Summer 7-21-2024

Special Education Preschool Teachers' Perspectives, Attitudes, and Self-Efficacy Towards Inclusive Education

Mieke Kramer Tavares
University of Massachusetts Global, mieke.kramer.ed@gmail.com

Special Education Preschool Teachers' Perspectives, Attitudes, and Self-Efficacy Towards Inclusive Education

A Dissertation by

Mieke Kramer Tavares

University of Massachusetts Global

A Private Nonprofit Affiliate of the University of Massachusetts

Irvine, California

School of Education

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

July 2024

Committee in charge:

Phil Pendley, Ed.D., Committee Chair

Timothy McCarty, Ed.D.

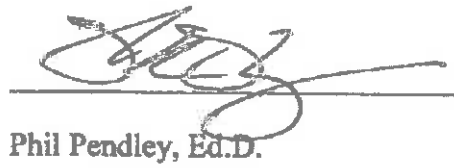
Zhanna Preston, Ed.D.

University of Massachusetts Global

A Nonprofit Affiliate of the University of Massachusetts

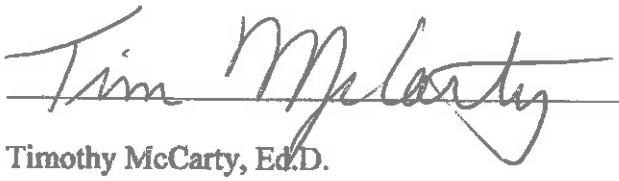
Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

The dissertation of Mieke Kramer Tavares is approved.



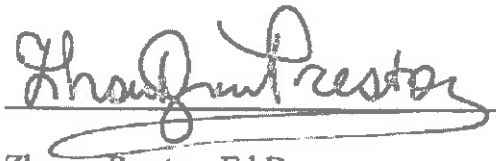
_____, Dissertation Chair

Phil Pendley, Ed.D.



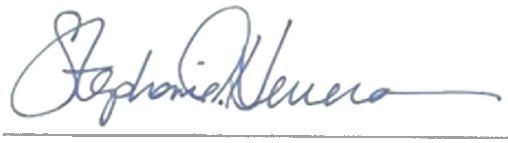
_____, Committee Member

Timothy McCarty, Ed.D.



_____, Committee Member

Zhanna Preston, Ed.D.



_____, Associate Dean

Stephanie Herrera, Ed.D.

July, 2024

Special Education Preschool Teachers' Perspectives, Attitudes, and Self-Efficacy Towards Inclusive Education

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

For Bob. And Gretchen. And Marieke.

A huge thank you to my husband, Jim Tavares, who patiently endured my obsessions with rewrites, listened to and tolerated my musings to include at least 10 more additional research topics, and conceded to endless evenings and weekends *not* filled with relaxation and quality family time. To my son, who managed to find every single article I was unable to locate through conventional dissertation research means. To my Delta Kappa Gamma sisters who helped me through the process of committing to one, and not three, research topic by reviewing and highlighting excess articles for me. And again to Jim Tavares who assisted with the final editing review. And finally, to Dr. Pendley, Dr. McCarty, and Dr. Preston for their guidance throughout this process.

ABSTRACT

Special Education Preschool Teachers' Perspectives, Attitudes, and Self-Efficacy Towards Inclusive Education

by Mieke Kramer Tavares

Purpose: The purpose of this study was to investigate the perspectives of special education preschool teachers in California regarding the inclusion of children with disabilities in general education preschool classrooms. Furthermore, the study examined the self-evaluation of these teachers regarding their abilities to support children with disabilities in general education classrooms. Last, the study aimed to identify additional factors that impact the attitudes of teachers towards including children with disabilities in general education preschool classrooms.

Methodology: A mixed methods nonexperimental descriptive, sequential, convergent research design was employed. Data collection tools included surveys (quantitative) and interviews (qualitative). In Phase 1, dependent variables were measured using Likert scales, and independent variables such as demographics were collected via a short questionnaire. In Phase 2 semistructured interviews were conducted. Methodological triangulation was used for data analysis.

Findings: Special education preschool teachers showed moderately positive attitudes towards inclusion, recognizing its social benefits but expressing concerns about full inclusion and current practices. They reported moderate to high confidence in supporting students in general education settings, contingent on available resources and support. No significant relationship between self-efficacy and attitudes was found. Qualitative analysis revealed 13 key factors influencing attitudes and self-efficacy.

Conclusions: The results of this study underscore the multifaceted nature of attitudes and self-efficacy in inclusive education. To improve teaching efficacy and attitudes towards inclusion among special education preschool teachers, the following key actions are necessary: (a) maintain a continuum of placement options and flexible service delivery models and employ an individualized approach to inclusion to ensure that diverse student needs are met; (b) enhance resource availability and support systems, including targeted and ongoing professional development on inclusive practices, collaboration time, lower teacher-student ratio, and highly trained paraprofessionals; (c) increase funding to support effective and meaningful inclusive education; and (d) promote inclusive mindsets and foster a culture of mutual respect and shared philosophies between general and special education staff.

Recommendations: Twelve suggestions for future research are made to further explore these issues. In addition, educational leaders should investigate context-specific mediating variables that affect self-efficacy and attitudes towards inclusion to identify effective strategies for enhancing inclusive education practices.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

There has been a global and national paradigm shift that emphasizes the importance of inclusion and belonging. Adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in New York on December 13, 2006, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) considers inclusion as a fundamental human right and aims to ensure that all persons with disabilities across the globe enjoy human rights and freedoms on an equal basis with others (United Nations, 2007). Article 24 emphasizes the elimination of barriers and the provision of support to foster an inclusive and equitable education system for persons with disabilities. To date, 185 of the 193 member states of the United Nations, including the United States, have signed the United Nations' CRPD (United Nations, n.d.).

Inclusive education typically refers to an educational practice that includes those students previously at risk of being excluded or marginalized due to a disability. But being a complex construct, the definitions of inclusive education vary around the world (Rapp & Corral-Granados, 2021). The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2005) purports that inclusive education ensures the full participation of all children within their community and society. An essential strand of the international policy agenda of UNESCO's International Board of Education stresses the importance of removing barriers that prevent children with disabilities to attend school along with their typically developing peers (Ydo, 2020). This involves providing modifications of learning content as well as accommodations to address the diverse needs of every learner, particularly those who have historically been marginalized (UNESCO, 2005). The term inclusive education in the United States refers to students with

disabilities being educated alongside their typically developing peers (Humphrey et al., 2020).

The origins of inclusive education in the United States can be traced back to the civil rights era in the 1950s. After the seminal decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), parents of children with disabilities capitalized on the momentum of the civil rights movement and the court's unanimous decision that "in the field of public education the doctrine of separate but equal has no place" and that all children should be included in the public education system (Yell, 2019, para. 7). The concept of inclusion within special education was further developed when, in 1986, the Department of Education made way for the Regular Education Initiative (REI), a movement that advocated for one educational system rather than two separate systems, namely general education and special education (Will, 1986). However, it was not until 1994 that inclusion became a global term referring to the integration of children with disabilities through the creation of inclusive schools (Francisco et al., 2020).

First considered as simply providing free education to students with disabilities, inclusion as an educational concept in today's educational milieu is largely understood as educating students with disabilities in the general education settings (Francisco et al., 2020). What inclusion looks like in practice can vary greatly depending on the philosophical pedagogy of a country, a state, or a district, or even on the type of disability a student has. The U.S. Department of Education defines inclusion as the provision of education to students with disabilities within the general education environment more than 80% of the instructional day, while the Office of Education emphasizes the provision of aids and supports needed to facilitate placement within the general education

environment (Humphrey et al., 2020; National Council on Disability, 2018; U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services [OSERS], Office of Special Education Programs [OSEP], 2019).

Students in inclusive classrooms achieve at higher levels than students excluded from inclusive opportunities. This is true not only for the special needs child, but also for the typically developing child (Jung et al., 2019; Obiakor et al., 2019). The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 2004, as well as state and federally funded early childhood programs has recommended that services for special needs children should be delivered in general education settings to the maximum extent possible (Bateman & Cline, 2016). Nevertheless, the U.S. Department of Education found that from 1985 to 2012, the percentage of special needs preschool students receiving services in the general education setting increased less than 6% (Barton & Smith, 2015). A more concerning statistic is that inclusion practices in preschool settings in California are currently in a downward trend. Since 2017, the percentage of preschool students with special needs who receive the majority of instruction in a regular early education preschool program has declined by 44% (Nguyen et al., 2021).

The literature is replete with studies on the inclusion barriers experienced by general education teachers and has shown that general education teachers' attitudes towards inclusion greatly affect the successful implementation of inclusive programs. However, there are few studies that have explored attitudes and perceptions of special education teachers towards inclusion (Cochran, 1997; Harkins & Fletcher, 2015). The focus of this study was to explore the special education preschool teacher's attitudes towards inclusion, the belief of their ability to support the general education teacher, and

the impact these attitudes and beliefs have on recommendations related to placement in a general education setting.

Background

The evolution of special education in the United States, global and national inclusion movements, and special education policy and best practices provide the context in which attitudes towards inclusion were explored. Starting with the global understanding of inclusion, and a brief historical overview of inclusive education in the United States, research on barriers to inclusion and how they relate to attitudes were reviewed. Guided by theoretical frameworks through which the relationship between attitudes and behavior are explored, research on measuring attitudes and self-efficacy is presented.

Theory of Inclusion

Inclusion is the act of including or the state of being included (Barnhart & Steinmetz, 2006). It can include elements or ideas that indicate a state of being included. Inclusion comes from the Latin word *inclusionem*, which means confinement or to shut something in materially. European scholars frequently cite Niklas Luhmann, a German philosopher and theoretical pioneer of the 20th century, to fully understand the concept of inclusion and what it means in specific contexts. Believing that exclusion is the precursor of the concept of inclusion, Luhmann was fundamental in creating the social systems theory (Schirmer & Michailakis, 2015). In the Luhmannian approach, exclusion is defined within a complex and highly dynamic communication process that systematically excluded those considered irrelevant to the system, and the theory emphasizes the interconnectedness and interdependence of individuals and groups within society.

Globally, social exclusion is understood within the context of four domains: economic, political, social, and cultural (Rapp & Corral-Granados, 2021). Although intended to examine how social exclusion resulted in health inequalities, this framework can also be used to understand the social systems of education and improve inclusive practices through public policy and action (Popay et al., 2008).

Historical Context of Inclusive Education

During the 1870s, laws and policies related to education in the United States were focused on compulsory education. This did not include children with disabilities, however, and it was not until the 1950s and 1960s that government and federal policies and laws were formed to also support special education. Driven by the civil rights movement and philosophies of social justice, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA) of 1975 introduced the least restrictive environment (LRE) concept (Francisco et al., 2020). The LRE construct also became part of IDEA (2004), which states that students should be included with their typical peers to the maximum extent possible. IDEA does not use the term inclusion when describing LRE. Nevertheless, it is the framework of LRE that has helped shape the definition of inclusion as it is known today (Koh & Shin, 2017). IDEA does not dictate how much time students should be in the general education setting but merely that students with disabilities should be educated alongside their peers without disabilities to the maximum extent possible. What this should look like in practice, as well as what inclusion model is considered most beneficial for all students, is still heavily debated.

Impact of Inclusion

Whether advocating for full inclusion or partial inclusion, most experts agree that inclusion benefits children with and without disabilities. Research strongly suggests that even students without disabilities do better both academically and socially when they are taught with students with disabilities (Jackson et al., 2008; Cole et al., 2004). Proponents of full inclusion argue that to have equal access to the curriculum, students with disabilities must be educated in the general education classroom. Indeed, research has shown that students with special needs are more likely to work on skills that are directly related to the grade-level standards (Turnbull et al., 2019). Furthermore, it has been found that students who are placed in a segregated classroom at an early age tend to remain in a segregated setting and are less likely to move out of these classes to join their typical peers (Taylor, 1988).

Not all experts agree, however, that full inclusion is the best option for all students with special needs. Critics of full inclusion cite issues such as low self-esteem because of not being able to do what their peers do, a greater risk of being bullied and excluded, inability to master skills because of reduced opportunities for one-on-one or small group instruction, or simply the inability for some students to be regulated in a class of more than 24 other students (Koh & Shin, 2017; Zigmond, 2003). Nevertheless, inclusion is found to have great benefits for both special needs and typically developing students (Mead & Paige, 2008).

Inclusion as a Social Construct

Social principles, such as civil rights and human rights, are designed to ensure full integration of all individuals (Rapp & Corral-Granados, 2021). Along with policy and

law, they help create educational systems meant to reflect those values. One of the primary goals of inclusive education is to create a positive learning environment that fosters peer interactions and a sense of belonging. In a joint statement of the Division for Early Childhood (DEC) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), early childhood inclusion is defined as embodying values, practices and policies that result in "a sense of belonging and membership, positive social relationships, and development and learning to reach their full potential" (DEC/NAEYC, 2009, p.2). This sentiment is reiterated in a policy statement by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Education (2015) on inclusion of children with disabilities in early childhood programs. The policy posits that inclusive high-quality early childhood programs facilitate full participation in all activities, foster a sense of belonging, promote friendships with peers, and set the foundation for meaningful inclusion and participation for individuals with disabilities throughout all facets of their lives (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services & U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

Barriers to Inclusion

Although many educators support the idea that schools and classrooms should become more inclusive, barriers to inclusion, whether perceived or real, may be the reason that inclusive intent and inclusive practices are incongruent. The three frequently cited barriers to successful inclusion are insufficient teacher training, attitudes and perceptions towards inclusion, and lack of support systems. Bennet et al. (1997) studied the perspectives of teachers and parents on inclusion and the practical application of inclusive practices and found that teachers generally had less than positive attitudes

towards inclusion. This was attributed to their lack of confidence in their ability to educate students with disabilities, a lack of resources needed to support inclusive practices, a lack of disability awareness, and the belief that inclusion would never result in the positive effects cited by their administrators. Scruggs and Mastropieri (1996) concluded that although teachers generally supported the idea of inclusion, many felt that inclusion would have a negative impact on their classroom. This was particularly true when behavioral disabilities and cognitive or developmental disabilities were considered. In addition, teachers cited insufficient time and training as barriers to successful inclusion, and nearly 70% of the respondents felt that inclusion was not necessarily in the best interest of the child with special needs (Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996; see also MacMillan et al., 1996).

Today, decades after the height of the REI movement, barriers to implementing inclusive programs remain largely unchanged. Kendall (2019) found that the primary barriers to implementing inclusive practices were lack of teacher training and disability awareness that led to teachers' attitudinal barriers towards inclusion. Similarly, Koh and Shin (2017) reviewed and synthesized over 30 years of literature on teacher preparation programs and inclusion practices. They concluded that new general education teachers did not feel they had received adequate training on how to educate students with disabilities and that these new teachers held the same attitudes towards inclusion as did their counterparts 30 years ago.

Attitudinal Barriers

A teacher's positive attitude towards including students with disabilities in their general education classrooms is a determining factor in the effectiveness of inclusive

education (Cook, 2002; Forlin, 2010). Furthermore, Levins et al. (2005) found that teachers with positive attitudes towards inclusion acted more positively towards their students with special needs than did teachers who expressed negative attitudes about inclusion. Boyle et al. (2020) ascertained that negativity can be observed in numerous ways. For example, negative attitudes often manifest as resistance to adapting or modifying the curriculum and beliefs that special needs students cannot learn, are unteachable, and are better off in a separate individualized setting.

Theoretical Foundations

A review of existing theories and previous studies provided a theoretical foundation that can be used to guide current research (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). A theoretical framework is a scholarly perspective through which research is conducted. It can be used to assist the researcher not only to understand or explain a phenomenon but also to identify variables and to develop a research design. Identifying a theoretical framework is especially important in mixed-methods studies that further explore a problem that has been extensively studied (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). A review of literature on barriers to inclusion, including teacher's opinions and attitudes towards inclusion, provided a theoretical framework for this study.

Theories on Attitudes and Behavior

The concept of attitudes and how attitudes affect behavior has been studied for a long time. In the mid-1800s, attitude was considered part of a series of factors that determined a person's response to a series of social stimuli, such as a gesture, comment, or social situation (Triandis et al., 1984). Since then, the understanding of attitude has evolved from a person's feelings towards something or someone to an affect towards an

attitude object consisting of several elements, such as a psychological and neural state, motivation, belief related to experiences, and cognitive components (Schwarz & Bohner, 2001).

The theory of planned behavior (TPB) focuses on behavioral intention and can be used to predict behavior. Developed by Ajzen (1991), TPB consists of three core components: Cognition, affect, and conation. Both attitude and the response behavior can be expressed using these three elements. Distinguishing between the three components of attitudes allows the development of a theoretical framework that supports the measurement of attitudes, even if the distinction between the three cannot be made through statistical analysis (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993).

Theories on Self-Efficacy and Attitudes

A key component related to a teacher's attitudes towards inclusion is the teacher's sense of self-efficacy. Frequently associated with the cognitive dimension of attitudes, self-efficacy with inclusive practices reflects a teacher's perceived ability to teach students with disabilities (Martinez, 2003). This, in turn, affects the conative or behavioral dimension of attitude. Developed by Canadian psychologist Albert Bandura, the self-efficacy theory is closely aligned to attitudes and TPB. According to Bandura (1986), self-efficacy influences how people think, feel, and behave in certain situations and their self-efficacy beliefs play a central role in predicting their behavior.

Measuring Attitudes

The theory of attitude measurement holds that the three components of attitude are interrelated and degrees of likes or dislikes within each variable attitude do not necessarily reflect the overall attitude (Bagozzi & Burnkrant, 1979). Measuring these

variables can help identify a person's overall attitudes towards something or someone. Responses to statements of opinions can be affected by people's inclination to agree with something that should represent their presumed attitude (Thurstone, 1929). In short, the response is a function of the conscientiousness of the subject.

Variables Affecting Attitudes

TPB holds that three independent determinants affect intention: the person's attitude towards the behavior; social pressure to execute, or not execute, the behavior; and the perceived ability to perform the behavior in a given context (Ajzen, 1985). Intention, or the desire to perform a particular behavior, is not only dependent on the person's attitude towards the behavior but also dependent on availability of perceived prerequisites and resources to perform the behavior successfully (Ajzen & Madden, 1986; Schwartz & Bohner, 2001). For general education teachers who mostly support the idea of welcoming students with special needs in their classrooms, this can include training, experience, time, monetary resources, and human supports. These factors can amount to the perceived behavioral control. When attitudes towards inclusion measurement scales are grounded in the TPB, incompatibilities with self-reported attitudes and overt behavior in specific situations can be explored.

According to TPB, an attitude is a latent variable that can be inferred from its manifestation in behavior. Within the expectancy-behavior correlation, the moderating variables include personality characteristics, secondary characteristics of attitude (the degree to which an attitude of belief is held with conviction), or self-awareness and efficacy related to the object or situation (Ajzen & Madden, 1986). Many attitudes towards inclusion scales include the three components of attitude (cognitive, affective,

and behavioral) as mediating variables and incorporate TPB in the development of subscales to measure attitudes towards inclusion to predict behavior. For example, the Scale of Teachers' Attitudes Towards Inclusion (STATIC) is organized under the following variables: (a) Advantages and Disadvantages of Inclusive Education, (b) Professional Issues Regarding Inclusive Education, (c) Philosophical Issues Regarding Inclusive Education, and (d) Logistical Concerns of Inclusive Education (Cochran, 1997). The Opinions Relative to Integration of Students with Disabilities (ORI) is made up of four multidimensional factors: (a) Benefits of Integration, (b) Integrated Classroom Management, (c) Perceived Ability to Teach Students With Disabilities, and (d) Special Versus Integrated General Education (Antonak & Larrivee, 1995). These subcategories are frequently referred to as factors or dimensions and constitute the mediating variables.

Statement of the Research Problem

Inclusive practices have shown to positively influence social-emotional as well as academic outcomes for both general education students and students with disabilities (Horowitz et al., 2017). This has resulted in legislative action and policy promoting inclusive education throughout the United States. However, in California, many students with disabilities continue to receive much of their education in segregated settings. Despite the renewed push for the development of inclusive education, California continues to have one of the lowest inclusion rates in the country (Humphrey et al., 2020; Willis et al., 2020).

Over the past decades, much research has been done to identify barriers to the implementation of inclusive practices and programming (Koh & Shin, 2017; Kendall, 2019). One of the most frequently cited barriers to inclusion is the attitude held towards

inclusion. Research overwhelmingly supports the significant role a person's positive attitude plays in inclusion's success (Boyle et al., 2020; Cook, 2002; Forlin, 2010). Most studies on identifying attitudes towards inclusion, however, have focused primarily on the attitudes of general education teachers and administrative leadership (Yan & Sin, 2015; Boyle et al., 2020; Guillemot et al., 2022).

There are few studies exploring attitudes and perceptions of special education teachers towards inclusion and how these attitudes might affect inclusive practices. This is of particular concern because the special education teacher is often the driving force behind placement recommendations for students with special needs (Martin et al., 2006; Blackwell & Rossetti, 2014). In addition, general education teachers' attitude and self-efficacy when including students with disabilities in the general education classroom is greatly dependent on the support they receive from special education teachers (Boyle et al., 2012).

Attitudes towards inclusion greatly affect the successful implementation of inclusive programs. Currently there is a gap in the research examining attitudes towards inclusion held by special education teachers and how these attitudes impact behavioral intent towards support of inclusion programs at their schools. To continue to improve on and increase inclusive practices in American public schools, the impact of special education teachers' attitudes towards inclusion must be addressed.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this mixed-methods study was to determine how special education preschool teachers rate their attitudes towards inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education preschool classroom in California with respect to cognitive factors,

affective factors and behavioral intent factors. In addition, this study aimed to explore how special education preschool teachers rate their self-efficacy in supporting students with disabilities in the general education classroom in California with respect to inclusive instruction, collaboration, and behavior management, and how these ratings compare to their attitudes towards inclusion. A final purpose of the study was to determine how preschool special education teachers identify and describe other factors not previously mentioned in the ratings that impact their attitudes towards inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education preschool classroom.

Research Questions

1. How do special education preschool teachers rate their attitudes towards inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education preschool classroom in California with respect to cognitive factors, affective factors and behavioral intent factors as measured by the Attitudes Towards Teaching All Students (ATTAS-mm) instrument?
2. How do special education preschool teachers rate their self-efficacy in supporting students with disabilities in the general education classroom in California with respect to inclusive instruction, collaboration, and behavior management as measured by the Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practices-Short Form (TEIP-SF) scale?
3. How do the ratings of special education preschool teachers' attitudes towards inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom compare to their ratings of self-efficacy in supporting students with disabilities in the general education classroom?

4. How do special education preschool teachers identify and describe other factors not previously mentioned that impact their teaching efficacy and attitudes towards inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom?

Significance of the Problem

The literature is replete with studies on the inclusion barriers experienced by general education teachers and has shown that general education teachers' attitudes towards including students with special needs in their classrooms affect their behavior and thus student outcomes (Hernandez et al., 2016). If teachers' attitude affects their behavior when including students with special needs, it is to be expected that the attitudes of special education teachers affect the support they provide the special education students and their general education teachers in an inclusive general education classroom (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2005). Collaboration between the general and special education teachers is essential for an inclusion program to succeed (Gregory & Noto, 2018). Furthermore, the special education teacher's attitude towards inclusion likely impacts the decision-making process regarding placement (Blackwell & Rossetti, 2014). To continue to improve and increase inclusive practices, the importance of the special education teacher's attitude towards inclusion cannot be overlooked. Therefore, the impact of special education teachers' attitudes towards inclusion must be examined and addressed.

Information from this study contributes to the existing knowledge regarding attitudes towards inclusion and how attitudes affect behavioral intent. Exploring and uncovering attitudes towards inclusion held by special education teachers can: (a) identify needs for specific supports and training to improve attitudes towards inclusion, (b) inform special education teacher pre-service training programs and professional

development, (c) assist districts with state and district goals and priority setting aimed to support inclusion in schools, and (d) inform federal, state, and district-level policy and funding allocations.

Definitions of Terms

This section provides definitions for specific terms used in this study. The theoretical, or conceptual, definitions are drawn from previous studies and offer explanations for specific terms relevant to research on attitudes, self-efficacy, and inclusive education. Operational, or descriptive, definitions explain the usage of these terms in the study. Operational definitions serve two crucial functions: (a) they set the guidelines and methods that the researcher will use to measure the primary variables of the study and (b) they provide clear and precise meaning to terms that may otherwise be understood in multiple ways (Creswell, 2014; UMass Global, 2023). For context-specific key terms or key terms relevant to the theoretical frameworks, both a theoretical and operational definition is provided.

Attitude

Theoretical Definition. An attitude is a person's affect towards an attitude object consisting of several elements, such as a psychological and neural state, motivation, belief related to experiences, and cognitive components (Schwartz & Bohner, 2001).

Operational Definition. An attitude can be described as the combination of beliefs, emotions, and inclinations to act in certain ways towards objects or symbols that hold social importance (Hogg & Vaughan, 2017). For the purposes of this study, a teacher's attitude towards inclusion is their beliefs and feelings about the value, importance, and effectiveness of inclusion.

Early Childhood Education

Theoretical Definition. Early childhood education is a combination of services for children from birth through age 5 that address the child's cognitive (including language, early literacy, and early mathematics), social, emotional, and physical development (California Department of Education, 2019).

Operational Definition. Education in a preschool setting designed for children aged 3 through 5.

Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)

Operational Definition. FAPE is the legal requirement of the IDEA (2004) whereby public schools must provide an education for students with disabilities based on their individual strengths and needs with their same-aged nondisabled peers at no cost to families (Burke & Goldman, 2017).

General Education Classroom

Operational Definition. A general education classroom is a learning environment in which most students receive their instruction based on grade-level and subject area state standards (California Department of Education, 2012). The classroom teacher is usually a credentialed general education teacher.

General Education Teacher

Operational Definition. A general education teacher is an educator who holds a general education teaching credential and teaches students in a specific grade level and/or subject matter (Turnbull et al., 2019).

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

Operational Definition. IDEA is a federal law that requires all children with disabilities to have access to FAPE that includes special education and related services tailored to their individual needs (U.S. Department of Education, 2022).

Individualized Education Program (IEP)

Operational Definition. An Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a legally binding document that outlines the unique educational needs of a student with a disability (IDEA, 2004; Mostert & Crockett, 2000).

Inclusion

Theoretical Definition. Inclusion is the act or principle of ensuring equal accessibility to resources and opportunities for individuals who may otherwise be excluded or marginalized, including those with physical or mental disabilities, as well as members of other minority groups (Oxford University Press, n.d.).

Operational Definition. Inclusion refers to educating students who have special education needs in general education classrooms with the necessary supports and services (Francisco et al., 2020). In this approach, the student's primary instructor is the general education teacher, who works collaboratively with the special education teacher and other related service providers (Gregory & Noto, 2018).

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

Theoretical Definition. Least Restrictive Environment (LRE), means that to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are not disabled and special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with

disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability of a child is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily. (IDEA, 2004, 20 U.S.C. § 1412).

Operational Definition. LRE is a legal requirement of IDEA that requires public schools to provide education and related services to students with disabilities alongside their non-disabled peers to the greatest extent possible (Koh & Shin, 2017).

Preschool Student

Operational Definition. A preschool student is a child with a chronological age of 3 to 5 years enrolled in a preschool program (California Department of Education, 2015).

Self-Efficacy

Theoretical Definition. Self-efficacy is an individual's belief in their capacity to execute the behaviors necessary to achieve specific outcomes. It is the confidence one has in their ability to exert control over their own motivation, behavior, and social environment (Bandura, 1977, 1986).

Operational Definition. For the purposes of this study, teacher self-efficacy reflects a teacher's perceived ability to teach students with disabilities within specific contexts (Martinez, 2003; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001).

Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA)

Operational Definition. SELPAs are regionalized organizations in California that are responsible for ensuring that school districts within their boundaries provide special education services to all eligible students. The purpose of SELPA is to facilitate

collaboration among districts, charter schools, and county offices of education to meet the needs of students with disabilities. California primarily distributes special education funds through SELPAs (Willis et al., 2020).

Special Education

Operational Definition. IDEA defines special education as specifically designed instruction and support services provided to a child with a disability, without any cost to parents, which include physical education, speech and language services, and any other necessary related services to meet the child's unique learning needs (IDEA, 2004).

Special Education Classroom

Operational Definition. A separate learning environment in which students with disabilities receive their instruction. The classroom teacher is a credentialed special education teacher (Turnbull et al., 2019).

Special Education Teacher

Operational Definition. A teacher who possesses a special education teaching credential and primarily teaches students with disabilities (Turnbull et al., 2019).

Student With Special Needs

Operational Definition. A student with an IEP who is enrolled in a public school program.

Delimitations

Delimitations are the boundaries or limitations set within a research study. They can include constraints such as time limitations, geographic boundaries, or specific population groups, or the use of specific research methods (Roberts & Hyatt, 2019). This mixed methods study was delimited to special education preschool teachers teaching in a

public educational institution belonging to any of the SELPAs in Los Angeles County in Southern California.

Organization of Study

The study consists of five chapters and includes references and appendices. Following the introduction, Chapter I included an overview of inclusion and special education, a review of the theoretical frameworks guiding the study, the study's significance, and the research questions addressed. Chapter II includes a detailed review of literature on the evolution of inclusion in the United States, effectiveness of and barriers to inclusive education, and an in-depth examination of the interplay between behavior, self-efficacy, and attitudes towards inclusion. Chapter III provides a thorough overview of the methodology, encompassing the research design, population sample, instrumentation, data collection procedures, analysis methods, and the study's limitations. Chapter IV presents an in-depth analysis of the data collected during the study. Chapter V articulates the study's conclusions, highlighting significant findings and discussing implications for future research.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The landscape of special education in the United States and throughout the world has undergone a profound evolution, marked by a history that reflects societal shifts in perceptions and policies that ultimately led to an international push for inclusive education (Francisco et al., 2020). Nevertheless, inclusive education in the United States remains relatively low because barriers to its implementation persist (Jung et. al., 2019). This chapter begins with an exploration of the historical trajectory that has shaped the present state of special education in the United States followed by a thorough examination of the historical research on the effectiveness of inclusion, exploring its impact on academic performance, social integration, and overall educational outcomes. Empirical research on barriers to the implementation of inclusive practices, ranging from structural challenges within educational systems to societal attitudes and perceptions follows. Drawing from theoretical foundations, the study explored inclusion as a social construct, underpinned by the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and the Theory of Self-Efficacy. Central to this exploration was the interplay between attitudes and behavior, unpacking the three components of attitude, methods of measuring attitudes, and the diverse variables that influence these attitudes. In addition, research on teachers' attitudes towards inclusion, their teaching efficacy, and variables related to their sense of self-efficacy to implement inclusive practices was analyzed.

Special Education in the United States

History of Special Education

In the early 1800s, before the rise of mandatory public education, the principles and beliefs that shaped special education in the United States were heavily influenced by

European practices (Winzer, 1993). During this era, the prevailing approach was to institutionalize children with disabilities and separate them from the general public. Because disability was often viewed synonymously with dependency, in addition to providing care, these educational institutions aimed to guide those with disabilities towards greater self-sufficiency (Francisco et al., 2020). Mandatory public education emerged just before the 20th century, aiming to integrate the swiftly arriving immigrants and to instill in the working-class children the norms and values of industrial work (Katz, 1976). In 1852, Massachusetts led the nation by becoming the first state to legally mandate school attendance for children, and by 1918, all 50 states had adopted similar compulsory education laws (Yell et al., 1998). However, children with disabilities remained largely excluded from the public school system and compulsory education laws, and for much of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, they continued to be educated in private institutions (Francisco et al., 2020; Winzer, 1993).

In the 1930s, parent-led movements emerged that advocated for their children with disabilities to gain access to the public educational system. Over the subsequent 2 decades, as the push to adhere to compulsory education grew stronger and families nationwide protested the sidelining of students with disabilities and took their fights to the courts, the public school system began to accommodate children with disabilities and phased out specialized facilities and asylums (Winzer, 1993; Yell et al., 1998). Struggling to meet the diverse educational and behavioral needs, schools developed separate classes and programs for students with disabilities (Yell et al., 1998). These programs catered to students who were considered disruptive to the conventional learning environment, such as those with intellectual disabilities or who were deaf or blind (Winzer, 1993). As a

result, even though no longer confined to isolated institutions, many children with disabilities continued to be segregated within public school campuses.

Special Education Policy

The landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* case in 1954, which declared racial segregation in schools unconstitutional, greatly influenced the disability rights movement (Mead & Paige, 2008). Although the decision initially focused on racial segregation, it paved the way for disability rights groups to argue for equal educational rights. Capitalizing on this momentum, in 1973, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act was introduced, which prohibited the exclusion of individuals with disabilities in any federally funded program or activity (Shandrick & Vanbergeijk, 2021). Just 2 years later, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA) was enacted, earmarking federal funds to support the educational rights of students with disabilities. This act introduced the Individualized Education Program (IEP)—a tailored plan outlining the necessary supports and services for a student with disabilities (IDEA, 2004; Mostert & Crockett, 2000). The EAHCA evolved over the years, reemerging as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1990, and then undergoing further amendments in 1997 and 2004. The core principle of these laws is the commitment to providing FAPE to students with disabilities alongside their peers in the least restrictive setting (Koh & Shin, 2017).

Overview of Special Education

Special education services are designed to serve students with a variety of disabilities that result in cognitive, physical, emotional, and behavioral challenges (Horowitz et al. 2017). The primary legislation regulating special education is the federal

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act IDEA. The IDEA key provisions include the following: (a) all children, and specifically those with a disability, have a right to a free and public education (FAPE); (b) all students must be educated in the least restrictive environment (LRE); (c) students in need of special education services must be provided with an Individualized Education Program (IEP); and (d) students must be thoroughly evaluated in all areas related to the suspected disability to determine whether a student qualifies for special education services before providing special education and related services (IDEA, 2004; Shandrick & Vanbergeijk, 2021; Yell et al., 2011).

To be eligible for special education services, student need to have an identified disability that significantly impacts their academic performance, necessitating the provision of specialized educational support to ensure they receive an appropriate and free public education (IDEA, 2004). Over recent decades, there has been a consistent rise in the number of U.S. students aged 3-21 identified with a disability. In the academic year 1990–1991, 4.7 million students, or 11% of the student body, had identified disabilities. By the 2021–2022 school year, this number had grown to 7.3 million, representing 15% of all public school students (Irwin et al., 2023; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services & U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Thirteen qualifying disability categories under which children may be eligible for special education services are specified in IDEA (2004). In the 2021–2022 school year, among the students who were provided with special education and related services under IDEA, the most commonly reported disability categories were specific learning disability (32%), speech or language impairment (19%), other health impairments (15%), and autism (12%; Irwin et al., 2023).

Special education services encompass specialized academic instruction, related services, and supplementary aids and services. Specially designed instruction refers to the tailored adjustments made in the content, teaching methods, or manner of delivering instruction (IDEA, 2004). Provided by the special education teacher, specialized academic instruction may be delivered in a separate setting, such as a special day class, a resource room, or in the general education classroom or environment. The aim is twofold: to address the individual challenges arising from the child's disability and to ensure that the child can access and benefit from the standard curriculum that all students in the public agency's jurisdiction are expected to achieve (Turnbull et al., 2019). Related services refer to the additional support and services provided to students with disabilities to assist them in benefiting from their educational program. These services are tailored to the individual needs of the student and are determined through the Individualized Education Program (IEP) process (Yell & Bateman, 2017). Related services may include speech therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, orientation and mobility services, vision services, or audiology services. Supplementary aids and services refer to the additional support given to students to facilitate their education in a general education setting. These aids ensure that students with disabilities can access and make progress in the general curriculum alongside their non-disabled peers. Examples of these supports range from specific accommodations such as extended testing time or individualized pacing in classroom instruction to assistance from a paraprofessional (Turnbull et al., 2019).

Inclusion

Inclusion is the act of including or the state of being included (Barnhart & Steinmetz, 2006). It can include elements or ideas that indicate a state of being included. Inclusion comes from the Latin word *inclusionem*, which means confinement or to shut something in materially. European scholars frequently cite Niklas Luhmann, a German philosopher and theoretical pioneer of the 20th century, to fully understand the concept of inclusion and what it means within specific contexts. Believing that exclusion is the precursor of the concept of inclusion, Luhmann was fundamental in creating the social systems theory (Schirmer & Michailakis, 2015). In the Luhmannian approach, exclusion is defined within a complex and highly dynamic communication process that systematically excluded those considered irrelevant to the system. The theory emphasizes the interconnectedness and interdependence of individuals and groups within society. Globally, social exclusion is understood within the context of four domains: (a) economic, (b) political, (c) social, and (d) cultural (Rapp & Corral-Granados, 2021). Although intended to examine how social exclusion results in health inequalities, this framework can also be used to understand the social systems of education and improve inclusive practices through public policy and action. (Popay et al., 2008).

Inclusive Education

Inclusion as it relates to education is not a new concept. After the seminal decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, parents of children with disabilities capitalized on the momentum of the civil rights movement and the Court's unanimous decision that "in the field of public education the doctrine of separate but equal has no place" and that all children should be included in the public education system (Yell, 2019, para. 7). The

passing of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA) of 1975 helped ensure that states and local school districts no longer could deny educational services to children with disabilities. This law required that all schools accepting federal funds provide equal access to education for students with disabilities (Mead & Paige, 2008).

Least Restrictive Environment

The civil rights movement and the EAHCA brought forth the concept of a least restrictive environment (LRE), which states that students should be included with their typical peers to the maximum extent possible (Koh & Shin, 2017). The concept of inclusion in special education was further developed when in 1986 when the Department of Education made way for the Regular Education Initiative (REI), a movement in the 1980s that advocated for one educational system rather than two separate systems, namely general education and special education. Then Assistant Secretary for the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, Madelaine Will, spoke of concerns that educating students with special needs in separate settings on public school campuses would result in unintended negative consequences (Will, 1986). However, it was not until 1994 that inclusion became a global term referring to the integration of children with disabilities through the creation of inclusive schools (Francisco et al., 2020). The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) of 2004 does not use the term inclusion when describing LRE. Nevertheless, it is the framework of LRE that has determined the definition of inclusion as currently understood.

Definition of Inclusion

Inclusion is a complex construct, and its definition varies around the world (Rapp & Corral-Granados, 2021). UNESCO (2005) purported that inclusive education ensures

the full participation of all children within the community and society. This involves modifications and accommodations to address the needs of children who have historically been marginalized (UNESCO, 2005). In a joint statement on the rights of children with disabilities developed by the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Committee on the Rights of Children with Disabilities (2022), inclusive education is defined as educating all children in the same general education system rather than using a two-system educational model that has a mainstream component and a special education and segregated component. Inclusive education in the United States refers to students with disabilities being educated alongside their typically developing peers. Guided by the principal of LRE, the U.S. Department of Education defines inclusion as the provision of education to students with disabilities within the general education environment for more than 80% of the instructional day, and the Office of Education emphasizes the provision of aids and supports needed to facilitate placement within the general education environment (Humphrey et al., 2020; National Council on Disability, 2018; U.S. Department of Education, OSERS, OSEP, 2019). To date, Florida is the only state with a statute that provides a definition of inclusion. It states,

> A school district shall use the term "inclusion" to mean that a student is receiving education in a general education regular class setting, reflecting natural proportions and age-appropriate heterogeneous groups in core academic and elective or special areas within the school community; a student with a disability is a valued member of the classroom and school community; the teachers and administrators support universal education and have knowledge and support available to enable them to effectively teach all children; and a teacher is provided

> access to technical assistance in best practices, instructional methods, and supports tailored to the student's needs based on current research. (National Council on Disability, 2018, p. 29)

Inclusion Models

The three primary inclusion models seen in most public educational institutions today are mainstreaming, pull-out, and full inclusion (Dev & Haynes, 2015). In the mainstreaming model, students with special needs are educated primarily in a separate classroom but are provided with opportunities to interact with their typical peers (Turnbull et al., 2019). These opportunities usually occur during recess and lunchtime or during activities outside of core instruction, such as circle time, elective courses, or school-wide assemblies. In this model, the teacher of record is the special education teacher.

In a pull-out model, the teacher of record is the general education teacher (Tompkins, & Deloney, 1995). In this model, the students with special needs attend classes with their typically developing peers but receive specialized academic instruction in a separate setting. In the elementary school setting, the student is temporarily removed from their classroom environment to receive instruction specifically designed to address their IEP goals in a separate classroom. In the secondary school setting, students with disabilities receive instruction based on need during set periods that align with the general education schedule.

As the term suggests, in the full-inclusion model, students receive all instruction in the general education setting. This model assumes that instruction is delivered in such a way that it is accessible to all students of all abilities. The full-inclusion model,

however, does not require that a student receive all special education services in the general education classroom. Students may leave the classroom to receive special education related services, such as speech therapy or occupational therapy (Disability Rights California, n.d.).

Historical Research on the Effectiveness of Inclusion

The continued debate about inclusion is not only about whether the practice benefits students with disabilities but also about what types of inclusion program models provide maximum benefit to students with special needs. Citing Chief Justice Earl Warren, initial supporters of the full-inclusion movement argued that separate schools were inherently unequal; therefore, students with disabilities should no longer be educated in separate schools or separate classes (Yell, 2019). Early public debates regarding this topic were spurred on by the publication of a journal article in which the author argued that educating students with mental retardation in a separate classroom was no longer acceptable (Dunn, 1968). An early critic of what was believed to be Dunn's call for the abolishment of separate classes for students with disabilities, MacMillan (1971) argued that the studies on which Dunn relied to make his case were flawed because they were "poorly designed [and] replete with sampling biases which render the results uninterpretable" (p. 3). Despite being criticized by scholars for lack of scholarly rigor, Dunn's article sparked the fervent debate that continues to dominate the inclusion discussion today, which is whether separate classes should be fully abandoned or whether inclusion should take on a more tempered approach (Kavale & Forness, 2000). Even though complete abolishment of separate classes was not the message Dunn intended to send, his article that was published in 1968 has been cited by many scholars and

researchers to support full inclusion of all students with disabilities in the general education classroom (Dunn, 1982; Osgood, 2005).

Although the term LRE initially focused on access to typically developing peers, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1997 and the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 resulted in a greater emphasis on access to the general education curriculum (NCLA, 2002). The debate regarding inclusion models intensified when participation of students with disabilities in statewide assessments designed for quality control of education became a requirement (Zigmond, 2003). Studies comparing the effectiveness of inclusive or exclusive practices yielded varying results. Sindelar and Deno (1978) concluded that students with disabilities who were provided with specialized academic instruction in a separate setting through a pull-out model exhibited greater educational benefit. Other studies have concluded that although students with cognitive delays did equally well in segregated settings as in inclusive settings, students with learning disabilities or behavioral disorders performed better academically in a separate educational setting (Carlberg & Kavale, 1980).

As inclusion models transitioned from pull-out services to full inclusion, more research was needed to determine whether the full-inclusion models would yield the same or greater positive academic outcomes that the pull-out model appeared to produce (Zigmond, 2003). Some studies found that full-inclusion models, with the proper support of special educators and support staff in place, had similar outcomes for students when compared to those receiving instruction in a separate setting. Other studies, however, demonstrated that the full-inclusion models did not yield the academic and social gains expected. Koh and Shin (2017) concluded that, despite the demand for academic rigor

and accountability through the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, today's full-inclusion models do not yield better academic results than the segregated systems of general and special education prior to the inclusion movement. Manset and Semmel (1997) analyzed numerous studies on the efficacy of the different inclusion models and suggested that no one single model of inclusion proved effective for all students. It appeared that studies on the effectiveness of inclusion practices consistently yielded inconsistent results and conclusions.

Despite the volume of inquiry, there continues to be significant disagreement among scholars on whether students with disabilities benefit from full inclusion, and whether arguments for or against are based on empirical evidence (Kavale, 2000). Furthermore, it is unclear what the indicators of success of inclusion actually are. Zigmond (2003) suggested that future research should examine educational practices rather than focusing on the amount of time that is spent with typical peers. Ultimately, an effective teacher in any setting promotes social-emotional and academic growth in students, whether they are with or without disabilities whereas an ineffective teacher does not. Other researchers have argued that research should not focus on the education setting but rather on evaluating the continuum of placement associated with LRE. Taylor (2004) posited that the fundamental essence of LRE legitimizes restrictive or self-contained environments. Furthermore, Taylor argued that most educational models operate with the assumption or expectation that students must move along the continuum. Only when a student meets a certain set of predetermined academic or social skills can he or she move up the continuum to a less restrictive setting.

Whether advocating for full inclusion or partial inclusion, most experts have agreed that inclusion benefits children with and without disabilities. Research strongly suggests that even students without disabilities do better both academically and socially when they are taught with students with disabilities (Jackson et al., 2008; Cole et al., 2004). Proponents of full inclusion argue that to have equal access to the curriculum, students with disabilities must be educated in the general education classroom. Indeed, research has shown that students with special needs are more likely to work on skills that are directly related to the grade-level standards (Turnbull et al., 2019). Furthermore, Tayllor (1988) found that students who are placed in a segregated classroom early on tend to remain in a segregated setting and are less likely to move out of these classes to join their typical peers. Critics of full inclusion cite issues such as low self-esteem because of not being able to do what their peers do, a greater risk of being bullied and excluded, inability to master skills because of reduced opportunities for one-on-one or small group instruction, or simply the inability for some students to be regulated in a class of more than 24 other students (Koh & Shin, 2017; Zigmond, 2003). Nevertheless, inclusion is found to have great benefits for both special needs and typically developing students (Mead & Paige, 2008).

Barriers to Inclusion

Although many educators support the idea that schools and classrooms should become more inclusive, barriers to inclusion, whether perceived or real, may be the reason that inclusive intent and inclusive practices are incongruent (Koh & Shin, 2017). In contrast to the relatively sparse empirical research and quantitative studies done on the effectiveness of the different inclusion models and practices, much research has been

done on the barriers to the implementation of inclusive practices (MacMillan et al., 1996). The three frequently cited barriers to successful inclusion are insufficient teacher training, attitudes and perceptions towards inclusion, and lack of support systems. Bennet et al.'s (1997) study on the perspectives of teachers and parents on inclusive practice and the practical application of inclusive practices found that teachers generally had less than positive attitudes toward inclusion. This was attributed to a lack of confidence in their ability to educate students with disabilities, a lack of resources needed to support inclusive practices, a lack of disability awareness, and the belief that inclusion would never result in the positive effects cited by their administrators. Scruggs and Mastropieri (1996) concluded that although teachers generally supported the idea of inclusion, many felt that inclusion would have a negative impact on their classroom. This was particularly true when behavioral disabilities and cognitive or developmental disabilities were considered. In addition, teachers cited insufficient time and training as barriers to successful inclusion, and nearly 70% of the respondents felt that inclusion was not necessarily in the best interest of the child with special needs (Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996; see also MacMillan et al., 1996).

A teacher's positive attitude towards including students with disabilities in the general education classroom is also a determining factor in the effectiveness of inclusive education (Cook, 2002; Forlin, 2010). Furthermore, Levins et al. (2005) found that teachers with positive attitudes towards inclusion acted more positively towards their students with special needs than did teachers who expressed negative attitudes about inclusion. Boyle et al. (2020) ascertained that negativity can be observed in numerous ways. For example, negative attitudes often manifest as resistance to adapting or

modifying the curriculum and beliefs that special needs students cannot learn, are unteachable, and are better off in a separate individualized setting.

Today, decades after the height of the REI movement, barriers to implementing inclusive programs remain largely unchanged. Kendall (2019) synthesized data from seven different studies and found that the primary barriers to implementing inclusive practices were a lack of teacher training and disability awareness that led to teachers' attitudinal barriers towards inclusion. Koh and Shin (2017) reviewed and synthesized over 30 years of literature on teacher preparation programs and inclusion practices. They concluded that new general education teachers did not feel they had received adequate training on how to educate students with disabilities and that these new teachers held the same beliefs regarding barriers to inclusion as did their counterparts 30 years ago.

Teachers' Attitudes Towards Inclusion

An attitude can be described as the combination of beliefs, emotions, and inclinations to act in certain ways towards objects or symbols that hold social importance (Hogg & Vaughan, 2017). Teachers' attitude towards inclusion, therefore, refers to their beliefs about the value and importance of inclusion, their feelings towards participating in inclusive practices, and their tendency to act in ways that promote or hinder inclusion (Gregory & Noto, 2019). Research has shown that general education teachers frequently hold reservations about the practical challenges of implementing inclusive education. They may feel that students with disabilities demand an excessive share of their attention, necessitate unique educational approaches, and believe that regular education teachers lack the training to effectively teach students with special needs (Bender et al., 1995; Jordan, et al., 2009; Norwich & Nash, 2010). Attitudes towards inclusion are a critical

factor in the effectiveness and outcome of inclusive practices. Positive attitudes towards inclusion tend to result in a higher readiness among educators to integrate students with disabilities into the general education classroom and to foster an environment in which all students are provided with opportunities to learn and participate (Cochran, 1997; Rankin et al., 1994; Gregory & Noto, 2018).

Teaching Efficacy

Aligned with Bandura's two-component model of self-efficacy, teaching efficacy has two primary constructs: general teaching efficacy and personal teaching efficacy (Menon & Lefteri, 2021). General teaching efficacy is the belief about what a teacher can achieve despite constraints imposed by external factors, and personal teaching efficacy is the teacher's belief in their own teaching abilities and the ability to be an effective agent of change (Gibson & Dembo, 1984). Teaching efficacy is context specific and therefore malleable (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). For example, a teacher proficient in instructing science may not possess the same level of proficiency in teaching English. Inclusive teaching efficacy refers to a teacher's belief or perception in their ability to educate students with diverse needs effectively and to foster desired outcomes in student achievement (Sahli Lozano et al., 2023; Sharma et al., 2012). As with a teacher's attitude towards inclusion, a teacher's sense of self-efficacy related to inclusive practices is a key factor in the outcome of inclusive programs. Teachers possessing a stronger belief in their capabilities tend to maintain more favorable perspectives on, dedicate more effort to, and manage the challenges of educational changes more effectively, including those associated with the inclusive education movement (Bandura, 1997; Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Sharma et al., 2012).

Theoretical Foundations

A review of existing theories and previous studies provides a theoretical foundation that can be used to guide the current research (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). A theoretical framework is a scholarly perspective through which research is conducted. It can be used to understand or explain a phenomenon and to identify variables and develop a research design. Identifying a theoretical framework is especially important in mixed-methods studies that further explore a problem that has been extensively studied (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The review of literature on barriers to inclusion, including teacher's opinions and attitudes towards inclusion, provided a theoretical framework for this study.

Inclusion as a Social Construct

Social constructionism is based on the belief that people's understanding of the world is shaped by their social interactions and cultural context (Lynch, 2016). This perspective emphasizes that beliefs, values, and behaviors are molded by the culture and society in which people live and that these social constructions can change over time. Therefore, inclusive practices in education not only help shape the future education of individuals with disabilities but also how they are positioned within society (Kaufman et al., 2022; Moore et al., 1998). Social principles, such as civil rights and human rights, are designed to ensure full integration of all individuals (Rapp & Corral-Granados, 2021). Along with policy and law, they help create educational and organizational systems meant to reflect those values.

Social Construct and Early Education

Disability is not a biological phenomenon affecting the individual's ability to participate in society, but a sociocultural construct (Vygotsky, 1987; Jones, 1996). As such, inclusive practices in early education are fundamental in developing inclusion as a social construct. Vygotsky (1987) asserted that the educational system should aim to positively affect the societal attitudes that exist towards people with disabilities (see also Gindis, 1999). One of the primary goals of inclusive education is to create a positive learning environment that fosters peer interactions and a sense of belonging. In a joint statement of DEC/NAEYC (2009), early childhood inclusion is defined as embodying values, practices and policies that result in "a sense of belonging and membership, positive social relationships, and development and learning to reach their full potential" (p.2). This sentiment was reiterated in a policy statement by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Education (2015) on inclusion of children with disabilities in early childhood programs. The policy posited that inclusive high-quality early childhood programs facilitate full participation in all activities, foster a sense of belonging, promote friendships with peers, and set the foundation for meaningful inclusion and participation for individuals with disabilities throughout all facets of their lives.

Peer relationships in early childhood are an important dimension of the social-emotional development of a child. In addition to learning interpersonal skills and the processes involved, peer relationships help children develop and master new social skills that provide the foundation for future psychosocial adjustment, and the absence of social-emotional relationships with peers can result in chronic peer difficulties later in life

(Boivin, 2005; Hartup, 1996).When typically developing peers learn and play together with peers with special needs, they tend to develop more positive attitudes towards people with disabilities (Noggle & Stites, 2018).

Theory of Planned Behavior

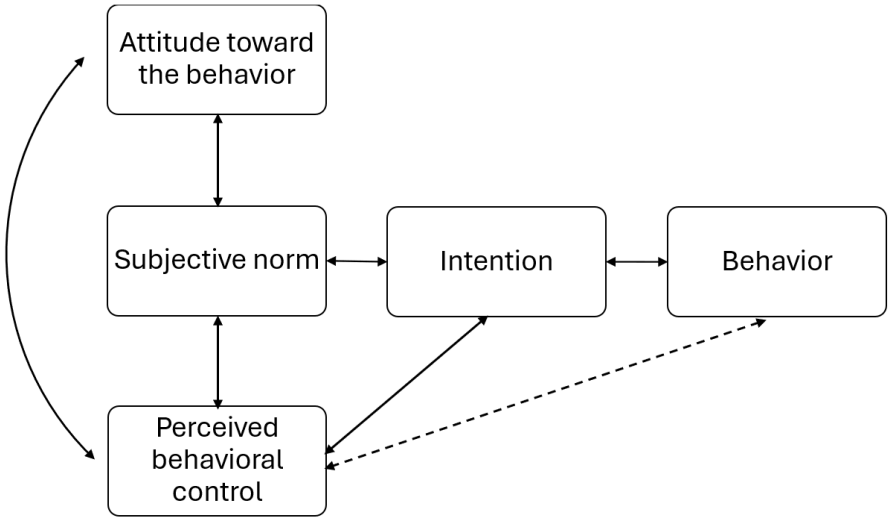
The concept of attitudes and how attitudes affect behavior has been studied for a long time. In the mid-1800s, attitude was considered part of a series of factors that determined a person's response to a series of social stimuli, such as a gesture, comment, or social situation (Triandis et al., 1984). Since then, the understanding of attitude has evolved from a person's feelings towards something or someone to an affect towards an attitude object consisting of several elements, such as a psychological and neural state, motivation, belief related to experiences, and cognitive components (Schwartz & Bohner, 2001).

According to Triandis (1971), an attitude consists of cognitive (idea), affective (emotion), and behavioral (action) elements. This led to the development of several theories of attitudes and behavior, including the tripartite and neotripartite model of attitude development and TPB (Cochran, 1997; Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). According to neotripartite model, cognitive, affective, and behavioral experiences influence attitudes (Albarracín & Shavitt, 2018). These attitudes, in turn, produce a response, or behavior, towards the attitude object. The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) focuses on behavioral intention and can be used to predict behavior and considers the predictors of behavior rather than providing a new or distinct definition of behavior itself (Ajzen, 1991). It centers on the processes leading up to the behavior, especially the role of intentions and the factors (attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control) that influence

these intentions (Figure 1). TPB incorporates 3 core components: Cognition, affect, and conation (behavioral intent). Both attitude and the response behavior can be expressed using these three elements (Ajzen, 1985). Distinguishing between the three components of attitudes allowed for a theoretical framework that supports the measurement of attitudes, even if the distinction between the three cannot be made through statistical analysis (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993).

Figure 1

Theory of Planned Behavior



Note. Adapted from "The Theory of Planned Behavior," by I. Ajzen, 1991, *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, 50*(2), p. 182 (https://doi.org/10.1016/0749-5978(91)90020-T). Copyright 1991 by Academic Press Inc.

Theory of Self-Efficacy

Intention, which reflects the desire to undertake a specific behavior, hinges not only on an individual's attitude towards that action but also on their perception of the necessary prerequisites and resources available to successfully execute it (Ajzen &

Madden, 1986; Schwartz & Bohner, 2001). For instance, general education teachers who are fundamentally in favor of including students with special needs in their classrooms might feel they lack the required resources to be successful. This can encompass training, prior experience, time, financial support, and additional personnel assistance (Sharma et al., 2012). A key component of teachers' attitudes towards inclusion that is related to their perceived behavior control is their sense of self-efficacy (Koh & Shin, 2017; Mahat, 2008). Frequently associated with the cognitive dimension of attitudes, self-efficacy reflects a teacher's perceived ability to teach students with disabilities (Martinez, 2003; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001).

Developed by Canadian psychologist Albert Bandura, the self-efficacy theory is closely aligned with attitudes and TPB. According to Bandura (1986), self-efficacy influences how people think, feel, and behave in certain situations and their self-efficacy beliefs play a central role in predicting their behavior. In this theory, efficacy expectation is described as the person's conviction in their ability to execute a behavior, accomplish a task, or achieve a desired result. Outcome expectations, in turn, refer to the level of confidence an individual has that a specific behavior will yield a particular result (Bandura, 1977, 1986). When combined, these two components shape an individual's self-efficacy.

Attitudes and Behavior

An attitude is a concept that has been defined in various ways by different scholars over the years (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). Generally, an attitude is defined as a person's predisposition to respond or act. It is a relatively enduring organization of beliefs, feelings, and behavioral tendencies towards an attitude object (Triandis, 1971;

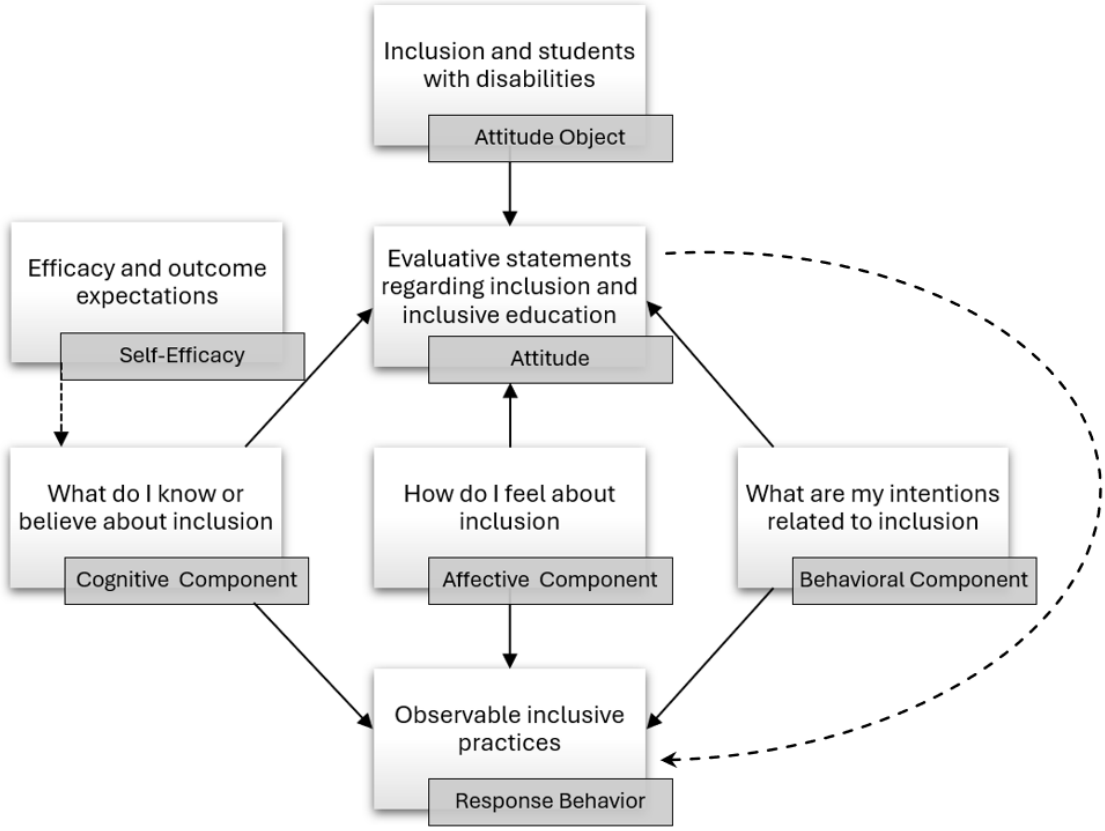
Fazio & Zanda, 1981). An attitude object is the stimulus that elicits the evaluative response or behavior, such as an idea, person or groups, events, articles, or symbols. Behavior, in turn, is an observable action—the observable response of an individual in a given situation with respect to a given target or attitude object. It is a function of four factors: (a) attitudes, (b) norms, (c) habits, and (d) anticipated rewards or outcomes (Ajzen, 1985). The higher the degree of alignment of the four factors, the more consistency between attitudes and behavior exists (Triandis, 1971).

Three Components of Attitude

Although specific definitions of attitudes might vary slightly, scholars generally agree that an attitude encompasses cognitive (beliefs and thoughts), affective (feelings and emotions), and behavioral intent (predisposition to act) components towards an attitude object (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993; Glasman & Albarracín, 2006). Cognitive, affective, and behavioral components of attitude are interrelated and can influence each other, but the relationship between them is not always straightforward or consistent (Ajzen, 1993). These inconsistencies, or gaps, between the components are often referred to as attitude-behavior discrepancies (Azjen and Fishbein, 2005). A person might believe in the importance of inclusion (cognitive) and feel passionate about including students with disabilities (affective) but continue to recommend placement in a separate classroom (behavioral) because of convenience or other external factors. Various external and internal factors, including social norms, past experiences, and individual personality traits can also affect the interplay between these components (Ajzen, 1991; Eagly & Chaiken, 1993; Schwartz & Bohner, 2001). Figure 2 shows the application of the three components of attitude to this study.

Figure 2

Components of Attitude and Their Influence on Response Behavior



Note. Figure illustrates how attitude and response behavior can be expressed using the three core components of attitude: cognition, affect, and behavioral intent.

Measuring Attitudes

The theory of Attitude Measurement holds that the three components of attitude are interrelated and degrees of likes or dislikes within each variable attitude do not necessarily reflect the overall attitude (Bagozzi & Burnkrant, 1979). Nevertheless, measuring these variables can help identify a person's overall attitudes towards something or someone. The relationship between the variables and the overall attitude is not always linear, and multiple factors need to be considered to predict behavior based on

attitudes (Ajzen, 1985; Triandis, 1971). For example, people's responses to statements of opinions can be affected by their inclination to agree or disagree with something that should represent their presumed attitude (Thurstone, 1929). In short, when measuring attitudes, the responses are a function of the conscientiousness of the subject.

Variables Affecting Attitudes

In the context of the Theory of Planned Behavior TPB, a person's intention to carry out a particular behavior is pivotal. TPB holds that three independent determinants affect intention: the person's attitude towards the behavior, social pressure to execute or not execute the behavior, and the perceived ability to perform the behavior in a given context (Ajzen, 1985). Intention, or the desire to perform a particular behavior, is dependent not only on the person's attitude towards the behavior, but also on availability of perceived prerequisites and resources to perform the behavior successfully (Ajzen & Madden, 1986; Schwartz & Bohner, 2001). For general education teachers who support the idea of welcoming students with special needs in their classrooms, this can include training, experience, time, monetary resources, and human supports. These factors can amount to the perceived behavioral control. When attitudes towards inclusion measurement scales are grounded in TPB, incompatibilities with self-reported attitudes and overt behavior in specific situations can be explored.

TPB assumes that an attitude is a latent variable that can be inferred from its manifestation in behavior. Within the expectancy-behavior correlation, the moderating variables include personality characteristics, secondary characteristics of attitude (the degree to which an attitude of belief is held with conviction), or self-awareness and efficacy related to the object or situation (Ajzen & Madden, 1986). Many attitudes

towards inclusion scales include the three components of attitude (cognitive, affective, and behavioral) as mediating variables and incorporate TPB in the development of subscales to measure attitudes towards inclusion to predict behavior. For example, the Scale of Teachers' Attitudes Towards Inclusion (STATIC) is organized under the following variables: (a) Advantages and Disadvantages of Inclusive Education, (b) Professional Issues Regarding Inclusive Education, (c) Philosophical Issues Regarding Inclusive Education, and (d) Logistical Concerns of Inclusive Education (Cochran, 1997). The Opinions Relative to Integration of Students with Disabilities (ORI) is made up of four multidimensional factors: (a) Benefits of Integration, (b) Integrated Classroom Management, (c) Perceived Ability to Teach Students with Disabilities, and (d) Special Versus Integrated General Education (Antonak & Larrivee, 1995). These subcategories are frequently referred to as factors or dimensions and constitute the mediating variables.

Measuring Self-Efficacy

People's sense of self-efficacy related to a specific task is influenced not only by their innate skills and capabilities but also by their confidence in coordinating those skills and their determination to exert and maintain effort throughout the task (Bandura, 1986). Therefore, rather than assessing a person's actual skills, self-efficacy scales should be designed to measure their beliefs in their abilities to perform under various conditions. Instruments that measure self-efficacy need to be carefully tailored to specific areas, or domains, of the functioning under investigation to be relevant (Bandura, 2006).

Variables Affecting Teacher Self-Efficacy

Most instruments developed to measure teacher efficacy are grounded in Rotter's Social Learning Theory and Bandura's construct of self-efficacy (Tschannen-Moran et

al., 1998). Rotter's theory focuses on internal versus external control, while Bandura's centers on self-efficacy and outcome expectations. Armor et al. (1976) assessed teacher self-efficacy by using simple two-factor measure that asked participants to rate their level of agreement with two statements: "When it comes right down to it, a teacher really can't do much because most of a student's motivation and performance depends on his or her home environment" and "If I try really hard, I can get through to even the most difficult or unmotivated students" (Armor et al., 1976, p. 34). Subsequently developed scales continued to be aligned with the two-component model of self-efficacy. A factor analysis of the Teacher Efficacy Scale found that the 30-item questionnaire corresponded to two similar efficacy dimensions: teaching efficacy, or the degree to which students can be taught, and personal teaching efficacy (Gibson & Dembo, 1984). Gibson and Dembo (1984) determined that additional cohesive dimensions were difficult to ascertain.

Research on teacher efficacy and inclusion has found that adopting and implementing inclusive teaching practices is a distinct subset within teaching efficacy. Therefore, inclusive teaching efficacy scales encompass the following components: the ability to collaborate effectively, the management of challenging behaviors, and the implementation of inclusive teaching methods (Sharma & Jacobs, 2016; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). The Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practices (TEIP) scale was developed to measure a teacher's self-efficacy to teach in inclusive classrooms. The TEIP scale outlines three critical areas: efficacy in using inclusive instruction, efficacy in collaboration, and efficacy in managing behavior (Sharma et al., 2012).

Summary

Inclusive practices have been shown to positively influence social-emotional as well as academic outcomes for general education students and students with disabilities (Horowitz et al., 2017; Noggle & Stites, 2018). This has resulted in legislative action and policy promoting inclusive education throughout the United States. Despite the renewed push for the development of inclusive education, California continues to have one of the lowest inclusion rates in the country (Humphrey et al., 2020). Over the past few decades, much research has been done to identify barriers to the successful implementation of inclusive practices and programming (Koh & Shin, 2017). Two of the most frequently cited barriers to inclusion are the attitude a teacher holds towards inclusion and the teacher's sense of self-efficacy.

Both attitudes and self-efficacy are fluid and multifaceted concepts, each encompassing a range of definitions that vary across different situations and contexts. A teacher's attitude towards inclusion can be broken down into key elements such as their beliefs about educating students with disabilities in mainstream classrooms, their perceived professional duties and responsibilities, and their views on the overall success or influence of inclusive education practices (Cullen et al., 2010). Teachers' sense of self-efficacy encompasses their confidence in their instructional capabilities in an inclusive classroom, their capacity to collaborate in inclusive environments, and their proficiency to manage the behaviors of students with disabilities (Sharma et al., 2012). When viewed through the lens of models designed for complex change, these components of attitude and efficacy emerge as especially significant for inclusive education. They form the

foundational beliefs and capabilities that drive the adoption and implementation of inclusive practices (Fullan, 2002; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991; Gibson & Dembo, 1984).

As of the date of this study, most of the studies conducted related to attitudes towards inclusion have primarily examined the perspectives of general education teachers regarding inclusive education (Yan & Sin, 2014; Boyle et al, 2020; Guillemot et al., 2022). This is of concern because the attitudes towards inclusion of special education teachers should not be overlooked when developing and implementing inclusive programs in schools. Studies have shown that special education teachers wield considerable influence during IEP meetings and in the creation of the IEP document itself (Blackwell & Rossetti, 2014). The IEP team collaborates to assess the student's learning goals, gauge unique abilities and needs, determine the need for special education services, and decide on the best educational environment to provide those services. However, in many instances, the input of parents, general education teachers, and school officials is heavily influenced by the special education teacher's recommendations (Buell et al., 1999; Martin et al., 2006). The decision to place students with special needs in the general education classroom is therefore greatly influenced by the special education teacher's beliefs about teaching students with special needs within the general education setting.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004) as well as Early Childhood programs have stated that services for special needs children should be delivered in general education settings to the maximum extent possible. Nevertheless, the U.S. Department of Education found that from 1985 to 2012, the percentage of special needs preschool students receiving services in the general education setting increased less

than 6% (Barton & Smith, 2015). Although many factors contribute to the lack of progress related to inclusive practices, a monitoring report on inclusion and education published by UNESCO found that policy related to inclusion is frequently created in organizational and governmental silos that, combined with bureaucratic culture and interests, hinders implementation and collaboration of equity and inclusion in educational organizations (Global Education Monitoring Report Team, 2020).

Acceptance of cultural diversity, which includes acceptances in differences of abilities, begins at an early age. It is during the early years of childhood when socially dominant ideas and interactions shape a person's worldview and understanding and acceptance of others (University of Nebraska, 2021). By putting emphasis on early education, this study contributes to the existing knowledge regarding attitudes towards inclusion and how attitudes affect behavioral intent. Exploring and uncovering attitudes towards inclusion held by special education preschool teachers can (a) identify needs for specific supports and training to improve attitudes towards inclusion, (b) inform special education teacher pre-service training programs and professional development, (c) assist districts with state and district goals and priority setting aimed to support inclusion in schools, and (d) inform federal, state, and district-level policy and funding allocations.

Synthesis Matrix

The key sources and references used for the review of the literature for this study were organized in a synthesis matrix (Appendix A). The synthesis matrix guides and supports the development of the literature review, including its theoretical foundation, key variables, and the research design used in this study.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Overview

Research overwhelmingly supports the significant role a positive attitude plays in inclusion's success (Boyle et al. 2020; Cook, 2002; Forlin, 2010). Most studies on identifying attitudes towards inclusion, however, have focused primarily on the attitudes towards inclusion of general education teachers and administrative leadership (Boyle et al, 2020; Guillemot et al., 2022; Yan & Sin, 2014, 2015). This current study aimed to discover what attitudes towards inclusion are held by special education preschool teachers and their belief in their ability to support special education students in the general education classroom.

This chapter provides a detailed description of the methodology used to carry out the study. Following the purpose statement and research questions, the study's research design and rationale are presented. Next, the population and sampling procedures are delineated, followed by a detailed description of the instrumentation employed. Validity and reliability are addressed and data collection methods are outlined. The chapter concludes with a description of data analysis methods and the study's limitations.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this mixed-methods study was to determine how special education preschool teachers rate their attitudes towards inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education preschool classroom in California with respect to cognitive factors, affective factors, and behavioral intent factors. In addition, this study aimed to explore how special education preschool teachers rate their self-efficacy in supporting students with disabilities in the general education classroom in California with respect to inclusive

instruction, collaboration, and behavior management and how these ratings compare to their attitudes towards inclusion. A final purpose of the study was to determine how preschool special education teachers identify and describe other factors not previously mentioned in the ratings that impact their attitudes towards inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education preschool classroom.

Research Questions

1. How do special education preschool teachers rate their attitudes towards inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education preschool classroom in California with respect to cognitive factors, affective factors and behavioral intent factors as measured by the Attitudes Towards Teaching All Students (ATTAS-mm) instrument?
2. How do special education preschool teachers rate their self-efficacy in supporting students with disabilities in the general education classroom in California with respect to inclusive instruction, collaboration, and behavior management as measured by the Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practices-Short Form (TEIP-SF) scale?
3. How do the ratings of special education preschool teachers' attitudes towards inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom compare to their ratings of self-efficacy in supporting students with disabilities in the general education classroom?
4. How do special education preschool teachers identify and describe other factors not previously mentioned that impact their teaching efficacy and attitudes towards inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom?

Research Design

This study used a mixed methods nonexperimental, descriptive, sequential, convergent research design. Mixed-methods research designs mix quantitative and qualitative research techniques to understand a research problem (Creswell, 2008). In non-experimental designs there are no interventions or manipulations present. Because this study aimed to determine current attitudes of preschool special education teachers without having received any specific type of intervention or training aimed to increase positive beliefs regarding inclusion, a non-experimental design was most appropriate. Simple descriptive designs are often used to describe attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, or other traits of a group (Patten & Newhart, 2018). In addition to identifying attitudes towards inclusion, this study aimed to determine whether there is a relationship, or correlation, between teachers' attitudes towards inclusion and their sense of self-efficacy to implement inclusive programs.

Mixed Methods Design

The three types of mixed-methods design are exploratory, explanatory, and triangulation, or convergent (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Fraenkel et al., 2011). Exploratory designs typically start with a qualitative study to discover potential variables that contribute to a phenomenon. Data collected during the qualitative phase informs the development of the quantitative phase. An explanatory design begins with quantitative data and then augments the results with qualitative data to help explain the quantitative findings (Creswell & Cresswell, 2018). In a convergent design, both qualitative and quantitative data are collected and then merged to facilitate the comparison or synthesis

of their respective results. Although typically collected concurrently, data can also be collected sequentially through two or more phases (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

Research Design Rationale

The research methodology employed in this study was a mixed methods nonexperimental, descriptive, sequential, convergent design. The purpose of this mixed-methods study was threefold: (a) to assess the attitudes of special education preschool teachers in California towards including students with disabilities in general education preschool classrooms, considering cognitive, affective, and behavioral intent factors; (b) to examine the self-efficacy of these teachers in supporting students with disabilities in the general education classroom, specifically in terms of inclusive instruction, collaboration, and behavior management, and to compare these self-efficacy ratings with their attitudes towards inclusion; and (c) to explore additional factors that influence special education preschool teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education preschool classrooms. A convergent mixed-methods methodology was selected as the most suitable approach for this study because it allows the integration of the advantages of both quantitative and qualitative methodologies, thereby offering a more comprehensive insight into the research problem (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Quantitative data allowed an analysis of the intricate interplay between teachers' self-efficacy and their attitudes towards inclusive education and qualitative data facilitated further exploration of the factors influencing teachers' self-efficacy and their attitudes regarding inclusion.

Population

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), a population is a group of individuals, cases, or elements that meet a specific set of criteria to which the researcher aims to generalize the results of the study. For this study, the population was special education preschool teachers in California. A special education preschool teacher is someone who possesses an early childhood special education (ECSE) teaching credential and primarily teaches preschool students with disabilities (Turnbull et al., 2019). According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2023), in 2022, 1,610 special education preschool teachers were employed in California.

Target Population or Sampling Frame

The group, or list, from which actual participants are selected is called the target population or sampling frame (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The target population in this study was special education preschool teachers in any of the 19 Special Education Local Plan Areas (SELPAs) in Los Angeles County. Data obtained from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2023) did not delineate between Northern, Central, and Southern California, or its counties, and limited geographical delimitations showed that the Los Angeles-Long Beach-Anaheim area accounted for 400 special education preschool teachers. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2020), 25% of California's population lives in Los Angeles County. Therefore, the estimated number of special education preschool teachers in Los Angeles County was 403.

Sample

A sample consists of the individuals who participated in the study and from whom data are collected (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The target population in this study

was special education preschool teachers teaching at school districts in one of the 19 Special Education Local Plan Areas (SELPAs) in Los Angeles County. When deciding on the size of a sample, several key factors must be considered, including the level of variability within the population and the likelihood of choosing a sample that accurately reflects the broader population (Patten & Newhart, 2018). When a target population is relatively homogeneous, researchers can achieve reliable results even with a smaller sample size. In this study, all participants were California credentialed special education preschool teachers. The online sample size calculator developed for the Donor Committee for Enterprise Development (DCED) was used to calculate the recommended minimum sample size for descriptive research when using a survey. With a confidence level of 90%, and a confidence interval of 10, the minimum sample size based on a population of 1,610 was 30 (Fairbairn & Kessler, 2015).

Quantitative Sampling Process

Phase 1 of the study used nonprobability purposeful and convenience sampling methods. Nonprobability purposeful or purposive sampling selects participants who can provide information-rich data relevant to the study's inquiry, which increases generalizability (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). In convenience sampling, participants are selected based on accessibility, availability, and willingness to participate. Convenience sampling helps navigate barriers related to resources, such as a limited budget, time, and access (Patten & Newhart, 2018). Los Angeles County SELPA directors, superintendents, and special education directors were contacted to assist in identifying study subjects, specifically special education preschool teachers, and securing

their participation. Ain addition, snowball sampling was used. In snowball sampling, participants invite others to become part of the sample group (Creswell, 2012).

Quantitative Sample Selection Procedure

For the quantitative Phase 1, Los Angeles County SELPA directors were contacted via email with information about the study. The email included an introduction of the researcher, the purpose of the study, a request for assistance in identifying and contacting educational and administrative leaders from member districts, and information on the delivery of the questionnaire (Appendix B). Following this outreach, special education administrators throughout the Los Angeles County area were contacted using the same method. Follow-up phone calls were made as needed. Potential survey participants were contacted via email with an invitation to participate (Appendix C). Persons who chose to participate and who completed the survey were encouraged to share a link to the survey with other special education preschool teachers. The final sample for the quantitative phase was 43 special education preschool teachers.

Qualitative Sampling Process

A convenience sampling method was also used for the qualitative Phase 2. The quantitative survey in Phase 1 included a question that asked whether the participant was willing to participate in a follow-up interview. The sample for Phase 2 of the study involved a subset of special education preschool teachers who completed the survey in Phase 1 and who volunteered to participate. Of the 43 participants who completed Phase 1 of the study, 16 expressed interest in participating in Phase 2.

Qualitative Sample Selection Procedure

Survey data were reviewed and participants who had expressed interest in participating in a follow-up interview were identified. All interested survey respondents were contacted via email and invited to participate in Phase 2. The email included a formal invitation to participate in the interview (Appendix D), and prospective participants were asked to provide preferred dates and times to schedule the interview. Follow-up emails were sent as needed. Eight of the 16 survey respondents who had expressed interest in participating in Phase 2 of the study agreed to be interviewed and completed the interview process.

Instrumentation

This research applied a mixed methods convergent design, which enables researchers to gather and analyze both qualitative and quantitative data to compare, contrast, and interpret the findings (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The tools used for collection of data comprised surveys (quantitative) and open-ended interview questions (qualitative). During Phase 1, the dependent variables were measured using a Likert scale. Interval data can be reflected in a Likert scale that uses a rating on a continuum of regular intervals, such as strongly agree or strongly disagree (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The ratings gathered described the attitudes of special education preschool teachers related to inclusion as well as their sense of self-efficacy to support students with special needs in the general education classroom. Independent variables such as demographics were collected using a short questionnaire. Semistructured interviews were conducted during Phase 2.

Quantitative Instruments

Past studies on attitudes towards inclusion have indicated that demographic differences, such as gender, age, education, and years of teaching experience may impact a teacher's attitude towards inclusion (Engelbrecht & Savolainen, 2018; Forlin et al., 2009; Gregory & Noto, 2012). To gather information on relevant personal factors that may impact teachers' attitudes and sense of self-efficacy related to inclusion, a 9-item demographic questionnaire was developed. The questionnaire included closed-ended questions or statements that aimed to gather information on the participant's gender, age, educational background, years of teaching experience, teacher certifications and other relevant credentials, and experience with teaching in an inclusive setting.

Teacher self-efficacy was measured using the Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practices Short Form (TEIP-SF) scale. The scale is a shortened version of the Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practices (TEIP), a widely used scale designed to assess teachers' self-perceived efficacy in inclusive education (Sahli Lozano et al., 2023). The TEIP scale focuses on three key areas crucial for successful inclusion: knowledge of content and pedagogy, classroom/behavior management, and collaboration skills with parents and paraprofessionals (Sharma et al., 2012). The original 18-item scale comprised three distinct factors that included 6 items each: (a) teaching efficacy in inclusive instruction (Factor 1), (b) efficacy in managing disruptive behaviors (Factor 2), and (c) efficacy in collaboration (Factor 3). The TEIP-SF scale consists of 3 questions per factor, resulting in a 9-item scale. Teachers' responses from these three factors offered a comprehensive view of their teaching efficacy concerning students in inclusive settings (Sahli Lozano et

al., 2023). Permission to use the instrument was granted by Dr. Sahli Lozano on November 25, 2023.

The Attitudes Towards Teaching All Students (ATTAS-mm) scale, developed by Gregory and Noto (2012), was used to measure teachers' disposition towards the inclusion of students with disabilities using three components of attitude. The cognitive component addressed a teacher's thoughts and beliefs about inclusion, the affective component captured the emotional response regarding inclusion, and the behavioral component examined the likelihood of acting on these attitudes towards inclusion. The 9-item scale is divided into three sections with three questions each. The sections address teacher attitudes about believing all students can succeed in general education classrooms, developing personal and professional relationships, and creating an accepting environment for all students to learn (Gregory & Noto, 2012). Permission to use the instrument was granted by Dr. Gregory on February 11, 2023.

Qualitative Instruments

For the qualitative component, a 10-item semistructured interview was used to gather the data. A semistructured interview approach flexibility to probe and clarify , making it more suitable than a structured interview method when exploring complex behaviors, motivations, or feelings (Creswell, 2012). The interview protocol including the questions can be found in Appendix E. Teachers were asked to express their overall opinions about educating children with disabilities in general education classrooms. In addition, they were asked about their personal experiences supporting students with disabilities in inclusive settings and what factors may have contributed to or inhibited successful inclusive practices. Developing effective interview questions requires

examining existing and relevant interview questions (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The study's interview questions were adapted from the interview questions used in a similar study that investigated the correlation between secondary special education teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of students with disabilities and their level of self-efficacy to support students with disabilities who are included in the general education classroom (Wood, 2017).

Validity and Reliability

Reliability relates to the instrument being used and reflects the instrument's consistency. This includes the internal consistency of scores on an instrument, that is, whether the responses to the items are consistent across constructs as well as the stability of these scores over time (test-retest correlations) and the consistency of test administration and scoring (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Validity is used to assess whether the research outcomes measure what they were intended to measure and to estimate the accuracy and truthfulness of the obtained results. Internal validity refers to whether the results of the causal relationship between variables being tested are trustworthy and not affected by other factors or variables. External validity refers to how well the results, or findings, of a study can be generalized to other groups or situations (McMillan, & Schumacher, 2010). Quantitative validity is concerned with whether meaningful and useful inferences can be drawn from scores obtained through specific instruments (Creswell & Cresswell, 2018).

Quantitative Reliability and Validity

Quantitative validity, also known as construct validity, refers to the extent to which the scores obtained from participants accurately measure the construct being

assessed. Quantitative reliability refers to the consistency and stability of scores received from participants over time (Cresswell & Plano Clarke, 2018). Internal consistency is considered the most important form of reliability for multi-item instruments. To quantify a scale's internal consistency, Cronbach's alpha (α) value, which falls between 0 and 1, is often used. The optimal range for this value is typically between 0.7 and 0.9 (Creswell & Cresswell, 2018). An alternative to the Cronbach's alpha coefficient is the McDonald's omega (ω). Like Cronbach's alpha, an omega value between 0.7 and 0.9 is generally regarded as optimal (Deng & Chan, 2017).

To measure teacher self-efficacy, the TEIP-SF scale was used. The scale is a condensed version of the Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practices (TEIP), which is commonly used to evaluate teachers' self-perceived efficacy in inclusive education (Sahli Lozano et al., 2023). Instead of Cronbach's alpha reliability measures, the authors used the McDonald's omega. The newly developed TEIP-SF was found to be a sufficiently valid and reliable scale to measure teacher efficacy in inclusive classrooms with reported reliability coefficients for each of the three factors reported as $\omega = 0.74$ (efficacy in inclusive instruction), $\omega = 0.81$ (efficacy in collaboration), and $\omega = 0.88$ (efficacy in managing behavior). In addition, it was found to be more time efficient than the original full-length scale and demonstrated a stable factor structure (Sahli Lozano et al., 2023). Criterion and convergent validity were determined by assessing the sub scale and broad scale scores overlap between the TEIP-SF scale and the already validated TEIP scale using samples from Canada, Switzerland, and Australia. The TEIP-SF correlated with r values between 0.90 and 0.95 in the validation samples, indicating a high overlap between the original and the short-form scales.

The ATTAS-mm scale, developed by Gregory and Noto (2012), was used to measure teachers' disposition towards the inclusion of students with disabilities using three components of attitude. The instrument consists of three subscales (cognitive, affective, and behavioral) that explain almost 80% of the variance in scores and was found to have strong validity and reliability (Gregory & Noto, 2012, 2018). The Cronbach alpha for the entire ATTAS-mm scale was $\alpha = 0.83$, and the three subscales also demonstrated acceptable reliability values: $\alpha = 0.72$ (cognitive), $\alpha = 0.93$ (affective) and $\alpha = 0.84$ (behavioral). To ensure validity, the items were aligned with relevant literature, had a narrow focus on the content, and were reviewed by a small panel of experts (Gregeory & Noto, 2012). The instrument has since been revalidated through analysis and comparison of data collected between 2012 and 2018 (Gregory & Noto, 2019).

Response Time

A fast response time, the time spent answering questions on a survey, is frequently associated with low response quality (Couper & Kreuter, 2013). This is especially true for scaled questionnaires in which responses are subjective, and respondents can quickly go through the survey by arbitrarily selecting answers without carefully reading the questions. Although it is difficult to determine the minimum response time required for optimum response quality, it can be assumed that the respondents sped through the survey if their completion time is significantly less than the amount of time required for an average reader to read the questions (Conrad et al., 2017). As an added measure to ensure validity and integrity of the quantitative data, the average time to complete the survey was calculated using Survey Monkey's response quality

feature. Based on average reading speed, the estimated time to complete the survey was 7 min. To account for varying reading speeds, the speeding threshold should be set low enough to identify and exclude unreasonably fast completions (Zhang & Conrad, 2013). Consequently, surveys completed in under 5 min were omitted from the final data analysis.

Qualitative Reliability and Validity

In qualitative research, validity refers to the accuracy of the findings, which is ensured through various procedures. To check for qualitative validity, it is important to assess the accuracy of information obtained through qualitative data collection to determine that the instrument collected the data it intended to collect. This involves examining the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the information (Creswell & Plano Clarke, 2018). Qualitative reliability implies the consistency of the researchers' approach across different research studies and projects (Creswell & Cresswell, 2018). In qualitative research, when reliability is emphasized, it pertains primarily to the consistency of multiple coders on a team in establishing agreement on codes for passages in the text.

To develop effective interview questions requires examining existing and relevant interview questions (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The interview questions developed for this study were adapted from the interview questions used in a similar study that investigated the correlation between secondary special education teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of students with disabilities and their level of self-efficacy to support students with disabilities who are included in the general education classroom (Wood, 2017). Data collection alignment tools can help ensure that the data collected are

relevant and answer the research question (Lee, 2020). To determine alignment of the interview questions to the research questions, an interview question development matrix was used. Finally, an interview guide was developed, and both the matrix and the guide were reviewed by ECSE specialists and an early childhood inclusion specialist for appropriateness and applicability within the context of special education teachers and early education.

Field Test

Reliability was further established through a pilot field test. In qualitative studies, researchers are the instruments, and their unique personalities, characteristics, and interview techniques can significantly influence data collection. This may result in biases being introduced during participant interviews, which must be addressed and minimized (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Therefore, researchers must be aware of their behavior during participant interviews because it can significantly impact the responses they receive. For this study, a pilot interview with a veteran special education preschool teacher was conducted. A peer researcher familiar with conducting and analyzing qualitative interviews was present during the pilot interview and acted as a qualified observer. After completing the interview, the interview process and questions were evaluated using the interviewee feedback questions (Appendix F) and observer feedback questions (Appendix G).

Data Collection

In fixed mixed-methods designs, the use of both qualitative and quantitative methods is preplanned and predetermined at the outset of the research process and the procedures being implemented as per the plan (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Before

collecting data, a three-part online survey instrument titled Special Education Preschool Teacher Survey on Inclusive Education was developed (Appendix H). The survey was developed using SurveyMonkey. The first section included a questionnaire designed specifically for this study to collect relevant demographic data. The second section included a 6-point Likert TEIP-SF scale developed by Sahli Lozano et al. (2023). The last section consisted of a 7-point Likert scale with values ranging from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*. It was based on the previously published and frequently used ATTAS-mm survey instrument developed by Gregory and Noto (2012). To collect qualitative data, a standardized, open-ended interview guide was developed. An interview guide outlines the process in which the interview will be conducted (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The 10-item interview guide was adapted from one that was used in a similar study that investigated the correlation between secondary special education teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of students with disabilities and their level of self-efficacy to support students with disabilities in the general education classroom (Wood, 2017).

Human Subject Considerations

Before data collection, coursework was completed to obtain the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) Clearance Certificate of Human Subjects certification (Appendix I). Subsequently, permission from the UMass Global University Institutional Review Board (UMIRB) to conduct research involving human subjects was obtained (Appendix J). All potential participants were provided with the UMIRB Research Participant's Bill of Rights (Appendix K) and participants' informed consent was secured using the informed consent and confidentiality form (Appendix L).

Phase 1 Data Collection

For the quantitative phase, potential candidates identified through the quantitative sampling process were contacted via email with an invitation to participate. The invitation included detailed information about the study, inclusion criteria, and a hyperlink to the online survey hosted by SurveyMonkey. An Informed Consent Packet was attached to the email and included a copy of the Informed Consent and Confidentiality Form and the Research Participant's Bill of Rights.

At the start of the survey, participants were asked to confirm receipt of the consent packet and provide informed consent electronically. When consent was obtained and participation criteria verified, participants were able to move forward to complete the three questionnaires that were included in the survey. Participants' information was stored in their secure Service Organization Controls (SOC) 2 accredited data center that follows security and technical best practices. Data collected were securely transmitted through an https connection, and researcher user logins were safeguarded via Transport Layer Security (TLS) and encrypted using industry-standard encryption algorithms and strength (SurveyMonkey, n.d.). Survey results were kept confidential and were safeguarded using password-protected log-in credentials. The estimated time to complete the survey was 7 min.

Phase 2 Data Collection

Qualitative data were collected after the quantitative data collection phase. The participants for Phase 2 of the study were special education preschool teachers who completed the survey in Phase 1 and who volunteered to participate. Initial contact with the participants was made via email. The email included a formal invitation to participate

in the interview process along with the interview consent form (Appendix M) and the audio recording consent and release form (Appendix N). Invitees were asked to provide their preferred dates and times for the interview to be scheduled and follow-up emails were sent to confirm a mutually agreed upon date and time. The 10-item semistructured interview was conducted using the Zoom platform. At the start of the interview, participants were reminded of their rights, including their anonymity and their ability to terminate the interview at any point, and asked to electronically sign the consent forms. Participants were also informed that the interview was semistructured, providing the flexibility to ask follow-up questions, offer clarification, or delve deeper into responses. The interviews were recorded using Zoom's audio recording and transcription features.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is a continuous aspect of research, involving examining, transforming, and interpreting the data with the goal of discovering useful information and draw conclusions about a phenomenon (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The approach to analyzing data differs depending on whether the data are qualitative or quantitative. For qualitative data, the process involves reviewing and examining a variety of sources, such as interview transcripts, field notes, or documents. This information is then coded and categorized into themes to build a database for analysis (Patten & Newhart, 2018). For quantitative data, an analysis process involves identifying trends using descriptive analysis techniques. Regardless of the type of data, the research questions need to be revisited and addressed during the analysis process and the results of the data analysis should be summarized in various formats, such as summary statements, figures, or tables (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

Quantitative Data Analysis

Survey data were collected and analyzed using SurveyMonkey. Results were tabulated and described through statistical analysis. Descriptive statistics involve providing numerical analysis of information that includes the central tendency, variance, and standard deviation (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The mean, median, and mode were calculated to determine the average of the scores, the center scores, and the most frequently occurring scores, which in turn were used to summarize, identify, and describe the essential characteristics of the data. To compare the total attitude and efficacy scores and singular independent variables such as gender and years of teaching, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was completed. To explore the relationship between attitudes towards inclusion (measured by ATTAS-mm) and efficacy for inclusive practices (measured by TEIP-SF), a multiple regression analysis and a Pearson's correlation test were done.

Qualitative Data Analysis

An inductive analysis process was used to analyze the qualitative data. Data collected were coded and themed using MAXQDA, which is a qualitative and mixed-methods data analysis software program. Before coding the data in MAXQDA, a coding and themes worksheet was used. The interview transcripts were analyzed and responses to the interview questions were color-coded and added to the worksheet. From the responses added, potential themes, or codes, were created. These codes were then converted into theme phrases and added to MAXQDA. Patterns and frequencies of each code were determined and organized using parent nodes and child nodes.

Intercoder Reliability

Intercoder reliability refers to the extent that multiple coders come to the same conclusions with respect to evaluating and interpreting collected data and identifying themes (Patton, 2015). Intercoder reliability is established when two or more researchers agree on the same codes for the same passages of text. The procedure involves creating a codebook and having multiple individuals code agreed upon sections of the transcript. The coded transcripts are then compared to determine whether the codes and themes were applied similarly or differently. Agreement rates are calculated based on the percentage of codes that are similar, and reliability statistics can be computed for systematic data comparisons (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). To obtain reliability, at least 10% of the qualitative data should be double-coded. Intercoder reliability is established when a minimum of 80% agreement is achieved (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). For this study, to ensure acceptable levels of reliability and reduce researcher bias, a UMass Global peer researcher familiar with coding procedures along with a veteran special education preschool teacher reviewed and coded approximately 10% of the qualitative data. The results were cross-referenced, and 91.67% agreement was established.

Data Triangulation

Mixed-methods data analysis refers to the application of analytic techniques to both quantitative and qualitative data along with the integration of both forms of data (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). For this study, the last stage of the data analysis involved the merging of the collected quantitative and qualitative data, which is often referred to as triangulation. Triangulation takes place when multiple methods of inquiry are used, or when the examination of more than one data source is conducted. Data

triangulation with multiple sources or methods that arrive at the same conclusion strengthens the researcher's credibility of results (Patten & Newhart, 2018). The four types of triangulation methods are data triangulation, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation, and methodological triangulation (Patton, 2015). Methodological triangulation, which was used in this study, involves the use of multiple data sources and collection methods. Triangulation of the data ensured an in-depth understanding of the research findings.

Limitations

A study's limitations refer to the characteristics of the design or methodology that establish parameters for the application or interpretation of its results, such as constraints on the generalizability and utility of the study's findings (Roberts, 2010). One of the benefits of using a mixed-methods research design is that it incorporates the strengths of different methods, which helps minimize the limitations of any one method. Nevertheless, limitations in any study are inevitable and must be considered (Morgan, 2013).

Researcher and Participant Bias

Some level of bias exists in all research, and can range from selection bias, confirmation bias, framing bias, procedural bias, or reporting bias. To maximize the validity of the study and its conclusions, the researcher must acknowledge potential biases when outlining the methodology and discussing the interpretations and conclusions (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).

Researcher as Instrument

There are many ways to minimize the effects of human bias in qualitative research. Perhaps the most important one is for researchers to identify their own biases. Acknowledging and accepting one's inherent subjectivity that leads to bias is essential to effectively monitor and minimize its influence (Mehra, 2002). Because the researcher is the primary instrument to collect and interpret qualitative data, bias as a threat to validity must be considered and addressed (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).

Self-Selection Bias

Self-selection bias arises when individuals are given the option to decide whether or not to participate in a research study. This type of bias can have a significant impact on the study's outcomes because those who choose to participate may differ in important ways from those who decline to participate (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Consequently, the sample may be biased, which can affect the generalizability of the results obtained from the study. Volunteer sampling, which is a form of nonprobability and convenience sampling, was used in both the quantitative phase and the qualitative phase of the study.

Self-Reporting

Self-report techniques were used in both survey and interview methods. The validity of this study's results was contingent upon the teachers' self-awareness of their own self-efficacy and attitudes, as well as their willingness to provide honest and candid responses. Furthermore, like any emotional state, attitudes and perspectives are internal states that are complex in nature (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). A participant's response to a question, especially those that are closed-ended, not only may be difficult to

quantify but also may not necessarily reflect that person's true emotion. Finally, self-report measures are susceptible to social desirability (Patten & Newhart, 2018). Social desirability is the tendency of individuals to present themselves in a positive light. Participants either may respond with what they believe they should be thinking or feeling or may provide answers that they suspect the researcher wants to hear.

Independent or Extraneous Variables

Although correlation and regression analysis can help non-experimental comparative research designs determine whether there is a relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variables, it cannot determine causal relationships (McMillan, & Schumacher, 2010). Therefore, any conclusions related to the effect of the shared existing characteristics of the independent variable should be made carefully.

Summary

This study used a mixed methods nonexperimental, descriptive, sequential, convergent research design. Its purpose was threefold: (a) assess the attitudes of special education preschool teachers in California towards including students with disabilities in general education preschool classrooms, considering cognitive, affective, and behavioral intent factors; (b) examine the self-efficacy of these teachers in supporting students with disabilities in the general education classroom, specifically in terms of inclusive instruction, collaboration, and behavior management and compare these self-efficacy ratings with their attitudes towards inclusion; and (c), explore additional factors that influence special education preschool teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education preschool classrooms. The target population in this

study was special education preschool teachers who taught at school districts in one of the 19 SELPAs in Los Angeles County. Data were collected in two phases using surveys and interview methods. Data analysis involved intercoder reliability and triangulation, and the findings are discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER IV: RESEARCH, DATA COLLECTION, AND FINDINGS

Overview

Chapter IV provides a brief overview of this study's purpose statement, research questions, methodology, population, and sample. This chapter also provides a detailed report of the demographic data of the participants, the quantitative data and the qualitative data collected to address the research questions, a data analysis, and a summary of the findings.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this mixed-methods study was to determine how special education preschool teachers rate their attitudes towards inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education preschool classroom in California with respect to cognitive factors, affective factors, and behavioral intent factors. In addition, this study aimed to explore how special education preschool teachers rate their self-efficacy in supporting students with disabilities in the general education classroom in California with respect to inclusive instruction, collaboration, and behavior management, and how these ratings compare to their attitudes towards inclusion. A final purpose of the study was to determine how preschool special education teachers identify and describe other factors not previously mentioned in the ratings that impact their attitudes towards inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education preschool classroom.

Research Questions

1. How do special education preschool teachers rate their attitudes towards inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education preschool classroom in California with respect to cognitive factors, affective factors and behavioral intent

factors as measured by the Attitudes Towards Teaching All Students (ATTAS-mm) instrument?

2. How do special education preschool teachers rate their self-efficacy in supporting students with disabilities in the general education classroom in California with respect to inclusive instruction, collaboration, and behavior management as measured by the Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practices-Short Form (TEIP-SF) scale?
3. How do the ratings of special education preschool teachers' attitudes towards inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom compare to their ratings of self-efficacy in supporting students with disabilities in the general education classroom?
4. How do special education preschool teachers identify and describe other factors not previously mentioned that impact their teaching efficacy and attitudes towards inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom?

Research Methods and Data Collection Procedures

The research methodology employed in this study was a mixed methods nonexperimental, descriptive, sequential, convergent design. Quantitative data were collected using an online survey comprising nine demographic closed-ended questions; a nine question, 6-point Likert scale; and a nine question, 7-point Likert scale. Qualitative data was collected after the quantitative data collection phase through one-on-one interviews using the Zoom platform. The quantitative data findings collected using the survey addressed Research Questions 1, 2, and 3, and qualitative interview data addressed Research Question 4.

Population

The population relevant to this study was special education preschool teachers in California. A special education preschool teacher holds an ECSE teaching credential and primarily teaches preschool students with disabilities (Turnbull et al., 2019). According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2023), in 2022, 1,610 special education preschool teachers were employed in California.

Sample

The target population in this study was special education preschool teachers in any of the 19 Special Education Local Plan Areas (SELPAs) in Los Angeles County. The online sample size calculator developed for the Donor Committee for Enterprise Development (DCED) was used to calculate the recommended minimum sample size for descriptive research when using a survey. With a confidence level of 90% and a confidence interval of 10, the minimum sample size based on a population of 1,610 was 30 (Fairbairn & Kessler, 2015). The survey yielded 67 respondents. Responses were analyzed for fidelity using completion time and completion rate. Incomplete surveys and surveys that were completed in less than 5 min were eliminated. A total of 43 special education preschool teachers completed all parts of the survey with fidelity and were included in the final sample. For the qualitative phase, the inclusion criteria comprised preschool teachers in special education who agreed to participate in the study and completed all quantitative survey requirements with accuracy. Of the 43 qualifying survey participants, 16 had expressed interest in participating in a follow-up interview. All 16 were contacted and eight of them responded positively and confirmed their participation in a follow-up interview.

Demographic Data

Table 1 provides a summary of demographic data for survey respondents. The majority were female (93%), and the largest age group was 25-34 (27.9%). Of the respondents, 46.5% were currently teaching in a self-contained or special day class (SDC) and 25.6% were providing services in a general education setting to some extent. The majority of the respondents were from Los Angeles County (67.4%), and the remaining respondents were from Northern California (9.3%) and Southern California (23.3%). The highest percentage of respondents taught in suburban areas (46.5%), followed by urban areas (39.5%) and rural areas (14%). All the respondents held an Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) credential, and 23 respondents (53%) indicated that they held additional teaching credentials, such as a general education credential or a K-12 mild/moderate credential. In terms of years of experience, most of the respondents had over 15 years of teaching experience (37.2%), and the second largest group of respondents had 5 years or less of teaching experience (32.5%).

Table 1

Summary of Demographic Data for Survey Respondents

	Category	Frequency	%
Gender	Male	3	7.0%
	Female	40	93.0%
Age range	25-34	12	27.9%
	35-44	11	25.6%
	45-54	8	18.6%
	55-64	11	25.6%
	65 or over	1	2.3%
Credentials	Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE)	43	100.0%
	Additional credential(s)	23	53.4%
	Child development permit (general education)	7	16.3%
	Multiple subject (general education)	9	20.9%
	K–12 Mild/Moderate (MMSN)	11	25.6%
	K–12 Moderate/Severe (ESN)	6	14.0%
	Administration	1	2.3%
Years teaching	<1 year	1	2.3%
	1–5 years	13	30.2%
	6–10 years	10	23.3%
	10–15 years	3	7.0%
	>15 years	16	37.2%
Current teaching assignment	General Education Classroom (co-taught)	5	11.6%
	General Education Classroom (push-in)	6	14.0%
	Preschool Assessment Team	5	11.6%
	Resource Room (pull-out)	1	2.3%
	SAI Support and Assessment	1	2.3%
	Self-Contained classroom (SDC)	20	46.5%
	Special Education Blended Classroom	4	9.3%
	State Preschool (SPED)	1	2.3%
Current district county	Los Angeles County	29	67.4%
	Northern California	4	9.3%
	Southern California	10	23.3%
District area	Rural	6	14.0%
	Suburban	20	46.5%
	Urban	17	39.5%

Table 1 (*continued*)

	Category	Frequency	%
Past teaching assignment(s)	General Education Classroom (co-taught)	13	30.2%
	General Education Classroom (push-in)	6	14.0%
	Preschool Assessment Team	1	2.3%
	Resource Room (pull-out)	3	7.0%
	Self-Contained classroom (SDC)	32	74.4%
	Special Education Blended Classroom	7	16.3%
	General Education Teacher	16	37.2%

Eight of the 43 survey respondents participated in a follow-up interview (Table 2). All were female special education preschool teachers who had an Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) teaching credential. Of these eight teachers, three also had a general education credential, and four held a K-12 special education credential. The years of experience in education for these teachers varied; one had 1-5 years of experience, one had 6-10 years, and six had over 15 years of experience. In terms of their current teaching assignments, two teachers reported teaching in a general education classroom (push-in), two teaching in a special day class (SDC), and three teaching in a special education blended classroom. One teacher was part of her district's preschool assessment team, three teachers had some experience with coteaching, and three teachers had experience delivering specialized academic instruction through a push-in model.

Table 2

Summary of Demographic Data for Interviewees

	Category	Frequency	%
Gender	Female	8	100.0%
Teaching credentials	Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE)	8	100.0%
	General Education Credential	3	37.5%
	K-12 Mild/Moderate (MMSN)	3	37.5%
	K-12 Moderate/Severe (ESN)	1	12.5%
Years in education	1-5 years	1	12.5%
	6-10 years	1	12.5%
	>15 years	6	75.0%
Current teaching assignment	General Education Classroom (push-in)	2	25.0%
	Preschool Assessment Team	1	12.5%
	Self-Contained Classroom (SDC)	2	25.0%
	Special Education Blended Classroom	3	37.5%
Inclusion teaching experience	Coteaching	3	37.5%
	Push-in	3	37.5%

Presentation and Analysis of Data

In this mixed-methods study, both quantitative data and qualitative data were collected to answer the research questions. Quantitative data were obtained using a survey that included the Attitudes Towards Teaching All Students (ATTAS-mm) scale and the Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practices Short Form (TEIP-SF) scale. Data collected were analyzed and used to answer Research Questions 1, 2, and 3. Qualitative data were obtained through one-on-one semistructured interviews with eight special education preschool teachers. Approximately 10% of the data were double-coded and cross-referenced to ensure acceptable levels of reliability.

Data Analysis for Research Question 1

Research Question 1 asked, “How do special education preschool teachers rate their attitudes towards inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education

preschool classroom in California with respect to cognitive factors, affective factors, and behavioral intent factors as measured by Attitudes Towards Teaching All Students (ATTAS-mm)?" ATTAS-mm is a 9-item scale that consists of the following three factors with three questions each: Cognitive, affective, and behavioral. The factors address teacher attitudes about believing all students can succeed in general education classrooms, developing personal and professional relationships, and creating an accepting environment for all students to learn (Gregory & Noto, 2012). As an overall measure of attitudes towards teaching all students in an inclusive setting, special education preschool students in this study reported an average score of 5.14 (SD = 0.81), equating to a statement of *somewhat agree* on attitudes towards including all students with disabilities in the general education setting (see Table 3).

Table 3

Attitudes Towards Teaching All Students (ATTAS-mm) Instrument Average Scores (*N* = 43)

Factor	Item	*M*	*SD*	Min-max	Range
ATTAS-mm Factor 1 Cognitive *M* = 3.91, *SD* = 1.31 M-M = 1-7, R = 6	Q1-C: Most or all separate classrooms that exclusively serve students with mild-to-moderate disabilities should be eliminated.	3.37	1.79	1-7	6
	Q2-C: Students with mild-to-moderate disabilities should be taught in regular classes with non-disabled students because they do not require too much of the teacher's time.	3.91	1.53	1-7	6
	Q3-C: Students with mild-to-moderate disabilities can be more effectively educated in regular classrooms as opposed to special education classrooms.	4.44	1.44	1-7	6
ATTAS-mm Factor 2 Affective *M* = 5.57, *SD* = 0.89 M-M = 3-7, R = 4	Q4-A: I would like to be mentored by a teacher who models effective differentiated instruction in the general education classroom.	5.12	1.38	2-7	5
	Q5-A: I want to emulate teachers who know how to design appropriate academic interventions within the general education classroom.	5.56	1.08	4-7	3
	Q6-A: I believe including students with disabilities in the regular education classrooms is effective because they can learn the social skills necessary for success.	6.02	1.04	3-7	4
ATTAS-mm Factor 3 Behavioral *M* = 5.95, *SD* = 0.84 M-M = 3.67-7, R = 3.33	Q7-B: I would like people to think that I can create a welcoming classroom environment for students with disabilities in a general education setting.	6.05	1.41	1-7	6
	Q8-B: Students with mild-to-moderate disabilities can be trusted with responsibilities in the classroom.	6.21	0.91	3-7	4
	Q9-B: All students with mild-to-moderate disabilities should be educated in regular classrooms with nonhandicapped peers to the fullest extent possible	5.60	1.00	4-7	3
ATTAS-mm Full Scale		5.14	0.81	3.11-6.56	3.44

Note. (1) Strongly disagree, (2) Disagree, (3) Somewhat disagree, (4) Neither agree nor disagree, (5) Somewhat agree, (6) Agree, (7) Strongly agree. ATTAS-mm = Attitudes Toward Teaching All Students.

Creating an Accepting Environment (Behavioral)

The highest rated domain on the ATTAS-mm was the behavioral domain, which measures the teacher's attitude towards creating accepting environments for students with disabilities. With a mean score of 6.05, teachers expressed a relatively strong desire for their classrooms to be welcoming and inclusive. Although the individual responses varied in the level of agreement (*SD* = 1.41), 36 teachers responded with *agree* or *strongly agree*. In addition, most respondents believed that students with mild-to-moderate disabilities can be trusted with responsibilities in the classroom (*M* = 6.21, *SD* = 0.91). However, there was less agreement with the statement that all students with mild-to-moderate disabilities should be educated in regular classrooms to the fullest extent possible. The average response was *somewhat agree* (*M* = 5.60, *SD* = 1.0), which suggested some reservations or variability in respondents' attitudes towards full inclusion. Overall, the findings suggested a supportive attitude towards inclusion and the creation of inclusive learning environments and some nuances regarding the extent of inclusion for students with disabilities.

Developing Personal and Professional Relationships (Affective)

The affective domain, which assesses attitudes towards teaching all students, yielded the second highest rating (*M* = 5.57, *SD* = 0.89). Teachers believed in the effectiveness of including students with disabilities in regular education classrooms to promote social skills development and overall student success (*M* = 6.02, *SD* = 1.04). The majority of the teachers (60.5%) expressed a desire to learn from experienced educators who model effective differentiated instruction and design appropriate academic interventions in the general education classroom, and 32.6% were neutral on the topic.

Believing All students Can Succeed (Cognitive)

The lowest agreement rating, with three who indicated *somewhat agree* was in the cognitive domain ($M = 3.91$, $SD = 1.31$). Overall, teachers expressed mixed attitudes towards inclusive education practices for students with mild-to-moderate disabilities ($M = 3.37$, $SD = 1.79$). Of the respondents, 11.7% agreed with the idea of eliminating separate classrooms, and 39.5% disagreed. Despite the support for integration and a belief in the effectiveness of educating students with disabilities in regular classrooms ($M = 4.44$, $SD = 1.44$), 44.2% of the teachers disagreed with the statement that students with special needs did not require too much of the general education teacher's time.

Data Analysis for Research Question 2

Research Question 2 asked, "How do special education preschool teachers rate their self-efficacy in supporting students with disabilities in the general education classroom in California with respect to inclusive instruction, collaboration, and behavior management as measured by the TEIP-SF scale? The TEIP-SF scale focused on three key areas crucial for successful inclusion: knowledge of content and pedagogy, classroom/behavior management, and collaboration skills with parents and paraprofessionals (Sahli Lozano et al., 2023; Sharma et al., 2012). It is comprised of three distinct factors that included three items each: efficacy in inclusive instruction (Factor 1), efficacy in managing behavior (Factor 2), and efficacy in collaboration (Factor 3). As an overall measure of self-efficacy with inclusive practices, special education preschool teachers in this study reported an average score of 5.14 ($SD = 0.47$), equating to a statement of "agree" on feeling effective in supporting students with disabilities in the general education classroom (Table 4).

Table 4

Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practices-Short Form (TEIP-SF) Average Scores (N = 43)

Factor	Item	*M*	*SD*	Min-max	Range
TEIP-SF Factor 1 Instruction *M* = 5.29, *SD* = 0.83 M-M = 1-6, R = 5	Q1-I: I can use a variety of assessment strategies (e.g., portfolio assessment, modified tests and performance-based assessment).	5.26	0.88	1-6	5
	Q2-I: I am able to provide an alternate explanation or example when students are confused.	5.26	1.09	1-6	5
	Q3-I: I am confident in designing learning tasks so that the individual needs of students with disabilities are accommodated.	5.35	0.90	1-6	5
TEIP-SF Factor 2 Managing Behavior *M* = 5.04, *SD* = 0.44 M-M = 4-6, R = 2	Q4-MB: I am confident in my ability to prevent disruptive behavior in the classroom before it occurs.	5.07	0.59	4-6	2
	Q5-MB: I am able to calm a student who is disruptive or noisy.	5.00	0.49	4-6	2
	Q6-MB: I am able to get children to follow classroom rules.	5.05	0.49	4-6	2
TEIP-SF Factor 3 Collaboration *M* = 5.11, *SD* = 0.52 M-M = 4-6, R = 2	Q7-C: I am able to work jointly with other professionals and staff (e.g., aides, other teachers) to teach students with disabilities in the classroom.	5.35	0.57	4-6	2
	Q8-C: I am confident in my ability to get parents involved in school activities of their children with disabilities.	4.60	0.93	2-6	4
	Q9-C: I can collaborate with other professionals (e.g., itinerant teachers or speech pathologists) in designing educational plans for students with disabilities.	5.37	0.54	4-6	2
TEIP-SF Full Scale		5.14	0.47	3.33-6	2.67

Note. (1) Strongly disagree, (2) Disagree, (3) Disagree somewhat, (4) Agree somewhat (5) Agree, (6) Strongly agree. TEIP-SF = Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practices-Short Form.

Self-Efficacy in Using Inclusive Instruction

The highest-rated domain of self-efficacy was in instructional practices related to inclusive education, with an average score of 5.11 (*SD* = 0.52). The mean scores for all items fell within the upper range of the scale (5 = *agree*, 6 = *strongly agree*) indicating a high level of overall confidence in their ability to use a variety of assessment strategies, provide alternate explanations or examples when students are confused, and design

learning tasks that accommodate the individual needs of students with disabilities. All three items in this domain showed a greater internal variance than any other items on the scale (*SD* = 0.83, Range = 5). Variance in responses suggested that special education preschool teachers have varying levels of confidence and competence in their ability to implement inclusive instructional practices.

Self-Efficacy in Collaboration

The second highest-rated area for self-efficacy for special education preschool teachers in this study was in collaboration. Teachers generally expressed confidence in their ability to work jointly with other professionals and staff, such as aides and other teachers, to teach students with disabilities effectively (*M* = 5.35, *SD* = 0.57). In addition, teachers indicated a strong belief in their capacity to collaborate with other providers when designing educational plans for students with disabilities. However, there was some variability in responses regarding confidence in getting parents involved in school activities for children with disabilities (*SD* = 0.93), and a lower mean score of 4.60, indicating a slightly lower level of confidence in this aspect of collaboration compared to the other items.

Self-Efficacy in Managing Behavior

The lowest reported domain of self-efficacy was in managing behavior (*M* = 5.04) with the lowest internal variance (S = 0.44). Nevertheless, this area still fell within the relatively high range of perceived self-efficacy overall. Special education preschool teachers in this study expressed confidence in their ability to prevent disruptive behavior before it occurs (*M* = 5.07, *SD* = 0.59), calm students who are disruptive or noisy (*M* = 5.00, *SD* = 0.49), and get children to follow classroom rules (*M* = 5.05, *SD* = 0.49).

Demographic Factors

The population for this study was special education preschool teachers in California. The target population was special education preschool teachers in any of the 19 Special Education Local Plan Areas (SELPAs) in Los Angeles County. A total of 43 special education preschool teachers completed all parts of the survey with fidelity and were included in the final sample. In addition to the TEIP-SF scale and the ATTAS-mm scale, the survey included nine closed-ended demographic questions to further refine and describe specific characteristics of the sample. An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to determine whether any trends in the quantitative data could be identified based on the following demographic factors: Age; years of teaching; geographic area; and experience with coteaching, push-in, or general education.

Table 5 provides the results of the TEIP-SF factor analysis that examined the four demographic factors. The over 55 group had the highest mean score of 5.4, and the 35–44 group had the lowest mean score of 4.88. The *p* value for the age-group factor was .065. While close to the $p = .05$ level, the differences between the age groups were not statistically significant. In the Years of Teaching Experience factor, the over 10 years category had the highest mean score of 5.25, and the under 5 years category had the lowest mean score of 5.14. With a *p* value of .2519, differences between the groups were not significant. There was no significant difference found between rural, suburban, and urban areas ($F = .02$, $p = .9805$). Finally, although the *p* value for push-in teaching experience was relatively close to the significance level ($p = .05$), no statistical difference was found with respect to the teaching experience factors.

Table 5

TEIP-SF Factor Analysis Demographics

Category		*N*	*M*	*SD*	*F*	*p*
Age group	25-34	12	5.16	0.433	2.629	0.0637
	35-44	11	4.88	0.568		
	45-54	8	5.11	0.46		
	>55	12	5.40	0.294		
Years of teaching	<5	14	5.14	0.353	1.427	0.2519
	6-10	10	4.94	0.407		
	>10	19	5.25	0.555		
District geographic area	Rural	6	5.11	0.567	0.02	0.9805
	Suburban	20	5.16	0.573		
	Urban	17	5.14	0.299		
Coteaching experience	No	30	5.14	0.462	0	0.9957
	Yes	13	5.15	0.508		
Push-in teaching experience	No	31	5.06	0.442	3.422	0.0716
	Yes	12	5.35	0.494		
General education teaching experience	No	27	5.16	0.515	0.128	0.7228
	Yes	16	5.11	0.395		

Table 6 provides the results of the ATTAS-mm factor analysis that examined the four demographic factors. The over 55 group had the lowest mean score of 4.74, and the 45-54 age group had the highest mean score of 5.47. With a *p* value of .1988, differences between the groups were not statistically significant. The 6–10 years of teaching experience group had the highest mean score of 5.51, and the over 10 years of teaching experience group had the lowest mean score of 4.99. The *p* value for this factor was .2454, therefor the differences between the groups were not considered statistically significant. There was no significant difference found between rural, suburban, and urban areas ($F = .0231$, $p = .7947$). Finally, the study examined the participants' teaching experience and found no significant difference between those who had coteaching and push-in teaching experience and those who did not.

Table 6

ATTAS-mm Factor Analysis Demographics

Category		*N*	*M*	*SD*	*F*	*p*
Age group	25-34	12	5.20	0.724	1.627	0.1988
	35-44	11	5.27	0.721		
	45-54	8	5.47	0.619		
	>55	12	4.74	0.983		
Years of teaching	<5	14	5.09	0.642	1.456	0.2454
	6-10	10	5.51	0.675		
	>10	19	4.99	0.943		
District geographic area	Rural	6	5.07	1.044	0.231	0.7947
	Suburban	20	5.23	0.76		
	Urban	17	5.06	0.814		
Coteaching experience	No	30	5.19	0.83	0.383	0.5394
	Yes	13	5.03	0.769		
Push-in teaching experience	No	31	5.08	0.805	0.678	0.4149
	Yes	12	5.31	0.822		
General education teaching experience	No	27	5.23	0.68	0.787	0.3801
	Yes	16	5	0.993		

Data Analysis for Research Question 3

Research Question 3 asked, "How do the ratings of special education preschool teachers' attitudes towards inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom compare to their ratings of self-efficacy in supporting students with disabilities in the general education classroom?" To answer Research Question 3 and explore the relationship between attitudes towards inclusion (measured by ATTAS-mm) and efficacy for inclusive practices (measured by TEIP-SF), a multiple regression analysis and a Pearson's correlation test were done. The multiple regression analysis investigated whether there was a causal relationship between the TEIP-SF scores as the independent variable and the ATTAS-mm scores as the dependent variable. The Pearson-correlation

was used to determine whether there was a correlation between the individual items on the TEIP-SF and the ATTAS-mm.

Multiple Regression Analysis

Self-efficacy influences how people think, feel, and behave in certain situations, and their self-efficacy beliefs play a central role in predicting their behavior (Bandura, 1986). As such, the TEIP-SF factor scores and full-scale score were used as the independent variable while the ATTAS-mm factor scores and full-scale score were used as the dependent variables (Tables 7–10).

The regression analysis summary in Table 7 provides information about the relationship between the independent variables, TEIP-SF Factor 1 (instruction), TEIP-SF Factor 2 (managing behavior), and TEIP-SF Factor 3 (collaboration), and the dependent variable, ATTAS-mm Factor 1 (cognitive). Factor 1 had a *p* value of .1752, which was greater than .05, so the impact this variable had on ATTAS-mm cognitive factor was not significant at the .05 level. Factor 2 had a *p* value of .7521, which was much greater than .05, so the impact this variable had on ATTAS-mm cognitive factor was not significant at the .05 level. Factor 3 had a *p* value of .2455, which was greater than .05, so the impact this variable had on the ATTAS-mm cognitive factor was not significant at the .05 level. Although not statistically significant at the .05 level, it can be inferred that the instruction factor ($p = .1752$) had a greater relationship to ATTAS-mm cognitive factor than collaboration ($p = .2455$) or managing behavior ($p = .7521$).

Table 7

Regression Analysis: Factor 1

Source	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*p-value*	
Regression	3.7878	3	1.2626	0.72	.5468	
Residual	68.5068	39	1.7566			
Total	72.2946	42				
Regression output					Confidence interval	
Variables	Coefficients	*SE*	*t* (*df* = 39)	*p*-value	95% lower	95% upper
Intercept	3.9629	2.6324	1.505	.1403	-1.3615	9.2874
TEIP-SF Factor 1 instruction	0.4214	0.3052	1.381	.1752	-0.1959	1.0386
TEIP-SF Factor 2 managing behavior	0.1629	0.5123	0.318	.7521	-0.8733	1.1992
TEIP-SF Factor 3 collaboration	-0.6077	0.5154	-1.179	.2455	-1.6502	0.4348

Note. $R = 0.229$; $N = 43$; $k = 3$; $R^2 = 0.052$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.000$; Dep. ATTAS-mm Factor 1; SE = 1.324; Var. Cognitive. TEIP-SF = Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practices-Short Form; ATTAS-mm = Attitudes Toward Teaching All Students.

Further analysis of the *R* values revealed the following: *R* was .229 which was close to 0 so the results of the test were weak. This made sense because the relationships were very weak and not significant. R^2 is .052 which meant that only about 5% of the impact in the model is the result of the variables, a predictable result because the relationship between the variables was very weak. There was little association between the variables used. Adjusted R^2 is .000. Because the R^2 and Adjusted R^2 values were reasonably close, the population size had little effect on the results and can be considered consistent despite the lack of statistical significance.

Finally, the following was found from the ANOVA results: The *p* value for the ANOVA was .5468 which is much greater than .05, meaning the results were not significant and there is little chance that these variables had an impact on one another. Based on the results of the multiple regression analysis, it can be concluded that the independent variables (TEIP-SF instruction, managing behavior, and collaboration

factors) did not have a significant impact on the dependent variable (ATTAS-mm cognitive factor).

The regression analysis summary in Table 8 provides information about the relationship between the independent variables, TEIP-SF Factor 1 (instruction), TEIP-SF Factor 2 (managing behavior), and TEIP-SF Factor 3 (collaboration), and the dependent variable, ATTAS-mm Factor 2 (affective). Factor 1 had a *p* value of .4345 which was greater than .05, so the impact this variable had on ATTAS-mm affective factor was not significant at the .05 level. Factor 2 had a *p* value of .5357, which was much greater than .05, so the impact this variable had on ATTAS-mm affective factor was not significant at the .05 level. Factor 3 had a *p* value of .2336, which was greater than .05, so the impact this variable had on the ATTAS-mm affective factor was not significant at the .05 level. Although not statistically significant at the .05 level, it can be inferred that the collaboration factor ($p = .2336$) had a greater relationship to ATTAS-mm affective factor than the instruction factor ($p = .4345$) or the managing behavior factor ($p = .5357$).

Table 8

Regression Analysis: Factor 2

Source	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*p*-value	
Regression	1.2708	3	0.4236	0.51	.6755	
Residual	32.1814	39	0.8252			
Total	33.4522	42				
Regression output					Confidence interval	
Variables	Coefficients	SE	*t* (*df* = 39)	*p*-value	95% lower	95% upper
Intercept	5.7705	1.8042	3.198	.0027	2.1212	9.4199
TEIP-SF Factor 1 instruction	0.1652	0.2092	0.790	.4345	-0.2579	0.5882
TEIP-SF Factor 2 managing behavior	0.2194	0.3511	0.625	.5357	-0.4908	0.9296
TEIP-SF Factor 3 collaboration	-0.4274	0.3533	-1.210	.2336	-1.1419	0.2871

Note. $N = 43$; $k = 3$; $R = 0.195$; $R^2 = 0.038$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.000$; Dep. ATTAS-mm Factor 2; SE = 0.908; Var. Affective. TEIP-SF = Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practices-Short Form; ATTAS-mm = Attitudes Toward Teaching All Students.

Further analysis of the *R* values revealed the following: *R* was .195 which was close to 0 so the results of the test were weak. This makes sense because the relationships were very weak and not significant. R^2 was .038, which indicated that only about 4% of the impact in the model was the result of the variables, a predictable result because the relationship between the variables was very weak. There was little association between the variables used. Adjusted R^2 was .000. Because the R^2 and adjusted R^2 values were reasonably close, the population size had little effect on the results. The results can be considered consistent despite the lack of statistical significance.

Finally, the following was found from the ANOVA results: The *p* value for the ANOVA was .6755 which was much greater than .05 meaning the results were not significant and there is little chance that these variables had an impact on one another. Based on the results of the multiple regression analysis, it can be concluded that the independent variables (TEIP-SF instruction, managing behavior, and collaboration factors) did not have a significant impact on the dependent variable (ATTAS-mm affective factor).

The regression analysis summary in Table 9 provides information about the relationship between the independent variables, TEIP-SF Factor 1 (instruction), TEIP-SF Factor 2 (managing behavior), and TEIP-SF Factor 3 (collaboration), and the dependent variable, ATTAS-mm Factor 3 (behavioral). The TEIP-SF Factor 1 had a *p* value of .9545 which was greater than .05 so the impact this variable had on ATTAS-mm behavioral factor was not significant at the .05 level. Factor 2 managing behavior had a *p* value of .6517, which was much greater than .05, so the impact this variable had on ATTAS-mm behavioral factor was not significant at the .05 level. Factor 3 collaboration

had a *p* value of .4962 which was greater than .05 so the impact this variable had on the ATTAS-mm behavioral factor was not significant at the .05 level. Although not statistically significant at the .05 level, it can be inferred that the collaboration factor (p = .4962) had a greater relationship to ATTAS-mm Behavioral Factor than Instruction (p = .9545) or managing behavior (p = .6517).

Table 9

Regression Analysis: Factor 3

Source	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*p*-value
Regression	0.9956	3	0.3319	0.45	.7179
Residual	28.6891	39	0.7356		
Total	29.6847	42			

Regression output					Confidence interval	
Variables	Coefficients	SE	*t* (*df* = 39)	*p*-value	95% lower	95% upper
Intercept	4.0834	1.7035	2.397	.0214	0.6378	7.5290
TEIP-SF Factor 1 instruction	-0.0113	0.1975	-0.057	.9545	-0.4108	0.3881
TEIP-SF Factor 2 managing behavior	0.1508	0.3315	0.455	.6517	-0.5198	0.8213
TEIP-SF Factor 3 collaboration	0.2291	0.3335	0.687	.4962	-0.4456	0.9037

Note. N = 43; k = 3; R = 0.183; R^2 = 0.034; Adjusted R^2 = 0.000; Dep. ATTAS-mm Factor 2; SE = 0.858; Dep. Var. ATTAS-mm Factor 3 behavioral. TEIP-SF = Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practices-Short Form; ATTAS-mm = Attitudes Toward Teaching All Students

Further analysis of the *R* values revealed the following: *R* was .183, which was close to 0, so the results of the test were weak. This makes sense because the relationships were very weak and not significant. R^2 is .034 which means that only about 3% of the impact in the model was the result of the variables and there was little association between the variables used. Adjusted R^2 is .000. Because the R^2 and adjusted R^2 values were reasonably close, the population size had little effect on the results and can be considered consistent despite the lack of statistical significance.

Finally, the following was found from the ANOVA results: The *p* value for the ANOVA was .7179, which was much greater than .05, meaning the results were not significant, and there is little chance that these variables had an impact on one another. Based on the results of the multiple regression analysis, it can be concluded that the independent variables (TEIP-SF Instruction, Managing Behavior, and Collaboration Factors) did not have a significant impact on the dependent variable (ATTAS-mm Behavioral Factor).

The regression analysis summary in Table 10 provides information about the relationship between the independent variable, TEIP-SF full scale score, and the dependent variable, ATTAS-mm full scale score. The TEIP-SF Full Scale Score had a *p* value of .6092, which was greater than .05, so the impact this variable had on ATTAS-mm full scale score was not significant at the .05 level.

Table 10

Regression Analysis: Full Scale

Source	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*p-value*	
Regression	0.1757	1	0.1757	0.27	.6092	
Residual	27.1410	41	0.6620			
Total	27.3167	42				
Regression output					Confidence interval	
Variables	Coefficients	*SE*	*t* (*df* = 41)	*p*-value	95% lower	95% upper
Intercept	4.4340	1.3802	3.213	.0026	1.6466	7.2214
TEIP-SF full scale score	0.1376	0.2672	0.515	.6092	-0.4020	0.6772

Note. $N = 43$; $k = 1$; $R = 0.080$; $R^2 = 0.006$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.000$; Dep. ATTAS-mm Factor 2; SE = 0.814; Dep. Var. ATTAS-mm full scale score.

Further analysis of the *R* values revealed the following: *R* was .080 which was close to 0, so the results of the test are weak. This makes sense because the relationships were very weak and not significant. R^2 was .006 which means that only about 0.6% of the

impact in the model was the result of the variables, a predictable result since the relationship between the variables was very weak. There was little association between the variables used.

Finally, the *p* value for the ANOVA was .5468, which was much greater than .05, meaning the results were not significant and there is little chance that these variables had an impact on one another. Based on the results of the regression analysis, it can be concluded that the independent variable (TEIP-SF full scale) does not have a significant impact on the dependent variable (ATTAS-mm full scale)

Pearson's Correlation Test

The Pearson-correlation was used to determine whether there was a correlation between preschool special education teachers' self-efficacy for inclusive practices and their attitudes towards inclusion as measured by TEIP-SF and ATTAS-mm respectively. Table 11 shows the correlations between the three factors as well as the overall scale between TEIP-SF and ATTAS-mm. There was extremely limited correlation between the two full-scale variables, $r = .080$, ($p < .935$), N = 43 and no clear association between overall feelings of efficacy and overall attitude towards inclusion when using these two specific scales.

Table 11

Correlation Matrix Factors and Total Scale TEIP-SF and ATTAS-mm

	TEIP-SF Factor 1	TEIP-SF Factor 2	TEIP-SF Factor 3	TEIP-SF Total Score
ATTAS-mm Factor 1	0.135 (p = 0.1932)	0.011 (p = 0.4722)	-0.066 (p = 0.3376)	0.058 (p = 0.3554)
ATTAS-mm Factor 2	0.029 (p = 0.4260)	0.037 (p = 0.4072)	-0.118 (p = 0.2258)	-0.015 (p = 0.4616)
ATTAS-mm Factor 3	0.089 (p = 0.2860)	0.134 (p = 0.1956)	0.168 (p = 0.1410)	0.156 (p = 0.1593)
ATTAS-mm total score	0.115 (p = 0.2312)	0.066 (p = 0.3367)	-0.021 (p = 0.4473)	0.080 (p = 0.3048)

Note. TEIP-SF = Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practices-Short Form; ATTAS-mm = Attitudes Toward Teaching All Students; p-value: 1-tailed.

When investigating the correlations between the individual items on the TEIP-SF and the ATTAS-mm, a moderate correlation was found between items on the TEIP-SF collaboration factor and items on the ATTAS-mm affective and behavioral factors. Table 12 shows the correlations between the individual items of TEIP-SF and ATTAS-mm that yielded a moderate correlation ($\pm 3 \leq r \leq \pm 5$) with a p value of .05 or smaller.

Table 12

Correlation Matrix Individual Items TEIP-SF and ATTAS-mm (selected)

Item	TEIP-SF Q7-C: I am able to work jointly with other professionals and staff (e.g., aides, other teachers) to teach students with disabilities in the classroom.	TEIP-SF Q9-C: I can collaborate with other professionals (e.g., itinerant teachers or speech pathologists) in designing educational plans for students with disabilities.
ATTAS-mm Q4-A: I would like to be mentored by a teacher who models effective differentiated instruction in the general education classroom.	-0.323 (p = 0.0173)	
ATTAS-mm Q8-B: Students with mild to moderate disabilities can be trusted with responsibilities in the classroom.	0.357 (p = 0.0093)	0.324 (p = 0.0171)
ATTAS-mm Q9-B: All students with mild to moderate disabilities should be educated in regular classrooms with nonhandicapped peers to the fullest extent possible		0.324 (p = 0.0169)

Note. TEIP-SF = Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practices-Short Form; ATTAS-mm = Attitudes Toward Teaching All Students.

There was a moderate positive correlation between teachers' belief that students with mild-to-moderate disabilities can be trusted with responsibilities in the classroom and their sense of self-efficacy to work jointly with other professionals and staff (e.g., aides and other teachers) to teach students with disabilities in the classroom (r = 0.357, p = 0.0093, N = 43). There was also a moderate positive correlation between teachers' belief that students with mild-to-moderate disabilities can be trusted with responsibilities in the classroom and their sense of self-efficacy to collaborate with other professionals and staff when designing educational plans for students with disabilities (r = 0.324, p = 0.0171, N = 43). A third moderate positive correlation was found between teachers' belief that all students with mild-to-moderate disabilities should be educated in regular classrooms with non-handicapped peers to the fullest extent possible and their sense of

self-efficacy to collaborate with other professionals and staff in designing educational plans for students with disabilities ($r = 0.324$, $p = 0.0169$, $N = 43$). Finally, there was a moderate negative correlation between a teacher's desire to be mentored by a teacher who models effective differentiated instruction in the general education classroom and their sense of self-efficacy to work jointly with other professionals and staff (e.g., aides and other teachers) to teach students with disabilities in the classroom ($r = -0.323$, $p = 0.0173$, $N = 43$).

Data Analysis for Research Question 4

Research Question 4 asked, "How do preschool special education preschool teachers identify and describe other factors not previously mentioned that impact their teaching efficacy and attitudes towards inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom?" To answer Research Question 4, a 10-item semistructured interview was used to gather data. Eight of the 43 survey respondents participated in the one-on-one interview in which they were asked to express their overall opinions about educating children with disabilities in general education classrooms. In addition, they were asked about their personal experiences with supporting students with disabilities in inclusive settings and asked to identify what factors may have contributed to or inhibited the success of inclusive practices, self-efficacy, or attitudes towards inclusion.

Intercoder Reliability

To ensure acceptable levels of reliability and reduce researcher bias, a UMass Global peer researcher familiar with coding procedures and a veteran special education preschool teacher reviewed and coded approximately 10% of the qualitative data on three separate occasions. The MAXQDA Intercoder Agreement function was used to compare the two independently coded results. The purpose of the first intercoder agreement round

was to analyze and discuss the differences to improve the coding quality. Yielding an intercoder agreement of 37% in the first round, primary disagreements involved three previously established themes: establishment bureaucracy (attitude), program characteristics (attitude), and collaboration (efficacy). All codes were reviewed and analyzed, which led to additional consolidation and revision of 13 attitude-factor codes into eight parent codes and three child codes. The final code count for factors affecting self-efficacy was seven parent codes.

A second intercoder analysis round resulted in 73% agreement. Discrepancies were primarily noted in the length of segments. Additional discrepancies were noted in resources and support systems (attitude) and collaboration (attitude), which led to assigning collaboration as a child code of resources and support systems. The final code count after revisions for factors affecting attitude was seven parent codes and four child codes. The final code count for factors affecting self-efficacy was six parent codes. Table 13 shows the code-specific results of the final intercoder reliability test at the segment level. With a minimum code overlapping of 90%, the test yielded 91.67% intercoder agreement, meeting the intercoder reliability acceptability threshold of 80% or more agreement (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Figure 3 shows the chance-corrected Cohen's Kappa coefficients. A Kappa coefficient of 0.91 indicates a high level of agreement, suggesting strong reliability in their coding decisions beyond what would be expected by chance [Kappa = (.92 - .08) / (1 - .08) = 0.91].

Table 13

Intercoder Agreement at Segment Level

Code	Agreements	Disagreements	Total	%
Overall attitude	8	0	8	100.00%
Previous experiences	2	0	2	100.00%
Gen ed teacher/staff attitude (attitude)	6	0	6	100.00%
Resources and support systems (attitude)	8	0	8	100.00%
Collaboration (attitude)	4	0	4	100.00%
Program characteristics (attitude)	8	4	12	66.67%
Establishment bureaucracy (attitude)	2	2	4	50.00%
Student factors (attitude)	14	2	16	87.50%
Overall efficacy	8	0	8	100.00%
Collaboration (efficacy)	8	0	8	100.00%
Gen ed staff attitude (efficacy)	2	0	2	100.00%
Resources or support systems (efficacy)	10	0	10	100.00%
Delivery of service (efficacy)	8	0	8	100.00%
Total	88	8	96	91.67%

Figure 3

Cohen's Kappa Intercoder Reliability

		Coder 1		
		1	**0**	
Coder 2	**1**	a = 88	b = 4	92
	0	c = 4	0	4
		92	4	96

P(observed) = Po = a / (a + b + c) = 0.92

P(chance) = Pc = 1 / Number of codes = 1 / 13 = 0.08

Kappa = (Po - Pc) / (1 - Pc) = 0.91

Development of Themes

An inductive analysis process was used to analyze the qualitative data. Data collected were coded and themed using MAXQDA, which is a qualitative and mixed-

methods data analysis software program. Before coding the data in MAXQDA, a coding and themes worksheet was used. The interview transcripts were analyzed and responses to the interview questions were color-coded and added to the worksheet. From the responses added, potential themes, or codes, were created. These codes were then converted into theme phrases and added to MAXQDA. Patterns and frequencies of each code were determined and organized under Factors Affecting Attitudes and Factors Affecting Self-Efficacy using parent nodes and child nodes. Themes were identified at the latent level, reflecting underlying ideas or assumptions, and the semantic level, based on explicit content. In addition, the usefulness of the theme in answering the research question was considered. Code coverage was assessed at the individual document level and across the entire document set. Finally, mention of a theme by multiple participants and frequency of occurrence in the data set was considered. Seven major themes were identified as factors affecting attitudes, and six major themes were identified as factors affecting self-efficacy (see Table 14).

Table 14

Major Themes and Frequencies

Theme	Segment frequency	Code coverage	Document frequency
Code system	330		8
Factors affecting attitude			
Program characteristics (attitude)	67	36%	8
Autonomy	3		3
Instruction and curriculum	12		4
Establishment bureaucracy (attitude)	19		6
Resources and support systems (attitude)	44	25%	8
Collaboration (attitude)	23		8
Student factors (attitude)	42	16%	8
General education teacher efficacy (attitude)	26	10%	7
General education teacher/staff attitude (attitude)	23	9%	7
Knowledge of existing programs	7	3%	4
Previous experiences	4	1%	2
Factors affecting self-efficacy			
Collaboration (efficacy)	19	32%	6
Delivery of service (efficacy)	17	28%	6
Resources or support systems (efficacy)	12	20%	4
Student factors (efficacy)	5	8%	2
General education staff attitude (efficacy)	4	7%	3
Curriculum (efficacy)	3	5%	2

General Attitude

The overall attitude towards the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education settings was rated as positive. The special education teachers who participated in the interview believed that all students should have the opportunity to be in a general education classroom as long as they receive the necessary supports and accommodations. Although peer interaction and modeling were seen as valuable for learning and social-emotional development, all eight teachers acknowledged that not all students are a good fit for inclusion and that individualized instruction and placement in a

separate setting might be necessary. The importance of identifying good fits and getting families on board was emphasized. Even though the overall sentiment was a strong desire to maximize inclusion or mainstreaming opportunities and to make the experience as successful as possible for all students, all teachers expressed reluctance with the push for full inclusion of students with either mild-to-moderate or intensive special needs, especially in the early years. One teacher commented,

> I prefer that gradually the goal is to get the students moved into the general education classroom but give them as much support as they need while they're young in the special education setting, and then see how far they can go.

Factors Affecting Attitudes

An analysis of the qualitative data identified seven major themes for the factors influencing attitudes towards inclusion: Program characteristics, resources and support systems, student factors, general education teacher efficacy, general education staff attitudes towards inclusion, knowledge of existing programs, and previous experiences. Notably, program characteristics stood out with the highest frequency, indicating their substantial impact on attitudes. Collaboration also emerged as a key factor, appearing prominently in different sub-themes. These findings underscore the importance of creating supportive environments, fostering collaboration between teachers and service providers, ensuring adequate resources and support systems, and tailoring programs to address diverse student needs.

Program Characteristics

Program characteristics were found to be the most significant factor. With the highest frequency (67 mentions) covering 36% of the coded segments, this theme was

present in the transcription of all eight participant interviews (as shown in Table 14). Incorporating different aspects of the educational practice and policy, teachers perceived inclusion as a multifaceted endeavor, contingent upon various program-related factors, such as classroom environments and class size, flexibility within the program's structure, existence of coteaching and other service models, use of curriculum, and effectiveness of integration between the general education state-funded preschool system and the special education preschool program. Many teachers believed that the current methods and strategies employed by their district were not effective. As one teacher stated,

> I want to see [my students] succeed. And I don't think the way that the district is doing it and the way that things are being implemented, our kids are doing well. I think they're putting them out there and they're just failing. So something needs to change.

Of program characteristics, classroom environment emerged as a pivotal consideration; class size, student to teacher ratio, and adaptations requisites to accommodate the diverse needs of students were mentioned most frequently. Classroom environment considerations emphasized the necessity of adapting physical spaces to accommodate diverse student needs. For instance, one participant stressed the importance of environmental adjustments for students with differing developmental levels:

> If [students are] developmentally at a much different or a lower developmental age, the classroom needs to be adapted. For example, you have to make sure that you don't have things that are too little, that students could choke on.

Class size was referenced most frequently with a total of 17 frequencies related to the number of students in one classroom and seven frequencies related to student-staff ratio.

One teacher stated, “Class size is an issue. Definitely. It needs to be a smaller group. Probably not like ours, but maybe having a cap of 15-16 students in the gen ed preschool class.” Another teacher explained,

> This year we went for [full inclusion] at the preschool, UTK, and kinder level. All or the majority of our students with mild-to-moderate disabilities are in the general education classroom. But I believe districts are going to need to reduce class size and increase staffing.

Teachers also shared examples of students with sensory challenges for whom a larger class size would be too overwhelming with too much visual stimuli and too much noise. One teacher stated,

> Some students may need a different setting, or they may need pulled out part of the day because they’re overwhelmed. I think inclusion is fabulous, but we really need to make sure we're still providing students with what they need.

The ability to gradually integrate students into mainstream educational settings as an element of a program’s structure was underscored as an essential pedagogical approach by seven of the eight teachers. One participant articulated that this gradual process involves “starting with mainstreaming” before transitioning to full inclusion, allowing students to adjust to the general education environment. Teachers shared that this necessitates flexibility in program structures and program options. One teacher stated, “I also don’t want us to get into one size fits all because it is an individualized education plan. And some students may need a different setting.”

Teachers suggested that there also needs to be flexibility with service delivery models, such as pushing in for some students and pulling out for others, to ensure that

students are receiving what they need. One teacher shared that it is essential that schools provide a designated space for the special education teacher that can be used as a break room for students, specialized instruction time, or a place in general to be used on an as-needed basis. Another teacher stated, "Maybe a child cannot handle the full day instruction in a gen ed setting. There needs to be flexibility."

Coteaching was referenced in seven documents. Most of the teachers stated that the ideal classroom setting should have a general education teacher and a special education teacher working together all day. One teacher stated,

> If both the special ed and the general ed teacher both are trained, receive training and collaborate together on their areas of expertise, then you could have a very powerful classroom, but that would involve having two teachers in a classroom compared to one.

Another teacher stated,

> Actually, I had a student, he could have been in inclusion. If we had a special education teacher in his kindergarten classroom also, that could have helped him with just those language and numeral things. Then he could also have been in the general education classroom.

In addition to the importance of the type of coteaching model used, the way it is implemented was also deemed of significance. A few teachers indicated that often the special education teacher is given the role of an assistant rather than a teacher, lamenting that the impact they had on student learning was compromised.

Teacher Autonomy. Autonomy, or the willingness of teachers to participate in a coteaching model, was found to be a factor affecting attitudes and was listed as a

subtheme of program characteristics (see Table 14). One participant stated, “If we were moving towards inclusion, I would be willing to work with somebody, you know, coteaching stuff. As long as my kids are getting what they need. But I know other teachers might not.” Two teachers believed that coteaching would be good but felt that it might take away the independence of both the special education teacher and the general education teacher. One teacher explained, “I cannot imagine a teacher having had her own classroom for I don't know how many years being able to manage the whole thing, and then dividing that power with someone else.” Overall, having an effective collaborative approach that involves both special education and general education teachers, as well as a willingness for them to collaborate, was deemed necessary for successful inclusion. “Inclusion is hard,” said one teacher, “especially when you have special ed teachers that are burnt out and they don't have the best attitude, even in their own classroom. And this really is stepping out of your comfort zone for everybody.”

Instruction and Curriculum. This second subtheme involved the instructional framework of inclusive education. Appropriate early childhood instructional methods and program curriculum were seen as crucial for inclusive programs, in which teaching strategies need to be adjusted to meet the diverse learning styles and abilities of students. This included when and where inclusion and integration are emphasized. As underscored by one participant, “Inclusion should be focused on academic subjects rather than just social times like recess and lunch, where children with autism struggle.” However, the

presence of explicit social skills and peer interaction instruction was deemed equally important. One teacher stated:

> I'm a big advocate of socialthinking.com and their curriculum for preschool students. I can start them on that path in my classroom, but once they matriculate to [an inclusive setting], they still need that. And so that's just like kind of a lacking, you know, an area that's lacking in the inclusive environment.

Establishment Bureaucracy. A number of teachers expressed frustration with bureaucratic roadblocks, particularly when dealing with multiple preschool programs that are not cohesive and establishment perimeters are not conducive to progress, resulting in efforts to make it work being met with obstacles. As elucidated by one participant's critique of state-prescribed mandates: "The restrictions of state preschool create an environment with too many limitations, making it difficult to achieve inclusion." Another participant shared a similar sentiment:

> In our preschool we're really kind of locked in with mod severe. We can't have a student in a mod severe class and in inclusion. So it's an all or nothing. We can't do... like let's give the student half an hour [of mainstreaming] and let you adjust and then build on it, because the system doesn't allow it.

Resources and Support Systems

With a high frequency (44 mentions) and coverage in eight documents, this theme was labeled as second most significant (see Table 14). Within this factor, collaboration was a key aspect and mentioned in 23 instances across all eight documents. Collaboration was deemed essential for effective teamwork, communication, and strategy development among educators and concerns were raised about the lack of dedicated collaboration time

hindering a teacher's ability to plan and implement support strategies effectively. Participants also highlighted the critical role of support staff, citing the need for well-trained assistants capable of addressing diverse student needs. In addition, participants mentioned funding constraints, which they felt limited the availability of essential resources and services necessary for inclusive education, and they stressed the importance of comprehensive training to equip general education teachers and support staff with the skills and knowledge needed to support diverse learners effectively. They called for pre-service and ongoing professional development opportunities to stay updated on best practices and to address emerging challenges in inclusive education.

Participants stressed the importance of collaboration time as a critical component of supporting inclusive education effectively. They expressed a need for dedicated opportunities to come together as a team, share insights, and strategize on how best to meet the diverse needs of students. One teacher lamented, "There isn't time for that," referring to the lack of structured collaboration time. Another teacher highlighted the significance of collaboration in building relationships and fostering adaptability, stating, "Collaboration I believe, is relationship building." Participants emphasized the benefits of regular collaboration sessions for enhancing teamwork, communication, and the exchange of ideas among educators. Furthermore, they underscored the challenges posed by the current lack of sufficient collaboration time, which hinders their ability to effectively plan and implement strategies to support students with diverse needs. They advocated for structured collaboration sessions to be integrated into their schedules, allowing consistent teamwork and the sharing of best practices to better serve all students in inclusive classrooms.

Human support systems were referenced by all participants, with 17 instances using the word *assistant* and 18 instances using the word *assistants*. Teachers emphasized the crucial role of support staff resources to facilitate inclusive education. They highlighted the need for well-trained assistants who are equipped to handle diverse student needs, particularly in managing behaviors and providing individualized support. One teacher remarked,

> Because even with us sometimes... it doesn't mean that we know how to deal with every behavior that some of our kids come with. And so that's why we do have assistants who are behaviorists and specialized in trying to figure out how to manage some of these behaviors.

They stressed the importance of addressing behavioral challenges early on to create a conducive learning environment for all students and prevent potential disruptions to the educational process. In addition, participants expressed concerns about the availability and adequacy of support staff, particularly in relation to class size and support ratios. They advocated for smaller class sizes and adequate support ratios to ensure that each student receives the attention and assistance the student requires. One teacher stated, "Another important thing is the number of kids [with IEPs] in their classroom... having six kids with IEPs and only one assistant. It's nuts. I don't think that they can do it, and I don't think they can do it well." Another teacher emphasized, "If there is enough support in the classroom, then our kids will succeed," highlighting the pivotal role teachers believe support staff resources play in creating a successful inclusive environment.

Participants expressed concerns about funding and its impact on the availability of resources and support systems necessary for inclusive education. They highlighted the

perceived inadequacy of financial resources allocated to support staff, materials, and training programs. One teacher pointed out, “I think [the lack of support is] a lot because of the money,” suggesting a belief among educators that financial constraints hinder the provision of essential resources and services in an inclusive setting for students with diverse needs. One teacher emphasized lack of funding for support staff specifically: “There's a little bit of extra expense [to provide for additional behavior staff], but I don't think that is the deep level of help that we give to students in the general education preschool setting.”

The perceived discrepancy between available resources and the level of support needed to ensure the success of inclusive education initiatives appeared to be a significant factor affecting teachers’ attitudes towards inclusion. They strongly advocated for increased funding to address these gaps and ensure that all students receive the support they require to thrive in inclusive classroom environments. The need for additional funding also extended to the ability to implement coteaching practices by both the general education teacher and the special education teacher are present throughout the school day. As one teacher stated,

> My negative feeling about the inclusion classroom was the lack of support in the classroom. So being that the student is in the classroom, but they only have one general education teacher, and the special education teacher only supports a limited time each week.”

A final component of the resources and support systems factor identified was access to adequate professional development along with collaboration time. Participants emphasized the importance of comprehensive and ongoing training for general education

teachers and support staff to support effective inclusive education practices. They expressed a desire for extensive training sessions before the start of the school year to ensure that all staff members are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to support students with diverse needs effectively. One teacher articulated,

> My dream is if they had like 40 hours or a week of training before we started [the school year] so we were all on the same page. I feel like it's snippets of training now. I come in and like give [the support staff and teacher] little snippets here and there instead of like a full-on training.

This illustrates a recognition among educators of the importance of thorough preparation to understand the complexities of inclusive education and implement best practices. In addition, participants highlighted the need for continual professional development throughout the school year to stay updated on the latest strategies and approaches to support diverse learners. Overall, participants advocated for increased investment in training time and training programs to ensure that educators are adequately prepared to create inclusive and supportive learning environments for all students.

General Education Teachers and Staff Attitudes

This factor encompassed the attitudes of general education teachers and staff. It had a moderate frequency (23 mentions) and references were found in seven documents (see Table 14). The attitude of general education teachers towards inclusion of students with special needs was found to affect the special education teacher's willingness to recommend a general education setting for their students. One teacher put it simply: "I think a lot of times it's the attitude of the general education teacher that can impact the attitude of the special ed teacher." Although they acknowledged that attitudes have

become more positive in recent years, participants shared that there continues to be resistance from general education teachers and staff to include and welcome students with disabilities into their classrooms. “Positive attitudes and willingness to help all students are crucial for successful inclusion,” one teacher stated. Another teacher said,

> You need to have a teacher that’s willing and wants to help students as much as possible in the classrooms. With classrooms that I’ve been around, some teachers are willing to take students with special needs into their classroom and are very supportive, but others are not.

Indeed, the exclusion of special needs students who are included in the general education classroom was a frequently mentioned concern. “Adults need to be open to accept students with differences,” explained one teacher. “How are my students going to succeed and learn if they’re not being, you know, included in all activities?”

General Education Teacher Efficacy

This theme focused on the efficacy of general education teachers in supporting students with special needs. With a relatively high frequency (26 mentions), this theme was found in seven documents (see Table 14). Participants shared that their attitudes towards inclusion are influenced by various general education teacher efficacy factors, particularly in terms of understanding behaviors, implementing instructional strategies specifically for students with learning differences, and having knowledge about different disabilities. “It really comes down to the training they receive in their credentialing program,” one teacher shared. In general, the special education teachers felt that general education teachers needed special education specific classes as part of their credentialing programs to effectively support students with diverse needs. This included gaining

knowledge about disabilities, learning strategies for managing behaviors, implementing calming techniques, making curriculum modifications, and understanding Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). One teacher who had both a general education credential and a special education credential stated,

> I think that [learning about disabilities and behaviors] is important because when I was a general education teacher, I wouldn't think the way that I think now as a special education teacher. Regular ed teachers see a behavior and automatically think it's a negative thing. We see a behavior and we're like, okay, well, what are you trying to tell me?

Acknowledging that there may be additional challenges, such as biases and insufficient inclusion training, that hinder the implementation of inclusive practices, participants strongly believed that ongoing professional development and training at the school sites are necessary to equip general education teachers with the tools and confidence needed to meet the diverse needs of all students. One teacher shared, "[If they could have] trainings to learn and understand new strategies, like, this is how visual support works. Stuff like that. You know, some updates, like things that they haven't been around, like ABA methods." With this ongoing support, participants shared that general education teachers would be better able to respond to the unique learning needs of the students with IEPs, especially in handling behaviors and using interventions like visual supports, token economies, and social stories.

Student Factors

Student-related factors were mentioned in 42 instances in all eight documents, suggesting that student characteristics and their specific needs strongly influence attitudes

(Table 14). Citing readiness for inclusion, participants emphasized the importance of considering a student's developmental level, behavior, and individual needs when determining placement. Factors related to what extent they felt the students with special needs benefited from the placement and how their presence impacted the other students in the classroom were also mentioned. However, student factors were usually considered within the context of supports available in the general education classroom as well as perceived general education teachers' expectations. For example, a student's level of independence or their ability to self-regulate were frequently mentioned as primary factors.

Special education preschool teachers stressed the importance of behavioral self-regulation, highlighting that students need to refrain from disrupting the learning environment for others. One participant stated, "When a kid is not disruptive to everyone, when they have some ability to self-regulate, then inclusion makes sense for them." The readiness consideration also involved students' social skills and their ability to interact positively with peers and teachers in the general education setting. Students who could demonstrate effective social communication and cooperation were considered more ready for inclusion than those who could not. This aspect of readiness was highlighted by one teacher who stated, "Inclusion works with students when they don't impact the classroom environment significantly and they can go with the classroom flow."

Another key consideration was a student's developmental maturity, with participants noting that students with significant developmental gaps struggle to keep up with their peers academically and socially in the general education classroom. Participants expressed concerns about whether a student possesses academic readiness

skills, such as the ability to complete tasks independently and participate in classroom activities without constant support. Cognitive ability was also mentioned as an important student factor, especially within the context of engaging with other students academically. One teacher explained, “What is the point of having a student who is 1 year cognitively sit in the back playing itsy bitsy spider when the other students are trying to learn about history?”

Student sensory needs and sensitivities were also factors when determining their readiness for inclusion. Those who may be overwhelmed by the sensory stimuli in a general education classroom may require a separate setting when additional support or accommodations are not enough. Some participants advocated for a gradual transition to general education settings to aid sensory desensitization, starting with mainstreaming opportunities or part-time inclusion before moving to a full-time placement in the general education classroom. Overall, participants stressed the importance of individualized assessment and ongoing monitoring to ensure that inclusion is beneficial for all students involved, taking into account individual student needs, academic progress, and the maintenance of a positive learning environment.

Knowledge of Existing Programs

Although mentioned explicitly in only seven instances, awareness of existing programs did appear to play a role in shaping attitudes towards inclusive education. One teacher emphasized, “Factors that would support placement of [our] students in a gen ed setting is to really understand more about what that setting looks like and how and what then the student needs in order to be successful in that setting.” Increased exposure to inclusive classrooms could also enhance their comfort level with inclusion. “If sped

teachers have more exposure to inclusion in a classroom that is inclusive, then they might feel more comfortable" one teacher remarked. This implies that familiarity with inclusive settings could alleviate apprehension and foster confidence in supporting special needs students in general education environments.

Participants also noted challenges of isolation within the special education realm, which limits opportunities for collaboration and knowledge exchange with general education teachers. This isolation can contribute to a sense of uncertainty and apprehension regarding inclusion. One teacher noted, "Because special ed often is so isolated, we don't have exposure to other special ed teachers or gen ed teachers and see what they're doing." Overall, participants expressed concerns about unknown aspects of inclusion, including fears about students' needs not being met or their acceptance in general education settings. This apprehension underscores the importance of providing special education teachers with exposure to inclusive environments, and opportunities for collaboration to facilitate successful inclusion experiences for students.

Previous Experience

Similar to the knowledge of existing programs factor, previous experience was explicitly referred to in only two documents, with a low frequency of four mentions. Nevertheless, it appeared to have a relatively significant impact on special education preschool teachers' attitudes towards inclusion. Overall, teachers' previous experiences with inclusion, whether positive or negative, significantly impacted their attitudes towards its effectiveness. Positive experiences fostered confidence and support for inclusive practices, and negative experiences raised concerns about the feasibility and adequacy of inclusion programs.

According to two of the special education preschool teachers interviewed, previous experiences had a significant impact on their attitudes towards inclusion. As one teacher stated,

> I feel like I've had many, many positive experiences where some people might feel like, oh, this kid doesn't belong in a special general education class. They just need a little bit of support. So, I know that it is possible.

The teacher explained that this positive experience led to a shift in her mindset from uncertainty about placing students with special needs in a general education setting to belief in its efficacy. Positive experiences with collaboration between teachers and specialists also instilled confidence in the viability of inclusion. One teacher noted, "From what I've seen, the collaboration between the teachers and the specialists such as speech or OT, it has been just amazing. We have great communication and that made it work."

Issues such as having experienced a lack of support in the classroom, insufficient assistance for students with IEPs, or negative coteaching experiences led to doubts about the feasibility of inclusion. One teacher related that she had heard horrible stories from parents about how her previous students were doing in a general education setting. Another teacher remarked, "I sometimes stop placing a student in an inclusive setting, due to the fact that I don't feel that there is adequate support." A third teacher shared that although her experience with coteaching was positive, she stated,

> I have heard from others who have had different experiences that were not good. The rest of my credentialing program cohort worked for a different district and

their experiences have been completely different than mine. So, I don't know if I would be enthusiastic about coteaching in their district.

General Self-Efficacy

The majority of the participants expressed confidence in their ability to teach in an inclusive environment and shared successful experiences in supporting students through different strategies for self-regulation, the implementation of accommodations and modifications, and modeling and in-the-moment training of general education staff. They acknowledged, however, that inclusion requires more planning and a clear understanding of tasks between general education and special education teachers. Some teachers felt less successful in providing adequate support when they worked in a general education environment and indicated that lack of time in the classroom affected their impact on their students' integration and learning. Despite the challenges, most teachers were comfortable trying different approaches to help their students succeed in the general education setting.

Factors Affecting Self-Efficacy

The data highlight several factors influencing self-efficacy in inclusive education programs. Collaboration emerged as a significant contributor, indicating the importance of collaborative efforts among stakeholders. The delivery of services also played a crucial role, suggesting that the manner in which services are provided impacts individuals' confidence in their ability to effectively support students. Moreover, the availability and adequacy of resources and support systems were identified as key determinants, emphasizing the need for sufficient support structures to bolster self-efficacy. Although mentioned less frequently, curriculum and student-related factors were recognized as

influential aspects. Overall, the findings underscore the multifaceted nature of self-efficacy in inclusive education, emphasizing the importance of fostering collaborative environments, flexibility with service delivery options, ensuring resource accessibility, and addressing curriculum and student needs to enhance self-efficacy among stakeholders.

Collaboration

Similar to its effect on attitudes, collaboration was indicated as a relatively significant factor affecting self-efficacy with 19 mentions in six documents. Some teachers reported difficulties when general education teachers are not fully engaged or welcoming towards students with IEPs. One teacher observed, “When teachers, general education teachers, are really hands off and don’t see their inclusion kid as one of their kids. That’s been challenging.” Participants also expressed frustration over a lack of time dedicated to team meetings and strategizing, which limits opportunities for collaborative problem-solving and support. “[There is] not enough time to sit and talk together as a team and strategize,” one teacher lamented. This shortage of collaborative opportunities underscored systemic barriers that inhibit effective teamwork and hinder teachers’ ability to address students’ needs comprehensively.

Positive relationships between general education and special education teachers were also seen as crucial for effective teamwork and the implementation of inclusive practices. Participants emphasized the importance of shared philosophies and mutual respect, which contributes to a supportive and cohesive team dynamic. One teacher confirmed, “I loved my co-teacher. She was gen ed, you know, and she was just amazing. I think we had the same, like, philosophy.” Collaboration with occupational therapists,

speech therapists, and other specialists also aided in the special education teachers' sense of self-efficacy to provide valuable strategies to support students, particularly in managing behaviors. One teacher reflected, "Working with OTs, different strategies to help… especially with behaviors and that kind of thing has been, you know, super valuable. You just learn as you go."

Delivery of Service

This factor, which was the second most impactful, was mentioned 17 times in seven documents, suggesting that the way services are delivered significantly affects a teacher's sense of self-efficacy in inclusive education settings. Participants expressed a desire for more consistent and immersive involvement in general education classrooms. The amount of time they were able to spend in the general education classroom was a specific concern. Several participants stated that they wished they could spend more continual time in classrooms rather than being pulled away for various responsibilities, because the latter often led to fragmented support. As one teacher stated: "I wish each day I could be there for the whole [day] and not be like, oh, I got to run back because I have an IEP, or I have to go to another classroom."

Furthermore, the effectiveness of different service delivery models was scrutinized, and participants highlighted the benefits and drawbacks of the various approaches. Some teachers acknowledged the potential effectiveness of a push-in model, by which support is provided within the general education classroom, and others expressed concerns about its feasibility and potential limitations. One teacher remarked,

> It can be effective as long as there is some time to target the special needs [in a separate setting], like, you know, the resource classroom. There should be certain

> minutes a week to separate and help students learn specific skills… and [then] rejoin their peers.

Another teacher stated,

> I'm not sure if the push-in model would be fully effective because it seems like we'd only see certain parts of the child, right? I think it really depends on the child, and it might be harder to implement. It feels a bit disjointed to me.

Although the limited time spent in the classroom affected the special education preschool teachers' ability to observe and understand classroom dynamics before providing targeted support, they also felt that balancing multiple roles and responsibilities reduces their effectiveness. Some participants stated the need for better division of tasks between general education and special education teachers, especially when providing either push-in services or services through a coteaching model. They expressed frustration with how their role was perceived by general education teachers because they had limited opportunities to actually teach. Instead, they found themselves providing supplementary assistance similar to that of a paraprofessional. One teacher remarked: "We have been given the role of a [behavior assistant], for example. So we're not really teaching."

Resources and Support Systems

Frequently overlapping with the effects on attitudes, available resources and support systems were referenced 12 times in four documents. Participants highlighted that the availability and quality of resources and support systems significantly influenced their self-efficacy in inclusive classrooms. This was especially true for human support resources. "We need to have assistants for support in the classroom," one teacher

remarked, “because, even in my classroom, I have a superb assistant and he has done so much for my kids in the classroom.”

In addition, the impact of class size, resource allocation on service delivery, and caseload was underscored, with teachers noting the challenges posed by limited resources and high student-to-adult ratios. As one teacher observed, “I think obviously the lower end numbers, the higher success we’re going to have.” Higher caseloads result in less time spent with each student, especially when working with students placed in different classrooms. Another teacher stated, “The [inclusion] SPED teachers’ caseloads are very large. And so to provide the kids with what they need with these large caseloads, I believe is overwhelming.”

Although the participants appreciated having assistants in the general education classroom, they emphasized the need for these assistants to receive more specialized training, particularly in early intervention to be truly effective. The lack of adequately trained staff in general education settings and the inability to add necessary support often undermines their efforts. The special education preschool teachers expressed a desire for allocation of resources to provide comprehensive training programs for both support staff and general education teachers to ensure everyone is on the same page, rather than relying on brief, fragmented training sessions provided by the special education teacher.

Finally, the presence of a supportive administrator who understands the intricacies of special education and grants teachers the autonomy to manage their time effectively also boosts their confidence and sense of self-efficacy. One teacher remarked, “For special education teachers to feel more successful, I think having a supportive administration and administrator that fully understands what the job is [and what needs to

be in place] to be effective." This includes providing designated collaboration time for the special education and general education teacher. As was noted previously, lack of collaboration time inhibits effective teamwork and hinders teachers' ability to address students' needs comprehensively.

General Education Staff Attitudes

Although only explicitly mentioned four times in three documents, the general education teacher's attitude towards inclusion or students with disabilities affects the special education teacher's efficacy when working in inclusive environments. Special education teachers reported that a lack of ownership and responsibility from the general education staff resulted in challenges to properly integrate and support their special education students. One teacher noted that problems arise "when teachers, general education teachers, really are hands off and don't see their inclusion kid as one of their kids." Furthermore, perceptions of negative attitudes towards students with special needs was found to have a negative effect. One teacher shared the complaint of a coworker: "There was something wrong with the special ed kids and that the typical children should not have to deal with them." This fostered a divisive environment and complicated efforts to create an inclusive learning environment.

Resistance to collaboration also posed challenges. Rigid scheduling practices, in which special education staff are only welcomed at specific times, limited the ability to effectively support the special education student in the inclusive environment. One teacher highlighted this issue: "Other teachers that I work with do have some difficulties with teachers only wanting them there on the scheduled day and scheduled time, and they don't necessarily feel welcome." While challenges when general education teachers are

not open to collaborating or implementing inclusive practices were found to create barriers for special education teachers support their students, having supportive co-teachers and paraprofessionals can make a substantial positive impact and help improve the effectiveness of inclusion. One teacher expressed relief and appreciation when her colleagues were "open to understanding what the approaches are and going with, like, let's say, if it's extinction to a certain kind of behaviors or trying some of the behavior approaches that others implement." Overall, the attitude and cooperation of general education staff can significantly influence the special education teacher's sense of self-efficacy in the inclusion classroom. Supportive and flexible teamwork was found to enhance the experience, and negative attitudes and a lack of integration presented substantial challenges.

Student Factors

Student-related factors appeared to play a minor role in self-efficacy, with five mentions in documents. Participants identified several student factors that impacted their teaching efficacy in inclusive environments. One key issue was the variability in student goals and needs, which can influence how effectively a teacher can manage classroom responsibilities and needs at a given time. For instance, one special education preschool teacher stated that her ability to address these goals can fluctuate depending on what skill-set students are working on in relation to the core instruction in the classroom, affecting overall teaching efficacy.

Another factor was the presence of significant behavioral challenges. One teacher recounted a particularly difficult experience with a student who had "major, major behaviors" and described how these behaviors, which included being "vocal and loud,

using bad words, or not being able to sit for 3 minutes" and being "physical with the staff" disrupted the entire classroom. The teacher admitted, "I couldn't teach as well as I was teaching before because of all those behaviors," indicating that such disruptions severely hindered the teacher's ability to maintain an effective teaching environment and the teacher's sense of self-efficacy.

Finally, the importance of students having some ability to participate in classroom activities was highlighted. One teacher emphasized that students need to have some "cognitive responses and being able to show joint attention and sit through some activities to some level," even if it is just for a few minutes. She explained that, without these basic abilities, it becomes extremely challenging to conduct lessons effectively and maintain a productive classroom environment.

Knowledge of Curriculum

This factor was mentioned only three times and had the lowest impact on influencing self-efficacy. One teacher highlighted a critical gap in her credential program training: "Special education teachers...do not have any education in [curriculum], like about how the brain works, how students learn developmentally." This lack of foundational understanding about student development and learning processes creates a barrier to effective teaching. Another teacher elaborated on this concept: "What is the progress [of teaching specific subjects]? How should you teach letters and numbers? How do you teach writing? What is pre-writing?" The teacher concluded that the lack of curriculum knowledge directly impacted her self-efficacy in the past: "So I think it's just the knowledge that can be a barrier. The knowledge of how to teach the curriculum, that is a barrier." Without a strong foundation in curriculum content, special education

teachers may feel less confident in their ability to deliver core curriculum concepts effectively and meet their students' needs.

Summary

This mixed-methods study aimed to assess special education preschool teachers' attitudes towards inclusion of students with disabilities in California's general education preschool classrooms, examining cognitive, affective, and behavioral factors. In addition, teachers' self-efficacy in supporting students with disabilities concerning inclusive instruction, collaboration, and behavior management was investigated, and compared with their attitudes towards inclusion. Last, the study intended to identify and explore other factors influencing teachers' attitudes towards inclusion that were not previously considered in the ratings. This chapter provided a detailed report of the demographic data of the participants, the quantitative and qualitative data collected to address the research questions, and the analysis of the data in relation to the research questions.

Using the ATTAS-mm scale, special education preschool teachers rated their attitudes towards teaching students with disabilities in the general education classroom. Participants reported a moderately positive attitude towards inclusion, and an average score indicating a tendency to *somewhat agree* with inclusive practices. The highest-rated domain was behavioral, indicating a strong desire to create inclusive environments. Teachers expressed confidence in students' abilities and willingness to trust them with responsibilities but showed some reservation regarding full inclusion. In the affective domain, teachers believed in the benefits of inclusion for social skills development and student success. Participants also expressed a moderate desire to expand their knowledge and skills related to inclusive teaching. However, the cognitive domain yielded the lowest

agreement ratings, indicating mixed attitudes towards current inclusive practices and uncertainties regarding resource allocation and teacher capacity.

To measure teacher self-efficacy, the TEIP-SF scale was used. Special education preschool teachers generally reported a moderate to high level of confidence with inclusive practices, with the highest ratings in inclusive instruction and collaboration. In inclusive instruction, participants felt adept at implementing various teaching strategies tailored to individual student needs. Collaboration skills were also rated as strong. Teachers expressed confidence in working effectively with colleagues and professionals, although engagement with parents showed slightly lower confidence. Despite behavior management ranking lowest, participants still felt capable of handling disruptive behaviors and maintaining classroom order.

A regression analysis found no significant relationship between special education preschool teachers' self-efficacy (measured by TEIP-SF) and their attitudes towards inclusion (measured by ATTAS-mm). Even though some moderate correlations were found between specific aspects of collaboration and beliefs about students' capabilities, the Pearson correlation analysis revealed an extremely limited correlation between preschool special education teachers' self-efficacy for inclusive practices (as measured by TEIP-SF) and their attitudes towards inclusion (as measured by ATTAS-mm).

Analysis of the qualitative data revealed seven major themes as factors affecting attitudes and six major themes were identified as factors affecting self-efficacy. Factors affecting special education preschool teachers' attitudes towards inclusion included the attitudes and efficacy of general education teachers and staff, availability of resources and support systems, collaboration efforts, program characteristics, student factors, and

previous experiences with inclusion. Program characteristics had the most significant impact, with emphasis on classroom environments, flexibility, coteaching, curriculum, and integration between general and special education systems. Key factors affecting special education preschool teachers' sense of self-efficacy included fostering collaborative environments, providing flexible and consistent service delivery, ensuring resource accessibility, and addressing curriculum and student needs. Effective teamwork, supportive administration, adequate training, and positive attitudes from general education staff were deemed to be crucial for building a strong sense of self-efficacy among special education preschool teachers when teaching in inclusive settings.

CHAPTER V: FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overview

Chapter V presents an overview of the research study, encompassing a review of the study's purpose statement, research questions, methods, population, and sample. The primary aim of this chapter was to highlight the major findings, unexpected discoveries, and research conclusions. In addition, implications for actions derived from the research conclusions are presented. The chapter concludes with recommendations for future research and final remarks.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this mixed-methods study was to determine how special education preschool teachers rate their attitudes towards inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education preschool classroom in California with respect to cognitive factors, affective factors, and behavioral intent factors. In addition, this study aimed to explore how special education preschool teachers rate their self-efficacy in supporting students with disabilities in the general education classroom in California with respect to inclusive instruction, collaboration, and behavior management, and how these ratings compare to their attitudes towards inclusion. A final purpose of the study was to determine how preschool special education teachers identify and describe other factors not previously mentioned in the ratings that impact their attitudes towards inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education preschool classroom.

Research Questions

1. How do special education preschool teachers rate their attitudes towards inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education preschool classroom in

California with respect to cognitive factors, affective factors and behavioral intent factors as measured by the Attitudes Towards Teaching All Students (ATTAS-mm) instrument?

2. How do special education preschool teachers rate their self-efficacy in supporting students with disabilities in the general education classroom in California with respect to inclusive instruction, collaboration, and behavior management as measured by the Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practices-Short Form (TEIP-SF) scale?
3. How do the ratings of special education preschool teachers' attitudes towards inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom compare to their ratings of self-efficacy in supporting students with disabilities in the general education classroom?
4. How do special education preschool teachers identify and describe other factors not previously mentioned that impact their teaching efficacy and attitudes towards inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom?

Research Methods

The research methodology employed in this study was a mixed methods nonexperimental, descriptive, sequential, convergent design. Quantitative data were collected using an online survey comprising nine demographic closed-ended questions, a nine-question, 6-point Likert scale, and a nine-question 7-point Likert scale. Qualitative data were collected after the quantitative data collection phase through one-on-one interviews using the Zoom platform. The analysis of the quantitative data collected using

a survey addressed Research Questions 1, 2, and 3, and the qualitative interview data addressed Research Question 4.

Population

The population relevant to this study was special education preschool teachers in California. A special education preschool teacher is someone who possesses an early childhood special education (ECSE) teaching credential and primarily teaches preschool students with disabilities (Turnbull et al., 2019). According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2023), in 2022, 1,610 special education preschool teachers were employed in California.

Sample

The target population in this study was special education preschool teachers in any of the 19 Special Education Local Plan Areas (SELPAs) in Los Angeles County. The online sample size calculator developed for the Donor Committee for Enterprise Development (DCED) was used to calculate the recommended minimum sample size for descriptive research when using a survey. With a confidence level of 90%, and a confidence interval of 10, the minimum sample size based on a population of 1,610 was 30 (Fairbairn & Kessler, 2015). The survey yielded 67 respondents. Responses were analyzed for fidelity using completion time and completion rate. Incomplete surveys and surveys that were completed in less than 5 min were eliminated. A total of 43 special education preschool teachers completed all parts of the survey with fidelity and were included in the final sample. For the qualitative phase, the inclusion criteria comprised preschool teachers in special education who agreed to participate in the study and who completed all quantitative survey requirements with accuracy. Of the 43 qualifying

survey participants, 16 expressed interest in participating in the follow-up interview. All 16 were contacted and eight responded positively and confirmed their participation in the follow-up interview.

Major Findings

The major findings are presented by research question. Quantitative data was collected and analyzed to answer Research Question 1, 2, and 3. Instrument-specific descriptors were used to determine ratings of self-efficacy and ratings of attitudes. Qualitative data were analyzed through the development of themes and used to answer RQ4. Themes were identified at both the latent level, reflecting underlying ideas or assumptions, and the semantic level, based on explicit content. In addition, the usefulness of the theme to answer the research question was considered. Code coverage was assessed both at the individual document level and from the entire document set. Finally, the mention of a theme by multiple participants and frequency of occurrence in the data set was taken into account.

Major Findings for Research Question 1

Research Question 1 asked, "How do special education preschool teachers rate their attitudes toward inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education preschool classroom in California with respect to cognitive factors, affective factors and behavioral intent factors as measured by the ATTAS-mm instrument?" On the 7-point Likert scale, a score of 1 indicated an unfavorable attitude and a score of 7 indicated a positive attitude. Results indicated that special education preschool teachers had a somewhat favorable attitude towards inclusion.

Participants showed strong support for creating inclusive learning environments and believed in the benefits of including students with disabilities for promoting social skills and overall success. They felt confident that students with mild-to-moderate disabilities could manage classroom responsibilities, and many expressed a desire to learn from experienced educators who model effective differentiated instruction and design appropriate academic interventions within the general education setting. However, over 30% of respondents were neutral about a desire to learn from others, possibly because of satisfaction with their current skills or uncertainty about its impact.

Despite these positive attitudes of teachers, there were notable concerns. The lower mean score for fully educating all students with mild-to-moderate disabilities in regular classrooms indicated some hesitancy, which could be related to concerns about the adequacy of resources and support or the specific needs of individual students. Participants also showed lower agreement within the cognitive domain, reflecting reservations about the ability of all students to succeed in a general education environment. These reservations could indicate concerns with the ability of students with disabilities to meet academic standards and access the general curriculum, or doubts about the effectiveness of providing intensive individualized support in a general classroom setting. A high variance in the responses suggested a lack of consensus, reflecting diverse levels of comfort, understanding, and belief in the effectiveness of inclusive practices. Overall, although special education preschool teachers in California generally support the inclusion of students with disabilities, there are significant areas of concern, particularly regarding the full inclusion of students with moderate disabilities and the effectiveness of inclusive practices.

Major Findings for Research Question 2

Research Question 2 asked, "How do special education preschool teachers rate their self-efficacy in supporting students with disabilities in the general education classroom in California with respect to inclusive instruction, collaboration, and behavior management as measured by the TEIP-SF scale?" Data analysis revealed that special education preschool teachers generally felt confident about their skills in all three domains. Teachers reported high confidence in their ability to employ inclusive instructional strategies. They felt capable of using diverse assessment methods, providing alternate explanations, and designing tasks to meet individual student needs. However, there was notable internal variance in responses, indicating that although many teachers felt confident, others experienced varying degrees of competence. This variance underscores the importance of tailored support, professional development, and resources to enhance teachers' efficacy in creating inclusive learning environments for all students.

Special education preschool teachers also indicated a strong belief in their capacity to collaborate with other providers to design educational plans for students with disabilities, and they generally expressed confidence in their ability to work jointly with other professionals and staff when teaching students with disabilities. Confidence in involving parents in school activities was markedly lower. This suggests a need to enhance skills and confidence in involving parents in the educational process through additional training or collaboration opportunities. Addressing this gap could lead to more effective and inclusive educational environments for students with disabilities.

Despite behavior management being the lowest-rated area, special education preschool teachers generally felt confident in their ability to manage behavior within the

general education classroom effectively. The low internal variance suggests a consistent level of confidence among the teachers surveyed. However, because behavior management was the lowest-rated area, there is potential for improvement. Professional development focusing on advanced behavior management and generalization techniques could help enhance teachers' ability to foster positive behavior in different educational settings.

Major Findings for Research Question 3

Research Question 3 asked, "How do the ratings of special education preschool teachers' attitudes toward inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom compare to their ratings of self-efficacy in supporting students with disabilities in the general education classroom?" A regression analysis found no significant relationship between special education preschool teachers' self-efficacy and their attitudes towards inclusion. In addition, there was no significant correlation between preschool special education teachers' self-efficacy for inclusive practices and their attitudes towards teaching all students in the general education environment.

Major Findings for Research Question 4

Research Question 4 asked, "How do special education preschool teachers identify and describe other factors not previously mentioned that impact their teaching efficacy and attitudes toward inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom?" An analysis of qualitative data collected through semistructured interviews with special education preschool teachers revealed seven additional key factors that affect attitudes and six additional factors that affect self-efficacy.

Key Factors Affecting Attitudes

Key factors that affect special education preschool teachers' attitudes towards inclusion included the attitudes and efficacy of general education teachers and staff, availability of resources and support systems, collaboration efforts, program characteristics, student factors, and previous experiences with inclusion. Program characteristics had the most significant impact, with emphasis on classroom environments, flexibility, coteaching, curriculum, and integration between general and special education systems. Major findings are summarized new.

Key Factor 1: Program Characteristics. Support for inclusion was contingent upon various program-related factors, such as classroom environments and class size, flexibility within the program's structure, existence of coteaching and other service models, use of curriculum, and effectiveness of integration between the general education state-funded preschool system and the special education preschool program. Many teachers believed that the current methods and strategies employed by their district were not effective. This sentiment highlights the need for continual evaluation and improvement of inclusive practices, ensuring they meet the evolving needs of both students and educators. It also suggests that teacher training and support, policy adjustments, and resource allocation are critical areas for development to enhance the effectiveness of inclusion programs.

Key Factor 2: Resources and Support Systems. Attitudes towards inclusion were also influenced by the perceived gap between available resources and the level of support necessary for successful inclusive education. Teachers stressed the need for increased funding to bridge these gaps and ensure all students receive necessary support.

Concerns were raised regarding insufficient collaboration time between general and special education staff, crucial for effective inclusion. The importance of well-trained support staff was highlighted, emphasizing their role in addressing diverse student needs. Access to comprehensive and ongoing professional development was also deemed essential to equip teachers and support staff with the necessary skills for effective inclusion. Prioritizing inclusive practices in teacher preparation programs, allocating funding for inclusive education initiatives at the local level, and allocating time for collaboration between general and special education teachers may improve attitudes towards inclusion.

Key Factor 3: General Education Teachers and Staff Attitudes. The attitude of general education teachers and staff towards the inclusion of students with special needs in their classrooms impacts the special education preschool teacher's willingness to recommend a general education setting for their students. Special education teachers are more likely to recommend general education settings for their students if they perceive positive and welcoming attitudes from general education teachers. Successful inclusion relies heavily on the willingness and supportiveness of general education teachers, and although some general education teachers actively embrace and support students with special needs, others do not, leading to concerns about not only the effectiveness of inclusion but also the exclusion of these students from classroom activities.

Key Factor 4: General Education Teacher Efficacy. Special education preschool teachers' attitudes towards inclusion are influenced by various general education teacher efficacy factors and their confidence in general education teachers' abilities to support students with special needs. Key factors included general education

teachers' proficiency in behavior management, their use of instructional strategies tailored for students with learning differences, and their knowledge of various disabilities and their impacts on learning. Overall, they believed that general education teachers need specialized training in special education as part of their credentialing programs to effectively support students with diverse needs as well as district and site-level training on supporting students with special needs.

Key Factor 5: Student Factors. Special education preschool teachers highlighted the crucial importance of taking into account the students' developmental level, behavior, and individual needs when advocating for their placement in an inclusive environment. The readiness consideration also involved students' social skills and their ability to interact positively with peers and teachers in the general education setting. This underscores the significant influence of student factors on the attitudes of special education teachers towards inclusion. However, these student factors were typically assessed within the framework of the characteristics of available general education or inclusion programs, as well as the presence of support systems within these programs to ensure the success of special needs children. Thus, although student factors shape attitudes towards inclusion, there was a prevailing belief that diverse learners can thrive in an inclusive educational setting provided that appropriate supports and resources are available, and the placement aligns well with the needs of the student.

Key Factor 6: Knowledge of Existing Programs. The extent of special education preschool teachers' familiarity with existing programs also influenced their attitudes towards inclusive education and limited exposure to inclusion classrooms and programs impacted their comfort level with inclusion. Overall, teachers voiced

apprehensions about the unfamiliar aspects of inclusion, including concerns about meeting students' needs adequately and their integration into general education settings. This suggests that familiarity with existing inclusive settings could alleviate apprehension and foster confidence in supporting the placement of students in general education environments.

Key Factor 7: Previous Experience. Special education preschool teachers' previous experiences with inclusion, whether positive or negative, significantly impacted their attitudes towards its effectiveness; positive experiences fostered confidence and support for inclusive practices and negative experiences raised concerns about the feasibility and adequacy of inclusion programs. Providing opportunities for special education preschool teachers to collaborate with colleagues who have had positive experiences with inclusion could lead to more positive attitudes towards inclusion. Peer learning, specifically teacher-to-teacher interactions, can provide valuable insights and foster a sense of confidence in the effectiveness of educational practices (Thurlings & Den Brok, 2018).

Key Factors Affecting Teaching Efficacy

Key factors affecting special education preschool teachers' sense of self-efficacy included fostering collaborative environments, providing flexible and consistent service delivery, ensuring resource accessibility, and addressing curriculum and student needs. Effective teamwork, supportive administration, adequate training, and positive attitudes from general education staff were deemed to be crucial for building a strong sense of self-efficacy among special education preschool teachers when teaching in inclusive settings. The major findings are summarized next.

Key Factor 1: Collaboration. Collaboration emerged as a crucial factor influencing self-efficacy, and concerns were raised about the lack of dedicated collaboration time, hindering a teacher's ability to plan and implement support strategies effectively. Teachers also expressed frustration over a lack of time dedicated to team meetings and strategizing, which limits opportunities for collaborative problem-solving and support. This shortage of collaborative opportunities underscored systemic barriers that inhibit effective teamwork and hinder teachers' ability to address students' needs comprehensively. Positive relationships between general education and special education teachers were also seen as crucial for effective teamwork and the implementation of inclusive practices. Teachers emphasized the importance of shared philosophies and mutual respect, which contributes to a supportive and cohesive team dynamic.

Key Factor 2: Delivery of Service. The way specialized academic instruction is delivered significantly affects a special education preschool teacher's sense of self-efficacy. This included the amount of time they were able to spend in the general education classroom to observe, time allocated to work directly with each student, and having access to a designated space to work with students in a separate setting as needed. Unclarity regarding the division of tasks between general education and special education teachers, especially when providing push-in services or providing services through a coteaching model, also impacted how effective special education preschool teachers felt when they taught in inclusive settings. Overall, teachers expressed a desire for more consistent and immersive involvement in general education classrooms.

Key Factor 3: Resources and Support Systems. The availability and quality of resources and support systems significantly influenced special education preschool

teachers' self-efficacy when supporting students in inclusive classrooms. This included time to collaborate, comprehensive training opportunities for both support staff and general education teachers, and the provision of adapted instructional materials. In addition, the impact of class size and caseload was underscored. Finally, the presence of a supportive administrator who understands the intricacies of special education and grants teachers the autonomy to manage their time effectively boosts their confidence levels and sense of self-efficacy.

Key Factor 4: General Education Staff Attitudes. The attitude and cooperation of general education staff can significantly influence the special education preschool teacher's sense of self-efficacy in the inclusion classroom. Although supportive and flexible teamwork was found to enhance the experience, negative attitudes held by general education staff and a lack of integration efforts presented substantial challenges when working in inclusive environments. Lack of ownership and responsibility from the general education staff resulted in challenges to properly integrate and support their special education students and complicated efforts to create an inclusive learning environment.

Key Factor 5: Student Factors. Although student-related factors appeared to play a minor role in self-efficacy, special education preschool teachers identified several student factors that impacted their teaching efficacy in inclusive environments. The primary factor was the presence of significant behavioral challenges that severely hindered the teacher's ability to maintain a productive teaching environment. Variability in student goals, needs, and ability to participate in general classroom activities also

impacted the teacher's teaching efficacy when teaching in the general education classroom.

Key Factor 6: Knowledge of Curriculum. Knowledge of and familiarity with the general education curriculum was found to be a factor impacting self-efficacy. This lack of foundational understanding can create a barrier to effective teaching. Without a strong foundation in curriculum content, special education teachers may feel less confident in their ability to deliver core curriculum concepts effectively and meet their students' needs.

Unexpected Findings

A prevalent theme in studies regarding attitudes and self-efficacy is the moderating effect self-efficacy has on attitudes and behavior (Bandura, 1986). This is also found within the context of a teacher's self-efficacy with inclusive practices and their attitudes towards inclusive education. Past studies on attitudes and self-efficacy related to inclusion have consistently shown that there is a strong correlation between the two (Bandura, 1997; Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Koh & Shin, 2017; Sharma et al., 2012). In this study, however, data analysis found no significant relationship or correlation between special education preschool teachers' self-efficacy and their attitudes towards inclusion as measured by TEIP-SF and ATTAS-mm.

Attitudes towards inclusion and self-efficacy are multi-faceted constructs influenced by various personal and contextual factors (Ajzen, 1985; Bandura, 1997; Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Gregory & Noto, 2019). Therefore, the tools used to measure self-efficacy (TEIP-SF) and attitudes towards inclusion (ATTAS-mm) might not fully capture the nuances of these various constructs. Both instruments focused on three

distinct factors that were limited to three questions each, which could have led to a lack of observable correlation or relationship between the two primary constructs.

The lack of an observed relationship between the two instruments can also be explained by the existence of distinct subsets within teaching efficacy. Aligned with Bandura's two-component model of self-efficacy, teaching efficacy has two primary constructs: General teaching efficacy and personal teaching efficacy (Menon & Lefteri, 2021). General teaching efficacy is the belief about what a teacher can achieve despite constraints imposed by external factors, and personal teaching efficacy is the teacher's belief in their own teaching abilities and the ability to be an effective agent of change (Gibson & Dembo, 1984). Teachers might differentiate between their professional self-efficacy and their efficacy within the constraints of current inclusion programs and practices. They may feel competent in using inclusive practices because of training and experience, yet harbor reservations or concerns about the broader implications and effectiveness of full inclusion within the current educational system.

Conclusions

This study aimed to investigate and understand California special education preschool teachers' attitudes towards inclusion and their sense of self-efficacy with educating students with disabilities in general education settings. In addition, the study aimed to identify and describe factors that influence special education preschool teachers' self-efficacy and attitudes towards the inclusion of children with disabilities in general education preschool classrooms. The key findings resulted in nine conclusions supported by the study's data.

Conclusion 1

Special education preschool teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom are mixed.

Most special education preschool teachers are supportive of the idea of inclusion but are ambivalent about the benefits of inclusion within the current educational systems. Overall, the most common theme in attitudes towards inclusion was special educator resistance to the elimination of self-contained special education classrooms. They do not believe that inclusion is beneficial for all students with disabilities and generally oppose the elimination of self-contained classrooms or special day classes (SDCs) in favor of full inclusion.

Conclusion 2

Special education preschool teachers feel confident in their ability to support students in general education environments.

Special education preschool teachers reported high confidence in their ability to employ inclusive instructional strategies and collaborate with general education staff. Generally, they feel confident in their ability to manage behavior within the general education classroom effectively.

Conclusion 3

Special education preschool teachers' support for inclusion is contingent on various program-related factors, including program characteristics and available resources and support systems.

There is a perceived gap between available resources and the level of support deemed necessary for successful inclusive education. Teachers are more likely to support

inclusive initiatives if they feel their students' needs can be adequately met with the current support systems in place. They believe that for inclusion to be effective, class sizes need to be reduced, the student-to-adult ratio needs to be lowered, and programs should include coteaching models. Concerns were raised regarding insufficient collaboration time between general and special education staff, which was deemed crucial for effective inclusion. Many teachers believe that the current methods and strategies employed by their districts are not effective, and that restrictions on service delivery options hinder their students' progress in the general education environment, which led to teachers' reluctance to recommend placement in a general education environment for many of their students.

Conclusion 4

Special education preschool teachers' support for inclusion is contingent on their general education counterparts' willingness to accept students with disabilities in their classrooms and their ability to effectively address these students' needs.

Special education preschool teachers are more likely to recommend general education settings for their students if they perceive positive and welcoming attitudes from general education teachers. A general education teacher's lack of willingness to support and welcome students with special needs leads not only to concerns about the benefits of inclusion, but also to concerns that their students will be excluded from fully participating in all classroom activities. Special education teachers stressed the need for increased funding to adequately prepare and support general education teachers to support students with special needs. Access to comprehensive and ongoing professional

development was deemed essential to equip general education teachers and support staff with the necessary skills for effective inclusion.

Conclusion 5

Exposure to successful inclusive programs and experiences can positively impact the special education preschool teacher's attitudes towards inclusion.

Special education preschool teachers' previous experiences with inclusion, whether positive or negative, significantly impacted their attitudes towards its effectiveness; positive experiences fostered confidence and support for inclusive practices and negative experiences raised concerns about the feasibility and adequacy of inclusion programs. Limited exposure to inclusion classrooms and programs and lack of experience with success also impacted special education preschool teachers' comfort level with inclusion. Overall, teachers voiced apprehensions about the unfamiliar aspects of inclusion, including concerns about their students' needs being met in general education settings.

Conclusion 6

Special education preschool teachers do not believe inclusion is appropriate for all students and their support for inclusion is contingent on individual student attributes, their unique needs, and their readiness for inclusion.

Special education preschool teachers highlighted the importance of considering a student's developmental level, behavior, and individual needs when contemplating placement in an inclusive environment. Student readiness considerations involve students' social skills and their ability to interact positively with peers and teachers in the general education setting.

Conclusion 7

Collaboration plays a critical role in influencing the special education preschool teacher's self-efficacy in supporting students with disabilities in general education settings.

Collaboration emerged as a crucial factor that influences self-efficacy, but systemic barriers such as insufficient dedicated collaboration time hinder this process. Teachers feel that the lack of time for team meetings and strategizing limits opportunities for collaborative problem-solving and comprehensive support for students. The attitude and cooperation of general education staff also significantly influence the special education preschool teacher's sense of self-efficacy in the inclusion classroom. Although supportive and flexible teamwork was found to enhance the experience, negative attitudes held by general education staff and a lack of integration presented substantial challenges when working in inclusive environments. Furthermore, lack of ownership and responsibility from the general education staff resulted in challenges to properly integrate and support their special education students, complicating efforts to create an inclusive learning environment. Overall, teachers expressed a desire for more consistent and immersive involvement in general education classrooms to enhance the impact they have on successful student outcomes.

Conclusion 8

Rigid prescriptive service delivery models negatively impact the self-efficacy of special education preschool teachers when working in inclusive settings.

The way specialized academic instruction is delivered significantly affects a special education preschool teacher's sense of self-efficacy. This includes the amount of

time they are able to spend observing in the general education classroom, the amount of time allocated to work directly with each student, and whether they have access to a designated space to work with students in a separate setting as needed. Special education preschool teachers expressed the need for supportive administrators who understand the intricacies of special education and grants special education teachers autonomy and flexibility in delivering services.

Conclusion 9

The availability and quality of paraprofessionals have a significant impact on the self-efficacy of special education preschool teachers in implementing inclusive education.

Special education preschool teachers emphasized the importance of well-trained assistants who can effectively address the diverse needs of students, especially in managing behaviors and providing personalized support. This level of support is crucial for maintaining consistent implementation of instructional strategies aimed at promoting individual student success and facilitating access to the general education curriculum necessary to ensure that their efforts in supporting students in general education settings are maximized.

Implications for Action

Prior research has shown that a general education teacher's attitude towards inclusion and their sense of self-efficacy teaching students with disabilities significantly impacts the successful implementation of inclusive practices and programming (Hernandez et al., 2016; Koh & Shin, 2017; Kendall, 2019). This has led to recommendations to improve general education teachers' self-efficacy and attitudes towards inclusion and thus the outcome for students with disabilities. Few studies,

however, have explored the attitudes and perceptions of special education teachers towards inclusion and how these attitudes might affect inclusive practices (Yan & Sin, 2015; Boyle et al., 2020; Guillemot et al., 2022). This study aimed to address this gap in the research and examine California's special education preschool teachers' attitudes towards inclusion and their self-efficacy in educating students with disabilities in general education settings. Moreover, it aimed to identify and describe the factors influencing their self-efficacy and attitudes towards the inclusion of children with disabilities in general education preschool classrooms.

The findings of this study highlight the need to foster collaboration between teachers and service providers, ensure adequate resources and support systems, and tailor programs to meet diverse student needs. They underscore the multifaceted nature of attitudes and self-efficacy in inclusive education, emphasizing the importance of collaborative environments, flexible service delivery options, resource accessibility, and addressing of curriculum and student needs to enhance self-efficacy among stakeholders. The following sections list the recommendations for future action.

Implication for Action 1: Improve Resource Availability and Support Systems at the Site and District Level

This study identified a disparity between the available resources and the support that special education preschool teachers require for effective inclusive education. This gap negatively impacts their attitudes towards inclusion and their confidence in teaching in inclusive environments (Sharma et al., 2009; Toompalu et al., 2017). To address this, it is imperative to allocate categorical funding at the district level for inclusive education. Increasing funding for inclusive education programs is crucial to ensure adequate

resources, including smaller class sizes, lower student-to-adult ratios, and sufficient materials and tools for both general and special education teachers. In addition, increased funding allows for enhanced support systems for students with extensive needs, promoting successful inclusive practices and improving outcomes for all students.

Implication for Action 2: Foster Collaborative Practices

Collaboration between the general and special education teachers is essential for an inclusion program to succeed (Gregory & Noto, 2018). Data analysis of this study found that collaboration was critical in influencing special education preschool teachers' self-efficacy in supporting students with disabilities in general education settings. However, systemic barriers, such as insufficient dedicated collaboration time, hinder this process. Teachers raised concerns about the lack of time for team meetings and strategizing, which limits opportunities for collaborative problem-solving and comprehensive support for students. To address this, site administrators need to allow dedicated time for collaborative planning and problem-solving and establish regular team meetings to enhance communication and develop strategies to support students in inclusive settings.

The attitude and cooperation of general education staff was also found to have a significant impact on the special education preschool teacher's sense of self-efficacy in the inclusion classroom. Positive experiences fostered confidence and support for inclusive practices, and negative experiences raised concerns about the feasibility and adequacy of inclusion programs. Supportive and flexible teamwork were found to enhance the experience, but negative attitudes and a lack of integration efforts presented substantial challenges when working in inclusive environments. Site administrators

should encourage joint curriculum planning sessions to align special and general education objectives (Buell et al., 1999).

Implication for Action 3: Promote Inclusive Mindsets

The effectiveness of inclusive education is greatly dependent on a teacher's belief that all students belong in a regular education classroom (Specht et al., 2016). This study found that special education preschool teachers' support for inclusion is contingent on their general education counterparts' willingness to accept students with disabilities in their classrooms and their ability to effectively address these students' needs. Special education preschool teachers were more likely to recommend general education settings for their students if they perceived positive and welcoming attitudes from general education teachers. Site leaders can encourage and support positive attitudes towards inclusion among general education teachers by fostering positive and welcoming attitudes towards students with disabilities through school-wide initiatives and training, highlighting successful inclusion stories and best practices, and providing workshops and seminars led by experienced educators who model effective inclusive practices.

Implication for Action 4: Provide Targeted and Ongoing Professional Development for General and Special Education Teachers on Inclusive Practices

Special education teachers stressed the need for comprehensive and ongoing training to adequately prepare and support general education teachers to support students with special needs. Specific concerns were raised regarding knowledge of disabilities and their impact on learning, differentiated instruction, and behavior management. Targeted training programs should focus on inclusive teaching strategies, differentiated instruction, and universal design for learning. In addition, specialized training in advanced behavior

management techniques, coteaching strategies, and collaboration techniques is needed for both general and special education teachers. Finally, special education teachers would benefit from training on the general education curriculum to boost special education teachers' confidence in delivering core content.

Implication for Action 5: Increase Awareness of Existing Programs

Limited exposure to inclusion classrooms and programs and lack of experience with success impacts the special education preschool teacher's comfort level with inclusion. Overall, teachers voiced apprehensions about the unfamiliar aspects of inclusion, including concerns about their students' needs being met in general education settings. This can be addressed through site visits and observations of successful inclusive programs to alleviate teacher apprehensions about inclusion, share best practices and success stories to build confidence in inclusive education and encourage peer learning and collaboration among teachers with positive inclusion experiences, and create mentorship programs in which experienced teachers can guide those new to inclusive practices.

Implication for Action 6: Promote a Culture of Mutual Respect and Shared Philosophies Between General and Special Education Staff

The attitude and cooperation of general education staff significantly influences the special education preschool teacher's sense of self-efficacy in the inclusion classroom. Although supportive and flexible teamwork were found to enhance the experience, negative attitudes and a lack of integration presented substantial challenges when working in inclusive classrooms. Furthermore, lack of ownership and responsibility from the general education staff resulted in challenges to properly integrate and support their

special education students and complicated efforts to create an inclusive learning environment. Overall, special education preschool teachers emphasized the importance of shared philosophies and mutual respect, which contributes to a supportive and cohesive team dynamic. Administrators need to be knowledgeable about and supportive of inclusive practices and coteaching strategies. Roles and responsibilities for special education and general education teachers in coteaching and push-in service models need to be clarified and efforts should focus on developing a shared philosophy and mutual respect. By promoting coteaching models and team-teaching approaches to strengthen joint efforts in the classroom, administrators contribute to a supportive and cohesive team dynamic that leads to positive outcomes of inclusion programs.

Implication for Action 7: Maintain a Continuum of Placement Options

Manset and Semmel (1997) analyzed numerous studies on the efficacy of the various inclusion models and suggested that no one single model of inclusion proved effective for all students. This sentiment was echoed by the participants in this study. Most special education preschool teachers are supportive of the idea of inclusion but are ambivalent about the benefits of inclusion within their current educational systems. Furthermore, they exhibited resistance to phasing out self-contained special education classrooms and generally were opposed to the elimination of SDCs classrooms in favor of full inclusion. Given the mixed attitudes towards full inclusion and the general opposition to eliminating separate settings, districts need to continue to offer a range of educational settings to meet the diverse needs of students with disabilities.

Implication for Action 8: Employ an Individualized Approach to Inclusion

Student factors are a significant consideration affecting attitudes towards inclusion and special education preschool teacher recommendations for student placement in a general education setting. Special education preschool teachers do not believe inclusion is appropriate for all students and their support for inclusion is contingent on the individual student's attributes, unique needs, and perceived readiness for inclusion. Student readiness considerations involved the students' social skills and ability to interact positively with peers and teachers in the general education setting, as well as their ability to function independently. However, these student factors were typically considered within the framework of the characteristics of existing educational programs, as well as the presence of support systems within these programs to ensure the success of special needs children. To promote inclusive practices and placement of students with disabilities in the general education classroom, a systematic approach for assessing the impact this placement has on the student should be developed. This informs program modifications needed based on the student's unique needs and ensures that appropriate support is provided.

Implication for Action 9: Evaluate and Improve Program Delivery Options

Many teachers believe that the current methods and strategies employed by their district are not effective. This is in line with previous research that has suggested that future research should examine educational practices rather than focusing on the amount of time that is spent with typical peers (Zigmond, 2003). Districts should continually assess and refine inclusive practices to meet the evolving needs of students and educators; focus on creating flexible program structures, effective coteaching models, and

integrated curriculum approaches; and conduct regular assessments to ensure that inclusive practices are effectively meeting academic standards and providing necessary individualized support.

Implication for Action 10: Allow for Flexible Service Delivery Models

Many educational models operate with the assumption or expectation that students must move along a set continuum and require mastery of a set of arbitrary skills (Taylor, 2004). Only when a student meets a certain set of predetermined academic or social skills can he or she move up the continuum to a less restrictive setting. Special education preschool teachers noted that restrictions around service delivery options hinder their students' progress in the general education environment. Rigid prescriptive service delivery models also impacted the self-efficacy of special education preschool teachers when working in inclusive settings. This led to their reluctance to recommend placement in a general education environment for many of their students. They expressed the need for supportive administrators who understand the intricacies of special education and grant special education teachers autonomy and flexibility to deliver services. This includes the amount of time they are able to spend in the general education classroom to observe, time allocated to work directly with each student, and access to a designated space to work with students in a separate setting as needed.

Implication for Action 11: Investigate Context-Specific Mediating Variables Affecting Attitudes Towards Inclusion

The attitudes of special education preschool teachers towards inclusive education are significantly influenced by the varying contexts in which they work. Factors such as class size, resources, inclusion models, administrative support, and student characteristics

play a crucial role in shaping teachers' self-efficacy and attitudes towards inclusion. To better support teachers, it is important to gather information on existing resources and self-efficacy within their current settings to identify necessary supports to enhance attitudes and implementation of inclusion. Districts should collect data on the perceived resources available to teachers and the specific challenges they face in their respective contexts when supporting students in inclusive environments. By identifying these context-specific needs, districts can tailor support interventions to enhance teachers' attitudes and implementation of inclusive education practices. Understanding and addressing context-specific factors is key to fostering a more inclusive and supportive educational environment for both teachers and students.

Implication for Action 12: Invest in Professional Development for Paraprofessionals

The availability and quality of paraprofessionals have a significant impact on the self-efficacy of special education preschool teachers when implementing inclusive education. Teachers emphasized the importance of well-trained assistants who can effectively address the diverse needs of students, especially in managing behaviors and providing personalized support. This level of support is crucial for maintaining consistent implementation of instructional strategies aimed at promoting individual student success and facilitating access to the general education curriculum and is necessary to ensure that their efforts in supporting students in general education settings are maximized.

Implication for Action 13: Increase Awareness and Advocacy to Inform Policy

Although many factors contribute to the lack of progress related to inclusive practices, a monitoring report on inclusion and education published by United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) found that policy related

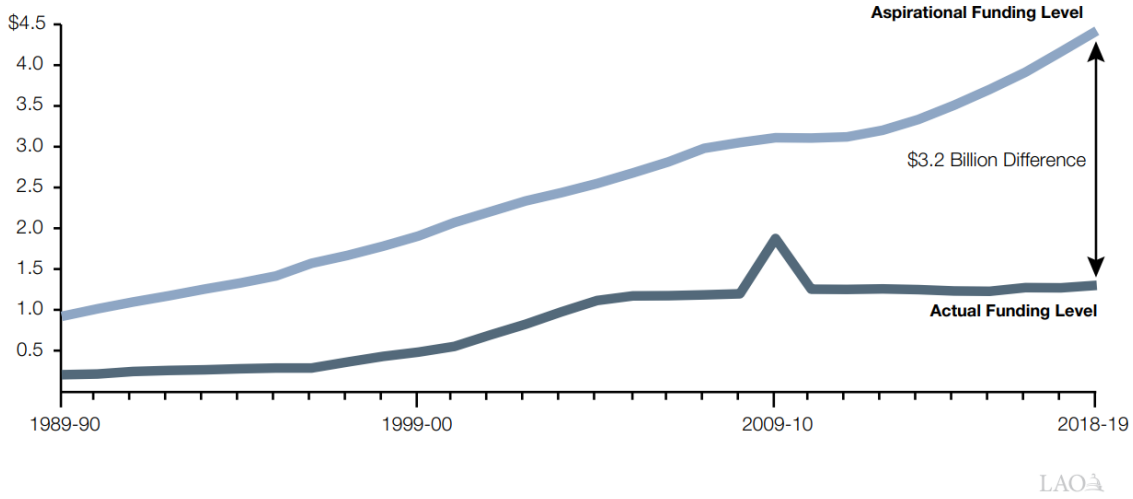
to inclusion is frequently created in organizational and governmental silos, which, combined with bureaucratic cultures and interests, hinder implementation and collaboration of equity and inclusion within educational organizations (Global Education Monitoring Report Team, 2020). It is imperative that educators raise awareness among stakeholders, including policymakers, about the importance of adequate support for inclusive education and advocate for policies that address the identified gaps in resources, training, and collaboration to enhance the overall effectiveness of inclusion programs.

Implication for Action 14: Reauthorization of IDEA to Address Shortfalls of Federal Funding for Special Education

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) authorizes the federal government to contribute funds equaling 40% of the nation's average K–12 spending per student. This amount was determined at the time of the original law's passing and based on the assumption that educating students with disabilities would, on average, cost 50% more than educating typical students. Starting at 5% of the nation's average per-pupil expenditure (APPE) for public schools in 1978, the goal was to provide 40% of APPE to states by 1982. However, as illustrated by the Legislative Analyst's Office chart (Figure 4), federal contributions have consistently remained below half of the promised amount, and the gap between the federal commitment and actual funding continues to widen (Anderson & Li, 2019).

Figure 4

Federal Special Education Funding for California



Note. Aspirational and actual federal special education funding for California expressed in billions. From *Overview of Special Education in California*, by R. Anderson & A. Li, 2019, p. 16. (https://lao.ca.gov/reports/2019/4110/overview-spec-ed-110619.pdf). Copyright 2019 by Legislative Analyst's Office.

Not only does this gap contribute to special education programs being significantly underfunded by the federal government, an evaluation of special education expenditures in California found that educating an average student with disabilities costs approximately $27,500—nearly three times the cost of educating an average student without disabilities in the state and double the current national APPE, according to 2022 census data (Lieberman, 2023; Menlove Doutre et al., 2021). This has led to a call to reevaluate current funding systems and a reauthorization of IDEA. A reauthorization could revise and update funding formulas to better reflect current educational costs, increase federal funding commitments to align with actual costs of special education, and include provisions for better oversight and accountability of how funds are spent to ensure that resources are directed towards effective inclusive practices and improving

outcomes for students with disabilities. Between 1975 and 2004, IDEA was reauthorized four times to adjust for changing needs and identified shortcomings. However, to date, Congress has made no significant effort towards a new reauthorization (Anderson & Li, 2019).

Implication for Action 15: Match Funding Formula to Legislative Policy

In an effort to reduce referrals for special education services, California state legislators have emphasized the need to expand early intervention services (Hill et al., 2016). In addition, the state has put an emphasis on fostering inclusive practices aimed at supporting students with disabilities within general education settings. Funding models can influence how schools address state policy priorities (Li, 2021). In 2013, the state of California introduced the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), which combined most state categorical programs into district base grants to shift decision-making to the local level. However, special education remained largely outside the LCFF governance framework as California's largest categorical grant (Hill et al., 2016; Menlove Doutre et al., 2021). Instead, state funds are primarily distributed to Special Education Local Plan Areas (SELPAs), which in turn offer regionalized special education programs and services for students with complex support needs that can be prohibitively costly to address at the district level (Irwin et al., 2023).

In recent years, California has focused on expanding inclusive preschool and early care opportunities for students with disabilities by implementing financial and policy incentives to create and increase inclusive preschool slots for children with disabilities, enhance professional learning, and build the infrastructure needed to support high-quality early education (California Department of Education, Special Education Division, 2021).

However, the renewed focus on early intervention services and inclusive practices requires a reevaluation of both the funding and intervention systems. Funding for preschools is separate from special education funding for preschool children with disabilities, and categorical funding rules and separate governance structures make meeting the state's objectives related to special education and inclusion in early childhood challenging (Hill et al., 2016; Menlove Doutre et al., 2021). According to the California Statewide Task Force on Special Education (2015), the State's special education system would benefit significantly if general education and special education were integrated into a cohesive system designed to meet the needs of all students. Changes to the current system should involve revising funding allocations, clearly defining the various roles and responsibilities within the special education system, and broadening the implementation of inclusive practices. The importance of coordination between general education and special education should be emphasized to ensure that inclusive practices improve outcomes for students with disabilities and benefit their peers without disabilities.

Recommendations for Further Research

Based on the conclusions of this study, several recommendations for future research can be made to further explore and address the issues identified. By addressing these areas, future studies can provide researchers with a deeper understanding of the factors that influence special education preschool teachers' attitudes and self-efficacy towards inclusion and identify effective strategies to enhance inclusive education practices.

Impact of Professional Development

- Examine the impact of comprehensive and ongoing professional development programs on the attitudes and self-efficacy of both special and general education teachers towards inclusion.
- Compare the effectiveness of different types of professional development (e.g., workshops, in-class coaching, and peer collaboration) to improve inclusive practices.

Resource Allocation and Support Systems

- Investigate the specific resources and support systems that most significantly enhance the efficacy of inclusive education programs, such as the optimal student-to-adult ratio, class sizes, and the role of paraprofessionals.
- Explore the impact of various coteaching models on the self-efficacy of special education teachers and the academic and social outcomes for students with disabilities.

Collaboration Between Educators

- Identify best practices for fostering positive and effective collaboration between general and special education teachers, including administrative support and team-building activities.
- Study the effects of structured collaboration time on the self-efficacy of special education teachers and the quality of inclusive education.

Individualized Approaches to Inclusion

- Investigate the criteria used by special education preschool teachers to determine a student's readiness for inclusion to inform inclusive practices and program

development.

- Study the impact of individualized inclusion plans on student outcomes, considering factors such as developmental levels, behavior, and social skills.

Paraprofessional Training and Effectiveness

- Research the training and support needs of paraprofessionals working in inclusive settings and their impact on the success of inclusive education.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of different training programs for paraprofessionals to strengthen their ability to support students with disabilities in the general education classroom.

Student and Parent Perspectives

- Include the perspectives of students with disabilities and their parents in future studies to understand their experiences and satisfaction with inclusive education.
- Investigate how student and parent feedback can be used to improve the design and implementation of inclusive education programs.

Concluding Remarks and Reflections

Despite the renewed push for the development of inclusive education, California continues to have one of the lowest inclusion rates in the country (Humphrey et al., 2020; Willis et al., 2020). A more concerning statistic is that inclusion practices in preschool settings in California are currently on a downward trend. Since 2017, the percentage of preschool students with special needs receiving the majority of their instruction in a regular early education program has declined in California, falling to 26% in the 2019-2020 school year, which is well below the national average of 44% (Nguyen et al., 2021).

In accordance with the California Department of Education, Special Education Division (2021), the Department of Education has reinforced its commitment to fostering inclusive practices within public schools. Recognizing the significance of inclusive practices in early education as a foundation for inclusivity throughout elementary and secondary education, the California Department of Education has recently revised its State Performance Plan Indicator Guide to establish updated objectives for Indicator 6. This indicator concentrates on ensuring a least restrictive environment (LRE) for students aged 3 to 5. The objective set forth is that by the year 2025, 49% of preschool students with special needs will be provided special education services in a regular early childhood program, aiming to promote inclusiveness and support their development (California Department of Education, 2022).

High-quality inclusive early childhood programs facilitate full participation in all activities, foster a sense of belonging, promote friendships with peers, and set the foundation for meaningful inclusion and participation for individuals with disabilities throughout all facets of their lives (DEC/NAEYC, 2009; U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Simply placing a child with special needs in a LRE alone is insufficient. Current general education classrooms may not adequately meet the social or academic needs of children with more severe disabilities, and it is essential for all programs to incorporate the principles of access, participation, and support as outlined in the joint position statement of the Division for Early Childhood and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (DEC/NAEYC, 2009).

Recognizing the many benefits of inclusion, special education preschool teachers remain hesitant to embrace the full inclusion movement. Findings from this study

indicate that this reluctance is primarily due to the lack of resources and support they feel is essential for inclusive education to be beneficial for students with disabilities and for these students to meaningfully engage in learning activities. To improve special education teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education, it is essential to enhance resource availability and support systems at both site and district levels. This includes evaluating and improving program delivery options, allowing for flexible service delivery models, and investigating context-specific mediating variables for attitudes towards inclusion to tailor supports and resources effectively. Providing targeted and ongoing professional development for both general and special education teachers on inclusive practices is crucial as is promoting a culture of mutual respect and shared philosophies between general and special education staff. Fostering collaborative practices, increasing awareness of effective inclusive programs, and promoting inclusive mindsets among staff will strengthen the overall educational environment. Maintaining a continuum of placement options and employing an individualized approach to inclusion are key strategies to gain buy-in to inclusion, and investing in highly trained paraprofessionals is essential for increased support and improved outcomes for all students.

REFERENCES

Ajzen, I. (1985). From intentions to actions: A theory of planned behavior. In J. Kuhl & J. Beckmann (Eds.), *Action control: From cognition to behavior* (pp. 11-39). Springer Science & Business Media. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-642-69746-3_2

Ajzen, I. (1991). The theory of planned behavior. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, 50*(2), 179–211. https://doi.org/10.1016/0749-5978(91)90020-T

Ajzen, I. (1993). Attitude theory and the attitude-behavior relation. In D. Krebs & P. Schmidt (Eds.), *New directions in attitude measurement* (pp. 41-57). De Gruyter.

Ajzen, I., & Fishbein, M. (2005). The influence of attitudes on behavior. In D. Albarracín, B. T. Johnson, & M. P. Zanna (Eds.), *The handbook of attitudes*. (pp. 173–221). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers

Ajzen, I., & Madden, T.J. (1986). Prediction of goal-directed behavior: Attitudes, intentions, and perceived behavioral control. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 22*, 453-474.

Albarracín, D., & Shavitt, S. (2018). Attitudes and attitude change. *Annual Review of Psychology*, *69*, 299–327.

Anderson, R., & Li, A. (2019). *Overview of special education in California*. Legislative Analyst's Office. https://lao.ca.gov/reports/2019/4110/overview-spec-ed-110619.pdf

Antonak, R. F., & Larrivee, B. (1995). Psychometric analysis and revision of the Opinions Relative to Mainstreaming scale. *Exceptional Children, 62*(2), 139-149. https://doi.org/10.1177/001440299506200204

Armor, D., Conroy-Oseguera, P., Cox, M., King, N., McDonell, L., Pascal, A., Pauly, E, & Zellman, G. (1976). *Analysis of the school preferred reading program in selected Los Angeles minority schools* (Report No. R-2007-LAUSD). Rand Corporation. https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/reports/2005/R2007.pdf

Bagozzi, R.P., & Burnkrant, R. E. (1979). Attitude organization and the attitude behavior relationship. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 37*, 913-929. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.37.6.913

Bandura, A. (1977). Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavior change. *Psychological Review, 84*(2), 191-215. http://doi.org/10.1016/0146-6402(78)90009-7

Bandura, A. (1986). The explanatory and predictive scope of self-efficacy theory. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, 4*(3), 359-373. http://doi.org/10.1521/jscp.1986.4.3.359

Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. Macmillan.

Bandura, A. (2006). Guide for constructing self-efficacy scales. In F. Pajares & T. C. Urdan (Eds.), *Self-efficacy beliefs of adolescents* (pp. 307-337). Information Age Publishing.

Barnhart, R. K., & Steinmetz, S. (Eds.). (2006). *Chambers dictionary of etymology*. Chambers.

Barton, E. E., & Smith, B. J. (2015). *The preschool inclusion toolbox: How to build and lead a high-quality program*. Brookes Publishing Company.

Bateman, D. F., & Cline, J. L. (2016). *A teacher's guide to special education*. ASCD.

Bender, W. N., Vail, C. O., & Scott, K. (1995). Teachers attitudes toward increased mainstreaming. *Journal of Learning Disabilities, 28*(2), 87-94. https://doi.org/10.1177/002221949502800203

Bennett, T., Deluca, D., & Bruns, D. (1997). Putting Inclusion into practice: Perspectives of teachers and parents. *Exceptional Children, 64*(1), 115-131. https://doi.org/10.1177/001440299706400108

Blackwell, W. H., & Rossetti, Z. S. (2014). The development of individualized education programs: Where have we been and where should we go now? *SAGE Open, 4*(2). http://doi.org/10.1177/2158244014530411

Boivin, M. (2005). The origin of peer relationship difficulties in early childhood and their impact on children's psychosocial adjustment and development. In R.E. Tremblay, M. Boivin, & R. D. Peters (Eds.), *Encyclopedia on early childhood development* [online]. https://www.child-encyclopedia.com/peer-relations/according-experts/origin-peer-relationship-difficulties-early-childhood-and-their

Boyle, C., Anderson, J., & Allen, K-A. (2020). The importance of teacher attitudes to inclusive education. In C. Boyle, J. Anderson, A. Page & S. Mavropoulou (Eds.), *Inclusive education: Global issues & controversies* (pp. 127-146). Brill.

Boyle, C., Topping, K., Jindal-Snape, D., & Norwich, B. (2012). The importance of peer-support for teaching staff when including children with special educational needs.

School Psychology International, 33(2), 167-184. https://doi.org/10.1177/0143034311415783

Brown v. Board of Education, 347 U.S. 483 (1954)

Buell, M. J., Hallam, R., & Gamel-McCormick, M. (1999). A survey of general and special education teachers' perceptions and in service needs concerning inclusion. *International Journal of Disability, Development, and Education, 46*(2), 143-156. https://doi.org/10.1080/103491299100597

Burke, M. M., & Goldman, S. E. (2017). Documenting the experiences of special education advocates. The Journal of Special Education, 51(1), 3-13. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022466916643714

California Department of Education. (2012). *Environment for services.* https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/se/ac/documents/srvcarrayfgre.doc&sa=U&ved=2ahUKEwjIvJz4zsyDAxXqIEQIHUuZCOwQFnoECAMQAQ&usg=AOvVaw0Rfxbcf030ru7YOCt-d5uS

California Department of Education. (2015). *DRDP: A developmental continuum from early infancy to kindergarten entry.* https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/ci/documents/drdp2015preschool.pdf

California Department of Education. (2019). *The alignment of the California Preschool Learning Foundations with key early education resources* (2nd ed.). https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/re/documents/alignmentofcaplf.pdf

California Department of Education. (2022). State performance plan indicator guide. System Improvement Leads. https://systemimprovement.org/uploads/resources/sppi-guide-v4.8.pdf

California Department of Education, Special Education Division. (2021). *California's progress toward achieving one system: Reforming education to serve all students*. WestEd. https://www.cde.ca.gov/SP/se/sr/documents/onesystemreport2021.pdf

California Statewide Task Force on Special Education. (2015). One system: Reforming education to serve all students. California Department of Education. https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/se/sr/taskforce2015.asp

Carlberg, C., & Kavale, K. (1980). The efficacy of special versus regular class placement for exceptional children: A meta-analysis. *The Journal of Special Education, 14*(3), 295-309. https://doi.org/10.1177/002246698001400304

Cochran, H. K. (1997). *The development and psychometric analysis of the Scale of Teachers' Attitudes Toward Inclusion* (Publication No. 9735689) [Doctoral Dissertation, The University of Alabama]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. https://www.proquest.com/openview/adede45936181ea344e9e45710ce507c/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750&diss=y

Cole, C. M., Waldron, N., & Maid, M. (2004). Academic progress of students across inclusive and traditional settings. *Mental Retardation, 42*, 136-144. http://dx.doi.org/10.1352/0047-6765(2004)42%3C136:APOSAI%3E2.0.CO;2

Committee on the Rights of the Child & Committee on the Rights of Children with Disabilities. (2022). *Joint statement: The rights of children with disabilities. United Nations*. https://bettercarenetwork.org/sites/default/files/2022-03/CRC%20CRPD%20joint%20statement_%20As%20adopted%20CRC%20and%20CRPD-18%20March%202022__0.pdf

Conrad, F., Tourangeau, R., Couper, M., & Zhang, C. (2017). Reducing speeding in web surveys by providing immediate feedback. *Survey Research Methods, 11*(1), 45-61. https://doi.org/10.18148/srm/2017.v11i1.6304

Cook, B. G. (2002). Inclusive attitudes, strengths, and weakness of pre-service general educators enrolled in a curriculum infusion teacher preparation program. *Teacher Education and Special Education, 25*(3), 262-277. https://doi.org/10.1177/088840640202500306

Couper, M. P., & Kreuter, F. (2013). Using Paradata to explore item level response times in surveys. *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society Series A: Statistics in Society, 176*(1), 271-286. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-985x.2012.01041.x

Creswell, J. W. (2008). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (3rd ed.). Pearson/Merrill Prentice Hall.

Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (4th ed.). Pearson Education.

Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. SAGE.

Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications.

Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2018). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.

Cullen, J. P., Gregory, J. L., & Noto, L.A. (2010, February 10). *The teacher attitudes toward inclusion scale (TATIS) technical report*. [Paper presentation]. Annual Meeting of the Eastern Educational Research Association 33rd Annual

Conference, Savannah, GA, United States. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED509930.pdf

Deng, L., & Chan, W. (2017). Testing the difference between reliability coefficients alpha and omega. *Educational and Psychological Measurement, 77*(2), 185–203. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013164416658325

Dev, P., & Haynes, L. (2015). Teacher perspectives on suitable learning environments for students with disabilities: What have we learned from inclusive, resource, and self-contained classrooms? *International Journal of Interdisciplinary Social Sciences: Annual Review, 9*, 53-64. https://doi.org/10.18848/1833-1882/CGP/v09/53554

Disability Rights California. (n.d.). *Special Education Rights and Responsibilities (SERR)*. Retrieved December 28, 2022, from https://serr.disabilityrightsca.org/

Division for Early Childhood/National Association for the Education of Young Children. (2009). *Early childhood inclusion: A joint position statement of the Division for Early Childhood (DEC) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina, FPG Child Development Institute. https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/resources/position-statements/ps_inclusion_dec_naeyc_ec.pdf

Dunn, L. M. (1968). *Special education for the mildly retarded—Is much of it justifiable? Exceptional Children, 35*(1), 5-22. https://doi.org/10.1177/001440296803500101

Eagly, A. H., & Chaiken, S. (1993). *The psychology of attitudes*. Wadsworth Publishing Company.

Engelbrecht, P., & Savolainen, H. (2018). A mixed-methods approach to developing an understanding of teachers' attitudes and their enactment of inclusive education. *European Journal of Special Needs Education, 33*(5), 660-676. https://doi.org/10.1080/08856257.2017.1410327

Fairbairn, W., & Kessler, A. (2015). *Practical advice for selecting sample sizes*. Donor Committee for Enterprise Development. https://www.enterprise-development.org/wp-content/uploads/Practical_advice_for_selecting_sample_sizes_May2015.pdf

Fazio, R. H., & Zanna, M. P. (1981). Direct experience and attitude-behavior consistency. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology, 14*, 161-202. https://doi.org/10.1016/s0065-2601(08)60372-x

Forlin, C. (2010). Teacher education reform for enhancing teachers' preparedness for inclusion. *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 14*, 649-653. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603111003778353

Forlin, C., Loreman, T., Sharma, U., & Earle, C. (2009). Demographic differences in changing pre-service teachers' attitudes, sentiments and concerns about inclusive education. *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 13*(2), 195–209. https://doi:10.1080/13603110701365356

Fraenkel, J., Hyun, H., & Wallen, N. (2011). *How to design and evaluate research in education*. McGraw-Hill Education.

Francisco, M. P. B., Hartman, M., & Wang, Y. (2020). Inclusion and special education. *Education Sciences, 10*(230), 1-17. https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci10090238

Fullan, M. (2002). The change leader. *Beyond Instructional Leadership, 59*(8), 16-20. https://www.ascd.org/el/articles/the-change-leader

Fullan, M., & Hargreaves, A. (1991). *What's worth fighting for? Working together for your school.* The Regional Laboratory for Education Improvement of the Northeast and Islands. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED342128.pdf

Gibson, S., & Dembo, M. H. (1984). Teacher efficacy: A construct validation. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 76*(4), 569–582. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0663.76.4.569

Gindis, B. (1999). Vygotsky's vision: Reshaping the practice of special education for the 21st century. *Remedial and Special Education, 20*(6), 32-64. https://doi.org/10.1177/074193259902000606

Glasman, L. R., & Albarracín, D. (2006). Forming attitudes that predict future behavior: A meta-analysis of the attitude–behavior relation. *Psychological Bulletin, 132*(5), 778–822. https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.132.5.778

Global Education Monitoring Report Team. (2020). *Global education monitoring report, 2020: Inclusion and education: All means all*. UNESCO Publishing. https://doi.org/10.54676/JJNK6989

Gregory, J. L., & Noto, L. A. (2012, November 9). *Technical manual for attitudes toward teaching all students (ATTAS) manual*. [Paper presentation]. Teacher Education Division of the Council for Exceptional Children conference. Grand Rapids, Michigan. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED537530.pdf

Gregory, J. L., & Noto, L. A. (2018). Attitudinal instrument development: Assessing cognitive, affective, and behavioral domains of teacher attitudes toward teaching

all students. *Cogent Education, 5*(1), 1422679. https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186x.2017.1422679

Gregory, J. L., & Noto, L. A. (2019). Revalidating an instrument to gain insights into changing attitudes towards teaching all students [Paper presentation]. NERA Conference Proceedings 2019, Trumbull, CT. https://opencommons.uconn.edu/nera-2019/2

Guillemot, F., Lacroix, F., & Nocus, I. (2022). Teachers' attitude towards inclusive education from 2000 to 2020: An extended meta-analysis. *International Journal of Educational Research Open, 3*(1), 1-10. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedro.2022.100175

Harkins, B., & Fletcher, T. (2015). Survey of educator attitude regarding Inclusive Education within a Southern Arizona School District. *Journal of Multilingual Education Research*, *6,* 61–90. https://research.library.fordham.edu/jmer/vol6/iss1/5/

Hartup, W. W. (1996). The company they keep: Friendships and their developmental significance. *Child development, 67*(1), 1-13. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedro.2022.100175

Hernandez, D. A., Hueck, S., & Charley, C. (2016, fall). General education and special education teachers' attitudes towards inclusion. *Journal of the American Academy of Special Education Professionals*, 79–93. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1129749.pdf

Hill, L., Warren, P., Murphy, P., Ugo, I., & Pathak, A. (2016). *Special education finance in California*. Public Policy Institute of California. Special Education Finance in California (ppic.org)

Hogg, M. A., & Vaughan, G. M. (2017). *Social psychology* (8th ed.). Pearson Education UK.

Horowitz, S. H., Rawe, J., & Whittaker, M. C. (2017). *The state of LD: Understanding the 1 in 5*. National Center for Learning Disabilities. https://www.ncld.org/research/state-of-learning-disabilities

Humphrey, D. C., Gamse, B. C., Myung J., & Cottingham B. W. (2020). *Promising policies to address the needs of students with disabilities: Lessons from other states*. Policy Analysis for California Education, PACE. https://edpolicyinca.org/publications/what-california-can-learn-other-states

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 20 U.S.C. §§ 1400-1482 (2004)

Irwin, V., Wang, K., Tezil, T., Zhang, J., Filbey, A., Jung, J., Bullock Mann, F., Dilig, R., & Parker, S. (2023). *Condition of education 2023*. National Center for Education Statistics. https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2023144rev

Jackson, L., Ryndak, D., & Wehmeyer, M. (2008). The dynamic relationship between context, curriculum, and student learning: A case for inclusive education as a research-based practice. *Research and Practice in Severe Disabilities, 34*, 175–195. https://doi.org/10.2511/rpsd.33.4.175

Jones, S. R. (1996). Toward inclusive theory: Disability as social construction. *NASPA Journal, 33*(4), 347-354. https://doi.org/10.1080/00220973.1996.11072421

Jordan, A., Schwartz, E., & McGhie-Richmond, D. (2009). Preparing teachers for inclusive classrooms. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 25*(4), 535-542. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2009.02.010

Jung, L. A., Frey, N., Fisher, D., & Kroener, J. (2019). *Your students, my students, our students: Rethinking equitable and inclusive classrooms*. ASCD.

Katz, M. S. (1976). *A history of compulsory education laws*. Fastback Series, No. 75. Bicentennial Series. Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED119389.pdf

Kauffman, J. M., Anastasiou, D., Hornby, G., Lopes, J., Burke, M. D., Felder, M., Ahrbeck, B., & Wiley, A. (2022). Imagining and reimagining the future of special and inclusive education. *Education Sciences, 12*(12), 903. https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci12120903

Kavale, K. A. (2000). Inclusion: Rhetoric and reality surrounding the integration of students with disabilities. *Occasional Research Paper Series*(2). http://www2.education.uiowa.edu/html/iae/iae-z-op-kavale-1-2.pdf

Kavale, K. A., & Fornes, S. R. (2000). History, rhetoric, and reality: Analysis of the inclusion debate. *Remedial and Special Education, 21*(5), 279-296. https://doi.org/10.1177/074193250002100505

Kendall, L. S. (2019). *Inclusion or exclusion across a range of educational settings: The lived experiences of students, parents and practitioners*. [Doctoral Dissertation, Liverpool John Moores University]. LJMU Research Online. https://researchonline.ljmu.ac.uk/id/eprint/11833/

Koh, M.-S., & Shin, S. (2017). Education of students with disabilities in the USA: Is inclusion the answer? *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research, 16*(10), 1-17. https://doi.org/10.26803/ijlter.16.10.1

Lee, J. (2020). *Qualitative research data collection alignment tools*. University of Massachusetts Global.

Levins, T., Bornholt, L., & Lennon, B. (2005). Teachers' experience, attitudes, feelings and behavioral intentions towards children with special educational needs. *Social Psychology of Education, 8*(3), 329–343. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11218-005-3020-z

Li, A. (2021). *Overview of special education funding models*. Legislative Analyst's Office. spec-ed-funding-models-121721.pdf (ca.gov)

Lieberman, M. (2023). *How special education funding actually works*. Education Week. https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/how-special-education-funding-actually-works/2023/04

Lynch, J. M. (2016). Effective instruction for students with disabilities: Perceptions of rural middle school principals. *Rural Special Education Quarterly, 35*(4), 18-28. https://doi.org/10.1177/875687051603500404

MacMillan, D. L. (1971). Special education for the mildly retarded: Servant or savant. *Focus on Exceptional Children, 2*(9), 1-11. https://doi.org/10.17161/foec.v2i9.7081

MacMillan, D. L., Gresham, F. M., & Forness, S. R. (1996). Full inclusion: An empirical perspective. *Behavioral Disorders, 21*(2), 145-159. https://doi.org/10.1177/019874299602100204

Mahat, M. (2008). The development of a psychometrically-sound instrument to measure teachers' multidimensional attitudes toward inclusive education. *International Journal of Special Education, 23*(1), 82–92.

Manset, G., & Semmel, M. I. (1997). Are inclusive programs for students with mild disabilities effective? A comparative review of model programs. *The Journal of Special Education, 31*(2), 155-180. https://doi.org/10.1177/002246699703100201

Martin, J. E., Van Dycke, J. L., Greene, B. A., Gardner, J. E., Christensen, W. R., Woods, L. L., & Lovett, D. L. (2006). Direct observation of teacher-directed IEP meetings: Establishing the need for student IEP meeting instruction. *Exceptional Children, 72*(2), 187–200

Martinez, R. S. (2003). Impact of a graduate class on attitudes toward inclusion, perceived teaching efficacy and knowledge about adapting instruction for children with disabilities in inclusive settings. *Teacher Development, 7*, 473-494. https://doi.org/10.1080/13664530300200215

McMillan, J., & Schumacher, S. (2010). *Research in education: Evidence-based inquiry* (7th ed.). Pearson Education.

Mead, J. F., & Paige, M. A. (2008). Parents as advocates: Examining the history and evolution of parents' rights to advocate for children with disabilities under the IDEA. *Journal of Legislation, 34*(2), 123-167. https://scholarship.law.nd.edu/jleg/vol34/iss2/2

Mehra, B. (2002). Bias in qualitative research: Voices from an online classroom. *The Qualitative Report, 7*(1), 1-19. https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2002.1986

Menlove Doutre, S., Willis, J., Barrett, T., Ripma, T., Caparas, R., & Krausen, K. (2021). *California special education funding system study, part 2*. WestEd. California State Special Education Funding System Study, Part 2: Executive Summary (wested.org)

Menon, M. E., & Lefteri, A. (2021). The link between transformational leadership and teacher self-efficacy. *Education, 142*(1), 42-52

Moore, C. J., Gilbreath, D., & Maiuri, F. (1998). *Educating students with disabilities in general education classrooms: A summary of the research*. U.S. Dept. of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, Educational Resources Information Center. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED419329.pdf

Morgan, D. L. (2013). *Integrating qualitative and quantitative methods: A pragmatic approach*. SAGE Publications.

Mostert, M. P., & Crockett, J. B. (2000). Reclaiming the history of special education for more effective practice. *Exceptionality, 8*(2), 133-143. https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327035EX0802_4

National Council on Disability (2018). *The segregation of students with disabilities*. IDEA Series. https://ncd.gov/sites/default/files/NCD_Segregation-SWD_508.pdf

Nguyen, J., Ortiz, N., Morino, C., Gillis, M., & Hebbeler, K. (2021). *Preschoolers Receiving Special Education: California and National Data (School Years 2011-12 to 2019-20)*. SRI International. https://caearlylearninginclusion.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Data-Snapshot-2_Acc.pdf

No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, P.L. 107-110, 20 U.S.C. § 6319 (2002).

Noggle, A., & Stites, K. (2018). Inclusion and preschoolers who are typically developing: The lived experience. *Early Childhood Education Journal, 46*(5), 511-522. https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10643-017-0879-1

Norwich, B., & Nash, T. (2010). Preparing teachers to teach children with special educational needs and disabilities: The significance of a national PGCE development and evaluation project for inclusive teacher education. *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs, 11*(1), 2-11. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-3802.2010.01175.x

Obiakor, F. E., Banks, T., Graves, J., & Rotatori, A. F. (Eds.). (2019). Educating young children with and without exceptionalities: New perspectives. Information Age Publishing.

Office of Special Education Programs. (2019). *41st Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*. http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED605108.pdf

Osgood, R. L. (2005). *The history of inclusion in the United States*. Gallaudet University Press.

Oxford University Press. (n.d.). Inclusion. In *Oxford English dictionary*. Retrieved December 21, 2013, from https://www.oed.com/

Patten, M., & Newhart, M. (2018). *Understanding research methods: An overview of the essentials* (10th ed.). Routledge.

Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods: Integrating theory and practice* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.

Popay, J., Escorel, S., Hernández, M., Johnston, H., Mathieson, J., & Rispel, L. (2008). *Understanding and tackling social exclusion: Final Report to the WHO Commission on Social Determinants of Health from the Social Exclusion Knowledge Network*. World Health Organization. https://www.who.int/social_determinants/knowledge_networks/final_reports/sekn_final%20report_042008.pdf

Rankin, D., Hallick, A., Ban, S., Hartley, P., Bost, C., & Uggla, N. (1994). Who's dreaming?—A general education perspective on inclusion. *Journal of the Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps, 19*(3), 235-237. https://doi.org/10.1177/154079699401900031

Rapp, A. C., & Corral-Granados, A. (2021). Understanding inclusive education – a theoretical contribution from system theory and the constructionist perspective. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, *28*(4), 423–439. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2021.1946725

Roberts, C. (2010). *The dissertation journey: A practical and comprehensive guide to planning, writing, and defending your dissertation* (2nd ed.). Corwin Press.

Roberts, C., & Hyatt, L. (2019). *The dissertation journey: A practical and comprehensive guide to planning, writing, and defending your dissertation* (3rd ed.). Corwin.

Sahli Lozano, C., Wüthrich, S., Baumli, N., Sharma, U., Loreman, T., & Forlin, C. (2023). Development and validation of a short form of the teacher efficacy for inclusive practices scale (TEIP-SF). *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs, 23*(4), 375-388. https://doi.org/10.1111/1471-3802.12607

Schirmer, W., & Michailakis, D. (2015). The Luhmannian approach to exclusion/inclusion and its relevance to social work. *Journal of Social Work, 15*(1), 45-64. https://doi.org/10.1177/1468017313504607

Schwarz, N., & Bohner, G. (2001). The construction of attitudes. In A. Tesser & N. Schwarz (Eds.), *Blackwell handbook of social psychology: Intraindividual processes* (pp. 436-457). Blackwell Publishing.

Scruggs, T. E., & Mastropieri, M. A. (1996). Teacher perceptions of mainstreaming/inclusion, 1958-1995: A research synthesis. *Exceptional Children, 63*, 59-74. https://doi.org/10.1177/001440299606300106

Shandrick Lengyel, L., & Vanbergeijk, E. (2021). *A brief history of special education: Milestones in the first 50 years (Part I of II)*. Exceptional Parent Magazine for the Special Needs Community. https://www.epmagazine.com/blog/a-brief-history-of-special-education-milestones-in-the-first-50-years-part-i-of-ii

Sharma, U., & Jacobs, D. K. (2016). Predicting in-service educators' intentions to teach in inclusive classrooms in India and Australia. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 55*, 13–23. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2015.12.004

Sharma, U., Loreman, T., & Forlin, C. (2012). Measuring teaching efficacy to implement inclusive practices. *Journal of Research in Special Education Needs, 12*, 12–21. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-3802.2011.01200.x

Sindelar, P. T., & Deno, S. L. (1978). The effectiveness of resource programming. *The Journal of Special Education, 12*(1), 17-28. https://doi.org/10.1177/002246697801200105

Specht, J., McGhie-Richmond, D., Loreman, T., Mirenda, P., Bennett, S., Gallagher, T. & Cloutier, S. (2016). Teaching in inclusive classrooms: Efficacy and beliefs of Canadian preservice teachers. *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 20*(1), 1-15. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2015.1059501

SurveyMonkey. (n.d.). *Data privacy & security: Protecting your data*. https://www.surveymonkey.com/mp/data-privacy/#:~:text=When%20using%20SurveyMonkey%2C%20all%20your,security%20and%20technical%20best%20practices

Taylor, S. J. (1988). Caught in the continuum: A critical analysis of the principle of the least restrictive environment. *Journal of the Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps, 13(*1), 41-53. https://doi.org/10.1177/154079698801300105

Taylor, S. J. (2004). Caught in the continuum: A critical analysis of the principle of the least restrictive environment. *Research & Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities, 29*(4), 218-230. https://doi.org/10.2511/rpsd.29.4.218

Thurlings, M., & Den Brok, P. (2018). Student teachers' and in-service teachers' peer learning: A realist synthesis. *Educational Research and Evaluation, 24*(1-2), 13-50. https://doi.org/10.1080/13803611.2018.1509719

Thurstone, L. L. (1929). Theory of attitude measurement. *Psychological Review, 36*(3), 222-241. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0070922

Tompkins, R., & Deloney, P. (1995). Inclusion: The pros and cons. *Issues ...about Change, 4*(3), 4-10. https://sedl.org/change/issues/issues43.html

Toompalu, A., Leijen, Ä., & Kullasepp, K. (2017). Professional role expectations and related feelings when solving pedagogical dilemmas: A comparison of pre-and in-

service teachers. *Teacher Development, 21*(2), 307–323. https://doi.org/10.1080/13664530.2016.1237985

Triandis, H. C. (1971). *Attitude and attitude change*. John Wiley & Sons.

Triandis, H. C., Adamopoulos, J., & Brinberg, D. (1984). Perspectives and issues in the study of attitudes. In R. L. Jones (Ed.), *Attitudes and attitude change in special education: Theory and practice* (pp. 21-40). Council for Exceptional Children.

Tschannen-Moran, M., & Hoy, A.W. (2001). Teacher efficacy: Capturing an elusive construct. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 17*(7), 783-805. https://doi.org/10.1016/s0742-051x(01)00036-1

Tschannen-Moran, M., Hoy, A.W., & Hoy, W. K. (1998). Teacher efficacy: its meaning and measure. *Review of Educational Research 68(2)*, 202-248. https://doi.org/10.2307/1170754

Turnbull, A., Turnbull, R., Wehmeyer, M. L., & Shogren, K. A. (2019). E*xceptional lives: Practice, progress, & dignity in today's schools* (9th ed.). Pearson Education.

United Nations. (n.d.). *Committee on the rights of persons with disabilities*. https://www.ohchr.org/en/treaty-bodies/crpd

United Nations. (2007). *Resolution adopted by the general assembly: Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*. https://drive.google.com/file/d/17iEa6zlSlD5kNgvm9O7eS7QxYKKNr0Aj/view?usp=sharing

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. (2005). *Guidelines for inclusion: Ensuring access to education for all*. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000140224

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2023). *Occupational employment and wage statistics*. https://data.bls.gov/oes/#/occGeo/One%20occupation%20for%20multiple%20geographical%20areas

U.S. Census Bureau. (2020). 2020 population and housing state data. *2020 Census*. https://www.census.gov/library/visualizations/interactive/2020-population-and-housing-state-data.html

U.S. Department of Education. (2022). *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)* website. https://sites.ed.gov/idea/

U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, Office of Special Education Programs. (2019). *41st annual report to Congress on the implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*. http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED605108.pdf

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services & U.S. Department of Education. (2015). *Policy statement of inclusion of children with disabilities in early childhood programs*. http://www2.ed.gov/policy/speced/guid/earlylearning/joint-statement-full-text.pdf

UMass Global (2023). *Dissertation Handbook Version 2.2.* University of Massachusetts Global. https://my.umassglobal.edu/sites/student/DeptsAndSchools/ED/EDD_Student/Pages/DissertationHandbook.aspx

University of Nebraska. (2021). *Cultural diversity*. Retrieved September 11, 2021, from https://child.unl.edu/cultural-diversity

Vygotsky, L. (1987). *The collected works of L.S. Vygotsky: The fundamentals of defectology* (R. W. Rieber & A. S. Carton, Eds.). Springer Science & Business Media.

Will, M. (1986). Educating children with learning problems: A shared responsibility. *Exceptional Children, 52*(5), 411-415. https://doi.org/10.1177/001440298605200502

Willis, J., Doutre, S. M., Krausen, K., Barrett, T., Ripma, T., & Caparas, R. (2020). *California special education funding study: A descriptive analysis of special education funding in California.* WestEd. https://www.wested.org/resources/ca-special-education-funding-system/

Winzer, M. A. (1993). *The history of special education: From isolation to integration*. Gallaudet University Press.

Wood, J. M. (2017). *Secondary special educators' attitudes and sense of self-efficacy toward inclusive education* (Publication No. 10686767) [Doctoral Dissertation, University of California, San Diego]. ProQuest Information & Learning. https://www.proquest.com/docview/2020844327

Yan, Z., & Sin, K.-f. (2014). Inclusive education: Teachers' intentions and behaviour analysed from the viewpoint of the theory of planned behaviour. *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 18*(1), 72-85. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2012.757811

Yan, Z., & Sin, K.-f. (2015). Exploring the intentions and practices of principals regarding inclusive education: An application of the theory of planned behaviour. *Cambridge Journal of Education, 45*(2), 205-221. https://doi.org/10.1080/0305764X.2014.934203

Ydo, Y. (2020). Inclusive education: Global priority, collective responsibility. *Prospects (00331538), 49*(3/4), 97–101. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11125-020-09520-y

Yell, M. (2019). Brown v. Board of Education (1954) and the development of special education. *SPED Law Blog*. https://spedlawblog.com/2019/07/20/brown-v-board-of-education-1954-and-the-development-of-special-education/

Yell, M. L., & Bateman, D. F. (2017). Endrew F. v. Douglas County school District (2017) FAPE and the U.S. Supreme Court. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, *50*(1), 7-15. https://doi.org/10.1177/0040059917721116

Yell, M. L., Katsiyannis, A., & Bradley, M. R. (2011). The Individual with Disabilities Education Act: The evolution of special education law. In J. M. Kauffman & D. P. Hallahan (Eds.), *Handbook of special education* (pp. 61-76). Routledge.

Yell, M. L., Rogers, D., & Rogers, E. L. (1998). The legal history of special education: What a long, strange trip it's been! *Remedial and Special Education, 19*(4), 219-228. https://doi.org/10.1177/074193259801900405

Zhang, C., & Conrad, F. (2013). Speeding in web surveys: The tendency to answer very fast and its association with straightlining. *Survey Research Methods, 8*(2), 127-135. https://doi.org/10.18148/srm/2014.v8i2.5453

Zigmond, N. (2003). Where should students with disabilities receive special education services? Is one place better than another? *Journal of Special Education, 37*(3), 193-199. https://doi.org/10.1177/00224669030370030901

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Synthesis Matrix

Citations	Theoretical Framework(s)	Social Construct of Inclusion & Belonging	Inclusion and Education	Peer Relations	Socioemotional Health and Academics	Collaboration	Pros and Cons to Inclusion	Early Childhood Education & Development	Barriers To Inclusion	Attitudes Towards Inclusion	Attitudes and Behavior	Teacher Preparation and Inclusion	SPED Programs and Inclusion Models	Policy, Law, Data, Stats	History of Inclusion	Definition of Inclusion	Self-Efficacy
Ajzen & Fishbein, 2005	x										x						
Ajzen & Madden, 1986	x										x						
Ajzen, 1985	x										x						
Ajzen, 1991	x										x						
Ajzen, 1993	x										x						
Antonak & Larrivee, 1995	x								x	x	x						
Bagozzi & Burnkrant, 1979	x										x						
Bandura, 1977	x										x						x
Bandura, 1986	x										x						x
Bandura, 1997			x						x								x
Bandura, 2006	x																x
Barton & Smith, 2015			x	x			x	x	x	x		x	x	x		x	
Bateman & Cline, 2016			x				x						x	x	x	x	
Bender et al., 1995			x						x	x		x					
Bennet et al., 1997	x	x		x			x							x	x		
Blackwell & Rossetti, 2014			x			x								x	x		
Boivin, 2005		x		x			x	x	x								
Boyle et al., 2012						x			x	x		x			x	x	
Boyle et al., 2020			x			x			x	x	x						
Buell et al., 1999						x	x		x	x	x			x			x
California Department of Education, 2012													x	x			
California Department of Education, 2015								x									
California Department of Education, 2019								x									
Carlberg & Kavale, 1980			x				x		x	x			x				
Cochran, 1997	x						x			x	x						
Cole et al, 2004			x		x		x										
Cook, 2002			x						x	x	x	x					
CRC/CRCD, 2022														x		x	
Cullen et al., 2010	x		x							x							
DEC/NAEYC, 2009			x		x		x	x						x		x	
Dev & Haynes, 2015			x				x						x				
Disabilities Rights California, n.d.									x				x				
Dunn, 1968			x				x						x				
Eagly & Chaiken, 1993	x										x						

Citations	Theoretical Framework(s)	Social Construct of Inclusion & Belonging	Inclusion and Education	Peer Relations	Socioemotional Health and Academics	Collaboration	Pros and Cons to Inclusion	Early Childhood Education & Development	Barriers To Inclusion	Attitudes Towards Inclusion	Attitudes and Behavior	Teacher Preparation and Inclusion	SPED Programs and Inclusion Models	Policy, Law, Data, Stats	History of Inclusion	Definition of Inclusion	Self-Efficacy
Fazio & Zanda, 1981	x										x						
Forlin et al., 2009			x						x	x		x					
Forlin, 2010			x						x	x		x					x
Francisco et al., 2020			x			x	x		x	x				x	x	x	
Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991			x							x							x
Fullan, 2002			x							x							x
Gibson & Dembo, 1984	x																x
Gindis, 1999	x	x	x		x			x				x	x			x	
Glasman & Albarracín, 2006	x										x						
Global Education Monitoring Report Team, 2020			x						x					x			
Gregory & Noto, 2012	x		x							x	x			x	x	x	
Gregory & Noto, 2018	x		x			x			x	x	x		x	x	x		x
Gregory & Noto, 2019			x							x	x						x
Guillemot et al., 2022			x											x	x	x	
Hartup, 1996		x		x				x									
Hogg & Vaughan, 2017	x										x						
Horowitz et al., 2017			x	x	x				x								
Humphrey et al., 2020			x											x	x		
Jackson et al., 2008			x		x												
Jones, 1996	x	x															
Jordan et al., 2009			x						x			x					
Jung et al., 2019			x		x		x	x									
Katz, 1976														x			
Kaufman et al., 2022		x	x						x								
Kavale & Forness, 2000			x				x		x				x				
Kavale, 2000			x				x		x	x			x				
Koh & Shin, 2017			x				x							x	x		
Levins et al., 2005	x								x	x	x	x					x
Lozano et al., 2023			x							x							x
Lynch, 2016		x	x						x	x							
MacMillan et al., 1996			x				x						x	x	x	x	
MacMillan, 1971			x				x						x				
Mahat, 2008			x						x	x	x					x	x
Manset & Semmel, 1997			x				x						x				

Citations	Theoretical Framework(s)	Social Construct of Inclusion & Belonging	Inclusion and Education	Peer Relations	Socioemotional Health and Academics	Collaboration	Pros and Cons to Inclusion	Early Childhood Education & Development	Barriers To Inclusion	Attitudes Towards Inclusion	Attitudes and Behavior	Teacher Preparation and Inclusion	SPED Programs and Inclusion Models	Policy, Law, Data, Stats	History of Inclusion	Definition of Inclusion	Self-Efficacy
Martin et al., 2006						x		x									
Mead & Paige, 2008														x	x		
Moore et al., 1998		x	x						x								
Mostert & Crockett, 2000														x	x		
National Center of Education Statistics, 2023														x			
National Council on Disability, 2018			x						x				x	x	x		
Noggle & Stites, 2018			x	x			x		x	x	x						
Norwich & Nash, 2010			x						x			x					
Obiakor et al., 2019			x				x	x	x	x							
Office of Special Education Programs, 2019													x	x			
Osgood, 2005															x		
Popay et al., 2008		x														x	
Rankin et al., 1994			x						x	x							
Rapp & Corral-Granados, 2021	x	x		x				x					x		x	x	
Schirmer & Michailakis, 2015	x	x														x	
Schwartz & Bohner, 2001	x										x						
Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996			x						x	x							
Shandrick & Vanbergeijk, 2021			x										x	x			
Sharma & Jacobs, 2016			x						x		x						x
Sharma et al., 2012			x														x
Sindelar and Deno, 1978			x				x		x				x				
Taylor, 1988			x	x	x		x						x				
Taylor, 2004			x				x		x				x				
Thurstone, 1929	x										x						
Tompkins & Deloney, 1995			x		x		x						x				
Triandis et al., 1984	x										x						
Triandis, 1971	x	x									x						
Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001																	x
Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998																	x
Turnbull et al., 2019			x					x				x	x				
U.S. Department of Education, 2022														x			
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services & U.S.			x	x			x	x					x	x		x	
UNESCO, 2005		x	x		x									x		x	
Vygotsky, 1987	x	x		x	x			x			x						

Citations	Theoretical Framework(s)	Social Construct of Inclusion & Belonging	Inclusion and Education	Peer Relations	Socioemotional Health and Academics	Collaboration	Pros and Cons to Inclusion	Early Childhood Education & Development	Barriers To Inclusion	Attitudes Towards Inclusion	Attitudes and Behavior	Teacher Preparation and Inclusion	SPED Programs and Inclusion Models	Policy, Law, Data, Stats	History of Inclusion	Definition of Inclusion	Self-Efficacy
Will, 1986			x				x										
Willis et al., 2020			x						x				x	x			
Winzer, 1993															x		
Yan & Sin, 2014	x								x	x	x	x					
Yan & Sin, 2015	x									x	x			x	x		
Ydo, 2022		x	x						x						x		
Yell & Bateman, 2017			x		x									x			
Yell et al., 1998														x	x		
Yell et al., 2011														x	x		
Yell, 2019														x	x		
Zigmond, 2003			x				x		x								

APPENDIX B

Recruiting Assistance Request

Dear <<SELPA Director/Special Education Director>>,

I hope this email finds you well. My name is Mieke Kramer, and I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Massachusetts Global. I am reaching out to request your valuable assistance in recruiting participants for a 5-minute survey. The survey is part of a mixed-method study that seeks to investigate and understand special education preschool teachers' sense of self-efficacy and opinions on educating students with disabilities in the general education setting.

Please consider sharing the survey link with your special education directors and special education preschool teachers. Your help in promoting this survey will significantly enhance this study's reach and impact, and its findings can help identify professional development and other support needs of special education teachers to better support students with disabilities in the general education environment.

Should you have any questions or require further information, please do not hesitate to reach out to me at mkramer7@mail.umassglobal.edu or xxx-xxx-xxxx.

Thank you in advance for your support. Your assistance is instrumental in ensuring that the voices of special education preschool teachers are heard and considered as we aim to create more inclusive programming and opportunities in our schools.

Warm regards,

Mieke Kramer
Special Education Administrator
Doctoral Candidate

SURVEY DETAILS

Purpose: To gather insights into how special education preschool teachers rate their opinions, or attitudes, as well as their sense of self-efficacy regarding the inclusion of preschool students with disabilities in the general education classroom.
Time Commitment: Approximately 7 minutes.
Confidentiality: All responses will be kept confidential, and individual participants will remain anonymous.
Compensation: No money will be paid in exchange for participating in the survey. However, as a token of appreciation, participants will receive a $5 gift card upon completing the survey.
Link to survey (includes confidentiality forms):
https://sites.google.com/mail.umassglobal.edu/preschool-inclusion-survey

APPENDIX C

Invitation to Participate in Survey

RESEARCH TITLE: Special Education Preschool Teachers' Perspectives, Attitudes, and Self-Efficacy Toward Inclusive Education

<<DATE>>

Dear Prospective Study Participant,

You are invited to participate in a 5-minute survey as part of a mixed method study to investigate and understand preschool special education teachers' sense of self-efficacy and opinions on educating students with disabilities in the general education setting. You were chosen to participate in this study because you are a special education preschool teacher teaching in Los Angeles County in Southern California.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this mixed-methods study is to determine how preschool teachers in California who work in special education rate their attitudes toward including children with disabilities in general education preschool classrooms. Additionally, the study aims to investigate how these teachers evaluate their self-efficacy in supporting children with disabilities in general education classrooms in California. Finally, the study aims to identify and describe other factors that influence their attitudes toward including children with disabilities in general education preschool classrooms. Insights gained can assist in identifying professional development and other support needs of special education teachers who are supporting students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment.

PARTICIPATION CRITERIA: You must be a special education preschool teacher employed within Los Angeles County to participate.

PROCEDURES: *Voluntary Participation Part I:* You will be asked to complete a brief survey using a rating scale. The survey is delivered via Survey Monkey and will take about **7 minutes** to complete. There are no right or wrong answers. At the end of the survey, participants will be asked if they are willing to participate in a 30-minute follow-up interview. Participants can select "No, thank you. This is not something I'm interested in doing at this time" or "Maybe, please send me more information so I can determine if this is something I want to do." Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you may withdraw from any portion of the study at any time. The initial survey responses will remain anonymous. Provision of your name for the follow-up interview is strictly voluntary and all interview data will be kept strictly confidential.

*Voluntary Participation Part II***:** Survey responses will be reviewed, and additional information will be sent via email to participants who (1) completed all 27 survey questions and (2) expressed interest in participating in a follow-up interview. The interview may last up to **30 minutes** and is designed to address your experiences supporting students with special needs in the least restrictive environment and allow for expansion on factors that

either contribute to or inhibit successful inclusion of students with special needs in the general education setting.

RISKS, INCONVENIENCES, AND DISCOMFORTS: There are minimal risks to your participation in this research study. It may be inconvenient to allocate time to complete the electronic survey, though participants will have a two-week period to complete the survey. Additionally, if participating in a follow-up interview, it will take an additional 30 minutes to complete the interview. The interview session will be held at an agreed upon time and be conducted virtually to minimize inconvenience to participants.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS: There are no major benefits to you for participation, however, your input and feedback could help add to the research regarding factors that may contribute to the successful inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education setting. The information from this study is intended to inform researchers, policymakers, and educators. Additionally, the findings and recommendations from this study will be made available to all participants upon request.

COMPENSATION: No money will be paid in exchange for participating in the study. However, as a token of appreciation, participants will receive a $5 gift card upon completing the survey. Participants in the follow-up interview will receive a $20 gift card.

ANONYMITY: Records of information that you provide for the research study, and any personal information you provide, will *not* be linked in any way. It will not be possible to identify you as the person who provided any specific information for the study.

You are encouraged to ask questions, at any time, that will help you understand how this study will be performed and/or how it will affect you. You may contact me by email at mkramer7@mail.umassglobal.edu or call me at (xxx) xxx-xxxx. You may also contact Dr. Philip Pendley by email at ppendley@mail.UMassglobal.edu. If you have any further questions or concerns about this study or your rights as a study participant, you may write or call the Office of the Executive Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, UMass Global University, 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA 92618, (949) 341-7641.

Respectfully,

Mieke Kramer
Doctoral Candidate, UMass Global University
mkramer7@mail.umassglobal.edu

Thank you so much for your consideration. If you are interested in participating, please respond to this email, or contact Mieke Kramer directly via phone xxx-xxx-xxxx or email: mkramer7@mail.umassglobal.edu. Alternatively, you can access the survey and related forms **here** or scan the QR code below.

APPENDIX D

Invitation to Participate in Interview

RESEARCH TITLE: Special Education Preschool Teachers' Perspectives, Attitudes, and Self-Efficacy Toward Inclusive Education

<<DATE>>

Dear <<NAME>>,

You are invited to participate in a 30-minute interview aimed to investigate and understand preschool special education teachers' sense of self-efficacy and opinions on educating students with disabilities in the general education setting. You are contacted because you indicated in our initial survey that you were interested in participating in a follow-up interview and sharing your opinions and experiences in supporting preschool students with special needs in a general education setting.

PROCEDURES: The interview will be conducted via Zoom at a date and time that is convenient for you. If you prefer, the interview can take place in person at a location of your choosing. The 10 interview questions will focus your experiences supporting students with special needs in the least restrictive environment and allow for expansion on factors that either contribute to or inhibit successful inclusion of students with special needs in the general education setting.

RISKS, INCONVENIENCES, AND DISCOMFORTS: There are minimal risks to your participation in this research study. It may be inconvenient to allocate time to participate in the interview. However, the interview session will be held at an agreed upon time to minimize this inconvenience. Some interview questions may cause you to reflect on barriers and support systems that are unique to your lived experience and sharing your experience in an interview setting may cause minor discomfort.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS: There are no major benefits to you for participation, however, your input and feedback could help add to the research regarding factors that may contribute to the successful inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education setting. The information from this study is intended to inform researchers, policymakers, and educators. Additionally, the findings and recommendations from this study will be made available to all participants upon request.

COMPENSATION: No money will be paid in exchange for participating in the interview. However, as a token of appreciation, interviewees will receive a $20 gift card upon completing the interview.

ANONYMITY: Records of information that you provide for the research study, and any personal information you provide, will *not* be linked in any way. It will not be possible to identify you as the person who provided any specific information for the study.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. I look forward to hearing from you and I hope you will choose to participate in the interview. I plan to begin interviews for the study as soon as possible, so please respond to this email by <<DATE>> with your preferred dates and times for the interview to take place. Please let me know if you have any questions. I can be reached at the phone or e-mail address below.

Respectfully,

Mieke Kramer
Doctoral Candidate, UMass Global University
xxx-xxx-xxxx
mkramer7@mail.umassglobal.edu

APPENDIX E

Interview Protocol

RESEARCH TITLE: Special Education Preschool Teachers' Perspectives, Attitudes, and Self-Efficacy Toward Inclusive Education.

Interviewer: Mieke Kramer Interviewee:_____ Date/time:_____

Location: Zoom Platform Recording: Field notes and Zoom audio

INTRODUCTION:

Thank you for agreeing to spend time with me today. My name is Mieke Kramer, and I am a special education administrator in Los Angeles County. I am a doctoral candidate in the field of Organizational Leadership at UMass Global University and currently conducting a study that explores special education preschool teacher's feelings and opinions on inclusive education. Specifically, the purpose of the study is to determine how preschool teachers in California who work in special education rate their attitudes toward including children with disabilities in general education preschool classrooms, how they evaluate their self-efficacy in supporting children with disabilities in general education classrooms in California, and which factors they believe influence their opinions, or attitudes, toward placing and educating children with disabilities in general education preschool classrooms.

Insights gained can assist in identifying professional development and other support needs of special education teachers who are supporting students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment. Your participation and insights will help to better understand the needs of special education preschool teachers when working toward a more inclusive environment for all students. Findings of this study can be instrumental in identifying the professional development and support requirements of special education teachers who are working toward supporting students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment.

The interview session will be audio recorded for transcription purposes only, and anything you say will be kept confidential. You may choose to skip, or not answer, a question, and you have the right to stop the interview at any time during the interview process. Please do not hesitate to ask for clarification if you do not understand the questions being asked. This is a semi-structured interview, which means that, in addition to the 10 interview questions, I may ask probing questions for clarification purposes or to obtain more specific, or in-depth information related to the interview questions.

The interview is expected to last about 30 minutes, but before we begin, I would like to review the consent packet that was emailed to you and answer any questions you might have prior to signing the consent forms [allow time for participant to respond. Provide clarification as needed and ensure that consent forms have been signed].

INTERVIEW:
Thank you for allowing me to audio record this interview. The recording is for transcription purposes only, but, if at any time you want me to stop the recording, please let me know. Are you ready for us to begin? [wait for response]. I will start the recording now.

Background Information

1. Tell me about yourself and your experiences as a special education preschool teacher.
2. Please describe your current assignment/role.
3. Please tell me about your personal philosophy (or attitude) around educating students with disabilities in the general education setting.
4. How efficacious do you feel with regards to inclusion?

Experiences with Inclusion

5. Tell me about a time that you felt you had a successful experience supporting a student(s) in an inclusive environment?
6. What do you feel contributed to that success?
7. Tell me about a time that you felt unsuccessful in supporting a student(s) in an inclusive classroom?
8. What do you feel contributed to the challenge?
9. Based on these experiences, what factors would you say support special education teachers' attitudes or efficacy around the inclusion of students with disabilities?
10. Based on these experiences, what factors would you say inhibit special education teachers' attitudes or efficacy around the inclusion of students with disabilities?

APPENDIX F

Field Test Interviewee Feedback Questions

As a veteran special education teacher your assistance is much appreciated in designing this interview instrument. Your participation is crucial to the development of a valid and reliable instrument. Below are some questions that I appreciate your answering after completing the interview. Your answers will assist me in refining both the directions and the interview items.

1. How long did the interview take? Did the time spent seem to be appropriate and adequate?
2. Did the request to read the consent information and sign the agreement before the interview began concern you at all? If so, would you briefly state your concern?
3. Was the Introduction sufficiently clear (and not too long) to inform you what the research was about? If not, what would you recommend that would make it better?
4. Were the directions clear and easy to understand?
5. Were the interview questions clear, appropriate, and easy to understand, or should there be adjustments made?
6. As you progressed through the interview, were there any additional questions you felt would have been appropriate or necessary to provide additional relevant information?
7. What suggestions do you have for improving the overall process?

Thank you so much for your help!

APPENDIX G

Field Test Observer Feedback Questions

As a doctoral student and researcher at UMASS Global your assistance is much appreciated in designing this interview instrument. Your participation is crucial to the development of a valid and reliable instrument. Below are some questions that I appreciate your answering after observing the interview. Your answers will assist me in refining both the directions and the interview items.

1. How long did the interview take? Did the time spent seem to be appropriate and adequate?
2. Was the introduction sufficiently clear (and not too long)? If not, what would you recommend that would make it better?
3. Were the directions clear and easy to understand?
4. Did I seem prepared to conduct the interview? Is there something I could have done to be better prepared?
5. How did I appear during the interview? Comfortable? Nervous?
6. Were the interview questions clear, appropriate, and easy to understand, or should adjustments be made?
7. As the interview progressed, were there any additional questions you felt would have been appropriate or necessary to provide additional relevant information?
8. What suggestions do you have for improving the overall process?

Thank you so much for your help!

APPENDIX H

Survey

Special Education Preschool Teacher Survey on Inclusive Education

Demographics and Background Information (Part I)

1. How many years have you taught?

- ◯ <1 year
- ◯ 1-5 years
- ◯ 6-10 years
- ◯ 10-15 years
- ◯ >15 years

2. In what county do you currently teach?

- ◯ Los Angeles County
- ◯ Other (**please specify**)

3. In what type of district do you teach?

4. What is your gender?

- ◯ Male
- ◯ Female
- ◯ Non-binary
- ◯ Prefer not to say

5. Which age range do you belong to?

- ◯ Under 25
- ◯ 25-34
- ◯ 35-44
- ◯ 45-54
- ◯ 55-64
- ◯ 65 or over

6. Which (teaching) credentials do you hold? (check all that apply)

- [ ] Early Childhood Special Education Credential (ECSE)
- [ ] Early Childhood Specialist Credential (general education)
- [ ] Child Development Permit (general education)
- [ ] Multiple Subject Credential (general education)
- [ ] K-12 Mild/Moderate Special Education Credential (MMSN)
- [ ] K-12 Moderate/Severe Special Education Credential (ESN)
- [ ] Other (please specify)

7. What is your *current* teaching assignment?

- ( ) Special Day Class (SDC) or Self-Contained classroom
- ( ) General Education Classroom (push-in)
- ( ) General Education Classroom (all day, co-taught)
- ( ) Resource Room (pull-out)
- ( ) Special Education Blended Classroom (one teacher)
- ( ) General Education Blended Classroom (co-taught)
- ( ) Other (please specify)

8. What were your *past* teaching assignments? Please check all that apply.

- [ ] Special Day Class (SDC) or Self-Contained classroom
- [ ] General Education Classroom (push-in)
- [ ] General Education Classroom (all day, co-taught)
- [ ] Resource Room (pull-out)
- [ ] Special Education Blended Classroom (one teacher)
- [ ] General Education Blended Classroom (co-taught)
- [ ] Other (please specify)

9. What type(s) of training/education have you completed addressing the inclusion of students with special needs? Please check all that apply.

- [ ] Coursework embedded in credential program
- [ ] Districted-provided professional development
- [ ] Site-provided professional development
- [ ] Graduate level coursework
- [ ] SELPA trainings
- [ ] LACOE trainings
- [ ] Other (please specify)

Special Education Preschool Teacher Survey on Inclusive Education

Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practices - Short Form (Part II)

This part of the survey is designed to help understand the nature of factors influencing the success of routine classroom activities when creating an inclusive classroom environment. In an inclusive classroom, students from a wide range of diverse backgrounds and abilities learn together.

Because there are no "right" or "wrong" answers to these items, please respond candidly. All questions assume the context of serving students in a general education classroom.

1. I can use a variety of assessment strategies (e.g., portfolio assessment, modified tests and performance-based assessment).

- ◯ Strongly disagree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Disagree somewhat
- ◯ Agree somewhat
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Strongly agree

2. I am able to provide an alternate explanation or example when students are confused.

- ◯ Strongly disagree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Disagree somewhat
- ◯ Agree somewhat
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Strongly agree

3. I am confident in designing learning tasks so that the individual needs of students with disabilities are accommodated.

- ◯ Strongly disagree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Disagree somewhat
- ◯ Agree somewhat
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Strongly agree

4. I am confident in my ability to prevent disruptive behaviour in the classroom before it occurs

- ◯ Strongly disagree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Disagree somewhat
- ◯ Agree somewhat
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Strongly agree

5. I am able to calm a student who is disruptive or noisy.

- ◯ Strongly disagree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Disagree somewhat
- ◯ Agree somewhat
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Strongly agree

6. I am able to get children to follow classroom rules.

- ◯ Strongly disagree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Disagree somewhat
- ◯ Agree somewhat
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Strongly agree

7. I am able to work jointly with other professionals and staff (e.g., aides, other teachers) to teach students with disabilities in the classroom.

- ◯ Strongly disagree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Disagree somewhat
- ◯ Agree somewhat
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Strongly agree

8. I am confident in my ability to get parents involved in school activities of their children with disabilities.

- ◯ Strongly disagree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Disagree somewhat
- ◯ Agree somewhat
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Strongly agree

9. I can collaborate with other professionals (e.g., itinerant Teachers or speech pathologists) in designing educational plans for students with disabilities.

- ◯ Strongly disagree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Disagree somewhat
- ◯ Agree somewhat
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Strongly agree

Special Education Preschool Teacher Survey on Inclusive Education

Attitudes Towards Teaching All Students (Part III)

The purpose of this questionnaire is to obtain an accurate and valid appraisal of your perceptions of teaching students with disabilities in a general education environment.

Please respond candidly because there are no "right" or "wrong" answers to these items.

1. Most or all separate classrooms that exclusively serve students with mild to moderate disabilities should be eliminated.

- ◯ Strongly agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Somewhat agree
- ◯ Neither agree nor disagree
- ◯ Somewhat disagree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly disagree

2. Students with mild to moderate disabilities should be taught in regular classes with non-disabled students because they do not require too much of the teacher's time.

- ◯ Strongly agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Somewhat agree
- ◯ Neither agree nor disagree
- ◯ Somewhat disagree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly disagree

3. Students with mild to moderate disabilities can be more effectively educated in regular classrooms as opposed to special education classrooms.

- ◯ Strongly agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Somewhat agree
- ◯ Neither agree nor disagree
- ◯ Somewhat disagree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly disagree

4. I would like to be mentored by a teacher who models effective differentiated instruction in the general education classroom.

- ◯ Strongly agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Somewhat agree
- ◯ Neither agree nor disagree
- ◯ Somewhat disagree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly disagree

5. I want to emulate teachers who know how to design appropriate academic interventions within the general education classroom.

- ◯ Strongly agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Somewhat agree
- ◯ Neither agree nor disagree
- ◯ Somewhat disagree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly disagree

6. I believe including students with disabilities in the regular education classrooms is effective because they can learn the social skills necessary for success.

- ◯ Strongly agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Somewhat agree
- ◯ Neither agree nor disagree
- ◯ Somewhat disagree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly disagree

7. I would like people to think that I can create a welcoming classroom environment for students with disabilities in a general education setting...

- ◯ Strongly agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Somewhat agree
- ◯ Neither agree nor disagree
- ◯ Somewhat disagree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly disagree

8. Students with mild to moderate disabilities can be trusted with responsibilities in the classroom.

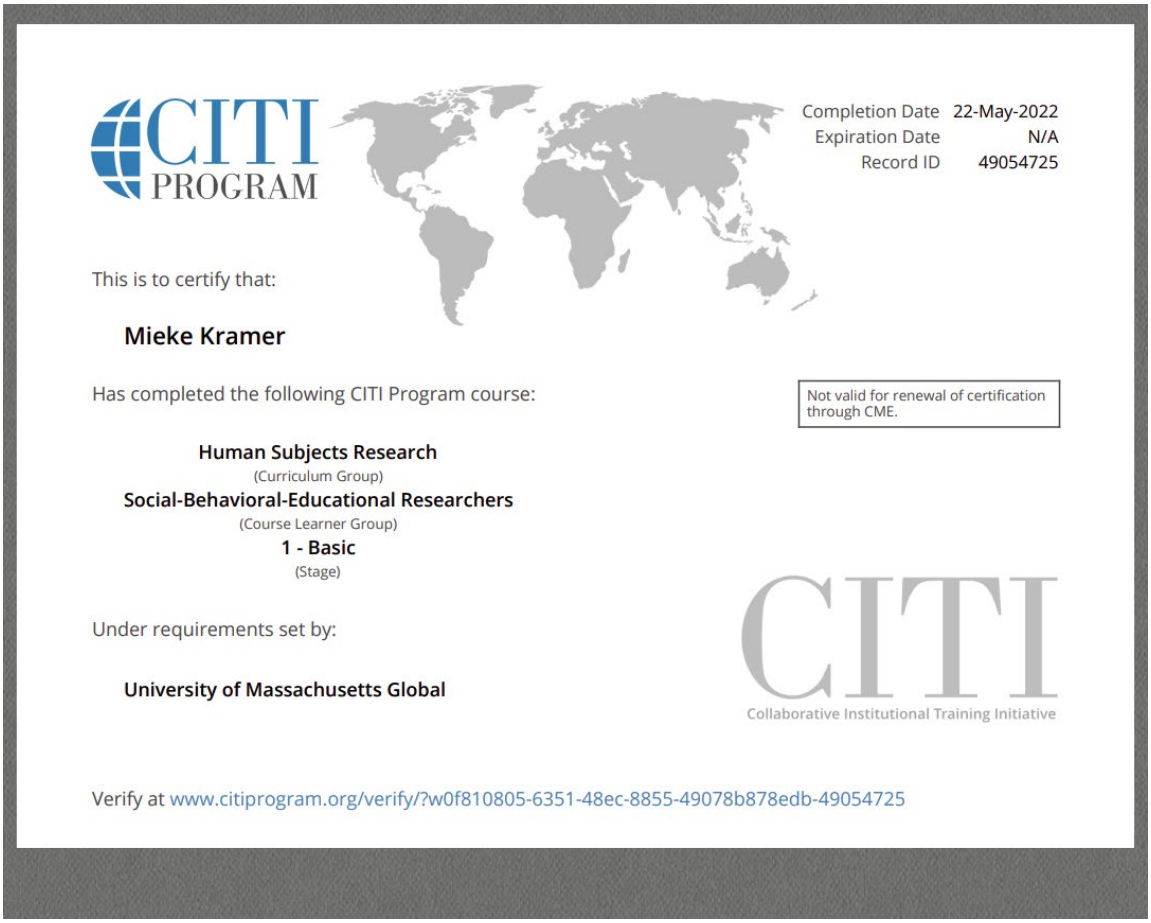
- ◯ Strongly agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Somewhat agree
- ◯ Neither agree nor disagree
- ◯ Somewhat disagree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly disagree

9. All students with mild to moderate disabilities should be educated in regular classrooms with non-handicapped peers to the fullest extent possible

- ◯ Strongly agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Somewhat agree
- ◯ Neither agree nor disagree
- ◯ Somewhat disagree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly disagree

APPENDIX I

CITI Certification


CITI PROGRAM

Completion Date 22-May-2022
Expiration Date N/A
Record ID 49054725

This is to certify that:

Mieke Kramer

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

Not valid for renewal of certification through CME.

Human Subjects Research
(Curriculum Group)
Social-Behavioral-Educational Researchers
(Course Learner Group)
1 - Basic
(Stage)

Under requirements set by:

University of Massachusetts Global

CITI
Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative

Verify at www.citiprogram.org/verify/?w0f810805-6351-48ec-8855-49078b878edb-49054725

APPENDIX J

Independent Review Board Approval

Dear Mieke Kramer,

Congratulations! Your IRB application to conduct research has been approved by the UMass Global Institutional Review Board. Please keep this email for your records, as it will need to be included in your research appendix.

If you need to modify your IRB application for any reason, please fill out the "Application Modification Form" before proceeding with your research. The Modification form can be found at IRB.umassglobal.edu

Best wishes for a successful completion of your study.

Thank You,

IRB
Academic Affairs
UMass Global
16355 Laguna Canyon Road
Irvine, CA 92618
irb@umassglobal.edu
www.umassglobal.edu

This email is an automated notification. If you have questions please email us at irb@umassglobal.edu.

APPENDIX K

Research Participant's Bill of Rights

UMASS GLOBAL
A nonprofit affiliate of the University of Massachusetts

UMASS GLOBAL UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

Research Participant's Bill of Rights

Any person who is requested to consent to participate as a subject in an experiment, or who is requested to consent on behalf of another, has the following rights:

1. To be told what the study is attempting to discover.
2. To be told what will happen in the study and whether any of the procedures, drugs or devices are different from what would be used in standard practice.
3. To be told about the risks, side effects or discomforts of the things that may happen to him/her.
4. To be told if he/she can expect any benefit from participating and, if so, what the benefits might be.
5. To be told what other choices he/she has and how they may be better or worse than being in the study.
6. To be allowed to ask any questions concerning the study both before agreeing to be involved and during the course of the study.
7. To be told what sort of medical treatment is available if any complications arise.
8. To refuse to participate at all before or after the study is started without any adverse effects.
9. To receive a copy of the signed and dated consent form.
10. To be free of pressures when considering whether he/she wishes to agree to be in the study.

If at any time you have questions regarding a research study, you should ask the researchers to answer them. You also may contact the UMASS GLOBAL Institutional Review Board, which is concerned with the protection of volunteers in research projects. The UMass Global Institutional Review Board may be contacted either by telephoning the Office of Academic Affairs at (949) 341-9937 or by writing to the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, UMASS GLOBAL, 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA, 92618.

UMass Global IRB Adopted 2021

APPENDIX L

Informed Consent and Confidentiality Form – Survey

RESEARCH TITLE: Special Education Preschool Teachers' Perspectives, Attitudes, and Self-Efficacy Toward Inclusive Education.

UMASS GLOBAL UNIVERSITY
16355 LAGUNA CANYON ROAD
IRVINE, CA 92618

RESPRONSIBLE INVESTIGATER: Mieke Kramer, Doctoral Candidate

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY: The purpose of this study is to investigate the perspectives of special education preschool teachers in California toward the inclusion of children with disabilities in general education preschool classrooms. Furthermore, the study endeavors to examine the self-evaluation of these teachers regarding their abilities to support children with disabilities in general education classrooms. Lastly, the study aims to identify additional factors that impact the attitudes of teachers toward including children with disabilities in general education preschool classrooms. The insights generated by this study can be instrumental in identifying the professional development and support requirements of special education teachers who are working toward supporting students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment.

PROCEDURES: In participating in this research study, I agree to complete a brief electronic survey. I also have the option to additional participate in audio-recorded semi-structured interview, in person or via Zoom. The interview will occur at a predetermined time and will last approximately thirty minutes.

I understand that:

1. There are no known major risks or discomforts associated with this research. Time dedicated to this survey may cause inconvenience. Should I elect to participate in the subsequent interview, the additional time dedicated may cause inconvenience. However, the interview session will be held at an agreed upon time to minimize this inconvenience. Some survey or interview questions may cause me to reflect on barriers and support systems that are unique to my lived experience and sharing my experience in an interview setting may cause minor discomfort.
2. There are no major benefits to me for participation. The information from this study is intended to inform researchers, policymakers, and educators. A potential benefit is to add to the research base regarding successful inclusive practices in education.
3. Money will not be provided for my time and involvement. However, I will receive a $5 gift card as a token of appreciation upon completing the survey. If I participate in the follow-up interview, I will receive a $20 gift card.

4. Any questions I have concerning my participation in this study will be answered by Mieke Kramer, UMass Global Doctoral Candidate. I understand that Ms. Kramer may be contacted by phone at (xxx) xxx-xxxx or email at mkramer7@mail.umassglobal.edu.
5. I may refuse to participate or withdraw from this study at any time without any negative consequences.
6. No information that identifies me will be released without my separate consent and all identifiable information will be protected to the limits allowed by law. If the study design or the use of the data is to be changed, I will be informed, and my consent re-obtained.
7. If I have any questions, comments, or concerns about the study or the informed consent process, I may contact this study's dissertation chair, Dr. Philip Pendley by email at ppendley@mail.UMassglobal.edu or phone (916) 769 2453. Additionally, I may write or call the office of the Executive Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, UMass Global, and 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA 92618, (949) 341-7641.
8. I acknowledge that I have received the Informed Consent Packet that includes the following: **(1) A copy of this Informed Consent and Confidentiality Form; (2) Research Participant's Bill of Rights, (3) Independent Review Board (IRB) approval, (4) and the Protecting Human Research Participants NIH Certificate.**

ELECTRONIC CONSENT: Please select your choice below. Clicking on the "agree" button indicates that you have read and understand the contents of this informed consent form and the and that you voluntarily agree to participate. If you do not wish to participate in this electronic survey, you may decline participation by clicking on the "disagree" button. The survey will not open for responses unless you agree to participate.

☐ AGREE: I acknowledge receipt of the complete Informed Consent packet and "Bill of Rights." I have read the materials and give my consent to participate in the study.

☐ DISAGREE: I do not wish to participate in this electronic survey.

APPENDIX M

Informed Consent and Confidentiality Form - Interview

RESEARCH TITLE: Special Education Preschool Teachers' Perspectives, Attitudes, and Self-Efficacy Toward Inclusive Education.

UMASS GLOBAL UNIVERSITY
16355 LAGUNA CANYON ROAD
IRVINE, CA 92618

RESPRONSIBLE INVESTIGATER: Mieke Kramer, Doctoral Candidate

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY: The purpose of this study is to investigate the perspectives of special education preschool teachers in California toward the inclusion of children with disabilities in general education preschool classrooms. Furthermore, the study endeavors to examine the self-evaluation of these teachers regarding their abilities to support children with disabilities in general education classrooms. Lastly, the study aims to identify additional factors that impact the attitudes of teachers toward including children with disabilities in general education preschool classrooms. The insights generated by this study can be instrumental in identifying the professional development and support requirements of special education teachers who are working toward supporting students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment.

PROCEDURES: In participating in this research study, I agree to participate in a one-on-one interview. The interview will occur at a predetermined time and will last approximately thirty minutes. A copy of the interview questions will be provided to me prior to commencing the interview. In addition to the 10 interview questions, I may be asked additional questions for clarification purposes. The interview will be audio recorded for transcription purposes only.

I understand that:

3. There are no known major risks or discomforts associated with this research. Time dedicated to this interview may cause inconvenience. However, the interview session will be held at an agreed upon time to minimize this inconvenience. Some interview questions may cause me to reflect on barriers and support systems that are unique to my lived experience and sharing my experience in an interview setting may cause minor discomfort.
4. There are no major benefits to me for participation. The information from this study is intended to inform researchers, policymakers, and educators. A potential benefit is to add to the research base regarding successful inclusive practices in education.
9. Money will not be provided for my time and involvement. However, I will receive a $20 gift card as a token of appreciation upon completing the interview.

10. Any questions I have concerning my participation in this study will be answered by Mieke Kramer, UMass Global Doctoral Candidate. I understand that Ms. Kramer may be contacted by phone at (xxx) xxx-xxxx or email at mkramer7@mail.umassglobal.edu.
11. I may refuse to participate or withdraw from this study at any time without any negative consequences.
12. No information that identifies me will be released without my separate consent and all identifiable information will be protected to the limits allowed by law. If the study design or the use of the data is to be changed, I will be informed, and my consent re-obtained.
13. If I have any questions, comments, or concerns about the study or the informed consent process, I may contact this study's dissertation chair, Dr. Philip Pendley by email at ppendley@mail.UMassglobal.edu or phone (916) 769 2453. Additionally, I may write or call the office of the Executive Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, UMass Global, and 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA 92618, (949) 341-7641.
14. I acknowledge that I have received the Informed Consent Packet that includes the following: **(1) A copy of this Informed Consent and Confidentiality Form; (2) the Audio Release Form, (3) Research Participant's Bill of Rights, (4) Independent Review Board (IRB) approval, (5) and the Protecting Human Research Participants NIH Certificate.**

ELECTRONIC CONSENT: Please select your choice below. Clicking on the "agree" button indicates that you have read and understand the contents of this informed consent form and the and that you voluntarily agree to participate. If you do not wish to participate in this interview, you may decline participation by clicking on the "disagree" button and the interview process will be aborted.

☐ AGREE: I acknowledge receipt of the complete Informed Consent packet and "Bill of Rights." I have read the materials and give my consent to participate in the study.

☐ DISAGREE: I do not wish to participate in the interview

APPENDIX N

Audio Recording Consent and Release Form

RESEARCH TITLE: Special Education Preschool Teachers' Perspectives, Attitudes, and Self-Efficacy Toward Inclusive Education

UMASS GLOBAL UNIVERSITY
16355 LAGUNA CANYON ROAD
IRVINE, CA 92618

RESPRONSIBLE INVESTIGATER: Mieke Kramer, Doctoral Candidate

As part of this study, I am participating in an interview which will be audio-recorded as a digital file.

I (Participant) understand and grant the following permissions:

1. The audio recording will be used for transcription purposes only. The recordings will not be used beyond the scope of this project.
2. No information that identifies me will be released without my separate consent, and all identifiable information will be protected to the limits allowed by law.
3. I waive any right to royalties or other compensation arising correlated to the use of information obtained from the recording.
4. All digital audio files will be deleted at the end of the study. The transcriptions will be stored securely and destroyed three years following the completion of this study.
5. If have any questions, comments, or concerns about the study or the informed consent process, I may write or call the office of the Executive Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, UMass Global, and 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA 92618, (949) 341-7641.

By signing this form, I acknowledge that I have completely read and fully understand the above release and agree to the outlined terms. I hereby release all claims against any person or organization utilizing this material.

Signature of Participant: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Principal Investigator: _____ Date: _____