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Teacher Perceptions of Inclusion and Students with Autism

A dissertation

presented to

the faculty of the department of Educational Leadership

East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

by

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December 2018

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ABSTRACT

Teacher Perceptions of Inclusion and Students with Autism

by

Nancy Keener

Inclusion is considered the least restrictive environment for most students with disabilities. The purpose of this study was to examine teachers' and administrators' perceptions of inclusion in general education classrooms for students with autism. This included an examination of how schools determined placement for students with autism, the academic and social influences of placement in the general classroom, perceptions of teachers and administrators about inclusion for students with autism, teaching strategies that worked for students with autism in the general classroom, and the influence other students in the classroom have on students with autism. Participants in the study were from one county school system in Tennessee. All data were collected through in-depth analysis of interviews with teachers of students with autism. Results from this study may provide information to teachers and administrators which assists in supporting teachers and educational assistants in the general classroom with students who have autism, as well as increasing the positive effects of inclusion for students with autism in the general education classroom.

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my children: Bethanie, Alex, Aaron, Alexis, Timothy, and Kaleena. I hope that I have taught you to never give up on what you believe in, and that most things are possible if you are determined. You are never too old to change your path. If you want to change, paths, then do it.

I would also like to dedicate this to my parents, Vicky and Rick, who have always supported me and provided a gentle (usually) push when I needed it. I would not be here if it were not for the two of you.

I would also like to dedicate this to my father, Dwain. Your work ethic has always been an inspiration to me, and you also helped me get to where I am.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Context Setting and History of the Issue

The identification of autism has increased greatly since 2000. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC] (CDC, 2014) reported that autism increased 119.4 percent from 2000 to 2010. Autism spectrum disorder is a developmental disability that affects about one in sixty-eight children (CDC, 2015). The CDC (2016) finds that boys are diagnosed 4.5 times more often than girls with autism. Pennington, Cullinan, and Southern (2014) stated that as recently as 1994, autism was considered rare and identified in only one in 1,000 children. Autism affects people of all race and ethnic groups.

Historically, students with disabilities were educated in a separate setting than students without disabilities, and they sometimes received no education. Kurth (2015) wrote that prior to 1975, millions of children with disabilities were excluded from school, and some states did not allow students with certain disabilities to go to public schools. Dillenburger (2012) indicated, over 30 years ago, that many children diagnosed with autism were considered unteachable and were institutionalized, but similar children are now learning in schools with non-disabled peers. In 1971, Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Citizens sued the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania on behalf of children with mental retardation in Pennsylvania. The court found that students with mental

retardation in Pennsylvania were entitled to a free public education and should be in general education classrooms when possible (Nwokefor, 2009). In 1972, *Mills vs. Board of Education of the District of Columbia* extended this to include all children with disabilities between the ages of five and twenty-one in Washington D.C. (Horrocks, White, & Roberts, 2008). These lawsuits did not help students with disabilities at the federal level. Yell, Katsiyannis, and Hazelkorn (2007) reported that more than 1.75 million students with disabilities did not receive educational services in 1974. These separate class-action lawsuits led to Congress passing the Education for All Handicapped Children Act in 1975. The formalization of this legislation was used to require that "...all handicapped children have available to them...a free appropriate public education which emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs" (Education for All Handicapped Children Act, 1975, p.775), which allowed students with disabilities to attend public school with students who did not have disabilities. This has led to more students with disabilities being educated with students who do not have disabilities, but some students have continued to be served in separate schools and classrooms. When the Education for All Handicapped Children Act was passed, autism was not recognized as a disability that would be covered under the act. Consequently students could not receive services unless they qualified under another category, such as mental retardation. In 1990, autism was added as a disability category in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (U.S. Department of Education, 2006). Legislation passed as No Child Left Behind (2002) was utilized to change restrictions about testing for all students and had requirements about proficiency for all students which were unrealistic for students with severe disabilities.

Legislation passed as No Child Left Behind (2002) was utilized to require that all children test proficient on annual testing (Klein, 2017). With the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015, testing requirements changed but were still required for students with severe disabilities (Civic Impulse, 2017).

Statement of the Problem

Federal regulations require that all students are to be educated in the least restrictive environment and have nationally recognized testing in reading, math, and science at regular intervals. Because of these requirements, increasing numbers of students with autism are being included in the general classroom for the majority of the school day. Understanding what contributes to the successful inclusion of students with autism is important for students with autism and students without autism who are placed together in the classroom to learn. With successful inclusion, students with disabilities and students without disabilities would be taught together in a classroom with appropriate accommodations provided for students with disabilities so that all students could learn. The purpose of this study is to examine teachers' and administrators' perceptions of inclusion for students with autism in general classrooms.

Significance of the Study

Increasing numbers of students with autism are educated in the general classroom for the majority of their school day. Most general classroom teachers have had few if any courses during their professional training that adequately prepare them for students with disabilities, but 46.7 % of children with autism in Tennessee spend at least 80% of their time in the general education classroom (IDEA Data, 2017). The Tennessee Department of Education (2017) states that school districts must educate all

students, including students with disabilities, in the regular classroom to the extent possible. With current regulations, only 1% of students in the state could take the alternate assessment on annual testing. 99% of students are tested on a grade level standardized test and are expected to perform proficient on annual testing (Klein, 2016). A percentage of teacher annual evaluations are linked to student test scores. Teachers and administrators need to know how to help students with autism who are included in the general classroom to insure that all students succeed. Determining what contributes to students with autism being successful in the general classroom should then be considered when developing university education programs and professional development in the school system and in statewide trainings that are provided for educators.

Research Questions

The study will be guided by the following overarching research questions.

1. What are the perceptions of general education and special education teachers of inclusion efforts within their school?
2. What factors are necessary to support students with autism in an inclusion setting?
3. What inhibits students with autism in an inclusion setting?
4. What are the academic and social expectations of general education teachers for students with autism participating in the general classroom?

Delimitations and Limitations

Delimitations included not having parents of students with autism participate in the study. Parents do not have direct knowledge of the daily experiences of students with autism in the inclusion setting. Parents may have unrealistic expectations for successful inclusion and not be objective about progress and success with inclusion.

Autism was chosen for the sub-group of successful inclusion of students with disabilities. Students with other disabilities are also participants of inclusion that could also be considered for study on successful inclusion, but a more narrow focus was needed. There are a high percentage of students with autism being included in the general classroom which provides educators with direct knowledge of successful inclusion.

This study was limited to one school system in Tennessee. There is a lack of diversity in the school system and a high percentage of lower socioeconomic students. 43.9 % of students in this school system qualify for free and reduced lunch (Kids Count, 2018). This should not be considered a normative representation of other school systems. The participants for this study were regular and special education teachers from five elementary schools, as well as two administrators from the elementary school with the largest population of students with autism.

Researcher Bias

As a special education teacher and a parent of a child with autism I have tried to prevent personal bias on the subject of autism from encroaching on this study. While every effort has been made to prevent personal bias, personal bias could be unintentionally displayed. All data will be provided so that the reader is able to do his/her own interpretation of data. The American Psychological Association (2010) notes that labeling is another form of bias, so individuals in this study are referred to as students with autism rather than autistic students.

Definition of Terms

The following definitions of terms are provided for this study.

Autism/Autism Spectrum Disorder: Autism, or autism spectrum disorder, refers to characteristics that include difficulty with social skills, repetitive behaviors, speech and language, and other differences (Autism Speaks, 2017).

Every Student Succeeds Act: The Every Student Succeeds Act is a US law that was enacted in 2015 and replaced and updated No Child Left Behind. Students are tested annually in reading and math during grades three through eight then once in high school. A change from No Child Left Behind is that states are able to set their own goals for achievement if they fit within the federal framework (Klein, 2016).

Free Appropriate Public Education: Free appropriate public education is "...special education and related services that have been provided at public expense, under public supervision and direction, and without charge...and are provided in

conformity with the individualized education program.” (Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, 2004, p. 869).

General Education: General education is the education children without disabilities receive which is based on state standards then evaluated annually by a standards based test. Previously this was often called regular education (Webster, 2015).

Inclusion: Inclusion is including students with autism and other disabilities in general classrooms with peers who do not have disabilities (Harrower and Dunlap, 2001).

Individualized Education Program (IEP): “An IEP is a written document for a student with one or more disabilities, which is developed, reviewed, and revised annually by the IEP team” (Tennessee Department of Education, 2017, p. 5). The IEP includes any information required by the state and federal government and addresses what goals and services are going to be provided during the period covered by the IEP.

Individualized Education Program Team: The individualized education program team is responsible for developing the student’s IEP and includes at least: the parent(s) and or guardian(s), one of the regular education teachers, the special education teacher, and a representative of the school district who is able to provide information about available resources, the curriculum, and could provide or supervise the provision of instruction that is appropriate for the needs of the child. Other team members could include speech therapists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, school counselor, and others that the parent or school would like to include on the team. The

child is also invited at age fourteen or earlier when appropriate (Tennessee Department of Education, 2017).

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act: The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act is a law that requires students with disabilities be educated with students who are not disabled unless the severity of the disability prevents the child receiving services in the setting with non-disabled peers (Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, 2004).

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE): The least restrictive environment is the setting where the student will receive services and which gives the most access to students without disabilities (Tennessee Department of Education, 2017).

No Child Left Behind Act: The No Child Left Behind Act was a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. No Child Left Behind stated that students in grades three through eight would be tested annually in reading and math, and they would be tested one time in high school. With this act, all students were supposed to meet state standards by 2014, with just one percent of students classified as special education students taking an alternate test (Klein, 2017).

Special Education: Special education is instruction designed to meet the needs of a child with a disability at no cost to the parents which includes instruction conducted in the classroom, in the home, in the hospital or institution and in other settings (Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, 2004).

Chapter Summary

Including students with autism in the general classroom has occurred for many reasons, including federal legislation to provide all students access to free appropriate public education and requirements for testing all students on state standards. As more students with disabilities have been educated in the least restrictive environment, research has been conducted to determine how to successfully include students with autism in the general classroom.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The prevalence of autism has increased since 2000. The CDC (2014) reported that autism increased 119.4 % from 2000 to 2010. This review begins with information about the characteristics of autism spectrum disorder, which includes the medical, federal and state criteria for the diagnosis of autism. The history of education for students with disabilities is reviewed. The current educational placement options for students with autism are examined, as well as many factors that contribute to the successful inclusion of students with autism. The attitudes of the teachers, administrators, students with autism, and other students in the classroom all contribute to the successful inclusion of students with autism.

Characteristics of Autism

Kanner first wrote about autism in 1943. He studied children who had previously been diagnosed with schizophrenia and found that the children studied had an absence of some of the features of schizophrenia. He described the children as having “autistic disturbances of affective contact” (Kanner, 1943, p.250).

Children with autism are usually diagnosed by doctors or other health professionals by the time they enter school. Doctors diagnose autism by reviewing behavior and developmental history (CDC, 2015). People with autism have difficulties with social, emotional, and communication skills. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual

of Mental Disorders (American Psychiatric Association, 2013) identify the following criteria for diagnosis of autism:

- A. Persistent deficits in social communication and social interaction across multiple contexts, as manifested by the following, currently or by history...suit various social
- B. Restricted, repetitive patterns of behavior, interests, or activities, as manifested by at least two of the following, currently or by history...
- C. Symptoms must be present in the early developmental period (but may not become fully manifest until social demands exceed limited capacities, or may be masked by learned strategies in later life).
- D. Symptoms cause clinically significant impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of current functioning.
- E. These disturbances are not better explained by intellectual disability (intellectual developmental disorder) or global developmental delay. Intellectual disability and autism spectrum disorder frequently co-occur; to make comorbid diagnoses of autism spectrum disorder and intellectual disability, social communication should be below that expected for general developmental level. (p. 50-51).

At the federal level, legislators developed IDEA (2004) in which they defined autism as a developmental delay which impacts verbal and non-verbal communication, as well as social interaction that adversely affects a child's educational performance. This may be identified before the age of three, but according to IDEA, if the child meets the criteria after age three, the child could receive services for autism. If a child with

autism is able to perform in school without special education services, then the child would not qualify as having a disability under IDEA. If the child also has an emotional disturbance which is impacting the child's education, then the child would receive services under the category of emotional disturbance rather than under the category of autism.

In Tennessee, autism is recognized as an eligible disability when it meets the following: significantly affects communication and social interaction that adversely affects a child's educational performance. Autism is not recognized as the disability if the educational performance is affected primarily because of an Emotional Disturbance (Tennessee Department of Education, 2017). For a child to be determined eligible for special education services in Tennessee under the label of autism, the following evaluation procedures must occur: parent interview which includes the child's developmental history, behavioral observations in two or more settings, physical and neurological information from a licensed physician, pediatrician, or neurologist, evaluation of speech and language skills, evaluation of adaptive behavior skills, evaluation of social skills, and documentation of how autism affects the child's educational performance in the learning environment (Tennessee Department of Education, 2017).

Historical Background

Since 1990 when legislators added autism as a disability category in Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (U.S. Department of Education, 2012), there has been much discussion on the appropriate placement for students with autism. Harrower and Dunlap (2001) note the increasing trend to include students with autism and other

disabilities in the general education classroom with non-disabled peers, which they find is both from theories of social development and legal issues resulting from the civil rights movement.

Further progress with inclusion came from laws such as the *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2001. Legislators used this legislation to hold states and schools accountable for student achievement in the core curricular areas of math, reading/language arts and science, including students with autism (Yell, Drasgow, & Lowery, 2005). Students were also required to make progress in the general education curriculum and be assessed according to the grade level standards (Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, 2004). Students with disabilities were able to take a modified test, and students with the most severe disabilities took an alternate test. With The Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015, only 1% of students with the most severe cognitive disabilities are able to take an alternate test (Klein, 2016). This has led to an increase in the number of students with autism in the general education setting. According to Boutot and Bryant (2005), the number of students with autism spectrum disorders being included in general education for instruction in core curriculum has risen each year. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act legislation (2004) was utilized to mandate that children with disabilities were to be educated with children who were nondisabled as much as possible. The review of the literature will examine how inclusion is implemented and what has helped students with autism adjust and make progress in a general classroom.

Current Status of the Problem

Inclusion is defined as the educational practice of educating children with disabilities in the classroom with children without disabilities. Full inclusion is described as “the concept that students with special needs can and should be educated in the same setting as their normally developing peers, with appropriate support services, rather than being placed in special education classrooms or schools” (Mesibov & Shea, 1996, p. 337). In 2011, 39% of all children in the United States with autism spent at least 80% of their time in the general education classroom (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). In Tennessee, the number was even higher, with 42.3 % of children with autism spending at least 80% of their time in the general education classroom (IDEA Data, 2011). Morningstar, Kurth, and Johnson (2017) found in their study on national trends in educational placements for students with disabilities that the only group making significant progress toward in spending more time in the general classroom was students with autism. There is currently no mandate for inclusion of students in the general education classroom, but IDEA legislation was enacted to require that all students should be educated in the least restrictive environment. The general classroom is often seen as the least restrictive environment. Research has indicated that students with autism who are educated in a general education setting experience greater success than students who are in a special education classroom (Kurth, 2015).

Factors that Affect Educational Placement

Kurth (2015) found that decisions regarding services for students with autism were often made based on the available resources, rather than on what the family wanted or what the child needed. Morningstar et al. (2017) stated that the IEP team should consider how to support students within the general education setting before placing students in more restrictive placements. Students with a higher IQ have been more likely to be educated in an inclusion setting (Harris & Handleman, 2000). Students with higher social skills have also been more likely to be placed in an inclusion classroom (Lyons, Cappadocia, & Wise, 2011). Students with behavior problems have been more likely to be placed in a special education classroom even if they were able to function academically in the inclusion classroom. McCurdy and Cole (2014) noted that disruptive, off-task behaviors that children with autism showed in class affected the learning of the student with autism and for the rest of the students in the class, which often led to students with autism being placed in a special education classroom instead of a general classroom. Some parents have wanted their children to have specialized services that would not be available at their local school. When this has occurred, students have been transported to another school which has been able to provide the services if that was determined to be the least restrictive environment for the child. School systems have been required to pay tuition for students to attend private schools with specialized programs when that was determined to be appropriate.

Principals and other administrators have played an important role in the successful inclusion of students with autism. Praisner (2003) found that only one in five principals had a positive attitude toward inclusion of students with disabilities. Principals

who had more positive attitudes were more likely to place students with disabilities in less restrictive environments, while other principals were more likely to leave students with disabilities in a special education classrooms. Principals who had formal training on autism had higher rates of inclusion placements for students with autism (Horrocks et al., 2008).

White, Scahill, Klin, Koenig, and Volkmar (2007) found that once the decision of placement in an inclusive classroom or special education classroom had been determined, students usually remained in that setting throughout their years of education. Individualized education plans are reviewed and revised annually due to the special education law, but placement usually did not change when the review occurred, which has made the initial placement a very important decision.

Students with autism who have a higher IQ and fewer behavior problems have been more likely to be in a general classroom for their instruction. When students have shown disruptive and off-task behavior, they have been more likely to be placed in a special education classroom for the majority of their school day. Principals and other administrators have influenced where a student with autism was placed, so principals with more positive attitudes and experiences with students with autism were more likely to place students with autism in a general classroom. After the decision to place a student with autism in the general or special education classroom was made, students usually remained in that placement throughout their education.

Perceptions of Educators Including Students with Autism in the General Classroom

Segall and Campbell (2012) studied practices for inclusion of students with autism in the general education classroom and found that 92% of the participants reported positive attitudes towards academic inclusion. While teachers have had positive attitudes about inclusion, there has been a negative impact on the teacher-student relationship when students with autism have had problem behaviors. Busby, Ingram, Bowron, Oliver, and Lyons (2012) reported that teachers were worried that students would be disruptive in a general classroom. Eisenhower, Blacher, and Bush (2015) concluded that teachers had less closeness and more conflict with students with autism than with students who did not have autism. Brown and McIntosh (2012) found that problem behaviors were the biggest predictor of the teacher-student relationship. Supports were needed to decrease the problem behaviors and improve the teacher-student relationship. Many educators have felt unprepared for teaching children with autism. Campbell, Ellis, Baxter, and Nicholls (2007) found that 63% of those responding to a survey felt that more support has been needed for schools educating students who have autism. Busby et al. (2012) found that many general education teachers have only taken one special education class in college and have had little specialized training in the area of autism. Because of their lack of training, general education teachers wanted to help but felt that they could not because of the lack of training. Teachers in the study were also concerned about the amount of time that would be required to collaborate with other teachers and professionals. Segall and Campbell (2012) identified that the experience of teachers and their knowledge about autism affected their attitudes about

working with students with autism. They concluded that providing more training on autism and working with students with autism to the teachers would help their attitudes and help students succeed in an inclusion setting.

Able, Sreckovic, Schultz, Garwood and Sherman (2015) identified that teachers wanted more collaboration to discuss specific behaviors and needs of students with autism then determining strategies to use when new students came into the classroom. They found that teachers preferred collaborating when new students came in instead of waiting for behaviors and issues to occur then acting.

Higginson and Chatfield (2012) researched professional development paired with mentoring for teachers working with students on the autism spectrum. In this study, teachers attended at least two professional development sessions then had the option to attend other sessions. Mentoring was offered weekly or as needed. Higginson and Chatfield found that teachers became more accepting of children with autism in their classroom and better able to handle problem behaviors after attending professional development and receiving mentoring from a teacher with more experience working with students with autism. "The professional development had positive effects for other children in the classroom. Teachers indicated some strategies tried were also useful for the majority of the children in their classrooms" (p. 34).

Cameron and Cook (2013) indicated that teachers in the inclusion classroom often felt that academic progress was not their responsibility and that the special education teachers were responsible for academic progress. Several teachers surveyed by Cameron and Cook felt that social skills were more important than academic improvement and that students with severe needs were not going to make more

improvement in their academics. One teacher surveyed by Cameron and Cook stated that focusing on the academics for the students with disabilities would distract her from teaching her other students. A theme with inclusion has been collaborative teaching, but this would require mutual planning times, which would not occur in a rural school where the special education teacher would be going to three or four different grade level classrooms each day.

Students with autism often have had additional support in the regular classroom through a paraprofessional who worked directly with the child 1:1 or with a few students who were receiving special education services. Robertson, Chamberlain, and Kasari (2003) found that when the teacher and paraprofessional worked together to address behavior and academics, both the student and the teacher received support. Brown and McIntosh (2012) found that the relationship of the paraprofessional with the student was not affected by problem behaviors as it was with the student and the teacher. They suggested that paraprofessionals who had previous training on autism spectrum disorder and experience in working with students with autism provided greater understanding of the behavior. Brown and McIntosh concluded that the function of the behavior was sometimes communication, which the paraprofessionals recognized because of their training and experience.

Teachers reported positive attitudes about inclusion (Segall & Campbell, 2012), but there was a negative impact on the attitudes and the relationship when the students displayed problem behaviors (Eisenhower, Blacher, & Bush, 2015). Teachers worried that students with autism would disrupt class, and teachers did not have as close a relationship with students with autism as they did with other students in the classroom.

Teachers also were concerned about the amount of time it would take to collaborate with other teachers to help students with autism, but they wanted more training and to be able to collaborate (Busby et al., 2012). Teachers who had more training felt better prepared to work with students with autism (Segall and Campbell, 2015).

Inclusion and Peer Relationships

When students without disabilities have had positive perceptions of their relationships with students who have disabilities, the students with disabilities' behavior problems have been less frequent, and the students with disabilities have had more social interactions with non-disabled peers (Robertson et al., 2013). Placing students with autism in groups with students who do well in school has been more successful because the more successful students have been more willing to accept the differences of students with autism (Able et al., 2015). Cameron and Cook (2013) found that when interviewing general education teachers about their goals for students who have disabilities in the classroom with non-disabled peers, teachers wanted students with typical development to become more accepting of students with disabilities.

Bottema-Beutel, Turiel, DeWitt, and Wolfberg (2017) studied students without autism and their reasoning strategies in vignettes in which a child with autism is not invited to a social event. They found that all of the students interviewed considered exclusion of students with disabilities as unacceptable. The authors concluded that teachers and other professionals should provide structured opportunities for general education students to invite students with autism and encourage inclusion of these students.

Students with autism have had fewer friendships than other students in regular education classrooms at the elementary level. As they enter middle and high school, their ability to develop and maintain friendships will be even more challenged. Able et al. (2015) stated that for students with autism, they had more loneliness and poorer friendship quality than their peers without autism. Cameron and Cook (2013) found that teachers strove to get students without disabilities to become more accepting of students with disabilities.

High school students with autism were paired with students without disabilities to research the impact of peer support at the high school level in a study by Carter et al. (2016). The students in this study were in general education classrooms but previously rarely interacted with other students. During the time that peer support was used, the students with autism increased their social interactions with students who did not have a disability. They had limited improvement in initiating social interactions. While the students had increased social interactions, it did not negatively affect their academic involvement. This study did not look at long term effects or at how the students did in classes that did not have peer support.

Bullying is a problem that has affected many students, and students with disabilities have been targets to students who bully. Sterzing, Shattuck, Narendorf, and Cooper (2012) found that youth with an autism spectrum disorder are bullied almost five times as much as their peers. 46% of children with autism in middle and high school report that they have been bullied at school in the last year. Anderson (2014) found that bullying was most prevalent in grades five through eight for students with autism. Between 42% and 49% of students with autism in this grade range reported being

bullied in the past month. Anderson (2014) found that parents reported that their children with autism were bullied repeatedly because the students who bullied thought that it was funny when children with autism had loss of emotional self-control after being bullied. This then sometimes led to aggression towards other students and the teacher. Students with autism needed the support of peers and school staff to deal with school bullying. Tennessee has required that all public schools have a bullying prevention policy to educate and reduce bullying in the schools, as well as a reporting system in order to document the frequency of bullying (Tenn. Code Ann. 49-6-4503, 2014).

Students with autism who were placed in groups with students who did well in school were more successful (Able et al., 2015). Teachers wanted to see students with autism be accepted by peers without disabilities and worked both at the elementary and high school level to get students without disabilities to include students with autism (Cameron & Cook, 2013). Bullying has been a problem for students with autism, and Tennessee has implemented a bullying prevention policy to educate and reduce bullying for all students.

Teaching Strategies that Impact the Success of Students with Autism in the Classroom

Hart and Whalon (2011) stated that teachers and others working with students who have autism needed to be given multiple strategies that help students with autism in the general classroom. They identified evidence-based strategies that have been proven to be successful such as flexible grouping, concrete supports, self-management, and video modeling. With flexible grouping, students with autism were placed with students who did not have disabilities and took turns teaching the other students with a scripted lesson which gave the students with autism an opportunity to lead the group.

Concrete supports included visuals, scripts, and other concrete supports which provided visual or written information to help students with autism interact with others. As they experienced this, students with autism also began to have more spontaneous interactions. Self-management allowed students with autism to decrease their dependence on others during independent tasks and group activities. With self-management, students may have been given a checklist or other visual support to use during an activity so that they were able to self-monitor during the activity. These strategies helped with both social interaction and academic learning. Video modeling allowed the student with autism to watch a video of appropriate behavior or appropriate follow through on a task so that the child with autism could then successfully replicate the behavior or task. The students with autism then needed opportunities to practice what they observed so that they could get feedback on their interactions.

Delmolino and Harris (2011) found a significant benefit of autism intervention occurred when parents were trained in the teaching methods used for their child with autism and involved in their child with autism's education. Behavior has often been an issue with children with autism in the school and home setting. When parents were involved and educated on how the teachers and other school professionals were addressing behavior problems at school, parents could use the same methods at home, which decreased problem behaviors at home and school.

Knight, Sartini, and Spriggs (2015) researched the effectiveness of visual activity schedules for students with autism "to determine whether visual activity schedules can be considered an evidence-based practice" (p. 157). Visual activity schedules "have been used to teach, improve, maintain, and generalize a range of skills (e.g., on task,

on-schedule, transition, percentage of task completion) across environments.” (p. 173). Visual activity schedules produced positive effects with students, including increased on-task behavior and decreased need for prompting students. The authors concluded that they could be considered an evidence-based practice and that visual activity schedules could benefit students of all ages with autism.

Spencer, Evmenova, Boon, and Hayes-Harris (2014) examined various interventions for students with autism and found that providing concrete representations was effective for students with autism. The examples that they gave included concept maps, graphic organizers, mnemonics and the *TouchMath* program. Each of these examples helped with the need for visuals to increase opportunities for learning.

Technology-based interventions have been used to teach academic skills to students with autism. Knight, McKissick, and Sanders (2013) studied whether instructional technology could be considered evidence-based and effective in teaching children with autism. The authors concluded there was not sufficient research to consider technology-based interventions evidence based, but they found that technology-based interventions had been effective in reinforcing skills in English/Language Arts, to teach discrete trials with words and symbol identification, and as another way to provide information visually (Knight et al., 2013).

Dillenburger (2012) researched the success of applied behavior analysis (ABA) and found that ABA was very successful with students with autism. While it was successful, it was also very expensive. Insurance companies and school systems did not often pay for ABA. Dillenburger found that if teachers and other school employees were trained in ABA based methods, there would be enormous savings to schools and

parents. Jacobson, Foxx, and Murdock (2005) stated that early behavior intervention could save \$200,000 per child by the age of 22 years. In addition to this savings, the students would be more successful in the classroom, which would impact the success of other children in the classroom and teacher satisfaction.

Hart and Whalon (2011) found that teachers needed many strategies to help students with autism be successful in the general classroom. All strategies do not work for all students so a variety of strategies were discussed which could be used.

Delmolino and Harris (2011) found that when parents were trained on the teaching methods used at school, these methods helped at home and at school. Visual activity schedules are one effective way that students with autism were helped at school and also at home (Knight et al., 2015). Technology based interventions have been effective in teaching students with autism, as well as applied behavior analysis (Knight et al., 2013). When these strategies were used at school and at home, success for students with autism improved.

Academic Impact of Educational Placement on Students with Autism

Placement in full inclusion had a significant impact on academic achievement (Kurth & Mastergeorge, 2010a). Students with autism who are included in general education classes have more rigorous Individualized Education Plan goals (Kurth & Mastergeorge, 2010b). Students with autism in general education settings had greater success than students with autism educated in self-contained education classrooms (Kurth, 2015; Oh-Young & Filler, 2015). Nahmias, Kase, and Mandell (2014) found that the benefit of inclusive preschool placements lead to students experiencing greater average gains in cognitive scores than children who attend preschools with peers who

have disabilities. When comparing special education and general education settings, there was a significant difference in non-instructional time. Bui, Quirk, Almazinan and Valenti (2010) found that in the special education classroom, 58% of the time was classified as non-instructional versus 35% of the time in general education classes. Non-instructional time included social time, play time, etc., versus academic or instructional time.

Impact of Placement on Social Skills for Students with Autism

Because students with autism have had difficulty with social interaction and communication, students with autism were often not as accepted by their peers as students without disabilities and faced more rejection than typical students (Jones & Frederickson, 2010). Locke, Fuller, and Kasari (2014) reported that neglected children have more negative attitudes towards children with autism and were less willing to engage with them than popular children. Petrina, Carter, and Stephenson (2017) compared the importance of social skills and other outcomes for students with autism. “Both teachers and parents rated and ranked social skills, emotional development and friendship as the three most important outcomes when compared to intellectual and academic skills, physical skill and motor development” (p. 114).

Teachers have used peers without disabilities to help students with autism increase their social skills. McCurdy and Cole (2014) researched the impact of a peer supporter on a student with autism in the general classroom. The peer supporter was trained on ways to address off task behavior with the student that they were assigned to support. McCurdy and Cole compared off task behavior before and after the peer supporter was introduced and concluded that “the peer support intervention was

effective in reducing the off task behavior of students with autism to a level similar of that with their classroom peers” (p. 890). Jackson and Campbell (2009) found that teachers often selected peers of the same gender to pair with students with autism, which they stated might be due to children segregating into same-sex groups for play and social activities during middle childhood. One successful study involved using a small group of typical peers to work with students who had autism on social skills training during recess. After social skills training during recess, the students with autism increased their social interactions and their social initiation to play (Harper, Symon, & Frea, 2008). In another study using the Superheroes social skills training once per week for thirty minutes each week over a period of eight weeks, students were more engaged socially during recess once the training began (Radley, Ford, & Battaglia, 2014). Students initiated interactions with peers during recess and responded to peers more after the training. Radley et al. (2014) found that students with autism had increased social engagement during generalized settings such as recess. Students who participated in the training had more connections to peers after the training, which could help the students form friendships. Radley et al. suggested that improvements in social relationships could then potentially lead to other improved outcomes, such as higher academic achievement and later employment opportunities (2014). In situations where typical students are aware of a peer’s diagnosis of autism and how a peer with autism could act differently, the peers are more likely to include and accept the students with autism (Ochs, Kremer-Sadlick, Solomon, & Sirota, 2001). Oh-Young and Filler (2015) found that students with disabilities who are not placed in an inclusive classroom score

lower on assessments that measure social outcomes than students who are placed in an inclusive classroom.

Feldman, Carter, Asmus, and Brock (2016) found in their study of high school students that students with autism were present for an average of only 80.6% of a class period. Some students came in late, and some left early, which affected their ability to interact with students without disabilities. Even when in class, students were only in proximity to peers an average of 38.1% of the class period. At other times they were seated with other students with disabilities or next to a paraprofessional. With this limited amount of time with peers, students had fewer opportunities for positive or negative interaction with peers. Social skills had been a deficit for students with autism, and not allowing social opportunities for students with autism exacerbated the problem.

Oh-Young and Filler (2015) have found that students with autism were able to improve their social skills when placed in a general classroom and scored higher on social skills assessments. Peer support has been used effectively to reduce off-task behavior for students with autism. Social skills training was also effective in helping students with autism increase their social interactions during play time at recess.

Feldman et al. (2016) found that high school students with autism who were included for part of the school day spent less time in the classroom than their peers which impacted their ability to have social interactions.

Chapter Summary

Since Kanner first described characteristics of autism in 1943, researchers have searched for a cause, treatment, appropriate interventions, etc., but questions remain about the etiology of autism and how to appropriately intervene in the school setting for students with autism. As special education laws indicate for all disabilities, an intervention plan for each student with autism has to be individualized. All interventions do not work for all students who have autism. Because of this, serious consideration has to be given to the appropriate placement for students with autism to allow them to make as much progress as possible in an appropriate placement. General educators, special educators, parents and administrators should work together to determine the best placement for a child with autism then work together to determine the best educational plan for that child. Students without disabilities affect how students with disabilities do in the classroom so insuring that students who are used as peer helpers, partners, etc. are appropriately matched is important. Bullying is a problem for students with and without disabilities so educating students about bullying and working to stop bullying at the school level is important. Social skills are an area of weakness for many students with autism so providing interventions at school that help with this will help students with autism be more successful with peers. Further research is needed to continue to find what helps students with autism adjust and succeed in the general classroom.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This study was a qualitative study that examined teacher perceptions of inclusion on students with autism by interviewing general and special education teachers about their perceptions working with students who had autism. Administrators also participated in the study to provide their perceptions. Specifically, teachers and administrators were asked to give their perceptions of the inclusion efforts at their school. Teachers and administrators were asked to identify whether they felt qualified to teach students with autism and to identify what would help them be better prepared to teach students with autism. Teachers and administrators were asked what factors were necessary to support students with autism in the inclusion setting. They were then asked to identify what impacts students with autism have on other students in the inclusion setting. The purpose of this chapter is to describe the methods and procedures used to conduct the investigation.

Qualitative Method Used

The qualitative method used for this study was a phenomenological study. A phenomenological study was used to describe “the lived experiences of individuals about a phenomenon as described by participants” (Creswell, 2014, p.14). In this study, in-depth analysis of interviews of teachers and administrators who had worked with students that have autism in Blank County, Tennessee occurred.¹ The phenomenon in this study was inclusion of students with autism. Interviews were conducted with

¹ Blank County, TN is a pseudonym for the county in which this research was conducted.

teachers from each of the five school settings, as well as two administrators from the school that had the most students with autism in the inclusion setting. This would be the most appropriate way to conduct research perceptions of teachers and administrators regarding inclusion for students with autism. Creswell wrote that in phenomenology, “inquirers attempt to build the essence of experience from participants” (2014, p. 66).

Research Questions

The study will be guided by the following overarching research questions.

1. What are the perceptions of general education and special education teachers of inclusion efforts within their school?
2. What factors are necessary to support students with autism in an inclusion setting?
3. What inhibits students with autism in an inclusion setting?
4. What are the academic and social expectations of general education teachers for students with autism participating in the general classroom?

Role of the Researcher

The role in the researcher in this study was one of an interviewer. This took place in the natural setting because it occurred face to face where the participants teach (Creswell, 2014). An open-ended interview was used, with the same questions being asked in the same order for each participant (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The researcher had previous experience teaching students in the inclusion setting so was

Careful to form questions in a way that they were not leading the participants to answer the questions in a certain way based on the question rather than the participant's experience. After all field notes were transcribed, the researcher then met with the participants a second time to insure that the notes were transcribed correctly and asked for any additional statements or if any information should be changed.

Sources/Subject/Population Sample

Convenience sampling was used because general education and special education teachers who work for Blank County Tennessee Department of Education were invited to participate in the study. One general and one special education teacher from each Pre K-8 school in Blank County participated in this study, as well as two administrators from the school that had the most students with autism in the inclusion setting. Permission was obtained from the Director of Schools before beginning the study. An open-ended interview was used, with the same questions being asked in the same order (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).

Data Collection Methods

During the planning phase of data collection, the researcher obtained permission to interview participants. Before conducting research, permission was obtained from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of East Tennessee State University. During actual data collection, individual interviews were conducted. Participant responses were collected, and follow-up interviews were conducted if needed. Initial interviews lasted approximately sixty minutes, with the time varying according to length of responses from participants. Interviews were recorded then transcribed. Member checking occurred to

insure accuracy, and any additional comments were incorporated into the findings. After completion, collected data was compiled to begin interpreting the information (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).

Data Analysis Methods

During qualitative data analysis, the researcher is required to show how data were synthesized and identify the strategies used (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Coding was used to categorize the information into similar topics. Creswell (2014) described two different ways to code: developing a list of expected topics then fitting the data into those topics, and developing a list of topics from the data collected, which was the more traditional way to code. The researcher used the more traditional way to code by developing themes from the data collected. Coding line by line occurred to insure that all themes are identified. Triangulation of the data from different sources increased the validity of this study (Creswell, 2014). This occurred by interviewing and getting multiple perspectives, which included general education and special education teachers from different schools in Blank County, as well as two administrators from the school with the most students who have autism in the inclusion setting. Triangulation occurred by having the perspectives of the teachers and the administrators about their perceptions of inclusion for students with autism.

Credibility and Trustworthiness

Trochim (2006) stated that true credibility could only be determined by the participants in the research. McMillan and Schumacher stated that the researcher must include results that the participants recognize as credible. The researcher must have

trustworthy data that is not influenced by the researcher's beliefs or influence (2010). Member checking assisted in determining the credibility of the data. Creswell (2014) wrote that part of credibility during the research process includes always focusing on the meaning that the participants have about the issue of inclusion for students with autism and not on the meaning that the researcher had or the authors in the literature review.

In this study, participants had the opportunity to review all field notes and transcription of the interviews to determine the accuracy of the data gathered. By allowing the participants to review the field notes and transcription of the interviews, credibility and trustworthiness was created. A peer debriefer was used to review the data and ask questions about the qualitative study (Creswell, 2014).

Ethical Considerations

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), qualitative research has a higher probability of being obtrusive than quantitative research. Because of this, extra care was necessary to remain ethical. Participants were notified of confidentiality and anonymity, including being informed that pseudonyms would be utilized to identify the participants. Information was collected, but participants' wishes were considered when reporting the data. Member checking assisted with the accuracy of the data collection and reporting. The Institutional Review Board required informed consent for study participants.

Chapter Summary

A qualitative design was appropriate to determine what makes inclusion successful for students who have autism. The qualitative approach used open ended questions to consider the effects of inclusion on students with autism. The role of the

researcher was one of an interviewer. Participants from each of the K-8 schools in Blank County completed initial interviews then had follow-up interviews to determine if any additional comments should have been added or if any information should be changed to accurately reflect the views of the participants.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the perceptions of teachers and administrators regarding inclusion for students with autism in general classrooms. General education teachers and special education teachers who had worked with students with autism were interviewed, as well as administrators from the school in the district that had the highest population of students with autism. The research was guided by the four research questions utilized for qualitative data collection for this study.

1. What are the perceptions of general education and special education teachers of inclusion efforts within their school?
2. What factors are necessary to support students with autism in an inclusion setting?
3. What inhibits students with autism in an inclusion setting?
4. What are the academic and social expectations of general education teachers for students with autism participating in the general classroom?

Data were collected through twelve in-depth interviews with a purposeful sample of general education teachers, five special education teachers, and two administrators in a rural Tennessee school system. Teachers from each of the elementary schools in

the district were interviewed, as well as administrators from the school with the highest population of students with autism. Each of the ten teachers were asked the same interview questions (see Appendix A), and each administrator answered questions which were more specific to administrators (see Appendix B).

Ethical issues for this study were examined. The East Tennessee State University Institutional Review Board granted approval to conduct human subject research (see Appendix C). Emails to potential participants were sent to teachers from each of the elementary schools identifying the researcher and the content of the study (see Appendix D). Emails were also sent to the administrators of the school with the most students with autism in the county (see Appendix E).

Interviews lasted 45 to 60 minutes and were conducted at a time and place of each participant's choosing. Prior to each interview I explained the Informed Consent process in detail, and each study participant signed an Informed Consent form (see Appendix F). During interviews participants were asked to not use names of schools or individuals. Interviews were recorded on my laptop, assigned a unique code, then transcribed the interviews verbatim. Member checking then was used to assist with data collection. Participants were given a transcript of their interview to insure accuracy of transcription, as well as to give any additional information that they might want to share.

Study Participants

Special education teachers provided brief demographic information about their gender, years of experience teaching, as well as school levels and school settings in which they had taught students with autism. Table 1 provides a summary of demographic information pertaining to special education teacher participants.

Table1

Demographic Information about Special Education Teacher Participants

Code	Gender	Years Teaching	Level(s) Taught	Setting
SS1	F	10	Elementary, High School	Self-Contained, Resource
SF1	F	11	Elementary, High School	Self-Contained, Inclusion, Resource
SU1	F	26	Elementary, High School	Resource, Inclusion, Self-Contained
SB2	F	6	Elementary	Resource, Inclusion
SH1	F	37	Elementary	Resource, Inclusion

General education teachers provided brief demographic information about their years of experience teaching, as well as school levels in which they had taught students with autism. Table 2 provides a summary of demographic information pertaining to general education teacher participants.

Table 2

Demographic Information about General Education Teacher Participants

Code	Gender	Years Teaching	Level(s) Taught
RU1	F	41	Elementary
RS1	F	7	Elementary
RB1	F	4	Elementary
RF2	F	27	Elementary
RH1	F	28	Elementary

Administrators provided brief demographic information about their gender, years of experience as an administrator, as well as school levels in which they had taught students with autism, and their current setting as administrators working with students who have autism. Table 3 provides a summary of demographic information pertaining to administrator participants.

Table 3

Demographic Information about Administrators

Code	Gender	Years as Administrator	Level(s) Taught	Current Setting
A1	F	13	Elementary	Pre K - 8
A2	M	7	Middle School, High School	Pre K - 8

Themes

Based on the coding and review of interview transcripts, the following themes were observed regarding perceptions of inclusion efforts within teachers' schools:

- Special education teachers and general education teachers have a different view on how placement decisions are made for students with autism
- Students with autism are in the general classroom for more time than in the past
- Students with autism are making academic gains in the general classroom
- Inclusion in the classroom is defined differently by different teachers
- Some teachers do not accept the need for supports and strategies necessary for students with autism

One predominant theme about placement was related to how placement decisions are made for students with autism. General education teachers felt that they had little or no input about placement decisions. Teacher RF1 stated, "I have always thought it was more of a special ed. teacher decision, but if I have problems I take those to the administrator or special education teacher." Teacher RU1 stated, "I feel like I have no input on placement initially because I am a kindergarten teacher, and they either already have an IEP in place from preschool...or do not have services yet." All but one of the special education teachers indicated a different perspective of placement being a team decision. Teacher SU1 stated,

We have the team, and each person on the team has input on placement and services...We look at the least restrictive environment for each student, but

sometimes they come in with an IEP in place that tells us where they go. With others we want to start with inclusion then change to more restrictive only if we have to.

Teacher SS1 added, "I have prior experience and expertise on developing the IEP and looking at placement, and that certainly helps to guide the team in making the placement decision." Teacher SH1 had a different perspective and stated, "Special ed. teacher mainly calls the shots and makes the decision, and everyone goes along with it. There is not much questioning about placement." Administrator A1 stated that administrators have as much input as needed regarding placement decisions but also "need to hear input from others and don't want to do it without advice or hearing concerns from other members of the team." Administrator A2 stated,

I am fully involved in the placement of autistic students within the classroom. Our student placement system first involves the current teachers placing all students into the classroom for the next year. I then review all potential class rosters for the upcoming school year during the first week of summer. If needed, I meet with the assistant principal and special education teacher to determine if the placement is the correct placement. We discuss the individual child's IEP, discipline record, and attendance record. We also discuss how to best serve the child as far as IEP coverage.

Another theme that emerged about placement was students with autism spending more time in the general classroom than they have in the past. Teacher RS1 stated, "Students [with autism] in the school are being included more, even with

students in the CDC.” Teacher RF1 expressed, “They [students with autism] are in the general classroom more than in the past and for more subjects than in the past.”

Teacher SU1 stated, “Previously, students with disabilities were in self-contained classrooms and not given an opportunity to be in other classes. Some of my students [with autism] now are in full inclusion.”

In addition to students with autism spending more time in the general classroom than in the past, a theme about academic gains emerged. Teacher SF1 noted that students are making social and academic gains since being in the general education classroom more. Teacher SU1 stated, “We [teachers and administrators] are doing a better job with them [students with autism] now and looking at where they need to be academically.”

Another prevalent theme about placement and inclusion was the differing views of what inclusion is perceived to be by different teachers. Teacher RU1 stated, “Students [with autism] would benefit from the general classroom more if there were more EA [Education Assistant] time...Some students are pulled from the general ed. classroom too quickly.” Teacher RB1 teaches at a school where there is not a self-contained classroom for students. Students would be sent to another school if that were the placement needed. Teacher RB1 stated, “Teachers and administrators make it work for students with autism to be in the general classroom, and alternate placement isn’t considered.” Teacher SH1 expressed frustration with students with autism and other disabilities having services based on the quality of the special education assistant. SH1 stated,

With a weak assistant the child [with autism] might not get the right type of support, and the regular education teachers don't know what to do with them, [students with autism] and the teachers just leave it to the special education staff to see that they get what they need.

Teacher SS1 commented, "There needs to be more talk about inclusion and talk about serving students with disabilities. If the push is for inclusion, there needs to be more instruction on how to do that."

An additional theme to emerge from the interviews with teachers about inclusion efforts at their schools was that some teachers do not show a commitment to utilizing supports and strategies that are needed for students with autism in the general classroom. Teacher SS1 stated, "General ed. teachers sometimes want to teach in the box because that is how they learned." Teacher SS1 further stated,

Inclusion is not putting the student [with autism] in the back of the room. Inclusion is not that they are in your room. True inclusion is having all students paired, they have the same materials as everyone else, they don't share if there is not enough or sit at the back of room with an EA. Everybody should work with partners and not just the child with [a] disability. Inclusion is that child comes in and does the same as everyone else in the room.

Teacher SF1 stated that general education teachers need to be "consistent with strategies and open to trying new things." Teacher SU1 stated that when teachers have tried supports and strategies and "who have not seen the success may not want to try it again. Teachers need the support to implement the ideas and to help make sure it is

working.” Teacher RU1 added, “[Teachers] are under so much pressure and stress about test scores and don’t have the freedom to do what they need to do for students with autism.”

Based on the coding and review of interview transcripts, the following themes were observed regarding factors necessary to support students with autism in an inclusion setting:

- More training for teachers and educational assistants, as well as more education about disabilities
- More assistance from trained assistants in the classroom
- More collaboration between special education teachers and general education teachers
- Accommodations in the classroom used appropriately
- Peers’ influence

A predominant theme expressed by teachers and administrators was a need for more training for teachers and educational assistants, as well as more education about disabilities and how they affect students’ learning and behavior. Every teacher and administrator interviewed agreed that more training on working with students with autism was needed. Teacher SH1 discussed one area of training needed for general education teachers who are teaching students with autism. Teacher SH1 stated,

If the regular ed. teacher is open to modification, they don’t know what to do or how to do it. On a test they may mark out some of the questions, but there is a lot more that needs to be done and that could be done.

Teacher SB2 stated, “They [teachers] see the student struggle and think that they should not be in the general classroom. There should be a class on different disabilities when teachers are going to school for their degree.” Teacher SU1 discussed the need for more training and supervision for educational assistants. She stated, “The support may not always be adequately trained and supervising the support (EA) is sometimes difficult. It can be difficult to insure that they are using their training when not supervised.” Teacher SS1 discussed the need for experienced teachers to have more training on working with students with disabilities. She stated,

There needs to be ongoing staff development on how to work with students with disabilities, how to work with students with autism, how to incorporate sensory issues, not just for special ed. population. Regular education teachers need this training and not just special education teachers going to the training and relaying it to regular ed. teachers.

Administrator A1 stated, “I would like to see more training for general education teachers so that they are able to work with the inclusion child and be more comfortable with it.” Administrator A1 stated that currently,

Sometimes when we have an autistic student in our building for several years, teachers down the hall may think ‘oh if he’s in my room, I don’t know if I can handle him – if he tries to hit me I don’t know what I’ll do’, so I think the fear and the uncomfortable part of it may affect the attitude, even they don’t mean for it to, of having that student or a similar student.

Another theme expressed by several teachers was the need for more assistance from trained assistants in the classroom. Teacher SB2 stated, “The assistants sometimes become upset when students get upset in class, so ongoing crisis intervention training is needed.” Teacher SH1 stated, “If I were changing anything, there would be more aides and they would be trained to work with the kids with autism.” Teacher RH1 stated in response to a question about students with autism having adequate support in the classroom, “Teachers and assistants need more information and more training in the beginning.” Teacher RU1 stated, “Students would benefit from the classroom more if there were more EA time.”

A theme noted by general education and special education teachers was the need for more collaboration between special education and general education teachers. When discussing the most important factors to facilitate successful inclusion for students with autism, Teacher SU1 stated, “...collaboration between everyone to find out what works for the child.” Teacher SB2 stated, “The special education teacher needs to be there to support and help the general education teacher with suggestions of what they need to do to help the student, and to tell them what has worked with the student.” When discussing what would help the general education teacher be better prepared to teach students with autism, Teacher SH1 stated,

It varies from child to child. If the regular educator would sit down one on one with the special education teacher that is in charge of the child, and the special education teacher knows what they are doing and explain different techniques and that child's autism...

Another theme that was noted by many of the special education teachers was the need for accommodations to be used appropriately in the classroom by general education teachers. Teacher SF1 responded that for general education teachers to be more prepared to teach students with autism, there needs to be “individualizing instruction more for students with autism, being consistent with strategies and open to trying to new things.” Teacher SU1 stated that for accommodations to be used appropriately, teachers “have to have buy in and see successes.” Teacher SS1 noted, “The special ed. teacher provides support and information and recommendations for the general ed. setting, but it doesn’t always transfer the way it should.” SS1 also stated,

Sometimes it is hard to get the teachers to buy into using visual schedules or other techniques needed for the students with disabilities to be more successful. It takes more time in the front end, but if you can get them on board it will help in the long run.

Another theme identified by general education and special education teachers was the influence of peers on inclusion of students with autism, as well as the impact students with autism have on peers in the general classroom. Teacher SU1 stated,

Some students [with autism] have had problems which would make other students suffer if it were not gotten under control. If you have the training and everybody implements what they are supposed to, the positives outweigh the negatives because they learn that people with autism are part of society...

Teacher SF1 stated in response to a question about the impact students with autism have on other students in the classroom that “helps students be more

understanding of others, mutually beneficial, using peer buddies more which is helping all students.” Administrator A2 stated, “There are students with autism who have led the classroom discussion on things that were ‘their thing.’” Teacher RS1 stated that, “By including students with autism, it helps students with autism and other students work together and accept differences.” Teacher SS1 responded to the question about the impact students with autism have on other students in the classroom by saying,

The impact is huge. It is a learning opportunity for everyone. If we don’t teach everyone early on that not everyone is the same then we are doing a huge injustice. We will be at work in places there are people with autism. We will be in society with people with autism. Inclusion is being accepting of that other person. Sometimes you don’t understand what another person is going through because you don’t know anything about it...they need to be accepted. If we teach that early on we are doing everyone a favor.

Based on the coding and review of interview transcripts, the following themes were identified as inhibiting students with autism in an inclusion setting:

- Behaviors of the students with autism and the reaction of other students in the classroom
- Lack of follow through with accommodations by general education teachers
- Problems with social acceptance and treatment by peers
- Academics difficult for students

A prevalent theme among administrators and teachers was the behavior of students with autism possibly inhibiting the academic performance of all students in

the classroom and how it also affects interactions with other students in the classroom. Teacher SH1 discussed how special education teachers and special education assistants intervene before a behavior problem occurs. She stated, "Usually the problem is a loud noise level and when it gets to be too much, and if there is a good assistant the assistant will recognize the signs and bring the child out." She stated that when intervention does not occur before a behavior problem

I think sensory overload triggers their autistic tendencies more than anything. Then, I would whatever levels their communication abilities are, their abilities to communicate also affect their functioning levels. The harder it is for them to communicate with our standard language (both verbal and body communications) the harder it is for them to function.

Teacher RB1 stated about student behaviors, "Occasionally a student [with autism] might have to leave the room briefly, but the aide takes them out so there is not a disruption." Teacher SH1 stated, "I have seen with younger students the children get scared of an autistic child having a meltdown, and the student with autism should have been taken out before the meltdown." Teacher RH1 stated, "Sometimes students with autism may disrupt the class with tantrums, but students learn to deal with it and move on." Administrator A2 discussed the need to address behaviors and how his school is approaching this issue. Administrator A2 stated, "We are also starting a new RTIB (Response to Intervention - Behavior) group that will look at behavior and how to intervene with behaviors. This will look at how we can change these behaviors and improve our academic success." Administrator A2 also discussed ways that students with autism may be affected by a full inclusion placement and how to intervene, stating,

This all depends on the IEP and the frequency that he/she is an inclusion setting. For example, if an autistic student is high on the spectrum their sensory issues may prevent the individual child from listening or participating on the same level as general education students. Students who have organizational issues may need extra supports like schedules, checklists and planners to improve executive functioning skills.

Administrator A1 discussed her observations of how behavior of students with autism affects the classroom. She stated, "I've seen classrooms where there were peers working with an autistic student, and they all got along just fine. I have also seen students who maybe had outbursts and had problems in the classroom." Teacher SB2 noted a way that students in the classroom react to the behaviors of a student with autism. She stated, "Some students may know what is going to set off a kid with autism and set them off."

Another emerging theme among special education teachers was the lack of follow through with accommodations for students with autism by general education teachers. Teacher SH1 stated that when looking at accommodations and modifications, general education teachers "don't know what to do or how to do it. On a test they may mark out some of the answers, but there is a lot more that needs to be done and could be done." Teacher SS1 stated, "Sometimes it is hard to get the teachers to buy into using visual schedules or other techniques needed for the students with disabilities to be more successful." She added that teachers need "a willingness to keep trying because sometimes you try and something doesn't work and you have to keep trying until you find the right support or right solution for that student's needs."

A theme among teachers and administrators was students with autism having difficulty with social acceptance and treatment of the students by peers. Teacher RU1 discussed how students with autism of different ages are treated differently by students who do not have autism. She stated,

The young ones love them and realize that they are special, and they can teach each other. As they get older, the extreme cases are still fine, but the other ones get made fun of because they don't realize the disability.

Administrator A1 stated, "As they get older, the way the peers feel about that student [with autism] affects the student more and more, and they know the student is different. It depends on the student." Teacher RS1 stated, "At times I feel that students with autism who are fully included can have challenges socially in the classroom." Teacher SS1 stated, "At some point we have to work with the regular education students to build relationships with students with autism."

A final theme identified regarding ways that success of students with autism in the general classroom may be inhibited is the academic difficulties experienced by some students with autism. Teacher RS1 stated that among the academic problems for students with autism, "organizational skills can be an issue as well (losing papers, having a hard time keeping up with things or forgetting to bring things to class)." Teacher RS1 further stated, "Some content may need to be modified, also." Teacher RH1 stated,

All students do not need to have the same classes. My son taught one year with students who were taking a high school math class but did not have the

prerequisite skills. After working with students who could not add and subtract or count money, but trying to teach them higher math skills, he decided that he would go back to school for a different profession. There are some things that all students need, if they can learn them, but all students do not need AP classes or Algebra, etc.

Teacher RH1 also stated, “If a middle school student is reading at pre-primer level, regular education for reading is not the best.” Teacher SU1 stated that if the student is “below the 25th percentile, intervention time.” While discussing inclusion, Teacher SH1 stated, “There needs to be more individualization [for students with autism]. Inclusion is not the total answer, and self-contained is not the total answer. Some students don’t need to be included for certain subjects or certain times.” Teacher RF1 stated, “Inclusion is great, but there are some times that students need to be taught outside the general classroom.”

Based on the coding and review of interview transcripts, the following themes were observed regarding general education teachers’ social and academic expectations for students with autism participating in the general classroom:

- Different social and behavioral expectations according to the type of placement and severity of disability
- Different academic expectations according to the type of placement and severity of disability
- Teachers require more group work and peer collaboration

One theme that emerged for general education teachers regarding social and academic expectations for students with autism participating in the general classroom is the different social and behavioral expectations according to the severity of the disability and the type of placement for the student with autism. There are students who were placed in the general classroom for socialization, but their primary placement was in a self-contained classroom. Other students with autism were placed in the general classroom for the majority of the school day, and this research focused on these students. Teacher RU1 stated that students with autism are able to remain in the classroom after behavior problems “until other children can no longer learn” or students with autism “are a danger to others.” Teacher SU1 stated, “the goal is [for the student to] function and follow the rules and pick your battles, to be flexible” when working with students with autism who are having behavior problems in the general classroom. Teacher SS1 stated, “CDC behaviors are often overlooked where inclusion students [with autism] are expected to behave as typical students.” When asked about students with behavior plans in place, Teacher SS1 replied, “Regular ed. teachers typically have a difficult time following behavior plans.”

Another theme that emerged regarding general education teachers’ social and academic expectations for students with autism participating in the general classroom was the different academic expectations according to the severity of the disability and the type of placement for the student with autism. Teacher RU1 stated that in academics, “you may have to detour off the main track to help the students learn because students learn differently.” Teacher SU1 stated, “You have accommodations and modifications and flexibility when working with students [with autism in the general

classroom].” Teacher RH1 stated, “Students in the general classroom are usually expected to do all of the work that other students do, unless they are coming from the CDC classroom.” Teacher RS1 stated,

I feel that social and academic expectations would be the same as students without autism, but an open mind would need to be kept. If students with autism are not able to do certain things that other students can do, then modifications would be needed. I feel that students with autism should not be limited and need the same expectations and encouragement as everyone else.

Teacher RB1 discussed the importance of all students being held to the same standards. She stated that she tells them this,

‘I want you to do this’ but says that they may not do the exact same thing. We are all going to do this, but these might get extra help and not write as much. They know we are all going to do this together. They know we have to all do this.

Administrator A2 stated that at his school,

Academic expectations are high for all children. However, we follow the IEP to ensure that the child meets all IEP goals. We use a variety of academic and professional settings such as PLCs, RTI-A, RTI-B and tiered intervention groups to make this happen for all children including autistic children.

Teacher SH1 stated when asked teachers have different expectations for students with autism,

I definitely think so, but I attribute that to lack of knowledge about autism. Also, each autistic child is very different. Understanding then accommodating those differences between students is harder for the regular ed teacher because they have so many students to work with.

A final theme that emerged regarding social and academic expectations of general education teachers for students with autism participating in the general classroom is teachers changing how students are grouped for learning. General education teachers require more group work and peer collaboration than previously. Teacher SF1 stated that at her school, they are “using peer buddies more which is helping all students. This has been done some with middle school grades and some with lower grades.” Teacher SS1 stated, “Everybody should work with partners and not just the child with a disability.” RH1 stated, “When I taught science I had a lot of students with autism. We did a lot of group work and did experiments which all of the kids enjoyed. Students learn from each other.” Teacher RS1 stated, “Pairing with peers works.”

Chapter Summary

The findings detailed in Chapter 4 include verbatim comments made by the 12 participants during one-on-one interviews in response to open-ended questions asked by the researcher. The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the perceptions of general education teachers and special education teachers regarding inclusion for

students with autism in general classrooms. This included first studying how schools determined placement for students with autism, the academic and social influences of placement in the general classroom, perceptions of teachers and administrators about inclusion for students with autism, teaching strategies that worked for students with autism in the general classroom, and the influence other students in the classroom have on students with autism. Potential participants were contacted by email as approved by the IRB. All participants signed informed consent forms before participating in the audio-recorded interviews.

The themes that emerged regarding the perceptions of teachers with inclusion efforts in their school were: special education teachers and general education teachers have a different view on how placement decisions are made for students with autism, students with autism are in the general classroom for more time than in the past, students with autism are making academic gains in the general classroom, inclusion in the classroom is defined differently by different teachers, and some teachers do not buy-in to supports and strategies needed for students with autism.

The themes that emerged regarding factors necessary to support students with autism in an inclusion setting were: more training for teachers and educational assistants, as well as more education about disabilities, more assistance from trained assistants in the classroom, more collaboration between special education teachers and general education teachers, accommodations in the classroom used appropriately, and peers' influence.

Themes that emerged which inhibited students with autism in an inclusion setting were: behaviors of the students with autism and the reaction of other students in the classroom, lack of follow through with accommodations by general education teachers, problem with social acceptance and treatment by peers, and academics difficult for some students with autism.

Themes that emerged regarding social and academic expectations for students with autism participating in the general classroom were: different social and behavioral expectations according to the type of placement and severity of disability, different academic expectations according to the type of placement and severity of disability, and teachers require more group work and peer collaboration.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to examine five general education teachers, five special education teachers, and two administrators and their perceptions of inclusion for students with autism in general classrooms. The qualitative method used for this study was a phenomenological study. All participants were interviewed one-on-one with open-ended questions about inclusion for students with autism in the general classroom. Specifically, the research investigated teachers' and administrators' perceptions regarding placement decisions for students with autism, the academic and social influences of placement in the general classroom, perceptions of teachers and administrators about inclusion for students with autism, teaching strategies that worked for students with autism in the general classroom, and the influence other students in the classroom have on students with autism. This information may be useful as the number of students with autism being served in Blank County schools has increased, as well as the emphasis at the state and federal level of using inclusion as the placement for all but the lowest functioning students. Results from this study provide information to teachers and administrators which assists in supporting teachers and educational assistants in the general classroom with students who have autism, as well as increasing the positive effects of inclusion for students with autism in the general education classroom.

Summary of Findings

Four research questions guided this qualitative study. These questions examined the teachers and administrators' perceptions of inclusion for students with autism in general classrooms.

Research Question #1

What are the perceptions of general education and special education teachers of inclusion efforts within their school?

Teachers and administrators were first asked about the decision making process for placement of students with autism. The administrators and four of the special education teachers stated that placement for students was a team decision, while the general education teachers felt they had little or no input and that placement was a special education teacher decision. Several general education teachers did state that they felt they had more input if changes were needed once the student with autism was in the general classroom.

All participants stated that students with autism are in the general classroom more than they were previously. One teacher stated that she saw students with autism in the general classroom more when they were younger but saw them pulled out more into self-contained classrooms when they were older. Several teachers stated that students from self-contained classrooms are coming into the general classroom for increasing amounts of time for socialization.

Teachers agreed that students with autism made academic gains when in the general classroom more and exposed to grade level standards with their peers.

Teachers used group work and peer buddying to help students with autism work with their peers in the general classroom. Teachers and administrators interviewed agreed that this was beneficial to students with autism and other students in the classroom. Several teachers discussed how being with students who have autism in the general classroom and working together prepares students for the future when as adults they will be together in the community.

Special education teachers discussed many of the supports that are available for students with autism but discussed difficulty getting the general education teacher to follow through with supports that the students need. General education teachers were more likely to identify the education assistants as the support that the students had, rather than other supports which the special education teachers had put in place to help the students with autism succeed. Both general education and special education teachers agreed that having more time in the classroom with trained educational assistants would help students with autism be more successful in the classroom.

Research Question #2

What factors are necessary to support students with autism in an inclusion setting?

Every teacher and administrator interviewed agreed that more training on working with students who have autism was needed for teachers and educational assistants. General education teachers stated that they had one class in college on students with special needs and stated that they needed more training on autism and other disabilities. Special education teachers stated that general education teachers do not know how to work with students who have autism and need more training and then

more support from special education teachers and assistants to follow through on what they learned in training. One administrator suggested that more training would help general education teachers be more comfortable teaching students with autism.

Special education teachers stated that more collaboration between special education teachers and general education teachers was necessary to support students with autism. After individualized IEPs were developed for students with autism, collaboration between general education and special education teachers would help ensure that general education teachers had support during implementation of the plan. Special education teachers would then be able to support the general education teacher and ensure that all team members were consistent with strategies. The special education teacher could also offer suggestions when problems arose during the implementation.

Several special education teachers identified a need for general education teachers to use accommodations appropriately in the classroom. Four special education teachers interviewed felt that general education teachers needed to be open to trying new strategies in the classroom to support students with autism. One special education teachers noted that teachers sometimes would not follow through with an accommodation because they had used it before without success, so the general education teachers insinuated they should not have to try it again. The special education teachers discussed how they provided general education teachers support and information to utilize in the classroom, but that sometimes the general education teachers did not transfer the information and use it correctly in the classroom with students who had autism.

Special education and general education teachers interviewed identified the influence peers have on students with autism in the general classroom. Peers were used as peer buddies to help students with autism in the general classroom. Peers were also in groups alongside students with autism, and they worked together on group projects. Each of the five special education teachers interviewed felt that there was a mutual benefit for students with autism and peers in the general classroom. Special education teachers discussed the importance of peers interacting with students who had autism and how this prepared peers who would be with people different than them later in life.

Research Question #3

What inhibits students with autism in an inclusion setting?

Both administrators and most of the teachers agreed that behaviors of students with autism could disrupt class which could affect the academic performance of all students in the classroom and affect interactions with students in the classroom who do not have autism. Several teachers interviewed stated that teachers and assistants intervened before a behavior problem occurred in the classroom. Special education and general education teachers noted that students with autism sometimes had a brief time-out of the classroom to calm down, but other general education teachers discussed how their classes ignored the outbursts and continued with class. One general education teacher noted that students sometimes antagonized students with autism to set them off once the students knew how to trigger the students with autism.

Special education teachers felt that general education teachers not following through with accommodations inhibited students with autism in the general education classroom. They identified different reasons for this occurring. Some special education teachers felt that the general education teachers did not know how to implement the accommodations and modifications for students with autism in the classroom. Other special education teachers talked about the difficulty in getting general education teachers to commit to the idea of implementing supports that they were not familiar with, as well as general education teachers not wanting to try different techniques when others did not work.

Each of the teachers and administrators felt that students with autism had difficulties with social acceptance at school, as well as being mistreated by peers at times. Several teachers discussed how students with autism who have been at the same school for many years are accepted more than students with autism who move into the school at an older age. There were different thoughts on why this occurred. One teacher said that students with more severe disabilities were accepted more than students with autism who might have less visible disabilities. One administrator felt that as students got older, students with autism were affected more by how peers felt about the students with autism.

Academic difficulties also inhibited students with autism in the general classroom. Students with autism worked on the same standards as other students and were expected to be able to do the same work as the other students, but many were not able to do grade level work. Students who were below a certain percentile in math and language arts were pulled for intervention time in order to improve their performance.

The general education teachers felt that there were times it was more appropriate to have students with autism who struggled academically in a pull out setting instead of including the students in a general classroom, but the district had eliminated a lot of pull out services for students.

Research Question #4

What are the academic and social expectations of general education teachers for students with autism participating in the general classroom?

Teachers felt that social and behavioral expectations were different according to the severity of the disability and primary placement. Students who were coming into the classroom from a self-contained classroom for socialization purposes were not held to the same behavior expectations as students with autism who were in the general classroom for most of their day. Students with autism who were in the general classroom for most of the school day were expected to maintain the same level of behaviors as other students in the classroom. When this did not occur, students were given consequences. If the problems continued, the IEP team developed a behavior plan to address the behaviors in order to improve them.

Students with autism in the general classroom for the majority of their school day were exposed to grade level standards and expected to complete the same assignments as students without disabilities. Teachers felt that this was necessary since all students would be tested over the material learned in class. Accommodations and modifications were used as needed. Students who came from a self-contained

classroom were in the classroom primarily for socialization and were not required to complete the same amount of work.

General education teachers and special education teachers felt that with the expectations for students with autism and other disabilities in the general classroom, teachers changed how they provided instruction and grouping. Instead of lecturing, teachers felt that they used more hands on activities and projects which encouraged groups to work together. Students with autism were paired with other students for some instruction, and general education teachers and special education teachers felt that groups were used more in the classroom for learning. Teachers felt these groupings were beneficial for all students.

Conclusions

Including students with autism in the general classroom has occurred for many reasons, including federal legislation to provide all students access to free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment and requirements for testing all students on grade level state standards. As more students with disabilities have been educated in the least restrictive environment, research has been conducted to determine how to successfully include students with autism in the general classroom. Research has shown that many teachers want to include all students in the general classroom but lack the training and knowledge to be successful (Busby et al., 2012). As special education laws indicate for all disabilities, an intervention plan for each student with autism has to be individualized. General educators, special educators, parents and administrators should work together to determine the best placement for a child with autism then work together to determine the best educational plan for that child.

Since Kanner first described characteristics of autism in 1943, researchers have searched for a cause, treatment, appropriate interventions, etc., but questions remain about the etiology of autism and how to appropriately intervene in the school setting for students with autism. Students without disabilities affect how students with disabilities do in the classroom so ensuring that students who are used as peer helpers, partners, etc. are appropriately matched is important. Social skills are an area of weakness for many students with autism so providing interventions at school that help with this will help students with autism be more successful with peers.

A qualitative design was appropriate to determine what makes inclusion successful for students who have autism. The qualitative approach used ended questions to consider the effects of inclusion on students with autism. The role of the researcher was one of an interviewer. Participants from each of the K-8 schools in Blank County completed initial interviews then had follow-up interviews to determine if any additional comments should be added or if any information should be changed to accurately reflect the views of the participants.

The general and special education teachers in Blank County shared their perceptions of inclusion efforts in their schools. Teachers and administrators discussed the necessary factors to support students with autism in the general education setting, as well as what inhibits students with autism in the general education setting. General education teachers discussed their social and academic expectations for students with autism placed in the general classroom.

Recommendations for Future Practice

1. Based on interviews with teachers and administrators for this study, there is a need for more training on autism for general and special education teachers, as well as for educational assistants.
2. Collaboration between general education teachers and special education teachers was identified as a need. Administrators should consider when teachers could collaborate regularly to positively affect students with autism.
3. Resources should be considered to determine whether more assistants working with students who have autism in the classroom would be beneficial.
4. Placement options should be considered for students with autism who are not able to perform academically in the classroom. The general classroom and self-contained classroom were identified as the main options for learning. More opportunities for academic intervention should be considered.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study was limited to only one school district. Further research should be conducted to determine if similar concerns are identified regarding inclusion efforts for students with autism in other school districts, if similar factors are identified to support students with autism in the general education classroom, what inhibits students with autism in the general education classroom in other school districts, and the social and academic expectations of teachers for students with autism in the general classroom in other school districts.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Interview Questions for Teachers

1. Are you a general education teacher or a special education teacher?
2. How long have you been teaching?
3. What input do teachers have on placement of students with autism?
4. What types of support do students with autism in the classroom receive?
5. Do you feel students with autism have adequate support in the classroom?
6. What is happening with students with autism in the classroom?
7. If you are a general education teacher, do you feel qualified to teach students with autism in your classroom? What would help you feel more qualified?

OR If you are a special education teacher, what would help the general education classroom teacher be better prepared to teach students with autism?

8. What impact do students with autism have on other students in the classroom?
9. What do you think are the five most important factors to facilitate successful inclusion for students with autism?
10. What is happening with the inclusion efforts in your school?
11. Is there anything we have not talked about that you would like to add or talk about regarding inclusion?

APPENDIX B

Interview Questions for Administrators

1. What is your teaching background?
2. How long have you been an administrator?
3. What input do administrators have on placement of students with autism?
4. What types of support do students with autism in the classroom receive?
5. Do you feel students with autism have adequate support in the classroom?
6. What is happening with students with autism in the classroom?
7. What types of experience of training do your teachers have? What additional opportunities would you want for them, if it was available?
8. What impact do students with autism have on other students in the classroom?
9. What do you think are the five most important factors to facilitate successful inclusion for students with autism?
10. What is happening with the inclusion efforts in your school? What changes could occur with this?
11. Is there anything we have not talked about that you would like to add or talk about regarding inclusion?

APPENDIX C

Letter to Teachers

Hello, my name is Nancy Keener. I am a doctoral student at East Tennessee State University (ETSU). I am doing a study that involves effects of inclusion on students with autism. I am looking for general education teachers and special education teachers who teach or have taught students with autism. I am looking for one general education teacher and one special education teacher from each elementary school in the district to participate in this study. If several teachers indicate interest in participating, I will ask two additional questions regarding the number of years teaching and the number of autism students you have taught to determine who to include in the study. This study involves an interview which should take approximately one hour. The interview will take place at the location of your choice. Please think about participating. Participation is voluntary. If you have any questions please contact me at nkeener@lcdoe.org or (931) 993-8422.

Sincerely,

Nancy Keener

Informed consent is attached to this email.

APPENDIX D

Letter to Administrators

Hello, my name is Nancy Keener. I am a doctoral student at East Tennessee State University (ETSU). I am doing a study that involves effects of inclusion on students with autism. I am looking for administrators who work with a high population of students with autism. This study involves an interview which should take approximately one hour. The interview will take place at the location of your choice. Please think about participating. Participation is voluntary. If you have any questions please contact me at nkeener@lcdoe.org or (931) 993-8422.

Sincerely,

Nancy Keener

Informed consent is attached to this email.

VITA

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