

**Hi Jack,**

With reference to our 'car discussion' here's a list of the 'Eight Myths' re inclusive education I use during my workshops with ed psych trainees at Nottingham University. I usually write brief prompts, supported by practical examples based on my work in schools and classrooms. So the sessions are more interactive. I've padded this out in case it's of any use for your meeting on Friday. Use or omit as you please!

It also includes a series of arguments and source of research findings (not all up-to-date, but still relevant) to challenge the 'myths'. Enjoy!

Gerv.

### ***INCLUSIVE EDUCATION or SPECIAL SCHOOLS?***

#### ***EIGHT COMMON MYTHS***

1. 'Inclusion is a desirable aim but not feasible in practice for children with significant disabilities.'
2. 'Pupils with challenging behaviour are better placed in special schools or PRUs.'
3. 'Inclusive education is merely about placing pupils with significant needs in mainstream schools without adequate supports.'
4. 'Peer supported learning in classrooms is a form of cheap labour.'
5. 'Inclusive education is just too costly. It *may* be a good idea, but we just can't afford it.'
6. 'Children with physical and learning difficulties learn and are taught more effectively in special schools.'
7. 'Special schools prepare pupils more effectively for independent adult life.'
8. 'Given the choice, parents of children with significant disabilities would prefer them to be educated in special schools.'

## Argument

### Myth 1.

Many of the following arguments *against* the ‘myths’ are based on the Ofsted Report: ‘Inclusion: does it matter where children are taught?’

In order to reduce repetition, I will refer to that report where it’s relevant. (See Appendix 1) The evidence base for the Report was based on research visits to 74 special and **mainstream** schools and the results of evidence of Ofsted inspections of a further 146 schools. (OFSTED = ‘Office for Standards in Education’) This is a Government policy of inspections and reports which applies to all schools, mainstream and special, within the UK.

This Report was published in 2006 and was summarised as follows.

*‘This Report examines the factors that promote good outcomes across a range of different provision for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. It found effective provision was distributed equally between and special schools when certain factors were securely in place. However, more good or outstanding provision existed in resourced mainstream schools.’*

Appendix 1

### Myth 2.

‘Pupils with challenging behaviour are better placed in special schools or PRUs.’

See source/ evidence in Appendix 1, Ofsted Report.

‘Many pupils with BESD were placed successfully in mainstream schools, either with support or in resourced mainstream schools.’  
(BESD: Behavioural, emotional and social difficulties).

### Myth 3.

‘Inclusive education is merely about placing pupils with significant needs in mainstream schools without adequate supports.’

See Appendix 2 for a list of nature and philosophy of relevant supports for inclusive practice.

The most often quoted reason for inclusive schooling ‘not being appropriate, adequately resourced or effective’ is that *sufficient supports*

*are not available.* However, without adequate or appropriate supports it is *not*, and cannot be, *inclusive*.

See Appendix 2.

Nor can special school function at all without enhanced supports. Yet, with or without additional supports, they remain special, and segregated.

#### **Myth 4.**

‘Peer supported learning in classrooms is a form of cheap labour.’

Pupils can make greater progress in collaborative learning approaches with a peer than in traditional classroom teaching.

#### Source

Research in two special schools for children with learning difficulties demonstrated the learning gains for children who were withdrawn from the special class and curriculum *to work together in pairs* in solving a learning problem. There were 12 weekly sessions, each lasting 30 mins, with one adult facilitator. Forty one pupils (13 to 15yrs) were involved.

The withdrawal, ‘collaborative’ sessions did not involve reading or related activities. Despite the short time scale, the intervention pupils made remarkable gains in reading, problem solving and communication skills.

The reading gains were achieved when the pupils removed from the classroom reading activities to take part in an intervention programme, which included no reading or reading related activity.

Conversely, pupils remaining in the reading class receiving teaching and coaching in reading, showed *no gains whatever in reading ability*.

The researchers also noted that, across the school, pupils showed no gains in reading ability over time as they moved up the school. Yet for most, if not all, the ostensible aim of the special school placement was to improve reading and literacy.

(Source: Lamb, S., Bibby, P. Wood, D.J. and Leyden, G (1998). An intervention programme for children with moderate learning difficulties. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 68, 493-504.)

Other collaborative techniques such as peer tutoring, mentoring, reciprocal teaching or 'buddy' systems have equally achieved gains in pupils' learning and social skills and abilities.

They also have other inclusive benefits: *'Properly used, inclusive and collaborative techniques write the peer group back into the special needs script and the child with special needs back into the peer group.'*

(Source: Leyden, G. (1966) 'Cheap Labour' or neglected resource? The role of the peer group and efficient, effective support for children special needs. *Educational Psychology in Practice*. 11, 4, 49-55.

Peer support in the school and classroom is not only **economical** but also **effective** and **inclusive**.

Cheap labour? No way!

### **Myth 5.**

'Inclusive education is just too costly. It *may* be a good idea, but we just can't afford it.'

### **Comparison costs of annual UK school placements**

The following are all approximations as the formulae differ, as do the systems of allocation.

Average teacher salaries (UK pay scales, approx over 6 years).  
= £21-888 to £31- 552

Mainstream primary school placement  
= £4,000

Mainstream secondary school placement  
= £5,000

Special schools for children with moderate learning difficulties (MLD).  
= £10,000 - £12,000

Special Schools for children with severe learning difficulties (SLD).  
= £20,000 - £25,000.

PRUs (Pupil Referral Units for challenging behaviour).  
= £15,000

Plus additional fees for pupils on the autistic continuum, or with sensory problems (hearing, sighted) and/or physical impairments).

Special Schools for children with Emotional, Behavioural or Social difficulties.

= £20,000.

Special Residential or Independent schools

Up to £100,000.

Can we truly afford special schools?

### **Myth 6.**

‘Children with physical and learning difficulties learn and are taught more effectively in special schools.’

Some refutation of Myth 6 was covered in the answer to Myth 4.

The following excerpts are from **Appendix 1, The Ofsted Report.**

‘Mainstream schools with additionally resourced provision were particularly successful in achieving high outcomes for pupils academically, socially and personally. PRUs were the least successful.’

‘Pupils with PMLD (Profound and multiple learning difficulties) and those with extremely challenging behaviour were less often placed in mainstream schools, unless parents chose. Nevertheless given specialist resources and teaching in a well run and resourced mainstream school, they were able to make outstanding progress.’

(Jack. May have omitted this from my ‘Ofsted quotes....time is short but will try and ’include’ it later.

### **Myth 7.**

‘Special schools prepare pupils more effectively for independent adult life.’

I don’t know any evidence for this.

Recently I met a teenager who had left a special school at the local leisure and sports centre. He, shamefaced, commented to me: ‘I didn’t think I was allowed to mix with others who hadn’t been to a special school.’

Strong likelihood this accounts for feelings of being ‘outcast’ shared by young people who had not been in mainstream.

However, from a survey of 100 special school leavers, only 50 could be tracked down and interviewed. Most had lived in poor social housing which had been knocked down, or had moved away. Of the the 50 we interviewed, only one had found a job. A social comment, which shocked the school staff! (why didn't they know?).

Sixty percentage of the school's pupils received free school meals (that is now an index of social disadvantage, unemployed parents and social poverty).

The leavers described the paucity of social support they now received, linked with lack of vocational and leisure opps. Most spent the day at home, isolated within their own communities. Most wanted a job, but few saw it as achievable goal. Their felt they were 'socially and vocationally penalised' by their segregated education.

Adult social and neighbourhood isolation has its roots in special schooling.

(Source: Freshwater, K and Leyden G. (1989). Limited options: where are special school leavers now? *British Journal of Special Education*, 16.1. 19-22)

### **Myth 8.**

'Given the choice, parents of children with significant disabilities would prefer them to be educated in special schools.'

I don't know the evidence for this Myth. ....if it exists! But I strongly doubt its validity.

There are numerous parent groups advocating inclusive ed for their children.

There are also other 'specialist groups' proactive for inclusion.  
E.g, CSIE, Parents for Inclusion (both linked with The Alliance for Inclusion)

Each of the Toronto Summer Institute is particularly well attended by very distressed parents unable to obtain a mainstream placement for their child (children) within their local authority, schoolboard.

Appendix 4 has a very powerful piece of advocacy from Johnathan Bartley, a parent Trustee of CSIE and ‘confrontation’ with David Cameron during the last election campaign.

If all else fails.....check out Appendix 3!

**Hope this helps!**

**Regards**

**gerv**

## **Appendices**

### **Appendix 1.**

**Myths 1, 2, 3, 6.**

Source of information to challenge Myths 1, 2, 3, 6

## **OFSTED Report**

### **Inclusion: does it matter where children are taught?**

#### *Relevant Findings re ‘Myths’ from Report*

The following excerpts relate to a survey of pupils with significant learning and/or physical disabilities attending mainstream or special schools in the UK.

‘There was little difference in the quality of provision and outcomes for pupils across primary and secondary mainstream schools and special schools.’

‘...mainstream schools with additionally resourced provision were particularly successful in achieving high outcomes for pupils academically, socially and personally.’

‘PRUs were the least successful.’

‘Pupils with even the most severe and complex needs were able to make outstanding progress in all types of settings. High quality, specialist

teachers and a commitment by leaders to create opportunities to include all pupils were the keys to success.’

‘Many pupils with BESD were placed successfully in mainstream schools, either with support or in resourced mainstream schools....

(special) schools for pupils with BESD continued to be less effective than other special schools.’

### Definitions

**PRU** Pupil Referral Unit. Special unit for pupils with particularly challenging behaviour, usually at secondary age range. Often ‘part-time’ linked with other placements, practical and vocational. Intended as a temporary placement, but mainstream schools reluctant to re-admit.

**BESD:** pupils with ‘behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.’

**Additionally resourced provision:** Mainstream schools with additional provision which enables them to support pupils with significant behavioural, learning or physical needs within mainstream classes (i.e. **not** separated units or withdrawal classes.

## Appendix 2.

Checklist of factors which help identify the school based characteristics of an inclusive school.

### *IS IT REALLY INCLUSIVE EDUCATION?*

Use this checklist to determine if your school / education authority’s philosophy and practices support inclusion. ‘YES’ indicates inclusive practice, ‘NO’ an area of need to be addressed.		
1. <i>All</i> students attend the school and class they would attend if they did not have disabilities.	YES	NO
2. <i>All</i> students attend mainstream classes appropriate to their <i>chronological age</i> .	YES	NO
3. <i>Students with disabilities</i> attend mainstream classes on a <i>full-time</i> basis (i.e. receive all their supports in the classroom, following the same schedule as other students).	YES	NO
4. <i>Mainstream</i> classes have a <i>natural proportion</i> of students		

with and without disabilities? (t.i.c neighbourhood characteristics)	YES	NO
5. <i>Students</i> with disabilities use the <i>same places and services</i> as other students? (i.e. toilets, cloakrooms, lunches, break-times, transport)	YES	NO
6. <i>Students</i> with disabilities receive the <i>supports</i> necessary for them to succeed in the classroom? (i.e. curriculum adaptations, assistive technology, adult and peer support).	YES	NO
7. <i>Teachers</i> receive the necessary <i>supports</i> for the successful teaching of all students in the class, including those with significant learning difficulties (i.e. preparation time, consultation with LSAs and support services, training).	YES	NO
8. <i>Parents</i> of students with disabilities are given every opportunity to be full participants in their child's education.	YES	NO
9. <i>The school</i> has a <i>philosophy</i> that respects <i>all</i> students as learners and contributing members of the classroom and school community.	YES	NO
10. <i>The school</i> has a task force to address issues identified by the 'No' answers on this checklist.	YES	NO

(Adapted from 'Innovations', University of New Hampshire, by Gerv Leyden).

*How many of the above 10 statements have you encountered in your schooling or practice as a teacher or trainee educational psychologist?*

### **Appendix 3.**

#### Values, segregation and inclusion

'At the time of the American Civil War, should Abraham Lincoln have asked to see the scientific evidence on the benefits of ending slavery?

Should he have consulted with the "expert", perhaps a sociologist, an economist, a political scientist? Of course not. Slavery is now and was not then, an issue for science. It is a moral issue.

But, just for a moment, suppose that an economist had been able to demonstrate that Blacks would suffer economically, as would the entire South, from emancipation. Would that justify keeping slavery?

And suppose a political scientist had argued that blacks had no experience with democracy, they were not ready for it. Would that have justified extending slavery? Or imagine that a sociologist could have advised Lincoln against abolishing slavery on the grounds that it would destroy the basic social structure of Southern plantations, town and cities.

All of the arguments might have seemed “true.” But could they really justify slavery? Of course not. Slavery had no justification.’

Biklen, D. (1985).

*Achieving the complete school.* New York: Columbia University Press.

## **Appendix 4**



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