

INCLUSION UPDATE

Mercer County
High School
Aledo, IL

The "IN-Team" Informer

What is Inclusion?

by Kathleen Whitbread, Ph.D.

The Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s was a precursor to legislation protecting the rights of children with disabilities to a public education. In the Supreme Court ruling of *Brown vs. Board of Education* in 1954, Chief Justice Earl Warren, referring to segregation of children by race, stated: "Today, education is perhaps the most important function of state and local governments . . . it is a principal instrument in awakening the child to cultural values, in preparing him for later professional training, and in helping him to adjust normally to his environment. In these days, it is doubtful that any child may reasonably be expected to succeed in life if he is denied the opportunity of an education. Such an opportunity is a right which must be made available on equal terms. We conclude that in the field of education, the doctrine "separate and equal" has no place (*Brown v. Board of Education*, 1954). These same arguments, originally applied to race, have been repeated on behalf of children with disabilities, many of whom continue to be educated separately from their nondisabled peers despite legislation mandating otherwise (U.S. Department of Education, 2003). There is a strong research base to support the education of children with disabilities alongside their nondisabled peers. Although separate classes, with lower student to teacher ratios, controlled environments and specially trained staff would seem to offer benefits to a child with a disability, research fails to demonstrate the effectiveness of such programs (Lipsky, 1997; Sailor, 2003

There is mounting evidence that, other than a smaller class size, "there is little that is special about the special education system," and that the negative effects of separating children with disabilities from their peers far outweigh any benefit to smaller classes (Audette & Algozzine, 1997). Students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms show academic gains in a number of areas, including improved performance on standardized tests, mastery of IEP goals, grades, on-task behavior and motivation to learn (National Center for Education Restructuring and Inclusion, 1995). Moreover, placement in inclusive classrooms does not interfere with the academic performance of students without disabilities with respect to the amount of allocated time and engaged instructional time, the rate of interruption to planned activities and student achievement on test scores and report card grades (York, Vandercook, MacDonald, Heise-Neff, and Caughy)

Events

After School Inclusion Support

Mondays 3:00pm – 3:30pm

Inclusive Classroom Observations

Monday 01/16 – Friday 01/20

Faculty Support

In November all MCHS faculty were given inclusion handbooks highlighting some of the important aspects of inclusion and providing them with tools and tactics to use in their classroom. The Inclusion team is also completing classroom observations and meeting with general and special education teachers to develop better strategies for an inclusive classroom. Teachers are encouraged to meet with members of the I-team after school on Mondays if they need help implementing inclusive strategies in their



Reminders to Students

Students, you play the most important role in making inclusion work. Treat everyone with respect and learn from those around you. We all have strengths and weaknesses and should learn how we can help those around us!

Reminders to Parents

7. Parents, please contact us if you have any questions or concerns. Working as a team in this process is the key to success in the classroom!

Goals of Inclusion

Better Instruction

The general classroom offers more materials, curriculum content, & opportunity to participate in discussion with peers.

More Time on Task

Transition time is reduced because students are not being pulled from one room to the next.

Fewer Interruptions

There is smoother delivery of materials with both a general and special education teacher. Less distractions are present.

Higher Self-Esteem

Students with special needs feel included. Students without special needs act as mentors.

More Risk Taking

Students are willing to try harder tasks. Students feel supported by both teachers.

Contact Us

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Thank You!

We would like to offer a special thanks to all faculty, students and parents involved in making inclusion work at our high school. We "love it when a plan comes together!"