



5-1-2016

Does Inclusion Really Mean Included?

Nicole M. Aldrich

Follow this and additional works at: http://vc.bridgew.edu/honors_proj



Part of the [Educational Sociology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Aldrich, Nicole M.. (2016). Does Inclusion Really Mean Included?. In *BSU Honors Program Theses and Projects*. Item 176. Available at: http://vc.bridgew.edu/honors_proj/176
Copyright © 2016 Nicole M. Aldrich

This item is available as part of Virtual Commons, the open-access institutional repository of Bridgewater State University, Bridgewater, Massachusetts.

Does Inclusion Really Mean Included?

Nicole M. Aldrich

Submitted in Partial Completion of the
Requirements for Departmental Honors in Sociology

Bridgewater State University

May 1, 2016

Dr. Jodi Cohen, Thesis Director
Dr. Patricia Fanning, Committee Member
Dr. Meghan Murphy, Committee Member

Abstract

Classroom inclusion is currently one of the most debated issues in education. The debate is whether inclusion serves as the most appropriate way to provide education for students with disabilities. According to Heyne et al. (2012) social interactions are important to an individual, however, throughout an inclusion classroom environment social inclusion might not always be found amongst children with disabilities and their peers. Throughout the course of eight months I collected observations in a preschool inclusion classroom where one student has a one-to-one aide present at all times. This study examines this child's degree of social inclusion amongst peers. Findings suggest that while this child can be included at times during teacher-led activities, during free play she is mostly socially isolated from her peers. Children with disabilities although included in the classroom are not always socially included with their peers, leaving us to question whether inclusion really means included.

Introduction

Inclusion classrooms have become a central topic of debate when it comes to educating a student with a disability.

Inclusive education means that all students within a school regardless of their strengths or weaknesses, or disabilities in any area become part of the school community. In this context, students with disabilities attend the same schools as their neighbors and peers without disabilities where they are provided all support needed to achieve full access to the same curriculum. Inclusion is built on the principle that all students should be valued for their exceptional abilities and included as important members of the school community (Obiakor, et al. 2012, 478).

Inclusion classrooms were designed to provide students with disabilities access to an education with their age appropriate peers. Within inclusive classrooms, students with disabilities should have access to meaningful, rigorous general education curriculum and special education through a specifically designed instruction to assist them in maximizing their potential.

Students are currently mandated by law to be in the least restrictive classroom due to Individual with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA). IDEA 2004 speaks to the principle of school inclusion, mandating that students with disabilities receive an education in the least restrictive environment with appropriate supports (Crouch, Keys, & McMahon 2014). With the IDEA in place by law students with disabilities are supposed to be in an inclusion classroom with the appropriate help if this means that the environment is least restrictive to the student.

Laws that Lead to Inclusion

Inclusion was not always an option for students with disabilities. Prior to 1990 and IDEA, students with disabilities were forced to choose between general education with no assistance or special education which took students away from their age appropriate peers and put them in a separate mix-age and mixed-grade classroom.

At the federal level, the recent No Child Left Behind Act (2001) and the current and previous versions of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (1997-2004) requires access to the general education curriculum for students with disabilities. The 2004 amendments to the Individuals with Disabilities Education act further propose that students responses to research- based instructional methods, presumably occurring in general education contexts, be used as a data source to augment or replace exclusive reliance on the IQ-achievement discrepancy model for identifying students with learning disabilities (Berry 2006, 490).

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and IDEA have shaped education as we currently know it. Prior to 1990 and IDEA there were more than eight million children with disabilities, most of whom were excluded from any inclusion educational opportunities. Of those who were educated almost seventy percent were taught in separate classrooms or buildings apart from non-disabled students (Gordon, 2006). Now students with disabilities are allowed access to general education classrooms where they are no longer measured on intelligence based on their IQ score, but rather their ability to respond to instructions in the classroom. However, there are cases where the student will still need to be in a special education classroom as the general education classroom is not restrictive enough.

Inclusion in Massachusetts

Massachusetts has prided itself on being a State that follows the law of Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). In particular, the law encourages opportunities for children with disabilities to participate in a general education setting and in the general education curriculum (MA DOE, 1999). For a student with disabilities, this meant placement in a classroom with age appropriate peers stated by the Massachusetts Department of Education (DOE) website. According to the Massachusetts DOE and Special Education:

Progress effectively in the general education program shall mean to make documented growth in the acquisition of knowledge and skills, including social/ emotional development, within the general education program, with or without accommodations, according to chronological age and developmental expectations, the individual educational potential of the student, and the learning standards set forth in the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks and the curriculum of the district. The general education program includes preschool and early childhood programs offered by the district, academic and non- academic offerings of the district, and vocational programs and activities (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/>).

In the general education classroom documentation of progress is necessary in order to ensure that a child with special needs is demonstrating growth. The documentation shows the progress that the student is making on the skill level, social development, and learning experience within the general education classroom based on the supports and aids the student is given. Written documentation to these supports and aids can usually be found in a student's Individual Education Plan (IEP). IEP has been called the heart of providing a free appropriate public education. At the cornerstone of the IDEA of 2004, no document is more significant for ensuring

effective and compliant program design, implementation, monitoring, and enforcement of the law. The IEP serves as a roadmap for special education services (Rotter, 2014). An IEP is in place to ensure that a student receives the appropriate help needed in the classroom environment. IEP is both a process and a product designed to carry into implementation the law's intent of an appropriate education. According to Rotter (2014), the IEP requires collaboration between parents, teachers, administrators, and the multi-disciplinary team.

According to the Massachusetts DOE, determining the placement of a student relies heavily on the needs of the child:

At the Team meeting, after the IEP has been developed, the Team shall consider the identified needs of the student, the types of services required, and whether such services may be provided in general education classroom with supplementary aids and/ or services or in a separate classroom or school. The Team shall consider all aspects of the student's proposed special education program as specified in the student's IEP and determine the appropriate placement to provide the services (<http://www.doe.mass.edu>).

IEPs are used to determine where the student would be "adequately" placed. The Massachusetts DOE reports that their goal is to support each student with the support that the student needs in order to succeed.

Since the inception of IDEA, a shift began to incorporate more inclusion classrooms in public school settings, and with that, inclusion has become a debated topic in education. While many think positively about inclusion classrooms and feel that there is more to gain from a inclusion, others disagree. Some feel that inclusion is a distraction to the other students in the classroom and takes away attention from the typically learning students within the classroom. In 2011 WNYC 93.9 radio station conducted a controversial discussion on inclusion classrooms.

During this discussion, parents weighed in with their opinions about inclusion. The main takeaway from these interviews was that inclusion is not accepted by all, and those with special learning needs who are in inclusion classrooms are not always included. It is this lack of inclusion that is central to my study. When students are placed in inclusion classrooms, are they included socially?

Literature Review

Social Interactions

Positive social interaction promotes the formation of identity, a sense of self and others, communication and relationship skills, friendship development, and a feeling of community belonging. In fact, social relationships are the primary source of most people's happiness and the key ingredient to a life well-lived (Heyne et al., 2012). According to Heyne et al. (2012) social interactions are important to an individual, however throughout an inclusion environment inclusion might not always be found socially amongst children with disabilities and their non-disabled peers. When examining social integration of children with disabilities with children without disabilities there are several objectives to consider including: interactions with children who have disabilities that affect their social interaction, interactions in social environments, interaction when having a one-to-one aide, and with children who have a physical disability.

In the classroom setting sometimes students with social disabilities struggle to fit in with their classmates. One example of this is offered in Beutel and Li (2015) in their discussion of Laurie. Laurie is a member of a general education classroom. Laurie has a disability, and because of this disability she has trouble socializing with other students and is perceived of as strange by her peers. Laurie has a disability that affects her social interaction with her peers, and as a result

she struggles to understand the social behavior expectations and her peers label her as strange and do not bother socializing with her. Beutel and Li's (2015) study shows that student lacking the expected social skills for their age group struggle to connect with their peers. Heyne et al. (2012) in discussing social interaction explain that its absence leads to missing out on a key ingredient to a life well-lived.

Autism and Social inclusion

Children with autism face enormous struggles when attempting to interact with their typically developing peers (Gunn & Delafield-Butt, 2015; Lauderdale-Littin, 2013; Koegel, 2012; Cotugno, 2009). More children are educated in integrated settings; however, play skills usually need to be explicitly taught, and play environments must be carefully prepared to support effective social interactions (Harper et al., 2008). Social play, according to Harper et al. (2008) might be more difficult for a student with autism. This is due to many students with autism having a desire for routine and predictability, a new play sequence may represent change and thereby cause anxiety to the child with autism. Students with autism have to be prompted and cued when it comes to social interaction with peers. As a result of this, often students with autism are more likely to engage in self-play at recess time without the prompting and cuing. However, in Harper et al.'s (2008) study they found that children with autism may not act on play materials or imitate peer actions without a cue, with external facilitation or instruction, play skills can improve. In regards to improving socialization amongst students with autism and typically developing children, Frea (1999)[in Harper et al., 2008] did one study in which children were assigned into cooperative groups with typically learning peers, and the providing of structured playgroups led to improved social interactions between the targeted children and

peers. Harper et al. (2008) found in their study that when students with autism are trained to interact socially within a classroom they are more likely to interact with their peers on the playground.

Programs to Promote Social Inclusion

Outside of classroom space, peer-led time periods, such as lunchtime, can be a difficult time for any student: Where will I sit? With whom will I sit? Will I make friends? These questions are on every students' mind and sometimes students have little choice. If the student needs assistance eating, his or her lunch companion will likely be the classroom aide instead of a classroom peer. Research on the lack of socialization between children with and without disabilities has led to the development of structured lunch programs forming in school settings. The lunchroom setting is an important environment for students because it is where friendships grow and develop independent of adult authority, which is important for social interaction (Kindzierski et al., 2013). One program that strives to encourage social interactions between students with disabilities and students without disabilities is "Lunch Bunch". Lunch Bunch programs were developed to reduce barriers to social integration. Heyne et al. (2012) looks at the Lunch Bunch program as:

The Lunch Bunch program grew out of a federal grant project from the U.S Department of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services. The purpose of the program was to explore that nature of relationships and friendships between elementary- age children with and without disabilities, what prevented friendships from developing, and what encouraged and sustained them. As part of the program, children with and without

disabilities participated in school- based recreational activities together, including lunch bunches, over 2 academic years (Heyne et al., 2012, 56).

Lunch Bunch programing became a space for students with disabilities who normally sat alone or with an aide at lunchtime to instead be given a structured opportunity to interact socially with a group of their peers. Structured Lunch Bunch programs begin with conversations over boxed lunches and are then followed by participation in recreational activities with those whom students ate lunch. While these programs cannot guarantee friendships will occur, they can set the stage for positive social interactions among children whereby friendships can take root and grow (Heyne et al., 2012). Lunch Bunch groups can improve social interactions between students with disabilities and students without disabilities by providing them with a set social time to interact with same-aged peers.

Hindrance or Aide?

When students have a one-to-one aide with them throughout the day not only is that aide normally present in the classroom, that aide is also with the student during lunch and recreational time (i.e. recess) in the school environment. While some students with disabilities are able to manage on their own in a general education classroom others have a one-to-one aide with them at all times, which can affect their social interactions with their peers (Osborn, 2014; Harrower & Dunlap, 2001). In Broer et al.'s (2005) study, one young man described how he felt about some of the paraprofessionals assigned to support him as, "I was kind of getting embarrassed because I always had, like a mother right there. People were like looking at me and stuff, and saying, 'Why do you always have this person with you who is twice as old as you?'" (420). Having an aide follow and always be with you is noticeable to other students, and, as a result, can affect the

quality of social interaction with peers. One individual with an assigned aide describes his lack of socialization, “That’s why I didn’t have any best friends or a girlfriend in high school because I always had a mother on my back” (Broer et al. 2005, 421). Aides can almost be like mother figures according to Broer et al. (2005), which as a result can affect the social interactions between students who have this one-to-one attention and typically developing students. Students who have constant supervision are not as socially available and as result other students are less likely to engage socially with them.

Students who have a one-to-one aide have reported being in their own world and socially disconnected from their peers. One young woman explained, “I didn’t feel like I was within a group...I feel like I was sitting on the outside”. One young man stated, “I could never sit in the way back with the other kids. I always had to sit down there with the kids that didn’t belong.” (Broer et al. 2005, 421). These students felt like outsiders because they were never socially included by the typically learning peers in the school environment. When it came time to sit in the classroom, students with an aide were normally located in the front of the classroom while the other students could choose to sit in the back of the classroom. The result of this was social exclusion where students felt segregated. However one student in Broer et al.’s (2005) study did report having some social inclusion with peers that shared disabilities similar to them. As one young man explained, “I made some friends that would sit next to me (in the cafeteria) who were like my kind of people (students with disabilities). Another participant referred to himself and his group of friends as nerds” (421). For the most part, Broer et al. (2005) found that students with paraprofessionals were socially isolated from typically developing peers in the school setting. This is different for the most part from what Heyne et al. (2012) found in their study, where students with a one-to-one aide had social interactions that helped them promote the formation of

identity. In Heyne et al.'s (2012) study and Broer et al.'s (2005) study differ from other studies because both of these studies examine the impact of an aide. However, Heyne et al. (2012) found that students with disabilities who have a one-to-one aide are more positively included with their peers. While Broer et al.'s (2005) found that having a one-to-one aide can negatively impact a child's social interactions within a classroom. Having a one-to-one aide can impact a student's social interactions because having an aide makes it known to the typically developing peers in the classroom that the student with a disability is different.

Social Isolation?

Despite studies supporting the efficacy of inclusion, some research has yielded mixed findings where the integration of children with disabilities has resulted in social isolation, suggesting that current inclusive practices may be insufficient to promote social acceptance of children with disabilities. Koller & San Juan (2013) found that when it comes to having students with disabilities in a general classroom with students who are non-disabled, non-disabled students develop different opinions about students with disabilities, especially if the disability is physically noticeable. When asked in a study children spontaneously identified disability as a form of sickness, inferring that disabled students could be changed over time (Koller & San Juan, 2013). For example, children expressed a belief that physical disabilities are temporary and could be "fixed" or healed with time. In Koller and San Juan's (2013) study, only one four-year old boy viewed disability as a more permanent state whereby sickness was related to death. The understanding of disabilities can be important to the social interaction between students with disabilities and students without disabilities. Understanding how students without disabilities view students with disabilities is important, according to Koller and San Juan (2013), because it

can affect how students without disabilities treat students with disabilities. For example, in one study nine children endorsed the idea that children with and without disabilities should attend the same school. One student said, “They should play all together, otherwise they might ‘feel left out’ in a segregated environment;” and “they can play with each other”. During the interview there were dolls that represented physically disabled children and nondisabled children. One young girl during her interview made a point of removing the doll with the disability from the segregated school and placing it with the other dolls that did not have disability (Koller & San Juan, 2013). This girl, in Koller and San Juan’s (2013) study, by removing the doll that was disabled and placing it with the other dolls that were not disabled showed that this child believed that social inclusion between physically disabled and regular developing children should occur, understanding that no child should be left alone and isolated.

While students in Koller and San Juan’s (2013) study believed that students with physical disabilities should be included in the classroom setting, the idea that they should be included and actually being included are two separated ideas. The idea that students with disabilities should be in a general classroom was accepted by many in Koller and San Juan’s (2013) study, however the idea of actually befriending these children was not as accepted by typically developing children. One four-year old boy when asked whether he would be friends with a child with a physical disability such as in a wheelchair, he initially agreed but later changed his mind, saying he did not want to be friends with a child in a wheelchair because he would be too busy playing with another boy in his class - one who did not have a disability and whom he referred to as a “friend” (Koller & San Juan, 2013). When children have a physical disability they are not always included socially by their typically developing peers.

Beutel & Li (2015), Kindzierski et al. (2013), Koller & San Juan (2013), Heyne et al. (2012), Harper et al. (2008), and Broer et al. (2005) have all reported that students with disabilities struggle more socially than students without disabilities. They also found that students with disabilities were accepted by their peers in the classroom, however, they were not seen as a “friend” by the students without disabilities. One can conclude from the previous research that any student with a noticeable disability has a harder time being socially included than students without disabilities.

Disability Knowledge

Children’s lack of knowledge about disability can adversely impact their attitudes toward people with disabilities (Lindsay & Edwards, 2013). However studies have shown that when children have prior knowledge or experience with others with disabilities that these children are having more positive interactions with people with disabilities than those with no prior knowledge (Shogren et al., 2015; Lund & Seekins, 2014; Lindsay & Edwards, 2012 ; Heyne et al., 2012; Lindsay & McPherson, 2011; Siperstein et al., 2007; Diamond, 2001). The result of this is that inclusion classrooms are providing experiences and knowledge that in return potentially lead to a more inclusive society in the future.

Inclusion learning environments have given students without “disability knowledge”, experiences that can lead to a more positive view and more inclusive view of students with disabilities. In some studies, participation in programs that have included peers with disabilities have been associated with children’s and adolescents’ positive attitudes toward people with disabilities. One study with preschool children, Esposito and Reed (1986) [in Diamond, 2001] reported that contact with same age peers with disabilities was associated with long lasting

positive gains in elementary age children attitudes toward people with disabilities (Diamond, 2001). Another study discussed by Diamond (2001) reported evidence that typically developing children in inclusive programs hold more positive attitudes toward people with disabilities than they do toward their peers enrolled in preschool programs for typically developing children. When children without disabilities are included early on with students with disabilities there is more hope that the experiences will create positive attitudes towards disabled people throughout their life (Diamond, 2001). When children are exposed to an inclusion classroom environment students generally report having a more positive interaction with children with disabilities than those who are not exposed to children with disabilities (Lund & Seekins, 2014). Therefore the earlier non-disabled children are exposed to children with disabilities, the sooner they can create these normalizing attitudes that will lead to a more socially inclusive education experiences.

Intervention Systems

The provision of inclusive and accepting social climates within schools is necessary to decrease the likelihood that children will be socially excluded from their peers. In order to value social inclusion and create an environment in which students with disabilities are included by their peers. Lindsay and Edwards (2013) did a systemic review of previous research to critically appraise the evidence of disability awareness and social inclusion interventions for children and youth. From this, they created an intervention system for use by schools. This intervention measured two outcomes: the knowledge of people with disabilities and the attitudes towards and acceptance of peers with disabilities. “A key outcome among the studies we reviewed involved attitudes towards and acceptance of people with a disability” (Lindsay & Edwards 2013, 625). One of the studies that Lindsay and Edwards (2013) reviewed was Favazza and Odom’s (1997),

acceptance scale created to measure social inclusion of Kindergarteners with a disability (in an inclusion setting). In this study knowledge of disabilities was examined through a 9-week program divided into reading books about disabilities and having structural play with students with disabilities each week. The findings from Favazza and Odom's (1997) [in Lindsay & Edwards, 2013] study was that attitudes and perceptions of elementary school-aged children about people with disabilities is able to be altered in a relatively short period of time by providing positive, direct experiences with children with disabilities, as well as indirect experience such as information through book, guided discussion, or simulation activities. Lindsay and Edwards (2013) found that social contact and use of children's books are effective means to alter the attitudes of children. Xafopoulous et al. (2009) investigated the effect of Paralympic Day on children's attitudes towards peers with a disability in a general physical education class. This day consisted of activities such as wheelchair basketball and meeting athletes with a disability. Xafopoulous et al. (2009) found that the attitudes towards inclusion were positively changed and as a result more children with disabilities began being included in general play activities. Lindsay and Edwards (2013) reviewed this study and found that the one-day intervention positively influenced the general attitudes of the girls but not their sport specific attitudes. The overall finding provides evidence for one example of how to achieve optimal outcomes for improving social attitudes towards those with disabilities and overall acceptance of people with disabilities. Uncovering the effective components of disability awareness intervention is especially important as schools, educators, and health professionals increasingly invest in the development of disability awareness through interventions to further enhance social inclusion (Lindsay & Edwards, 2013).

Inclusion environments provide students with the knowledge and experience to understand and work with students who have a disability (Jimenez, 2012; Brown, 2004). In Lindsay & Edwards's (2013) research they found that programs in school settings helped students without disabilities react to students with disabilities with a more positive manner, this idea was also found in Heyne et al.'s (2012) study of the Lunch Bunch program. Through this program students without disabilities socialized with students with disabilities during lunch and recess. Students without disabilities learned to include and advocate for classmates with disabilities through this program and this noticeably boosted their self-confidence. The results of the Lunch Bunch program were that students with disabilities were no longer sitting alone during lunch time and began to build relationships with a larger group of peers. . This program became a weekly highlight for everyone, even when school was on holiday, children asked to get together for play dates (Heyne et al., 2012). The Lunch Bunch program in Heyne et al.'s (2012) study is an example of how when students are given the opportunity to engage with students with disabilities the students without disabilities have more positive thoughts about people with disabilities and this can lead to more social inclusion.

School Climate and Classroom Climate

School climate is particularly important in influencing peer acceptance and accommodations of children with disabilities (Lindsay & McPherson, 2011). In Lindsay and McPherson's (2011) research they ran an exploratory study with students with cerebral palsy that asked what are the suggestions of children with disabilities for improving social inclusion at school. The findings supported that students with disabilities wished that their peers were more educated and had more knowledge about students with disabilities. As in Lindsay and

McPherson's (2011) study, children with cerebral palsy reported "It would be helpful for (other kids) to know. They probably don't know what I have or understand what it is" (811). This student wished that his peers had an understanding of what he was going through but did not want to be seen just as having a disability. Students with disabilities typically do not want to be seen as their disability, but rather as an individual. Previous research has shown that in order for students with disabilities to be seen as such it is important for everyone to become educated about disabilities.

Children and youth remarked how important it is for them to communicate with peers and to make them aware of their condition, their particular needs, and also to emphasize their abilities, rather than to focus on their disability (Lindsay & McPherson, 2011). Inclusion environments give students with a disability an environment to communicate with students without disabilities where they can choose to educate their peers on their disability. This is important because in Lindsay and McPherson's (2011) study children and youth often felt their peers lacked understanding about differences in general, like why someone might be acting or moving differently. Thus, their peers often viewed children with disabilities differently.

The school system needs to understand that we're the same as everyone else and we want the same things in life... We need to improve exposure to people with disabilities. People always ask me 'why are you in a wheelchair?' I always say, well I was born like this and no, my parents didn't do anything wrong and no, I did not get sick. You know it's just natural and I'm happy the way I am (Lindsay & McPherson 2011, 812).

Children with disabilities, such as cerebral palsy, are often willing to educate their peers on their disability just like the child above states that they wish children without disabilities were exposed more to children with disabilities. In seeking to remove the "sick" label, the non-disabled peer

can become informed on disabilities and from that knowledge can create positive attitudes towards peers with disabilities.

Shogren et al.'s (2015) study looks at inclusive schools that have provided students with the experience to learn about disabilities through teaching and experience in the classroom. In this study students gave their opinion on the inclusion classroom, one child reported "I think what makes our school really unique is that everyone really likes working together and having fun while doing things... students and staff really care for each other" (Shogren et al. 2015, 6). The inclusion classroom educates both children with disabilities and children without disabilities. Although students described the impressive strengths related to school culture, when asked what their feelings were about safety and bullying, students with and without disabilities described seeing or experiencing bullying in less structural environments than the classroom. Many students, particularly those with disabilities, described their experiences at their current school as much better than at previous schools. One child in Shogren et al.'s (2015) study reported, "This is an inclusive school and I learned here from other kids when they were sticking up for themselves" (8). This inclusion school that Shogren researched aims for the social inclusion of everyone.

It's actually kind of helpful because everybody will meet someone who has disability in their life. And if you go to an inclusion school, like this school, you have a personal experience with it, then it will actually be easier and you won't just be like, oh my gosh, what I do, how do I deal with this. And it's actually kind of fun too because they are really funny (Shogren, 2015, 7).

Having children with disabilities in an inclusion classroom gives students without disabilities the experience working with students with a disability, which in turns helps them to interact with

students with disabilities. When students without disabilities begin to learn about disabilities and interact with students with disabilities some students who are nondisabled are surprised to learn that students with disabilities are just like them. Across a focus group in Shogren's (2011) research, students made repeated statements like "they (referring to students with disabilities) aren't really different from anybody else. They just need a little bit of help" (8). When students without disabilities are in inclusion classrooms early on they are more likely to have these normalizing attitudes about other students who have disabilities.

Importance of the Inclusion Setting

Throughout the inclusion environment, the physical setting can play a vital role in the inclusion of all students within the classroom. The setting is important for the students in the classroom to obtain positive attitudes toward inclusion and their peers with disabilities. However, general education teachers do have concerns about teaching students with learning impairments including their lack of special education training, planning time, and resources. Research is essential to demonstrating how the inclusion model can have a positive impact on academic achievement as well as social interaction among students with disabilities (Lampert et al., 2012; Soukup et al., 2007; Liberman et al., 2004). Without this, students with disabilities can struggle to fit into general education classrooms because they are not being accommodated, this can lead to being isolated in some classroom settings.

Programs have been created within the classroom setting to help students with disabilities transition into a general education classroom. Calabrese et al.'s (2008) study observes an inclusive setting that was implemented in some classrooms called the Circle of Friends Program

(COFP). This program has proven to be beneficial in increasing social interactions for both inside and outside of the classroom. As Calabrese et al. (2008) notes,

The COFP paired disabled students with a non-disabled buddy in a classroom. “The COFP is not only a model for successful inclusion of students with disabilities in and outside the classroom but has the potential to serve as a vehicle for facilitating school-wide inclusive practices. It was evident that the COFP helps foster a culture of acceptance through encouraging relationships between students with disabilities and their non-disabled peers. While the COFP introduces buddies into the special education setting, most inclusion efforts begin with placing students with disabilities in the general education classroom (37).

The COFP requires that students with disabilities be given the opportunity to interact with non-disabled peers, and as a result, the seating arrangements for the classroom changes to create this opportunity. In the COFP program, students are in an inclusive setting and participate in facilitated social interactions through a peer program where they are matched with another peer and are given the opportunity to socialize.

While student programs are formed to socialize students within an inclusive setting, modifications often need to be made in order to socially include a student with a disability. Guardino (2012) explains that when it comes to accommodating all students within the classroom, the accommodations might involve altering the physical classroom settings. Classroom environments can influence the way students behave as found in Simmons et al. (2015):

A quick change in classroom seating to decrease student behavior which will generally improve student performance. Denton (1992, 31) said it best, “Careful use of physical

space can positively affect teacher and student attitudes”. Educators play an important role in children’s academic and social behavior when they structure and arrange the daily lives of students in their classroom (Hughes, 2012) [in Simmons et al. 2015, 52].

Simmon et al.’s (2015) study examines the effect of different seating arrangements in a classroom setting and the effects of the seating arrangement on the behaviors of students with disabilities in the classroom. According to Weinstein’s (1979) research [in Simmon et al., 2015] due to the lack of space within a classroom, teachers generally are limited to three classroom seating arrangements: row seating, cluster seating, and horseshoe seating. Research in Rosenfield et al (1985)[in Simmon et al., 2015] found that row seating was not proven successful in increasing interaction amongst peers. In fact row seating was least effective in fostering social interaction between students with disabilities and students without disabilities. When it came to classrooms using cluster seating Simmon et al.’s (2015) research found that this seating arrangement was effective in fostering student’s collaborative learning. In a study done by Rosenfield et al. (1985) [in Simmon et al., 2015] they found that cluster seating had a positive effect on social interactions and that more students were actively participating during class discussion. The last form of seating arrangement that was common in an inclusion classroom was horseshoe seating, which was analyzed by Wengal (1992) [in Simmon et al., 2015]. Wengal (1992) [in Simmon et al., 2015] found the horseshoe seating arrangement also promoted participation and appropriate behavior by the students within the classroom. From Simmon et al.’s (2015) research it becomes clear that the seating arrangement plays a role in the social inclusion of students with disabilities.

Students with disabilities can benefit from being placed in an inclusion classroom if the setting of the classroom is open and does not exclude these students. Students with disabilities in

these previous studies interacted substantially more often with their classmates when working with peers relative to when supported entirely by paraprofessionals or aides. When students with disabilities are integrated into the classroom completely they access a wide range of social, learning, and behavioral supports from peers (Carter et al., 2015). However, in many classrooms the seating arrangement is set up so students with disabilities are not included (Simmons et al, 2015). Students with severe disabilities are often seated away from their peers, decreasing the likelihood that interaction will occur naturally (Brock, 2015). Students with disabilities have the tendency to be isolated from their peers, and when this occurs the students do not experiences social inclusion.

Methodology

This research examines the degree to which students with special needs are included in their inclusion classrooms, and ultimately aims to determine whether or not inclusion can offer a fair and appropriate education available to a student with disabilities. Observations took place over an seven month period from October 2015 through April 2016, and extensive field notes where collected during over 80 hours of observations in classrooms, lunchrooms and playgrounds. All observations took place in an inclusion classrooms at a private preschool in a suburb of Boston where a one-to-one aide is present in the classroom. I specifically examined the social interactions between one special needs student with one-to-one aide and her typical-learning peers, the degree of social inclusion and expectations for the student with special needs in her inclusion classroom and appropriate accommodations made for her. The children's names, school name, and location have been masked throughout the paper to protect the identity of the children.

Observations were collected and charted using the Field Notes Form (Table 1). Notes on accommodations, as well as examples of degree of inclusion, social acceptance, and fair and appropriate lesson modifications were collected each day on site. These notes were compiled and broken into 3 season blocks to better examine experienced changes over time. The qualitative data was then used to explain and support the research question, using previous research to frame the findings. This research was undertaken as a case study, where one student in one school was observed over eight months.

Table 1: Field Notes Form

Teacher:	
Date:	
Subject:	
1. Accommodations	
2. Degree of Inclusion (volunteer answers, engage in discussion, take part in whole group activities)	
3. Social acceptance (Asked to be partners during partner work, asked questions by peers, works well with others, etc.)	
4. "Fair and Appropriate" (Is the lesson benefitting the students, is the lesson appropriately modified for students with special needs, etc.)	

Town Setting and Demographics

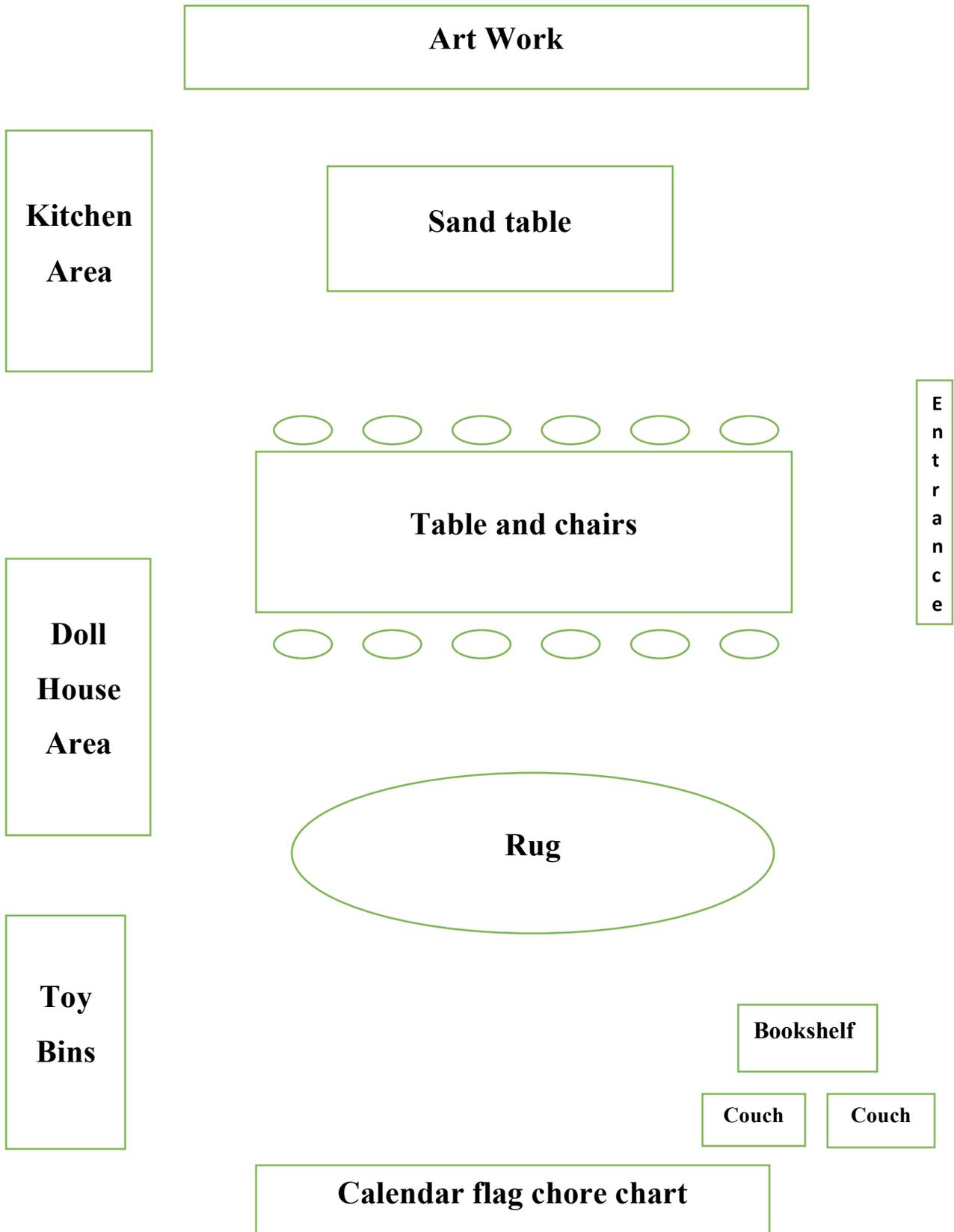
The private preschool in this study is located in a suburb south of Boston. This suburb's educational include of 8 preschools, 4 public elementary schools, 1 public middle school, and 1 public high school. According to the 2014 Annual Town Report, the town's year-round population is approximately 27,000, with approximately 4,000 children in the local schools.

According to the 2014 Enrollment Data, the majority of the students identify themselves as Caucasian (69.7%). The remaining students are identified as being African American (18.5%), Asian (5.3%), or Hispanic (4.3%). Additionally, the Enrollment Data shows that 15.7% of the student population is identified as being "low-income" and 13.3% of the total population receives special education services.

Description of the Classroom

In Sarah's classroom there are 12 students, 2 boys and 10 girls. The ages of the children in the classroom ranges from late 3 year olds to early 4 year olds. The physical arrangement of Sarah's classroom (Diagram 1) is setup like this: you walk in and the first thing that you see is a long table going vertically across the classroom. This is where the students gather for activities and snack time. In the front left hand side of the classroom there is a reading area with a bookshelf full of picture books for students to read and look at. There are two small couches for the students to sit on while reading. Next to this area, on the left hand side, is a large rug where students gather for circle time. Against the wall on the left is a flag, a calendar, and a chore chart for the students to use during circle time. In the back of the room to the left is a bin of toy cars

Diagram 1:



for the children to play with, and a dollhouse. To the right of the dollhouse is a play kitchen. In the middle to the far right is a sand table, a name chart, and artwork hung up behind the sand table on the right hand wall.

Research Questions

- *When teachers organize interactive activities for all the students, will this interaction between students with disabilities carry forward for the rest of the day? The rest of the week? Further than a week?*
- *How does having an aide in a classroom for only one child impact the social interactions of that one child with her peers?*
- *Does adult-led inclusion become more peer-led over time?*
- *Does the physical arrangement of the classroom impact the level of social inclusion?*

Limitations

One limitation of this study is that the findings are not be generalizable as this is a case study of the experiences of one special needs child. The characteristics of the particular school in which the study takes place are not the same as those of other schools across the United States.

This study does not evaluate the classroom teachers, the one-to-one aides, nor their classrooms and curriculum. It does not evaluate the school that the students attend, nor the school district. As it is difficult to obtain permission to research in schools it is necessary to ensure the teachers and administration that neither their classroom nor their curriculum was being evaluated.

Findings and Discussion

Through observing in one classroom where a child has a one-to-one aide it is possible to understand more about the role social inclusion plays in the inclusion classroom. The data collected allows evaluation of how included students with a one-to-one aide can be when looking at accommodations, degree of inclusion, social acceptance, and fair and appropriate opportunities within a school setting.

Research Question 1: When teachers organize interactive activities for all the students, will this interaction between students with disabilities carry forward for the rest of the day? The rest of the week? For more than a week?

Social Interactions

School environment provides students with many useful skills to help them to grow as individuals. One of these skills is how to socially interact with one's peers within a school environment. Harper et al. (2008) suggests that children with autism have to be prompted and cued when it comes to social interaction. And as a result of this, often students with autism are more likely to engage in self-play at recess time without the prompting and cuing. Harper et al. (2008) also found that children with autism may not act on play materials or imitate peer actions without a cue. Yet, without external facilitation or instruction, play skills cannot improve. Children sometimes need that aide or teacher to help prompt them in social interactions amongst their peers in the classroom. Without the proper prompting from a teacher or aide the student might engage more in self-play rather than playing with their peers.

Sarah¹ in the Fall: Social Interactions

Sarah is a student with autism enrolled in an inclusion classroom at a private preschool. She is in the four-year old classroom and is the only student in the school with a one-to-one aide. Throughout early observations that took place when the teacher ran whole classroom activities which included Sarah with her peers, the residual social interaction with her peers tended to be short term. One example of this occurred mid-October when the teacher led the class in the dinosaur dance. Sarah loved the “dinosaur dance” and was laughing and dancing with all the children in the classroom. This finding of social inclusion matches with Harper et al.’s (2008) findings, where children with autism have to be prompted and cued when it comes to social interactions, but once that occurs they are socially included in the activity. During this dinosaur dance activity Sarah was being prompted by her teachers and aide and as a result was included in the social aspect of the activity. Sarah experienced high levels of social inclusion in this teacher-led activity and was playing along with her peers. This interaction continued on past the teacher led activity and on to the playground at recess, immediately followed the dinosaur. Sarah was playing with Jade, a typically developing same-age peer, from the classroom. They were playing together in the castle for the majority of recess until Sarah decided to go off and play by herself in the sandbox. Here we see that the teacher led activity had a short term effect on Sarah’s inclusion with her peers that lasted for part of the day but not a full day. The break in the inclusion is not only based on decisions of Sarah’s peers but also when Sarah removes herself from peer-engaged play. This is representative of Sarah’s social inclusion on most days observed. Each time a teacher-led activity transitioned into free-play time, such as recess, there was greater residual social inclusion for Sarah with her peers.

¹ Names of all children changed

Sarah in the Winter: Social Interactions

By the time the winter season came along everyone in the classroom seemed to be well adjusted into a routine, every student including Sarah knew the daily class routine. Sarah was also familiar with all her peer's names by this time and knew which objects belonged to which student. As she would consistently tell the teacher or aide which backpack belonged to which child. However, when it came to being included into free time play Sarah still struggled to be consistently immersed into play activities with her peers, even though she demonstrated familiarity and knowledge about each of them.

Instead what was observed throughout the winter was Sarah spending most time exclusively with her aide. Sarah's social segregation is similar to what was seen in previous studies, where Broer et al.'s (2005) research that found that students with one-to-one aides were socially isolated from typically developing peers in the school setting. During one observation Sarah was barely present at all during free time, instead she could be found in the bathroom being constantly escorted by her aide. Sarah seemed to use the bathroom as an outlet to escape social interactions with her peers. Every time a group activity was being presented Sarah would suddenly ask to go to the bathroom with her aide which isolated her from the rest of the class and removed her from the social activity. On that particular day I did not observe Sarah socializing with her peers at all, instead she only engaged with her aide, and two other teachers.

On another day of observations, Sarah was interacting with her peers briefly when playing with the dollhouse. During this social interaction Sarah's aide was watching from a distance instead of sitting right next to Sarah. However, that experience was cut short when the other students playing with the doll house did not like that Sarah was taking the dolls out of their hands. Instead the three girls that were one minute all playing with Sarah decided that they no

longer wanted to play dolls with her and instead walked away from the dollhouse. This left Sarah to play with the dollhouse all by herself. It was observed that Sarah's social inclusion on most days was adversely affected by her behaviors that other children did not understand. Harper et al. (2008) found that children with autism may not act on play materials or imitate peer actions external facilitation or instruction. Yet, play skills can only improve when play occurs. Where Sarah did not always know how to appropriately interact with her peers when her aide was not present to cue her, this led to her peers choosing to not play with her. Each time Sarah was included in an activity during free time it was shortened either by peers losing interest or Sarah wishing to only communicate with her aide instead.

Sarah in the Spring: Social Interactions

In the springtime Sarah was faced with a transition in paraprofessionals as one aide left the school and another was hired. Through this transition Sarah was left without an aide for a week, and then had to adapt to a new aide the following week. Throughout this transition Sarah was more isolated than during previous observations. When no aide was present it left the teachers to step up to be more of an integrator for Sarah. With having two teachers present in the classroom the class was manageable, however there was still a noticeable difference in the amount of attention given to Sarah as opposed to the other children while Sarah was without her one-to-one aide. One of the peers in the classroom was noticeably upset that Sarah was receiving extra attention instead of her. Circle time, where all students convene on the rug, was especially difficult as Sarah was consistently struggling to sit down on the rug with her peers and instead was running up to the teachers and sitting on their laps or putting her hands on other students. This caused the students to noticeably get annoyed with Sarah and complain to the teacher,

which lead to further social isolation from her classmates. Osborn (2014) and Harrower & Dunlap (2001) both found that while some students with disabilities are able to manage their own in a general education others need a one-to-one aide with them all times which can affect their social interactions with peers. This study's findings support the findings in my study where when Sarah had an aide present the teachers did not have to step in and guide Sarah in peer interactions as often. With an aide present there was less noticeable conflict between Sarah and her peers.

When the new aide started there was a noticeable transition. Sarah and her previous aide had a routine and Sarah very comfortable with her. The new aide was a noticeable roadblock for social inclusion upon arrival. On the aide's first day Sarah was observed not interacting with other children. The aide would stand on one side of Sarah while the peers were located on the complete opposite side of her, which made it difficult for Sarah to interact with her peers. In this instance the aide became a physical barrier. Throughout the first day of working with the new aide Sarah was observed to be excluded from peer interaction altogether. As time progressed in the spring, Sarah and her new aide developed a system that allowed for Sarah to interact with her peers again. However, these interactions were still short and limited. Sarah would have small conversations with her peers and play games with them, however these activities would not last for more than a few minutes.

As observations continued in the spring months a new negative behavior was starting to become apparent. Sarah had started spitting at other children throughout the day. This behavior had not existed prior to working with the new aide. Sarah started by just spitting at the new aide, this however progressed to spitting on her peers as well. The spitting made the other children not wish to spend any time with Sarah. According to Harper et al (2008) social play might be more

difficult for a child with autism than other students. This is due to the students with autism having a desire for a routine and predictability. When Sarah received a new aide this aide was not used to her routine and forced a change for Sarah and a disruption to her routine. As a result, new negative behaviors formed, which negatively impacted her social interactions with peers.

Sarah and Social Interactions Observed

Throughout the course of the eight months observation Sarah's social interactions were brief. Even after the transition to a new aide and adjusting to a new routine, the end results of observations were that Sarah was not socially included amongst her peers. Sarah would participate in whole class activities for the most part, however she tended to leave these activities eventually. Sarah still spent the majority of her time playing alone or with her aide, while her peers all played with one another. By the end of the eight months, social interaction for her peers grew and friendships between them grew stronger, but Sarah was still not viewed as a friend by her peers. This leads to conclusions that Sarah's experiences are similar to those in Broer et al.'s (2005) research, where students with a paraprofessional or aide were socially isolated from typically developing peers in the school setting. And yet, without an aide, Sarah was even further isolated, not having the social skills to join unprompted into peer play.

Teacher- Intervention and Social Inclusion

Recess is the time of day at most schools where students are able to interact independently and socialize with their peers. I observed Sarah's social interactions throughout recess and in particular looked these interactions to lead to social inclusion after recess time. I also observed whether the teacher made any impact in these social interactions through teacher-

led recess activities. Table 2 shows my findings throughout observations by month, charting out observed times that Sarah engaged with her peers socially.

Throughout observations of recess Sarah was included more after teacher-led group activities than when students were not transitioning from group activity to recess. Sarah was never included in recess group play following activities not led by a teacher, and was always found by herself or with her aide during recess which followed independent or individual

Table 2: Social Interactions and Recess

	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Interactions at recess following a teacher-led activity	3	2	1	2	2	3
Interactions at recess following independent activity	1	1	1	0	2	2
No interaction at recess following a teacher-led activity	0	0	0	0	0	0
No interaction at recess following independent activity	2	2	3	4	2	2

activities. In looking at Table 2, we see that teacher led inclusion has an impact on social inclusion for Sarah. Without transitioning from a group activity to recess, Sarah would have shown no social interactions at recess with her peers at all.

In-class group activities pull Sarah in, and with this when play move to recess, her peers are still engaged with her, making her more likely to be included. Yet, when the children were engaged in individual activities or work, the lack of engagement with Sarah at that moment of transition to free play, left her out because she did not look to join in with her peers, and they did not ask her to play. The findings here support that teacher organized activities can impact the child with disability level of inclusion, however this interaction is short term inclusion.

Research Question 2: How does having an aide in a classroom for only one child impact the social interactions of that one child with their peers?

Aide Inclusion?

In an inclusion classroom children with disabilities are mixed into a classroom with their typically developing peers. In some instances the other children in the classroom have no idea that their peer has a disability. However, in some instances it becomes quite apparent early on that the children with disabilities are different from their typically developing peers. Koller & San Juan (2013) found that when it comes to having students with disabilities in a classroom students who are non-disabled have different opinions about the students with disabilities, especially if the disability is physically noticeable. Therefore when placing an aide into a general education classroom for one specific child it becomes apparent that there are differences between the child and typically developing peers. The aide becomes a physical marker of disability, and therefore difference.

Having one-to-one aide can impact social inclusion throughout grade school. In Broer et al.'s (2005) study, they examined the social attitudes that people with disabilities have faced for having an aide follow them around throughout the school day. One student reported in this study that students looked at him differently because he always had someone who was noticeably older than him by his side. Although in Sarah's case she was only in preschool therefore others did not understand the reasoning behind the aide. The other children in the classroom, however did understand that Sarah was different and had someone following her around all day. This resulted in jealousy and isolation from her peers in her classroom, as other children also wanted attention from her aide because she was another adult in the classroom.

Sarah in the Fall: Aide Impact

In preschool a child might not understand fully what a disability is, however a child will understand when another child is receiving more attention than others. In Sarah's preschool classroom she shows up every day with an extra "friend". A "friend" that is just there for Sarah, and not for any of the other children. This early in the school year led to questions by classmates as to why Sarah was receiving extra attention from her "friend" and why they could not have a "friend" like Sarah's as well.

This led to other children trying to gain attention from Sarah's "friend" and trying to cut Sarah out by pushing Sarah out of the way to gain that attention. One day one of the students came into class early and tried to talk to the aide who was Sarah's friend, however the aide was focused on making sure Sarah was doing her work and not jumping on the table and as a result the other child ended up crying because she wanted to be the aide's friend too.

Sarah in the Winter: Aide Impact

In the winter time there was still a noticeable difference in the special treatment of Sarah by the other children. Having an aide follow you and always be with you is noticeable to other students, and as a result, can affect the quality of social interactions with peers (Broer et al., 2005). At all times Sarah had her aide by her side, which when it came time for social interactions was viewed as a road block.

Each morning there is play time in the classroom, where the children get to choose an activity and play independently or with their peers. With the aide present as Sarah's friend the other children play mainly with each other and calling each other their friend, however Sarah is left with her friend, the aide. The aide becomes Sarah's friend while all the other children are

starting to develop stronger peer bonds and friendships. This findings relates to Broer et al.'s (2005) because in both studies it was an obstacle to make friendships because their peers always saw the aide as their friend and this was a road block to social interactions. Because Sarah was seen by her classmates as already having someone to play with, her aide, they chose to find another classmate to play with whom was not already occupied.

Sarah in the Spring: Aide Impact

With the change in aides in the classroom Sarah gained a new friend. This friend was not an age appropriate peer, instead it was a new aide. With the new aide came attention wanted by the other peers in the classroom. Not more attention for Sarah, however, instead the children wanted to get to know the new aide and become the new aide's friend.

The new aide was an adjustment for Sarah socially, as the new aide would hover more over Sarah and restricted her from playing with the other children. The new aide was trying to work on getting Sarah's attention throughout the day, which involved telling Sarah to look this way or even physically directing her attention by moving her head. The new aide was constantly by Sarah's side and would sit and block Sarah from the other children. This made Sarah even more secluded in the classroom. One day Sarah wanted to play dolls with the other girls in the classroom. Upon asking the first time the children said no she could not play. The aide tried to step in and force the other children play with Sarah, and as a result the other children, got mad that the aide said something to them and were even more resistant to including Sarah. A few days later this happened again where Sarah asked to play and the other children said no, however this time the aide did not step in. This time Sarah joined regardless of being told no by the other girls,

and played with for the rest of free time. Sometimes although the aide was there to help Sarah, she actually made it more difficult for others to interact with Sarah.

The Aide Impact

Having an aide in the classroom can have many positive effects. However, when dealing with younger children the presence of the aide can be confusing for classmates. The aide at times was a distraction to the other children, because all the children wanted to do was talk to the new person in the classroom and did not understand why the person was only there for Sarah. As a result the aide at times impacted Sarah's social inclusion by blocking her from making any friends, other than her aide. Sometimes the aide's presence prevented Sarah from joining in with her peers. However, Sarah's time without an aide was even more isolating, and put teachers into a position of having to meet Sarah's needs at the expense of helping all of the children in the classroom. Sarah being treated differently by the students in the classroom as a result of having a one-to-one aide supports the research question because having this aide leads to more social seclusion. Although having an aide is beneficial to Sarah more often than not having this aide led to Sarah being treated differently by her peers which supports the research question that having an aide has impacted Sarah's level of social inclusion.

Research Question 3: Does adult-led inclusion become more peer-led over time?

Modeling Behavior

When children are taught in an inclusion classroom environment those students generally report having a more positive interactions with students with disabilities when compared to

students who are not exposed to students with disabilities (Lund & Seekins, 2014). When children are immersed into experiences with children with disabilities they are more likely to have a more positive outlook toward people with disabilities than children who are not exposed. Classroom and programs initiated to create social inclusion for children with disabilities have been shown to foster more social inclusion. For Sarah, teacher led group activities served the same function, creating a means for her to be socially included when free time followed a period of group work activities. Here, the teacher is modeling social inclusion of Sarah for the other students.

Sarah in the Fall: Modeling Behavior

Throughout early observations of Sarah within the classroom, it was apparent that the teachers would try to include all of the students in all of the activities. In early weeks of the school year, the teachers would run activities during free play and recess to try and to incorporate all of the students into collective play. The teachers also stressed how everyone in the classroom should be nice to each other and use good manners at all times within the classroom. By the middle of October Sarah's classmates started to notice her and interact with her more frequently. To the point where one child in particular, named Jade, called Sarah her "friend". Jade would go off and play with the other children in the classroom at times but would come back to play with Sarah as well.

Every morning at drop-off parents would enter the classroom and spend a few minutes interacting with the teacher and the children before leaving. During this time only one mother would spend time talking to Sarah, and that was Jade's mother. When it came to Halloween in the classroom Jade's mother came in at drop-off and informed the teachers that Sarah would be

coming over that day for a playdate with Jade after school. This social interaction and inclusion begins with students learning how to be each other's friends and as a result Jade, the typically developing peer, is wanting to befriend and hangout with Sarah the child with a disability outside of the school environment. This happens though because of the support of a parent of a typically developing child. This parent's encouragement and intervention (through scheduling a play opportunity) increases Sarah's social inclusion.

Sarah in the Winter: Modeling Behavior

By the time winter came, everyone in the classroom was well aware of manners and expectations of how to treat their classmates. The teachers taught the whole class about how to be a friend and would read books to the class to reinforce friendship behaviors. The aide with Sarah would make sure she would say hello to her teachers and peers and would remind her to use her manners when interacting with her peers. However, even with the positive modeling behaviors that the teachers and aide supplied, the students did not always treat Sarah with respect. One day I observed, Jade who Sarah had the playdate with in a previous month, talking negatively about Sarah to the other girls in the class. No teacher was listening at the time as Jade whispered to the girls about how Sarah had come over to her house and wrecked her Lego toys and made a mess in Jade's house that Jade had to pick up once Sarah left. This made the other girls in the class not want to talk to Sarah for the rest of the day, and would not allow Sarah to play any of the games with them at recess time. Children's lack of knowledge about disability adversely impacts their attitudes toward those with disabilities (Lindsay & Edwards, 2013). The children who were gossiping about Sarah did not understand her disability, and as a result thought negatively of Sarah and her behaviors. It is likely that Jade's mother arranged the

playdate to socially include Sarah and normalize her disabilities for Jade. However, the result of this playdate was that instead Jade and her peers did not wish to socialize with Sarah at all. Parent led or adult led inclusion, in this case, can only work well if positive explanation of irregular behavior leads to normalizing them and the children.

Sarah in the Spring: Modeling Behavior

The teachers by the springtime had reinforced manners and how to be a good friend into all the children's minds. Students began to include Sarah in more activities than earlier in the school year and no longer were observed talking about Sarah behind her back. However these lessons are still somewhat short lived. Around Easter time Sarah's mother hosted an Easter Egg Hunt for the entire class. Early in the month of March she asked the teachers to hand out fliers to all the students in the class. She explained at drop-off that she really wanted all of Sarah's friends to come over and get to know her family and the other parents of the class. Sarah's mom went on to talk about how she hired someone to come and dress up as the Easter Bunny and had hundreds of eggs to hide. Around the same time of the event, the weekend prior, Molly had her *Frozen* themed birthday party that all of the girls, including Sarah, had attended. Molly was one of the more popular girls in the class demonstrated by everyone wanting to be her friend, sit next to her, and play with her. When it came time for the Easter egg hunt the following weekend however very few children from the class showed up. The following Monday at school all the children were still talking about Molly's party and said nothing of Sarah's, even though Sarah's party was more recent and included both the boys and the girls. The demonstrated preference for Molly, made clear Sarah's social position and lower levels of social integration.

Sarah and Modeling Behavior

The result of Lund & Seekin's (2014) study showed that when children are exposed to an inclusion classroom environment they generally report having a more positive interactions with children with disabilities than children who are not exposed to students with disabilities. However, in the case of Sarah's classroom throughout the year, even with the constant exposure, positive interactions were rare. For the most part, Sarah was segregated from the rest of her classmates both by her own behaviors removing herself from group play, and being left out of group play by her peers. This was evident when not many showed up to Sarah's social gathering. In this case, decisions about inclusion hinged on the choices and behaviors of parents. Those not attending the party removed their children from an adult-led opportunity to interact with Sarah and her family.

Observed Modeling Behavior

In the classroom, positive adult modeling behavior did not change Sarah's social inclusion in over half the observations. Table 3 below shows how modeling behavior impacted the level of inclusion throughout Sarah's day. This modeling behavior by an adult within the classroom to include Sarah, mainly the teachers, and at times a parent, led to some increased peer inclusion. However, the result of observations showed that although adult modeling behavior can lead to inclusion by peers in the classroom, it also can lead to no change in inclusion levels. If Sarah was included by her peers, it was always in the short term. Therefore, although modeling behavior can have positive short term social inclusion, most of the time it resulted in no change in behavior of the students. Here, adult-modeling of inclusion behaviors, more than half of the

time, did not result in peer inclusion for Sarah. Because majority of the time adult-modeling did not impact social inclusion for Sarah within the classroom, the research question was not supported by the findings.

Table 3: Modeling Behavior

	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Modeling behavior led to inclusion	3	2	1	2	3	3
Modeling behavior did not lead to inclusion	3	3	4	4	3	4

Research Question 4: Does the physical arrangement of the classroom impact the level of social inclusion?

Sarah in the Fall: Importance of the Inclusion Setting

During early observations of Sarah’s classroom it did not seem that many physical changes had to be made in order to accommodate her. However, the teachers explained that the sand table had not existed within the classroom prior to Sarah’s presence. When finding out that they would have a student with autism within the classroom the teachers thought it would be best to add more sensory related activity to the room. Therefore, the teachers decided to add a sand table to their classroom to accommodate Sarah’s potential need for sensory related activities. In simply adding this station, it gave Sarah and the students another activity in the classroom to enjoy. With the teachers making this physical alteration to the classroom they were creating accommodations, while including all the students. The sand table was not reserved just for Sarah, but all the students would utilize it and benefit from its presence. It accommodated Sarah’s need

for sensory related objects, and it also gave her another activity to “play” with her peers, increasing opportunities for social inclusion.

The sand table was an activity that everyone enjoyed, which meant that at free play many children would gather around the table and play with one another. Sarah always loved going over and playing with the sand, and for the most part she played beside her peers while everyone made their own sand creation. However, one day Jade came up with the idea that the class should create a huge sand castle at the table. Everyone, including Sarah, contributed to the makings of this sand castle. The sand table provided Sarah with social interactions early on that she might not have received if it was not for this accommodation.

Another change was made to the setting of the classroom in the fall that had not been there at the start of the school year. By mid-October it was noticeable that the teachers added in five minute warnings before transitioning activities. In early observations Sarah had held up the class when it came time to transition from one activity to the next, such as cleaning up after play time or getting ready to go out for recess. As a result of this the other students in the class were starting to get annoyed with Sarah for shortening their time on the playground and as a result the five minute warnings were added by the teachers. In adding this marked beginning of transition time to the classroom schedule, one that had not existed prior, transitions became easier as Sarah was better able to prepare herself and get ready for the transition prior to transition taking place. This five minute warning meant less tension between Sarah and her peers. Here, the teachers tested out a five minute warning system, and added it to their classroom set-up, and the end result helped add more positive social interaction between Sarah and her classmates, by eliminating a social barrier for Sarah.

Five minute warnings, although established for Sarah, served the purpose of helping other students within the classroom as well. In having the warning in place it allowed for all the students to prepare themselves for transitioning to the next task. The five minute warning helped all of the children in the classroom realize that play time was almost over and that they would soon have to stop their activity and transition to a new task. This was especially useful for students who would take on a large project during free play and then get upset when they suddenly ran out of time to finish the project. Early in the year children loved playing with the blocks and making large buildings and would get mad when they suddenly would have to clean up their project. However, when the five minute warning went into effect, all the children transitioned easier to cleaning up because they had already been warned time was almost up. Although it was established for Sarah, since she had trouble transitioning tasks, it did benefit the other children as well.

Sarah in the Winter: Importance of the Inclusion Setting

In the wintertime changes to the classroom from the fall were working out well for the class, however a new problem arose. Sarah had become fixated on taking the Lego pieces and putting them into the class Play Dough. The result of this was that the Lego pieces would get ruined because it became impossible to take the Play Dough out of the little Lego pieces. This angered a lot of the students in the classroom who enjoyed playing with both the Legos and the Play Dough because there was less of a supply after each incident. The result of the constant loss of Lego pieces was that the teachers were forced to slowly take the Legos out of the classroom. Removing the Legos from the building area of the classroom had a negative impact on the social interactions between Sarah and her classmates. The typically learning students were first upset

because Sarah would take Legos and ruin them, and then the Legos were completely removed, were very upset about this change. One child in the class thought that Sarah had ruined all the Legos and that was why there were no Legos, this led to other children blaming Sarah. This led to further social isolation, where the typically learning students did not understand why Sarah was unable to follow the rules about Lego use, leading to “their” loss of Legos. Here, the accommodation is seen as having a negative effect on the classroom setting, and this change hurt Sarah’s social inclusion.

In the winter another issue was present to the preschool classroom’s inclusion setting. The children at snack time all sat together at one long table. There is little room for personal space at this table, and the children normally were able to decide whom they wished to sit next to. This led to children saving seats, and not letting certain children sit next to them. Sarah was one of the students who was normally the last to find a seat because other students wished to sit next to another friend instead of Sarah. Simmon et al. (2015) found that cluster seating had a positive effect on social interaction and that more students were actively participating discussion with each other. However, when seat saving behaviors occurred, like in Sarah’s case, this cluster seating arrangement did not have a positive effect on social inclusion. Seat saving left Sarah out and in some way stigmatized being “stuck” sitting next to her. When there was no assigned seating, Sarah would get bounced around and would end up talking to her aide during these fee social interaction times, such as snack time instead of interacting with her peers.

Sarah in the Spring: Importance of the Inclusion Setting

By the springtime a change had to be made to the setting arrangement during snack time to try and include all of the students in the classroom. In order to make this change the teachers

researched how to modify their seating arrangement to foster better social inclusion. The teachers temporarily changed the setup of the classroom, however they soon went back to the original setup. The shift was to eliminate the long table and create smaller groups with two smaller tables but changed it back because these two smaller tables created more of a divide in the classroom, where children would become noticeably upset if they were not at a certain table with their friend. They found that cluster seating had a positive effect on social interactions and wanted to retain that. For the most part, all the students were communicating during snack time including Sarah, with the cluster seating arrangement. To prevent students from saving seats, the teachers would assign seats. The students would find their name tag at a designated spot each day. This prevented students from feeling left out, and allowed them to sit with different friends each day as the arrangement of name tags changed, and continued the positive social effects of clustered seating.

The setting and set-up of a classroom plays a central role in creating a welcoming environment. The physical setting of a classroom can play a vital role in the inclusion of all the students. Without a well-functioning classroom setting students with disabilities can end up secluded, or not receiving the services that they need within the classroom. Research for that reason is essential to demonstrating how the inclusion classroom set-up can have positive impact on academic achievement, as well as social interaction for students with disabilities (Lampton et al., 2012; Soukup et al. 2007; Liberman et al., 2004). Without having the essential resources available to a student with a disability the student will often struggle to fit into the general education classroom and as a result can become isolated from their peers. When students with disabilities are integrated into the classroom completely they access a wide range of social, learning, and behavioral supports from peers (Carter et al., 2015).

Throughout the year the setting played a large role in Sarah's social inclusion within the classroom. The physical environment was important for Sarah because it provided her with accommodations, such as the sand table, which allowed for her to participate in more sensory based learning. The sand table also gave her another activity for her to participate in with her peers in. However, accommodations such as taking away the Legos had a negative impact on Sarah's social inclusion in the winter time because her peers blamed her for that loss. Interestingly, Sarah is not credited with the gain of the sand table because it is not shared information. However, eventually the children eventually forgot all about the Legos and went back to the other activities in the classroom. The teachers researched changes to make needed accommodations throughout the year and continued to better the classroom environment which, in the end led to a more positive impact on the social interaction as seen in (Lamport et al., 2012; Soukup et al., 2007; Liberman et al., 2004). Although the social inclusion of Sarah was still short term by the end of observations, the classroom environment itself had improved over the course of the year and these improvements benefited all of the students in the classroom. The classroom arrangement itself did have an impact on Sarah's social inclusion which supports the research question.

Conclusion

When a student with a disability is placed into a general education classroom, accommodations or modifications usually have to be made in order for this student to be academically successful. However, even when these academic changes are made to foster inclusion, social inclusion is still not always present. Levels of inclusion can be impacted by social interactions, modeling behavior, and inclusive settings. In this study, social interactions

played a role in the level of inclusion experienced by of the student with disabilities. Where social relationships are the primary source of most people's happiness (Heyne et al., 2012), Sarah's inclusion with her peers was important to examine. According to Heyne et al. (2012) social interactions are important, however, inclusion in general education classroom does not guarantee it. Where Sarah was integrated into the classroom, she was not socially accepted by her peers. My findings about Sarah's social inclusion, based on observations, are that Sarah was segregated from her peers most of the time, and instead was socializing with her aide and teachers more than she was with her age appropriate peers. Therefore, although Sarah was a member of the class and academically was on track, she was not socially included and was usually not engaged in peer-led play. Sometimes when Sarah was included, her lack of understanding of the social rules that her typically learning peers seemed to already know, such as not grabbing dolls away from other children, left Sarah isolated. Sarah also sometimes walked away from peer interactions, or used her aide as a means to not engage. However, teacher-led group activities gave Sarah a greater opportunity for social inclusion, and this often temporarily allowed her to be included in recess or free play that followed.

Modeling behavior was found to not have lasting impact on the level of social inclusion, and while previous research has shown that when children have prior knowledge or experience with others with disabilities that these children are reportedly having a more positive interaction with people with disabilities (Shogren et al., 2015; Lund & Seekins, 2014; Lindsay & Edwards, 2012 ; Heyne et al. 2012; Lindsay & McPherson, 2011; Siperstein et al., 2007; Diamond. 2001), this did not appear to be the case in this study. Although having classmates with prior experience and knowledge about different disabilities can help a student with disabilities gain acceptance in a general education classroom, it does not always lead to social inclusion within the classroom.

Throughout my observations with Sarah I noticed that when adults would model behavior, acceptance could be found, but was not always found as a factor of social inclusion. In most cases in this study modeling behavior had little to no impact on Sarah's social inclusion in free play with her peers.

Inclusive setting is another important factor to look at when examining an inclusive classroom. The classroom setup can have an impact on the level of social inclusion a child with a disability. Guardino (2012) explains that when it comes to accommodating all students within the classroom, the accommodations sometimes involve altering the classroom settings. In an inclusion classroom, accommodations might have to be made to accommodate the student or students with a disability. While these accommodations might help the student academically, socially these accommodations might have a reverse effect leading to further isolation. From observations here, at times the accommodations that needed to be made such as taking the Legos out of the classroom led to a negative impact socially for Sarah. And while all benefited from the sand table, the other children in the class did not know that it had been added because of Sarah's inclusion in the class. Change to the setting, while beneficial in terms of learning and safety, only sometimes fostered social inclusion. Changing transitions in activities to include a five minute warning helped eliminate the frustration Sarah's peers experienced at her slow movement to the next activity, and assigned seating at snack time alleviated the scramble to save seats, which had left Sarah sitting with only her aide. These accommodations opened the possibility of greater social inclusion for Sarah, but it was not always enough.

Having a one-to-one aide present is a factor that can greatly affect the level of inclusion within a general education classroom. An aide here physical proof that the child with disability is receiving special treatment. Therefore, this physical proof of a disability relates to Koller & San

Juan (2013) found that when it comes to having a student with disabilities in the classroom, if the disability is noticeable the student was treated differently. In the case of Sarah within the preschool classroom although the children did not know why the aide was present, the other students did know Sarah was receiving special treatment and as a result treated Sarah differently. The result of having an aide present was Sarah became more secluded from her peers as her “friend” was her aide according to her classmates. Therefore although it is beneficial for Sarah to have an aide, it also can be difficult for her to socialize with her peers as a result of receiving special attention from an adult figure.

Overall, throughout the eight months of observations and research I found that inclusion classrooms are not always designed for social inclusion. Although students with disabilities are placed into general education with the accommodations that they need, and the teachers try to cater to the needs of the student, social inclusion is not always the end result. While friendships in the classroom are formed often times the student with the one-to-one aide is left out, constantly half in an adult world and half in the children’s world. While Sarah was, more or less, accepted as a student in the classroom, she was not socially included.

Future Research

Future research relating to the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classroom needs to be conducted in order to understand any advantages or disadvantages of its application. There is limited previous research on the social issues faced with students with disabilities in inclusion classrooms. Since inclusion is still relatively new (with IDEA in 2004) and becoming more common in schools, it is important to conduct as much research as possible on the implications of having inclusion classrooms and how they are impacting all learners

socially. It is important for there to be more research on the social implications of inclusion classrooms on students with disabilities.

First, expanding my research would allow for the observation of students at different grade levels to see how social inclusion looks for different age groups. In this future study, one could look at the same research questions that were used in this study and compare social inclusion across ages. In a larger future, one could explore if the level of teacher-led activities impacts social inclusion, such as when children start working in groups more in grade 2, with less teacher-led activities impacting the degree of social inclusion within the classroom. Lastly a future study could examine the impact of adult-led inclusion within different grade levels and how teacher handle the organization of an inclusion classroom. Every teacher has their own individual teaching methods and each grade level is different from the next. Therefore, it would be interesting to see how a student with a one-to-one aide is treated throughout their academic school years in inclusion classrooms. In this it would be very interesting to carry out a longitudinal study, following the same students from preschool through high school.

The experiences of Sarah are not necessarily universal and observing more students allows us to see how others experience inclusion classrooms. Therefore it is important to conduct as many variations of studies on inclusion classrooms, such as the ones suggested, in order to get a better understanding for how students with a disabilities are socially included in general education classrooms.

Work Cited

- Bottema-Beutel, K. & Li, Z. (2015). Adolescent Judgements and Reasoning About the Failure to Include Peers with Social Disabilities. *Journal of Autism Development Disorder*, 45(6), 1873-1886.
- Brock, M., Biggs, E., Carter, E., Cattet, G., & Raley, K. (2015). Implementation and Generalization of Peer Support Arrangements for Students with Severe Disabilities in Inclusive Classrooms. *The Journal of Special Education*, 1-12.
- Broer, S., Doyle, M., & Giangreco, M. (2005). Perspectives of Students with Intellectual Disabilities about their Experiences with Paraprofessional Support. *Exceptional Children*, 71(4), 415-430.
- Calabrese, R. (2008). An Appreciative Inquiry into the Circle of Friends Program: The Benefits of Social Inclusion. *International Journal of Whole Schooling*, 4(2), 20-40.
- Carter, E., Asmus, J., Moss, C., Biggs, E., Bolt, D., Born, T., Brock, M., Cattet, G., Chen, R., Cooney, M., Fesperman, E., Hochman, J., Huber, H., Lequila, J., Lyons, G., Moyseenko, K., Riesch, L., Shalev, R., Vincent, L., & Weir, K. (2015). Randomized Evaluation of Peer Support Arrangements to Support the Inclusion of High School Students with Severe Disabilities. *Exceptional Children*, 1-25.
- Cotugno, A. (2009). Social Competence and Social Skills Training and Intervention for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders. *Journal Autism Development Disorder*, 39(9), 1268-1277.
- Diamond, K. (2001). Relationships Among Young Children's Ideas, Emotional Understanding, and Social Contact with Classmates with Disabilities. *Department of Child Development & Family Studies*, 21(2), 104-113.
- Favazza, P. & Odom, S. (1997). Promoting Positive Attitudes of Kindergarten-Age Children toward People with Disabilities. *Council for Exceptional Children*. 63(3), 405-418.
- Guardino, C. & Antia, S. (2012). Modifying the Classroom Environment to Increase Engagement and Decrease Disruption with students Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing. *Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education*, 17(4), 519-528.
- Gunn, K., & Delafield- Butt, J. (2015). Teaching Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder with Restricted Interests. *Review of Educational Research*, 55(5), 1-23.
- Harper, C. & Symon, J. (2008). Recess is Time-in: Using Peers to Improve Social Skills of Children with Autism. *Journal Autism Development Disorder*. 38(5), 815-826.

- Harrower, J. & Dunlap, G. (2001). Including Children with Autism in General Education Classrooms. *Behavior Modification*, 25(5), 762-784.
- Heyne, L., Wilkins, V., Anderson, L. (2012). Social Inclusion in the Lunchroom and the Playground at School. *Social Advocacy and System Change Journal*. 3(1), 54-66.
- Jimenez, B., Browder, D., & Dibiase, W. (2012). Inclusive Inquiry Science Using Peer-Mediated Embedded Instruction for Students with Moderate Intellectual Disability. *Exceptional Children*, 78(3), 301-317.
- Kindziarski, C., Leavitt-Noble, K., Dutt-Doner, K., Marable, M., & Wallace, N. (2013). Teaching Tolerance With Mix It Up!: Student Reactions to an Unusual Lunch Period. *Childhood Education*, 89(1), 15-18.
- Koegel, L., Matos-Freden, R., Lang, R., & Koegel, R. (2012). Interventions for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders in Inclusive School Settings. *Cognitive and Behavioral Practice*, 19(3), 401-412.
- Koller, D. & San Juan, V. (2015). Play-based Interview Methods for Exploring Young Children's Perspectives on Inclusion. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 28(5), 610-631.
- Lamport, M., Graves, L., & Ward, A. (2012). Special Needs Students in Inclusive Classrooms: The impact of Social interactions on Educational Outcomes for Learners with Emotional and Behavioral Disabilities. *European journal of Business and Social Sciences*, 1(5), 54-69.
- Lawrence- Brown, D. (2004). Differentiated Instruction: Inclusive Strategies for Standards-Based Learning That Benefit the Whole World. *American Secondary Education*, 32(3), 34-62.
- Lauderdale- Littin, S., Howell, E., & Blacher, J. (2013). Educational Placement for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders in Public and Non-Public School Settings: The Impact of Social Skills and Behavior. *Education and Training in Autism and Developmental Disabilities*, 48(4), 469-478.
- Liberman, L., James, A., & Ludwa, N. (2004). The Impact of Inclusion in General Physical Education for All Students. *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance*, 75(5), 37-55.
- Linda, H., Wilkins, V., & Lynn, A. (2012). Social Inclusion in the Lunchroom and on Playground at School. *Social Advocacy and Systems Change Journal*, 3(1), 54-67.
- Lindsay, S. & Edwards, A. (2013). A Systematic Review of Disability Awareness Interventions for Children and Youth. *Disability & Rehabilitation*, 35(8), 623-646.

Lindsay, S. & McPherson, A. (2011). Strategies for Improving Disability Awareness and Social Inclusion of Children and Young People with Cerebral Palsy. *Child: Care, Health, and Development*, 38(6), 809-816.

Lund, E. & Seekins, T. (2014) Early Exposure to People with Physical and Sensory Disabilities and Later Attitudes Toward Social Interactions and Inclusion. *Physical Disabilities: Education and Related Services*, 33(1), 1-16.

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. <http://www.doe.mass.edu/>

Obiakor, F., Harris, M., Mutua, K., Rotatori, A., & Algozzine, B. (2012). Making Inclusion Work in General Education Classrooms. *Education and Treatment of Children*, 35(3), 477-490.

Osborn, C. (2014). The Impact of One-to-One Paraprofessional Aides on Social Skills Outcomes in Students with Autism. *UCLA Electronic Theses and Dissertations*, 1-18.

Rotter, K. (2014). IEP Use by General and Special Education Teachers. *The Journal of Special Education*, 1-8.

Shogren, K., Gross, J., Forber-Pratt, A., Francis, G., Satter, A., Blue-Banning, M., & Hill, C. (2015). The Perspectives of Students With and Without Disabilities on Inclusive Schools. *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities*, 1-18.

Simmons, K., Carpenter, L., Crenshaw, S., & Hinton, V. (2015). Exploration of Classroom Seating Arrangements and Student Behavior in a Second Grade Classroom. *Georgia Educational Researcher*, 12(1), 51-68.

Soukup, J., Wehmeyer, M., & Bovaird, J. (2007). Classroom Variables and Access to the General Curriculum for Students with Disabilities. *Exceptional Children*, 74(1), 101-120.

Voices: A Thoughtful Debate Over Inclusion (November 6, 2001).
<http://www.wnyc.org/story/301701-voices-a-thoughtful-debate-over-inclusion/>

Xafopoulous, M., Kudlacekl, M., & Evaggelinou, C. (2009). Effect of the Intervention Program “Paralympic School Day” on Attitudes of Children Attending International School Towards Inclusion of Students with Disabilities. *Acta University*, 39(4), 63-71.