

Full Inclusion: Would the Educational Needs of Students with Exceptionalities be Best Met in a Fully-Inclusionary Classroom?

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Abstract

This study addressed whether the placement of students with disabilities would be best met in a fully inclusionary classroom. The opinions of 1,247 Northeast Arkansas educators were determined from their Likert-scaled response on this question. The sample was divided into ten subgroupings for comparisons, based on job classification. Descriptive and inferential statistical analyses were used to determine the significance of the responses. There were significant differences determined for the levels of response among subgroups.

This article was written to reveal and provide evidence for the beliefs and opinions held by educators toward “Full Inclusion,” focusing on whether or not Northeast Arkansas educators believed the needs of students with exceptionalities would be best met by their full inclusion in the general education classroom. In this article, research findings are presented as to the opinions and beliefs of practicing public school educators of Northeast Arkansas concerning the following belief statement:

The educational needs of students with exceptionalities would be best met by their full inclusion in the general education classroom with appropriate supports such as, but not limited to push-in, co-teaching, paraprofessionals, and assistive devices.

Although the survey was composed of ten belief statements, this article will concentrate only on the belief statement cited above. Survey data, respective of the belief statement, was collected from a sample of Northeast Arkansas education practitioners comprised of teachers, counselors, and school administrators. For the belief statement, an analysis of the response is provided for the total sample and for each of ten subgroups, whose composition was determined based on their professional job classifications.

The Problem

A review of the literature indicated there were two divergent views held for full inclusion among the more global educational community; those who believed and those that did not believe. However, between those diverging views, there existed a continuous spectrum of opinions that endorsed various formats and degrees of inclusion, although falling short of placement of all

disabled students in the regular education classroom all the time. The proponents of full inclusion believed if students with disabilities were fully included in the regular classroom, they would benefit both socially and academically, more-so than their peers placed in self-contained settings (Hunt, Farron-Davis, Beckstead, Curtis, & Goetz, 1994a). However, some groups like the Learning Disabilities Association of America (2012) did not support full inclusion or any policies that mandated the same placement, instruction, or treatment for all disabled students (Hessling-Hux, 2017).

Regular education classroom teachers' attitudes and beliefs about inclusive practices would be highly significant since they would have been expected to play a vital role in any inclusion process that would have been implemented in the schools. It was recognized that when new programs were introduced into the schools, there were at least two important effects that could help ensure success for their implementation. They were: ¹having the support of the classroom teachers who would be the first-line implementers of new strategies or programs and ²their recognition or expectation that what was being implemented would be "best" for children (Cherniss, 1997). This study was born out of the conviction that teachers' attitudes and beliefs are important.

Literature Review

A significant amount of research had been previously undertaken and reported regarding the efficacy of inclusion. However, this study was concerned with full inclusion. Therefore, it seemed appropriate, at this point, to formally differentiate these two terms; Inclusion and Full Inclusion.

According to the Wisconsin Education Association Council (2001):

Inclusion was the term that expressed a commitment to educate all children (handicapped or not), to the maximum extent appropriate, in the school and classroom, he or she would otherwise have attended without a handicapping condition. It involved bringing the support services to the child (rather than moving the child to the services), and *Full Inclusion* meant that all students, regardless of handicapping condition or level of severity, were to be placed in a regular classroom/program full-time where all services must be delivered to the child in that setting. (para. 8-9)

More explicitly, the key element that described and emphasized the major difference between the two types of inclusion was the word ALL. Full inclusion required the delivery of ALL educational services within the regular education classroom to ALL children, regardless of handicapping condition, ALL the time (Hessling-Hux, 2017, p. 2).

Not everyone was excited about including students with disabilities into the regular education classroom setting. Since the focus of this research report was directed at whether or not the placement of exceptional students in fully inclusionary classrooms was the most appropriate placement for best meeting their needs, a brief overview of the literature related to this concern is presented.

According to Zigmond (2003), "The question of where special education students should be educated was not new" (p. 1). "For more than three decades, special education researchers and scholars had conducted research on the comparative effectiveness of places where exceptional students should be served" (Zigmond, 2003, p. 3). Also, according to Bryant, D., Bryant, & Smith,

(2016) and Zigmond (2003), there was no simple and straightforward answer to where students with disabilities should receive their special education instruction to best meet their needs. While there had been a significant amount of research that supported the practice of inclusion, there had also been an equal amount of research which pointed to detrimental effects for students (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; Lindsay, 2003; Vlachou, 2004). Many argued not all students having exceptionalities were necessarily best served in a fully inclusionary classroom, either due to the severity or type of their disability (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; MacMillan, Gresham, & Forness, 1996; Toloi, Manzini, Spoldaro, & Ventura, 2016). “A poll conducted by the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) indicated it was the opinion of 78 percent of respondents that disabled students would not benefit from inclusion” (Leo, 1994, p. 22).

MacMillan et al. (1996), in an extensive review of the research on inclusion, reported on a “lack of evidence on its efficacy” (p. 145). This investigator found that within the literature there seemed to be a consensus among many researchers; there existed an unqualified - one size fits all – deluded enthusiasm for full inclusion (Fuchs, D. & Fuchs, L., 1998; Macmillan et al., 1996; Zigmond, 2003). Their conclusion was supported by DeMatthews and Mawhinney (2013) suggesting there was no single place, strategy, or program that would have been singularly beneficial for all SEN students. MacMillan et al. (1996) pointed out that although the placement of children with disabilities into regular education classrooms was beneficial for some students, it was not necessarily beneficial for all students. This conclusion was more specifically supported by Zigmond’s study (2003), as well as a study by At-Turki, Ali Aldmour, Maitah, & Alsarayreh (2012) where it was reported that resource rooms were determined to be more effective than general education classrooms in improving the academic achievement of students with learning disabilities. Other studies had indicated that students with mental retardation in special education classroom placements performed academically as well as those placed in general education classrooms. It was also concluded that students with learning or behavior disorders placed in special classes (both self-contained and resource programs) were found to have had a modest academic advantage over those remaining in the general education classrooms (Zigmond, 2003).

The positive benefits of inclusion have been as much of a social matter as academic, and maybe more-so. According to Koster, Nakken, Pijl, & van Houten (2009) and Tkachyk (2013), a common argument for inclusion has been the enhanced opportunity for social interaction provided to special needs students and the establishment of relationships with others. For example, students with problem behavior or social issues could benefit from being fully included in the general education classroom environment, because they could observe and learn more socially acceptable behaviors from other students. However, while recognizing the social benefits of inclusion, teachers and parents questioned whether or not the implementation of full inclusion would best provide for students’ individual needs (Tkachyk, 2013). Considering the preceding discussion, one may have been inclined to ask, what have been some of the documented benefits, both socially and academically, regarding inclusion?

D’Alonzo, Giordano, and Vanleeuwen (1997) investigated teacher perceptions about the benefits of inclusion. They reported the following benefits for disabled students placed in inclusionary classrooms:

Academic Skills

- Individualized Educational Plans for students with disabilities were of higher quality than in special classes (Hunt, Staub, Alwell, & Goetz, 1994b, p. 209).

- Students with disabilities spent more time engaged in learning than in special settings (Hunt Farron-Davis, Beckstead, Curtis, & Goetz, 1994a, p. 210).
- Students with disabilities learned targeted academic skills (Hunt et al., 1994a, p. 298; Wolery, Wens, Caldwell, & Snyder, 1994, p. 434).

Social Skill Acquisition

- Students with disabilities demonstrated more social gains than those in segregated settings (Cole & Meyer, 1991, p. 348).
- Students with disabilities experienced greater social acceptance and more opportunities for interactions not associated with their level of functioning (Evans, Salisbury, Palombaro, Berryman, & Hollowood, 1992, pp. 208-09 & 211).
- High school students reported that their relationships with students with disabilities resulted in more positive attitudes, increased response to the needs of others, and increased appreciation for diversity (Helmstetter, Peck, & Giangreco, 1994, p. 274).
- Students with disabilities were alone less often and showed more social contact than students in special classes (Hunt et al., 1994a, p. 207; Kennedy & Itkonen, 1994, abstract).
- Students with disabilities were helped to establish and maintain social networks and opportunities to be accepted by nondisabled peers (Farmer, T. & Farmer, E., 1996, p. 446; Kennedy & Itkonen, 1994, abstract).
- Students with severe disabilities developed social networks, positive interpersonal relationships, and friendships with students without disabilities (Hendrickson, Shokoohi-Yekta, Hamre-Nietupski, & Gable, 1996, pp. 22 & 25).

In summary, there has been significant research resulting in both support for and opposition to full inclusion. However, this investigator found no support in the literature for the unrestrained or wholesale placement of special needs students in fully inclusionary classrooms but did find significant support for the selective placement of exceptional students in fully inclusionary classrooms.

Sample, Research Design, and Instrumentation

For this study, a quantitative descriptive survey research design was employed using a Likert-scaled survey based on ten belief statements addressing a spectrum of issues related to full inclusion; one of which is the subject of this study; the “best” placement for meeting the needs of students with exceptionalities. The survey was administered via SurveyMonkey to a sample of 1,247 Northeast Arkansas public school practitioners during the spring of the 2015 school term. For analytical purposes, these practitioners were divided into ten subgroupings categorically segregated as regular education classroom teachers, special education classroom teachers, guidance counselors, special education administrators, building principals, and district superintendents. A categorization of the subgroups and their numbers of respondents may be found in Table 1. Of the 1,247 respondents, there were 967 valid responses (77.5%) available for consideration in the analysis. To avoid redundancy, the word “significance” or “significantly” will refer to a statistical definition of chance error where $p < .05$. Moreover, the word “sample” will be used in reference to the 1,247 respondents originally sampled.

Table 1

Numbers of Respondents per Subgroup

	<i>N</i>	<i>N %</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n as % of N</i>
<i>Regular Education Teachers</i>	808	64.8%	600	74.3%
Grades (PK - 6)	439	35.2%	323	73.6%
Grades (7 - 12)	369	29.6%	277	75.1%
<i>Special Education Teachers</i>	227	18.2%	198	87.2%
Grades (PK - 6)	113	9.1%	98	86.7%
Grades (7 - 12)	114	9.1%	100	87.7%
<i>School Counselors</i>	71	5.7%	53	74.6%
Grades (PK - 6)	36	2.9%	26	72.2%
Grades (7 - 12)	35	2.8%	27	77.1%
<i>Building Principals</i>	94	7.5%	73	77.7%
Grades (PK - 6)	51	4.1%	40	78.4%
Grades (7 - 12)	43	3.4%	33	76.7%
<i>Special Education Administrators/Coordinators</i>	21	1.7%	20	95.2%
<i>Superintendents</i>	26	2.1%	23	88.5%
<i>The Sample - All Subgroups</i>	1247	100.0%	967	77.5%

N = Number of total responses within the category

n = number of valid responses within the category

Because this was a forced-choice survey, the Neutral category was not included on the survey response form for the raters to choose. Respondents were required to make a choice, either positive or negative, on the issue described in each belief statement. For purposes of interpretation and discussion, in addition to the Likert scale ratings, each of the levels of the scale were assigned a particular description level, (¹Non-acceptance, ²Very Low, ³Uncertain/Non-discernable, ⁴Substantial or Meaningful, and ⁵Strong), that would provide a quality level rating for the strength of the response (see Table 2).

Table 2

Response and Interpretation Levels for Likert Scale; 5-Point and Percent Scaling

Response Level	Scale Value	Description Levels	Score Range	Range for Percent Scale
Strongly Agree (SA)	5	Strong Acceptance	4.20 - 5.0	80.0% - 100%
Agree (A)	4	Substantial or Meaningful Acceptance	3.40 - 4.19	60.0% - 79.9%
*Neutral (N)	3	Uncertainty or Non-Discernable Acceptance	2.60 - 3.39	40.0% - 59.9%
Disagree (D)	2	Very Low Acceptance	1.80 - 2.59	20.0% - 39.9%
Strongly Disagree (SD)	1	Non-acceptance	1.0 - 1.79	0% - 19.9%

* Neutral was not a choice for respondents. This was a forced-choice scale.

Scores were converted to percent by: % Score = 0.25 x (Likert-scaled score) - 0.25

Presentation and Analysis of the Data

To determine what Northeast Arkansas education practitioners believed regarding the belief statement, “The educational needs of students with exceptionalities would be best met by their full inclusion in the general education classroom . . .,” the following five elements of analysis and response were addressed regarding this belief statement.

- The average response score for the sample and each of the ten subgroups as well as identification as to which subgroups of the sample scored the belief statement the highest and lowest.
- A determination of which subgroups may have yielded scores for the belief statement that were significantly different, (statistically different at the .05 level), from the mean score of the sample.
- A determination of which subgroups’ scores were significantly different from one-another.
- A determination of the proportion (percentage) of responses for each subgroup that scored the belief statement in the positive or negative direction, on the Likert scale (SD-, D-, A+, SA+).
- And, how regular education classroom teachers compared to the other subgroups of the sample respective of their beliefs and opinions as to their acceptance of the premise of the belief statement.

Data Analysis

Data for the sample and each of the ten subgroups for responses on the belief statement can be found in Table 3. The mean score for the sample was 2.85 (46.3%), and a Likert response of Neutral indicating a level of uncertainty among those surveyed for the belief statement can also be seen in Table 3. Neutral was not a choice for respondents, but as a measurable parameter, it was used to discuss average responses that were located between the Disagree and Agree response

levels. In this case, the average fell into the Neutral range. Also, each of the ten subgroups yielded scores that were also within the Neutral range. The subgroup scoring the highest was secondary principals (7-12) at 3.31 (57.8%), and scoring the lowest, 2.70 (42.5%) was elementary education teachers (PK-6). Again, both in the Neutral response range with secondary principals on the high end and elementary teachers on the low end of the range. As will be determined later, these two scores were statistically significantly different from one-another. Both subgroups of regular education classroom teachers (PK-6) and (7-12) scored below the mean, as did elementary school counselors (PK-6).

Table 3

Likert Scale Scores for Belief Statement in Rank Order for Subgroups of the Sample

Grouping	<i>n</i>	Score 5- Point Scale	Score as a Percent	Diff. Score Minus Mean	<i>SD</i>	Likert Rating	Rank
Building Principals Secondary (7-12)	35	3.31	57.8%	0.46	0.67	Neutral	1
School Counselors Secondary (7-12)	27	3.26	56.5%	0.41	0.62	Neutral	2
School Superintendents	24	3.25	56.3%	0.40	0.75	Neutral	3
Building Principals Elementary (PK-6)	43	3.23	55.8%	0.38	0.80	Neutral	4
Special Education Teachers Secondary (7-12)	101	2.96	49.0%	0.11	0.91	Neutral	5
Special Education Teachers Elementary (PK-6)	99	2.92	48.0%	0.07	0.79	Neutral	6
Special Education Administrators/Coordinators	20	2.90	47.5%	0.05	0.92	Neutral	7
<i>The Sample – All Subgroups Combined</i>	997	2.85	46.3%	0.00	0.84	Neutral	8
Regular Education Teachers Secondary (7-12)	286	2.79	44.8%	-0.06	0.86	Neutral	9
School Counselors Elementary (PK-6)	26	2.73	43.3%	-0.12	0.96	Neutral	10
Regular Education Teachers Elementary School (PK-6)	336	2.70	42.5%	-0.15	0.82	Neutral	11

Percent scores were calculated via the formula: % score = 0.25 x (Likert score) – 0.25.

Even though the resulting average score for each subgroup “fell” within the Likert rating of Neutral, there was an adequate numerical range in that category, 2.60 to 3.39, for statistically significant differences to be determined among and between the subgroupings and also relative to the mean. The subgroups determined to have scored a response that was statistically significantly, ($p < .05$), above or below the sample mean for the belief statement can be located in Table 4. Single-sample *t*-tests indicated five subgroups, as displayed in Table 4, as having scores that were

statistically significantly different from the mean, 2.85 (46.3%). Scoring significantly above the mean were (7-12) principals, (7-12) counselors, superintendents, and (PK-6) principals. Elementary regular education teachers, (PK-6), scored significantly below the mean.

Table 4

Subgroups Having Statistically Significant ($p < .05$) Differences From the Group Mean via Single-Sample t -tests for the Belief Statement

Subgroup	Survey Score	Percent Score	Difference from Mean at 2.85
Principals (7-12)	3.31	57.8%	0.46
Counselors (7-12)	3.26	56.5%	0.41
Superintendents	3.25	56.3%	0.40
Principals (PK-6)	3.23	55.8%	0.38
Regular Education Teachers (PK-6)	2.70	42.5%	-0.15

The results of the post hoc tests for a one-way ANOVA that were computed comparing the various subgroups' scores on the belief statement can be found in Table 5. The result for the ANOVA indicated significant differences were determined for the scores of subgroups within the sample, ($F(9, 978) = 5.24, p < .05$). Tukey's HSD (see Table 5) was used to determine which subgroups were significantly different from other subgroups within the sample. Regular education teachers (PK-6) were found to have scored significantly lower than principals (PK-6) and (7-12), counselors (7-12), and superintendents. Regular education teachers (7-12) scored significantly lower than both principal groups, (PK-6) and (7-12). The significance of this result was regular education classroom teachers, (PK-12), did *not* accept the premise of the belief statement to the same degree as principals, counselors, and superintendents.

Table 5

Tukey HSD Post Hoc Test Results for ANOVA, Comparing Sub-Groups, Having Significant Differences for Inclusion Acceptance Scores

Subgroup	Score	Subgroup	Score	Difference
Regular Education Teachers (PK-6)	2.70	Principals (PK-6)	3.23	-0.53
		Principals (7-12)	3.31	-0.61
		Counselors (7-12)	3.26	-0.56
		Superintendents	3.25	-0.55
Regular Education Teachers (7-12)	2.79	Principals (PK-6)	3.23	-0.44
		Principals (7-12)	3.31	-0.52

The distribution of scoring on the Likert scale, (SD-, D-, A+, SA+), for each of the ten major subgroups on the belief statement, can be observed in Table 6. This analysis can provide more accurate and determinable information than the Likert scale score alone. The proportion (percentage) of respondents that agreed or disagreed with the premise of the belief statement may

be seen in Table 6. For this interpretation “agreed” was the combined percentage for “Agree” and “Strongly Agree” and the same pattern was followed for “disagree.”

Table 6

Distribution of Response Scores for Sample Subgroups Over the Likert Scale

Subgroup	<i>n</i>	Strongly Disagree (-)	Disagree (-)	Agree (+)	Strongly Agree (+)	Disagree or Strongly Disagree (-)	Agree or Strongly Agree (+)	Diff. Between Agree and Disagree
Regular Ed. Teachers (PK-6)	336	16.7%	43.5%	33.0%	6.8%	60.1% ↑	39.9%	-20.2%
Regular Ed. Teachers (7-12)	286	15.4%	42.0%	33.9%	8.7%	57.3% ↑	42.7%	-14.7%
Counselors (PK-6)	26	19.2%	42.3%	23.1%	15.4%	61.5% ↑	38.5%	-23.1%
Counselors (7-12)	27	3.7%	33.3%	59.3%	3.7%	37.0%	63.0% ↑	25.9%
SPED Teachers (PK-6)	99	12.1%	39.4%	41.4%	7.1%	51.5% ↑	48.5%	-3.0%
SPED Teachers (7-12)	101	5.0%	23.8%	48.5%	22.8%	28.7%	71.3% ↑	42.6%
SPED Administrators	20	15.0%	40.0%	30.0%	15.0%	55.0% ↑	45.0%	-10.0%
Principals (PK-6)	43	7.0%	34.9%	44.2%	14.0%	41.9%	58.1% ↑	16.3%
Principals (7-12)	35	2.9%	34.3%	54.3%	8.6%	37.1%	62.9% ↑	25.7%
Superintendents	24	4.2%	37.5%	45.8%	12.5%	41.7%	58.3% ↑	16.7%
All Subgroups-The Sample	997	13.9%	41.1%	35.8%	9.1%	55.1% ↑	44.9%	-10.1%

↑ Symbol indicating majority percentage. **Highlight** indicates the greatest percentage.

*Due to rounding, percentages may not add to 100%

There were five subgroups for which a majority of their respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the premise of the belief statement and five that did not. Subgroups having greater than 50% of their respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with the premise of the belief statement were, (7-12) secondary counselors, (7-12) SPED teachers, (PK-6) elementary principals, (7-12) secondary principals, and superintendents. Subgroups having a majority of respondents in disagreement with the belief statement were (PK-6) elementary counselors, (PK-6) elementary teachers, (7-12) secondary teachers, (PK-6) SPED teachers and SPED administrators. Secondary SPED teachers had the greatest proportion, (71.3%), of respondents in agreement with the premise of the belief statement and the subgroup having the largest proportion of respondents in disagreement with the premise of the belief statement was (PK-6) counselors, (61.5%). For the belief statement, SPED teachers for grades (7-12) had the greatest range of dispersion (42.6%);

from 28.7% disagreeing to 71.3% in agreement with the belief statement. The smallest amount of dispersion (-3.0%) was determined for (PK-6) counselors; almost equally divided between agreeing, (48.5%), and disagree, (51.5%). Both subgroups of regular education teachers (PK-6) and (7-12) approximated a 60-40 split; 60% disagreeing and 40% agreeing with the premise of the belief statement. An examination of the dispersion for the entire sample indicated a 55-45 split; 55% disagreeing and 45% agreeing full inclusion would be a most appropriate placement for meeting the needs of disabled students.

Summary

From the analyses for the belief statement, it was determined:

- The mean response for the sample was 2.85 (46.3%), a Neutral response on the Likert scale; considered a level of uncertainty for the sample's opinion on the belief statement. Seven subgroups scored above the mean and three scored below the mean and included both subgroups of regular education teachers, (PK-6) and (7-12). Secondary principals scored the belief statement the highest at, 3.31 (57.8%) and elementary regular education teachers scored it the lowest at 2.70 (42.5%).
- Those scoring significantly above the mean for the sample were elementary and secondary principals, secondary counselors, and superintendents. Elementary regular education teachers scored significantly below the mean score for the sample.
- Elementary regular education teachers scored significantly lower than elementary and secondary principals, secondary and superintendents and secondary regular education teachers scored significantly lower than both groups of principals.
- Elementary counselors, followed closely by elementary and secondary regular education teachers, had the greatest proportions of respondents that disagreed with the belief statement, while secondary special education teachers had the greatest proportion of respondents to agree with the belief statement.
- The response frequency distribution indicated five subgroups agreed with the premise of the belief statement and five did not. Regular elementary and secondary regular education teachers were among the subgroups that did not agree with the belief statement.
- Based upon the frequency distribution of response for regular education teachers, they scored at the low end of the Neutral range expressing uncertainty for the acceptance of the premise: "The educational needs of students with exceptionalities would be best met by their full inclusion in the general education classroom . . ." However, from the frequency distribution, it was determined that elementary and secondary principals, secondary counselors, SPED teachers (7-12) and superintendents most significantly agreed with the premise of the belief statement.

- Relative to this analysis and the Likert scale response values, regular education teachers, both (PK-6) and (7-12), consistently scored their response level on the opposite extreme from the more positively responding subgroups. For the belief statement that was secondary principals (7-12), counselors (7-12), and superintendents.

Findings

Overall, the sample and each of the ten subgroups returned scores on the belief statement at the Neutral level on the Likert response scale, indicating a level of uncertainty among the respondents for the belief statement. Therefore, it could *not* be determined from the Likert score designation Neutral, alone how the subgroupings scored relative to one another. However, when numerical values of scaled scores were compared, significant differences were determined among and between subgroupings within the Neutral range and also relative to the sample mean as well.

The subgroup expressing the highest level of acceptance for the belief statement, “The educational needs of students with exceptionalities would be best met by their full inclusion in the general education classroom . . .” was secondary principals (7-12), and the lowest level of response was expressed by elementary classroom teachers (PK-6). When actual subgroup response scores were compared it was found, elementary classroom teachers, elementary school counselors, elementary special education teachers and elementary principals, subgroups scored below their secondary counterparts for this belief statement as well. The elementary educators (PK-6) consistently scored below their secondary (7-12) counterparts.

From the statistical analyses, *t*-tests and ANOVA, it was determined other subgroups especially (PK-12) principals, (7-12) counselors, and superintendents held a significantly opposite view on this matter than did regular education teachers. Regular education teachers (PK-6) scored significantly below principals (PK-6) and (7-12), counselors (7-12), and superintendents. Regular education teachers (7-12) scored significantly below (PK-6) principals. Subgroups having statistically significant differences from the sample mean were principals (7-12), counselors (7-12), superintendents, principals (PK-6), and regular education teachers (PK-6). The score distribution analysis over the Likert categories, indicated five subgroups, that disagreed or strongly disagreed with the belief statement of concern were, counselors (PK-6), regular education teachers ((PK-6), regular education teachers (7-12), SPED administrators and SPED teachers (PK-6). The subgroups agreeing or strongly agreeing with the belief statement were, SPED teachers (7-12), counselors (7-12), principals (PK-6), principals (7-12), and superintendents. Overall the score distribution over the Likert categories indicated 55% of the sample disagreed or strongly disagreed with the belief statement and 45% of the sample either agreed or strongly agreed with the belief statement. (See tables, 4, 5, and 6, for details.)

Conclusions

It was the purpose of this study to determine if a representative sample of professional educators, composed of school administrators, special education teachers, regular education teachers, and school counselors of Northeast Arkansas public schools would agree or disagree, “The educational needs of students with exceptionalities would be best met in a fully-inclusionary classroom . . .” Because the success of new or challenging programs to be implemented in schools

is greatly dependent on the beliefs and opinions of the stakeholders implementing such a program and most specifically classroom teachers, it was additionally the purpose of this study to determine how regular education classroom teachers, compared with other subgroupings of professional educators, as to the level of their belief or non-belief in the premise of the belief statement. The sample was divided into ten subgroupings distinguishing between secondary (7-12) and elementary (PK-6) classifications, as well as the level and type of administrative tasks administrators, performed.

The sample consisted of 1,247 respondents to a Likert scaled survey administered in the spring of 2015, for which members of the sample responded as to their level of belief in the statement: "The educational needs of students with exceptionalities would be best met by their full inclusion in the general education classroom . . ." The results were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential analyses.

Overall, the sample and each of the ten subgroupings scored their belief in the statement as Neutral. However, there were significant differences noted among and between the subgroups for the relative values of their numerical scores and score distributions. Regular education teachers (PK-12) and elementary counselors (PK-6), more than other subgroupings of the sample, did not agree with the belief statement, "The educational needs of students with exceptionalities would be best met by their full inclusion in the general education classroom . . ." However, superintendents, principals (PK-12), and secondary counselors (7-12) did. Classroom teachers and elementary counselors scored significantly (statistically) below the other subgroupings of educational professionals on this measure.

Supported by the frequency distribution results and other statistical measures, it was determined that regular education teachers (PK-12) were not supportive of the belief statement, but other subgroups were. It was the opinion of regular education teachers (PK-12) and (PK-6) counselors the educational needs of students with exceptionalities would *not* be best met by their full inclusion in the general education classroom. However, other major subgroups that included (PK-12) principals, superintendents, (7-12) counselors, and (7-12) SPED teachers, were supportive of the belief statement. They believed the premise, "The educational needs of students with exceptionalities would be best met by their full inclusion in the general education classroom . . ."

It has been established regular education classroom teachers' attitudes, and beliefs about inclusive practices would be critically important since classroom teachers would be expected to play a vital role in any inclusion process or practice that would be considered for implementation in the schools. It is also recognized that when new programs are to be introduced in schools, there are at least two important effects that can help ensure success for their implementation. They are: having the support of the classroom teachers and their recognition or expectation that what is being implemented would be best for children (Cherniss, 1997). It is clearly not the belief of Northeast Arkansas classroom teachers or elementary counselors, "The educational needs of students with exceptionalities would be best met by their full inclusion in the general education classroom . . ." It was, however, the belief of building principals (PK-12), school counselors (7-12), and school superintendents held a more favorable view and acceptance for the premise of the belief statement than all other subgroups.

If full inclusion is to be a successful undertaking in the schools represented by this sample, a significant amount of attitude transformation would be needed; not only for classroom teachers, but elementary counselors, special education administrators/coordinators, and special education teachers as well. Perhaps, staff development activities could be helpful for this population, in the area of providing fully inclusionary special education services. Analysis of educators' concerns

about the challenges posed by full inclusion practices could assist in identifying issues for staff development, both preservice and in-service training, and could be useful information for school districts considering the implementation of full inclusion.

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