

PARENT ATTITUDES TOWARDS INCLUSION IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION

By

Sarah Crye

A Thesis Presented to

The Faculty of Humboldt State University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Science in Kinesiology: Teaching/Coaching

Committee Membership

Dr. Chris Hopper, Committee Chair

Dr. Jill Pawlowski, Committee Member

Dr. David Adams, Committee Member

Dr. Taylor Bloeden, Program Graduate Coordinator

July 2019

ABSTRACT

PARENT ATTITUDES TOWARDS INCLUSION IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Sarah Crye

BACKGROUND: More schools are moving towards full inclusion for students with disabilities into physical education classes. One key facilitating factor in the success of inclusion is parental support and involvement. Although much research has been conducted on the attitudes of teachers and students towards inclusion in physical education classes, there is very little information regarding parent attitudes towards inclusion in a physical education setting.

PURPOSE: To examine parent attitudes towards inclusion in physical education.

METHODS: Online anonymous surveys were administered to parents of students with and without disabilities enrolled in a high school in rural northern California. Survey questions gathered information relating to demographics and parent attitudes towards inclusion in physical education. Participant's responses were grouped by common themes and reviewed for similarities and differences.

RESULTS: Parents support inclusion in PE but feel that students with disabilities should be placed in a PE class based on an individual basis. Parents have mixed feelings regarding the outcomes of inclusive PE for students with disabilities regarding learning and developing physical skills. Parents of students without disabilities had slightly stronger attitudes in favor of inclusion than parents of students with disabilities.

CONCLUSION: More research is needed to evaluate the attitudes of parents of students with disabilities.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to the faculty and staff at Humboldt State University for your guidance throughout this entire process. A special thanks to my family for your patience and support during the long hours of studying and time away from you while obtaining my degree. Your love and support mean the world to me.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	v
LIST OF TABLES.....	vii
LIST OF APPENDICES.....	viii
INTRODUCTION	1
Definition of Key Terms.....	3
Literature Review.....	4
Inclusion.....	5
Inclusion in physical education.....	5
Attitudes about inclusion	6
METHODS	11
Participants.....	11
Instrument	11
Procedure	12
Assumptions.....	13
Statistical Analysis.....	13

Qualitative Analysis.....	14
RESULTS	15
Comparison of Parents of Students With and Without Disabilities.....	17
Qualitative Findings.....	18
DISCUSSION.....	19
CONCLUSIONS	23
REFERENCES	24
APPENDICES	31

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Inclusion statement answer percentages, means and standard deviations 16

Table 2: T-test comparing parents of students with disabilities and parents of students without disabilities.. 17

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix A.....	31
Appendix B.....	32

INTRODUCTION

Inclusion is the philosophy of educating students with disabilities in a general educational setting. It is based on the belief that education should be provided in a way that promotes maximum interaction between children with disabilities and their non-disabled peers and is consistent with the least restrictive environment (LRE) provisions in the Individuals with Disabilities Act ([IDEA], 2004 (Winnick & Porretta, 2017)). In Physical Education (PE) this means that public education agencies must provide all students with a disability the same opportunities to participate in the general physical education classroom that is available to typically developed children unless: “the child is enrolled full-time in a separate facility or the child needs specially designed physical education as prescribed in the child’s Individualized Education Plan (IEP) (United States Government Accountability Office, 2010).

The number of students with a disability being placed in general education classroom has increased as reported by the U.S. Department of Education, 2018. Within this report 80 percent of all students 6 to 21 years of age served under IDEA, spent most of the school day in the general classroom setting. These numbers represent a 47 percent increase from the fall of 2000 and 63 percent raise from the fall of 2015 (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). In California’s annual federal performance review for special education a goal was set to increase inclusion rates even further to at least 75 percent of students with disabilities in the general education classroom for 80 percent of

the day (Legislative Analysis Office, 2013). According to research conducted by the United States Government Accountability Office (2010), PE is often the one general education class that students with disabilities attend. In fact, the emphasis on educating students with disabilities in an inclusive environment with their typically developing peers has contributed to high numbers of students in general PE class (United States Government Accountability Office, 2010). This is reflected in the fact that most students with disabilities (i.e., 92% at elementary and 88% at the secondary level) are included into general PE classes (United States Government Accountability Office, 2010).

For inclusion to be successful, it is important to obtain information from all stakeholders, specifically parents of both students with and without disabilities. Parents especially, should have confidence in the capacity of the schools to understand and effectively educate their child with a disability (Elkins & Kraaynoord, 2013). Berger (1995) reported that involving parents in improving public education is fundamental to a healthy system of public education and has been considered an important factor related to better outcomes in the education of young children with and without disabilities in inclusive childhood programs.

In California, parent involvement is a “state priority” which includes “effort the school district makes to seek parent input in making decisions for the school district and each individual site, and how the school district will promote parental participation in programs for pupils and individuals with exceptional needs” (California Education Code Sec. 52060). Parent input is a requirement as part of the financing formula and parents must be involved in deciding how these funds are spent (Freedberg, 2016).

Although there have been several studies revealing parent perspectives on inclusion in a classroom setting (Anke, 2009; Leyser & Kirk, 2004; Soodak & Erwin, 2000; Soponaru, Paduraru, Dumbrava, Starica & Iorga, 2016; Stolber, Gettinger, & Goetz, 1998) there are very few studies available that have examined parent attitudes about inclusion specifically in PE. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate the attitudes of parents of students both with and without disabilities towards inclusion within the general PE classroom. The researchers believe that the information obtained may be useful in enhancing the practices of supporting students with disabilities while also supporting the parents' thoughts on inclusion in PE.

Definition of Key Terms

This section includes definitions of key operational terms. These terms will be discussed as they relate to the proposed study.

Inclusion. Students with disabilities educated together with their peers without disabilities in general education programs (Block, 1999).

Physical Education (PE). Physical Education provides an environment that prepares and implements units of instruction and lesson plans in line with state and national standards to all students participating in physical and motor fitness, fundamental motor skills and instruction in a variety of sports and physical activities (IDEA, 2004).

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004). The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act is a public law that provides students with disabilities equal and fair opportunities in public education environments (IDEA, 2004).

Students with Disabilities. Under IDEA (2004) students with disabilities are based on the following categories: having an intellectual disability, a hearing impairment, a speech or language impairment, a visual impairment, an emotional disturbance, an orthopedic impairment, autism, a traumatic brain injury, other health impairments, a specific learning disability, deaf-blindness, or multiple disabilities, and who, therefore, must receive special education and related services (IDEA, 2004).

Attitudes. Attitudes reflect one's beliefs and knowledge about a subject, a person's feelings and one's behavioral intentions (Boer, Marieke, Pijl, and Minraert, 2012).

Heading level three is left aligned; the font is underlined and sentence case. There is a double space to the text that follows.

Literature Review

In this literature review, themes related to inclusion in PE and stakeholder attitudes are explored. Parents' attitudes toward inclusion in a general education class other than physical education are also considered. Information for this literature review was conducted using a variety of databases and search engines, which included ProQuest, EBSCO Host, ERIC, Google Scholar, and educational journals. The following key terms were used during the search: *Inclusion, inclusive physical education, inclusion in physical education, inclusive education, parent attitudes towards inclusion, parent attitudes towards inclusion in physical education.*

Inclusion

The IDEA (2004) mandates that students with disabilities should be educated with their typically developing students in general education classes to the greatest extent possible. Additionally, IDEA emphasizes that students with disabilities should only be placed in separate classes when the nature or severity of their disabilities is such that they cannot receive an appropriate level of education in a general education classroom with supplementary aides and services (Heward, 2003). The development of this educational philosophy combined with an increasing amount of inclusive legislation has led to an increase in the number of students with disabilities who participate in traditional learning environments. This philosophy also includes the general physical education classroom.

Inclusion in physical education

PE is unique compared to other subjects taught in school as the students are provided PE the opportunity to learn about physical movement and engage in physical activity (Kohl & Cook, 2013). PE also provides an excellent opportunity for students to develop positive social skills, cooperate with others, and accept responsibility for their own actions (California Department of Education, 2018).

Researchers have demonstrated that when implemented appropriately, inclusion can positively affect both students with and without disabilities (Grenier, Collins, Wright, & Kearns, 2014). In fact, inclusive PE has demonstrated positive effects on the social skills, attitudes, and awareness toward individuals with disabilities and leadership of students with and without disabilities (Grenier, Collins, Wright, & Kearns, 2014). Researchers have also reported that inclusion promotes personal development in both

students with and without disabilities, as well as prepares students without disabilities to deal with disability in their own lives, and increases nondisabled students' self-concept, tolerance, self-worth, and understanding of other people (Lieberman, James, & Ludwa, 2004). However, researchers have also reported that inclusion can negatively affect students' active participation, result in less activity time for all students, and create a dependency that causes the students with disabilities to question their own self-worth (Lieberman, James & Ludwa, 2014).

Block and Obrusnikova (2007), critically analyzed a total of 38 articles focused on the inclusion of students with disabilities in PE from 1995-2005. The researchers summarized that there are numerous positive outcomes (i.e., provide those positive outcomes here) of inclusion in PE based on research reviewed. This review also demonstrated that students with disabilities can be successfully included in PE when given proper support, do not have any negative effect on peers without disabilities, and tend to have moderately positive attitudes toward peers with disabilities, but concluded more research is needed (Block & Obrusnikova, 2007).

Attitudes about inclusion

Attitudes reflect one's beliefs and knowledge about a subject, a person's feelings and one's behavioral intentions (Boer, Marieke, Pijl, and Minraert, 2012). An attitude is a judgment made on the 'attitude object' (i.e., person, place, task, event, skill)) which are formed by individuals (e.g., parent) based on their personal experience and are used to develop expectations (Stolber, Gettinger, & Goetz, 1998). Researchers have shown that the attitudes of individuals (e.g., teachers, parents, students, administrators) involved in

the process of inclusion are of great importance (D'Alonzo & Ledon, 1992; Hunt & McDonnell, 2007). Recently, researchers evaluating inclusion in physical education have focused on both teacher and student's attitudes towards inclusion. There are several studies that examine teacher attitudes towards inclusion and the influence of teacher attitudes towards inclusion in the classroom (Abdi, 2017; Combs, Elliott, & Whipple, 2010; Morgan, 2013; Townsend, 2017) and PE classroom (Bebetsos, Zafeiriadis, Derri, & Kyrgiridis, 2013; Haegele & Sutherland, 2015;). Despite all the recent research on inclusion, research on parent attitudes about inclusion in physical education is limited.

Parents or families of students with and without disabilities may have specific attitudes to inclusion that could contribute to the successful implementation of inclusion practices (Childre, 2004). For students with disabilities, family members can be an excellent source of information concerning the effect of the inclusion program on the academic and social, behaviors (Salend & Garrick-Duhaney, 2001). High levels of parental involvement correlate with improved academic performance, higher test scores, more positive attitudes toward school, higher homework completion rates, fewer placements in special education, academic perseverance, lower dropout rates; and fewer suspensions (Christenson, Hurley, & Sheridan, 1997). Information concerning parental views on inclusion can help guide school district policy towards successful implementation in PE. Inclusion teams, those stakeholders involved in creating the IEP, can also solicit information from family members concerning their perceptions of the effectiveness of the school district's inclusion practices and policies, and their

recommendations concerning policies and practices in need of revision (Giangreco, Edelman, Cloninger, & Dennis, 1993).

A review conducted by researchers Qi and Ha of 75 articles between 1990 and 2009 focusing on inclusion, attitudes and PE found three major themes in research which included: stakeholder (e.g., teachers and parents) perspectives of inclusive PE, effective inclusive practices, and the impacts of inclusion on students with and without disabilities (2012). The findings revealed that there were only a total of 48 studies investigating stakeholder perspectives on inclusive physical education. Of the 48 studies, only one study mentioned the perspective of parents with children with disabilities (Qi & Ha, 2012). None of the studies mentioned the perspective of parents of children without disabilities on inclusion in physical education. Qi and Ha (2012) concluded that more research is required to explore the perspectives of parents of students with and without disabilities in order to obtain a better understanding of the experiences of students with disabilities in inclusive PE.

One study conducted by An and Goodwin (2007) interviewed 7 mothers of children with Spina Bifida to get their perspectives on their child's PE, their role in schools and the importance of the IEP program in home and school communication. The research revealed that the mothers valued their children's participation in PE. They also valued sport as an avenue for developing sport-specific skills, which in turn enriched the children's school experience. However, the mothers were concerned about the barriers to their children's participation, including safety concerns, equipment and wheelchair accessibility, and instructional support. Although the study examined parents'

perspectives on Physical Education, it did not directly examine their attitudes towards inclusion in Physical Education.

Another study conducted by Downing and Rebolow (1999), investigated parents' perspectives regarding the factors essential for placement of children with disabilities into integrated physical education programs. In the study, seventy-five parents completed a 21-item survey to determine factors essential for integrated physical education programs. The results suggested that parents viewed smaller class size, program support, physical and communicative skills, health status, and motivation as prerequisites of an effectively integrated program.

The research literature indicates that there is a wide range of opinion amongst parents related to the placement of children in other general educational settings (Grove & Fisher, 1999 cited in Elkins & Kraaynoord, 2013). A literature review of parent attitudes towards inclusive education demonstrated that the majority of the studies which examined attitudes of parents of children with disabilities did not show clear positive attitudes. Parents may be undecided and often indicate that inclusion is not a good option for their child (Anke, 2009). Parents of typically developing children on the other hand showed more positive attitudes towards inclusive education. Those parents believe that their children might experience social benefits of inclusive education (Anke, 2009). The study also concluded that parents who had a high socioeconomic status, higher education level and experience with inclusive education held more positive attitudes compared to parents with a low socioeconomic status, lower education level and less experience with inclusive education (Anke, 2009).

A study investigating the attitudes of 354 Australian parents who have a child with a disability found that many of the parents favored inclusion. Parents who did not favor inclusion said that they would if resources were provided. There were only a limited number of parents who had negative attitudes towards inclusion (Elkins, Kraayenoord, & Jobling, 2003).

In a 2016 study (Soponaru, Paduraru, Dumbrava, Starica & Iorga) examining the attitudes of parents and teachers regarding mainstreaming in Romania, researchers found that parents are concerned about mainstreaming due to the fact that no information is provided regarding the positive aspects of integration. Secondly, parents are concerned about the teachers' skills regarding school work when it comes to children with special needs.

More research is needed on parent attitudes towards inclusion in physical education. The purpose of this research is to examine the attitudes of parents of both students with and without disabilities towards inclusion in physical education. The findings may be useful in understanding parent perspectives and used to enhance the practices in the physical education classroom of supporting students with disabilities.

METHODS

Participants

A purposive convenience sampling strategy was used to recruit participants for this study. The study was conducted at a high school located in northern California. The school population included 1424 students enrolled in grades 9 through 12. The population of students with disabilities (i.e., having an IEP) represents 10% of the school population. The students with an IEP at the school included a variety of disabilities in the mild to moderate range. Participants were recruited from an email list of parents of students enrolled in the high school. Emails were sent to 1000 parents of students.

Instrument

The instrument used was an anonymous online survey using Survey Monkey (see Appendix B). The survey contained 4 questions pertaining to demographics for all parents and 4 additional demographic questions for parents of students with disabilities. The second part of the survey included 11 items constructed in statement form (e.g., I believe students with disabilities have the right to be in the same PE class as students without disabilities). Each statement was followed by a five-point Likert scale that allowed the participant to select the degree of intensity that best described the participants attitude towards the statement (i.e., strongly disagree, disagree, undecided/neutral, agree, strongly agree). Statements were scored with a possible range of 1 to 5. A lower score reflected a less positive attitude towards inclusion and a higher score reflecting a more

positive attitude towards inclusion. Six of the statements were worded positively towards inclusion in PE and five of the statements were worded negatively. The questions that were worded negatively were reverse coded. The final question on the survey was an open-ended response asking if parents had any additional comments.

The survey was created by modifying the *My Thinking About Inclusion* (MTAI; scale (Gettinger, Goetz, & Stolber, 1998) for their study exploring factors influencing parents' beliefs about inclusion. The 11 questions from the "Attitude Towards Inclusion/Mainstreaming" scale was used and modified to fit this study. The modifications made to each question were the addition of the term "physical education" in place of "classroom." In addition, "with disabilities" replaced the term "with special needs."

The survey was pilot tested by reviewing the survey with 5 parents of high school students. The 5 parents included 2 parents with a child with disabilities and 3 parents without children with disabilities. After the pilot study, questions were reworded for clarity and to reflect the responses of the parents.

Procedure

Approval for the study was obtained from the Humboldt State University Institutional Review Board on February 2, 2019 (IRB 18-125). Additionally, the researcher obtained permission to contact potential participants via email from the district superintendent. Emails with survey information and a link to the survey on SurveyMonkey were sent to an email list of 1000 parents of students enrolled in a high

school in northern California. Within each email, an information letter and a consent form were provided. The information letter outlined the project and provided information about the survey. Informed consent was included as the first question in the survey. Data from the survey was collected using Survey Monkey.

Assumptions

The following assumptions were made in this study. Questionnaires for parents used in this study were capable of providing evidence of valid and reliable scores. All participants answered all questionnaire items honestly. Participants' self-reporting of behaviors is accurate.

Statistical Analysis

The data was analyzed using SPSS software. The statements favoring inclusion with the Likert-scale were coded (1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=undecided/neutral, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree). The statements that were unfavorable for inclusion were reverse coded. The median was found for a measure of central tendency to help determine most likely response for the 11 statements regarding inclusion. In addition, the interquartile range of each statement was found to measure whether responses were clustered or scattered. An independent samples t-test was performed to see if a significant difference between the attitudes of parents of students with disabilities and parents of students without disabilities was present. Likert scale categories (strongly disagree/disagree and agree/strongly agree) were combined to determine percentages for

each. In addition, the mean scores and standard deviations for each category and questions was determined and compared.

Qualitative Analysis

Qualitative research was also conducted on the open-ended response because it is “well suited to study diversity” and the “best way to learn about people’s subjective experience is to ask them about it” (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). Qualitative research involves analyzing and interpreting responses in order to discover meaningful patterns of a particular phenomenon (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). To analyze the qualitative data from the open-ended response, the information was categorized, themes or patterns were identified and these terms were summarized.

RESULTS

The total number of parent responses in this study was 96 as one survey was omitted due to the parents not completing the informed consent. Of the respondents, 81 were female and 15 were male. All but one parent reported that their child had been enrolled in a general PE class during his or her time in school. A total of 16 parents reporting having a child with an IEP. The parents reported the following disabilities as being classified on their child's IEP: Autism spectrum disorder (20%), emotional disturbance (13.33%), intellectual disability (26.67%), other health impairment (26.67%), specific learning disability (46.67%), speech or language impairment (13.33%), traumatic brain injury (13.33%), and visual impairment (20%). The majority of the parents of students with a disability (60%) reported that their child had been receiving services based on their IEP for five or more years. In addition, two parents reported that their child currently received adapted physical education within their normal school schedule.

Based on the mean and percentages for each of the 11 statements (see table 1), parents answered in favor of inclusion on 9 of the statements. The interquartile range for 7 of these 9 statements was low (IQ=1). This may indicate that parents feel very similar about inclusion in PE and there wasn't a lot of variance in the answers.

Table 1: Inclusion statement answer percentages, means and standard deviations

	Strongly Disagree/ Disagree	Undecided/ Neutral	Agree/ Strongly Agree	n=96	
				M	SD
10. I believe students with disabilities have the right to be educated in the same Physical Education class as students without disabilities.	13.54	10.42	76.04	3.95	1.13
11. I believe inclusion in Physical Education is NOT a good practice for educating students with disabilities. (reversed)	72.92	17.71	9.38	2.13	1.04
12. I believe students will have a hard time learning in an inclusive Physical Education class. (reversed)	68.75	16.67	14.58	2.21	1.04
13. I believe students with disabilities should only be taught in an inclusive Physical Education class.	53.68	36.84	9.48	2.43	.94
14. I believe inclusion in Physical Education can be beneficial for children without disabilities.	4.21	8.42	87.37	4.25	.78
15. I believe an inclusive Physical Education class gives students with disabilities more practice in developing social and communication skills.	3.16	9.47	87.36	4.08	.91
16. I believe students with disabilities will develop better physical skills (running, jumping, hopping, throwing, and catching) in a Physical Education class that is separate from students without disabilities. (reversed)	40.63	35.42	23.96	3.23	1.02
17. I believe students without disabilities will not want to participate with students with disabilities in an inclusive Physical Education class. (reversed)	68.75	16.67	14.58	3.74	.98
18. I believe students with disabilities will take up a majority of the teacher's time in an inclusive Physical Education class so that they will not be able to give attention to students without disabilities. (reversed)	56.25	19.79	23.96	3.43	1.06
19. I believe the presence of students with disabilities in an inclusive Physical Education class promotes awareness of individual differences.	5.21	5.21	89.59	4.24	.90
20. I believe an inclusive Physical Education class is safe for students with disabilities.	12.51	32.29	55.21	3.52	.94

Comparison of Parents of Students With and Without Disabilities

The independent sample t-test showed no significant difference between the attitudes of parents of students with disabilities and the attitudes of parents of students without disabilities on statements 10, 13, 16, 17, 18 and 20 ($p > .05$). There was a significant difference on five statements (see table 2). In the statements with significant differences between the two groups, parents of students without disabilities had a slightly higher mean score in favor of inclusion in PE. However, there was a small sample ($n=16$) of parents of students with disabilities compared to the sample size of parents of students without disabilities ($n=80$). A larger sample size of parents of students with disabilities may yield different results.

Table 2: T-test comparing parents of students with disabilities and parents of students without disabilities.

	P-Value	n=16 Parents of students with disabilities	n=80 Parents of students without disabilities
11. I believe inclusion in Physical Education is NOT a good practice for educating students with disabilities. (reversed)	.036	3.38	3.98
12. I believe students will have a hard time learning in an inclusive Physical Education class. (reversed)	.011	3.19	3.91
14. I believe inclusion in Physical Education can be beneficial for children without disabilities.	.004	3.75	4.35
15. I believe an inclusive Physical Education class gives students with disabilities more practice in developing social and communication skills.	.004	3.47	4.20
19. I believe the presence of students with disabilities in an inclusive Physical Education class promotes awareness of individual differences.	.015	3.35	4.33

Qualitative Findings

The open-ended response portion of the survey resulted in 19 total responses and produced several themes. The first theme identified (5 responses) was the importance of inclusion for students without disabilities because it “teaches empathy and compassion.” One parent mentioned that in their personal experience with inclusion, the students without disabilities were never given direct instruction on how to positively interact with students with disabilities.

A second theme (5 responses) was that inclusion can be beneficial but should be on a case by case basis. Students with disabilities should “have the choice,” but “special classes should be offered for those who lack the confidence and do not want to be with the regular students.” In addition, parents mentioned that factors necessary for inclusion to be successful include smaller class size, teacher support, and teacher aides (4 responses). Conversely, there were a few parents that felt inclusion was not safe in PE (2 responses). One parent mentioned that due to bullying that occurred in a general PE class, their child will not take PE at the high school and take PE at an alternate site. Finally, one parent mentioned that the survey was too broad and it depends on the severity of the disability.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study is to examine parent attitudes towards inclusion in physical education. The researcher hypothesized that parents would have a wide variety of attitudes towards inclusion in PE. The researcher also hypothesized that parents of students with disabilities were less likely to support inclusion in PE compared to parents of students without disabilities. The results showed that parents of students with and without disabilities felt strongly in support of inclusion in several areas. Parents of students without disabilities support inclusion slightly more than parents of students with disabilities.

Statements relating to social benefits for students with and without disabilities had the highest percentage in agreement. Eighty-seven percent of parents agree/strongly agree that inclusion can be beneficial for children without disabilities ($M=4.25$, $SD=.78$). Similarly, the same number of parents agreed that inclusion gives students with disabilities practice developing social and communication skills ($M=4.13$, $SD=.74$). In addition, 89 percent agreed that inclusion in PE promotes awareness of individual differences ($M=4.24$, $SD=.90$). Parents (i.e., 67%) strongly supported students with disabilities right to be educated in an inclusive PE class. Seventy-six percent agree/strongly agree that students with disabilities have the right to be in the same PE class as students without disabilities ($M=3.95$, $SD=1.13$). Seventy-two percent disagreed/strongly disagreed that inclusion in PE is NOT a good practice for educating students with disabilities ($M=2.13$, $SD=1.04$). Although parents within this study support

students with disabilities right to be educated in an inclusive PE class, they do not all agree that “students with disabilities should only be taught in an inclusive PE class” (MD=2.43, SD=.94). This may indicate that parents feel that students with disabilities should have other options for PE other than an inclusive PE class.

Parents had mixed attitudes towards the outcomes of inclusion for students with disabilities. Parents (i.e., 68%) disagree/strongly disagree that children with disabilities will have a “hard time learning in an inclusive PE class” and that “children without disabilities will not want to participate with children with disabilities.” However, in response to the statement “students with disabilities will develop better physical skills...in a PE class that is separate from students without disabilities” (i.e., reverse coded) had a wide variety of attitudes; 23 percent agree/strongly agree, 35 percent were undecided/neutral, 45 percent disagree/strongly disagree (MD=2.77, SD=1.02). Many parents were undecided (i.e., 32%) whether or not an inclusive PE class is “safe for students with disabilities” (M=3.52, SD= .94). Parents also had mixed attitudes towards whether or not students with disabilities will “take up a majority of the teacher’s time in an inclusive PE class” (M=3.42, SD=1.06).

Although the researcher hypothesized that parents would have mixed attitudes towards inclusion, the results show that most parents support inclusion in PE. Parents seem to agree that inclusion can be beneficial for students without disabilities. Parents also seem to agree that inclusion can benefit students with disabilities socially. This is consistent with research that shows that “appropriately implemented inclusive physical education using evidence-based strategies has been found to benefit students both with

and without disabilities” (Aiello, Cavanaugh, Haegele, Lieberman, & Wilson, 2017). Parents also seem to agree that although students with disabilities have the right to be educated in an inclusive PE class, it is not always the best placement. Several parents indicated that student placement should be on an individual basis. In other words, students with disabilities should be placed in a PE class that is most beneficial to them. This is consistent with best practices in PE for placement of students with disabilities. Best practices indicate that in order to meet the needs of students with a wide range of disabilities, a variety of physical education placement options should be made available on a continuum and range from inclusive PE to a modified PE class (Aiello, Cavanaugh, Haegele, Lieberman, & Wilson, 2017).

The school district of the school in this survey only offers students with disabilities the ability to be placed in an inclusive PE class; there are no other modified PE classes available to students as an option for placement. This policy was implemented two years ago in an effort to increase inclusion into general education classes for all subjects for students with disabilities. This school district and others like it who do not have a variety of options for students with disabilities may want to revisit this issue. It is important to make sure that each placement on the continuum is available in any given school district or county in order to ensure compliance with the law (Columna, Davis, Lieberman, & Lytle, 2010). If a service is not available in a student’s school, the school district is responsible for paying for services (e.g., transportation) when it is determined that the student with a disability must receive educational services at another location (Columna, Davis, Lieberman, & Lytle, 2010).

Parents in this survey mentioned class size, teacher aides and teacher support as key factors for successful inclusion. These are all key areas to address when implementing inclusion. However, at the high school level at many schools PE classes can be very large (many times 50 or more students), teacher aides are not provided, and teacher support is low. These are all areas that also need to be addressed by school districts in order to improve inclusion in PE. As one parent mentioned, this survey is very broad. Further research is necessary to understand parent attitudes towards inclusion in PE for various disabilities. For example, a parent may feel differently about inclusion for PE for students with an intellectual disability compared to how they may feel about inclusion for students with physical disabilities.

CONCLUSIONS

Within this study, there was a low percentage of respondents to the survey (i.e., 10%) based on the total number of available participants. For this reason, the results do not represent the views of all parents at the high school in northern California. One possible limitation may have been that emails were sent to parents of students at a high school and not at lower grade levels. Parents of students in elementary grades may have different opinions than those parents of high school students. Secondly, the participants who volunteered for this study may not be representative of the sample of the population as this study was conducted at one high school in northern California. For these reasons, additional research is needed to understand how parents of students with disabilities feel towards inclusion in PE. Parents of students with disabilities play a vital role in the education of students with disabilities and their input is valuable.

REFERENCES

- Aiello, R., Cavanaugh, L., Haegele, J., Lieberman, L., Wilson, W. (2017) The Modified Physical Education Class: An Option for the Least Restrictive Environment, *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance*, 88:7, 10-16, DOI: 10.1080/07303084.2017.1340203
- An, J., & Goodwin, D. (2007). Physical education for students with spina bifida: Mothers perspectives. *Adapted Physical Activity Quarterly*. 24, 38-54.
- Anke, D. (2009). Attitudes of parents towards inclusive education: A review of Literature. International Association of Special Education. Pp 274-276
- Auerbach, C. & Silverstein, L. (2003). *Qualitative Data: An Introduction to Coding and Analysis*. New York: New York University Press.
- Bebetsos, E., Zafeiriadis, S., Derri, V., & Kyrgiridis, P. (2013). Relationship among Students' Attitudes, Intentions and Behaviors towards the Inclusion of Peers with Disabilities, in Mainstream Physical Education Classes. *International Electronic Journal of Elementary Education*, 5(3), 233–248. Retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1070458>
- Berger, E. (1995). *Parents as partners in education: Families and School Working together*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ.: Prentice Hall.
- Block, M. E. (1999). Did we jump on the wrong bandwagon? Problems with inclusion in physical education. *Palaestra*, 15(3), 30-36.
- Block, M. E., & Obrusnikova, I. (2007). *Inclusion in Physical Education: A Review of*

- the Literature from 1995-2005. *Adapted Physical Activity Quarterly*, 24(2), 103–124. <https://doi.org/10.1123/apaq.24.2.103>
- California Department of Education. (2018). Physical Education FAQs. retrieved from <https://www.cde.ca.gov/pd/ca/pe/physeducfaqs.asp>
- Childre, A. L. (2004). Families. Including students with severe disabilities. Boston: Allyn & Bacon. pp. 78-99.
- Christenson, S., Hurley, C., Sheridan, S. (1997). Parents' and School Psychologists' Perspectives on Parent Involvement Activities. *School Psychology Review*. P. 111-30.
- Columna, L., Davis, T., Lieberman, L., & Lytle, R. (2010). Determining the most appropriate physical education placement for students with disabilities. *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance*, 81(7), 30–37.
- Combs, S., Elliott, S., & Whipple, K. (2010). Elementary physical education teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of children with special needs: a qualitative investigation. *International Journal of Special Education*, 25(1), 12.
- D'Alonzo, J. B., & Ledon, C. (1992). Successful inclusion of children with disabilities with nondisabled peers in early intervention and preschool settings. *Infant Toddler Intervention*. 2, 277-283.
- Downing, J. H., & Rebollo, J. (1999). Parents' Perceptions of the Factors Essential for Integrated Physical Education Programs: *Remedial and Special Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/074193259902000305>
- Elkins, J., Kraayenoord, C. E. V., & Jobling, A. (2003). Parents' attitudes to inclusion of

- their children with special needs. *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs*, 3(2), 122–129. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1471-3802.00005>
- Fingertip Facts on Education in California - CalEdFacts (CA Dept of Education). (n.d). Retrieved June 22, 2018, from <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sd/cb/ceffingertipfacts.asp>
- Freedberg, Louis. (2016). Report: State must adopt guidelines for parent engagement IN schools. Ed Source. Retrieved July 18, 2019 from <https://edsource.org/2016/report-state-must-adopt-guidelines-for-parent-engagement-in-schools/95124>
- Giangreco, M. F., Edelman, S., Cloninger, C., & Dennis, R. (1993). My child has a classmate with severe disabilities: What parents of nondisabled children think about full inclusion. *Developmental Disabilities Bulletin*, 21(1), 77-91.
- Grenier, M., Collins, K., Wright, S., & Kearns, C. (2014). Perceptions of a disability sport unit in general physical education. *Adapted Physical Activity Quarterly*, 31(1), 49–66. doi:10.1123/apaq2013-0006
- Haegele, J. A., & Sutherland, S. (2015). Perspectives of students with disabilities toward physical education: A qualitative inquiry review. *Quest*, 67(3), 255–273.
- Heward, W. (2003). *Exceptional children: An introduction to special education*. Columbus, OH: Merrill Prentice Hall.
- Hunt, P., & McDonnell, J. (2007). Inclusive education. In S. L. Odom, R. H. Horner, M. E. Snell, & J. Blacher (Eds.) *Handbook of Developmental Disabilities* (pp. 269–291). New York: The Guilford Press.

- Kohl, H. & Cook, H. (Eds.). (2013). *Educating the Student Body: Taking Physical Activity and Physical Education to School*. Washington, D.C. : National Academies Press.
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 20 U.S.C. § 1400 (2004)
- Kumar, M. (2018). The relationship between beliefs, values, attitudes and behaviors. retrieved from <https://owlcation.com/social-sciences/Teaching-and-Assessing-Attitudes>
- Legislative Analysis Office. (2013). *Overview of Special Education in California*. Sacramento, CA.: LAO Publications. Retrieved July 13, 2018, from <http://www.lao.ca.gov/reports/2013/edu/special-ed-primer/special-ed-primer-010313.aspx>
- Leyser, Y. and Kirk, R. (2004). Evaluating inclusion: an examination of parent views and factors influencing their perspectives. *International Journal of Disability, Development and Education*. Vol. 51, No. 3
- Lieberman, L. J., James, A. R., & Ludwa, N. (2004). The Impact of Inclusion in General Physical Education for All Students. *JOPERD: The Journal of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance*, 75(5), 37–55.
- Morgan, J. A. (2013). *Factors Influencing Physical Educators' Inclusion Behaviors towards Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder*. ProQuest LLC.
- U.S. Department of Education. (2018). *The Condition of Education: Children and Youth with Disabilities. National Center for Education Statistics, 1.8*. retrieved from <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2018/2018144.pdf>

- Qi, J., & Ha, A. S. (2012). Inclusion in Physical Education: A Review of Literature. *International Journal of Disability, Development and Education*, 59(3), 257–281.
Retrieved from <http://ezproxy.humboldt.edu>
- Salend, S., Garrick Duhaney, L. (2001). What do families have to say about inclusion? How to pay attention and get results. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, Vol. 35, No. 1
- Shourbagi, S. E. (2017). Parental involvement in inclusive classrooms for students with learning disabilities at Omani schools as perceived by teachers. *Journal of Psychology and Cognition*, 2(2). Retrieved from <http://www.alliedacademies.org/abstract/parental-involvement-in-inclusive-classrooms-for-students-with-learning-disabilities-at-omani-schools-as-perceived-by-teachers-7851.html>
- Soodak, L. C., & Erwin, E. J. (2000). Valued member or tolerated participant: Parents' experiences in inclusive early childhood settings. *The Journal of the Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps*, 25, 29–41.
- Soponar, C., Paduraru, C., Dumbrava, A., Starica, E. C., and Iorga, M., (2016). The attitudes of parents and teachers regarding the process of integration for children with special educational needs in the mainstream educational system. *Annals of the Al. I. Cuza University, Psychology Series*. 2016, Vol. 25 Issue 2, p19-28.
- Special Education Inclusion. (2014, August 21). Retrieved July 14, 2018, from <http://weac.org/articles/specialedinc/>
- Stolber, KC., Gettinger, M., Goetz, D. (1998). Exploring factors influencing parents and

early childhood practitioner's beliefs about inclusion. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 13, No. 1, 107-124.

Townsend, A. (2017). The Examination of Physical Education Teachers' Perceptions of Their Teacher Training to Include Students with Disabilities in General Physical Education (Ed.D.). Northcentral University, United States -- Arizona. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1943388676/abstract/5F5C1BDCA42B41D6PQ/1>

20 U.S.C. 1412 - State eligibility. (n.d.). Retrieved June 22, 2018, from <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/granule/USCODE-2011-title20/USCODE-2011-title20-chap33-subchapII-sec1412>

U.S. Department of Education. (2018). The Condition of Education: Children and Youth with Disabilities. *National Center for Education Statistics, 1.8*. retrieved from <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2018/2018144.pdf>

U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, Office of Special Education Programs. (2015). *37th Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2015*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office. Retrieved July 9, 2018 from <https://www2.ed.gov/about/reports/annual/osep/index.html>

United States Government Accountability Office. (2010). *Report to Congressional requestors: Student with disabilities: More information and guidance could improve opportunities in Physical Education and Athletics*. Washington, D.C.

Webster, J. (2017). General Education: The Education Everyone Should Be Provided.

Retrieved July 13, 2018, from <https://www.thoughtco.com/general-education-glossary-term-3110863>

Winnick, J. and Porretta, D. (2017). *Adapted Physical Education and Sport*. 6th ed.
Champaign, IL.: Human Kinetics

APPENDICES

Appendix A

My name is Sarah Crye, and I am a PE teacher at Shasta High School and am obtaining my master's degree in Kinesiology through Humboldt State University. I obtained your email address through a list of parents of students enrolled at Shasta High School with the permission of the district Superintendent, Jim Cloney. I am conducting a research study to learn more about parent attitudes towards inclusion in Physical Education. Inclusion in Physical Education means placing all students with and without disabilities in the same Physical Education class. Currently, there is very limited research on parent attitudes towards inclusion in Physical Education.

If you volunteer to participate, you will be asked to complete an anonymous online survey. The survey will take 3-5 minutes to complete. Your participation in this survey can be valuable in helping gain a better understanding of how parents feel about inclusion in Physical Education.

If you have any questions about this research at any time, please call or email me at sac156@humboldt.edu or Dr. Chris Hopper chris.hopper@humboldt.edu. If you have any concerns with this study or questions about your rights as a participant, contact the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects at irb@humboldt.edu or (707) 826-5165.

To participate in the survey, please click on the link below:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SQDQYHX>

*Appendix B***Informed Consent**

This survey is a part of a research study to learn more about parent attitudes towards inclusion in Physical Education. Inclusion in Physical Education means placing all students with and without disabilities in the same Physical Education class. This survey will take 3-5 minutes to complete.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You have the right not to participate at all or to leave the study at any time. It is anticipated that study results will be shared with the public through presentations and/or publications. Information collected for this study is anticipated to be completely anonymous and cannot be linked back to you. The anonymous data will be maintained safe and may be used for future research studies or distributed to another investigator for future research studies without additional informed consent from you.

If you have any questions about this research at any time, please call or email me at sac156@humboldt.edu or Dr. Chris Hopper chris.hopper@humboldt.edu. If you have any concerns with this study or questions about your rights as a participant, contact the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects at irb@humboldt.edu or (707) 826-5165.

Your participation in this study indicates that you are at least 18 years old, have read and understand the information provided above, that you willingly agree to participate, and that you may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation at any time.

1. I have read and agree to the terms of this informed consent.

Yes

No

II – Demographic Information

2. What is your gender?

Male

Female

3. What is your child(ren)'s current grade level? Mark all that apply.

Kindergarten		7th	
--------------	--	-----	--

1 st		8th	
2 nd		9th	
3 rd		10th	
4 th		11th	
5 th		12th	
6 th			

4. Has your child(ren) participated in a general Physical Education class during his or her time in school?

Yes

No

5. Does your child currently have an IEP?

Yes

No

Questions 6-9 were only given to parents who answered yes to their child having an IEP.

6. Which disability is your child's Individualized Education Plan (IEP) classified under? check all that apply

Autism Spectrum Disorder		Orthopedic Impairment	
Blindness		Other Health Impairment	
Deaf		Specific Learning Disability	

Emotional Disturbance		Speech or Language Impairment	
Hearing Impairment		Traumatic Brain Injury	
Intellectual Disability		Visual Impairment	
Multiple Disabilities			

7. How long has your child had an Individualized Education Plan (IEP)?

Less than 1 year

1-2 years

3-5 years

5-10 years

10 or more years

Unsure

8. Has your child ever qualified to receive Adapted Physical Education services?

Yes

No

Unsure

9. Does your child currently receive Adapted Physical Education within their normal week

Yes

No

Unsure

II. Inclusion in Physical Education.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided/ Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Core Perspectives

10. I believe students with disabilities have the right to be educated in the same Physical Education class as students without disabilities.

11. I believe inclusion in Physical Education is NOT a good practice for educating students with disabilities.

12. I believe students will have a hard time learning in an inclusive Physical Education class.

13. I believe children with disabilities should only be taught in an inclusive Physical Education class.

14. I believe inclusion in Physical Education can be beneficial for children without disabilities.

15. I believe an inclusive Physical Education class gives students with disabilities more practice in developing social and communication skills.

16. I believe students with disabilities will develop better physical skills (running, jumping, hopping, throwing, and catching) in a Physical Education class that is separate from students without disabilities.

17. I believe children without disabilities will not want to participate with students with disabilities in an inclusive Physical Education class.

18. I believe students with disabilities will take up a majority of the teacher's time in an inclusive Physical Education class so that they will not be able to give attention to students without disabilities.

19. I believe the presence of students with disabilities in an inclusive Physical Education class promotes awareness of individual differences.

20. I believe an inclusive Physical Education class is safe for students with disabilities.

21. Do you have any additional comments?