

TEACHERS' VIEWS OF INCLUSION AND  
SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT:  
A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF  
PRACTICES AND BELIEFS

Honors Thesis

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of Bachelor of Science in Psychology

In the College of Arts and Sciences at  
Salem State University

By  
Lindsay LaValley

Dr. Joanna Gonsalves  
Faculty Advisor  
Department of Psychology

\*\*\*

The Honors Program  
Salem State University  
2013

## Abstract

This thesis examines teachers' attitudes towards social skill development and beliefs towards inclusion and social integration in their young students with disabilities, while also examining some of their current practices. With the increasing push toward integrating classrooms, it is important to pay attention to how teachers are adapting to having more students with disabilities in their classrooms and how they are approaching developing social skills among their students. Children with special needs can be at a disadvantage because of the decreased amount of attention paid to their socialization.

A sample of elementary teachers, special education teachers, administrators and counselors were surveyed to ascertain their views on the topic, including whether teaching social skills is seen as important or not, what age to start teaching social skills, how much room in curricula do teachers have for developing social skills, and their views on the inclusion of special education students in the general education classroom. The main objective of the study was to compare attitudes and beliefs about inclusion and social integration that are held by elementary teachers with those held by special education teachers, administrators and counselors. Differences emerged in the practical application of social skill training strategies, and in the beliefs about when children should receive the most focused social skill training.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....1

Introduction.....3

Literature Review.....5

Methods.....13

Results.....15

    -Quantitative.....15

    -Qualitative.....19

Discussion.....20

References.....23

Appendix A: Disclosure Form.....24

Appendix B: Survey.....25

### Introduction

Educational curricula are highly structured and address children's cognitive, as well as motor, development. Students spend a considerable amount of their time with teachers in educational settings and, therefore, their development will, undoubtedly, be influenced by these environments. Inclusion, also referred to as 'mainstreaming', is the practice of integrating students with disabilities and special needs into the general education classroom. In full inclusion, students receive all forms of aid and assistance within the general education classroom and are never removed for services. Unfortunately, with the movement toward inclusive classrooms in public schools, teachers' roles are expanding and their responsibilities growing. This provides very little time for the development of social skills and there are not enough specific guidelines for educators to address these issues (Levins, Bornholt, & Lennon, 2005).

Children with special needs can be especially vulnerable because of the decreased amount of attention paid to their socialization. Social skill development does not come as easily to these children; children with disabilities are more likely to need specific interventions to give instruction in socialization (Strain, 1996). This thesis will examine teachers', special educators', administrators', and counselors' attitudes on social skill development and beliefs towards inclusion and social integration in their young students with disabilities. With the increasing push toward integrating classrooms, it is important to pay attention to how teachers are

## Inclusion and Social Development

adapting to having more students with disabilities in their classrooms and how they are approaching developing social skills among their students.

When viewing the topic of young children with physical, developmental, or intellectual disabilities from a professional lens, it is important to consider the individual and his or her lifelong well-being. One important aspect of a happy and successful life is establishing and maintaining social relationships. Research has made it evident that developing social skills during the critical period of childhood leads to better academic and social skills throughout school and life (Sartini, Knight, & Collins, 2013 and Johns, Crowley, & Guetzloe, 2005). Social psychology research has demonstrated, time and again, that those with good peer relationships live longer, on average, than those who lack these friendships (Knight, 1999). In particular, these people experience fewer diseases, have a better sense of self-esteem, and have a better overall mental health (Strayhorn & Strain, 1986). Children with any kind of disabilities face many challenges when it comes to relating to their peers, forming friendships, and then keeping these friendships.

Another important impact of developing social skills in young children is how the child learns to interact with society throughout their life. Not only is the purpose of this project to look at teachers' views on inclusion and social development with their special needs students, but to illustrate current issues related to integration and give suggestions on how to achieve the benefits (Varlier, G., & Vuran, S. 2006). Children with disabilities often have more difficulties picking up on social roles, rules, and norms, and, therefore, may suffer in every

## Inclusion and Social Development

social situation. For this reason, I believe attention should be paid to fostering social skills in young children, especially those with special needs or disabilities.

Additionally, because teachers' implicit and explicit attitudes affect the way they teach and interact with students, it is important to pay attention to this topic. Furthermore, the earlier an intervention is made, the likelihood that it will help a student internalize the concepts increases, and, in the case of social skills, be better prepared for a socially well-adjusted future (Stephens, Jain, & Kim 2010.) In the following sections, I will review current literature on the topics of social skill training, inclusion, teacher attitudes, and techniques and approaches to teaching social skills and successful classroom integration.

## Social Skills Training

Curricula have a constant focus on the language, motor, and cognitive development of children in American elementary education classrooms, but there is a noticeable lack of emphasis on social development and peer relations (Strain, 1996.) However, evidence of social skill acquisition can be seen as early as age two. Once these signals appear, actions should be taken to support their social development and continue to build upon it. The earliest developing social skills are based upon the interaction of temperament with environment. Consequently it is important that parents and teachers monitor the environment to keep children safe and create an atmosphere that will foster social growth through learning experiences (Tassoni, 2013.) One should remember that children's pace of

## Inclusion and Social Development

development is individual, and therefore, training should be tailored to their needs.

Social skills, like any other skill, are important to accrue for many reasons beside the obvious. Social skills are learned behaviors that children can either be explicitly taught or implicitly taught through modeling; without guidance and training, these behaviors can become maladaptive ones. The accumulation of various appropriate and adequate social skills leads to social competence so that one can navigate through multidimensional settings, for example a school or workplace, (Johns, Crowley, & Guetzloe 2005.) The factors that determine success are the acquiring of skills, and the continued proper usage of these skills in question, in broader environments.

The success of social skill training is contingent upon teachers' abilities to assess the sources of skill deficit and avenues for improvement. Proper assessment comes from observations, functional assessments, as well as other concrete means such as behavior-ratings scales. To implement a training plan or intervention, it takes mindfulness on the teacher's part of all of his or her students' varying needs when developing a multifaceted approach. She must recognize, and act upon, the teachable moments and situations that arise, and stand as a visible role model of social competence. Teachers should make social skill training an integral part of their curriculum (Johns, Crowley, & Guetzloe 2005.) Some general skills that should be focused on in elementary classrooms are addressing peers, sharing, working with others, conflict resolution, appropriate behaviors, and self-regulation (Johns, Crowley, & Guetzloe 2005.)

## Inclusion and Social Development

### Inclusion

Inclusion is the philosophy and practice of educating all students in the natural teaching environment with their peers, including those with cognitive delays, and physical and mental disabilities. All children are educated in the general education classroom and any students who require special adaptations or services have these needs met in the classroom. Proponents of inclusion suggest that since the 'real world' is technically an inclusive setting, it is a service to all children, with or without special needs, to be accustomed to this type of setting (Knight, 1999.) Theoretically then, the experience a child will get from an inclusive setting will help better prepare them to function in the diverse, global world.

Although the current study does not explicitly focus on preschool classrooms, it is notable to mention that Hestenes and colleagues (2008) conducted two studies on that assessed quality of inclusive and non-inclusive preschool classroom programs and also the quality of the interactions in these different programs through direct assessment and observations using the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised, (ECERS-R). They found that inclusive preschool classrooms showed higher global quality and both a higher frequency of teacher-student interactions and that these interactions were of better quality than in non-inclusive classrooms. Other studies have found that teachers tend to be more direct in their communications with children with disabilities and more focused on promoting cognitive play than social play (Quay, 1991; Goodman, 1992). Interactions that

## Inclusion and Social Development

teachers have with their students have the possibility to influence all aspects of the child's development, including the subsequent interactions children have with their classmates and other children (Hestenes, et al. 2008.)

There are many concerns regarding inclusive programs such as class size, a wide range of needs to address, variation in learning speeds, and social stigma. However, Knight assures that with structure and support from the entire school, as well as considerable amounts of coordination among classroom teachers and special education teachers, all students in inclusive classrooms can demonstrate as much learning, if not more, than non-inclusive student counterparts (Knight, 1999.)

Not only do teachers have an influence on students, but children have a significant influence upon one another. In this regard, inclusion provides for daily social interaction among peers. The United States Department of Education lists that not only are children with special needs and disabilities more likely to be victims of bullying, additional variables such as social skill challenges and intolerant environments may heighten the risk of bullying (Yudin, 2013). The U.S. D.O.E. also urges teachers and schools to ensure environments are not conducive to bullying in order for all students to reach their full potential, and, for students with special needs to continue learning in the least restrictive environment (Yudin, 2013).

Therefore, while inclusive classrooms may risk exposing students with special needs to negative peer interaction, if inclusion is done successfully, tolerance and acceptance will be more commonplace than bullying. Typically developing students can serve as role models for those with disabilities; routine interaction has

## Inclusion and Social Development

shown to improve various social aspects of behavior in children with special needs, including less disruptive behavior, increase in communication, and engaging with peers in social contexts. Another social benefit of inclusion is the greater responsiveness on the part of typically developing students toward children with special needs that has been seen in these contexts (Strain, P.J. 1996; Strain & Kohler, 1995).

## Teachers' Attitudes

As with most issues that pertain to classroom organization, teacher attitudes can be mixed on the issues of social skill training and inclusion. In a study by E.H. Finke (2009) and colleagues, the teachers interviewed remarked positively about inclusion and emphasized the importance of social skill training in a mixed-student setting. Inclusion provides opportunities for social integration that would otherwise not necessarily occur in unstructured environments like the cafeteria or the playground. This can facilitate peer role models and even friendships.

Although the teachers in the study agreed there were definite benefits to inclusion, there was also agreement about the negative consequences of inclusion. A notable trend about the negatives mentioned was how they all related to the additional tasks and responsibilities placed on the classroom teacher like enabling acceptance of the students, additional diversified lesson planning, and classroom behavior management. One of the most emphasized recommendations from the participants in the study, for other classroom teachers to follow, was to keep a

## Inclusion and Social Development

positive attitude toward inclusion, which shows that attitude can be a major challenge. Finke et al. attest that teachers' attitudes toward inclusion can determine how well they handle the challenges associated with it (Finke, E.H. 2009.)

Available research seems to agree on the point that teachers' beliefs and attitudes toward students with disabilities impacts the effectiveness of their teaching and how well they are able to include these students in the general education classroom. One study found that teachers' explicit attitudes can have an influence on their behaviors toward students with disabilities. To help rectify this situation, teachers' attitudes can be evaluated to assess for these negative explicit attitudes. Teachers can also be educated on different disabilities and their students' needs to help neutralize any negative explicit attitudes (Levins, et al. 2005.)

## Strategies for Social Skill Training

Researchers urge the importance of an early start to social skill training, especially for those with special needs; in order for success in general education classrooms, students with disabilities may require help to adjust to the social environment (Stephens, Jain, & Kim 2010). The first important step is to conduct assessments of individual social ability levels. This should be done initially in order to set goals and make plans for class, group, and individual lessons. Follow up assessments should be conducted frequently to track progress (Sartini, 2013.)

Referring to a concept from teacher and author Richard LaVoie, classroom educators can work with an individual student to conduct a "social autopsy" after a

## Inclusion and Social Development

negative social interaction has transpired (Grace, 2006.) This can consist of verbally recounting the details of the event on the part of the student, and the teacher modeling more appropriate behaviors put in the context of the situation. Giving concrete, specific examples of what to do, and what not to do, can help portray memorable illustrations of proper behavior for students, which can be more necessary for students with special needs.

It is important in inclusive classrooms, and arguably all classrooms, for teachers to educate their students on individual differences, as some negative attitudes, and actions, toward students with special needs may come out of a lack of understanding about disabilities (Grace, 2006.) Researchers have had success teaching students without disabilities strategies for interacting and communicating with their special needs peers (Sartini, Knight, & Collins 2013.) This promotes successful social contact and relationships that innately provide a rewarding experience for all individuals involved and creates a more socially harmonious classroom.

Literature exists on group counseling as a technique for social skill training in children with special needs. Group counseling simultaneously gives experience in teamwork, learning from peers, and a safe environment to practice new skills. This technique can also help in that a comfortable atmosphere is created where individuals can feel free to share worries, concerns, and fears with those that can relate. Group counseling has shown positive results when used for social skill training with general education elementary students (Stephens, Jain, & Kim 2010).

## Inclusion and Social Development

Along the lines of group work, all students can benefit when social skills are taught to the entire class, either through activities or as part of a lesson (Grace, 2006.) By teaching a lesson on a specific social behavior or set of behaviors followed by an activity requiring those skills, students can be ‘primed’ to take initiative using their new skills (Sartini, 2013.) When teaching a lesson on social skills or using socially based activities, teachers should plan to include opportunities for frequent reinforcement, creating a pleasant and rewarding atmosphere of learning. It is also advised that teachers should avoid punishing for undesired social behaviors; punishment can diminish social confidence and counteract what could have been a social learning experience (Grace, 2006.) Table 1, below, summarizes key strategies for teachers to utilize when planning social skill training.

Table 1. *Strategies for Social Skill Training*

1.	Assess Level of Social Abilities
2.	Social Autopsy
3.	Group Discussions
4.	Class Lessons
5.	Planned Activities
6.	Frequent Reinforcement
7.	Educate on Individual Differences

For this reason, a sample of elementary teachers, special education teachers, and administrators were surveyed. The goal of the study was to determine whether teaching social skills is seen as important or not, what age to start teaching social skills, how much room is currently in the curricula of various elementary grades for

## Inclusion and Social Development

developing social skills, etc. The main objective of the project is to compare attitudes and beliefs about inclusion and social skill development that are held by elementary teachers with those held by special education teachers and administrators and counselors, with special educators valuing these concepts the most and administrators valuing them the least. I hypothesize that social integration and development will be more prominent in special education teachers' practices and viewed as more important by special education teachers than by elementary teachers and administration.

## Methods

### Participants

Participants were 38 public-school district employees that responded to an email asking them to complete a survey; the response rate was approximately 38%, given that the survey was sent to 100 school district employees. The school district is in a suburban city with a population near 43,000 people. The city's population demographically includes 75% white/Caucasian, 16% Hispanic, 4% African American, 2% Asian, the remaining 2% being of other racial descent or multi-racial. The school district includes seven elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school. Of the 38 respondents, eight were special education teachers, nine were administrators or counselors, and the remaining twenty-one were general education classroom teachers. Ninety-five percent of the participants were females, and the age range of participants was twenty-three to fifty-four with the average

## Inclusion and Social Development

age being forty. Years of experience in the education field ranged from two to twenty-nine years, the average amount of experience was 14 years. Due to the nature of the different positions of employment, there was great variation in the percent of students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) that the participant either had in their classroom or was in contact with.

## Procedure

Approval to run this study was obtained from the Salem State University Honors Program and the Salem State Institutional Review Board. Permission was also obtained from the school district's assistant superintendent to distribute the survey to the district's staff. In a district-wide email from the district's assistant superintendent, participants were asked to complete an online survey through Survey Monkey. The survey used is one that I adopted from Finke, E. H., McNaughton, D. B., & Drager, K. R. (2009) that is comprised of seven questions about background information followed by twelve ranking questions and three open-ended questions. Topics addressed in the survey include basic background information about the participant, their years of experience, and the percentage of their students that have Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). They were also asked about their typical classroom practices in regards to social skill instruction, for example, how often they address sharing and team work, observe and assess social skill functioning, and encourage positive peer interactions. Questions that determined their views on skill training and about the inclusion of children with

## Inclusion and Social Development

special needs in the general education setting included ranking statements such as “It is important to include children with special needs in a general education setting” and open-ended questions like “What are the challenges to successful inclusion of children with disabilities.” I have included the disclosure form and survey in Appendix A.

## Results

### Quantitative Analysis

Participant responses were divided on the basis of employment position: general education classroom teachers, special education teachers, or administrators and counselors, and by the percent of their students that had IEPs . A correlation was conducted on the responses to all of the scaled questions that compared the variation in answers by the percent of students with IEPs each participant reported. There was a correlation in the use of classroom practices, indicating that the participants with more IEP students used the practices less than participants with a smaller percentage of students with IEPs. These correlations were found in the responses for the following statements: I spend time developing team work skills with my students (-.342), I spend time developing sharing skills with my student (-.451), I address the issue of making friends with my students (-.375), and I address the topic of manners and being polite with my students (-.358). The mean data for each of the statement responses can be found in Table 2 below; where responses were rated on a Likert scale with a score of 1 indicating “never” and a

## Inclusion and Social Development

score of 3 indicating “often”. In each of these questions, the responses of the special education teachers indicated a lower use of these practices that was statistically lower than general education classroom teachers and administrators and counselors.

Table 2. Means and significance of social skills training practices differences.

Significant Statement:	Classroom Teachers	Special Ed. Teachers	Administrators & Counselors	Significance (at $p=.05$ level)
I spend time developing team work skills with my students	$\underline{M} = 2.809$ n = 21 sd=0.40237	$\underline{M} = 2.667$ n = 6 sd=0.5164	$\underline{M} = 2.889$ n = 9 sd=0.3333	p = .065
I spend time developing sharing skills with my students.	$\underline{M} = 2.714$ n = 21 sd=0.46291	$\underline{M} = 2.5$ n = 6 sd=0.5477	$\underline{M} = 2.778$ n = 9 sd=0.44096	p = .012
I address the issue of making friends with my students.	$\underline{M} = 2.762$ n = 21 sd=0.46344	$\underline{M} = 2.286$ n = 7 sd=0.7559	$\underline{M} = 2.667$ n = 9 sd=0.70711	p = .041
I address the topic of manners and being polite with my students.	$\underline{M} = 2.857$ n = 21 sd=0.35857	$\underline{M} = 2.714$ n = 7 sd=0.4879	$\underline{M} = 2.889$ n = 9 sd=0.33333	p = .052

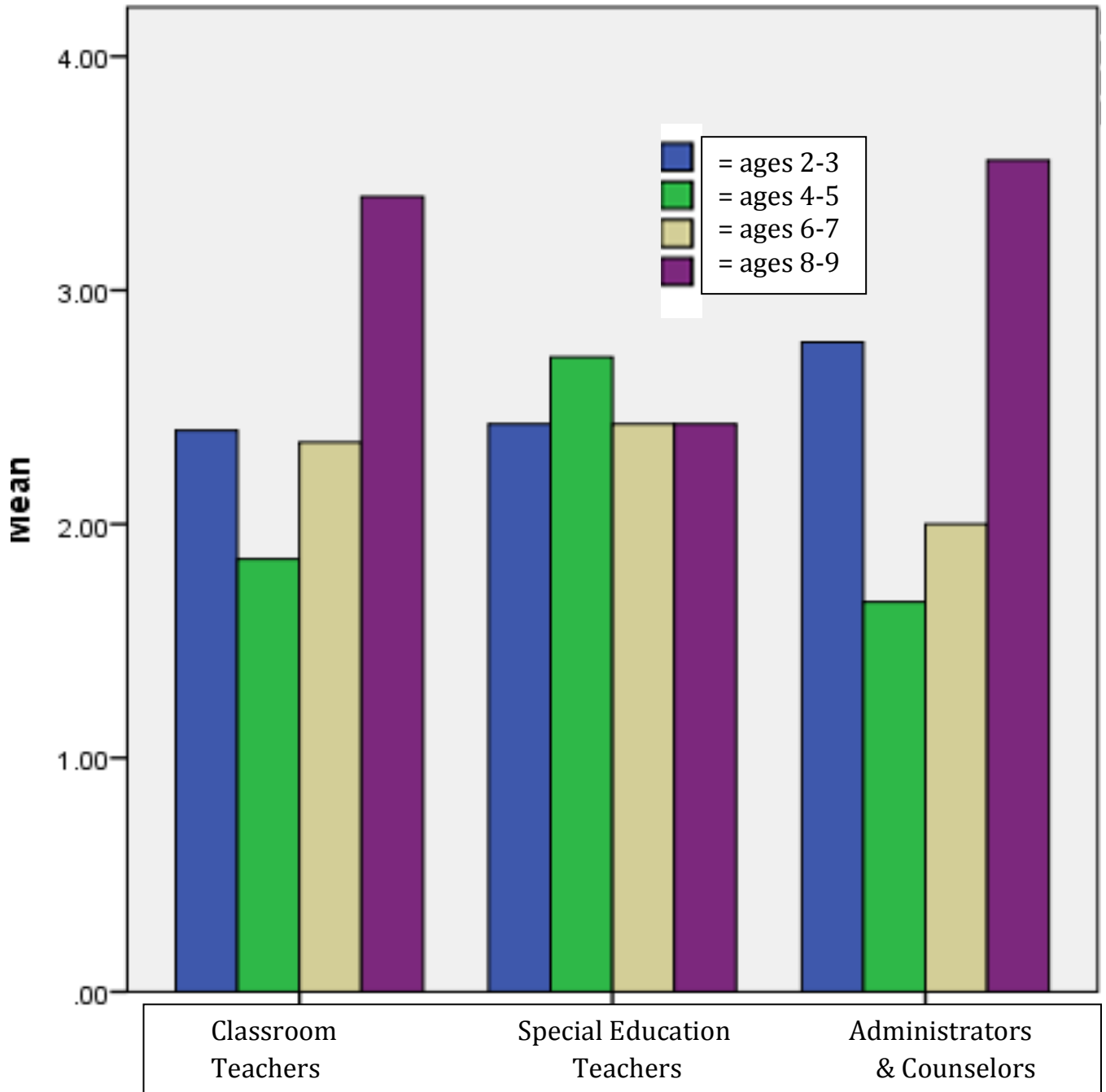
Another area that yielded significant results was the ranking section where participants were asked to rank from most focus to least focus, accordingly to their own beliefs, age groups being 2-3 years, 4-5 years, 6-7 years, and 8-9 years.

Responses by employment position were compared in a one-way ANOVA, mean

## Inclusion and Social Development

rankings by employment position are shown in Figure 1 below. There were statistically significant differences in the ranked amount of focus that should be given to the 4-5 year old age group ( $F(2,33)=3.749, p=.034$ ) and the 8-9 year old age group ( $F(2,33)=3.711, p=.035$ ). Again special education teachers showed differences in their responses while general education classroom teachers and administrators and counselors had similar responses. Special education teachers responded that the 4-5 year old age group should have more focus on social skill training than the other employment position groups, and conversely responded that the 8-9 year old age group should have less focus on social skill training than the classroom teachers, administrators, and counselors responded. Figure 1 shows consistent results among special education teachers, with an average importance placed across all ages. Meanwhile, general education classroom teachers as well as administrators show similar trends in how they rated the amount of focus on social skill training, which was statistically, significantly different from the results of the special education teachers. Both of these groups rated ages 4-5 as the most important time to focus on social skill training and ages 8-9 as the time of least important to focus on social skill training. The data was also analyzed by years of professional experience; no significant results were found.

Figure 1. Mean Rankings of Social Skills Training Focus across Age Groups



## Inclusion and Social Development

### Qualitative Analysis

The survey concludes with opinion-based open-ended questions on the topic of inclusion; the responses were assessed for any patterns or themes that seemed to appear. The three questions posed were: 1. What are the positive impacts of inclusion? 2. What are the negative impacts of inclusion? and 3. What are the challenges to successful inclusion? The majority (78.8%) of replies regarding the positive impact of inclusion was that it teaches skills such as tolerance, empathy, and understanding and that it allows for more peer interaction and role modeling. In terms of the negative impacts that inclusion could have, responses most often (55.2%) included social discrepancies between special education students and their general education peers and disrupting behaviors. Another prevalent response (51.7%) indicated that there is not enough support for the students with disabilities within the classroom and this lack of support affects teacher's ability to be efficient. In the feedback to the challenges to successful inclusion, a majority of replies (52.9%) included needing more time for planning and needing more support (resources, training, support staff, etc.). The responses to these questions indicated teachers' acceptance of inclusion, but that without proper support they are encountering many obstacles to successful inclusion.

Attention should be drawn in reference to the survey question asking how much room curriculum allows for developing social skills. There was no statistically significant difference in the responses based on employment position. In fact, the averages of their ranked scores were almost equal and fell below the

## Inclusion and Social Development

“Enough Room” category and twenty of the thirty-eight participants (53%) responded that the amount of room available for social development is “Less than desirable”. This reflects that there is a general feeling that there is not enough room in curricula to allow for proper social skills training and development.

## Discussion

Classroom teachers, special education teachers, administration, and counselors from one suburban school district were issued a survey on social skill training and inclusion. I hypothesized that social integration and development would be more prominent in special education teachers’ practices and viewed as more important by special education teachers than by elementary teachers and administrators. The results contradict the prediction in terms of what social skill training strategies are used more frequently based on employment position; on average, special education teachers reported using the strategies less than the other two professional groups. The results to the ranking of social skill training focus based on age groups, however, did yield some support to the hypothesis that special educators would view social skill training as more important. While classroom teachers, administrators, and counselors placed the most focus on ages 2-3 years and ages 8-9 years, special education teachers ranked the focus of social skills training consistent across age groups thereby indicating a constant concern for social development.

The significant differences in frequency of certain practices, as noted above, could be due to the different demands of different professional positions. There are

## Inclusion and Social Development

a variety of reasons that these practices were used less frequently by special education teachers, such as working on specific and concrete academic skills, as well as working on an individual level with students instead of in group settings. This does indicate, though, that special education students may receive more exposure to social skill training in the inclusive general education classroom if these teachers do actually use these practices more frequently.

The other finding regarding the ranking of amount of focus given to social skill training at a certain age shows a surprising discrepancy among the professional staff in the school. Ultimately, the age that social skill training is believed to be most important is a personal value decision possibly based on experience in the field, since there is no known evidence yet that indicates the ideal age of socialization. The differences of opinions on what ages should receive the most focus on social skill development can cause disagreements about what the best professional approaches to social skill training and timing are. Again, the statistical difference could be a result of the different nature of employment position. Special education teachers may place more emphasis on social skill training at all ages because of the increased challenges their students typically have with social skills and, therefore, aim to build a greater social foundation. The data was also analyzed by years of experience; no significant results were found.

Districts may have some curriculum regulations regarding social skill training; therefore, the results of this study are limited to the school district which the sample was taken from. The study is additionally limited by the gender composition of the sample. Although the field of education is typically dominated

## Inclusion and Social Development

by females, about 76% of public school teachers were females according to 2007-08 data (Institute of Education Sciences, 2011), the current sample was 95% female and therefore a more representative sample may yield different results.

The most important implication from this study can be taken from the open-ended questions. There was an overwhelming response indicating that classroom inclusion is a desired goal and can be implemented, but that general education classroom teachers are in need of support staff assistance, training, resources, material, and time to be able to make this happen. With many school budgets feeling economic strain, it is important to hear teachers' concerns over what they need from the school to effectively teach all students. Teachers, special educators, administration, and counselors should work together to plan how to best allocate staff and resources so that all students can receive appropriate education.

In terms of social skill training practices, if special needs students are less likely to receive social skills training through special educators, there becomes imperative for general education classroom teachers to be addressing these topics and incorporating these strategies into their curriculum. Again, communication between all teachers, administration, and counselors involved can ensure that students, particularly those with special needs, are receiving proper training for appropriate and complete social development.

References

- Finke, E. H., McNaughton, D. B., & Drager, K. R. (2009). 'All children can and should have the opportunity to learn': General education teacher's perspectives on including children with autism spectrum disorder who require ACC. *Augmentative and Alternative Communication, 25*(2), 110-122. doi:10.1080/07434610902886206.
- Grace, C. (2006). Can we be friends?. *Instructor, 115*(6), 27-29.
- Goodman, J. F. (1992). *When slow is fast enough*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Hestenes, L. L., Cassidy, D. J., Shim, J., & Hegde, A. V. (2008). Quality in inclusive preschool classrooms. *Early Education And Development, 19*(4), 519-540.
- Institute of Education Sciences (2011). Fast facts. Retrieved December 3, 2013, from <http://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=28>.
- Johns, B. H., Crowley, E., & Guetzloe, E. (2005). The central role of teaching social skills. *Focus On Exceptional Children, 37*(8), 1-8.
- Knight, B. (1999). Towards inclusion of students with special needs in the regular classroom. *Support For Learning, 14*(1), 3-7. doi:10.1111/1467-19604.00091.
- Levins, T., Bornholt, L., & Lennon, B. (2005). Teachers' experience, attitudes, feelings and behavioural intentions towards children with special educational needs. *Social Psychology Of Education, 8*(3), 329-343. doi:10.1007/s11218-005-3020-z.
- Quay, L. C. (1991). Caregivers' interactions with nonhandicapped and mainstreamed handicapped children in caregiving and instructional activities. *Early Education and Development, 2*, 261-269.
- Sartini, E. C., Knight, V. F., & Collins, B. C. (2013). Ten Guidelines to Facilitate Social Groups for Students with Complex Special Needs. *Teaching Exceptional Children, 45*(3), 54-62.
- Stephens, D., Jain, S., & Kim, K. (2010). Group counseling: techniques for teaching social skills to students with special needs. *Education, 130*(3), 509-512.
- Strain, P. J. (1996). Developing social skills in young children with special needs. *Preventing School Failure, 41*(1), 24.

## Inclusion and Social Development

- Strain, P. S., & Kohler, F. W. (1995). Analyzing predictors of daily social skill performance. *Behavioral Disorders*, 21, 78-87.
- Strayhorn, J. M. & Strain, P. S. (1986) Social and language skills for preventive mental health: what, how, who and when, in: P. S. Strain, M. J. Guralnick & H. Walker (Eds) *Children's social behavior: development, assessment and modifications*, 287–330.
- Tassoni, P. (2013). Side by side. *Nursery World*, 112(4312), 20-22.
- Valier, G. & Vuran, S. (2006) The view of pre-school teachers about integration. *Educational Sciences: Theory & Practice*. 6(2), 578-585.
- Yudin, M. (2013) U.S. Department of Education. Keeping students with disabilities safe from bullying. Retrieved December 12, 2013 from <http://www.ed.gov/blog/2013/08/keeping-students-with-disabilities-safe-from-bullying/>

Appendix A

**DIGITAL DISCLOSURE FORM**  
**Teacher Survey about Social Skills Training and Inclusion**  
**Lindsay LaValley**  
**Salem State University**

This survey evaluates teacher attitudes about social skills training and inclusion. The results will be reported in aggregate data form only and included in my senior thesis report. The questionnaire takes 5-10 minutes to complete. No compensation will be received for participation in this study. Participation is completely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time from part or all of this study.

Names or identities will not be used in reports or presentations of the findings of this research. The information provided to the researchers will be kept confidential with the exception of the following, which must be reported under Massachusetts's law.

1. Suspected cases of child or elder abuse
2. Information that individuals intend to harm themselves or others

After reading the above information, please continue on to participate in this study.

---

For questions or concerns about the research, please contact Dr. Joanna Gonsalves, Psychology Department (978-542-6247). For concerns about your treatment as a research participant, please contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Salem State University, Sponsored Programs and Research Administration, 352 Lafayette Street, Salem, MA 01970, (978) 542-7177 / (978) 542-7556 or [irb@salemstate.edu](mailto:irb@salemstate.edu).

Appendix B

**Teacher Survey**

Adopted from Finke, E. H., McNaughton, D. B., & Drager, K. R. (2009).

Basic Background Information

1. What is your age?
  2. What gender are you?
  3. What grade do you teach?
  4. How many years have you been teaching?
  5. How many children in your classroom?
  6. How many of these children have IEPs or considered to have special needs?
  7. What adaptations have you used to support the inclusion of children with special needs within the past year? Check all that apply.
- Design activities to provide a structural foundation
  - Use instruction that has value and meaning for all students
  - Promote appropriate instances of independence
  - Utilize assistive technology
  - Conduct assessments every day

Beliefs and Practices

On a scale of 1 to 5, with the scale being specified for each statement, rate the following statements:

It is important to include children with special needs in a general education setting.  
Not Important      1      2      3      4      5      Very Important

The need to address building social skills is higher with children with special needs than those without.  
Strongly Disagree      1      2      3      4      5      Strongly Agree

I address building social skills in my classroom every day.  
Strongly Disagree      1      2      3      4      5      Strongly Agree

I spend time observing student social interactions.  
Never      Sometimes      Often

I devote an entire lesson to an aspect of social functioning.  
Never      Sometimes      Often

I spend time developing team work skills with my students.  
Never      Sometimes      Often

I spend time developing sharing skills with my students.  
Never      Sometimes      Often

## Inclusion and Social Development

I address the issue of making friends with my students.

Never            Sometimes            Often

I address the topic of manners and being polite with my students.

Never            Sometimes            Often

I use and encourage positive peer interactions.

Never            Sometimes            Often

## Social Skills Training

1. At what age should social skills training receive the most focus in classroom curricula?

Please rank from the most focus to least focus

- Age 2 -3 years
- Age 4 – 5 years
- Age 6 -7 years
- Age 8 –9 years

2. How much room does your curriculum allow for developing social skills?

Less than desirable

Adequate

More than enough

## Inclusion Open-ended Questions

What are the positive impacts of including children with disabilities in the general education classroom?

What are the negative impacts of including children with disabilities in the general education classroom?

What are the challenges to successful inclusion of children with disabilities?