

THE ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF THE INCLUSION OF
STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES INTO REGULAR EDUCATION CLASSROOMS

by

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ABSTRACT

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Over the last 20 years, there is no topic that causes more controversy in special education among teachers, administrators, and parents than inclusion. Inclusion represents the belief or philosophy that students with disabilities should be integrated into the regular education classrooms whether or not they can meet traditional curricular standards. The purpose of this study was to examine the potential advantages and disadvantages of the inclusion of students with disabilities into regular education classrooms. This study included a comprehensive review and critical analysis of research and literature concerning the issue of inclusion, the factors that contributed to the movement to educate students in inclusive classrooms, inclusion versus mainstreaming,

what the least restrictive environment is, models of inclusion, what an inclusive classroom looks like, and the advantages and disadvantages for special education students, regular education students, and regular education teachers when placing students with disabilities into regular education classrooms.

Research has shown that inclusion promotes the idea that students with disabilities should begin in the regular education classroom, and be removed only when appropriate services cannot be provided there. When implemented properly, inclusion can have many advantages for all students and teachers involved in the process.

While there are many proponents to the idea of inclusion, there are also many adversaries as well. Quite often, inclusion is put into action by schools without giving the teaching staff proper training, enough planning time throughout the day, or an appropriate forum for them to voice their opinions, concerns, and suggestions. When this is the case, inclusion can have many disadvantages for all persons involved and can make for an unpleasant school environment.

In order to improve the odds of an inclusionary program being successful, the researcher gave recommendations to regular education teachers and administrators. These recommendations were designed to assist in implementing an inclusionary program with ease and so everyone involved is comfortable with the changes being made.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

There is no issue that causes more controversy in special education among teachers, administrators, and parents than inclusion. Inclusion “represents the belief or philosophy that students with disabilities should be integrated into the general education classrooms whether or not they can meet traditional curricular standards” (Friend & Bursuck, 1999, p. 4). It involves bringing the support services to the child, rather than moving the child to the services, and requires only that the child will benefit from being in the class (“Special Education Inclusion”, 2001). Inclusion promotes the idea that students with disabilities should begin in the regular education classroom, and be removed only when appropriate services cannot be provided there. At this time, the student would receive their instruction in the special education classroom where services can more easily, and more appropriately, be provided (“Special Education Inclusion”, 2001).

When examining inclusion, it is important to take a brief look at its history. “Special education, in general, began in the United States in 1823” (Lipsky & Gartner, 1997, p.73). By 1905 and through the 1920’s, cities such as New York and Cleveland had begun establishing schools for students who were deemed as truant, delinquent, unteachable, and incorrigible. “In 1945, a panel at the Council for Exceptional Children convention recommended that children with educable mental retardation be included in general school settings” (Lipsky & Gartner, 1997, p. 74). Then, in the 1960’s, several studies were published questioning the benefit of special classes for children with mental retardation. Lipsky and Gartner (1997) summarized the findings as follows:

1. No available evidence suggested that the academic progress of children with mental retardation in special, separate classes was better than the academic progress of such children in general classrooms.
2. Labels accompanying special class placement were stigmatizing.
3. General education was capable of providing effective individual instruction to slow pupils or to those with mental retardation.

With a newfound commitment to special education, disability advocates won a major victory with the passage of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973, including the civil rights component in Section 504. This is a civil rights law that prevents discrimination against all individuals with disabilities in programs that receive federal funds, as do all public schools (Friend & Bursuck, 1999). Soon, Congress also enacted PL 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975. This law established an enforceable substantive right to a free appropriate public education for all students with disabilities. This meant that these students now had the right to be educated in their least restrictive environment (LRE) (Salend, 2001). The LRE concept promotes the placement of students with disabilities in general education classrooms, and the merger of special education and regular education had begun.

In the late 1980's, advocates for inclusion began proposing, "purposeful integration, whereby all students with disabilities, regardless of severity, would be educated in general classrooms" (Lipsky & Gartner, 1997, p. 79). As school personnel began to understand the philosophy of inclusion, its implementation became more

widespread throughout the country during the 1990's and into the new millennium (Lipsky & Gartner, 1997).

Today, the present trend in special education is toward inclusive practices with the best interests of each individual student in mind (Friend & Bursuck, 1999). Teachers have complex and varying attitudes toward inclusion. "Educators tend to agree with the principle of placing students with disabilities in general education classrooms, although some controversy still exists" (Salend, 2001, p. 29).

In general, middle and high school teachers tend to favor inclusion less than elementary teachers (Salend, 2001). Concerns that general educators have expressed toward inclusion include: the negative attitudes of others, insufficient support, training, and time to collaborate with others, the large size of their classes, and the difficulty in meeting the medical needs and behavioral challenges of students with disabilities and in designing and implementing appropriate instructional accommodations (Salend, 2001). Many general educators are fearful and feel unprepared to work with students with disabilities in their classrooms (Kochhar, West, Taymans, 2000).

General education teachers have also expressed positive outcomes of inclusion, which include: increased confidence in their teaching efficacy, greater awareness of themselves as positive role models for *all* students, more skill in meeting the needs of *all* students with and without disabilities, and acquaintance with new colleagues (Salend, 2001)

Successful inclusion relies a great deal on regular education teachers, as well as special education teachers, administrators, and parents. Their cooperation is critical and there is a need to further explore their attitudes, as well as the advantages and

disadvantages of inclusion and integrating students with disabilities into regular education classrooms.

Statement of the Problem

This study seeks to explore the advantages and disadvantages of placing students with varying disabilities into regular education classrooms. This is a topic that affects educators on a daily basis, and is the center of much controversy in the field of education.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to help educators and administrators more clearly understand the concept of inclusion, and the advantages and disadvantages of placing students with varying disabilities into regular education classrooms. This was accomplished through a comparative study of the research and literature associated with inclusion, as well as special education and regular education.

Research Objectives

This study addressed three main objectives. They were as follows:

1. To examine the advantages of the inclusion of special education students in regular education classrooms.
2. To examine the disadvantages of the inclusion of special education students in regular education classrooms.
3. To formulate recommendations to help both special education and regular education teachers come together in a positive way regarding the concept of inclusion.

Definition of Terms

For clarity and understanding, the following terms need to be defined:

At-risk – refers to students who have characteristics, live in an environment, or have experiences that make them more likely than others to fail in school (Friend & Bursuck, 1999).

Emotional behavioral disturbance – significant difficulty in the social/emotional domain, serious enough to interfere with the student's learning (Friend & Bursuck, 1999).

High School – grades nine, ten, eleven, and twelve.

Learning disability – a dysfunction in processing information typically found in language-based activities (Friend & Bursuck, 1999).

Least restrictive environment (LRE) - a school is required to educate students with disabilities as much as possible with their peers who do not have disabilities (Salend, 2001).

Mainstreaming – placing students with disabilities in general education settings only when they can meet traditional academic expectations with minimal assistance (Friend & Bursuck, 1999).

Mental retardation – having significant limitations in cognitive ability and adaptive behaviors (Friend & Bursuck, 1999).

Middle School – grades six, seven, and eight.

Related services – assistance required to enable a student to benefit from special education.

Special education – the specially designed instruction provided by the school district or other local education agency that meets the unique needs of students identified as disabled (Friend & Bursuck, 1999).

Speech or language impairments – difficulty in communicating with other because of causes other than maturation (Friend & Bursuck, 1999).

Students with disabilities – students who are eligible according to state and federal guidelines to receive special education services (Friend & Bursuck, 1999).

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

Introduction

The process towards inclusive education is just that – a process. It can be a rewarding, yet difficult journey to create an educational system where excellence and equality walk hand in hand (Frost & Pearpoint, 2004). Throughout the last several years, the topic of inclusion has been at the epicenter of debate among educators, administrators, and parents. Inclusion remains a controversial concept because it relates to educational and social values, as well as to our sense of individual worth (“Special Education Inclusion”, 2001). The purpose of this literature review is to gain a better understanding of what inclusion is, what inclusion is not, and to discuss the potential advantages and disadvantages of inclusion.

What is Inclusion?

Inclusion is a “philosophy that brings students, families, educators, and community members together to create schools and other social institutions based on acceptance, belonging, and community” (Salend, 2001, p. 5). In theory, inclusion is practiced in schools to establish collaborative, supportive, and nurturing environments for learners that are based on giving all students the services and accommodations that they need to learn, as well as respecting and learning from each other’s individual differences (Salend, 2001). Inclusion is not necessarily just focused on the students with disabilities. When implemented correctly it is also designed to be able to accommodate and respond to the needs of regular education students as well.

Salend (2001) stated that there are four main principals that provide a framework and summarize the philosophies on which inclusive practices are based:

1. Diversity – effective inclusion improves the educational system for all students by placing them together in general education classrooms, regardless of their learning ability, race, linguistic ability, economic status, gender, learning style, ethnicity, cultural background, religion, family structure, and sexual orientation. Inclusionary schools welcome, acknowledge, affirm, and celebrate the value of all learners by educating them together in high-quality age appropriate regular education classrooms in their neighborhood schools. All students have opportunities to learn and play together, and participate in educational, social, and recreational activities. These inclusionary practices, which promote acceptance, equity, and collaboration, are responsive to individual needs and embrace diversity. (p. 6)
2. Individual Needs – effective inclusion involves sensitivity to and acceptance of individual needs and differences. Educators cannot teach students without taking into account the factors that shape their students and make them unique. Forces such as disability, race, linguistic background, gender, and economic status interact and affect academic performance and socialization; therefore, educators, students, and family members must be sensitive to individual needs and differences. In inclusive classrooms, all

students are valued as individuals capable of learning and contributing to society. They are taught to appreciate diversity and to value and learn from each other's similarities and differences.

(p. 7)

3. Reflective Practice – effective inclusion requires reflective educators to modify their attitudes, teaching and classroom management practices, and curricula to accommodate individual needs. In inclusive classrooms, teachers are reflective practitioners who are flexible, responsive, and aware of students' needs. They think critically about their values and beliefs and routinely examine their own practices for self-improvement and to ensure that all students' needs are met. Educators individualize education for all students in terms of assessment techniques, curriculum accessibility, teaching strategies, technology, physical design adaptations, and a wide array of related services based on their needs. Students are given a multilevel and multimodality curriculum, as well as challenging educational and social experiences that are consistent with their abilities and needs. (p. 7)
4. Collaboration – effective inclusion is a group effort; it involves collaboration among educators, other professionals, students, families, and community agencies. The support and services that students need are provided in the regular education classroom. People work cooperatively and reflectively, sharing resources,

responsibilities, skills, decisions, and advocacy for the students' benefit. School districts provide support, training, time, and resources to restructure their programs to support individuals in working collaboratively to address students' needs. (p. 7)

Factors that Contributed to the Movement to Educate Students in Inclusive Classrooms

In today's educational system, "the number of school districts implementing inclusion for their students with disabilities has increased significantly" (Salend, 2001, p. 14). Salend (2001) states that there are nine factors contributing to this movement, and they are as follows:

1. Normalization – Inclusion is rooted in this principle. Normalization aims to provide social interactions and experiences that parallel those of society to adults and children with disabilities. The philosophy of educating students with disabilities in regular education classrooms rests on the principle that educational opportunities for students with disabilities should resemble as closely as possible the opportunities and activities enjoyed by their peers who are not disabled. (p. 14)
2. Deinstitutionalization – Up until very recently, people with disabilities were feared, ridiculed, abandoned, or placed in institutions that isolated them from the general public. Because of the terrible conditions found in many institutions, as well as a growing awareness of the negative effects of institutionalization,

smaller, community-based independent living centers were developed for people with disabilities. (p. 14)

3. Early Intervention and Early Childhood Programs – The effectiveness of early intervention and early childhood programs has promoted the placement of students with disabilities in regular education classrooms. These programs have increased the physical, motor, cognitive, language, speech, socialization, and self-help skills of many children from birth to age 6. They have also reduced the likelihood that secondary disabilities will occur; empowered families to promote their child’s development; and decreased the probability that children with disabilities will be socially dependent as adults. (p. 15)
4. Technological Advances – Technological advances have changed the quality of life for many people with disabilities. Technology has helped them to gain access, independence, and achievement. Assistive and instructional technology allows students with communication, physical, learning, and sensory disabilities to gain more control over their lives and environment, as well as greater access to society and regular education classrooms. (p. 15)
5. Civil Rights Movement and Resulting Litigation – The precedent for much special education related litigation was established by the landmark case “Brown v. Topeka Board of Education” in 1954. The decision in this civil rights case determined that segregating

students in schools based on race, even if other educational variables appear to be equal, is unconstitutional. This refutation of the doctrine” separate but equal” served as the underlying argument in court actions brought by families to ensure that their children with disabilities received a free, appropriate education.

(p. 16)

6. Advocacy Groups – Fueled by the momentum of civil rights campaigns, advocacy groups of family members, professionals, and individuals with disabilities banded together to seek civil rights and greater societal acceptance for individuals with disabilities. Along with alerting the public to issues related to people with disabilities, advocacy groups lobbied state and federal legislators, brought lawsuits, and protested policies of exclusion and segregation. The result was greater societal acceptance and rights for people with disabilities. Advocacy groups have also created a disability culture that celebrates and affirms disability, fosters community among people with disabilities, promotes disability awareness, and challenges society’s conventional notions of disability. (p. 17)

7. Segregated Nature of Special Schools and Classes – As institutionalization of people with disabilities declined, the number of special schools and special classes within public schools for students with disabilities rose. However, educators began to

question the segregation of these students. They argued that special education classes for students with mild disabilities were unjustifiable because they served as a form of homogenous grouping and tracking. They also cited studies in the late 1960's and early 1970's showing that students with disabilities labeled as "mildly disabled" made as much or more progress in the regular education classroom as they did in the special classes, as well as studies showing that labeling reduces the student's self-concept and the teacher's expectations for success in school. Soon, other studies on the effectiveness of special education programs began to show that progress aside, students with disabilities have high dropout and incarceration rates and low employment rates. (p. 18)

8. Disproportionate Representation – Concerns were raised about the disproportionate representation of students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in special education classes that segregated these students, and many saw inclusive placements as a way to counter this segregation. Disproportionate representation is the presence of students from a specific group in an educational program that is higher or lower than one would expect based on their representation in the general population of students. Issues of disproportionality are multifaceted and shaped by the cultural experiences of students and professionals, so educators need to examine whether their policies, practices, attitudes, and behaviors

result in disparate treatment (treating students differently because of their characteristics and membership in a group) or disparate impact (treating all students similarly) for students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. (p. 18)

9. Educational Reform – The challenge to reform our educational system means that schools must restructure their programs to help all students, including those with disabilities, meet higher learning standards. All students must be included in high-stakes assessment aligned with the higher standards; this makes schools accountable for educating all students. Thus, rather than segregating students with disabilities based on their performance on standardized achievement tests, many schools are unifying regular and special education into one service delivery system to provide all students with a regular education. (p. 19)

Why is Inclusion Controversial?

As mentioned, few topics in education create as much controversy as inclusion. Few professionals would question the appropriateness of including students with disabilities in regular education classrooms (Friend & Bursuck, 1999). “However, considerable debate continues about which students should be part of general education classes and how much time they should spend there” (Friend & Bursuck, 1999, p. 14). On one side of the issue are those who feel that all students belong in the regular education setting nearly all of the time. Friend & Bursuck (1999) state that advocates of inclusion make the following points:

1. All students have a basic human right to attend school with other students who are their peers; this can only occur on a single school system where all students are members of one learning community.
2. With support, all students benefit from education in inclusive settings.
3. When students leave the general education classroom to go to a special education setting, they are stigmatized by their classmates and the labels associated with having a disability.
4. Some students with disabilities receive assistance from several professionals, which means that the student leaves the classroom several times a day, and the student loses valuable instruction time during these transitions.
5. The teaching approaches used in separate special education classes are in many cases not significantly different from those used in the regular education classrooms.

On the other side of the issue of inclusion are those who believe that only students who can meet certain standards or maintain a certain rate of academic progress should be included in regular education classrooms (Friend & Bursuck, 1999). Friend & Bursuck (1999) state that the people on this side of inclusion support it only under certain conditions, and they offer these arguments:

1. To say that all students should be in general education settings is to deny the unique characteristics of students with disabilities, and it denies them the right to an individualized education.

2. In the past, many students, especially those with disabilities related to learning and behavior, too often have been relegated to special education classes when they could succeed in a general education setting. However, some students do need the specialized, structured environment and the highly individualized services that a special education class can provide.
3. The general education classroom is not always the least restrictive environment; some of the services that student with disabilities need cannot be provided in the regular education classroom without calling attention to student differences and disrupting the entire class.
4. General education classrooms and teachers who work there are not necessarily equipped to manage the learning needs of some students with disabilities.
5. Students in inclusive situations and their classroom teachers should receive sufficient support services, and often do not.

Most educators' views on inclusion fall somewhere between these two extremes.

“Many educators agree that students with disabilities too often have been educated in isolated settings that minimize instead of maximize their potential, but they recognize that for some students the general education setting is occasionally but not always the least restrictive environment” (Friend & Bursuck, 1999, p. 14).

Inclusion Versus Mainstreaming

The terms *inclusion* and *mainstreaming* are often used interchangeably in education today. Because the concept of inclusion grew out of mainstreaming and shares many of its philosophical goals, these terms mean different things to different people (Salend, 2001). This inconsistency in usage often leads to confusion about what educators mean when they talk about inclusion (“Learning Disabilities”, 1994). Mainstreaming is the term for placing students with disabilities in regular education classrooms only when they can meet the traditional academic expectations with minimal assistance, or when those expectations are not relevant (Friend & Bursuck, 1999). “The definition and scope of mainstreaming can vary greatly from any interactions between students who do and do not have disabilities to more specific integration of students with disabilities into the social and instructional activities of the general education classroom” (Salend, 2001, p. 10). Proponents of mainstreaming generally assume that a student must earn his or her opportunity to be placed in regular education classes by demonstrating their ability to keep up with the work assigned by the regular education classroom teacher (“Special Education Inclusion”, 2001). This concept is closely related to the traditional form of special education service delivery.

Inclusion is a newer term used to describe the placement of students with disabilities in regular education classes for all or nearly all of the school day, whether or not they can meet the traditional curricular standards (“Learning Disabilities”, 1994). This involves a commitment to educating students with disabilities, to the maximum extent possible, in the school and classroom that they would otherwise attend. Inclusion involves bringing the support system and services to the child, rather than moving the

child to the services (“Special Education Inclusion”, 2001). Inclusion only requires that students with disabilities will benefit from being in the regular education class, rather than having to keep up, academically, with the other students.

In addition to problems with definition in regards to inclusion and mainstreaming, it also should be understood that there is often a philosophical or conceptual distinction made between the two (“Special Education Inclusion”, 2001). Those who support the idea of mainstreaming believe that students with disabilities first and foremost belong in the special education environment and that they must earn their way into the regular education classroom. However, those who support inclusion believe that students with disabilities should begin in the regular education environment and be removed only when appropriate services cannot be provided there (“Special Education Inclusion”, 2001). Furthermore, advocates of inclusion believe that students with disabilities “should not be routinely removed from general education classrooms to receive assistance because doing so highlights their disabilities, disrupts their education, and teaches them to be dependent” (Friend & Bursuck, 1999, p. 4)

What is the Least Restrictive Environment?

“Both inclusion and mainstreaming are rooted in the concept of the least restrictive environment” (Salend, 2001, p. 11). The least restrictive environment requires schools to educate students with varying disabilities as much as possible with their non-disabled peers. The least restrictive environment is determined on an individual basis, and is determined on each student’s educational needs rather than the student’s disability. (Salend, 2001). “The least restrictive environment concept promotes the placement of students with disabilities in general education classrooms. It also means that students can

be shifted to self-contained special education classes, specialized schools, and residential program only when their school performance indicates that even with supplementary aids and services, they cannot be educated satisfactorily in a general education classroom” (Salend, 2001, p. 11).

The least restrictive environment concept also encourages that students with disabilities attend the school that is as close as possible to their homes and it promotes interaction with other students in their neighborhood. “The participation of students with disabilities in all parts of the school program, including extracurricular activities, also is an important aspect of the least restrictive environment” (Salend, 2001, p. 11). The least restrictive environment also correlates to the principle of natural proportions. According to this principle, the classroom should reflect the ratio of the larger population, including both students with and without disabilities.

“To implement the least restrictive environment and organize the delivery of special education services, school districts use a continuum of educational placements ranging from the highly integrated setting of the general education classroom to the highly segregated setting where instruction is delivered in hospitals and institutions” (Salend, 2001, p. 11). This continuum ranges from the most to the least restrictive educational placements for students, although as you would expect, variations do exist. A student is placed in their least restrictive environment based on their needs, skills, abilities, and motivation (Salend, 2001). As soon as it’s recognized, a student moves to a less restrictive environment as quickly as possible. In addition, a student moves to a more segregated environment only when it is absolutely necessary.

Salend (2001) presented the following list of least restrictive environment placement options, in order of least restrictive to most restrictive:

1. General education classroom placement with few or no supportive services – the least restrictive environment is the general education classroom with few or no supportive services.
2. General education classroom placement with few or no supportive services – similar to option one, however the general education classroom teacher and the student receive collaborative services from ancillary support personnel in the general education classroom.
3. General education classroom placement with itinerant specialist assistance – teaching takes place in the general education classroom, and the student also receives supportive services from itinerant teachers.
4. General education classroom placement with resource room assistance – resource room teachers offer direct services to students with disabilities, usually in a separate resource room within the school.
5. Special education classroom placement with part time in the general education classroom – the student's primary placement is in a special education classroom within the same school building as non-disabled peers.

6. Full-time special education classroom – similar to option five, however contact with non-disabled peers typically is exclusively social and teaching takes place in a separate classroom.
7. Special day school – students attend an alternative school different from that of their neighborhood peers.
8. Residential school – residential programs are designed to serve students with more severe disabilities where the students live at the school and participate in a 24-hour program.
9. Homebound instruction – this option is for students such as those who are recovering from surgery or an illness, who may have been suspended from school, or who may require homebound instruction; a teacher teaches the student at home.
10. Hospital or institution – while placing students with severe disabilities in hospitals and institutions has been reduced by the deinstitutionalization movement, it does still exist. As with the other placement options, education must be part of this program, it should be viewed as short term, and an emphasis should be placed on moving these individuals to a less restrictive environment.

Many factors in the history of education, including judicial decisions, have established guidelines that must be considered when implementing the least restrictive environment concept for students with disabilities. With all factors considered, it is suggested in the least restrictive environment concept that students with disabilities “have a right to be educated in general education settings” (Salend, 2001, p. 13). Salend (2001)

states that before placing a student with a disability into their least restrictive environment, school districts should consider the following:

1. The anticipated educational benefits in the general education setting with appropriate supplementary aids and services compared with the benefits of the special education classroom.
2. The noneducational, social, and self-concept benefits that are likely to occur in the regular education setting, including interactions with classmates.
3. The impact of the student with a disability on the education of classmates without disabilities.
4. The effect of the student with a disability on teachers and their instructional time.
5. The cost of educating the student with a disability in the regular education setting with supplementary aids and services, and the effect of these costs on the district's resources for educating other students.

Three Models for Inclusion

Today, as the majority of schools decide to move towards inclusive practices in some form or another, there are three models of inclusion that they may choose to work from. Lipsky & Garter (1997), identified the following models for general education and special education teachers to follow when implementing inclusion in their school district:

1. Consultant Model – In a building with a low incidence of students with special needs and overall low student population, this model

would be compatible. The special education teacher is made available to re-teach a difficult skill or to help the student(s) practice a newly acquired skill. This is a non-intrusive approach that provides the students with special needs with at least two teachers to ask for help with curriculum problems. Regularly scheduled meetings are recommended rather than communication on an as needed basis.

2. **Teaming Model** – Using this model, the special education teacher is assigned to one grade level team with one planning period per week for the team. The special education teacher provides student information, possible instructional strategies, modification ideas for assignments and/or tests, and behavior modification strategies. The team meets on a regular basis, establishing consistent communication among the team members. The team model is designed so teachers are not working independently to achieve the success of their students. Instead, all team members, both regular education and special education, work together and broaden their knowledge in various areas.
3. **Collaborative, Co-Teaching Model** – Using this model, the regular education and special education teachers work together to teach students with and without disabilities in a shared classroom. Both are responsible for instruction planning and delivery, student achievement, assessment, and discipline. Students receive age-

appropriate academics, support services, and possible modified instruction. This model provides a minimum of scheduling problems, continuous and ongoing communication between educators, and lower student to teacher ratio than the Teaming or Consultant models. Collaborative teaching can be organized in five different ways:

- (a) One teacher, One Support – This model works well for teaching a unit where one teacher is more of an expert than the other. Students still have two teachers to ask questions of and get help.
- (b) Parallel Teaching Design – In this model, the teacher divides the class into groups and teaches them simultaneously. The student to teacher ratio is low, more time is devoted to learning versus students waiting for help, opportunities for re-teaching are immediate, support for the teacher is present, communication is constant, and behavior problems can be minimized.
- (c) Station Teaching – This model has the teacher divide up content and the students so that the teachers or the students rotate at the end of a unit. It is ideal for subject matter taught in units with no particular sequence. Benefits include the opportunities for re-teaching are immediate, the student to

teacher ratio is low, teachers become experts with material, and communication among teachers is constant.

(d) Alternative Teaching Design – In this model, one teacher leads an enrichment or alternative activity while a second teacher re-teaches a small group of students if they are having difficulty with content. The subject of math is compatible with this design where a lot of re-teaching is done.

(e) Team Teaching – This model has teachers work together to deliver the same material to the entire class. Teachers circulate around the class providing immediate re-teaching and it also provides a low student to teacher ratio.

What Does an Inclusive Classroom Look Like?

Inclusive classrooms look different all of the time because the environment is created by whatever interactions the teachers (both regular education and special education) have as a group or as individuals in the group (“What Does an Inclusive Classroom Look Like?”, 2004). Hopefully, “it is a classroom where learning often happens in small groups with peers helping and supporting each other” (“What Does an Inclusive Classroom Look Like?”, para. 3, 2004). There is a lot of time for social interaction, and the interactions are meaningful to the curricular expectations. The classroom is student-centered and the students have a high level of responsibility for creating their classroom. They help structure the rules and are expected to follow them and to meet whatever expectations have been contracted (“What Does an Inclusive Classroom Look Like?”, 2004). An inclusive classroom is also “a classroom where

students know others will be doing different things and the issue of fairness does not come into play because that is just the way it is” (“What Does an Inclusive Classroom Look Like?”, para. 6, 2004). This can be an important issue to address with all of the students to avoid feelings of resentment and jealousy among regular education and special education students.

Dr. Christopher Kliewer, who taught in an inclusive classroom for four years, offers the following broad outline for an inclusive classroom (“Content/Behavior Strategies”, 2004):

1. Inclusive education is nothing more than good teaching for all students.
2. Students take responsibility for their education; they help create the structure of the classroom, including helping to establish rules and academic programs.
3. Teachers have high expectations that all students will meet the rules and academic challenges.
4. Families are involved.
5. Curriculum is focused on humanity, on one’s worth. The students tell their own stories or other’s stories and learn about things that matter in their lives.
6. Teachers throw out the worksheets and basal reader system; they create curriculum that involves students.

Advantages of Inclusion for Students With Disabilities

With the issue of inclusion, there are advocates on both sides of the issue.

“Inclusion proponents claim that segregated programs are detrimental to students and do

not meet the original goals of special education” (“Special Education Inclusion”, 2001). Recent research has confirmed that there are many beneficial effects of inclusion education for students with disabilities when these students are put into regular education classrooms (“Special Education Inclusion”, 2001).

When a student with a disability is put into a regular education classroom, there are many positives that can come about for that student. Typically, it can provide a more stimulating environment versus the traditional special education classroom environment (“Rationale for and Benefits of Inclusion”, 2004). This environment often leads to enriched growing and learning for the special education student (“What Does an Inclusive Classroom Look Like?”, 2004). Research reveals that students with disabilities that are put into inclusion programs have more engaged instructional time, and have greater exposure to academic activities (Salend, 2001). This stimulating environment hopefully will lead to greater academic success.

There are also role models, in the regular education students, who can facilitate communication, social, and adaptive behaviors (“Rationale for and Benefits of Inclusion”, 2004). The regular education students can provide examples for appropriate classroom behavior, and appropriate social behavior for the special education student. This modeling often happens naturally since the expectations in the regular education classroom are quite high. Often, if students with disabilities are isolated in the special education classroom, they are not exposed to any type of appropriate student modeling.

Another advantage of inclusion for a special education student is the opportunity to make new friends and share new experiences (“Rationale for and Benefits of Inclusion”, 2004). The student is exposed to a whole new sector of the student

population that they are typically not exposed to in the special education classroom. They are able to develop friendships with their same age peers, which leads to greater acceptance by their peers in and out of the school community. The regular education students “become conscious of the person first and concern for labeling fades (Wood, 1993, p. 20). This also enables students with disabilities to develop friendships in their neighborhoods. A parent of a child with a disability who attend Waverly Public Schools in Waverly, Iowa made the following comment in regards to having her son be in the regular education classroom (“Philosophy of Inclusive Education”, 2004):

After my son is put of public school, he’ll be living and working with a diverse population of people. I want him to be accepted after he’s out of school as much as when he’s in school. For me, that’s why inclusion is a key while he’s in school. (p. 1)

Next, inclusion also can enhance the student with a disability’s self respect and self esteem (“Benefits of Inclusive Classrooms for All”, 1999). When they start to make connections with regular education students and teachers, they begin to feel a sense of self worth. They feel good about themselves, and about their overall school experience. They can begin to see themselves as an individual who can share some of the same experiences and opportunities as their non-disabled peers (“Benefits of Inclusive Classrooms for All”, 1999).

Improved competence in IEP objectives is another advantage of inclusion for a student with a disability. Literature has documented that a student with a disability can make strong academic gains in the regular education classroom, with the appropriate supports when necessary (“Rationale for and Benefits of Inclusion”, 2004). Research has

also showed that for students with disabilities, inclusion results in improved standardized test scores, reading performance, mastery of IEP goals, and grades (Salend, 2001). An inclusive setting can enhance the usual education program, and enrich their overall educational environment (“Rationale for and Benefits of Inclusion”, 2004).

A final advantage of inclusion for a student with a disability relates to cost effectiveness. “A 1989 study found that over a fifteen year period, the employment rate for high school graduates with special needs who had been in segregated programs was 53%. But for special needs graduates from integrated programs the employment rate was 73%. Furthermore, the cost of educating students in segregated programs was double that for educating them in integrated programs” (“Special Education Inclusion, p. 6, 2001). “A similar study in 1988 showed that the integrated classrooms for students with special needs was more cost-effective than the resource program, even though achievement in reading, math, and language remained basically the same in the two service delivery methods” (“Special Education Inclusion”, p. 6, 2001). This shows that in a time where many school districts are struggling with their budgets, inclusion of students with disabilities into regular education classrooms can be a cost-effective way of relieving some of the current budget shortfalls.

Advantages of Inclusion for Regular Education Students

Along with there being advantages to inclusion for students with disabilities, there can also be advantages for regular education students. One advantage is that it allows students to be more accepting of differences among individuals (“Rationale for and Benefits of Inclusion”, 2004). Inclusion can help the regular education students understand individual differences, the needs of others, and begin to understand and deal

with disability in their own lives (Salend, 2001). Through contact with students with disabilities, regular education students can learn that physical, intellectual, and emotional differences are part of everyone's world (Wood, 1993). Students begin to have a small taste of the diversity of society on a much smaller scale within the classroom. Hopefully, this experience will create tolerance and respect for others with diverse characteristics ("Benefits of Inclusive Classrooms for All", 1999). Dr. Susan Etscheidt, ("Philosophy of Inclusive Education", 2004) who is a Professor of Special Education at the University of Northern Iowa, made the following statement regarding inclusion and its benefits to regular education students:

Inclusion is based on the belief that people/adults work in inclusive communities; work with people of different races, religions, aspirations, and disabilities. In the same vein, children of all ages should learn and grow in environments that resemble the environments that they will eventually work in. (p. 1)

Another advantage to inclusion for regular education students is that they become more familiar with their classmates that have disabilities ("Rationale for and Benefits of Inclusion", 2004). This, in turn, hopefully takes away the fear and uneasiness that regular education students can often feel in regards to their disabled classmates. They can start to develop sensitivity towards their classmates' limitations, and develop empathetic skills towards them as well ("Benefits of Inclusive Classrooms for All", 1999).

Lastly, when schools practice inclusion, the regular education students can develop important skills necessary for their adult lives. These skills include leadership, increased abilities to help and teach others, mentoring, tutoring, self-empowerment, and

improved self-esteem (“Benefits of Inclusive Classrooms for All”, 1999). In inclusive classrooms, regular education students are often given the opportunity to step into the teacher role, and assist and teach their classmates with disabilities. This can make them feel good about themselves with what they are able to accomplish with that student, and the fact that they are making a difference. Many regular education students will embrace this challenge, and willfully help and care for their classmates with disabilities.

Advantages of Inclusion for Regular Education Teachers

When discussing the issue of inclusion, it would be discriminate to leave out the impact that it has on regular education teachers. They can be thrown into practicing inclusion in their classroom with little warning, and be expected to carry it out flawlessly. However, research has shown that there are many advantages to inclusion for regular education teachers. One advantage is that inclusion creates an awareness and appreciation of individual differences in all students (“Rationale for and Benefits of Inclusion”, 2004). Regular education teachers can begin to recognize that all students have strengths that can be beneficial and important to their entire classroom, and these strengths can be built upon to create a meaningful school experience (“Benefits of Inclusive Classrooms for All”, 1999).

Another advantage of inclusion for regular education teachers is that inclusion allows them to learn new teaching techniques that can help all of their students (Rationale for and Benefits of Inclusion”, 2004). When students with disabilities are in a regular education classroom, the traditional method of teaching (such as lecturing, note taking, etc.) may not be appropriate for all students. When this is the case, inclusion allows regular education teachers to be creative with their teaching methods, avoid monotony,

and come up with new ways of delivering the information that will be appropriate for all students in their classroom. Inclusion can also create an awareness of the importance of direct individual instruction for all students, which can often get lost when using traditional teaching methods (“Benefits of Inclusive Classrooms for All”, 1999).

The last advantage of inclusion for regular education teachers is that inclusion allows them to develop teamwork skills (“Benefits of Inclusive Classrooms for All”, 1999). When practicing inclusion, regular education teachers typically will need to stay in regular contact with many other school professionals such as other regular education teachers, special education teachers, specialists, or the principal. With all these minds effectively working together, it can increase ways of creatively addressing challenges that inclusion might present (“Benefits of Inclusive Classrooms for All”, 1999). This teamwork can also teach collaborative problem solving skills, acquire different ways of perceiving challenges, enhance accountability, as well as increase staff morale and staff relationships as a result of many different staff members working together on a common student issue (“Benefits of Inclusive Classrooms for All”, 1999).

Disadvantages of Inclusion for Students with Disabilities

On the other side of the issue of inclusion, there are many who see it doing more harm than good for all persons involved. These opponents of inclusion view it as a policy driven by unrealistic expectations where schools try to force all students into the mold of regular education (“Special Education Inclusion”, 2001). The literature has shown that when not implemented appropriately, inclusion can have many detrimental effects on those involved with it.

One disadvantage to inclusion for students with disabilities is that too often the socialization part of their education takes precedence over the academic part of their education (“Education Integration”, 1998). Opponents to inclusion feel that for students with disabilities, socialization cannot be the primary goal of education without regard to teaching their academics as well (“Education Integration”, 1998). Many inclusion movements are based on having the students with disabilities sit in regular education classes and look normal, whether they are participating in the educational program or not (“Education Integration”, 1998). This can be detrimental to the students’ academic progress, and many important skills fail to be taught just for the sake of having the student physically be in the regular education classroom.

Along those same lines, another disadvantage to inclusion is that some students with disabilities need the special education classroom to get the maximum benefit of their education (“Education Integration”, 1998). There are students that need the special education classroom where there is a small class size, limited distractions, more one-on-one instruction, and an individualized academic program so that they are learning the important skills that they need to be successful once they are out of school. With these students, you want to be able to hit them hard in terms of education with reading, writing, math, and all other basic skills (“Education Integration”, 1998). In a regular education classroom, most students are not able to get this type of academic intensity.

Another disadvantage with inclusion for students with disabilities is that they often leave the regular education classrooms with low self-esteem and a low self-concept (“Education Integration”, 1998). Some special education students have “reported that life in the mainstream was characterized by fear, frustration, ridicule, and isolation” (Salend,

2001, p. 27). When in a regular education classroom, students with disabilities can see what their peers can do, and what they cannot. As a result, they often feel depressed, overwhelmed, and academically inadequate compared to their non-disabled classmates ("Education Integration", 1998). Pat Pasquale ("Education Integration", 1998) made the following comment in regards to her eleven-year-old daughter, Janine Pasquale, who was born with Downs Syndrome:

If she was in an inclusive classroom, I don't think she would have the self-esteem that she has, she really thinks she's wonderful, she's very confident with herself and she's very happy in what she does accomplish. I think if she was in a regular class, she would really realize what she cannot do. (p. 4)

The last disadvantage of inclusion for special education students is that many feel these students will be teased or harmed by regular education students, and that they will not be safe ("Benefits of Inclusive Classrooms for All", 1999). Bringing students with disabilities into the regular education classroom can cause problems when the regular education students are not ready to accept that their peers with disabilities are going to be their classmates once again. They may find the students with disabilities as easy targets and focus on them for harassment, name-calling, or teasing. This can cause added stress and anxiety for the students with disabilities, and aide in the inclusion process being unsuccessful.

Disadvantages of Inclusion for Regular Education Students

One disadvantage of inclusion for regular education students is that an inclusive classroom is typically more active than a non-inclusive classroom, and some regular

education students see this as disruptive for their own learning (“Preparing for Inclusion”, 2004). Some factors that might make an inclusive classroom distracting for regular education students would include the addition of one or more lead teachers, special education aides, students with disabilities coming in and out of the classroom for various reasons, or students with disabilities making involuntary vocalizations as a result of their disability. Some regular education students are not able to concentrate and block out these extra distractions, and their own academic progress could suffer. Many opponents to inclusion feel that it is not fair to jeopardize the entire regular education class’ academics for only one or two special education students (“Preparing for Inclusion”, 2004).

The second disadvantage to inclusion for regular education students is that it can create a degree of resentment among regular education students and special education students (“Preparing for Inclusion”, 2004). Regular education students will often see the amount of special instruction or one-on-one attention that the students with disabilities are receiving, and wonder why they are not receiving the same amount of attention. Regular education students may also see the modified assignments and tests that the students with disabilities are doing, or that their workload is smaller than theirs. All these things can lead to jealousy and bitterness toward their peers with disabilities. In turn, this can result in regular education students teasing and tormenting the students with disabilities, as well as inhibit any positive relationships that were forming between the two groups of students.

Disadvantages of Inclusion for Regular Education Teachers

As mentioned, implementing inclusion into schools has a huge impact on regular education teachers. For regular education teachers, “inclusion without resources, without support, without teacher preparation time, without commitment, without a vision statement, without restructuring, without staff development, won’t work” (“What Does an Inclusive Classroom Look Like?”, 2004”). The first disadvantage of inclusion for regular education teachers is the constant thought of fear (Forest & Pearpoint, 2004). Since fear is the dominant emotion, many regular education teachers fear that they are going to fail at successfully and appropriately carrying out inclusion in their classroom. They realize that they are responsible for all of the students in their classroom, and may not have the training to teach and deal with students with disabilities. These fears often can result in a negative attitude towards inclusion, the students with disabilities, and their teaching abilities and competence level (Forest & Pearpoint, 2004).

Another disadvantage of inclusion for regular education teachers is reluctance and discomfort of giving up control of their classroom (Forest & Pearpoint, 2004). Many regular education teachers realize quickly that if inclusion is going to be successful, they are not going to be able to do it on their own. However, many regular education teachers are reluctant to admit that they do not have all the answers, and do not feel comfortable handing over any amount of control to another teacher in their own classroom (Forest & Pearpoint, 2004). Many opponents to inclusion agree with the idea that regular education teachers should not have to adjust what they are doing in their classroom to meet the needs of only a few students, or share control of their classroom with anyone else.

The last disadvantage of inclusion for regular education teachers is the lack of training and support that many regular education teachers receive when told to turn their classroom into one that practices inclusion (Forest & Pearpoint, 2004). Many regular education teachers receive minimal training on how to effectively teach students with disabilities, or what classroom strategies they should use to best meet their needs. These skills are often learned on the fly, and can take some time to master. Also, many regular education teachers, as well as special education teachers, are not given the proper amount of instructional planning and collaboration time (Forest & Pearpoint, 2004). All these issues combined can often lead to frustration by the regular education teacher, and, again, negativity towards the inclusion concept and the students with disabilities in their classroom.

CHAPTER THREE

Summary, Conclusion, and Recommendations

Introduction

This chapter reviews the purpose of the study and summarizes the information found in the Review of Literature chapter. A critique of the findings and a conclusion was drawn, also based on the results found in the Review of Literature chapter. The researcher will conclude with recommendations to educators and school administrators.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine the literature pertaining to inclusion, factors that contributed to the movement to educate students in inclusive classrooms, why inclusion is controversial, inclusion versus mainstreaming, what the least restrictive environment is, models of inclusion, what an inclusive classroom looks like, and the advantages and disadvantages for special education students, regular education students, and regular education teachers when placing students with disabilities into regular education classrooms.

Conclusion

Inclusion is a highly controversial and emotional topic in education. Special educators, regular educators, and administrators continue to have mixed reactions towards inclusion. Their attitudes are related to their success in implementing an inclusionary program. This success, in turn, is dependent upon administrative support, available resources, adequate time to plan and prepare, and the appropriate training that they receive to put into practice an effective inclusion program in their school.

When a successful inclusion program is carried out in a school, research has shown many benefits for both students with disabilities and regular education students. These benefits can extend far beyond their school years, and have shown to greatly affect the students in their adult life as well.

However, when an inclusion program is put into place without the proper resources and training, research has also shown that there can be many negative affects on students with disabilities and regular education students. When this is the case, many students and professionals involved in the inclusion program begin to have a pessimistic view on the idea of inclusion, and can become much more unwilling to put forth a genuine effort to make it successful.

As the researcher discussed in the previous chapter, there are many factors that have lead to the current movement towards schools promoting inclusive education. A few of these factors include legislation, civil rights movement, normalization, technological advances, and educational reform. These factors, and others, have guided school leaders towards believing that students can learn side by side, yet still have different educational goals. These factors have also shown that it is important that all students have the opportunities to interact with each other, develop friendships, and share the same school experiences. It is important to note that the inclusive education movement recognizes the fact that inclusion may not be appropriate for all students. To force these students into the inclusion mold is as detrimental and unfair to them as exclusion once was years ago.

The impact of inclusion continues to offer a variety of perspectives. The foundations of inclusion, various philosophies on the execution of inclusion, as well as

some of the challenges associated with inclusion were discussed in the previous two chapters. While special educators, regular educators, and administrators will continue to have varying opinions on inclusion, the researcher found it remains clear that social and academic performance of all students continues to be the top priority in our schools.

Recommendations

The results of this comprehensive review of literature has led the researcher to the following recommendations regarding the issue of inclusion:

For regular education teachers:

1. Before any new inclusion programs are developed and implemented, the building staff must agree on a clearly stated philosophy of education for all students. All teachers and support staff should be involved in any decision-making, planning, and evaluation processes for students.
2. Work towards bringing the special education and regular education programs together in a positive way – if possible, it should be one system.
3. When developing an inclusion program, highly consider the ideas of multiple teaching approaches such as team teaching, co-teaching, peer tutoring programs, etc. This will make the transition to an inclusion program much smoother for you, and the students.
4. To the fullest extent possible, involve parents and students in any decision-making processes.

5. Acquire a variety of teaching strategies and know how to use them effectively.
6. View each student in your class as an exciting opportunity to become a better teacher, rather than a problem that needs to be coped with.
7. Open all lines of communication with school administrators to express your feelings and attitudes towards any potential inclusion program that may affect you classroom.

For administrators:

1. Have a vision for what you want your school to look like if you educate all of your students to the appropriate extent possible.
2. Help to plan the agenda for achieving the goals of your vision.
3. Understand the role of each professional involved in providing equal educational opportunities to both special education students and regular education students.
4. Structure and organize the school day and the teachers' schedules to allow for appropriate planning and collaboration time for regular education teachers and special education teachers.
5. Provide staff training and continuing professional development to sufficiently prepare all professionals involved in a potential inclusionary program.

6. In classrooms that practice inclusion, reduce class sizes and/or increase the number of teachers/para professionals in the classroom.
7. Open all lines of communication with regular education teachers and special education teachers in regards to the positive or negative progress of an inclusion program, as well as any concerns or praise that you might have about the education of all of the students in your school.

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