Inclusion Versus Pull-out: A Comparison
Within a Mild to Moderately Disabled Rural Middle School Population

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Abstract
The effects of the setting for the provision of special education services were investigated. Seventh and eighth grade middle school students, identified as having a disability, were placed in either a pull-out (resource) or inclusive (regular class) setting for English for one semester, receiving special education services in both settings. Both groups followed a modified middle school curriculum. None of the students had been exposed to inclusion in an English class before, nor had they been exposed to a modified grade level curriculum in English. Results indicated significant improvement in writing achievement demonstrated by both groups. The inclusion students were more likely than the pull-out students to express feelings of frustration and alienation in the school environment by the end of the semester. The majority of students reported that they felt more supported by the teaching staff in a pull-out setting, and that they preferred the traditional pull-out approach of service delivery to inclusion. However, those who preferred inclusion appeared to be very definite in their opinions. The findings are congruent with previous studies and support the position that a continuum of services is necessary in order to meet the needs of all middle school students with mild to moderate disabilities.

Inclusion is not a new concept, having been in the special education lexicon at least since the introduction of the Regular Education Initiative (REI) developed in the 1980s (Stainback & Stainback, 1984; Will, 1984, 1986). In its early years, it was seen as the solution to perceived limitations of the traditional special education curriculum and service delivery, as well as the high cost of educating students in separate placements (Heritage Foundation Backgrounder, 1984; Will, 1984, 1986). However, in its implementation during the past two decades, controversy remains as to whether inclusion has been successful in overcoming the drawbacks of traditional special education service delivery.

Inclusion is touted by some as a civil rights issue that is simply “the right thing to do” and therefore not a subject for research: “No one should have to pass anyone’s test or prove anything in a research study to live and learn in the mainstream of community life. This is a basic right, not something one has to earn.” (Stainback & Stainback, 1990, pp. 5-7). In the words of Paul and Ward (1996), those who adhere to this belief are following an “ethics paradigm” that is not debatable. Such believers have also been labeled “abolitionists” (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1991), since they believe that the current delivery system, wherein students are pulled out of the classroom for either part or all of the school day in order to receive special education services, should be abolished. In accordance with this belief, “full inclusion” (generally defined as the provision of all, or nearly all special education services in a regular education setting) has been endorsed by associations as diverse as the Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps (1992) and the National Association of State Boards of Education (1992).

Yet the research that has been done on this subject during the past two decades indicates that the effective implementation of this mandate has been anything but basic or simple. Hocutt (1996), in a meta-analysis of inclusion studies dating back to 1980, determined that quality of instruction rather than
placement was the critical factor in effecting success for students with disabilities. Research conducted during the 1990s to determine the effectiveness of “full inclusion” suggests that this model has not significantly increased students’ self-esteem or academic performance across the curriculum (Baines, Baines, & Masterson, 1994; Daniel & King, 1998; Fuchs & Fuchs, 1992, 1994; Manset & Semmel, 1997; Marston, 1996; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1995; Smelser, Rasch, & Yudewitz, 1994; Zigmond & Baker, 1994; Zigmond, et al., 1995).

Children with learning disabilities constitute by far the largest single category of children with identified disabilities who qualify for special education services (Jacob-Timm & Hartshorne, 1998). The research suggests that these students tend to demonstrate slightly improved academics and self-esteem when placed in pull-out settings for at least part of the school day (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1995; Fuchs, Fuchs, & Fernstrom, 1993; Marston, 1987-88; 1996). Perhaps partly in response to these findings, the Learning Disabilities Association of America (1993), the Council for Learning Disabilities (1993) and the Orton Dyslexia Society (1995) have all endorsed a continuation of a full continuum of services, including pull-out, for students with learning disabilities.

Studies on the efficacy of inclusion for secondary students are fairly rare, as the majority are centered on elementary-age students. One rare study of ninth grade students found that those with identified learning disabilities who were taught in general education settings performed significantly lower according to standardized post-testing than low-achieving non-disabled peers, and were also far more likely to drop out of school (Donohoe & Zigmond, 1990). Another study comparing collaborative special/regular education instruction with traditional pull-out services at the secondary level yielded results which suggested lower academic outcomes for mildly disabled students in collaborative (inclusive) settings (Boudah, Schumacher, & Deshler, 1997). Yet another study consisted of interviews with nine high school students with learning disabilities who had been participating in inclusion classrooms and had recently been moved to more restrictive pull-out settings. Results indicated that despite their initial negative reactions, the majority of students interviewed concurred that a special education setting was the best way to meet their needs (Guterman, 1995).

Compared to studies of both elementary and secondary-age students, there has been a paucity of research specifically involving the effects of inclusion on middle school-age students. Those that have been done have tended to focus on students identified with severe emotional/behavioral disturbances (Cheney & Barringer, 1995; Shapiro, Miller, Sawka, Gardill, & Handler, 1999). In addition, most studies have focused on teachers’ and administrators’ perceptions of the benefits and drawbacks of inclusive/collaborative instruction (Downing, Simpson, & Myles, 1990; Marston, 1996; Marston & Heistad, 1994; Zigmond & Baker, 1996).

The purpose of this study is to determine whether research previously conducted with younger and older students will be replicated when applied to “in-between-age” students with mild to moderate disabilities who are in middle school (seventh and eighth grades). A holistic focus will examine not only academic achievement, but students’ perceptions of the experience as well.

A comparison of pull-out versus inclusion settings will be examined, analyzing the variables of participating students’ academic achievement; perception of classroom environment; and preferences regarding the delivery of services. Possible confounding factors such as curriculum will be eliminated by following the same curriculum in both pull-out and inclusion classes.

Setting

The study was conducted in a small rural school district in the Southwest region of the U.S., comprised of approximately 850 students in grades pre-kindergarten through 12. The district is located in a town of approximately 3000 inhabitants. More than 70% of the students in the district qualify for free or reduced lunches, based on district office reporting, and file review indicated that approximately 80% of the families of students receiving special education services are headed by single, divorced or surrogate parents.

Compared to the national average, a disproportionate number of students in the district qualify for and receive special education services (approximately 25% of the school population, per file review). Census data indicates that the town’s ethnic composition is nearly 80% Hispanic (Mexican-American). However, as the town is not a border crossing, most of the Hispanic families have lived in the area for at least one generation. Thus, many Hispanic households are bilingual, and some are even monolingual English-speaking.

All participants in the study were attending the district’s middle school (seventh and eighth grade) during the semester in which the study was undertaken, and all were receiving at least a moderate amount
of special education services (more than 10% of the school day). The middle school was following a block schedule of four classes each semester, and all participants had at least one class during the day in which they were mainstreamed with no direct special education support. However, none of the students had been exposed to inclusion (special education support provided in the regular classroom). None of the participating students had individual instructional assistants, nor did any of them receive counseling or any other kind of formal mental health services during the semester.

As the study attempted to focus on students with mild to moderate disabilities, students were eliminated from consideration who were identified as demonstrating severe disruptive behavioral disorders; moderate to severe intellectual deficits; limited English proficiency; or a tested grade level equivalent in writing below the beginning of second grade. Also excluded were students whose functional level in English was high enough to preclude the need for special education assistance in this subject, per IEP team decision. A total of 22 students initially participated, with one participant lost during the semester due to attrition, resulting in a sample size at 21.

The subject area involved in the study was English, including literature, vocabulary, writing and grammar. All participants, prior to the implementation of the study, were slated to receive English instruction in a special education pull-out setting during the second semester. In accordance with block scheduling, a year’s worth of material was to be covered in one semester, with each class meeting one and one-half hours per day, five days a week.

Staff involved in the study included a regular seventh grade English teacher, a regular eighth grade English teacher, a special education teacher with a Master’s degree in English, and an instructional assistant (IA) who was pursuing a degree in education. The special education staff members were both in their second year of teaching. Both of the regular English teachers had more than 20 years’ experience working in the district, and had similar teaching styles. Both had the same amount of training in inclusion, consisting of two half-day inservice trainings provided by the district for the faculty during the previous semester, and one half-day inservice at the beginning of the semester in which the study took place. The latter inservice training included only the staff involved in the study.

**Procedures**

Institutional Research Board (IRB) procedures were followed and permission granted by both the university and district to conduct the study. Parents were informed that they had the option of placing their children in a non-participating special education English class if they so desired. Addendum meetings to develop Individual Education Plans (IEPs) were then held for each student whose parent agreed to consideration of participation in the study, with benefits/risks involved in participation explained to each in his/her native language, and assurances that all students' rights would be protected in accordance with federal and state law. Parents who agreed to have their children participate signed the IEP as well as both district and university permission forms.

As many of the students came from bilingual households, previously administered non-verbal Intelligence Quotients (I.Q.s) were used to determine general cognitive ability level (either the Performance Scale of the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children, Third Edition (WISC-III) (Wechsler, 1991) or the Kaufman Assessment Battery for Children (K-ABC) (Kaufman & Kaufman, 1983)). After controlling for roughly equal mean I.Q.s for the two groups, qualifying students were then randomly placed in either the inclusion or pull-out group. Accounting for the attrition of one student, ten students were placed in the inclusion group, and eleven in the pull-out group. (Descriptive data on the participating students is shown in Table 1).

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<th>Table 1</th>
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<tr>
<td>Demographic Data on Student Participants</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inclusion Group</td>
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<td><strong>Number</strong></td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
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Students in the inclusion group were placed in either regular seventh or eighth grade English, depending on their grade level. There were four participating students in the seventh grade class, which consisted of a total of 17 students; and six participating students in the eighth grade class of 23 students. Both seventh and eighth grade inclusion students attended English fourth period. The special education teacher and instructional assistant rotated between the two classes on a weekly basis, ensuring that one of them was in one of the two regular English inclusion classes at all times during this period.

Both special education teacher and assistant functioned in a mediator capacity in the regular classroom—conferring with the regular teacher to modify lessons and tests, rephrasing directions, implementing behavior management plans and helping any students in the class who wished to avail themselves of their services.

Students in the pull-out group all went to the resource room for English during third period. They were then further divided into two groups according to grade level (five 7th and six 8th graders), and were instructed by either the special education teacher or the instructional assistant, who again rotated the groups they worked with on a weekly basis. There were no other students in the resource class during this period.

In order to keep the curriculum of the inclusion and pull-out groups as closely aligned as possible, the special education instructors attempted to duplicate the lessons covered in the regular classes the following day with the pull-out students. Exposure to the regular English curriculum was novel for participants in both groups. Thus, many students found that this was their first exposure to classic literature, analysis of daily oral language samples and relatively sophisticated vocabulary and grammar exercises.

Modifications for both groups included shortening and/or simplifying assignments, rewording instructions, and having literature read out loud either by the teacher or via audiotape. Individual modifications were also provided in accordance with students’ IEPs.

Instruments

Students in both groups were pre and post tested on writing achievement using the Woodcock-Johnson Revised Test of Broad Written Language (WJ-R) (Woodcock & Johnson, 1989, 1990). This instrument includes two subtests: Dictation, measuring knowledge of spelling, punctuation, capitalization and word usage, and Writing Samples, measuring skills in forming correct sentences and paragraphs. Form A was used for all pretesting, while Form B was used for all post-testing.

Assessment of the students' perceptions of the social climate of their English class, whether pull-out or inclusion, was undertaken using the Classroom Environment Scale (CES) Form R (Trickett & Moos, 1974). The CES is a 90-item form in which the student marks “true” or “false” for each item regarding the class being assessed. When scored, the items are grouped into nine scales, including: 1) Involvement; 2) Affiliation; 3) Teacher Support; 4) Task Orientation; 5) Competition; 6) Order and Organization; 7) Rule Clarity; 8) Teacher Control and 9) Innovation.

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<thead>
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<td>8th grade (8.5)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4</td>
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Finally, students were asked to complete an 11-item true-false questionnaire, intended to elicit their opinions specifically regarding the English class they had taken that semester. In addition, students were encouraged to comment briefly on the class in writing at the bottom of the questionnaire.

Results

Assessing Student Writing Achievement

All students were pretested individually in the month preceding the study on Form A of the Written Language composite of the WJ-R, and post-tested individually at the end of the semester on Form B of the same instrument. Grade level equivalents were chosen to measure writing achievement. Repeated measures statistical analysis was used to determine significance.

Results of pre and post testing are listed in Figure 1. The inclusion group demonstrated a gain of slightly more than one-half of a school year (.51) in grade level equivalency during the semester, increasing its mean grade level equivalent in pretesting from 3.48 (SD 1.21) to 3.99 (SD 1.37) in post-testing. The pull-out group demonstrated a smaller gain of approximately one-quarter of a school year (.23) in grade level equivalency, increasing its mean grade level equivalent from 3.72 (SD .61) in pretesting to 3.95 (SD .74) in post-testing.

The difference in progress demonstrated between the two groups was not statistically significant. However, as a whole, both groups demonstrated a significant time effect interaction from pre to post testing (p < .01). While the mean pretest score for both groups combined was 3.60, the mean posttest score for the combined groups was 3.97, a gain of more than one-third of a school year (.37). This suggests that participants’ writing skills significantly increased during the course of the semester.

Assessing Student Perceptions of Classroom Environment

The CES, Form R (Trickett & Moos, 1974) was administered once, individually and near the end of the semester, to each participant in order to determine the student’s perception of the social climate in his/her English class. For purposes of analysis, the seventh and eight grade inclusion classes were combined into one group, while the seventh and eighth grade pull-out groups were combined to form the second group. The two groups’ mean scores were then obtained and compared. As norms for the English/social studies classes as outlined in the manual are outdated (Trickett & Moos, 1974), a comparison between the two groups’ mean scores and those of the norming sample will not be made unless they differ significantly. In general, a subscale score of five on this instrument represents the mean.

A one-tailed test was used to determine statistical significance for two of the nine scales, Affiliation and Competition. The following hypotheses were generated regarding these two scales:

1) Students in the pull-out group would score significantly higher than those in the inclusion group on the Affiliation scale, which “assesses the level of friendship students feel for each other…the extent to which they help each other…get to know each other…and enjoy working together” (Trickett & Moos, 1974). As participants had been placed in special education classrooms for an average of 5.4 years, most of them had spent at least one hour per day (often more) with the same students in small pull-out classes since second or third grade. It was therefore hypothesized that pull-out students would experience greater affinity with their classmates than those participants in the regular education (inclusion) setting.

2) Students in the inclusion group would score significantly higher than students in the pull-out group on the Competition scale, which assesses the perception of the extent to which “students (are) competing with each other for grades and recognition” (Trickett & Moos, 1974). Pull-out settings are often criticized for not exposing disabled children to adequate expectations of achievement nor normal levels of competition that tend to be present in regular classrooms (Dawson, 1995). It was therefore hypothesized that participants in the regular classroom would be exposed to a greater amount of competition than those in pull-out.

Results of Hypothesis #1: The sample means went significantly in the hypothesized direction (p < .05). While the mean for the inclusion group on the Affiliation scale was 5.5 (SD 2.5), the mean for the pull-out group was 7.7 (SD 2.5). This suggests that students in the pull-out group did express greater comfort and affiliation with the peers in their special education classroom than did the inclusion students placed in regular classes. However, it should be noted that the mean scores for both pull-out and inclusion fell within the average range on this scale.

Results of Hypothesis #2: The sample means went significantly against the hypothesized direction (p < .05). The mean for the inclusion group (5.7, SD 1.5) was significantly lower than that for the pull-out
group (6.7, SD 1.1). This suggests that students in the pull-out group were actually more likely to view their classroom as competitive than the students in the inclusion classes. However, again it should be noted that the mean scores of both groups were within the average range.

The other seven scales of the CES were analyzed using two-tailed tests (see Figure 8). Five of these scales did not yield significant differences between the two groups (Task Orientation, Order/Organization, Rule Clarity, Teacher Control and Innovation). This suggests that students in the two groups tended to view their classroom environments similarly in terms of classroom management and content, including the level of teacher control and organization, the amount of variation and novelty in lessons presented, and the fairness with which rules were explained and enforced.

The Involvement scale, which measures the attention and interest students express toward classroom activities and discussions, yielded a significantly higher mean score for the pull-out group (5.7, SD 1.2) than for the inclusion group (2.8, SD 1.3) (p = .01). This suggests a greater sense of enjoyment, involvement and overall participation in classroom activities among the students in the pull-out group. While the pull-out mean score fell in the average range, the inclusion mean score was significantly below average compared to the norming sample (p < .01). This suggests that participants may have felt alienated and disengaged in the regular classroom setting.

A significant difference between the mean scores of the pull-out and inclusion groups (p < .01) was also reflected on the Teacher Support scale. The mean for the pull-out group was 7.0 (SD 1.7), while the mean for the inclusion group was 4.0 (SD 2.0). The mean pull-out score fell in the average range compared to the norming sample, while the inclusion mean score fell significantly below average (p < .01). This suggests that, compared to students in the pull-out group, inclusion students did not feel they received adequate help nor concern from the teaching staff in their English class.

Assessing Specific Student Opinions

An 11-item, true/false questionnaire was composed and administered to students individually, once toward the end of the semester (see Appendix). In addition to completing the questionnaire, all students were encouraged to write comments regarding their participation in the study. A Chi-square test for specified proportions (greater than 50/50) was used to assess significance of responses to each of the 11 items. In contrast with the other instruments used, the results of the questionnaire were analyzed as a whole, rather than as a group comparison.

Results indicated that a significant majority of students (90.5%) admitted they need help with the subject of English (p < .01). Additionally, a significant number of students (71%) went on to affirm that they would prefer to receive help in a pull-out (rather than a regular) class (p = .05). Finally, only 9.5% of students affirmed that it was “embarrassing” to get help in the special education classroom, a proportion significantly lower than 50/50 (p < .01).

The rest of the results of the questionnaire did not reach significance. However, a slight majority of students (57%) marked that they preferred working on grade-level English with modifications as they had during this semester, rather than on English assignments at a lower grade level. A slight majority (57%) also affirmed that the English class they had participated in during the semester was harder than previous English classes they had taken. More students marked that it was “embarrassing” to get help in the regular classroom (38%) than those who felt that way about getting help in a special education classroom (9.5%).

In their personal comments, half of the students in the inclusion class wrote about what they liked about the class. Of the positive respondents, 60% stated that what they enjoyed the most was being able to see their friends and be with regular students. Twenty percent of the inclusion students wrote only positive comments. Twenty percent of the inclusion students wrote only positive comments regarding the experience.

Seventy percent of the inclusion students wrote about factors they disliked in their English class. The number included 60% of the students who made positive comments as well. Among those who had negative comments, 57% complained that the class was “too hard.” Reading aloud in the regular class was mentioned negatively by 28% of the inclusion students, even though the modification of not being asked to read aloud was written in almost every participant’s IEP.

In contrast to the inclusion group, 73% of students in pull-out wrote about what they liked about their English class. Of the positive respondents, 62.5% stated that what they liked most about the class was being able to get help from the teaching staff. Sixty-four percent of the students in the pull-out class wrote only positive comments. Only 36% of the pull-out students commented on factors they disliked about their class. This number included just 12.5% of the students who also had positive comments. Half of the negative comments involved complaints that there was “too much work” in their English class. The
minority of students who preferred inclusion to pull-out were over represented by females (50%), of whom 75% had participated in the inclusion group. While not in agreement as to their reasons for preferring inclusion, these students were very definite about their preference.

Discussion

The study compared the delivery of special education services to mildly to moderately disabled middle school students in an inclusive setting with the more traditional delivery of a “pull-out” model. The subject area was English. Previous studies undertaken with elementary and high school age students suggest that setting is not the crucial factor in effecting student success and/or self-confidence (Boudah, Schumaker, & Deshler, 1997; Daniel & King, 1998; Donohoe & Zigmond, 1990; Guterman, 1995; Hocutt, 1996; Klingner & Vaughn, 1998; Manset & Semmel; 1997; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1995). The intent of this study was to determine whether results of previous studies would be replicated with middle school students.

A by-product of the study involved examining the academic effects and students’ preferences regarding a modified grade-level curriculum (undertaken in both the inclusion and pull-out classes), in contrast to the individualized, goal-mastery alternative curriculum previously used in the delivery of special education services.

In order to compare the delivery systems of inclusion and pull-out, students in both groups were pre and post tested in the areas of writing achievement. In addition, participating students’ opinions regarding the social climate in their English classrooms were solicited near the end of the semester, and the responses of members of the two groups were compared to each other. Finally, a true-false questionnaire was developed and administered near the end of the semester as well. The purpose was to assess participants’ specific feelings regarding their participation in the English class in which they were placed. The questionnaire also included a “comments” section.

It appears that a clear pattern emerged in the data regarding students’ perceptions of inclusion: the majority of students participating in both groups preferred the traditional pull-out approach of service delivery. Students in the inclusion group were significantly more likely than those in the pull-out group to express a negative attitude toward school by the end of the semester. In assessing classroom climate, students participating in the pull-out class reported a greater affiliation with the other students in their class, as well as a greater sense of competition than students in the inclusion class. Pull-out students also reported being significantly more involved and interested in class activities, and the feeling that they were more supported by the teaching staff. However, a paradox remains. Though the majority of participants were negative in their stated perceptions of the inclusion setting, both groups demonstrated significant achievement gains in writing by the end of the semester, with those in the inclusion group posting higher gains than those in pull-out (though not significantly). None of the participants received outside help (such as tutoring), nor did any receive direct instruction in writing in any of their other classes. If the students in the inclusion group were truly as disengaged and alienated by their environment as they claimed, how were such gains possible?

Study Limitation

Several cautions are in order before any generalizations can be made of present data. First, the small sample size (N = 21) and limited scope of sampling (one rural school, composed of a much greater Hispanic population than that found in overall US Census data) reduce the ability to generalize these results to other settings. While the absence of mental health support and outside services such as tutoring in this rural district may have contributed to parity between the two groups in this study, it is a situation not likely to be found in many other districts; thus this factor also hampers replication.

In addition, the much higher than average number of students receiving special education services at this school (nearly 25%) may have resulted in a lessening of the stigma attached to pull-out services when compared to middle schools with a more typical proportion of students identified as requiring special education services (approximately 10-12% per US Census data). In fact, analysis of student comments on their questionnaires indicates that not one mentioned teasing, labeling or the negative reactions of regular students as a reason for preferring inclusion to pull-out. The comments may have been quite different in a school district with a smaller proportion of students receiving services.

Due to scheduling difficulties and the need to control factors such as non-verbal intelligence, a truly random sample could not be obtained. In addition, though the regular classes composing the inclusion group were similar in structure, teacher experience and training, they were separate classes taught by two different teachers; in contrast, there was just one teacher and instructional assistant for the pull-out students. Thus, from a statistical standpoint, true replication could not be obtained.
Finally, the staff involved received a very limited amount of training in the inclusion model, resulting in confusion among those involved as to what the special educator’s role should be in the regular classroom. The regular education teachers also had very little training in special education law. As evidenced by some students’ comments about having to read aloud in the inclusion class, the regular teachers did not always follow the modifications outlined in students’ IEPs. These factors may have contributed to students’ negative opinions regarding inclusion.

Conclusions

Results of this study of middle school students corroborate previous studies involving older and younger students (Guterman, 1995; Hocutt, 1996; Manset & Semmel, 1997) which suggest that setting is not the critical factor in determining students’ academic success and sense of self-efficacy. For most of the students in this study, the effects of being placed in a more restrictive environment did not tend to be perceived as negative. In a subject with intense academic demands such as English, most students apparently felt more comfortable and safe in the smaller and more traditional special education classroom than in the regular classroom. The minority of students who preferred inclusion to pull-out were very enthusiastic about their preference.

These dichotomous responses mirror those from previous studies done in elementary and high schools, suggesting that a continuum of services is necessary in order to meet the individualized needs of each student with disabilities (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1995; Klingner & Vaughn, 1998; Zigmond & Baker, 1994). Given that the small proportion of females were over represented in the group preferring inclusion, further research should be done to determine whether this setting tends to be more beneficial for middle school girls than for boys. Results also suggest that it may be beneficial to include middle school students in placement decisions by consulting them prior to the IEP meeting regarding the type of learning environment they prefer, rather than making assumptions about optimal placements based on ability level or behavior.

Academically, it appears that the modified grade level curriculum, utilized with both groups, was successful with both. Significant achievement in writing was demonstrated by both pull-out and inclusion groups in post-testing. In addition, nearly all the participants were willing to admit they needed help in developing their English skills by the end of the semester. Having been exposed to this model for the first time, the majority of students also marked that they preferred a modified grade-level curriculum to the traditional special education model of starting at the student’s level of proficiency academically and working up to grade level via mastery of basic skills. Perhaps this signifies a “common ground” in attitude between educators now required by law to follow the regular curriculum, and those they are educating.
References


