom space restrictions, and linking formative assessment in planning instruction.

To combat these challenges, teachers indicated they need more information on developing rubrics, students' directed assessments, managing large classes and differentiating instruction without watering down curriculum content. The teachers would like future teacher-education curricula to include guidance on developing and learning these skills. Teachers already in the field would like in-service training in the form of workshops to gain further insight into these skills. It is also important to note the teachers agreed that the government has a role in creating changes regarding classroom structures and environments, providing training on DI, and monitoring and supervising teachers' use of DI.

Through questionnaires and interview data, researchers Idol and Griffith (1998) sought to examine what happens in four elementary schools in the Austin Independent School District as educators move towards more inclusive practices. The evaluators visited four different

schools across two days and conducted 125 interviews with principals, assistant principals, classroom teachers, special education teachers, and teacher assistants. The questions asked of the educators revolved around types of disabilities, amount of time spent in special education and general education classrooms, number and types of referrals to special education, attitudes of staff toward each other, toward students with special education needs, and toward inclusion, and staff perceptions of their skills of making curriculum modifications.

Results of the interviews indicated that no educators thought students with disabilities should be taught in different special education classes, but rather they should be taught in general education buildings with educational assistants accompanying them. Additionally, the interviewees reported that the addition of students with special needs in classrooms was not harmful to other students. The data from the study also indicated recommendations to improve better inclusive classrooms and schools, which consisted of more staff development on inclusion, opportunities to visit schools that are further along in the inclusion process, better training for teacher assistants, catching reading problems earlier, and respecting the challenges special education teachers face and providing them more support. Overall, while teachers in this particular study felt mostly supported by their administrators, it was noted lack of principal support is the primary reason change and movements toward inclusion do not take place. Having a supportive administrator as well as an instructional leader is critical to the advancement of inclusive education.

Researchers have found that for classrooms to successfully implement inclusive practices, teachers need to have a positive attitude toward them. Avramidis and Kalyva (2008) did a study to determine what teachers' attitudes are toward inclusion and how this affects the implementation of inclusive strategies. Data were collected using questionnaires on 155 general education primary teachers from Northern Greece. The study found that teachers currently using inclusive methods have a more positive attitude than those who do not teach in inclusive classrooms. This finding indicates that the more inclusion becomes part of the landscape, the more inclusive attitudes and practices will become (Avramidis & Kalyva, 2008, p. 25). Teachers who were currently teaching in inclusive classrooms had prior training on positive teacher attitudes toward inclusion. Avramidis and Kalyva (2008) recommend that in order for classrooms to maintain inclusion in the classrooms, school districts need to develop critical professional development courses around positive attitudes in inclusive classrooms that can result in attitudinal change and the formulation of genuinely inclusive practices (Avramidis & Kalyva, 2008, p. 26).

Peer Attitudes Towards Inclusive Classrooms

In addition to teacher attitudes regarding inclusive classrooms, student attitudes also impact the ability of a classroom to be truly inclusive. While teachers are responsible for creating a positive, inclusive classroom, students help to promote that by following their teacher's lead. Social relationships and friendships are seen as positive traits in inclusive

classrooms. Therefore, it's important to create school environments that accept children's differences (De Silva, 2013).

Roldan et al. (2021) examined the impacts of students without disabilities being educated alongside students with special needs. This study was conducted within a framework of a greater research project titled "Interactive learning environments for the Inclusion of students with and without disabilities: Improving Learning, development, and relationships (INTER-ACT)." Considering this study was done as part of a larger research project, the purpose of this study was to determine if there was an impact of specific learning environments (i.e., interactive groups (IGs) and dialogic literary gatherings (DLGs)) on learning and/or development for students without special educational needs, to identify the types of impacts on students without disabilities after participating in IGs and DLGs, and to understand how these impacts are related to shared, inclusive, and interactive learning environments. The study took place in one primary school, one primary and secondary school, and one secondary school that educates children with and without special needs in shared learning environments.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with teachers and community volunteers participating in the schools and focus groups with students and teachers. During the interviews and focus groups, questions were asked regarding the specifics of the implementation of the learning environments and the impacts on the students. Based on the information gathered during the interviews and focus groups, three main themes emerged: impact on students' attitudes, impact on students' social skills, and impact on students'

academic learning and cognitive development. Furthermore, the researchers found that inclusive classrooms lead to more positive attitudes toward diversity, specifically among typically developing peers toward children with disabilities. Additionally, students without disabilities who learned alongside students with disabilities in IGs and DLGs had an opportunity to foster skills related to empathy and conflict resolution and gain skills allowing them to better communicate with diverse people with more aptitude. Data from this study also concluded that interactive learning environments supported the learning and cognitive development of students without disabilities. While interesting results can be drawn from this study, the findings should be interpreted with caution due to the sample size and the fact that this study was done as part of a larger research project with schools already implementing IGs and DLGs.

Self-Perception of Inclusive Classrooms

To gain further insight into students with special needs perspectives towards inclusive classrooms, Fitch (2003) followed 11 students labeled “developmentally handicapped” across four urban schools for six years to gather information about their experiences in classrooms that hold traditionalistic versus inclusive beliefs. Classrooms with traditionalist views are described as classrooms where diversity is problematic, disabilities are seen as innate conditions of particular human beings, and the most appropriate and effective supports and interventions are delivered in separate settings by special education experts. Whereas classrooms with inclusive ideologies hold true that diversity is expected and valued, human commonalities expand across socially constructed categories, and people should not be

grouped based on how they differ from the norm; it is in the interest of everyone to be socially inclusive, and collaboration, cooperation, and mutual support are important aspects of interpersonal interaction. Participants in the study concluded that while some schools say they are inclusive, there are traditionalist classrooms within the building that do not offer a sense of belonging to their students. Those students felt rejected and had the desire to escape to the safety of special education classrooms. A recurring theme throughout the study was students adopted the attitudes, behaviors, and views of self that the educational professionals held merely from being in those environments and around those people. Results indicated that students who felt their teachers' ideological beliefs were inclusive had a significantly greater sense of self and belonging than in traditionalist classrooms. Qualitative data from this study and De Silva's (2013) study consistently support inclusive classroom practices.

A study done by Goldwasser and Hubbard (2019) offers findings regarding student perceptions of inclusivity at the collegiate level. This qualitative study took place at a private research university in the American South, where the participants were eight traditional-aged undergraduate students in good academic standing. The study was completed through a combination of interviews based on topics and issues decided in advance and open-ended interview questions. The results of the interview questions were coded to determine how much of a sense of belonging in the classroom was in the control of the professor, not exclusively within the professor's control, or not within the professor's control at all. Statistics of the findings showed 76.5% of making a student feel like they belong was solely in the professor's control. Practices professors engage in that influence the extent to which students feel included

in the classroom consist of setting the tone early, using inclusive language and examples, relating course content to the “real world,” and facilitating small group work during class. Related to small groups, the students reported when they’re positioned in a way where their desks face each other instead of in rows, they feel more like part of a group. Conversely, students also indicated professors could create exclusive environments through harsh judgments, arrogance, and implying there’s only one definition of “scholarly,” which leads to a lack of belonging. The sample size of the study was small, albeit diverse, and only took place at one institution in the United States. However, the findings align with those of Fitch (2003).

In a quasi-experimental study, Taylor and Moniz-Tadeo (2012) wanted to determine how much of an impact inclusive classrooms versus self-contained classrooms had on the progress of preschool children with developmental delays. The study was completed through three different phases: first, analyzing pretest and posttest scores of the Brigance Inventory of Early Development (IED-II); second, using the Inviting School Survey-Revised (ISS-R) to collect data describing in detail the environments of each setting; and third, dividing the ISS-R results into five Invitational Learning groups: people, process, practice, place, and policies, to identify correlations between the student progress and the environmental factors, as reported by teachers and administrators. Two groups of preschool-aged children, ages three to five years old, who qualified for special education services in the category of Developmental Delay under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) participated in the study. The first group consisted of 25 students who were placed in self-contained classrooms with other students with disabilities to receive their education. In comparison, the second group also consisted of

25 students, but they received their education in an inclusive classroom with typically developing peers. When the students began their educational programs around three years of age, they were administered subtests of the IED-II to produce domain scores in the areas of academic/cognitive, daily living, and social-emotional to gather pretest scores. The same subtests were given when the students left the preschool setting, around five years of age, to gather post-test scores. For completion of the second phase of the study, four administrators and four teachers working in the schools anonymously completed the ISS-R. Then, for the third phase, the ISS-R results were separated into the five Invitational Learning to identify correlations between the student's progress and the environmental factors.

Results concluded the academic/cognitive domain and daily living domain had no significant difference regardless of the classroom in which the students obtained their education; however, students who received their education in an inclusive setting had progressed significantly higher in the social-emotional domain. Additionally, despite only having four teacher and four administrator survey results, self-contained administrators described the overall school climate as more favorable than the teachers.

Overall, findings indicate teachers, students with disabilities, and their classmates are generally in favor of inclusive classrooms when they are properly trained, heavily supported, and have access to ongoing resources and support.

CHAPTER III: DISCUSSION AND SUMMARY

Summary of Literature

For classrooms to create and maintain successful inclusive classrooms, teachers must have proper preparation training, use appropriate methodologies in the classroom, and have positive attitudes. Proper teacher preparation training is an essential part of creating and maintaining an effective inclusive classroom. There are a couple of different ways that teachers can get this training. Researchers found that the most effective way to get teachers this essential training is through teacher education programs and professional development. Meeting the needs of students with special needs is a very hard task. Through professional development, teachers can learn the skills and methods that are needed to work with special education students in an inclusive classroom (Chitiyo et al., 2019; Hardy & Woodcock, 2017; Ledoux et al., 2012). Through studies, researchers have found a variety of different ways to make these professional development times meaningful. The traditional top-down approach to professional development has failed teachers. Professional development needs to be relevant to the teachers. To make professional development relevant to the teachers, teachers need to be involved in the process of creating professional development. By having teachers involved in the process of creating professional development, they can use their professional judgment to determine what training is most relevant to their classrooms. Another way to make professional development relevant to the teachers is to allow them time to collaborate during professional development. This will allow teachers to have a say in the conversations and work through any issues that may need to be addressed. Another way to make professional

development meaningful is to have it modeled during training sessions. This allows teachers to see how inclusive practices can be implemented, and it allows for direct feedback (Benjamin, 2020; Chitiyo et al., 2019; Shaffer & Thomas-Brown, 2015; Waitollers, 2013). Studies show a very close relationship between effective inclusive instructional practices and high levels of proper training in inclusive methods. Teachers need Professional development that is ongoing and continuous and inclusive classroom training of one university-level course at a minimum. (Miller & Parson, 2016; Shaffer & Thomas-Brown, 2015).

Providing teachers with proper training in co-teaching is another extremely important part of maintaining an inclusive classroom. Meeting the diverse needs of the students in an inclusive classroom requires teachers to collaborate and co-teach with one another. For co-teaching to be successful, teachers must have the proper training. This training can be done through professional development or teacher education programs (Brinda & Chitiyo, 2018; Cramer & Nevin, 2006; Pancsofar & Petroff, 2013; Shaffer & Thomas-Brown, 2015).

Giving teachers meaningful professional development is one of the most valuable tools in supporting teachers in inclusive classrooms, along with successfully implementing co-teaching. Professional development is an essential part of advancing teachers in their effectiveness of maintaining inclusion.

Determining the methodology of the classroom is another essential part of creating and maintaining an inclusive classroom. There are so many different strategies and approaches that a teacher can use in their classrooms. The success of students in an inclusive classroom strongly depends on the management skills that the teacher uses (Akalin & Sucuglu, 2015; Yildiz, 2015).

One practice that is useful in maintaining inclusion is to ensure that there are high levels of engagement in the lessons and that there is a sense of belonging in the classrooms. This can be done in a variety of different ways. Some strategies that this may include are hands-on activities, having a comfortable and supportive learning environment, staff engaging with the students, etc. (Campbell-Whatley & Brooker, 2018; Morningstar et al., 2015; Prasetyo, 2021; Yildiz, 2015; Mackey, 2014). Another methodology that teachers need to consider is the accommodation and modification that they use. This can include the instructional format (i.e., whole group vs. small group, differentiating ways that the students can access the curriculum, differentiating how materials are presented (i.e., large prints, visuals, auditory, etc.), offering tools/manipulatives, and allowing students to show proof of achievement in a variety of ways. (Campbell-Whatley & Brooker, 2018; Gosslien, 2012; Katz et al., 2002; Mackey, 2014; Morningstar et al., 2015)

Another type of practice that teachers should use in order to maintain inclusion in collaboration. Teachers are left with a lot of responsibility in inclusive classrooms. Co-teaching allows the general education teacher and special education teacher to instruct together to meet the needs of all the learned in an inclusive setting. (Bendle & Lock, 2017; Bottge et al., 2017). Co-teaching requires time for teachers to meet together to collaborate and plan. Teachers need to be given daily collaboration time where they can determine their responsibilities. Along with time to plan, teachers need to be trained on how to co-teach. Teachers cannot be expected to collaborate with and co-teach if they do not have the proper training or adequate time (Fennick & Liddy, 2001; Pulschen, 2015)

In addition to teacher preparation training and methodology of the classroom, teacher and student attitudes play a large role in creating and maintaining an inclusive classroom. Teachers who believe all students are meant to be in their classrooms and actively create a space to foster inclusion are more likely to see increases in academics, engagement, and social-emotional skills among students with and without disabilities (De Silva, 2013; Sucuoglu et al., 2014; Avramidis & Kalyva, 2008; Taylor & Moniz-Tadeo, 2012). Additionally, researchers concluded the importance of frequent consultation with the administration and ongoing professional development and training surrounding inclusion as a critical part of making inclusive classrooms successful (Ghesquiere et al., 2002; Onyishi & Sefotho, 2020; Griffith, 1998). Furthermore, inclusive classrooms lead to more positive attitudes of typically developing peers toward children with disabilities, and students who feel like they belong have a greater sense of self (Roldon et al., 2021; Fitch, 2003; Goldwasser & Hubbard, 2019).

Limitations of the Research

When initially beginning the search for research articles regarding inclusion in the classroom, there was a plethora of articles supporting inclusive classrooms; however, the majority of the articles were non-research articles. While the importance of inclusion was apparent, it was challenging to find research studies completed to support this idea. Therefore, a limitation was not being able to use all of the articles available. Another limitation that occurred when researching inclusive classrooms was the dates of the articles. There was a variety of articles that were extremely outdated, and with advances in education, they are no longer applicable. In addition to being outdated, many of the articles found contained relevant,

broad information regarding special education but did not include specifics related to how to maintain inclusion in schools.

Along with the research articles seemingly being few and far between or outdated, the articles that were found often took place in a country outside of the United States of America, consisted of small sample sizes, or were conducted at very specialized schools. Having all together different educational systems across countries makes it challenging to generalize and apply the data and outcomes found in the studies. Additionally, the search for articles was geared toward ones that promoted inclusion in classrooms and what strategies work to support that idea. While articles countering inclusive classrooms were not particularly sought out, they also were not common to come across.

Implications for Future Research

Future research should examine the outcome of districts that are applying all the components of the conclusion well, not just one aspect of it, such as professional development. There are very limited districts that are truly applying all areas that are needed to maintain inclusion. Once school districts are correctly taking the steps and putting into place the practices that are required for maintaining inclusion, research should be done to determine the success this has on special education students. Along with school, research is needed to compare and contrast teachers who took all the steps and proper training of inclusion to those who have not.

Other research should investigate school districts that are more applicable to educators in the United States. The majority of the studies found were done either in other countries or

in private and charter schools. There was very little research that was completed in public schools in the United States. Research on how public schools in the United States maintain inclusion would help give further information to teachers and administrators.

Implications for Professional Application

Through this literature review, I have found a large amount of information that will allow teachers to maintain inclusion in their classrooms. The first piece that needs to be addressed when looking at special education inclusion is the training that teachers are required to take. All teacher preparation programs for general education and special education should have courses that directly relate to inclusion. These courses need to specifically train teachers on inclusion practices, including the use of co-teaching. Along with teacher preparation programs, the professional development that teachers receive should be reframed. Some ideas of how this can look can be but are not limited to, teachers helping plan the professional development so their needs are being directly addressed, professional development being ongoing and in real life (i.e., administrators coming into the classrooms and giving direct feedback, or administrators coming into the classrooms and modeling inclusive practices, etc.). When the professional development is ongoing and meaningful to the teachers, educators are truly able to learn from these experiences and can collaborate as a team to find different ways to maintain inclusion in their classrooms.

The attitudes of the teachers and the students also play a large role in hiding or promoting inclusive classrooms. Teachers' attitudes need to be positive in the area of inclusion for it to work. Many teachers are left having negative attitudes due to them not having proper

training on inclusion and co-teaching. Through this literature review, I have found the importance of proper training around positive attitudes toward inclusive classrooms. For classrooms to maintain inclusion in the classrooms, school districts need to develop critical professional development courses around positive attitudes in inclusive classrooms that can result in attitudinal changes in the staff who are implementing inclusive practices.

Another area that should be considered when maintaining inclusive classrooms is the methodology of the classroom environment. To maintain inclusion, there need to be correct interventions and classroom management practices in place. Moving forward, when I have students who are transitioning to less restrictive settings and are spending more time in the general education classroom, I plan to support the general education teacher in implementing classroom practices that promote inclusion. One strategy that I plan to implement is allowing special education students in the general education classroom the flexibility to demonstrate what they have learned in a nontraditional way. This will allow the students to show what they know. Not only do I hope that their proof of learning will be modified, but I hope that I can work with the general education teachers on how to modify how special education students are accessing the curriculum so they are still able to have access to the curriculum in a way that works for them. Another thing I plan to implement is I will make sure that the students see themselves in their new classrooms and the curriculum. I will work with the general education teacher to make sure that the lessons meet the interests of the students and that their culture and race are represented in the room and lessons so they feel a sense of belonging.

This literature review also pointed out the urgent need to bridge the gap from special education classrooms to general education classrooms. One way I plan to bridge this gap is through co-teaching with the general education teacher. In most special education classrooms, there are a ton of resources available so that special education teachers can appropriately implement the students' accommodations and modifications. I plan to work closely with the general education teachers to problem solve and figure out ways that the students' accommodations and modifications can be implemented just as smoothly in the general education classroom to maximize the success of the students. Collaborating as a team and co-teaching takes a lot of time and effort. In the future, administrators need to recognize the time and effort that is needed to collaborate. Staff needs to be given adequate time to problem-solve as a team to ensure that inclusive practices are being correctly implemented.

Conclusion

It is clear that teacher preparation training, the methodology of the classroom, and teacher/student attitudes are the key parts of maintaining and creating an inclusive classroom. Teachers should not be expected to create an inclusive classroom on their own. Teachers need proper training, adequate professional development, support from the administration, and time to collaborate with other professionals. When these things are in place, teachers' attitudes toward inclusion are positive, and they are able to use the appropriate classroom practices to allow for a successful inclusive environment. Students who are a part of these inclusive classrooms have a greater sense of self and demonstrate higher achievement in their academic and social-emotional skills. In 2020-2021 more than 66% of children with disabilities were in

general education classrooms for 80% or more of the school day (U.S. Department of Education). This shows that the success of creating and maintaining inclusive classrooms is growing and will continue to grow as the findings from this paper are implemented.

References

- About idea. *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*. (2022, November 7). <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/about-idea/#IDEA-History>
- Akalin, S., & Sucuoglu, B. (2015). Effects of classroom management intervention based on teacher, training and performance feedback on outcomes of teacher-student dyads in inclusive classrooms. *Educational Sciences: Theory and Practice*, *15*(3), 739–758.
- Avramidis, E., & Kalyva, E. (2007). The influence of teaching experience and professional development on Greek teachers' attitudes towards inclusion. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, *22*(4), 367-389.
- Benjamin, L. K. (2020). Differentiated instruction in middle school inclusion classrooms to support special education students [ProQuest Information & Learning]. In *Dissertation Abstracts International Section A: Humanities and Social Sciences* (Vol. 81, Issue 7–A).
- Bottge, B. A., Cohen, A. S., & Choi, H.-J. (2017). Comparisons of mathematics intervention effects in resource and inclusive classrooms. *Grantee Submission*.
- Booker, K. C., & Campbell-Whatley, G. D. (2018). How faculty create learning environments for diversity and inclusion. *InSight: A Journal of Scholarly Teaching*, *13*, 14–27.
- Brendle, J., Lock, R., & Piazza, K. (2017). A study of co-teaching identifying effective implementation strategies. *International Journal of Special Education*, *32*(3), 538–550.
- Chitiyo, J., & Brinda, W. (2018). Teacher preparedness in the use of co-teaching in inclusive classrooms. *Support for Learning*, *33*(1), 38–51. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.bethel.edu/10.1111/1467-9604.12190>

- Chitiyo, M., Kumudzro, F. K., Hughes, E. M., & Ahmed, S. (2019). Teachers' professional development needs regarding inclusive education in Ghana. *International Journal of Whole Schooling, 15*(2), 53–79.
- De Silva, N. L. (2013). Inclusive pedagogy in light of social justice. special educational rights and inclusive classrooms: on whose terms? a field study in Stockholm suburbs. *European Journal of Education, 48*(3), 419–435.
- Fennick, E., & Liddy, D. (2001). Responsibilities and preparation for collaborative teaching: Co-teachers' perspectives. *Teacher Education and Special Education, 24*(3), 229-240.
- Fitch, F. (2003). Inclusion, exclusion, and ideology: special education students' changing sense of self. *Urban Review, 35*(3), 233. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.bethel.edu/10.1023/A:1025733719935>
- Ghesquière, P., Moors, G., Maes, B., & Vandenberghe, R. (2002). Implementation of inclusive education in Flemish primary schools: a multiple case study. *Educational Review, 54*(1), 47–56. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.bethel.edu/10.1080/00131910120110875>
- Goldwasser, M. M., & Hubbard, M. E. (2019). Creating and maintaining inclusive classrooms. *Forum on Public Policy Online, 2019*(1).
- Gosselin, J. (2012). How to create a more inclusive learning strategy in large upper-year undergraduate courses: The use of differentiated evaluation. *Psychology Learning & Teaching, 11*(2), 238–244. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.bethel.edu/10.2304/plat.2012.11.2.238>

- Idol, L., & Griffith, J. (1998). A study of four schools: moving toward inclusion of special education students in general education. *ERIC*. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED432083>
- Katz, J., Mirenda, P., & Auerbach, S. (2002). Instructional strategies and educational outcomes for students with developmental disabilities in inclusive “multiple intelligences” and typical inclusive classrooms. *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities, 27*(4), 227–238
- LeDoux, C., Graves, S. L., & Burt, W. (2012). Meeting the needs of special education students in inclusion classrooms. *Journal of the American Academy of Special Education Professionals, 20*–34.
- Mackey, M. (2014). Inclusive education in the United States: middle school general education teachers' approaches to inclusion. *International Journal of Instruction, 7*(2), 5-20.
- Molina Roldán, S., Marauri, J., Aubert, A., & Flecha, R. (2021). How inclusive interactive learning environments benefit students without special needs. *Frontiers in Psychology, 15*10.
- Morningstar, M. E., Shogren, K. A., Lee, H., & Born, K. (2015). Preliminary lessons about supporting participation and learning in inclusive classrooms. *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities, 40*(3), 192–210.
- Onyishi, C. N., & Sefotho, M. M. (2020). Teachers’ perspectives on the use of differentiated instruction in inclusive classrooms: implication for teacher education. *International Journal of Higher Education, 9*(6), 136–150.
- Parsons, L. D., Miller, H., & Deris, A. R. (2016). The effects of special education training on educator efficacy in classroom management and inclusive strategy use for students with

- autism in inclusion classes. *Journal of the American Academy of Special Education Professionals*, 7–16.
- Pülschen, S., & Pülschen, D. (2015). Preparation for teacher collaboration in inclusive classrooms -- stress reduction for special education students via acceptance and commitment training: A controlled study. *Journal of Molecular Psychiatry*, 3(1), 1–13.
<https://doi-org.ezproxy.bethel.edu/10.1186/s40303-015-0015-3>
- Prasetyo, T., Rachmadtullah, R., Samsudin, A., & Aliyyah, R. R. (2021). General teachers' experience of the brain's natural learning systems-based instructional approach in inclusive classroom. *International Journal of Instruction*, 14(3), 95-116
- Shaffer, L., & Thomas-Brown, K. (2015). Enhancing teacher competency through co-teaching and embedded professional development. *Journal of Education and Training Studies*, 3(3), 117–125.
- Sucuoglu, N. B., Akalin, S., & Pinar, E. S. (2014). Instructional variables of inclusive elementary classrooms in Turkey. *International Journal of Special Education*, 29(3), 40–57.
- Taylor, A. G., & Moniz-Tadeo, B.-J. (2012). The impact of an invitational environment on preschoolers with special needs. *Journal of Invitational Theory & Practice*, 18, 19–25.
- Waitoller, F. R., & Artiles, A. J. (2013). A decade of professional development research for inclusive education: A critical review and notes for a research program. *Review of educational research*, 83(3), 319-356.
- Woodcock, S., & Hardy, I. (2017). Probing and problematizing teacher professional development for inclusion. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 83, 43-54.

Yildiz, N. G. (2015). Teacher and Student Behaviors in Inclusive Classrooms. *Educational Sciences: Theory and Practice*, 15(1), 177–184.