

BENEFITS OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Giangreco, M. F., Edelman, S., Cloninger, C., & Dennis, R. (1993). My child has a classmate with severe disabilities: What parents of nondisabled children think about full inclusion. *Developmental Disabilities Bulletin*, Vol 21, (1),

Positive responses by parents to their nondisabled children's experiences being a classmate with someone who has severe disabilities suggests that many of these parents consider this innovation to be consistent with the mission of the school for their own children. Parents indicated some long-term outcomes through public education were strengthened through this experience (e.g. developing responsibility, accepting individual differences, expanding horizons, promoting social/emotional growth) and did not interfere with other educational outcomes.

Tapasak, R. C., & Walter-Thomas, C. S. (1999). Evaluation of a first-year program: Student perceptions and classroom performance. *Remedial and Special Education*, 20(4).

Study findings also indicate that primary students with disabilities (Grades K – 2) and their peers felt good about their performance in inclusive classrooms. Both groups of primary students rated their own cognitive competence higher at posttesting, but only the ratings of students with disabilities significantly increased. Students with disabilities began the year with lower perceptions of their cognitive competence than did students without disabilities. However, their cognitive competence perceptions increased in magnitude over the year such that, by the end of the school year, students with disabilities, on the average, had higher cognitive competence perceptions than did their peers without disabilities.

Primary students with disabilities rated themselves significantly higher in physical competence (than did typical students) during both pre and post testing.

No significant differences were found between the two groups on the Self-Perception sub-scales related to athletic competence, physical appearance, behaviour, and global self-ratings. Teachers reported significant posttest increases in social skills development for both younger and older students with disabilities.

Positive effects from inclusive participation for all the students with disabilities may be attributable to ongoing interaction with appropriate peer models and the higher performance expectations found in inclusive classrooms. Students with disabilities may have enjoyed being members of general education classrooms, and their performances may have risen to meet expectations of peers and teachers.

Willis, S. (1994). Making schools more inclusive: Teaching children with disabilities in regular classrooms. *Curriculum Update*, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

In what ways does inclusive schooling provide a better environment for children with disabilities? Inclusion benefits these children both academically and socially, advocates argue. The regular classroom environment bolsters their academic progress, because they are held to higher expectations, exposed to more challenging content, and inspired by the example of their nondisabled peers. They benefit socially because they can see models of appropriate social behaviour and make friends with children from their own neighbourhoods.

Benefits of this kind have been demonstrated in the case of Tiffany Robson, who is now a regular 4th grader at Kilmer Elementary School in Port Coquitlam, B. C., an inclusive school. Although Tiffany has multiple disabilities, she is fully included in a regular classroom, assisted by a full-time aide. She studies modified lessons that parallel what the other students are learning. Tiffany is making satisfactory progress, her mother, Karen Robson, says, and she now has many friends.

Karen Robson “can’t express enough” the advantages of being able to walk Tiffany to school – where she sees other children welcoming her daughter – and being able to talk daily with Tiffany’s teacher and aide. She now has a sense of belonging to the community, she says.

Baker, E. T., Wang, M. C., & Walberg, H. J. (1995). The effects of inclusion on learning. Educational Leadership.

Three meta-analyses (analysis of a group of studies at once) in the educational literature address the issue of the most effective setting for the education of special needs students. These meta-analyses generate a common measure, called an effect size. ... These effect sizes demonstrate a small-to-moderate beneficial effect of inclusive education on the academic and social outcomes of special needs children. Academic outcomes are learning measures generated by standardized achievement tests, whereas social outcomes are obtained by self, peer, teacher, and observer ratings of special needs students’ success in relating with others in the classrooms.

The average effect size is 0.08 to 0.44 (and all are positive), which means that special needs students educated in regular classes do better academically and socially than comparable students in noninclusive settings.

Staub, D., & Peck, C. A. (1995) What are the outcomes for nondisabled students? Educational Leadership.

Concerns re Students with Disabilities in Regular Classrooms

1. Will inclusion reduce the academic progress of nondisabled children?

Only a few studies of this issue are available. A few of these have used quasi-experimental designs to compare progress of nondisabled children in inclusive

classrooms to that of matched children in classrooms that do not include children with disabilities. These studies have consistently found no deceleration of academic progress for nondisabled children enrolled in inclusive classrooms.

Other studies have tracked the developmental progress of nondisabled children enrolled in inclusive preschool programs over one or more years – again finding no evidence of developmental harm.

Surveys conducted with parents and teachers who have been directly involved in inclusive settings generally show that both parties have positive views about the inclusive programs and do not report any harm to the development of nondisabled children.

2. Will nondisabled children lose teacher time and attention?

Only one study has directly investigated this issue in depth. Hollowood and colleagues compared allocated and actual instructional time for six randomly selected nondisabled students in classrooms that included at least one student with severe disabilities, with a comparison group of nondisabled students in noninclusive classrooms. They also collected data on the rate of interruptions to planned instruction. Their findings indicated that the presence of students with disabilities had no effect on levels of allocated or engaged time. Further, time lost to interruptions of instruction was not significantly different in inclusive and noninclusive classrooms.

These findings are supported by survey responses from teachers and parents who have direct experience with inclusive classrooms.

3. Will nondisabled students learn undesirable behavior from students with disabilities?

Observations of young children in inclusive classrooms suggest that this seldom occurs. In one survey, both parents and teachers indicated that nondisabled children had not picked up on undesirable behaviour from children with disabilities.

Another research effort conducted along follow-along case studies of nondisabled students in inclusive elementary and middle school classrooms. Interviews with parents and teachers, as well as direct observational data collected over two successive school years, indicate that nondisabled students do not acquire undesirable or maladaptive behaviour from peers with disabilities.

Benefits of Inclusion

1. Reduced fear of human differences accompanied by increased comfort and awareness.

On surveys and in interviews, high school students often attributed their reduced fear of people who looked or behaved differently to having had interactions with individuals with disabilities.

After interviewing 20 parents of nondisabled elementary-aged students attending inclusive classes, we found that not only did parents report that their children had less fear of people who looked or acted differently, but that they themselves had experienced a similar effect vicariously through their children's experience. In addition, to feeling more accepting of others, students said that they came to value the contributions that all individuals make.

2. Growth in social cognition

A yearlong ethnographic study in an inclusive high school found that nondisabled students learned to be more tolerant of others as they became more aware of the needs of their peers with disabilities. She also found that these students demonstrated more positive feelings about themselves after spending time helping classmates with severe disabilities. In addition, researchers have found that elementary school children learn skills that enable them to communicate more effectively with their peers with disabilities, but also to be more supportive of them in daily interactions.

3. Improvement of self-concept

Many nondisabled students have experienced an increase in self-esteem as a result of their relationships with individuals with disabilities. Studies have shown that some students perceived that their relationship with a classmate with disabilities had elevated their status in class and school.

4. Development of personal principals

Many nondisabled students experienced a growth in their commitment to personal moral and ethical principles as a result of their relationship with students with disabilities. Parents also reported that their children showed less prejudice toward people who behaved, acted, or looked differently from themselves. Often nondisabled students assume an advocacy role toward their peers and friends with disabilities.

5. Warm and caring friendships

In many cases, the relationships that have emerged between students with and without disabilities have developed into meaningful, long-lasting friendships. Many nondisabled students have commented on the value of the personal acceptance they have experienced from their peers with disabilities as well as the relaxed nature of their interactions with them.