

Special Education in Sri Lanka: A snapshot of three provinces



Candidacy Meeting
December 6th, 2012
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Background

- The UN reports that there are 200 million children with disabilities in the world. (Gronlund, Lim & Larsson, 2010)
- There has been an increased interest in improving special education services worldwide.
- Sri Lanka was a signatory on the Salamanca statement for inclusive education in 1994 (Mendis, 2004).

Disability in Sri Lanka

- 7% of the population in Sri Lanka present with disabilities, which amounts to about 1,407,000 people (UNESCAP, 2010).
- Many children with disabilities do not attend school (Ministry of Social Welfare, 2003).
- The stigma associated with disability and negative attitudes often make people unwilling to admit they have a family member with a disability (Kalyanpur, 2008).

Rationale for this study

- Developing nations need to prioritize identifying the numbers and needs of individuals with disabilities. (Kalyanpur, 2008)
- Involving parents of children with disabilities in their children's education is considered an imperative part of providing effective services. (Department of Education and Employment, 1997, 1998).

The Current Study

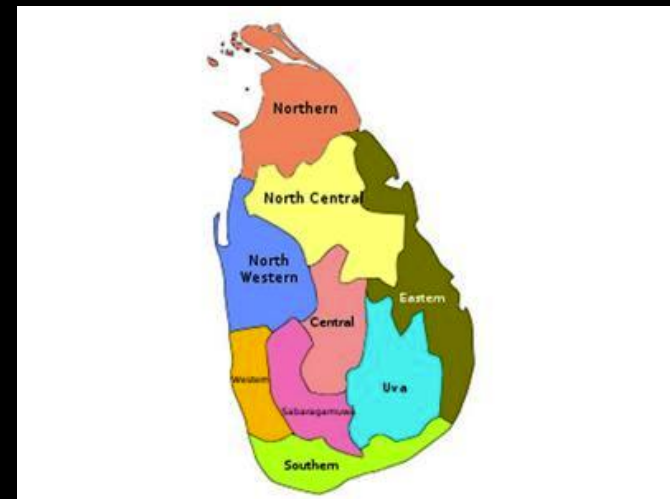
- This study sought to answer the following research questions,
 1. Who are the children receiving special education services? (Sampled across 3 provinces in Sri Lanka)
 2. Who are the parents of children receiving special education services? (Sampled across 3 provinces in SL)
 3. What are the current special educational practices in these provinces?
 4. Are there differences between the provinces with regard to educational supports, practices and parents' views?

Method

- Parents participated in a face-to-face survey interview.
- The survey was developed based on a review of the literature, input from a professor (an expert in the field) and input from the primary investigator who is from Sri Lanka.
- The survey consisted of six sections:
 - 1) Parents' demographics
 - 2) Child's demographics
 - 3) Physical skills
 - 4) Communication needs and interventions (questions were adapted from the Communication Matrix Profile)
 - 5) Questions related to inclusion
 - 6) Questions related to literacy

Participants

- Parent participants were recruited from three provinces in Sri Lanka: Western, Southern and Northern provinces.
- Total of 67 participants,
 - 25 from the Western Province
 - 23 from the Southern Province
 - 19 from the Northern Province



Procedures

- Interviews were conducted in three languages; Sinhala, Tamil and English.
- All interviews in Sinhala and English were conducted by the primary investigator. Translators were used for interviews in Tamil.
- Each survey-interview lasted between 30-60 minutes.
- The interviewer read each question to the participant and based on the participant's response checked off a corresponding answer on the survey.

Results

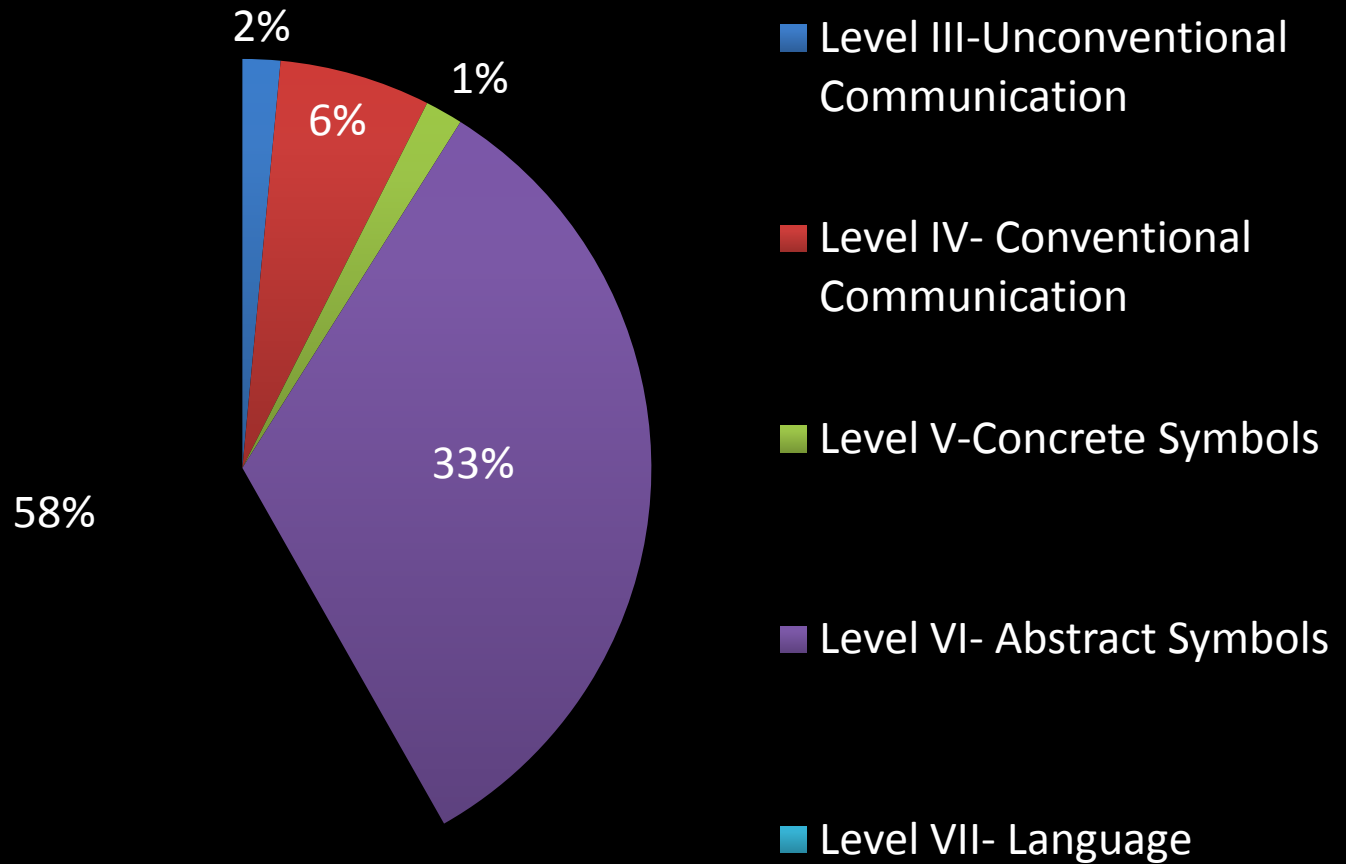
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Children's Demographics and Traits

- Ages of children in private special schools in the Western and Northern provinces ranged from 5 years to adults.
- None of the children who attended the special education units in government schools were older than 14 years.
- Only four children in the entire sample were reported to be severe in overall functioning.
- There were no children in the sample who were reported to be beginning communicators.

Children's Communication Levels



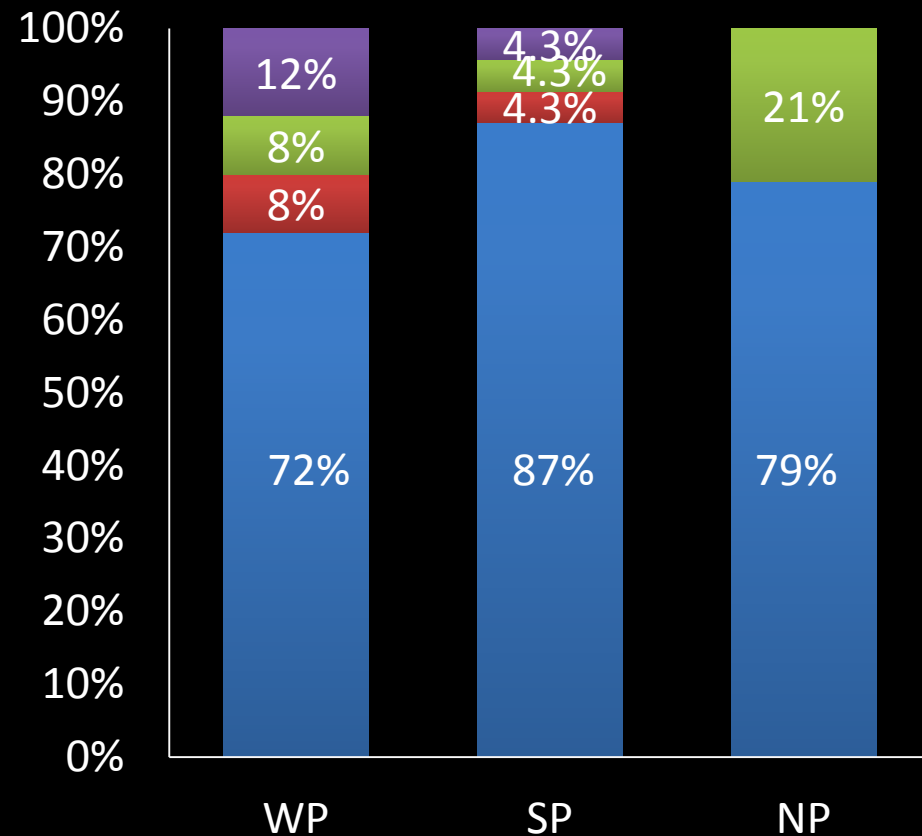
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Parents' Demographics

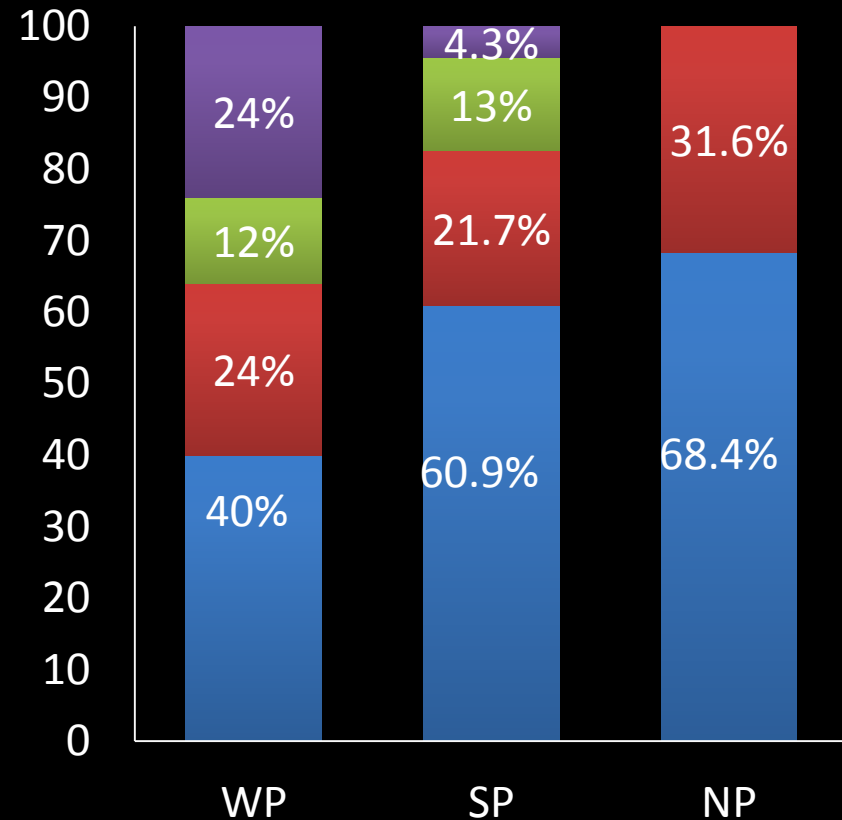
- Data were representative of both ethnic and religious representations in Sri Lanka.
- More parents from the Western Province had higher levels of education and income when compared to the other two provinces.

Parents' levels of Education



- 1st Grade-Advanced Level (A/L)
- Diploma
- Bachelor's Degree
- Master's Degree or higher

Parents' Income



- Under Rs. 15,000
- Between Rs. 16,000-30,000
- Between Rs. 31,000-50,000
- Above Rs. 50,000

Research Questions

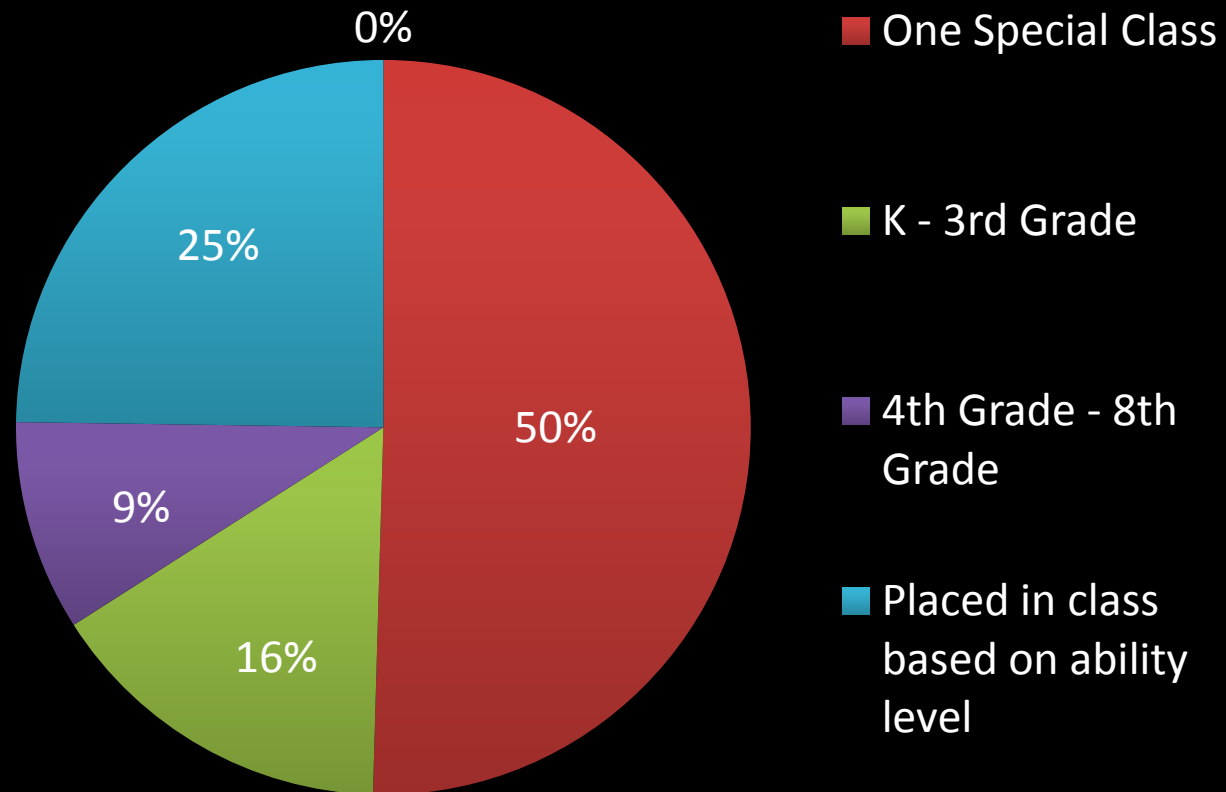
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Communication Supports & Parents' views on communication

- A majority of the time children received communication support at school by a special education teacher.
- All parents who were asked if they would like their children to receive communication support by a Speech and Language Therapist in school, responded “Yes”. (n=40)

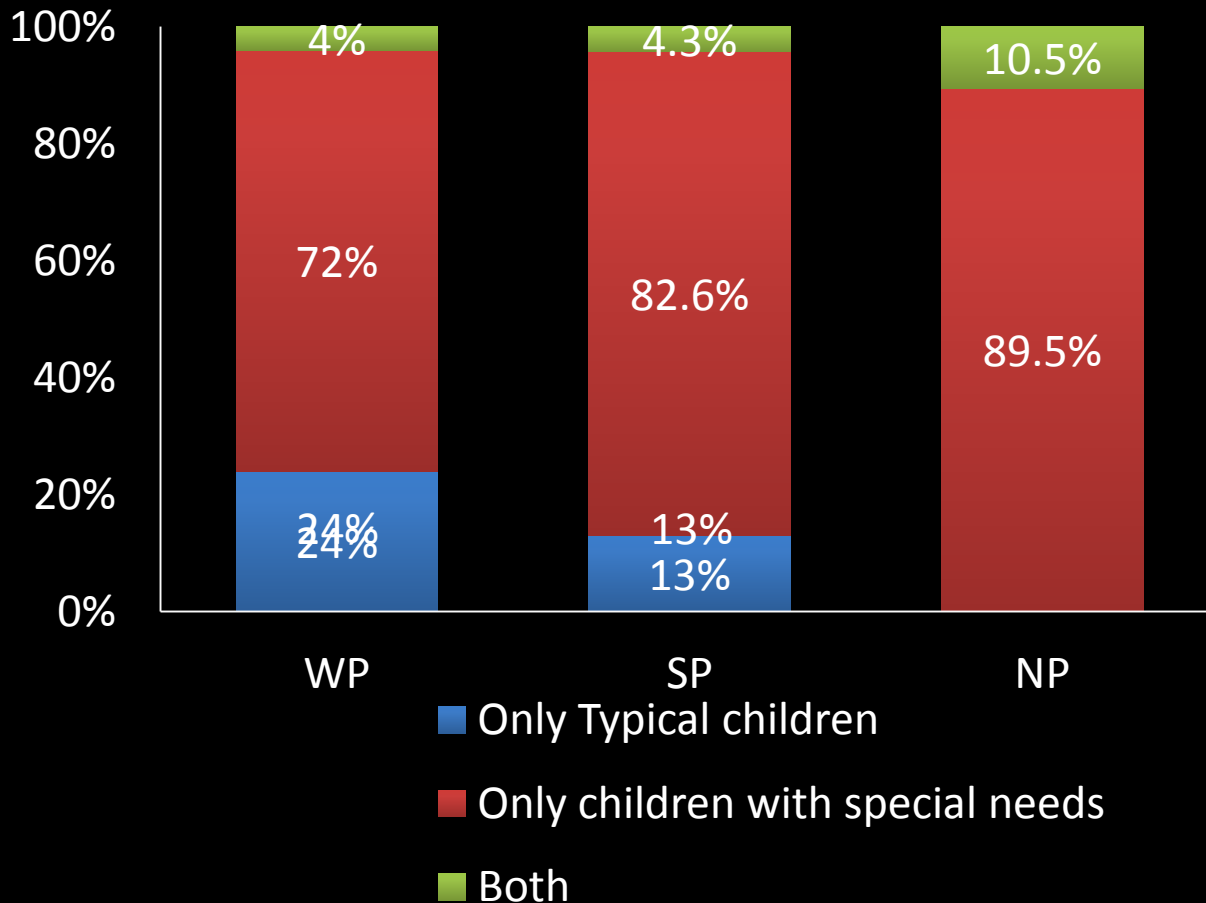
Classroom Practices

- 50% (n=33) of children were placed in one special class (self-contained) regardless of their age or abilities.



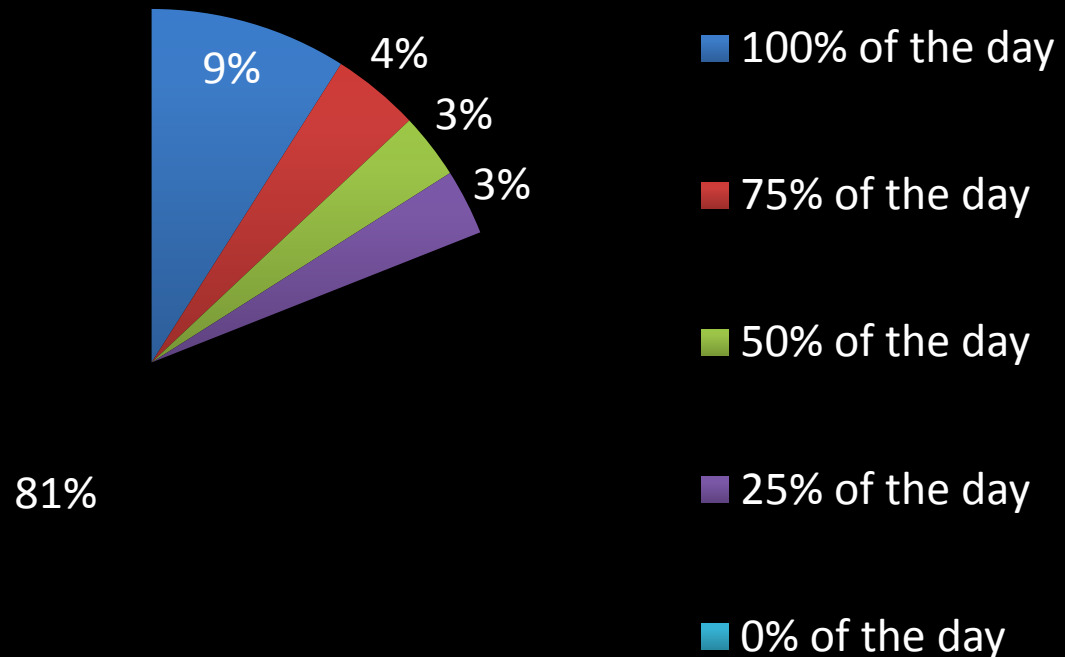
Inclusionary Practices

- A majority of the time children were in classrooms only with other children with special needs.



Time spent with peers

- Consistent with the make up of their classrooms a majority of children did not have the opportunity to interact with their typical peers during the school day.

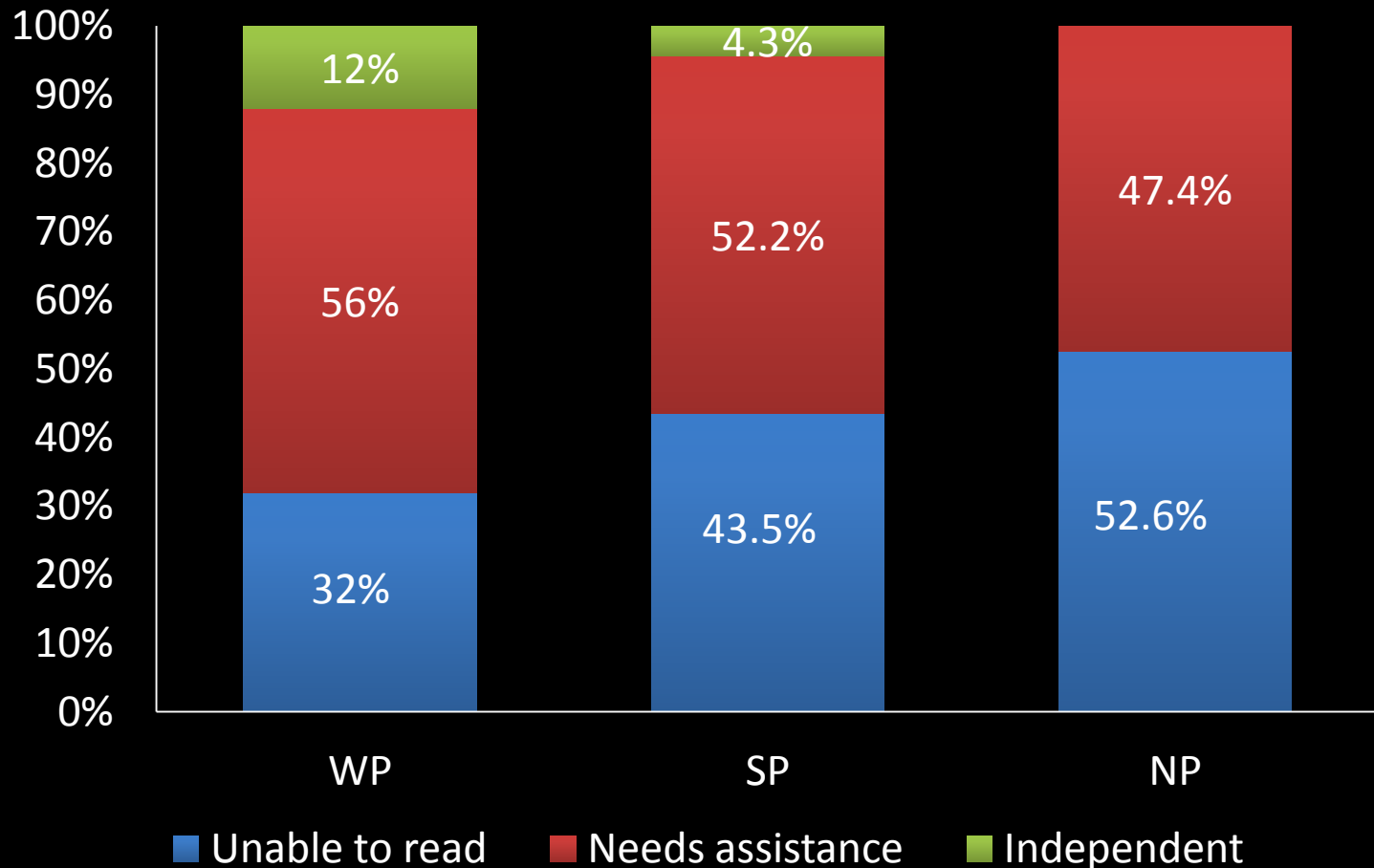


Parents views on Inclusion

- A majority of parents from the Western (92%, n=22) and (95.7%, n=22) Southern provinces and over half (63.2%, n=12) of parents from the Northern province expressed that inclusion with typically developing children would be beneficial for their children.

Literacy Practices

- A majority of the children from all three groups either needed assistance to read (52.2%, n=35) or were unable to read (41.8%, n=28).



Parents views on Literacy

- Almost all parents stated that they felt it was important for their children to have literacy skills (98.5%, n=66).

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Differences between provinces

- Significant differences were found on the variables: emphasis placed on teaching writing and parents' views regarding inclusion.
- The Northern Province did not have any parents reporting that a “major emphasis” was placed on teaching writing
- Parents in the North had less positive views regarding inclusion as compared to parents in the Southern and Western provinces.

Discussion

- Imposed age limit on education services for school-age children older than 14 years in government schools.
- No children in the sample who had severe communication and/or motor impairments.
- Currently no allocation for Speech and Language Therapists to be employed in government schools in Sri Lanka.
- Although children with disabilities were permitted access to regular schools, a majority of the time they were placed in a segregated classroom (unit) limiting their opportunities to interact with typical peers.

Future Research

- Services for older children and adults.
- Exploration into the lack of students with severe disabilities in schools.
- Teachers' perspectives on the special education system and effective training models.
- A qualitative study looking at parents' satisfaction with current special education services.
- Further research is also needed to examine the benefits and challenges of implementing inclusive education in developing countries.

Conclusions

- It is encouraging to see the growth that has taken place in the field of special education in Sri Lanka; however, it is critical to step back and evaluate current services in order to improve them further.
- Broadening worldwide knowledge on special education services and considering recommendations from parents will help to enhance services globally.



Discussion?

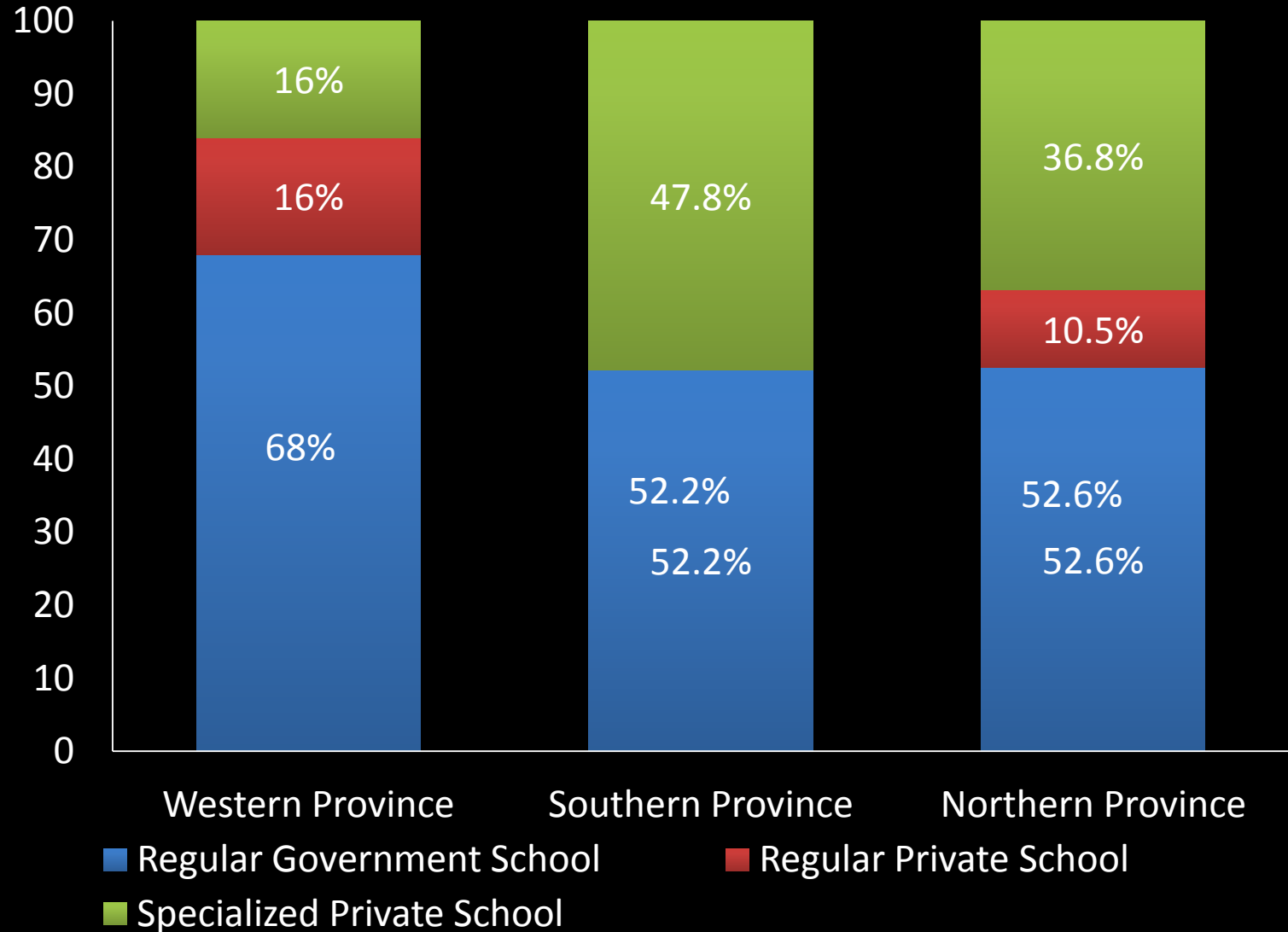


Additional fun graphs and things!

Table 2
 Children's Demographics

	Western		Southern		Northern		Overall	
	Province		Province		Province			
	mean	median	mean	median	mean	median	mean	median
Age	10.12	8	9.91	10	10.42	11		
	n	%	n	%	n	%	N	%
Gender								
Female	7	28%	8	34.8%	9	47.4%	24	36%
Male	18	72%	15	65.2%	10	52.6%	43	64%
Diagnosis								
Autism	6	24%	1	4.3%	0	0%	7	10%
Down Syndrome	9	36%	10	43.5%	7	36.8%	26	39%
Cerebral Palsy	2	8%	2	8.7%	4	21.1%	8	12%
Developmental Delay	1	4%	4	17.4%	3	15.8%	8	12%
ADHD	1	4%	2	8.7%	0	0%	3	5%
Other	1	4%	3	13%	2	10.5%	6	9%
Dual Diagnosis	5	20%	1	4.3%	3	15.8%	9	13%

Type of School



Children in specialized schools vs. regular schools

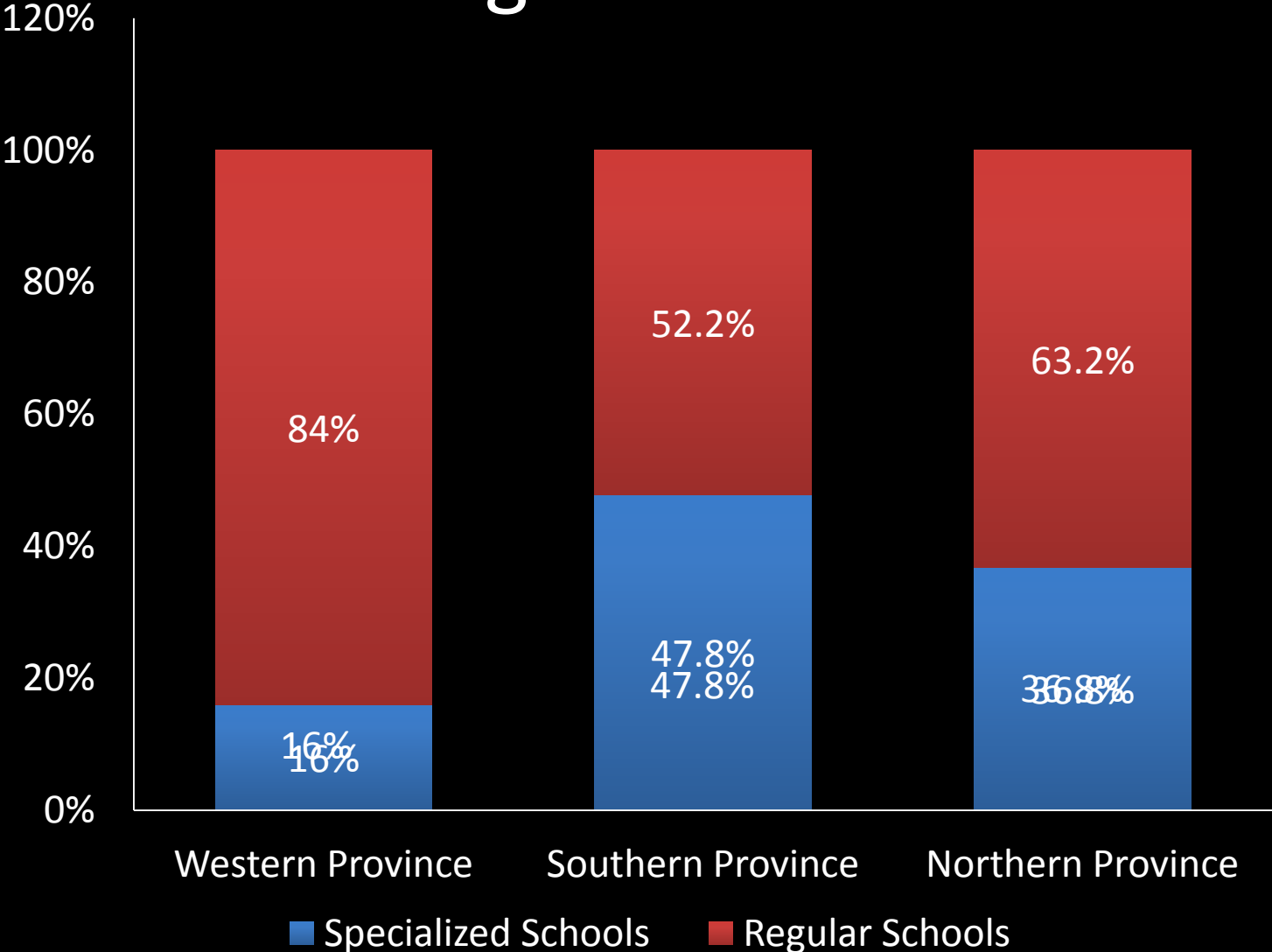
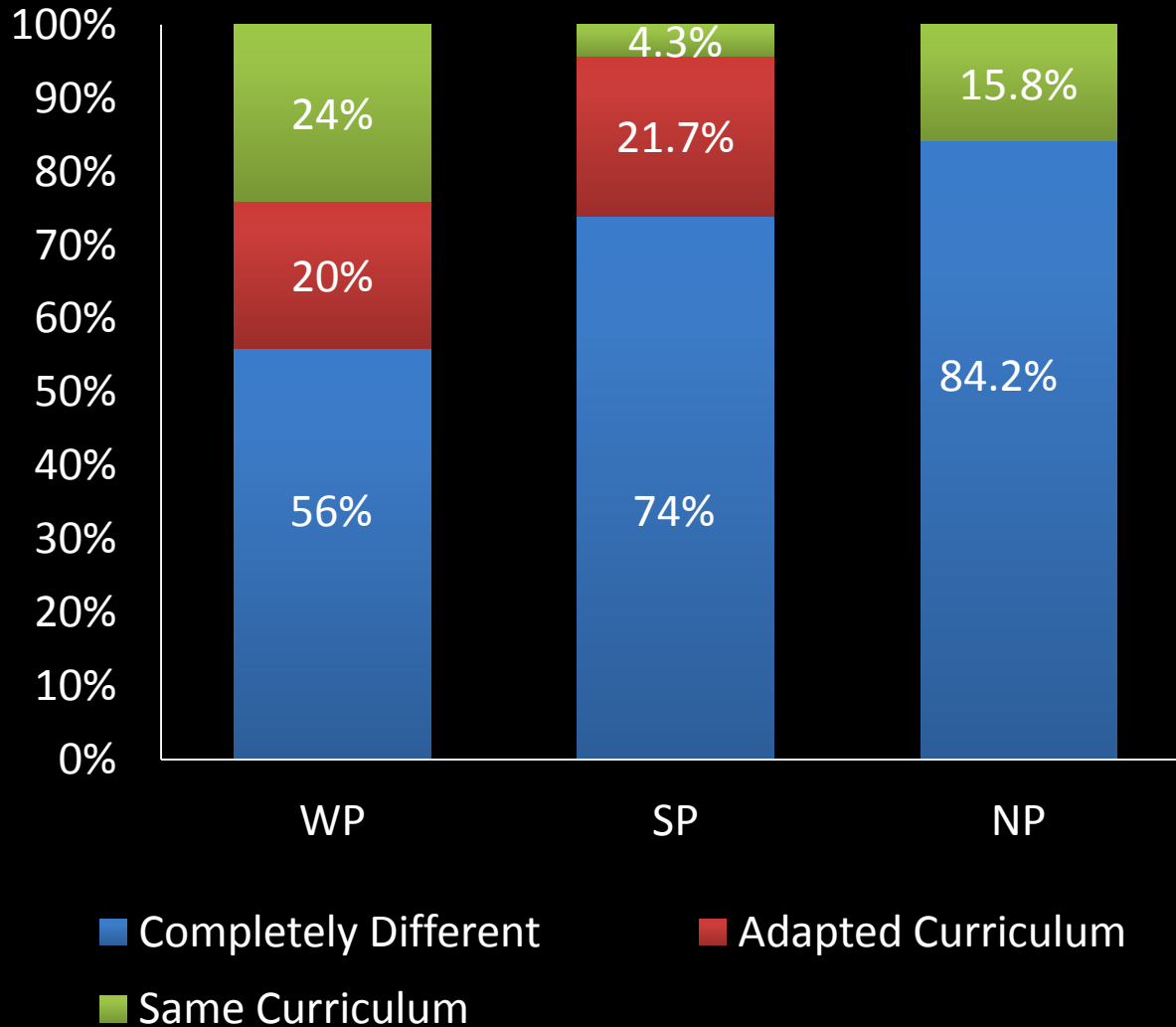


Table 5
Communication support at school

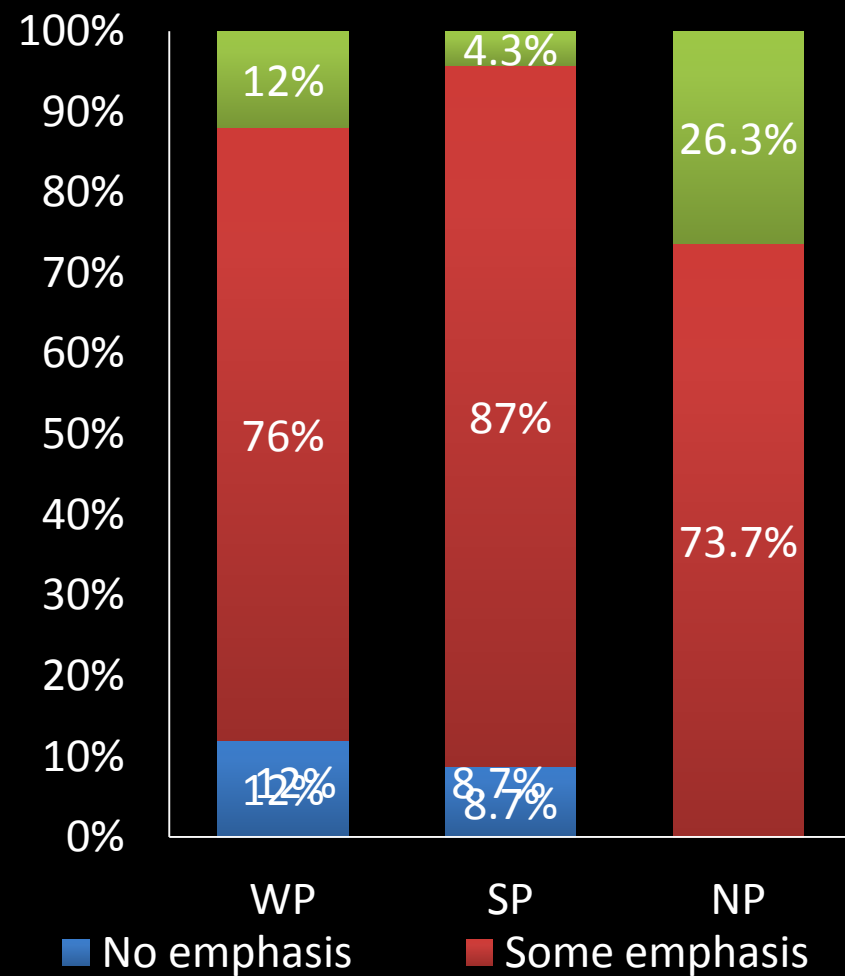
	WP		SP		NP		Overall	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	N	%
Does your child receive help with his/her communication at school?								
Yes	15	75%	14	70%	6	46.2%	35	66%
No	5	25%	6	30%	7	53.8%	18	34%
Who provides help to your child with his/her communication at school?								
Teacher	9	60%	14	100%	6	100%	29	82.8%
Speech Therapist	2	13.3%	0	0%	0	0%	2	5.7%
Teacher and Speech Therapist	2	13.3%	0	0%	0	0%	2	5.7%
Other	2	13.3%	0	0%	0	0%	2	5.7%

Curriculum

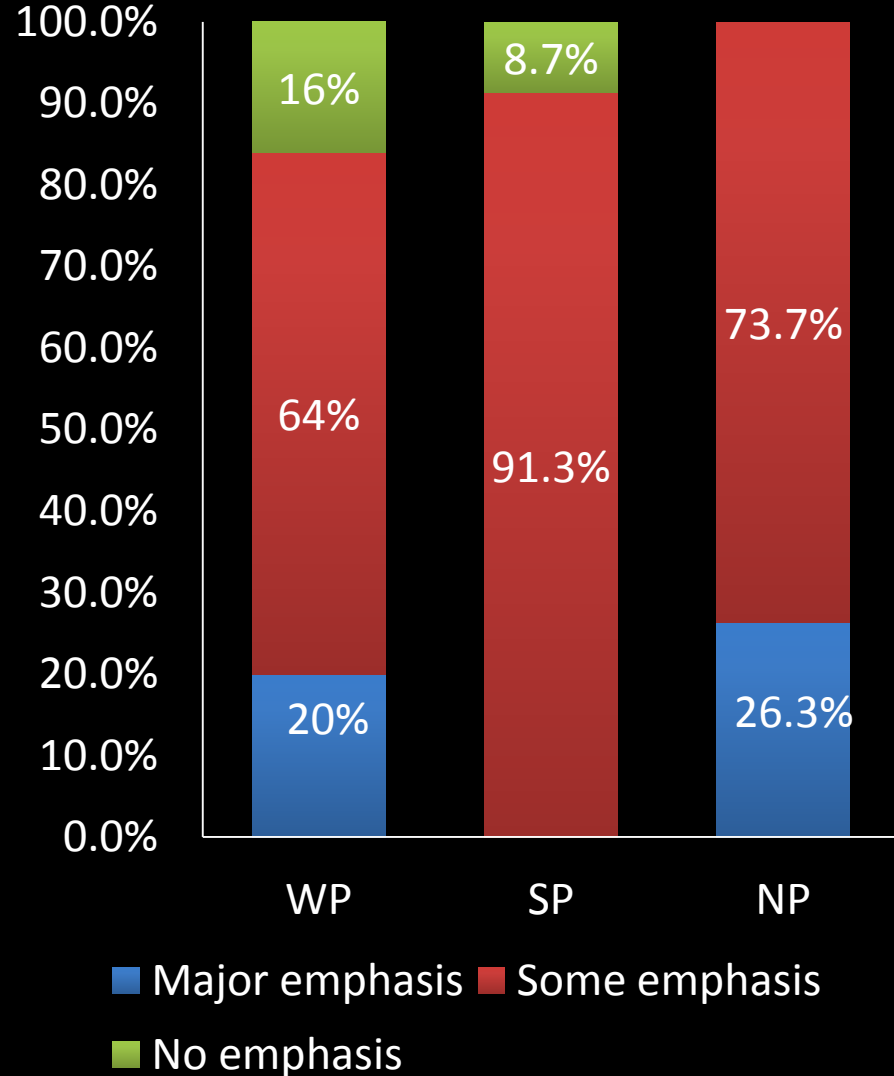


Emphasis on teaching Reading and Writing

Teaching Reading



Teaching Writing



Chi-square test for emphasis on writing

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	9.798 ^a	4	.044
Likelihood Ratio	14.303	4	.006
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.830	1	.176
N of Valid Cases	67		

a. 6 cells (66.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.70.

Fisher's test on inclusion

Exact Test on the variable Inclusion

	WP and NP	SP and NP	WP and SP
Exact Test	*0.027	*0.015	0.532

Significant at $\alpha=0.05$ level