

## Additional Literature Review Materials

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Excerpts from:

### **Student Engagement: A Leadership Priority (from *In Conversation* – Ministry of Education Leadership Publication)**

This article explores the effect of student engagement as a key driver of student achievement.

**Author:** J. Douglas Willms, Professor and Director of the Canadian Research Institute for Social Policy; University of New Brunswick.

**Date Published:** Summer 2011 – Volume III Issue 2

If you have a child of average family background and average ability, is that child going to be better off going to a high-ability, high socio-economic status school, where he or she is a small fish in a big pond, or is the child better off going to a low socio-economic status school and low-ability school, where he or she will be a big fish in a small pond? The answer, unequivocally, is that it is better to expose students to the high social class, high ability context. What happens when you separate students by social class or by ability is this: students from poor backgrounds and those that are struggling academically, do considerably worse, while those with high ability, or from a higher socio-economic background, do slightly better, but not much. So what does that mean on the ground? It means that if you have about a quarter of your students who are vulnerable – not able to read well, for example – the typical teacher should have six or seven of these children in his or her classroom. In a segregated system, you'll have some teachers with only one or two vulnerable students, and other teachers with 10, 14, or even 18 children in a class of 30. That is well beyond the tipping point, and so these students fare much worse than they would do in an inclusive setting. We have good examples now, where school systems have deliberately made an effort to desegregate. They have a better mix of students, with those who are vulnerable more equally distributed across classrooms and schools. Those school systems do better. The research from the PISA study, across 30 countries, also found a strong positive effect associated with inclusion. The more inclusive the system is, the better everyone does.

Excerpts from:

### **Education that fits: Review of international trends in the education of students with special educational needs**

The purpose of this review is to outline international trends in the education of students with special educational needs, with the aim of informing the Ministry of Education's current review of special education.

**Author(s):** David Mitchell, PhD - College of Education, University of Canterbury, for the Ministry of Education

**Date Published:** July 2010

Until recently, special education has been dominated by a *psycho-medical paradigm*, which focuses on the assumption that deficits are located within individual students (Clark et al., 1995). Historically, this paradigm has been the most widespread and has been used in both the diagnosis and educational treatment of children with disabilities. As noted by Ackerman et al. (2002), in this model students receive a medical diagnosis based on their psychological and/or physical [impairments](#) across selected domains and both strengths and weakness are identified for education and training. Those with similar diagnoses and functional levels are grouped together for instructional purposes. This model is problematic for several reasons, according to Christensen (1996). Firstly, it leads to the attribution of student failure to a defect or inadequacy within the individual, thus masking the role that highly constraining educational systems play in creating failure. Secondly, it wrongly suggests homogeneity within various diagnostic categories. Thirdly, many students enrolled in special education do not manifest demonstrable pathologies. Fourthly, as we shall see later in this report, studies show that instruction based on categories is generally not effective.

Clark et al. (1995) have added... an *organisational paradigm*, which they have identified in the writings of scholars such as Ainscow (1995) and Lipsky & Gartner (1999). In this newly-emerged paradigm, special education is seen as the consequence of inadequacies in mainstream schools and, consequently, ways should be found to make them more capable of responding to student diversity. Disabilities are perceived as a function of the interaction between individual students and their physical, social and psychological environments.

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Instructional techniques and learning opportunities should be structured to compensate for environmental deficiencies to ensure that children learn and achieve skills of adaptive living. This can be achieved through such means as schools implementing findings from research into effective teaching, operating as problem-solving organisations, and supporting teachers through the change process.

In recent years, the concept of inclusive education has been broadened to encompass not only students with disabilities, but also all students who may be disadvantaged. Earlier, Skrtic et al. (1996) had argued that inclusive education goes far beyond physical placement of students with disabilities in general classrooms, but should involve schools meeting the needs of all their students within common, but fluid, environments and activities. This broadened conceptualisation of inclusive education was recently articulated in the meeting at the forty-eighth session of the UNESCO International Conference on Education, held in Geneva in November 2008, where it was acknowledged that 'inclusive education is an ongoing process aimed at offering quality education for all while respecting diversity and the different needs and abilities, characteristics and learning expectations of the students and communities, eliminating all forms of discrimination' (UNESCO, 2009, p.126).

Several writers claim that inclusive education is a basic human right. For example, Christensen (1996) argued that exclusion or segregation of students with special needs is a violation of their human rights and represents an unfair distribution of educational resources. Similarly, Lipsky & Gartner (1996, 1999) asserted that inclusive education is a fundamental right, derived from the principle of equity, which, if recognised, would contribute significantly to a democratic society.... as Lipsky & Gartner (1996, 1999) pointed out, in designing educational programmes for students with disabilities, the focus must shift from the individual's impairments to the social context, a key feature of which should be a unitary education system dedicated to providing quality education for all students (cf., Meijer et al.'s (2003).

**England.** 1997 Green Paper, *Excellence For All Children*, as signaling the government's commitment to the principle of inclusion and the need to rethink the role of special schools within that context.

**Australia.** It is described as 'a professional learning program that promotes and supports the cultural shift of inclusive educational practices in all public schools'.

**Europe.** The indicators are expected to have 'a clear focus on the policy conditions that may support or hinder the development of inclusive education within schools'.

**U.S.** The United States has a voluminous literature and a range of policies relating to inclusive education, although the term is not employed in official documents... *university researchers associated with special education departments around the country built a strong case for more positive educational and social outcomes for children when they are educated alongside their nondisabled peers.*

**Canada.** A Canadian study of 3rd grade students with 'at risk' characteristics (e.g., learning disabilities, behaviour disorders) compared the impact on achievement of a multi-faceted inclusive education programme.... Significant effects were found in the writing scores for the inclusive education group. The general education students were not held back by the presence of the at-risk students in the classroom; on the contrary, their reading and mathematics scores benefited from the additional interventions offered by the programme (Saint-Laurent et al., 1998).

A U.S. study addressed the effects of an inclusive school programme on the academic achievement of students with mild or severe learning disabilities in grades two - six... Results showed that the students with mild learning disabilities in the inclusive classrooms made significantly more progress in reading and comparable progress in mathematics, compared with those in the resource classes. (Waldron & McLeskey, 1998).

One of the most comprehensive studies of the effects of inclusive programmes on the development of social competence in students with severe disabilities is that reported by Fisher & Meyer (2002). In a matched-pairs design, 40 students were assessed across two years of inclusive versus self-contained special education classrooms. Those in the inclusive programme made significant, albeit small, gains on measures of social competence, compared with students in self-contained classrooms.

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A UK study compared the outcomes for adolescents with Down syndrome of similar abilities but educated in mainstream or in special schools. The results showed no evidence of educational benefits for those in segregated settings, despite the higher teacher-student ratios. Those who attended their neighbourhood mainstream schools made significant gains (two-three years) over their special school peers in expressive language and in academic achievement (Buckley, 2006).

A 2004 study in England showed that the presence of relatively large numbers of SWSN (not analysed by category) in ordinary schools did not have a negative impact on the achievement of general education learners at the local education authority level. Rather, attainment seemed to be largely independent of levels of inclusive education. Other factors, such as socio-economic status, gender, ethnicity and language, seemed to be much more significant. Furthermore, the researchers found evidence that SWSN were making good progress academically, personally and socially. They also found some evidence (chiefly in the views of teachers and pupils) that inclusion can have positive effects on the wider achievements of all learners, such as on their social skills and understanding (Dyson et al., 2004).

Several studies have found that quality of instruction, rather than placement, is the most important predictor of student achievement. ..Rather specific features of quality placement included a supportive teacher, regular and extensive reviews of material, direct instruction and a positive classroom environment (Kluwin & Moores, 1989). These findings were echoed in a report by Ofsted (2006) on English provisions for SWSN. It considered that the most important factor in determining the best outcomes for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities was not the type but the quality of the provision. Effective provision was distributed equally in the mainstream and special schools visited, but there was more good and outstanding provision in resourced mainstream schools than elsewhere.

It is noteworthy that developments in special and inclusive education show similar trajectories across countries, especially those in the developed western world.

Excerpts from:

### **Breaking Barriers: Excellence and Equity for All**

The purpose of this book is a call to all educators to intensify their efforts to take teaching and learning, student engagement and achievement, and advocacy to new heights. The book is firmly rooted within the Canadian context and offers lessons of equity and excellence in education that are global in their impact.

**Author(s):** Avis Glaze, Ed.D., President: Edu-quest International Inc. ; Ruth Mattingley, M.Ed., Associate: Edu-quest International Inc.; Ben Levin, Ph.D., Professor and Canada Research Chair at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE).

**Date Published:** 2012 (pending)

Schools that work for all students are built upon a foundation of equity and inclusiveness. Educators have a legacy to uphold: it is important for us to be aware of the fundamental beliefs of our country, the country for which we are preparing our students, and the need for all peoples to live together in peaceful coexistence. When we model and insist upon egalitarian values and principles, we do our part in replicating the values that our society considers important.

Research demonstrates that caring can assist in reclaiming and including students with disabilities, contribute to the retention of students in schools, and promote interracial interaction. The research of Noblitt, Rogers, and McCadden (1995) indicates that teachers who demonstrate commitment to students and state clearly that they will not give up on them reap improved behaviour, increased motivation, and enhanced achievement. Because of the caring attitude of a teacher, children learn to read, to recognize their capabilities, and to feel better about themselves. Caring does not, however, mean being permissive or making excuses for students who show lack of effort or behave unacceptably. Caring teachers get results because, while demonstrating love respect, empathy, and concern, they are also demanding effort by setting high standards and expectations for student performance.

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Most important of all are the beliefs we hold about children and learning and the need to educate all children successfully (Shields, 2004; Valencia, 1997). As educators, we are called to reflect constantly on our attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours.

We should be cautious about assuming that we know the future of any student – the evidence is clear that we may be wrong. We should do as much as we can to help students be successful now, whatever they may have done in the past...History is not destiny. With the right supports, most students can achieve far more than anyone thought they could. Part of the job of schools is to make negative predictions less likely to be true.

There is a danger that the sense of comfort and protection provided by alternative programs is mixed with lower expectations. This situation can happen from the best of intentions. We want these students, who may face difficult lives outside the school, to feel protected and cared for, and one way to do so is to lower our demands on them. Lowering expectations, however, does them no favours. It leads to lower levels of achievement and lifelong disadvantages. The task for all schools is to combine high levels of care with high levels of expectation.

Provide a range of courses whereby students gain a variety of pathways to graduation...Bundle courses that build on students' strengths and interests.

Some jurisdictions are moving to an instructional model known as Response to Intervention (RTI). This model shifts the focus away from the child's deficits to the learning conditions in the classroom and school. "The whole intent of RTI is to move away from looking at poor learning outcomes as indicating there is something wrong with the student and instead to think about what the teacher needs to do to make the student successful" (Echevarria & Vogt, 2011).

Excerpts from:

### **Special Education in Ontario Schools (6<sup>th</sup> Edition)**

This book provides a summary of Special Education history, current practices, legislative information, and research on Special Education in Ontario.

**Author(s):** Dr. Sheila Bennett, Professor and former Chair of the Department of Pre-Service Education: Brock University; Dr. Don Dworet, Associate Professor of Education: Brock University; Dr. Ken Weber, Professor Emeritus: University of Toronto.

**Date Published:** 2008

The provincial government has long declared the integration of students with special needs to be the norm in the province's schools, a principle that continues to be affirmed by the Ministry of Education... the Special Education Transformation report reaffirmed this view and also recommended that when a special class placement is made it should be duration-specific, and intervention-focused. Though not in regulation, these recommendations provide guidance to IPRCs and IEP developers. Educators and parents of students with special needs in regular classes now know that placing a student in a regular class is not as difficult as once thought, and usually produces significant benefits for all.

All school boards in Ontario now accept the premise that inclusion of students with exceptionalities in regular classes should be the normal practice. At the same time, it is Ministry of Education policy that a range of settings...should be available for students whose needs are best addressed under alternative arrangements...Important philosophical principles of the model are that students always be placed in the least restrictive environment, and that no restricted placement ever be regarded as permanent.

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Excerpts from:

### **Inclusion Defined**

This article is from The Centre for Inclusive Education, University of Western Ontario

**Author(s):** Dr. Jacqueline Specht

The basic idea behind normalization is that people with special needs should be viewed in the ways in which they are the same as other people rather than in the ways in which they are different. School can be seen as a microcosm of the larger society. As Canadian society has moved toward a more inclusive view of all individuals, so too have schools moved toward inclusion.

An effective school is one that has high expectations for its staff members and students, provides caring support for students and staff, and provides opportunities for their participation the classroom and broader school setting. Feelings of acceptance are promoted by a welcoming school atmosphere and a school culture that accepts different kinds of behaviours in the classroom and does not make assumptions about children's abilities.

Excerpt from:

### **Inclusive Education Knowledge Exchange Initiative: An Analysis of the Statistics Canada Participation and Activity Limitation Survey**

This article is available through the Canadian Council on Learning/Conseil Canadien sur L'Apprentissage

**Principal Investigators:** Dr. Vianne Timmons, University of Regina; Maryam Wagner, OISE

The analysis of the data revealed that parents were more likely to report that their children with disabilities are in better general health, progress very well/well at school, interact very well/well with their peers, and more frequently look forward to going to school in higher inclusive educational settings than in mid-range or lower inclusion settings. This positive association was consistent, regardless of severity and type of disability.

Although it cannot be stated definitely that inclusive education has a direct impact on health, this research points to the likelihood that this association does exist. Health is a predominant issue for all children, and this research highlights the association between the health of children with disabilities and inclusive educational practices.

Excerpt from:

### **How adolescents with physical disabilities view success in life**

This article is available from CanChild Centre for Childhood Disability Research and McMaster University

**Principal Investigators:** J. Miller Polgar; G. King; E. MacKinnon.

The findings indicate that adolescents with disabilities have desires and aspirations similar to those of any adolescent. They want to be happy, to be engaged in meaningful activity; they need to be believed in and supported. Also, the findings show that the biggest barriers faced by adolescents with physical disabilities are negative attitudes and others' low expectations of what they can achieve. .. The biggest barriers are attitudinal – how others view them and how they view themselves.