

Title: A Qualitative Case Study of an Inclusion Program Focusing on the Perceptions and Outlooks of Five Teachers Who Have Had Preparation and Experience in Teaching and Managing Inclusive Classrooms

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In light of numerous, current concerns about inclusion, this research study explored the perceptions and outlooks of five teachers who have had preparation and experience in teaching and managing inclusive classrooms. Because teachers are on the front lines of carrying out this initiative, their first-hand, extended experiences with inclusion in the context of their actual classrooms are important to its continued development.

Case study was the main method of inquiry guiding this research project. Case studies describe in depth how things are at a particular place and time (Stake, 1995). In this particular case study, data gathered from focus group and individual interviews, observations in classrooms, and document and literature review was triangulated to validate the perceptions of five trained and experienced teachers of inclusion regarding the issues of best instructional practices and in-class supports, professional development and training, overall classroom management, sustaining variables, and obstacles.

Results regarding each issue were as follows:

- 1.) There is no one right way to implement best instructional practices for inclusion, and both material and human in-class supports must be sufficient to meet the needs of all students; 2.) Professional development and training served mainly to hone teachers' own backgrounds and experiences, and teachers with more inclusive experiences should provide future training; 3.) Impact on physical and instructional aspects of classroom management hinged on number, severity, and behavior of special

needs students; 4.) Sustaining variables included improved instructional practices, collaborative teaming among educators, continuous reflection on practices, and development of a strong sense of community and belonging; 5.) Obstacles included ideal vs. reality, inappropriate placements, over abundance of special needs students, over challenged educators, and insufficient in-class personnel.

Conclusions from this study indicate that inclusion will go on, but improved practices will continue to evolve through additional experiences. The results of this case study do not provide a blue print for action (Clark et al., 1995), but they do help people to better understand the variety of issues with which educators may be confronted as they implement and experience inclusion.