

Selected Articles and Reports Arguing Inclusion Does Create Better Academic and Social Outcomes:

Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities (and related groups)

Gee, K., Gonzalez, M., & Cooper, C. (2020). Outcomes of Inclusive Versus Separate Placements: A Matched Pairs Comparison Study. *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities*, 1540796920943469.

Students (grades kindergarten through 12th grade) with significant cognitive disabilities included in general education 80% or more of the day made significant gains in literacy, numeracy, and communication compared with their matched pairs who were placed in self-contained classrooms.

Jackson, L., Agran, M., Lansey, K., Baker, D., Matthews, S., Fitzpatrick, H., Jameson, M., Ryndak, D., Burnette, K., & Taub, D. (in press). Examination of setting ecologies within and across different types of Placement for elementary students with complex support needs. *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities*.

IES national research project on services for students with severe disabilities. Research has begun to identify the breadth and complexity of contextual variables that impact the opportunities, services, and supports students with complex support needs receive across different classroom placements. Indeed, as Jackson et al. (2008-2009) suggested, placement in and of itself may determine the schooling experiences of these students in ways that either enhance or constrain the outcomes of the educational process. The present study examined an array of contextual, curricular, instructional, and student support variables in relation to four types of placement in which students with complex support needs might be placed for educational services by their Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams. Placements were defined in terms of percent of the school day a student had access to age-level general education classes, ranging between no access (separate school) to 80% or higher (“inclusive”). The investigation used ecological surveys completed, respectively, by a national sample of special and general educators and administrators. Completed surveys were obtained for 117 students with complex support needs across all four types of placement. The findings revealed potential relationships between a number of ecological variables and placement, suggesting that: (a) student opportunities and experiences may vary systematically in relation to the amount of access they have to general education classrooms; and (b) the application of the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) process, with its tacit endorsement of segregated settings and specialized programs, may in fact negatively impact the education of many of these students.

Kleinert, H., Towles-Reeves, E., Quenemoen, R., Thurlow, M., Fluegge, L., Weseman, L., & Kerbel, A. (2015). Where students with the most significant cognitive disabilities are taught: Implications for general curriculum access. *Exceptional Children, 81*(3), 312-328.

Surveying 15 states and 39,837 students, this study examined the extent to which students who took an alternate assessment based on alternate achievement standards in the 2010–2011 school year had access to regular education settings. It also examined the extent to which that access correlated with expressive communication, use of an augmentative or alternative communication (AAC) system, and reading and math skill levels. The vast majority (93%) of students were served in self-contained classrooms, separate schools, or home settings, whereas only 7% were served in regular education or resource room placements. There was a significant, positive correlation between expressive communication and reading and math skill levels with increasingly inclusive classroom settings and a significant, negative correlation between use of AAC and more inclusive settings.

Kurth, J., & Mastergeorge, A. M. (2010). Individual education plan goals and services for adolescents with autism: Impact of age and educational setting. *The Journal of Special Education, 44*(3), 146-160.

The purpose of this study is to describe the educational programs for adolescents with autism (age 12–16 years) in inclusion and non-inclusion settings as reflected in their Individual Education Plan (IEP) goals, services, and curricular adaptations. Students who were included in general education math and language arts instruction had fewer overall IEP goals, but goals focused more on applied skill development, whereas students in non-inclusion had goals addressing primarily rote and procedural skills

Mansouri, M. C., Kurth, J. A., Lockman Turner, E., Zimmerman, K. N., & Frick, T. A. (2022). Comparison of Academic and Social Outcomes of Students with Extensive Support Needs Across Placements. *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities, 15407969221101792*.

Extending Freeman and Alkin’s review of the literature, this systematic literature review examines the social and academic outcomes of students with extensive support needs (ESN) taught in general education settings compared with those taught in segregated settings. Six comparison design studies were analyzed for contextual factors of educational environments, participants’ characteristics, and outcomes related to social or academic attainment. Results indicate access to the general education classroom with same-age peers is associated with greater academic and social outcomes for students with ESN. Students with ESN taught in inclusive settings had greater academic and social outcomes compared with students with ESN taught in segregated settings in five out of six studies (83.3%). These are similar to findings from Kleinert et al. (2015) demonstrating a positive correlation between the outcomes of students with ESN (i.e., expressive communication, reading skills, and mathematic skills) and increasingly inclusive classroom settings. Both studies examining academic outcomes showed students with ESN served in inclusive settings had greater achievement in literacy and math. Out of the studies examining students’ social outcomes across settings (i.e., inclusive; segregated), the majority (80%) demonstrated that students with ESN served in the general education classroom alongside same-age peers had better outcomes than those served in

segregated settings. While one study in this review did not find statistically significant differences in the social competence of those served in inclusive and segregated settings, it did establish that only students with ESN taught in inclusive settings demonstrated statistically significant gains in social outcomes (i.e., two out of 11 subscales of social competence; Fisher & Meyer, 2002). In summary, our findings demonstrate greater gains are made for students with ESN in inclusive settings...

McConnell, A., Sanford, C., Martin, J., Cameto, R., & Hodge, L. (2021). Skills, Behaviors, Expectations, and Experiences Associated with Improved Postsecondary Outcomes for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities. *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities*, 46(4), 240-258.

An in-depth literature review of 53 studies was conducted to identify the skills, behaviors, expectations, and experiences associated with employment, further education, and independent living for students with significant cognitive disabilities following high school. The section on academics emphasizes this:

- “*Students with significant cognitive disabilities who can read, are integrated with similarly aged typically developing peers, are included in general education, have higher functional academic skills, and are able to complete 3-step tasks are more likely to experience employment and education after high school (Baer et al., 2011; Foley et al., 2012; Heal & Rusch, 1995; Lemaire & Mallik, 2008; Papay & Bambara, 2014; White & Weiner, 2004).*

Reading (Lemaire & Malik, 2008), being included in school settings that provide high degrees of integration with similarly aged typical peers (White & Weiner, 2004), and ability to complete 3-step tasks (Foley et al., 2012) are associated with improved employment outcomes. Receiving instruction in the general education classroom more than 80% of the school day predicts further education for students with significant cognitive disabilities (Baer et al., 2011). Secondary analyses of NLTS and NLTS-2 data included telling time on a clock, reading and understanding common signs, counting change, and looking up telephone numbers in a phonebook as academic skills students with significant cognitive disabilities need for better post-school outcomes in both education and employment (Heal & Rusch, 1995; Papay & Bambara, 2014).”

Wehmeyer, M. L., Shogren, K. A., & Kurth, J. (2021). The state of inclusion with students with intellectual and developmental disabilities in the United States. *Journal of Policy and Practice in Intellectual Disabilities*, 18(1), 36-43.

This overview article describes the state of inclusion and inclusive practices with students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) in the United States. It contains a section on the benefits of inclusive education stating this:

- “A recent review of placement outcomes (Agran et al., 2019) identified a myriad of ways in which students with I/DD benefit from inclusive placements. These include ... improved academic achievement and academic skill acquisition (Kurth & Mastergeorge, 2010a, 2010b), improved communication skills and social interactions (Carter & Hughes, 2005; Fisher & Meyer, 2002), self-determination (Hughes, Agran, Cosgriff, & Washington, 2013), and positive perceptions of belonging and of high

expectations for learning (Shogren et al., 2015). Hehir et al. (2016) conducted a review of evidence from almost 300 research studies and concluded inclusive practices “confer substantial short- and long-term benefits for children’s cognitive and social development” (p. 26).

Students with Disabilities Overall

Cole, S. M., Murphy, H. R., Frisby, M. B., & Robinson, J. (2022). The Relationship Between Special Education Placement and High School Outcomes. *The Journal of Special Education*, 00224669221097945.

Compared academic outcomes of students with disabilities in Indiana placed in more inclusive settings with those placed in less inclusive settings. Students with disabilities spending 80% more time in inclusive classrooms did better in reading and math than peers spending more time in special education classrooms. The study shows differences in diploma types of students in more inclusive settings than those in less inclusive settings, indicating that students in inclusive settings engage in more rigorous course of study and are more prepared for successful post-secondary educational and employment opportunities.

Cole, S. M., Murphy, H. R., Frisby, M. B., Grossi, T. A., & Bolte, H. R. (2021). The relationship of special education placement and student academic outcomes. *The Journal of Special Education*, 54(4), 217-227.

This study investigates the academic outcomes of a special education student cohort in the state of Indiana placed in high- and low-inclusion settings. Student scores in these two settings from the Indiana State Test of Educational Progress (ISTEP+ English/Language Arts and math) were compared from fourth grade in 2014 through the eighth grade in 2018. Results of this study show that students with disabilities who spent 80% or more of their time in a general education inclusive classroom did significantly better in both reading and math assessment than their peers who spent more time in separate special education classrooms.

Hehir, T., Grindal, T., Freeman, B., Lamoreau, R., Borquaye, Y., & Burke, S. (2016). *A summary of the evidence on inclusive education*. ABT Associates. ERIC.

<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED596134.pdf>

This report summarizes research on 89 international studies demonstrating the benefits of inclusive education for students with disabilities (most often children with Down syndrome), and particularly for students without disabilities. The authors state “There is clear and consistent evidence that inclusive educational settings can confer substantial short- and long-term benefits for students with and without disabilities” (p.2). Research indicates that included students develop stronger reading and math skills, have better school attendance, have better behavior, and are more likely to graduate than students who are not included. As adults, students with disabilities who have been included are more likely to be enrolled in postsecondary education, and to be employed or living independently. Evidence suggests that in most cases there are no adverse effects for typical students who are being educated in an inclusive classroom. Some research shows that these students are more accepting of differences and less prejudiced. Similarly, typical coworkers benefit from an inclusive workplace that creates a positive work culture and environment, fosters conflict resolution skills, and increases employee motivation.