

---

HIM 1990-2015

---

2012

## Finding the dominant characteristics that contribute to effectively implementing best practices in primary inclusion classrooms using the inclusive classroom profile (icp)

Marilyn Romero  
*University of Central Florida*

 Part of the [Political Science Commons](#)

Find similar works at: <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/honorstheses1990-2015>

University of Central Florida Libraries <http://library.ucf.edu>

This Open Access is brought to you for free and open access by STARS. It has been accepted for inclusion in HIM 1990-2015 by an authorized administrator of STARS. For more information, please contact [STARS@ucf.edu](mailto:STARS@ucf.edu).

---

### Recommended Citation

Romero, Marilyn, "Finding the dominant characteristics that contribute to effectively implementing best practices in primary inclusion classrooms using the inclusive classroom profile (icp)" (2012). *HIM 1990-2015*. 1298.

<https://stars.library.ucf.edu/honorstheses1990-2015/1298>

Finding the Dominant Characteristics that Contribute to Effectively Implementing  
Best Practices in Primary Inclusion Classrooms Using the Inclusive Classroom  
Profile (ICP)

by

MARILYN N. ROMERO

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the Honors in the Major Program in Political Science  
in the College of Arts and Sciences  
and in the Burnett Honors College  
at the University of Central Florida  
Orlando, Florida

Spring Term 2012

Thesis Chair: Dr. Maria Reyes-Macpherson

© 2012 Marilyn N. Romero

## **ABSTRACT**

In 1997, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was amended to emphasize the need for students with disabilities to have access to the general curriculum. Along with IDEA, No Child Left Behind (NCLB), emphasized that all children must have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education (Sec. 1001, Part A, Title 1 of ESEA; 20U.S.C. 6301) increasing the need for effective inclusion classrooms in schools around the country. This study evaluated six inclusive classrooms (three partial and three full) from a large metropolitan school district in Florida. The classrooms' best practices were assessed using the Inclusive Classroom Profile (ICP). The ICP is a 7-point rating scale conducted through an observation procedure that is designed to assess the quality of daily classroom practices of children with disabilities (Soukakou, 2007). Teacher characteristics, student characteristics, and classroom characteristics were gathered from all classrooms and analyzed through correlation tests with the ICP scores. Although statistical results did not demonstrate statistically significant data in regards to the strength of relationships between these characteristics and ICP scores, the direction of the relationship on the following characteristics: related experience, severity of disabilities, and level of support, revealed a possible impact on ICP scores.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

I primarily would like to thank God for giving me the strength and wisdom to endure this rigorous, academic task. I would like to thank my devoted family. To my Mami and Papi for pushing me to reach my fullest potential and taking pride in my education. To Edwin and Bernadette for always providing me with encouragement and support. To Cynthia for taking the time to guide me every step of the way. I could not have accomplished this without your enlightening direction. My gratitude extends to Nick who motivated and inspired me throughout this entire endeavor. You made me coffee at two in the morning and carried my heavy books to my car, always showing me that you genuinely cared.

A great amount of gratitude goes to my thesis chair, Dr. Maria Reyes-Macpherson for remaining strong and positive through all the highs and lows this project entailed. You have taught me a vast amount of knowledge that will have a continuous impact in my life. I aspire to gain your level of experience and eloquence. To Dr. Sherron Roberts for facilitating my journey by opening many doors to a world of insightful resources. To Dr. Caroline Pratt-Marrett for always comforting me with your wise and soothing words.

An immense appreciation goes to all of you for your dedication and faithfulness towards a project based on a topic that is so near and dear to me. You all contributed a significant piece to the completion of this project.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|   |      |
|---|------|
| LIST OF TABLES .....                                  | viii |
| LIST OF FIGURES .....                                 | x    |
| CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....                        | 1    |
| Research Question .....                               | 2    |
| Null Hypothesis .....                                 | 3    |
| Thesis Objectives .....                               | 3    |
| CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW .....                  | 4    |
| 1. Adaptations of Space and Materials/ Equipment..... | 4    |
| 2. Adult Involvement in Peer Interactions .....       | 5    |
| 3. Adult's Guidance of Children's Play .....          | 6    |
| 4. Conflict Resolution .....                          | 7    |
| 5. Membership .....                                   | 8    |
| 6. Adult-Child Social Communicative Interactions..... | 9    |

|   |    |
|---|----|
| 7. Support for Social Communication .....                                 | 10 |
| 8. Adaptation of Group Activities.....                                    | 12 |
| 9. Transitions Between Activities .....                                   | 12 |
| 10. Feedback .....  | 13 |
| 11. Planning and Monitoring of Children’s Individual Needs and Goals..... | 13 |
| Summary .....   | 14 |
| CHAPTER THREE: METHODS .....  | 15 |
| Theoretical Framework .....   | 15 |
| Participant Profile .....   | 16 |
| Limitations .....   | 19 |
| Summary .....   | 19 |
| CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS .....   | 20 |
| ICP Scores.....   | 22 |
| Teacher Characteristics .....   | 26 |
| Student Characteristics.....  | 29 |

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Classroom Characteristics.....  | 34 |
| Summary .....   | 37 |
| CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION.....   | 40 |
| Overview.....   | 40 |
| Suggestions for Future Implementation of Inclusion Classrooms.....            | 46 |
| APPENDIX A: UCF IRB Approval Letter.....                                      | 47 |
| APPENDIX B: Principal Letters to IRB.....                                     | 49 |
| APPENDIX C: Orange County Public Schools Approved Research Request Form ..... | 52 |
| APPENDIX D: Principal Letters to Orange County Public Schools.....            | 54 |
| APPENDIX E: Teacher Profile .....   | 57 |
| APPENDIX F: Classroom Profile .....   | 59 |
| APPENDIX G: Assessment Tool: Inclusion Classroom Profile (ICP) .....          | 62 |
| REFERENCES .....  | 68 |



## LIST OF TABLES

|  |    |
|--|----|
| <i>Table 1:</i> Sample Lesson Plan (Cote, 2011, p. 263).....   | 8  |
| <i>Table 2:</i> Most Common Visual Approaches (Devlin, 2009, p. 331-332).....  | 11 |
| <i>Table 3:</i> Overview of Classroom Settings .....   | 22 |
| <i>Table 4:</i> Mean ICP Scores Dependent on Inclusion Program .....   | 23 |
| <i>Table 5:</i> Mean ICP Score Dependent on Grade Level .....  | 24 |
| <i>Table 6:</i> Pearson Correlation Coefficients between ICP Scores and Inclusion Program .....                          | 25 |
| <i>Table 7:</i> Overview of Teacher Characteristics .....  | 27 |
| <i>Table 8:</i> Mean ICP Scores Dependent on Teacher's having ESE Certification (Y / N) .....                            | 28 |
| <i>Table 9:</i> Pearson Correlation Coefficients between ICP Scores and ESE Certification .....                          | 29 |
| <i>Table 10:</i> Scores Compared to Student Characteristics (Gender, Type of Disability, & Severity of Disability) ..... | 31 |
| <i>Table 11:</i> Mean ICP Scores Dependent on Severity of Disabilities .....   | 32 |
| <i>Table 12:</i> Pearson Correlation Coefficients between ICP Scores and Severity of Disabilities....                    | 33 |
| <i>Table 13:</i> Overview of Classroom Characteristics .....   | 35 |

*Table 14:* Pearson Correlation Coefficients between ICP Scores and Number of Personnel in

|                 |    |
|-----------------|----|
| Classroom ..... | 37 |
|-----------------|----|

## LIST OF FIGURES

|                                     |    |
|-------------------------------------|----|
| <i>Figure 1: Project Plan</i> ..... | 18 |
|-------------------------------------|----|

## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

From its inception, PL 94-142, established the need for a free appropriate education in the least restrictive environment for ALL children. In 1997, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was amended to emphasize the need for students with disabilities to have access to the general curriculum. Along with IDEA, No Child Left Behind (NCLB), emphasized that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education (Sec. 1001, Part A, Title 1 of ESEA; 20U.S.C. 6301) increasing the need for effective inclusion classrooms in schools around the country. As regular and exceptional education teachers face the challenges of the inclusive classroom in an education arena characterized by strong budget cuts and a call for teacher accountability it becomes critical to identify the best practices in inclusive settings.

Not only is there a need for effective inclusion classrooms, but this need is increasing. This need has become evident under many circumstances. For example, the U.S. Department of Education reported that in the 1991-1992 school year the number of children diagnosed with autism was 5,415 and by the 2001-2002 school year this number had increased by 77%. Comparably, another instance where the need for inclusion classrooms becomes highly evident is through the research recently conducted concerning health, educational, and developmental issues among students in high stress and low income environments. The research demonstrates that there is distinguished socioeconomic gradient in the relation between family income and children's outcomes (Aber, 2010). The number of low-income families is steadily increasing, as our country's economy is not seeing relief. Due to this concerning issue, some predict that we

may see an increase in students with higher emotional needs. With the rise in students with disabilities, a movement towards inclusion practices is swift. In fact, the U.S. Department of Education also recently reported that more than 95% of students with disabilities are currently enrolled in regular schools, and of those students, 52% spent a majority of the school day in a general education classroom (Klotz, 2004).

As the need for inclusion classrooms rises, efforts to improve their quality are necessary. However, an uncertainty persists as to a true definition of the term inclusion, which as a result may be hindering these efforts (Kilanowski-Press, 2010). As more schools and institutions embrace the concept, linking inclusion to the qualities and characteristics that it should possess is imperative. These qualities should be continuously assessed to ensure the effectiveness of any inclusion approach. To achieve a proper assessment of inclusion efforts, we need a set of standard criteria to guide such a critical assessment. A standard process and criteria for inclusion classrooms are necessary to identify and track successful practices in order to better cater to students with and without disabilities. Quality and improvement derive from frequent evaluation and communication of feedback (Ludtke, 2009). Giving the community a common understanding of what is expected from an inclusive classroom is a movement closer to guiding educators to utilize more effective researched practices.

### **Research Question**

What are the dominant teacher, student, and classroom characteristics that contribute to the effective implementation of best practices in primary inclusion classrooms?

### **Null Hypothesis**

There will be no relationship between any of the characteristics and the trend of the Inclusion Classroom Profile (ICP) Scores.

### **Thesis Objectives**

The purpose of this study is to discover dominant characteristics among those inclusion classrooms that are effectively implementing inclusion best practices. For this study, best practices are defined as the productivity among the 11 core qualities from the ICP that should be found in an inclusion classroom. The 11 core qualities will further be described in detail in both Chapters 2 and 3. We would like to report our findings to facilitate the implementation of these core qualities to other inclusion classrooms.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

Inclusion is an intricate practice that is affected by many factors of a classroom. The Inclusion Classroom Profile (ICP) (Soukakou, 2007), focuses on assessing 11 core qualities, that if delivered correctly, compile as indicators of an inclusive classroom conducting its best practices. This chapter consists of a review of literature that was driven by researching these 11 core qualities to demonstrate justification for why these qualities are significant to an inclusive classroom. Each quality was depicted by linking its background to past evidence or research of students' benefitting from implementation of each individual quality. The following 11 core qualities are considered best practice.

### **1. Adaptations of Space and Materials/ Equipment**

A crucial aspect of a student with a disability entering a general education classroom is that the classroom in itself is appropriate to the students' needs. Studies have shown that classrooms should provide adequate space for movement, have matched areas to learning styles, and have visual/ auditory accommodations (Mohr, 1995). A student may have a cognitive, communication, physical, social emotional, or developmental disability. Depending on the student's particular disability they may have equipment and devices that facilitate their mobility and communication. Students with physical disabilities may use wheelchairs or other mobility equipment. It is important that the classroom is wheelchair accessible in order to allow the student to access all parts of the room so that their resources are equal to that of other students. Students may also have standers, walkers, or gait trainers that are necessary for the student to improve physical abilities. A classroom should be able to accommodate students' equipment so

that it is accessible to them at necessary times. Furthermore, students with cognitive or communicative disabilities may use visual aids or communication devices. A study conducted by the technology and psychology education department of the University of Arizona reported that students who were able to access visual cues and assistive technologies scored significantly better on test scores (Lin. 2011). Therefore, students should be able to access necessary equipment and devices as independently as possible.

## **2. Adult Involvement in Peer Interactions**

As early as the 1920's, Vygotsky began exploring the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which is defined in the 1978 publication of Vygotsky's work as the distance between the actual developmental level, as determined by independent problem solving, and the level of potential development, as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers (Wass, 2011). This concept was a part of Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory that emphasized social interaction as a fundamental role in cognitive development. Teachers play a major role in providing opportunities that encourage students to be challenged and learn concepts that would otherwise be too difficult. This can be accomplished by strategically grouping students to have positive peer role models and be complemented by their group member's strength and weaknesses. Students can accomplish more when appropriately supported and guided. Along with Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory of learning came the idea of scaffolding (Wood et al. 1976). Scaffolding refers to metaphor adopted to explain the role that adults can play in joint problem-solving activities with children. The same way a scaffold is temporarily erected to help with the building or modification of another structure, a student can be temporarily assisted until they can complete a more difficult task on



their own (van de Pol, 2010). Both theories, ZPD and scaffolding, display the benefits of adult involvement in peer interactions. Teachers can facilitate learning, by prompting and manipulating peer interaction. Students will learn from peer modeling and peer inquiry.

### **3. Adult's Guidance of Children's Play**

Along the same lines teachers can manipulate peer interaction to make children's play meaningful. Students with low interactions may be paired with a high interacting peer to encourage communication and appropriate use of play. Teachers may provide unique opportunities to interact with different manipulatives. Teachers may also prompt students by asking questions during play. The teacher may monitor play and at times interact, but there should be a balance between how much a teacher should intervene and how much teachers should allow students to use their own creativity. The Center for Early Childhood Education in Eastern Connecticut State University categorized levels to distinguish appropriate adult interaction. They reported that child play behaviors could be sorted into three basic categories related to the amount of needed adult guidance, labeled much need, some need, and no need. "Much need" students, need a lot of adult prompting because they cannot proceed with the tasks on their own. They require frequent role enactment, peer interaction, and daily routine. "Some need" students, need some adult support during play due to being unable to remain engaged, having difficulty problem solving, and maintaining positive interactions with others. Lastly, are "No need" students that do not need any adult support because they are independent and display elaborate and social play patterns. Being able to judge when to effectively support students in play is necessary to meet the social needs of students at varying levels (Trawick-Smith & Dziurgot, 2011).

#### **4. Conflict Resolution**

A quality classroom should have procedures in place to prevent conflicts from occurring such as a visual for classroom rules or a familiar behavior system. However, it is inevitable that conflicts occur. Therefore, there are numerous critical strategies that should be implemented in encouraging students to utilize problem solving skills. These strategies include giving the student options, modeling, and allowing students to play an “active role” in the solution (Soukakou, 2007). According to the Hammill Institute on Disabilities, decision-making is a significant step in problem solving. Giving students choices allows the student to reach a higher order of thinking that will lead them to justify an appropriate decision. Questioning students’ daily decisions to strengthen their confidence and reasoning can practice this step. For example, prompting the students to ask themselves “What’s the problem?” “How can we fix it?” and “Why would it work?” (Cote, 2011). Helping students understand the rationale behind their decisions guides them to become independent thinkers.

The next important factor in developing problem solving skills is modeling. The teacher is the primary role model in the classroom setting; therefore he/she should act as they would like their students to act. For example, using polite words to the students will demonstrate that they too should use polite words to others. Another way to model is to practice daily routines such as standing in line. Many times a problem is triggered by the students’ lack of confidence with a task. If the student is exposed to the correct procedure they are more likely to pursue it in the correct manner. Lastly, allowing the student to be a part of the solution process is important. If they help create the solution and help implement the solution it becomes more meaningful to the student, which will in return raise the probability of the student repeating the solution when the

same problem occurs at another time. Hamill Institute on Disabilities also composed a sample lesson plan used to allow the student to play an “active role” in the solution process. As seen in *Table 1* the sample lesson plan consists of the direct steps and descriptions used to depict a particular problem and guide students to analyze every factor of their problem.

**Table 1: Sample Lesson Plan (Cote, 2011, p. 263)**

| Lesson plan            | Explanation and sample dialogue  |
|------------------------|--|
| <b>Objective</b>       | Teacher writes the goal (e.g., identify a problem, identify possible solutions) on the board   |
| <b>Describe</b>        | Teacher describes and reviews the three problem-solving steps using flash cards. Sample dialogue: A detective symbolizes What’s the problem?, a nurse symbolizes How can you fix it?, and a cheerful boy symbolizes Why would it work?   |
| <b>Model</b>           | Teacher makes use of the problem-solving storybooks. Sample dialogue: “Listen as I read the story. Notice the problem that she had. She solved her problem by asking for help.”  |
| <b>Guided practice</b> | Teacher facilitates the student in defining the problem and generating possible solutions using the Problem Situation Measure (adapted from Glago, 2005). Sample dialogue: “Listen as I read to you a problem. Ann is having trouble remembering her math facts. Ann’s teacher is giving a math test on Friday. Ann wants to get an A on the test. What is Ann’s problem?” |
| <b>Role-play</b>       | Teacher prompts and assists the student in identifying problems and possible solutions during role-play. Sample dialogue: “Your teacher tells you to take out a pencil for the next assignment. You look and cannot find your pencil. You remember leaving a pencil in your desk.”   |
| <b>Feedback</b>        | Teacher encourages the student to justify or defend why the solution would work. Sample dialogue: “Yes, you could do that to solve your problem. What else could you do? Why is that the best solution?”   |

## **5. Membership**

A main concern of students with disabilities entering a general education classroom is the possibility of bullying or a negative reaction to the differences. However, teachers can create a sense of membership where all students feel accepted and celebrate each other’s differences. Klotz (2004) explains that students can be encouraged to welcome students with disabilities by

being honest, developing empathy, increasing exposure, and therefore eliminating bullying. Many times students are unfamiliar with disabilities so they avoid interaction, but honesty is the best solution. Students should openly ask questions to better understand their peers. The process can better be facilitated through the use of literature on encouraging peers. Likewise, to better understand their peers, students must feel empathy for one another. Teachers can help students develop empathy by planning for all students to experience a form of disability themselves. The web has numerous resources that allow students to simulate various disabilities. The longer the students are exposed to students with disabilities, the more one might expect they would gain an understanding of their peers and see past their differences. Perhaps, the students will gain a sense of respect for one another, which will prevent bullying. When students respect each other, the classroom should become safe and conducive to learning.

## **6. Adult-Child Social Communicative Interactions**

Correspondingly, classroom environment is also established through adult- child social communication. Students should feel comfortable to speak to their teachers. Building positive student- teacher relationships leads to creating a positive and inviting classroom environment. Instructors can establish a sense of connection in the classroom through communicative behaviors that exhibit warmth (Beattie & Olley, 1977; Voelkl, 1995). Students should feel welcomed to ask questions and express their emotions. Students should not be shamed for their wrong answers, but rather redirected to the correct answers. In an inclusive setting this becomes all the more significant because all students need to have the trust to confide any concerns to their teacher, whether it be regarding a disability or not.

## **7. Support for Social Communication**

Students should be given opportunities to actively participate and all students' responses should be encouraged in class discussions. For students with limited social communication research has found that visual approaches are an effective alternative (Devlin, 2009). *Table 2* represents a compiled list of the most common visual approaches. Giving students options to communicate such as, visual or vocal approaches, is one of the most important aspects of encouraging communication, so that the student may pick the option they feel most comfortable using. The communication approach used is suggested to be that most appropriate for the child and be used for the adequate reason, whether it is for social communication, social understanding, or social interaction.

**Table 2: Most Common Visual Approaches (Devlin, 2009, p. 331-332)**

| Approach   | Description   | Aim   | Target Group  |
|--|---|---|---|
| Picture Scripts (Grodén & LeVasseur, 1995; Hodgdon, 1995)  | Illustrating situations that a child has difficulty with, accompanied by guidance on what to do in that situation   | To help children adapt to a social situation  | Verbal and non-verbal children                        |
| Social Stories (Gray, 1995)  | Four to six sentences that describe factual information about a social situation, the possible reaction of others and directive statements of desired emotions and/or behaviour   | To promote social interaction and adaptation to social situations   | Verbal and non-verbal children who can read text      |
| Video feedback (Kern, Wacker, Mace, Dunlap, & Kormrey, 1995)   | Individual's interactions are videoed and then played back during individual coaching to help the individual develop new skills   | To promote social interaction and communication   | Verbal and non-verbal children                        |
| Comic Strip Conversations (Gray, 1994)   | Simple drawings and thought bubbles. Colours can be used to display and highlight feelings as well  | To illustrate the actions, feelings, thoughts and intentions of those involved in a particular social situation | Verbal children who can read text                     |
| Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) (Bondy & Frost, 1994) and other augmentative communication approaches | Signs, pictures, symbols or written words are used as an alternative to, or as a precursor of, speech   | To facilitate and promote communication   | Verbal and non verbal children                        |
| Visual timetables (Schopler & Mesibov, 1995)   | Pictures or symbols are displayed horizontally or vertically to show a sequence of activities to a child  | To promote sequencing, reduce anxiety and to communicate information and clarify expectations                   | Verbal and non verbal children                        |
| Sign language (Kiernan, 1983)  | Hand gestures are used to symbolically communicate meaning  | To facilitate and promote communication   | Verbal and non-verbal children                        |
| Written prompts (Kistner, Robbins, & Haskett, 1988)  | Verbal prompts are supported with written prompts (verbal prompt: – “do you want?” written prompt: – “want cookie”)   | Improve responses to questions  | Verbal children who can read text                     |
| Power Cards (Gragnon, 2001)  | Visual aids that incorporate a student's special interest(s) to teach appropriate social interactions. The Power Card presents the pupil's “hero” or special interest solving a problem with a suggestion of how the pupil might use that same strategy to solve a problem for themselves | To teach problem solving skills and how to adapt to social situations   | Verbal children who can read text                     |
| Facilitated Communication (NAS, 1994) and communication boards (Siegel, 1996)                                      | Children are supported so they can point to a communication board or keyboard. Communication aids can be two dimensional using pictures or three dimensional using objects  | To promote communication  | Verbal and non-verbal children. Children who can read |

## **8. Adaptation of Group Activities**

Classroom groups have many uses, but in order for the groups to be productive, they must be designed strategically. Groups can be used for classroom activities, centers, and small focus groups. Groups need to be adaptable to meet the needs of all students. Some groups can be created with students at all varying skill levels to promote learning and prevent labeling (Allington, 2007). However, students are particularly placed in groups with students of opposite strengths and weaknesses so that they can complement their needs. Some groups may be specific to a need so that all students with that need, can receive extra practice. Groups for classroom activities should be created in a way that objectives, materials, and other instructional support can enable the engagement of all students while still allowing students to do the same activity (Soukakou, 2007).

## **9. Transitions Between Activities**

Transitions can be a challenging time for some classrooms. These challenges can be prevented by having strategies in place to ameliorate the process. Transitions are especially important to have in place for students with autism because they need additional assistance in grasping the concept of time (Devlin, 2009). Firstly, students should discuss the daily schedule, for example stating “First we will go to art and then to lunch.” Students should also have a schedule posted in the room for reference at any time. Therefore, the schedule should be mostly consistent on a day to day basis. Additional strategies to provide individual support for students who struggle with disabilities would be to provide an individual picture schedule where they can manipulate the picture tasks that have been completed and the picture tasks that are yet to be completed (Olive, 2004). Another contributing factor to maintain smooth transitions is to limit

down time by having additional activities planned or in place for those who finish early.

Transitions are the strings that hold a classroom together and therefore are an important aspect of quality classrooms.

## **10. Feedback**

In a study that collected perceptions of feedback (Rowe, 2011), students were asked “Why do you value feedback?” One student responded “It can evaluate my progress so far, show the weakness I get whether I should keep doing [study] in the same way or put [in] more time or change the way I study,” while another responded “It provides an indication of the level of work expected to do well in the subject and helps to highlight strengths and weaknesses.” Ultimately, the common trend seemed to be students wanting feedback. Most students wanted to know why they were wrong and did not want to be wrong for no reason. Since the students were eager to know why they were wrong, immediate feedback was most effective because they were able to identify a correct answer and justify it. All students need to receive feedback so that they can excel in their strengths and know how to work on their weaknesses.

## **11. Planning and Monitoring of Children’s Individual Needs and Goals**

One of the most important factors in assessing the quality of classrooms is monitoring students’ needs and goals to assure that each student is being catered to. It all comes down to whether or not the student is making progress under the current practices. Students’ goals and plans should be created around the student’s current strengths and weaknesses. Continuous assessments should be conducted to assure that the current practices are being effective and to isolate the students’ weaknesses that still need to be worked on. Monitoring progress can be conducted in either formal or informal ways. Instructors may choose to do anecdotal recordings,



portfolio assessments, or a school/state standardized test. The most important aspect in progress monitoring is recording dates, examples of behavior, responses to interventions, and change over time.

### **Summary**

Overall, this review of relevant literature supports the implementation of these 11 core qualities. From adapting space for materials/equipment to planning and monitoring children's individual needs and goals, a classroom that practices these items exudes classroom quality. Students with and without disabilities should be both accepted in a classroom and be accommodated in a classroom. For this reason the ICP narrowed the essence of quality classrooms down to these 11 core items and is an adequate way to assess inclusive classrooms. Our goal is to discover dominant characteristics among those classrooms that score high on the ICP in order to implement quality in future inclusion classrooms. Through this study we want to set a standard of quality among all inclusive classrooms that we found evident through the review of this literature. Through these efforts of establishing a standard of quality, we will not only be advocating to improve current inclusion practices, but be making a movement to achieve best practices among the inclusion classrooms that are increasingly being actualized.

## CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study was framed around the Inclusive Classroom Profile (ICP) created by Elena P. Soukakou. A sample of the ICP can be found in Appendix G. The ICP is a 7-point rating scale conducted through an observation procedure that is designed to assess the quality of daily classroom practices of children with disabilities (Soukakou, 2007). The ICP has been widely tested in 45 inclusive pre-K classrooms. Inter-rater reliability was established in a separate set of classrooms (n=10), and results suggested that independent observers were highly consistent in their ratings of individual items. The mean weighted kappa for all items was 0.79. Cronbach's Alpha analysis was conducted on the scale's items and assessed the measure's internal consistency ( $\alpha=0.79$ ). The factor structure of the Inclusive Classroom Profile was tested through confirmatory factor analysis. The one factor model filled the assumptions and showed good values for model fit; Model fit indices were:  $\chi^2= 35.164$ ,  $df= 35$ ,  $p=.460$ ,  $CMIN/df = 1.005$ ,  $RMSEA= .010$ ,  $NNFI = .998$ , and  $CFI= .998$ . To assess construct validity the ICP was compared with other measures of classroom quality. The total score of the ICP showed a .626 ( $p<0.001$ ) moderately high correlation with the ECERS-R, suggesting the two instruments are measuring similar but not identical constructs.

The 7-point range commences at number 1, suggesting that the classroom is highly inadequate, to the number 7, suggesting that the classroom promotes the highest degree of quality practices to ensure that the needs of students with disabilities are being met. The ICP rates 11 core qualities that an inclusion classroom should be implementing. These qualities consist of adaptations of space and material/ equipment, adult involvement in peer interactions,

adult's guidance of children's play, conflict resolution, membership, adult-child social communicative interaction, support for social communication, adaptation of group activities, transitions between activities, feedback, and planning and monitoring of children's individual needs and goals.

This study examines six primary level, inclusion classrooms using the ICP. For the purpose of this study we are defining inclusion as any general education classroom with an enrollment of at least one student with an identified disability. Three of the participating classrooms were partial inclusion and the other three participating classrooms were full inclusion. Partial inclusion is having enrollment of the student(s) with a disability for only a percentage of an average school day (e.g. student arrives for only reading) and full inclusion is having classroom enrollment of the student(s) with a disability for the entire school day. In addition, to conducting the ICP, teacher, student, and classroom characteristics were collected and analyzed to determine possible relationships. Teacher characteristics were collected using the Teacher Profile found in Appendix E. Student and classroom characteristics will be collected using the classroom profile found in Appendix F.

### **Participant Profile**

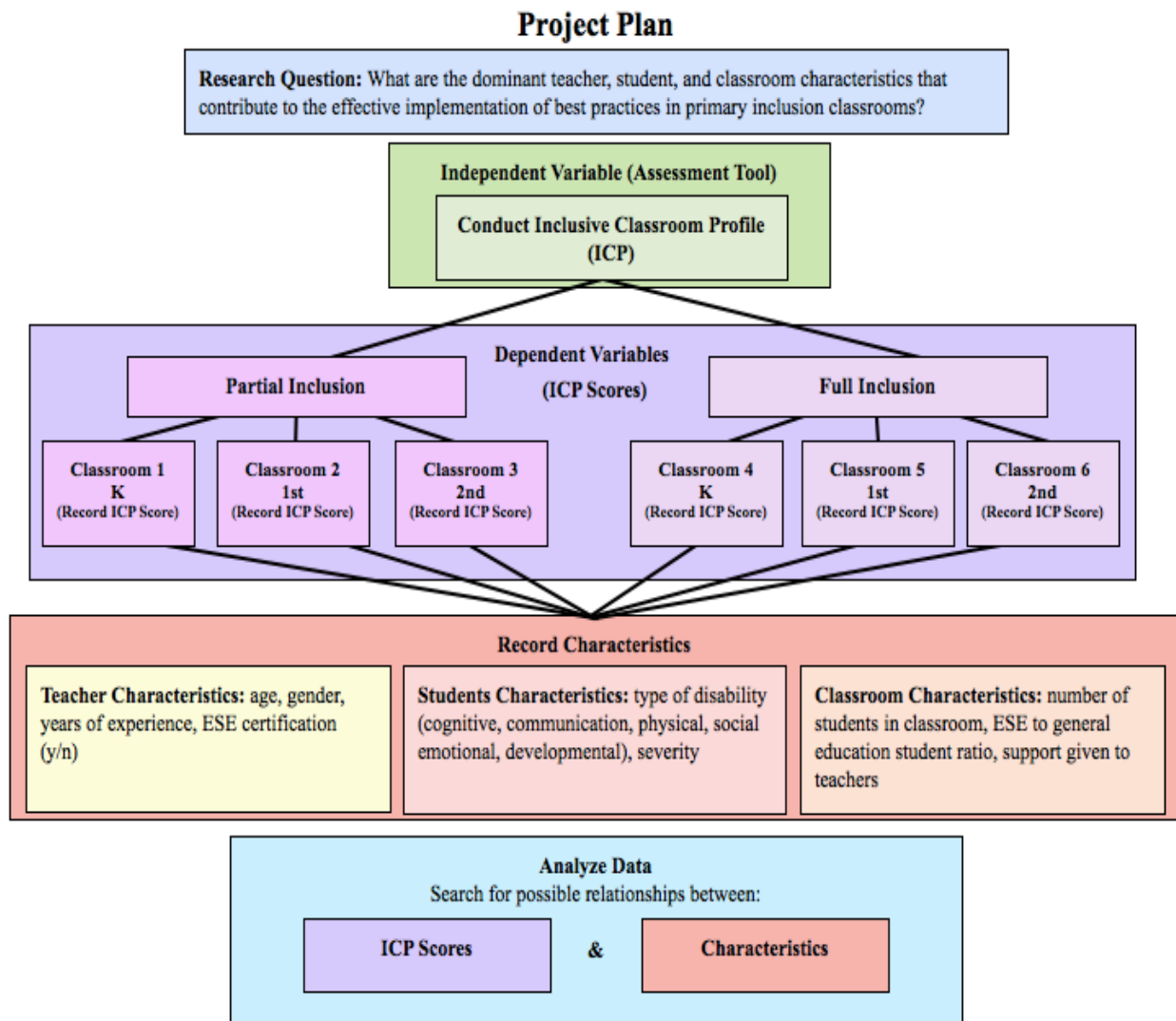
This study took place in a large metropolitan school district in South Eastern United States. A total of six classrooms were conveniently sampled from classrooms of one charter school and one public school who were willing to participate in the study. The six classrooms were divided by two settings: Inclusion Program and Grade Level. From the six classrooms, three followed a Partial Inclusion Program and the other three followed Full Inclusion Program. Each Inclusion Program had one Kindergarten classroom, one First grade classroom, and one

Second grade classroom. This study was submitted for approval of the Institutional Review Board (IRB). Approval from IRB can be found in Appendix A and principal letters to IRB can be found in Appendix B. This study was also submitted for approval from the Orange County Public School district (OCPS). Approval from OCPS can be found in Appendix C and principal letters to OCPS can be found in Appendix D. In order to protect participants' confidentiality pseudonyms were given to participating teachers and classrooms. Names of teachers and classrooms used in this study are fictional. Participation of this study was completely voluntary and participants could terminate their participation at any time.

Teachers were observed only after they consented to participate. Each classroom was observed for a total of two hours and a half by one researcher. The first half hour was used to collect qualitative notes such as teacher characteristics (age, gender, years of experience, ESE certification (y/n)) using the Teacher Profile (Appendix E), student characteristics (gender, type of disability (cognitive, communication, physical, social emotional, developmental), severity of disabilities) using the Classroom Profile (Appendix F), and classroom characteristics (number of students in classroom, ESE to general education student ratio, support given to teachers) using the Classroom Profile. The last two hours were used to conduct the ICP (Appendix G). The researcher was prepared by the author of the ICP to appropriately assess classrooms. Scores were given according to assessment protocol to eliminate biases. Each classroom was given a score on each of the 11 core qualities and was given an overall average score by the researcher.

Correlational analyses were conducted to find possible relationships between the ICP scores and the collected characteristics. From the analyses dominant characteristics were depicted. The ICP assessment instrument was the independent variable and the ICP Scores were the dependent

variable. Scores were inputted into an electronic spreadsheet to facilitate the analyses of the data. Lastly, we reported our findings to communicate the dominant characteristics of the higher scoring classrooms. These characteristics may be replicated in future inclusive classrooms to raise the overall quality of inclusion settings. An image of our project plan can be found in *Figure 1* below.



**Figure 1: Project Plan**

## **Limitations**

This study encountered a few limitations. The researcher created the Teacher Profile and the Classroom Profile used to collect various characteristics in the study. They were not directly tested for reliability and validity. However, the ICP creator suggested the characteristics included on the profiles. Another limitation is the population of the study. Although the study was completed in a large, metropolitan school district, it was limited to one county and in that county it was limited to only one charter school and one public school. An additional limitation was sample size. The population may not be entirely representative of the sample due to only six classroom participating.

## **Summary**

The purpose of this study was to determine possible relationships between Teacher Characteristics, Student Characteristics, Classroom Characteristics and ICP Scores. This study examines six inclusion classrooms using the ICP. In addition, to conducting the ICP, teacher, student, and classroom characteristics were collected and analyzed to determine possible relationships. The independent variable was the ICP assessment tool and the dependent variable is the ICP Scores. A few limitations were evident in this study concerning its sample size and population.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS**

In this study the ICP scores represent the degree in which an inclusion classroom is implementing its best practices. The ICP is a 7-point rating scale conducted through an observation procedure that is designed to assess the quality of daily classroom practices of children with disabilities (Soukakou, 2007). The 7-point range commences at number 1, suggesting that the classroom is highly inadequate, to the number 7, suggesting that the classroom promotes the highest degree of quality practices to ensure that the needs of students with disabilities are being met. This research focuses on three main types of characteristics affecting classrooms' efforts to implement best practices, which are: Teacher Characteristics, Student Characteristics, and Classroom Characteristics. This study examined the relationship between ICP scores and these three main types of characteristics. The research question studied was, "What are the dominant teacher, student, and classroom characteristics that contribute to the effective implementation of best practices in primary inclusion classrooms?" The null hypothesis predicted no relationship will exist between any of the characteristics and the trend of the ICP Scores. This chapter presents the analyses and outcomes of ICP scores and dominant characteristics that affected the classrooms that scored higher on the ICP. All tables presented in the results will include the ICP Scores, for the purpose of comparing the ICP Scores to all of the characteristics collected.

In the study, classrooms were selected dependent on their setting. The study had two Inclusion Programs: Partial Inclusion and Full Inclusion. From the classrooms selected, three classrooms were Full Inclusion Programs and three classrooms were Partial Inclusion Programs. For each Inclusion Program, three Grade Levels were observed: one Kindergarten classroom,

one First grade classroom, and one Second grade classroom. The results of the scores are displayed first, according to the settings of the classrooms and secondly by the category of the three main types of characteristics: Teacher Characteristics, Student Characteristics, and Classroom Characteristics. All of the subgroups from each of the characteristics were compared by calculating the mean ICP score of classrooms that fell under the same subgroups. For example, for the subgroup of Gender under Student Characteristics a mean ICP score was calculated for all classrooms that had a majority of female students and a mean ICP score was calculated for all classrooms that had a majority of male students. The two means were then compared to find distinct differences. For this study we defined distinct differences as the difference between the means of two characteristics being at least 0.5. Subgroups that demonstrated means with distinct differences were considered dominant characteristics and were further analyzed. An asterisk was placed by the dominant characteristics that were to be further analyzed and displayed on their own.

The dominant characteristics were further analyzed using the Pearson Correlation Test on Statistical Packages for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The Pearson Correlation test is a measure of strength of association between two variables. It finds the correlation coefficient to show the data's closeness to a linear line. The correlations coefficient demonstrates strength and direction between two variables. The Pearson's correlation coefficient runs from an interval of -1 to 1. A positive correlation indicates that both variables are either increasing or decreasing together, while a negative correlation indicates inverse relationship, that as one variable is increasing the other is decreasing. For this study a correlation is considered significant at a level of 0.05. The Pearson correlation test was the most appropriate test for this analysis because only two variables



were considered at a time. The significance of the dominant characteristics will further be discussed in Chapter 5.

### **ICP Scores**

In this section the results of the overall ICP scores of the six classrooms assessed, are addressed and displayed according to their setting. For this study a setting constituted of different types of environments/classrooms where a given student population received instruction. Two different settings were identified based on the Inclusion Program and Grade Level of classrooms. For Inclusion Programs, classrooms were either Full or Partial Inclusion and for Grade Levels, classrooms were either Kindergarten, First, or Second. *Table 3* shows an overview of the classes and their setting. Further along the tables will show mean scores dependent on their setting.

#### *Results of Scores Dependent on Classroom Setting*

**Table 3: Overview of Classroom Settings**

|   | <i>Classroom</i>    | ICP<br>Scores | <i>Setting</i>     |       |
|---|---------------------|---------------|--------------------|-------|
|   |                     |               | Inclusion Program* | Grade |
| 1 | Mrs. Davis's Class  | 5.7           | 2                  | 0     |
| 2 | Mrs. Moore's Class  | 5.3           | 2                  | 1     |
| 3 | Mrs. Knight's Class | 6.7           | 2                  | 2     |
| 4 | Mrs. Miller's Class | 6.3           | 1                  | 0     |
| 5 | Mrs. Chase's Class  | 4.3           | 1                  | 1     |
| 6 | Mrs. Ficher's Class | 5.4           | 1                  | 2     |

This table shows the six classrooms overall scores, from a scale of 1 to 7, and their settings. In this table the settings were coded for numerical data. For the setting of Inclusion Program, a 2 was given to those classrooms participating in Full Inclusion and a 1 was given to those classrooms participating in Partial Inclusion. For the setting of grade, classrooms were given codes as follows: 0 for Kindergarten, 1 for First grade, and 2 for Second grade.

**Setting:** Inclusion Program\*

**Table 4: Mean ICP Scores Dependent on Inclusion Program**

|                | <i>Classroom</i>    | <i>ICP Score</i> | <i>Mean</i> |
|----------------|---------------------|------------------|-------------|
| <b>Full</b>    | Mrs. Davis's Class  | 5.7              | 5.9         |
|                | Mrs. Moore's Class  | 5.3              |             |
|                | Mrs. Knight's Class | 6.7              |             |
| <b>Partial</b> | Mrs. Miller's Class | 6.3              | 5.3         |
|                | Mrs. Chase's Class  | 4.3              |             |
|                | Mrs. Ficher's Class | 5.4              |             |

In this table a mean was calculated of the ICP scores dependent on the Inclusion Program the classrooms participated in. The mean was calculated to compare if any of the two Inclusion Programs scored higher on the ICP collectively.

**Setting: Grade Level**

**Table 5: Mean ICP Score Dependent on Grade Level**

| <i>Grade</i> | <i>Classroom</i>    | <i>ICP Score</i> | <i>Mean</i> |
|--------------|---------------------|------------------|-------------|
| K            | Mrs. Davis's Class  | 5.7              | 6           |
|              | Mrs. Miller's Class | 6.3              |             |
| 1            | Mrs. Moore 's Class | 5.3              | 4.8         |
|              | Mrs. Chase's Class  | 4.3              |             |
| 2            | Mrs. Knights Class  | 6.7              | 6.1         |
|              | Mrs. Ficher's Class | 5.4              |             |

In this table a mean was calculated of the ICP scores dependent on the Classrooms' Grade Levels. The mean was calculated to compare if any of the three grade levels scored higher on the ICP collectively.

**\*Dominant Setting: Inclusion Program**

When considering the settings of Grade Level and Inclusion Program, Inclusion Program was the dominant setting. Attention was given to the possible relationship between the ICP Scores and Inclusion Programs, because it was noticed that the mean of classrooms participating in Full Inclusion Programs was higher than the mean of the classrooms participating in Partial Inclusion Programs. The Inclusion Program and ICP scores were analyzed by listing all scores

and all Inclusion Programs for each individual classroom, not collectively through the mean of each Inclusion Program. Classroom data was coded as a 2 for a Full Inclusive Program and a 1 for a Partial Inclusive Program. The classroom data and the ICP scores were then analyzed using the Pearson Correlation Test in search of a correlation. The results of the correlation found between the ICP score and the Inclusion Program of each class is presented in *Table 6*.

**Table 6: Pearson Correlation Coefficients between ICP Scores and Inclusion Program**

| <b>Correlations</b> |                     | Scores | Program |
|---------------------|---------------------|--------|---------|
| Scores              | Pearson Correlation | 1      | .369    |
|                     | Sig. (2-tailed)     |        | .471    |
|                     | N                   | 6      | 6       |
| Program             | Pearson Correlation | .369   | 1       |
|                     | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .471   |         |
|                     | N                   | 6      | 6       |

\*p<.05

The table shows the Pearson Coefficients between the ICP Scores and the Inclusion Program. The coefficient .471 is not significant at .05, but shows a positive relationship between ICP Scores and classrooms who were implementing Full Inclusion. Full Inclusion Programs were coded as a 2 and Partial Inclusion Programs were coded as a 1. Since 2 is a bigger number, the relationship is that as ICP Scores went up, the Inclusion Program went up as well. This implies that classrooms participating in Full Inclusion programs had higher scores than those classrooms participating in Partial Inclusion programs.

### **Teacher Characteristics**

For this study only self-reported teacher demographics were used as Teacher Characteristics. Teacher Characteristics collected pertained to three subgroups: a) Personal Information, b) Education, and c) Related Experience. This information was collected from the Teacher Profile found in Appendix E. Teachers' Age and Gender were collected under the Personal Information subgroup. Teachers' Highest Education and Number of Additional Certifications (e.g. ESOL) were collected under the Education subgroup. Teachers' Number of Years of Experience (years teaching), ESE Certification (Y / N), and Number of Professional Development Courses taken related to Education were collected under the Related Experience subgroup. An overview of the Teacher Characteristics collected can be found in *Table 7*.

**Table 7: Overview of Teacher Characteristics**

| <i>Teacher</i> | <i>ICP Scores</i> | <i>Teacher Characteristics</i> |        |                   |                                     |                     |                    |  |
|----------------|-------------------|--------------------------------|--------|-------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|--|
|                |                   | Personal Information           |        | Education         |                                     | Related Experience  |                    |  |
|                |                   | Age                            | Gender | Highest Education | Number of Additional Certifications | Years of Experience | ESE Certification* | Number of Professional Development Courses Taken |
| Mrs. Davis     | 5.7               | 47                             | 1      | 2                 | 4                                   | 20                  | 1                  | 3  |
| Mrs. Moore     | 5.3               | 40                             | 1      | 2                 | 4                                   | 27                  | 1                  | 3  |
| Mrs. Knight    | 6.7               | 44                             | 1      | 1                 | 1                                   | 11                  | 1                  | 3  |
| Mrs. Miller    | 6.3               | 55                             | 1      | 1                 | 1                                   | 32                  | 0                  | 3  |
| Mrs. Chase     | 4.3               | 28                             | 1      | 1                 | 1                                   | 5                   | 0                  | 2  |
| Mrs. Ficher    | 5.4               | 29                             | 1      | 2                 | 2                                   | 6                   | 0                  | 3  |

The table shows the various Teacher Characteristics collected. Coding was used to create numerical data. For the teachers' gender codes were given as follows: 0 for males and 1 for females. In this case by chance, our study had all females. For the Teachers' Highest Degree of Education the codes were as followed: 1 for Bachelors, 2 for Masters, and 3 for Doctorates. For the Teachers' ESE Certification, the researcher coded a 1 for yes if they have it and a 1 for no if they do not have it.

**Teacher Characteristic: Related Experience, ESE Certification (Y / N)\***

**Table 8: Mean ICP Scores Dependent on Teacher's having ESE Certification (Y / N)**

| ESE Certification | Classroom           | ICP Score | Mean |
|-------------------|---------------------|-----------|------|
| Yes               | Mrs. Davis's Class  | 5.7       | 5.9  |
|                   | Mrs. Moore's Class  | 5.3       |      |
|                   | Mrs. Knight's Class | 6.7       |      |
| No                | Mrs. Miller's Class | 6.3       | 5.3  |
|                   | Mrs. Chase's Class  | 4.3       |      |
|                   | Mrs. Ficher's Class | 5.4       |      |

In this table, means were calculated of the ICP scores dependent on those teachers who had their ICP Certifications and those teachers who did not have their ESE certification. The means were calculated to compare if either teachers with or without their ESE certifications scored higher on the ICP collectively.

**\*Dominant Teacher Characteristic: Related Experience (ESE Certification)**

Among all the Teacher Characteristics collected, Teachers' Related Experience, particularly the status of their ESE Certification, was the dominant characteristic and was further analyzed. The possible relationship between the ICP scores and the Teachers' ESE Certification

was explored because it was noticed that collectively those teachers who had their ESE Certification, scored higher than those who did not.

**Table 9: Pearson Correlation Coefficients between ICP Scores and ESE Certification**

| <b>Correlations</b> |                     | Scores | ESE  |
|---------------------|---------------------|--------|------|
| Scores              | Pearson Correlation | 1      | .369 |
|                     | Sig. (2-tailed)     |        | .471 |
|                     | N                   | 6      | 6    |
| ESE                 | Pearson Correlation | .369   | 1    |
|                     | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .471   |      |
|                     | N                   | 6      | 6    |

\*p<.05

The table shows the Pearson Coefficients between the ICP Scores and the status of teachers having their ESE Certification. The coefficient .369 is not significant at .05, but shows a positive relationship between ICP Scores and teachers who had an ESE Certification. Teachers who did not have an ESE certification were coded with a 0 and Teachers with an ESE certification were coded with a 1. Since 1 is a bigger number, the relationship is that as ICP Scores went up the ESE Certification status went up as well. This implies that the classrooms of teachers with ESE Certifications had higher ICP scores than those classrooms of teachers that did not have ESE Certifications.

### **Student Characteristics**

For this study only collected students' demographic characteristics were considered. The Student Characteristics were collected from three subgroups: a) Gender, b) Type of Disability, and c) Severity of their disability. Only the percentage of students with these characteristics were



displayed. To describe Gender, the percentage of males and females in each class were displayed. For Type of Disability, disabilities were categorized into broader types of disabilities such as, Cognitive, Communication, Physical, Social, Emotional, and Developmental. From the number of ESE students in the class the percentage of each disability was calculated to better describe the ESE population in each class.

The severity of individual students with disabilities were collected and used to determine the overall severity of the disabilities present in each classroom. During the data collection process, a 1 was given to a student with a mild disability, a 2 was given to a student with a moderate disability, and a 3 was given to a student with a severe disability. Then for each class the number of students with mild disabilities were added together, the number of students with moderate disabilities were added together, and the number of students with severe disabilities were added together. Percentages for each of the categories were calculated, to provide an overview of the general severity of the ESE population in each classroom. An overview of the Student Characteristics can be found in *Table 10* below.

**Table 10: Scores Compared to Student Characteristics (Gender, Type of Disability, & Severity of Disability)**

| Class-<br>room            | ICP<br>Scores | Student Characteristics        |      |                                 |                       |              |            |                   |                       |                           |              |            |
|---------------------------|---------------|--------------------------------|------|---------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------|------------|-------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|--------------|------------|
|                           |               | Gender<br>(% from<br>Students) |      | Type of Disability (% from ESE) |                       |              |            |                   |                       | Severity*<br>(% from ESE) |              |            |
|                           |               | F                              | M    | Cog<br>nitiv<br>e               | Com<br>muni<br>cation | Phys<br>ical | Soci<br>al | Em<br>otio<br>nal | Devel<br>opme<br>ntal | Mild                      | Mod<br>erate | Seve<br>re |
| Mrs.<br>Davis's<br>Class  | 5.7           | 12.5                           | 87.5 | 23.1                            | 0                     | 7.7          | 7.7        | 0                 | 61.5                  | 61.5                      | 30.8         | 7.8        |
| Mrs.<br>Moore's<br>Class  | 5.3           | 25                             | 75   | 0                               | 33.3                  | 33.3         | 11.1       | 0                 | 22.2                  | 77.8                      | 11.1         | 11.1       |
| Mrs.<br>Knight's<br>Class | 6.7           | 50                             | 50   | 16.7                            | 25                    | 41.7         | 16.7       | 0                 | 0                     | 58.3                      | 16.7         | 25         |
| Mrs.<br>Miller's<br>Class | 6.3           | 44.4                           | 55.6 | 0                               | 0                     | 100          | 0          | 0                 | 0                     | 0                         | 100          | 0          |
| Mrs.<br>Chase's<br>Class  | 4.3           | 50                             | 50   | 0                               | 0                     | 100          | 0          | 0                 | 0                     | 0                         | 0            | 100        |
| Mrs.<br>Ficher's<br>Class | 5.4           | 41.2                           | 58.8 | 0                               | 0                     | 0            | 50         | 0                 | 50                    | 100                       | 0            | 0          |

The table shows student characteristics as collected from each classroom. The gender percentage is calculated for the whole class. The type of disability percentage is taken from only

the ESE students in the class. The severity percentage is taken only from the ESE students in the class.

**Student Characteristic: Severity (Mild, Moderate, or Severe)\***

*Table 11: Mean ICP Scores Dependent on Severity of Disabilities*

| <i>Severity</i> | <i>Class</i>        | <i>ICP Score</i> | <i>Mean</i> |
|-----------------|---------------------|------------------|-------------|
| 1               | Mrs. Davis's Class  | 5.7              | 5.8         |
|                 | Mrs. Moore's Class  | 5.3              |             |
|                 | Mrs. Knight's Class | 6.7              |             |
|                 | Mrs. Ficher's Class | 5.4              |             |
| 2               | Mrs. Miller's Class | 6.3              | 6.3         |
| 3               | Mrs. Chase's Class  | 4.3              | 4.3         |

In this table a mean was calculated for the ICP scores for each set of classroom according to the predominant severity level of disabilities present in the classroom. If the majority of ESE students in the class had a mild severity the classroom was given a 1. If the majority of ESE students in the classroom had a moderate severity the classroom was given a 2. If the majority of the ESE students in the classroom had a severe severity the classroom given a 3. The mean was

calculated to compare if each level of severity represented by the classrooms scored higher or lower on the ICP collectively.

**\*Dominant Student Characteristic: Severity; Mild, Moderate, or Severe**

Among all the Student Characteristics collected, the Severity of students' disabilities was the dominant characteristic and was further analyzed. Possible relationships were investigated between the ICP scores and the Severity of the classrooms, particularly classrooms that were categorized as severe. Findings depict that classrooms with students who had more severe disabilities had the lowest ICP scores.

**Table 12: Pearson Correlation Coefficients between ICP Scores and Severity of Disabilities**

**Correlations**

|          |                     | Scores | Severity |
|----------|---------------------|--------|----------|
| Scores   | Pearson Correlation | 1      | -.555    |
|          | Sig. (2-tailed)     |        | .253     |
|          | N                   | 6      | 6        |
| Severity | Pearson Correlation | -.555  | 1        |
|          | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .253   |          |
|          | N                   | 6      | 6        |

\*p<.05

The table shows the Pearson Coefficients between the ICP Scores and the Severity of disabilities represented by the classroom. Although the findings do not indicate a significant correlation at .05, it is interesting to consider the direction of the correlation. A negative coefficient of -.555 indicates an inverse relationship between ICP Scores and the Severity of disabilities represented by a classroom. Classrooms that had the majority of ESE students with

mild disabilities were coded with a 1, classrooms with a majority of ESE students with moderate disabilities were coded with a 2, and classrooms with majority of ESE students with severe disabilities were coded with a 3. Therefore, classrooms with students with more severe disabilities had the higher numbers given to classrooms. The classrooms' severities were inputted individually rather than using the means of classrooms with same severity. Findings depict that classrooms with a higher number of students with severe disabilities scored lower than classrooms with a less severe level of disability.

### **Classroom Characteristics**

For this study we considered Classroom Characteristics as any demographic pertaining to the classroom as a whole. The Classroom Characteristics were based on data collected based on two subgroups: Student Ratios and Support. For subgroup Student Ratios, the number of students in each class and the percentage of ESE students in each class were collected. For the subgroup Support, the Number of Teachers in each classroom and the Number of Paraprofessional in each classroom were collected. The data collected for the Classroom Characteristics was collected from the Classroom Profile found in Appendix F. An overview of all the Classroom characteristics can be found in *Table 13* below.

**Table 13: Overview of Classroom Characteristics**

| <i>Classroom</i>    | <i>ICP Scores</i> | <i>Classroom Characteristics</i> |                             |                    |                             |
|---------------------|-------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|
|                     |                   | Student Ratios                   |                             | Support*           |                             |
|                     |                   | Number of Students               | ESE Students (% from class) | Number of Teachers | Number of Paraprofessionals |
| Mrs. Davis's Class  | 5.7               | 16                               | 81                          | 2                  | 1                           |
| Mrs. Moore's Class  | 5.3               | 16                               | 56.3                        | 2                  | 1                           |
| Mrs. Knight's Class | 6.7               | 22                               | 54.5                        | 2                  | 2                           |
| Mrs. Miller's Class | 6.3               | 18                               | 11.1                        | 1                  | 0                           |
| Mr. Chase's Class   | 4.3               | 18                               | 5.6                         | 1                  | 0                           |
| Mrs. Ficher's Class | 5.4               | 17                               | 11.8                        | 1                  | 0                           |

The table shows an overview of the Classroom Characteristics collected. All numbers are as is and were not coded for numerical data. The percentages of ESE students were calculated from the whole class.

**Classroom Characteristic: Support (Number of Teachers and Paraprofessionals)\***

*Table 6.2 Mean ICP Scores Dependent on Number of Personnel in the Classroom*

| Number of Personnel | Classroom           | ICP Score | Mean |
|---------------------|---------------------|-----------|------|
| (3 - 4)             | Mrs. Davis's Class  | 5.7       | 5.9  |
|                     | Mrs. Moore's Class  | 5.3       |      |
|                     | Mrs. Knight's Class | 6.7       |      |
| (1 - 2)             | Mrs. Miller's Class | 6.3       | 5.3  |
|                     | Mrs. Chase's Class  | 4.3       |      |
|                     | Mrs. Ficher's Class | 5.4       |      |

To look at the level of support in each classroom as a whole, the number of Teachers and Paraprofessionals in each classroom were added together and renamed as Personnel. Then classrooms were placed in groups of whether they had three to four personnel (3-4) in the classroom or one to two (1-2) personnel in the classroom. In this table a mean was calculated for the ICP scores of those classrooms with the same number of Personnel. The mean was calculated to compare if classrooms with more personnel scored higher on the ICP collectively.

**\*Dominant Classroom Characteristic: Support (Number of Teachers and Paraprofessionals in Classroom)**

Among all the Classroom Characteristics collected, level of Support in Classrooms was the dominant characteristic and was further analyzed. The possible relationship between the ICP

scores and the number of personnel in each classroom was explored. Findings indicate that those classrooms with more personnel scored higher on the ICP collectively than those classrooms who had less personnel.

**Table 14: Pearson Correlation Coefficients between ICP Scores and Number of Personnel in Classroom**

**Correlations**

|           |                     | Scores | Personnel |
|-----------|---------------------|--------|-----------|
| Scores    | Pearson Correlation | 1      | .499      |
|           | Sig. (2-tailed)     |        | .314      |
|           | N                   | 6      | 6         |
| Personnel | Pearson Correlation | .499   | 1         |
|           | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .314   |           |
|           | N                   | 6      | 6         |

\*p<.05

The table shows the Pearson Coefficients between the ICP Scores and the Number of Personnel in a classroom. Although a coefficient of .499 is not significant at .05, it depicts a positive relationship between ICP Scores and the Number of Personnel in a Classroom. The Number of Personnel of each classroom was inputted individually and not analyzed based on the mean of classrooms with same amount of personnel. The data was not coded because the Number of Personnel was already numerical data. Findings depict a positive relationship, as the Number of Personnel increased in a classroom the higher they scored on the ICP.

**Summary**

This study analyzed the relationship of Classrooms' settings and ICP Scores. Between the two classroom settings considered, Inclusion Program and Grade level, Full Inclusion Programs



collectively scored higher than those classrooms classified as Partial Inclusion Programs. The Pearson Correlation Test between the ICP Scores and the Classroom's Inclusion Program found no significant correlations at .05. Analysis of the categorizing characteristics: Teacher Characteristics, Student Characteristics, and Classroom Characteristics and the ICP Scores were compared next.

Teacher Characteristics we divided into three subgroups: a) Personal Information, b) Education, and c) Related Experience. From these subgroups, Related Experience, was analyzed further by considering Teachers' Number of Years teaching and whether or not they had their ESE Certification. When looking at the teachers' ESE Certification status, the teachers that had their ESE certification, collectively scored higher on the ICP than those teachers who did not have their ESE Certification. Nevertheless, the Pearson Correlation Test between the ICP Scores and Teachers' ESE Certification Status found no significant correlations  $p < .05$ .

Student Characteristics were divided into three subgroups: a) Gender, b) Type of Disability, and c) Severity. From these subgroups, further analysis was done to the Severity of the ESE students in the classroom. Each classroom was assigned a category according to the degree of disability of the majority of the ESE students in each classroom. The categories were mild, moderate, or severe. Classrooms in which the majority of ESE students had severe disabilities scored lower on the ICP. Nevertheless, the Pearson Correlation Test between the ICP Scores and the Classrooms' Representation of the ESE student's severity found no significant correlations  $p < .05$ .

Classroom Characteristics we divided into two subgroups: a) Student Ratios and b) Support. From these subgroups further analysis was done the level of Support. Support was

analyzed collectively by adding the number of teacher and paraprofessionals in a classroom and renaming them as personnel. When looking at the classroom who had (3-4) personnel compared to those classroom who had (1-2) personnel, those classroom who had (3-4) personnel in their classroom scored collectively higher on the ICP than those classrooms who had (1-2) personnel. Nonetheless, the Pearson Correlation Test between the ICP Scores and the number of personnel in a classroom found no significant correlations at  $p < .05$ .

The results demonstrated that no statistically significant relationships exist between any of the characteristics and the trends of the ICP scores. Therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted, but suggestions for future Implementation of Inclusive Classrooms were compiled and will be discussed in Chapter 5.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION**

### **Overview**

Despite not finding statistically significant data to support a relationship between any of the three dominant characteristics and trends in ICP Scores, there were some characteristics that had a greater impact on the classrooms' overall ICP Scores. The small size of the sample could have affected the analysis and therefore prevented to find statistically significant results. However, even with a small sample size it is possible to see trends in those classrooms that scored higher on the ICP. Through the process of assessing classrooms with the ICP, the researcher was also able to collect compelling qualitative data.

This study was guided by the research question (1) What are the dominant teacher, student, and classroom characteristics that contribute to the effective implementation of best practices in primary inclusion classrooms? In this study the ICP scores represented the degree in which inclusive classrooms were implementing best practices. The ICP enabled us to see many factors affecting, which included some that can be controlled by school personnel and others that cannot. For example, although schools may be limited by budget constraints, efforts may still be made in strategically staffing classrooms and having higher qualified personnel in the room.

This study found that common traits do exist among classrooms who are implementing successful inclusive programs. When comparing scores of the Inclusion Program setting between Full and Partial the means showed that collectively Full Inclusion Programs scored higher on the ICP Partial Inclusion Programs. Although the results were not statistically

significant, some observations may be made to help explain these results and possible relationships.

In the results, the ICP Scores of those classrooms participating in Full Inclusion Programs were exactly the same as the mean ICP Score of those teachers who had their ESE Certifications. Unlikely to be just a coincidence, since the same group of teachers who participated in Full Inclusion were the same group of teachers who had their ESE Certifications. In fact, none of the teachers in Partial Inclusion Programs had their ESE certifications. All teachers in the Full Inclusion Program were required to be ESE certified while teachers in Partial Inclusion Programs were not. ESE certification may be a contributing factor for Full Inclusion Programs scoring higher on the ICP collectively than the Partial Inclusion Programs.

The mean of ICP scores of Full Inclusion Programs was yet again the same as another characteristic that was explored. Support, among the Classroom Characteristics had the same mean of ICP Scores as the Full Inclusion Programs. Once more it is unlikely that this is a coincidence since the same classroom group that follows a Full Inclusion Program was the same classroom group that had more (3-4) personnel. In the partial inclusion classrooms when the ESE students came from their homerooms into their inclusive classroom they became an additional student to the classroom, but the number of personnel in the classroom stayed the same. The Partial Inclusion teachers did not receive any additional support when they received ESE students into their classroom in addition to them not having their ESE certification. Giving teachers support both physically and educationally is crucial to the success of an Inclusive classroom. This may be another characteristic contributing to the higher scores of the Full Inclusion on the ICP when compared to the Partial Inclusion Programs.

Among the 11 core qualities of the ICP, one may want to further examine Membership for both the Full Inclusion and Partial Inclusion programs. Membership was defined as having all students feel accepted regardless of their differences. In a Partial Inclusion Program, ESE students are only a part of the classroom for a part of the day, thus the term partial. This may make it more difficult for ESE students to feel a sense of belongingness when they enter their Inclusive classroom daily for only a fraction of the day. The student may not feel belongingness within their classroom and interactively, the teacher may not feel ownership of the student. Correspondingly, the ICP assesses how a teacher progress monitors students. When I asked Mrs. Chase, a first grade teacher from our study, who participated in partial inclusion, “What do you do to progress monitor the ESE student who comes in daily?” she responded, “I don’t usually progress monitor the ESE student, he is only here for an hour, so his ESE teacher is the one who takes care of that.” The other Partial Inclusion teachers responded in a similar way.

This type of response affected their scores in both areas of membership and progress monitoring. Since the ESE students only came to their classroom for only an hour or so, they were seen more as daily visitors than students from that class, making it difficult for students to feel like members of the classroom. Feeling accepted in a classroom plays a large role in students, emotional needs and may affect a child’s performance in the classroom. In fact, according to Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1943), Love and Belongingness are the initial hurdles before a student can reach their fullest potential. Likewise, in the area of progress-monitoring, students in the Partial Inclusion Classrooms were not being monitored as frequently by their general education teacher and some were not being progress monitored at all. Progress monitoring is beneficial to both the teacher and the students. It notifies teachers whether their

teaching methods are being effective and it also shows students' strengths and weaknesses. If the general education teacher does not know where the student needs improvement, how is the student serviced going to have his/ her needs met? Subsequently, how can the quality of the inclusion program be improved if areas of weakness are unknown?

The goal of Partial Inclusion Programs is to equip and prepare ESE students for the long-term goal of being in general education classrooms full time. However, they are being seen as temporary students rather than stationary students, which is not what inclusion entails. Inclusion means to become a part of. If students are hoped to be successfully included, they must first be given the opportunity to do so and be treated as a member not as a visitor.

The 11 core qualities of the ICP were set into place for significant reasons and all bind together to create a strong foundation for inclusion settings implementing best practices. The 11 core qualities are all interconnected in many ways. When one quality is lacking it may have a ripple effect. For example, when the areas of membership and progress monitoring were not executed correctly the next area to be affected was student's accommodations. Since students were only seen as temporary students and not permanent students in the partial inclusion programs, their necessary equipment were usually left behind in their homerooms or not given the assistance for use because of lack of time or personnel. Students' accommodations and necessary equipment are what facilitates learning and helps students overcome their disabilities. Placing students without their necessary tools in a classroom that is already a more difficult learning environment for them, deprives students of being able to adequately participate in inclusion programs.

Furthermore, when the two classrooms' scores are compared, the lowest and the highest on the ICP reveal some very clear distinctions. Mrs. Knight's class scored the highest on the ICP with a score of 6.7. Mrs. Chase's class scored the lowest on the ICP with a score of 4.3. Mrs. Knight teaches in a Full Inclusion Setting. She has her ESE certification and of all the classrooms had the highest number of personnel (4) in her classroom: two teachers and two paraprofessionals. Mrs. Chase teaches in a Partial Inclusion Program. She does not have her ESE certification and receives no additional support when the ESE student joins her classroom. Another interesting characteristic of Mrs. Chase's classroom is that the only student participating in her Inclusion classroom had severe physical disabilities. The severity of her student's disability skewed the classroom classification and was assigned a "majority severe" code. Conversely, Mrs. Knight's class had a majority of ESE students with mild disabilities in her classroom.

As the researcher examined possible reasons for Mrs. Knight's class scoring higher on the ICP than Mrs. Chase's class, attention was given to the level of accommodations provided to students in these classrooms. When considering the student characteristic of severity, it is important to consider that it could be harder to make accommodations for ESE students with severe disabilities than ESE students with mild disabilities. Yet, when looking back, Mrs. Chase's class had the lowest percentage of ESE students while Mrs. Knight had among the top three highest percentages of ESE students in her class. So why did Mrs. Chase score lower on the ICP with less ESE students and Mrs. Knight score higher on the ICP with more ESE students? Perhaps, succeeding in a classroom with less ESE students is easier, but Mrs. Chase's class was only Partial Inclusion while Mrs. Knight's class was full inclusion. This may lead to the thinking

that Mrs. Knight's Full Inclusion class was better equipped to accommodate students' needs initially all day unlike Mrs. Knight's Partial Inclusion class because the student is only in the classroom for a part of the day. It is assumed that the child can do without certain accommodations because it is only for a brief part of the day. Students are being left without their designated equipment that helps them succeed in their learning environment. Although Partial Inclusion programs take place for a temporary part of the day it still crucial part of the day to the students' education.

All of the dominant characteristics further analyzed were found to be contributing factors to the ICP scores between the highest and lowest scoring classrooms. When acknowledging the Teacher Characteristic of Related Experience, the teacher with the ESE Certification scored the highest. When acknowledging the Student Characteristic of Severity, the classroom represented by a majority of ESE students with severe disabilities scored the lowest. Lastly, when acknowledging the Classroom Characteristics of Support, the classroom with the highest number of personnel scored the highest on the ICP. It is obvious that when teachers are not adequately prepared and supported to serve students with disabilities, their classrooms are left to minimally carry through the ethics of inclusion. In order for inclusion classrooms to strive for best practices they must possess qualities such as membership, providing materials/equipment, and monitoring students progress. Educators should be held accountable to fulfill all students' needs to their best of our abilities. There is a prominent demand for these dominant characteristics to be evaluated by school personnel and be further researched. It is unethical to serve any student with anything less than quality education.



### **Suggestions for Future Implementation of Inclusion Classrooms**

These observations clearly suggest three very specific characteristics that are likely necessary for a successful Inclusive Classroom Setting. The first falls under Teacher Characteristics, all teachers must earn an ESE certification. Higher standards regarding teacher preparation are necessary to better understand and serve the needs of ESE students. Secondly, further examination of Student Characteristics is crucial to ensure that the severity of the students' disabilities is considered when placing students in their classrooms. Every classroom should provide the necessary accommodations such as assistive technologies to better serve students' needs. Finally, considering Classroom Characteristics and providing teachers with the necessary support is vital. Teachers who are given more ESE students in their classroom need a supporting staff to accommodate teacher-to-student ratios in a manner that is conducive to learning. With the emphasis towards inclusion, research should continue investigating the commonalities among classrooms that are implementing successful inclusive programs, so that one day ALL students receive the free, appropriate education to which they are entitled to.

## **APPENDIX A: UCF IRB Approval Letter**

## Appendix A: UCF IRB Approval Letter



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

### Approval of Exempt Human Research

From: **UCF Institutional Review Board #1**  
**FWA00000351, IRB00001138**

To: **Marilyn N. Romero**

Date: **February 03, 2012**

Dear Researcher:

On 2/3/2012, the IRB approved the following activity as human participant research that is exempt from regulation:

|                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| Type of Review: | Exempt Determination   |
| Project Title:  | Finding the Key Characteristics that Contribute to Effectively<br>Implementing the Best Practices in an Inclusion Classroom<br>Setting |
| Investigator:   | Marilyn N. Romero  |
| IRB Number:     | SBE-12-08146   |
| Funding Agency: |  |
| Grant Title:    |  |
| Research ID:    | N/A  |

This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these changes affect the exempt status of the human research, please contact the IRB. When you have completed your research, please submit a Study Closure request in iRIS so that IRB records will be accurate.

In the conduct of this research, you are responsible to follow the requirements of the Investigator Manual.

On behalf of Sophia Dziegielewski, Ph.D., L.C.S.W., UCF IRB Chair, this letter is signed by:

Signature applied by Joanne Muratori on 02/03/2012 10:18:44 AM EST

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joanne Muratori".

IRB Coordinator

## **APPENDIX B: Principal Letters to IRB**

## Appendix B: Principal Letters to IRB



### ORANGE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

[Redacted]  
[Redacted]  
*Principal*

[Redacted]  
*Assistant Principal*

December 1, 2011

To: University of Central Florida  
Institutional Review Board

I would like to inform you that [Redacted] Elementary School is hoping to be involved in a research project with the University of Central Florida conducted by Honors in the Major Student Marilyn Romero and her professor Maria Reyes-Macpherson, Ph.D.

The proposed project is titled *Finding the Key Characteristics that Contribute to Effectively Implementing the Best Practices in an Inclusion Classroom Setting*. Its purpose of which is to examine the quality of inclusive classrooms as well as collect demographics of the teachers and students in this setting. The components of this project are (1) to observe and collect characteristics of different classrooms engaged in full and partial inclusion; (2) assess classrooms using the Inclusion Classroom Profile; and (3) search for possible relationships between characteristics among classrooms and their score on the Inclusion Classroom Profile.

Participation in this project will help discover common characteristics among high quality inclusion settings. Results will be translated into a list of reoccurring characteristics in order to implement them into future inclusive classrooms. This is an effort to raise the quality of inclusion classrooms overall.

The project would begin January 2012 and conclude by March 2012.

Respectfully submitted,





## ORANGE COUNTY CHARTER SCHOOLS

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
Principal

[REDACTED]  
Assistant Principal

December 1, 2011

To: University of Central Florida  
Institutional Review Board

I would like to inform you that the [REDACTED] is hoping to be involved in a research project with the University of Central Florida conducted by Honors in the Major Student Marilyn Romero and her professor Maria Reyes-Macpherson, Ph.D.

The proposed project is titled *Finding the Key Characteristics that Contribute to Effectively Implementing the Best Practices in an Inclusion Classroom Setting*. Its purpose of which is to examine the quality of inclusive classrooms as well as collect demographics of the teachers and students in this setting. The components of this project are (1) to observe and collect characteristics of different classrooms engaged in full and partial inclusion; (2) assess classrooms using the Inclusion Classroom Profile; and (3) search for possible relationships between characteristics among classrooms and their score on the Inclusion Classroom Profile.

Participation in this project will help discover common characteristics among high quality inclusion settings. Results will be translated into a list of reoccurring characteristics in order to implement them into future inclusive classrooms. This is an effort to raise the quality of inclusion classrooms overall.

The project would begin January 2012 and conclude by March 2012.

Respectfully submitted,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

**APPENDIX C: Orange County Public Schools Approved Research Request  
Form**

## Appendix C: Orange County Public Schools Approved Research Request Form

|   |   |  |  |
|---|---|--|--|
| Submit this form and a copy of your proposal to:<br>Accountability, Research, and Assessment<br>P.O. Box 271<br>Orlando, FL 32802-0271  | <b>Orange County Public Schools</b><br><br><b>RESEARCH REQUEST FORM</b><br><br>RECEIVED JAN 03 2012 | <b>Your research proposal should include:</b><br>Project Title<br>Purpose and Research Problem<br>Instruments<br>Procedures and Proposed Data Analysis |  |
| Requester's Name <u>Marilyn Romero</u> Date <u>12/12/11</u>   |   |  |  |
| E-mail <span style="background-color: black; color: black;">[REDACTED]</span> Phone <span style="background-color: black; color: black;">[REDACTED]</span>  |   |  |  |
| Address <span style="background-color: black; color: black;">[REDACTED]</span>  |   |  |  |
| Institutional Affiliation <u>University of Central Florida</u>  |   |  |  |
| Project Director or Advisor <u>Dr. Maria Beyes</u> Phone <span style="background-color: black; color: black;">[REDACTED]</span>   |   |  |  |
| Degree Sought: (check one) <input type="checkbox"/> Associate <input type="checkbox"/> Doctorate <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Bachelor's <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable <input type="checkbox"/> Master's <input type="checkbox"/> Specialist   |   |  |  |
| Project Title: <u>Finding the Key Characteristics that contribute to effectively implementing the Best Practices in an Inclusion Set</u>  |   |  |  |
| <b>ESTIMATED INVOLVEMENT</b>  |   |  |  |
| PERSONNEL/CENTERS   | NUMBER  | AMOUNT OF TIME (DAYS, HOURS, ETC.)   | SPECIFY SCHOOLS BY NAME AND NUMBER OF TEACHERS, ADMINISTRATORS, ETC.   |
| Students  |   |  |  |
| Teachers  |   |  |  |
| Administrators  |   |  |  |
| Schools/Centers   | 2   | 18 hrs.  | <span style="background-color: black; color: black;">[REDACTED]</span> |
| Others (specify)  |   |  |  |
| Specify possible benefits to students/school system: <u>There are no anticipated risks, compensation or other direct benefits to the participants in this study.</u>  |   |  |  |
| <b>ASSURANCE</b>  |   |  |  |
| 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: <u>Marilyn Romero</u>  |   |  |  |
| Approval Granted: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No   |   |  |  |
| Signature of the Senior Director for Accountability, Research, and Assessment: <u>[Signature]</u> Date: <u>1-31-12</u>  |   |  |  |

NOTE TO REQUESTER: When seeking approval at the school level, a copy of this form, signed by the Senior Director, Accountability, Research, and Assessment, should be shown to the school principal who has the option to refuse participation depending upon any school circumstance or condition. The original Research Request Form is preferable to a faxed document.



## **APPENDIX D: Principal Letters to Orange County Public Schools**

## Appendix D: Principal Letters to Orange County Public Schools



ORANGE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Principal

Assistant Principal

December 1, 2011

To: Dr. Vickie Cartwright  
Assessment, Accountability, and Research  
Orange County Public Schools


I would like to inform you [redacted] Elementary School is hoping to be involved in a research project with the University of Central Florida conducted by Honors in the Major Student Marilyn Romero and her professor Maria Reyes-Macpherson, Ph.D.

The proposed project is titled *Finding the Key Characteristics that Contribute to Effectively Implementing the Best Practices in an Inclusion Classroom Setting*. Its purpose of which is to examine the quality of inclusive classrooms as well as collect demographics of the teachers and students in this setting. The components of this project are (1) to observe and collect characteristics of different classrooms engaged in full and partial inclusion; (2) assess classrooms using the Inclusion Classroom Profile; and (3) search for possible relationships between characteristics among classrooms and their score on the Inclusion Classroom Profile.

Participation in this project will help discover common characteristics among high quality inclusion settings. Results will be translated into a list of reoccurring characteristics in order to implement them into future inclusive classrooms. This is an effort to raise the quality of inclusion classrooms overall.

The project would begin January 2012 and conclude by March 2012.

Respectfully submitted,

  
[redacted]



## ORANGE COUNTY CHARTER SCHOOLS

*Principal*

*Assistant Principal*

December 1, 2011

To: Dr. Vickie Cartwright  
Assessment, Accountability, and Research  
Orange County Public Schools

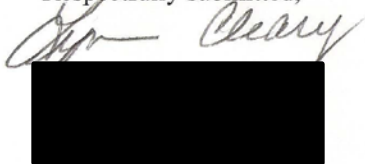
I would like to inform you that the [REDACTED] is hoping to be involved in a research project with the University of Central Florida conducted by Honors in the Major Student Marilyn Romero and her professor Maria Reyes-Macpherson, Ph.D.

The proposed project is titled *Finding the Key Characteristics that Contribute to Effectively Implementing the Best Practices in an Inclusion Classroom Setting*. Its purpose of which is to examine the quality of inclusive classrooms as well as collect demographics of the teachers and students in this setting. The components of this project are (1) to observe and collect characteristics of different classrooms engaged in full and partial inclusion; (2) assess classrooms using the Inclusion Classroom Profile; and (3) search for possible relationships between characteristics among classrooms and their score on the Inclusion Classroom Profile.

Participation in this project will help discover common characteristics among high quality inclusion settings. Results will be translated into a list of reoccurring characteristics in order to implement them into future inclusive classrooms. This is an effort to raise the quality of inclusion classrooms overall.

The project would begin January 2012 and conclude by March 2012.

Respectfully submitted,



[REDACTED]

## **APPENDIX E: Teacher Profile**

## Appendix E: Teacher Profile

**Classroom:** 1   2   3   |   4   5   6  
**Teacher :** A   B   C

**Inclusion Setting:** Partial   or   Full

---

### Teacher Profile

#### Personal Information:

1. Age: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Gender: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Education:

3. Degrees (Check all that apply)

☐ Bachelors in: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Masters in: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Doctorates in: \_\_\_\_\_

4. List any additional certifications

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

#### Related Experience:

5. Number of years teaching: \_\_\_\_\_

6. ESE Certification (circle):   Yes   or   No

7. Professional Development Courses Taken (Circle):

(0-4)

(5-9)

(10-14)

(15 +)

## **APPENDIX F: Classroom Profile**

## Appendix F: Classroom Profile

**Classroom:** 1   2   3   |   4   5   6

**Inclusion Setting:** Partial   or   Full

### Classroom Profile

1. Number of Teachers: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Number of Paraprofessionals: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Number of Students in Classroom: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Number of Female Students: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Number of Male Students: \_\_\_\_\_
6. Number of ESE Students in Classroom: \_\_\_\_\_
7. Student Demographics:

| <u>Type of Disability</u> | <u>Severity</u><br>Mild (1)<br>Moderate (2)<br>Severe (3) | <u>Gender</u><br>Male (M)<br>Female (F) | <u>Service (If Partial)</u>   |   |
|---------------------------|---|---|---|---|
|                           |   |   | <b>Time spent in Inclusion:</b><br>1hr- 2hr (A)<br>2hr- 3hr (B)<br>3hr- 4hr (C) | <b>List Subjects:</b><br>Math (M)<br>Language Arts (LA)<br>Social Studies (SS)<br>Science (S)<br>Specials (SP)<br>Lunch (L) |
| <b>Cognitive</b>          |   |   |   |   |
| 1.                        |   |   |   |   |
| 2.                        |   |   |   |   |
| 3.                        |   |   |   |   |
| 4.                        |   |   |   |   |
| 5.                        |   |   |   |   |
| <b>Communication</b>      |   |   |   |   |
| 1.                        |   |   |   |   |
| 2.                        |   |   |   |   |
| 3.                        |   |   |   |   |
| 4.                        |   |   |   |   |
| 5.                        |   |   |   |   |
| <b>Physical</b>           |   |   |   |   |

|                      |  |  |  |  |
|----------------------|--|--|--|--|
| 1.                   |  |  |  |  |
| 2.                   |  |  |  |  |
| 3.                   |  |  |  |  |
| 4.                   |  |  |  |  |
| 5.                   |  |  |  |  |
| <b>Social</b>        |  |  |  |  |
| 1.                   |  |  |  |  |
| 2.                   |  |  |  |  |
| 3.                   |  |  |  |  |
| 4.                   |  |  |  |  |
| 5.                   |  |  |  |  |
| <b>Emotional</b>     |  |  |  |  |
| 1.                   |  |  |  |  |
| 2.                   |  |  |  |  |
| 3.                   |  |  |  |  |
| 4.                   |  |  |  |  |
| 5.                   |  |  |  |  |
| <b>Developmental</b> |  |  |  |  |
| 1.                   |  |  |  |  |
| 2.                   |  |  |  |  |
| 3.                   |  |  |  |  |
| 4.                   |  |  |  |  |
| 5.                   |  |  |  |  |



## **APPENDIX G: Assessment Tool: Inclusion Classroom Profile (ICP)**

## Appendix G: Assessment Tool: Inclusion

### INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM PROFILE

**Elena P. Soukakou**

Date of observation: \_\_\_\_\_ Name of setting: \_\_\_\_\_

Observer: \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher (s): \_\_\_\_\_

Time observation began: \_\_\_\_\_ Time observation ended: \_\_\_\_\_

This permission to make copies for research purposes, professional development or program quality assessment is not permission to publish or sell copies of this measure. Please direct any questions about using this measure to the author Elena P. Soukakou, Postdoctoral Research Fellow, FPG Child Development Institute, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, CB#180, 105 Smith Level Road, Chapel Hill, NC 27599. TEL: (919) 843-7354. E-mail: [elena.soukakou@unc.edu](mailto:elena.soukakou@unc.edu); [elenasoucacou@hotmail.com](mailto:elenasoucacou@hotmail.com). The author requests that the use or reference of the measure in oral presentations and written products is appropriately cited: Soucacou, E.P. (2007). *Assessment of Classroom Quality in Inclusive Preschool Settings: Development and Validation of a New Observation Measure*. Unpublished D.Phil Thesis. Department of Education, Oxford University.

Copyright © 2010 by Elena P. Soukakou

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any mean, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, or any information storage and retrieval system, without prior permission from the author. The score sheet page may be photocopied without permission being sought. Copyright restrictions apply to the rest of the publication.

*Copyright © 2010 by Elena P. Soukakou*

## The Inclusive Classroom Profile (ICP)

### Rationale and Purpose

The *Inclusive Classroom Profile* (ICP) is a structured observation rating scale designed to assess the quality of provisions and daily classroom practices that support the developmental needs of children with disabilities in early childhood settings. Ratings on the measure's items indicate *the extent to which adult support and adjustments of various elements of the classroom promote the diverse needs of children with disabilities as a group, within the context of their peer interactions*. As a research tool, the ICP may be used to assess aspects of quality in inclusive classrooms. It can also allow researchers to investigate the relationship between classroom quality and children's developmental progress. The ICP can also be used as a self-assessment tool or as a tool to use in program quality assessment for achieving desired levels of quality and enhancing classroom practice to better accommodate children's needs. The ICP might also inform professional development models to support those involved in meeting the individualized needs of children with disabilities in inclusive classrooms. The ICP is designed to be used in conjunction with other early childhood environment rating scales and measures, such as the *Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised* (ECERS-R; Harms, Clifford, & Cryer, 2005).

### Structure of the ICP

The ICP is a 7 point Likert-type rating scale which rates the quality of daily classroom practices ranging from 1 (Practices considered highly inadequate) to 7 (Practices that promote to the highest degree the developmental needs of children with disabilities included in the classroom). The measure includes 11 items, each comprised of quality indicators under the form of qualitative descriptions of various practices and adult behaviors. These are:

1. Adaptations of space and materials/ equipment
2. Adult involvement in peer interactions
3. Adults' guidance of children's play
4. Conflict resolution
5. Membership
6. Adult-child social communicative interactions
7. Support for social communication
8. Adaptation of group activities
9. Transitions between activities
10. Feedback
11. Planning and monitoring of children's individual needs and goals

## Observation Focus

The scale uses the inclusive classroom as the primary unit of assessment. Ratings are made by observing **all children with identified disabilities in the classroom as a group** (children 2.5-5 years old). Scores on each item represent the overall quality of observed practices implemented by staff to support the developmental needs of children with disabilities as a group. As the focus of the scale is on inclusive practices, many indicators also assess what adults do with the rest of the group in order to support children with disabilities in the classroom's community. However, unless an indicator clearly guides assessors to provide their rating (YES/NO) based on observation of ALL children (children with and without disabilities), the vast majority of indicators within the scale's 11 items are rated based on observation of children with disabilities as a group.

A unique aspect of the ICP is the conceptualization of classroom practices in terms of *inclusive adaptations*. The concept of *inclusive adaptations* embodies the idea of individualization within inclusive contexts. This idea was essential in the development of items because it views quality as a reflection of the extent to which adjustments of various elements of the classroom can accommodate individual needs while also encourage children's active engagement in the group. Accordingly, items reflecting inclusive adaptations score at the highest level those embedded practices which deliberately encourage peer interaction or *inclusiveness*, through adjustments that might differ from child to child. Specific examples clarify the different ways that these practices can be embedded in the classroom to support the diverse needs of children with disabilities.

## Administration and Scoring

To administer the rating scale appropriately, raters need to be familiar with the scale's items, administration and scoring procedures. It is recommended that users receive appropriate training prior to using the measure formally. Information on training can be provided upon contacting the author of the rating scale.

### ADMINISTRATION TIME

The ICP was designed to be administered in a two and a half hour observation period.

## Terminology

**ADULTS:** Refers to all individuals responsible for the education of the children in the classroom (e.g., teachers, teacher assistants, specialists, therapists)

**ALL:** Refers to children with and without identified disabilities in the classroom.

**A.C.S:** Alternative Communication Systems

**IEP:** Individual Education Plan

### Psychometric Properties of the ICP

The ICP has been field tested in 45 inclusive pre-k classrooms. Inter-rater reliability was established in a separate set of classrooms (  $n=10$ ), and results suggested that independent observers were highly consistent in their ratings of individual items. The mean weighted kappa for all items was 0.79. Cronbach's Alpha analysis was conducted on the scale's items and assessed the measure's internal consistency ( $\alpha=0.79$ ). The factor structure of the Inclusive Classroom Profile was tested through confirmatory factor analysis. The one factor model filled the assumptions and showed good values for model fit; Model fit indices were:  $\chi^2=35.164$ ,  $df=35$ ,  $p=.460$ , CMIN/df = 1.005, RMSEA = .010, NNFI = .998, and CFI = .998. To assess construct validity the ICP was compared with other measures of classroom quality. The total score of the ICP showed a .626 ( $p<0.001$ ) moderately high correlation with the ECERS-R, suggesting the two instruments are measuring similar but not identical constructs.

### References

- Harms, T., Clifford, R. M., & Cryer, D. (1998; 2005). *Early childhood environment rating scale* (Revised ed.). New York: Teacher's College Press.
- Soucacou, E. P., & Sylva, K. (2010). Developing observation instruments and arriving at inter-rater reliability for a range of contexts and raters: The early childhood environment rating scales. In G. Walford, E. Tucker & M. Viswanathan (Eds.), *The sage handbook of measurement*. London: Sage.
- Soucacou, E. P. (2007). *Assessment of classroom quality in inclusive preschool settings: Development and validation of a new observation measure*. Unpublished D.Phil Thesis. Department of Education, Oxford University.

## REFERENCES

- Aber, L., Chaudry, A., & Urban, I. (2010). Low-income children, their families and the greatrecession: What next in policy? *Urban Institute*. Retrieved 25 July 2011.  
<http://www.urban.org/publications/412069.html>
- Allen, P., Ciancio, J., & Rutkowski, S. (2008). Transitioning students with disabilities into work. *Techniques: Connecting Education and Careers*, 83(2), 22-25.
- Allington, R. L. (2007). Intervention all day long: New hope for struggling readers. *Voices From The Middle*, 14(4), 7-14.
- Beattie, I., & Olley, P. (1977). Non-instructional factors relating to classroom climate: an exploratory study. *Education*, 98, 180-184.
- Bondy, A., & Frost, L. (1994). The picture exchange communication system. *Focus on Autistic Behaviour*, 9, 1-19.
- Cote, D. L. (2011). Implementing a problem-solving intervention with students with mild to moderate disabilities. *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 46(5), 259-265. Retrieved 24 July 2011. <http://isc.sagepub.com/content/46/5/259>
- Devlin, N. (2009). The rules grid: Helping children with social communication and interaction needs manage social complexity. *Educational Psychology in Practice*, 25(4), 327-338.
- Frisby, B. N., & Martin, M. M. (2010). Instructor-student and student-student rapport in the classroom. *Communication Education*, 59(2), 146-164.
- Glago, K. D. (2005). The effect of problem solving self-determination instruction on elementary students with learning disabilities and emotional disabilities. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 66(02), 549.

- Gragnon, E. (2001). Power Cards: Using special interests to motivate children and youth with Asperger syndrome and autism. Shawnee Mission, KS: Autism Asperger Publishing Co.
- Gray, C.A. (1994). Comic strip conversations: *Arlington: Future Directions*.
- Gray, C.A. (1995). Teaching children with autism to “read” social situations. In K.A. Quill (Ed.), *Teaching children with autism: Strategies to enhance communication and socialization* (pp. 219–242). New York: Delmar.
- Groden, J., & LeVasseur, P. (1995). Cognitive picture rehearsal: A system to teach self-control. In K.A. Quill (Ed.), *Teaching children with autism: Strategies to enhance communication and socialization* (pp. 287–306). New York: Delmar.
- Hodgdon, L. (1995). Solving social-behaviour problems through the use of visually supported communication. In K.A. Quill (Ed.), *Teaching children with autism: Strategies to enhance communication and socialization* (pp. 256–286). New York: Delmar.
- Kargin, T., Guldenoglu, B., & Sahin, F. (2010). Opinions of the general education teachers on the adaptations for students with special needs in general education classrooms. *Educational Sciences: Theory and Practice*, 10(4), 2455-2464.
- Kern, L., Wacker, D.P., Mace, F.C., Dunlap, G., & Kormrey, J.D. (1995). Improving the peer interaction of students with emotional and behavioural disorders through self-evaluation procedures: A component analysis and group application. *Journal of Applied Behaviour Analysis*, 28, 47–59.
- Kiernan, C. (1983). The use of nonvocal communication techniques with autistic individuals. *Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 24(3), 339–375.



- Kilanowski-Press, L., Foote, C. J., & Rinaldo, V. J. (2010). Inclusion classrooms and teachers: A survey of current practices. *International Journal of Special Education*, 25(3), 43-56.
- Kistner, J., Robbins, F., & Haskett, M. (1988). Assessment and skills remediation of hyper-lexic children. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 18, 191–205.
- Klotz, M. (2004). Help kids welcome disabled students. *Education Digest: Essential Readings Condensed for Quick Review*, 69(6), 41-42.
- Lin, L., & Atkinson, R. K. (2011). Using animations and visual cueing to support learning of scientific concepts and processes. *Computers & Education*, 56(3), 650-658.
- Ludtke, O., Robitzsch, A., Trautwein, U., & Kunter, M. (2009). Assessing the impact of learning environments: How to use student ratings of classroom or school characteristics in multilevel modeling. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 34(2), 120-131.
- Maslow, A. H. (1943). A Theory of Human Motivation. *Psychological Review*, 50, pp. 370.
- Mohr, L. L. (1995). *Teaching Diverse Learners in Inclusive Settings: Steps for Adapting Instruction*.
- National Autistic Society (NAS). (1994). *Approaches to autism: An annotated list* (2nd ed.). London: NAS.
- Olive, M. L. (2004). Transitioning children between activities: Effective strategies for decreasing challenging behavior. *Beyond Behavior*, 14(1), 11-16.
- Rowe, A. (2011). The personal dimension in teaching: Why students value feedback. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 25(4), 343-360.
- Schopler, E., & Mesibov, G.B. (1995). Learning and cognition in autism. *New York: Plenum Press*.

- Siegel, B. (1996). *The world of the autistic child: Understanding and treating autistic spectrum disorders*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Soukakou, E.P. (2007). *Assessment of classroom quality in inclusive preschool settings: development and validation of a new observation measure. Unpublished D.Phil Thesis*. Department of Education, Oxford University.
- Stecker, P. M., & Fuchs, L. S. (2000). Effecting superior achievement using curriculum-based measurement: The importance of individual progress monitoring. *Learning Disabilities: Research & Practice*, 15(3), 128-34.
- Trawick-Smith, J., & Dziurgot, T. (2011). "Good-Fit" teacher-child play interactions and the subsequent autonomous play of preschool children. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 26(1), 110-123.
- Wass, R., Harland, T., & Mercer, A. (2011). Scaffolding critical thinking in the zone of proximal development. *Higher Education Research and Development*, 30(3), 317-328.
- Williams, S., Mastergeorge, A. M., & Ontai, L. L. (2010). Caregiver Involvement in Infant Peer Interactions: Scaffolding in a Social Context. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 25(2), 251-266.
- Wood, D., Bruner, J. S., & Ross, G. (1976). The role of tutoring in problem-solving. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry and Allied Disciplines*, 17, 89–100.
- van de Pol, J., Volman, M., & Beishuizen, J. (2010). Scaffolding in teacher-student interaction: A decade of research. *Educational Psychology Review*, 22(3), 271-296.
- Voelkl, K. E. (1995). School warmth, student participation, and achievement. *Journal of Experimental Education*, 63, 127-139.

Vygotsky, L.S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes.*

Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Yazbak, F. Edward. (2003). Autism in the United States: A perspective. *Journal of American Physicians and Surgeons*, 8(4), 103-107.