

Inclusive Education

An inclusive education setting is defined as one that “provides educational intervention to all students in a common setting and provides appropriate levels of instruction and support to meet the needs of all students.” In an inclusive education setting, students are provided the type and level of support necessary to have equal access to the same meaningful outcomes (Schwartz 2005).

Elements of Quality Inclusive Education

- Requires highly qualified, skilled teachers, staff, specialized resources, collaboration (interdisciplinary), and flexibility
- Requires advanced planning, training, ongoing consultation, and support
- Requires individualized, student & family-centered supports
- Focuses on teaching a child a specific skill or behavior vs. just helping a child “fit in”
- Inclusion is not just having children with various needs present, it is accommodating and providing the appropriate levels of support for each child to be an active participant (Schwartz 2005)

Benefits of Inclusive Education for Children with Special Needs

- *Membership*- How the child is accepted into and participates in groups. Also refers to the child’s sense of **belonging** to the social fabric of the group. Children with special needs gain true membership in an inclusive setting.
- Accommodations are made for the child to access & participate
- Active participation in activities occurs (formally or informally)
- Overt signs of membership: missing an art craft/cubby

Research shows kids recognize the signs of membership. They know when a child is a member of the group based on the above things, not because of their needs.

- *Relationships*- Broad range of behaviors and complex interpersonal interactions with individual peers. A variety of interactions with a variety of peers yields successful relationships.
- *Knowledge and Skills*- Children with special needs have shown improvement in each of these areas of skill development in an inclusive setting: social communication skills, academic skills, cognitive skills, motor skills, adaptive skills. (Schwartz 2005)

Research has shown that children with special needs who attend inclusive education settings tend to gain more competitive employment, are more likely to live independently, and are less likely to experience disciplinary action as compared to their peers who did not attend inclusive education settings (Hehir, Thomas, et al. 2016).

Benefits of Inclusive Education for Children without Special Needs

Similarly, children without special needs reap the benefits of membership, relationships, and knowledge/skills as outlined more specifically below.

A literature review conducted by Staub and Peck in 1995, revealed consistent themes regarding benefits of inclusive education for children without special needs:

- Reduced fear of human differences accompanied by increased comfort and awareness
- Growth in social-emotional cognition
- Improvements in self-concept
- Development of personal principles
- Warm and caring friendships
- Typically developing children tend to benefit from the additional academic support and strategies utilized for children with special needs. These supports tend to address the needs of diverse learners.

“Inclusion is about choice, lifestyle, community, and friends that does not end when the school bell rings or when a child ages out of special education. Inclusive education is a commitment that we make to children with disabilities and their families to help them live a life in which they accomplish their goals, achieve their dreams, and create a lifestyle with which they are satisfied” (Schwartz 2005).

References:

Hehir, Thomas, et al. “A Summary of the Evidence on Inclusive Education.” Abt Associates, Abt Associates. 4550 Montgomery Avenue Suite 800 North, Bethesda, MD 20814. Tel: 301-347-5000; Fax: 301-634-1801; Web Site: [Http://Abtassociates.com](http://Abtassociates.com), 31 July 2016, <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED596134>.

Schwartz, Ilene. “Inclusion and Applied Behavior Analysis: Mending Fences and Building Bridges.” 2005, pp. 239-251.

*Staub, Debbie, and Charles Peck. “What Are the Outcomes for Non-Disabled Students?” *Educational Leadership: Journal of the Department of Supervision and Curriculum Development, N.E.A*, vol. 52, no. 4, Jan. 1995, pp. 36–40.*