



Inclusion of At-Risk Students

October 2008

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Background...

- Inclusion of students with learning disabilities into regular classrooms is getting strong support mainly because it is believed that children not only have this right, but will also benefit from it. The literature has yielded inconsistent findings on whether inclusion should be incorporated in schools.
- Suggestions have been made to alter the detection of students that require special education to a more frequent program including functional assessments and classroom interventions. The most effective way to conduct interventions is to start early, and on a small scale.
- Inclusion, the process of adapting of the 'host' to meet the incoming child's needs, must be implemented correctly for it to be successful.

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Key Findings....

Numerous studies have been conducted on the topic of inclusion of students with special needs into regular classrooms. Below is a list of findings and recommended practices related to inclusion and students with learning disabilities.

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When students with special education needs are integrated into the regular classroom, the following practices have been identified as critical:

- Intensive planning for the needs of individual students
- Considerable professional development for the regular class teacher (especially in different instructional techniques and when each is appropriate for maximizing results)
- Ongoing support from special service personnel
- Administrative support
- Necessary resource material
- Opportunities for professional collaboration
- Teacher motivation
- Teacher effectiveness (appropriate time on task, good pacing of instruction, etc)

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- Establishment of a 'life plan' might be an effective way to not only achieve success academically, but also emotionally.
- For older students, a longer and more intense program is required if they are ever to catch up to their peers in reading ability.
- Research strongly supports the integration of students into a mixed environment, in terms of socioeconomic diversity, especially if those students are from a low socioeconomic background.
- Findings, as well as individual accounts, point to the importance of humour inclusion in special education programs. Humour not only helps the student feel less alienated or lonely, but also helps in developing healthy self-criticism and coping skills.

- Inclusive classrooms not only help students in need (with LD) but also students in the rest of the class.

The literature illustrates that integration must be done correctly if it is to succeed. The following list includes some of the successful practices when integrating LD students.

- Hands-on experience, especially with science, is beneficial for students with learning disabilities. Also, it makes for a more enjoyable experience resulting in less behavioural problems.
- Concreteness facilitates learning.
- Drawing their own conclusions is a good tool, which can be taught, for LD students as a tool for improved learning.
- The use of peer tutoring and cooperative learning helps by enhancing instruction as well as increasing student familiarity, thus lowering feelings of isolation in students with special needs.

Inclusion can be beneficial to all students, however, it must be implemented properly. With proper teacher training, planning and support inclusion can be successful. Furthermore, the method in which lessons are delivered must be altered so that they are accessible to all students in the class, especially the newly-included special needs students.

BOTTOM LINE ACTIONABLE MESSAGE