What Research Tells Us About Early Childhood Inclusion

Partnerships for Inclusion
What Research Tells Us about Early Childhood Inclusion

1. No study has found segregated options to be superior for developmental outcomes for preschool children with disabilities.

2. With support, children with special needs in inclusive settings do not lose ground in their skills or development.

3. Inclusion has the largest impact on the social skills of young children with special needs. Positive social outcomes occur only when interaction among children with and without disabilities is frequent, and systematically planned by teachers. Language skills also increase.

4. Specialized instruction is an important component of inclusion and a moderator of child outcomes.

5. Families generally view inclusion favorably, although some express concerns about quality.

6. Children who do not have special needs continue to learn and grow in the same ways that they did before they had classmates with special needs. In addition, they may become more accepting of children who are different as they learn to work and play with children who have a wide range of abilities.

7. Typically developing children do not learn inappropriate behaviors as a result of inclusion.

8. In programs studied, when inclusion was of high quality, all children had successful experiences.

9. There are long-term effects of early placement decisions. Research has shown that children of matched demographics and developmental levels who were placed in inclusive preschool programs were significantly more likely to be in inclusive elementary classes several years later than their matched peers who started off in segregated preschool programs.

10. Progress has been made to ensure access to inclusive programs, but universal access for all young children with disabilities is far from reality.
References


*Research reviews*

**PFI’s mission** is to promote the inclusion of young children with special needs, ages birth through five years, and their families in all aspects of community life. PFI provides training and consultation to thousands of early childhood professionals each year related to meeting the needs of children with disabilities through high quality, inclusive experiences. These include professionals from

- early intervention services
- child care and preschool programs (centers and homes)
- public schools
- Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies
- Smart Start Partnerships
- community colleges
- Regional and Local Interagency Coordinating Councils, and
- Children’s Developmental Services Agencies.

Funded by the Public Schools of North Carolina (Exceptional Children Division and Office of School Readiness) and the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (Infant-Toddler Program in the Division of Public Health and the Division of Child Development). PFI has offices in the western, central, and eastern regions of the state.

Visit PFI at [www.fpg.unc.edu/~pfi](http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~pfi)

© 2007 Partnerships for Inclusion, FPG Child Development Institute