CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE INCLUSION CLASSROOMS IN A MIDDLE SCHOOL SETTING
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Abstract

Throughout the years there has been constant debate about how education should be delivered to the special education population. The Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) was created to work toward the achievement of the special education population in the general education setting. Inclusion has become a topic of debate over the last 20 years. Schools are working to find an inclusive education model that will best suit the needs of both general and special education students in our schools. Researchers have found educational practices that give all students the opportunities to learn within the general education setting. Educators continually work toward finding the most beneficial ways to teach all students and create an environment where all students achieve.
Chapter I: Introduction

In 1975, Congress passed the Education for All Handicapped Children Act. According to Pardini (2002), children with more severe disabilities had the option to remain at home or be institutionalized, rather than be included in a school setting. Children with mild or moderate disabilities who were in the public school system were likely to drop out well before graduating from high school because of the inequality in the public schools (Pardini, 2002). The Individuals with Disabilities Act, or IDEA, sets high standards for special education students’ achievement and guides how individual help and services are made available to students in schools to address each student’s individual needs (Winans, 1996).

Within IDEA, a high priority is placed on the placement of the student in the classroom. The law requires that the student be placed in the least restrictive environment, or LRE, and has high priority on the student’s participation in the general education curriculum, alongside students without special needs (Rosenberg, Westling, & McLeskey, 2008). Views about placement of special education students constantly changed to keep up with the laws. In many schools, there are different placement options for students with disabilities. These can include inclusion, students participating fully with their peers in a general education setting; resource, where special education students are pulled out and provided services; self-contained, where students remain in a special education classroom throughout the day; and students receive services outside the general public school (Algozzine, Harris, Mutua, Obiakor, & Rotatori, 2012). However, since education standards continue to become higher, as well as accountability of the schools and teachers, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) requires all students to be taught by highly qualified teachers, which in turn is leading schools to become more inclusive (U.S. Department of Education, 2002).
Inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classrooms has stimulated great debate in education (Algozzine, Harris, Mutua, Obiakor, & Rotatori, 2012). Ilda King (2003) stated that inclusive education refers to all students becoming part of a school community regardless of strengths and weaknesses they maintain. Friend & Bursuck (1999) believe that inclusion means students with disabilities should be integrated into the general education classroom regardless of those special education students being able to meet the “traditional” standards. A number of professionals and researchers argue that the need for special education students to take part in small-groups and have highly structured environments is hard to create in general education classrooms. Those same professionals feel that inclusion in not the best educational practice for students with disabilities (McGrath, Johns, & Mathur, 2004; Mock & Kauffman, 2002). The generally accepted inclusion concept places special education students in classrooms with their peers. Academic benefits occur for both special and general education students in an inclusion classroom, whereas, students have additional support in the classroom and are able to receive adaptations in the classroom (Hunt, 2000)

**Statement of the Problem**

Middle schools lend themselves to inclusive practices because the co-teaching model (common in middle schools) is more successfully implemented where interdisciplinary teaching teams share planning (Hines, 2001). Inclusive classrooms are not just about accommodations and supports; they are about an attitude and a disposition that a school intentionally teaches by example. An inclusive vision often times drives all decisions and actions. For example, questions of “Why inclusion?” turn to “How do we successfully include all students?” (Falvey & Givner, 2005).

One study reporting on perceptions of middle school students, their parents, and teachers
indicated that middle school students with mild disabilities who are included in the general education classroom experienced increased self-confidence, camaraderie amongst peers, more support from the teachers, and were given higher expectations in the inclusive setting (Ritter, Michel, & Irby, 1999). However, Tiner (1995) surveyed 120 middle school teachers and found that teachers were most concerned with making sure that all students, both special and general education, have an opportunity to learn. Teachers within this particular study voiced concerns that too much time is being spent with the special education students, lessening the time given to the general education students. Overall, both opponents and proponents of inclusion continue to find research supporting personal views. The current research on inclusion remains inconclusive, but in order to include special education students as outlined in IDEA, schools will continue to look for ways to include special education students and create the least restrictive environment for all students.

**Research Question**

What are the characteristics of effective inclusion models for general and special education teachers at the middle school level?

**Definition of terms**

Readers need to be familiar with terms related to special education in the areas of inclusion, co-teaching, cooperative learning, least restrictive environment (LRE), Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and No Child Left Behind (NCLB). A clear understanding of these terms is essential to create a better understanding of the educational topic within this literature review.

*Inclusion.* Inclusive schools are places where students, regardless of ability, race, language and income, are integral members of classrooms, feel a connection to their peers, have
access to rigorous and meaningful general education curricula and receive collaborative support to succeed. In inclusive schools, students do not have to leave to learn. Rather, services and supports are brought directly to them (Causton-Theoharis & Theoharis, 2009).

**Co-Teaching.** An instructional delivery approach in which general and special educators share responsibility for planning, delivery and evaluation of instructional techniques for a group of students; general and special educators work in a coactive and coordinated fashion, which involves the joint teaching of academically and behaviorally heterogeneous groups of students in integrated settings. (Bauwens & Hourcade, 1991; Bauwens, Hourcade, & Friend, 1989; Friend & Cook, 1992; Scheffel, Kallam, Smith, & Hoernicke, 1996; Walther-Thomas, Bryant, & Land, 1996).

**Cooperative Learning.** Successful teaching strategy in which small teams, each with students of different levels of ability, use a variety of learning activities to improve their understanding of a subject. Each member of a team is responsible not only for learning what is taught but also for helping teammates learn, thus creating an atmosphere of achievement. (Johnson & Johnson, 1984).

**Least Restrictive Environment.** Placement discussions for a student deemed a student with special needs begins with consideration of the regular education classroom. A student with a disability should have the opportunity to be educated with the student’s non-disabled peers. Least restrictive environment also means that if a special needs student can participate in a general education setting with the proper supports and accommodations. (Rosenberg, Westling, & McLeskey, 2008).

**Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.** IDEA was originally enacted by Congress in 1975 to ensure that children with disabilities have the opportunity to receive a free appropriate
public education, just like other children (“IDEA-the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act,” 2012).

No Child Left Behind. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 is a comprehensive federal initiative designed to improve the educational performance of all students. NCLB represents a major expansion of the federal government’s role in public education. Rather than merely providing financial assistance to states in their efforts to set standards and improve student achievement, the act explicitly mandates compliance to high standards and sanctions states and schools that fail to meet set criteria (Rosenberg, Westling, & McLeskey, 2008, p. 42).
Chapter Two: Literature Review

Special education practices, alongside educational practices in general, are constantly changing with the times. Schools are moving toward inclusion for a variety of reasons; the legislative mandate of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, the ability to meet adequate yearly progress, and the families and vision of school leaders (Causton-Theoharis & Theoharis, 2008). Inclusion can be taught in a variety of ways and many studies have been done, and continue to be done, in order to find the most effective ways to teach middle school special education students.

Outcomes for Students with Learning Disabilities

With limited data and a number of varying philosophical perspectives, educators continue to search out ways to educate both general and special education students for maximum results and performance (Rea, McLaughlin & Walther-Thomas, 2002). Both academic and behavior outcomes for students with disabilities was investigated in both inclusive and pullout special education programs. The population consisted of 8th grade students with learning disabilities in two middle schools in a suburban district in the southeast. Participants had all been classified learning disabled consistent with federal and state regulations. Students with Learning Disabilities who had not been enrolled in their assigned school program for at least two years were removed from the sample.

This qualitative and quantitative study explored the relationship between placement of students with Learning Disabilities and school performance; including behavior, achievement, and attendance. The focus of this study was student and program factors that would provide a comprehensive depiction of practice and most likely influence student performance outcomes. There were 36 middle school students receiving services through an inclusive support model, and
22 students from a different school in the same district, who received special education services through a resource model.

Teachers at the middle school using inclusive model, created their model for implementing special education services based on team teaching and collaborative planning. General and special education teachers co-taught four periods throughout the day and had one period for individual planning and another period for team planning. During this same two year period, teachers at the other middle school used a resource method with their special education students. Students had four core classes during the day taught by only general education teachers. Special education students had to forfeit at least one of their elective classes in order to receive their services in a small group setting. General and special education teachers at this school did not meet on a regular basis and were not part of grade level meetings. Meetings occurred on an as-needed basis (Rea, McLaughlin & Walther-Thomas, 2002).

Results indicated that the middle school students included in general education classrooms achieved better outcomes on some measures or comparable outcomes on others than their peers in resource, or pullout, programs (Rea, McLaughlin & Walther-Thomas, 2002). This particular study’s findings suggest students with disabilities can achieve success in general education classroom as long as the special education students are getting adequate adaptations, individualized programs, and sufficient support. Success, in the case of this study, combines academic and social success (Rea, McLaughlin & Walther-Thomas, 2002).

**Principals’ Feelings toward Inclusion**

Special education has always been a subject at the forefront of education. Questions have consistently risen about the most effective and least restrictive ways to educate special education students. Elementary principals were observed, as well as, relationships regarding attitudes
toward inclusion, variables such as training and experience, and placement perceptions were investigated (Praisner, 2003). A sampling of 408 elementary school principals selected from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The elementary schools ranged from having only 250 students, to over 1,000 students and the average class size ranged from 10 to 40. These schools represented varying degrees of inclusion. The PIS (Principals and Inclusions Survey) was designed to determine the extent to which variables such as training, experience, and program factors were related to the attitudes of the principals participating in the study. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data, present data summary, and to examine the relationships among the variables. Principals’ positive attitudes are essential to having success educating special education students in an inclusive setting. The best way to create quality programs is to have special and general education staff collaborate and develop the knowledge and skills necessary to identify and articulate the students’ specific needs. Lastly, principals need to be able to observe and model administrator and teacher behaviors in successful inclusion settings.

**Collaborative Teaching**

A variety of things need to occur for collaborative teaching to be successful with the individual you will be working closely with (Robinson & Schaible, 1995). Begin by restricting the team to two people because good collaborative teaching is too complex to do well with more. When two teachers are just beginning the collaborative teaching process, those teachers should agree that working together is a trial run and no hard feelings should be had if teaching together does not work out. Co-teachers need to have a healthy psyche, and not be a person who is easily offended. Prior to working together, teaching philosophy and teaching methods need to be discussed, and the co-teachers should review the criteria for grading within that class. One of the biggest ways of increasing the benefits of collaborative teaching is to be willing to consider
compromising with your colleague and be able to listen to one another regardless of differences and always look to do what is best for your students (Robinson & Schaible, 1995). Lastly, collaborative teaching can help us overcome the frequent sense of isolation so often felt by members of a faculty. Traditional modes of teaching tend not to facilitate mutual support or encouragement. Some faculty members can expect never to be visited by a colleague or to engage in sustained conversations about one’s discipline or teaching except with an office mate or close friend. Neither the chance conversation nor the large forum lends itself to the thoughtful exploration of different approaches and points of view, and the victim is too often the teacher (Matthews, 1994). Both classroom research and literature on learning indicate that students learn from the behavior we model and if teachers improve themselves, students’ learning will also improve.

**Teacher’s Beliefs about Co-Teaching**

Few studies have investigated the teachers’ perceptions of collaboration and the effects of collaboration on student learning. Researching the perceptions of collaborative teachers, will provide valuable information in the co-teaching endeavor (Austin, 2001).

One hundred and thirty-nine collaborative teachers from nine school districts in northern New Jersey who taught in kindergarten through twelfth grade participated in this study. The participating teachers were from districts that were identified as having the inclusion model established for at least a semester. All of the districts were located within one county and were considered middle income. Teacher traits were derived from the demographic data found within the survey and showed that a majority (73.8%) of the special education teachers, and 70.2% of the general education teachers surveyed taught at the secondary level, either middle or high school. As for the mean years of teaching experience, the special education teachers averaged
15.5 years teaching, whereas the general education teachers averaged 18.7. Only 28% of general education co-teacher participants and 26.7% of special education co-teacher participants volunteered for their inclusive classroom teaching assignment, which suggests that the majority of the co-teacher participants were conscripted for the assignment.

For this study, all participants were assessed by using the Perceptions of Co-Teacher Survey, which consisted of two major components. Part I looked at demographic information, while Part II sought information according to four specific categories relevant to teacher perceptions of collaboration. Each of the categories in Part II was designed to provide information specific to one of the four categories: Co-Teacher Perceptions of Current Experience, Recommended Collaborative Practices, Teacher Preparation for Collaborative Teaching, or School-Based Supports That Facilitate Collaborative Teaching.

A qualitative instrument was developed using the Interview Format with Probing Questions model provided by Cox (1996). The interview questions were written in sets, with each set examining a particular issue of relevance. The researcher posed the same questions to each participant in the same way, to ensure consistency and a more reliable analysis. The researcher also personally distributed the survey and a cover letter to every participant and collected the surveys the next day.

Possible improvements in practice and areas for further research were found in this research study (Austin, 2001). Offering feedback to one’s partner, sharing classroom management, providing daily mutual planning time, and using cooperative learning techniques proved essential for school districts to incorporate in the planning stage of the inclusion program. Teacher preparation programs need curricula that are relevant to the current trend toward inclusive education. Student teachers should be prepared to step into an inclusive classroom and
teach collaboratively. Support of school administration is also extremely important for collaborative teaching to be effective. In addition, Austin (2001) states that further research is necessary to investigate more fully the effectiveness of collaborative teaching in facilitating the academic development of students with and without disabilities. Based on the trends in education today, the inclusion model seems to gaining more acceptance and teacher education programs need to provide the training and supports to prepare teachers to serve in inclusive classrooms

**Effects of Cooperative Learning on Junior High Students**

Cooperative learning in the classroom requires a lot of time and effort, on the teacher’s part, to create the most beneficial groups and settings for learning. Gillies (2003) studied the effects of cooperative learning on junior high students who worked in both structured and unstructured cooperative groups. Two hundred and twenty-three ninth grade junior high students from six different high schools in Brisbane, Australia participated in Gillies (2003) quantitative research study. All of the six schools who participated in this study had previously encouraged teachers to use small cooperative groups as one of their instructional strategies. Three of those six schools were more committed to cooperative learning and had previously been given professional development to promote cooperative learning within instructional practice. Those three schools established small cooperative learning groups in their classrooms and provided students the opportunity of engaging in cooperative learning experiences at least once a week across all subject areas for a unit of work (approximately 4–6 weeks) each term. The remaining three schools in Gillies’ (2003) study did not establish groups on a regular basis or create a learning environment where students understood the basics of cooperative learning groups and teachers had not been trained either.
Key elements of cooperative learning groups include, but are not limited to, three or more students working together on a common group task, students are required to help each other and facilitate each other’s learning, accept responsibility for contributing to the task at hand. Students were observed twice on both the students’ behavior and verbal interactions within the group. Students were videotaped during this study while participating on mathematical problem-solving activities.

Students in the structured groups demonstrated more cooperative behaviors and stayed on task more than their peers in the unstructured groups. Students were more willing to work with others on the task, listen to what classmates had to say, and share ideas, information and reasoning to their classmates. Overall, the children in the structured groups developed a stronger perception of group cohesion and social responsibility for each other’s learning than their peers in the unstructured groups proving that cooperative learning groups has a place in our educational system.

**Toward Inclusion of Special Education in General Education**

The purpose of this study was to examine four different elementary schools, two middle schools, and two high schools and evaluate how those schools provided special education services to their special education population. The eight schools chosen came from a large metropolitan school district in a southwestern city. The primary intent was to determine how much inclusion of special education students in a general education setting was occurring at each individual school and the rationale was to describe what happens in schools as educators to move toward a more inclusive education.

Quantitative and qualitative data was gathered during this study in the forms of teacher interviews and data from state testing on all students. The educators at the eight schools were
asked a variety of questions which covered a variety of indicators. The interview questions
given to staff included topics such as; types of disabilities at the educator’s particular school,
amount of time with which special education students are in the general education setting, the
number and types of support, the number and types of referrals for special education testing, the
attitudes of staff toward each other, inclusion, collaboration, and special education students, staff
perceptions in their own personal skills, and staff perceptions of inclusion and the general
education population. Along with the interviews, statewide test data was also taken into
consideration and used to provide information regarding testing results from students with
disabilities (Idol, 2006).

Because inclusion in the middle school setting is being studied in this paper, one school is
known as Middle School E and the other school is known as Middle School F. Middle School E
was implementing a new pilot program using flex teams and was providing a statewide test
preparation program. The flex team was created and identified students who needed extra help.
Heterogeneous groups were created, separating the general and special education populations.
This flex team was considered to be consultants and was available to classroom teachers as
advisors as well. Classroom teachers were supported by cooperative teaching opportunities, as
well as, resource classes for supports in core subjects (Idol, 2006). Middle School F used an
inclusion model and the teachers were supported by a consulting teacher, cooperative teaching, a
curriculum coordinator, instructional coordinator, two behavioral disorder classrooms, and a
special education clerk for record keeping.

Middle School E and Middle School F both reported 128 students with disabilities. The
percentage based on total enrollment was nearly the same in both schools. Middle School E
reported approximately 15 referrals for special education, while Middle School F reported only
5. Middle School E contained a higher number of resource rooms in their school, while Middle School F provided more special education services to students within the general education setting, which could be possible reasons for referral differences between the middle schools involved in this study.

A large majority of faculty viewed the principals as being very supportive of inclusion; Middle School E, 83% and Middle School F, 85%. Overall, the educators also rated their principals as highly supportive of their teachers as professionals, between 74%-88%. When asked about where educators felt the special education population was best taught, 50% of the educators surveyed from Middle School E believed that students are best taught in grade-level classes with a special education teacher or teacher assistant in the classroom. In Middle School F, 61% believed that special education students were also best taught in grade-level classes with a special education teacher or assistant in the classroom with the general education teacher (Idol, 2006).

Overall, there was a huge trend of the participating educators moving toward inclusion more and more and special education students being taught in a general education setting. Very few teachers chose the self-contained setting to educate the special education population. Administrators also swayed toward inclusion and thought inclusion is best implemented if extra adults are available. This study resulted in findings providing a snapshot into two middle schools and the ideas and perceptions of educators and administrators on inclusion when teaching the special education population. When looking at the results of the study, the findings show that inclusion, alongside other indicators, can be a great opportunity for achieving the least restrictive environment for special education students in a middle school setting.
Personnel Utilization in Inclusion-Oriented Schools

The foundational question regarding the number of special educators needed in an inclusion-oriented school is one that is has not received as much attention in professional literature regarding inclusion (Giangreco, Suter, & Hurley, 2011). The following study used a quantitative design to examine the influences of special educator variables and school demographic variables on special educators’ ratings of perceived conduciveness of their work responsibilities in order to meet the needs of students receiving special education services (Giangreco, Suter, & Hurley, 2011). Data was collected between September 2007 and October 2010 and was collected in 32 schools spanning all grades. The study included 16 elementary schools, 5 elementary/middle schools (K-8), 8 middle schools and 3 high schools. These 16 schools were located in rural, small city, suburban, and town settings and enrollment ranged from 86 to 1,099 students with a mean class size of 18.28. On average, this grouping of schools had 30.39% of students on either IEP’s, 504’s, or Educational Support Team (EST) plans (Giangreco, Suter, & Hurley, 2011).

Participants in this study totaled 174 and included 145 special educators, 23 principals and assistant principals, and 6 special education administrators. The special educators had an average of 13.10 years of experience working in the field and 79% held graduate degrees.

School administrators completed a School Demographics Questionnaire responding to basic school characteristics, such as enrollment and personnel numbers for special educators and paraprofessionals. A total of 145 special educators completed the Special Education Questionnaire responding to work roles, caseloads, time use, and the paraprofessionals they supervised. The Student Characteristics Questionnaire was completed by a subset of 78 special educators reporting on 196 students on their caseloads receiving support. This questionnaire
included items on demographics, instructional time, and reasons for having a one-to-one paraprofessional (Giangreco, Suter, & Hurley, 2011).

After comparing this study with one done previously, there was a subset of data with numerous implications most notable in developing coherent special education service delivery in inclusion-oriented schools. The average number of students that special educators supported, with and without IEP’s, rivaled average class size in the schools used in this study. Schools that identified fewer students eligible for special education were less well resourced with special educators than schools identified higher percentages of students eligible for special education services (Giangreco, Suter, & Hurley, 2011). Out-of-class instruction in this study was reported to be approximately 75% and raises concerns about offering inclusion-oriented instructional supports. Through this study, the researchers learned that schools need to work toward specialized instructional approaches within general education classrooms to support students with disabilities and other educational needs. A more productive balance between special and general educators will require ongoing collaboration in order to service the special education population in a way that keeps the students in the general education classroom while still supporting them and following their IEP’s (Giangreco, Suter, & Hurley, 2011).
Chapter 3: Results and Analysis Relative to Problem

Educators continue to work to find the most beneficial instructional practices needed to provide special education students with the best education possible. Inclusion is a way to educate special education students without segregating from the rest of the students, while still providing the special education students with the extra support students may need. Inclusion is a way to follow the guidelines of IDEA and continue to push harder for student achievement. In an inclusive school, general education teachers do not relinquish responsibility for the students with special needs in their classroom, rather, the general education teachers work cooperatively with the special education teachers to provide a quality education for all students (Praisner, 2003).

Researchers have found that in order to create a positive inclusive environment where both general and special education students learn, you need administrator backing, teacher acceptance, plenty of training, and different types of educational practices in order to have success.

Administrator Attitudes

Researchers identified the attitudes of administrators and other school leaders directly influence the success of inclusive classrooms. Praisner (2003) found that the principals’ positive attitude toward inclusion is essential to having success educating special education students in the general education setting. Austin (2001), while researching on collaborative teaching in an inclusive setting, found that the support of school administration is extremely important for collaborative teaching to be effective for both special and general education students. Support must be provided at every turn and administrators must provide the leadership, when difficulties arise, in order to continue working toward successful inclusive classrooms for the entire special and general education population (Causton-Theoharis & Theoharis, 2008).
Training

Researchers also identified the issue of training, or lack thereof, as a hindrance to inclusive classrooms. Roberts & Teigland (2008) state that training of both special and general education teachers needs to be ongoing and individualized for the unique needs of specific students and classrooms. Causton-Theoharis & Theoharis (2008) feel that school leaders must provide explicit training to teachers and staff to build the capacity to support all students in inclusive settings. The training must also include ways to differentiate instruction and learn collaboration techniques. Austin (2001) states that the inclusion model seems to gaining more acceptance and teacher education programs need to provide the training and supports to prepare teachers to serve in inclusive classrooms. Both general and special educators feel that knowledge barriers exist in inclusive classroom whereas a number of general educators do not feel equipped to work with students having special needs. Some special educators may also feel a disadvantage in middle level classes if they are not content experts (Hines, 2001). More researchers agree that teachers agree in principle with the goals of inclusion, but many do not feel prepared to work in inclusive settings (Hines & Johnston, 1997). Likewise, according to Read, McLaughlin & Walther-Thomas (2002) practicing professionals need ongoing professional development opportunities to enhance their skills related to effective classroom instruction, management within the classroom, communication, and collaboration with colleagues. These efforts will ensure the preparedness of school personnel to work effectively with colleagues, provide research-based instructional practices, monitor student progress, and make appropriate data-based decisions. We must thoughtfully consider the classroom teacher and what supports will be needed in order to provide them the tools for a successful inclusive environment (Causton-Theoharis & Theoharis, 2008).
Educational Practices

Initiatives to tighten eligibility requirements for special education, an increasing reliance on accommodations to serve students with disabilities, and inclusive schooling practices have increased the diversity of general education classrooms and draw attention to the need for all professionals in the schools to work together in collaborative partnerships (Wood, 1998). Realizing the need for professionals to work more closely, proves a bigger need for educational practices that work in inclusive settings.

Cooperative learning is an educational practice with which students work in small groups to improve the students understanding of a subject or concept. Using cooperative learning groups in an inclusion classroom would create the possibilities of mixing groups of students, of differing abilities, and creating small group activities that would create vast learning possibilities for students of all abilities. Cooperative learning fosters the development of leadership abilities, a sense of teamwork, and improved self-esteem (Strommen, 1995). Developing leadership, teamwork, and self-esteem is essential for both general and special education students and learning these skills through cooperative learning in the classroom would benefit all students in an inclusive setting.

The nature of co-teaching allows for smaller teacher ratios and more individualized instruction within inclusion classrooms. Co-teachers planning and delivering lessons together based on student needs is beneficial and in doing so, the special educator does not always have to teach the small remedial group, in fact, the special educator may teach the whole class. Co-teaching is at its best when teachers openly communicate and interact. Communication, humor, and a high degree of comfort create a dynamic co-teaching, collaborative classroom where a high level of comfort is experienced by teachers, students, and visitors alike. The two teachers work
together and complement one another. At this stage, it is often difficult for outsiders to
distinguish which teacher is the special educator and which is the general educator (Gately &
Gately, 2001).
Chapter IV: Recommendations and Conclusion

Many administrators and teachers believe they are already using inclusion in their schools and classrooms. The national statistics from the U.S. Department of Education document over one million students are denied access to the general education curriculum and the instruction that goes along with that. Numerous other students have access to instruction and curriculum by name only (Causton-Theoharis & Theoharis, 2008). According to Roberts & Teigland (2008), there are numerous things with which schools need to do in order to make inclusion happen. One necessity is to provide strong leadership within the school and district. The top leadership individuals; including board of education, superintendent, and principals, must be leading advocates for inclusive education. Roberts and Teigland (2008), also make known that including special education students within the general education setting is an expensive endeavor and should not be thought of any other way.

Inclusion, cooperative learning, and co-teaching were designed to increase learning for all of our students, especially those special education students in our schools’ population. Educators are striving to create a learning space where all students are able to reach their full potential. Working together, as educators, can only create a better educational system and a place where students are given equal chances to learn and the best tools to take with the students for the rest of their lives. Administrators need to become familiar with the types of educational practices being used effectively in schools and strive toward creating an inclusive environment within an administrator’s own districts and buildings. Teachers should be given numerous opportunities for professional development in the realm of inclusive environments and practices teachers can use in classrooms to become more effective teachers. Overall, special education students and general education students need to be given the best education possible and the
more opportunities to study educational practices that work for inclusion, the better chance inclusion can be successful.
References


INCLUSION IN MIDDLE SCHOOL

http://nichcy.org/laws/idea.


