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Special Education Students and Standardized Assessments

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by

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Declaration of Originality

I do hereby declare and attest to the fact that this is an original study based solely upon my own scholarly work at Lindenwood University and that I have not submitted it for any other college or university course or degree.

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Abstract

Special education students with many different disabilities are taught in today's classrooms, and since the passing of the No Child Left Behind Act in 2001, they are required to take the same standardized assessments as their regular education peers (Resmovits, 2013). Within this study, data were analyzed to determine the perceptions of two groups, which included third-grade regular education teachers and special education teachers of special education students who took the same standardized assessments as their regular education peers. In addition, data were also examined to determine if there was a relationship between how teachers from the two groups responded to survey statements and how students actually scored on the Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) for the years 2012-2014. Finally, data were analyzed to determine the perceptions of the two groups on the use of special education students' assessment results for teacher evaluations. Sixty-three (N = 63) teachers, 30 regular and 33 special education teachers, from the Southwest Missouri region participated in completing a survey. Results indicated teachers in both groups negatively viewed the idea of special education students taking the same standardized assessments, with or without accommodations, as their non-disabled peers. In addition, a statistical relationship was found between the regular education teachers' perceptions and special education students' MAP scores in the area of communication arts (2013, 2014), and a statistical relationship was found between special education teachers' perceptions and special education students' MAP scores in the area of communication arts (2012) and math (2013). Finally, the data showed teachers in both groups negatively viewed the idea that special education students' MAP scores should be used in teacher evaluations.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Ch**apter One: Introduction**

Over the past 10 years, "states have been engaged in a variety of education reform efforts designed to improve the quality of public education. One highly visible reform is 'high-stakes' testing" (GreatSchools, 2015, para. 1). The purpose of assessments is to improve student success (GreatSchools, 2015). Each April, in all of Missouri's public schools, special education students sit perplexed and struggle through answering each question on required state assessments (Cecchetti, 2009). This is not because students with disabilities cannot learn or take assessments (Cecchetti, 2009). Many students have disabilities that impede the ability to sort through questions at their grade level; however, there are also many students with disabilities who can perform well on standardized assessments when provided accommodations and/or modifications (Cecchetti, 2009).

Standardized assessments have been used for centuries, and all public schools are required to administer these assessments (Perrone, 1991). Standardized assessments are used for a great deal of decision-making in today's schools (Darling-Hammond & Adamson, 2014). Assessments are used for financial rewards, diplomas, certificates, entrance to higher education, funding, and social status (Cheng, 2014). Standardized Assessments, or high-stakes tests, can seriously impact both educators and students (Cheng, 2014). Some of the impacts on students and education include the following: "loss of learning time, reduced content, knowledge narrowed curriculum, shut out of programs, school closures, harmful stress, grades, and graduation requirements" (Strauss, 2014a, para. 3)

Students in the United States are assessed more frequently than in any other industrialized country (Darling-Hammond & Adamson, 2014). Initially, assessment outcomes were not discussed with parents or the community (Perrone, 1991). Today, everyone knows students' scores of administrators, teachers, students, and parents (Perrone, 1991). Prior to 1990, special education students were assessed based on goals of their Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) (Whilden, 2010). Since the enactment of laws such as the Education of All Handicapped Children's Act of 1975, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1997, and the America's Schools Act of 1994, states are required to develop standards that pertain to all students, including special education students (Whilden, 2010). When No Child Left Behind (NCLB) was implemented in 2002 by President George W. Bush, schools provided greater instructional support and attention to special education students (Wright, Wright, & Heath, 2004).

In the article "The Future of Children," Laudan Aron and Pamela Loprest (2012) assessed the progress of the nation's education system. Aron and Loprest (2012) stated, "The special education system has given children with disabilities much greater access to public education, established an infrastructure for educating them, helped with the earlier identification of disabilities, and promoted greater inclusion of these children alongside their nondisabled peers" (para. 3). The goal for all educators has been to help special education students maximize their performance (Obiakor, Harris, Mutua, Rotatori, & Algozzine, 2012). Inclusion is one way educators have attempted to achieve this goal (Obiakor et al., 2012). According to Connor (2010), another element in our schools that can change the performance of special education students is to provide great instruction

and have high expectations for all students (Conner, 2010). Conner (2010) also stated, "In fact, for decades, research has been very clear. The instruction provided in our nation's classrooms has a greater impact on student performance than anything else" (p. 15).

Not all teachers are in favor of students with disabilities taking the same standardized assessments as regular education students or using student performance on these assessments as part of teacher evaluations (Rebora, 2012). In a report published by Scholastic and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation based on more than 10,000 public school teachers, Rebora (2012) found most teachers do not believe standardized assessments are a good way to measure student performance. In the same report, Margery Mayer, the president of Scholastic Education, stated, "The findings speak to the need to use multiple measures to evaluate teachers' impact on student learning" (Rebora, 2012, p. 14).

Conceptual Framework

Over the years it has become crucial teachers increase the academic achievement of students (Rosenberg, 2014)). Educators are being held to a higher level of accountability for the improvement of student performance due to the requirements of NCLB (Rosenberg, 2014). Special education teachers are feeling the insistence even more, because their students are required to take the same standardized assessments as non-disabled peers (Walker, 2014b). Across the country, all school districts have been affected by the NCLB legislation (Rosenberg, 2014). Therefore, this study was viewed through the lens of the NCLB Act.

As a result of the NCLB legislation, annual yearly performance (AYP) was introduced (Darling-Hammond & Adamson, 2014). Annual yearly performance is a measurement defined by the NCLB to determine how each student is performing on a standardized assessment (Darling-Hammond & Adamson, 2014). Students in grades three through eight and in 11th grade are given standardized assessments every year (Darling-Hammond & Adamson, 2014). The results are compared to prior year scores and utilized to determine if the school has made sufficient progress (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education [MODESE], 2014a). Missouri school districts are also being evaluated using the methods guided by performance standards listed in the Missouri School Improvement Plan (MSIP) (MODESE, 2014a). School districts are given an annual performance plan score (MODESE, 2014a). The primary goal of the annual performance plan is for all students to graduate high school college- and career-ready (MODESE, 2014a).

The goal for every school in the United States under NCLB was for 100% of students to receive proficient or advanced scores in math, reading, and science, regardless of intelligence, language, or disability (Christenson, Decker, Triezenberg, Ysseldyke, & Reschly, 2007). As schools approached the 2014 deadline for all students to score proficient or advanced, many school districts found they did not meet this goal (Resmovits, 2013). Students with disabilities are required to take standardized assessments at their current grade level, although most students with disabilities are not academically at their grade level and some never will be (Resmovits, 2013). The purpose of standardized assessments is to determine what a student knows in comparison to

her/his peers, but special education students are on a different level than their non-disabled peers (Cecchetti, 2009).

There has been a lot of controversy regarding inclusion of special education students' assessment scores in academic achievement test data (Wright et al., 2004). The questions continue to be as follows:

- Is it relevant for special education students to take standardized assessments?
- Are special education students getting a suitable education?
- Should schools expect to make the same progress with special education students year after year? (Wright et al., 2004)

The NCLB law clearly answered *yes* to these questions (Wright et al., 2004). Even with the passing of the new Every Student Succeeds Act, students with disabilities will still be required to take the same standardized assessments as their non-disabled peers (Nelson, 2015).

Statement of the Problem

This study was based on the need for more information related to the success of special education students taking the same standardized assessments as their regular education peers. Students receive special education services when they have demonstrated an area of disability in sensory, language, intellect, and/or academics (Connor, 2010). Approximately 80% of students who qualify for special education services have average intelligence (Cortiella & Horowitz, 2014). If special education students possess average intelligence then they have the same potential of being successful and mastering grade-level material as their regular education peers (Connor, 2010). Special education students "may have physical, sensory, or learning differences

that must be accommodated, but their fundamental capacity is there" (Connor, 2010, p. 5). Rieser (2004) agreed and stated:

> Most children with disabilities have conditions at the milder end of the spectrum; their abilities are not that different from those of their peers, though they may need some special help. Even some children with complex disabilities can, with help, achieve at or near grade level. Thus, there are good arguments for not letting up on the idea that, with supports, most students with disabilities can be as successful as their classmates. (p. 1)

Students with disabilities need rigorous instruction (Connor, 2010). Barbara Blackburn and Bradley Witzel (2013) defined rigor as "creating an environment in which each student is supported so that he/she can be expected to learn at a high level, and demonstrates learning at high levels" (p. 7).

Purpose of the Study

Many regular and special education teachers feel special education students should not and cannot take the same standardized assessments and perform as well as regular education students (Rebore, 2012). This study was designed to elicit feedback from third-grade regular and special education teachers related to their perceptions of special education students taking the same standardized assessments as regular education students. Teachers' expectations of special education students can play a significant part in the success of these students (Connor, 2010).

The changes that affect school districts and teachers, such as academic standards, teacher evaluations, and performance by students with disabilities, continue to be a high priority. The data collected were used to discern the perceptions of third-grade regular

education and third-grade special education teachers concerning special education students taking the same standardized assessments as their non-disabled peers. The researcher also analyzed the data to determine if there is a relationship between how teachers responded to the survey questions compared to students' actual scores on the Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) grade level assessment. The data collected were used to examine the perceptions of third-grade regular and special education teachers of whether standardized assessment scores should affect teacher evaluations.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the design and collection of data for this study:

RQ1. What are the perceptions of regular and special education teachers in regard to special education students taking standardized assessments?

RQ2. What is the relationship between special and regular education teachers' perceptions related to special education students taking standardized assessments and the special education students' actual scores on standardized assessments?

RQ3. What are the perceptions of regular and special education teachers in regard to special education students' scores on standardized assessments being used as a possible factor in teacher evaluation scores?

Null Hypothesis

The following null hypothesis was posed within this study:

$H2_{0:}$ There is no relationship between special and regular education teachers' perceptions related to special education students taking standardized assessments and the special education students' actual scores on standardized assessments.

Limitations

The primary limitation of this study was the use of special education directors to administer the survey to participating third-grade regular and special education teachers. Other limitations from the survey included the following:

- All participants were from Southwest Missouri school districts.
- The teachers may or may not have been honest when responding to the survey statements.
- Only third-grade teachers were given the survey.
- The researcher had no prior experience creating surveys, which may have impacted data gathered.

Definitions of Key Terms

The following key terms were utilized during the course of this study:

Adequate yearly progress (AYP). Adequate yearly progress is the amount of improvement a school district is expected to make each year (MODESE, 2014a). The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education is responsible for how each public school in the state is to achieve academically (MODESE, 2014a). Academic achievement is based on the outcomes of standardized assessments (MODESE, 2014a).

Annual performance report (APR). The annual performance report (APR) is a rating provided by the MODESE for each school district (MODESE, 2014a). According to the MODESE (2014a):

> The overall rating consists of each MSIP 5 Performance Standard: Academic Achievement, Subgroup Achievement, High School Readiness or College and Career Readiness, Attendance Rate and Graduation Rate. Status, progress, and

> growth are used to calculate a comprehensive score used to determine the accreditation level of a school district. (p.5)

Also, used for accountability determinations is graduation rate (MODESE, 2014a).

High-stakes testing. High-stakes testing involves assessments given to compare students' performance (Reich & Bally, 2010). High-stakes testing plays a big role in what teachers teach and how they teach it (Reich & Bally, 2010). Many decisions about high-stakes testing are determined by federal and local funding (Reich & Bally, 2010).

Inclusion. Inclusion refers to "the practice of including another group of students in regular classrooms: students with physical, developmental, or social emotional disabilities, and those with chronic health problems" (Cushner, McClelland, & Safford, 2012, p. 7).

Least restrictive environment (LRE). The least restrictive environment (LRE) refers to the IDEA's instruction that all students with disabilities be educated with their non-disabled peers to the fullest extent appropriate whether that be in the regular education classroom or in the resource room where the students' needs can be meet (Marx et al., 2014)

Missouri assessment program (MAP). The Missouri assessment program (MAP) includes standards-based assessments that evaluate specific skills defined for each grade level (MODESE, 2014a). The MAP tests are scored according to four levels: advanced, proficient, basic, and below-basic (MODESE, 2014a). The goal is for all students to perform at or above the proficient level (MODESE, 2014a). Assessments are given in science, math, and communication arts (MODESE, 2014a).

Missouri assessment program-Alternative (MAP-A). The MAP-A Alternate Assessment "is designed to promote enhanced capacities and integrated life opportunities and is administered only to students with the most significant cognitive disabilities who meet grade level and eligibility criteria" (MODESE, 2013, p.1).

Resource room. A resource room is a classroom just like a general education classroom, but only students who have been qualified with a disability are educated in a resource room (Watson, 2014). Students receive specialized instruction in a small group and/or one-on-one setting and work toward goals written in their IEPs (Watson, 2014).

Testing accommodations. Testing accommodations "are a change in the way a child with a disability is administered a test. These changes are intended to allow measurement of the true basics of a disabled student's ability" (Royer & Randall, 2012, p. 144).

Testing modifications. Testing modifications are changes in testing procedures for students with disabilities to give them the opportunity to participate and demonstrate their knowledge (Tomlinson, 2014). There are many modifications including extended time, alternative environment, and/or tests read to students (Tomlinson, 2014).

Value-added method (VAM). The value-added method (VAM) measures a teacher's contribution in a given year (Haertel, 2013). It compares students' previous years' assessment scores and considers each student's expected growth (Haertel, 2013). The VAM also compares scores to students in the same grade (Haertel, 2013). A teacher's performance evaluation is directly linked to how well his or her students perform on standardized assessments (Haertel, 2013).

Summary

Every year special education students undergo the same standardized assessments as their regular education peers (Strauss, 2014a). Standardized assessments are used for many important decisions, such as identifying a learning disability, promotion, and graduation (Strauss, 2014a). Standardized assessments can also carry some serious consequences, such as loss of time teaching, reduction of content, stress on teachers and students, and as a requirement for graduation (Strauss, 2014a).

There are several federal laws that affect special education students. The Education for All Handicapped Children's Act now known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), has been revised several times between 1975 and 2004 (New America Foundation, 2012). The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) (2002) significantly affected students with disabilities (Wright et al., 2004). The NCLB Act mandated students with disabilities take the same standardized assessments as their non-disabled peers (Wright et al., 2004).

Teachers were required to adapt their instruction to accommodate for students with disabilities (Christenson et al., 2007). The NCLB Act put a lot of pressure on teachers and school districts to reach the goal of 100% proficiency for all students, regardless of intelligence, language, or disability, by the year 2014 (Christenson et al., 2007). The goal was never met (Christenson et al., 2007). The law set a "simple if daunting goal: All of nation's students would perform at grade level on state tests. Every single one. '100%'. Or as the name of the law put it, there would be No Child Left Behind" (Kamenetz, 2014, para. 3).

Twelve years later, in 2014, the NCLB law was still in effect and not all students met the "100%" goal of scoring proficient or advanced (Kamenetz, 2014). In December of 2015, the senate passed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) (Nelson, 2015). Although this law still requires special education students to take the same standardized assessments, the ESSA takes much of the power away from the federal government and returns more power to the states (Nelson, 2015).

There are many regular and special education teachers who do not believe special education students should take the same standardized assessments as their non-disabled peers (Rebora, 2012). Educators are held accountable to improve special education student performance on standardized assessments (Rebora, 2012). This study was based on regular and special education teachers' perceptions of special education students taking the same standardized assessments as their non-disabled peers. Laws continue to change the impact special education students' scores have on students, teachers, and school districts. The following chapter includes a review of research about case laws in school segregation, history of standardized assessments, federal laws, standardized assessments and high-stakes testing, special education inclusion, teachers' perceptions and beliefs, teacher accountability and teacher evaluations.

Chapter Two: Review of Literature

There have been many studies on high-stakes assessments and what effects these assessments have on students, teachers, and school districts; however, there has been very little verifiable research conducted on the perceptions of regular and special education teachers toward special education students and standardized assessments. This study centered on regular and special education teacher perceptions toward special education students taking the same standardized assessments as regular education peers. Eight topics emerged when searching for relevant literature:

- Case laws that have affected segregation of students
- History of standardized assessments and high-stakes assessments
- Federal laws that affect special education students
- Standardized assessments and high-stakes assessments
- Inclusion of special education students and preparing special education students for standardized assessments
- Perceptions and beliefs of teachers
- Teacher accountability

The study was also focused on regular and special education teachers' perceptions of special education students' assessment scores affecting teacher evaluations and the possible existence of a correlation between teacher perceptions and special education students' actual standardized assessment (MAP) scores.

Case Laws in School Segregation

In the 1950s and 1960s, public schools across the United States faced many challenges with segregation (Essex, 2008). Racial segregation persisted, although the

courts took a firm position it was constitutionally impermissible (Essex, 2008). Segregated education "limits learning and limits the opportunities for meaningful adult lives. Some segregate out of fear. Some segregate out of a misdirected need to protect" (Antosh & Imparato, 2014, para. 5). Even with the passing of the 14th Amendment in 1968 to provide equal protection under the law, the majority of schools still remained segregated (Essex, 2008). In the 1954 landmark case *Brown v. Board of Education*, the U.S. Supreme Court overturned the *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) case (Essex, 2008). *Plessy v. Ferguson*, although not directly related to schools, established the legal basis for segregated public facilities that was embraced by most public schools (Essex, 2008). Thomas Jefferson's opinion of public education was for it, "to prepare well informed citizens; the *Brown v. Board of Education* provided the direction we must all follow" (Antosh & Imparato, 2014, para. 5).

Brown v. Board of Education (1954) arose from the segregation of black children in Kansas, South Carolina, Virginia, and Delaware (Essex, 2008). The United States Supreme Court struck down the notion of separate but equal:

> Segregation of white and colored children in public schools has a detrimental effect upon the colored children. The impact is greater when it has the sanction of the law; for the policy of separating the races is usually interpreted as denoting the inferiority of the Negro group. A sense of inferiority affects the motivation of a child to learn. Segregation with the sanction of the law therefore has a tendency to retard the educational and mental development of Negro children to deprive them of some of the benefits they would receive in a racially integrated school system. We conclude that in the field of education, the doctrine of separate but

> equal has no place. Separate education facilities are inherently unequal. Therefore, we hold that plaintiffs and others similarly situated for whom this action has been brought are, by reason of the segregation complained of, deprived of the equal protection of the law guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment. (Essex, 2008, p. 308)

In addition, the *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) ruling set the basis for the 1975 federal law, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (Antosh & Imparato, 2014).

Two other legal cases that greatly affected students with disabilities were *Pennsylvania Association of Retarded Citizens (PARC) v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania* (1971) and *Mills v. Board of Education of the District of Columbia* (1972) (Romberg, 2011). Both of those cases involved the segregation of disabled students (Romberg, 2011). The *PARC v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania* (1972) case was the first right-to-education suit in the country. Public schools were denying services to children who did not have a mental age of five years by the start of first grade (*PARC v. Commonwealth*, 1972). In *Mills v. Board of Education of the District of Columbia* (1972), students were being labeled as "exceptional" students, and this meant they had emotional or behavioral issues and/or were mentally handicapped. These children were denied a free appropriate public education in the public school system (*Mills v. Board of Education*, 1972). The courts ruled in favor of the students (Romberg, 2011).

In *PARC v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania* (1972), the court entered a consent decree that declared school districts were required to provide an education to children with mental disabilities ages six to 21. In *PARC v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania* (1972), the court ruled children with behavior or emotional disabilities and mentally

handicapped children were entitled to a free appropriate education in a public school. Both the *PARC* and *Mills* cases were of predominant importance to congressional enactment of the IDEA (Romberg, 2011).

History of Standardized Testing

In the past it was uncommon to see students with disabilities educated or taking the same standardized assessments as students without disabilities ("The History of Special Education," 2016). Parents did not have many options and were forced to educate their children at home ("The History of Special Education," 2016). The only other option was to pay for expensive private education, and many parents did not have the means to provide this for their children ("The History of Special Education," 2016).

Standardized assessments for students began in the seventh century (Fletcher, 2009). The first standardized assessments took place in China (Fletcher, 2009). In the 15th century, a German scientist named Gutenberg invented a printing press, and this invention made books inexpensive and quick to produce (Hall, 2005). By the 16th century, Europeans could read and write, and for the first time in Europe students began taking written exams (Hall, 2005).

Standardized assessments in America began in 1845 (Hall, 2005). Educator Horace Mann promoted assessments in public schools to evaluate students in geography, math, and spelling (Hall, 2005). In 1909, the Thorndike Handwriting Scale was the first standardized assessment used in American schools (Hall, 2005). In 1914, Frederick Kelly invented multiple choice tests (Van Duyn, 2012). All public schools were expediting some form of standardized assessments by the 1930s (Hall, 2005).

Standardized assessments were seen as the best way to measure if students were meeting standards and became routine in 1957 (Hall, 2005).

Federal Laws

It was not until the early 20th century that the story of special education began ("The History of Special Education," 2016). Special education students were not always able to attend the same public schools as their non-disabled peers ("The History of Special Education," 2016). Until legislation required "public education for children with cognitive or emotional disabilities, deafness, blindness or the need for speech therapy, among others, parents had very few options other than to educate their children at home or pay for expensive private education" ("The History of Special Education," 2016, p. 1). Parents began to form advocacy groups "to help bring the educational needs of children with disabilities to the public eye. These groups gained momentum mid-century. In 1961, President John F. Kennedy created the Presidents Panel on Mental Retardation" ("The History of Special Education," 2016, p. 1). The board's recommendations included aid to states to help with educating students with disabilities ("The History of Special Education," 2016). Many other federal policies related to students with disabilities followed. Leading the way was the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA).

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). The ESEA was the most comprehensive education bill passed (Hana, 2005). The ESEA was enacted April 11, 1965, and authorized and regulated the majority of kindergarten through 12th-grade programs in public education (Hana, 2005). The ESEA was authorized by President Lyndon B. Johnson and is updated every five to six years to increase standards and hold

schools liable (Wright et al., 2004). In addition, the ESEA governs the majority of federal K-12 programs (Hana, 2005). In 2001, President Bush renamed the law "No Child Left Behind" (NCLB) (Wright et al., 2004). The law distinctly stated all students in third through eighth grades take yearly assessments and that states could make reasonable modifications or accommodations for students with disabilities (Wright et al., 2004).

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The IDEA was first passed by Congress in 1975 (Douvanis & Hulsey, 2002). The IDEA is still the major statute that governs federal aid for students with disabilities (Douvanis & Hulsey, 2002). More than six million children in the United States have a disability (Douvanis & Hulsey, 2002). The IDEA is the law that guarantees services to children with disabilities (Douvanis & Hulsey, 2002). The IDEA "controls how public and state agencies offer early arbitration, special education and related services to children with disabilities" (Douvanis & Hulsey, 2002, p. 1). The two key components of IDEA are as follows:

> (1) Due process provisions detailing parental rights, and (2) a permanently authorized grant program that provides federal funding to the states. States that receive federal funds are required to provide a "free, appropriate public education" to all children with disabilities in the "least restrictive environment." (New America Foundation, 2012, para. 1)

The IDEA covers the educational needs of students with disabilities from birth to age 21. (Douvanis & Hulsey, 2002). The IDEA also states special education and related services should be tailored to meet the distinct needs of children with disabilities who qualify for such services (Whilden, 2010). The IDEA consists of six main elements: "Individualized

Education Program (IEP), free and appropriate public education (FAPE), least restrictive environment (LRE), appropriate evaluation, parent and teacher participation and procedural safeguards" (Singh, 2016, p. 34).

The IDEA and its former statute, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, have also been revised and adjusted many times (New America Foundation, 2012). The latest revision was completed in December 2004 by President George W. Bush (New America Foundation, 2012). The NCLB Act was enacted in 2001 and then signed into law by President George W. Bush in 2002 (Hall, 2005).

No Child Left Behind (NCLB). The NCLB Act directed states to prepare assessments in basic skills for to all students in grades three through eight and in one high school grade in order for school districts to receive federal funding (Hursh, 2007). Results from assessments are used to evaluate if students are progressing (Hursh, 2007). As a result of NCLB, Annual Yearly Performance (AYP) was implemented (Darling-Hammond & Adamson, 2014). The AYP measures how students are performing on a state standardized assessment (Darling-Hammond & Adamson, 2014).

In a nationwide study completed by Michele McNeil (2011b), the number of schools not meeting AYP continued to mount. Throughout the country, 28% of schools failed to meet AYP in 2007, and that number jumped to 38% in 2011 (McNeil, 2011b). The NCLB law sets "annual performance targets for students and for small subgroups such as English-language learners and special education students" (McNeil, 2011b, para. 9). While schools moved toward the 2014 deadline of 100% student proficiency, school districts were concerned with the rising set of sanctions they might acquire for not reaching the 100% goal (McNeil, 2011a).

In 2011, the MODESE applied for a waiver to gain flexibility from some of the accountability measures of the NCLB Act (Bock, 2012). In 2012, this wavier was granted (Bock, 2012). What was known as AYP vanished from Missouri's test score results, and a state-developed accountability system was implemented (Bock, 2012). The new primary goal from the MODESE was that all students would graduate high school and be college- and/or career-ready (MODESE, 2014a). To measure progress toward preparing students to be college- and/or career-ready, the MODESE computes an Annual Performance Report score. This overall score:

> Is comprised of scores for each of the MSIP 5 Performance Standards (1) Academic Achievement (2) Subgroup Achievement (3) High School Readiness (K-8 districts) or College and Career Readiness (K-12 districts) (4) Attendance Rate and (5) Graduation Rate (K-12 districts). Status, progress, and growth (where applicable) were used to calculate a comprehensive score used to determine the accreditation level of a school district. (MODESE, 2014a, p. 5)

President Obama vigorously campaigned for a revision of NCLB to alleviate some of the law's strict measurement instruments (Werner, 2011). He agreed schools should be accountable on criteria in addition to student performance on standardized assessments (Werner, 2011). Werner (2011) stated:

> One thing I never want to see happen, is schools that are just teaching the test, because then you are not learning about the world, you're not learning about different cultures, you're not learning about science, you're not learning about math. All you're learning about is how to fill out a little bubble on an exam, and

> little tricks that you need to do in order to take a test, and that's not going to make education interesting. (para. 5)

President Obama suggested students should take fewer standardized assessments and that standardized assessments were being used to penalize students, or in some cases, to penalize schools (Werner, 2011). President Obama believed not all students would achieve 100% proficiency on reading, science, and math assessments, and he wanted to change the law to read that by 2020, all students graduating from high school would be career- or college-ready (Werner, 2011).

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). The ESSA of 2015 ended the federal assessment- based accountability system of the NCLB Act and reauthorized and amended the ESEA of 1965 (Walker, 2015). The goals of NCLB "'were the right one's high standards, accountability, closing the achievement gap, making sure every child was learning,' Obama said. 'But in practice, it often fell short'" (Layton, 2015, p. 1). This act changed the responsibilities of the states (U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Science [IES], 2015). States will now have flexibility and be responsible for developing their own accountability systems, deciding how federally mandated assessments should be weighted, selecting additional measures of students and school performance, and implementing teacher evaluation systems (IES, 2015). Under the ESSA, special education students will still have to take the same standardized assessments as their regular education peers, except those special education students who qualify for MAP-A (Samuels, 2015). Students with the most severe cognitive disabilities will still be able to take the MAP-Alternative; however, there will be a 1% cap on the percentage of students who can take the MAP-A assessment (MODESE, 2014c).

Standardized Assessments and High-Stakes Testing

Schools have used standardized assessments to determine many things. Standardized assessments have helped to determine if a child has a learning disability or other handicap (National Center for Fair and Open Testing, 2012). High-stakes testing have also been designed to determine how good students, teachers, and school districts perform (Perrone, 1991). Standardized assessments have assisted in determining if students are ready for school and whether students are to be advanced to the next grade (National Center for Fair and Open Testing, 2012).

Standardized assessments consist of mostly multiple choice questions that can be answered quickly and then graded using scanning machines ("Standardized Testing," 2012). These assessments are used to measure students against each other ("Standardized Testing," 2012). High-stakes tests are used to assess students' progress in school, to determine ability to attend college, and to place students in programs including special or gifted education ("Standardized Testing," 2012).

There are two classifications of standardized assessments: the norm-referenced assessment and the criterion-referenced assessment (National Center for Fair and Open Testing, 2007). The norm-referenced assessment contrasts a student's scores against the scores of a group of students who have already taken the assessments (National Center for Fair and Open Testing, 2007). Norm-referenced assessments include short-answer questions and questions from the content of nationally-used textbooks, not local curriculum (National Center for Fair and Open Testing, 2007).

Criterion-referenced assessments are used to measure how good students have learned a specific body of knowledge and skills, and a passing score is set by the teacher

("Criterion-Referenced Test," 2014). There are some cases where passing scores of criterion-referenced assessments are set to meet the number of low-income, minority, and special education students who pass or fail the assessments ("Criterion-Referenced Test," 2014). Criterion-referenced assessments are not based on a specific curriculum, but give a more general idea of what students are being taught ("Criterion-Referenced Test," 2014).

According to the Missouri State Board of Education, the Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) is a norm-referenced assessment (MODESE, 2013). The MAP assessments include sections from the Terra Nova Survey (MODESE, 2013). The Terra Nova is a national norm-referenced assessment that compares students around the nation with their same-age peers (MODESE, 2013).

Former Assistant Secretary of Education, Diane Ravitch (2011), once an advocate of NCLB, stated, "We should thank President George W. Bush and Congress for passing No Child Left Behind Act…All this attention and focus is paying off for younger students, who are reading and solving mathematics problems better than their parents' generation" (para. 2). Ravitch's (2011) expectations changed four years later. She stated she came to the conclusion NCLB had turned into a timetable of destruction and stated:

> I had never imagined that the test would someday be turned into a blunt instrument to close schools or to say whether teachers are good teachers or not because I always knew children's test scores are far more complicated than the way they're being received today. (Ravitch, 2011, para. 3)

Research has shown high-stakes assessments have caused damage to individual students and to education as a whole (Ravitch, 2011). Standardized assessments can be looked at as unfair to many students (Ravitch, 2011).

Alfie Kohn (2000), another major critic of standardized assessments, argued standardized assessments do more damage than good. He believed standardized assessments turn schools into prep centers, are not a good assessment of teaching or student quality, and the "tests are just the means by which this game is played" (Kohn, 2000, para. 21). Kohn (2000) stated:

- Our children are tested to an extent that is unprecedented in our history and unparalleled anywhere else in the world.
- Non-instructional factors explain most of the variance among test scores where schools or districts are compared.
- Norm-referenced assessments were never intended to measure the quality of learning or teaching.
- Standardized-assessment scores often measure superficial thinking.
- Virtually all specialists condemn the practice of giving standardized assessments to children younger than 8 or 9 years old.
- Virtually all relevant experts and organizations condemn the practice of basing important decisions, such as graduation or promotion, on the results of a single test.
- The time, energy, and money that are being devoted to preparing students for standardized assessments have to come from somewhere

- Many educators are leaving the field because of what is being done to schools in the name of "accountability" and "tougher standards." (paras 2-9)

According to Berliner and Nichols (2007), assessments implicitly corrupt the teaching profession. High-stakes assessments force teachers to "surrender their roles as coaches and educators to become 'prison guard parrots' reading the script provided by the state department of education" (Fryer, 2011, para. 7). With so much centering on how well students perform on standardized assessments, it is not startling a Florida superintendent stated, "When a low-performing child walks into a classroom, instead of being seen as a challenge, or an opportunity for improvement, for the first time since I've been in education teachers are seeing this child as a liability" (Berliner & Nichols, 2007, para. 11).

Steve DeLapp, principal of Barton Open in Minneapolis, had been recognized for great assessment scores (Hawkins, 2010). DeLapp was upset his staff had to stop teaching normal lessons to prepare students for assessments (Hawkins, 2010). His criticism "that teaching to the assessment is a poor substitute for good instruction is a common one" (Hawkins, 2010, para. 19). Although Barton Open's students still take standardized assessments, Delapp planned to maintain the school's insistence on teaching the curriculum and not teaching to the assessment (Hawkins, 2010). Delapp assured everyone students would still do just fine on whatever assessments he is forced to administer (Hawkins, 2010).

Special education teachers should be responsible for student learning, but that does not have to be measured by a grade-level assessment (Boarini, 2012). According to Boarini (2012), state-mandated standardized assessments cannot measure progress when

students are being set up to fail. Not all students should be exempt and teachers should be able to show progress, but the focus should be on the students' needs and strengths and not the tests (Boarini, 2012).

James Sears, an Alabama attorney, believed special education students should not be given the same assessments as regular education students (Phillips, 2010). Sears used an example of an autistic, mentally disabled and emotional disturbed 12-year-old boy who was reading on a first-grade level, but still had to take the assessment designed for a seventh-grade student. If the student "gets any answers correct it will only be because he was lucky enough to color in the right bubble. It's just pencil marks on a paper for him" (as cited in Phillips, 2010, para. 5).

In the article "Many Schools Miss AYP Due to Special Education Scores," Rena Phillips (2010) stated:

> Of the 30 public schools in Mobile and Baldwin counties and Saraland that did not meet state standards, 24 missed just because of the test scores of special-education students. That was the case with most of the elementary and middle schools across Alabama that did not meet standards this year. (p. 1)

Although teachers prepare special education students for standardized assessments and these students are making progress, it was still not enough to keep up with the state's assessment requirements (Phillips, 2010).

Inclusion (Preparing Special Education Students for Standardized Assessments)

When preparing students with disabilities for taking the same standardized assessments as their peers, it is imperative students are provided inclusion in the regular education classroom as much as possible (McLeksey, Waldron, & Redd, 2012).

Inclusive education refers to "the practice of including another group of students in regular classrooms: students with physical, developmental, or social-emotional disabilities, and those with chronic health problems" (Cushner et al., 2012, p. 403). There are many social and academic benefits when special education students are integrated with their regular education peers into the classroom (Kauffman & Badar, 2014).

One key component for a successful inclusion program is the positive perceptions of the teachers (Hwang & Evans, 2010). Teachers are influential in the success or failure of any program in schools (Hwang & Evans, 2010). Beacham and Rouse (2012) stated:

> The beliefs and attitudes of teachers are an important element in the development of inclusive education and its associated practices. Teacher education is seen as crucial in helping to develop positive attitudes and beliefs that are thought to promote inclusion, although attempts to reform teacher education in order to address issues of inclusion are complex. The paper reports the finding from a set of surveys that student teachers' attitudes to beliefs about inclusion and exclusion at the beginning and end of a newly reformed 1-year professional graduate diploma course at the professional graduate diploma course at the University of Aberdeen, which places inclusion at the heart of the programme. The findings from the surveys indicate that both primary and secondary student teachers' attitudes and beliefs towards the principles of inclusive education remain positive through the course and are largely undiminished by school experience. (p. 3)

This disputes some conclusions that have been reported, where beliefs and attitudes became less favorable following experiences in schools (Beacham & Rouse, 2012)

In a research study completed by Saloviita and Takala (2010), results revealed the more experience regular education teachers have with inclusion of special education students, the better their perceptions are about teaching students with disabilities. Although students with disabilities are being taught in the regular education classroom, it does not mean interventions are still not in place such as extra classroom support, variation in instructional practices, small group discussion, and assistive technology (Adler & Arsdale, 2013).

In Missouri, there continues to be an increase in the percentage of special education students being served in the regular education classroom setting at least 80% of the school day or more (MODESE, 2014b). While this category is increasing, the number of students with disabilities served in the regular education setting 40%-79% of the school day or 40% or less of the school day has been steady or is decreasing (MODESE, 2014b). The MODESE (2014b) reported in 2005-2006 there were 27.63% of special education students in the regular education setting 40%-79% of the school day and 11.21% of special education students in regular education 40% or less of the school day. During the 2013-2014 school year, 26.55% of special education students were in the regular education setting from 40%-79% of the school day, and 8.96% of special education students were in regular education, 40% or less of the school day (MODESE, 2014b).

In 2002, a study including approximately 1,000 teachers with experience teaching special education students was completed at the University of the United Kingdom (Avramidis, Bayliss, & Burden, 2010). Avramidis et al. (2010) found teachers had a more positive attitude toward inclusion of students with sensory and physical disabilities

than for students diagnosed with a learning disability or emotional behavior disability. The data also showed teachers who participated in professional development on inclusion had a more positive attitude toward inclusion (Avramidis et al., 2010).

In 2010, Lisa Kilanowski, Chandra J. Foote, and Vince J. Rinaldo of Niagara University surveyed 71 regular education teachers. Quantitative analysis of the surveys allowed the researchers to conclude there was variability among the inclusion practices employed in the regular education classroom (Kilanowski et al., 2010). Co-teaching was cited as the most beneficial model of inclusive practices (Kilanowski et al., 2010).

In the article "Coming Together," an intervention specialist stated, "We try to challenge each and every one of them, and we don't expect any less from children with disabilities. It may just come down to them showing us what they know in a different way" (Craig, 2014, para. 4). Frequently, either consciously or subconsciously, teachers lower their expectations for students with disabilities (Blackburn & Witzel, 2013). Having high expectations begins with the realization each student possesses the potential to be successful at his or her individual level (Blackburn & Witzel, 2013). The intervention specialist also stated:

> I think the mixing gives a model to special education students with peer tutoring…A student may not get what the teacher's saying, but a kid can explain it a totally different way, and all of sudden, they get it. With inclusion, those special-ed students can see higher orders and levels of thinking and they're not held under the bar all the time. (Craig, 2014, para. 9)

Barbara Blackburn, author of the book *Rigor for Students with Special Needs,* loved to ask students, "If you were in charge of the school, what would you change?" (Blackburn

& Witzel, 2013, p. 3). She posed this question to a special education student, Gabrielle, and Gabrielle's answer was very insightful (Blackburn & Witzel, 2013). Gabrielle replied, "For people who don't understand as much… [they should] be in higher-level classes to understand more [because] if they already don't know much, you don't want to teach them to not know much over and over" (Blackburn & Witzel, 2013, p. 3).

Successful inclusion means teachers may need to accommodate and modify the curriculum (Blackburn & Witzel, 2013). It is the responsibility of the teachers "to gather and apply as many teaching strategies as possible, with the intent of matching those that work best to each students' needs" (Winebrenner & Kiss, 2014, p. 23). This does not mean students with special needs cannot do the work (Blackburn & Witzel, 2013). Students do not all learn in the same way (Blackburn & Witzel, 2013). Regular education teachers, with the help of special education teachers, need to use predominantly positive and encouraging words; provide opportunities for success; minimize opportunities for public failure; provide a clear, written agreement of expectations; and use positive follow-up (Blackburn & Witzel, 2013).

Paraprofessionals are a vital component of the success of the special education students and their ability to learn the regular education curriculum (Giangreco, Backus, CichoskiKelly, Sherman, & Mavropoulos, 2011). Paraprofessionals are just as helpful in preparing special education students for standardized assessments as the special education teachers (Giangreco et al., 2011). A group of professors at the University of Virginia found paraprofessionals are an important asset in assisting special education students in the regular classroom (Giangreco et al., 2011). To accomplish this successful assistance, paraprofessionals must receive more training to work successfully in the

regular education classroom with students with a wide range of disabilities (Giangreco et al., 2011).

The standards-based reform movement of the past 15 years has had significant effects on special education students (Desimone, 2013). Standards-based reform was established to support all students, including students with disabilities (Desimone, 2013). Teachers and administrators recognized most special education students are capable of performing at high levels (Whilden, 2010). Results from standards-based reform increased focus to struggling students through inclusion and having the same access to the curriculum and content standards as their regular education peers (Desimone, 2013).

A case study completed in 2010 relating to teachers' perceptions on successfully teaching students with disabilities in the regular education classroom revealed regular education teachers are in favor of standards-based IEPs (Smith-Woofter, 2010). Regular education teachers believe standards-based IEPs are the ambitious force for classroom instruction (Smith-Woofter, 2010). The case study also depicted it is the responsibility of both the regular education and special education teachers to teach students with disabilities, so these students can be as successful as their peers (Smith-Woofter, 2010).

Teacher Perceptions and Beliefs

There is not a lot of current research on teachers' perceptions of and beliefs about students with disabilities taking the same standardized assessments as their regular education peers. There are many challenges regular and special education teachers face when ensuring students with disabilities are successful on standardized assessments (Cortiella & Horowitz, 2014). Teachers are required to enhance their expectations, share ownership, collaborate, and attend professional development workshops to ensure

success of special education students on standardized assessments (Cortiella & Horowitz, 2014). Moore (2015) stated there are several common dispositions and attitudes that prepare teachers to be effective:

- Positive expectations for all students
- Teachers need to care about all their students; teachers need to have trust and acceptance for all students
- Effective teachers are excited about teaching
- Teachers value diversity and treat all students fairly
- Effective teachers collaborate with all stakeholders: co-workers, community, administrators, and families. (p. 14)

Are teachers who hold a Master's degree more effective than teachers who hold a Bachelor's degree? Goldhaber, Liddle, Theobald, and Walch (2010), from the Data and Research Center at the University of Washington, completed a study to compare the effectiveness in teaching reading and math between teachers with Bachelor's and Master's degrees. The data showed only about 52% of teachers had a postgraduate degree (Goldhaber et al., 2010). The group discovered the education level of teachers only accounted for 3% of teacher influence, while 97% was due to teacher intangible aspects, such as enthusiasm and teaching skills (Goldhaber et al., 2010). Clotfelter, Ladd, and Vigdor (2007) concluded the level of teacher degree held was not predictive of higher student achievement. In another study, Sass and Feng (2013) concluded a teacher's effectiveness was greater with a Master's degree or higher.

Following a study of inclusion of students with disabilities in high-stakes assessments, Crawford, Tindal, Almond, and Hollenbeck (2002) established that more

experienced regular and special education teachers are less frustrated about giving standardized assessments to special education students. In the same study, the majority of teachers responded negatively about using special education students' assessment data to measure teacher effectiveness (Crawford et al., 2002).

Goldhaber et al. (2010) analyzed if there are any differences between a novice teacher and an experienced teacher and found that a beginning teacher scores 3% of a standard deviation lower than teachers who have average experience. Teachers who have more than four years' experience score about 2% of a standard deviation higher than those who taught four years or less (Goldhaber et al., 2010). MacFarlane and Woolfson (2013) analyzed teacher attitudes and behaviors toward students with disabilities. The results indicated teachers who are more experienced are not as willing to work with students with disabilities, as are the less experienced teachers (MacFarlane & Woolfson, 2013). Teachers who attend more workshops and receive the most training are more positive and accepting of working with students with disabilities (MacFarlane & Woolfson, 2013).

Sandra Cimbricz (2012) studied the relationships between state-mandated assessments and teachers' practices and beliefs. The study revealed that although state assessments influence how teachers teach, so do other factors including the teacher's knowledge, views of learning, approach to teaching, and diversity of experience (Cimbricz, 2012). All of these factors determine how teachers use the results of state-mandated assessments (Cimbricz, 2012). Sass and Feng (2013) discovered students with disabilities, whose teachers are certified in special education, have greater success in reading and math than students whose teachers are not certified or trained in educating

special education students. Research shows "that what teachers know, do, and value has a significant influence on the nature, extent, and rate of student learning" (Moore, 2015, p. 17).

Teacher Accountability

Since the passing of NCLB in 2002, states have tripled the number of assessments and have attached punishments to students' scores (Turnipseed & Darling-Hammond, 2015). Teachers felt the pressure for all students to be successful on standardized assessments (Turnipseed & Darling-Hammond, 2015). Expectations for teachers had always existed, but over the last decade, expectations have continued to drastically increase (Moore, 2015). Research has indicated special education teachers have a high turnover rate because of the high expectations placed on them for students with disabilities to take the same standardized assessments as regular education peers (Boe, Cook, & Sunderland, 2008). Fifty percent of "special education teachers leave their jobs within 5 years. Half of those who make it past 5 years will leave within 10 years. This equates to a 75% turnover rate every 10 years" (as cited in Palmer, 2007, p. 9).

In the article "Why They Leave," Kopkowski (2008) stated one of the reasons there is such teacher turnover is because of NCLB mandates. Kopkowski (2008) interviewed several teachers:

> Marta Nielson, an elementary school teacher in Vista, California, is leaving. Her current classroom is packed with up to 38 students. There are no aides and the obsessive focus on cramming for standardized tests means "an atmosphere of constant stress and fear," she says. The result? She's leaving at the end of the year for a small private school. A young elementary special education teacher in

> New Jersey knows that she will leave the profession because of what she sees as the unfair demands placed on her by the law. Her classroom is increasingly loaded with students and the benchmarks for those students are creeping up senselessly. "They are in special education for a reason," she says. "There will always be children who perform below others on standardized tests, but under the current accountability mandates, their teachers are looked at like we're not doing a good job, even if we've been doing good work with them," she says. "I say to myself more and more often that I don't know how much longer I can do this." (para. 6)

John Connor (2010), author of *Students with Disabilities Can Meet Accountability Standards: A Roadmap for School Leaders*, stated that although it is difficult to teach to all students, especially those students who need extra help, accommodations, and/or modifications to be successful, it is possible with the appropriate training and through maintaining high expectations. Connor (2010) suggested students with disabilities need more rigorous instruction and higher expectations. Sass and Feng (2013) used statewide data from Florida to research the success of students with disabilities to achieve (Karp, 2011).

With all the hype on teacher accountability, it will be interesting to see what happens with the passing of the Every Students Succeeds Act (ESSA). The ESSA's goal is to lessen the pressure of standardized assessment scores' effect on teacher accountability (Nelson, 2015). The ESSA will not fully go into effect until the fall of 2017 (Nelson, 2015).

Teacher Evaluations

Teacher evaluations have been changing throughout the years and now include students' standardized assessment scores as part of the evaluations (Hallinger, Heck, Murphy, 2014). Darling-Hammond, Amrien-Beardsley, Haertel and Rothstein, (2012) stated:

> Researchers and policy makers agree that teacher evaluations systems do little to help teachers improve or to support personal decision making. There's also a growing consensus that evidence of teacher contributions to student learning should be part of the evaluations systems, along with evidence about the quality of teacher practices. (p. 1)

It was a consensus districts could not modify their evaluations even when it came to evaluating special education teachers (Holdheide, Goe, Croft, & Reschly, 2010). Even though many "teacher evaluation instruments explicitly address teachers 'diverse' learners they may not consider the special skills and evidence based instructional methods for student with disabilities" (Holdheide et al., 2010, p. 1).

Standardized assessments are an imprecise measure of teacher performance, yet they are used to punish and reward teachers (Strauss, 2010). Standardized assessments help motivate needed change, and public educators do not want them to be abolished, but there should not be such rigorous consequences (Strauss, 2010). The current emphasis on teacher accountability poses a challenge for critiquing special education teachers (Holdheide et al., 2010). Strauss (2015) stated:

> Teachers are being set up to fail with goals that are virtually impossible to obtain. School reformers, including Obama administration education officials, have

> gotten it into their heads despite warning from assessment experts that linking student test scores to teacher evaluation is a bad practice. They say this because the method by which the determinations are made are not reliable enough and not valid as a measure of achievement. (para. 6)

Is this fair for regular education teachers who have special education students in their classrooms? What does it mean for special education teachers? Regular education and special education teachers have no control over the variables that lead to successful student performance on external assessments (Jones, 1998). Regular education and special education teachers focused on accountability of a state assessment tend to change curriculum to address the assessment content, rather than a student's IEP (Jones, 1998).

By threatening teachers, it undermines the risk-taking approach needed from teachers to bring about change in instructional practices (Jones, 1998). Baker (2011) questioned:

> Basing tenure, dismissal and teacher evaluations decisions on scores that may be influenced by which students a teacher services provides a substantial disincentive for teachers to serve kids with the greatest needs, disruptive kids, or kids with disruptive family lives. (Baker, 2011, para.18)

In July 2011, Tennessee became one of the first states to adopt a new teacher evaluation to include the value-added model linking students' standardized assessment scores as 35% of a teacher's evaluation (Strauss, 2011). In Florida, Senate Bill 736 was signed into law by Governor Rick Scott (Student Success Act, 2011). The Student Success Act (2011) stated 50% of a teacher's evaluation will be based on how students score on

Florida's state standardized assessment. In California, 30% of teachers' evaluations are based on students' standardized assessment scores (Blume, 2013).

In 2012, a group from Missouri, known as Students First, pushed for House Bill 1526 and Senate Bill 806 (Fajen, 2012). These bills proposed at least 50% of every teacher's evaluation should be based on how students perform on a state-mandated assessment (Fajen, 2012). The National Education Association (NEA) and the Missouri National Education Association (MNEA) opposed both of these bills (Fajen, 2012). House Bill 1526 would have had a detrimental effect on teachers and students; if passed, school districts would have lost control of evaluating teachers (Fajen, 2012). Under House Bill 1526, 50% of evaluations would be based on state assessments (Missouri House Bill No. 1526 [1526], 2012). Missouri House Bill 1526 (2012) placed too much emphasis on a single test. The bill would have also allowed a school district to remove a teacher based solely on his/her assessment effectiveness (HB 1526, 2012). Although this bill did not pass, it showed the current beliefs of accountability.

Districts that want to be financially funded by federal programs need to continue to shift their focus on growth or value-added methods (Collins & Amrein-Beardsley, 2014). The value-added method (VAM) measures a teacher's contribution in a given year (Haertel, 2013). It compares students' previous years' assessment scores and takes into account the students' expected growth (Haertel, 2013). Assessing teachers on a value-added method greatly impairs educational quality (Collins & Amrein-Beardsley, 2014). Teacher evaluations should not be based on inadequate standardized assessment scores; this is not a good practice (Guisbond, Neill, & Schaeffer, 2012). It is not fair to determine educators' careers by their students' assessments scores (Guisbond et al.,

2012). Allowing this to happen greatly heightens incentives and leads to teachers teaching to the assessment (Guisbond et al., 2012).

The shortcomings of evaluating teachers by assessment scores were apparent in a recent report of the American Institute for Research (Burris, 2012). This report showed "as the percentage of students with disabilities and students of poverty in a class or school increases, the average teacher growth score decreases," and as teachers have increasing class sizes, the more they are disadvantaged by this model (Burris, 2012, para. 9). When state results are made public, a disproportionate number of teachers of students with serious learning disabilities and teachers in schools with high levels of poverty rated ineffective on scores (Burris, 2012). Value-added methods are inaccurate, because students who are below grade level, or who have disabilities, impact the values (Darling-Hammond, 2015).

Rod Estvan, Research Director of Access Living, a non-residential center for independent living for people with disabilities, cautioned:

> One or two scenarios could emerge if officials rush too quickly with the new evaluations: The test scores of special education students could be discounted, which would be bad news because teachers would not be held responsible for teaching them. Or, the test scores could be factored into the equation just like the scores of students who are in regular education another bad deal, since it could lead to teachers maneuvering to keep test scores up by keeping special students out of their classes. (as cited in Karp, 2011, p. 1)

Rothstein, an associate professor at the University of California, studied the relationship between classroom assignments and the value-added method and found this method will

do more harm than good (Dieterle, Guarino, Reckase, & Wooldridge, 2014). Value-added methods have been controversial among researchers and are not favored by teacher unions (Dieterle et al., 2014). One significant concern is the non-random sorting of students who are below grade level or who have disabilities (Dieterle et al., 2014).

Morgan Polikoff and Andrew Porter, in a study published by the American Education Research Association, found the value-added method "had a weak to zero relationship between pedagogical quality and the content of the quality of classroom instruction" (as cited in Walker, 2014a, para. 7). Polikoff stated the results were surprising:

> What we expected to find was that there were strong positive relationships between instructional alignments with these measures of quality, that it would predict student learning on state tests, but what we actually found was that there were very weak to zero relationships between pedagogical qualities with the value-added measures. (as cited in Walker, 2014a, para. 6)

Principals from around the country were extremely worried about what the value-added method would do to the morale and the careers of their teachers (Burris, 2012). One principal wrote, "Two excellent teachers who volunteer to take on my toughest students got an ineffective. Their hearts were broken, so was mine!" (Burris, 2012, para. 9). Another principal remarked, "The teachers who were identified as ineffective have been teaching for more than 15 years, and have cared for students in ways that no test can measure" (Burris, 2012, para. 9). Many other principals stated they would change a teacher rated as ineffective to a different assignment the following year and assign them less needy students or students with disabilities to protect first-class teachers from the

ineffective rating (Burris, 2012). The Every Student Succeeds Act that just passed in December of 2015 will now allow states to decide how much emphasis is placed on test scores and whether or not to use students' assessment scores for teacher evaluations (Walker, 2015).

Summary

There have been a number of cases that have greatly impacted desegregation of students: *Plessy v. Ferguson, PARC v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Mills v. Board of Education,* and the landmark case*, Brown v. Board of Education. PARC v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania* and *Mills v. Board of Education* both involved segregation of disabled students (Romberg, 2011). In both cases the courts ruled in favor of the students (Romberg, 2011).

Standardized assessments began centuries ago, and it was not until the 1930s that almost all students began taking standardized assessments (Hall, 2005). Federal legislation began in 1965 with the Elementary and Secondary Schools Education Act (ESEA). The ESEA has been revised many times throughout the years (Hana, 2005). In 1975 the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was authorized (Hana, 2005).

The IDEA is the major statute that governs federal aid for students with disabilities (Douvanis & Hulsey, 2002). The IDEA provides for the educational needs of all students with disabilities from birth to the age of 21 (Douvanis & Hulsey, 2002). The IDEA also ensures students receive a free and appropriate public education (Douvanis & Hulsey, 2002).

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) was signed into law by President Bush in 2002. The NCLB stated all students would take the same standardized assessments as their non-disabled peers, no matter their disabilities (Bock, 2012). Results from standardized assessments are used to evaluate school districts (Hursh, 2007).

In December 2015, the U.S. senate signed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) (IES, 2015). The ESSA takes the federal government out of the equation and puts the responsibilities on each state (IES, 2015). However, with this act, special education students are still required to take the same standardized assessments as their non-disabled peers (IES, 2015).

High-stakes or standardized assessments are forcing teachers out of the classroom with high expectations for all students to score either proficient or advanced (Kohn, 2000). Tougher standards make it difficult for many teachers to look beyond a student's disability as a liability (Berliner & Nichols, 2007). There are opinions both for and against special education students taking standardized assessments. Research shows high-stakes assessments cause harm to students, teachers, and school districts (Ravitch, 2011). There is also research that shows special education students can be successful on standardized assessments if they are exposed to the regular education curriculum and feel high expectations from their teachers (Connor, 2010).

Inclusion of special education students is one of the methods teachers are using to work together to educate students with disabilities. There are many benefits, both social and academic, when inclusion is used (Kauffman & Badar, 2014). In order for inclusion to be successful, teachers need to have expectations that special education students can be just as successful as their peers (Beacham & Rouse, 2012).

There have been several studies comparing educational levels and experience with special education teachers. There does not seem to be a significant difference whether a teacher has a Bachelor's or a graduate degree on education of special education students or their performance on standardized assessments (Goldhaber et al., 2010). There also does not seem to be a difference whether a student is taught by a novice or an experienced teacher (MacFarlane & Woolfson, 2013). Factors that make a difference are high expectations, sharing ownership, collaboration, professional workshops, enthusiasm, and teaching skills (Connor, 2010).

The topic of including students' standardized assessments scores on teacher evaluations has been a controversial issue for educators (Heitin, 2012). Even more so, including special education students' scores to evaluate special education teachers has become a very complicated issue (Heitin, 2012). The Council for Exceptional Children senior director emphasized there should not be one evaluation system for all teachers (Heitin, 2012). Heitin (2012) stated, "We don't want to exclude these teachers any more than we want to exclude the child {they work with}" (para. 6). The question still remains if standardized assessment scores should be used to evaluate any teacher.

Chapter Three includes the methodology of this study. Within Chapter Three, the research questions, null hypothesis, population and sample, instrumentation, data collection, and limitations of the study are examined. Chapter Four includes the data collected and the analysis of the data. Chapter Five includes a summary of the results, conclusions, implications for practice, and recommendations for future studies.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Introduction

Since 2002, with the passing of the No Child Left Behind Act, much more emphasis has been placed on teachers for all students to take the same standardized assessments ("Fixing No Child Left Behind," 2010). High-stakes test scores "flatten the incredible variety of circumstances kids bring to school is something that all teachers recognize, but the problem is amplified in special education" (Boarini, 2012, p. 5). In December 2015, a new law, the ESSA, was signed by President Obama (Nelson, 2015). This law will not be fully implemented until the fall of 2017 (Nelson, 2015). Under the ESSA, schools will no longer have to make progress toward a national education goal, but all students will still be required to take standardized assessments (Layton, 2015).

Standardized assessments make a normative comparison about the progress of students compared with the progress of other students across the nation (Brown, 2012). There has been a lot of pressure on school districts to close the performance gap between regular and special education students (Brown, 2012). Special education students fall across a wide spectrum and can range from those with mild learning disabilities to students with significant physical impairments (Brown, 2012). There are few special education students whose disabilities prevent them from performing well on the same standardized assessments as their peers (Brown, 2012). To increase success on standardized assessments, special education students can have accommodations and modifications (Brown, 2012). A small majority of severely disabled special education students may also qualify for an alternative assessment (Brown, 2012). In Missouri, that assessment is the MAP-A (Brown, 2012).

The purpose of this study was to analyze regular and special education teachers' perceptions of special education students taking the same standardized assessments as their regular education peers. The study included analysis of teacher perceptions and a comparison of participating teachers' district MAP scores. The researcher also analyzed the perceptions of regular and special education teachers concerning whether special education students' standardized assessment scores should be used as part of teacher evaluations.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the design and collection of data for this study:

RQ1. What are the perceptions of regular and special education teachers in regard to special education students taking standardized assessments?

RQ2. What is the relationship between special and regular education teachers' perceptions related to special education students taking standardized assessments and the special education students' actual scores on standardized assessments?

RQ3. What are the perceptions of regular and special education teachers in regard to special education students' scores on standardized assessments being used as a possible factor in teacher evaluation scores?

Null Hypothesis

The following null hypothesis was posed within this study:

$H2_{0:}$ There is no relationship between special and regular education teachers' perceptions related to special education students taking standardized assessments and the special education students' actual scores on standardized assessments.

Rationale for Quantitative Research

Quantitative methodology was selected for this study. Quantitative research is "a type of educational research in which the researcher decides what to study; asks specific, narrow, questions; collects quantifiable data from participants; analyzes these numbers using statistics; and conducts the inquiry in an unbiased, objective manner" (Bauer & Brazer, 2012, p. 211). A quantitative approach consists of surveys, close-ended questions, and numerical data (Creswell, 2014).

For the purpose of this study, survey responses were converted into numerical data with the use of a five-point Likert-style scale. Teachers responded to each of the survey statements ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." Each response was converted to a number between one and five for statistical rating purposes.

Instrumentation

This survey was piloted by administrators and three third-grade teachers to test for readability prior to administration within this study. This process provided valuable feedback to the researcher concerning the survey. The survey (see Appendix A) was available to the participants on SurveyMonkey®, an online application. The first section of the survey consisted of 10 questions regarding teacher demographics and characteristics. The demographic portion of the survey included questions concerning school district, gender, age, years in teaching, highest degree earned, type of certification, type of teacher training, school enrollment, and location (urban, suburban, rural) of school.

The second section of the survey consisted of statements related to participants' perceptions concerning special education students taking standardized assessments and

whether special education students' scores should be included in teacher evaluations. Survey statements included in the survey consisted of the following:

- Special education students should take the same standardized assessments as their regular education students.
- Special education students, without accommodations, perform as well on a standardized assessment as their regular education peers.
- Special education students, with accommodations, perform as well on a standardized assessment (MAP) as their regular education peers.
- I am knowledgeable of accommodations for special education students who take standardized assessments.
- I feel comfortable preparing special education students for standardized assessments.
- Special education students' standardized assessment scores should be used for special education teacher accountability.
- Special education students' scores on standardized assessment should be included in regular education teacher evaluations.

Population and Sample

The population included third-grade regular education and special education teachers from Southwest Missouri school districts. In the Southwest Missouri region, there are 214 elementary schools consisting of approximately 642 third- grade teachers and 214 third-grade special education teachers (MODESE, 2015). The sample included 30 third-grade regular education teachers and 33 third-grade special education teachers from 25 different school districts.

Data Collection

Once approval (see Appendix B) was given by the Lindenwood University IRB, the data collection process began. An invitation to participate in the research study (see Appendix C) was emailed to district special education directors with a request to forward the invitation to their third- grade regular education and special education teachers. Attached to the invitation to participate was an informed consent form (see Appendix D) and a link to the SurveyMonkey® survey. The invitation was originally emailed in late April 2015 to approximately 90 special education directors in Southwest Missouri. Two follow-up emails were sent over the next month until sufficient responses were collected. Using SurveyMonkey® statistical calculator at a 90% confidence level and with a 10% margin of error, 63 surveys were required to ensure the survey would be valid (Bluman, 2014). Standardized assessment scores were obtained through the MODESE website by determining the MAP mean index scores for third-grade special education students in each participating school for the years 2012, 2013, and 2014.

Data Analysis

For Research Questions #1 and #3, the primary data collected for this study were the survey responses to statements provided by third-grade regular and special education teachers. The data were compiled through SurveyMonkey® and information was transferred to an Excel spreadsheet. Data were compiled for each survey statement, and comparisons were made between the responses of regular and special education teachers. Data were also analyzed and compared within the regular and special education teacher groups in several demographic areas: age, number of years teaching, and highest degree held.

Teachers' responses to survey statements were collected with the use of a five-point Likert-style scale. The possible choices included strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree. Each answer was then assigned a numerical value for use in the statistical analysis.

Table 1

Likert-style Scale Responses for Survey Statements

Response	Score
Strongly Disagree	1
Disagree	2
Neutral	3
Agree	4
Strongly Agree	5

Note. Teachers scored each survey statement using the Likert-style scale response score based on their perceptions.

For Research Question #2, the researcher correlated the participant responses from each survey statement to their respective schools' third-grade MAP mean index scores for special education students for the years 2012, 2013, and 2014. The MAP Performance Index (MPI) is defined as follows:

> MPI is used to develop scores within the Status and Progress metrics and to set academic achievement targets for LEA, school and student group achievement. Student performance on tests administered through the MAP is reported in terms of four (4) achievement levels (Below Basic, Basic, Proficient and Advanced) that describe a pathway to proficiency. The MPI is a single composite number that represents the MAP assessment performance of every student by awarding points

> to each student based on the four (4) achievement levels. The points for all students in the LEA, school or student group in a subject area are summed together, divided by the number of students in the group being measured and then multiplied by 100 rounded to the tenth. The result is the MPI for that group and subject. (MODESE, 2014a, p. 15)

The results from the assessments from a single accountability year and single content and subject are then combined to generate subject-group MPI or the LEA school MPI (MODESE, 2014a).

A Spearman rank-order correlational analysis was selected as the statistical method to analyze the relationship between the teachers' survey statement scores and the respective schools' third-grade MAP mean index scores (Bluman, 2014). The Spearman rank-order correlation measures the strength of an increasing or decreasing relationship between two variables (Bluman, 2014). According to Bluman (2014), the Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient is used to determine if there is a relationship between two variables. The correlation coefficient "computed from the sample data measures the strength and direction of a linear relationship between two variables. The symbol for the sample correlation coefficient is *r*. The symbol for the population correlation coefficient is *p*" (Bluman, 2014, p. 525). When conducting the Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient, the results range from -1 to +1 (Bluman, 2014). If there is a "strong positive linear relationship between the variables, the value of *r* will be close to +1. If there is a strong negative linear relationship between the variables, the value of *r* will be close to -1" (Bluman, 2014, p.533). The guide included in Table 2 was used to determine the

strength of relationship identified between variables in the Spearman rank-order correlation.

Table 2

Spearman Correlation Strength

Correlation	Strength
+/- .00 - .19	Very Weak
+/- .20 - .39	Weak
+/- .40 - .59	Moderate
+/- .60 - .79	Strong
+/- .80 - 1.0	Very Strong

The Spearman rank-order correlation was calculated using an online calculator based upon how the teachers responded to each survey statement (11-15) and was then compared to the MAP index mean scores for third-grade special education students in each participant school district for the years 2012, 2013, and 2014. A p value of 0.05 was used. A p value of < 0.05 indicates strong evidence against the null hypothesis, therefore allowing the researcher to reject the null hypothesis (Bluman, 2014). A p value of greater than 0.05 indicates weak evidence against the null hypothesis, therefore allowing the researcher to not reject the null hypothesis (Bluman, 2014).

Limitations

The primary limitation of this study was the use of special education directors to pass on the survey to all of the third-grade regular education teachers and third-grade special education teachers within their respective districts. Other limitations from the survey included the fact only teachers from schools located in Southwest Missouri were included. The teachers may or may not have been honest when responding to the survey

statements. Surveys were only given to third-grade teachers. The researcher had no prior experiences creating a survey, which may have impacted data gathered in the study.

Summary

Data gathered within this study were used to evaluate the perceptions of third-grade regular and special education teachers concerning special education students taking the same standardized assessments as their non-disabled peers. The data collected were also used to analyze if there was a relationship between how teachers responded to the survey questions compared to students' actual scores on the MAP assessments. The data collected were also used to determine the perceptions of third-grade regular and special education teachers on the use of standardized assessment scores within their own teacher evaluations.

All special education directors in Southwest Missouri were sent an invitation to participate to be distributed to the districts' third-grade regular and special education teachers. Sixty-three teachers responded. Thirty regular education and 33 special education teachers responded to the survey. Ninety-seven percent of the teachers who responded were female, 69% lived in a rural area, over 50% taught at a school with a population of 399-400, 51% held a Master's degree, and over 70% had taught six or more years.

Mean MAP index scores were also collected from the MODESE website for the years 2012, 2013, and 2014. A survey was created using an online survey application, SurveyMonkey®. The survey consisted of 10 demographic questions (age, degree, gender, years taught, experience, number of students, location) and seven statements related to teachers' perceptions concerning special education students taking standardized

assessments and students' MAP mean index scores affecting teacher evaluations. Teacher responses were then converted to numerical data for quantitative analysis purposes by using a five-point Likert-style scale.

A Spearman rank-order correlational analysis was used to analyze the relationship between the teachers' survey statements scores and the respective schools' third-grade mean MAP index scores. A *p* value of 0.05 was used to determine whether to reject or not reject the null hypothesis.

In Chapter Four, data analysis and correlation data are presented. In Chapter Five, a summary of the findings related to literature, conclusions, and recommendations for further research are discussed.

Chapter Four: Analysis of Data

Problem and Purpose Overview

Standardized assessments have been around for centuries and will not be departing any time soon (Bock, 2012). Since the passing of the No Child Left Behind Act in 2002, all students are required to take standardized assessments (Bock, 2012). The performance of special education students who must take the same standardized assessments as regular education peers continues to be the subject of a great deal of discourse and concern (Bock, 2012). One perception is that students with disabilities perform poorly on state assessments (National Center on Education Outcomes [NCEO], 2011). However, there does seem to be some increasing diversity of special education students performing at proficient levels or above (NCEO, 2011).

President Obama and Arne Duncan, former U.S. Secretary of Education, expressed a desire to hold teachers, students, and principals accountable for all students' scores on standardized assessments (Strauss, 2014b). Strauss (2014b) stated:

> The department believes that more additional testing will help special education students achieve more in school. But since No Child Left Behind started, the standardized test based "accountability" era more than a dozen years ago, there has been no evidence to show that standardized tests have improved achievement, or that linking test scores to teacher evaluations has created better teachers. (para. 7)

States are progressively using the value-added method approach to evaluate teacher effectiveness (Steinbrecher, Selig, Cosbey, & Thorstensen, 2014). There is still a great

deal of deliberation regarding these methods and whether or not the value-added method should be implemented (Steinbrecher et al., 2014).

The purpose of this study was to collect information concerning perceptions of third-grade regular and special education teachers toward special education students taking the same standardized assessments as their grade-level peers. The researcher analyzed if there was a relationship between teacher perceptions and actual MAP mean index scores. The researcher also examined third-grade regular and special education teachers' perceptions regarding inclusion of special education students' standardized assessment scores in evaluation of teachers' performance.

Research Question #1

To answer Research Question #1, data were gathered to determine the perceptions of special and regular education teachers in regard to special education students taking standardized assessments. Teachers were asked to respond to the following five statements:

- Special education students should take the same standardized assessments as their regular education peers.
- Special education students, without accommodations, perform as well on a standardized assessment as their regular education peers.
- Special education students, with accommodations, perform as well on a standardized assessment as their regular education peers.
- I am knowledgeable of accommodations for special education students who take standardized assessments.

- I feel comfortable preparing special education students for standardized assessments.

Teachers rated each of these questions based on a five-point Likert-style scale with responses ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree.” These responses were converted to numerical values between one and five for statistical rating purposes. Teachers were also asked to answer 10 questions based on their demographic information: gender; age; highest degree earned; regular or special educator; years taught; whether they taught in their current school district in 2012, 2013, and 2014; special education or regular education teacher; special education training; student population; and school location (urban, suburban, rural).

Teacher participants were from several different types of demographic areas in Southwest Missouri. The majority of the teachers, 69%, lived in a rural area. Over half of the teachers who responded, 52%, taught at a school with a population of 300-499 students. Almost all of the teachers, 97%, were female. Thirty-nine percent of teachers were in the age range of 35-44, whereas 32% were in the age range 25-34. Fifty-one percent of the teachers who responded to the survey held a Master’s degree, while 43% held a Bachelor’s degree. The majority of the teachers either taught 6-10 years, 31%, or over 15+ years, 31%.

In addition, after analyzing the response data, it was determined 100% of the teachers who responded to the survey either were teaching special education or at a minimum had attended workshops that included content on educating special education students. After consideration of the available demographics data and survey responses, the determination was made to utilize only three demographic traits. The traits chosen for

further analysis within Research Question #1 were: teacher ages, highest degree earned, and years of teaching.

Special education students should take the same standardized assessments as their regular education peers. Regular education and special education teachers were asked if special education students should take the same standardized assessments as their regular education peers (Survey Statement 11). After analyzing the data collected from teacher participants, it was determined 57% of regular educators and 83% of special educators disagreed or strongly disagreed special education students should take the same standardized assessments as their regular education peers. In comparison, only 26% of regular education teachers and 12% of special education teachers agreed or strongly agreed special education students should take the same standardized assessments as their regular education peers (see Figure 1).

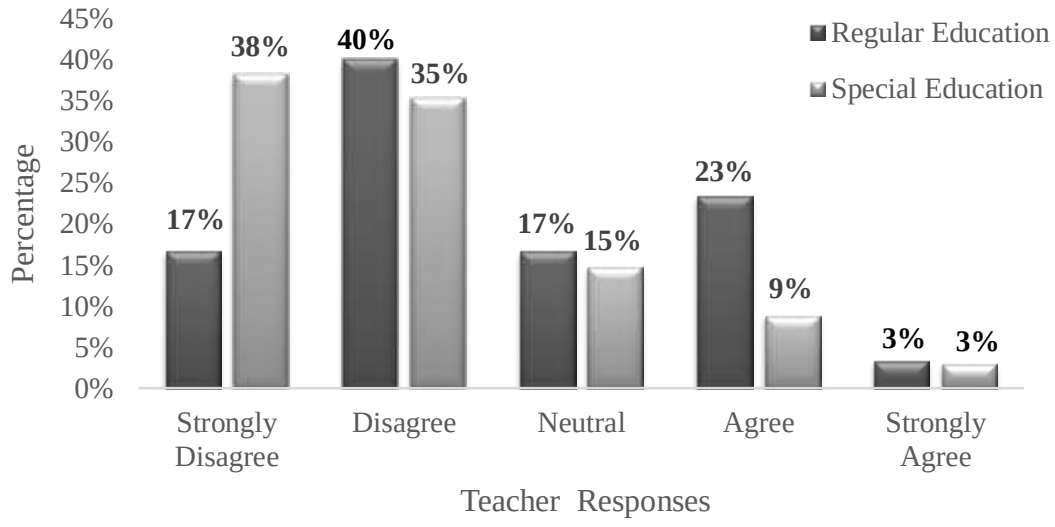

Figure 1. Survey statement 11 results: Special education students should take the same standardized assessments as their regular education peers.

Responses to Survey Statement 11: Special education students should take the same standardized assessments as their regular education peers, analyzed by teacher age. Regular education and special education teachers were asked to indicate their current ages (Survey Statement 3). The data collected were compared to how teachers responded to Survey Statement 11. Of teachers aged 25-34 years, 70% of regular education teachers disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement in comparison to only 51% of special education teachers.

Of regular education teachers aged 35-44 years, 78% disagreed or strongly disagreed in comparison to 80% of special education teachers. Sixty-eight percent of regular education teachers aged 45-54 years disagreed or strongly disagreed in comparison to 86% of special education teachers (see Table 3).

Table 3

Teacher Age in Response to Survey Statement 11

	25-34		35-44		45-54	
	Reg Ed	Sp Ed	Reg Ed	Sp Ed	Reg Ed	Sp Ed
Strongly Disagree	16%	26%	30%	30%	18%	29%
Disagree	54%	25%	48%	30%	50%	57%
Neutral	7%	12%	15%	20%	16%	14%
Agree	23%	37%	7%	10%	0%	0%
Strongly Agree	0%	0%	0%	10%	16%	0%

Note. Survey Statement 11: Special education students should take the same standardized assessments as their regular education peers.

Responses to Survey Statement 11: Special education students should take the same standardized assessments as their regular education peers, analyzed by highest level of education. Regular education and special education teachers were asked to indicate their highest level of education (Survey Statement 4). The data collected were then compared to how teachers responded to Survey Statement 11. Of regular education teachers who held a Bachelor's degree, 76% disagreed or strongly disagreed in comparison to only 50% of special education teachers. In contrast, 18% of regular education teachers and 17% of special education teachers agreed. Of the regular education teachers who held a Master's degree, 49% disagreed or strongly disagreed in comparison to 66% of special education teachers, while 16% of regular education

teachers and 22% of special education teachers agreed or strongly agreed with this same statement (see Table 4).

Table 4

Highest Teacher Degree Earned in Response to Survey Statement 11

	Bachelor's		Master's	
	Regular Education	Special Education	Regular Education	Special Education
Strongly Disagree	33%	42%	23%	22%
Disagree	43%	8%	46%	44%
Neutral	6%	33%	15%	11%
Agree	18%	17%	8%	17%
Strongly Agree	0%	0%	8%	6%

Note. Survey Statement 11: Special education students should take the same standardized assessments as their regular education peers.

Responses to Survey Statement 11: Special education students should take the same standardized assessments as their regular education peers, analyzed by teaching experience. Regular education and special education teachers were asked to indicate how many years they have taught (Survey Statement 5). The data collected were then compared to how teachers responded Survey Statement 11. Of regular education teachers who taught one to five years, 86% disagreed or strongly disagreed in comparison to only 50% of special education teachers. Of the regular education teachers who taught six to 10 years, 54% disagreed or strongly disagreed in comparison to 55% of special

education teachers. Of the regular education teachers who taught 11 to 15 years, 50% disagreed or strongly disagreed in comparison to 66% of special education teachers. Of the regular education teachers who taught 15 or more years, 74% disagreed or strongly disagreed in comparison to 64% of special education teachers (see Table 5).

Table 5

Years Teaching Experience in Response to Survey Statement 11

	1-5		6-10		11-15		15+	
	Reg Ed	Sp Ed	Reg Ed	Sp Ed	Reg Ed	Sp Ed	Reg Ed	Sp Ed
Strongly Disagree	28%	17%	27%	33%	50%	33%	12%	37%
Disagree	53%	33%	27%	22%	50%	33%	62%	27%
Neutral	14%	17%	9%	11%	0%	33%	12%	18%
Agree	0%	33%	37%	33%	0%	0%	0%	9%
Strongly Agree	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	12%	9%

Note. Survey Statement 11: Special education students should take the same standardized assessments as their regular education peers.

Survey Statement 12: Special education students, without accommodations, perform as well on a standardized assessment as their regular education peers. Regular education and special education teachers were asked if special education students can perform as well on standardized assessments, without accommodations, as their regular education peers (Survey Statement 12). After analyzing the data, it was

determined 90% of regular education teachers and 91% of special education teachers disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. In both teacher groups, only 3% of teachers agreed with the statement (see Figure 2).

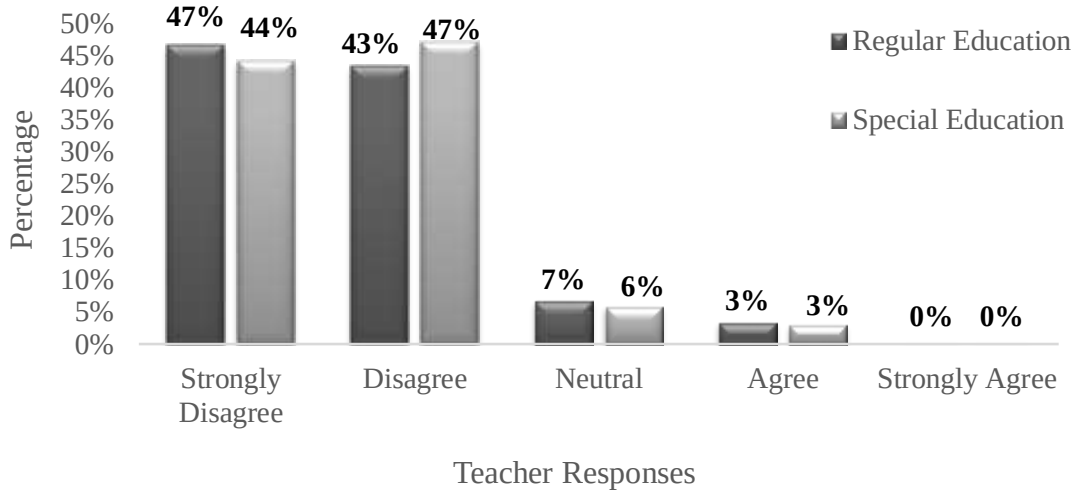

Figure 2. Survey statement 12 results: Special education students, without accommodations, can perform as well on a standardized assessment as their regular education peers.

Responses to Survey Statement 12: Special education students, without accommodations, perform as well on a standardized assessment as their regular education peers, analyzed by teacher age. Regular education and special education teachers were asked to indicate their current age (Survey Statement 3). The data were collected and compared to how the teachers responded to the following statement: Special education students, without accommodations, can perform as well on

standardized assessments as their regular education peers. After analyzing the data, it was determined of regular education teachers aged 25-34, 84% disagreed or strongly disagreed in comparison to 88% of special education teachers. Of teachers in the age range from 35-44, 92% of both regular and special educators disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. Of regular education teachers aged 45-54, 83% disagreed or strongly disagreed in comparison to 86% of special education teachers (see Table 6).

Table 6

Teacher Age in Response to Survey Statement 12

	25-34		35-44		45-54	
	Reg Ed	Sp Ed	Reg Ed	Sp Ed	Reg Ed	Sp Ed
Strongly Disagree	25%	38%	58%	38%	33%	29%
Disagree	59%	50%	34%	54%	50%	57%
Neutral	8%	12%	8%	8%	17%	14%
Agree	8%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Strongly Agree	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Note. Survey Statement 12: Special education students, without accommodations perform as well on a standardized assessment as their regular education peers.

Responses to Survey Statement: Special education students, without accommodations, perform as well on a standardized assessment as their regular education peers, analyzed by highest level of education. Regular and special

education teachers were asked to indicate their highest level of education (Survey Statement 4). The data collected were then compared to how teachers responded to the following statement: Special education students, without accommodations, can perform as well on a standardized assessment as their regular education peers. Of regular education teachers who hold a Bachelor's degree, 88% disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement in comparison to 84% of special education teachers. Eighty-four percent of regular education teachers who hold a Master's degree disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement in comparison to 100% of special education teachers (see Table 7).

Table 7

Highest Teacher Degree Earned in Response to Survey Statement 12

	Bachelor's		Master's	
	Regular Education	Special Education	Regular Education	Special Education
Strongly Disagree	40%	42%	38%	47%
Disagree	48%	42%	46%	53%
Neutral	6%	16%	8%	0%
Agree	6%	0%	8%	0%
Strongly Agree	0%	0%	0%	0%

Note. Survey Statement 12: Special education students, without accommodations, perform as well on a standardized assessment as their regular education peers.

Responses to Survey Statement 12: Special education students, without accommodations, perform as well on a standardized assessment as their regular education peers, analyzed by teaching experience. Regular and special education teachers were asked to indicate how many years they have taught (Survey Statement 5). The data collected were then compared to how teachers responded to the following survey statement: Special education students, without accommodations, can perform as well on a standardized assessment as their regular education peers.

Of both regular education teachers and special education teachers who taught one to five years, 83% disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. Of the teachers who taught six to 10 years, 75% of regular educators and 100% of special educators disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. Of the teachers who taught 11to 15 years, 100% of regular education teachers disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement in comparison to 83% of special education teachers. In both groups of teachers who taught 15 or more years, all participants disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement (see Table 8).

Table 8

Years Teaching Experience in Response to Survey Statement 12

	1-5		6-10		11-15		15+	
	Reg Ed	Sp Ed	Reg Ed	Sp Ed	Reg Ed	Sp Ed	Reg Ed	Sp Ed
Strongly Disagree	33%	33%	25%	44%	75%	50%	50%	75%
Disagree	50%	50%	50%	56%	25%	33%	50%	25%
Neutral	0%	17%	17%	0%	0%	17%	0%	0%
Agree	17%	0%	8%	0%	0%	0%	0%	9%
Strongly Agree	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Note. Survey Statement 12: Special education students, without accommodations, perform as well on a standardized assessment as their regular education peers.

Survey Statement 13: Special education students, with accommodations, can perform as well on a standardized assessment as their regular education peers. Regular and special education teachers were asked if special education students, with accommodations, can perform as well on a standardized assessment as their regular education peers (Survey Statement 13). The data collected were analyzed, and it was determined only 36% of regular education teachers disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement compared to 59% of special education teachers. Like-wise, 36% of regular education teachers agreed or strongly agreed with the statement compared to only 24% of special education teachers (see Figure 3).

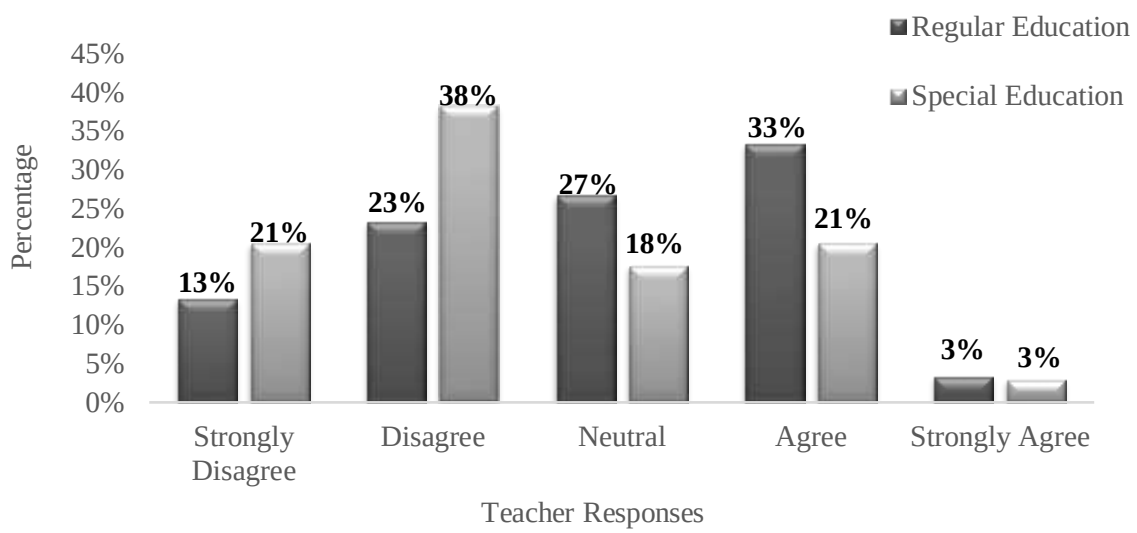

Figure 3. Survey statement 13 results: Special education students, with accommodations, can perform as well on a standardized assessment as their regular education peers.

Responses to Survey Statement 13: Special education students, with accommodations, perform as well on a standardized assessment as their regular education peers, analyzed by teaching experience. Regular education and special education teachers were asked to indicate their current age (Survey Statement 3). The data collected were then compared to how teachers responded to Survey Statement 13. After analyzing the data, it was determined of regular education teachers aged 25 to 34 years, 35% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement in comparison to 38% of special education teachers. Forty-three percent of regular education teachers aged 25 to 34 years agreed with the statement in comparison to 37% of special education teachers. Of regular education teachers aged 35 to 44 years, 60% disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement in comparison to 46% of special education teachers. Of regular

education teachers aged 45 to 54 years, 67% disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement in comparison to 86% of special education teachers (see Table 9).

Table 9

Teacher Age in Response to Survey Statement 13

	25-34		35-44		45-54	
	Regular Education	Special Education	Regular Education	Special Education	Regular Education	Special Education
Strongly Disagree	13%	13%	20%	15%	17%	43%
Disagree	22%	25%	40%	31%	50%	43%
Neutral	22%	25%	30%	23%	17%	0%
Agree	43%	37%	10%	31%	17%	14%
Strongly Agree	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Note. Survey Statement 13: Special education students, with accommodations, perform as well on a standardized assessment as their regular education peers.

Responses to Survey Statement 13: Special education students, with accommodations, perform as well on a standardized assessment as their regular education peers, analyzed by highest level of education. Regular education and special education teachers were asked to indicate their highest level of education (Survey Statement 4). The data collected were then compared to how teachers responded to Survey Statement 13. After analyzing the data, of regular education teachers who held a Bachelor's degree, 36% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement in comparison

to 34% of special education teachers. Likewise, of regular education teachers who held a Bachelor's degree, 43% agreed in comparison to 33% of special education teachers who agreed or strongly agreed with the same statement. Of the regular education teachers who held a Master's degree, 51% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement in comparison to 58% of special education teachers. Likewise, of regular education teachers who held a Master's degree, 28% agreed or strongly agreed in comparison to 26% of special education teachers (see Table 10).

Table 10

Highest Teacher Degree Earned in Response to Survey Statement 13

	Bachelor's		Master's	
	Regular Education	Special Education	Regular Education	Special Education
Strongly Disagree	7%	17%	21%	21%
Disagree	29%	17%	30%	37%
Neutral	21%	33%	21%	16%
Agree	43%	33%	14%	26%
Strongly Agree	0%	0%	14%	0%

Note. Survey Statement 13: Special education students, with accommodations, can perform as well on a standardized assessment as their regular education peers.

Responses to Survey Statement 13: Special education students, with accommodations, perform as well on a standardized assessment as their regular education peers, analyzed by teaching experience. Regular education and special

education teachers were asked to indicate how long they have been teaching (Survey Statement 5). The data collected were then compared to how teachers responded to Survey Statement 13. After analyzing the data, of both regular education teachers and special education teachers who have taught one to five years, 83% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. Of the regular education teachers who taught six to 10 years, 75% disagreed or strongly disagreed in comparison to 100% of special education teachers. Of the regular education teachers who taught 11 to 15 years, 100% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement in comparison to 83% of special education teachers. In both groups of teachers who taught 15 or more years, all participants disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement (see Table 11).

Table 11

Years Teaching Experience in Response to Survey Statement 13

	1-5		6-10		11-15		15+	
	Reg Ed	Sp Ed	Reg Ed	Sp Ed	Reg Ed	Sp Ed	Reg Ed	Sp Ed
Strongly Disagree	33%	33%	25%	44%	75%	50%	50%	75%
Disagree	50%	50%	50%	56%	25%	33%	50%	25%
Neutral	0%	17%	17%	0%	0%	17%	0%	0%
Agree	17%	0%	8%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Strongly Agree	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Note. Survey Statement 13: Special education students, with accommodations, perform as well on a standardized assessment as their regular education peers.

Survey Statement 14: I am knowledgeable of accommodations for special education students who take standardized assessments. Regular education and special education teachers were asked if they were knowledgeable of accommodations for special education students who take standardized assessments (Survey Statement 14). The data collected were analyzed, and it was determined 90% of regular education teachers agreed or strongly agreed to this statement compared to 100% of special education teachers (see Figure 4).

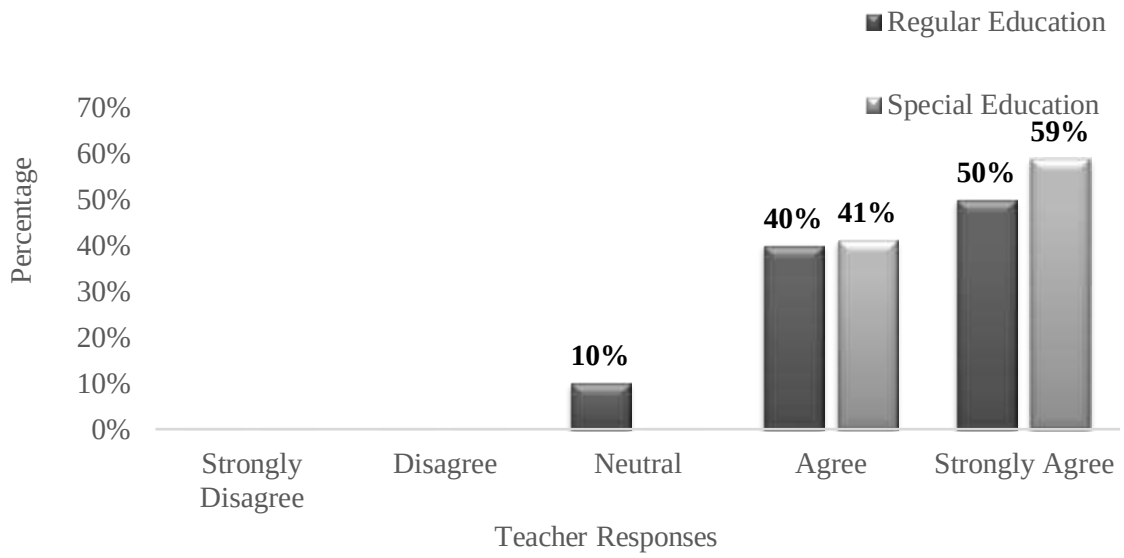

Figure 4. Survey statement 14 results: I am knowledgeable of accommodations for special education students who take standardized assessments.

Responses to Survey Statement 14: I am knowledgeable of accommodations for special education students who take standardized assessments, analyzed by teacher ages. Regular education and special education teachers were asked to indicate their current ages (Survey Statement 3). The data collected were compared after teachers responded to Survey Statement 14. After analyzing the data, it was determined of the

regular education teachers aged 25 to 34 years, 83% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement in comparison to 100% of special education teachers. Of regular education teachers aged 35 to 44 years, 93% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement in comparison to 100% of special education teachers. In both groups of teachers aged 45 to 54 years, all participants agreed or strongly agreed with the statement (see Table 12).

Table 12

Teacher Age in Response to Survey Statement 14

	25-34		35-44		45-54	
	Regular Education	Special Education	Regular Education	Special Education	Regular Education	Special Education
Strongly Disagree	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Disagree	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Neutral	17%	0%	7%	0%	0%	0%
Agree	58%	0%	70%	23%	50%	29%
Strongly Agree	25%	100%	23%	77%	50%	71%

Note. Survey Statement 14: I am knowledgeable of accommodations for special education students who take standardized assessments.

Responses to Survey Statement 14: I am knowledgeable of accommodations for special education students who take standardized assessments, analyzed by highest level of education. Regular education and special education teachers were asked to indicate their highest level of education (Survey Statement 4). The data collected were

then compared to how teachers responded to Survey Statement 14. After analyzing the data, it was determined of teachers who hold a Bachelor's degree, 87% of regular education teachers agreed or strongly agreed with the statement in comparison to 100% of special education teachers. Of the regular education teachers who held a Master's degree, 86% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement in comparison to 100% of special education teachers (see Table 13).

Table 13

Highest Teacher Degree Earned in Response to Survey Statement 14

	Bachelor's		Master's	
	Regular Education	Special Education	Regular Education	Special Education
Strongly Disagree	0%	0%	0%	0%
Disagree	0%	0%	0%	0%
Neutral	13%	0%	14%	0%
Agree	67%	0%	50%	44%
Strongly Agree	20%	100%	36%	56%

Note. Survey Statement 14: I am knowledgeable of accommodations for special education students who take standardized assessments.

Responses to Survey Statement 14: I am knowledgeable of accommodations for special education students who take standardized assessments, analyzed by highest level of education. Regular education and special education teachers were asked to indicate how many years they have taught (Survey Statement 5). The data collected

were then compared to how teachers responded to Survey Statement 14. After analyzing the data for teachers with one to five years of experience, it was determined both groups of teachers 100% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. Of the regular education teachers who taught six to 10 years, 95% strongly agreed or agreed with the statement in comparison to 100% of special education teachers. Of the regular education teachers who taught 11 to15 years, 75% agreed or strongly agreed in comparison to 100% of special education teachers (see Table 14).

Table 14

Years Teaching Experience in Response to Survey Statement 14

	1-5		6-10		11-15		15+	
	Reg Ed	Sp Ed	Reg Ed	Sp Ed	Reg Ed	Sp Ed	Reg Ed	Sp Ed
Strongly Disagree	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Disagree	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Neutral	0%	0%	0%	0%	25%	0%	29%	0%
Agree	71%	0%	55%	57%	50%	0%	57%	33%
Strongly Agree	29%	100%	45%	43%	25%	100%	14%	66%

Note. Survey Statement 14: I am knowledgeable of accommodations for special education students who take standardized assessments.

Survey Statement 15: I feel comfortable preparing special education students for standardized assessments. Regular education and special education teachers were asked if they feel comfortable preparing special education students for standardized assessments (Survey Statement 15). The data collected were analyzed, and it was determined 36% of special education teachers disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement in comparison to 30% of regular education teachers. Sixty-three percent of regular education teachers agreed or strongly agreed in comparison in comparison to 41% of special education teachers (see Figure 5).

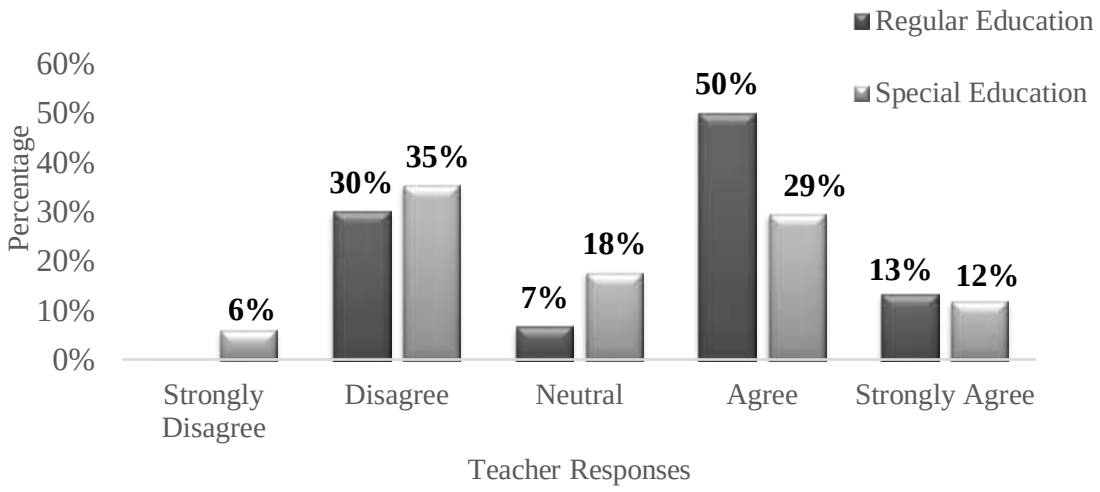

Figure 5. Survey statement 15 results: I feel comfortable preparing special education students for standardized assessments.

Responses to Survey Statement 15: I feel comfortable preparing special education students for standardized assessments, analyzed by teacher age. Regular education and special education teachers were asked to indicate their current ages (Survey Statement 3). The data were collected and compared to how the teachers

responded to Survey Statement 15. After analyzing the data, it was determined of regular education teachers aged 25 to 34 years, 23% disagreed with the statement in comparison to 37% of special education teachers. In the 25 to 34 age range, 69% of regular education teachers agreed with the statement in comparison to 62% of special education teachers. Of regular education teachers aged 35 to 44 years, 44% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement in comparison to 46% of special educators. Of the regular education teachers aged 35 to 44, 45% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement in comparison to 54% of special education teachers. Of both regular and special education teachers aged 45 to 54 years, 67% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. Only 17% of special education teachers aged 45 to 54 agreed with the statement (see Table 15).

Table 15

Teacher Age in Response to Survey Statement 15

	25-34		35-44		45-54	
	Regular Education	Special Education	Regular Education	Special Education	Regular Education	Special Education
Strongly Disagree	0%	0%	11%	0%	50%	17%
Disagree	23%	37%	33%	23%	17%	50%
Neutral	8%	0%	11%	23%	33%	17%
Agree	69%	25%	45%	23%	0%	17%
Strongly Agree	0%	37%	0%	31%	0%	0%

Note. Survey Statement 15: I feel comfortable preparing special education students for standardized assessments.

Responses to Survey Statement 15: I feel comfortable preparing special education students for standardized assessments, analyzed by highest level of education. Regular education and special education teachers were asked to indicate their highest level of education (Survey Statement 4). The data collected were then compared to how teachers responded to Survey Statement 15. After analyzing the data, it was determined of teachers who held a Bachelor's degree, 25% of regular educators disagreed with the statement in comparison to 33% of special education teachers. Sixty-nine percent of regular education teachers agreed with the statement in comparison to 59% of special education teachers. Of the regular education teachers who held a Master's degree, 47% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement in comparison to 39% of special education teachers. Of regular education teachers who held a Master's degree, 46% agreed or strongly agreed to the statement in comparison to 45% of special education teachers (see Table 16).

Table 16

Highest Teacher Degree Earned in Response to Survey Statement 15

	Bachelor's		Master's	
	Regular Education	Special Education	Regular Education	Special Education
Strongly Disagree	0%	0%	8%	6%
Disagree	25%	33%	38%	33%
Neutral	6%	8%	8%	16%
Agree	69%	18%	38%	39%
Strongly Agree	0%	41%	8%	6%

Note. Survey Statement 15: I feel comfortable preparing special education students for standardized assessments.

Responses to Survey Statement 15: I feel comfortable preparing special education students for standardized assessments, analyzed by teaching experience. Regular education and special education teachers were asked to indicate how many years they have taught (Survey Statement 5). The data collected were then compared to how teachers responded to Survey Statement 15. Of the regular education teachers who taught one to five years, 14% disagreed and 86% agreed with the statement in comparison to special education teachers, of whom 33% disagreed and 66% agreed or strongly agreed.

Of the regular educators who taught six to 10 years, 54% disagreed or strongly disagreed and 36% agreed, while of special education teachers, 44% disagreed and 33% agreed. Of the regular education teachers who taught 11 to 15 years, 25% disagreed and 50% agreed in comparison to special education teachers, of whom 34% disagreed and 50% agreed or strongly agreed. Of the regular education teachers who taught 15 or more

years, 20% disagreed and 80% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement in comparison to special education teachers, of whom 45% disagreed or strongly disagreed and 33% agreed or strongly agreed (see Table 17).

Table 17

Years Teaching Experience in Response to Survey Statement 15

	1-5		6-10		11-15		15+	
	Reg Ed	Sp Ed	Reg Ed	Sp Ed	Reg Ed	Sp Ed	Reg Ed	Sp Ed
Strongly Disagree	0%	0%	9%	0%	25%	34%	0%	11%
Disagree	14%	33%	45%	44%	25%	16%	20%	34%
Neutral	0%	0%	9%	23%	50%	16%	0%	22%
Agree	86%	33%	36%	33%	0%	34%	40%	11%
Strongly Agree	0%	33%	0%	0%	0%	0%	40%	20%

Note. Survey Statement 15. I feel comfortable preparing special education students for standardized assessments.

Research Question #2

To answer Research Question # 2, the researcher correlated the participant responses from each survey statement to their respective school's third-grade MAP mean index scores for special education students for the years 2012, 2013, and 2014. The MAP index scores are calculated by how well a grade level performed on the MAP assessments (MODESE, 2014a). According to the MODESE (2014a):

> MAP index scores are a method that measures improvement by comparing two (2) year averages of data and setting targets based on an MPI Gap. Year 1 and 2 are averaged, and years 2 and 3 are averaged; the averages are then compared to determine the amount of improvement achieved. When three (3) years of data are not available in the LEA or school; (e.g., a new school is established) the available years will be used for reporting purposes. When three (3) consecutive years of data are not available; (e.g., assessment data are not available one (1) year for a content area), the three most recent years of data not to exceed a time span of five (5) years will be used for accountability purposes. Progress in the LEA or school's MPI recognizes movement of students throughout all MAP achievement levels, ensuring that the focus remains on all students and not just those closest to being proficient. Differentiated improvement targets are set for LEAs, schools and subgroups based on the individual group's two (2) prior years' achievement. A detailed description of how to calculate the MPI Gap can be found later in this document. (p. 11)

The MPI progress is separated into four stages all based on the MPI Gap: "Exceeding represents equal to or greater than 5% improvement; On Track represents equal to or greater than 3% but less than 5% improvement based; Approaching represents equal to or greater than 1% but less than 3% improvement; Floor represents less than 1% improvement" (MODESE, 2014a, p. 11).

MAP data 2012 for Communication arts. The Spearman rank-order correlation was used as the statistical method to analyze the relationship between special education and regular education teachers' perceptions related to special education

students taking standardized assessments and special education students' actual scores on the 2012 MAP communication arts assessment. Table 18 provides a detailed analysis of the Spearman rank-order correlation coefficients (r_s). The level of significance for this study was $p = .05$.

The Spearman rank-order correlation analysis indicated only one moderate relationship between variables that was statistically significant. When correlating responses from third-grade special education teachers to their respective school districts' actual third-grade special education student scores on the 2012 MAP communication arts assessment, the Spearman rank-order coefficient was 0.295 with a *p* value of 0.047, thus indicating a statistically significant relationship. The null hypothesis for this particular relationship was rejected, because the *p* value was less than 0.05.

The remaining relationships between special and regular education teachers' perceptions related to special education students taking the standardized assessments and actual special education scores on the 2012 MAP communication arts assessment resulted in Spearman rank-order correlation coefficients too low to be meaningful (see Table 18). These lower-level correlations produced *p* values that were well above the 0.05 level, indicating any correlational relationship between the variables was not statistically significant. As a result, the null hypothesis was not rejected for each of the following relationships between regular and special education third-grade students' communication arts for 2012:

- Special education students should take the same standardized assessments as their regular education peers.

- Special education students, without accommodations, perform as well on a standardized assessment as their regular education peers.
- Special education students, with accommodations, perform as well on a standardized assessment (MAP) as their regular education peers.
- I am knowledgeable of accommodations for special education students who take the standardized assessments.
- Special education students' standardized assessment scores should be used for special education teacher accountability.

Table 18

Spearman Rank-Order Correlation Values: MAP Data 2012 for Communication Arts

Survey Statements	r_s Reg Ed	*p* value Reg Ed	r_s Sp Ed	*p* value Sp Ed
Special education students should take the same standardized assessments as their regular education peers.	0.220	0.120	0.056	0.379
Special education students, without accommodations, perform as well on a standardized assessment as their regular education peers.	0.204	0.138	-0.099	0.293
Special education students, with accommodations, perform as well on a standardized assessment as their regular education peers.	0.007	0.484	0.049	0.390
I am knowledgeable of accommodations for special education students who take the standardized assessments.	-0.198	0.146	0.067	0.353
I feel comfortable preparing special education students for standardized assessments.	-0.126	0.251	0.295	0.047
Special education students' standardized assessment scores should be used for special education teacher accountability.	0.222	0.120	-0.1000	0.289
Special education students' scores on standardized assessments be included in regular education teacher evaluations.	0.267	0.076	0.041	0.409

MAP data 2012 for Math. **T**he Spearman rank-order correlation was used as the statistical method to analyze the relationship between special and regular education teachers' perceptions related to special education students taking standardized assessments and special educations students' actual scores on the 2012 MAP math assessment. Table 19 provides a detailed analysis of the Spearman rank-order correlation coefficients (r_s). The level of significance for this study was p = 0.05. There were not any p values that represented any significant relationships between the responses of regular and special education teachers to any of survey statements and their own school districts third-grade 2012 MAP math assessment scores.

All correlational relationships between special and regular education teachers' perceptions of special education students taking the standardized assessment and actual special education student scores on the 2012 MAP math assessment resulted in Spearman rank-order correlation coefficients too low to be meaningful (see Table 19). These lower-level correlations produced p values that were well above the 0.05 level, indicating any correlational relationships between the variables were not statistically significant. As a result, the null hypothesis was not rejected for each one of the relationships between teacher perceptions and actual special education third-grade students' math scores for 2012.

Table 19

Spearman Rank-Order Correlation Values: MAP Data 2012 for Math

Survey Statements	r_s Reg Ed	*p* value Reg Ed	r_s Sp Ed	*p* value Sp Ed
Special education students should take the same standardized assessments as their regular education peers.	0.230	0.120	-0.167	0.177
Special education students, without accommodations, perform as well on a standardized assessment as their regular education peers.	0.194	0.151	-0.085	0.320
Special education students, with accommodations, perform as well on a standardized assessment as their regular education peers.	0.225	0.116	-0.122	0.247
I am knowledgeable of accommodations for special education students who take the standardized assessments.	0.036	0.425	-0.009	0.480
I feel comfortable preparing special education students for standardized assessments.	-0.035	0.425	0.106	0.276
Special education students' standardized assessment scores should be used for special education teacher accountability.	0.174	0.177	-0.004	0.488
Special education students' scores on standardized assessments be included in regular education teacher evaluations.	0.176	0.175	0.037	0.417

MAP data 2013 for Communication arts. The Spearman rank-order correlation was used as the statistical method to analyze the relationship between special education and regular education teachers' perceptions related to special education students taking standardized assessments and special education students' actual scores on the 2013 MAP communication arts assessment. Table 20 provides a detailed analysis of the Spearman rank-order correlation coefficients (r_s). The level of significance for this study was $p = 0.05$.

The Spearman rank-order correlation analysis indicated two moderate relationships between variables that were statistically significant when correlating responses from third-grade regular education teachers to the survey statements. The first was Survey Statement 13: Special education students, with accommodations perform as well on a standardized assessment as their regular education peers. The result of the Spearman rank-order coefficient was 0.339 with a *p* value of 0.03, thus indicating a statistically significant relationship. The null hypothesis was rejected for this particular relationship, because the *p* value was less than 0.05.

The second was Survey Statement 14: I am knowledgeable of accommodations for special education students who take standardized assessments. The result of the Spearman rank-order coefficient was -0.335 with a *p* value of 0.035. This indicated a statistically significant relationship and a negative correlation, therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected.

The remaining other relationship between special education and regular education teachers' perceptions related to special education students taking the standardized assessments and special education students' actual scores on the 2013

communication arts assessment resulted in Spearman rank-order correlation coefficients too low to be meaningful (see Table 20). These lower-level correlations produced *p* values that were well above the 0.05 level, indicating any correlational relationship between the variables were not statistically significant. As a result, the null hypothesis was not rejected for each of the remaining relationships.

Table 20

Spearman Rank-Order Correlation Values: MAP Data 2013 for Communication Arts

Survey Statements	r_s Reg Ed	*p* value Reg Ed	r_s Sp Ed	*p* value Sp Ed
Special education students should take the same standardized assessments as their regular education peers.	0.231	0.109	-0.086	0.317
Special education students, without accommodations, perform as well on a standardized assessment as their regular education peers.	0.106	0.286	-0.261	0.070
Special education students, with accommodations, perform as well on a standardized assessment as their regular education peers.	0.339	0.033	-0.078	0.331
I am knowledgeable of accommodations for special education students who take the standardized assessments.	-0.335	0.035	0.164	0.179
I feel comfortable preparing special education students for standardized assessments.	0.062	0.371	0.219	0.110
Special education students' standardized assessment scores should be used for special education teacher accountability.	0.084	0.328	0.005	0.488
Special education students' scores on standardized assessments be included in regular education teacher evaluations.	0.063	0.368	-0.033	0.425

MAP data 2013 for Math. The Spearman-rank order correlation was used as the statistical method to analyze the relationship between special education and regular education teachers' perceptions related to special education students taking standardized assessments and special education students' actual scores on the 2013 MAP math assessment. Table 21 provides a detailed analysis of the Spearman rank-order correlation coefficients (r_s). The level of significance for this study was p = .05.

The Spearman rank-order correlation analysis indicated only one moderate relationship between variables that was statistically significant when correlating responses from third-grade special education teachers to the survey statement that special education students' scores on standardized assessments should be included in regular education teacher evaluations. The result of the Spearman rank-order coefficient was 0.348 with a p value of 0.023, this indicating a statistically significant relationship. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected.

The remaining other relationships between special education teachers' perceptions related to special education students taking the standardized assessments and actual special education scores on the 2013 MAP math assessment resulted in Spearman rank-order correlation coefficients too low to be meaningful (see Table 21). These lower-level correlations produced p values that were well above the 0.05 level, indicating any correlational relationship between the variables were not statistically significant. As a result, the null hypothesis was not rejected for each of the remaining relationships.

Table 21

Spearman Rank-Order Correlation Values: MAP Data 2013 for Math

Survey Statements	r_s Reg Ed	*p* value Reg Ed	r_s Sp Ed	*p* value Sp Ed
Special education students should take the same standardized assessments as their regular education peers.	0.027	0.440	-0.055	0.379
Special education students, without accommodations, perform as well on a standardized assessment as their regular education peers.	-0.030	0.437	-0.229	0.099
Special education students, with accommodations, perform as well on a standardized assessment as their regular education peers.	0.191	0.155	0.022	0.452
I am knowledgeable of accommodations for special education students who take the standardized assessments.	0.018	0.460	-0.045	0.402
I feel comfortable preparing special education students for standardized assessments.	-0.029	0.437	0.045	0.402
Special education students' standardized assessment scores should be used for special education teacher accountability.	0.075	0.346	0.279	0.057
Special education students' scores on standardized assessments be included in regular education teacher evaluations.	-0.023	0.448	0.348	0.023

MAP data 2014 for Communication arts. The Spearman rank-order correlation was used as the statistical method to analyze the relationship between special education and regular education teachers' perceptions related to special education students taking standardized assessments and actual special education students' scores on the 2014 MAP communication arts assessment. Table 22 provides a detailed analysis of the Spearman rank-order correlation coefficients (r_s) and p values. The level of significance for this study was $p = .05$.

The Spearman rank-order correlation analysis indicated moderate relationships between variables that were statistically significant when correlating responses from third-grade special education teachers to the following survey statements: Special education students' standardized assessment scores should be used for special education teacher accountability, and special education students' scores on standardized assessments should be included in regular education teacher evaluations. The result of the Spearman rank-order coefficient for special education students' standardized assessment scores being used for special education teacher evaluations was -0.317 with a p value of 0.043. The result of the Spearman rank-order coefficient for special education students' standardized assessments being included in regular education teacher evaluations was -0.323 with a p value of 0.040. Therefore, a moderate statistical relationship was indicated, and the null hypothesis was rejected.

The remaining other relationships between special education and regular education teachers' perceptions and actual special education scores on the 2014 MAP communication arts assessment resulted in Spearman rank-order correlation

coefficients too low to be meaningful (see Table 22). These lower-level correlations produced *p* values that were well above the 0.05 level, indicating any correlational relationships between the variables were not statistically significant. As a result, the null hypothesis was not rejected for each of the remaining relationships.

Table 22

Spearman Rank-Order Correlation Values: MAP Data 2014 for Communication Arts

Survey Statements	r_s Reg Ed	*p* value Reg Ed	r_s Sp Ed	*p* value Sp Ed
Special education students should take the same standardized assessments as their regular education peers.	-0.289	0.060	0.095	0.299
Special education students, without accommodations, perform as well on a standardized assessment as their regular education peers.	0.040	0.418	-0.110	0.269
Special education students, with accommodations, perform as well on a standardized assessment as their regular education peers.	-0.243	0.097	-0.067	0.353
I am knowledgeable of accommodations for special education students who take the standardized assessments.	-0.115	0.273	0.181	0.158
I feel comfortable preparing special education students for standardized assessments.	-0.130	0.244	-0.090	0.310
Special education students' standardized assessment scores should be used for special education teacher accountability.	-0.317	0.043	-0.084	0.320
Special education students' scores on standardized assessments be included in regular education teacher evaluations.	-0.323	0.040	-0.152	0.198

Math. MAP data 2014 for Math. The Spearman rank-order correlation was used as the statistical method to analyze if a relationship existed between special and regular education teachers' perceptions related to special education students taking standardized assessments and special educations students' actual scores on the 2014 MAP math assessment. Table 23 provides a detailed analysis of the Spearman rank-order correlation coefficients (r_s). The level of significance for this study was $p = 0.05$. There were not any p values that represented any significant relationships between the responses of regular and special education teachers to each of survey statements and their own school districts third-grade 2014 MAP math assessment scores.

All correlational relationships between special and regular education teachers' perceptions and actual special education scores on the 2014 MAP math assessment resulted in Spearman rank-order correlation coefficients too low to be meaningful (see Table 23). These lower-level correlations produced p values that were well above the .05 level, indicating any correlational relationships between the variables were not statistically significant. As a result, the null hypothesis was not rejected for all of the relationships between teacher perceptions and special education third-grade students' actual math scores for 2014.

Table 23

Spearman Rank-Order Correlation Values: MAP Data 2014 for Math

Survey Statements	r_s Reg Ed	*p* value Reg Ed	r_s Sp Ed	*p* value Sp Ed
Special education students should take the same standardized assessments as their regular education peers.	-0.060	0.375	-0.124	0.244
Special education students, without accommodations, perform as well on a standardized assessment as their regular education peers.	0.028	0.440	-0.067	0.353
Special education students, with accommodations, perform as well on a standardized assessment as their regular education peers.	0.001	0.534	-0.015	0.468
I am knowledgeable of accommodations for special education students who take the standardized assessments.	0.114	0.273	0.036	0.421
I feel comfortable preparing special education students for standardized assessments.	-0.072	0.353	-0.062	0.364
Special education students' standardized assessment scores should be used for special education teacher accountability.	-0.002	0.496	-0.261	0.070
Special education students' scores on standardized assessments be included in regular education teacher evaluations.	-0.008	0.480	-0.223	0.105

Research Question #3

To answer Research Question #3, What are the perceptions of regular and special education teachers in regard to special education students' scores on the standardized assessments being used as a possible factor in their own evaluations was analyzed. Teachers responded to the following statements:

- Special education students' standardized assessment scores should be used for special education teacher evaluation.
- Special education students' scores on standardized assessments should be included in regular education teacher evaluations.

Teachers were also asked to answer 10 questions based on demographic information:

- Gender
- Age
- Highest degree earned
- Regular or special educator
- Years taught
- Whether they taught in their current school district in 2012,2013, and 2014
- Special education or regular education teacher
- Special education training
- Student population
- School location (urban, suburban, rural).

Although there were 10 survey questions, the researcher accentuated three questions to be the most applicable: age, highest degree earned, and years taught. Teachers rated each of these questions based on a five-point Likert-style scale with responses ranging from

strongly agree to strongly disagree. These responses were converted to numbers between one and five for statistical rating purposes.

Survey Statement 16: Special education students' standardized assessment scores should be used for special education teacher evaluation. After analyzing the data collected from all the surveys returned, it was determined 76% of regular education teachers disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement in comparison to 89% of special education teachers. Of both the regular and special education teachers, only 6% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement (see Figure 6).

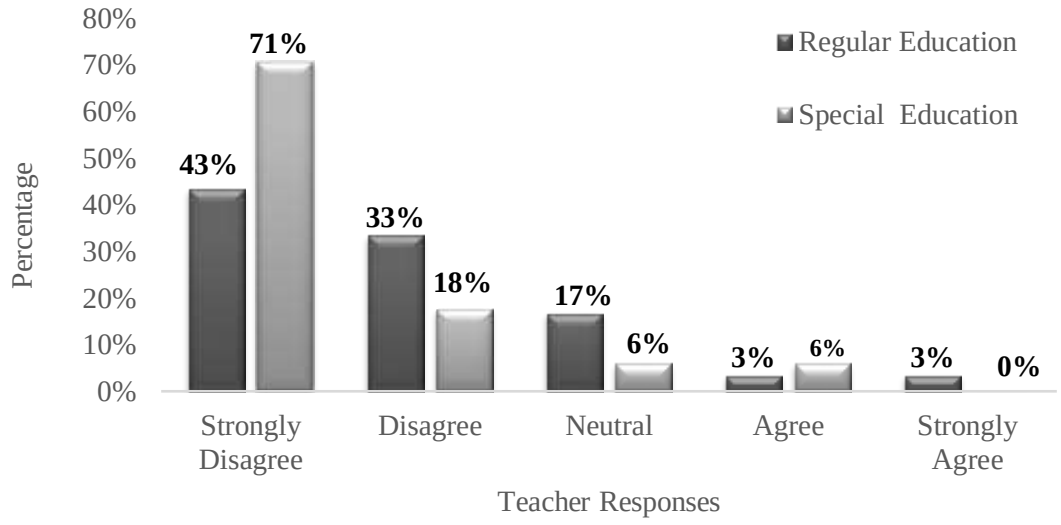

Figure 6. Survey statement 16 results: Special education students' standardized assessment scores should be used for special education teacher evaluation.

Responses to Survey Statement 16: Special education students' standardized assessment scores should be use for special education teacher evaluations, analyzed by teaching experience. Regular education and special education teachers were asked to indicate their current ages (Survey Statement 3). The data collected were then compared to how teachers responded to Survey Statement 16. After analyzing the data, it was determined that of the regular education teachers aged 25 to 34 years, 66% strongly disagreed with the statement in comparison to 88% of special education teachers. For both regular and special education teachers aged 35 to 44 years, 91% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. Of regular education teachers aged 45 to 54 years, 56% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement in comparison to 83% of special education teachers (see Table 24).

Table 24

Teacher Age in Response to Survey Statement 16

	25-34		35-44		45-54	
	Regular Education	Special Education	Regular Education	Special Education	Regular Education	Special Education
Strongly Disagree	41%	50%	58%	66%	50%	83%
Disagree	25%	38%	33%	25%	16%	0%
Neutral	25%	12%	9%	0%	0%	17%
Agree	9%	0%	0%	9%	16%	0%
Strongly Agree	0%	0%	0%	0%	16%	0%

Note. Survey Statement 16: Special education students' standardized assessment scores should be used for special education teacher evaluation.

Responses to Survey Statement 16: Special education students' standardized assessment scores should be use for special education teacher evaluations, analyzed by highest level of education. Regular education and special education teachers were asked to indicate their highest level of education (Survey Statement 4). The data collected were then compared to how teachers responded to Survey Statement 16. After analyzing the data, it was determined that of the regular education teachers who held a Bachelor's degree, 74% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement in comparison to 91% of special education teachers. Of the regular education teachers who held a Master's degree, 76% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement in comparison to 81% of special education teachers (see Table 25).

Table 25

Highest Teacher Degree Earned in Response to Survey Statement 16

	Bachelor's		Master's	
	Regular Education	Special Education	Regular Education	Special Education
Strongly Disagree	47%	58%	51%	68%
Disagree	27%	33%	25%	22%
Neutral	20%	9%	8%	5%
Agree	6%	0%	8%	5%
Strongly Agree	0%	0%	8%	0%

Note. Survey Statement 16: Special education students' standardized assessment scores should be used for special education teacher evaluation.

Responses to Survey Statement 16: Special education students' standardized assessment scores should be use for special education teacher evaluations analyzed by teaching experience. Regular education and special education teachers were asked to indicate how many years they have taught (Survey Statement 5). The data collected were then compared to how teachers responded to Survey Statement 16. After analyzing the data, it was determined that of the regular education teachers who taught one to five years, 86% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement in comparison to 100% of special education teachers.

Of the regular education teachers who taught six to 10 years, 85% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement in comparison to 90% of special education teachers. Of the regular education teachers who taught 11 to 15 years, 50% disagreed with the statement in comparison to 83% of special education teachers. Of regular

education teachers who taught 15 or more years, 87% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement in comparison to 91% of special education teachers (see Table 26).

Table 26

Years Teaching Experience in Response to Survey Statement 16

	1-5		6-10		11-15		15+	
	Reg Ed	Sp Ed	Reg Ed	Sp Ed	Reg Ed	Sp Ed	Reg Ed	Sp Ed
Strongly Disagree	43%	67%	57%	70%	50%	50%	62%	63%
Disagree	43%	33%	28%	20%	0%	33%	25%	28%
Neutral	9%	0%	0%	10%	25%	0%	1%	9%
Agree	15%	0%	15%	0%	0%	17%	0%	0%
Strongly Agree	0%	0%	0%	0%	25%	0%	0%	0%

Note. Survey Statement 16: Special education students' standardized assessment scores should be used for special education teacher evaluation.

Survey Statement 17: Special education students' scores on standardized assessments should be included in regular education teacher evaluations. The data collected were analyzed, and it was determined that 84% of regular educators and 94% of special educators disagreed or strongly disagreed with Survey Statement 17 (see Figure 7).

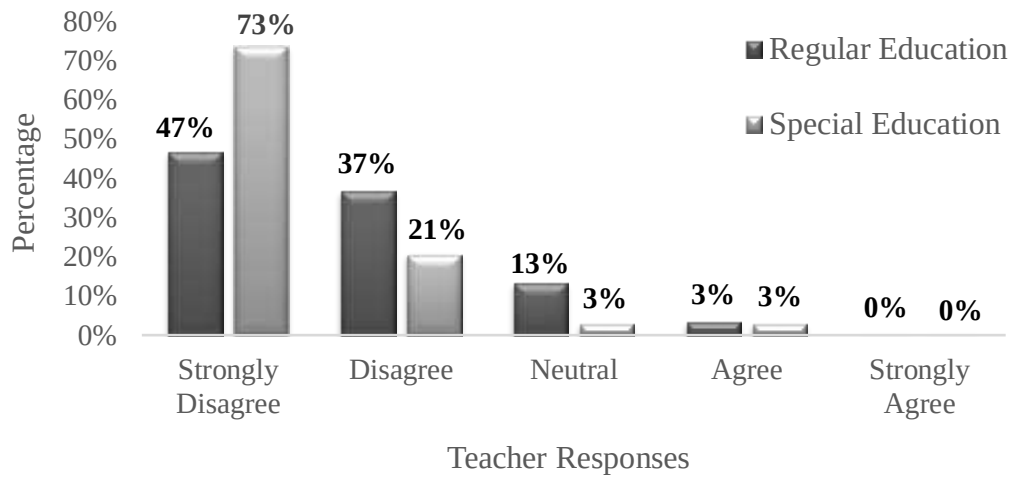

Figure 7. Survey statement 17 results: Special education students' scores on standardized assessments should be included in regular education teacher evaluations.

Responses to Survey Statement 17: Special education students' scores on standardized assessments should be included in regular education teacher evaluations, analyzed by age. Special education and regular education teachers were asked to indicate their current ages (Survey Statement 3). The data collected were than compared to how the teachers responded to Survey Statement 17. After analyzing the data, it was determined of regular education teachers aged 25 to 34 years, 83% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement in comparison to 70% of special education teachers. Of the regular education teachers aged 35 to 44 years, 91% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement in comparison to 92% of special education teachers. Of regular education teachers aged 45 to 54 years, 83% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement in comparison to 100% of special education teachers (see Table 27).

Table 27

Teacher Age in Response to Survey Statement 17

	25-34		35-44		45 -54	
	Regular Education	Special Education	Regular Education	Special Education	Regular Education	Special Education
Strongly Disagree	50%	40%	63%	69%	50%	92%
Disagree	33%	30%	28%	23%	33%	81%
Neutral	17%	30%	9%	0%	0%	0%
Agree	0%	0%	0%	8%	17%	0%
Strongly Agree	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Note. Survey Statement 17: Special education students' standardized assessment scores should be included in regular education teacher evaluations.

Responses to Survey Statement 17: Special education students' scores on standardized assessments should be included in regular education teacher evaluations, analyzed by highest level of education. Special education and regular education teachers were asked to indicate their highest level of education (Survey Statement 4). The data collected were than compared to how teachers responded to Survey Statement 17. After analyzing the data, it was determined of regular education teachers who held a Bachelor's degree, 83% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement in comparison to 91% of special education teachers. Of the regular education teachers who held a Master's degree, 84% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement in comparison to 94% of special education teachers (see Table 28).

Table 28

Highest Teacher Degree Earned in Response to Survey Statement 17

	Bachelor's		Master's	
	Regular Education	Special Education	Regular Education	Special Education
Strongly Disagree	50%	55%	61%	68%
Disagree	33%	36%	23%	26%
Neutral	14%	9%	7%	0%
Agree	0%	0%	16%	6%
Strongly Agree	0%	0%	8%	0%

Note. Survey Statement 17: Special education students' standardized assessment scores should be included in regular education teacher evaluations.

Responses to Survey Statement 17: Special education students' scores on standardized assessments should be included in regular education teacher evaluations, analyzed by teaching experience. Regular education and special education teachers were asked to indicate how many years they have taught (Survey Statement 5). The data collected were then compared to how teachers responded to Survey Statement 17. After analyzing the data, it was determined of the regular and special education teachers who taught one to five years, 100% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. Of regular education teachers who taught six to 10 years, 91% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement in comparison to 100% of special education teachers. Of regular educators who taught 11 to 15 years, 75% disagreed or strongly disagreed in comparison to 83% of special education teachers. Of the regular education

teachers who taught 15 or more years, 87% disagreed or strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement in comparison to 92% of special education teachers (see Table 29).

Table 29

Years Teaching Experience in Response to Survey Statement 17

	1-5		6-10		11-15		15+	
	Reg Ed	Sp Ed	Reg Ed	Sp Ed	Reg Ed	Sp Ed	Reg Ed	Sp Ed
Strongly Disagree	43%	67%	55%	75%	50%	50%	75%	67%
Disagree	57%	33%	36%	25%	25%	33%	12%	25%
Neutral	0%	0%	9%	0%	0%	17%	12%	0%
Agree	0%	0%	0%	0%	25%	0%	0%	8%
Strongly Agree	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Note. Survey Statement 17: Special education students' standardized assessment scores should be included in regular education teacher evaluations.

Summary

A survey was distributed to special education directors in the Southwest Missouri region requesting participation in this research study. Of the respondents, 63 educators, including 30 regular education and 33 special education teachers, agreed to participate. The survey consisted of 10 demographic questions and seven statements related to teachers' perceptions of special education students taking the same standardized assessments as their non-disabled peers and of how the scores of special education

students affect teacher evaluations. Data from each survey statement were compared to teachers' ages, levels of education, and the amount of time teaching.

To answer research question #1, survey statement # 11's results revealed that the majority of both regular and special education teachers disagreed or strongly disagreed that special education students should take the same standardized assessments as their regular education peers. When compared to teachers' ages, degree level, and years taught there were more regular and special education teachers who responded positively the younger they were.

The responses from survey statement # 12's results revealed over 90% of both regular and special education teachers disagreed or strongly disagreed that special education students perform as well on a standardized assessment as their non-disabled peers without accommodations. When compared to teachers' ages, degree level, and years taught both groups, regular and special education teachers' perceptions of students with disabilities taking the same standardized assessments as their peers without accommodations was negative.

The responses from survey statement # 13 revealed the majority of both groups, regular and special education teachers perceived using accommodations on standardized assessments with disagreed and strongly disagreed. Regular and special education teacher's perceptions did not change based on their ages, degree levels, and years taught.

The responses from survey statement # 14 revealed both regular education and special education teachers were knowledgeable of accommodations when giving the same standardized assessment. In both groups, regular and special education teacher's perceptions did not change based on their ages, degree levels, and years taught.

The responses from survey statement #15 revealed that more regular education teachers felt comfortable preparing special education students for standardized assessments then special education teachers. When analyzing the data for age the majority of regular education teachers 25 – 34 agreed. When analyzing the data for degree level most the regular education teachers held a Bachelors, and when analyzing the data for years of teaching experience regular education teachers who taught 1 – 5 years agreed.

To answer Research Question #2, the collected data were compared to participating teachers' school districts' MAP mean index scores to identify any relationships. The MAP mean index scores for third-grade special education students in each participating district for the years 2012, 2013, and 2014 and a Spearman rank-order correlation were used to compare variables. According to the data for research question two there were statistical relationships found between regular education teachers and special education students scores in the area of communication arts (2013, 2014). There was also a statistical relationship found between special education students scores in the areas of communication arts (2012) and math (2013). The level of significance for this study was $p = 0.05$.

To answer research question #3, two survey statement were presented: a) "Special education students' scores on standardized assessment scores should be included in special education teacher evaluations," and b) "Special education students' scores on standardized assessments should be included in regular education teachers' evaluations." On both questions, the majority of regular and special education teachers disagreed and strongly disagreed that special education students' scores on standardized assessments

should be included in special education evaluations and regular education teachers' evaluations. In both groups, regular and special education teacher's perceptions did not change based on their ages, degree levels, and years taught

The purpose of Chapter Five is to review the results of Chapter Four. Chapter five is separated into five sections: Purpose Summary, Summary of the Findings, Conclusions, Implications for Practice, and Recommendations for Future Research.

Chapter Five: Summary and Conclusion

There has been much emphasis placed on both regular and special education teachers to successfully prepare students with disabilities to perform well on the same standardized assessments as their regular education peers (Resmovits, 2013). The Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) and the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) each emphasized improved student progress (Lingo, Barton-Arwood, & Jolivette, 2011). It has always been expected that special education teachers work with special education students on goals and objectives based on Individual Education Programs (IEPs) (Lingo., et al., 2011). With the IDEA and NCLB there has been a renewed emphasis on ensuring special education students are exposed to the regular education curriculum (Lingo et al., 2011). In December of 2015, President Obama signed the first extensive education law in over a decade, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) (Nelson, 2015). Although the ESSA takes away most of the power from the federal government, it will still require all students, including special education students, take standardized assessments (Nelson, 2015). The ESSA will not fully go into effect until the fall of 2017 (Nelson, 2015).

The following three research questions guided this study:

RQ1. What are the perceptions of regular and special education teachers in regard to special education students taking standardized assessments?

RQ2. What is the relationship between special and regular education teachers' perceptions related to special education students taking standardized assessments and the special education students' actual scores on standardized assessments?

RQ3. What are the perceptions of regular and special education teachers in regard to special education students' scores on standardized assessments being used as a possible factor in teacher evaluation scores?

Purpose Summary

The purpose of this research was to determine the perceptions of regular and special education teachers concerning special education students taking the same standardized assessments as their grade-level peers, as well as the perceptions concerning whether or not special education students' standardized assessment scores should affect teacher evaluations. The same regular and special education teacher perceptions were also compared to special education students' state standardized assessment scores to identify if there were any significant relationships between teacher perceptions and actual data. The data collected will be used to help special and regular education teachers strengthen their understanding of the relationships between special and regular education teachers' perceptions/beliefs on instruction and assessment of special education students.

Findings

Regular and special education teachers responded to seven survey statements related to their perceptions of special education students taking standardized assessments and of standardized assessment scores affecting teacher evaluations. Teachers also answered basic demographic questions. The data collected for the seven survey statements were then converted to a five-point Likert-style scale in an effort to identify regular and special education teachers' responses. Further comparisons were made by analyzing teacher responses to each survey statement in relation to the teacher demographic responses.

RQ1. What are the perceptions of regular and special education teachers in regard to special education students taking standardized assessments?

Special education students should take the same standardized assessments as their regular education peers. Survey results showed the majority of both regular (57%) and special education (73%) teachers disagreed or strongly disagreed that special education students should take the same standardized assessments as their regular education peers. In general, teachers viewed the idea of special education students taking the same standardized assessments as their regular education peers negatively. Special education or low-performing students are no longer thought of as a challenge, but as a liability (Berliner & Nichols, 2007). Regular and special education teachers continually do their best to prepare special education students for standardized assessments, but both groups agreed that although special education students are making progress, it is still not enough to keep up with their same-age peers or to take the same standardized assessments as their peers (Phillips, 2010). The researcher found it very interesting that special education teachers disagreed or strongly disagreed more frequently than regular education teachers did. The data collected from teacher responses were then analyzed and compared to teachers' ages, level of degrees, and years of experience.

According to data for this study, teachers who were aged 25 to 34 agreed more than teachers who were in the age ranges of 35 to 44 and 45 to 54. The researcher found it interesting the group with the youngest teachers had the highest percentage who agreed special education students should take the same standardized assessments as their non-disabled peers.

Of the teachers who responded to the survey, 43% held a Bachelor's degree, while a majority, 57%, held a Master's degree. The researcher determined that the perceptions of both groups, regular and special education teachers did not change whether they held a Bachelor's or a Master's degree. Two studies supported this conclusion (Clotfelter et al., 2007; Goldhaber et al., 2010), and both studies showed education levels were not predictive of higher student achievement with special education students.

The majority of regular and special education teachers who responded to the survey disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. Although the majority of teachers disagreed or strongly disagreed, the researcher found it interesting the teachers who agreed or strongly agreed had taught from one to five years or from six to 10 years. In a research study completed by Goldhaber et al. (2010) with novice and seasoned teachers, there were very few differences among teachers who taught fewer than four years compared to teachers who taught four years or longer.

Special education students, without accommodations, perform as well on a standardized assessment as their regular education peers. Approximately 90% of regular education teachers and 91% of special education teachers disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. There were only 6% of teachers who agreed with this statement.

When the data were compared and analyzed by teacher ages, highest level of degree, and years taught, results showed that in all three areas, the majority of both groups of teachers disagreed or strongly disagreed students should take the same assessments without accommodations. The researcher was not surprised by these results.

Special education students already have a difficult time and struggle with taking grade-level assessments even with accommodations (Resmovits, 2013).

There are many advocates who argue students with disabilities should take the same standardized assessments without accommodations (Lewin, 2007). Lawrence Feinberg, assistant director of the group that administers the National Assessment of Educational Progress, stated, "The federal tests that rates school performance…it's only fair if you test everyone the same way" (Lewin, 2007, para. 19). Also, Kit Vaton, an assessment official with the Massachusetts Department of Education, stated, "A student who's tested is a student taught" (Lewin, 2007, para. 21). Advocacy groups for the disabled do not agree. These groups state "making a learning disabled student take a standardized test without accommodations is as unfair as requiring a physically disabled child to run a race without a wheelchair" (Lewin, 2007, para. 22).

Special education students, with accommodations, perform as well on a standardized assessment as their regular education peers. The majority of both groups, regular and special education teachers, disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. The researcher, again, found it interesting 36% of regular education teachers in comparison with only 24% of special education teachers agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. There were 27% of regular education teachers and 18% of special education teachers who responded with neutral (no opinion). When the data were compared to teachers' ages, highest level of degree, and years taught, results showed no changes in the way teachers responded.

I am knowledgeable of accommodations for special education students who take the same standardized assessments. Ninety percent of regular education teachers

agreed or strongly agreed, while only 10% had no opinion (neutral), and 100% of special education teachers agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. There was no change in the way the teachers answered this survey question in relation to their ages, highest degree earned, or number of years teaching. According to the data, teachers are collaborating on accommodations for special education students. It is crucial for special education teachers to effectively collaborate with regular education teachers on accommodations and modifications written into IEPs for assignments, tests, and standardized assessments at the beginning of the year to ensure academic success (Beacham & Rouse, 2012)

I feel comfortable preparing special education students for standardized assessments. For this statement, 30% of regular education teachers disagreed or strongly disagreed, compared to 41% of special education teachers. Sixty-three percent of regular education teachers agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, compared to 41% of special education teachers. The researcher was surprised more regular education teachers felt comfortable preparing special education students for standardized assessments than did special education teachers.

When these data were compared to teacher ages and analyzed, the majority of regular education teachers aged 25 to 44 agreed they felt comfortable preparing special education students for standardized assessments. The data also showed responses of special education teachers were fairly the same regardless of age.

Of regular education teachers who held a Bachelor's degree, 25% disagreed and 69% agreed compared to 33% of special education teachers who disagreed and 59% who agreed or strongly agreed. Of regular education teachers who held a Master's degree,

46% disagreed or strongly disagreed and 38% agreed or strongly agreed, compared to 39% of special education teachers who disagreed or strongly disagreed and 45% who agreed or strongly agreed. The data showed that whether or not a teacher held a Bachelor's or Master's degree didn't change their perceptions.

Of regular education teachers who taught one to five years, 14% disagreed or strongly disagreed and 86% agreed or strongly agreed, compared to 33% of special education teachers who disagreed or strongly disagreed and 66% who agreed or strongly agreed. Taylor and Sobel (2001) stated regular education teachers hold strong beliefs about their responsibility to provide the same education for special education students.

RQ2. What is the relationship between special education teachers and regular education teachers' perceptions related to special education students taking standardized assessments and the special education students' actual scores on standardized assessments?

There were several statistical relationships when comparing teachers' responses to the survey statement to student grade-level MAP mean index scores from their own school districts. When comparing special education students' communication arts 2012 MAP scores with teacher perceptions, the correlation resulted in a Spearman rank-order coefficient of 0.0295 with a p value of 0.047. The p value $0.047 < 0.05$ resulted in a significant relationship; therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected.

There were two statistical relationships with special education students' MAP data for communication arts in 2013. The first one was found when comparing teacher perceptions to student performance. This correlation resulted in a Spearman rank-order coefficient of 0.339 with a p value of 0.033. The p value $0.033 < 0.05$ resulted in a

significant relationship, and therefore the null hypothesis was rejected. The second one was found when comparing teachers' responses concerning their knowledge of accommodations. This correlation resulted in a Spearman rank-order coefficient of -0.035 and a *p* value of 0.035. The *p* value 0.035 < 0.05 resulted in a significant relationship; therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Another statistical relationship between variables, from grade-level MAP math data in 2013, was identified from the following survey statement: Special education students' scores on standardized assessments should be included in regular education teacher evaluations. This correlation resulted in a Spearman rank-order coefficient of 0.348 with a *p* value of 0.023. The *p* value was -0.035 < 0.05; therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected.

The last analysis showing a statistical relationship between variables occurred when comparing special education student communication arts 2014 MAP scores with teachers' responses to the following survey statement: Special education students' standardized assessment scores should be used for special education teacher accountability. This correlation resulted in a Spearman rank-order coefficient of -0.317 with a *p* value of 0.043. The *p* value 0.043 < 0.05 resulted in a significant relationship; therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. All other correlations from communication arts and math MAP data for 2012, 2013, and 2014 resulted in Spearman rank-order correlations coefficients well above the *p* value of 0.05. Since the *p* values were all > 0.05, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

RQ3. What are the perceptions of regular and special education teachers in regard to special education students' scores on standardized assessments being used as a possible factor in teacher evaluation scores?

These two survey statements about student scores being included in teacher evaluations were very similar and gave rise to similar results. Teacher participants in this study were asked if special education students' standardized assessment scores should be included for special education teacher accountability. The majority of teachers disagreed or strongly disagreed. Seventy-six percent of regular education teachers disagreed or strongly disagreed, compared to 89% of special education teachers. When the data were compared and analyzed to teacher ages, highest level of degree, and years taught, results offered no additional insight. The majority of teachers still responded with disagree or strongly disagree.

Teacher participants in this study were also asked if special education students' standardized assessment scores should be included for regular education teacher accountability. The majority of the teachers disagreed or strongly disagreed. Eighty-two percent of regular education teachers disagreed or strongly disagreed compared to 93% of special education teachers. When the data were compared and analyzed to teacher ages, highest level of degree, and years taught, the results still showed the majority of teachers disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. Standardized assessments help motivate needed change, but they should not carry such serious consequences (Baker, 2011). Special education students' standardized assessment scores should not be used on teacher evaluations. Teachers' evaluations should not be based on scores that may be influenced by which student's educators are serving (Baker, 2011).

Conclusions

The assessment of students with disabilities has been and will continue to be a topic of controversy. With the passing of NCLB, the IDEA, and the ESSA, school districts have very few options for assessing special education students (National Center for Fair and Open Testing, 2012). Only about 1% of special education students will be allowed to take the alternative assessments, as it is only available to students with the most severe disabilities (MODESE, 2014c).

In this study, regular and special education teachers were asked for their opinions on seven statements, which were analyzed based on their ages, levels of education, and the amount of time they had been teaching. The results indicated the majority of regular and special education teachers had negative views on special education students taking the same standardized assessments as their regular education peers. Interestingly, the few who did not respond, agreed, or strongly agreed were all regular education teachers, implying regular education teachers' view special education students taking the same standardized assessments more positively than do special education teachers.

Both regular and special education teachers had negative perceptions of special education students taking the same standardized assessments as their peers without accommodations. With accommodations, the results were not as negative; 36% of regular education teachers and 24% of special education teachers responded positively to students with disabilities taking the same standardized assessments as their non-disabled peers as long as they were provided with accommodations. When given accommodations, many special education students can perform as well on standardized assessments as their regular education peers (Connor, 2010). For example, if a special

education student is really good at math, but reading is the disability, the math problems can be read to the student. The student is likely to do very well on the assessment, as it is not meant to assess reading skills, but instead math skills.

When responding to the statement "I feel comfortable preparing special education students for standardized assessments," 63% of regular education teachers and 41% of special education teachers agreed or strongly agreed. Teachers between the ages of 25 and 34 years had the highest percentage of agreement, possibly a result of the teacher education programs they graduated from or of their younger ages. When compared to degree levels, both regular and special education teachers who held a Bachelor's degree had the highest percentage of "agree" and "strongly agree" responses; again, recently graduating from a teaching program could have prepared teachers for the challenges of special education students. When compared to years taught, regular education teachers who taught between one and five years and special education teachers who taught for more than 15 years had the highest percentage of positive responses. This could be because teachers who are just graduating are being trained to work with special education students, and those who have taught for a long time have experience in teaching special education students.

Data from this study allowed the researcher to compare third-grade students' MAP mean index scores from 2012, 2013, and 2014 to the survey statements collected from regular and special education teachers in the Southwest Missouri region. The results from the 2012 MAP data for communication arts, 2013 MAP data for communication arts, 2013 MAP data for math, and 2014 MAP data for communication arts all had at least one moderately statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) result. The 2012

MAP data for math and the 2014 MAP data for communication arts were not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$). The null hypothesis was rejected when the p value was > 0.05 and not rejected when the p value was < 0.05. Therefore, it can be concluded that, although there was moderate significance, the overall results yielded several statistically significant relationships between regular and special education teachers' perceptions of special education students taking the standardized assessments and special education students' actual scores on standardized assessments.

The researcher also looked at regular and special education teachers' perceptions of whether special education students' MAP scores should affect teacher evaluations. The majority of regular and special education teachers felt the MAP scores from special education students' standardized assessments should not affect teacher evaluations. Although the majority of teachers responded negatively to these two statements, the data showed regular education teachers had the highest percentage of neutral ("no response"), agree, or strongly agree responses.

Implications for Practice

The current federal pressure on school districts to have all students performing proficiently places a lot of stress on both regular and special education teachers (Ballard & Bates, 2008). The current study showed both regular and special education teachers have negative attitudes toward special education students taking the same standardized assessments as their non-disabled peers, and the majority of regular and special education teachers disagreed or strongly disagreed special education students could be successful taking the same standardized assessments as their non-disabled peers, even with accommodations. Unfortunately, with laws like the IDEA, NCLB, and the ESSA, it is

still mandated special education students take the same standardized assessments as their non-disabled peers (Nelson, 2015).

Preparing special education students for standardized assessments is a challenge for both regular and special education teachers. Research suggests several ways to help teachers prepare special education students for standardized assessments and to hopefully improve the perceptions of regular and special education teachers in teaching special education students. One of these ways is inclusion. Kauffman and Badar (2014) stated there are many social and academic benefits when special education students are integrated into the regular education classroom. The more experience regular educators have with the integration of students with disabilities into regular classrooms, the better their perceptions of teaching students with disabilities (Saloviita & Takala, 2010).

Another key component for the successful preparation of special education students for standardized assessments is that regular and special education teachers have the same expectations for special education students as they do for regular education students (Connor, 2010). According to Clampit et al. (2004), the successful integration of special education students in the regular education classroom results in positive perceptions of teachers, and the expectations of teachers for special education students play a significant role in the success of special education students (Conner, 2010). According to Hattie (2015), assessments can be powerful tools for improving both teaching and learning.

Recommendations for Future Research

There are a limited number of studies analyzing teachers' perceptions of special education students taking the same standardized assessments as their regular education

peers. There is also limited evidence available on the effectiveness of specific special education services to improve special education student achievement (Aron & Loprest, 2012). While this study showed that both groups, regular and special education teachers viewed special education students taking the same standardized assessments as their non-disabled peers negatively; there were more regular education teachers who viewed special education students taking the same standardized assessments as their non-disabled peers positively. Further research should focus on a larger population that includes participants from urban areas. A longitudinal study comparing the academic outcomes of special education students receiving different services and comparing the inclusive classroom to the resource room is also needed. The following questions can also be explored in future studies:

- What kinds of disabilities do your students have?
- Do regular and special education teachers have the same expectations of special education students as they do of regular education students?
- Are special education students being provided accommodations and modifications throughout the year so they can be successful not only on standardized assessments, but in all other education aspects as well?
- Are special education students provided opportunities to access grade-level curriculum?
- Are special education students being placed in the right educational environments?
- Are regular and special education teachers working together to ensure the success of special education students?

More research needs to be conducted to determine the most effective educational practices for the success of special education students who must learn and be assessed on the same material as their regular education peers.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to analyze teachers' perceptions of special education students taking the same standardized assessments as their non-disabled peers. The researcher also examined MAP mean index scores and compared those scores to teachers' perceptions. Finally, the researcher analyzed teachers' perceptions of special education students' standardized assessments scores affecting teacher evaluations.

Chapter One included the conceptual framework, the statement of the problem, the significance, and the purpose of the study. The research questions and null hypothesis were introduced. Limitations and key terms were presented. In Chapter Two, a review of literature with supporting and opposing evidence was presented.

In Chapter Three, an account of the methodology used in this quantitative study was stated. The problem and purpose of this study were stated, along with the research questions and null hypothesis. The population and sample size were identified, as well as the analysis and population.

In Chapter Four, data were presented. A total of 63 teachers responded including 30 regular education teachers and 33 special education teachers. The data were analyzed, and figures and tables were designed to exhibit the findings.

In Chapter Five, findings, conclusions, and answers to the research questions were examined. Overall, the data revealed that both groups, regular and special education teachers perceived the idea of special education students taking the same standardized

assessments as their non-disabled peers negatively. The results for research question two indicated a statistical relationship was found between the regular education teachers' perceptions and special education students MAP scores in the area of communication arts (2013, 2014). The results also indicated a statistical relationship was found between special education teachers' perceptions and special education students MAP scores in the area of communication arts (2012) and math (2013). Finally, the data acclaimed teachers in both groups negatively viewed the idea that special education students standardized assessment (MAP) scores should be used as teacher evaluations.

Appendix A

Online Teacher Survey Questions

Please tell me about yourself:

1. What School District do you work for? _____

2. What is your gender?

    - Male
    - Female

3. What is your age?

    - under 25
    - 25-39
    - 40-59
    - 60 or over

4. What is the highest degree you have received?

    - Bachelor's
    - Master's
    - Specialist
    - Doctorate

5. Number of years you have been teaching

    - 1-5 years
    - 6-10 years
    - 11-15 years
    - 15 years +

6. Did you teach in your current position in…

    - 2011-12
    - 2012-13
    - 2013-14

7. Are you a special education or regular education teacher?

    - Regular Education Teacher
    - Special Education Teacher

8. How much training have you had related to teaching students with disabilities? (Select all that apply?)

- None
- Attend Workshops/Professional Development
- 1-3 College Classes
- 4 or more College Classes
- Degree in Special Education
- Degree in Regular Education
- Other _____

9. How many students are currently attending the school?

- Less than 300
- 300 – 499
- 500 – 799
- 800 or more

10. How would you describe your school?

- Urban-inner city
- Suburban-residential area on the outskirts of the city or town
- Rural-country

Please rate each question as strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, or strongly disagree.

11. Special education students should take the same standardized assessments as their regular education peers.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

12. Special education students, without accommodations, perform as well on a standardized assessment as their regular education peers.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

13. Special education students, with accommodations, perform as well on a standardized assessment as their regular education peers.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

14. I am knowledgeable of accommodations for special education students who take the standardized assessments.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

15. I feel comfortable preparing special education students for standardized assessments.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

16. Special education students' standardized assessment scores should be included for special education teacher accountability.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

17. Special education students' scores on standardized assessments should be included in regular education teacher evaluations.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Appendix B

IBR Approval

DATE:	March 23, 2015
TO:	Deborah Taylor
FROM:	Lindenwood University Institutional Review Board
STUDY TITLE:	[714441-1] Special Education Students and Standardized Testing
IRB REFERENCE #:	
SUBMISSION TYPE:	New Project
ACTION:	APPROVED
APPROVAL DATE:	March 23, 2015
EXPIRATION DATE:	March 23, 2016
REVIEW TYPE:	Expedited Review

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this research project. Lindenwood University Institutional Review Board has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a study design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

This submission has received Expedited Review based on the applicable federal regulation.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the study and insurance of participant understanding followed by a signed consent form. Informed consent must continue throughout the study via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require each participant receive a copy of the signed consent document.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this office prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

All SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported to this office. Please use the appropriate adverse event forms for this procedure. All FDA and sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed.

All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must be reported promptly to the IRB.

This project has been determined to be a Minimal Risk project. Based on the risks, this project requires continuing review by this committee on an annual basis. Please use the completion/amendment form for this procedure. Your documentation for continuing review must be received with sufficient time for review and continued approval before the expiration date of March 23, 2016.

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of three years.

Appendix C

Cover Letter for Survey

Date

Dear Special Education Teacher or Regular Education Teacher,

My name is Deborah Taylor. I am a special education teacher working on my Doctorate degree in Instructional Education at Lindenwood University. As part of my degree requirements I am conducting research to examine special education and regular education perceptions on special education students taking the MAP tests. I am also looking at the perceptions of special education and regular education teachers based on special education students' scores being included on teacher evaluations.

The survey should only take about 5-10 minutes to complete. There is no compensation for responding. The survey will be confidential so do not include your name. Copies of the project will be provided to my Lindenwood University Instructor and to my dissertation committee. If you choose to participate, please, answer all questions as honestly as possible. The first part is basic information about yourself and teaching experience. The second part will consist of questions relating to your opinions.

Thank you for taking the time to assist me in my doctoral pursuit. If you have any questions about any of the questionnaire items or about my research, please feel free to contact me at (417) [redacted]. Thank you for your time and valuable assistance. If you are not satisfied with the manner in which this study is being conducted, you may report (anonymously) any complaints to Lindenwood University.

Sincerely,

Deborah Taylor
Special Education Teacher
Graduate Student

Dissertation Chair-Dr. Brad Hanson
[redacted]

Appendix D

Informed Consent Form

LINDENWOOD

INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

Special Education Students and Standardized Testing

Principal Investigator: Deborah Taylor

Telephone: [redacted] E-mail: [redacted]

Participant _____ Contact info _____

1. You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Deborah Taylor under the guidance of Dr. Brad Hanson. The purpose of this research is based on the need for more information related to the success of special education students taking the same standardized assessments as their regular education peers.

2. a) Your participation will involve completing a brief survey.

   b) The amount of time involved in your participation will be 5-10 minutes. Third grade regular education teachers and special education teachers from Southwest Missouri will be included in the study. There are 19 counties in Southwest Missouri that include 214 elementary schools. There will be approximately 856 teachers asked to participate in the survey.

3. There are no anticipated risks associated with this research.

4. There are no direct benefits for you participating in this study. However, your participation will contribute to the knowledge about teachers' perceptions on special education students taking standardized assessments and if those perceptions influence special education students' performance on standardized assessments.

5. Your participation is voluntary and you may choose not to participate in this research study or to withdraw your consent at any time. You may choose not to answer any questions that you do not want to answer. You will NOT be penalized in any way should you choose not to participate or to withdraw.

6. We will do everything we can to protect your privacy. As part of this effort, your identity will not be revealed in any publication or presentation that may result from this study and the information collected will remain in the possession of the investigator in a safe location.

7. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, or if any problems arise, you may call the Investigator, Deborah Taylor at [redacted] or the Supervising Faculty, Dr. Brad Hanson at [redacted]. You may also ask questions of or state concerns regarding your participation to the Lindenwood Institutional Review Board (IRB) through contacting Dr. Marilyn Abbott, Provost, at MAbbott@lindenwood.edu.

I have read this consent form and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I will also be given a copy of this consent form for my records. I consent to my participation in the research described above.

_____	_____
Participant's Signature Date	Participant's Printed Name
_____	_____
Signature of Principal Investigator Date	Investigator Printed Name

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Vita

Deborah Taylor graduated in 1985 from Ranum High School in Denver, Colorado. Several years after high school, Deborah attended Arizona State University and graduated with a Bachelor's Degree in Special Education in December 1998. In January 1999, Deborah took her first job at Austin Centers for Exceptional Children (ACES) in Peoria, Arizona. Deborah moved to Missouri in August of 1999 and took a special education job with the Dallas County School District in Buffalo, Missouri. Deborah taught in Buffalo, Missouri, for a year and took three years off to raise her son. She began working for Nixa School District in June of 2004. In 2009, Deborah earned her Master's Degree in Curriculum and Instruction from Lindenwood University. In 2013, Deborah earned her Master's Degree in Administration from Lindenwood University. In August 2015, Deborah began working in Clever, Missouri, with elementary special education students.