

Old Dominion University

ODU Digital Commons

---

OTS Master's Level Projects & Papers

STEM Education & Professional Studies

---

1986

## Attitudes of Special Education Students towards Vocational Education Classes at Western Branch High School, Chesapeake, Virginia

Cynthia R. B. Sessoms  
*Old Dominion University*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/ots\\_masters\\_projects](https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/ots_masters_projects)



Part of the [Education Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Sessoms, Cynthia R. B., "Attitudes of Special Education Students towards Vocational Education Classes at Western Branch High School, Chesapeake, Virginia" (1986). *OTS Master's Level Projects & Papers*. 446. [https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/ots\\_masters\\_projects/446](https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/ots_masters_projects/446)

This Master's Project is brought to you for free and open access by the STEM Education & Professional Studies at ODU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in OTS Master's Level Projects & Papers by an authorized administrator of ODU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@odu.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@odu.edu).

ATTITUDES OF SPECIAL EDUCATION  
STUDENTS TOWARDS VOCATIONAL  
EDUCATION CLASSES AT  
WESTERN BRANCH HIGH SCHOOL  
CHESAPEAKE, VIRGINIA

---

A Research Project  
Presented to  
The Faculty of Graduate School  
Old Dominion University

---

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Masters of Science in Education

---

by  
Cynthia R. B. Sessoms

1986

APPROVAL SHEET

This research paper was prepared by Cynthia Boone Sessoms under the direction of Dr. John M. Ritz in the VTE 636 Problems in Education. It was submitted to the Graduate Program Director as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Masters of Science in Education.

Approved by:

John M. Ritz      4-27-87  
Dr. John M. Ritz      Date

Advisor

Malvern Miller      4/28/87  
Dr. Malvern Miller      Date

Graduate Program Director

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Approval Page . . . . .	ii
Table of Contents . . . . .	iii
List of Tables . . . . .	v
CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1
Statement of Problem . . . . .	2
Research Questions . . . . .	2
Background and Significance. . . . .	3
Limitations . . . . .	4
Assumptions . . . . .	5
Procedure . . . . .	5
Definition of Terms. . . . .	6
Overview of Chapter I. . . . .	9
CHAPTER II REVIEW OF LITERATURE . . . . .	10
History of Mainstreaming . . . . .	10
Characteristics of Handicapped Students in Vocational Education . . . . .	13
Preparing the Regular Teacher. . . . .	15
Familiarizing the Regular Teacher with the IEP . .	17
Peer Acceptance of Handicapped Students. . . . .	17
Being Available as a Resource. . . . .	19
Summary . . . . .	20
CHAPTER III METHODS AND PROCEDURES. . . . .	21
Selection of the Population . . . . .	21
Instrument Description . . . . .	21
Methods and Procedures for Treating Data . . . . .	22
Statistical Analysis . . . . .	23
Summary . . . . .	23

CHAPTER IV FINDINGS . . . . .	24
Survey Results . . . . .	25
Summary. . . . .	36
CHAPTER V SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS. . . . .	37
Summary. . . . .	37
Conclusions. . . . .	38
Recommendations. . . . .	39
BIBLIOGRAPHY. . . . .	41
APPENDICES. . . . .	42
A. Letter Requesting Permission to Conduct the Research Study	
B. Letter Requesting Permission to Conduct the Survey	
C. Survey Questionnaire	

TABLES

Table	Page
1. Attitudes of Special Education Students Towards Vocational Education Classes at Western Branch High School Question 1. . . . .	25
2. Attitudes of Special Education Students Towards Vocational Education Classes at Western Branch High School Question 2. . . . .	27
3. Attitudes of Special Education Students Towards Vocational Education Classes at Western Branch High School Question 3. . . . .	28
4. Attitudes of Special Education Students Towards Vocational Education Classes at Western Branch High School Question 4. . . . .	29
5. Attitudes of Special Education Students Towards Vocational Education Classes at Western Branch High School Question 5. . . . .	30
6. Attitudes of Special Education Students Towards Vocational Education Classes at Western Branch High School Question 6. . . . .	31
7. Attitudes of Special Education Students Towards Vocational Education Classes at Western Branch High School Question 7. . . . .	33
8. Attitudes of Special Education Students Towards Vocational Education Classes at Western Branch High School Question 8. . . . .	34

9. Attitudes of Special Education Students  
Towards Vocational Education Classes at  
Western Branch High School  
Question 9. . . . . 35

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The rapid changes in technology have brought about a number of crucial changes in the workplace. These changes have modified or completely changed existing jobs while at the same time creating new ones. These changes have characteristically involved the use of the computer or other automated devices in accomplishing tasks.

As a direct consequence, many adults are finding it necessary to get additional training in order to stay current or in some cases keep their jobs. Additionally, parents feel the need to see that their children get the kind of education that matches or closely approximates the existing as well as projected job market condition.

This trend has also caused educators to see the need to insure that there are programs available to meet the needs of all students. More specifically, there are attempts to have comprehensive programs of study which includes vocational studies. Therein is the problem.

Traditionally, vocational education has been looked upon as less than the type of education worthy of study except by those who could not do much else.

This attitude has not changed significantly. At Western Branch High School, special education teachers are working



hard to change this perceived attitude that special education students have about being enrolled in vocational education classes. This clientele appears to be the appropriate group that stands to benefit tremendously from skill oriented education. If in fact, bad feelings, real or imagined, interfere with a student becoming a productive citizen, this issue needs to be documented and addressed appropriately.

#### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The problem of this study was to determine special education students' attitudes towards enrolling in vocational education classes at Western Branch High School.

#### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The purpose of this study was to determine special education students' attitudes towards vocational education classes. The following questions have provided guidance to the investigator in designing this study.

1. Is the decision to enroll in vocational education classes primarily made by the student(s)?
2. Are there external influences that affect special education students decisions to enroll in vocational education classes from:
  - a. Peer pressure
  - b. Parental advice
  - c. School guidance counselor
  - d. Special Education teacher
3. Has the student planned to enroll in a vocational education course in the future?

## BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

Commitment to normalization is not only humanistic, it is mandated by law; Public Law 94-142 was a long awaited event in the struggle for equal educational opportunity for handicapped children and youth ranging in ages three to twenty-one. It signaled the beginning of mainstreaming and normalization in the United States on a national basis and was the beginning attempt through legislation and federal funding to reduce stigma and segregation of the handicapped and to foster acceptance and integration of handicapped students into public education.

The Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act of 1984 (P. L. 98-524) has created new challenges and opportunities for local education agencies to improve programs and services for the disadvantaged and handicapped student. The Act places much emphasis on the vocational programs and the need to provide the necessary special services to enhance the participation of special needs youth and adults.

The Carl Perkins Vocational Education Act mandates transitional services and coordinates support so that all special needs students will succeed in vocational education. It should also be noted that because of the success in mainstreaming students with mild handicaps into vocational education, the goal now is to achieve competitive employment for severely disabled students.

Carl D. Perkins Vocational Act (P. L. 96-524) reflected increased emphasis upon coordinated efforts to provide a

smooth transition from school to work for secondary vocational education students.

The law mandated ten percent of the funds to be used to provide vocational education for handicapped students and twenty-two percent of the funds be used for disadvantaged students. Secondly, the law states handicapped and disadvantaged students must be informed of vocational education opportunities and entry requirements one year before vocational education offerings but no later than the ninth grade, and thirdly the law provides that handicapped and disadvantaged students must have equal access to special services such as assessment, counseling, modification of curriculum and transition services to assure their success in vocational programs.

Many handicapped students have been excluded from vocational classes. The exclusion is often based on prejudice, stigma, environmental barriers and lack of adequate preparation. The significance of this study was to document the attitudes which may influence special education students not to enroll in vocational education classes.

#### LIMITATIONS

Limitations of the study were:

1. Many of the students have a learning disability, therefore some of the questions and responses may be interpreted differently and thus may affect the validity of the study.

2. The research study was conducted at Western Branch High School and included only those students in the special education department.
3. The number of students enrolled in learning disability classes and educable mentally retarded classes is very small, therefore rendering the findings less generalizable.
4. Although faculty attitudes could play a part in influencing special education students to enroll in vocational classes, these attitudes have not been assessed or documented. This study therefore was limited to the extent to which this significant input was not available.

#### ASSUMPTIONS

This study was based on the following assumption:

1. That other groups influence decisions of special education students to enroll or not to enroll in vocational education classes.
2. Those special education students enrolled in vocational education classes can profit from instruction.

#### PROCEDURE

The investigator used the survey method to collect the data for this study. The survey was administered to a panel

of teachers to review for its clarity, readability, and grade appropriate level. After appropriate revisions, the survey was prepared in final form using the Likert Scale.

Further, the investigator sought and subsequently received permission from the appropriate school administrator to conduct the study using the special education students as the primary population.

After appropriate instructions the researcher administered the survey to the students. The data were then compiled and analyzed.

#### DEFINITIONS

The following terms were used in this study and were defined for clarification:

1. Attitude - Settled behavior or manner of acting as representative of feeling or opinion; attitude of mind; deliberately adopted or habitual mode of regarding the object of thought (Oxford English Dictionary, Volume I, pp. 552-553).

2. Vocational Education - The term vocational education means vocational or technical training or retraining which is given in schools or classes under public supervision and control or under contract with a state board or local educational agency and is conducted as part of a program designed to prepare individuals for gainful employment as semi-skilled or skilled workers or technicians or sub-professionals in recognized occupations and in new and emerging occupations or to prepare individuals for enrollment in

advanced technical education programs by excluding any program to prepare individuals for employment in occupations which determine and specify by regulation, to be generally considered professional, or which requires a baccalaureate or higher degree.

The above definition was edited in 1968, Definitions of Terms in Vocational, Technical and Practical Arts Education published by the American Vocational Association (Roberts, 1971, Vocational and Practical Arts Education).

3. Learning Disabilities - (Based on definition provided by the National Advisory Committee on Handicapped Children, U. S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, 1968.) A learning disability refers to one or more significant deficits in essential learning processes requiring special educational techniques for its remediation. Children with learning disabilities generally demonstrate a discrepancy between expected and actual achievement in one or more areas, such as spoken, read or written language, mathematics, and spatial orientation. The learning disability referred to is not primarily the result of sensory, motor, intellectual, or emotional handicap, or lack of opportunity to learn. Deficits are to be defined in terms of accepted diagnostic procedures in education and psychology. Essential learning processes are those currently referred to in behavioral science as perception, integration, and expression, either verbal or non-verbal. Special education techniques for remediation require educational planning based on the diagnostic procedures and findings (Lerner, 1971, pp 9-27).

4. Resource Teacher - A specialist who works with children of learning disabilities and acts as a consultant to other teachers, providing materials and methods to help children who are having difficulty within the regular classroom. The resource teacher may work from a centralized resource room within a school where appropriate materials are housed (Lerner, 1971, pp 9-27).

5. Mental Retardation - Refers to sub-average general intellectual functioning which originates during the developmental period and is associated with impairment in one or more of the following: (1) maturation, (2) learning, and (3) social adjustment (Lerner, 1971, p. 27).

6. Disadvantaged - The term disadvantaged means individuals (other than handicapped individuals) who have economic or academic disadvantages and who require special services and assistance in order to enable them to succeed in vocational programs. Such term includes individuals who are members of economically disadvantaged families, migrants, individuals who have limited English proficiency, and individuals who are dropouts from, or who are identified as potential dropouts from secondary schools.

7. Handicapped - The term handicapped when applied to individuals, means individuals who are mentally retarded, hard of hearing, deaf, speech impaired, visually handicapped, seriously emotionally disturbed, orthopedically impaired, or other health impaired persons or persons with specific learning disabilities, who by reason thereof require special education and related services and who because of their

handicapping condition cannot succeed in the regular vocational education program without special educational assistance or require a modified vocational education program (State Department of Education, Department of Special Education, Richmond, Virginia 1981, p.5).

#### OVERVIEW OF CHAPTER I

In Chapter I the problem and the objectives of the study were presented. The researcher gave the background and the significance for the study, its limitations, assumptions, and the definitions of various terms. A brief description of the procedures involved in collecting and in treating the data was also discussed.

In the following chapters the literature related to this study will be reviewed, the methods and procedures used to collect and treat the data will be discussed in detail, and an analysis of the findings of the study along with the recommendations and conclusions will be presented.



## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In an effort to identify other studies and articles which contain information pertinent to this study a review of the literature was undertaken. A summary of the findings are discussed in the following paragraphs.

Every school and program have children who fail to find success in the regular academic programs. For a number of reasons, these students cannot meet the demands put upon them in classes that deal primarily with lecture and paper and pencil activities. Special education students need educational activities that include building, forming and shaping as they related to their academic level of functioning. Consequently, those students need teachers who appreciate their educational needs and who are dedicated to accommodating those needs.

The enrollment of special students into vocational education courses is designed to prepare them for a vocation but to prepare them with general knowledge, skills, and attitudes to enable them to find a degree of satisfaction in everyday life and meet their responsibilities as a citizen.

### HISTORY OF MAINSTREAMING

On November 29, 1975, Public Law 94-142 (also known as

the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975) was put into effect. The following are some of the findings of Congress which prompted the passage of Public Law 94-142.

The findings were:

1. There are more than eight million handicapped children in the United States.
2. The special educational needs of handicapped children are not being fully met.
3. More than fifty percent of the handicapped children in the United States do not have equal opportunity in education because they do not receive appropriate educational needs.
4. One million handicapped children in the United States are excluded entirely from the public school system.
5. There are many handicapped children in the public school system who are deprived of a normal education because their handicaps go undetected by school administrators.

(State Department of Education, Department of Vocational Education 1981, p. A1)

As a result of these findings, Congress enacted Public Law 94-142 in 1975. This law increased the responsibility of the federal government in providing appropriate education to all handicapped students. The law requires that a school develop an individual educational program (IEP) for each handicapped student that will provide the student with an education in the least restrictive educational environment. The term least restrictive educational environment means that

every effort must be made by the school to make sure that the handicapped student is taught the normal curriculum. Every effort must be made to ensure that the handicapped student is integrated into the regular classroom. This process is known as mainstreaming.

Public Law 94-142 defines handicapped as any student who is deaf or hard of hearing, has impaired speech, has impaired vision, is orthopedically impaired, is seriously emotionally disturbed, is mentally retarded, or has a specific learning disability that requires special education and related services (State Department of Education, Department of Vocational Education, 1981, p. A1).

The 1976 Vocational Education Amendments expanded the number of students covered by the law to include those students who, because of their handicap, could not succeed in the regular vocational education program without some modification or special assistance.

In addition, the 1976 Vocational Education Amendments included disadvantaged, (those persons other than handicapped) who have academic or economic disadvantages and who require special services, assistance, or programs in order to enable them to succeed in vocational education programs (State Department of Education, Department of Vocational Education, 1981, p. A1).

The Vocational Education Amendments include the academically disadvantaged. A student who lacks reading and writing skills, lacks mathematical skills, or performs below grade level is considered academically disadvantaged.

The amendment also pertains to students who are economically disadvantaged and to whom one or more of the following categories applies:

1. Family income is at or below national poverty level.
2. Participant or parent(s) or guardian of the participant is unemployed.
3. Participant or parent of participant is a recipient of public assistance.
4. Participant is institutionalized or under state guardianship.

(State Department of Education, Department of Vocational Education, 1981, p. A2)

The 1976 Vocational Education Amendments require each state to spend at least twenty percent of their federal vocational budget for disadvantaged persons and ten percent for handicapped students. Of the federal funds available to each state, seventy-five percent goes directly to the local schools. These funds must be used for the excess costs involved in providing additional services for handicapped students.

Schools are spending these funds in an attempt to provide an appropriate education for special education students in vocational education.

#### CHARACTERISTICS OF HANDICAPPED STUDENTS IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

In 1983 Dr. Michael Allen Valentine of Gallaudet College conducted a study to investigate variables of handicapped students who complete or drop out of vocational education

programs. Specifically, this general objective was examined by: (a) describing the characteristics of handicapped students in vocational education programs and by analyzing variables which may contribute to discriminating between those students who complete all requirements, complete less than all requirements, or drop out of vocational education programs.

Results of the descriptive statistical analysis indicated that the typical handicapped student was mentally retarded and more than likely enrolled in the Trade and Industrial occupations curriculum. In addition the handicapped student could best be described as a caucasian male who was between the ages of sixteen and eighteen and was enrolled in a curriculum designed for the handicapped for fifteen hours per week. If the handicapped student dropped out of vocational education, the reason given was usually due to lack of progress or a scheduling problem.

Forty-one percent of the total sample completed all requirements of their vocational education programs. As a result of the stepwise discriminant analysis, two functions containing fifteen variables were generated which significantly discriminated between those students who complete all requirements, complete less than all requirements, or drop out of vocational education programs. Those variables most significantly contributing to discrimination between students who drop out and students who complete all requirements were: (1) enrolled in an Office Occupational program, (2) enrolled in a Trade and Industrial Occupations program, (3) enrolled in an Agriculture program, (4) presence or absence of a

handicapping condition and, (5) participation in a vocational education program.

#### PREPARING THE REGULAR TEACHER

Before a handicapped student is integrated into a regular classroom, the special educator should offer to assist the regular classroom teacher in defining and assessing any possible problem. Such assistance might include providing a background of the student's needs and describing the major components of his or her handicapping condition. Additional assistance might include help in analyzing what alterations, if any, the regular classroom teacher might have to make to properly program for the new addition to the class. The teacher should be reassured that he or she will not have to ignore the needs of the other children in the class to meet the needs of the handicapped student (Ottman, 1981, p. 41).

A study conducted by William Pryor sought to determine the attitudes of high school administrators, guidance counselors, and teachers in Nacogdoches County, Texas towards vocational education. Secondly, to determine whether there were significant differences in the attitudes of high school administrators, guidance counselors, and teachers in Nacogdoches County, Texas toward vocational education. Thirdly, to determine whether there were significant differences in the group attitudes of high school administrators, guidance counselors, and teachers toward vocational education according to age,

sex, level of education, time in position, previous administrative or teaching assignments, previous training in vocational fields in high school, and current offerings of vocational courses in their schools.

The population surveyed included one hundred eighty six high school administrators, guidance counselors, and teachers in Nacogdoches County, Texas. All one hundred eighty six people responded to the questionnaire which constituted the research data. The image of vocational education scale was used to solicit information regarding the respondent's attitudes toward vocational education and a demographic data sheet was used to obtain information about age, sex, level of education, time in position, previous administrative or teaching assignment, previous training in vocational fields in high school, and current offerings of vocational courses in their schools. The findings were as follows: (1) the attitudes of administrators, guidance counselors, and teachers in Nacogdoches County, Texas toward vocational education were positive, (2) there were no significant differences in the attitudes of the administrators and guidance counselors versus teachers toward vocational education; and (3) some significant differences existed when the variables of age, sex, level of education, previous administrative or teaching experiences, time in position and previous training in vocational fields in high schools were analyzed.

FAMILIARIZING THE REGULAR TEACHER  
WITH THE IEP

The regular classroom teacher should be invited to attend the individualized education program (IEP) meeting in which goals are developed for the mainstreamed student. Or if the student has been in a self-contained classroom and integration takes place after the initial IEP conference, the special educator should share the goals and objectives with the regular teacher before the student enters the classroom (Ottman, 1981, p. 45).

Because the special education student may have different or additional goals from the rest of the students, the regular teacher may be required to collect additional data on the special education student. The special educator should aid the regular teacher in the measurement of such data by stating specifically which behaviors are to be measured and by providing an appropriate instrument to gather such data, e.g. a behavior checklist. The reasons for the collection of such information should also be explained.

PEER ACCEPTANCE OF HANDICAPPED STUDENTS

The special educator must aid the regular classroom teacher in devising strategies to assist the special education student as he or she enters the regular classroom (Ottman, 1981, p. 46). Such problems might involve simple educational adaptations of lesson presentations, or might deal with the



students need for social and educational interaction with his or her peers and vice versa.

In 1983 Rebecca Reed conducted a study at North Carolina State University at Raleigh to determine peer acceptance of handicapped students mainstreamed in selected vocational educational classes in rural North Carolina. Objectives were to determine if there was a significant difference in acceptance of handicapped and non-handicapped students and to determine if acceptance varied for mentally retarded and learning disabled students. Characteristics rated were those of sex, race, class rank and socioeconomic status. Differences were determined for students enrolled in five vocational education program areas: (1) Agriculture, (2) Business and Office Education, (3) Consumer Education, (4) Homemaking and (5) Trade and Industrial Education at both the introductory and skill development levels.

The peer rating scale (Feldhusen and McDaniel, 1984; modified by Isaacson-Kailes, Flores de Apodacco, Watson, and Mueller, 1981) was in this study to determine peer acceptance. It was administered to 700 students in forty-nine classes in three school systems. Data were analyzed for two hundred peers. A comparison group of one hundred eighty three matched pairs was also analyzed.

The findings of the study indicated: (1) handicapped students in vocational education classes were also less accepted than their non-handicapped peers on the factors of Leadership, Control of Agression, Social Acceptance, and Being

Liked and one scale Affective Relationships. Second, mentally retarded students were rated lower than learning disabled subjects on the Peer Rating Scale factor of Leadership, Assertiveness and Competitiveness. Third, class rank was the most significant rater characteristic. The higher the rank in the vocational class the greater the social acceptance of the handicapped student. Sex and race influenced only one factor, being liked, and socioeconomic status did not have a significant influence on acceptance of the handicapped students. Fourth, class rank of the raters influenced one factor, cooperation, sex and race and socioeconomic status of the rater did not influence their acceptance of handicapped peers. Finally, peer acceptance of handicapped students did not differ across vocational program areas of course level.

#### BEING AVAILABLE AS A RESOURCE

The most important aspect is that the special educator must maintain close contact with both the regular classroom teacher and the special education student's parents. When this is done neither will have anxieties once the special education student enters the regular classroom environment. The responsible special educator will seek out both the regular teacher and the parents to ensure not only a smooth transfer, but a continued harmony for the mainstreaming effort. The special educator should also consider acting as a liaison between the regular teacher and any ancillary

services (e.g., physical or occupational therapy, speech) that may be needed by the handicapped student (Ottman, 1981, p. 45).

#### SUMMARY

After reviewing the related literature on attitudes, one can detect that vocational education has been a complex subject with special education students mainstreamed. During the past ten years educators have been investing a lot of time, money, and energy to make the move of special students in the mainstream as smooth as possible. In the next chapter, the methods and procedures used to validate the attitudes of special education students prepared by the researcher will be presented.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The purpose of this chapter was to identify how the population was selected, how the instrument was developed, and how the researcher collected factually and accurately the responses provided by the students surveyed. This chapter explains the methods and the procedures used for collecting the data.

#### SELECTION OF THE POPULATION

All of the special education students at Western Branch High School, forty-four male and female students were surveyed. The total population of the students were utilized in an effort to enhance validation of the results. These students were classified as freshmen, sophomores, juniors and seniors, enrolled in Learning Disability classes, Educable Mentally Retarded classes, and labeled Handicapped and/or Disadvantaged.

Fifty percent of these students were enrolled in vocational education classes at Western Branch High School.

#### INSTRUMENT DESCRIPTION

The data gathering device was a survey questionnaire

administered by the researcher, (Appendix C). The questionnaire contained nine items. The questionnaire was designed to ascertain:

1. Attitudinal information from all of those students who are presently enrolled in a special program.
2. Attitudinal information from all of those students who are presently enrolled in a vocational class while in a special program.
3. To determine student satisfaction or dissatisfaction with vocational education program.
4. To determine if student goals in the classroom are compatible and relative to their aptitude and ability.

#### METHODS AND PROCEDURES FOR COLLECTING DATA

Permission to administer the questionnaire was secured from the principal of Western Branch High School. A letter was submitted to the principal with a copy of the survey questionnaire. Permission was granted by the principal. The letter is found in Appendix B. The researcher then obtained permission from three classroom teachers at Western Branch High School to administer the questionnaire. Arrangements were made with the classroom teachers to administer the questionnaire during the month of December, 1986.

Before administering the questionnaire, a brief explanation of the questionnaire was given. Included in the explanation was a definition of attitude. Directions were read aloud

before beginning to answer the questionnaire. Fifty minutes were allowed for each class participating in the questionnaire. The researcher remained in the classroom with the participants until completion.

#### STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

The statistical analysis utilized measures of central tendencies for each class surveyed. Percentages were gathered from each question of the survey. The analysis also included the median.

#### SUMMARY

This chapter has described the methods and procedures used to collect and to analyze the data for this study. In Chapter IV the findings of the research will be described, along with an analysis of the statistical data.

## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS

The purpose of this chapter was to present the results of the data collected from the forty-four students of this study who responded to the questionnaire. The problem of this study was to validate special education students attitudes towards enrolling in vocational education classes at Western Branch High School. The objectives of the research were to determine if the decision to enroll in vocational classes were made primarily by the students, if there were external influences that affect special education students decisions to enroll in vocational education courses and determine if they would continue in the vocational education course currently enrolled or make plans to enter a course in the future.

To aid in the validation of students attitudes, it was necessary to find what influenced the students decision. A survey was completed by forty-four students in the special education department at Western Branch High School. Table I reflects the findings to question one: Did you have a vocational objective when you entered the special education program? The data received showed an overall response of 50 percent that strongly disagreed, 11.4 percent that disagreed and 18.2 percent that were undecided about having

TABLE I  
 ATTITUDES OF SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS  
 TOWARDS VOCATIONAL EDUCATION CLASSES AT  
 WESTERN BRANCH HIGH SCHOOL  
 QUESTION 1

Item	Value Label	Value	Frequency	Percent
Did you have a vocational education objective when you entered the special education program?	Strongly disagree	1	22	50.0
	Disagree	2	5	11.4
	Undecided	3	8	18.2
	Agree	4	7	15.9
	Strongly agree	5	2	4.5

Median 1.500



vocational objectives when entering the special education program. Seven individuals representing 15.9 percent agreed and two individuals representing 4.5 percent strongly agreed.

The second question: Did you enter the vocational education course by choice? Sixteen individuals strongly disagreed representing 36.4 percent of the population while six individuals strongly agreed representing 13.6 percent of the population. Table II provides the data reflective of question two.

Question three in an attempt to determine the extent in which peer pressure may have influenced the students, the results are rather conclusive. Thirty-seven students representing 84.1 percent responded that their peers did not encourage them to enroll in a vocational education course, while two students were undecided. Table III does indicate that 5 students, 11.4 percent were strongly encouraged by their peers to enroll in vocational education courses.

Table IV indicates that thirteen students, 29.5 percent were influenced to some degree by their parents to enroll in vocational education courses.

Question five as indicated by Table V, suggests that a representable number of students, 38.6 percent, were influenced by their guidance counselors to enroll in vocational education courses.

Referrals from special education teachers to enter vocational education courses comprised 41 percent of the students surveyed. They indicated that referrals were a factor. Fifty percent of the students as indicated in Table VI, were not

TABLE II  
 ATTITUDES OF SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS  
 TOWARDS VOCATIONAL EDUCATION CLASSES AT  
 WESTERN BRANCH HIGH SCHOOL  
 QUESTION 2

Item	Value Label	Value	Frequency	Percent
Did you enter the vocational education course by choice?	Strongly disagree	1	16	36.4
	Disagree	2	10	22.7
	Undecided	3	7	15.9
	Agree	4	5	11.4
	Strongly agree	5	6	13.6

Median 2.000

TABLE III  
 ATTITUDES OF SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS  
 TOWARDS VOCATIONAL EDUCATION CLASSES AT  
 WESTERN BRANCH HIGH SCHOOL  
 QUESTION 3

Item	Value Label	Value	Frequency	Percent
Was your decision	Strongly disagree	1	22	50.0
to enter a vocational	Disagree	2	15	34.1
education course	Undecided	3	2	4.5
encouraged by your	Agree	4	0	0
peers?	Strongly agree	5	5	11.4

Median 1.500

TABLE IV  
 ATTITUDES OF SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS  
 TOWARDS VOCATIONAL EDUCATION CLASSES AT  
 WESTERN BRANCH HIGH SCHOOL  
 QUESTION 4

Item	Value Label	Value	Frequency	Percent
Did your parents suggest and encourage a vocational education course for you?	Strongly disagree	1	14	31.8
	Disagree	2	13	29.5
	Undecided	3	4	9.1
	Agree	4	6	13.6
	Strongly agree	5	7	15.9

Median 2.000

TABLE V  
 ATTITUDES OF SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS  
 TOWARDS VOCATIONAL EDUCATION CLASSES AT  
 WESTERN BRANCH HIGH SCHOOL  
 QUESTION 5

Item	Value Label	Value	Frequency	Percent
Was your decision to enter a vocational education course encouraged by your guidance counselor?	Strongly disagree	1	13	29.5
	Disagree	2	12	27.3
	Undecided	3	2	4.5
	Agree	4	7	15.9
	Strongly agree	5	10	22.7

Median 2.000

TABLE VI  
 ATTITUDES OF SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS  
 TOWARDS VOCATIONAL EDUCATION CLASSES AT  
 WESTERN BRANCH HIGH SCHOOL  
 QUESTION 6

Item	Value Label	Value	Frequency	Percent
Did you enter the vocational education course with a referral from your special education teacher?	Strongly disagree	1	13	29.5
	Disagree	2	9	20.5
	Undecided	3	4	9.1
	Agree	4	5	11.4
	Strongly agree	5	13	29.5
Median 2.500				

referred by their special education teacher.

The practice of mainstreaming of the students that is; the perception that the school (Western Branch High) encourages special education students to enter vocational education courses is strongly disagreed with. Table VII reflects 61.4 percent disagreement of encouragement.

Regarding the eighth question, that is, Do you plan to continue your enrollment in your current vocational education course? Thirty-nine percent (38.7) of the students suggested they would continue their enrollment in the course. Table VIII indicates that 45.4 percent of the students would not continue in their present enrollment.

A significant percentage of the students, 57.0 percent indicate that they would not consider a different vocational education course in the future. Table IX also indicates that only 27.2 percent would consider a different vocational education course in the future.

TABLE VII  
 ATTITUDES OF SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS  
 TOWARDS VOCATIONAL EDUCATION CLASSES AT  
 WESTERN BRANCH HIGH SCHOOL  
 QUESTION 7

Item	Value Label	Value	Frequency	Percent
Do you feel that your school has encouraged mainstreaming of special education students in vocational education courses?	Strongly disagree	1	23	52.3
	Disagree	2	4	9.1
	Undecided	3	5	11.4
	Agree	4	7	15.9
	Strongly agree	5	5	11.4

Median 1.000



TABLE VIII  
 ATTITUDES OF SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS  
 TOWARDS VOCATIONAL EDUCATION CLASSES AT  
 WESTERN BRANCH HIGH SCHOOL  
 QUESTION 8

Item	Value Label	Value	Frequency	Percent
Do you plan to continue your enrollment in your current vocational education course?	Strongly disagree	1	13	29.5
	Disagree	2	7	15.9
	Undecided	3	7	15.9
	Agree	4	9	20.5
	Strongly agree	5	8	18.2

Median 3.000

TABLE IX  
 ATTITUDES OF SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS  
 TOWARDS VOCATIONAL EDUCATION CLASSES AT  
 WESTERN BRANCH HIGH SCHOOL  
 QUESTION 9

Item	Value Label	Value	Frequency	Percent
Do you plan to consider a different vocational education course in the future?	Strongly disagree	1	14	31.8
	Disagree	2	11	25.0
	Undecided	3	7	15.9
	Agree	4	6	13.6
	Strongly agree	5	6	13.6

Median 2.000

### SUMMARY

In this chapter the results of the survey regarding students attitudes toward enrolling in vocational education courses were discussed. Various findings were presented but the major conclusion suggested that the special education teacher plays a significant role in the enrollment of special education courses.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### SUMMARY

This study sought to determine attitudes of special education students enrolled in vocational education courses at Western Branch High School. The intent of conducting this study was to remove barriers related to lack of student interest and student enrollment. This study was also conducted to bring about increased enrollment of special education students in vocational education courses.

The population was comprised of three special education classes. Two classes of students that participated in this study were enrolled in Learning Disability Resource and Learning Disability-Self Contained, the third class was Educable Mentally Retarded.

The study was based on a survey questionnaire distributed to participating students. It attempted to do three things: (1) determine special education students attitudes towards enrolling in vocational education courses; (2) determine whether the students acted independently or whether external influences played a role in their decisions; and (3) to assess if special education students would continue in the courses currently enrolled or enroll in a vocational education course in the future.

## CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to determine special education students' attitudes towards vocational education classes/courses. Data accumulated, in response to several questions, have provided some measure of the students attitudes towards vocational education. The questions that follow are intended to give some indication of the students' attitudes.

"Is the decision to enroll in vocational education classes primarily made by the student(s)?" The students were asked if they entered/enrolled in a vocational education course by choice and more than 58.0 percent of the students responded that they did not have much choice in the matter. More than 15 percent of the students were undecided.

The significance of external influences that affected the students decisions to enroll in vocational education courses was evidenced by the high response given to the Special Education teacher. The guidance counselor was next in level of influence. Parental advice provided a small level of influence and peer pressure was not influential at all.

Student plans to enroll in vocational education courses in the future, whether the current course or a different course, more than 42 percent of the students indicated they would not. More than 15 percent of the students were undecided

about their future plans.

39

The study clearly indicated the major role that the special education teacher and the guidance counselor play in the enrollment of students in vocational education classes or courses.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

The survey results suggest that the decision by students to enroll in special education is basically made by someone else. The school system itself can improve the students decision making by adopting a program to increase the students awareness of the benefits and rewards of enrollment in vocational education courses.

The external influences that affect the students decisions to enroll in vocational education courses are varied. However, the greatest level of influence comes from the special education teacher. Guidance counselors also have an impact on the students decisions to enroll in special education courses.

To increase parental influence it is suggested that the school system also adopt a program to increase parental awareness of vocational education offerings.

Future enrollment in vocational education courses lies with all educational parties. But when all else fails the burden of awareness and the selling of benefits of vocational education courses resides with the special education teacher and the guidance counselor. They have to seek innovative

ways to get their message across to students, parents and the faculty.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Kimeldorf, Martin R. Special Needs in Technology Education.  
Worcester, Ma: Davis Publishing Inc., 1984.

Lerner, Janet. "Children with Learning Disabilities, Theories,  
Diagnosis and Teaching Strategies." Boston: Houghton  
Mifflin Company, 1971.

O'Brien, Thomas. "Vocational Training and Placement of  
Handicapped Students," Industrial Education, March 1980,  
29-31.

Ottman, Ronald A. "Before a Handicapped Student Enters the  
Classroom: What the Special Education Educator Can Do,"  
Teaching Exceptional, April 1981, 41-45.

Pryor, William Donald, Ed.D. "Study of the Attitudes of High  
School Administrators, Guidance Counselors and Teachers  
in Nacogdoches County, Texas Toward Vocational Education,"  
Dissertation Abstract, Humanities (November, December  
1983), p. 184.

Reed, Rebecca Racer, Ed.D. "Peer Acceptance of Handicapped  
Students Mainstreamed in Secondary Vocational Education,"  
Dissertation Abstract, Humanities (November, December  
1983), p. 117.

Roberts, Roy W. Vocational and Practical Arts Education.  
New York, Harper and Row Publishers, 1971.

State Department of Education, Department of Special Education,  
Richmond, Virginia. "Education for the Handicapped/  
Disadvantaged Student," 1981, p. 5.

State Department of Education, Department of Vocational Educa-  
tion, Richmond, Virginia. Education for the Handicapped.  
McGraw Hill, Inc., 1981, p. A1-A9.

Valentine, Michael Alden, Ph.D. "Characteristics of Handi-  
capped Students in Vocational Education Programs in  
West Virginia," Dissertation Abstract, Humanities  
(November, December 1983), p. 130.



APPENDIX A

## APPENDICES

- Appendix A - Letter Requesting Permission to Conduct the Research Study
- Appendix B - Letter Requesting Permission to Conduct the Survey
- Appendix C - Survey Questionnaire

Cynthia B. Sessoms  
5044 Kemp Farm Place  
Va. Beach, VA 23464

September 19, 1986

Mr. Arthur V. Brandriff  
Western Branch High School  
4222 Terry Drive  
Chesapeake, VA 23321

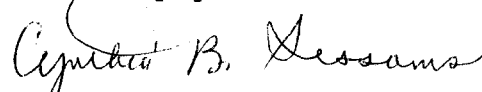
RE: Permission to conduct research

Dear Mr. Brandriff:

As a Master of Science candidate at Old Dominion University, I am researching attitudes of special education students towards vocational education. It is my hypothesis that special education students have a very negative attitude toward being mainstreamed into vocational education courses.

As a member of the faculty and working directly with the students in the Special Education Department, I see a need for this type of study. Therefore, I am requesting permission to conduct this study at Western Branch High School within the Special Education Department.

Sincerely yours,



Cynthia B. Sessoms

APPENDIX B

Cynthia B. Sessoms  
5044 Kemps Farm Place  
Va. Beach, VA 23464

December 1, 1986

Mr. Arthur V. Brandriff  
Western Branch High School  
4222 Terry Drive  
Chesapeake, VA 23321

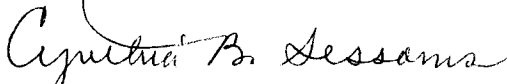
RE: Permission to conduct survey

Dear Mr. Brandriff:

As a Master of Science candidate at Old Dominion University, I am researching attitudes of special education students towards vocational education. It is my hypothesis that special education students have a very negative attitude toward being mainstreamed into vocational education courses.

In order to complete this study it is necessary to survey the students in the special education department at Western Branch High School. Therefore, I am requesting permission to conduct the survey within the Special Education Department.

Sincerely yours,

  
Cynthia B. Sessoms

APPENDIX C

INSTRUMENT 1  
STUDENT ATTITUDES

The purpose of this survey is to determine your attitudes towards enrolling in vocational education classes.

Directions:

Please complete all of the questions. Indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the questions that follow by choosing the appropriate number from the scale below and placing it in the space provided to the left of each question.

- 1 = strongly disagree
- 2 = disagree
- 3 = undecided
- 4 = agree
- 5 = strongly agree

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Did you have a vocational objective when you entered the Special Education program?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Did you enter the vocational education course by choice?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Was your decision to enter a vocational education course encouraged by your peers?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Did your parents suggest and encourage a vocational education course for you?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Was your decision to enter a vocational education course encouraged by your guidance counselor?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Did you enter the vocational education course with a referral from your Special Education teacher?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Do you feel that your school has encouraged mainstreaming of Special Education students in vocational education courses?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Do you plan to continue your enrollment in your current vocational education course?

\_\_\_\_\_ 9. Do you plan to consider a different vocational education course in the future?