

Improving the Education of Children Through Inclusion

Kathryn Dempsey

EN1300: Composition II

National American University

May 24, 2017

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### Abstract

Inclusion education programs improve the educational outcome for special needs students and their peers, teach tolerance in schools, model productive teaching methods for teachers when universally applied, and is an established right for all special needs students. Inclusion places children with special needs in the regular classroom environment to be educated alongside their peers. It has helped remove the stigma students with special needs have traditionally faced in their lives (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2010). Students can better develop the confidence needed to succeed and make more gains with their educational goals than when placed in a self-contained or resource class with a small group of other students with learning disabilities. Funding for special education programs is blended into providing better support for regular classrooms (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2010). This is an efficient way to support the education of all students including those without disabilities. Additionally, peers without disabilities are taught tolerance and learn to more easily accept and destigmatize individuals who are viewed as different from themselves (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2010).

### Improving the Education of Children Through Inclusion

Understanding inclusion is more than just placing students in a regular classroom. As McMillan (2008) so eloquently says, “Inclusion is a philosophy of acceptance and diversity” (p. 35). The successfulness of a program is dependent on the development of a culture that embraces diversity and tolerance. When discussing education, it is easy to overlook our most vulnerable and stigmatized people in society. Unlike most children, who grow up able to discern their own place in this world, children with special needs are unable to advocate for themselves into adulthood; that role is left solely to parents and educators who endeavor to make things better for future generations of children and their families. Through inclusion we begin changing the attitudes of others by providing children with a more egalitarian model of education which teaches tolerance and impacts self-esteem in a positive way. Inclusion is an established right, but its successful implementation relies on changing the foundational attitudes of those around us.

#### **History of Special Education**

The concept of inclusion began in the United States in 1968, when racial segregation was a highly-debated topic—especially in schools. Advocates for giving children access to the general education curriculum began promoting this concept intuitively knowing the social and educational impact equal education provides (Kavale, 2000). Since inclusion was first introduced in the 1960s, a large body of research has emerged supporting inclusion. Advocates have successfully lobbied congress to extend protections to special education students enabling

them to attend local schools with their peers (US Dept. of Education). Despite these protections, many schools fail to understand the importance and impact a more inclusive environment has on all students (Kavale, 2000).

Prior to modern protections children with disabilities were traditionally removed from the home and placed in institutions or sent to residential schools (Kavale, 2000). This usually meant the state would assume guardianship of the individual and place them in facilities that were severely understaffed and underfunded. The state would make all decisions unilaterally on behalf of the individual without input from parents or family. Children grew up and lived out their entire lives in these institutions. Families had limited access to view the conditions their loved ones were living in and various forms of abuse abounded unchecked. If the family became aware of the deplorable conditions these institutions housed they had little to no recourse to intervene and the state reserved the right to transfer individuals to a different institution where the family lost access. Individuals with disabilities, both adults and children, are considered some of the most vulnerable within the population. Within the walls of these institutions, they had no advocates to ensure their welfare amid an under-funded system of care. Exposure of the conditions within these facilities, through media efforts, stimulated the passage of laws and established practices designed to protect individuals with disabilities from historical discrimination and segregation while also providing them with opportunities for success.

After public outcry over the conditions discovered within various institutions, advocacy groups mobilized to lobby officials at both the local and national level to eliminate the need for state-run institutions and allow children with disabilities to attend public schools in their local communities. Over the years, advocacy groups have effectively changed our culture to accept

and accommodate children with disabilities in our public schools. The Individuals with Disabilities Educational Act (IDEA) was passed in 1975. It was originally called the Education for all Handicapped Children Act and extended access to an education for all children regardless of their specific learning disability (Kavale, 2000). IDEA is the foundation for our approach to special education in the United States. It lays out the educational efforts schools are required to make when working with children with disabilities rooted in research-based-protocols and sets aside federal funding to assist with mandatory supports.

### **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act**

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) grants children with disabilities the right to a free and appropriate education at their neighborhood schools in the least restrictive environment (LRE) (Dept. of Education). According to IDEA a child with a disability is a generalized term, which includes any disability that requires support, and ensures all children will receive a free and appropriate education. This broad definition can include English as a second language (ESL) students, as well as those with any physical impairment such as blindness or deafness. The least restrictive environment, or LRE, is commonly used in special education, and defined by IDEA as, “the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are not disabled” (Dept. of Education). IDEA is referred to when determining what level of support is appropriate for any student whom may fall under its umbrella.

### **History of IDEA**

IDEA has undergone several legislative updates as better educational practices have been developed. IDEA works in conjunction with other federal educational programs granting

additional funding for protecting the rights of children with disabilities. The original concept of the IDEA legislation was fueled by the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s (Kavale, 2000).

When first implemented, schools only applied it to children with mild learning disabilities who could adapt to the mainstream environment without needing extensive support or changes to the general curriculum (Kavale, 2000). Since 1968, IDEA has been extended to offer more protections and has forged a path for accommodating all children in the public education system regardless of their disability.

### **Impact of IDEA on Education**

The special education services framework provided by IDEA benefits not just children with cognitive disorders, but also those with physical impairments as well as their teachers and their families. The foundational concept of IDEA recognizes that “inclusive education offers substantial benefits to all students and communities” (Katsiyannis, 1995). The inclusion educational structure helps drive student and teacher success by promoting teacher training, endorsing school diversity, and teaching tolerance. Inclusion provides all children with social, community, and educational opportunities they would not otherwise have. The IDEA stance on inclusion provides families with indirect support by recognizing the importance of social development in conjunction with academics.

### **Legal Precedents**

Since the passage of IDEA by Congress, multiple court proceedings have consistently supported a more inclusive environment cementing inclusion as a civil right (Katsiyannis, 1995). Court edicts consistently agree that inclusion serves all children and communities; courts have historically serve to protect this right. Court precedents also finds that successful programs in a

more restrictive setting—which includes any setting where the child does not have access to the general education curriculum and their neurotypical peers—does not preclude the ability to implement inclusion (Katsiyannis, 1995). Cases, such as *Mavis ex rel. Maris v. Sobol*, 1994, and *Statum v. Birmingham Public Schools Board of Education*, 1993, state that districts must establish over time why a student should not be educated in an inclusion setting (Katsiyannis, 1995). Possible reasons for placing a student in a more restrictive environment include the severity of the disability, the student's behavior, and lack of district resources to provide accommodations (Katsiyannis, 1995; IDEA). However, it is the district's responsibility to demonstrate first that the student cannot be successful in the general education setting with adaptations.

### **Context**

The United States is unique among countries in the developed world in that we give every child a right to an education until the age of twenty-one (IDEA). The US consistently ranks very low (OECD, 2014) in reading, math, and science for national test score averages when compared to other developed nations. Finland, which consistently ranks amongst the top in the world for their education programs, frequently publishes its statistics citing teacher autonomy and an intense focus on the child to explain the triumph of their educational system. While no one can argue the success of their non-traditional approach toward education is working for general education students, they provide little to no education to students with learning disabilities or those deemed too difficult to teach. Instead, these children are sent to segregated schools, almost entirely at the discretion of the teacher, and are not included in the nation's overall test scores (Salovita, 2009). The importance the US places on educating every

child and the inclusion of students with learning disabilities in scholastic statistics is a major contributing factor to explain why the US ranks among the lowest in test scores.

### **Mainstream versus Inclusion**

The distinction between inclusion and mainstream education is commonly misunderstood. In an ideal inclusion model, there is an additional paid staff member present who circulates throughout the classroom to help all students and not just students with disabilities. The accommodations are universal in that the teacher implements methods which reinforce learning for all students (Vaughn, 1998). In this way children with disabilities are treated as inclusive members of the community. In contrast, mainstream education has an additional paid staff member who works solely with children who are learning disabled, alongside their peers, for all or part of the day. The major drawback of having a mainstream approach is that it singles out children with disabilities. These students often have differentiated homework and may even work from different textbooks and do not fully participate in the general education curriculum (Vaughn, 1998).

### **Least Restrictive Environment**

Current laws and legislation are very specific in how they inform the public that students have a right to receive an education in the least restrictive environment. The educational continuum is shown in the Figure 1 below.



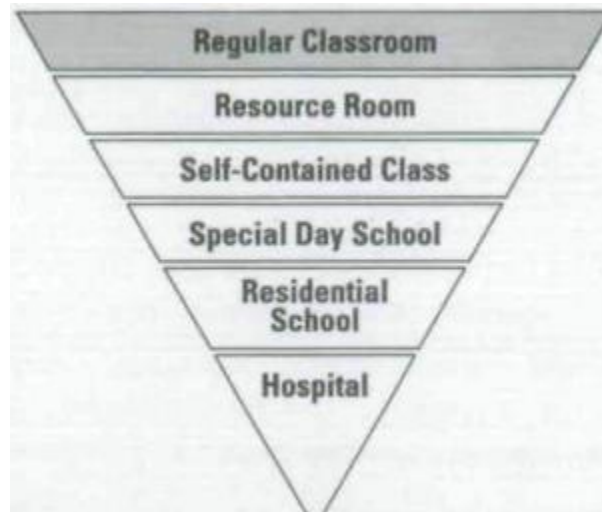


Figure 1. General Education in the Conventional Continuum of Special Education Placements and Services (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2010).

The regular classroom environment is the least restrictive placement for children. In an inclusion classroom, services are brought to the child to assist them with accessing the general education curriculum. The educational team works to develop strategies for each child and ensure they are implemented properly. Only after every other option is exhausted should a child be moved out of the regular classroom and into a resource room. There is always an impact on the child when they are removed from the general education classroom and placed in a more restrictive environment. It is important that educators collaborate to determine at what point the benefits of placing a child in a more restrictive setting outweigh the detrimental impact.

The other levels of placement on the continuum include placing the child in a resource room or small group, a self-contained class, residential school, or hospital. Full inclusion offers instruction all day in the general education environment. Inclusion is often supplemented with a resource room. Resource rooms offers extra support to assist children with disabilities in

keeping up with their general education peers by pulling the child out of the general education class for a portion of the day. A self-contained class consists of only children with varying levels of disability and has a low student-teacher ratio. The purpose of this classroom is to provide children with more intensive support that they cannot receive in the general education environment. The drawback is the child suffers segregation from their peers and is not challenged in the same way they would be in a general education classroom. The next level includes special day schools; children are sent to a specialized school for children with disabilities. They are never exposed to peers without disabilities at school as they would be in their neighborhood school. Next on the continuum are residential schools. Children with disabilities are sent to live on campus full time or only during the school week. They are removed from their family-home environment and provided with intensive therapies and treatment. Residential schools are used as placements for children who are found to not be safe at home due to severe behavioral issues. Hospitalization is recommended for children who are an immediate danger to themselves or other people. These children need medical intervention to ensure the safety of themselves and those around them. Very few children ever need this intensive intervention and it is even more rarely used as for long-term placement. Regardless of the level of placement, the local school remains responsible for providing the child with a free and appropriate education.

### **The Inclusion Model**

Teachers who learn the fundamentals of teaching students with disabilities in the inclusion setting utilize more effective teaching strategies for all students (Vaughn, 1998), can approach each student with flexibility, and increase successful implementation of inclusion

models. Methods for teaching inclusion are to be universally applied to reinforce the concepts being taught to the entire class. Adaptations may include having the class journal about what they learned that day, writing down questions about what they would like to learn based on the day's topic, or working with a peer to review what was learned. Vaughn (1998) calls these "just good teaching strategies" every child can benefit from. Teachers require ongoing training as more universal practices evolve. Unfortunately, the inconsistent implementation of universal adaptations contributes to the failure of inclusion programs (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2010). Children should be continuously evaluated for the potential need for more intensive support and provided with intervention strategies in reading and math if they are failing to meet their educational goals (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2010). Flexibility is important for success in helping students with disabilities to keep pace with their peers. If more intensive support is necessary, it should be provided with the goal of returning students to the general education classroom once goals are met.

### **Educational Benefits**

Students in a general education setting can better develop the confidence needed to succeed and make progress toward their educational goals than when placed in a self-contained class with a small group of other students with disabilities. A strong criticism of placing students with disabilities in a self-contained classroom is how this model has been adopted as a tradition without the support of research to justify this more restrictive model of education. The primary reasoning behind placing children with disabilities in a separate classroom is to provide them with a lower student-teacher ratio and more individual instruction. However, research has overwhelmingly shown that this model does not improve academic success (Kavale, 2002). Higher academic standards and access to talented teachers who vary their teaching to

accommodate a naturally more diverse group of learning styles benefit children with disabilities more consistently than placing children in self-contained classroom. In self-contained classrooms, teachers will often avoid teaching more difficult concepts because they feel students will be unable to grasp the same concepts being taught in the general education environment (McMillan, 2008, p. 9). Children in the general education environment are more likely to feel the work they are doing is important and meaningful so students will work more independently to accomplish educational goals. Children also benefit more from the academic pressures a general education environment provides.

### **Educational Benefits for Non-Disabled Students**

Inclusion has been shown to improve the education of both children with disabilities and their peers when implemented properly (Gandhi, 2007). Gandhi recognized the limitations of models used for determining the effectiveness and impact inclusion has on students without disabilities in previous studies and set out to sort through variables that potentially impact student outcomes. She concluded that students without disabilities who were offered additional support by a paid aide in the classroom made better gains in reading than those in a non-inclusion environment even amongst students with less common disabilities such as autism.

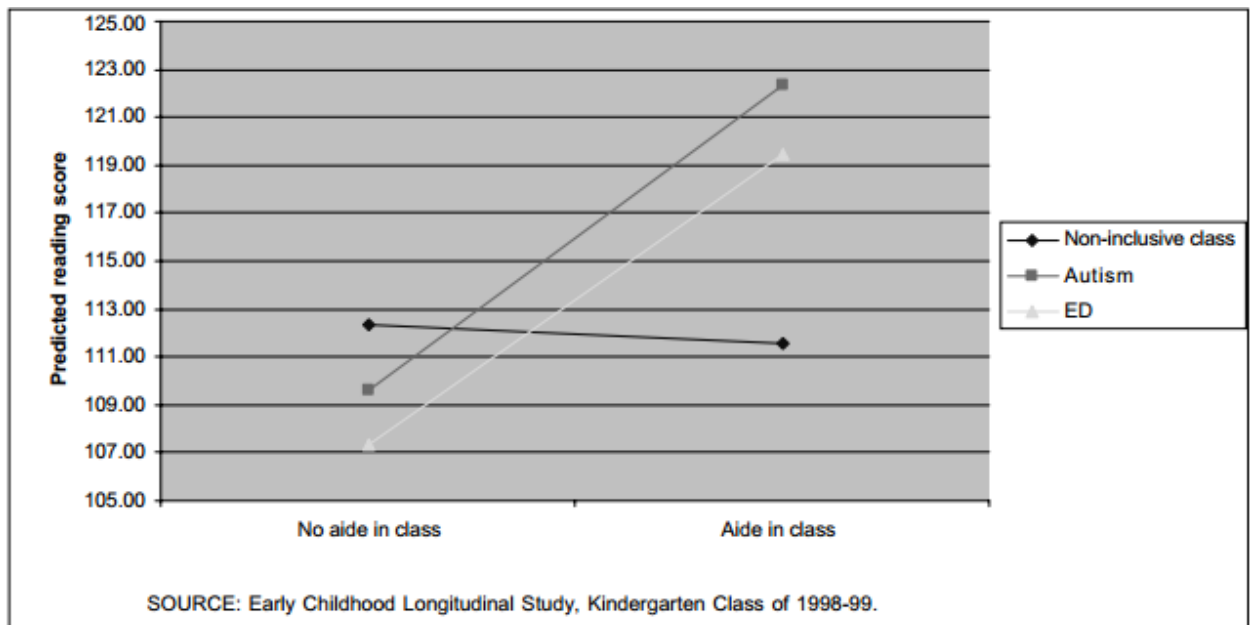


Figure 2. Reading scores of non-disabled students in both inclusion and non-inclusion classes with support or absence of a paid aide (Gandhi, 2007).

Figure 2 shows the impact of placing additional paid staff in the classroom has on reading scores of students regardless of the nature of the disability of the students needing accommodations. In both the “ED” and “Autism” class, reading outcomes were significantly higher for non-disabled students in the inclusion settings than in the non-inclusion setting with the presence of a paid aide. This highlights the need for proper implementation and support to achieve successful outcomes for all students in an inclusion setting.

### Peer Modeling

Children with disabilities learn appropriate behaviors and social skills modeled by their peers and teachers are given the unique opportunity to foster compassion in students.

Undesirable behavior is discouraged by other students in the general education setting and the social pressures to conform cause a decrease in negative behavior. When children are segregated

from non-learning disabled students they are denied the opportunity to see appropriate behavior modeled and fail to learn how to conform to societal standards (McMillan, 2008, p. 8). Teachers should implement social skills instruction to guide children on how to make friends and encourage positive relationships between children with disabilities and those without (DiGennaro, McIntyre, Dusek, & Quintero, 2011). Teaching tolerance in the classroom is only successful if the teacher can model compassion (Kavale, 2000).

### **Access to Peer Tutors**

By receiving the same education as their peers, special education students are able to discuss and receive peer tutoring on challenging concepts. According to Vaughn (1998), students in middle and high school prefer using peer tutoring as a strategy to assist in learning. If a child is taught separately from their peers, they are commonly assigned work from different chapters or textbooks, making it difficult or impossible to discuss lessons with or receive help from their peers. This inability to collaborate with peers further diminishes the importance of learning in school (McMillan, 2008 p. 8).

### **Social Impact**

Another crucial factor in discussing inclusion is the social impact the model has on children without disabilities. By exposing students without disabilities to children with obvious differences, the stigmatization of having a disability is removed. Classrooms contain a diverse range of students from all backgrounds and do not represent microcosms of homogenous groups. By introducing children who have appreciated differences, children without disabilities are gifted with a better awareness of the world, and are taught compassion as they organically humanize children with disabilities as contributing members of the community. Placing children in the

inclusion setting removes the labels placed on children with disabilities as their peers may not be aware extra services are being provided. The child's privacy is protected, they are spared from embarrassment, and self-esteem improves. Peers recognize other children with disabilities as members of the community and come to appreciate what they share. Teaching this kind of tolerance early in life teaches empathy and compassion to our next generation (McMillan, 2008 p. 11).

### **Adult and Teacher Role in Fostering Tolerance**

Teachers who are not trained, or who do not feel supported, often carry negative attitudes into the classroom that impact their ability to model tolerance. This bias is detrimental and may create a hostile environment for children with disabilities (Kavale, 2000). An effective way to change teacher bias is through education and ongoing training. When classroom teachers lack the proper training and education to support children with disabilities in the classroom they are more likely to fail. This reinforces teacher bias against inclusion and carries through into the classroom environment. Proper training for teachers, in both undergraduate educational programs and professional development, is critical for student success.

### **Changing Perceptions**

By providing teachers with better teaching models, and more training in special education, assumptions that all children with disabilities need separate instruction can be changed. Stereotypes are damaging to children and are promoted by myopic views from the media and lack of exposure to individuals with disabilities. Historical segregation of minority students prior to *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), demonstrated how separating groups of children negatively impacted self-esteem and self-perception. As Kavale (2000) emotionally

words it, “Substitute child a with disabilities for a minority child and parallels to the present inclusion debate are apparent.” This is not to say resistance to inclusion programs is steeped in prejudice; educators approach things with the belief they can provide children with more individual attention and shelter them more affectively from social stigma in a resource classroom. However, the impact on the student’s perception of the world around them remains the same as those children affected by racial segregation.

### **Improving Teaching Strategies and Positive Teacher Impact**

As states and districts move toward providing more inclusion, there are discrepancies in teacher training to accommodate newer teaching models focusing on special education. Many talented general education teachers have no special education training and do not know how to reach students with difficult learning disabilities. They approach the inclusion model with strong negative assumptions, do not properly implement the inclusion model, and unconsciously set their students up for failure (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2010). According to Fuchs and Fuchs (2010), proper implementation of the inclusion model is established in only 25% of classrooms. This reinforces negative teacher attitudes when individuals with disabilities fail to meet their educational goals. Many universities are moving toward providing all teachers with some special education training out of college, but established teachers require additional training to understand how to make their programs successful (Kavale, 2000). Even special education teachers often lack the proper training to understand the concepts and philosophy behind inclusion. According to Fuchs and Fuchs (2010), special education teachers expressed the most concern over the implementation of the inclusion model. Improved teacher development helps



close this gap and serves to assuage reservations about adopting more inclusive models of education.

### **Teacher Development**

Ongoing teacher development and training is essential for teachers to properly prepare for and implement an inclusion program. Going from providing only self-contained classes for special education students to inclusion requires restructuring and reallocation of teachers around the school. According to Fuchs and Fuchs (2010), inclusion requires careful planning and specialized teacher training to be successful. A successful inclusion model is not something that happens without careful planning, support, and training. Teachers need training and support to address concerns and ensure the inclusion program is given the proper support to be successful.

### **Impact of Rhetoric on Student Success**

Many teachers lack the exposure and training needed to reverse their own biases and are unwilling to modify their teaching habits to accommodate students with learning disabilities. Teachers see older models of providing self-contained classes to students with disabilities as being successful and consequently dismiss the benefits of inclusion. It has been demonstrated that teacher attitudes have the greatest impact on successful outcomes in the inclusion environments (Kavale, 2000). Teachers often report higher than average negative behaviors of students with disabilities while actual behavioral studies place children with disabilities in the average range (Digennaro Reed, 2011). This impacts the child's ability to adjust to the general education environment as well as and the student-teacher relationship (Digennaro Reed, 2011).

### **Arguments Against Inclusion**

Many teachers fail to see the benefits of inclusion and feel that applying inclusion models is ideological. To many teachers, the amount of effort and commitment required for a successful inclusion program to work outweighs the rewards. These teachers lack the training to realize exactly how inclusion programs benefit students and do not have the support necessary to make inclusion successful. Critics of the inclusion model argue that researchers are not applying these models to real world applications. Every child is different and not every child can be successful in the inclusion environment despite the efforts provided by the school. Education must be dynamic and individually tailored to each student with efforts to keep them on pace with their neurotypical peers. If a child is falling behind, extra effort and attention are required to ensure that educational goals are met. If a child needs more intensive intervention that requires placement in a resource classroom, it should be done with the goal to return the child to the inclusion environment when they are able.

#### **Lack of Teacher Training and Ongoing Assessments**

Many teachers graduate with no special education courses, do not know how to appropriately adapt their curriculum to children with special needs, and are not adequately trained to assess children with disabilities on an ongoing basis to determine interventions to best suit their needs. Even teachers with a background in special education may not necessarily have training on how to teach children in an inclusion environment (Kavale, 2000). In order to combat teacher bias against inclusion and successfully implement inclusion models, proper training of teachers is required. Students with disabilities need ongoing assessments and if a

teacher is working with the assumption the inclusion model will fail the teacher will not make the effort to apply the model for students whom are difficult to teach.

Working with students with disabilities requires a dynamic approach to teaching and ongoing student assessments to determine if they are meeting educational goals. If a child is falling behind in the curriculum, further adaptations are necessary to assist the child in keeping pace with their peers. If all universal adaptations in the inclusion environment fail, a child should be provided with more intensive support in a small group or resource environment. When working with the inclusion model, it is important to consider the individuality of students who may not succeed without interventions. However, children should first be placed in the least restrictive environment and given the opportunity to learn alongside their peers. Only once it has been determined they cannot succeed in the inclusion environment should they be moved to a more restrictive environment with the goal of returning them to the general education classroom (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2010).

### **Reasons for Inclusion Implementation Failure**

Inclusion demands that teachers and other staff embrace the model so they are motivated to make the changes to their curriculum required to properly support all the children in the classroom. Negative assumptions, poor administrative support, and lack of collaborative support are all reasons inclusion models fail. If the school is not committed to the model, then general education classrooms are not prepared to accept children with disabilities. Negative teacher and administrative attitudes are primary reasons inclusion programs fail. Teachers with negative assumptions do not implement the adaptations necessary to support students with disabilities.

This sets up the classroom for failure and reinforces biases against the inclusion model and limits future success (Kavale, 2000).

### **Poor Administrative Support**

Adequate planning is required to ensure that children and teachers have the support they need to achieve success in an inclusion environment. A successful inclusion model requires restructuring of special education departments. Teachers and aides need to be reassigned to assist with the support necessary for inclusion classrooms. Ongoing teacher training and educational in-services need to be made available for teachers. Inclusion is something that requires not only the efforts of trained teachers, but also requires careful planning, training, and support by the administration. Many schools implement a cluster model instead of the accepted and successfully studied inclusion model. The cluster model takes all children with disabilities at a particular grade level and places them in a single room with children without disabilities. Inclusion is supposed to reflect the general population in which we live. The cluster model fails to reflect the real world in the same way because of the disparate ratio of children without disabilities versus those with gathered in a single classroom setting. Consequently, the cluster model does not provide children with adequate exposure to their peers without disabilities and overwhelms teachers who cannot provide the time individual students need for extra support to assist in keeping pace with the general education curriculum. Administrative bodies are charged with recognizing and supporting teachers through proper implementation of standard inclusion models in order to be successful.

### **Lack of Collaborative Support**

Inclusion teachers often work as teams with another teacher or teacher's aide. Inclusion models, with a lack of appropriate support staff, are detrimental to both general education and special education students. Often teachers with different teaching styles or personalities have difficulty working together. For teachers to work together in an inclusion setting they need to be able to effectively collaborate so the responsibilities and expectations are shared in order for inclusion to be successful. Further teacher training to help define teacher roles and responsibilities in a collaborative environment helps to alleviate potential conflict.

### **Student Success**

Student success in the general education environment is the goal of inclusion and requires flexibility with student placement, an ongoing plan with clear objectives, intervention to help students keep pace with their peers, and mindfulness of the least restrictive environment for the individual child. Ensuring success requires an educational team who can adapt and set clear goals for each student. If a child is not meeting goals immediate intervention is necessary to provide the child with additional supports. Regardless of what interventions are needed, the least restrictive environment must be tried first with the goal of helping the child take steps toward returning to the general education environment.

### **Flexibility with Student Placement**

Students need assessment on an ongoing basis. As the individual education plan (IEP) is developed, children are given both short-term and long-term educational goals. As the school year progresses, teachers must monitor each child to ensure they are meeting goals and adapt

accordingly. If the child is unable to meet their goals, a meeting should be called with the parent or guardian to discuss placement into a more intensive resource setting. The key factor is that the least restrictive environment is attempted first and the goal remains to eventually return the child to the general education classroom.

### **Ongoing Plan with Clear Objectives and Interventions**

An IEP is developed for every student in a special education program. The IEP—established by a dedicated team of teachers, administrators, and parents—sets clear objectives and goals for each child. Having a thorough IEP establishes the child's baseline when the IEP is written and lays out the team's educational and social goals for the child. Ongoing evaluation of the child to determine if they are meeting goals is essential to determining if current interventions are working effectively and establish what interventions, if any, are needed to help the child keep pace with peers. Children who are not meeting educational goals should first have additional services brought into the general education classroom to assist them in accessing the curriculum. If the child is still unable to keep pace with their peers, additional support outside the general education classroom may be necessary until it is determined that the child is ready to return to the general education classroom.

### **Set Goals to Return Child to the Regular Education Environment**

Educating children in the least restrictive environment possible is the purpose of the inclusion programs. Not every child can access the general education curriculum and requires placement in a smaller classroom for more individualized attention. Resource rooms, which provide the child with more intensive support while still granting access to the general education curriculum, should first be tried to help the child keep pace with peers and remain in the general

education setting. The benefits of being removed from the general education classroom should outweigh the potential negative impact it has on the child. Once it is determined that the child is ready, the child should return to the general education environment.

### **Conclusion**

As cultural awareness is raised, society is beginning to accept people with appreciated differences and respect their unique contributions and perspective in society. We can begin raising awareness in children while simultaneously giving those who have disabilities the opportunities they would have been denied in previous generations. This relatively recent approach toward desegregation has laid the foundation for inclusion to become an emerging culture in schools. As laws press teachers and districts to implement more inclusive options for children with disabilities, our society is moving toward embracing these children for their differences. When implemented properly, student outcomes improve for both general education and special education students. Teachers must be willing to teach and model appropriate socialization between children in the classroom to properly instill compassion in the classroom. By taking the proper steps necessary to successfully support healthy interactions, teachers model tolerance and children grow up to become better citizens who are more accepting of people with obvious differences. Furthermore, teachers challenged by educating children with learning disabilities make better teachers. Teachers learn to adapt to the variety of learning styles they encounter in a single classroom and implement methods to serve all students. Currently, children are narrowly served in the inclusion model. Increased funding and awareness will move society toward accepting a broader range of students into the general education setting. Society is resistant to changing practices perceived to work, even if it ignores the developmental

opportunities and rights being denied to individuals. Inclusion opportunities are a right for children with special needs and more parents and schools would be better served by honoring that right for their most vulnerable children. Education is an effective way to change deeply rooted assumptions and show people how our culture can change to embrace all members of the community. As a culture, we can adopt an inclusive philosophy to create a more tolerant and compassionate society.

For Training Purposes Only



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