

Washington State University

College of Education

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Will defend the dissertation on

Date: May 1, 2024

Time: 12:30 P.M.

Pullman Campus – Cleveland Hall 160A

Zoom available upon request to gradstudies@wsu.edu

Faculty, students and the general public are encouraged to attend

TEACHER ATTITUDES AND PERCEPTIONS OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Chair: Marcus Poppen

Students with mild disabilities are spending the majority of their school day in general education classrooms. However, their academic engagement and outcomes are not always favorable and teachers are often unprepared to present curricula in a way that is engaging and accessible for students at every skill level. A Theory of Academic Engagement was developed that addressed a process for increasing engagement and outcomes for students with mild disabilities. A survey was developed and distributed to practicing elementary level teachers in five western states to investigate teachers' knowledge of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) as well as their attitudes and perceptions toward students with mild disabilities in their classrooms. Both the UDL survey items and the Attitudes and Perceptions items were divided into subfactors and each subfactor was used to address the research questions. In addition to a rating scale, the survey included 4 open-ended written response questions. The findings revealed that while most teachers had some understanding of UDL, they did not have the depth of knowledge or training to implement it effectively. Further, while teachers' attitudes and perceptions of students with mild disabilities were positive, they expressed frustration with a lack of support and proper training. In addition, a discussion of the results as well as implications and directions for future research are included.