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Determining the inclusiveness of students with disabilities in Iowa agricultural classrooms

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Determining the inclusiveness of students with disabilities in Iowa agricultural classrooms

by

Taylor Wilkins

A thesis submitted to the graduate faculty

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

Major: Agricultural and Life Sciences Education

Program of Study Committee:
Scott Smalley Co-major Professor
Mark Hainline Co-major Professor
Pat Carlson

The student author, whose presentation of the scholarship was approved is solely responsible for the content of this thesis. The Graduate College will ensure this thesis is globally accessible and will not permit alterations after a degree is conferred.

Iowa State University

Ames, Iowa

2018

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ABSTRACT

The mainstreaming of students with disabilities has become a popular topic with the passing of laws such as Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE), Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), No Child Left Behind (NCLB), and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Federal law mandates students be included in the least restricted environment (LRE). This study sought to determine the inclusion of students with disabilities in Iowa school-based agricultural education (SBAE) courses throughout all aspects of the agricultural education three-circle model: (1) classroom/laboratory instruction, (2) FFA, and (3) Supervised Agriculture Experiences (SAE). Utilizing the experiences of 10 teachers, three main themes were derived from open-ended interview questions: communication, inclusiveness for a complete program, and transfer of responsibility for provided services. Interview questions were developed around teaching experience, classroom structure, support from administration, and specific examples of adjusting for a student with a disability. Future recommendations for practice include engaged conversations in Individuals Education Program (IEP) meetings with administration, faculty, parents, and students. In addition, future research recommendations include interviewing special education departments to understand their unique role in developing modifications and accommodations needs for active participation of students with disabilities in SBAE.
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Special education and the inclusion of students with disabilities is not a new subject in today’s education system. Federal laws mandate the inclusion of students with disabilities in the least restricted environment (LRE). With the popularity of mainstreaming, students are being included in more secondary education courses. However, research is limited in providing details for modification and accommodation needs for students with disabilities to be successful in secondary education classrooms. Agricultural education and career and technical education is no exception. School based agricultural educators are improving their abilities to work with students that have disabilities. This study sought to identify the modifications and accommodations needed for students to be involved in all aspects of the agricultural education three-circle model from firsthand experiences of a sample of Iowa’s school-based agricultural education (SBAE) teachers. Three primary objectives guided the structure of this project:

1. Describe Iowa’s SBAE teacher’s experiences when working with students that have disabilities in the classroom/laboratory instruction.

2. Describe Iowa’s SBAE teacher’s experiences when working with students that have disabilities in FFA.

3. Describe Iowa’s SBAE teacher’s experiences when working with students that have disabilities in SAE.

Results indicated although education is individualized, three main themes need to be considered to incorporate students fully: (1) importance of communication, (2) inclusiveness of a complete program, and (3) transfer of responsibility for provided services.
The climate of American education over the past decades has changed significantly in regards to special education. Limited literature and documentation in disability history, continues to be a challenge; however, research indicates that perceptions and attitudes towards students with disabilities has drastically changed due to the passing of federal legislation, such as Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

The landmark legislation passed by Congress in 1975, known as Public Law 94-142, guaranteed that every child with a disability would have a free and appropriate public education (FAPE). The law was known as the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, which became IDEA. Public Law 94-142, had four main purposes: (1) to assure that all children with disabilities have available a free and appropriate education emphasizing special education and the services needed to meet their needs, (2) to assure the rights of children with disabilities are protected, (3) to assist states and localities to provide for the education of students with disabilities, and (4) to assess the effectiveness of efforts to educate children with disabilities.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 ensures the rights of students with disabilities are protected. The U.S. Department of Education provides financial assistance to school districts providing services and programs to students with disabilities. Section 504 requires a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to anyone with a disability who is in the school’s jurisdiction, regardless of the person’s disability. A student is covered by Section 504 if: (1) they have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits major life activity, (2) they have a record of such impairment, or (3) they are regarded as having such an impairment (Walsh, Kemerer, Maniotis, 2014, p.120).
In January of 2002, with the signing of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), President George H.W. Bush emphasized the commitment level of the government on educational accountability (Manna, 2006). The Center of Education Policy (CEP) conducted a comprehensive review of NCLB and discovered schools were spending more time on improving achievement gaps and the learning needs of groups of students (Jennings & Rentner, 2006). NCLB requires districts and schools to not only work to improve the academic achievements of students individually, but also smaller groups of students, especially underachieving groups.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a law closely aligned with NCLB (Turnball, 2005). IDEA provides the right for students with disabilities to participate in assessments at both the district and state level with accommodations and modifications. A means of supporting this notion of accountability requires highly qualified teachers.

Federal laws mandate schools to provide students with disabilities an education and it must be conducted “to the maximum extent possible, with students without disabilities,” (Rozalski, Stewart, & Miller, 2010, p. 151). This principle is commonly known as LRE. Over the course of time and due to the vagueness of LRE, the specific requirement varies according to the student’s personal needs, which has caused educators to struggle providing a FAPE to students with disabilities in LRE (Rozalski, et al., 2010).

Special education services apply to core classes, as well as to Career and Technical Education (CTE), specifically agricultural education. Casale-Giannola (2011) offered multiple benefits to students with disabilities participating in CTE classes. According to Casale-Giannola, CTE courses offer the opportunity for hands-on, real-life application activities. In addition, she suggested that CTE provides a strong backing of differentiated
instruction. Regardless of a student’s ability, differentiated instruction involves a multitude of choices in content, interest, and learning styles. However, Casale-Giannola also provided detail into areas of weakness for CTE educators. CTE educators lack understanding of special education laws. Some teachers do not understand that IDEA and NCLB increases the number of students with disabilities in their classroom, as well as making them accountable for the inclusion of these students (Casale-Giannola, 2011). Students with disabilities have weak basic skills needed for success in CTE courses. Cognitive development and reading comprehension can be an area of struggle for a student with a disability if they lack basic cognitive skills (Casale-Giannola, 2011). Lastly, Casale-Giannola (2011) mentioned being everywhere at one time can be difficult for CTE teachers with several activities going on inside a classroom. Because of the opportunities that differential learning presents, providing adequate supervision is a CTE teacher’s weakness.

Understanding the role a CTE teacher plays in the development of a student with disabilities is vital. Wonacott (2001) believed CTE teachers must be aware of the rights students with disabilities have, in addition to being actively involved in meeting the needs of these students. Due to the nature of CTE classes it is extremely important that CTE educators participate in conversations with administration and special education teams. The integration of both classroom instruction and work-based experience is unique. Wonacott (2001) suggested that many students with disabilities could benefit from the structure of a CTE program.

It is the federal duty of educators to serve students fully in a LRE being sure to provide them with a FAPE. The question this research plans to address is to what extent are students with disabilities included in SBAE classrooms in the state of Iowa, utilizing the three-circle
model of SBAE? The primary objectives of this qualitative study were centered on the inclusion of students with disabilities in agricultural education classrooms in the state of Iowa, utilizing the three components of school-based agricultural education: (1) classroom/laboratory, (2) FFA, and (3) SAE.

**Key Terms:**

*Accommodation:* meeting the learning objective without modifying the curriculum (Special Education Guide, 2018).

*Career and Technical Education (CTE):* term applied to schools, institutions, and educational programs that specialize in the skilled trades, applied sciences, modern technologies, and career preparation (The glossary of Education Reform, 2014.)

*Center for Education Policy (CEP):* national, independent source for research about public education (Center of Education Policy, 2018).

*Disability:* natural part of the human experience and does not diminishes the right of individuals to participate in society (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act).

*Diversity:* the range of human differences, including, but not limited to race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, social class, physical abilities, religious beliefs, and physical beliefs (Ferris State University, nd.).

*Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE):* mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, students with disabilities will be educated in a public school setting, with emphasis on individual needs outlined in student’s Individualized Education Program, at no cost to the parent or guardian (Free Appropriate Public Education for Students with Disabilities: Requirements under Section 504 of The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, 2010).
**Inclusion:** a sense of belonging, where the inherent worth and dignity of all people are recognized. (Ferris State University, nd.).

**Individuals Education Program (IEP):** a written statement for each student with a disability that describes the student’s special education program. This legal document spells out the services, activities, and support each student will receive (Iowa Department of Education, 2018).

**Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA):** law that makes available a free appropriate public education to students with disabilities throughout the United States to ensure special education and related services are given to those students (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2004).

**Least Restricted Environment (LRE):** requirement of Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, that students with disabilities should be placed in classroom settings that best meet their needs, rather than assuming a special class is the best option (Legal Information Institute, Cornell Law School, nd.).

**Modification:** curriculum changes that lower expectations and standards (Special Education Guide, 2018).

**National Association of Agricultural Educators (NAAE):** federation of state agricultural educators association, advocating for agricultural education (National Association of Agricultural Educators, 2018).

**No Child Left Behind (NCLB):** required states to test students in reading and math grades third through eight grades and once in high school to access if students are meeting state standards (Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, 2011).
School-Based Agricultural Education (SBAE): essential educational program, delivered through career and technical education in every state in the United States and five U.S. territories. Three core principles include classroom instruction, premier leadership, and experiential learning (Nevada Agriculture Education, 2017).

Supervised Agricultural Experiences (SAE): required component of a total agricultural education program, intended for every student. Students explore multiple careers and specific industry skills. Students apply classroom knowledge with the world of college and career opportunities (National FFA, 2015).
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Since 1975, the mainstreaming of students with disabilities has specified students should be educated in the least restrictive setting (Treder, Morse, & Ferron, 2000). Students with disabilities have individual characteristics that present challenges during learning. These challenges vary but may include the lack of attention span needed for secondary education courses (Aschenbrener, Garton, & Ross, 2010). The modifications and accommodations are different for each student, and adaptations will be needed (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 1995). Modification is defined as changing what is taught to a student or what you might expect a student to learn. Through accommodations, students are still learning the same material as their classmates, just in a different way. An example of an accommodation would be shortening exam questions. Students with disabilities have been a focus point of research in SBAE for multiple years (Elbert & Bagget, 2003; Kessell, Wingebach, Burley, Lawver, Fraze, & Davis 2006a, 2006b). A challenge of special educators is the lack of experience with technical classes, making it difficult to serve as an assistant (Evers & Bursuck, 1995). In addition, Evers and Bursuck identified students with disabilities enrolled in CTE classes often encounter the same difficulties as core academic subjects. Current SBAE teachers are increasing their awareness of students with disabilities, as well as their desire to provide quality education for diverse learners (Hoerst & Whittington, 2009).

The mission of the Iowa State Board of Education is the following: “champion excellence in education through superior leadership and services. We are committed to high levels of learning, achievement and performance for all students, so they will become successful members of their community and the workforce”. The required Individualized Education Program (IEP) of IDEA is crucial to the achievement of the state
board’s mission. Iowa’s State Board of Education mandates an IEP be developed with special consideration to a child’s abilities, including their strength and interests. In addition, the IEP directs the student towards attainable goals and must serve as a tool to guide the development of meaningful experiences in education. Five foundations guide the development of a successful IEP creation and implementation. The Iowa Department of Education elaborately describes each foundation guide: (1) the IEP documents that a student is receiving FAPE; (2) to the maximum extent possible, students with disabilities are included with students who do not require special education; (3) the IEP development is a collaborative process; (4) high expectations of the student is established; and lastly (5) the IEP process is continuous.

According to Iowa Department of Education (2018), the teacher should be actively involved in IEP meetings. The general education teacher should provide input in how to best teach the student, offer expertise in curriculum modifications and/or accommodations, support the student, provide intervention strategies, and fulfill the services outlined in the IEP.

Experiential learning has been the foundation of SBAE since the beginning (Baker, Robinson & Kolb, 2012). According to Kolb (1984), experiential learning is defined as “the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience” (p. 38). For educators to build upon the learning experience, students should be engaged in the learning process. Learning is linked to a student’s personal experiences and the adaptations to the world (Baker et al., 2012). Kolb’s (1984) experiential learning study suggested that knowledge is the result of experiences that have been transformed. According to the National Association of Agricultural Educators (NAAE), agricultural education utilizes Kolb’s idea of experimental learning using the three-circle model.
Each component represents equal integration of classroom instruction, leadership development through FFA, and experiential learning through a SAE. Johnson, Wilson, Flowers, and Croom (2012) examined the perceptions of North Carolina’s SBAE teachers regarding including students with disabilities in SAE and FFA. Of the 77 responses received, 97.1% agreed students with disabilities receive similar benefits from SAE; however, 58.6% agreed participating in an SAE is more difficult. Regarding FFA, results showed FFA activities were more limited for students with disabilities than other students (Johnson, Wilson, Flowers, & Croom, 2012). Aschenbrener, Garton, and Ross (2010) sought to assess the perceptions of early career teachers’ ability to teach students with disabilities. Results indicated that administrative support contributed the most to success in working with students with disabilities, while in service activities contributed the least. Multiple research reports indicate SBAE teachers need training in teaching students with disabilities. In 2002, Joerger did a comparison of in-service education needs of two cohorts of beginning Minnesota agricultural education teachers from the years 2000 and 2001. Teachers had
completed one semester of teaching. The study indicated an area of high need was teaching special education students. When looking at the preparation and in-service needs of teachers in Georgia, Duncan, Ricketts, Peake, and Uesseler (2006) found teaching students with learning disabilities to be one of the higher-ranking pre-service/in-service need. In addition, Sorensen, Tarpley, and Warrick (2010) identified teachers in Utah need professional training in teaching of special education students.

Studies indicate special education has seen a rise in litigation. Karanxha and Zirkel (2014) claim “special education litigation continues to be a growth industry” (p.60). In addition, Walsh et al. (2014) support this perception stating, “no area of school law has experienced such explosive growth over the past forty years as special education” (p.86). SBAE educators are held to federal mandates, especially the FAPE and the requirement of IEP. Providing opportunities of mainstreaming is a key component of SBAE. Exposure and experiences transform into knowledge, and research indicates students with disabilities benefit from participation in SBAE. Therefore, it is crucial we understand the modifications and accommodations needed for students with disabilities to achieve the high expectations set forth in IEP.

Specific examples of court cases have shown the severe consequences school districts can face when not providing a FAPE. Dating back to 1999, Cedar Rapids Community School District vs. Garret F. The Supreme Court ruled the financial responsibility of providing appropriate medical equipment fell on the school’s shoulders, as these services are necessary for the student to attend school. In addition, if modifications and accommodations are not completed and enforced as written in the IEP, schools are in danger of federal risks. In the case of Doe vs. Withers (1993), Michael Withers, a history teacher in West Virginia, did not
comply with a student’s modifications outlined in the IEP. In return, he was forced to pay a $15,000 fine.

**Framework**

The conceptual framework guiding this study was the concept of inclusion. Bloom, Perlmutter, and Burrell (1999) suggest inclusion as a philosophy that brings people together, students, families, educators, and community members together to create a social environment of belonging. According to Salend (2001), inclusion is designed around four main concepts: (1) diversity, (2) individual needs, (3) reflective practice, and (4) collaboration. Diversity advances educational settings by incorporating students regardless of differences in general education classes. Individual needs encompass reception and understanding of needs. Reflective practice requires teachers to self-reflect on their feelings and attitudes towards teaching students with disabilities. Lastly, collaboration allows for family, community, and schools to come together to provide a successful learning environment for all students.

This study focuses on the four main themes that Salend (2001) suggested inclusion was designed around. Diversity is considered in the extensive range of disabilities within SBAE. Understanding the realm of disabilities was important in strengthening the overall findings. Both learning and physical disabilities were considered in this study. Hammill, Leigh, McNutt, and Larsen (1981) defined learning disabilities as a group of disorders in relation to listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning, or mathematical capabilities. The U.S. Department of Education defines individuals with handicaps as anyone with a physical or mental disability, which substantially affects major life activities. A physical or mental disability is further defined as a condition affecting one or more of the body systems.
Individual needs were the focus of each student personally. Education is individualized. Therefore, this study took the experiences of an array of SBAE educators to gain an insight into the needs of each student. Questions focused on the unique experiences of students in each aspect of SBAE. Reflective practice was implemented as teachers thought back on their teaching career and the work they personally were involved in. Teachers self-reflected throughout the interviews. Lastly, collaboration is supported by the idea of mainstreaming. In addition, administration support and communication with special education departments was questioned. Successfully incorporating students with disabilities into courses with general education students is a strong area of importance for SBAE educators.

Bloom et. al (1999) suggested that students with disabilities may have experienced failure, therefore having an attitude of “I cannot”. The teacher is responsible for helping the student feel comfortable, but also understand that mistakes are needed as part of the learning process. This message is important to portray to all students, especially students with disabilities to encourage students to take risk. In addition, Bloom et al. tell us it is vital for the design of a classroom, to be interactive and provide real world examples, especially to aid in the success of students with disabilities. Educators who create a climate that is nurturing, communicate effectively, and create an appropriate relationship with students, will see that the inclusion of students with disabilities is an asset in the classroom (Bloom, et al., 1999).

According to Rozlski et al. (2010), LRE is the idea that students with disabilities will spend as much time possible in general education environments. Students with disabilities have rights to be educated with mainstream students, therefore schools should provide appropriate education in the LRE. LRE affects students, parents, and staff. The demand
educate students with disabilities in the LRE is growing substantially (Buell, Hallam, Gamel–McCormick, Scheer, 1999).
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to determine the inclusiveness of students with disabilities in school-based agricultural education classrooms in the state of Iowa. Iowa communities with school enrollment less than 500 students were identified. The primary focus of the study was on the modifications and accommodations made to utilize the three-circle model. According to the National FFA Organization, the components of the three-circle model provide opportunities for students to have equal integration of classroom/laboratory instruction, supervised agricultural experience, and student leadership participation in FFA. Each component provides the opportunity for students to have leadership development, personal growth, and career success through agricultural education.

Three primary objectives guided the structure of this project:

1. Describe Iowa’s SBAE teacher’s experiences when teaching students with disabilities in the classroom/laboratory instruction.
2. Describe Iowa’s SBAE teacher’s experiences when assisting students with disabilities in FFA.
3. Describe Iowa’s SBAE teacher’s experiences when advising students with disabilities in SAE.

Upon approval of the Institutional Review Board (IRB), a purposive sample was attempted of Iowa SBAE teachers. Contact information (i.e., name, school, affiliation, and email addresses) of each teacher was derived from the publicly available teacher directory on iowaagteachers.org. Utilizing the research of Christensen (1983) teachers were placed into one of three groups:
• early year teachers were identified as having between one and four years of experience,

• middle year teachers were identified as having between four to 20 years of experience, and

• later year teachers were identified as having between 20 to 30 years of experience.

Teachers were then sent a recruitment email. The email included information about the study, instructions for participating in the study, and a sample interview assessment. A total of 10 teachers participated in the study. Data collection involved interviews with open-ended questions regarding students with disabilities, and the support provided for inclusion in a traditional agricultural education classroom. Five main questions were included to have a better insight into Iowa’s SBAE teacher’s experiences. The questions included: (1) Based on the three-circle model of agricultural education, determine the amount of time teachers allot to each aspect (Classroom instruction, FFA, and SAE); (2) Determine the ways in which SBAE teachers include students with disabilities into each component of the three-circle model; (3) Describe the types and amount of support SBAE teachers receive from school administration to provide a FAPE for students with disabilities; (4) Describe instances when SBAE teachers adjusted curriculum activities for students with disabilities; and (5) Explain situations when students with disabilities were not able to be accommodated in the SBAE setting. Responses and notes were evaluated using an open-coding technique. Participants received their transcribed interview from field notes to ensure the trustworthiness of the data. The researcher transcribed the data using the field notes immediately after the interview to ensure no information was excluded. This qualitative study focused on the individual experiences of teachers in the state of Iowa. Each teacher was asked the same guiding
questions, for the researcher to gain insight into the modifications/accommodations needed for students with disabilities to be incorporated into SBAE. Researchers individually coded the results, then met together to evaluate notes. These notes were then used to create common themes and identify noteworthy accounts.

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) reliability and validity are established through the methods ensuring credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Through triangulation efforts, credibility can be correlated to the level of confidence in the researcher. In addition, analyst triangulation was utilized to ensure findings were comprehensive and robust through field notes, assuring accuracy of notes from teachers and interview notes were cross referenced by major professors. To ascertain transferability, research participants were purposively selected to be sure diversity in the population was added. Wheeler (2015) stated diversity is needed to be able to make inferences about the group. Procedures and benchmarks were established and kept in place to assure researchers achieved a high level of dependability that included: using credible, peer reviewed resources; transcribing interviews word for word; and participants checking transcripts for accuracy. The researcher used the method of bracketing to establish confirmability. In qualitative research, bracketing requires researchers to put aside their beliefs of the research topic to remove biases (Creswell, 2013). The researcher is a master’s student with a teacher educator focus. The researcher has completed student teaching.
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

This study focused on the modifications and accommodations needed for the inclusion of students with disabilities in all facets of agricultural education. SBAE teachers were interviewed to gain an insight into their individual experiences working with students with disabilities. All names were changed for the protection of identity of each participant. Additionally, teachers used accommodation and modification interchangeably. The population included six females and four male SBAE teachers in Iowa. Each teacher varied in number of students with disabilities they had taught throughout their teaching career, but overall, the findings can be summarized by three main themes: (1) need for communication (2) inclusiveness for a complete program, and (3) transfer of responsibility for provided services.

Communication:

Each teacher identified communication as a main priority for success of students with disabilities. “A high school is like an airport, but without the planes. Everyone is going a million ways, and if we do not communicate, no one would ever reach the main goal,” stated Mr. Williams. In addition, Mr. Williams emphasized the importance of communication with parents and guardians. In fact, he said “communication is key, get the family involved.” Mr. Thomas agreed and reiterated the need of actively engaging parents. He stated, “we have dialogue in regard to the success of the students, being sure to set attainable goals together.” Mr. Miller shared,

“parent involvement is a yes or no answer. Some students participate with brothers, cousins, or parent support. I have taught many other students with lesser levels of needed accommodations and they are similar to a traditional student, participating
frequently, occasionally, or rarely. In the end, when parents are involved the participation level seems to increase.”

In addition to the need of communication with parents, teachers identified the need of communication with students. Ms. Harris referred to them as “Modified expectations”. Ms. Johnson said, “how are you a good teacher if you do not make modifications for the success of your students?” As a veteran teacher, Mr. Miller holds one-on-one conversations at the beginning of the semester to map out the course goals of each students based on their ability level. As another means of communication for students, Mr. Hamilton created a class page utilizing Canvas. He stated, “this webpage serves as an additional resource and form of communication for students. Using this interactive page, students are actively engaged not only with me as the instructor, but their classmates as well.”

The final subtheme of communication is the importance of a supportive administration and special education department. “Communication with my special education department is a two-way street. The special education teacher is phenomenal at my school,” said Mr. Thomas. Ms. Harris supported this statement through the example of working closing with administration to create assessments that take into consideration the limitations of students. Mr. Hamilton mentioned, “my special education department is actively engaged in the materials I provide in my class through Canvas.”

**Inclusiveness of complete program:**

To achieve a complete program, one that incorporates all aspects of the three-circle model, specific inclusion strategies must be used to ensure the success of each student. Each teacher provided examples of specific modifications for each component of the three-circle model: classroom/laboratory, FFA, and SAE. Results indicated classroom instruction is the
area teachers focus on the most. Mr. Williams provided the example of a student with a vision disability in his horticulture class. Mr. Williams said,

“when in the greenhouse, I provide Kate with her own plant. I tell her, do not be afraid to break this plant apart. Do whatever you need to do to be able to visualize the components I am talking about.”

In Mr. Miller’s class, the accommodations were not always needed, but were provided. He said

“I had one student who they believed had a "spatial orientation" disability. He exhibited autistic-like behaviors, but never spoke unless asked to answer questions. Accommodations included the following, which were easy to provide: typed copy of notes, extra time to complete if graphics were drawn on the board, complete exams/quizzes in the resource room, and extra time to complete homework assignments. Ironically, he always gave his homework to me when he came into the room, and he never needed extra time.”

Ms. Johnson never wants a student to feel singled out, so should the need for a shorter exam be required, she creates a shorter exam for the entire class, being sure to provide equal opportunities for all. Mr. Thomas echoed this idea with the following example. “I have one student who needs oral exams. Therefore, all students are given an oral exam.”

As previously mentioned, schools are to provide a FAPE to all students and participation in the National FFA Organization is no exception. Mr. Thomas believes that any student who wants to be involved, should be. Therefore, he worked with a student to develop a prepared public speech. The student wanted to work on developing his speaking
skills but did not feel comfortable competing in the Career Development Event contest, so Mr. Thomas organized a group to listen to the student’s speech. In doing so, Mr. Thomas said, “Tyler stepped out of his comfort zone. He still improved his speaking skills, wore his FFA jacket, and demonstrated his ability to speak in front of a group of people. I call that a success.” Another specific example of modifications is the example Mr. Miller shared. A student of his had cerebral palsy and was a member of the parliamentary procedure team. Instead of standing to address the chairperson, the student remains seated. A simple accommodation that allows for the participation of this student. In addition, Mr. Miller provide another example of the student with a spatial orientation disability.

“The student described previously had the most severe limitations of any student I have taught. We (myself, parents, and special education instructor.) agreed to encourage him to do anything he wanted to pursue. He never competed, but he attended every (I mean every) FFA meeting.”

The final component of the three-circle model is the modifications and accommodations needed for the inclusion of SAE projects. Supervised agricultural experiences are the opportunity to provide hands-on learning, in addition to gaining record keeping and financial skills. Mr. Thomas requires each student to have an SAE project in his classroom, and he helps find projects that are related to the student’s interests. One example is of a student named Josh. Josh is severely autistic. He participates in the school’s coffee program in the mornings. He found this to be a fun time, so with the help of Mr. Thomas and his parents, they began an SAE project. Josh now runs a coffee shop in town, where he imports the coffee beans from Columbia. In fact, the plan is for this coffee shop to be Josh’s career path after high school. Mr. Williams provided on campus opportunities for SAE
involvement. He assigns each student a task in the greenhouse and it is the responsibility of the student to see the task is met. Using the greenhouse as a learning tool, students improve their time management, budget management, and overall responsibility. In Mr. Miller’s classroom, all students are required to have an SAE project as well. He said,

“all students can and must have an SAE – no problem at all. In fact, the student I have talked so much about, farmed 40 acres of corn/soybeans. Though he was not capable of manually doing anything himself, because of balance and depth perception deficits, he drove the equipment with a family member sitting beside him in the cab. He never said anything, but his brother and parents told me how much he loved driving tractors in the field. They loved that he received class credit for working (or simulating working) in the real world.”

Transferring of Responsibility for Provided Services:

Due to the uniqueness of SBAE classrooms, and the considerable number of subject areas and additional responsibilities that are expected of SBAE educators, an overachieving theme of who is responsible for incorporating students with disabilities in the classroom presented itself in interviews with SBAE educators. Of the 10 teachers interviewed, six teachers indicated they did not make modifications or accommodations for students with disabilities unless the student personally asked.

Mr. Cohen stated, “I do not make adjustments for my students because in the workforce, adjustments will not be made for them. If students feel they are unable to complete the assigned task they must ask the paraprofessionals for support.” Ms. Tucker supported this statement, “It is the responsibility of the special education support team to
assist students with disabilities in her classroom.” In addition, Mr. Williams believes it is the school’s responsibility to provide a paraprofessional or support person for each student with a disability in his classroom, both learning and physical.

Ms. Adams explained her position on responsibility and who is held liable for providing an interpreter for a student she has involved in her FFA chapter with a hearing impairment. “According to my administration, if Sarah wants to participate in FFA events, the FFA chapter is responsible for paying for an interpreter; however, I believe that falls on the shoulders of the administration as FFA is co-curricular, not extra-curricular.”

Ms. Johnson does not have an active special education department; therefore, she relies on parents and guardians to work with her. She stated, “without a supportive and active special education department, the parent responsibility increases.” However, just as Mr. Miller suggested parents often claim, “that is the school’s job.”

When asked whose responsibility it is to provide a FAPE, all 10 SBAE educators differed in answers ranging from administration to parent to student. In fact, limited understanding of FAPE was prevalent. If we do not understand who is properly responsible, history is bound to repeat itself. Unfortunately, “lack of understanding” is not a sufficient answer for the court system. In order for educators to have professional security, it is crucial teachers have a sufficient understanding of federal education laws, especially in relation to special education.
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

Utilizing the experiences of 10 agricultural education teachers in the state of Iowa, three themes were identified for the need of the inclusions of students with disabilities: (1) importance of communication (2) inclusiveness for a complete program, and (3) transfer of responsibility for providing service. The study presented the uniqueness of working with special education students. The intent was not to generalize the results to all special education students, but rather to the perceptions of the participants. It is important to note caution should be taken if generalizing the results to all students with disabilities participating in SBAE. The results this study presented can support the notion that education is individualized. Specific modifications and accommodations needed is dependent upon the student’s situation. Just as Bloom et al. (1999) suggested inclusion brings all people together: students, families, and educators, to create a sense of belonging. Effective communication among the parents, students, and administration aid in the success of students with disabilities.

In addition, federal regulations mandate the requirement of a free and appropriate education to all in the least restricted environment. As Rozakski et al (2009) summarized, LRE is the impression that students with disabilities spend as much time as possible with mainstreamed students. LRE is not only applicable to general education classrooms, but secondary education classrooms as well. SBAE educators must understand that the inclusiveness of a complete program is expected for all students. Therefore to provide FAPE, modifications and accommodations are not only made within classroom instruction, but in SAEs and FFA.
As defined by Ferris State University (nd.) inclusion is defined as having a sense of belonging regardless of differences, which supports Bloom et al. (1999) theory of inclusion. This study sought to determine the inclusiveness of students with disabilities in each aspect of the three-circle model: (1) classroom/laboratory instruction, (2) FFA, and (3) SAE utilizing the personal experiences of SBAE educators.

**Describe Iowa’s SBAE teacher’s experiences when teaching students with disabilities in the classroom/laboratory instruction.**

When asked about the time spent planning classroom/laboratory instruction, SBAE educators in the state of Iowa suggested this is one of the largest areas of time emphasis. To provide a FAPE to students with disabilities, communication with administration and the special education department, is vital to the success of a student. SBAE teachers spoke of the team effort it takes from all facets. Wonacott (2001) supported this feeling and believes CTE teachers are to provide support to others who lead the process of identifying needs of students. Adjustments and modifications are varied among situations, but SBAE teachers provided real world experiences from their teaching careers.

Beginning career SBAE educators in Iowa believe their knowledge of working with students with disabilities is limited, just as Aschenbrener et al. (2010) found. Future research recommendations include professional development experiences for CTE teachers. In addition, SBAE teachers in Iowa provided unusual cases where students with disabilities had to be turned down from CTE classrooms due to the safety of all students. Understanding the makeup of SBAE settings are far different than general education courses, recommendations into what conversations CTE teachers should have with the special education department, students, and parents, to be mindful of the safety for all. In addition, addressing
responsibilities of each party is key in successful inclusion of students with disabilities. As per the Iowa Department of Education (2018), an IEP team for a student with a disability must include a regular education teacher of the student, who is responsible for being actively engaged in the development and review of the student’s IEP.

Future practice recommendations include conversations with the student to set individual goals. Additionally, conversations with parents and administration is recommended to take place at the beginning of the semester. SBAE educators should evaluate the needs of each student and adjust as needed. Total support of students is the legal obligation of school systems. As SBAE changes with content and up-to-date technology, SBAE educators must be considerate of the ever-changing modifications that must happen to incorporate students in an LRE.

Describe Iowa’s SBAE teacher’s experience when assisting students with disabilities in FFA.

The National FFA Organizations suggests that FFA is the opportunity for students to grow personally. In this organization students are challenged and pushed to step outside their comfort zones. From the experiences of SBAE educators in Iowa, students with disabilities are not typically involved in FFA. However, findings from LaVerge, Larke, Elbert, and Jones (2011) indicated there are multiple benefits available to students with disabilities actively engaged in FFA. Although, the model suggested equal integration of each circle, in the experiences of the six teachers interviewed, FFA is extra-curricular verses co-curricular. Iowa’s SBAE educators described the significant impact parental support has on students with disabilities involvement in FFA. Each SBAE teacher interviewed provided examples of
parents attending field trips and FFA meetings, as well as providing the modifications needed for the student with disabilities.

Future research studies should include conversations with special education departments to understand their role, and how they can be an active member of FFA integration. In addition, the perceptions of parents and the support offered to their student’s time in FFA will aid in the improvement of students with disabilities in participation and involvement levels.

In practice, SBAE teachers should be recruiting and promoting the inclusion of students with disabilities in FFA. SBAE teachers should be having active conversations with special education departments to make them aware of FFA and the areas special education departments can assist with modifications.

Describe Iowa’s SBAE teacher’s experience when working with students with disabilities in SAE.

Results indicated SAE was the area of least focus for SBAE teachers. However, teachers believe considerable benefit comes from active involvement with SAE. According to Wonacott (2001) students with disabilities who had unpaid or paid jobs in high school had higher employment success after graduation. SAE creates opportunities for work-based experiences. In addition, Iowa SBAE teachers believe SAE teaches record keeping skills. SBAE educators are working to find SAE opportunities that are unique to the interests of the student. Through the support of parents especially, ideas and jobs are being created for students with disabilities in high school.

Future research should involve the National FFA Organizations’s work with including students with disabilities in SAE programs to ensure that students with disability
have equal opportunities to participate in SAE projects. Additionally, research should include local opportunities in the state of Iowa for students with disabilities to become involved with.

SBAE educators should continue to find opportunities for SAE specific to the student. Examples of the coffee shop, that Mr. Thomas shared, found the unique interests of his student Josh, and created the opportunity for Josh to have a lifelong career.

In closing, the inclusion of students with disabilities is not a new subject. Although research is limited, results do find the benefits students with disabilities receive from being actively involved in SBAE. Determining the appropriate modifications and accommodations needed can be a challenge. Therefore, a team effort is required from all aspects: parents, teachers, administration, and students. It is crucial that administration, special education departments, SBAE teachers, parents, and students understand that federal laws mandate students with disabilities are provided a FAPE. Appropriate professional development should be sure students with disabilities are included fully in SBAE classrooms. As indicated by this study: (1) communication, (2) inclusiveness for a complete program, and (3) transfer of responsibility for provided services are key elements in properly providing a FAPE to all students.
REFERENCES


Doe vs. Withers, 20 IDELR 422 (West Virginia Circuit Court, Taylor County, 1993).


Education for All Handicapped Children Act, 1975, P.L. 94-142.


APPENDIX A: INFORMED CONSENT/IRB APPROVAL

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Institutional Review Board
Office for Responsible Research
Vice President for Research
2120 Lincoln Way, Suite 202
Ames, Iowa 50014
515-294-4566

Date: 2/8/2018

To: Taylor Wilkins
220 Curris

CC: Dr. Scott Smalley
217C Curlls Hall
Dr. Mark Hainline
206 Curlls

From: Office for Responsible Research

Title: Determining the inclusiveness of students with disabilities in Iowa agricultural classrooms

IRB ID: 18-036

Study Review Date: 2/8/2018

The project referenced above has been declared exempt from the requirements of the human subject protections regulations as described in 45 CFR 46.101(b) because it meets the following federal requirements for exemption:

- (2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey or interview procedures with adults or observation of public behavior where
  - Information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects cannot be identified directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; or
  - Any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could not reasonably place the subject at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to their financial standing, employability, or reputation.

The determination of exemption means that:

- You do not need to submit an application for annual continuing review.

- You must carry out the research as described in the IRB application. Review by IRB staff is required prior to implementing modifications that may change the exempt status of the research. In general, review is required for any modifications to the research procedures (e.g., method of data collection, nature or scope of information to be collected, changes in confidentiality measures, etc.), modifications that result in the inclusion of participants from vulnerable populations, and/or any change that may increase the risk or discomfort to the participants. Changes to key personnel must also be approved. The purpose of review is to determine if the project still meets the federal criteria for exemption.

Non-exempt research is subject to many regulatory requirements that must be addressed prior to implementation of the study. Conducting non-exempt research without IRB review and approval may constitute non-compliance with federal regulations and/or academic misconduct according to ISU policy.

Detailed information about requirements for submission of modifications can be found on the Exempt Study Modification Form. A Personnel Change Form may be submitted when the only modification involves changes in study staff. If it is determined that exemption is no longer warranted, then an Application for Approval of Research Involving Humans Form will need to be submitted and approved before proceeding with data collection.

Please note that you must submit all research involving human participants for review. Only the IRB or designees may make the determination of exemption, even if you conduct a study in the future that is exactly like this study.

Please be aware that approval from other entities may also be needed. For example, access to data from private records (e.g., student, medical, or employment records, etc.) that are protected by FERPA, HIPAA, or other confidentiality policies requires permission from the holders of those records. Similarly, for research conducted in institutions other than ISU (e.g., schools, other colleges or universities, medical facilities, companies, etc.), investigators must obtain permission from the institution(s) as required by their policies. An IRB determination of exemption in no way implies or guarantees that permission from these other entities will be granted.
APPENDIX B: SURVEY

Students with Disabilities in Agricultural Education Classrooms
Interview Protocol

Introduction:
1. Tell me about your background.
   a. How many years of teaching experience do you have?
   b. How many students with disabilities have you taught?

Classroom Structure:
2. Using the three-circle model as our design, how much time do you spend planning classroom instruction?
   a. FFA?
   b. SAE?
3. How do you incorporate students with disabilities into each component of the model?
4. How much support do you have from the school administration for students with disabilities?
5. Can you describe a time where you adjusted for a student with a disability?
6. Has there ever been a time where you had to turn down a student with a disability due to the safety of other students in class?

Closing:
7. Do you have any questions for me?
   a. Is there something I did not ask which might be interesting?
8. Would you have time to review any transcripts, which gives you the opportunity to review your words stated in this interview?
   a. Can we contact you again with future questions regarding this study?
   b. How would you like to be contacted if we need to get in contact with you?
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I would like to begin by thanking my family. Mom and dad, thank you for allowing me to spread my wings and move halfway across the country. Thank you for teaching me that when you follow your dreams and work hard, good things happen. Throughout my three years in Iowa, you have never failed to support me. I cannot thank you enough for the many miles you have driven or the many dollars you have spent on plane tickets just for a couple days together. Tori and Terryn, thank you both for being some of the best little sisters anyone can ask for. I know I have missed out on a lot of your moments, but I want you to know I am so incredibly proud of you both!

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Lastly, Skylar thank you for all that you do. Thank you for your motivation during the late nights spent at the kitchen table writing. Thank you for pushing me, when I wanted to throw in the towel. Thank you for not letting giving up be an option. Let’s be honest, you are a rockstar for dealing with me!