

# **Teacher Needs for Educating Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders in the General Education Classroom**

**Kim Finch, Robert Watson, and Cynthia MacGregor**

Missouri State University

**Natalie Precise, Drury University**

The purpose of this study was to gather information on experiences of general education teachers concerning inclusion practices for children with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD). In this case study third, fourth, and fifth grade general education teachers in a rural Southwest Missouri school district provided the data source to keep a narrowed focus on the needs of education teachers for inclusion. The sample accounted for 16 elementary education teachers. Surveys were sent to all third, fourth, and fifth grade general education teachers in the district. Perceptions of general education teachers on proper inclusion training were identified as necessary for the study; comprehensive sampling was utilized as all third, fourth, and fifth grade general education teachers had the opportunity to participate. The surveyed group of teachers had the opportunity to participate in focus groups with their same grade level peers to further elaborate on their experiences. The focus group questions were open-ended and conducted by the researcher. The study found the participants had minimal experience in preservice preparation with minor background knowledge on ASD. Limited knowledge of teaching strategies and experiences in collaboration were also noted. Finally, teacher efficacy was measured through the perceptions of preparedness, confidence, and effectiveness in educating children with ASD. Participants felt low efficacy levels in these areas. An eagerness to increase training for educating children with ASD was widespread.

*Keywords:* autism spectrum disorder, ASD, inclusion, teacher efficacy, professional development