

DEVELOPING THE HEART:
PRIVATE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS AND STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

M. A. Thesis

Presented to

the Faculty of the School of Education

Biola University

La Mirada, California

USA

By

Melissa Louise Stymeist

December 2008

ABSTRACT

DEVELOPING THE HEART:
PRIVATE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS AND STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Melissa Louise Stymeist

At least 10% of students in private Christian schools are considered students with special needs. Private Christian schools vary in the degree to which they educate these students and in the approaches that they take toward educating them. This study examines whether or not private Christian Schools are allowing students with special needs access to a Christian education, how private Christian schools are providing students with learning challenges an education that meets their special needs, and whether or not the approaches that private Christian schools are taking to educate these students are effective. This study, a survey of private Christian school educators, looks particularly at the approaches of consultation, teaming, co-teaching, advocacy, task-analysis, and a combination thereof as means to helping students with special needs academically succeed in Christian schools. The study found that all of these approaches are being used to various degrees in Christian schools with various levels of effectiveness. As a result of this study, the researcher found that Christian schools educate a percentage of students with special needs that is below the national average. Also, the approaches that Christian schools take toward educating students with special needs are varied, sometimes implementing researched-based interventions. Finally, according to the survey, on

average, Christian schools are somewhat effective in their approach toward educating students with special needs, but have significant room to grow.

Chapter 1: The Problem

There is a troubling disparity between the Christian worldview of students with special needs and the way these students are served in Christian schools.

Essential to the worldview of evangelical Christians is the belief that all people are made in the image of God. Christians promote the idea that a Creator God has given humans the ability to love, worship, and think (Reisen, 2002). According to the Christian worldview, because one God gives all humans life—people, though unique in their talents and abilities, are created equal and deserve to be respected. Theologians call this Christian teaching the *Imago Dei*. It is an extremely important tenant of Christianity. Yet, not all students created in the image of God have an opportunity to receive an appropriate education in private Christian schools. Service to students with special needs has been limited (ChildD.org, Pudlas, 2004).

Background of the Problem

Historically, private evangelical Christian schools surged in the 1960s, in response to an increasingly secular influence on public education. Many evangelical Christian parents chose to put their children in schools where they would be taught according to their worldview and values (Education Encyclopedia, 2008). (For this same reason parents are enrolling their students in private Christian schools today (Zehr, M., 2004, 2005).) For the most part, the traditional Christian values that were taught in private Christian schools were also taught in a very traditional way (Ames, 2000). Remnants of this traditional style of teaching can still be noted in the A Beka and Bob Jones curriculum, both popular in Christian schools. The instruction that such curriculums prescribe has limited differentiation strategies, virtually ignoring

accommodations for students with special needs. Therefore, students with special needs could only limitedly benefit from such an education in a Christian school.

Meanwhile, a mainstreaming revolution in public education was taking place. In 1965, the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (ESEA) was passed to protect the educational rights of any person who was considered disadvantaged. This act paved the way for an equal education for students with learning disabilities or special needs in the classroom. Ten years later, the *Education for All Handicapped Children Act*, known as the “mainstreaming law,” was passed to give students the right to an education in the least restrictive environment. These laws made education for students with special needs inclusive. Today, the 2004 *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA) requires that teachers and school districts make interventions on behalf of their students with special needs. These students are given Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) to help them meet their academic and behavioral goals within the educational system (Vaughn et al., 2007).

Christian schools have taken some steps to catch up with the services that are being provided to students with special needs in public schools (J. Inouye, October 21, 2008, personal communication; J. Haddock, October 21, personal communication; Opportunity Schools, 2008; ChildD.org, 2008). (These steps and approaches to educating students with special needs in Christian schools will be discussed in detail in chapter 2.) However, services to students with special needs are still limited by what might be deemed as an undeveloped heart for students with special needs in Christian schools and the lack of financial and professional resources available to Christian schools (K. Norton,

personal communication, July 5, 2008; M. Stranske, personal communication, July 3, 2008; L. Sudman, personal communication, Fall 2006).

Purpose and Significance of the Study

The purpose of this study is to determine what can be done to help students with special needs receive a quality education in Christian schools. Therefore, this study first asks whether or not students with special needs are being educated in private Christian schools. If private Christian schools are allowing students with special needs access to an education in their schools, this study further seeks to determine how they are making accommodations for students with special needs. The study also examines the degree to which private Christian schools consider themselves effective in providing students with special needs with an appropriate education. This study is significant because it will gather data from private Christian schools that may be used in determining how the community of private Christian schools may improve upon their efforts in educating students with special needs.

Research Questions

This research poses the following three questions:

1. Are private Christian Schools allowing students with special needs access to a Christian education?
2. How are private Christian schools providing students with learning challenges with an education that meets their special needs?
3. Are the approaches that private Christian schools are taking to educate students with special needs effective?

Hypotheses

The hypotheses of this study are three-fold. First, the researcher hypothesizes that while some Christian schools seem to be making progress in extending services to students with special needs, Christian schools must make greater efforts toward understanding and raising an awareness about the difficulties that students with special needs face. Second, the researcher hypothesizes that Christian schools will need to examine how they are educationally intervening on behalf of students with special needs to ensure that their approaches are research-based. Third, the researcher hypothesizes that the current approaches Christian schools are taking toward helping students with special needs are only somewhat effective and that Christian schools will need to expand their financial and professional resources in order to meet the needs of these students in a manner of excellence.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Approximately 10% to 12% of school-aged-children are students with special needs according to the U.S. Department of Education (Taylor, 2005, p. 282). Some Christian schools, due to a lack of sensitivity to such students, are unwilling to accept students with special needs (K. Norton, personal communication, July 5, 2008; M. Stranske, personal communication, July 3, 2008; L. Sudman, personal communication, Fall 2006). If Christian schools exclude these children, this group of students will lose the opportunity to have a Christian education. Christian education philosopher Richard A. Riesen (2002) argues, “education, if not the most important, is nonetheless among the most important gifts a society can give” (p. 42). It is unjust to withhold the precious gift of a Christian education from the population of students with special needs.

Some students with special needs are accepted by Christian schools. In fact, many experts educating students with special needs believe that the percentage of students with special needs or learning challenges is higher in private schools than in public schools (Barton, 2006; Taylor, 2005 p. 286). They reason that parents of children who struggle in school perceive that private schools, with their smaller class sizes and noted care and concern for students, can do a better job than public schools when it comes to serving their children. While Christian schools are known for these admirable qualities, traditionally, they do not have the same breadth of special education resources for students with special needs that public schools do. Christian schools that accept students with special needs cannot always give these students the kind of support that they need due to a lack of professional and financial resources (Norton, 2008; Stranske, 2008;

Sudman, 2006). Therefore, the needs of students with special needs are not adequately met, and their chances for academic success in private Christian schools is diminished.

These barriers that prevent students with special needs from receiving a quality education at private Christian schools are penetrable. Perhaps the primer struggle of educating students with special needs in private Christian schools is a Christian school's hesitancy to accepting students with special needs for fear of gaining a reputation of being a school that specializes in special education rather than an excellent academic institution (Shaywitz, 2003, p. 297; M. Stranske, personal communication, July 3, 2008; Pudlas, 2004). Why can't private Christian schools be known for both diversifying instruction to meet special needs *and* academic excellence? It is a mark of excellence in teaching to be able to meet the diverse needs of students. A school that embraces this kind of instruction is truly dedicated to excellence because it embraces a multi-faced approach toward instruction and embraces in the truest sense the Imago Dei in each child.

Furthermore, if Christian (Bible teaching) schools want their teachings and practice to be consistent, they must examine what the Bible says about students with special needs. According to the Bible, God created people with challenges and limitations (Ex. 4:11). Whether or not people have issues that will cause them to struggle in a classroom, all humans will struggle with some weaknesses. The Bible teaches that weaknesses can actually be a blessing that may lead a person into a deeper relationship with their Creator (2 Corinthians 12:9-10). Therefore, Christians in education who hold to these Biblical teachings should humbly embrace the unique talents and struggles of students with special needs in their schools.

The lack of funding for special education programs is also a part of the problem with educating students with special needs in Christian schools, but once Christian schools develop a heart for students with special needs, it can be overcome. Possible funding for programs can be absorbed by the general school budget, parents of children with special needs, a combination of both parties, or outside foundations or organizations. (K. Norton, personal communication, July 5, 2008; M. Stranske, personal communication, July 3, 2008; L. Sudman, personal communication, Fall 2006, ChidD.org, 2008). Federal funding from *No Child Left Behind* can also be applied to programs for students with special needs in some cases (Opportunity Schools, 2008). Furthermore, when Christian schools open up enrollment to students with special needs, they will receive more tuition dollars, which in theory can eventually adequately fund programs to help students with special needs (K. Miller, personal communication, October 11, 2008). Creative means of funding may, therefore, need to be explored and developed within Christian schools to support programs for students with special needs.

Solutions

Educating students with special needs in Christian schools is a two-fold challenge. First, Christian schools must develop instructional interventions for students with special needs. Secondly, a network of related and support services must support these instructional interventions. Both instructional interventions and related and support services must be considered in developing a holistic approach toward helping students with special needs in Christian schools.

Instructional Interventions

Much research is yet to be completed on the instructional approaches that private Christian schools are using to address their populations of students with special needs (Taylor, 2005). This chapter will examine what research is available in this area. It will also consider what is being accomplished in public schools to meet the needs of this population and how these strategies might be applied in private Christian schools. The advantages and disadvantages to each instructional solution for helping students with special needs will be discussed. For the sake of consistency with a Christian worldview and instructional practice in Christian schools, the instructional approach's congruence with a Biblical worldview will also be considered.

The OIAR or Organization for Inclusion, Acceptance, Respect, promotes the research of Elaine E. Daack (1999), which was built upon Gartner and Lipsky's (1997) research, for helping students with special needs (Organization for Inclusion, Acceptance, Respect, 2008). The OIAR notes three prominent models for helping students with special needs. They are the consultation model, teaming model, and the collaborative co-teaching model. This chapter will consider how these approaches might be made manifest in private Christian schools. (These approaches are already practiced in some private Christian schools, but to varying degrees.) This chapter will also consider the advocacy approach to helping students with special needs in Christian schools. Finally, this chapter will consider Dr. Mel Levine's task analysis, a teacher training centered approach to helping students with special needs and how it might benefit Christian schools.

Consultation Model

In the consultation model of special education, the special educator re-teaches concepts to students with special needs (Daack, 1999). In this model, students with special needs are often referred to as “resource kids.” This is because the students with special needs leave class during specified times to receive special instruction elsewhere, usually in the resource room.

The consultation model has its advantages, especially for private Christian schools with a small population of students with special needs. One advantage is that the consultant, or special educator, can adequately provide the extra special instruction that a small number of students might need. Another advantage is the opportunity for students with special needs to receive one-on-one or small group instruction during the re-teaching time.

There are some disadvantages to the consultation model, which include issues with funding, pulling students from class, and no prescribed communication between the classroom teacher and the special educator. First, there is the issue of how to hire and pay someone with a special education credential or with extensive experience diversifying instruction. Either schools must find a way to fit the special educator into their budget, or parents of students with special needs must pay extra money to the schools for tutoring expenses. Second, this method requires students to be pulled from their regular classes which can stigmatize students, and give them the feeling that they are missing out on something in their regular classrooms while they are being tutored somewhere else. Finally, as this approach does not prescribe any communication between the consultant or special educator and the teacher in the general education classroom, infrequent and or

inadequate communication between the special educator and classroom teacher may result. Lack of communication between the two parties might jeopardize the student with special needs' education with curricula that may repeat itself or miss something altogether.

The consultation approach manifests itself as Opportunity Schools, an organization that helps students with special needs in private Christian schools. Opportunity Schools works with private Christian schools to establish a specialized consultation program on their campuses. Students who are identified by their classroom teachers as having special needs are eligible to enter a small group tutoring program with a specially trained teacher who uses multisensory approaches to teaching math and reading (K. Miller, personal communication, October 11, 2008; Opportunity Schools, 2008).

Opportunity Schools has all of the advantages of the consultation model like small group instruction tailored to individual students. Opportunity Schools also provides Christian Schools with supportive leadership through the administration of the organization. Furthermore, as the Opportunity Schools program was designed specifically for Christian schools, its founders have taken much care in developing strategies to successfully implement the program in Christian schools (K. Miller, personal communication, October 11, 2008; Opportunity Schools, 2008).

Opportunity Schools has also addressed some of the disadvantages to the consultant model. To address the financial burden of hiring a special educator, Opportunity Schools works with Christian schools on practical ways to finance the program. In fact, the program draws more students to the Christian school, giving the

school a healthy enrollment, the chance to provide a Christian education for more students, and more tuition funds, which can help to pay for the program.

Another mentioned disadvantage to the consultant model was the possible stigmatizing of students with special needs because of their removal from class for instructional intervention. However, with all of the special programs that Christian schools usually offer, students being pulled from class for activities like band, art, and gifted and talented education are commonplace. Therefore, students leaving class to participate in the Opportunity Schools' program would not be perceived as strangely different for doing so. Moreover, Christian educators can address this problem by creating a loving community that is accepting of differences in their classrooms, so as to include students with special needs, and "build them up."

Perhaps discipleship might be seen as the Biblical equivalent to the consultant model. The essence of discipleship is individual and small group instruction. Disciples learn in an intimate setting with personal methods that help them understand at a pace that yields growth. When Jesus worked with His disciples, He did not teach all of His followers the same way. Sometimes he taught explicitly from the Hebrew Scripture, other times he used metaphors. He touched and washed feet and let Thomas touch his side. He spent more time with some than others. Could it be that "the three" had the most "special needs" when it came to comprehending matters of faith and how to follow Christ (Taylor, 2008)? The fact is that the master teacher, Jesus, was also the master consultant when he pulled people away from a group to teach them differently than everyone else, meeting the individual special needs of His students.

Teaming Model

Daack (1999) defines the teaming model of educating students with special needs as an approach whereby special educators and classroom teachers, as well as parents, school psychologists, and counselors, work closely together in every step of the student with special needs' education process. This includes: assessment, planning, intervention, and evaluation (Carpenter et al., 1998). This approach requires positive administrative support and teachers who are eager to collaborate (Coben et al., 1997, p. 429). Educators participating in teaming must have mutual goals, and respect for all involved in the collaborating on behalf of the student with special needs (Coben et al., 1997, p. 429).

One of the main advantages to this approach, as opposed to the consultant approach, is that no one person is considered to be the expert. No one teacher is solely responsible for students with special needs, and no teacher is subordinate to another in working with these students. Everyone has expertise and an important part to play in helping a student with special needs succeed (Paulsen, 2008, p. 313). Some other noted advantages to this approach are opportunities for educators to develop professional skills, collegiality and cooperative sharing of ideas and strategies, and development of cohesive services for students with special needs. For students, this approach is not only cohesive, but also least restrictive, and student-centered.

Perhaps one of the greatest disadvantages to this approach is the possibility of educators committing too much of their time to the teaming process, and not having time to fulfill other responsibilities (Paulsen, 2008, p. 314). Busy teachers have trouble making time for common planning time (Paulsen, 2008, p. 315). Also, classroom teachers do not speak the language of special education professionals. Due to their limited knowledge of

the lingo, communication problems between the general and special educators often ensue (Coben et al., 1997, p.429). Negotiating educational responsibilities between the two parties can become a battle. Furthermore, general educators might view recommendations from special educators as unrealistic (Coben et al., 1997, p.429). There can be organizational barriers as well, such as finding time to schedule meetings during the school day (Coben et al., 1997, p. 428).

The teaming approach entails Christian educators working together to help one another decide how to serve students with special needs. In this model, the ideal teaming staff is an image of the body of Christ. The classroom teacher recognizes that she cannot help a student with special needs succeed all by herself. The special educator respects the classroom teacher and offers her own expertise to help the classroom teacher excel at her occupation, and ultimately, the student with special needs meet his academic goals. No one person thinks they are better than another, but they all work together for the good of students and to the glory of God.

Collaborative Co-Teaching Model

Co-teaching is a model where two teachers—one special educator and a classroom teacher—team up to teach a heterogeneous class of students with and without special needs. It involves a high degree of expertise from both teachers, who plan, reflect on, and implement their instruction together. Both educators must be actively teaching and assessing all students in the classroom during instructional time (Wilson, 2008). Administrative support for co-teaching, planning time, and training are all key components to this method for reaching students with special needs (Scruggs et al., 2007, p. 403-404).

There are great advantages to co-teaching. This method improves student self-efficacy, contributes to professional growth, gives students more constant teacher attention, exposes students to a variety of social situations, and is thought to help students with special needs improve academically (Magiera et al., 2006, Wilson & Michaels, 2006, Scruggs et al., 2007).

Wilson and Michaels (2006) found as a result of their mixed method study on co-teaching that it improved student self-efficacy. The students in their study believed that as a result of being in a co-taught class, that their reading, writing and math skills had improved and that they would receive passing grades on their report cards (Wilson & Michaels, 2006, p. 220).

Another advantage to co-teaching is professional growth for educators. Co-teachers learn from one another. With co-teaching, they have the opportunity to collaborate, take ownership of educating students with special needs, change school culture, and implement vision (Magiera et al., 2006).

Co-teaching also gives more teacher attention to individual students. In co-taught classes the student-teacher ratio is low. The students also benefit from exposure to two different teaching styles, and one more person to hold them accountable for their work and spur them on to academic success (Scruggs et al., 2007).

There are social benefits as well (Scruggs et al., 2007). Both students with and without special needs learn to be in a community with people who are different from them. For example, students with special needs who have behavior problems might learn from the example of classmates who don't share their same struggle. Moreover, a student

without special academic needs may see the world differently as a result of sharing a class with students who do have special needs.

Finally, according to the Scruggs et al. study (2007), students are academically successful in co-taught classes. The co-teachers in the study found that when they assessed their students, students without noted special needs succeeded, and students with special needs improved (Scruggs et al., 2007).

Although co-teaching seems to be a promising trend for educating students with special needs, it does have some disadvantages. First, more research about the specific implementation and effectiveness of this method concerning the actual academic improvement of students is needed (Scruggs et al., 2007; Weiss, 2004; Wilson, 2006). Second, if co-taught classes are too heavily weighted with students who have special academic and behavioral needs, it is “setting up teachers and students for failure and frustration” (Scruggs et al., 2007, p. 402). Third, the potential that co-teachers might fall into a “one teach, one assist” pattern weakens the model (Scruggs et al., 2007 p. 407; Wilson, 2008 p. 240). Last, as this model requires two teachers per class, it is expensive.

Co-teaching seems to be the “two heads are better than one” approach to educating students with special needs. It’s philosophy is reminiscent of the Scripture from Ecclesiastes 4:11-13 “...if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.” It is a wise approach to put two teachers in the same classroom who have the same mind to help all of their students achieve great things academically and socially.

Advocacy

One creative solution to educating students with special needs in Christian schools may be advocacy. Advocacy is an approach that the researcher sees emerging from her own personal experience as a teacher in a Christian school. Christian school teachers in schools without services for students with special needs, and without their own special education expertise, who desire to help their students with special needs overcome their learning challenges, may find themselves searching for ways to connect their students with special needs and their families to places (like the local school district) that can help them. These educators would be advocates for their students with special needs.

There are advantages and disadvantages to the advocacy approach. The advantages to the advocacy approach seem to be cooperation with local professionals in the field of special education, and the ability to help students with special needs in Christian schools without creating an entire new program for students with special needs to educate them. The disadvantages seem to be sending students and their families outside of the Christian school environment to get the services they need where there is potential for the child with special needs to be educated by teachers with conflicting worldviews. Furthermore, potential communication struggles between the local school district or outside agency that is helping the student with special needs may arise.

Christian schools may opt for this approach to helping students with special needs because of the Biblical mandate to be an advocate for the “least of these.” Christian teachers who want to live a life that is consistent with their religious beliefs may choose to serve their students with special needs by connecting their students with experts in

special education who can help them. Indeed such teachers who are driven by the Biblical exhortations to care for everyone may consider it their duty to find outside help for their students when adequate help is not offered within the school.

Task Analysis

Dr. Mel Levine (2002) has developed his own “Mind at a Time” approach to educating students with special needs where teachers use task analysis and observation to diagnose the learning problems of their students. Levine asserts, “Educators and parents are not just influencing the thought processes of children but actually helping to construct their brains” (Levine, 2002, p. 307). Therefore, Levine believes that the role of general educators as experts in understanding the brain and being able to determine what weaknesses a mind might have is absolutely essential to helping students with special needs improve academically. Once teachers have diagnosed not the students, but their brain activity, the educators are to “demystify” their students by showing them how they can focus on improving weaknesses that are hindering learning. Furthermore, Levine suggests that teachers adopt certain students, so as to become their advocates, advisors, academic coaches, or mentors (Levine, 2002, p. 313).

The advantages to using this method to help students with special needs are numerous. First, regular classroom teachers become experts and implement special strategies in their own classrooms. Building on Goldman’s (1988) argument, Coben and Thomas (1997) assert that teacher quality is both the problem and solution for educating students with special needs. Levine’s task analysis approach trains teachers to be the solution. This provides teachers with professional development opportunities. It is cost effective for the school, and it’s an inclusive approach for students with special needs.

Miller & Sabatino (1978) and Oldridge (2001) assert that an approach like Levine's might be the future of special education. They advocate task-analytic remediation programs in the general education classroom rather than the traditional or formal diagnostic procedures of special educators and special day classes (Miller & Sabatino, 1978, p. 89; Oldridge, 2001, p.196).

A second great advantage to this approach is a teacher focus on instructing students how to understand how they learn, or how they think about thinking. This is arguably the most effective way to train students to become life long learners (Wiggins, 1989, pp. 44-59). Furthermore, this method promotes student self-efficacy. (A student will learn that she has to work on her memory skills rather than resign herself to being a poor reader (Levine, 2002).)

There are also some disadvantages to the task analysis "Mind at a Time" approach. First, more research needs to be done to determine the exact academic merits of this relatively new approach to education. Second, there is the disadvantage of a teacher working by herself (instead of collaboratively with a special educator). Third, one teacher has the difficult job of being the lead observer for all of the students in her classroom, an overwhelming task to do for all of her students all the time. Fourth, the training for this approach costs schools money and time. Last, learning about the brain can be a complex study, requiring much effort on the part of school faculty.

When private Christian schools consider the Biblical integration of Levine's "Mind at a Time" task analysis approach, they might find it to be worth the extra time and money. In 1 Corinthians 12, the apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthian church about the kind of community that God wanted them to have, and he presented them with the

analogy of the body of Christ. (This analogy has already been discussed and applied to the working relationships among educators. Here it is applied to the community of students in a classroom where the task-analysis approach to education is being practiced.) Paul stated that each part of the body was important, just as every child in a classroom community is important. No part of the body could function perfectly without the help of the other parts. All students have weaknesses, which is something that Levine (2002) strongly asserts. Everyone in a classroom has something that they can work on. This is something that a classroom community needs to remind itself of in order to create a non-threatening, stretching classroom environment—the classroom culture that Levine advocates. Therefore, Levine’s approach to establishing and working with a humble community of learners is much like Paul’s Biblical approach to establishing community. The main difference is that one community is in a church and the other community is in a classroom.

Combination Approach

Of course Christian schools may choose any combination of the aforementioned instructional approaches to helping students with special needs. For example, a school might implement the consultation and teaming approaches simultaneously or train its teachers in the task-analysis approach while also using the consultation approach to offer tutoring to its students. The best approach for a Christian school may depend on the particular school’s population and culture. Christian schools should make these considerations as they seek to find a pathway to provide an accessible and quality education for students with special needs. See figure 1.

Figure 1: Spectrum of Approaches Toward Equal Access to a Christian Education for Every Learner



As previously stated, the instructional intervention(s) that the Christian school chooses to use to help students with special needs should be paired with related and support services.

Support Services

Vaughn et al. (2007) notes that an essential component to helping students with special needs succeed involves support from related services (Vaughn et al., 2007).

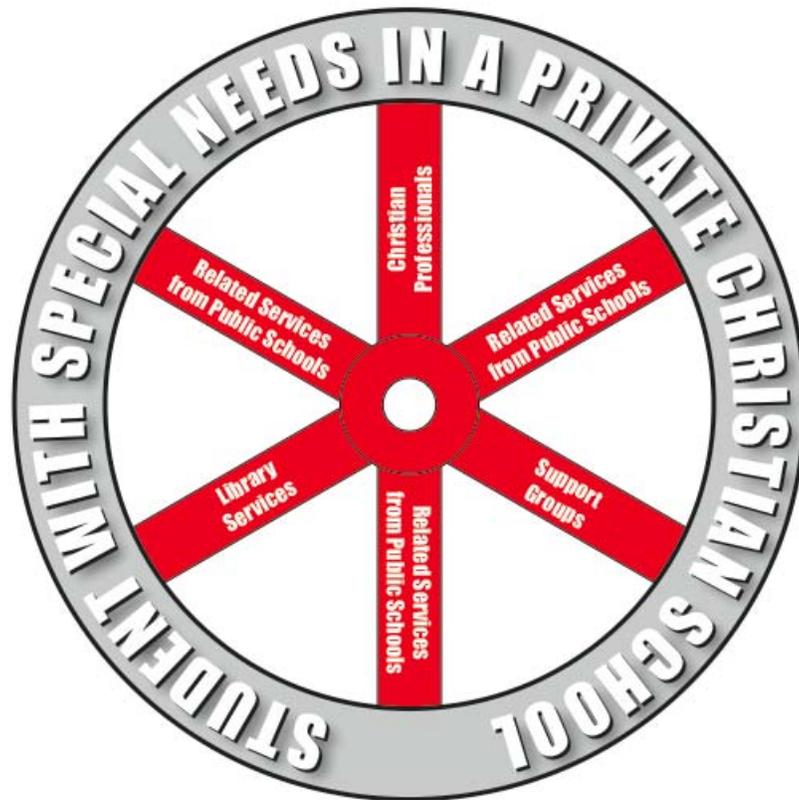
Vaughn and her colleagues (2007) cite the U.S. department of Education (1997) definition of related services:

The term “related services” means transportation and such developmental, corrective, and other supportive services (including speech pathology and audiology, psychological services, physical and occupational therapy, recreation, including therapeutic recreation, social work services, counseling services, including rehabilitation counseling, orientation and

mobility services and medical services (except that such medical services shall be for diagnostic and evaluation purposes) only as may be required to assist a child with a disability to benefit from special education, and includes the early identification and assessment of disabling conditions in children. (U.S. Department of Education, 1997)

Under the 2001 *No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)*, students who attend private Christian schools are entitled to these testing and support services offered by the school district of that student's residence (ChildD.org). In addition to the resources that the local school district offers, private schools may consider offering the following support services to students with special needs in order to enhance their education: the services of Christian professionals (counseling, consulting from a Christian perspective), parent support groups for students with special needs, and a resource library with literature about students with special needs. The combination of all these related services and support structures can greatly aid Christian schools in providing a quality holistic education for students with special needs. See figure 2.

Figure 2: Related and Support Services for Students with Special Needs in Christian Schools



In order to ensure that Christian schools have adequate support services, connections need to be made with local school districts surrounding the school. Connections also need to be established within the Christian community. Educational therapist, Joyce Inouye, recommends that private Christian schools reach out to their Christian communities, summoning the services of professional Christian church-goers who can offer students and their families expertise as an act of Christian service (ChildD.org).

Christian schools must decide what type of approach to take to educate students with special needs based on their unique visions, missions and school cultures. This

approach must be further supported by appropriate related services for students with special needs.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The researcher has posed the following questions about students with special needs in Christian schools:

1. Are private Christian Schools allowing students with special needs access to a Christian education?
2. How are private Christian schools providing students with learning challenges with an education that meets their special needs?
3. Are the approaches that private Christian schools are taking to educate students with special needs effective?

The researcher has hypothesized that while some Christian schools are providing students with learning challenges, or special needs, with an appropriate education, Christian schools need to develop a greater understanding of students with special needs. The researcher has also hypothesized that Christian schools may need to discover and implement some of the researched-based interventions that students with special needs require. Moreover, the researcher has hypothesized that while Christian schools are somewhat effective in meeting the needs of students with special needs, they can become more effective by developing a heart for students with special needs and acquiring more professional and financial resources to serve these students. To test these hypotheses, the researcher conducted a survey of Christian schools.

Research Design

After reviewing the literature, the researcher discovered five common approaches or a combination thereof to helping students with special needs and surmised how these approaches might function in Christian schools. Therefore, the survey was created around

these approaches so that the researcher might discover which approaches were being used in Christian schools and how effective the Christian schools deemed them to be when it came to helping their students with special needs. The survey also allowed for answers to open-ended questions so that the researcher might determine if there were any approaches that differed from those that she found in the literature. Moreover, the survey noted demographic information so that the researcher might determine the number of students with special needs in the Christian schools that responded to the survey and the title and position of the staff member who filled out a survey.

The 15-item survey was an electronic questionnaire that could be completed on the Internet. It was composed of short-answer, essay, check-all-that-apply, and Likert Scale questions. The Likert Scale questions asked educators to rate programs at their schools offered to students with special needs on a scale of 1 to 4, 4 being extremely effective and 1 being completely ineffective. This scale contributed to the significance of the study in that it forced educators to choose a number on either the effective or ineffective side. There was no middle numerical rating.

Before inviting educators to complete the survey, the researcher tested the survey among colleagues for face validity. Then the researcher sent out an email to all the Christian schools in California within her selected population (schools accredited by either the Western Association of Schools and Colleges or the Association of Christian Schools International with an enrollment of 300 or more students). The researcher obtained the email addresses for these schools by accessing them from ACSI's online directory. The researcher addressed the email invitation to the administrator of the school, introducing herself and explaining the purposes of her study, emphasizing that

participation in the study was voluntary. The email contained a link to the online survey, and requested that the administrator have the person at his or her school most intimately acquainted with serving students with special needs fill out the survey; if no such person existed, then the administrator was to complete the survey. The rationale behind this request was the researcher's desire to gather information from the person at each school with the most expertise on serving students with special needs. After the initial invitation to take the survey did not yield the researcher's desired response rate, the researcher sent out two additional emails requesting participation in the survey. Because the participants surveyed in this study were only those eager to participate, the respondent population was self-selected, not random and therefore not generalizable.

Previous to answering the survey questions, the survey respondents read the following definition of a student with special needs: "a student who can benefit academically from special accommodations implemented into his or her educational experience. This definition is broad and applies to students with dyslexia, autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), audio-processing disorders etc." The definition of a student with special needs for the purpose of this study varies from the broader definition of diverse and exceptional learners, which includes students who can benefit from Gifted and Talented Education (GATE). While the researcher recognizes that GATE students are students with their own special needs, she decided to limit the scope of the study to students with special needs that have learning challenges in that students with learning challenges can often be overlooked in private Christian schools.

The researcher also made some delimitations within the sampling, population, and participants of her study. She chose to sample only schools within the state of California

in order to limit the size of her study to a feasible number of schools for this research study. She chose to study school populations with an enrollment of 300 or more students, rationalizing that if a least 10% of students in private schools have special needs as the literature indicated, that these schools would indeed have a significant population of students with special needs to serve. Furthermore, schools with a healthy enrollment of 300 or more would be more than likely to have access to at least some resources for serving students with special needs. Therefore the researcher invited only schools with an enrollment greater than 300 students to participate in her study. As stated earlier, the participants were either those most intimately acquainted with helping students with special needs (special educators, resource specialists etc.) or school administrators.

Data Collection

The data from the surveys was collected with the help of an online tool called “SurveyMonkey” (www.surveymonkey.com). SurveyMonkey is software that allows users to design surveys and collect the results of respondents via the Internet. Respondents submitted the answers to their survey questions online and SurveyMonkey collected the completed responses, giving each respondent a number. The software further calculated facts and figures for the researcher, such as the percentage of respondents that answered each question in a particular way.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis

The data gathered from the study will be reported one survey question at a time in the order that the questions were asked on the survey.

Survey Results

One hundred fifteen schools were invited by email to complete the survey. Thirty-four Christian School educators accessed the online survey about students with special needs; however, only 24 of these educators completed the entire survey. Therefore, the study had a response completion rate of about 20%.

Of the respondents, 14 or 58.3% were school administrators such as principals, heads of school, or superintendents, 4 or 16.7% were administrators specializing in instruction, curriculum, academic support or family services, and 6 or 25% were special educators with titles such as resource specialists, psychologist, learning lab director, special education director, or counselor.

The first question that the survey respondents were asked was: *About how many students at your school have special needs?* Responses ranged from none or 0% to 11% of student enrollment. According to the survey respondents, the average number of students with special needs in the surveyed schools was 6.1%.

The second survey question was: *How do you discover students with special needs at your school?* (This was a check all that apply question with the following options: school entry assessment, teacher evaluation, parent interview, cumulative file review, other.) The survey revealed that the schools surveyed used all of the choices on the survey to varying degrees as well as additional means for discovering students with special needs, which they listed separately. The most popular way of identifying students

with special needs was teacher evaluation. Eighty-seven and a half percent of the respondents indicated this on the survey. Seventy-nine point two percent of respondents said they used cumulative file review. Seventy-five percent chose a parent interview for identifying students with special needs. Sixty-six point seven percent used a school entry assessment, and 50% mentioned another way under “other” for discovering students with special needs. These “other” responses included formal in house or district assessments performed by professionals and specialists. Some respondents also made mention of their schools accepting students transferring from public school with IEPs (Individualized Education Program) already in place.

The third survey question asked: *What kind of services do you offer students with special needs?* (This was another check all that apply question. See the survey in Appendix C for answer choices.) Eighty-seven and a half percent of the respondents reported that their school offers teacher training/in-services about different way in which students with special needs learn and some effective strategies for instructing them. Seventy-five percent of the schools surveyed said that they use team meetings between special educators and classroom teachers to discuss how to best educate a student with special needs. Sixty-two and a half percent of respondents chose a pull out time of one-on-one or small group tutoring with a specially trained educator as one of their approaches to educating students with special needs. Sixty-two and a half of the respondents also chose advocacy as a means of helping students with special needs at their schools. Eight point three percent, or two respondents indicated that they did not differentiate instruction for students with special needs. (These same two respondents reported that their schools did not have any students with special needs in question one of

the survey.) Four point two percent, or one school uses co-teaching to educate students with special needs. Finally, thirty-seven and a half percent of the respondents shared other approaches to helping students with special needs. Some of these approaches were: tutoring with non-credentialed specialists, peer tutoring, and brain training.

The fourth survey question asked: *On a scale of 1-4 (with a 4 being extremely effective and a 1 being completely ineffective) please rate the effectiveness of the services your school offers students with special needs.* The schools that offer teacher training/in-services about students with special needs gave this an average rating of 2.86. Team meetings between special educators and classroom teachers were given an average rating of 3.17. The average rating for pull out instruction was 3.21. Advocacy was given a rating of 3.33. The one school in the survey that offers co-teaching as a means to help students with special needs, gave it a rating of two. The other approaches to helping students with special needs listed in the previous question were given an average rating of 3.25. According to the survey results for this question, advocacy was the most effective approach toward educating students with special needs, while co-teaching was deemed the least effective.

Question five on the survey said: *Please list the advantages of your school's approach to serving students with special needs.* Four main themes emerged from the answers of the respondents. First, the respondents overwhelmingly noted the academic, emotional, and spiritual advantages that their programs for students with special needs. Second, the respondents mentioned the practical aspects for the way in which their programs were run. Third, special educators and research-based educational interventions were appreciated as valuable resources by the surveyed schools. Finally, the respondents

said that teacher collaboration and cooperation were advantages to their school's approach toward educating students with special needs.

While question five asked the survey respondents to list the advantages of their schools' approach to servicing students with special needs, question six read: *Please list the disadvantages (if any) to your school's approach to servicing students with special needs.* Again, several themes emerged. First, schools used such terms as: "not comprehensive," "minimal," and "limited" to describe their programs. Next, schools spoke of lacking resources, whether be finances, staff, or specialized training. Over half of the schools that responded to this question said that they needed more of these resources to make their approaches successful. Another disadvantage to several programs was having to pull a student with special needs from his or her regular classroom. Yet another mentioned disadvantage was the sometimes lacking parental support from students with special needs. Furthermore, some schools said that the fact that they did not accept students with special needs, or lost these students due to insufficient ways of meeting their needs were disadvantages. Finally, when answering this question, survey respondent number eight wrote, "Private Christian schools offering special day classes have lost the support of parents of typically developing students. This has caused school closures." Another survey respondent listed lower test scores as a disadvantage to helping students with special needs. Therefore, the way a school is perceived by parents, if it is negative, can be a disadvantage to serving students with special needs.

The seventh question on the survey was: *How are services for students with special needs financed at your school?* (This was another choose all that apply question. Please see the survey in Appendix C for answer choices.) Sixty-five point two percent of

the schools surveyed said that their programs were at least funded in part by the parent(s) of the child with special needs. Sixty point nine percent of the respondents reported that their approach was funded at least in part by the general school budget. Twenty-six point one percent of the schools mentioned donors as a resource to help fund their programs for students with special needs. Thirteen percent of those surveyed said that they used state funding. Thirteen percent of the respondents also said that they use scholarship funds. Only one respondent reported the use of state funding. Two of the schools surveyed mentioned other ways of funding. One of the schools assigns students with special needs to counselors and teachers, giving them the role of educating these students, so as to avoid needing to use extra monies to help these students. The other school uses a creative fundraiser called “Team Learning 4 Life” to help finance their approach to help students with special needs academically succeed.

Question eight on the survey requested: *Please write the number of people at your school that hold the following positions (resource specialist, reading specialist, speech and language specialist, school psychologist, special educator).* The survey results showed that among the 21 schools that answered this question, 20 resource specialists are employed—averaging about one resource specialist per school. The schools also employed a total of 17 reading specialists, 11 teachers with credentials in special education, 1 speech and language pathologist, and 1 school psychologist.

Question nine on the survey asked: *If money were no object, what would be your school’s next step toward helping students with special needs academically succeed?* Two main themes emerged in response to this short answer question. Seventy-five percent of the respondents said that they would make greater efforts to hire more

professionals and instructional aids to help students with special needs. Seventy percent of the respondents said that they would create additional programs at their schools, whether they be inclusive-pull out programs, or separate special day classes for students with special needs. One respondent mentioned her desire to make her school's services for students with special needs free for the families of these students.

The final question on the survey, question 10, read: *Additional Comments*. Eight respondents commented on this question. One respondent added thoughts on the lack of parent support received from students with special needs at his or her school site. Many comments expressed a desire to do more on behalf of students with special needs. Some of the other respondents left notes of encouragement for the researcher and requests to see her results.

Chapter 5: Summary of Findings

The original research questions for this study were:

1. Are private Christian Schools allowing students with special needs access to a Christian education?
2. How are private Christian schools providing students with learning challenges with an education that meets their special needs?
3. Are the approaches that private Christian schools are taking to educate students with special needs effective?

The research findings will be presented in accordance with each research question.

Are private Christian schools allowing students
with special needs access to a Christian education?

While the researcher hypothesized that some private Christian schools were serving students with special needs, she found that most (91.7% of the schools that participated in her survey) serve students with special needs. However, the schools that said they served students with special needs, on average, identified only 6.1% of their student population as students with special needs, while experts (Barton, 2006; Taylor, 2005) estimate that the percentage of students with special needs attending private schools is at least 10%. Therefore, while a significant number of the Christian schools that participated in this study are serving students with special needs, these schools may not be identifying all the students with special needs in their schools who might benefit from academic accommodations and or interventions.

The researcher found that the schools that participated in the survey discovered students with special needs in a variety of ways that included school entry assessment,

teacher evaluations, parent interviews, cumulative file reviews, and other methods such as professional testing. According to survey responses, the two least effective means to discovering students with special needs were professional testing and the school entry assessment. Therefore, Christian schools might re-evaluate their entry assessments. They may consider employing entry assessments that reveal a student's potential to be classified as a student with special needs. Christian schools may also find it helpful to be involved in a network of professionals who may be able to provide students with specific testing related to learning challenges. These and further teacher and administration exposure to working with students with special needs would aid schools in discovering their population of students with special needs.

How are private Christian schools
providing students with learning challenges with
an education that meets their special needs?

The study found that private Christian schools are using multifaceted approaches to serving students with special needs. The researcher had predicted that, based on the literature, schools would address educating students with special needs by using the approaches of: consultation, teaming, co-teaching, advocacy, task-analysis/training for teachers or any combination of these five approaches. According to the study, with the exception of co-teaching, over half the schools that participated in the survey used each of the noted approaches to educate students with special needs. Therefore, all of the approaches with the exception of co-teaching, have been shown to be a feasible way to educate students with special needs in Christian schools.

While addressing this research question of how private Christian schools are providing students with learning challenges with an education that meets their special needs, the researcher also predicted that not enough current research-based interventions are taking place for students with special needs. Further study needs to be implemented to confirm or deny this hypothesis as no one survey question specifically asked about research-based interventions. The researcher notes that some schools were very specific in describing their programs for serving students with special needs. Researched-based curriculums and programs like Orton-Gillingham, and programs like the National Institute for Learning Disabilities, and Opportunity Schools were mentioned by three of the different schools that participated in the survey. Therefore, to some degree, Christian schools are using research-based interventions to educate students with special needs.

Are the approaches that private Christian schools
take to educate students with special needs effective?

The researcher hypothesized that the current approaches Christian schools are taking toward helping students with special needs are only somewhat effective and that Christian schools will need to expand their financial and professional resources in order to meet the needs of these students in a manner of excellence. The survey results from the studied schools supported this hypothesis.

Quantitatively, the study found that, on average, the survey respondents ranked the consultation, teaming, and advocacy approaches toward educating students with special needs with a 3 out of 4 or “somewhat effective” rating. The average rating for the teacher training/in-services effect on serving students with special needs was a 2 or “somewhat ineffective” rating. More research might be conducted to discover why the

schools that participated in the study found this to be the weakest approach toward educating students with special needs.

Qualitatively, respondents answered a short answer question about the disadvantages of their school's approach to educating students with special needs with words like, "not comprehensive," "minimal," and "limited." These responses show dissatisfaction with current approaches for educating students with special needs in private Christian schools. When the respondents were given the opportunity to share what things might help their school become more successful in the area of educating students with special needs, they overwhelmingly shared a desire to hire more professionals and gain more financial resources so that they could afford to employ the professionals and the respective programs that they might implement. Therefore, while the approaches that are being taken to educate students with special needs in Christian schools are somewhat effective, there is much potential for Christian schools to grow toward being more effective in the ways that they help students with special needs.

Conclusions

As a result of this study, the researcher found that Christian schools educate a percentage of students with special needs that is below the national average. Also, the approaches that Christian schools take toward educating students with special needs are varied, sometimes implementing researched-based interventions. Finally, according to the survey, on average, Christian schools are somewhat effective in their approach toward educating students with special needs, but have significant room to grow.

Recommendations for Further Study

The researcher recommends that this study, or a similar one, be conducted on a larger scale with a random selection of Christian schools so that the results might be generalizable across a broader population. More stages of data collection, such as interviews should also take place. Furthermore, the parent issues that surround helping students with special needs should be examined more closely. Special consideration to the stigmatizing of Christian schools that have reached out to students with special needs, versus the schools that serve this population successfully and continue to grow enrollment should be made. In addition to parent issues, a further study is recommended to determine to what extent schools are using research-based approaches for educating students with special needs.

Final Thoughts for Christian Educators

Christian schools must increase their interaction with students with special needs in order to provide an equitable education for all. When Jesus wanted to challenge, grow, and better his disciples, he exposed them to people they wouldn't usually serve—Samaritans, women, children and tax collectors. He provided opportunities for His disciples to interact with people who were different so that they might accomplish His mission to love God and all mankind with a fully developed, loving heart. In the same way, if Christian schools wish to accomplish their own role in the Great Commission, *with His heart*, they must further explore how to educate those who learn differently, and how to educate them well.

References

- Ames, Bobbie. (2000, February). Christian education and Christian schools. *Montgomery Parent Magazine*. Retrieved October 13, 2008 from
<<http://www.emeraldmountainchristianschool.org/information/editorial>>.
- Barton, S. (Nov. 20, 2006). *Bright solutions for dyslexia*. Anaheim, California: Association of Christian Schools International Conference: Anaheim Convention Center.
- Carpenter, S., King-Sears, M., & Keys, S. (1998, October). Counselors + educators + families as a transdisciplinary team = more effective inclusion for students with disabilities. *Professional School Counseling*, 2(1), 1. Retrieved July 6, 2008, from Education Research Complete database.
- ChildD.org. <www.childd.org> Accessed October 13, 2008.
- Coben, S., & Thomas, C. (1997, July). Meeting the challenge of consultation and collaboration: Developing interactive teams. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 30(4), 427. Retrieved July 6, 2008, from Education Research Complete database.
- Daack, E. (1999). Inclusion models for a building level. *UMI Masters Thesis*.
- Education Encyclopedia (Online). *Private schooling—What is private school? History of private schools in the United States*.
<<http://education.stateuniversity.com/pages/2334/Private-Schooling.html>>
Accessed October 13, 2008.
- Levine, M., M.D. (2002). *A mind at a time*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

- Magiera, K., Lawrence-Brown, D., Bloomquist, K., Foster, C., Figueroa, A., Glatz, K., et al. (2006, May). On the road to more collaborative teaching: One school's experience. *Teaching Exceptional Children Plus*, 2(5), 1. Retrieved July 6, 2008, from Education Research Complete database.
- Miller, T., & Sabatino, D. (1978, October). An evaluation of the teacher consultant model as an approach to mainstreaming. *Exceptional Children*, 45(2), 86-91. Retrieved July 6, 2008, from Education Research Complete database.
- Oldridge, O. (1977, Summer77). Future directions for special education: Beyond a diagnostic and remedial model. *Journal of Special Education*, 11(2). Retrieved July 6, 2008, from Education Research Complete database.
- Opportunity Schools. <www.opp4kids.org> Accessed October 13, 2008.
- Organization for Inclusion, Acceptance, Respect. <<http://www.oiar.org/index.html>> Accessed October 13, 2008.
- Pudlas, K. (2004, January 1). Inclusive education: Will they know we are Christians?. *Journal of Research on Christian Education*, 13(1), 61. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. EJ739922) Retrieved June 30, 2008, from ERIC database.
- Paulsen, K. (2008, January 1). School-Based collaboration: An introduction to the collaboration column. *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 43(5), 313. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. EJ791340) Retrieved July 4, 2008, from ERIC database.
- Riesen, R. (2002). *Piety and philosophy: a primer for Christian schools*. Phoenix: ACW Press.

- Scruggs, T., Mastropieri, M., & McDuffie, K. (2007, Summer2007). Co-Teaching in inclusive classrooms: A metasynthesis of qualitative research. *Exceptional Children*, 73(4), 392-416. Retrieved July 6, 2008, from Education Research Complete database.
- Shaywitz, S., M. D. (2003). *Overcoming dyslexia: A new and complete science-based program for reading problems at any level*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Taylor, P. (Jan. 2008). *Life of Christ*. La Mirada, California: Education and Biblical Integration Course: Biola University.
- Taylor, S. (2005, January 1). Special education and private schools: Principals' points of view. *Remedial & Special Education*, 26(5), 281. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. EJ722323) Retrieved June 30, 2008, from ERIC database.
- Vaughn, S., Bos, C. S., & Schumm, J. S. (2007). *Teaching students who are exceptional, diverse, and at risk in the general education classroom (4th ed.)*. Boston: Pearson.
- Weiss, M. (2004, May). Co-Teaching as science in the schoolhouse: More questions than answers. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 37(3), 218-223. Retrieved July 6, 2008, from Education Research Complete database.
- Wiggins, G. (1989). The futility of trying to teach everything of importance. *Educational Leadership*, 47(3), 45-59.
- Wilson, G. (2006, July). Introduction: Co-Teaching and literacy. *Reading & Writing Quarterly*, 22(3), 199-204. Retrieved July 6, 2008, doi:10.1080/10573560500455687

Wilson, G. (2008, March). Be an active Co-Teacher. *Intervention in School & Clinic*, 43(4), 240-243. Retrieved July 6, 2008, from Education Research Complete database.

Wilson, G., & Michaels, C. (2006, July). General and special education students' perceptions of co-teaching: Implications for secondary-level literacy Instruction. *Reading & Writing Quarterly*, 22(3), 205-225. Retrieved July 6, 2008, doi:10.1080/10573560500455695

Zehr, M. (2004, December 8). Evangelical Christian schools see growth. *Education Week*, 24(15), . (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. EJ755806) Retrieved October 4, 2008, from ERIC database.

Zehr, M. (2005, December 7). School of faith: evangelical Christian schools represent the fastest-growing sector of private schools. *Education Week*, 25(14), 31-34. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. EJ739282) Retrieved October 4, 2008, from ERIC database.

Appendix A

Sample Email Invitation to Participate in Study

Note: This email is intended for the school administrator(s).

Fellow Christian Educator:

Please allow me a moment to introduce myself. My name is Melissa Stymeist; I am a second grade teacher at Lakewood Christian School and a graduate student at Biola University in the School of Education. I am currently doing research about what accredited ACSI member schools are doing to help students with special needs succeed academically in Christian schools.

I am conducting this research in order to gather information from educators like you, that can be shared with other Christian school educators, and reveal the different approaches that are taken to help the students with special needs in Christian schools. It is my hope that this research will ultimately help to enlighten our unique community on the best ways to educate students with special needs.

Please note that the intent of this research is to discover what schools are doing to help students with special needs, and not to rate programs of individual schools or compare one school with another. Also, this research is confidential. No names of people or schools will be published without written consent. Only the final results of this survey as they relate to demographic information will be anonymously published in my thesis.

I hope that you will take this opportunity to participate in furthering this research on what can be done to help students with special needs in Christian schools. If you do not wish to participate, you may disregard this email and its attachments.

If you do wish to participate, please forward this email to the person at your school most intimately acquainted with helping students with special needs so that he or she can click on the following link to fill out the survey. (If there is no one at your school who specializes in working with students with special needs, please kindly fill out the survey yourself.) The survey should take less than 10 minutes and must be completed by October 24, 2008. I greatly appreciate your contribution to my research!

Thank you for your prompt response,
Melissa Stymeist

http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=0XHsDdjgh6bW5aKoAbFbww_3d_3d

Appendix B

Informed Consent

I authorize Melissa Stymeist of the School of Education, Biola University, La Mirada, California, and/or any designated research assistants to gather information from me on the topic of helping students with special needs academically succeed in private Christian schools.

I understand that the general purpose of the research is to gather information to be published in a thesis, that I will be asked to fill out a survey, that my survey responses will be submitted to the researcher, and that the approximate total time of my involvement will be 10 minutes.

I am aware that I may choose not to answer any questions that I find embarrassing or offensive.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may refuse to participate or discontinue my participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled.

I understand that if, after my participation, I experience any undue anxiety or stress or have questions about the research or my rights as a participant, that may have been provoked by the experience, Melissa Stymeist will be available for consultation.

Confidentiality of research results will be maintained by the researcher. My individual results will not be released without my written consent.

The potential benefit of this study is the contribution to broadening the understanding of what is being done in Christian schools to help students with special needs.

By clicking yes, I consent to participating in this research.

Appendix C

Students with Special Needs in Christian Schools Survey

Thank you for filling out this survey! Please be as detailed as you can in your responses to these questions.

Name:

Name of School where Employed:

School Enrollment:

Position held at your school:

Note: for the purposes of this survey, the definition of a student with special needs is a student who can benefit academically from special accommodations implemented into his or her educational experience. This definition is broad and applies to students with dyslexia, autism, ADHD, audio-processing disorders etc.

Survey Questions

1. About how many students at your school have special needs? _____

2. How do you discover students with special needs at your school? (Please choose all that apply.)
 - A. School entry assessment
 - B. Teacher evaluation
 - C. Parent Interview
 - D. Cumulative File Review
 - E. Other (please specify)

3. What kind of services do you offer students with special needs? (Please choose all that apply.)
 - A. A pull out time of one-on-one or small groups tutoring with a specially trained educator
 - B. Team meetings between special educators and classroom teachers to discuss how to best educate a student with special needs
 - C. Co-teaching (A special educator and classroom teacher share a classroom and teaching duties)
 - D. Advocacy (A staff member becomes an advocate for students with special needs by investigating what a local school district can offer students in the way of special education)
 - E. Teacher training/in-services about different ways in which students with special needs learn and some effective ways to teach them
 - F. None of the above
 - G. Other: _____

4. On a scale of 1-4 (with a 4 being extremely effective and a 1 being completely ineffective) please rate the effectiveness of the services your school offers students with special needs.

A. Pull out time of one-on-one tutoring with a specially trained educator
1 2 3 4 N/A This program does not exist at my school.

B. Team meetings between special educators and classroom teachers
1 2 3 4 N/A This program does not exist at my school.

C. Co-teaching
1 2 3 4 N/A This program does not exist at my school.

D. Separate special education program/special school for students with special needs
1 2 3 4 N/A This program does not exist at my school.

E. Advocacy
1 2 3 4 N/A This program does not exist at my school.

F. Teacher training/Inservices
1 2 3 4 N/A This program does not exist at my school.

G. Other _____
1 2 3 4 N/A This program does not exist at my school.

5. Please list the advantages of your school's approach to servicing students with special needs.

6. Please list the disadvantages of your school's approach to servicing students with special needs.

7. How are services for students with special needs financed at your school? (Please choose all that apply.)

- A. By the parent(s) of the child with special needs
- B. By the general school budget
- C. Donors
- D. State Funding
- E. Federal Funding
- F. Scholarship Funds
- G. Other (Please explain below.)

8. Please write the number of people at your school that hold the following positions

- _____ Resource Specialist
- _____ Reading Specialist
- _____ Speech and Language Specialist
- _____ School Psychologist
- _____ Special Educator (with a credential in special education)

9. If money were no object, what would be your school's next step toward helping students with special needs academically succeed?

10. Additional Comments:
