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Teacher Perceptions Of The Achievement Of Students With Learning Disabilities On Statewide Assessments

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TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF THE ACHIEVEMENT OF STUDENTS WITH LEARNING
DISABILITIES ON STATEWIDE ASSESSMENTS

by

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A dissertation proposal submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
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ABSTRACT

Each year as a growing number of students with learning disabilities are included in statewide assessments, teacher perceptions and beliefs toward student achievement are being identified and examined. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001(NCLB) and the 2004 reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004) raise the achievement expectations of students with disabilities and require that teachers are knowledgeable about state academic content and achievement standards (Thompson, Lazarus, Clapper, & Thurlow, 2006). State departments of education are responsible to ensure that teacher competencies and expectations are specific to the achievement of grade level content standards (Thompson, et al., 2006). Educational reform, increased knowledge in the teacher-learning process, and greater access to the general education curriculum require changes in instructional practice.

This study investigated special education teachers' perceptions, backgrounds and beliefs related to test performance of third grade students with learning disabilities who passed the reading portion of the state assessment in Florida, the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT). The comparative descriptive research design was used to identify these factors and their effects in the study (Creswell, 2002). Quantitative data collection was used. A survey instrument was developed to include information on teachers' background, beliefs, experience, and perceptions toward statewide assessments.

The survey was sent to seventy six third grade teachers of students with learning disabilities. Teachers receiving the survey were categorized into two groups based on the outcome of the 2007 FCAT in reading. Significant differences between teacher responses were

found in the areas of professional development for test accommodations, co-teaching, and working with professionals in the general curriculum. Response to survey items on service delivery models indicated that students who spend the majority of time in the general education classroom or in a resource room setting have increased student achievement on statewide assessments. Differences were also found between teachers on questions related to school location, percentage of minority students, students who are eligible for free and reduced lunch, and positions employees held in education by the teachers in the study. One of the most significant findings of this study concluded that increased time spent in the general education classroom and collaboration of special education teachers with general education staff proved to be most beneficial when addressing the needs of students with learning disabilities and statewide assessment. The concept of teacher knowledge base and continued awareness of perceptions and beliefs addressed in this study allowed for further research investigations.

Dedicated to

My Children

Nicole Marie Elizabeth Gromoll & Michael Walter Steven Gromoll

My answer and my reason

and

My Husband

Kim Walter Vladimir Gromoll

The love of my life

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I have come to the frightening conclusion. I am the decisive element in the classroom. It is my personal approach that creates the climate. It is my daily mood that makes the weather. As a teacher I possess tremendous power to make a child's life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or humor, hurt or heal.

In all situations, it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated, and a child humanized or dehumanized.

-HAIM GINOTT

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To the teachers in my pilot group, thanks for coming through not once, but twice. And for all the teachers who work in a profession that pays too little and takes so much. You are the best and I am fortunate to know you.

For the students who are challenged by life, our exceptional students, we need to continue to work hard to know you. Know what we can do to make it happen for you. We need to remember why we are here and see that as a priority. As professionals, that is our responsibility and our goal.

To my children, Nik and Mike, no matter what I am, whatever I become, you are my greatest joy and the reason I do what I do. You never cease to amaze me. Live your dream, no matter how long it takes you to accomplish it. I love you, I love you, I love you.

To my husband, Kim, long ago, you became my family. You were the one who knew I could even when no one else thought so. I am grateful for your unconditional and constant love. You remain the single most important person in my life. Thank you for understanding and being there for me <u>no matter what</u>. I love you forever.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

State boards of education and local school districts are setting high standards for accountability in education for all students. Federal legislation addresses the need for accountability for all students including students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment (Nagle, Yunker, & Malmgrem, 2006; Turnbull, 2005). Students with learning disabilities are entitled to additional resources and support to access and master the general education curriculum as measured through statewide and district wide assessments. Despite the focus on reading development and support for students with learning disabilities, many students continue to struggle with learning to read (Atkinson, Wilhite, Frey, & Williams, 2002; Gersten, Fuchs, Williams, & Baker, 2001). Emphasis on accountability and school reform to improve student outcomes has lead to increased focus on teacher effectiveness to improve quality of instruction. Educators are being held to high standards in meeting the needs of students who require additional strategies and accommodations. Educational reform is focused on greater access for students with disabilities to the general education curriculum (Bowen &Rude, 2006; Nagle et al., 2006; Roach, Niebling, & Kurz, 2008). Additionally, increased knowledge in the teacher-learning process requires changes in instructional practice (Boardman, Arguelles, Vaughn, Hughes, & Klingner, 2005).

The identification and use of effective reading practices contributes significantly to the success of students with learning disabilities who are integrated in general education classrooms (Schmidt, Gozendal, & Greenman, 2002). Therefore, special education teachers are expected to include instructional approaches in their classrooms that would serve the needs of diverse

students and improve learning. The effectiveness of instruction is associated with significant increases in reading ability and improved performance on statewide assessment for students with learning disabilities (Albus, Shyyan, & Thurlow, 2006).

Effective teachers possess a rich understanding of pedagogical and content-specific knowledge (National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities, 2004). In order for students with learning disabilities to achieve the most significant gains on statewide assessment, teacher expectations and perceptions should be addressed. Many special education teachers believe that their perceptions of students' ability can directly impact the achievement outcome on statewide assessments (McGrew & Evans, 2003). Meeting the instructional needs in reading of students with learning disabilities related to their performance on statewide assessments requires additional research to determine effective instructional strategies that impact student achievement and classroom performance (McGrew & Evans; Schmidt, et al., 2002).

<u>Legislation</u>

History of Special Education Legislation

The education of students with disabilities has changed significantly as a result of federal legislation (Smith, 2005). In the past, students receiving services in special education were taught in self-contained classrooms without much access to the general education population. In 1972, the Pennsylvania Association of Retarded Citizens (PARC) challenged the law which excluded individuals with moderate handicaps and denied access to public school education. The courts ruled that students with disabilities ages 6 to 21 were entitled to a free appropriate public education (FAPE), and that it was desirable to educate these students in programs that were designed for their peers who did not have disabilities (Yell, 2006). In 1973, Congress passed

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Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act was the first federal civil rights law to protect the rights of persons with disabilities (Turnbull, 2005).

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

The initial legislation related to education of students with disabilities was the Education for All Handicapped Children (EAHCA) enacted in 1975. The EAHCA was the most significant involvement of the federal government with special education to date. The EAHCA, better known as PL 94-142, mandated that students with disabilities had the right to nondiscriminatory testing, evaluation and placement procedures (Yell, 2006). The act required that the school districts provide administrative procedures so that parents could dispute decisions made about their child's education. Public school districts were required to formulate an individual education plan that would resemble the education experience of non-disabled peers. The implementation of Public Law 94-142 in 1975 guaranteed students with disabilities a free appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE) based on their individual needs (Roberts & Maher, 1995). During the initial years, Public Law 94-142 emphasized the provision of services to students who had formerly been denied access to an education (Carnine & Granzine, 2001). The goal of special education was to ensure that students with disabilities were provided with an opportunity to attend and profit from education in special education classrooms (Vaughn & Linan-Thompson, 2003).

In 1990, the EAHCA was re-authorized and renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). IDEA 1990 emphasized the inclusion of the student with disabilities in the Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) transition process when the student was 16 years

or older. Autism and traumatic brain injury were added to the list of disabilities covered under IDEA (Smith, 2005).

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1997 (U.S. Department of Education, 2002b) gave all students with disabilities the right to public education. It also required that all students with disabilities participate in a state's accountability system. Yell (2006) stated that, " By adopting the 1997 amendments to the IDEA, Congress indicated that the goal of the amendments was to improve the effectiveness of special education by requiring demonstrable improvements in the educational achievement of students with disabilities" (p. 74). Recent years have seen an increasing concern on the quality of outcomes for students with disabilities under IDEA (Ysseldyke, Thurlow, Kozleski, & Reschly, 1998).

In November 2004, Congress adopted revisions to IDEA. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA,2004) supported high-quality preservice preparation, scientifically-based early reading programs and instructional practices, early intervention services to access learning and behavioral needs of children, Response to Intervention (RtI) as part of the problem solving delivery system, emphasis on early intervention to prevent the development of a disability, and focus on student outcomes and performance using assessment methods that yield useful interventions for delivering interventions (Prasse, 2006).

No Child Left Behind

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) was signed into law in January of 2002. NCLB held school districts accountable to high outcomes for all students, so that the academic potential of students with disabilities was as high in priority as their non-disabled peers (Bowen & Rude, 2006). The six major principles of NCLB include: accountability, highly qualified teachers,

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scientifically-based instruction, local flexibility, safe schools, and parent participation and choice (Turnbull, 2005).

A central tenet of NCLB is assessment as a major component of special education programs that directly impact teaching practices (Bowen & Rude, 2006). There is a high expectation from NCLB that students with disabilities will participate in state assessments with their general education peers and that schools show adequate yearly progress (AYP) for all students (Bowen & Rude). An expected result of including students in statewide assessments is that students with disabilities will have improved academic performance. Another result of participation in large scale assessments is that teachers will have higher academic expectations for students with disabilities and that through instructional changes students will have improved instruction (Bowen & Rude, 2006). Participation in statewide assessments should lead to effective teaching, improved learning, acquisition of literacy skills, learning strategies and social skills that allow students with disabilities access to the general curriculum (Gartland & Strosnider, 2004). These mandates impacted students with learning disabilities by increasing accountability and funding for Title I schools, providing teacher incentive funds related to student achievement, initiating school improvement funds for school improvement in challenging schools, and developing tutoring and after school instruction (U.S. Department of Education, 2007a).

Statewide Assessment

Federal legislation mandating standards based assessment and reform has focused on the progress of students in the classroom (Albus, et al., 2006). The national trend in education holds teachers and schools accountable for the achievement outcomes of their students while

emphasizing high stakes testing (U.S. Department of Education, 2002a). Students with

disabilities are being included in the general education classroom in increasing numbers (Albus,

et al.). The Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) is used in Florida to determine if

the student is meeting standards of academic performance. Schools are expected to ensure that

all students perform with high educational standards. Teachers are expected to support the needs

of all learners (Stone & Doane, 2002).

State and district-wide assessments are important as these assessments impact many

facets of a student's educational life. Testing results can affect the individual student, school

administration, the classroom teacher, and school district. Results for individual students may

affect their promotion and retention, grade level placement, need for remediation, and ultimately,

graduation (Guthrie, 2002; Heubert & Hauser, 1999).

Conceptual Framework: Statement of the Problem

"A teacher's knowledge and beliefs are influenced by the immediate contexts of the

classroom and the students, the larger contexts of the state and national policies, and the

surrounding context of culture and norms." (Hoy, Davis, & Pape, 2006, p.717). The standards

movement represents efforts by national organizations in the United States to identify instruction

that supports positive schooling outcomes (Hoy, Davis, & Pape, 2006). Recent legislation such

as No Child Left Behind and the Individual with Disabilities Education Improvement Act have

changed educational practices (Wood, 2004). This legislation supports the inclusion of students

with learning disabilities in high stakes testing. The outcome of state mandated testing seems to

depend on how state policy is interpreted and whether teachers' beliefs are influenced by other

factors (Cimbricz, 2002). This study researched and identified these factors and investigated

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teacher perceptions and beliefs related to statewide assessments and achievement of students with learning disabilities. Teacher expectations may affect the type and level of instruction that students with learning disabilities receive and may have a significant influence on overall learning and performance (Austin, 2003; Palmer, Stough, Burdenski, & Gonzales, 2005). The identification of teacher perceptions of student performance provided insights on teacher beliefs related to reading and achievement on state assessments.

Purpose and Significance

The focus of this study was to investigate perceptions and beliefs of special education teachers on the performance of students with learning disabilities related to state assessment results in an urban school district in central Florida. Quantitative data were collected using the Teacher Perception and Beliefs survey and the Florida Department of Education website. The data provided detailed descriptions of participants' perceptions and beliefs as well as implications their perceptions and beliefs have on student achievement in statewide assessments.

Overview Questions

This study was designed to answer the following research questions:

1. What differences in teacher perceptions and beliefs toward statewide assessments are present among teachers of students with learning disabilities?

2. What differences in professional development and service delivery models are present in these settings in which there were differences in teacher perceptions and beliefs toward statewide assessments?

Limitations and Delimitations

There are several limitations to this study. One was the small sampling size of the participants. The focus of this study was on perceptions, strategies, and beliefs of special education teacher on student achievement in statewide assessments. The limited sampling size decreased the generalizability of the findings (Creswell, 2003). Given the limitation of the size of the representative sample, the findings were specific to provide descriptions of teacher perceptions, strategies, and background.

Another limitation to the study was the quality and accuracy of responses given in the survey instrument. The study researcher could only report the responses provided by the teachers who participated in the study and was dependent on the honestly and accuracy of the responses that the teacher participants provided. The nature and time limitation of the study did not allow for observations directly made by the study researcher. Therefore, a limitation was the accuracy of the responses given by the participants (Creswell, 2003).

Another limitation was the diversity of the schools identified in this study. Identification of elementary schools across the school district did not allow for control in which demographic area these schools were selected as the selection of these schools is dependent on identification of a core sample of special education teachers whose students passed the reading portion of the FCAT (2007). The identification of these participants was dependent on the information provided from the FDOE website. The second group of teachers was dependent on the response of teachers willing to participate in the study and approval of principals. The study researcher could not determine school location prior to the teacher participant approval. It was possible that demographics impacted the results of the variables of schools participating in this study.

Finally, this study assumed the strategies provided in the survey are representative of teaching strategies used by effective teachers. As delimitation to the study, the survey instrument was designed to include strategies which are identified as effective as a result of research-based investigation and student outcomes (Albus, et al., 2006). This research sought to indicate the implementation of these practices in participants' classrooms.

This study encourages continued research to investigate the relationship of teacher perception and beliefs of student achievement and the performance of students with learning disabilities on statewide assessment. Further research may include studies of student performance on various other statewide assessments based on their demographic region. Still other research may include analyzing student performance on math, writing, science and social studies on the FCAT or additional statewide assessments. Finally, additional research may evaluate the relationship of teacher perceptions on classroom outcomes instead of statewide assessments.

<u>Definition of Terms</u>

The following definitions are included to clarify terms used in the proposed study:

1. Accountability- A systematic method to assure stakeholders, educators, policymakers, and the public that schools are producing the desired results. Accountability includes common elements such as goals, indicators or progress toward meeting those goals, measures, analysis of data, reporting procedures, and consequence or sanctions (Ysseldyke, Thurlow, et al., 1998).

2. Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) - The Federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 requires states to evaluate the performance of all students in all public schools in order to determine whether schools, school districts, and the state have made adequate yearly progress

(AYP). Florida's approved accountability plan uses the same FCAT test and definitions of "grade level" as does the A+ Plan and includes specific criteria for determining and reporting AYP for all schools (FDOE, 2006a).

3. Central Tendencies- A score in a set of scores or a frequency distribution that is typical or representative of all the scores. Measures of central tendency are the mean, median and mode (National Research Council, 2002).

4. Comparative Descriptive Research Design- A research design in which data are collected to describe and compare two or more groups of participants or entities (National Research Council, 2002).

5. Criterion Reference Tests (CRT) - A test for which a score is interpreted by comparing it to levels of performance established for the test by professionals in the field that the test addresses (National Research Council, 2002).

6. Descriptive Research- A type of research that has the goal of describing what, how or why something is happening (National Research Council, 2002).

7. Descriptive Statistics- Statistics used to describe, organize and summarize data (National Research Council, 2002).

8. Effective Instructional Strategies- Teaching techniques when implemented provide positive results on student achievement on standardized assessment, criterion-based testing, and classroom performance. Effective teaching is the basis of successful learning. Effective teaching identifies and builds on prior knowledge, makes real-life connections, develops deep understanding and monitors and reflects on learning.

9. Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) - Part of Florida's overall plan to increase student achievement by implementing higher standards. The FCAT, administered to students in Grades 3-11, contains two basic components: criterion-referenced tests (CRT), measuring selected benchmarks in Mathematics, Reading, Science and Writing from the Sunshine State Standards (SSS); and norm-referenced tests (NRT) in Reading and Mathematics, measuring individual student performance against national norms (FDOE, 2001).

10. Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)- The Section 504 regulation requires a school district to provide a "free appropriate public education" (FAPE) to each qualified person with a disability who is in the school district's jurisdiction, regardless of the nature or severity of the person's disability (U.S. Department of Education, 1999a).

11. Inclusion- Inclusion is a term which expresses commitment to educate each child, to the maximum extent appropriate, in the school and classroom he or she would otherwise attend. It involves bringing the support services to the child (rather than moving the child to the services) and requires only that the child will benefit from being in the class (rather than having to keep up with the other students). Proponents of inclusion generally favor newer forms of education service delivery. Full inclusion means that all students, regardless of handicapping condition or severity, will be in a regular classroom/program full time. All services must be taken to the child in that setting (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 1993)

12. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEIA)- This Act is a reauthorization of IDEA 1997. The changes in IDEIA include: adding NCLB language related to highly qualified special education teachers, increasing full funding to special education by 2011, changing eligibility for classification as having LD, adding flexibility to attendance at

IEP meetings, creating a pilot demonstration for multiyear IEPs, deleting the requirement for short-term objectives on the IEP, and modifying suspension and expulsion requirements (Smith, 2005).

13. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 1997 (IDEA 1997)- This Act strengthens academic expectations and accountability for the nation's 5.8 million children with disabilities and bridges the gap that has too often existed between what children with disabilities learn and what is required in regular curriculum (U.S. Department of Education, 2002b).

14. Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)-An educational setting or program that provides a student with disabilities with the chance to work and learn to the best of his or her ability; it also provides the student as much contact as possible with children without disabilities, while meeting all of the child's learning needs and physical requirements (FDOE, 2006a).

15. Likert Scale- A response scale in which participants respond to questionnaire items about their beliefs and attitudes by indicating varying degrees of intensity between two extremes such as like/dislike and agree/disagree (National Research Council, 2002).

16. Norm Referenced Tests- A test for which a score is interpreted by comparing it to the scores of a comparison or norming group of persons who took the test. The similarity of an individual to the persons in the comparison group influences the accuracy of interpretation (National Research Council, 2002).

17. Pilot Study- A trial run of all or some parts of a research study. Researchers often pilot test their data-collection procedures and instruments (National Research Council, 2002).

18. Quantitative Data- Numbers and measurements (National Research Council,

2002).

19. Quantitative Research- Research in which the data are numbers and measurements. In quantitative research, there is an emphasis on control of the variables in the study (National Research Council, 2002).

20. Reliability- The extent to which a measure produces the same results over multiple administrations (Devlin, 2006).

21. Representative Sample- A subset of a population used in a research study whose characteristics are generally reflective of the characteristics of the larger population that the sample is taken to represent. If a sample is not representative of the larger population, then any conclusions based on the sample might not hold for the larger population (National Research Council, 2002).

22. Response to Intervention (RTI)- Response to intervention represents a change in behavior or performance as a function of an intervention (Gresham, 2003).

23. Specific Learning Disability - A heterogeneous group of psychological processing disorders manifested by significant difficulties in the acquisition and use of language, reading, writing, or mathematics (FDOE, 2001).

24. Stratified Random Sample-is the process of selecting a sample in such a way that identified subgroups in the population are represented in the sample. Within this sample, participants are chosen randomly (Gay & Airasian, 2003).

25. Sunshine State Standards (SSS)- The Sunshine State Standards were approved by the State Board of Education in 1996 to provide expectations for student achievement in Florida. The Standards approved in 1996 were written in seven subject areas, each divided into four

separate grade clusters (Pre K-2, 3-5, 6-8, and 9-12). This format was chosen to provide flexibility to school districts in designing curriculum based on local needs. However, as Florida moves toward greater accountability for student achievement for student achievement at each grade level, the Sunshine State Standards have been further defined. In subject areas of language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies, the Sunshine State Standards have been expanded to include Grade Level Expectations. These Grade Level Expectations will eventually become the basis for state assessments at each grade 3-10 in language arts, and mathematics-and may eventually be used in state assessments in science and social studies (FDOE, 2006a).

26. Teacher Perceptions - The teacher's ideology, demography, beliefs and predisposition toward a given topic or ideal. Teacher perceptions toward state testing does matter and influence what teachers say and do, so, too, do other things, such as teachers' knowledge of subject matter, their approaches to teaching, their views of learning, and the amalgam of experience and status they possess in the school organization. As a result, the influence state-mandated testing has (or not) on teachers and teaching would seem to depend on how teachers interpret state testing and use it to guide their action. Moreover, the influence state testing may or may not have on teachers and teaching expands beyond individual perceptions and actions to include the network of constructed meanings and significance extant within particular educational contexts (Cimbricz, 2002).

27. Validity (Test Instrument)- The degree to which an instrument measures what it is designed to measure and the degree to which it is used appropriately (National Research Council, 2002).

28. Validity (Research)- The degree to which the conclusions of a research study are supported by evidence and can be trusted (also referred to as internal validity) (National Research Council, 2002).

Ethical Considerations

Among the ethical considerations of this study was to ensure the confidentiality of each of the participants. Special education teachers needed to know that their comments were accurately and respectfully considered. Full support from administration was crucial to the significance of the study in order for the researcher to gain access to the special education staff and the facilities. Responses to the survey remained anonymous so as to ensure the accuracy was reflective of the teachers' views.

Summary and Contributions to the Field

As the demands of reform and accountability are ever evolving in special education legislation, teachers are expected to examine their beliefs toward educational outcomes (Seed, 2008). Reading development is the center of education and is integral to academic success. It is important to effectively serve students in elementary settings to enhance early literacy and reading development. Focus on reading performance and educational outcomes require special education teachers to reexamine their teaching beliefs and perceptions so as to improve student achievement in large scale testing. This study attempted to identify areas to consider in meeting the needs of students with learning disabilities.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Researchers have studied teacher perceptions and beliefs for over a quarter of a century (Hoy, Davis, & Pape, 2006). Early research indicated that teacher beliefs about learning have effects on students' behavior and influences their learning environment (Bussis, Chittenden, & Amarel, 1976). Teacher beliefs and perceptions are developed based upon multiple factors within the context of their work. Teachers work within school environments that are influenced by external factors such as legislation, policy mandates, and school procedures. Teacher beliefs are also influenced by their teaching and learning environments related to literacy, learning, and instruction that define and determine student outcomes (Fuchs, Fuchs, & Phillips, 1994; Schmidt, et al.). With the increase in recent mandates related to expectations on student achievement, especially in reading, it is important to examine teacher perceptions and beliefs about student achievement.

In addition, accountability for improved student outcomes for all students, including students with disabilities, is a central tenet of current legislation. As students with disabilities are increasingly educated and assessed in general education classrooms with their nondisabled peers, teachers' beliefs and resulting instruction have important implications. Recently, student outcome measures, as collected through state assessment systems mandated by state and national policies and legislation, have been described as an indicator of teacher quality (Blanton, Sindelar, & Correa, 2006). The influence of state mandated testing is dependent on how teachers perceive testing policy and use it to guide their actions (Cimbricz, 2002). As policymakers set standards

for teacher quality, links are made between what teachers do in the classroom and student achievement, especially in the area of reading.

Reading achievement is a key component to school success (Schmidt, et al., 2002; Sofie & Riccio, 2002). Current practices in language development with young children with disabilities required researchers to develop, validate and disseminate effective, acceptable and sustainable intervention programs (Denton, Fletcher, Anthony, & Francis, 2006; Sofie & Riccio, 2002). Identifying effective instructional practices for reading instruction is essential for ensuring that students with learning disabilities experience success from instruction. Poor reading abilities are strong predictors of school failure and the majority of students identified as having a learning disability experience reading difficulties (Schmidt, et al., 2002). The challenge of meeting the needs of an increasingly diverse student population, including students with learning disabilities, continues to be a concern (Atkinson, et al., 2002).

In the recent revision of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2007), record funding was provided for professional development for teachers in scientifically proven reading programs (U.S. Department of Education, 2007b). Reading First was the academic cornerstone of the NCLB. The purpose of this initiative was to fund professional development of scientifically based instructional programs, screening assessment, and statewide accountability and leadership structures (U.S. Department of Education, 2007b). A preliminary study of the Reading First program found that there was little evidence that Reading First was effective with the student populations it was designed to support. A large-scale study by the Institute of Educational Sciences (IES) focused on student achievement in first through third grade from 2004 through 2006. Preliminary results showed that children from schools receiving Reading

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First funding had no better reading skills than those from schools that didn't receive the funding (USDOE, 2008). These preliminary results showed students' reading scores were nearly indistinguishable from those students in other schools (Toppo, 2008).

Reading instruction is shaped by many factors, including teacher behavior and teacher effectiveness (Duffy, 2001). As reading is viewed as a crucial subject in school, it is imperative that it be well researched and taught in an effective manner. Teacher perceptions and beliefs toward statewide assessment were developed based on influential factors. These factors were presented in this chapter and reviewed throughout the study.

A conceptual model is presented on the following page to convey the study researcher's thoughts on the progression of information covered in Chapter Two. The study researcher's focus was teacher perceptions and beliefs. The section on teacher perceptions and beliefs precedes the other sections as it is the overlaying theme for this research. Three other areas are included as the study investigated how teacher beliefs within the context of current legislation and accountability. Because the study specifically investigated reading, reading instruction is included. In each section, subsections were determined. In the section on legislation, subsections included NCLB, IDEIA, statewide assessment, and standards reform. In the section on accountability, subsections included standards based curriculum, inclusion, and highly qualified teachers. In the final section on reading instruction, subsections included effective reading instruction, response to intervention, scientifically based instruction and research.
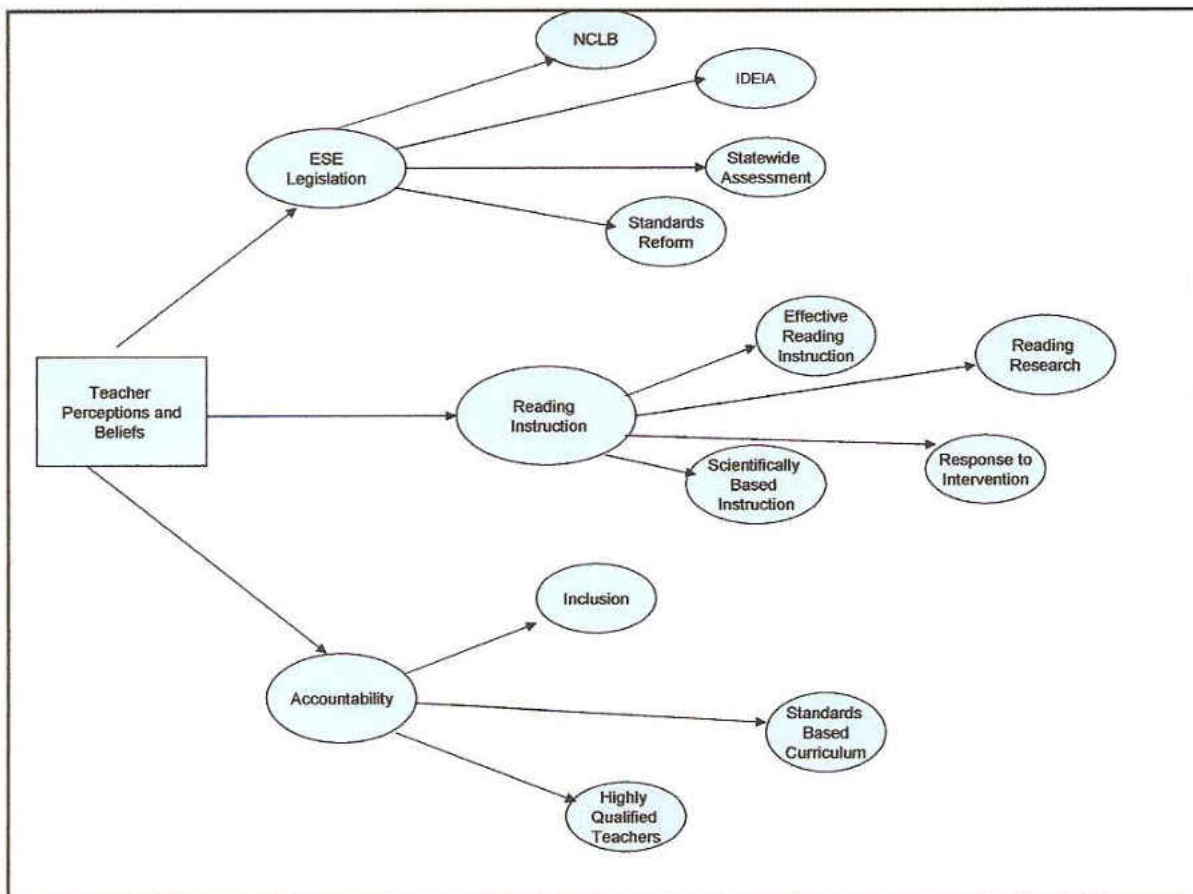
Figure 1 A conceptual model of Teacher Perceptions and Beliefs toward Statewide Assessment

<u>Teacher Perceptions and Beliefs</u>

Research has examined the relationship between teacher efficacy, beliefs and

implementation of new instructional practices and determined that teacher beliefs impact student

achievement (Benz, Bradley, Alderman, & Flowers, 1992). Efficacy beliefs have been

associated with instructional effectiveness but are difficult to interpret due to construct

definitions and measurement (Deemer & Minke, 2001). Measuring teacher perceptions and

beliefs continues to be an issue of importance to many individuals associated with education

(Burnett & Meacham, 2002). Teachers are concerned with their professional status, job security,

and merit promotion, school administration want to derive maximum benefits from their staffing dollar, government officials want to dispel beliefs concerning the decline of quality public employees, parents want the best for their children, and students want school success and promotion (Burnett & Meacham, 2002). Kagan (1992) found that teachers need to address both personally held beliefs and field-based theories about learning and instruction in both preservice teacher preparation and inservice teacher programs. Teachers needs to be knowledgeable of different epistemologies on which particular instructional interventions are based, well-researched instructional interventions may lose power and fail to achieve their intended outcome. As the numbers of inclusive classrooms increase, teacher beliefs influencing the educational experience of students with learning disabilities may help to provide opportunities for students to learn in a more flexible way (Ysseldyke, Thurlow, & Shin, 1995). Researchers have studied teacher knowledge and beliefs for over a quarter of a century (Hoy, Davis, & Pape, 2006). The findings have strengthened the understanding of the relationships of teacher beliefs on assessment, instruction and behavioral supports (Boardman, Arguellas, Vaughn, Hughes, & Klingner, 2005).

Teacher Perceptions and Beliefs Research

`The history of research on teaching and the qualities that produce effective teachers is relatively recent. According to Blanton et al. (2006), early studies in the 1940s, 1950s and into the 1960s focused on personal characteristics and variables. Blanton et al. found that in the 1960s researchers turned their focus to exploring the link between specific teacher behaviors and student learning. This approach is identified as the process-product approach to research and is based on behavioral psychology and child development. Process-product research focused on

defined teacher instructional behaviors and how these behaviors correlated with student achievement (Duffy, 2001). As a result of these studies, emphasis was placed on academic focus, time on task, and pupil progress monitoring (Rosenshine, 1976; 1979). In the 1970s, research began to address the complexities of teaching, classrooms, and schools (Blanton et al. 2006; Medley, 1979). Emphasis was placed on instructional time and efficient classroom management (Brophy, 1979). In the 1980s, research in the area of process-product went beyond efficient time management and expanded the view of what makes a teacher effective (Duffy, 2001). Teacher effectiveness needed to go beyond classroom management and investigate the teachers actually providing substantive instruction. Duffy suggested that teacher explanation during reading instruction provides increased effective instruction rather than reliance on structure and classroom management (2001).

Gorham and Zakahi (1990) investigated student and teacher perceptions of teacher immediacy and classroom learning outcomes. Teacher immediacy includes proximity to the student as well as eye contact, gestures, humor, praise, smiling relaxed body posture. The study found that teachers were able to monitor their behavior and outcomes using the process-product model. Gorham and Zakahi (1990) concluded that immediacy has been shown to influence motivation and expectancies and have some direct effect on learning outcomes.

Current research on teacher quality continues to expand and change. The focus continues on effective teaching and successful dimensions of teacher quality (Blanton et al., 2006). Accountability and performance standards dominate the teacher quality agenda (Blanton et al., 2006). Teachers with higher standards and strong beliefs regarding student work habits and classroom behavior are responsive to individual student performance and student achievement

(Fuchs et al, 1994). Teachers' negative attitudes may have far-reaching consequences such as increased behavior and academic problems (Montague & Rinaldi, 2001).

Attribution research on the relationship between teacher perceptions of student performance and their response to high- and low-achieving students may provide a basis for determining how elementary school teachers respond to instructional outcomes of students with learning disabilities (Clark, 1997). Clark identified situations in which identification of learning disabilities was a cause for failure. Clark stated that "teachers can be expected to assign low levels of personal responsibility to children with learning disabilities and thus will hold low expectancies for them" (p.70). School failure can result in a form of learned helplessness that not only influences academic performance but in consequences that can interfere with a student's adaptation to factors in and out of school settings (Palmer, Drummond, Tollison, & Zingraff, 1982).

Educators are concerned about the performance and achievement outcomes of students with learning disabilities (McGrew & Evans, 2003; Parish, 1997; Shaw, 2008). Some argue that a student's disability will prevent the student from attaining grade-level achievement standards but many special educators believe that high expectations and accountability will ultimately lead to improved instruction and learning for all students (McGrew & Evans, 2003). Staff members in low achieving schools sometimes view their students as limited in their learning ability and do not see themselves as responsible for raising students' academic performance (Cotton, 2001.) "Given the power of teacher expectations to influence student learning and their feelings about themselves, providing such a training is a good-perhaps essential-investment in our educational system" (Cotton, 2001, p.1).

According to a study by Crawford, Almond, Tindal, and Hollenbeck (2002), research studies exploring teacher perceptions of large scale testing have yielded mixed results. When assessment data are used as a measure of accountability, teachers react very negatively. Positive teacher perceptions regarding statewide assessment included the use of large-scale assessments as ways of improving educational outcomes, increased collaboration between general and special education, and involving all students in statewide assessment.

According to Haberman (2004), teacher perceptions and expectations influence the outcome of student achievement. Darling-Hammond (2000) stated that "the effects of a well-prepared teacher on student achievement can be stronger than the influences of student background factors, such as poverty, language background, and minority status" (p.38). Large scale assessments are designed for accountability at the classroom or school level. Inclusion of students with disabilities in large scale assessments provides information about the effectiveness of individual teachers or schools (Schulte et al., 2001).

In a study investigating teachers' perceptions of statewide assessment, Crawford et al., (2002) found that teachers who have more experience and knowledge of statewide assessment did not experience frustration about testing as did the peers with less experience and knowledge. Cimbricz (2002) examined the relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices and state-mandated testing. Cimbricz found that teachers' knowledge of subject matter, approach to teaching, views of learning, and educational experience determined how they used the information provided by state testing results. The influence state-mandated testing has on teachers perceptions depended on the teacher's interpretation of test results and if the teachers would use it to guide their actions in the classroom.

The standards movement established essential outcomes for educational practice in our schools. Teachers took on new roles as facilitators rather than as constructors of knowledge (Hoy, Davis, & Pape, 2006). Hoy, Davis, & Pape suggest that "these new perspectives on teaching increase the potential impact of teacher knowledge and beliefs as mediators between curricular documents and classroom instruction" (p.720). Recent legislation has required that changes occur in the classroom to promote adherence to standards and assessment. The emphasis on assessment has had a direct impact on teacher perceptions and beliefs.   This emphasis has produced greater attention in instruction on the education progress of students with learning disabilities (Albus, et al, 2006). Given the increase in accountability, it is important to examine teaching perceptions and beliefs in terms of legislation to ensure that educational needs for all students are being addressed.

Legislation

Overview

The success of students with learning disabilities in statewide assessment is dependent on many factors. One of these factors involved teacher perceptions and beliefs about standards and accountability and their interpretation of state testing policies (Hoy, Davis, Pape, 2006). Policymakers set student outcomes as gold standards for teacher quality (Blanton et al., 2006). In special education, the NCLB (2001) and IDEIA (2004) drive accountability policy at the federal level, while at the state level, accountability is primarily defined through the use of statewide assessment (Crawford & Tindal, 2006). The influences of statewide assessment seem to depend on how teachers interpret testing policy and put it into action (Cimbricz, 2002). The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) and No Child Left Behind

(NCLB) include significant changes that place new responsibilities on classroom teachers, schools, and districts that impact the education of students with disabilities.

No Child Left Behind

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) 2001 increased the achievement expectations for all students including students with learning disabilities (Thompson et al., 2006). The goal of the NCLB legislation is to increase student achievement, improve schools, provide parents with better information of their legal rights, and close the gaps in achievement in disadvantaged students (Nagle et al., 2006). In order to meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) goals, states, districts and schools of higher education are required to find ways to assist students with learning disabilities in achievement and proficiency on statewide assessment. AYP establishes clear goals for student learning, measures whether students are reaching these goals, and holding educators accountable for student achievement. (Haycock & Wiener, 2003). The No Child Left Behind (2001) also required that all teachers become "highly qualified" by the 2005-2006 school year. Highly qualified teachers must have: (a) a bachelor's degree, (b) full state certification or licensure, and (c) prove that they know each subject they teach (U.S. Department of Education, 2004).

NCLB holds educators in all schools and districts accountable for improving the academic achievement of all students (Nagle et al., 2006). NCLB raises the bar for what it means to be a successful school. NCLB is expected to shed new light on the performance of many schools. Under NCLB 2004, statewide assessment participation rates for students with learning disabilities must be above 95%, for adequate yearly progress. Appropriate accommodations for students with learning disabilities need to be aligned with the state's content standards and

promote access to the general curriculum (U.S. Department of Education, 2005).The Department of Education is also responsible for providing plans for assessment, professional development, IEP guidelines, and means for involving parents of students with learning disabilities. The success of students with disabilities on NCLB mandates is dependent on access to the general education curriculum and the capacity of educators to teach diverse learners (Nagle et al., 2006).

Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA)

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act was reauthorized in 2004 with the intent of aligning IDEIA with NCLB, as well as improving existing legislation (Bowen & Rude, 2006). Several significant changes were made in the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA). IDEA was renamed as Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA). These changes included (a) requirements for "highly qualified" special education teachers, (b) a track that will result in full funding, (c) changes in the composition of Individual Education Programs (IEPs) and committee involvement in the IEP process, (d) transition from school to postschool, (e) identification procedures for students with learning disabilities,(f) due process hearings,(g) expulsion and suspension of students with disabilities, and (h)additional less significant changes (Smith, 2005).

Major Components of NCLB and IDEIA

No Child Left Behind and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (2004) strengthened requirements for schools to be held accountable for the achievement of all students, including students with disabilities (Thompson et al., 2006). Teachers are required to understand state and federal legislation regarding academic content and achievement standards

and realize that these laws apply to all students (Thompson et al.). Thompson et al. go on to state that "teachers need to understand both state and federal legislation on the assessment of student achievement of academic content standards and the implication of state and district assessments for school accountability" (p. 443). The success of students with disabilities and current federal legislation is dependant on access to the general education system and the capacity of educators to teach diverse learners. Teachers from both general and special education need to recognize that students with disabilities are part of current educational reform (Nagle et al., 2006).

The tenets of NCLB and IDEIA are to include students with learning disabilities in the general education classroom and accountability systems (Center for Evaluation & Education Policy, 2006). Research on the benefits of educating students with learning disabilities in the general education classroom with their non-disabled peers has supported the development of quality programs (Cole, Waldron, & Majd, 2004). Both NCLB and IDEIA have requirements, expectations, and mandates for state and local governments (Center for Evaluation & Education Policy). IDEIA and NCLB were created partly in response to findings of nonparticipation in assessments for students with learning disabilities (Thurlow & Wiley, 2006). One of the purposes of reporting state assessment data is to use the results to make informed decisions on school effectiveness and educational programs. Access to the general education curriculum is significant as it is felt that this access would increase student achievement in state accountability systems (Thurlow & Wiley).

<u>Accountability</u>

Overview

Accountability has become the focus for schools and instructional personnel. Guthrie (2002) identified the recent attention placed on accountability as placing the emphasis on school improvement and equality of education for American students. Current education legislation stresses the importance of including students with disabilities in state accountability systems and sharing their performance results. This is in contrast to previous practices of excluding certain subgroups from the final report of statewide assessment (Thurlow & Wiley, 2006). Students with learning disabilities have been a great challenge to state educational agencies and school districts in accountability systems (Thurlow, Ysseldyke, Erickson, & Elliot, 1997).

Federal legislation has focused on the issue of accountability for students with disabilities by ensuring that all children benefit from their educational experience through equal access, high standards and high expectations, and become caring, productive, socially involved citizens who are committed to life-long learning (Ysseldyke, Krentz, et al., 1998). States are required to set performance goals and access progress for achieving these goals for students with disabilities (Ysseldyke, Krentz, et al.). Federal and state policies regarding the participation in statewide testing are based on the premise that all students can learn. Research in the field of education has supported this belief demonstrating that with the appropriate support and instruction students with disabilities can achieve educational gains (Crawford & Tindal, 2006).

The following section included areas which are required components for measuring accountability based on the legislation outlined in the previous section. Accountability was reviewed in the areas of standards based curriculum and educational reform, Free and

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Appropriate Education and Inclusion, Accountability for Student Learning, and Highly Qualified Teachers. Each of these subdivisions is included under the topic of accountability as they impact teacher views and beliefs for instructional practice in the classroom and statewide assessment.

Standards Based Curriculum and Educational Reform

Educational reform efforts have implemented new standards for individuals, schools, and school districts in high-stakes assessment. Standards-Based Reform is designed to improve student achievement through measures of accountability at federal and state levels (Crawford & Tindal, 2006). Students with disabilities are included in the standards movement, high-stakes educational reform, and state accountability systems (Defur, 2002). Educational reforms include: setting high academic standards, raising graduation requirements, focus on teacher quality, and creating high-stakes state assessment (Gartland & Strosnider, 2004). Federal regulations require that students with learning disabilities have access to the general education standards-based reform, accountability programs, and large scale testing program (Gartland & Strosnider; Schulte, Villwock, Whichard, & Stallings, 2001).

Standards based reforms have led to efforts to improve the overall educational quality by using high standards and holding students and educators accountable to these standards (McDonnell, McLaughlin, & Morison, 1997). The method for accessing if these standards have been met usually takes the form of statewide assessments. Standards based on growth require schools to make adequate yearly progress each year. State and district-wide assessments are an important part of demonstrating this accountability. Standards-based reforms have lead to school progress by reforming the general education curriculum and materials and encouraging the professional development of teachers and equalizing the resources for schools (Darling-

Hammond, 2002). Teachers learning and working together is considered the central element of major school reform efforts, including improving the inclusion of students with disabilities (Brownell, Adams, Sindelar, Waldron, & Vanhover, 2006). The success of students with disabilities depends on multiple factors, including access to the general education curriculum and capacity of educators' beliefs that they can teach diverse learners (Nagle, Yunker, & Malmgren, 2006).

FAPE/Inclusion

IDEIA provides billions of dollars in funding to state and local communities to provide special education programs for students with learning disabilities. In order for states to receive federal funding, IDEIA requires that they provide free appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE) (Department of Education, 2005). The student in special education receives an Individualized Education Plan, or IEP, a key document that lays out how a child receives a free and appropriate education in the least restrictive environment (Department of Education, 2005).

A difficult challenge for school professionals in their implementation of statewide assessment programs is the federally mandated inclusion of students with disabilities. In the field of special education, NCLB (2001) and IDEIA (2004) drive accountability at the federal level whereas accountability at the state level is primarily addressed in high-stakes testing (Crawford & Tindal, 2006). Contributing to state and federal policy regarding the full participation of students with disabilities in statewide assessment is the premise that all students can learn (Crawford & Tindal).

Inclusion refers to the instruction of all students, with and without disabilities, in the general education classroom, unless substantial evidence is provided to show that this placement may not be in the student's best interests (U.S. Department of Education, 1999a). In conjunction with this trend, there has been an increased use of collaborative teaching as a model of instruction (Austin, 2001). In special education, professional collaboration is considered a powerful tool for teachers who serve students with disabilities. The assumption in this collaboration is that when teachers work together to achieve a common vision, they will be able to change their instructional practices in important ways (Brownell, et al., 2006). It is incumbent upon collaborative teachers to provide quality instruction for all students in their classroom (Austin, 2001). To achieve this goal, teachers must be optimally prepared for collaboration. An examination of the perceptions of collaborative teachers will provide valuable information in this process (Austin). Current trends in special education are moving in the general direction of greater inclusion of students with disabilities.

Current research addresses three models of inclusive teaching: (a) the consultant model, in which the special education serves as a consultant to the general educator in areas pertaining to curriculum adaptation, skills deficit remediation, and assessment modification; (b)the coaching model, in which the special education and general educators take turns coaching each other in the areas of the curriculum and pedagogy in which they are acknowledged as "experts"; and (c) the teaming or collaborative model, in which the special and general educator share equitably the tasks of lesson planning, implementation, and assessment (U.S Department of Education, 1999a).

In a study investigation of collaborative teachers, Austin (2001) provided some relevant information about the current state of collaborative teaching. Data were collected in the form of a survey instrument and a Semi-Structured Interview developed by the author. Results from the interview and the survey revealed that the collaborative teachers found that the overall experience of co-teaching was a positive one. General educators in the co-taught classes revealed that they did feel that they do more in the inclusive classroom and the special education teacher is viewed more as a visitor in the classroom. An examination of the survey instrument revealed that co-teachers may not have access to many of the recommended practices, preparations, and school-based supports. Implications of these results involved improvement in teacher preparation programs, increased mutual planning time for collaborative teachers, and increased involvement of administration in order for collaborative teaching to be effective (Austin).

The practice of including students with learning disabilities in general education classrooms has increased in recent years based on research and legislation that promotes access to the general education curriculum(Rea, McLaughlin, Walther-Thomas, 2002). Data on pullout programs for students with learning disabilities revealed unsatisfactory results in school achievement and long term benefits (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1995; Skrtic, 1995). Barriers to school success for these students include lower expectations, restricted curriculum focused on rote tasks, disconnection from general education curriculum, and negative attitudes resulting from school failure (Meyers & Skrtic, 1995; Andrews, 2000). Rea et al. conducted a study with eighth grade students with learning disabilities comparing pull out and inclusive programs and student achievement. The study results indicated a significant difference in the mean scores obtained in language and math with students in inclusive setting scoring higher in both standardized testing

and classroom grades. Results of this study indicate an improvement in academic outcomes for students with learning disabilities served in general education classrooms.

General education and special education teachers who work together inclusive classrooms need to rethink current practices in general education and develop new understanding related to inclusion and reconceptualize how students with learning disabilities are taught (Kraayenoord, 2003). General education teachers particularly reveal a need for inservice training focused on the unique classroom situations and needs of students with learning disabilities (Kraayenood). Preparing teachers for inclusive classrooms was implemented by colleges and schools throughout the country as part of reform efforts to improve teacher education and practice (Voltz, 2001). Interns experienced inclusive classrooms at a professional development school involving school personnel, university faculty, teacher interns and K-12 students. General education interns worked together with special education teachers to improve awareness of interns in general education and their role in an inclusive classroom. Involvement of special education teachers as an integral part of the team was part of the training received by the interns. Participants in this study shared perspectives on how special educators can be an active part of the general education classroom and contributors to the professional development of the interns (Voltz).

Inclusion for students with disabilities also encompasses involvement in statewide assessment. Both states and districts are required to report assessment results before the beginning of the school year (Thurlow & Wiley, 2006). Excluding students with disabilities from state assessments deprives these students and their parents from gaining knowledge about their academic progress (National Research Council, 1999).

Accountability for Student Learning

The field of education is currently influenced by the national movement of statewide assessment which makes schools and teachers accountable for the success of its students (U.S. Department of Education, 2002a). Large scale assessments are designed for accountability at the classroom or school level. Inclusion of students with disabilities in large scale assessments provides information about the effectiveness of individual teachers or schools (Schulte et al., 2001).

Abrahms, Pedulla, and Madaus (2003) investigated the effects of state-mandated testing programs and test results. These studies gathered information from teachers and administration using surveys, interviews and classroom observations. Abrams et al. summarized the findings from survey-based research from various states.In all of the states that are mentioned, high stakes were attached to test results at the school and/or student level. For example, Kentucky, Vermont, and Washington used these test results to hold students accountable. In Maryland, North Carolina, Texas and Virginia, test results were used to make highly consequential decisions at both the school and student levels. "The review of current research on teacher's perceptions of the state testing programs is organized around four main topic areas: (a) impact on classroom practices in terms of the content of instruction and the strategies used to deliver instruction, (b) the pressure to prepare students for the state test, (c) impact on teacher and student motivation and morale, and (d) views of accountability". (p. 19).

Ysseldyke et al. (2004) reviewed positive and negative consequences of high stakes testing from research and newspaper headlines. A key finding from this report stated, "If you begin with high expectations, students will achieve more, this provides the underlying

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framework for greater access to the general education curriculum through enhanced awareness of appropriate accommodations to access the curriculum" (p.81).

The curriculum standards were intended to include high expectations and clear outcomes for students. Regardless of stakes levels, the majority of teachers were positive about their states standards (Abrams et al., 2003). Abrams et al. suggested in their overview of teachers' perceptions that the state test, rather than the content standards is the more powerful influence on teacher practices. In the state of Florida, the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test is the state test that determines accountability for student learning.

The Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) is part of Florida's overall plan to increase student achievement by implementing higher standards. The FCAT is the statewide assessment and accountability system used to test grade levels 3 to 11 in the state of Florida containing two basic components: criterion reference tests (CRT) measuring selected benchmarks in Mathematics, Reading, Science, and Writing from Florida's standards, the Sunshine State Standards (SSS) and norm-referenced tests (NRT) in Reading and Mathematics measuring individual student performance against national reforms. The skills and competencies outlined in the Sunshine State Standards are also embedded in the material of the student's core classes (Florida Department of Education, 2001).

In the early 1970's, the statewide assessment of students selected grades was authorized. In 1976, the Florida Legislature approved assessments in Grades 3, 5, 8, and 11 including the nation's first high school graduation test. Since then, the Legislature has continuously supported assessment and evaluation activities in the state's public school system.

Accountability for student learning is the key focus of Florida's system of school improvement. Results from the statewide assessment program are the basis of Florida's system of school improvement and accountability. Student achievement data from the FCAT are used to report educational status and annual progress for individual students, schools, districts, and the state. The A+ school grades are based on the percent of students meeting high standards and the percent of students who make learning gains. Test results are broken down by the student, school, district and state level (Jones & Egley, 2004). Ultimately, teachers are the persons responsible for the achievement and accountability of student learning. NCLB incorporated an important mandate that teachers were to be come "highly qualified" in the subjects they teach.

Highly Qualified Teachers

IDEIA includes a requirement that special education teachers meet the required "highly qualified" mandate as seen in No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). This reauthorization is the first that included requirements related to teacher qualifications. "Highly qualified" means that special education teachers must be licensed in the subjects they teach in the content area. Special education teachers must have a state special education teacher certification, not hold an emergency, temporary, or provisional certification, and have a bachelor's degree.

Research indicated that the idea of a "highly qualified teacher" included other qualifications than those contained in NCLB (2001). Seed (2008) stated that good teachers are not only knowledgeable in their content areas but also adept at making content accessible and interesting to their students. Seed goes on to say that teachers need to embrace their professionalism to ensure that all students have high-quality teachers in all their classes. Research shows that well-prepared teachers are important for all students but especially for

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students who have greater needs such as students with learning disabilities (Darling-Hammond & Berry, 2008). Students with learning disabilities or students of color are usually the population that receives under-qualified inexperienced teachers. Darling-Hammond and Berry pose solutions for increasing the likelihood of highly qualified teachers working with students with learning disabilities: create a national teacher labor market, target incentives to attract qualified teachers, and improve teacher retention by improving current conditions. Factors such as school leadership, time for high-quality professional development, and teacher empowerment have a positive effect on the outcome of student achievement and teacher retention (Center for Teacher Quality, 2006). Teachers who are "highly qualified" must instruct reading according to state approved standards. The next section describes factors of reading instruction: scientifically based instruction, effective reading instruction, response to intervention, and reading research.

<div align="center">Reading Instruction</div>

Reading improvement is a national goal as indicated by the recent Reading First and No Child Left Behind initiatives (Bursuck, Smith, Munk, Damer, Mehlig, & Perry, 2004). With the emphasis placed on reading improvement by legislation and education reform, scientifically based instruction, effective reading instruction, response to intervention, and continued research are valuable components in preventing reading disabilities and optimizing the achievement of all students (Beringer, Abbott, Vermeulen, & Fulton, 2006).

Scientifically Based Instruction

A report from the National Reading Council (2000) contained scientific evidence that effective reading instruction begins early and includes instructional practices that develop

phonological awareness, alphabetic understanding, reading fluency, and the understanding of vocabulary and connected text. Beringer et al. (2006) conducted a study with second grade students who had reading impairments. Focus of the study was in the areas of word reading and reading comprehension. Results of the study indicated that it was important to focus on vocabulary development, knowledge of the alphabetic principle, accuracy and rate of real word reading, and accuracy and rate of text reading, and comprehension strategies to ensure that struggling readers achieve success. Beringer et al. concluded that struggling readers needed to master these components in order to meet high-stakes standards.

Effective Reading Instruction

Effective reading instruction is a major goal of special education (Therrien, Wickstrom, & Jones, 2002). Reading instruction is important for students with learning disabilities as 80% of the students identified with learning disabilities have difficulties with reading (Shapiro, Church, & Lewis, 2002). By fourth grade students need to read with sufficient comprehension and fluency to manage text types and text content (Strickland, 2002). If students do not learn reading inquiry skills by third grade their likelihood for graduation is significantly compromised (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998).

Students with reading deficits are served, at increasing levels, in the general education classrooms. Interventions to ensure success are being incorporated in the classrooms to increase teacher effectiveness. Begeny and Martens (2006) conducted a study involving twelve third grade students from an urban school district. These students were reading below grade level but were not currently diagnosed with an educational or psychological disability. The study divided the students into two groups and provided the groups with interventions in word-list training,

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listening passage preview, reading fluency. Several interventions proved effective as a result of this study. The interventions appear to be viable solutions to address students' needs at various levels, the interventions may be considered socially valid by educators as it involves a variety of instructional components, the instruction did not require a great deal of time, and the interventions did not require more than one or two teachers to carry out the instruction. Overall results included increased fluency, improved scores on pre and post test and on the Letter-Word Identification subtest of the Woodcock-Johnson.

Standards-based reform has lead to an increase in educators' attention to the instruction and assessment of students with disabilities (Albus, et al., 2006). Instructional practices and attention to students' individual needs determine the effectiveness of teaching strategies (Begeny & Martens; Drecktrah & Chiang, 1997; Palmer et al., 2005; Rankin-Erickson & Pressley, 2000). Current research highlights effective reading instruction in grades K-3 including the professional development in reading and assessment practices (O'Connor, Fulmer, Harty, & Bell, 2005). The goal is classroom implementation of scientifically based reading instruction by addressing the components of reading that have been linked to reading improvement in experimental studies (O'Connor et al.).

Teachers of students with learning disabilities struggle with the need to teach students how to read and how to accommodate the students' reading disability in classroom situations (Atkinson et al., 2002). A report by Snow et al. (1998) indicated that staff development in research-based literary practices is essential for preventing the development of reading problems. The report also indicated that struggling readers need more opportunity to read text at

appropriate levels of difficulty and apply strategies to meaningful activities to become self-sufficient.

Approaches to effectively teach reading have generated interest for several decades (Drecktrah & Chiang, 1997). Drecktrah and Chiang indicated that the majority of teachers (70%) believe a combination of two techniques: Direct instruction and whole language is effective to teach reading. Explicit reading instruction makes a difference on reading outcomes, especially for low achieving students (Denton et al., 2006). Under No Child Left Behind, early reading intervention gained attention through the Reading First Initiative (RFI). The RFI builds on a foundation of scientifically based research by providing struggling students with necessary resources to make significant progress in reading achievement (U.S. Department of Education, 2002a).

According to McCardle, Scarborough, and Catts (2001), skilled reading is the ability to achieve meaning from the text accurately and efficiently. In order to attain a high level of skill, two sets of abilities must be acquired: phonological awareness and reading comprehension. Many levels of reading strands, within these two components, need to be taught and learned simultaneously from the start of reading instruction (McCardle et al.). Students with learning disabilities need to be taught how to use strategic reading behaviors in order to comprehend text. Therefore, students who have difficulty comprehending text need to be taught explicitly how to carry out a strategy so that comprehension improves (Swanson & De LaPaz, 1998).

After interviewing teachers nominated as effective in promoting literacy, Pressley, Wharton-McDonald, Mistretta-Hampson, Yokoi, & Raskin (1997) identified excellent literacy instruction as a " balanced articulation of many components, including whole language and skills

instruction" (p.1). These teachers did not believe in watering down or slowing down instruction for students with academic difficulties. They did agree that motivation was critical and portrayed their classrooms as being filled with praise for reading achievement. These teachers identified concern for students with difficulties. The differences reported were providing more intensive and individualized instruction, particularly with respect to lower-order skills such as decoding (Pressley et al., 1997). The studies described in this section incorporated interventions that allowed many students who were considered at risk and met individual student needs within the general education classroom. Students with learning disabilities are served within the general education classroom. One of the reasons for this change is the incorporation of Response to Intervention in general education classrooms for both student who are at risk for reading disabilities as well as students already diagnosed with learning disabilities. Response to intervention practices are described in the following subsection.

Response to Intervention

Response to Intervention is a school wide service delivery method in general and special education that promotes successful school outcomes for all students (Glover & DiPerna, 2007; Shaw, 2008). The Individuals with Disabilities Improvement Act has influenced both general education and special education and have changed the way educators look at outcomes for students with disabilities (Bowen & Rude, 2006;). In special education, federal legislation is moving away from a system that prioritizes finding and labeling children and toward a system that prevents learning problems and concentrates more on effective interventions and students' response to these interventions (Fuchs, 2003; Prasse, 2006). Focus has been placed on student

outcomes and effective interventions, using assessment to provide useful information for developing and delivering interventions (Fuchs & Deshler, 2007; Prasse).

Response to early interventions in reading has been designed to improve the conditions that need to be in place to meet the needs of students with disabilities (Torgeson, 2000). The past decade has increased the urgency for researchers and educators to teach all children to read by the middle elementary years (Torgeson). Torgeson found that early reading failure has serious consequences for children's affective and cognitive development. He added that adequate reading skills and instruction involve knowledge and skills to comprehend the printed material that is consistent with their general language comprehension skills. Denton, Vaughn, & Fletcher (2003) showed that students with persistent reading difficulties respond to intensive intervention. Denton et al. found that students with persistent reading disabilities can benefit from intensive reading intervention as students in this study demonstrated growth in decoding and comprehension. In another study, students are identified as at-risk for reading disabilities in the first grade when his or her response to effective educational intervention is dramatically inferior to that of his or her peers (Compton, Fuchs, Fuchs, & Bryant, 2006). Early identification of these students who are students allowed teachers to design interventions to meet their individual needs and achieve progress in reading. The Response to Intervention (RtI) model places focus on effective instruction, improving student outcomes, and continuous progress monitoring of skills aligned with outcomes (Compton et al.).

Response to Intervention places a great emphasis on early identification of students at risk of academic failure (Fuchs & Deshler, 2007). The RtI concept in IDEA 2004 included a provision of appropriate learning experiences for all students. Optimal learning occurs when

skills and abilities are closely matched to the curriculum increasing the likelihood that students can be successful and maintain classroom placement (Johnson, Mellard, Fuchs, and McKnight, 2006).

Current educational outcomes of students serve as a basis for current policies related to services for students with learning disabilities. The President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education report released in 2002 provided an analysis of the nation's special education service delivery system to frame recommendations. This report recognized that students in special education have been segregated from general education and this segregation is detrimental. "Segregation results in lowered expectations of student performance and fewer system-level requirements for performance accountability" (p.11). In addition this report acknowledged that students may not be identified as students with special needs if they have not been exposed to the general education curriculum and instruction is not scientifically based.

Response to Intervention has emerged as a promising model of service delivery receiving the greatest amount of systematic attention by researchers and practitioners (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006). Primary prevention is performed during the elementary grades as instruction in the general education classroom (Fuchs & Fuchs). Fuchs & Fuchs go on to state that children who do not respond to this universal core program enter into a secondary prevention that is in research-based versions of RtI as scientifically validated small group tutoring. During the next phase of tertiary intervention the student's need for individualized rather than standardized programming is given to determine necessity for special education. Special education is viewed as a valuable resource within the prevention system with students entering and exiting as their progress warrants (Fuchs & Fuchs). Continued scientifically based research is necessary in

response to intervention as well as in reading to ensure that progress in our understanding of these areas continues.

Research

Vaughn, Klingner, and Bryant (2001) indicated that a variety of reading practices beneficial to students with disabilities who are struggling with reading. These practices include peer mediated instruction and collaborative strategic reading. Collaborative Strategic Reading addresses (a) meeting the learning needs of am increasingly diverse student population, including student with learning disabilities; (b) providing an instructional practice that enhances comprehension of text and skills to learn from the text; and (c) provide procedures that facilitate peer-mediated instruction. Results of this part of the study indicated that collaborative strategic reading enhanced reading outcomes and promoted reading comprehension and content-area reading. Peer-mediated instruction has been useful in providing engaged instructional time, modeling, feedback, increasing the quality of verbal interactions, and progress monitoring (Vaugh, et al.). Results in this part of the study indicated for struggling readers receiving most of their instruction in general education classrooms, effectively implemented peer-mediated strategies are a good tool for teachers to provide additional instruction, practice, and support of student needs. Vaugh et al states that research in the areas of peer mediation and collaborative strategic reading was only in its beginning stages and holds great promise for future implementation of meeting the diverse needs of students with learning disabilities in the general education classroom.

McCardle et al. (2001) discussed the importance of early literacy experiences early in the preschool period. McCardle et al. discussed the development of "strands" in the areas of

phonological awareness, alphabetic principle, decoding, reading comprehension skills, background knowledge of facts and concepts, broad and deep vocabulary, verbal reasoning abilities and sentence structure. According to McCardle et al. interactive development of all these strands is necessary in becoming a skilled reader. McCardle et al identified skilled reading as the ability to derive meaning from text accurately and efficiently. McCardle et al. reported that skill attainment by novice readers acquires two sets of abilities. First, in order to recognize printed words, children need to become aware that spoken words are composed of smaller elements of speech or phonological awareness. In addition, correspondences between sound and spellings or decoding allow students to acquire words by sight. Second, reading comprehension skills are acquired when students develop a storehouse of knowledge (McCardle et al.). Continued research for future intervention research was recommended to enhance the language-comprehension skills for children in need of assistance.

The National Reading Panel (2000) issued a summary of research evidence for effective instructional practices. This report contained scientific information that is valuable in preventing reading disabilities. Based on scientific evidence, the Panel emphasized the importance of instruction aimed at phonological awareness, alphabetic principal and phonological decoding, fluency training, and reading comprehension (National Reading Panel). Many studies indicate need for continuous research to identify and predict future reading ability and reading difficulties. Increased awareness of these research findings provide assistance for teachers who work with a diverse population as well as improve their overall quality of instruction.

Conclusion

Federal legislation requires inclusion and accountability for students with learning disabilities (Gartland & Strosneider, 2004). Participation in these assessments for students with disabilities must lead to involvement in general education curriculum, informed teaching interventions, improved learning, and the acquisition of reading development and literacy skills (Gartland & Strosneider). Professional development is required to ensure implementation of current scientifically-based strategies in reading instruction, response to intervention, collaboration, data collection, co-teaching, awareness of accommodations, and testing procedures in order to meet the individual needs of students with learning disabilities (Bursuck et al., 2004; O'Connor et al., 2005). The goal of including students with disabilities in high-stakes testing is to enhance student outcomes and use test results to provide improved teaching and learning (Crawford & Tindal, 2006).

Students with learning disabilities require teachers to have strong background knowledge of their unique educational needs in order to achieve success. Effective strategic reading instruction for students with learning disabilities is evident in classrooms that engage all learners in actively constructing knowledge (Schmidt et al., 2002). Schmidt et al. stated that effective instruction takes place in an environment in which students have frequent, consistent opportunities to read, write and talk about literacy. Successful instruction is shaped by teacher beliefs and collaboration between teachers and students in the classroom. The extent that teachers' believe in their capacity to affect student performance is one of the best predictors of improved student achievement (Benz, Bradley, Alderman, & Flowers, 1992).

Teacher effectiveness is difficult to measure and consequently is being inferred from students' performance (Berk, 2005). Berk has found numerous difficulties when isolating teaching as the sole explanation for student productivity. Jordan and Stanovich (2001) have found that measurement of academic achievement and achievement gains are a challenge to researchers as students with disabilities are difficult to compare based on differing achievement levels.

This study examined current legislation and formulated an instrument to measure teacher characteristics, perceptions and beliefs that could impact student performance outcomes. The focus of Chapter Three is to describe the methodology used to conduct this study and determine the characteristics, perceptions, and beliefs associated with teachers who were successful in attaining positive student achievement from their students with learning disabilities.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

<u>Introduction</u>

The central purpose of the study was to investigate whether special education teachers' perceptions and beliefs were related to their students' FCAT achievement. The researcher was attempting to identify beliefs and perceptions that were found among teachers who were successful in having their third grade students with learning disabilities pass the reading portion of the 2007 FCAT. A second purpose of the study was to explore group and individual differences, specifically in perceptions and beliefs toward students with learning disabilities and statewide assessment. The third purpose was to investigate whether special education teachers' professional development and service delivery models were related to their students' FCAT achievement. The researcher was attempting to identify what professional development and service delivery models were present among special education teachers who were successful in having their third grade students with learning disabilities pass the reading portion of the 2007 FCAT. Specific hypothesis related to the researcher's purposes are presented below.

<u>Research Hypothesis</u>

The first hypothesis was related to the first and second purpose and addresses the question What differences in teacher perceptions and beliefs toward statewide assessments are present among teachers of students with learning disabilities?

Hypothesis 1:

The mean for special education teachers who had the majority of SWLD pass the FCAT will differ significantly and positively (at the .05 level) in teacher perceptions and beliefs toward statewide assessment from the mean for special education teachers who did not have the majority of SWLD pass the FCAT.

The second and third hypotheses were related to the third and final purpose and addresses the question What differences in professional development and service delivery models are present in these settings in which there were differences in teacher perceptions and beliefs toward statewide assessments?

Hypothesis 2:

The mean score for special education teachers who had the majority of SWLD pass the FCAT will differ significantly and positively (at the .05 level) in the amount of professional development received from the mean score for special education teachers who did not have the majority of SWLD pass the FCAT.

Hypothesis 3:

.   The mean score for special education teachers who had the majority of SWLD pass the FCAT will differ significantly (at the .05 level) in the type of service delivery received from the mean score for special education teachers who did not have the majority of SWLD pass the FCAT.

Design

A quasi-experimental design was used to answer the research question since the participants in this study were not randomly assigned to groups. Assignment to groups was

dependent on student achievement outcomes. Group size could not be equal based on the 2007 FCAT results.

This study investigated special education teachers' perceptions, backgrounds, and beliefs in teaching third grade classrooms of students with learning disabilities who passed the reading portion of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) (FDOE, 2005). Ideology, demography, beliefs and perceptions of special education teachers were surveyed and data were collected. The comparative descriptive research design was used to identify how and why something is happening and how it affects other variables in the study (Creswell, 2002). Quantitative data collection procedures were used. A survey instrument was developed (Appendix A) to include information on teachers' background, experience, and perceptions toward statewide assessments. Approval from the Internal Review Board and school district was obtained (Appendix B and C). After selection of the participants and IRB approval the researcher began examination of the teacher survey instrument through a Delphi Study (Appendix D and E) to form revisions.

Setting and Population

The setting for the proposed study was in elementary classrooms in a school district in central Florida. Participation in this study was reliant on the agreement of the principals (Appendix F) and teachers (Appendix G) of 76 elementary schools. Principals from elementary schools in a school district in central Florida were contacted online prior to the online teacher survey disbursement. If principals were in agreement, the ESE teachers in those schools were contacted.

The results of FCAT 2007 reading scores were obtained from the Florida Department of Education website. Based on this information a group of ten teachers in a central Florida school district were identified as having the majority of students with learning disabilities (57% or more) pass the reading portion of the 2007 FCAT. The special education teachers in this group (Group A) were contacted by mail and were given an informed consent letter (Appendix H) and the revised Teacher Perceptions and Beliefs Survey. The special education teachers (Group B) in the remaining sixty-six schools were contacted online, provided with an informed consent letter, and the revised Teacher Perceptions and Beliefs Survey. Fifty-four teachers from Group B agreed to participate in the online survey. These special education teachers did not have the majority (39% or less) of their SWLD pass the reading portion of the FCAT. Principals from both groups of special education teachers were contacted online using the school district email system. Permission for conducting the survey was requested and information detailing the survey was given. Some principals responded via email identifying the teachers; others just gave permission so the researcher used the school email system to obtain their identity.

The sample for this study was special education teachers of students with disabilities from third grade classrooms located in one central Florida school district who agreed to participate in the study. The special education teachers were teaching in general education classrooms, self contained classrooms, and resource rooms. The third grade students with learning disabilities in these classrooms are required to take the FCAT. The third grade level was selected because of the implications of retention at that grade level should the student not pass the FCAT. Students are required to achieve a Level 2 in order to "pass" the FCAT and move on to the next grade level.

Schools in this study were located in urban inner city, urban fringe, rural, and suburban settings. Additional information on school demographics are included on school size, number of minority students, and free and reduced lunch recipients. Descriptive Statistics for nominal values are contained in Table 1.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics for School Demographics

	Measure	Group A %	Group A N	Group B %	Group B N
Minority Students	< 6 %	30%	3	2%	1
	6-20 %	10%	1	7%	4
	21-49 %	60%	6	33%	18
	50% <.		0	26%	26
# of Students	< 300			6%	1
	301-599	40%	4	22%	12
	600-899	50%	5	41%	22
	900 <	10%	1	22%	12
Fr./Red. Lunch	< 35%	40%	4	7%	4
	35-49 %	50%	5	22%	12
	50-74%	10%	1	24%	13
	75% <	0%	0	22%	22
Location	Urban Inner City	0%	0	28%	15
	Urban Fringe	10%	1	22%	12
	Suburban	90%	9	44%	24
	Rural	0%	0	2%	1

Seventy-six elementary schools were contacted for participation in the study. Sixty-four teachers from these schools agreed to participate. This level of participation resulted in an 84% response rate. Teachers from these groups are representative of special education teachers who teach third grade students with learning disabilities in central Florida. Additional descriptive statistics of teachers are represented in Table 2. Teachers in both groups A and B taught students with learning disabilities. Students with learning disabilities (SWLD) are a heterogeneous group of psychological processing disorders manifested by significant difficulties in the acquisition and use of language, reading, writing, or mathematics (FDOE, 2001). More descriptive statistics of teachers are reported in Table 3.

Table 2 Descriptive Statistics for Nominal Variables-Teachers Group A and Group B

	Measure	%	N	%	N
	Measure	%	N	%	N
Gender					
	Female	100%	10	94%	50
	Male	0%	0	6%	3
Ethnicity	Afric.Am.	10%	1	4%	2
	Asian Is.	0%	0	0%	0
	Pacific Is.	0%	0	0%	0
	Hisp.	0%	0	10%	5
	White	90%	0	81%	42
	Multi.	0%	0	6%	3
Degree	Bachelor	70%	7	62%	33
	Masters	30%	3	34%	18
	Specialist	0%	0	0%	0
	Doctorate	0%	0	4%	2
Cert.	4 year College-Educ.	89%	8	80%	41
	Alternative. Cert. Course	0%	0	10%	5
	Certif. Test	10%	1	10%	5

Table 3 Descriptive Statistics for Nominal Variables- Students

		Group A		Group B	
	Measure	%	N	%	N
Gender	Female	38%	82	28%	263
	Male	62%	132	72%	665
Ethnicity					
	Afric. Am.	13%	84	33%	1092
	Asian Is.	0%	0	.002%	10
	Pacific Is.	1%	7	.008%	30
	Hisp.	39%	244	37%	1190
	White	43%	271	28%	942
	Multi.	3%	19	2%	75

Group A= SWLD from Classrooms in which 57% or more passed the FCAT reading 2007
Group B= SWLD from Classrooms in which 39% or less passed the FCAT reading 2007

A description of the research goals and procedure were given to every third grade special education teacher in each of the participating schools. Administrators and teachers were given the opportunity to seek clarification and decline participation, if desired.

Special education teachers who completed the survey were offered a $5.00 gift card. These teachers contacted the researcher in order to identify themselves and their work location. The contact was for gift card reception only. Their identities when receiving the gift card remain confidential with the researcher. Teachers participating in the survey were reminded via email to participate two additional times if surveys were not returned within 30 days of the initial

distribution. Teachers were given the gift cards based on the honor system as the researcher did
not have a specific way for determining who had actually completed the survey.

Table 4 Descriptive Statistics Group A and B

Group	*N*	FCAT passing	Contact
Group A	10	57% or more	Mail
Group B	54	39% or less	Online

After selection of participants and approval of the Internal Review Board process at the
university and school district, the researcher distributed the survey instrument and obtained
information regarding teacher perceptions and teacher, student and school demographics. The
researcher developed and revised the Teacher Perception and Beliefs Survey. Summated scales
for each of the four independent variables (teacher demographics, school demographics, student
demographics, and teacher perception and beliefs of student achievement on statewide
assessments) were developed. Overall descriptive statistics: mean and calculated distribution was
calculated for each scale. A descriptive comparison research design was used when collecting
data for the survey (National Research Council, 2002). A design matrix was constructed to
organize and report data (Lomax, 2001; Shavelson, 1996) for differences in teacher
demographics, school demographics, student demographics and perceptions of student
achievement between the two categories of teachers. Validity for the survey was formed based
on the Delphi study conducted prior to final survey distribution.

Instrumentation

The proposed survey was designed to determine teachers' background, school

demographics, student demographics, and teacher perceptions and beliefs toward students with

learning disabilities, and statewide assessments. The survey was divided into four sections. The

first section consisted of questions regarding teacher background, i.e. race, gender, certification,

educational background and teaching experiences. The second section consisted of school

demographics, such as school location, school size, students receiving free and reduced lunch,

and minority students. The third section consisted of student demographics, including gender,

ethnicity, transient students, and types of disabilities.. The fourth section was a rating scale of

teacher perceptions and beliefs toward statewide assessment. The fourth section also included

test preparation for the FCAT. A six-point Likert rating scale was used. A neutral category was

not used so as to avoid eliciting a scaled response. Since the neutral category will provide

respondents an excuse not to answer a question, it will be of little value in this instrument (Gay

& Airasian, 2003).

The survey was developed in the following manner:

1. Based on the literature review of effective approaches in reading along with teacher

perceptions of student achievement, a preliminary copy of the instrument was drafted.

2. A Delphi study was conducted with a purposive sampling of teachers. The preliminary copy

of the survey was reviewed by nine teacher educators in reading education at the third grade

level. With their suggestions the instrument was revised. This survey was distributed to these

educators once IRB and district approval was obtained. Internal Review Board approval is

required as human subjects participated in this study. District approval was obtained to maintain accountability for the study.

3. The survey was modified based on feedback from Delphi study participants. The Delphi study participants were active reading teachers in the field of education who were currently teaching reading in an elementary school in the school district whose students had taken the FCAT in 2007.

The Delphi methodology was used in this survey research as it reflected the systematic solicitation of opinions from an expert panel concerning a particular topic (Dinnebell, McInerney, & Hale, 2006). Participants in a Delphi panel are generally recruited based on their expertise in a given topic. Delphi studies are conducted in successive rounds during which members rate items, summarize the items, and then review the revised items for further rating (Dinnebell, McInerney, & Hale, 2006).

A Delphi study was conducted with a purposive sampling of third grade teachers who prepared students for statewide assessment (FCAT). These teachers were contacted (Appendix D) and agreed to participate in the study. These teachers received an initial draft of the Teacher Perceptions and Beliefs Survey (Appendix E). The team was composed of a nine member teaching team which was successful in having students achieve adequate yearly progress based on state standards from previous years of statewide assessment. The third grade teachers responded to questions from an initial construction of the Teacher Perceptions and Beliefs Survey (Appendix E). This initial survey (Appendix E) was first reviewed by the Internal Review Board and school district prior to distribution to the Delphi study participants. Changes

were made to the survey based on the responses and comments from the third grade teacher

participants. Table 5 includes specific information of the Delphi study participants.

Table 5 Delphi Study Teacher Demographics

Teacher	School/Gr.	Gender	Ethnicity	Experience	Education	Certificate
Teacher 1	Sch.1/3rd	Female	White	2 years	Bachelors	Elementary
Teacher 2	Sch.1/3rd	Female	White	13 years	Bachelors	Elementary
Teacher 3	Sch.1/3rd	Female	White	17 years	Masters	Elementary
Teacher 4	Sch.1/3rd	Female	White	5 years	Bachelors	Elementary
Teacher 5	Sch.1/3rd	Female	Hispanic	5 years	Masters	Elementaty/ESOL
Teacher 6	Sch.1/3rd	Female	Multi.	10 years	Masters	Elementary/ESE
Teacher 7	Sch.1/3rd	Female	White	15 years	Bachelors	Elementary/Hist.
Teacher 8	Sch.1/3rd	Female	White	7 years	Bachelors	Elementary
Teacher 9	Sch.1/3rd	Female	White	10 years	Bachelors	Elementary

Selection of these teachers was based on their current placement in an elementary third

grade classroom setting, their role as general education instructors providing preparation for the

FCAT, and a student population which includes students with learning disabilities. The

construction of the survey was based on literature of statewide assessment studies (DeSimone &

Parmar, 2006; Woodfolk & Hoy, 1990). Questions from the survey were derived from some of

the questions used in a prior study analyzing teachers' beliefs about inclusion in middle school

math. Frankel and Wallen (2003) state that a way to check validity is to use a second instrument

to measure the same variable. Judgment of knowledgeable persons serves as a second

instrument. A Delphi study was used in this study as this form of survey research systematically solicits opinions from an expert panel on a particular topic (Dinnebeil, McInerney, & Hale, 2006). The Delphi study enabled the researcher to determine common and divergent perspectives among the nine teachers who participated in the study. The purpose of the Delphi study was to understand how representatives teaching reading to third grade students perceived the teacher perceptions and beliefs involved in statewide assessment and students with learning disabilities and determine if these perceptions were accurately contained in the survey.

The Delphi study analysis indicated minor changes in syntax, spelling, and grammatical errors. Reactions to the survey's effectiveness yielded positive feedback for content, format, and presentation. The final version of the Teachers Perceptions and Beliefs Survey (Appendix A) was formulated based on the comments and responses from the teachers in the Delphi study. Delphi participant responses and overview of the Teachers Perceptions and Beliefs Survey were indicated in Table 6.

Table 6 Response to Effectiveness of Survey Instrument-Delphi Study

Teacher	Comments on Effectiveness
Teacher 1	Looks great to me! Obviously much time and efforts has been invested.
Teacher 2	Your survey looks well thought out and should give helpful information. I thought the format was good and easy to follow.
Teacher 3	I looked over the survey and liked this format. I liked having to select responses from a list rather than hand writing short answer responses. The survey was user friendly and not difficult to fill out.
Teacher 4	I thought the survey was very thorough. I like the questions on teacher beliefs and FCAT.
Teacher 5	I enjoyed reading this and hope that I was able to add some valuable ideas. I have found teamwork has been vital to preparing my students but most importantly informing and involving the parents. I liked the survey format and questions on teacher perceptions and beliefs.
Teacher 6	I took a look at the survey and thought it was perfect. I especially liked the wording on the teacher perceptions and beliefs section. I feel that it will encourage truthful responses and quite frankly, I would be very interested in learning the results of your survey particularly the portion about training.
Teacher 7	I would include more on collaboration and consulting with other teachers as this is important in reaching students with learning disabilities. I thought that the survey was effective in meeting the goal of identifying teacher perceptions and beliefs.
Teacher 8	I feel that there should be something included on informing parents about testing procedures. It is important that parents are informed and also that the teacher conveys a positive attitude to them. This has a direct impact on how the parents respond which impacts the students. I thought that the survey was very well put together and I felt it was easy to complete.
Teacher 9	Looks great! I think it will be an important survey for identifying teacher beliefs.

Responses from the Delphi study indicated that nine teachers felt that the survey was an effective inquiry of teacher perceptions and beliefs. Delphi study participants indicated minor syntax changes as described in Chapter 3. Changes were made prior to final survey distribution, as demonstrated in comparing Appendix A and Appendix E. The study researcher chose not to act upon the suggestion of parental inquiry as it is felt that this additional inquiry would need an entire study devoted to parental involvement and FCAT.

The Delphi study participants are recruited for their expertise related to a particular topic to ensure validity for items contained in the study. In this study, teachers were chosen based on their expertise in facilitating the FCAT to third grade students, including students with learning disabilities. The first distribution of the Delphi survey was provided to Delphi participants. The participants were asked to rate the contents of the survey within 2 weeks. Responses and comments were collected and participants were asked to rate items in each section of the survey (Perceptions and Beliefs, Teacher Demographics, School Demographics, Students Demographics). Consistency in ratings was defined as having 80% or more panelists rating each subsection the same. Delphi panelists required two iterations to attain the desired level of consensus.

Perceptions and Beliefs

The teachers' perception and beliefs section of the Teacher Perception and Beliefs Survey was developed from a literature review and was modified based on the responses from Delphi study participants. Questions on this section of the survey are scored on a 6-point Likert scale that ranged from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Twelve questions in the survey specifically addressed beliefs and perceptions of special education teachers toward students with learning

disabilities. The following 17 questions addressed the beliefs and perceptions of special education teachers toward students with learning disabilities and statewide assessment. DeSimone and Parmar (2006) included statements on beliefs about inclusion and students with learning disabilities. Woolfork and Hoy (1990) examined the structure and meaning of teacher efficacy related to beliefs about motivation. Teacher efficacy was thought to have a positive effect on student achievement.

DeSimone and Parmer (2006) developed the Survey on Teaching Mathematics to Students with Learning Disabilities in Middle School. A sample item from this study was "Students with learning disabilities should be afforded every opportunity to learn math with general ed students." A sample item from the Teacher Perception and Beliefs Survey was restated as "Students with learning disabilities should be given every opportunity to learn reading with general ed students." The sample item was changed to accommodate the focus and direction of the study. In the study by Woolfork and Hoy (1990) the sample given was "When a student is having difficulty with a classroom assignment, I am usually able to adjust it to match his/her ability level." A related sample question from the Teachers Perceptions and Beliefs survey was "I modify the curriculum in my classroom to match state standards." The change occurred to focus on adherence to state standards. Internal consistency for the scores of the Perceptions and Beliefs section of the survey was determined by Cronbach's alpha (12 items, alpha= .71) for Group A and (12 items, alpha=.59) for Group B in the Beliefs toward students with learning disabilities subsection. In the statewide assessment subsection internal consistency as determined by Cronbach's alpha was (17 items, alpha=.76) for Group A and (17 items, alpha=.59) for Group B.

Teacher Demographics

The first three sections of the survey instrument include information on teacher, school, and student information. Teacher demographics questions were developed from meetings with participants in the Delphi study and review of surveys used to obtain teacher demographics. Questions used in this part of the survey included questions on age, gender, ethnicity, years in teaching, years teaching special education, years teaching in their present position, degree earned, positions in education, teaching in field, and continuing education. Responses to these questions were intended to be easy to answer.

A sample of the questions used in this subsection of the survey "Are you currently pursuing a higher degree?" was an example of the researcher's interest in educational plans for teachers participating in the Teacher Perceptions and Beliefs Survey. Other sample questions of interest for the researcher were the education completed by the teachers, "Highest Education Completed" and numbers of years employed in an instructional position. The study researcher was interested in finding out what type of background the special education teacher participants had and whether education, experience, age, or former jobs had on student achievement. Specific to need for special education teacher, the researcher wanted to investigate whether a teacher's background or education level was a factor in the outcome for student achievement. A reliability analysis for the Teacher Demographics subscale for the Teacher Perceptions and Beliefs survey was Group A special education teachers (12 items, alpha=.73) and for Group B special education teachers (12 items, alpha =.68).

School Demographics

In the school demographics section, information on school size, school location, percentage of minority students, students who receive free and reduced lunch, school staff, service delivery models, professional development in co-teaching and collaboration, and reading programs were investigated. There were eight questions in this section in the form of multiple choice and short numeric answer. Service delivery models were a focus in the study as the frequency with which students with learning disabilities are educated alongside their non disabled peers in general education classrooms has increased considerably (Cook, Cameron, & Tankersley, 2007). A sample of questions related to service delivery models included "Check all Special Education Programs that can be found in the building in which you are currently working." Responses to these questions included choices for the type of classrooms found in elementary schools, such as resource room/ pull out programs, self-contained programs, and co-taught classrooms.

The study researcher was interested in whether the type and amount of professional development makes a difference in student achievement. Professional development of special education teachers was specifically addressed in questions on co-teaching and collaboration. A sample of an item in the School Demographics subsection on co-teaching and collaboration was "Co-teachers work in the general education classroom and provide instruction along with the general education teacher working with general education and special education students." "Do co-teachers attend formal training for co-teaching preparation?"

School characteristics in the areas of school location, school size, minority enrollment, and free and reduced lunch were categorized using data percentages from the National Center for

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educational Studies, 2001. The researcher was interested in the demographics of these groups and whether or not differences in school location, minority students, and free and reduced lunch were related to student achievement. Internal consistency for the scores of the School Demographics section of the survey was determined by Cronbach's alpha (3 items, alpha= .84) for Group A and (3 items, alpha=.78) for Group B for school location, free and reduced lunch, minority students. For the remaining variables, school staff, special education programs, professional development, Cronbach's alpha for Group A (5 items, alpha =.89) and for Group B (5 items= .84).

Student Demographics

Student Demographics included student gender, percentage of ethnicity, transient students, and type of disabilities. There were four questions all involving short answer numeric reporting. The questions were developed based on the researcher's experience with students in exceptional education and identifying categories of students with disabilities.

A sample of questions in the Student demographics subsection includes questions on gender, "Indicate the number of children (male and female) currently in your classroom", and transient students, "Identify the number of children in your class who have recently changed schools". Questions in the Student Demographics section focused on the type of students who comprised the special education teacher classrooms, their disabilities, and students who are transient. The researcher wanted to identify differences in these variables that may indicate areas that impact the outcome for student achievement. Consensus for the Teacher Demographics subscale was 80% in the Delphi study. Internal consistency for the scores of the Perceptions and Beliefs subsection of the survey was determined by Cronbach's alpha in subsection on gender

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and and ethnicity (2 items, alpha= .89) for Group A and (4 items, alpha=.72) for Group B. Cronbach's alpha for Group A (2 items, alpha=.78) and Group B (2 items, .74) for subsection on transient students and disabilities.

Results of Survey Instrument Development

The Teachers Perceptions and Beliefs Survey was developed based on literature (DeSimone & Parmar, 2006; Woodfolk & Hoy, 1990) from prior surveys which investigated teacher perceptions and beliefs and also included variables for school demographics, student demographics, and teacher demographics. The initial three sections of the survey addressed demographics of teachers, schools, and students and were comprised of questions in the form of multiple choice, short answer, and open ended responses. The final two sections of the survey involved teacher perceptions and beliefs of students with learning disabilities and statewide assessment. These two sections used a Likert Scale to measure responses. The scale consisted of: SD-Strongly Disagree, MD-Moderately Disagree, D-Disagree, A-Agree, MD Moderately Disagree, and SA-Strongly Agree. Results in the form of Response Percents were collected. To obtain reliability and validity for the survey instrument a Delphi study was conducted. Specific changes, eliminations and additions were collected and summarized in Table 6.

Table 7 Delphi Study Feedback

Teacher	Changes	Eliminations	Additions
Teacher 1	Page 1 Spacing	Initial Question On participation	"Currently" in Initial statement page 7
Teacher 2	Typo page 8 (Society)	Initial Statement on participation	None
Teacher 3	Typo page 8 (Society)	None	None
Teacher 4	Typo page 8 (society)	None	None
Teacher 5	Page 1 Format/Spacing	None	"Currently" in Initial statement page 7
Teacher 6	Typo page 8 (society)	None	None
Teacher 7	Typo page 8 (society)	Initial Statement on participation	"Currently" in Initial statement page 7
Teacher 8	None	None	"Currently" in Initial statement page 7
Teacher 9	Typo page 8 (society)	Initial Statement on participation	None

Changes were made based on the content and formatting as indicated from the teacher input. Comments were made as to the reaction to the questions in the survey and will be reviewed in detail in Chapter 4. The specific changes to the questions are addressed in Table 7.

Table 8 Delphi Study Question Summation

Question	Delphi Study	Final Revision
Page 2 Question 1	Please indicate whether or not to participate in the study __Yes __No	Question was deleted
Page 7 1st Direction Statement	The following questions are about the students in your classroom.	The following questions are about the students *currently* in your classroom.
Page 8 Question 1	SLD will have a better chance in *sociey* learning reading in inclusive classrooms than resource rooms.	SLD will have a better chance in *society* learning reading in inclusive classrooms than resource rooms.

Data Collection

Quantitative data were gathered in this study. Data collected in quantitative research are in the form of numbers and measurements (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003). The first sources of data collection was obtained from the Florida Department of Education's website indicating the results of the reading section of third grade students with learning disabilities from the Florida Comprehensive Achievement Test (FCAT) of 2007. Test results were comparative descriptive statistics used to describe test scores (Gay & Airasian, 1995). Seventy-six elementary schools in a school district in central Florida were invited to take part in the study.

The next source of data collection was an online survey distributed to the special education teachers from the sixty-six remaining elementary schools invited to take part in this study. The survey was composed of four sections: teacher demographics, school demographics, student demographics, and teacher perceptions and beliefs toward statewide assessments. A descriptive comparison of results identified possible differences in demographics and perceptions

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of special education teachers and the outcomes of the students with disabilities on the reading portion of the FCAT. The results of these questions was analyzed and categorized by: teacher perceptions and beliefs toward statewide assessment, teachers' demographics, school demographics, and student demographics.

 Data were collected from two sources:

1. The Florida Department of Education (FDOE) website reporting on 2007 FCAT reading test results of third grade students with learning disabilities from an urban school district in central Florida. The ESE teachers were categorized based on the outcomes of the students with disabilities test scores on the 2007 FCAT. Student outcomes refer to whether or not the student was able to pass the reading portion of the FCAT by achieving a level 2 or higher.

2. The teacher perceptions and beliefs survey given to special education teachers including teacher, school, and student demographics, and teacher perceptions and beliefs of student achievement on statewide assessments.

<u>Data Analysis</u>

This study involved two stages of data analysis: data collected from the Florida Department of Education website and distribution and analysis of a survey instrument. Results of the survey instrument were analyzed to determine differences in the present educational settings.

FCAT

Data from the Florida Department of Education (FDOE) 2007 website were analyzed to determine special education classrooms of students with learning disabilities who passed the reading portion of the FCAT. The 2007 reading FCAT scores of third grade students with

learning disabilities were obtained. The reliability and validity was determined by researching FCAT reading scores as reported on the FDOE website.

Data from the FCAT website (FDOE, 2006) were analyzed from the previous year for reliability and validity. Reliability for the FCAT is measured by different methods. The higher index value, the greater the test reliability. Reliability indices were above .90 which indicates that the tests are reliable (FDOE, 2006). The FCAT test has content validity (FDOE, 2006). According to the FDOE, the content validity is determined by those who are most acquainted with student expectations at the given level. The FDOE (2006) also states that there is evidence of concurrent validity as the FCAT is correlated with other tests that measures students in the same content area.

Seventy-six elementary schools in a district in central Florida were invited to take part in the study. In order to determine passing levels of the Reading FCAT-SSS, the mean FCAT- SSS for third grade standard curriculum students (non-ESE students) was identified, based on the information obtained from the Florida Department of Education website for test results of the 2007 reading FCAT. Florida Department of Education reported the standard error of measurement (SEM) for the function of Reading FCAT-SSS scores.

Table 9 is an example of the group demographic categories that allows retrieval of information from the Florida Department of Education website (FDOE, 2007). Elementary Schools from a school district in central Florida were selected and FCAT results were analyzed. Students with learning disabilities were identified from each school and a percentage that passed the FCAT was indicated.

Table 9 FDOE School Demographics

Elementary School in central Florida	3	133	1543	340	10	26	86
White		102	1589	348	5	22	91
Black		18	1361	310	22	33	67
Hispanic		8	*	*	*	*	*
Asian/Pacific Islander		3	*	*	*	*	*
Multiracial/Ethnic		2	*	*	*	*	*
Female		67	1522	337	9	30	87
Male		66	1565	344	11	21	85
Free/Reduced Lunch		23	1266	294	26	39	61
Not Free/Reduced Lunch		110	1601	350	6	23	91
All ESE Other Than Gifted		37	1339	306	11	35	73
Not ESE Plus Gifted		96	1622	353	9	22	91
Speech Impaired (F)		3	*	*	*	*	*
Emotionally Handicapped (J)		1	*	*	*	*	*
Specific Learning Disabled(K)		31	1320	303	13	29	68**
Gifted (L)		19	1977	412	0	0	100
Autistic (P)		2	*	*	*	*	*

**The last column across from the Specific Learning Disabilities category indicates the percentage of students who were successful in passing the FCAT in 2007 from this particular school district in central Florida.

Teachers' Perceptions and Beliefs Questionnaire

Data were analyzed using the t test and comparison of means to determine if two means were significantly different at a selected (less than .05) probability level (Gay & Airasian, 2003). Gay and Airasian (2003) stated that the t test makes adjustments for small sample size when determining significance. As the sample size was relatively small and the research questions addressed differences, the researcher felt it was appropriate to use the t test to identify significant difference among the two groups of teachers in the Teachers Perceptions and Beliefs section of the Survey.

The t test for independent samples was selected as members of one sample were not related to the other sample in any systematic way other than being selected from the same population (Gay & Airasian, 2003). The t tests for independent samples were used to determine significant difference between the two means of two independent samples (Gay & Airasian,

2003). SPSS 14.0 was used to compare means in the t test for independent samples. The independent variables from the survey are the teacher perceptions and beliefs. The behavior in this study is the dependent variable or statewide assessment outcomes. Dependent variables are the change in behavior that occurs as a result of the independent variable, also referred to as the outcome (Gay & Airasian, 2003). Statistically significant differences of the independent variables of teacher perceptions and beliefs are reviewed from this analysis in Chapter 4 of this study. Demographics data were analyzed using comparison of means and nominal statistics. Pearson Chi Square rests were performed on categorical data in the demographics sections of the survey to determine statistically significant differences among the teacher participants in the study. Results of the Pearson Chi Square tests were presented in Chapter 4 as a supplemental analysis.

Assumptions were made as the effect size was .33 which produces a relatively small effect. The effect size was determine by calculating the absolute value of the mean difference between Group A and Group B for the mean scale score for the 2007 FCAT divided by the standard deviation for district scores for all students with learning disabilities. In a study on the Tennessee Class size experiment provide the most compelling evidence on the effects of class size on student achievement (Nye, Hedges, and Konstantopoulos, 1999). Students from grades K-3 spent time in either small (13-17 students or large classes (22-26 students). Follow up data from this study made it possible to measure performance in reading, mathematics, and science and made it possible to measure when these K-3 students were in grades 4. 6. and 8. "the average effect of small classes was statistically significant and positive for both mathematics and reading achievement at every grade level, ranging from 0.11 to 0.20 standard deviation units. The small

class effect was positive for science achievement at all grades (ranging from 0.10 to 0.17 standard deviation units) and statistically significant for both Grades 6 and 8.……….. there was no evidence that small effects varied across schools" (p. 132).

Orlich (2003) conducted a longitudinal study to examine the effect on Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) on Student Achievement. Scale scores were compared in 1998 and 2001 showing a small effect size. However, over a four year period a small effect size does emerge. As a result of these findings a program was initiated in 2001 called the "School Improvement Specialist" program. As of 2003, no independent evaluation of the effects of this multi-million dollar program had yet been conducted (Orlich).

Cohen (1988) stated that .2 is the threshold for the smallest standardized difference in a mean. Sample size required that one of the groups consist of only ten members as this was the maximum identified participants in the group of special education teachers that were able to meet the criteria of successful test outcomes on the FCAT. A power analysis was performed based on FCAT 2007 results from the means scale scores collected for the schools and participants in the study. Differences in the means for each were calculated and effect size was determined. Power analysis on test was determined to be .70 when effect size, one-tailed significance and sample size were considered.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

Overview of Data Analysis

The purpose of the study was to investigate whether special education teachers'

perceptions and beliefs were related to their students' FCAT achievement. In following research

questions guided the inquiry for the study:

1. What differences in teacher perceptions and beliefs toward statewide

assessments are present among teachers of students with learning disabilities?

2. What differences in professional development and service delivery models are present

in these settings in which there were differences in teacher perceptions and beliefs toward

statewide assessments?

To investigate the difference between special education teachers whose students with

learning disabilities were and were not able to pass the reading portion of the 2007 FCAT,

variables in teacher demographics (Appendix I), school demographics (Appendix J), student

demographics (Appendix K), teacher perceptions and beliefs of beliefs toward students with

learning disabilities(Appendix L), and teacher perceptions and beliefs toward statewide

assessment (Appendix M) were analyzed. This chapter represents the results of these analyses for

the sample of teachers (Group A) of students with learning disabilities whose students passed the

FCAT (57% or more), and then extend the sample to teachers (Group B) of students with

learning disabilities whose students did not pass the FCAT (39% or less) and determine whether

special education teachers' perceptions and beliefs were related to their students' FCAT

achievement.

<u>Descriptive Statistics</u>

Descriptive Statistics for demographic variables were reported in Table 2 in the previous chapter for teacher study participants (Group A and Group B). The sample was typical for elementary school teachers: predominantly white and female, with a small percentage of minority representation in African American, Multiracial, and Hispanic ethnicity. Descriptive Statistics for demographic variables were reported in Table 3 for students who are in the classrooms of these participants. Once special education teachers were intentionally divided into groups based on criteria derived from FCAT results, differences in demographic variables and teacher perceptions and beliefs emerged. Means and standard deviations by group for Group A and Group B special education teachers in subsections: Professional Development (Table 11) and Service Delivery Models (Table 11), Participant Demographics (Table 10), and Student Demographics (Table 12) are reported. T tests, means, standard deviation, and statistically significant differences are reported in Table 13 for Perceptions and Beliefs toward students with learning disabilities and statewide assessment. The study researcher's intent was to focus on teacher perceptions and beliefs when students with learning disabilities are included in statewide assessment; however, differences in demographic variables among the groups emerged. To address these differences, the study researcher performed supplemental analysis to test for statistically significant differences using Pearson Chi square tests for categorical variables and *t* tests for ratio variables.

Supplemental Analysis

A supplemental analysis was conducted to look at possible differences in beliefs due to demographic variables. Independent samples *t* tests were conducted on ratio values, such as,

age, years of experience in teacher demographics, to determine statistically significance differences. Chi square tests were conducted to investigate group differences in categorical variables, such as, ethnicity and location. Specific variables are described in the following sections for teacher participant, student, and school demographics.

Teacher Participant Demographics

Teacher participants for the study consisted of a total of 64 special education teachers, ten from Group A and fifty four from Group B, who worked with and prepared third grade students with specific learning disabilities for the 2007 FCAT. The ten teachers in Group A were identified from the FDOE Website. The teachers in Group A had a majority of students (57% or more) score a Level 2 or above on the reading portion of the FCAT. Response percents were collected and analyzed (Appendix I). Group A consisted of ten female teachers (100%). Ninety percent of the teachers were White/Caucasian and 10% were African American. The mean age in Group A was 37 years. Ninety three percent of the teachers were teaching in field (in the field of special education) and 89% received their education certification at a 4 year college. Group B consisted of fifty four special education who participated in the survey. Group B consisted of fifty three females (94%) and one male (6%). Eighty-six percent of the participants were White/Caucasian, 10% were Hispanic, and 4% were African American. The mean age in Group B was 40 years. Ninety percent of teachers in Group B were teaching in field (in the field of special education) and 83% received their education certification at a 4 year college. Seventy nine percent (Group B) worked under the title of Varying Exceptionalities Teacher.

Seventy-six schools were contacted and asked to participate. Special education teachers in sixty-four schools agreed to participate in the study. The rate of return was 84% as sixty-four

out of seventy-six teachers responded to the Teacher Perceptions and Beliefs Survey. Ten teachers (Group A) were identified from the FDOE website as having the majority (57% or more) of their third grade students with learning disabilities pass the FCAT with a Level 2 and above. The remaining 54 teachers (Group B) were selected as they taught third grade students with learning disabilities and were involved in FCAT preparation.

The first section of the Teacher Perceptions and Beliefs Survey identified teacher demographics. This portion of the survey focused on the following teacher characteristics: age, gender, ethnicity, highest education completed, job title, other positions held in education, and years of experience in education and special education. D The mean age for Group A was 37 and the Group B was 40. Years of experience in teaching were 10 years for Group A and 13 years for Group B. Years at current position was the same for both groups (5 years). Years teaching in special education were 8 for Group A and 13 for Group B. There was no significant difference in age, total years teaching, years teaching special education, and years at current position (Table 10). The study researcher thought that there would be differences in years of experience or years teaching special education in Group A as this group had the majority of students with learning disabilities pass the FCAT and the researcher had the expectation that additional years of experience would be a factor in student achievement. Group B teachers actually had more years of experience in both special education ($M = 9.76$ vs. 7.5) and total teaching experience ($M = 12.65$ vs. 9.9).The study researcher also thought that the degree in education would be higher in Group A than in Group B. Group B teacher participants actually had higher degrees.

Table 10 Descriptive Statistics for Teacher Demographics

| | Group A | | | Group B | | | | |
Measure	Mean	SD	*N*	Mean	SD	*N*	*t*	*Sig,*
Age	37.10	6.14	10	39.56	11.29	54	.667	.507
Years Teaching	9.9	5.9	10	12.65	9.14	54	.913	.365
Years ESE	7.5	5.44	10	9.76	8.13	54	.842	.403
Years Current Position	4.7	3.23	10	4.87	5.42	54	.096	.924

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School Demographics

The second section of the Teacher Perceptions and Beliefs Survey involved school

demographics. School demographic inquiry consisted of questions on: school size, school

location, percentage of minority students, students eligible for free and reduced lunch, school

staff, special education programs, reading instruction, collaboration, and co-teaching. Ninety

percent of teachers from Group A indicated that the location of their schools was in a suburban

residential area outside of the city. Ten percent of teachers from the Group A indicated that their

school location was in an urban fringe, outside center city but in city limits. Teachers in Group B

indicated that their school location was also in a suburban-residential section (48%), but some of

the schools locations were identified by teachers in Group B as being in urban-inner city (29%),

urban fringe (23%), and rural regions (2%). The question on minority students asked teachers to

identify the percentage of minority students present in their classrooms. The percentage

breakdown was as follows: Less than 6 percent, 6 to 20 percent, 21 to 49 percent and 50 percent

or more. Fifty percent of schools in Group B indicated that they had 50% or more minority students in their classrooms while Group A teachers indicated that they had 10% in that same category. A Pearson Chi square test was conducted on free and reduced lunch recipients indicating significant group differences χ_2 (3, *N*=61) =13.88, *p*=.003. The question asked in the survey was: "Identify the percentage of students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch in your school". The categories of percentages were: Less than 35 percent, 35 to 47 percent, 50 to 74 percent, and 75 percent or more. Teacher from Group B identified 45% of students were in the 75% or more category for free and reduced lunch reception, while teachers in Group A students identified 0% of students in that same category (Appendix J).

The researcher was interested in two other demographic variables in the section on school demographics. The researcher expected a larger number of minority students in Group B. A Person Chi square test was conducted χ_2 (3, *N*=59) =16.02, *p*=.001 indicating significant group differences. Group B had a greater amount of minority students particularly in the category of 50% or more minority students per classroom as 26 teachers in Group B chose this category compared to none of the teachers in Group A.

Table 11 Descriptive Statistics for School Demographics

Measure	Group	N	Mean	SD
Minority Students	Group A	10	1.30	.949
	Group B	49	2.41	.734
Free/Reduced Lunch	Group A	10	.70	.675
	Group B	51	2.04	.999
SLD Resource Room	Group A	10	1.00	.000
	Group B	50	.66	.479
Co-Tch. Prepreparation.	Group A	10	1.50	.850
	Group B	34	.74	.864

A demographic variable of statistically significant group difference in school demographics was in co-teaching preparation. Response percents from the survey indicate that sixty three percent of teachers from Group B did not have a common planning time with general education teachers as compared to Group A which had thirty percent with no common planning time. Fifty five percent of special education teachers in Group B indicated that they had no training in co-teaching preparation. Twenty percent of teachers in Group A indicated that they did not receive training in co-teaching. (Appendix J).

Student Demographics

The third section of the Teachers Perceptions and Beliefs Survey was on student demographics. The student demographics section included questions on student gender, ethnicity, disabilities, and transient students. The study researcher was interested in looking at

possible differences in beliefs due to demographic variables. Pearson Chi tests were conducted

to determine statistically significant differences in student demographics for ethnicity percents.

The Pearson Chi square test indicated a statistically significant difference in percentage of

Hispanic χ_2 (25, N=47) =44.01, p=.011, Native American χ_2 (2, N=12) =12.00, p=.002, and

Pacific Islander χ_2 (3, N=47) =14.00, p=.003 ethnicity. The Pearson Chi square tests did not

identify significant group difference in gender, transient students, and types of disabilities.

Table 12 Descriptive Statistics for Student Demographics

Measure	Group	N	Mean	SD
Percentage African American Students	Group A	10	18.40	24.19
	Group B	35	42.74	33.37
Percentage Hispanic Students	Group A	10	37.50	33.53
	Group B	49	34.86	28.86
Percentage White/Caucasian Students	Group A	10	40.00	29.93
	Group B	51	32.37	26.36
Percentage Native American Students	Group A	10	.00	.00
	Group B	2	25.50	34.65
Percentage Pacific Islander Students	Group A	10	.70	2.21
	Group B	4	7.00	12.00
Percentage Multi Racial Students	Group A	10	3.30	3.92
	Group B	10	6.80	4.78

Research Question 1: Perception and Beliefs

The first hypothesis was tested to determine if statistically significant differences are present in Perceptions and Beliefs among teacher groups for beliefs toward students with learning disabilities and statewide assessment. The section of the survey was divided into two subsections as there were two separate, conceptually different sections to report. The first subsection was teacher perceptions and beliefs toward students with learning disabilities and the second was teacher perceptions and beliefs toward statewide assessment. Hypothesis 1 states the mean for special education teachers who had the majority of SWLD pass the FCAT will differ significantly and positively (at the .05 level) in teacher perceptions and beliefs toward statewide assessment from the mean for special education teachers who did not have the majority of SWLD pass the FCAT. The study researcher tested the first hypothesis by performing t tests for independent samples to compare means in each test subsection. There was not a significant difference between Group A and Group B special education teachers on comparison of means in the area of teacher perceptions and beliefs of students with learning disabilities. This difference does not present a problem as the second subsection addressed beliefs toward statewide assessment. The means, standard deviation, t scores, and significance are presented in Table 12. The 10 participants in Group A and the 54 participants in Group B did not demonstrate a significant difference in their responses to statements regarding beliefs of students with learning disabilities t (62)=1.28, p=.10.

Table 13 Descriptive Statistics for Teacher Beliefs of Students with Learning Disabilities

Measure	Group A		Group B			
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	t	Sig.
Beliefs Mean	2.51	.861	2.15	.736	1.28	.204
SWAS Mean	3.40	.791	2.71	.990	2.09	.041

Beliefs =Special Education Teachers Beliefs toward students with learning disabilities
SWAS =Special Education Teacher Beliefs toward Statewide Assessment

Independent samples t tests were conducted on the Perception and Beliefs subsection on statewide assessment to check for significant group differences among special education teachers in Group A and Group B. Group A was hypothesized to differ significantly and positively with mean responses in perceptions and beliefs as these teachers were successful in having the majority of their students with learning disabilities pass the FCAT. Group A had a higher mean SWAS score (3.40 vs. 2.71). The null hypothesis of no differences in perceptions and beliefs of statewide assessments between groups was rejected. Means were shown to have significant differences in the responses between Group A and Group B in perceptions and beliefs for the subsection on teacher beliefs in statewide assessment and students with learning disabilities t (62) =2.09, p = .0205. The effect size of .79 was in the expected direction. This represents a large effect size according to Cohen's criteria. Therefore, participants in Group A responded in a more positive manner to achievement of students with learning disabilities on statewide assessment than did participants in Group B.

The second hypothesis states that the mean score for special education teachers who had the majority of SWLD pass the FCAT will differ significantly and positively (at the .05 level) in the amount of professional development received from the mean score for special education teachers who did not have the majority of SWLD pass the FCAT. The study researcher tested the hypothesis for Question 2 by performing a supplemental analysis to look at possible differences in beliefs due to demographic values for hypothesis 2 and 3. For Hypothesis 2, the study researcher expected that professional development in Group A were different and positive in regards to the amount of professional development received. A Pearson Chi-Square test was conducted χ_2 (2, N=44) =6.35, p=.021. The effect size of .35 was in the expected direction. According to Cohen's criteria, the size of .35 can be considered a medium effect. The Pearson Chi square test determined that there were both positive and significant differences among the two groups of special education teacher for professional development in the areas of collaboration and co-teaching with more of the teacher participants in Group A receiving training in these areas.

Hypothesis 3 stated that the mean score for special education teachers who had the majority of SWLD pass the FCAT will differ significantly (at the .05 level) in the type of service delivery received from the mean score for special education teachers who did not have the majority of SWLD pass the FCAT. For Hypothesis 3, the study researcher expected that the service delivery model would be different among the two groups of teachers. The researcher expected to have an increased amount of time in the general education classroom for teachers who were successful in having their students with learning disabilities pass the reading portion of

the FCAT. A Pearson Chi-Square test was conducted $\chi_2 (1, N=60) =4.74, p=.014$. An effect size

of .30 was determined. According to Cohen's criteria, the size of .30 can be considered a

medium effect. Service delivery models differed in the areas of SLD Resource Room/Pull out

programs. The other service delivery models: self contained classrooms, co-taught classrooms,

and resource rooms were also tested for statistically significant differences. The only type of

service delivery model that differed significantly was the SLD Resource Room. The

identification of the SLD Resource Room service delivery model was expected but additional

models were expected such as VE Resource Rooms and co-taught classrooms. The study

researcher expected that an increased amount of time would be spent in general education

classrooms for students with learning disabilities for Group A as exposure to the general

education curriculum in reading would allow students an increased awareness of the type of

questions and information that is tested by the FCAT.

<u>Summary of Research Findings</u>

Hypothesis 1 stated that mean scores on the Teacher Perception and Beliefs Survey

would differ positively and significantly toward statewide assessment among special education

teachers. An independent samples *t* test was conducted to determine statistically significant

difference. T test results indicated that there were statistically significant differences among the

groups of special education teachers. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 addressing the relation between

special education teachers' beliefs toward statewide assessment and student achievement was

supported.

Hypothesis 2 stated that mean scores would differ positively and significantly in the

amount of professional development received among the two groups of special education

teachers. A supplemental analysis was performed to determine possible differences in beliefs due to demographic variables. A Pearson Chi square test was conducted to determine statistically significant difference in professional development in the areas of collaboration and co-teaching. The test results indicated that there were statistically significant differences among the groups of special education teachers in professional development. Therefore, Hypothesis 2 addressing the relation between special education teachers' beliefs and the amount of professional development received was supported.

Hypothesis 3 stated that the mean scores would differ in service delivery models among the two groups of teachers who participated in the study. A supplemental analysis was again performed to determine possible differences in beliefs due to demographic variables. A Pearson Chi square test was also conducted to determine statistically significant difference in service delivery models. The test results indicated that there were statistically significant differences among the groups of special education teachers in service delivery models in the area of SLD Resource Rooms. Therefore, Hypothesis 3 addressing differences in services delivery models was supported. In addition, chi square tests were performed on percentages of minority students and students who received free and reduced lunch and were shown to have statistically significant difference among the two groups of teachers in the study. Implications of these results will be discussed further in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Summary

The focus of this dissertation study was to examine teacher perceptions and beliefs of student achievement on statewide assessment through current research on teacher beliefs toward educational policy and standards reform. As reviewed in Chapter Two, a substantial research base indicated that teacher perceptions and beliefs affected the outcome of statewide testing, particularly with students who have learning disabilities (Cimbricz, 2002; Crawford & Tindal, 2006: Ysseldyke et al., 2004).With the recent emphasis placed on accountability and school performance, especially for students with learning disabilities, research on teacher beliefs and practices is needed for students to improve their performance was crucial. The first section of this chapter includes the results of the survey on special education teachers' perceptions and beliefs toward statewide assessment. The next section describes the findings related to professional development in the area of service delivery of instruction (resource room and co-teaching). A supplemental analysis was performed on professional development and service delivery model to determine significance between groups of teachers who did and did not have students with learning disabilities successfully pass the reading portion of the FCAT. Previous reviewed research indicated that teachers in co-taught classrooms benefited from professional development on collaboration and providing instruction for students with learning disabilities. The next section included service delivery models and their effect on educational outcomes. Previous research indicated that students taught in inclusive classrooms had improved grades and achievement scores on standardized testing.

Statewide Assessment

The first research question investigated the differences in teacher perceptions and beliefs toward statewide assessments present among special education teachers of students with learning disabilities. The hypothesis tested to answer this question was supported. Special education teachers in Group A (teachers who had the majority of their students with learning disabilities pass the reading portion of the FCAT) had a higher mean score on the Teacher Perceptions and Beliefs Survey regarding teacher perceptions and beliefs toward statewide assessments than teachers in Group B (teachers who did not have the majority of their students with learning disabilities pass the reading portion of the FCAT). This research supports the hypothesis that the special education teachers in Group A had expectations that their students with learning disabilities could pass the FCAT when compared to the responses of teachers in the Group B. Thus, this study provided clear evidence that special education teachers whose students passed the FCAT had greater positive responses to questions regarding the inclusion of students with learning disabilities on statewide assessment.

The findings in this section indicated that teacher perceptions and beliefs do impact student achievement. Many factors need to be considered with regard to accountability and student achievement. This was true for all students, but specifically for students with learning disabilities. Special education teachers are the direct support for these students and their beliefs in student success on state assessments are vital. Students with learning disabilities respond to teacher expectations and in this section of the study, teacher beliefs reflected the expectation that their students could pass the FCAT. It is important that teachers who work with students with

learning disabilities realize the importance of their beliefs in the educational outcome of individual students. As special education changes and becomes integrated in the general education classroom, teachers in both special and general education need to realize and reflect on how their beliefs impact student achievement. An excellent venue to discuss these concepts would be in professional development programs for teachers in both special education and general education.

Professional Development and Service Delivery Model

The second research question investigated the differences in professional development and service delivery models present in these settings in which there were differences in teacher perceptions and beliefs toward statewide assessments. Both hypotheses tested to answer this question were supported. First, special education teachers in Group A who had the majority of their students with learning disabilities pass the reading portion of the FCAT had a higher mean score on the Teacher Perceptions and Beliefs Survey in regards to professional development. This research question was concerned with individual questions from the Teacher Perceptions and Beliefs Survey. To address this question, a supplemental analysis was conducted for demographic variables for both hypotheses. The need for continued professional development was identified in survey responses in the following sections of the survey: teacher demographics. Thus, this study provided clear evidence that special education teachers whose students passed the FCAT had greater positive responses to questions regarding additional time spent in professional development. Second, special education teachers in Group A who had the majority of their students with learning disabilities pass the reading portion of the FCAT had higher scores on the Teacher Perceptions and Beliefs Survey in regards to service delivery model.

Professional development in the study was related to improved outcomes in student

achievement through collaboration and co-teaching in the general education classroom. As

education continues to change and evolve, particularly in the area of special education, teachers

need to maintain awareness in the areas of: ESE legislation, effective instruction, and teacher

beliefs toward educational outcomes. Educators need to see their role as active and involved.

Special education teachers need to spend time in and learn the general education curriculum.

They can no longer be enclosed in their own classrooms. Special education teachers need to

become involved in the school curriculum, instruction, and assessment to better meet the

academic needs of students with disabilities.

In addition, general education teachers need to realize that they are responsible for the

achievement of students with learning disabilities within their classrooms. As state

accountability systems continue to stress the importance of including students with learning

disabilities in statewide assessments, schools will need to address how service delivery models

can improve test outcomes by increasing the amount of time students with learning disabilities

spend in the general education classroom.

Limitations of the Study

An imbalanced sampling of group participants caused limited validity of response

results. The size of the sampling yielded many results that were not statistically significant. It is

believed that increasing the size of the sample would prove statistical significance in

demographics and teacher perceptions and beliefs toward students with learning disabilities.

Qualitative methodology would provide insight into teacher attitudes and beliefs. A few of the

teachers who took part in this study stated that they wanted to elaborate on their responses to the

statements made in the teacher perception and beliefs section of the survey. Teachers emailed the researcher to state that they felt that there were two levels of students with learning disabilities (higher performing and lower performing). The teachers went on to say that it was a disservice to group both levels of learning disabilities together when taking the FCAT. One of the limitations to this study was in its present format, only one instrument of acquiring information about teacher perceptions was available. Future research would need to include qualitative, as well as quantitative, research.

<u>Implications for Practice</u>

The findings of this survey have implications for special education teachers and their perceptions and beliefs for students with learning disabilities. Recommendations were compiled through the responses provided by special education teachers. These recommendations included implications for teachers and administrators in areas that would increase the educational outcomes for students with learning disabilities.

Recommendations for Teachers

Current research in teacher beliefs and student achievement indicated that teachers' beliefs influence the educational experience of students with learning disabilities (Kagen, 1992). Professional development in scientifically based instructional practices greatly impacts educational outcomes (Ysseldyke et al., 1995). Teachers need to embrace scientifically researched interventions and incorporate in instruction.

Recommendations for special education teachers are in the areas of professional development and access to the general education curriculum. Responses to the survey indicated

a need to increase involvement in the general education curriculum and collaboration with the general education staff. Results showed that professional development in the areas of co-teaching and collaboration between special education and general education teachers would provide improved awareness of the general education curriculum and increase the students' knowledge of state standards.

Current research indicated that inclusion in general education classrooms increased student achievement and classroom performance. Classrooms and service delivery models are assigned to teachers; however, advocacy for the students with learning disabilities is essential. Open communication with administration would allow teachers to discuss what types of planning, supports, and resources are needed to make the instructional time more effective.

Recommendations for Administration

Based on the findings from the Teachers Perceptions and Beliefs Survey indications for future professional development in the areas of co-teaching, general and special education collaboration, and awareness of accommodations for statewide assessment would prove beneficial for student achievement. Data from the study indicated that collaboration and increased access to the general education curriculum provided opportunities for students with learning disabilities to increase test scores on statewide assessment. Current research indicated that incorporating principles of response to intervention into the classroom allowed students with disabilities to have interventions while in the general education classroom and increase access to the general education curriculum.

Further Direction for Research

Three major areas of future research emerged from this study: (a) teacher perceptions and beliefs, (b) professional development in co-teaching and collaboration, and (c) service delivery models.

Teacher Perceptions and Beliefs

Evidence of the impact of teacher beliefs was indicated by the response of teachers in the select group that stated that students could pass the reading portion of the FCAT. These teachers were aware that the majority of their students were able to pass the FCAT and this was reflected through their responses to the Teacher Perception and Beliefs Survey. This poses the question as to the impact their expectations had on the outcome of student achievement on statewide assessment. Carnine and Granzin (2001) discuss the quality of educational outcomes and the importance of setting learning expectations for students served under IDEA. Teacher perceptions and beliefs that students with learning disabilities can pass the FCAT is a variable that should continue to be examined and researched for future studies.

Evidence of teacher beliefs and their influence on student achievement has been an ongoing theme throughout this study. Teachers' beliefs are a cornerstone in all classrooms, but especially in classrooms where reading development plays such a central role for indicating student progress. It is the firm belief of the study researcher that teachers' beliefs and quality of instruction directly impacts a child's progress. Aligning these beliefs with established known principles under instructional interventions would prove to be a powerful link.

Professional Development in Co-teaching and Collaboration

Many schools implemented professional development as part of reform efforts to improve teacher education and professional practice (Kraayenood, 2003; Voltz, 2001). The role of special education is currently being examined as to how it relates to school context and professional development in conjunction with the general education curriculum (Voltz, 2001). The results of this study indicated that further research is necessary in the area of collaboration between special education and general education teachers. Collaboration is needed regardless of the service delivery model. Special education teachers who have resource room/pull out models are also in need of collaboration with general education teachers so as to familiarize themselves with curriculum and materials used in general education classrooms. Professional development in co-teaching is important but it is just as important to follow through with information provide in workshops by collaborating once the information is attained.

Professional development is a vital tool in keeping current with educational practices. Although in some schools, professional development is not viewed as necessary, research from this study supports previous findings that professional development is a necessary component for understanding what influences student achievement. Teachers need to see themselves as lifelong learners. Education is an ever changing profession and if teachers are interested in maintaining a professional status they need to be willing to incorporate time into their schedules for professional development.

Service Delivery Models

This study found that special education teachers who were successful in having their students pass the reading portion of the FCAT were all from either co-taught or resource

room/pull out classrooms. Based on this outcome, a focus on the delivery of services for students with learning disabilities was needed. Students with learning disabilities would benefit from optimal application of service delivery (Glover & DiPerna, 2007). Delivery of interventions within the general education curriculum is currently being researched as it relates to the effectiveness of these interventions to selection and application of assessment tools (Glover & DiPerna, 2007). As students with learning disabilities are increasingly served in general education classrooms, service delivery models require attention. Resource room programs are commonly found in elementary classrooms due to funding and scheduling. Inclusive classrooms were shown much more effective, based on the research in this study.

The study researcher has experienced the difference in resource room programs and co-taught classrooms. Even with the required certification tests and years of experience in teaching, nothing compares to working in tandem with general education teachers in a general classroom setting. Special education teachers at the elementary level should continue to pursue access to general education teachers' classrooms and at the very least collaborate with the general education teacher to familiarize themselves with current curriculum and interventions.

Conclusion

Results of this study indicate that teacher perceptions and beliefs are significant in student achievement. However, the data contained in the FDOE website identified that only a limited number of students with learning disabilities were able to pass the reading portion of the FCAT. Demographic variables did influence some of these outcomes but questions still arise about the reality of including students with disabilities in statewide assessment and the implications of this decision. Passing the FCAT determines student graduation, retention,

entrance into the military and colleges. Focus of future research may need to include alternative assessment for students with learning disabilities.

For now, results from this study encourage continued development of concepts of teacher beliefs and their impact on student achievement. As professionals in education, teachers need to continue to develop a working knowledge of current research in legislation, accountability, reading instruction, and teacher beliefs. This study developed sound reasons for teachers to examine their beliefs toward statewide assessment, encouraging teachers to change their perceptions and beliefs are not easy. It is hoped that the findings in this study may promote thinking about teacher beliefs and the impact these beliefs have on student achievement.

APPENDIX A: TEACHER PERCEPTION AND BELIEFS SURVEY FINAL REVISION

Teacher Perceptions and Beliefs

1. Informed Consent Letter

Dear Educator,

I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Central Florida. For my dissertation study, I am conducting a quantitative study exploring teachers' perceptions and beliefs which affect outcomes on the third grade reading portion of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT). The title of the study is "Teacher Perceptions of the Achievement of Students with Learning Disabilities on Statewide Assessments". The research methodology will include quantitative data based on the 2007 report of FCAT statistics, as well as quantitative data in the form of a teacher perception and beliefs survey.

You are invited to assist in this study because you have been identified as an educator who works with students with learning disabilities at the third grade level who participate in taking the FCAT. Participants will be asked to complete a survey regarding teachers' perceptions and beliefs. In addition you will be asked to answer simple demographic types of questions on your characteristics as a teacher, the students in your third grade class, and the school in which you work.

There are no anticipated risks to you as a participant in this study. For compensation for your participation, you will receive a $5.00 gift card as indicated on your initial contact letter. You are free to withdraw your consent to participate and may discontinue your participation in the study at any time without consequence.

Following the completion of the study, the researcher will provide survey results and review best practices shared by teachers of students with disabilities. Participants will also be provided with a list of literature that identifies positive instructional practices for this population of students.

If you have any questions about this research project, please contact me through email at gromolm @ocps.net. I may also be reached at my work number (407) 877-8888 ext. 324. My faculty advisor, Dr. Mary Little can be reached at (407)823- 3275 or by email mlittle@mail.ucf.edu. Research at the University of Central Florida involving human participants is carried out under the oversight of the Institutional Review Board (IRB). Questions or concerns about research participants' rights may be directed to the Institutional Review Board Office, IRB Coordinator, University of Central Florida, Office of Research & Commercialization 12443 Research Parkway, Suite 302, Orlando FL 32826-3252. The telephone number is (407) 823-2901.

Sincerely,
Maryann T. Gromoll, M. Ed.

Teacher Perceptions and Beliefs

2. Teacher Demographics and Characteristics

Please respond to each of the following questions regarding your background and teaching experience.

1. Gender
- Male
- Female

2. Please indicate your age

3. Ethnicity
- African American
- American Indian
- Pacific Islander
- Hispanic
- White/Caucasian
- Multiracial

4. Highest Education Completed
- Bachelor's Degree
- Master's Degree
- Ed.S.
- Ed.D.
- Ph.D.

Other (please specify)

5. Identify other positions held in the field of education (Check all that apply).
- Elementary teacher
- Middle School Teacher
- Secondary Teacher
- ESE Teacher
- Reading/Literacy Coach
- Administration

Other (please specify)

6. Are you currently pursuing a higher degree?
- Yes
- No

If yes, please specify

7. Are you currently teaching in field? i.e. In field meaning that you are teaching in the subject area, grade level, and specialty in which you received your degree.
- Yes
- No

Teacher Perceptions and Beliefs

8. How did you achieve your certification in teaching?

- 4 year college; Degree in Education
- Alternative Certification Course
- Took the certification test

Other (please specify)

[   ]

9. What are the total number of years you were employed in an instructional position in the field of education?

[   ]

10. What are the total number of years you were employed in an Exceptional Education instructional position in the field of education?

[   ]

11. How many years have you been at your current position?

[   ]

12. What is your current job title?

[   ]

Teacher Perceptions and Beliefs

3. School Demographics and Characteristics

Please respond to the following questions describing the school in which you are currently working.

1. How many students are currently attending the school in which you are working?

- Less than 300
- 300 to 599
- 600 to 899
- 900 or more

2. Describe the school's location.

- Urban-inner city
- Urban Fringe-in city limits,outside center city
- Suburban-residential area on the outskirts of a city or large town
- Rural-country or agricultural region

3. Identify the percentage of minority students in your school.

- Less than 6 percent
- 6 to 20 percent
- 21 to 49 percent
- 50 percent or more

4. Identify the percentage of students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch.

- Less than 35 percent
- 35 to 49 percent
- 50 to 74 percent
- 75 percent or more

5. Estimate the number of school staff in your building

Administration	
Classroom Teachers	
Special Ed. Teachers	
Paraprofessionals	
Other Professionals-i.e.Literacy coach,CRT,etc.	

Teacher Perceptions and Beliefs

6. Check all Special Education Programs that can be found in the building in which you are currently working.

	Yes	No	Don't Know
Specific Learning Disabilities Self-Contained	⊙	⊙	⊙
Specific Learning Disabilities Pull Out for Resource Room	⊙	⊙	⊙
Specific Learning disabilities Co-Taught in Gen. Ed. Classroom	⊙	⊙	⊙
Varying Exceptionalities Self-Contained	⊙	⊙	⊙
Varying Exceptionalities Pull Out for Resource Room	⊙	⊙	⊙
Varying Exceptionalities Co-Taught in General Ed. Classroom	⊙	⊙	⊙
Other Health Impaired	⊙	⊙	⊙
Other Disabilities taking the FCAT	⊙	⊙	⊙

7. Identify how the reading instruction program in your school building relates to special education students and instructors.

	Yes	No	Don't Know
Most Specific Learning Disabled students have reading goals on their IEPs.	⊙	⊙	⊙
SLD students receive 90 minutes of daily reading instruction in the Gen. Ed. classroom.	⊙	⊙	⊙
SLD students receive 60 minutes of daily reading instruction in the Gen. Ed. classroom.	⊙	⊙	⊙
SLD students receive 30 minutes or less daily instruction in the Gen. Ed. classroom.	⊙	⊙	⊙
Special Education Teachers receive formal training for reading interventions.	⊙	⊙	⊙
Special Education Teachers receive formal training in the reading curricula used in the Gen. Ed. classroom.	⊙	⊙	⊙
Special Education Teachers receive formal training in the school adopted reading program.	⊙	⊙	⊙
Paraprofessionals who work with special education students receive training for reading interventions.	⊙	⊙	⊙

Teacher Perceptions and Beliefs

8. Please respond to questions in this section if you participate in co-teaching. Co-teachers work in the general education classroom and provide instruction along with the general education teacher working with general education and special education students. These classrooms may or may not also include paraprofessional assistance.

	Yes	No	Don't Know
Co-Teachers have a common planning time.	▯	▯	▯
Special Education Teachers are in the Gen. Ed. classroom during reading block.	▯	▯	▯
Co-teachers attend formal training for co-teaching techniques.	▯	▯	▯

Teacher Perceptions and Beliefs

4. Student Demographics and Characteristics

The following questions are about the students in your classroom.

1. Student Gender

Indicate the number of students in your classroom.

Male

Female

2. In your class, estimate the % of each ethnicity.

African American

Native American

Pacific Islander

Hispanic

White/Caucasian

Multiracial

3. Identify the number of students in your class who have recently changed schools.

4. Identify the number of students in your classroom that have the following disabilities.

Autism

Asperger's Syndrome

Educable Mentally Handicapped

Trainable Mentally Handicapped

Severe and Profoundly Handicapped

Specific Learning disabilities

Orthopedically Impaired

Physically Impaired

Other Health Impaired

Other

Teacher Perceptions and Beliefs

5. Teacher Perceptions and Beliefs

Please rate your perceptions and beliefs about the students you currently teach and their preparation for statewide assessment.

1. Rate your beliefs about students with learning disabilities (SLD) using the scale listed below:

SA-Strongly Disagree
MD-Moderately Disagree
D-Disagree
A-Agree
MD-Moderately Agree
SA-Strongly Agree

	SD	MD	D	A	MA	SA
SLD will have a better chance in sociey learning reading in inclusive classrooms than resource rooms.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
SLD should be given every opportunity to learn reading with general education students.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
SLD are capable of performing reading activities with accommodations.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
SLD are best taught in an inclusive classroom.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Resource rooms are effective in meeting the needs of SLD.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
SLD cause the most behavior problems.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Having SLD in my classroom has negative consequences for other students.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
For SLD to succeed, I have to take instruction time away from other students.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Special education teachers are responsible for ensuring that SLD are successful.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
General education teachers are reposnsible for ensuring SLD are successful.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Teachers feel capable of meeting the individual needs of SLD.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Teachers understand how to differentiate curriculum for SLD.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

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APPENDIX B: IRB APPROVAL LETTER

University of
**Central
Florida**

University of Central Florida Institutional Review Board
Office of Research & Commercialization
12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501
Orlando, Florida 32826-3246
Telephone: 407-823-2901, 407-882-2901 or 407-882-2276
www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html

Notice of Expedited Initial Review and Approval

From : **UCF Institutional Review Board**
FWA00000351, Exp. 5/07/10, IRB00001138

To : **Maryann Gromoll**

Date : **February 18, 2008**

IRB Number: SBE-08-05444

Study Title: **Teacher Perceptions of Achievement of Students with Disabilities on Statewide Assessment**

Dear Researcher:

Your research protocol noted above was approved by **expedited** review by the UCF IRB Chair on 2/14/2008. **The expiration date is 2/13/2009.** Your study was determined to be minimal risk for human subjects and expeditable per federal regulations, 45 CFR 46.110. The category for which this study qualifies as expeditable research is as follows:

7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

A **waiver of documentation of consent** has been approved for all subjects. Participants do not have to sign a consent form, but the IRB requires that you give participants a copy of the IRB-approved consent form, letter, information sheet, or statement of voluntary consent at the top of the survey.

All data, which may include signed consent form documents, must be retained in a locked file cabinet for a minimum of three years (six if HIPAA applies) past the completion of this research. Any links to the identification of participants should be maintained on a password-protected computer if electronic information is used. Additional requirements may be imposed by your funding agency, your department, or other entities. Access to data is limited to authorized individuals listed as key study personnel.

To continue this research beyond the expiration date, a Continuing Review Form must be submitted 2 – 4 weeks prior to the expiration date. Advise the IRB if you receive a subpoena for the release of this information, or if a breach of confidentiality occurs. Also report any unanticipated problems or serious adverse events (within 5 working days). Do not make changes to the protocol methodology or consent form before obtaining IRB approval. Changes can be submitted for IRB review using the Addendum/Modification Request Form. An Addendum/Modification Request Form **cannot** be used to extend the approval period of a study. All forms may be completed and submitted online at http://iris.research.ucf.edu .

Failure to provide a continuing review report could lead to study suspension, a loss of funding and/or publication possibilities, or reporting of noncompliance to sponsors or funding agencies. The IRB maintains the authority under 45 CFR 46.110(e) to observe or have a third party observe the consent process and the research.

On behalf of Tracy Dietz, Ph.D., UCF IRB Chair, this letter is signed by:

Signature applied by Janice Turchin on 02/18/2008 09:10:56 AM EST

Janice m Turchin

IRB Coordinator

APPENDIX C: DISTRICT APPROVAL LETTER

Submit this form and a copy of your proposal to: *Accountability, Research, and Assessment* P.O. Box 271 Orlando, FL 32802-0271	**Orange County Public Schools** **RESEARCH REQUEST FORM**	Your research proposal should include: • Project Title • Purpose and Research Problem • Instruments • Procedures and Proposed Data Analysis

Requester's Name__Maryann Gromoll_____   Date___January 29, 2008_____

Address__624 Darkwood Avenue Ocoee, FL 34761_____   Phone__407 656-5127_____

Institutional Affiliation___University of Central Florida_____

Project Director or Advisor__Dr. Mary Little_____   Phone__407 823-3275_____

Address__Department of Child, Family & Community Sciences, Education Building ED 315C, UCF, Orlando, 32816

Degree Sought: (check one)	☐ Associate ☒ Doctorate	☐ Bachelor's ☐ Not Applicable	☐ Master's	☐ Specialist

---

Project Title:__Teacher Perceptions of Achievement of Students with Disabilities and Statewide Assessment_____

ESTIMATED INVOLVEMENT

PERSONNEL/CENTERS	NUMBER	AMOUNT OF TIME (DAYS, HOURS, ETC.)	SPECIFY/DESCRIBE GRADES, SCHOOLS, SPECIAL NEEDS, ETC.
Students			
Teachers	76	30 minutes total	ESE Teachers- 3rd grade level
Administrators			
Schools/Centers			
Others (specify)			

Specify possible benefits to students/school system:__The focus of this study is to investigate the perceptions of ESE teachers in regards to the inclusion of students with disabilities in the Florida Comprehensive Achievement Test (FCAT). A quantitative methodology will be used to collect and analyze data. An online survey will be distributed to third grade ESE teachers whose students take the reading portion of the FCAT. Analysis of data may identify perceptions that support increased classroom performance and student achievement on statewide assessment. The study may provide identification of effective teacher practices and beliefs, improved methods of FCAT preparation, and increased outcomes on FCAT scores._____

ASSURANCE

Using the proposed procedures and instrument, I hereby agree to conduct research in accordance with the policies of the Orange County Public Schools. Deviations from the approved procedures shall be cleared through the Senior Director of Accountability, Research, and Assessment. Reports and materials shall be supplied as specified.

Requester's Signature__*Maryann Gromoll*__   ' RECEIVED JAN 29 2008

Approval Granted:	☒ Yes	☐ No	Date: 1-31-08

Signature of the Senior Director for Accountability, Research, and Assessment__*Lee Baker*__

APPENDIX D: LETTER FOR DELPHI STUDY

February 18, 2008

Dear Educator,

      I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Central Florida. For my dissertation study, I am conducting a quantitative study exploring teachers' perceptions and characteristics which may affect outcomes on the third grade reading portion of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT). The title of the study is "Teacher Perceptions of the Achievement of Students with Learning Disabilities on Statewide Assessments". The research methodology will include quantitative data based on the 2007 report of FCAT statistics, as well as qualitative data in the form of a teacher perception survey, observations of reading classes which include students with disabilities, and a semi-structured interview with the participant.

      You are invited to assist in this study because you have been identified as an educator who works with students in third grade reading classes. These students will eventually participate in the FCAT. It is hoped that the survey instrument used in this study is an accurate measurement of a third grade reading teachers' perceptions and characteristics. In order to ensure quality and accuracy of the survey, I am requesting your review of the survey instrument. I appreciate your comments and candor and will consider your suggestions and comments after consulting with my dissertation committee. Revisions of the survey instrument will reflect your suggestions and comments.

      In appreciation of your time and efforts, please accept this Starbucks Gift Card and enjoy a moment of relaxation on me. Please know that I am grateful for your input.

      Sincerely,

      Maryann T. Gromoll, M. Ed.

APPENDIX E: TEACHER PERCEPTION AND BELIEFS SURVEY DELPHI STUDY

Teacher Perceptions and Beliefs

1. Informed Consent Letter

Dear Educator,

I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Central Florida. For my dissertation study, I am conducting a quantitative study exploring teachers' perceptions and beliefs which affect outcomes on the third grade reading portion of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT). The title of the study is "Teacher Perceptions of the Achievement of Students with Learning Disabilities on Statewide Assessments". The research methodology will include quantitative data based on the 2007 report of FCAT statistics, as well as quantitative data in the form of a teacher perception and beliefs survey.

You are invited to assist in this study because you have been identified as an educator who works with students with learning disabilities at the third grade level who participate in taking the FCAT. Participants will be asked to complete a survey regarding teachers' perceptions and beliefs. In addition you will be asked to answer simple demographic types of questions on your characteristics as a teacher, the students in your third grade class, and the school in which you work. The survey instrument utilizes the "Survey Monkey" tool.

There are no anticipated risks to you as a participant in this study. For compensation for your participation, you will receive a $5.00 gift card. To qualify for this compensation, you must respond to the final section of the informed consent letter and complete the online survey. You are free to withdraw your consent to participate and may discontinue your participation in the study at any time without consequence.

Following the completion of the study, the researcher will provide survey results and review best practices shared by teachers of students with disabilities. Participants will also be provided with a list of literature that identifies positive instructional practices for this population of students.

If you have any questions about this research project, please contact me through email at Gromoll,MaryannT.@ocps.net. I may also be reached at my work number (407) 877-8888 ext. 324. My faculty advisor, Dr. Mary Little can be reached at (407)823- 3275 or by email mlittle@mail.ucf.edu. Research at the University of Central Florida involving human participants is carried out under the oversight of the Institutional Review Board (IRB). Questions or concerns about research participants' rights may be directed to the Institutional Review Board Office, IRB Coordinator, University of Central Florida, Office of Research & Commercialization 12443 Research Parkway, Suite 302, Orlando FL 32826-3252. The telephone number is (407) 823-2901.

Consent forms will be kept on file in a locked cabinet in the UCF Teaching Academy (TA Room 103) for a period of three years and then destroyed. Data collected will be filed for a period of three years and then destroyed. Please check the bottom of the informed consent letter to indicate whether or not you agree to participate in the study. By checking the final portion of the informed consent letter, you give me permission to report your responses anonymously in the final manuscript to be submitted to my dissertation committee for partial fulfillment of degree requirements. Results will be shared with members of the dissertation committee and participants in the study. Additionally, the final manuscript may be published in peer-reviewed professional journals.

Sincerely,
Maryann T. Gromoll, M. Ed.

Page 1

Teacher Perceptions and Beliefs

1. Please indicate whether or not you wish to participate in the study.

⬦ Yes, I would like to participate in the study
⬦ No, I do not want to participate in the study

2. Teacher Demographics and Characteristics

Please respond to each of the following questions regarding your background and teaching experience.

1. Gender

⬦ Male
⬦ Female

2. Please indicate your age

[   ]

3. Ethnicity

⬦ African American
⬦ American Indian
⬦ Pacific Islander
⬦ Hispanic
⬦ White/Caucasian
⬦ Multiracial

4. Highest Education Completed

⬦ Bachelor's Degree
⬦ Master's Degree
⬦ Ed.S.
⬦ Ed.D.
⬦ Ph.D.

Other (please specify)
[   ]

5. Identify other positions held in the field of education (Check all that apply).

☐ Elementary teacher
☐ Middle School Teacher
☐ Secondary Teacher
☐ ESE Teacher
☐ Reading/Literacy Coach
☐ Administration

Other (please specify)
[   ]

6. Are you currently pursuing a higher degree?

⬦ Yes
⬦ No

If yes, please specify
[   ]

Teacher Perceptions and Beliefs

7. Are you currently teaching in field? i.e. In field meaning that you are teaching in the subject area, grade level, and specialty in which you received your degree.

- Yes
- No

8. How did you achieve your certification in teaching?

- 4 year college; Degree in Education
- Alternative Certification Course
- Took the certification test

Other (please specify)

[   ]

9. What are the total number of years you were employed in an instructional position in the field of education?

[   ]

10. What are the total number of years you were employed in an Exceptional Education instructional position in the field of education?

[   ]

11. How many years have you been at your current position?

[   ]

12. What is your current job title?

[   ]

3. School Demographics and Characteristics

Please respond to the following questions describing the school in which you are currently working.

1. How many students are currently attending the school in which you are working?

- Less than 300
- 300 to 599
- 600 to 899
- 900 or more

2. Describe the school's location.

- Urban-inner city
- Urban Fringe-in city limits, outside center city
- Suburban-residential area on the outskirts of a city or large town
- Rural-country or agricultural region

3. Identify the percentage of minority students in your school.

- Less than 6 percent
- 6 to 20 percent
- 21 to 49 percent
- 50 percent or more

Teacher Perceptions and Beliefs

4. Identify the percentage of students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch.

- Less than 35 percent
- 35 to 49 percent
- 50 to 74 percent
- 75 percent or more

5. Estimate the number of school staff in your building

Administration	
Classroom Teachers	
Special Ed. Teachers	
Paraprofessionals	
Other Professionals- i.e.Literacy coach,CRT,etc.	

6. Check all Special Education Programs that can be found in the building in which you are currently working.

	Yes	No	Don't Know
Specific Learning Disabilities Self-Contained			
Specific Learning Disabilities Pull Out for Resource Room			
Specific Learning disabilities Co-Taught in Gen. Ed. Classroom			
Varying Exceptionalities Self-Contained			
Varying Exceptionalities Pull Out for Resource Room			
Varying Exceptionalities Co-Taught in General Ed. Classroom			
Other Health Impaired			
Other Disabilities taking the FCAT			

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Teacher Perceptions and Beliefs

7. Identify how the reading instruction program in your school building relates to special education students and instructors.

	Yes	No	Don't Know
Most Specific Learning Disabled students have reading goals on their IEPs.	☐	☐	☐
SLD students receive 90 minutes of daily reading instruction in the Gen. Ed. classroom.	☐	☐	☐
SLD students receive 60 minutes of daily reading instruction in the Gen. Ed. classroom.	☐	☐	☐
SLD students receive 30 minutes or less daily instruction in the Gen. Ed. classroom.	☐	☐	☐
Special Education Teachers receive formal training for reading interventions.	☐	☐	☐
Special Education Teachers receive formal training in the reading curricula used in the Gen. Ed. classroom.	☐	☐	☐
Special Education Teachers receive formal training in the school adopted reading program.	☐	☐	☐
Paraprofessionals who work with special education students receive training for reading interventions.	☐	☐	☐

8. Please respond to questions in this section if you participate in co-teaching. Co-teachers work in the general education classroom and provide instruction along with the general education teacher working with general education and special education students. These classrooms may or may not also include paraprofessional assistance.

	Yes	No	Don't Know
Co-Teachers have a common planning time.	☐	☐	☐
Special Education Teachers are in the Gen. Ed. classroom during reading block.	☐	☐	☐
Co-teachers attend formal training for co-teaching techniques.	☐	☐	☐

4. Student Demographics and Characteristics

The following questions are about the students in your classroom.

1. Student Gender

Indicate the number of students in your classroom.

Male _____

Female _____

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Teacher Perceptions and Beliefs

2. In your class, estimate the % of each ethnicity.

African American	
Native American	
Pacific Islander	
Hispanic	
White/Caucasian	
Multiracial	

3. Identify the number of students in your class who have recently changed schools.

4. Identify the number of students in your classroom that have the following disabilities.

Autism	
Asperger's Syndrome	
Educable Mentally Handicapped	
Trainable Mentally Handicapped	
Severe and Profoundly Handicapped	
Specific Learning disabilities	
Orthopedically Impaired	
Physically Impaired	
Other Health Impaired	
Other	

5. Teacher Perceptions and Beliefs

Please rate your perceptions and beliefs about the students you currently teach and their preparation for statewide assessment.

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Teacher Perceptions and Beliefs

1. Rate your beliefs about students with learning disabilities (SLD) using the scale listed below:

SA-Strongly Disagree
MD-Moderately Disagree
D-Disagree
A-Agree
MD-Moderately Agree
SA-Strongly Agree

	SD	MD	D	A	MA	SA
SLD will have a better chance in sociey learning reading in inclusive classrooms than resource rooms.	⊓	⊓	⊓	⊓	⊓	⊓
SLD should be given every opportunity to learn reading with general education students.	⊓	⊓	⊓	⊓	⊓	⊓
SLD are capable of performing reading activities with accommodations.	⊓	⊓	⊓	⊓	⊓	⊓
SLD are best taught in an inclusive classroom.	⊓	⊓	⊓	⊓	⊓	⊓
Resource rooms are effective in meeting the needs of SLD.	⊓	⊓	⊓	⊓	⊓	⊓
SLD cause the most behavior problems.	⊓	⊓	⊓	⊓	⊓	⊓
Having SLD in my classroom has negative consequences for other students.	⊓	⊓	⊓	⊓	⊓	⊓
For SLD to succeed, I have to take instruction time away from other students.	⊓	⊓	⊓	⊓	⊓	⊓
Special education teachers are responsible for ensuring that SLD are successful.	⊓	⊓	⊓	⊓	⊓	⊓
General education teachers are reposnsible for ensuring SLD are successful.	⊓	⊓	⊓	⊓	⊓	⊓
Teachers feel capable of meeting the individual needs of SLD.	⊓	⊓	⊓	⊓	⊓	⊓
Teachers understand how to differentiate curriculum for SLD.	⊓	⊓	⊓	⊓	⊓	⊓

Teacher Perceptions and Beliefs

2. Rate your beliefs on statewide assessment(FCAT), test preparation, and students with learning disabilities(SLD) using the scale listed below:

SD-Strongly Disagree
MD-Moderately Disagree
D-Disagree
A-Agree
MD-Moderately Disagree
SD-Strongly Disagree

	SD	MD	D	A	MA	SA
I modify the curriculum in my classroom to match the state standards.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I use specific techniques and strategies to prepare my students for statewide assessment(FCAT).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I primarily use state standards to identify what is important to teach in my classroom.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
My curriculum, instruction, and assessments are aligned with the content in state standards.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I develop lesson plans to teach students content found in state standards.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I plan assessments to measure student mastery of content relative to state standards.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I use the state standards to determine what is important to assess in my classroom.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
For students in my class, improvement on statewide assessment (FCAT) is extremely difficult to accomplish.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The state's expectations are reasonable for students at my school.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I know how students at my school compare to students at other schools in my state on statewide assessment(FCAT).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Statewide assessment (FCAT) appropriately measures my students' strengths and weaknesses.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The statewide assessment (FCAT) addresses the content of state standards.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am supportive of including SLD in statewide assessment (FCAT).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel that statewide assessment (FCAT) is too stressful for SLD.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel that SLD students can successfully pass the statewide assessment (FCAT).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am knowledgeable of accommodations for SLD who take statewide assessments (FCAT).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Overall, I feel comfortable preparing SLD for statewide assessment (FCAT).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

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APPENDIX F: INFORMED CONSENT LETTER PRINCIPALS

February 18, 2008

Dear Educator,

  I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Central Florida. For my dissertation study, I am conducting a quantitative study exploring teachers' perceptions and beliefs toward statewide assessment, in particular, the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT). The title of the study is "Teacher Perceptions of the Achievement of Students with Learning Disabilities on Statewide Assessments". The research methodology will include quantitative data based on the 2007 report of FCAT statistics, as well as quantitative data in the form of a teacher perception and beliefs survey.

  I am veteran ESE teacher who is currently working as a Behavior Specialist at Lake Whitney Elementary School in the West Learning Community. I have been teaching for over 25 years and have spent 8 of those years working in the Orange County School District. I have received both OCPS and IRB approval for this study. I will attach these letters of approval as well as my survey to this letter.

  I am interested in sending the survey Teacher Perceptions and Beliefs Survey to the 3rd grade ESE teachers in your building. ESE teachers have been invited to participate in an anonymous online survey identifying their perceptions and beliefs toward statewide assessment. Your email address was obtained from the Global OCPS email list. The teachers are invited to assist in this study because they have been identified as educators who work with students with learning disabilities at the third grade level participating in the FCAT. Participants will be asked to complete a survey regarding teachers' perceptions and beliefs. In addition they will be asked to answer simple demographic types of questions on their characteristics as teachers, the students in their third grade class, and the school in which they work. They will be given a $5.00 gift certificate for their participation in this study. They will be asked to provide contact information and return to my email address gromolm@ocps.net in order to receive their gift certificate.

  This survey is completely voluntary. They may choose not to participate or not to answer any specific questions. They may skip any question you are not comfortable answering. **They are free to withdraw their consent to participate and may discontinue their participation in the study at any time without consequence.** There are no anticipated risks.

  They may not take this survey if they are under the age of 18.

  If they wish to receive the $5.00 gift certificate, they will identify contact information at the end of their consent letter.

  The survey is anonymous. They can be assured that their responses will never be matched with their name, since IP addresses will be removed from the survey when it is submitted.

  Following the completion of the study, the researcher will provide survey results and review best practices shared by teachers of students with disabilities. Participants will also be provided with a list of literature that identifies positive instructional practices for this population of students.

  Composite data will be assessed to determine differences in teacher perception among ESE teachers and statewide assessment.

  They will be asked to: Please answer questions honestly.

  The online survey will take approximately 20 minutes to complete.

The survey is located at:
https://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=xqGEmLuUbZw1aU5Eyd5Pcg_3d_3d. If they choose to participate, they can complete the survey right now, or anytime until 3/31/08.

If you have any questions about this research project, please contact me through email at gromolm@ocps.net. I may also be reached at my work number (407) 877-8888 ext. 324. My faculty advisor, Dr. Mary Little can be reached at (407)823- 3275 or by email mlittle@mail.ucf.edu. Research at the University of Central Florida involving human participants is carried out under the oversight of the Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Questions or concerns about research participants' rights may be directed to the Institutional Review Board Office, IRB Coordinator, University of Central Florida, Office of Research & Commercialization 12443 Research Parkway, Suite 302, Orlando FL 32826-3252. The telephone number is (407) 823-2901. The office is open from 8:00 am to 5 pm Monday through Friday except on UCF holidays.

The results of this study may be published. However, the data obtained from you will be combined with data from others in the publication. The published results will not include your name or any other information that would personally identify you in any way.
To complete the survey online, the teachers will go to:
https://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=xqGEmLuUbZw1aU5Eyd5Pcg_3d_3d

I am asking your permission to send this survey to your teachers. Please respond to this email so that I can distribute the survey to your 3rd grade ESE teachers. Also, please identify the teachers in your building who are teachers of students with disabilities whose students participate in the FCAT. Their names will be kept confidential and their responses to the survey will be anonymous.

Sincerely,
Maryann Gromoll, M.Ed.
Curriculum & Instruction Doctoral Candidate
University of Central Florida

The 3rd grade ESE teacher(s) in my building: _____

APPENDIX G: INFORMED LETTER OF CONSENT TEACHERS

February 20, 2008

Dear Educator,

I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Central Florida. For my dissertation study, I am conducting a quantitative study exploring teachers' perceptions and beliefs toward statewide assessment, in particular, the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT). The title of the study is "Teacher Perceptions of the Achievement of Students with Learning Disabilities on Statewide Assessments". The research methodology will include quantitative data based on the 2007 report of FCAT statistics, as well as quantitative data in the form of a teacher perception and beliefs survey.

You are among several ESE teachers who have been invited to participate in an anonymous online survey identifying your perceptions and beliefs toward statewide assessment. Your email address was obtained from the Global OCPS email list. You are invited to assist in this study because you have been identified as an educator who works with students with learning disabilities at the third grade level who participate in taking the FCAT. Participants will be asked to complete a survey regarding teachers' perceptions and beliefs. In addition you will be asked to answer simple demographic types of questions on your characteristics as a teacher, the students in your third grade class, and the school in which you work. You will be given a $5.00 gift certificate for your participation in this study. Please provide contact information and return to my email address gromolm@ocps.net in order to receive your gift certificate.

This survey is completely voluntary. You may choose not to participate or not to answer any specific questions. You may skip any question you are not comfortable answering. **You are free to withdraw your consent to participate and may discontinue your participation in the study at any time without consequence.** There are no anticipated risks.

Do not take this survey if you are under the age of 18.

If you wish to receive the $5.00 gift certificate, please identify contact information at the end of this consent letter.

The survey is anonymous. You can be assured that your responses will never be matched with your name, since IP addresses will be removed from the survey when it is submitted.

Following the completion of the study, the researcher will provide survey results and review best practices shared by teachers of students with disabilities. Participants will also be provided with a list of literature that identifies positive instructional practices for this population of students.

Composite data will be assessed to determine differences in teacher perception among ESE teachers and statewide assessment.

Please answer questions honestly.

The online survey will take approximately 20 minutes to complete. The survey is located at:https://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=xqGEmLuUbZw1aU5Eyd5Pcg_3d_3d.

If you choose to participate, you can complete the survey right now, or anytime until 3/31/08.

If you have any questions about this research project, please contact me through email at gromolm@ocps.net. I may also be reached at my work number (407) 877-8888 ext. 324.

My faculty advisor, Dr. Mary Little can be reached at (407)823- 3275 or by email mlittle@mail.ucf.edu. Research at the University of Central Florida involving human participants is carried out under the oversight of the Institutional Review Board (IRB).
Questions or concerns about research participants' rights may be directed to the   Institutional Review Board Office, IRB Coordinator, University of Central Florida, Office of Research & Commercialization 12443 Research Parkway, Suite 302, Orlando FL 32826-3252. The telephone number is (407) 823-2901. The office is open from 8:00 am to 5 pm Monday through Friday except on UCF holidays.
The results of this study may be published. However, the data obtained from you will be combined with data from others in the publication. The published results will not include your name or any other information that would personally identify you in any way.
        Again, to complete the survey online, go to:
https://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=xqGEmLuUbZw1aU5Eyd5Pcg_3d_3d
        Thank you for taking the time and thought to complete this survey. I sincerely appreciate your participation. Your time and effort in helping gather information is greatly appreciated and will ultimately help professionals in education when preparing students for statewide assessment.

Sincerely,

Maryann Gromoll
Curriculum & Instruction Doctoral Candidate
University of Central Florida

 In order to receive your $5.00 gift certificate, please indicate the following:

Name_____
Address_____

_____
Send to: gromolm@ocps.net

APPENDIX H: INFORMED LETTER OF CONSENT -SELECT GROUP TEACHERS

Teacher Perceptions and Beliefs Survey

February 20, 2008

Dear Educator,

I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Central Florida. For my dissertation study, I am conducting a quantitative study exploring teachers' perceptions and beliefs toward statewide assessment, in particular, the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT). The title of the study is "Teacher Perceptions of the Achievement of Students with Learning Disabilities on Statewide Assessments". The research methodology will include quantitative data based on the 2007 report of FCAT statistics, as well as quantitative data in the form of a teacher perception and beliefs survey.

You are among several ESE teachers who have been invited to participate in a survey identifying your perceptions and beliefs toward statewide assessment. You were identified as a teacher whose 3rd grade students with specific learning disabilities passed the 2007 reading portion of the FCAT from the FDOE website and Orange County School District Online Database. Participants will be asked to complete a survey regarding teachers' perceptions and beliefs. In addition you will be asked to answer simple demographic types of questions on your characteristics as a teacher, the students in your third grade class, and the school in which you work. You will be given a $5.00 gift certificate for your participation in this study.

This survey is completely voluntary. You may choose not to participate or not to answer any specific questions. You may skip any question you are not comfortable answering. You are free to withdraw your consent to participate and may discontinue your participation in the study at any time without consequence. There are no anticipated risks.

Do not take this survey if you are under the age of 18.

The survey is confidential. You can be assured that your responses will never be matched with your name.

Following the completion of the study, the researcher will provide survey results and review best practices shared by teachers of students with disabilities. Participants will also be provided with a list of literature that identifies positive instructional practices for this population of students.

Composite data will be assessed to determine differences in teacher perception among ESE teachers and statewide assessment.

Please answer questions honestly.

The survey will take approximately 20 minutes to complete.

Please return the survey via the enclosed stamped envelope by 3/31/08.

If you have any questions about this research project, please contact me through email at gromolm@ocps.net. I may also be reached at my work number (407) 877-8888 ext. 324. My faculty advisor, Dr. Mary Little can be reached at (407)823- 3275 or by email mlittle@mail.ucf.edu. Research at the University of Central Florida involving human participants is carried out under the oversight of the Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Questions or concerns about research participants' rights may be directed to the Institutional Review Board Office, IRB Coordinator, University of Central Florida, Office of Research & Commercialization 12443 Research Parkway, Suite 302, Orlando FL 32826-3252. The telephone number is (407) 823-2901. The office is open from 8:00 am to 5 pm Monday through Friday except on UCF holidays.

The results of this study may be published. However, the data obtained from you will be combined with data from others in the publication. The published results will not include your name or any other information that would personally identify you in any way.

Thank you for taking the time and thought to complete this survey. I sincerely appreciate your participation. Your time and effort in helping gather information is greatly appreciated and will ultimately help professionals in education when preparing students for statewide assessment.

Sincerely,

Maryann Gromoll
Curriculum & Instruction Doctoral Candidate
University of Central Florida
gromolm@ocps.net
Magromoll12@aol.com

Your $5.00 gift card is enclosed. Please enjoy with my compliments.

APPENDIX I: RESPONSE PERCENT SUMMARY - TEACHER DEMOGRAPHICS

Groups	Gender		Ethnicity		High.Ed.Comp.		Tch. In Field	
Group A	Female	100	W/C	90	B.Degree	70	Yes	93
			A.Amer.	10	M.Degree	30	No	7
Group B	Female	94	W/C	86	B.Deg.	62	Yes	90
	Male	6	Hisp.	10	M.Deg.	34	No	10
			A. Amer.	4	Ed.D.	2		
					Ph.D.	2		

Groups	Certification		Job Title		Other Pos. Held		High. Deg.	
Group A	4 yr.	89	VE	50	Elem.	20	Yes	10
	C. Test	11	Elem.	20	ESE	80	No	90
			SLD	20				
			R.R.	10				
Group B	4 yr.	83	VE	79	Elem.	15	Yes	27
	Alt. C. C.	11	Elem.	6	ESE	24	No	73
	Cert. Test	6	SLD	6	Adm.	3		
			R.R.	15	Elem/ESE	30		
					El/S/M/ESE	6		
					Rdg. Coach	2		

APPENDIX J: RESPONSE PERCENT-SCHOOL DEMOGRAPHICS

Groups	Size		Location		Min. Students		Free/Red. Lunch	
Group A					< 6 %	30	< 35 %	40
	300-599	40	Urban Fr.	10	6-20 %	10	35-49 %	50
	600-899	50	Suburb.	90	21-49%	50	50-74%	10
	> 900	10			>50 %	10		
Group B	< 300	6	Urban In.	29	< 6 %	2	< 35 %	10
	300- 599	27	Urban Fr.	21	6-20 %.	6	35-49 % .	20
	600-899	45	Suburb.	48	21-49 %	38	50-74 % .	27
	> 900	25	Rural	2	>50 %	50	>75 %	45

APPENDIX K: RESPONSE PERCENT STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

Groups	Gender		Ethnicity		Tran. Students	Disabilities	
Group A	Male	62	A. Amer.	11	1.6%	Autism	1
	Female	38	Hisp.	35		Asperger's	1
			Wh./ Cau.	44		EMH	5
			P.I.	7		TMH	1
			Mult.	3		SLD	87
						Orth.Imp.	2
						PI	1
						OHI	1
						Other	1
Group B	Male	72	A.Amer.	33	2.8%	Autism	3
	Female	28	Hisp.	35		Asperger's	1
			Wh.Cau.	28		EMH	9
			P.I.	1		TMH	1
			Mult.	1		SLD	70
						Orth.Imp.	1%
						PI	1%
						OHI	6%
						Other	8%

APPENDIX L: SUMMARY OF RESPONSE PERCENT
BELIEFS ABOUT STUDENT WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

Beliefs about Students with Learning Disabilities						
	SD	MD	D	A	MA	SA
1. SLD will have a better chance in society learning reading in inclusive classroom rather than resource rooms.	Gr.A 30	Gr.A 10	Gr.A 20	Gr.A 10	Gr.A 10	Gr.A 20
	Gr.B 0	Gr.B 21	Gr.B 23	Gr.B 20.5	Gr.B 23	Gr.B 14
2. SLD should be given every opportunity to learn reading with general education students.	Gr.A 10	Gr.A 10	Gr.A 0	Gr.A 20	Gr.A 0	Gr.A 60
	Gr.B 0	Gr.B 10	Gr.B 5	Gr.B 41	Gr.B 11	Gr.B 39
3. SLD are capable of performing reading activities with accommodations.	Gr.A 0	Gr.A 10	Gr.A 0	Gr.A 40	Gr.A 10	Gr.A 40
	Gr.B 0	Gr.B 7	Gr.B 2	Gr.B 48	Gr.B 11	Gr.B 32
4. SLD are best taught in an inclusive classroom.	Gr.A 20	Gr.A 0	Gr.A 20	Gr.A 30	Gr.A 30	Gr.A 0
	Gr.B 0	Gr.B 19	Gr.B 26	Gr.B 19	Gr.B 26	Gr.B 12
5. Resource rooms are effective in meeting the needs of SLD.	Gr.A 10	Gr.A 0	Gr.A 0	Gr.A 40	Gr.A 40	Gr.A 10
	Gr.B 4	Gr.B 0	Gr.B 16	Gr.B 32	Gr.B 32	Gr.B 16

Beliefs about Students with Learning Disabilities	SD	MD	D	A	MA	SA
6. SLD cause the most behavior problems.	Gr.A 50	Gr.A 10	Gr.A 10	Gr.A 20	Gr.A 0	Gr.A 10
	Gr.B 42	Gr.B 21	Gr.B 5	Gr.B 0	Gr.B 0%	Gr.B 0
7. Having SLD in my classroom has negative consequences for the other students.	Gr.A 50	Gr.A 10	Gr.A 40	Gr.A 0	Gr.A 0	Gr.A 0
	Gr.B 57	Gr.B 20	Gr.B 18	Gr.B 5	Gr.B 0	Gr.B 0
8. For SLD to succeed I have to take instruction time away from my other students.	Gr.A 40	Gr.A 10	Gr.A 20	Gr.A 20	Gr.A 0	Gr.A 10
	Gr.B 34	Gr.B 18	Gr.B 30	Gr.B 16	Gr.B 2	Gr.B 0
9. Special Education teachers are responsible for ensuring that SLD are successful.	Gr. A 10	Gr.A 20	Gr.A 0	Gr.A 30	Gr.A 10	Gr.A 30
	Gr.B 11	Gr.B 5	Gr.B 30	Gr.B 28	Gr.B 23	Gr.B 16
10. General Education teachers are responsible for ensuring SLD are successful.	Gr.A 0	Gr.A 10	Gr.A 10	Gr.A 40	Gr.A 20	Gr.A 20
	Gr.B 9	Gr.B 7	Gr.Bl 23	Gr.B 25	Gr.B 23	Gr.B 14
11. Teachers feel capable of meeting the individual needs of SLD.	Gr.A 10	Gr.A 30	Gr.A 10	Gr.A 20	Gr.A 20	Gr.A 10
	Gr.B 5	Gr.B 23	Gr.B 27	Gr.B 34	Gr.B 7	Gr.B 5

Beliefs about Students with Learning Disabilities	SD	MD	D	A	MA	SA
12. Teachers understand how to differentiate curriculum for SLD.	Gr. A 30	Gr.A 10	Gr.A 30	Gr.A 20	Gr.A 10	Gr.A 0
	Gr.B 21	Gr.B 11	Gr.B 32	Gr.B 27	Gr.B 5	Gr.B 5

SD=Strongly Disagree MD=Moderately Disagree D=Disagree A=Agree MA=Moderately Agree
SA=Strongly Agree
SLD= Specific Learning Disabled
* The number of respondents varied because of missing data.

APPENDIX M: SUMMARY OF RESPONSE PERCENTS BELIEFS ABOUT STATEWIDE ASSESSMENTS

Beliefs about Statewide Assessments						
	SD	MD	D	A	MA	SA
1. I modify the curriculum in my classroom to match the state standards.	Gr. A 0	Gr. A 0	Gr. A 0	Gr. A 50	Gr. A 20	Gr. A 30
	Gr.B 0	Gr.B 0	Gr.B 10	Gr.B 51	Gr.B 16	Gr.B 23
2. I use specific techniques and strategies to prepare my students for statewide assessments (FCAT).	Gr. A 0	Gr. A 0	Gr. A 0	Gr. A 40	Gr. A 0	Gr. A 60
	Gr.B 0	Gr.B 0	Gr.B 2	Gr.B 52	Gr.B 21	GR.B 25
3. I primarily use state standards to identify what is important to teach in my classroom.	Gr. A 0	Gr. A 10	Gr. A 10	Gr. A 40	Gr. A 20	Gr. A 20
	Gr.B 0	Gr.B 2	Gr.B 14	Gr.Bl 52	Gr.B 16	Gr.B 16
4. My curriculum, instruction, and assessments are aligned with content found in state standards.	Gr. A 0	Gr. A 0	Gr. A 0	Gr. A 70	Gr. A 0	Gr. A 30
	GR.B 0	Gr, B 0	Gr.B 5	Gr.B 57	Gr.B 18	Gr.B 20
5. I develop lesson plans to teach students' content found in state standards.	Gr. A 0	Gr. A 0	Gr. A 0	Gr. A 50	Gr. A 10	Gr. A 40
	Gr.B 0	Gr.B 0	Gr.B 3	Gr.B 60	Gr.B 17	Ger.B 21

	SD	MD	D	A	MA	SA
6. I plan assessments to measure student mastery of content relative to state standards.	Gr. A 0	Gr. A 0	Gr. A 0	Gr. A 60	Gr. A 0	Gr. A 40
	GR.B 0	GR.B 0	Gr.B 7	Gr.B 66	Gr.B 9	Gr.B 18
7. I use the state standards to determine what is important to assess in my classroom.	Gr. A 10	Gr. A 0	Gr. A 0	Gr. A 40	Gr. A 0	Gr. A 50
	Gr.B 0	Gr.B 2	Gr.B 14	Gr.B 52	Gr.B 16	Gr.B 16
8. For students in my class, improvement on statewide assessment (FCAT) is extremely difficult to accomplish.	Gr. A 10	Gr. A 10	Gr. A 20	Gr. A 20	Gr. A 10	Gr. A 30
	Gr.B 0	Gr.B 7	Gr.B 14	Gr.B 37	Gr.B 13	Gr.B 29
9. The state's expectations are reasonable for students at my school.	Gr. A 0	Gr. A 20	Gr. A 0	Gr. A 40	Gr. A 20	Gr. A 20
	Gr. B 21	Gr.B 14	Gr.B 28	Gr.B 30	Gr.B 5	Gr.B 2
10. I know how students at my school compare to students at other schools in my state on statewide assessment (FCAT).	Gr. A 10	Gr. A 0	Gr. A 30	Gr. A 20	Gr. A 20	Gr. A 20
	Gr.B 2	Gr.B 2	Gr.B 19	Gr.B 53	Gr.B 12	Gr.B 12

	SD	MD	D	A	MA	SA
11. Statewide assessment (FCAT) appropriately measures my students' strengths and weaknesses.	Gr. A 40	Gr. A 10	Gr. A 30	Gr. A 10	Gr. A 0	Gr. A 10
	Gr.B 47	Gr.B 16	Gr.B 23	Gr.B 9	Gr.B 5	Gr.B 0
12. The statewide assessment (FCAT) addresses the content of state standards.	Gr. A 0	Gr. A 10	Gr. A 20	Gr. A 40	Gr. A 10	Gr. A 20
	Gr.B 0	Gr.B 5	Gr.B 13	Gr.B 64	Gr.B 11	Gr.B 7
13. I am supportive of including SLD in statewide assessment (FCAT).	Gr. A 11	Gr. A 0	Gr. A 44	Gr. A 33	Gr. A 0	Gr. A 11
	Gr.B 18	Gr.B 154	Gr.B 21	Gr.B 30	Gr.B 11	Gr. B 5
14. I feel that statewide assessments (FCAT) is too stressful for SLD.	Gr. A 10	Gr. A 0	Gr. A 0	Gr. A 40	Gr. A 10	Gr. A 40
	Gr.B 2	Gr.B 11	Gr.B 16	Gr.B 25	Gr.B 21	Gr.B 25
15. I feel that SLD students can successfully pass the statewide assessment (FCAT).	Gr. A 0	Gr. A 10	Gr. A 10	Gr. A 40	Gr. A 0	Gr. A 40
	Gr.B 14	Gr.B 9	Gr.B 37	Gr.B 27	Gr. B 9	Gr.B 5
16. I am knowledgeable of accommodations for SLD who take statewide assessments (FCAT).	Gr. A 0	Gr. A 0	Gr. A 0	Gr. A 10	Gr. A 20	Gr. A 70
	Gr.B 0	Gr.B 0	Gr. B 0	Gr.B 20	Gr.B 20	Gr.B 60

	SD	MD	D	A	MA	SA
17. Overall, I feel comfortable preparing SLD for statewide assessment.	Gr. A 10	Gr. A 0	Gr. A 10	Gr. A 40	Gr. A 10	Gr. A 30
	Gr. B 5	Gr. B 9	Gr. B 22	Gr. B 37	Gr. B 13	Gr. B 4

SD=Strongly Disagree MD=Moderately Disagree D=Disagree A=Agree MA=Moderately Agree
SA=Strongly Agree
SLD=Specific Learning Disabled
* The number of respondents varied because of missing data.

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