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Implications of a Reverse Inclusion Program for Students with Moderate to Severe Disabilities

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Implications of a Reverse Inclusion Program for Students with Moderate to Severe Disabilities

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for the Degree of Master of Arts in Education

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Implications of a Reverse Inclusion Program for Students with Moderate to Severe

Disabilities

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Abstract

Reverse Inclusion is an intermediary step to full inclusion. Reverse Inclusion is a program of scheduled interaction with typically developing students from the general education population working with students with moderate to severe disabilities in a self-contained special education classroom. This action research study reviews the potential benefits of a Reverse Inclusion Program to general education or typically developing third grade students. Reverse Inclusion is designed to foster positive peer interaction and positive peer support along with modeling desirable school appropriate behaviors among the participating students. Key findings of this study include: 1) regularly scheduled, structured contact between typically developing peers and their special education peers fosters positive relationships that extend from the classroom to the playground and beyond; 2) Reverse Inclusion provides a positive environment to allow for modeling of age appropriate behaviors; and 3) education provided to typically developing peers concerning disabilities, develops understanding of differences. Reflecting on my own teaching practice, the study findings indicate that collaboration with a general education teacher provides increased understanding between classroom environments and fosters an increased sense of community.

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CHAPTER 1: PROBLEM STATEMENT

Introduction

This action research study will analyze the potential benefits of a Reverse Inclusion Program to general education or typically developing twenty- five third grade students, selected to be in this study. Reverse Inclusion is a program of scheduled interaction with typically developing students from the general education population working with students with disabilities in a self-contained special education classroom. Reverse Inclusion is designed to foster positive peer interaction and positive peer support along with modeling desirable school appropriate behaviors among the participation students. This Reverse Inclusion (RI) program will also include collaboration between general education and special education teachers. RI is a possible intermediate step to full inclusion of students with moderate to severe disabilities in the general education environment.

Students with disabilities have the right to a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) and to be educated in the least restrictive environment (LRE) alongside their typically developing peers. The original 1975 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), revised in December 2004, provide guidelines for the provision of FAPE in the LRE. IDEA acknowledges that barriers to inclusion occur. The barriers include the potential "removal of children with disabilities from the general education environment" if those students have a disability severe enough to limit their ability to participate even after they are provided with the entitled "supplementary aids and services" (IDEA regulations, Part 300/B/300.114(a)(2)).

The goal of Inclusionary schools is to educate all students in age appropriate grade levels in neighborhood elementary schools. The inclusion movement has been studied in numerous ways including analyzing the impact on typically developing students, special education and

general education teachers and students with disabilities and their families (Salend, Duhaney, 1999).

There have been studies that point to the academic gains for students with disabilities in inclusive settings, including achieving IEP goals (Individual Education Plan), on-task behaviors and general learning motivation (Salend &Duhaney, 1999). For instance, school districts that participated in a national study reported more positive social interactions with peers and increased engagement in school and learning for students with disabilities in inclusive settings (National Center for Educational Restructuring and Inclusion, 1995). Social outcomes have been studied in various ways, both in inclusive and self –contained special education settings. These studies examine the impact of inclusive settings on positive peer interaction for students with disabilities and enhanced self-esteem.   Study results found that students with severe disabilities educated in classrooms with their typical peers, reported more social contacts and friendships with students without disabilities and received more social support than those students with disabilities in self-contained special education classes (Fryxell and Kennedy, 1995). Other studies analyzing the effects of specific interventions designed to enhance social interaction and acceptance and understanding of students with disabilities report positive results. One such study reported increased mutual social interactions as well as increased interactions initiated by the students with disabilities and less need for adult assistance during sessions in inclusive classrooms. This study also pointed to the development of enduring friendships between individuals in the two groups (Hunt, Alwell, Farron-Davis and Goetz, 1996).

The cooperation of teachers both special educators as well as general educators is critical to the success of inclusion programs.   Several studies have researched and analyzed the attitudes, experiences and support of inclusion programs in local schools. These studies utilized

largely structured interviews and surveys. The studies reported that teachers enjoyed collaboration with their counterparts in general education and special education, found value for all students in providing strategies that reached varied individual student abilities and provided greater engagement for all and reported satisfaction from exhibiting positive adult role modeling in acceptance, tolerance and inclusion of all. (Giangreco Dennis, Cloninger, Edelman, and Schattman, 1993, Downing, Eichinger and Williams, 1997, Villa, Thousand, Myers, and Nevin, 1996)

Many studies have analyzed the impact of inclusion on students without disabilities as well. In comparing inclusive and non-inclusive settings these studies found no ill effects on academic performance. One study even reported an increase in math and reading performance among students without disabilities educated in an inclusive setting.(Saint-Laurent et al, 1998). In measuring social outcomes various studies found that non- disabled students reported an increased level of understanding of individual differences and increase feelings of support and acceptance of their disabled peers. The typical peers found friendships and vital roles as advocates (Biklen, Corrigan and Quick, 1989, Staub, Schwartz, Gallucci, and Peck, 1994, Capper and Pickett, 1994).

While full inclusion is always the ultimate goal, this intermediate step of Reverse Inclusion (RI), can be instrumental in decreasing the barriers to inclusion for students with moderate to severe disabilities. RI has the potential to increase the collaborative relationships between students and between general education and special education teachers. Reverse Inclusion can provide disabled students with benefits such as becoming more aware of age appropriate conversation and cultural happenings; increased self-worth and more experience at social interactions and having reciprocal relationships with the typical peers (Stainback and

Stainback, 1984). This program of orchestrated contact can result in more positive attitudes by typically developing students towards their peers with disabilities as well as increased helping behaviors and demonstrations of empathy (Mavropoulou and Sideridis, 2014).

Problem Statement

Research is replete (Hunt, Goetz, 1997, Salend & Duhaney, 1999 and Schoger, 2006)) noting the benefits of inclusionary practices for students with mild to severe disabilities. However, when students' education consists of instruction in a special day class for over 90% of the day, few opportunities are afforded for meaningful participation in the general education settings. As a result, reverse inclusion may be a viable option for interacting with age appropriate peers. By creating a context for students with disabilities to model pro social behavior it bodes well for potential inclusion in general education environments. Interestingly, since the passage of PL94-142 in 1975 the term and concept of reverse mainstreaming has fallen out of favor as a salient instructional practice. However, in some situations bringing age appropriate peers into a special day class might be of benefit, that is, if it is short termed, with the idea that inclusion in normalized environments is the primary goal for all students with disabilities. Though inclusion should be a primary focus, reverse inclusion for students whose behavior presents formidable obstacles can provide needed peer interaction and can be a stepping stone to inclusion in general education classrooms and other general education settings. There are few case studies that analyze the effectiveness of reverse inclusion and offer the field suggestions in regards to its effects, both positive and negative. Therefore, this research will build on the research by Schoger (July, 2006) whose case study of reverse inclusion addresses the value of reverse inclusion with a caveat regarding the need to always be looking for opportunities for inclusion in normative school environments.

The belief that students with disabilities should be integrated with their typically functioning peers is not new. Despite over 40 years of federal law (IDEA, 1975 with revisions in December, 2004) that seeks to provide more options for an inclusive education, school districts struggle with the answers and choices for parents and students who live with moderate to severe disabilities. In 1984, the Stainbacks, leaders in inclusion for special education students wrote (in a special note) opening their book, <u>Integration of Students with Severe Handicaps into Regular School:</u> "It is our personal belief that the special/regular education dichotomy that now exists will one day be dissolved and that natural, normalized integration of all students, teachers etc., will be much easier to accomplish than it is at the present time….However, until that day occurs, "special " and 'regular" educators will need to work together within the current structure of the schools to promote as much natural, normalized integration as possible of all students within regular neighborhood public schools."

Now, in 2015, I am working to provide this "natural and normalized integration" in our local neighborhood public school, Brook Knoll Elementary School, Scotts Valley Unified School District, CA (Stainback and Stainback, 1984). I have a small team of educators from the general education population that have offered to help to create a more inclusive environment our school community by developing a structured, cohesive Reverse Inclusion program. This idea arose from events that occurred in the last school year.

During the 2013 – 2014 school year, I noticed some general education students participating in behaviors such as averting eye contact from students with disabilities, switching sides of the sidewalk to avoid contact and overt name calling.   What I came to understand was that the typical peers were uncomfortable with the unknown and didn't know how to approach

these students. A few of my students are unable to converse verbally and two use augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) devices to interact.

After talking with students and saying various things such as "Just because there are differences in people doesn't mean we don't have the same wants and needs." Or, when noticing the avoidance techniques used by the typical peers, I would (at a later time) set up a scenario of a formal introduction, including talking about the particular special need of my student. My action research project develops, and measures the effectiveness of a Reverse Inclusion program in increasing understanding, empathy and positive peer support on our campus.

This is a qualitative action research project which attempts to measure the attitudinal effects on typical peers who participated in a reverse inclusion program. Two different, typically developing peers have attended two, 30 minute work sessions per day in a close, personal work group setting, in a self-contained special education classroom of students with moderate to severe disabilities.

This research was conducted over a five week period, two 30 minute sessions per day involving 7 students with disabilities (in their more restrictive environment setting) and 2 typically developing students in each session. The goal is to have each of the twenty five third grade student participate at least two times during the study period.

I (as the researcher) conducted all of the group work sessions and I conducted all the interviews.   This method was selected because of the trust we developed over the course of the study. The potential disadvantage of this method might be the bias or subjectivity of the researcher. I am however, not the primary teacher of the study participants (typically developing students).   This has allowed the students to be more open to my questions and more authentic

with their answers. I am doing this project to help educate our greater school community and to provide growth and improvement to my own teaching practice.

Purpose of Study

The goal of this paper is to: 1. measure the attitudes of typically developing general education students who are partnered with students with disabilities in a Reverse Inclusion Program by collecting information through individual surveys and group interviews and 2. determine if the success of a Reverse Inclusion Program is dependent on the attitudes and knowledge of the general education teacher by measuring the pre and post attitudes and knowledge of the general education teacher involved in this research.

I am currently working as a teacher at Brook Knoll Elementary school in the Scotts Valley Unified School District, a neighborhood school that serves both students with disabilities in three classrooms and typically developing students in eighteen classrooms.

In the 2013-2014 school year, a third grade teacher and I started a Reverse Inclusion program. This paper aims to use qualitative research that can potentially be distributed to the administration and teachers at Brook Knoll School, showing that RI was a benefit to the school community. If Reverse Inclusion is proven to be a benefit to those participating, this study may be used as evidence in support of continuing the program and to possibly expand its use. To achieve the goals of this research project, I developed a reverse inclusion program with a third grade teacher who teaches typically developing students at my school site.

The following explains the RI Program format: Two group times were scheduled each day, one at 11:00 am and one at 1:00 pm. At 11:00 am we did phonics and art and at 1:00 pm we did math and science. These involved engaging, age appropriate activities such as rapping a song about letters and sounds, making related art projects such as snowy owls and doing simple

science experiments and a variety of number sense lessons. These activities were differentiated for all learning levels in the classroom and engaging enough to keep all students actively involved. The lessons used a variety of materials and technology.

Two students from the third grade class attended each session. The classroom teacher rotated his twenty five students so that in a three week period all of his students participated. We did this for the entire spring semester. (Five months) We also included two special events. One event took place before spring break. It was a watercolor and egg painting festival. My students provided the snacks and served them. The second event was a year- end carnival with games and student made ice cream. Both were tremendous successes. These events were hosted by the students in the special education classes and these same students did as much of the preparatory work as possible.

Research Questions

Within the context of my action research project I propose the following research questions:

- Will the structured involvement of typical peers in a self-contained special education classroom, create an increased sense of responsibility (in participating typical students) for community building?

- Will the attitudes and understanding of the teachers have an effect on the participating students and the success of the program?

- Will the typical students report greater understanding of individual differences, positive feelings toward their special needs peers resulting in helping behaviors and increased empathy as well as a heightened sense of community?

Theoretical Model

I will use the work of the following theorists to establish precedence and support for my action research thesis: Albert Bandura, Barry Zimmerman and Rosenthal and Leon Festinger.

Albert Bandura developed and published a theory called Social Learning Theory in 1971. He posited that "new patterns of behavior can be acquired through direct experience or by observing the behavior of others" (Social Learning Theory, Bandura, 1977). He conducted a famous experiment in 1961, called the Bobo Doll Experiment. This experiment demonstrated that behavior is learned from observation, specifically (in this case) aggression modeled by an adult toward a doll and children imitating and further generalizing the behavior. Bandura states that through repeated modeling, behavior is then encoded by the child and she uses it at a later time. He also states that behavior is likely to be imitated when the observed behavior is conducted by someone the child perceives as similar to herself and exhibiting qualities desirable to the child (Bandura, 1961). This is called identification. Retention of modeling a behavior is coded by the memory assigning verbal terms to the behavior and gives the child a method to recall the behavior. This is also achieved through repetition of the modeling experience (Bandura, 1977).

Bandura's research informs my research project in several important ways.   As Bandura states in his article Social Learning Theory, 1977, "In the social learning system, new patterns of behavior can be acquired through direct experience or by observing the behavior of others." Students with disabilities imitate the behaviors modeled by typically developing students. Students in the special education classroom observe the desirable behaviors of typically developing students and have increased ability to attend group sessions. The typically developing students receive instruction on behavior modeling and other assistive techniques

modeled by the special education teacher. In this structure, the students with disabilities are

learning to attend while at group time, to listen and to follow directions. The general education

students should gain a sense of awareness of the needs of students with disabilities resulting in an

increase in empathetic behaviors and increased levels of confidence in participating in positive

interactions with their peers in the special education classroom (Bogdan & Bilken, 1992). I have

used this research to help in the development of the goals of the program and data collection

process for this study.

Zimmerman and Rosenthal in their study titled, Observational Learning of Rule-

Governed Behavior by Children, University of Arizona, 1974, states, "Bandura (1969, 1971)

and the work of his associates has shown that social learning methods can effectively foster a

wide variety of affective , motor and self-regulatory behavior. Until recently few have attempted

to extend the use of social learning techniques to linguistic or abstract rule learning concept

formation, problem solving or creative response." And Zimmerman and Rosenthal state, in this

same article, "Modeling, when accompanied by a verbal rule, produced the highest level of

acquisition and generalization." This change in the focus of the theory name from Social

Learning to Social Cognitive is to emphasize the role cognition plays in "encoding and

performing" behaviors (Bandura, 1986). I have applied Social Cognitive Theory research in

guiding the development of training sessions for the typically developing students participating

in the Reverse Inclusion program thus providing more of an understanding of classroom

motivation, learning and achievement.

Lastly, in A Theory of Social Comparison Processes by Leon Festinger, 1954, states "A

person's cognition (his opinions and beliefs) about the situation in which he exists and his

appraisals of what he is capable of doing (his evaluation of his abilities) will together have

bearing on his behavior" (Festinger, 1954, pg. 117). Social Comparison Theory posits that we are constantly making social comparisons and evaluating our abilities as they relate to others. People tend to compare themselves to others who are similar.   Festinger also states that "when a discrepancy exists with respect to opinions or abilities there will be tendencies to change one's own position so as to move closer to others in the group" (Festinger, 1954, pg. 126). These concepts helped to guide the structure of the Reverse Inclusion program used in this project. There is some valuable use of this theory as it relates to students with disabilities interacting with their typically developing peers and in the typically developing peers interacting with the adult staff in the special education classroom. The general education students watched, modeled and in a sense compared themselves to the instructional staff working with the students with disabilities. The staff tends to be young, fun and great role models for our general education students to compare themselves to. Informed and intentionally planned scenarios in the research portion of this project included interaction between staff and student groups.

Researcher Background

I am a recent graduate of CSUMB credentialing program. I received an Educational Specialist credential, moderate to severe authorization in June of 2014. I was a fulltime intern classroom teacher, while attending CSUMB, for two years. I taught and am teaching in a moderate to severe self-contained special education classroom, referred to as an SDC Class (special day class).

In my first year I worked for Monterey Peninsula Unified School District and the second year for Scotts Valley Unified School District (SVUSD). I am now in my third year of teaching, continuing at SVUSD. I have been on the campus of two local elementary schools. I have

experienced the effects of having my students being included and not being included with their

typically developing peers.

The first school I worked in was in a low socio-economic area and the school I work in

now is in a high socio-economic area. Scotts Valley has a median income of $105,900.00

annually. What I have found is that inclusiveness and positive community building have little to

do with socio –economic status and a great deal to do with common goals and philosophies. A

few of the components needed to foster the goal of building an inclusive community are shared

dedication to inclusion, acceptance, tolerance, understanding of individual differences and

kindness.

All teachers are stretched to capacity with paper work, class size, standard changes etc. It

is up to me to spearhead a movement to include my students in the greater community. It is

incumbent upon me to build relationships with general education teachers and students. By

keeping this goal in the forefront of my practice, I can serve as a role model using aspects of

Social Learning Theory and Social Comparison theory and encourage best practices to endorse

empathy, increase kindness and foster friendship in our school community.

Definition of Terms

typical developing students/peers – Students in the general education population without special

learning needs and accommodations for other limitations.

Inclusion - A movement that seeks to create schools and other social institutions based on

meeting the needs of all learners as well as respecting and learning from each other's differences

(Salend, 1998).

<u>Reverse Inclusion</u> – providing specially designed instruction and supports for typically

developing students learning to assist and participate in the special education classroom and to

provide structured and regularly scheduled group times to foster inclusion.

<u>IDEA</u> – Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, a complex piece of legislation passed in

1975 and amended in December of 2004, providing for free and appropriate public education

(FAPE) for all in the least restrictive environment (LRE).

<u>IEP – Individual Education Plan</u> – the document developed by an education team for students

who qualify for special education. This document provides provisions for needed

accommodations, services and educational goals for the student with disabilities.

Summary

Students with disabilities have the legal right to inclusion with their typically developing

peers. Students with more severe disabilities may be educated in a more segregated environment

"if the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in the regular classes with the use

of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily."(IDEA regulations, Part

300/B/300.114(a)(2). However, it is in the best interest of the Community as a whole when

students with moderate to severe disabilities and typically developing students are fully included.

"Children who attended classrooms with fully included peers with severe disabilities were able

to display sophisticated judgments and suggestions when presented with scenarios of common. "

(Evand et al, 1994)

Studies by Helmstetter, Peck and Giangrec (1994) and Stainback, Stainback, Moravcek

and Jackson (1992) found that students develop positive attitudes toward students with

disabilities based on the experience of having disabled students in their classrooms. Helmstetter,

et al (1994) also noted that student friendships develop and found that students develop positive

attitudes toward students with disabilities based on the experience of having disabled students in their classroom.

The attitudes of typically developing general education students can be positively influenced when they are partnered with students with disabilities in a reverse inclusion program. In addition, the attitudes and knowledge of the general education teacher can also be positively influenced by this level of collaboration (Schoger, 2006).

In my own teaching practice in a self –contained classroom of students with moderate to severe disabilities on the local elementary school campus, when general education students are included in our group sessions, the typical peers modeled appropriate behaviors for my students struggling with inappropriate behaviors. My students acquired new and appropriate behaviors by observing behaviors of their typically developing peers (Bandura, Social learning Theory, 1977). The typical peers model my behaviors when interacting with my students. They often learn how to give instruction to students with language processing difficulties. The typical students helped my students to paint, count, sing, glue and so on. I also noticed the typical students taking leadership in instruction and preparation of instructional materials. The greatest outcome is the development of familiarity, understanding and a cohesive community. Helmstetter, et al(1994) also noted that "student friendships and relationships seem to be enhanced by inclusion."

These typical peers that have participated in our classroom seek out my students on the playground and greet them, help them to get involved in games and sit with them at lunch. Parents of my Special education students have reported receiving enthusiastic greetings from typical students when a spontaneous encounter occurred in the community. The following chapter will provide the literature review that will further support the concept of Reverse Inclusion as an intermediate strategy and how it affects teachers and students.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

The goal of this Chapter is to summarize the literature related to the potential benefits of a Reverse Inclusion Program (RI), to typically developing students, students with disabilities and general education teachers. Specifically my research aims to present findings on the effects on attitudes and behaviors as they relate to social skills and a heightened sense of community. These attitudes and behaviors include; typical peers saying hello outside the classroom, inviting students from the special needs class to sit with them at lunch and welcoming them in other environments such as the general education classroom. I have measured the contributing factors toward the attitudes and behaviors of the participating general education teacher as it relates to the support of RI.

Sequence of the Review

Having done a project of this type before (and only having anecdotal evidence of the benefit), I will review literature that provides evidence based findings on the benefits of inclusion to both students with and without disabilities and general education teachers. First, I will review literature that relates to the history of inclusion (including Special Education Law) and inclusionary practices.   Second, I will review literature that examines the use of inclusion programs and the impact on the attitudes, behaviors and community living skills of all students. Lastly, I will review studies that speak to the classroom teacher's attitudes and knowledge of such programs and how that may affect the RI program outcomes.

The literature review was conducted primarily through the CSUMB online library research system. The search used key words and phrases such as inclusive education, reverse inclusion,

IDEA, moderate to severe disabilities. I used books and peer reviewed articles as sources for this literature review.

Special Education Law. In 1975 Individuals with Disabilities Act was enacted by congress to ensure that all children with disabilities receive a free and appropriate public education, just like all typically developing children. This law has been revised many times over the years. The most recent amendments were passed by congress in December of 2004.   IDEA is 307 pages in length. (See DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION,34 CFR Parts 300 and 301, RIN 1820–AB57 Assistance to States for the Education, of Children with Disabilities and Preschool Grants for Children with Disabilities AGENCY: Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, Department of Education. ACTION: Final regulations.)

While this federal legislation stipulates a free and appropriate public education for all students and in the least restrictive environment, it does not specifically speak to inclusive education. The law does provide clarity to our understanding of a free and appropriate education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE) by providing guidelines. Specifically, (i) To the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities are educated with children who are nondisabled and (ii) Special classes, separate schooling or other removal of children with disabilities from the general educational environment occurs only if the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in the regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily.(IDEA regulations, Part 300/B/300.114(a)(2).

The child's placement must also be:

   (1) Determined at least annually;

   (2) Based on the child's individualized Education Program (IEP);

(3) Is a s close as possible to the child's home;

(c) Unless the IEP of a child with a disability requires some other arrangement, the child

is educated in the school that he or she would attend if nondisabled. and (d) in selecting the LRE,

consideration is given to any potential harmful effect on the child or on the quality of services

that he or she needs; and (e) A child with a disability is not removed from education in age-

appropriate regular classroom solely because of needed modifications in the general education

curriculum. (Authority:20 U.S.C. 1412(a)(5) (Sec. 300 116.(b-e)

IDEA further states that we must "ensure that handicapped children shall have equal opportunity

for participation in nonacademic activities such as meals, recess period, athletics, transportation,

health services, recreational activities, and so forth with nonhandicapped children (Section

121a.553). State guidelines require programs that "promote maximum interaction with the

general school population in a manner that is appropriate to the needs of both handicapped and

regular students "(California Education Code, Part 30, 1977).

Inclusion is the practice and policy of educating students with disabilities in the general

education classroom, with age appropriate peers, 100 % of the time. (Idol, 1997, p4).

Inclusion and Inclusionary Practices

In an article written by Dr. Lou Denti and Jane R. Mercer, titled *Obstacles to integrating*

disabled students in a "two-roof" elementary school , they describe a case study of a 5 year

effort to integrate special education and general education students . The goal of the study was to

enhance the contact and build relationships between students with disabilities and their more

typically developing peers. These two populations of students shared the same campus but were

educated in separate buildings with separate administrative staffs. (*Exceptional Children, 56.1,*

Sept. 1989)

In the third year of this 5 year study, the authors implemented an intervention to enhance contact of typical students and the students with disabilities called L.E.A.D. (Leaders in Enhancing Awareness of Disabilities). This was based on a theory of Attitude Equalization which states that prejudice is reduced and relationships are enhanced when there is contact between two groups that 1) contact is supported by community institutions and authority figures; 2) is nonhierarchical;3) is free of perceived threats;4) leads to a perception of common interests and common humanity;5) takes place in the ordinary purposeful pursuits of life and 6) involves individuals in joint activities in which the contributions of each person are important (Beger, Cohen & Zeldich 1972, Cohen 1972, 1973;Cohen & Roper, 1972).

The intervention provided adherence to all 6 points of this theory. It provided 10 weeks of structured contact including team exercises in disability awareness, speakers, lunch groupings, shared recess and other activities including various peer groupings. The program had some short term effects (over 3 months) resulting in contact on the playground, a special "buddy" program, peer tutoring, shared classroom time such as art, science and math and teacher collaboration and an increased protectiveness of students with disabilities by general education students at school as well as enhanced relationships between students and teachers of both general education and special education (Denti et al).

However, long term follow-up revealed few residual effects. In fact without an organized and well supported program most of the benefits faded including the buddy program, peer tutoring, lunch time sharing and other social events. Without on-going support and attention the program ceased to exist. The authors of this study pointed to separate facilities being the cause of the disintegration of the inclusion program and recommended the merging of regular

education and special education more fully. This was in relation to "two roof" schools which were phased out in the 1980s.

Susan Stainback and William Stainback published <u>Integration of Students with Severe Handicaps into Regular Schools</u> in 1984, which provided a detailed description of the importance of Inclusion for all members of the school community; students with and without disabilities and their respective educators. The Stainback's refer to Proximal Interactions, or typical peers and students with disabilities spending time together in natural settings such as lunch, recess, recreational and school sport activities as an integral components of successful inclusion scenarios. The benefits of integration or inclusion they are students with disabilities becoming more aware of age appropriate conversation and cultural happenings; increased self-worth and more experience at social interactions and having reciprocal relationships with the typical peers in the community.

More recent studies have found that students with disabilities educated with their typically developing peers report increased social contact, meaningful friendships and enhanced positive peer interaction (Fryxell and Kennedy, 1995). Several studies have also stated that teachers enjoyed the collaboration with their counterparts in general education and special education and found that inclusion fostered greater engagement for all including positive adult role modeling, increased acceptance of differences and long term friendships (Giangreco Dennis, Cloninger, Edelman, and Schattman, 1993; Downing, Eichinger and Wiiliams, 1997; Villa, Thousand, Myers and Nevin, 1996).

In the article, "Knowledge of Autism and Attitudes of Children Towards their Partially Integrated Peers with Autism Spectrum Disorders", by Sophia Mavropoulou and Georgios D. Sideridis , published in 2014 refers to the benefits by using contact theory (Allport 1954) as its

theoretical framework.(Mavropoulou et al). It supports that discrimination towards a group can

be moderated as a result of sustained contact between groups. General education students, who

participated in buddy programs and informational classes about disabilities, had significantly

more positive attitudes towards their peers with disabilities (Rosenblum et al 1986). Contact

between groups (in this case, students with disabilities and their typically developing peers)

should be direct and personal to bring out positive attitudes (Mavropolou et al).

The National Institute for Urban School Improvement presents in , "Inclusion and the

Other Kids: Here's What Research Shows so Far about inclusion's Effect on Nondisabled

Students", that the primary focus of inclusion programs should be on the attitudes, academic

progress, social skills, empathy and self-esteem of the typically developing children in the

inclusion environment. This study was conducted by Deb Staub, Social work and Education

Coordinator of the Casey Family Program in Seattle Washington. It found no adverse effects on

learning of the typical students in the inclusion setting in fact they found that students

standardized test scores increased(Staub, et al). Parents surveyed were happy with the inclusion

environment and instructional increased. The study pointed to inclusionary settings being

successful due to increased numbers of instructional aides in the classroom and collaboration

between general education and special education teachers. This study also found that meaningful

friendships formed, social skills increased (in particular, understanding and empathetic helping

behaviors and conversations), self-esteem increased as typical peers took on leadership roles in

accommodating for their disabled peers. They had an increased level of comfort for people who

are "different" and developed new advocacy roles and increased levels of kindness and

concern.(Staub et al)

The Regular Education Initiative (REI)movement, founded in the late 1980s, had the objective to eliminate special education and fully include all students with disabilities in general education settings. (Davis, 1989; Mruzas & Max 1988) This movement came under great scrutiny and caused great debates. Those opposed believed that students with disabilities would not receive needed special services and other supports necessary to level the learning playing field. Those in support felt that excluding students from the general education settings solely because of disability violated their civil rights. Taking this kind of for or against position provides little opportunity for growth in the area of inclusion. The Universal Design for Learning provides one of the most effective and appropriate methods for teaching students of all levels and backgrounds and to provide educators with the best tools and strategies to achieve this is the most optimum solution (Focus on Exceptional Children, Apr 98, Vol 30 Issue 8, p 5).

Teachers, Administrators and the Inclusive Environment

Each of the sources I have read all agree, the attitudes and support of the site administrator is a critical success factor of an inclusive education community. Teachers who are most successful in an inclusion setting are teachers with a collaborating spirit and a desire to create an inclusive school community.

To successfully develop and maintain a Reverse Inclusion Program, communication with the general education partner teacher is critical. It is important to foster continuity by conducting the classroom sessions on a regular schedule and collaboration time on a regular schedule. This requires a great deal of flexibility in schedules both in the general education setting and the special education environment. It is a must to be able to collaborate with the general education teacher to glean program content experience and individual student information (Schoger, 2006).

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This qualitative action research project analyzes and attempts to measure the attitudinal effects on general education students as well as their general education teacher who participated in this Reverse Inclusion program (RI). During the research phase of this project data will be collected and information will be provided to answer the following research questions:

- Will the structured involvement of typical peers in a self-contained special education classroom, create an increased sense of responsibility (in participating typical students) for community building?

- Will the attitudes and understanding of the teachers have an effect on the participating students and the success of the program?

- Will the typical students report greater understanding of individual differences, positive feelings toward their special needs peers resulting in helping behaviors and increased empathy as well as a heightened sense of community?

Overall Research Plan

The research was conducted at a local elementary school, Brook Knoll, over a five week period during two 30 minute class sessions each day held in the special education classroom. It involves seven students with moderate to severe disabilities and two general education students participating in engaging and multi-media lessons of phonics, math, art, science and physical education. Each third grade, general education student, in a class of a total of 25, will participate at least two times during the study period.

The general education teacher is an integral part of this study. The general education teacher will be interviewed each week to elicit feedback about the RI program and asked to

provide information about his student's participation and his attitudes and beliefs about RI and its potential benefits and drawbacks.

The research data collection methods chosen are pre and post surveys for the general education, third grade students and a focus group discussion at the beginning and end of the research period. Weekly recorded interviews were conducted with the general education teacher. The goal of these interviews are to collect valuable information on the attitudes, beliefs of the teacher as well as collecting feedback on the content and structure of the RI program.   I (as the researcher and the special education teacher) conducted all of the group work sessions as well as the interviews and focus group.   This method was selected because of the trust we developed over the course of the study. The potential disadvantage of this method might be the bias or subjectivity of the researcher. I am however, not the primary teacher of the study participants (typically developing students).   This has allowed the students to be more open to my questions and more authentic with their answers. I am doing this project to help educate our greater school community about the benefits of inclusion and to provide growth and improvement to my own teaching practice.

Setting

This action research project was conducted at Brook Knoll Elementary School, in Scotts Valley California. Scotts Valley (as of 2012) has a population of 11,670. (99% urban and 1% rural). It has a median household income of $105,636 with an estimated income per capita of $45,000 (in 2012). The population is 83.15% Caucasian and 7.9% Hispanic or Latino origin. (This demographic information was obtained from www.city –data.com) The population of Brook Knoll Elementary School reflects the greater community in racial make-up and socio

economic status. Brook Knoll Elementary School is a California Distinguished School. The primary language is English.

Participants

The students participating in the project are all Brook Knoll Elementary School students; 25 typically developing 3rd grade students from one classroom and 7 students who have moderate to severe disabilities and their primary placement is a separate special education classroom with the label of Special Day Class (SDC).

The SDC students all have IEPs (individual education plans) and the group lessons conducted were aimed at delivering student progress toward the IEP academic and behavior goals. The 3rd grade, typically developing peers were involved in this RI program as positive peer role models, to encourage social engagement between the groups of students both in and out of the classroom and to some degree, tutors.

The general education classroom teacher is also a participant in this research project. He will be interviewed weekly to assess his attitudes and beliefs about an RI program. I will also seek his feedback on the structure of the program and its on-going efficacy.

Data Collection Procedure

The interviews conducted with the general education teacher use open ended questions and attempt to elicit stories about the students' participation, feedback on the structure and timing of the program as well as the lesson content as it relates to student engagement. The teacher will also be asked about his own feelings and attitudes of the RI program. Interviews will take place two times per week, Monday and Friday for no less than 30 minutes and no more than one hour. I chose the interviewing data collecting method to increase my understanding of the teachers'

experiences through a meaningful dialogue to deepen and broaden my own teaching practice. I will record these sessions, transcribe them. I will also use a reflective teaching journal.

Twenty five general education third grade students will take part in this study. A pre and post survey will be given to all the participating students.(survey in Appendix A)The surveys will ask such questions as "When I see a student from the SDC (room 17) classroom on the playground I say hello?" and "Have you ever seen other students make fun of students from room 17 (SDC Classroom)?". The answer options are Always, Sometimes and Never. Three questions on the survey are open ended. The questions will help to discern information about students' attitudes and feelings about sitting, playing with and participating in other social activities both inside and outside of the RI program with their peers with disabilities. (survey results in appendix B) The pre and post survey questions will be identical. This will allow for measurement of attitudes and feelings both before and after the program is complete. The answers will be compiled and analyzed in chart form.

Focus groups with these students will be conducted at the beginning and the end of the research period. The focus group questions will include questions about their role in the RI program and how they felt about their participation in this project. The questions developed for both the interviews and focus groups attempt to gather understanding of the participant's feelings, attitudes, and empathy toward others. The focus group questions will refer to meaningful classroom sessions with memorable events meant to evoke a feeling and/or an emotional response. The focus groups will be facilitated by the researcher and will allow for naturalistic responses and follow up questions.

Data Analysis

The recorded teacher interviews are transcribed. The findings are included in Chapter 4, Findings. Paraphrasing will _not_ be used in an attempt to completely understand the participant's responses. A coding system will be used to track themes that emerge from the teacher's answers. Student survey data was tabulated by specific responses from each completed survey. All student surveys were input into Survey Monkey for objective analysis. Answers to the open ended questions are listed as written by students. The data was analyzed with an open mind, in an effort to allow conclusions to come from emerging themes, not in looking for themes and outcomes to prove the researcher's theories or opinions. The book, <u>Interviewing as Qualitative Research A Guide for Researchers inEducatio and the Social Sciences</u> by Irving Seidman was used to guide the principals of the research and its analysis. The complete survey results, pre and post, can be found in Appendices A and B.

I have shared and discussed this data analysis with my thesis advisor, colleagues and other professionals at my site in an attempt to develop meaningful interpretations, analysis and conclusions.

Threats/Limitations

A potential threat to this research project might be student attendance and conflicting schedules of the general education students during the course of this study. I have selected a period when schedules appear to be free of prior commitments however, the assessment of common core standards is new in this year and the schedule is in flux. This might allow for some inconsistency in participants attendance and information gathering.

I am the researcher and the special education teacher. I conducted the surveys, focus groups and all of the classroom sessions. I provided an orientation to the participating third

grade students at the beginning of the research phase. While I attempted to be as objective as possible this scenario may have some inherent bias.

Summary

This action research project provides valuable information in an attempt to answer the following questions:

- Will the structured involvement of typical peers in a self-contained special education classroom, create an increased sense of responsibility (in participating typical students) for community building?

- Will the attitudes and understanding of the teachers have an effect on the participating students and the success of the program?

- Will the typical students report greater understanding of individual differences, positive feelings toward their special needs peers resulting in helping behaviors and increased empathy as well as a heightened sense of community?

Pre and post surveys (Appendix C) were used to assess the general education students' feelings toward their special needs peers, their levels of empathy as well as their ability and desire to help their peers with disabilities. The focus groups conducted provided education conversation about the nature of disabilities and aimed at gleaning information about student contact and engagement with their peers with disabilities in social situations such as lunch, recess, assemblies and other community events.

Information has been collected from the general education teacher in the form of recorded interviews and journal writing. These interviews have been culled for repeating themes. The analyzing of these themes helped to inform the on-going structure and content of the practice, of Reverse Inclusion. The focus of this action research is on the implementation and success of a

Reverse Inclusion program. The hope is that the results of this research help to provide a

community vision for an inclusive school.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

Introduction

The goal of this qualitative research project is to analyze the attitudinal effects that might influence the behaviors of 25 typically developing, third grade students in the general education population, toward their peers in special education, all of whom have participated in the Reverse Inclusion Program (RI) at Brook Knoll Elementary School in Scotts Valley. This action thesis will examine attitudes by their general education classroom teacher regarding the efficacy of the RI program. Additionally, it will review the support provided by the general education teacher who participated in the program.

The information analyzed was collected through pre and post surveys of the participating general education students as well as two focus groups conducted with the same class of students. Their third grade teacher was interviewed separately on eight different occasions to help understand his role in the success of this RI program. I also used a reflective teaching journal to help record specific incidences of interest which occurred in our twice weekly group activity sessions.

This Chapter presents the findings this action research thesis focused on answering the following questions: 1). Will the structured involvement of typical peers in a self-contained special education classroom, create an increased sense of responsibility (in participating typical students) for community building? 2). Will the attitudes and understanding of the teachers have an effect on the participating students and the success of the program? and 3).Will the typical students report greater understanding of individual differences, positive feelings toward their special needs peers resulting in helping behaviors and increased empathy as well as a heightened sense of community?

The research phase of this project included a 5 week period of two classroom sessions per day. The project is referred to as Reverse Inclusion (RI). These RI sessions were conducted at 11am and 1pm daily, for 30 to 45 minutes and included interactive lessons in level appropriate Math, Phonics, Art, PE and Science. Two different students from the 3rd grade, general education classroom attended each session daily. These students were selected using a system allowing each one to participate in three separate sessions during the research phase. The typically developing, third grade peers participated in the lessons as role models, friends and helpers.

Student Survey and Focus Group Findings

Pre and post surveys were given to the typically developing peers. The surveys were identical. This helped to measure growth in attitudes and in some cases behaviors, which provided data to help in identifying if an increased sense of community amongst the typically developing students toward their peers with disabilities occurred. Each question had response choices of *Always*, *Sometimes* and *Never*. I will use a sampling of the questions illustrate the findings.

Survey question number one (Q1), "When I see a student on the playground from room 17 (The Special Day Classroom) I say hello." in Figure 1. below displays the pre survey results and Figure 2. displays the results from the post survey.
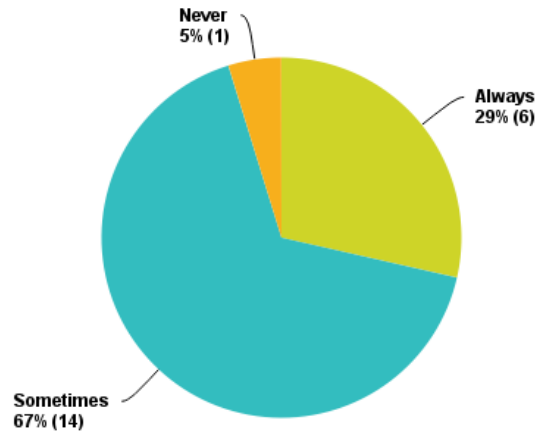
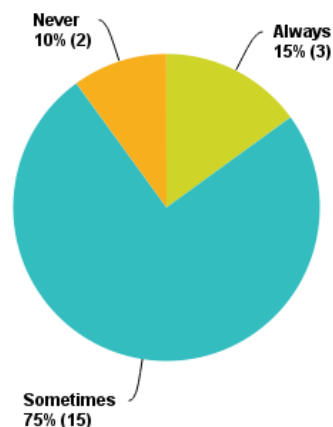*Figure 1.* **- Pre Survey Results**
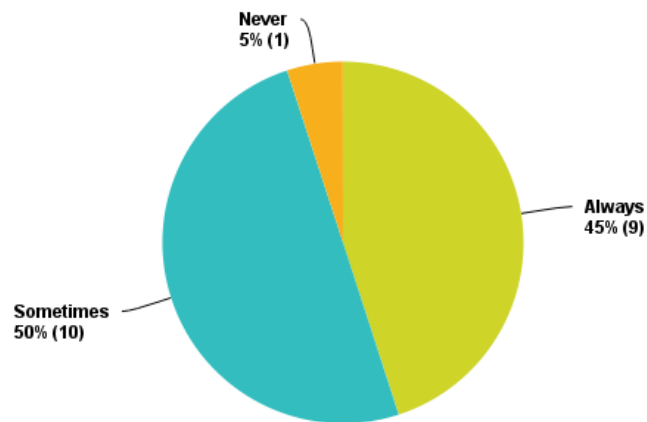
Figure 2. **Post Survey Results**

As shown in Figures 1 and 2, the percentage of times that students greeted their peers from the Special Day class upon seeing them on the playground, outside of our formal classroom sessions, increased 16% in the *Always* category. Nine students answered that they *Always* greeted their peers with special needs as opposed to six students providing this answer in the pre survey results.

In Survey question number two (Q2), the same question was asked but added greeting the special education students by name. Figures three and four depict the results in the pre and post surveys:

Q2 **When I see a student from room 17 around the school campus, I say hi to the student by name.**

Answered: 20   Skipped: 1

Never
10% (2)

Always
15% (3)

Sometimes
75% (15)

Figure 3. **Pre Survey Results**
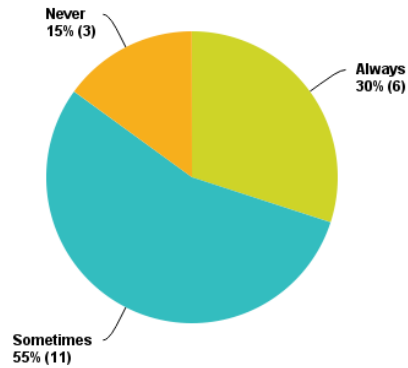
Figure 4. **Post Survey Results**

As shown in Figures 3 and 4, the students greeting their special education peers by name in the *Always* answer category doubled while the *Sometimes* category decreased 20 percent.

Question number three (Q 3) on the pre and post survey helped to collect data to provide information to support the typically developing students acquiring a greater sense of responsibility in the inclusion of their special education peers in the school community. Figures 5 and 6 display these results:
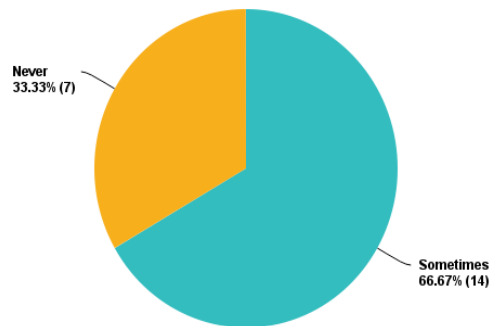
Figure 5. **Pre Survey Results**
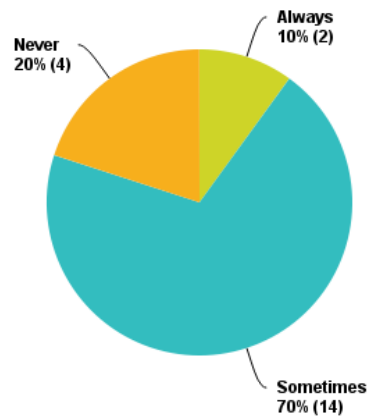
Figure 6. **Post Survey Results**

In the post survey results (Q3 Figure 6.), students answering *Sometimes* stayed the same while two students indicated that they *Always* asked the students with special needs to play with them on the playground as opposed to the pre survey, no one answered *Always*. In the *Never* answer option, those selecting that answer decreased 13%.

Question number six (Figures 7 and 8, Q6) on the survey also shed some light on level of responsibility felt by the general education students towards their peers in special education.

Q6 It is my job to help students in special education.

Answered: 21   Skipped: 0

Never
4.76% (1)

Sometimes
33.33% (7)

Always
61.90% (13)
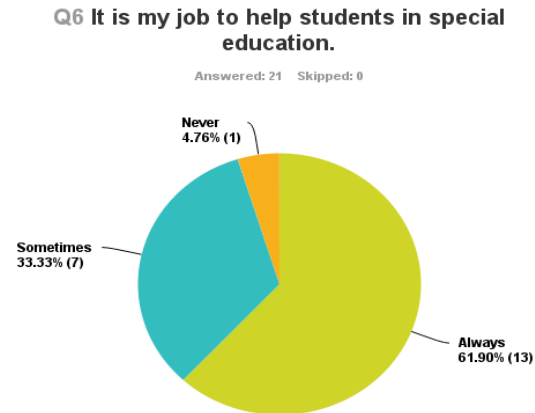
Figure 7. **Pre Survey Results**

Q6 It is my job to help students in special education.

Answered: 20   Skipped: 0

20.00%
(4)

80.00%
(16)

■ Always   ■ Sometimes   ■ Never
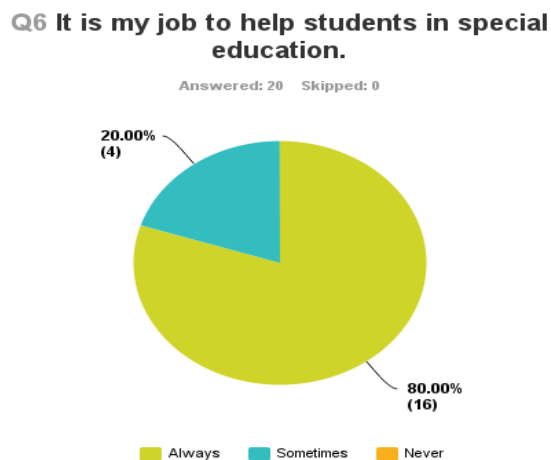
Figure 8. **Post Survey Results**

In Figure 7 the pre survey results show one student indicated *Never* and no one answered *Never* on the post survey (Figure 8.). Also, 19% more students in the post research study survey indicated that it is *Always* their job to help students in special education. The complete pre and post results of this survey are located in Appendix B for further review.

In addition to the surveys, two focus groups were conducted with the entire group of general education students; one at the beginning of the project and one at the end. The focus group sessions were conducted in the general education classroom setting. I (the researcher) conducted the groups. I sat in the front of the room in a rocking chair and the students sat at their desks. I attempted to create a relaxed environment to facilitate frank discussion. I asked the first question and a conversation ensued.

The goal of the beginning focus group was to glean information from the students in regards to differences they perceive in their peers in special education. For instance, one third grade boy asked about a special education student we will call Sam. Sam is a student with Downs Syndrome and has apraxia. The general education student asked about Sam's speech and wanted to know why it was so difficult to understand him. I explained the condition of apraxia in simple terms and that in Sam's case this condition impedes his muscles that govern his speech in communicating with his brain. I had them practice enunciating words and then to pretend that their muscles were frozen and try to speak. This exercise helped them to understand this condition and the need to listen carefully to Sam and encourage him to slow down his speech to be more easily understood. The third grade students also asked about various behaviors they noticed the students in the special education program engage in. Most of these were undesirable behaviors that involved a lack of impulse control and misreading social cues on behalf of the students with special needs. We were able to have a discussion about behaviors and the benefits of modeling appropriate behaviors, and other strategies used to teach replacement behaviors and self- control strategies such as counting and deep breathing.

The focus group conducted at the end of the research phase was held in the same setting as our pre focus group. The conversation that occurred post research phase was very different

than the pre focus group discussion. The pre focus group discussion focused mostly on perceived differences in the special education students. In our post focus group the typically developing third grade students discussed their specific experiences in modeling appropriate behaviors for the students in the special day class and in modeling and teaching replacement behaviors. The students discussed one strategy, which became a theme in our discussions and was a tool used in our RI sessions on a regular basis.   One of the general education students described the following scenario when this tool was used; when completing an art project, two students with special needs were struggling over crayons, the typical peer was able to give the command, "let's see our hands in get ready". This is a cue that I have modeled for the peer helpers often. This command helps the students with special needs to stop an undesirable behavior fairly quickly before it escalates.   All students in the classroom, at the moment the demand is given, stop, fold their hands on the table and regroup.

        We also discussed specific incidents when the general education peers were able to give their peers in special education options to avoid undesirable behaviors. Such as the time during our instruction period that included working with magnetic blocks. This was a cooperative learning experience that included 3 students working together, one general education student and two students in the special day class. One of the students with special needs wanted to knock down the structure the group built. The general education student was able to say, "Let's finish building it and when we all agree we are finished, I will let you knock it down". The ability to give students choices was used as a strategy that avoided a great deal of potential conflict and unnecessary power struggles.

        During our post focus group we also discussed our work sessions, they were periods between 30 and 45 minutes long. The general education, third grade students told about times

they were asked to model specific behaviors for the special needs peers. The general education students were proud of becoming very good at acting out appropriate behavior scenarios.   The students discussed the following typical RI scenario: one of the special education students exhibited frustration and threw materials. The general education student was asked to model the behavior they use when frustrated. We then practiced the appropriate behavior with all students and it inevitably resulted in picking up the instructional materials and repeating compliant behaviors. During our post focus group the general education students were able to recount many instances of modeling, using replacement behavior strategies, giving choices and using strategies to teach turn taking.

        In the pre focus group most of the discussion was about working in the special day classroom and "scary" behaviors they were concerned about. The discussion centered on identifying and learning to understand differences. They were asked what they think they might like about participation in the Reverse Inclusion Program in the special day class and the answers were primarily about doing projects, playing games and doing PE.

        In our post focus group the students were asked to give me one or two words about what they like most about being in the RI sessions in the special day class. These were the some of the responses: "teaching kids, seeing the smiles on their faces, helping, doing arts and crafts, playing, everything, making them feel included and playing games outside as a group. I then asked, "What does it mean to be included?" and the answers were; "they are one of us, letting them be in a project or a game at recess, encouraging them to learn the rules of a game, letting them play the game, spend time with the students and do what we do and be part of our group and the last comment was," It doesn't feel good not to be included, we want everyone to be part of the crowd."

Teacher Interview Summary

An integral part of this research was done with the general education classroom teacher. This teacher is the classroom teacher of the third grade students who participated in the RI program. The interviews were conducted biweekly to discuss RI program content as well as behavior challenges that his students might need to work on while in my classroom. Several themes evolved in our interviews. The themes included, learning responsibility, learning and exhibiting empathy, possible expansion of the program and communication with the students.

The teacher talked a great deal about this Reverse Inclusion Program and the result of fostering leadership skills and developing a greater sense of responsibility in his students. The classroom teacher picked 4 students a day, to attend two groups in the special day classroom, or Room 17. Two students came at 11:00 am for a phonics and art activity and two students came at 1 pm for Math or Science and PE. The students were selected randomly with care to rotate students equitably. Each student attended at least three sessions during the research period. The third grade peers came to Room 17 (special day classroom) during their instructional minutes.

The students were responsible for completing the work they missed when attending the RI program. The students were so interested in being a part of the research project, that making the work up was never a problem for them in fact, the students often made the work up during their recess and other free time. The classroom teacher also expected the students to remember their scheduled visits to the Reverse Inclusion Program. The students rarely missed their scheduled times and if they did they exhibited disappointment.

A memorable quote by the classroom teachers from one of our interviews included this; "There's always time for language arts and math. This is a once in a life time opportunity. This program (RI) teaches students to be in the moment. This makes for a broader person. I have the

students 184 days a year, I will cover academics. This let's my students know how important this

program is to me and to help foster a cohesive sense of community." When I asked him if this

program could be duplicated he was doubtful that many of the teachers would give this the time

it has taken to become a meaningful program. He stated that if this program were to grow and

have others participate, third grade is the right grade level due to maturity and skill level. He also

stated several times that the Reverse Inclusion program would have to fit into classroom

teacher's schedules. He said that he felt it (RI) would not be as meaningful if it were to be

conducted on a voluntary basis during recess times. Based on the findings, the classroom teacher

is a critical success factor in the development and implementation of a Reverse Inclusion

Program.

Summary

    This chapter provided the data results from the various tools used to collect information

to answer the research questions stated at the beginning of the chapter. This data will be

synthesized in a cogent fashion in the next chapter in order to present the implications of the

findings and their potential use in the school setting and in my own teaching practice. The results

seem to provide sufficient information to continue the Reverse Inclusion Program at Brook Knoll

Elementary School; however, further examination bolstered by extant literature on the subject

will be central to the discussion on the merits and potential drawbacks of an RI program

approach.

CHAPTER 5: CONCULSION

Introduction

In order to draw some conclusions from this qualitative action research project, 25 third grade students took pre and post surveys, participated in two focus groups one each in the pre and the post research phase of this project. The participating general education classroom teacher was interviewed eight times.   Each of the 25 students participated in at least two, 30 to 45 minute, Reverse Inclusion sessions over a five week period. These sessions included structured activities such as multi-media instruction in the areas of phonics, math, science, art and physical education. We also had 2 hour kick off and wrap parties, which included crafts, popcorn, cookies and games. We marked our kick off to embark on our research project and celebrated our success at the wrap party of becoming a cohesive group.

In our daily sessions, we reviewed the importance of including all students in all activities, learning about and valuing differences, and the importance of adhering to classroom rules. The general education students were very aware of the importance placed on this Reverse Inclusion program by the general education teacher and the special education teacher as well as the school Principal. Our school principal dropped in and watched during several of our Reverse Inclusion sessions. Allport (1954) in his journal article, *The Nature of Prejudice* provided the world with a powerful statement regarding his development of intergroup contact theory. "Allport held that, reduced prejudice will result when four features of the contact situation are present: equal status between groups in the situation; common goals; intergroup cooperation; and the support of the authorities, law or custom" (Pettigrew and Tropp, 2006, pg. 752). I believe all four features were present in our Reverse Inclusion program.

Summary of the Data

The research questions that were posed for this action research project are the following:

- Will the structured involvement of typical peers in a self-contained special education classroom, create an increased sense of responsibility (in participating typical students) for community building?

- Will the attitudes and understanding of the teachers have an effect on the participating students and the success of the program?

- Will the typical students report greater understanding of individual differences, positive feelings toward their special needs peers resulting in helping behaviors and increased empathy as well as a heightened sense of community?

The research data pointed to positive answers for each of these questions.   The general education third grade students who participated regularly in the Reverse Inclusion program reported a 16% increase in *always* greeting their special education peers in locations outside of the special day classroom. This demonstrates at the very least, an increase in awareness of their peers in the special education program as part of the school community and in some cases it points to a friendship relationship. It does depict a generalizing of behaviors that were exhibited in the special day classroom to the common areas of the school.

The post survey also showed a 20% increase in general education students greeting students from the special education program by name (when greeted on the playground). This familiarity of names points to a heightened sense of community.   When the general education students were asked, " If I see a student from room 17 (special day classroom) on the playground I ask them to play with me.", two categories shifted. Students were given the options of answering *Always, Sometimes and Never*. In the post survey those answering *Always* increased

from zero to two students. These students indicated that they always asked the students from the special day class to play with them on the playground. Also, those that answered *Never* to this same question decreased 13% in the post survey. Again, I believe this structured, regular contact in a Reverse Inclusion program has encouraged the development of a heightened sense of community between the 25 general education participating students and the 7 students in the special day classroom.

I also believe that the general education teacher who participated in the Reverse Inclusion program (with his class of 25 third grade students) was an invaluable and integral part of our success. As stated in Chapter 4: Findings, this program was a priority for him. He relayed that to his students weekly if not daily. He put this program in his regular daily schedule and held students accountable for their participation both in attendance of Reverse Inclusion and making up any general education work they missed while participating. He attended both the kick off and wrap parties and is a very familiar (and loved) adult to the special education students. In addition to participating in this research program, he often included the special day class students in other general education activities such as ukulele playing and singing and organized PE type games.

Lastly, while the results from these particular survey questions were not included in the Findings, I think they are important to mention when addressing the topic of increased empathy amongst the general education students who participated in the Reverse Inclusion Program. Question number 9 on the survey asked, "It is important for students from room 17 to be included with all students in general education or my kind of classroom." (Answers offered) *Always, Sometimes, Never*; in both the pre and post surveys, the 95% of the students answered *Always*. Two questions regarding kindness were included in the survey; Question 10, "It is

important to be kind to others." , 100 % of the students answered *Always* on both the Pre and post survey and Question 11, "It is important for people to be kind to me." On the pre survey, 85% of the students answered *Always* and 15% answered *Sometimes* and the post test, 95% answered *Always* and 5% answered *Sometimes*. The answers to these questions indicated to me that the general education students came with an inherent sense of empathy.

Limitations

The scope of this study was somewhat small. It did include one third grade classroom of students and one third grade teacher on a campus containing 4 third grade classrooms and 4 third grade teachers as well as a total student population of over 500 students. Also, in the last school year, my classroom was next door to the teacher in this study. Therefore my students (special education) were familiar with him prior to the research study. This group of students also participated in activities with the special day class prior to the formal research portion of this study. Therefore, this group of research participants may not represent the general education population of students and teachers that would be just learning about differences and forming relationships with students with special needs.

Implications for Practice

While full inclusion is always the goal, this is not yet the reality on our elementary school campus. Therefore as an intermediate step, I intend to continue the implementation of a Reverse Inclusion program for my current class and the general education population of the elementary school. The relationships that were developed and the modeling that occurred were helpful to all the participating students and had a positive effect on behaviors in the classroom and the campus as a whole. Anecdotally, I feel that it decreased prejudice amongst the general education students toward the special education students and increased acceptance of differences.

This program is very dependent on the attitudes and "buy in" of the general education teacher. If it is to continue, relationships with other teachers will need to be developed and fostered by the special education teacher. Also, flexible scheduling will need to be considered including the implementation of Reverse Inclusion during recess times. I will be presenting the results of this action research project at a staff meeting. My hope is that more teachers may become interested and we can start this in several classrooms in the next school year. I would also like to explore this as a six week program therefore allowing us to include all third grade classrooms during the school year.

Conclusion

Full inclusion of all students in the general education population is the ultimate goal. At this point our special education and general education departments are not equipped to provide this. Several challenges to this concept include: staffing, including numbers of para professionals needed and certificated teaching staff configuration, time and scheduling, and in a school that has a "California Distinguished School" status primarily for its academic success, inclusion of student with varied academic needs is an incongruent idea at the moment.

Moving toward full inclusion should be the coin of the realm and Brook Knoll Elementary School is the community that can make this possible. Reverse Inclusion is well worth the effort and can be used as a pathway to the ultimate goal, full inclusion.   In this small study RI has forged relationships that would not otherwise have existed. It has increased the sense of community among two populations on the campus, Room 17 (the special day class) and the third grade class that participated in this project. It has fostered the value of modeling acceptable behavior, and increased the use of positive reinforcement. It has demonstrated that

learning differences can not only be accepted but valued in a diverse learning community. Full

Inclusion could provide the exponential spread of these critical community values.

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Appendix A

Pre Survey Results

Q1 When I see a student from room 17 on the

playground I say hello

Answered: 21   Skipped: 0

Never4.76%

(1)

Always28.57%

(6)

Sometimes66.67%

(14)
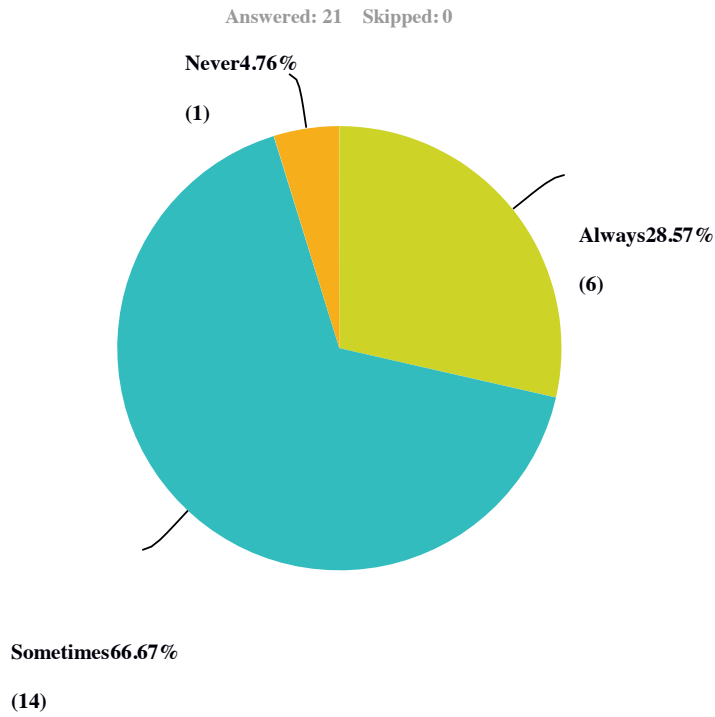
	Always (1)	Sometimes (2)	Never (3)	Total	Weighted Average
Most Students	**28.57%**	**66.67%**	**4.76%**		
	6	14	1		

Basic Statistics				
Minimum	**Maximum**	**Median**	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**
1.00	3.00	2.00	1.76	0.53

Q2 When I see a student from room 17 around the school campus, I say hi to the student by name.

Answered: 20   Skipped: 1

Never
10.00% (2)

Always
15.00% (3)
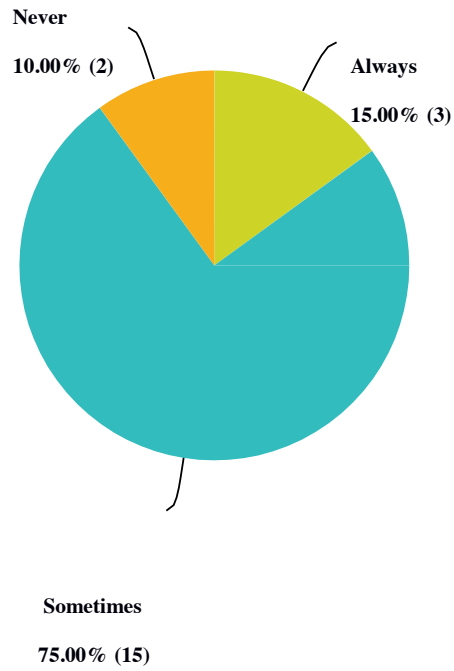
Sometimes
75.00% (15)

	Always (1)	Sometimes (2)	Never (3)	Total	Weighted Average
Most Students	15.00% 3	75.00% 15	10.00% 2		

Basic Statistics				
Minimum	Maximum	Median	Mean	Standard Deviation
1.00	3.00	2.00	1.95	0.50

Q3 If I see a student from room 17 on the playground I ask them to play with me.

Answered: 21   Skipped: 0

Never 33.33% (7)

Sometimes 66.67% (14)
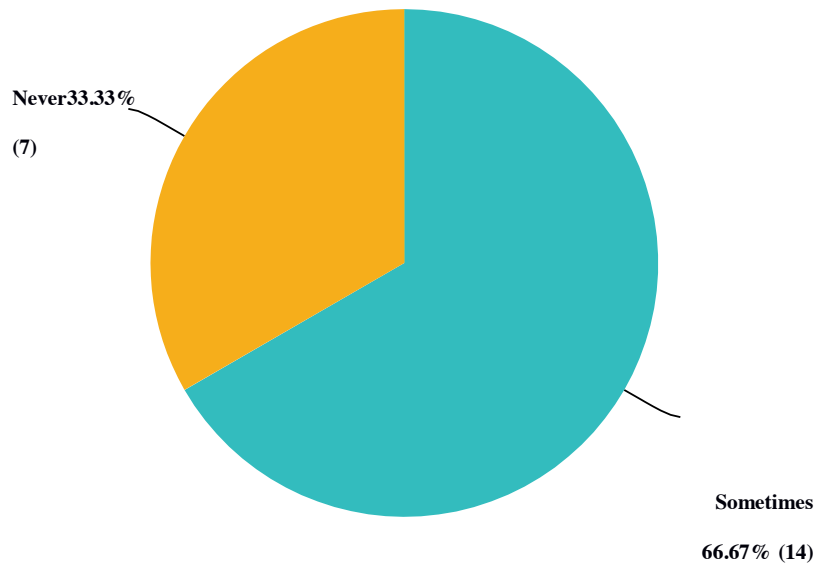
	Always (1)	Sometimes (2)	Never (3)	Total	Weighted Average
Most Students	0.00%	66.67%	33.33%		
	0	14	7		

Basic Statistics				
Minimum	Maximum	Median	Mean	Standard Deviation
2.00	3.00	2.00	2.33	0.47

Q4 It is easy for me to play with students from room 17.

Answered: 21   Skipped: 0

Sometimes
47.62% (10)
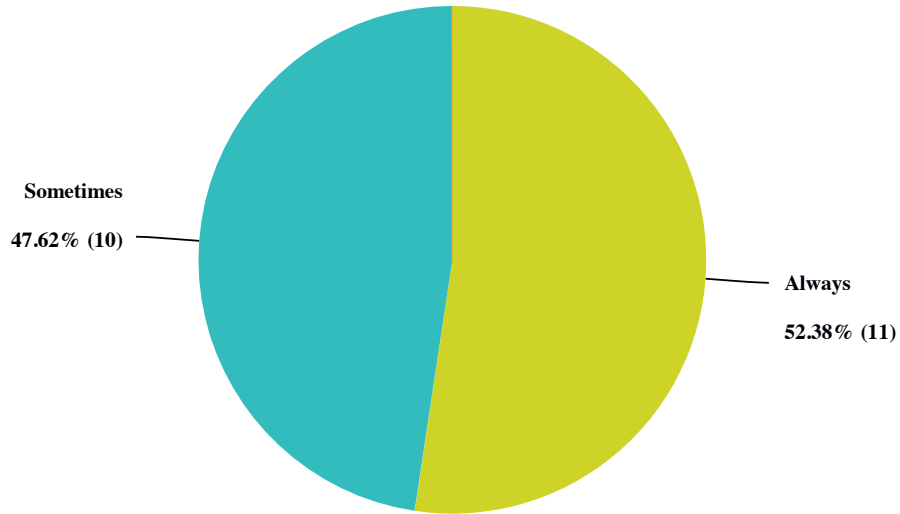
Always
52.38% (11)

	Always (1)	Sometimes (2)	Never (3)	Total	Weighted Average
(no label)	52.38%	47.62%	0.00%		
	11	10	0		

Basic Statistics

Minimum	Maximum	Median	Mean	Standard Deviation
1.00	2.00	1.00	1.48	0.50

Q5 I like attending sessions in Room 17.

Answered: 21   Skipped: 0

Sometimes

4.76% (1)

Always95.24%

(20)
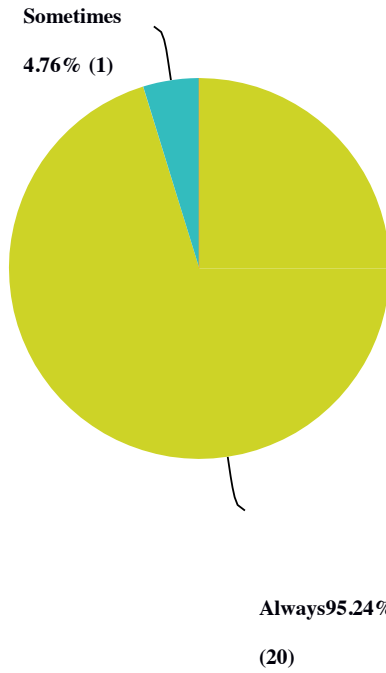
	Always (1)	Sometimes (2)	Never (3)	Total	Weighted Average
(no label)	**95.24%**	**4.76%**	**0.00%**		
	20	1	0		

Basic Statistics				
Minimum	**Maximum**	**Median**	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**
1.00	2.00	1.00	1.05	0.21

Q6 It is my job to help students in special education.

Answered: 21   Skipped: 0

Never

Sometimes

33.33% (7)

Always**61.90%**

(13)
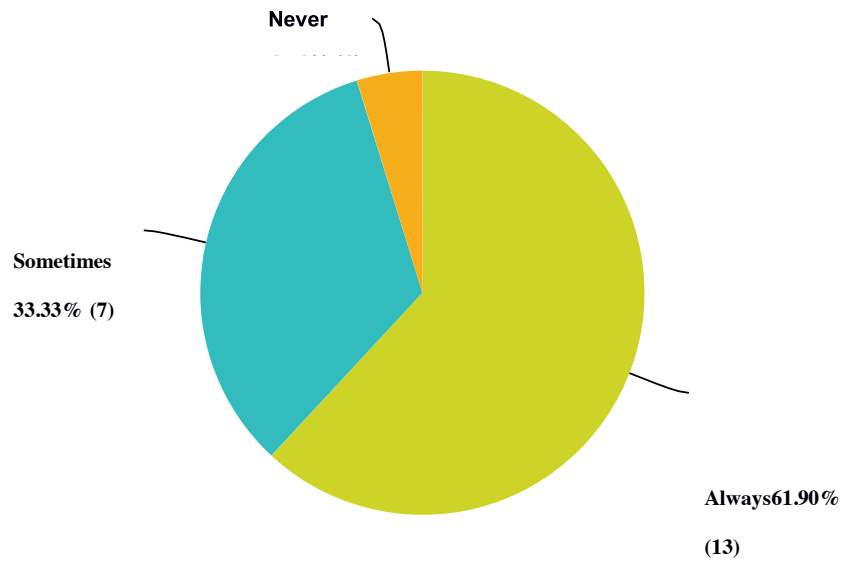
	Always (1)	Sometimes (2)	Never (3)	Total	Weighted Average
(no label)	**61.90%**	**33.33%**	**4.76%**		
	13	7	1		

Basic Statistics				
Minimum	**Maximum**	**Median**	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**
1.00	3.00	1.00	1.43	0.58

Q7 It is important for me to be like by my friends at school.

Answered: 21   Skipped: 0

Sometimes

19.05% (4)

Always80.95%

(17)
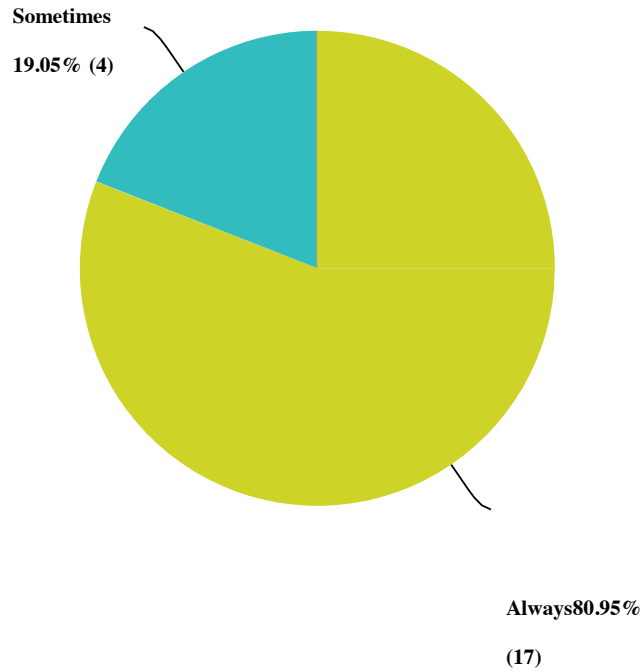
	Always (1)	Sometimes (2)	Never (3)	Total	Weighted Average
(no label)	**80.95%**	**19.05%**	**0.00%**		
	17	4	0		

Basic Statistics				
Minimum	**Maximum**	**Median**	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**
1.00	2.00	1.00	1.19	0.39

Q8 It is important for students in room 17 to be

liked by other students in school.

Answered: 20   Skipped: 1

Sometimes

10.00% (2)

Always90.00%

(18)
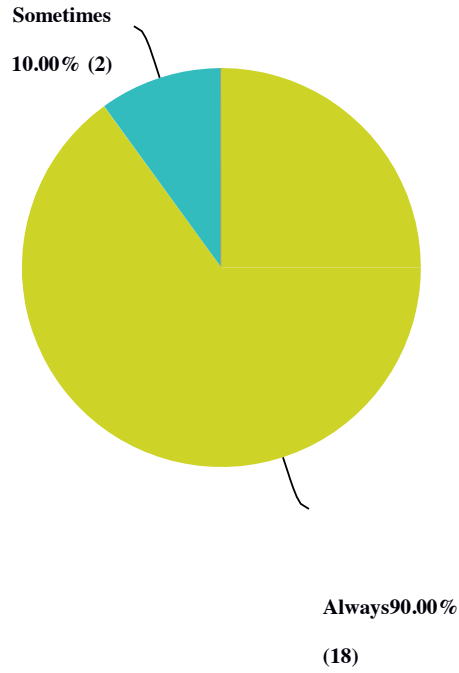
	Always (1)	Sometimes (2)	Never (3)	Total	Weighted Average
(no label)	90.00%	10.00%	0.00%		
	18	2	0		

Basic Statistics				
Minimum	Maximum	Median	Mean	Standard Deviation
1.00	2.00	1.00	1.10	0.30

Q9 It is important for students from room 17 to be included with all students in general education or my kind of classroom.

Answered: 20   Skipped: 1

Sometimes

5.00% (1)

Always95.00%

(19)
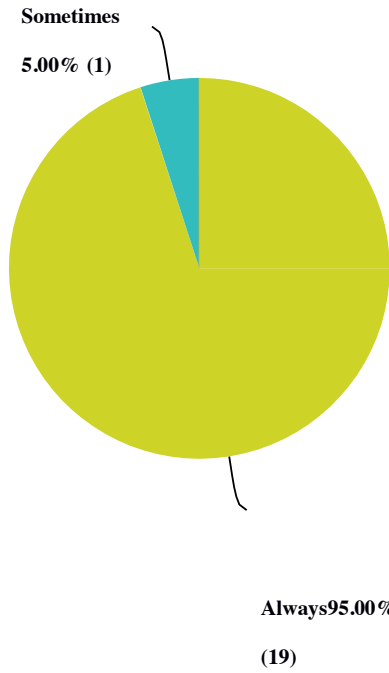
	Always (1)	Sometimes (2)	Never (3)	Total	Weighted Average
(no label)	95.00%	5.00%	0.00%		
	19	1	0		

Basic Statistics				
Minimum	**Maximum**	**Median**	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**
1.00	2.00	1.00	1.05	0.22

Q10 It is important to be kind to others.

Answered: 19   Skipped: 2

Always100.00%

(19)
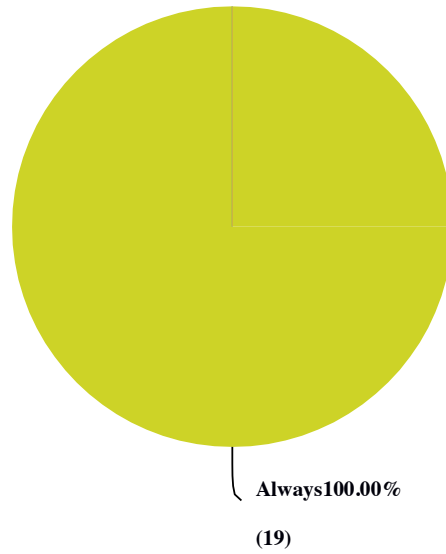
	Always (1)	Sometimes (2)	Never (3)	Total	Weighted Average
(no label)	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%		
	19	0	0		

Basic Statistics				
Minimum	Maximum	Median	Mean	Standard Deviation
1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	0.00

Q11 It is important for people to be kind to me.

Answered: 20   Skipped: 1

Sometimes

15.00% (3)

Always85.00%

(17)
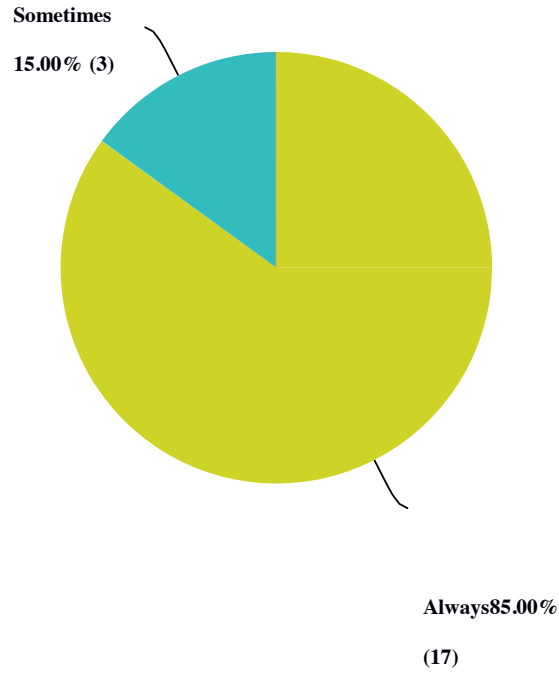
	Always (1)	Sometimes (2)	Never (3)	Total	Weighted Average
(no label)	**85.00%**	**15.00%**	**0.00%**		
	17	3	0		

Basic Statistics				
Minimum	**Maximum**	**Median**	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**
1.00	2.00	1.00	1.15	0.36

Q12 Have you ever seen other students make fun of students in special education?

Answered: 21   Skipped: 0

Always
9.52% (2)

Never**33.33%**
(7)
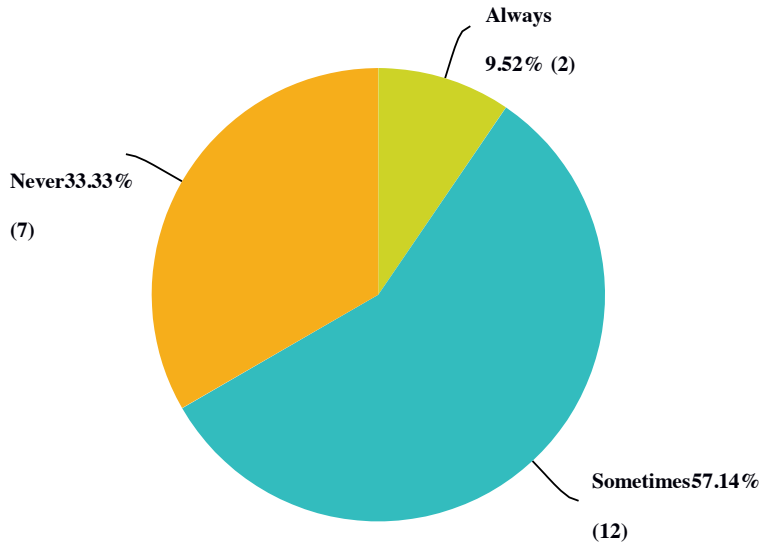
Sometimes**57.14%**
(12)

	Always (1)	Sometimes (2)	Never (3)	Total	Weighted Average
(no label)	**9.52%**	**57.14%**	**33.33%**		
	2	12	7		

Basic Statistics

Minimum	Maximum	Median	Mean	Standard Deviation
1.00	3.00	2.00	2.24	0.61

Q13 What do you like the best about

participation in room 17 sessions?

Answered: 0   Skipped: 21

	(no label) (1)	(no label) (2)	Total	Weighted Average
(no label)	0.00% 0	0.00% 0		

#	Other Please Comment:(pleasespecify)	Date
1	I like arts and crafts and I like playing outide.	3/30/2015 10:44 AM
2	I like Pi (a third grade student)	3/30/2015 10:41 AM
3	It is fun and the kids are fun, I just love it.	3/30/2015 10:39 AM
4	I like playing around and showing them things.	3/30/2015 10:37 AM
5	I like being with the children.	3/30/2015 10:32 AM
6	no response	3/30/2015 10:30 AM
7	playing outside	3/30/2015 10:28 AM
8	Students are happy when we come.	3/30/2015 10:26 AM
9	Playing with all the kids.	3/30/2015 10:24 AM
10	Playing with the kids because they are so joyful and kind and happy when I come.	3/30/2015 10:22 AM
11	I like when they play with me.	3/30/2015 10:20 AM
12	I just like helping them and spending time with them.	3/30/2015 10:18 AM
13	I like seeing all special needs class and making them happy.	3/30/2015 10:15 AM
14	I like to play games with them.	3/30/2015 10:13 AM
15	Playing with all the kids.	3/30/2015 10:10 AM
16	Magnetic Blocks	3/30/2015 10:08 AM
17	I like when we buy stuff from the store with fake coins.	3/30/2015 10:06 AM
18	I like doing fun activities with the kids.	3/30/2015 10:03 AM
19	I like everything. and the magnetic blocks.	3/30/2015 10:02 AM
20	I like participating in room 17 because I like helping people in need and it is fun to see how they do stuff.	3/30/2015 9:57 AM
21	I like to play with the magnetic blocks	3/30/2015 9:53 AM

Q14 What do you like the least about

participation in room 17 sessions?

Answered: 0   Skipped: 21

	(no label) (1)	(no label) (2)	Total	Weighted Average
(no label)	0.00% 0	0.00% 0		

#	Other Please Comment:(pleasespecify)	Date
1	I don't like the exercise song so much.	3/30/2015 10:44 AM
2	When the kids scream	3/30/2015 10:41 AM
3	Sometimes I miss class work.	3/30/2015 10:39 AM
4	I don't know	3/30/2015 10:37 AM
5	nothing	3/30/2015 10:32 AM
6	nothing	3/30/2015 10:30 AM
7	nothing	3/30/2015 10:28 AM
8	nothing	3/30/2015 10:26 AM
9	Their behavior sometimes.	3/30/2015 10:24 AM
10	When the kids fight.	3/30/2015 10:22 AM
11	Doing the banana dance.	3/30/2015 10:20 AM
12	I don't like that they can get really angry. I want them to be happy about a lot of stuff.	3/30/2015 10:18 AM
13	nothing	3/30/2015 10:15 AM
14	I am always happy on when where doing.	3/30/2015 10:13 AM
15	Nothing comes to mind.	3/30/2015 10:08 AM
16	dancing to the go bananas song.	3/30/2015 10:06 AM
17	When I don't get to go.	3/30/2015 10:03 AM
18	nothing	3/30/2015 10:02 AM
19	Nothing	3/30/2015 9:57 AM
20	Art	3/30/2015 9:53 AM

Q15 Is there anything else you'd like to say about

participating in this program?

Answered: 0   Skipped: 21

	(no label) (1)	(no label) (2)	Total	Weighted Average
(no label)	0.00% 0	0.00% 0		

#	Other Please Comment:(pleasespecify)	Date
1	I like going to room 17 because I like helping people it is just fun to help them and I feel happy when they are happy. I really like all of them because they all are different in their own way.	3/30/2015 10:44 AM
2	no not really but your students need to have respect.	3/30/2015 10:41 AM
3	no response	3/30/2015 10:39 AM
4	no response	3/30/2015 10:37 AM
5	no response	3/30/2015 10:32 AM
6	no response	3/30/2015 10:30 AM
7	It is fun to go to room 17.	3/30/2015 10:28 AM
8	I love just being able to help the others who need help. Being a port of this program makes me feel good inside.	3/30/2015 10:26 AM
9	no	3/30/2015 10:24 AM
10	no response	3/30/2015 10:22 AM
11	no response	3/30/2015 10:20 AM
12	No, I don't think so.	3/30/2015 10:18 AM
13	I just like going there and helping and making them happy.	3/30/2015 10:15 AM
14	no response	3/30/2015 10:13 AM
15	Them hurting me.	3/30/2015 10:10 AM
16	Happy to be there. Bowling and trampoline.	3/30/2015 10:08 AM
17	It makes me feel good to help all of them.	3/30/2015 10:06 AM
18	I like to help the kids learn.	3/30/2015 10:03 AM
19	I like everything about room 17 because it feels warm in the heart. Every boy and girl loves room 17.	3/30/2015 10:02 AM
20	I love room 17	3/30/2015 9:57 AM
21	It is fun because they sometimes copy you when you do something nice or good.	3/30/2015 9:53 AM

Q16 It's easy for me to play with students from

room 17.

Answered: 20   Skipped: 1

Sometimes 45.00%

(9)

Always 55.00%

(11)
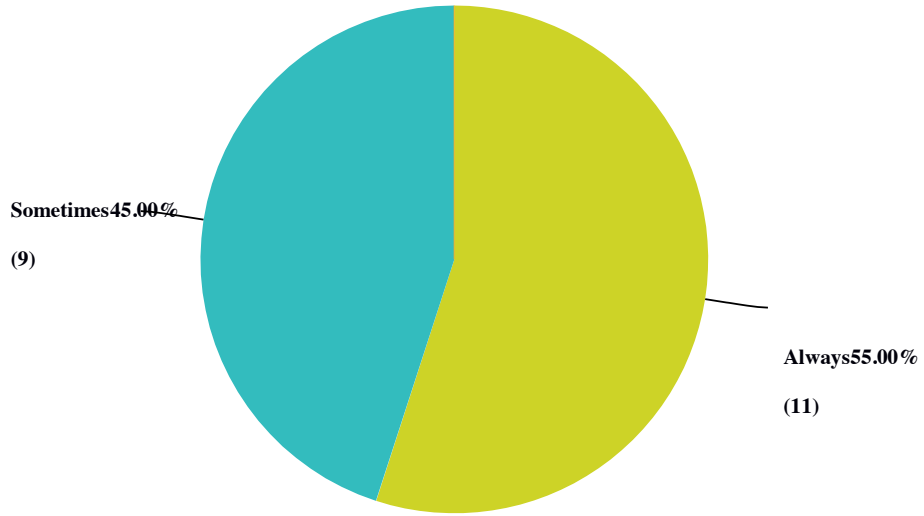
Answer Choices	Responses	
Always (1)	55.00%	11
Sometimes (2)	45.00%	9
Never (3)	0.00%	0
Total		**20**

Basic Statistics

Minimum	Maximum	Median	Mean	Standard Deviation
1.00	2.00	1.00	1.45	0.50

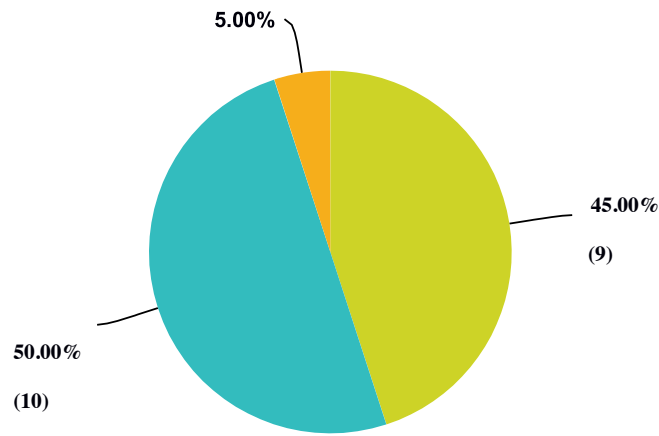**Appendix B**

Post Survey Results

Q1 When I see a student from room 17 on the playground I say hello

Answered: 20   Skipped: 0

5.00%

45.00%

(9)

50.00%

(10)
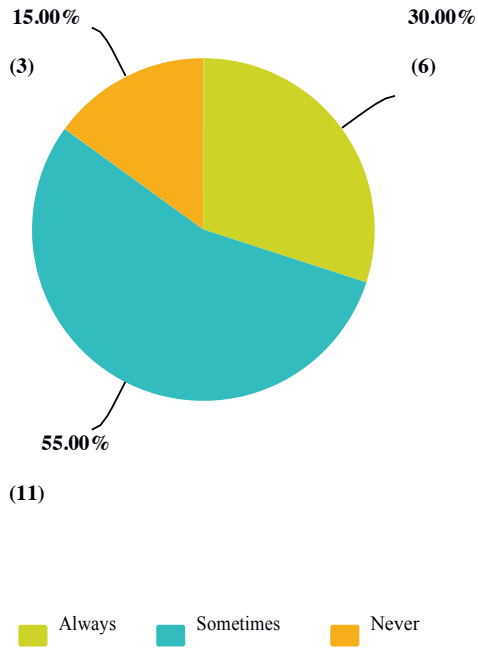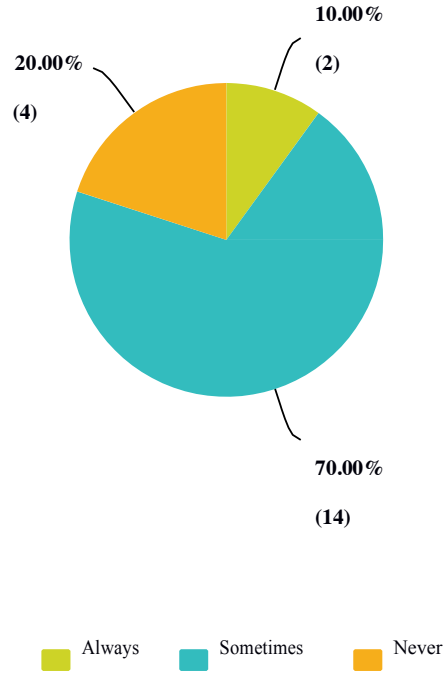
■ Always   ■ Sometimes   ■ Never

Q2 When I see a student from room 17 around the school campus, I say hi to the student by name.

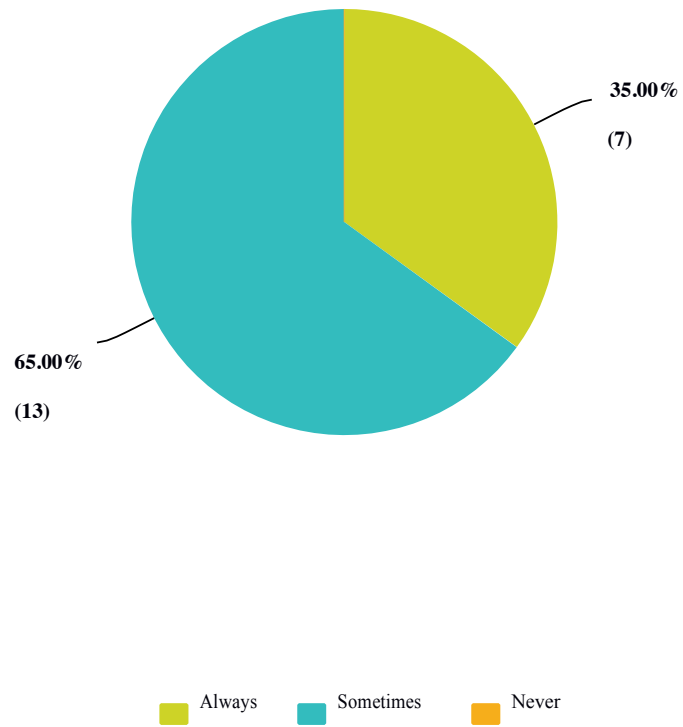Answered: 20   Skipped: 0

15.00%
(3)

30.00%
(6)

55.00%
(11)

Always   Sometimes   Never

Q3 If I see a student from room 17 on the

playground I ask them to play with me.

10.00%

(2)

20.00%

(4)

70.00%

(14)

Always   Sometimes   Never

Q4 It is easy for me to play with students from

room 17.

Answered: 20   Skipped: 0

35.00%

(7)

65.00%

(13)

Always   Sometimes   Never

Q5 I like attending sessions in Room 17.

5.26%

(1)

94.74%

(18)

Always   Sometimes   Never

Q6 It is my job to help students in special education.

Answered: 20   Skipped: 0

20.00%

(4)

80.00%

(16)

■ Always   ■ Sometimes   ■ Never
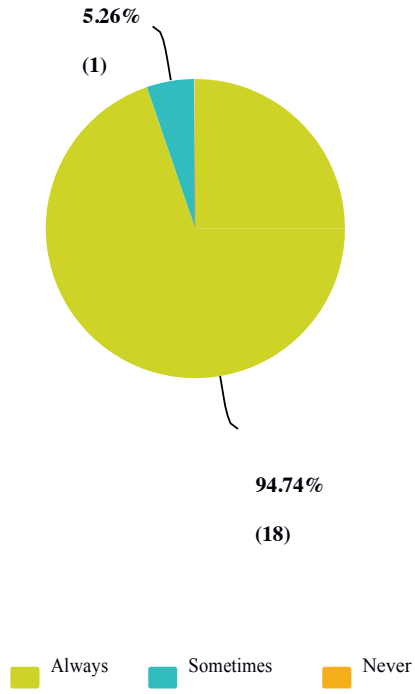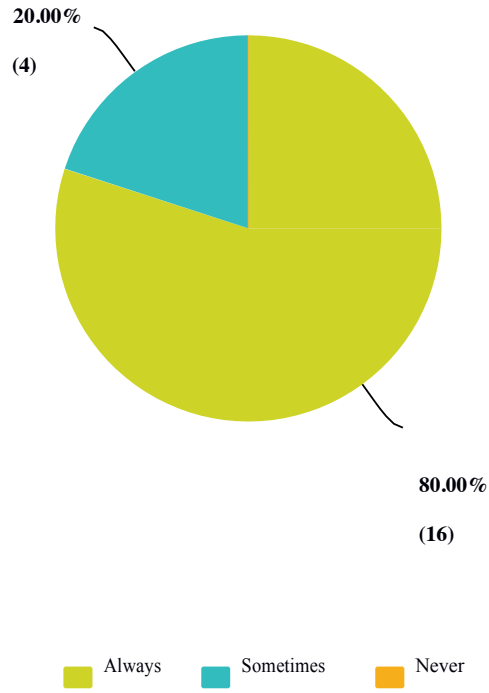
Q7 **It is important for me to be like by my**

friends at school.

Answered: 19   Skipped: 1

10.53%

(2)

89.47%

(17)

Always   Sometimes   Never

Q8 It is important for students in room 17 to be liked by other students in school.

Answered: 20   Skipped: 0

15.00%

(3)

85.00%

(17)

■ Always   ■ Sometimes   ■ Never

Q9 It is important for students from room 17 to

be included with all students in general

education or my kind of classroom.

Answered: 20   Skipped: 0

5.00%

(1)

95.00%

(19)

■ Always   ■ Sometimes   ■ Never

Q10 It is important to be kind to others.

100.00%

(20)

Always   Sometimes   Never

Q11 It is important for people to be kind to me.

Answered: 20   Skipped: 0

5.00%

(1)

95.00%

(19)

Always   Sometimes   Never

Q12 Have you ever seen other students make fun of students in special education?

Answered: 20   Skipped: 0

40.00%
(8)

60.00%
(12)

Always   Sometimes   Never

Q13 What do you like the best about
participation in room 17 sessions?

Answered: 0   Skipped: 20

#	Other Please Comment:(pleasespecify)	Date
1	I like the toys	3/30/2015 12:22 PM
2	I like to do activities with them.	3/30/2015 12:20 PM
3	Playing with the kids and doing art projects and blocks etc.	3/30/2015 12:19 PM
4	I like helping them. (Also this student responded on question 12 with - I don't do it)	3/30/2015 12:16 PM
5	I like helping other people so I like helping them.	3/30/2015 12:13 PM
6	I like doing crafts	3/30/2015 12:11 PM
7	I like helping them it makes me feel good to make them feel included and stuff.	3/30/2015 12:08 PM
8	I like playing building blocks with the students.	3/30/2015 12:05 PM
9	I like helping kids.	3/30/2015 12:03 PM
10	helping and PE	3/30/2015 12:01 PM
11	Everything	3/30/2015 11:59 AM
12	I like to play and make pictures.	3/30/2015 11:55 AM
13	It's very fun.	3/30/2015 11:53 AM
14	I like playing with the kids.	3/30/2015 11:52 AM
15	I love seeing the smiles on their faces when we come in.	3/30/2015 11:34 AM
16	Helping them have fun	3/30/2015 11:32 AM
17	I like to play with the pattern blocks	3/30/2015 11:30 AM
18	I like having fun with the kids in room 17.	3/30/2015 11:28 AM
19	I like helping them.	3/30/2015 11:26 AM
20	I like doing art in room 17.	3/30/2015 11:24 AM

Q14 What do you like the least about

participation in room 17 sessions?

Answered: 0   Skipped: 20

| #	Other Please Comment:(pleasespecify)	Date
1	What I like the least is that the kids keep skriming. (screaming)	3/30/2015 12:22 PM
2	When they are unhappy	3/30/2015 12:20 PM
3	When the kids threaten me.	3/30/2015 12:19 PM
4	I don't know	3/30/2015 12:16 PM
5	Nothing	3/30/2015 12:13 PM
6	I don't like some of the songs on the TV.	3/30/2015 12:11 PM
7	I don't like it when they say bad words.	3/30/2015 12:08 PM
8	I don't like dancing to the banana dance.	3/30/2015 12:05 PM
9	No response	3/30/2015 12:03 PM
10	When they scream	3/30/2015 12:01 PM
11	Nothing	3/30/2015 11:59 AM
12	When they say bad words but they don't mean it too.	3/30/2015 11:55 AM
13	I miss work in class.	3/30/2015 11:53 AM
14	When I have to leave.	3/30/2015 11:52 AM
15	I don't like that other kids make fun of them. The kids in room 17 should get as much respect as us.	3/30/2015 11:34 AM
16	Nothing	3/30/2015 11:32 AM
17	art	3/30/2015 11:30 AM
18	When they get mad at each other.	3/30/2015 11:28 AM
19	Nothing	3/30/2015 11:26 AM
20	Nothing	3/30/2015 11:24 AM

Q15 Is there anything else you'd like to say about participating in this program?

Answered: 0   Skipped: 20

#	Other Please Comment:(pleasespecify)	Date
1	I like that I can help the kids to learn.	3/30/2015 12:22 PM
2	no response	3/30/2015 12:20 PM
3	I would like to say that it's fun to go and I LOVE! the parties and the games.	3/30/2015 12:19 PM
4	I always have a good time.	3/30/2015 12:16 PM
5	I love room 17. (student drew hearts)	3/30/2015 12:13 PM
6	I like to come to room 17 a lot. It si fun to go. Also I think the teachers that help the kids are very nice and kind.	3/30/2015 12:11 PM
7	no response	3/30/2015 12:08 PM
8	no response	3/30/2015 12:05 PM
9	I love participating and helping kids with needs.	3/30/2015 12:03 PM
10	These kids will soon be part of the crowd. Not everyone likes them but I do.	3/30/2015 12:01 PM
11	Its been fun.	3/30/2015 11:59 AM
12	Well I really like to see the kids smiling and having fun. I reall like room 17 because you get to help.	3/30/2015 11:55 AM
13	no response	3/30/2015 11:53 AM
14	I have a lot of fun at room 17.	3/30/2015 11:52 AM
15	no response	3/30/2015 11:34 AM
16	I love it.	3/30/2015 11:32 AM
17	I love having the kids look up to me. The activities are fun in room 17.	3/30/2015 11:30 AM
18	I want to say that I like doing this program.	3/30/2015 11:28 AM
19	I love to help them. (this student drew a heart with two students in it with heart bubbles)	3/30/2015 11:26 AM
20	Nothing else	3/30/2015 11:24 AM

Q16 It's easy for me to play with students from

room 17.

Answered: 20   Skipped: 0

35.00%

(7)

65.00%

(13)

Always   Sometimes   Never
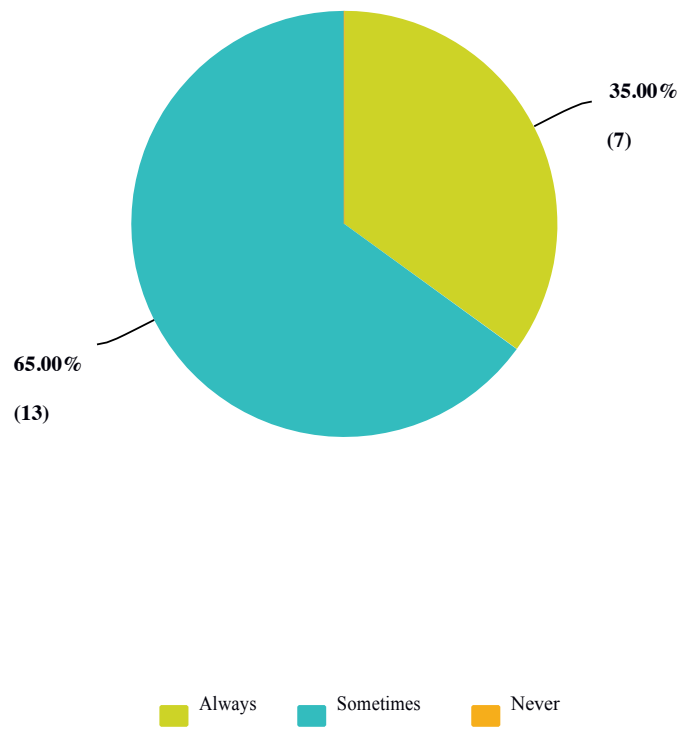
Appendix C

Mr. Igoe's Pre and Post Class Survey

You do not need to put your name on this paper.

Please be honest.

Always do your best.

1. When I see a student from room 17 on the playground I say hello.

Circle one

Always   sometimes   never

2. When I see a student from room 17 around the school campus (in the hallways, library,

   office, another classroom) I say hi to them by name.

Circle one

Always   sometimes   never

3. If I see a student from room 17 on the playground I ask them to play with me.

Circle One

Always   Sometimes   Never

4. It is easy for me to play with students from room 17.

Always   Sometimes   Never

5. I like attending sessions in Room 17.

Always   Sometimes   Never

6. It is my job to help the students in special education.

Always   Sometimes   Never

7. It is important for me to be liked by my friends at school.

Always   Sometimes   Never

8. It is important for students in room 17 to be liked by other students in school.

Always   Sometimes   Never

9. It is important for students from room 17 to be included with all students in general

   education or my kind of classroom.

Always   Sometimes   Never

10. It is important to be kind to others.

Always   Sometimes   Never

11. It is important for people to be kind to me.

Always   Sometimes   Never

12. Have you ever seen other students make fun of students in special education?

Always   Sometimes   Never

13. What do you like best about participating in room 17?

14. What do you like least?

15. Is there anything else that you'd like to say about participating in this program