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The Effectiveness of Mainstreaming Special Needs Students with Regular Students in a High School Classroom Setting

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**THE EFFECTIVENESS OF MAINSTREAMING SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENTS
WITH REGULAR STUDENTS IN A HIGH SCHOOL CLASSROOM SETTING**

A Research Paper

**Presented to the Graduate Faculty of the
Department of Occupational and Technical Studies
At Old Dominion University**

**In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the
Master of Science in Occupational and Technical Studies**

By

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July 2002

APPROVAL PAGE

This research paper was prepared by Michael A. Maciejewski under the direction of Dr. John M. Ritz in OTED 636, Problems in Occupational and Technical Education. It was submitted to the Graduate Program Director as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Science in Occupational and Technical Studies.

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Date

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The mainstreaming of special needs students into regular classrooms has become an enormous responsibility for our school systems. Extra staff in the form of educational aids, special counselors, and therapists are some of those who now assist the classroom teachers. Paper work in one form or another such as individual education plans and administrative requests for additional assistance, along with frequent meetings that include the student, staff, and parents, are also parts of the daily duties and responsibilities that schools must perform in order to educate the various classifications of special needs students.

But how do you classify a student as a special needs child and just how effective are our programs when it comes to ensuring these students are afforded the same opportunities as our other students? A special needs student is any student that could have a variety of problems. Learning disabilities, physical disabilities, mental disabilities, and special medical conditions such as asthma, cancer, phobias, and bowel and bladder problems are only a portion of the problems schools, students, and parents must face and deal with. A special needs student can also have severe behavioral problems (Wircenski & Scott, 1995, p. 3). Even the school nurse's work schedule is deeply affected by mainstreaming special needs students by the amount of care and procedures that must be followed in order to assist special needs pupils. These are just a few of the obstacles school staffs must overcome to help take care of the nation's youth.

School systems spend millions of dollars each year for programs to educate and care for special needs children. The effectiveness of the programs is measured in the

success of the child. Is the child taken care of at school? Is he or she achieving the level of success as other students? Can the student function in activities or the learning process as well as regular students? All these areas need consideration in the success of educating a special needs student.

Schools must constantly monitor each special needs student and ensure the child's success is measurable and evident in order to assure the student is progressing in a positive direction in the vast and complex system of the special needs programs. The question is are these students learning as well as their peers according to the laws, directives, and grading criteria as put forth by educational reform?

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The problem of this study was to compare the achievement levels between all special needs students and all regular students in a high school classroom setting and the overall effectiveness of mainstreaming in this type of learning environment.

RESEARCH GOALS

The goals of this study were to answer the following questions:

1. Are special needs students as successful in a regular classroom setting as other students are?
2. Do special needs students work and learn as well as other students in a regular classroom setting?
3. Do special needs students respond to the various teaching methods as well as other students?
4. Do special needs students respond to media and training aids as well as other students?

5. Is mainstreaming special needs students in a regular classroom setting successful overall or should other improvements be made?

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

The education of special needs students is a very time consuming and expensive endeavor. These students are placed in regular classrooms with other students (by law) and are expected to learn and achieve the same levels of success as their peers (Pautler, 1999, p. 15).

Educational aids are provided in the school system and often accompany special needs students to their various classes. Many times however, the students are left alone in classes and must work their way along through the curriculum as a regular student does.

A problem with this process is that these students are already a step behind the other students, depending upon their disability or learning difficulty. Teachers cannot afford the time to stop an entire class and hold up progress for one or two students. Therefore, the student can only do the best that he or she can do.

When the time comes to check achievement, it depends on the child what the outcome will be. Sometimes the report is better than expected, other times success does not come easy. Often, it is difficult to ascertain whether special needs students are successful or behind due to the fact that many records and assessment results are kept confidential (Huey & Remley, 1990). Documentation comparing special needs students to their counterparts is rarely, if ever, done. A closer look must be taken at the overall situation to see truthfully just how successful our special needs students really are in a regular classroom setting and how effective mainstreaming and inclusion actually is.

LIMITATIONS

The limitations that applied to this study include:

1. The information derived was from contact with teachers, administrators, students, and other staff members from a community high school.
2. Teachers, administrators, and staff must adhere to local, state, and federal regulations concerning education, procedures, and the releasing of information without infringing on the rights of any individual.
3. Names of the students and school shall not be used.
4. The researcher must adhere to school regulations and procedures concerning student information.
5. Data and observations will be taken during the 2001-2002 school year.

ASSUMPTIONS

The researcher made the following assumptions:

1. Special needs students should work, learn, and follow the same guidelines as well as regular students.
2. Teachers and staff have been trained on how to educate and care for special needs students.
3. Achievement levels for special needs students should be the same or comparable to regular students, depending on the learning disability or capability of the child.

PROCEDURES

The researcher used student grade averages and performance reports to collect data to perform this study. Classroom observations of actual students were also used to gather further information contained in this study. Various classrooms and different

subject areas for grades nine through twelve were used and observed throughout this research. Interviews and observations were conducted with special education teachers, regular subject teachers, therapists, counselors, and administrators in order to observe and assess the full spectrum of an effective mainstreaming program at a community high school.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

The following terms are defined to assist the reader in understanding this study:

1. **Basic skills information** – A measure of achievement levels and competencies in the areas of reading, spelling, writing, math, and language development. These measurements are used to determine the extent to which a student has learned (Wircenski & Scott, 1995, p. 723).
2. **Special Needs Student** – A number of categories which are used to describe “at risk students” who may not succeed in our education system that include, but not limited to, some of the following terms: learning disabled, gifted and talented, disadvantaged, low ability, slow learner, medical problems, handicapped, or low-performing (Wircenski & Scott, 1995, p. 3).

OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS

The problem of this study was to compare the achievement levels between all special needs students and all regular students in a high school classroom setting and the overall effectiveness of mainstreaming in this type of learning environment. With information and grades provided by administrators, and through classroom observations, a determination will be made as to the effectiveness of mainstreaming special needs students in a regular classroom setting. This research will also help determine if special

needs students can achieve the same levels of success as efficiently as their classmates in a local community high school program. Chapter II reviews the literature that the researcher based his study on and Chapter III further defines the methods and procedures the researcher used. Chapter IV lists the report's findings and Chapter V presents the summary, conclusions, and recommendations that the researcher has drawn from this study.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter will review the literature and procedures concerning the subject of mainstreaming special needs students in today's classrooms. It will also review the opinions of proponents and opponents of mainstreaming. Some of the responsibilities of the school will also be reviewed.

MAINSTREAMING AND INCLUSION OVERVIEW

The classroom today is a vast contrast to what it was several decades ago. Violence is an everyday occurrence and discipline continues to wind into a downward spiral in many schools. Many students come from broken homes or have no parents at all, and are left to the care of a guardian. In all this confusion and with the technology of a new century, much has changed for the special needs students also. Our country has passed many laws and acquired many resources to help make special needs students a productive part of society. But how does today's learning environment impact our special needs students and how effective is mainstreaming in general?

As we move through the year of 2002, more than 30 percent of the U.S. population has a racial or ethnic minority background. If the children of these families were evenly distributed across the nation's classrooms, a hypothetical class of 30 children would have 10 students from racial or ethnic minority groups; of these 10, six children would belong to families for whom English is not the home language, and two to four children would have limited English proficiency. Although the United States traditionally has been a culturally and linguistically diverse nation, today's schools have an increased awareness of the need to acknowledge and address issues of diversity

(Giangreco & Chigee, 1993, pp. 3–10).

Children with special needs also are increasingly represented in general education classrooms. Federal Laws relating to children with disabilities, such as the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (Public Law 94-142), specify that all students who have disabilities be entitled to a free, appropriate public education, regardless of skill levels or severity of disability, in the least-restrictive environment possible. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 1997 and The Carl D. Perkins Act of 1998 are just a few of the latest laws passed to assist special needs students and establish new guidelines for schools.

Federal law intertwines with attempts to incorporate disabled students in regular classrooms, from some type of mainstreaming which brings students with disabilities into regular classrooms for some classes, to full inclusion. Inclusion is the educational practice of integrating students with disabilities and other special needs into the regular classroom with students who do not have disabilities.

Proponents of full inclusion argue for including all special-needs children in regular classrooms at their home schools and eliminating all special education classes. The aim of full inclusion is threefold: to develop the social skills of children with disabilities, to improve the attitude of non-disabled students toward children with disabilities, and to develop positive relationships and friendships between disabled and non-disabled children (Giangreco & Chigee, 1993, pp. 27–35).

These efforts make students with disabilities more visible in every type of school setting, including the early education classroom. However, ever since the integration of special needs students years ago, negative attitudes towards this segment of our school

population abound. Even those who were willing to take children with disabilities in the classroom had very little training and really did not know where to begin (Chandler & Greene, 1995, p. 98). As one author noted:

"Most professionals and paraprofessionals prepared to work with non-disabled children know little about disabilities, about how impairments may affect children, or what strategies to use in addressing questions and problems in ways that expand and enhance positive attitudes in young children" (Brickner, 1995, p. 188).

The combination of poor attitudes and limited training further resulted in inclusion failures in many educational programs. Many of the special needs students also have a low self-esteem and do not fit in with their peers, which often creates problems.

On the other hand, others go to great length to ensure all students have an equal chance for an education. Many of these programs are often a shared responsibility among teachers, administrators, students, families, and communities to help all students become productive members of society. Teams work together to ensure that a continuum of support services, appropriate resources, and ongoing assessment procedures are provided.

Some schools are fortunate and can invest in various media and training aids and additional educational personnel to help special needs students. Movies, special subject shorts, hands on teaching aids, computers and software, and even field trips to various places are used in the learning process, and are highly encouraged to reach all the senses and learning styles of students. These educational aids greatly enhance the learning process for special needs students.

CLASSIFICATION OF SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENTS

Children with disabilities can be classified in a number of ways. Perhaps the most relevant classification system deals with their eligibility for early intervention and special education services. To be eligible for such services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, children can fit into any of the thirteen defined categories that identify the type of disability: deafness, dual-sensory impairments, hearing impairments, mental retardation, multiple handicaps, orthopedic impairments, other health impairments, serious emotional disturbances, specific learning disabilities, speech or language impairments, visual impairments and blindness, traumatic brain injuries, and autism (Wircenski & Scott, 1995, pp. 13-23).

Because of the negative effects of early labeling, IDEA allows states to use the category called developmental delay for young children with special needs. Each state has specific criteria and measurement procedures for determining children's eligibility for early intervention and special education services, including what constitutes developmental delay (Wircenski & Scott, 1995, pp. 13-23).

Other classifications also exist. Many children can be diagnosed by their physicians as having specific conditions or syndromes. For example, children may be diagnosed as having cerebral palsy, spinal bifida, muscular dystrophy, and many other conditions. Children with such diagnoses may be eligible for special education services under a category such as orthopedic impairments (McLaughlin & Warren, 1992, pp. 95 - 105).

The school nurse program is not just for minor injuries anymore. School nurses now may care for students with intravenous tubes for medication, feeding tubes,

tracheotomies, and ventilators. Those advanced technological devices require care and monitoring. Students in wheelchairs may be unable to use the toilet by themselves or may require the insertion of a catheter (Harvey, 1995, p. 13).

Students without physical disabilities are also requiring more care. School nurses administer more medications than ever before. In addition to dispensing prescription medications, such as Ritalin for Attention Deficit Disorder, nurses help students with chronic conditions to manage their health. Students with diabetes or asthma must have a monitored care plan. It is the school nurse's responsibility to help students follow their care plans during school hours. The school nurse must be familiar with every student's treatment regimen, including any devices or medical procedures the treatment requires. This is all a far cry compared to what school nurses used to do (Harvey, 1995, p. 15).

Some school districts are in a constant battle as to how far they must go to take care of a special needs student. In one county, there is a court case concerning the remodeling of a school. There is a student that must use a wheelchair. However, there are no elevators to get to the upper floors. The parents want this school remodeled for their child. The school is very old and the county does not have the funds to undertake such a project. The battle is ongoing to obtain enough funding for remodeling and to accommodate this special needs student.

It is because of reasons such as this, instead of integration, others call for segregation. How do you handle a special needs student who is violent, disruptive, or has other problems that require reworking of current school facilities or programs? Many try to walk the fine line when it comes to taking care of those students who may have problems and must use segregation and put all these students in one place, away from the

regular students, during various periods of the day, or in an alternative program all day, until they can act and meet the set guidelines as other students do. Some schools send their students to another school that is specially operated and able to handle violent students.

Whether you are for or against inclusion, there are issues that are constantly being brought to the forefront from both sides on the subject. Placing students into worthwhile programs takes much consideration and teamwork by the school faculty.

"Age and grade appropriate placement is the most controversial component of inclusion because it is based on ideals, values, and goals that are not congruent with the realities of today's classrooms. Proponents of full inclusion assume that the general education classroom can and will be able to accommodate all students with disabilities, even those with severe and multiple disabilities. They assume that such students can obtain educational and social benefits from that placement. Those who oppose full inclusion argue that, although methods of collaborative learning and group instruction are the preferred methods, the traditional classroom size and resources are often inadequate for the management and accommodation of many students with disabilities without producing adverse effects on the classroom as a whole. Some special education experts, however, believe that some students are unlikely to receive appropriate education without placement into alternative instructional groups or alternative learning environments, such as part-time or full-time special classes or alternative day schools" (Kochhar & West, 1995, p. 200).

Grading is also another issue for special needs students. It is a common practice among teachers not to lower the bar when it comes to grades. Everyone must meet the

set criteria. Coming up with a fair grading system to suit all the students' capabilities can be a struggle.

“The design and use of judicious and meaningful report cards for students with disabilities, especially those included within general education, can be a difficult task. The traditional system of comparing a student with a disability with the rest of the class is inconsistent with the goals of the Education of All Handicapped Act and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Accommodations in instruction and assessment of student progress can promote a more accurate representation of student knowledge when traditional report cards are used. Adaptations of and alternatives to traditional report cards also provide effective ways to report the academic progress of students with disabilities. The system selected should recognize individual differences in intellectual ability and learning strength for all students. Report cards should provide descriptive information illustrating student accomplishments and identify areas needing improvement. Accommodations, instruction, testing, and/or the grading process itself can reduce teachers' stress in assigning grades and increase the relevance of report cards for parents and their students with disabilities" (Azwell & Schmar, 1995, p. 35).

BENEFITS FOR STUDENTS AND TEACHERS

Finally, an overall effective inclusion program should be a benefit to all, not just to the special needs students. School systems must look at the overall purpose and goals of mainstreaming and have to check to make sure it is working for all, not just for some. Some of the benefits of an effective inclusion program are as follows:

Benefits for Children with Disabilities

- More stimulating environments

- Role models who facilitate communication, social, and adaptive behaviors
- Improved competence in IEP objectives
- Opportunities to make new friends and share new experiences
- Greater acceptance by peers
- Membership in a class and in the school

Benefits for Children without Disabilities

- More accepting of individual differences
- More comfortable with students that have disabilities
- Become more helpful in general
- Acquire leadership skills
- Improved self-esteem

Benefits of Inclusion to Teachers

- Awareness and appreciation of individual differences in all children
- Access to specialists and resources that can help all children
- Learn new teaching techniques that can help all children

SUMMARY

Although our country's school systems have made great advancements to improve the learning environment for special needs children, there is still much work to be done. For every step forward in the programs to teach special needs children, somewhere there are school systems that may be taking two steps back. With all the changes in society, laws, and technology, schools should be able to give every special needs student the same opportunities as there are for the regular students. Lack of money or resources should not get in the way of keeping all students in school and making them productive members of

society.

Schools must also ensure that special needs students are meeting the passing criteria and are placing them in programs which are effective and that will offer the most help and education to ensure the success of the students and the educational system.

Chapter III will discuss the methods and procedures used to gather the data and information for this study. The methods of data analysis will be provided and explained.

CHAPTER III

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Chapter III contains a description of the methods and procedures used to gather the necessary information and data needed to complete this study. It describes the population and student data that were the focus of this research at a local area high school that incorporated grades nine through twelve. How the data were gathered and organized will be described in detail.

POPULATION

The main focus of this study was the special needs students in a local high school. Their academic performance, behavior, and learning capabilities as compared to the regular student population were recorded and observed throughout the 2001 – 2002 school year. At the time of the completion of the study, there were 78 special needs students and 343 regular students in the school. These numbers fluctuated slightly during the school year due to several factors such as family relocation, the shifting of students in various programs, and unfortunately a small number of students that dropped out of school.

RESEARCH DESIGN

This study will use a descriptive approach in comparing the academic performance of special needs students with the regular student segment of the school. Academic performance and the effort of school and county personnel will be documented and reviewed in order to make a clear decision as to whether or not the inclusion of special needs students is actually a successful policy and will help students in their future lives. Multi-comparisons of the entire school process will be made in order to make

recommendations due to the impact of the inclusion of special needs students in the classroom.

METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

The requirement of this particular school system is that in order to graduate, a total of 21 credits are required in order to receive a high school diploma. There are also additional requirements such as mandatory classes including various levels of English, mathematics, and classes that include technology education. Students are allowed only three unexcused late passes to class and five unexcused absences to school after which they will receive no credit for that current semester. These requirements are well documented and student data will be obtained from office personnel.

How many students from both populations that successfully completed the school year according to passing grades and those who did not will be carefully recorded in distinctly separate categories. Actual names and posted grades will not be listed. Office referrals due to behavior problems in both populations throughout the school year will also be listed.

Observations of all students in special needs classes and inclusion classes shall also be made. Special notes will be taken on both populations for special interest items such as behavior, class participation, and the effort that is placed into helping students learn pertinent class material. These observations will be done in order to help with recommendations for the future.

The listed information will be gathered from school and county administration and staff. Data will be requested from counselors and office personnel. Interviews will be conducted in order to obtain additional background information on the special needs

inclusion program and policies. Exactly how many support personnel are used by the school in order to assist the special needs population will also be listed. A cost estimate for the school year in order for the school to help these students will also be provided.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

The problem of this study was to compare the achievement levels between all special needs students and all regular students in a modern high school classroom setting and the overall effectiveness of mainstreaming in this type of learning environment. Information on passing grades from both sets of students and other pertinent school information such as the number of dropouts and office referrals will be compared and tabulated in order to make successful conclusions and recommendations according to the research goals. Classroom observations will also be made in order to provide additional support information. The Chi – square statistical method will be used to provide a pass/fail frequency comparison.

SUMMARY

A comparison of special needs students and regular students in an area high school was done in order to examine the policy of inclusion in a normal classroom environment vice having the special needs population in separate classes as was done in the past. The problem of this study was to compare the achievement levels between all special needs students and all regular students in a modern high school classroom setting and the overall effectiveness of mainstreaming in this type of learning environment. Chapter IV discusses the findings of the study and the comparison of data among the student population.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The purpose of this chapter is to report the findings of the research study. The study's purpose was to compare the achievement levels between all special needs students and all regular students in a modern high school classroom setting and the overall effectiveness of mainstreaming in this type of learning environment.

The method of data collection for the study was by obtaining data for each student, which consisted of grades and educational status in the school system along with classroom observations of both inclusion and special education classes. School administrative personnel made the data available for the purpose of this research. The data were obtained from the 2001 – 2002 school year.

REPORT OF FINDINGS

At the close of the school year on June 11, 2002, there were 78 special needs students at the high school studied. The needs ranged from physical impairment such as hearing and prosthetics, to emotional and learning disabilities, and special family circumstances. A very experienced school staff along with aids from the county, worked very hard to support every student to help ensure a successful school year. A summary of students, special staff, and aids is as follows in Table I.

TABLE I – SCHOOL STAFF

Special needs students	Regular students	Special education teachers	Educational aids	Student therapists	Counselors
78	343	2	2	3	2

As Table I illustrates, for a large student population, there are not many special education teachers or aids to thoroughly support all the special needs students. These teachers work with regular teachers in inclusion classes along with holding their own special education classes with the students. These two teachers were also required to attend 120 Individualized Education Plan meetings during the school year. The two educational aids also are assigned classes to assist the classroom teacher who may have a group of special education students. Counselors and therapists schedule meetings with the students on a regular basis depending on the need of the student.

While shorthanded, all the special education teachers and aids, along with the classroom teachers, made great efforts to help all the students learn the material they were being taught. Special learning materials and teaching aids were obtained in many classes to help reach the various learning styles of all the students. Teachers spent many hours preparing for classes and obtaining the materials necessary to hold a good class. Videos, displays, hands on training, and library trips were a part of the daily classroom routine.

SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENTS IN THE CLASSROOM

The extra efforts by all the teachers and aids garnered good results among the wide range of students when taking a closer look at the passing scores of various classes. As the school year came to an end, all the students received passing grades and moved on with the exception of three seniors (two regular students and one special needs), who were not allowed to graduate due to low grades and insufficient credits. Grades on class work covered the full spectrum, from A's to F's among special needs students as

compared to regular students. After checking overall grades, 35% of the regular students received one to two higher-grade levels as compared to special needs students.

There were some discipline problems with the special needs students, as well as regular students. There were 66 office referrals for special needs students, while there were 15 for regular students. This is due to the difficulty of learning the material, which creates frustration among the special needs students. Observations in the classroom have helped make this point a lot clearer during the research.

Several students, due to behavior problems, were sent to alternative school; they are not however, listed as special needs students under this particular school system. Some students dropped out of school or were incarcerated but are no longer considered a responsibility of the school. A general breakdown of the student population and those who did not complete the school year is as follows Table II.

TABLE II – STUDENT POPULATION

Special needs students that passed the school year	77
Regular students that passed the school year	341
Special needs students that did not pass the school year	1
Regular students that did not pass the school year	2
Alternative students	3
Dropouts – Special needs	3
Dropouts – Regular students	6
Incarcerated	10

SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENTS' WORK AND LEARNING

Through observation it was noted that special needs students and regular students worked and learned very well together in their classes. The regular students were receptive to their special education counterparts. Many times they were all placed together in teams, depending on what class projects or tasking was assigned. This worked well for the special needs students. A large portion of special needs students in each class was able to keep up with assignments and receive passing grades on the tasking given. Also through classroom observations, it was noted that special needs students participated in class as much as their regular student counterparts.

RESPONSE TO TEACHING METHODS, MEDIA AND TRAINING AIDS

Special needs students respond much better to the personalized method of teaching and hands on learning vice sitting through a straight lecture. These students understood the tasking more rapidly when working with the teacher or an educational aid rather than on their own. Pairing up students also was very effective for the special need students, although at times it may be difficult to match up individual students with those that they can easily work with.

Media, when used at the proper educational level, was a great benefit to the learning process of the special needs students. This method was very effective when used in addition to the lectures on the topics. As long as the media was easy for the students to understand, they responded very well to the lesson.

The positive verbal and physical response to learning was also much more evident when adequate training aids pertaining to the topic were used in the lesson. When students were actually able to use or touch an object, their comprehension appeared to

drastically improve. Special needs students learned more easily using their hands while performing a task or trying to learn a topic.

MAINSTREAMING SUCCESS

The school has a very successful mainstreaming program as evident in the passing rate of all the students, not just special needs students. As much help and guidance as possible was given to each and every student. The extra effort put forth by the faculty and staff greatly contributed to their highly productive program.

Table III shows a Chi – square matrix to analyze the pass/fail frequency of the special needs students and regular students. The matrix identifies the number of special needs and regular students and those who did not successfully complete the school year. The calculated chi – square (χ^2) was .44.

TABLE III – CHI – SQUARE MATRIX

Special needs students that successfully completed the school year: 77	Regular students that successfully completed the school year: 341
Special needs students that did not successfully complete the school year: 1	Regular students that did not successfully complete the school year: 2

In addition, support of special needs programs often goes beyond the classroom. A portion of these students is enrolled in the school lunch program in order to receive a healthy breakfast and lunch at no cost. Another portion of these students are also in special after school programs to assist them in their education. This involves programs such as tutoring, special classes, and job placement. Between programs such as free lunch (for the special needs segment only), tutoring, and salaries for personnel, it cost this high school an estimated \$400,000.00 this school year to keep the special needs students in the educational system. And, although not a part of this study, it was noted that 30% of all students had only one parent or were in the custody of guardians. The research has

shown that it took a great deal of coordination between all concerned when dealing with these various factors that also contributes to the success of mainstreaming special needs students.

SUMMARY

This chapter included the findings and a summary of the data collected for the research to determine the achievement levels between all special needs students and all regular students in a modern high school classroom setting and the overall effectiveness of mainstreaming in this type of learning environment in order to help support the research goals. Chapter V includes the summary, conclusions, and recommendations of the research.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter contains a summary of the research conducted. It contains the conclusions for the research and the recommendations to further the study.

SUMMARY

The problem of this study was to compare the achievement levels between all special needs students and all regular students in a high school classroom setting and the overall effectiveness of mainstreaming in this type of learning environment. While many laws and policies concerning special education have been passed, regular studies are not accomplished to actually see if mainstreaming is really working for our students. As a result, this study has attempted to enter the classroom to find how well special needs students are performing in a particular high school. The goals of this study were to answer the following questions, which served as guidelines for the research:

1. Are special needs students as successful in a regular classroom setting as other students are?
2. Do special needs students work and learn as well as other students in a regular classroom setting?
3. Do special needs students respond to the various teaching methods as well as other students?
4. Do special needs students respond to media and training aids as well as other students?
5. Is mainstreaming special needs students in a regular classroom setting successful overall or should other improvements be made?

Data were gathered concerning the entire student population, their performance and grades, as well as through direct classroom observations and interviews to see if special needs students are being supported and performing according to the standards as well as their peers in order to obtain the necessary basic skills in order to successfully function as other people.

CONCLUSIONS

As the documentation shows and through much effort from the school faculty and staff, as well as through the county, special needs students are being well taken care of in this school. The overwhelming success rate of passing students is quite conclusive. There was only one special needs student and two regular students who failed to pass the school year and also graduate. Special needs students can perform as well as their peers and achieve the same results if given the right instruction and support that they require. There is enough evidence to prove mainstreaming can be a very successful program as exhibited by this school.

The research objectives were established to help in solving the problem of this study. The following are the objectives of this study along with the data collected to support the objectives.

1. Are special needs students as successful in a regular classroom setting as other students are? While the study has shown that grades will vary from student to student, the overall answer to this question is yes. However, the student must put forth as much effort as the teachers do in order to achieve success. Often, the teachers go through a great amount of effort to ensure all students learn the material. Many times, if a student does not understand the material, he or she will not ask for help, get frustrated, create a

problem, or just take the “F” for that portion of the class. If a special needs student does not succeed, it is not because the teacher is not trying to get the material across. The teachers tried a variety of methods to help students. Many bad grades were received for the simple fact that work was incomplete or not turned in at all. But, many of the special needs students were as successful as their peers. Since the Chi – square value of .44 is far below and does not exceed the value of 2.710 at the .05 level required for the level of significance, the researcher may conclude that there is no significant difference between the two groups of students and that special needs students will be as successful in attaining passing grades along with regular students.

2. Do special needs students work and learn as well as other students in a regular classroom setting? The overall answer to this question is yes. However, a great amount of effort is put forth by educators to keep these students on task. As the research has shown, there is not enough special education teachers or aids to adequately cover and guide each student individually continually throughout the class. Special needs students do fall behind and must work harder to complete their work. Many of them are successful and get the work done, while a small portion of others require more time to complete the work or do not finish it at all. Being in a regular classroom does appear to help with their motivation and ability to complete their work.

3. Do special needs students respond to the various teaching methods as well as other students? Many of the special needs students responded well to all types of teaching methods used in the classroom. Many do not respond well to just a straight lecture as other students can, however. But while working in groups and with educational aids, they responded quite well and contributed their portion of work to the

task at hand. They really respond well to individual attention. When someone takes the time to explain and demonstrate things more clearly, the response is positive.

4. Do special needs students respond to media and training aids as well as other students? Many special needs students respond better to the “hands on” approach. If they have an article or project that they can feel and see, or work on it, it is much better for them. Training aids such as rocks that were used in one particular class were very helpful to the students. Easy to read charts and color schemes are also a big help to the special needs students. Videos can help some students while others lose interest very quickly and cannot concentrate on the screen. The more training aids used in a class, the better the student outcome, especially for those with learning difficulties. Taking a day to go on a trip to see exhibits or to the library also help the special needs students. These last few methods appear to be very successful.

5. Is mainstreaming special needs students in a regular classroom setting successful overall, or should other improvements be made? There is no question that mainstreaming is successful for many students, and that they perform as well as their peers in school. However, all this comes at a cost. Teachers spend numerous hours preparing and in various programs to ensure success of their students. Often enough there is not insufficient funding to hire more personnel or materials to assist in the education of special needs students, and inevitably, along with other students are lost in the education system. Class sizes at times can be too overwhelming for the student as well as the teacher. In these classes, you just cannot get to every student all the time. Along with that, some students require additional special programs because they cannot

comprehend at all. Improvements need to be made in all these areas to ensure the success of every student.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that special needs students still be mainstreamed into regular classes with other students. The data collected showed that these students could achieve passing grades along with other students. The benefits to all those involved in the classroom is by far better with special needs students than without them. Special needs students do not feel labeled and feel like other students in a normal classroom setting. Teachers and other students become part of the team in the whole mainstreaming process.

However, there is still room for improvements. Some students just do not have the thought process to think through a class such as technology or science. Often they are placed in classes like these and are set up for failure. If the school is going to place them in classes such as these, then there should be adequate funding to hire aids to assist the teacher, especially in large classes, to help these students. While the teachers try very hard, some students are overlooked or the material too tough. Proper class placement is a must.

Some students exhibit severe emotional problems and may have difficulties being placed in a regular class. Special schools or facilities need to be made available to students such as these. Their problems must be diagnosed and taken care of properly in order to help the student. While this school tried very hard to take care of each and every student, some parents did not support the idea of sending their child to a special facility. So the staff had to do the best they could. This needs to change. If a child cannot

function or control disruptive behavior, then the child should be moved to a more adequate facility. Alternative schools are just a small portion of the picture, and only a few students go there. Other programs and more staff need to be brought on line and in the schools in order to deal with the wide range of problems.

Many hours are spent handling discipline problems, not only in the classroom, but also outside of it. Stricter rules should be enforced to ensure good order and discipline so the teacher can teach the class. This cannot be done when you have children with various problems in your classroom. Office referrals occur on an almost daily basis and the administration must deal with them continually. Once again, if a child has severe problems, he or she should be in a facility to handle those problems.

More studies should be undertaken in order to find solutions to overcome these problems and provide even better classrooms and learning to those who need it, not only for the students themselves, but also for the educators who have taken on the awesome task of educating our children. With a few more improvements concerning funding and the classroom, mainstreaming can be successful for every student.

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