A CASE FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

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Toronto District School Board
12/13-09
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Gillian Parekh

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INTRODUCTION

In recent history, research around education and pedagogy has supported adopting inclusive education models in both school structures and service delivery. A number of factors have culminated to create the push towards greater inclusion of students with Special Education Needs (SEN) into general education classrooms. This review of the literature looks at important factors pushing the inclusion agenda both locally and globally. It also reviews strategies supporting the inclusion of students with SEN at the system, school, and classroom levels. Although there is a gap in empirical research on the specific transition process school boards undergo when shifting from a special education to an inclusive education model, a significant amount of evidence-based research has identified successful strategies that promote quality inclusion of students with SEN.

1. International Principles Promoting Inclusive Education

"In almost every country, inclusive education has emerged as one of the most dominant issues in the education of SWSEN [Students with Special Education Needs]. In the past 40 years the field of special needs education has moved from a segregation paradigm through integration to a point where inclusion is central to contemporary discourse" (Mitchell, 2010, p. 121). The move towards greater inclusion closely mirrors recent shifts in disability discourse and perceptions of impairment (Oliver, 1990). Beginning in the 1970's, disability activist and advocacy groups began challenging the social origins of disability (Barnes, Mercer & Shakespeare, 1999). Soon after, international attention began focusing on areas that were perceived to present barriers to the full participation of persons with disabilities. One critical area of focus was education. In June, 1994, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) drafted the Salamanca Statement which included the following agreements:

- every child has a fundamental right to education, and must be given the opportunity to achieve and maintain an acceptable level of learning,
- every child has unique characteristics, interests, abilities and learning needs,
- education systems should be designed and educational programmes implemented to take into account the wide diversity of these characteristics and needs,
- those with special educational needs must have access to regular schools which should accommodate them within a child centered pedagogy capable of meeting these needs,
- regular schools with this inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all; moreover, they provide an effective education to the majority of children and improve the efficiency and ultimately the cost-effectiveness of the entire education system (UNESCO, 1994, p. viii-ix).
In 2006, the United Nations (UN) put forward the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) within which Article 24 addresses the principles of inclusive education:

States Parties shall ensure that:

a. Persons with disabilities are not excluded from the general education system on the basis of disability, and that children with disabilities are not excluded from free and compulsory primary education, or from secondary education, on the basis of disability;

b. Persons with disabilities can access an inclusive, quality and free primary education and secondary education on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live;

c. Reasonable accommodation of the individual’s requirements is provided;

d. Persons with disabilities receive the support required, within the general education system, to facilitate their effective education;

e. Effective individualized support measures are provided in environments that maximize academic and social development, consistent with the goal of full inclusion (UN, 2006, article 24).

Currently, the CRPD has received 155 signatories and 127 ratifications. Canada has both signed and ratified this convention (UNenable, current website).

2. The Special Education and Inclusive Education Debate: Which Model Better Serves Students?

Despite the prevalence of international principles outlining the need to adopt inclusive models of education, individual boards have struggled with the practicalities of implementation. The points of controversy seem to settle on the time students spend in general education classes and whether or not positive outcomes are achieved within inclusive settings (McLeskey & Waldron, 2011). A review of studies conducted in the United States exploring whether or not inclusive settings can obtain the highest academic outcomes for students with Learning Disabilities (LD) revealed mixed results (McLeskey & Waldron, 2011). On one hand, the review found that “[h]igh-quality inclusive classes provide a very good general education, which meets many of the needs of elementary students with LD” (McLeskey & Waldron, p. 52). However, the authors were unconvinced that the intensive instruction that ensures students with LD attain essential skills could always be delivered in an inclusive setting. McLeskey and Waldron (2011) were also able to conclude that congregated resource classes were not able to provide the intensive instruction students with LD required. They noted that the major concerns around congregated resource settings were that there was often lower-quality instruction and a lack of differentiation; little communication or coordination with mainstream teachers and education programming; less actual time for instruction; and unclear and lowered accountability for student outcomes (McLeskey & Waldron, 2011).
Trembley (2011) undertook a comparative analysis of both inclusive and special education models. Results demonstrated that educators in both models perceived the model in which they were working to be effective in addressing the needs of students with SEN. However, in terms of students’ performances within comparative student groups, the inclusive model demonstrated greater effects on student learning and outcomes (Trembley, 2011). In Mitchell’s (2010) large scale, international review looking at the effectiveness of special and inclusive education models, he concluded that “[t]he evidence of inclusive education is mixed but generally positive, the majority of studies reporting either positive effects or no differences for inclusion, compared with more segregated provisions” (p. 141). Mitchell’s review also concluded that “[i]n general, the presence of SWSEN in regular classrooms does not have a negative impact on the achievement of other students” (p. 141). In support of Trembley’s (2011) and Mitchell’s (2010) findings, a recent Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) study (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2012) demonstrated that systems in which schools grouped students by ability fared far worse on student performance outcomes.

Successful PISA countries also invest something else in their education systems: high expectations for all of their students. Schools and teachers in these systems do not allow struggling students to fail; they do not make them repeat a grade, they do not transfer them to other schools, nor do they group students into different classes based on ability. Regardless of a country’s or economy’s wealth, school systems that commit themselves, both in resources and in policies, to ensuring that all students succeed perform better in PISA than systems that tend to separate out poor performers or students with behavioural problems or special needs (OECD, 2012, p. 4).

Although the international literature does not suggest that inclusion works best for every student all the time, the overall trend indicates that students with SEN generally fare the same or better in inclusive settings with no negative impact on students without SEN. Therefore, adopting an inclusive model of education not only brings education systems in line with international rights conventions, but has also demonstrated to maintain or improve academic outcomes for students with SEN.

3. Making the Change: How Boards Have Adopted Inclusive Education Models

Barriers to Research

The hope of this review was to focus on jurisdictions that share similar characteristics to the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) who have also documented the process of transition from a special education to inclusive education model (particularly around service delivery). Two barriers were encountered in collecting this nature of data.

1. Although boards were identified as previously employing a special education model and currently practice an inclusive education approach, there is a gap in available data documenting the transition process at a board or system level.
2. There are very few school boards in the world that compare to the TDSB in socio-demographic makeup, size, and challenges. Therefore, the majority of board-specific research identified in this process reflects practices of boards that are arguably smaller and more homogenous than the TDSB.

To address these gaps in available data and research, contact was made with members of the Canadian Association of Community Living who have conducted extensive research in the area of inclusive education. Discussions with other researchers reiterated the gap in board-specific research. A number of inclusive education studies employ comparative analyses of small groups of students or classes; or compare provincial or state policy initiatives. However, it appears as though cross-board comparisons have yet to be conducted.

To further investigate whether research on current practice from smaller, more homogenous boards could be relevant to the structure of the TDSB, contact was made with Dr. Gordon Porter. Dr. Porter is the Director of Inclusive Education Initiatives for the Canadian Association for Community Living as well as former Chair of the New Brunswick Human Rights Commission. When asked whether the size or demography of a system matters in the approach to implementing an inclusive model, Dr. Porter reassured that, regardless of size or demography, the approach is the same. What can be achieved in smaller, more homogenous boards can be achieved in large, urban systems. A fiscal and attitudinal commitment to shifting structure is what makes for successful implementation of an inclusive model (Dr. G. Porter, personal communication, February 1, 2013).

**Steps to Adopting an Inclusive Education Model at the System Level**

Despite the lack of board-specific research on procedural transitions, Dr. Porter (2008) has outlined transitory steps that are applicable to all boards seeking to adopt an inclusive education model.

Let me list a few of the critical steps needed to implement this approach:

1. We need to make a plan for transition and change and accept that this will take at least 3-5 years to do properly.

2. School staff must know how to make their schools and classrooms effective for diverse student populations, and so we need to invest in training for existing teachers and school leaders as well as for new teachers.

3. Understanding that teachers need support to accept and meet this challenge, we need to work with them and their associations to develop supports they need.

4. We need to start by creating positive models of success – classrooms, schools, and communities that do a good job and can share their success and strategies with neighbors.

5. We need to identify a cadre of leaders and innovators at all levels and assist them in building networks where they can produce and share knowledge unique to their
communities.

6. We need to identify and share “best practices” from research and knowledge that is already available and can be enriched and enhanced by local experience.

7. We need to understand that innovations and changes that will make a difference will require resources. That means money and people (Porter & Stone, 1998 as cited in Porter, 2008, pg. 64).

In a personal communication with Dr. Porter, speaking specifically of the TDSB, he suggested that a cultural shift across the system is required. The current special education system has been long established and is the system with which most parents, teachers, professionals, and administrators are familiar. Dr. Porter suggested that with a board the size of the TDSB, setting up model schools of inclusion within each quadrant of the board might be a vital piece to moving the system forward. Using these schools as exemplars of an inclusive education model would help build confidence within the school community (Dr. G. Porter, personal communication, February 1, 2013).

**Values and Praxis at the School Level**

Sailor and Burrello (2013) discuss the importance of jurisdictions and school communities adhering to a core set of values that promote an inclusive environment for all students. To support these set values, specific practical directives are recommended:

1. All students’ education should be accommodated within the general education setting. “The unified system is based upon five requirements: (1) all students attend their regularly assigned school; (2) all students have membership in their assigned classrooms in that schools; (3) general education teachers and school-based leaders are responsible for all student learning; (4) all students are prepared within the district curriculum with appropriate adaptations and supports as needed; and (5) all staff are fully aware of teacher and student rights and capabilities, have the freedom to pursue what is important to them and their families, and have due process protections under law” (Sailor & Burrello, 2013, p. 31).

2. All students should have access to all available resources and benefits

3. All students should undertake training in citizenship and social development to better understand expectations as a student, but also as a citizen of the world highlighting post-school expectations.

4. “Schools should be democratically organized, data-driven, learning enhancement systems” (Sailor & Burrello, 2013, p. 31) “Five key elements are included here: (1) the school operates a team structure, including grade-level teams and a leadership team, that considers reliable and valid sources of data to determine instructional matches (i.e., services, supports, levels of intensity, etc.); (2) all staff (i.e., all school employees) participate in at least some way in the teaching and learning process; (3) the school employs a noncategorical lexicon (i.e., special education labels are not used in school discourse); (4) the school is guided by distributed leadership (i.e., teacher leaders...
assume some key leadership functions); and (5) each school has one or more learning enhancement teams that bring tougher the resident expertise of the school, its partnerships, and district personnel when needed to design conditions that increase student learning possibilities within and outside the school as appropriate to learning new functionings” (p. 31-32).

5. Schools should be developing capacities and partnerships with parents, families, and local businesses within the school’s community.

6. “Schools must have district support for undertaking transformative systems-change efforts” (Sailor & Burrello, 2013, p. 32).

Inclusion in the Classroom

Strategies and approaches to inclusion in the classroom are also important in developing a high quality, inclusive experience for students with SEN. Generally, strategies are not geared towards specific exceptionailties, but are instead designed to be implemented across exceptionality categories. Rix, Hall, Nind, Sheehy, and Wearmouth (2009) determined through their systematic literature review that co-operation among staff, commitment and accountability to the teaching of all students, differentiation of instruction, and recognizing “that social interaction is the means through which student knowledge is developed” (p. 17) are key to successful inclusion of students with SEN. In addition, the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (EADSNE) conducted two substantive international, evidence-based literature reviews. Areas of focus included evidence-based strategies to support inclusion of students with SEN in both the elementary and secondary levels (EADSNE, 2001, p. 31-32).

Evidence based strategies included:

At the **elementary** level:

- Cooperative teaching where special education teachers support general education teachers by providing instruction in the general education class.
- Peer tutoring in heterogeneous groups.
- Problem-solving as a team: teachers guide students through the processes involved in problem-solving.
- Promoting co-operation and shared responsibility by involving parents in the classroom, shared and co-operative teaching, peer tutoring, planning approached collaboratively by the teaching staff (EADSNE, 2001).

At the **secondary** level:

- Peer-tutoring within heterogeneous groups demonstrated to be effective as well as ensuring peers were working within the same curriculum although potentially different aspects of the curriculum. Accommodations were addressed through collaboration between special education and general education teachers.
• Co-teaching was also found to greatly beneficial to students. EADSNE cite Weigel, Murawski, and Swanson’s (2001) meta-analysis which determined that the essential facets of co-teaching were that special education service providers should be working with general education teachers in both practice and planning. The interventions happen in a shared space (the inclusive classroom) and classrooms are made up of heterogeneous students (EADSNE, 2004).

• Learning strategies and approaches to instruction were also a critical piece to facilitate inclusive education.

• Combined designs were classrooms that implemented a number of these strategies and also involved shifting structural elements of the school to support an inclusive environment. One such structural element was shifting class schedules to longer periods (50 minutes to 85 minute periods). Longer class periods allowed for greater blocks of time to accommodate learning differences but also facilitated planning for teachers as well (EADSNE, 2004).

NOTE: In both the elementary and secondary school level strategies, curriculum based measurement (CBM) with computer technology was noted as a tool to monitor student progress. Studies reviewing CBM were outdated so were not included above. However, they did support the use of technology in providing more accurate assessment opportunities (EADSNE, 2004).

4. Inclusion of Students with Specific Exceptionalities in the Classroom

Principles and approaches to inclusion can apply to all students with exceptionalities. The divisions in practice and approaches are not often as clearly delineated as is supposed in the process of identification. Applying the above principles and approaches provides a basis to include all students with SEN. As the literature concludes, it is necessary to differentiate pedagogical approaches to inclusion based on student need as opposed to student’s identification of exceptionality, as students sharing one exceptionality identification may have vastly different needs (Mitchell, 2010). However, some research has been conducted on how certain exceptionalities can be successfully included in the classroom.

Autism: Harrower and Dunlop (2001) conducted an evidence-based review of effective strategies on including students with Autism. Supports include antecedent procedures (priming, prompt delivery, picture schedules), delayed contingencies, self-management strategies, peer-mediated interventions (peer tutoring, utilizing peer supports, co-operative learning), and multicomponent interventions (teaching classmates about autism, augmentative forms of media for communication, rotating peer support systems – buddy systems). From the studies included in the review, Harrower and Dunlop (2001) suggest that students with Autism can be successfully included in the classroom as long as they are supported and accommodated.

Learning Disabilities: After a review of studies exploring effective programming for students with learning disabilities, McLeskey and Waldron (2011) concluded that inclusive classrooms offer a good basis for quality education for students with LD. However, they were unconvinced
that the intensive instruction some students with LD may require could be offered in either an inclusive OR segregated setting. They suggest that new research on instructional methods in the areas of reading and math are being developed (McLeskey & Waldrum, 2011). These approaches have the potential for being delivered in inclusive classrooms.

**Mild Intellectual Disability:** Research studies (Crawford, 2005; Myklebust & Batevik, 2009) demonstrate the importance of inclusion for students with low functional skills and/or intellectual disabilities. Both studies explored the correlation between students who had been taught in inclusive classrooms and their future employment and economic independence. When severity of impairment was controlled, results from both studies indicated that students who were taught in inclusive, general education classes were more likely to find employment and be economically independent post-high school.

**Behaviour Disorders:** Currently, evidence demonstrates that students with emotional or behavioral disorders are at significant risk for poor academic and post-school outcomes. Simpson (2004) argues that the reason why students with emotional or behavioral disorders appear to fare poorly within general education classrooms is that intentional inclusion, based on evidence supported strategies, has not been rigorously researched or implemented. There is a considerable gap in empirical research into the inclusion of students with emotional or behavioral disorders (Simpson, 2004).

5. **Adopting an Alternate Service Delivery Model: Successful Strategies Identified**

Through the literature review process, a number of structural and pedagogical strategies have been identified as essential or good praxis for successful inclusion of students with SEN within general education classrooms. Strategies include:

**Removing systems of categorization:** Many jurisdictions around the world are moving away from employing psychometric testing and categorizing students by ability/disability. For example: **Sweden** does not categorize students nor use psychometric testing. **Scotland** categorizes students who need additional support into a single category. **Denmark** and **England** only distinguish students who have profound disabilities (Mitchell, 2010)

In Ontario, the Ministry of Education (MOE or Ministry) supports that every student deemed exceptional has the right to an Identification, Review, and Placement Committee (IPRC). However, in its recent memorandum (December, 2011), the Ministry has clarified its position by stating that access to special education services is not contingent upon special education needs identification (MOE, 2011). Any student who is perceived as potentially benefitting from special education services is entitled to access them. “The determining factor for the provision of special education programs or services is not any specific diagnosed or undiagnosed medical condition, but rather the needs of individual students based on the individual assessment of strengths and needs (MOE, 2011, p. 2).
The current legislation around the structure of the IPRC is as follows: “Regulation 181/98 requires that all school boards set up an Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC)” (MOE, 2013, para. 3). The role of the IPRC is to: “decide whether or not the student should be identified as exceptional; identify the areas of the student’s exceptionality, according to the categories and definitions of exceptionalities provided by the Ministry of Education; decide an appropriate placement for the student; and review the identification and placement at least once in each school year” (MOE, 2013, para. 4).

Although the Ministry supports the continuation of the IPRC process, criticism of the process has been mounting. Calls for alternative approaches and shifts in resource allocation are being made. The Auditor General’s report (2005) identified the IPRC process as resource-intensive coupled with limited accountability.

Identification, Placement, and Review Committees (IPRCs) make significant decisions regarding the education of students with special education needs, but do not adequately document the rationale for their decisions and the evidence they relied on. As a result, information that would be of use to IPRCs conducting annual reviews and to teachers in connection with the preparation of IEPs is not available. The lack of detailed information on the proceedings also limits the ability of boards to identify areas for systemic improvement in IPRC procedures... The process for formally identifying students with special education needs—including IPRC meetings and professional assessments—is resource intensive. One school board we audited conducted fewer formal assessments to help offset the cost of additional special education teachers. The Ministry needs to compare the contribution to student outcomes made by the formal identification process to that made by additional direct services provided by special education teachers and identify the strategy that results in the greater benefits to students (Auditor General, 2005, Chap. 3).

A similar review of identification processes in the United States received parallel critiques from the President’s Commission on Excellence in Special Education (2002). This document outlined the concerns regarding labeling children within a potentially subjective or biased process of identification. The report strongly recommended against the use of resources to identify students and instead suggests funds be used to support student learning.

The Commission could not identify firm practical or scientific reasons supporting the current classification of disabilities in IDEA [Individuals with Disabilities Education Act]... The Commission is concerned that federal implementing regulations waste valuable special education resources in determining which category a child fits into rather than providing the instructional interventions a child requires... Thus, the overall Commission recommendation for assessment and identification is to simplify wherever possible and to orient any assessments towards the provision of services (President’s Commission on Excellence in Special Education, 2002, pp. 21-22).
Scholars have identified the process of identification as a key barrier to implementing an inclusive model. They suggest that classifying students into categories maintains a separate system of education within which students will encounter lowered expectations and less favorable opportunities after their academic tenure. "It is our contention that the assessment and sorting of students with special needs into 13 separate categories of disability has resulted in a parallel system of responsibility and care for these students. This parallel system is serviced by a cadre of specialists each with their own culture, roles, and expectations for student outcomes and, unfortunately, poor postschool results" (Sailor & Burrello, 2013, p. 36).

In Mitchell’s (2010) extensive international review of special education, he cites seven concerns with education processes that include the identification or classification of students perceived as having SEN. 1) Use an individual/deficit model in which academic failure is internal to the student; 2) there is significant heterogeneity within categories of exceptionalities; 3) many students who are identified with SEN do not appear to have disabilities; 4) research continues to show that deficit-based instruction does not adequately address student need; 5) due to the perception that impairments are often on a spectrum, individual judgment is required to determine when or if a student has an impairment/disability; 6) category boundaries are complicated by co-morbidity of multiple impairments; and 7) categories can prevent educators from approaching the student in a holistic way, further identifying the student by their impairment or disability (Farrell, 2010, p. 55 as cited in Mitchell, 2010).

Inclusive boards across Canada rarely employ IPRC processes as currently configured. Instead, a number of boards have opted to forego psychometric testing (except for in rare instances). Instead, they utilize a committee of in-school members and professionals to consult with and support teachers by focusing on student needs and setting goals for students’ academic progress. Discussions prioritize unpacking strategies teachers can incorporate into their instructional delivery to ensure that they are meeting the needs of the student in question (Dr. G. Porter, personal communication, February 1, 2013). “Teachers don’t need clinical diagnosis, they need practical solutions and strategies” (Dr. G. Porter, personal communication, February 1, 2013).

*Reducing congregated classrooms or ability grouping:* One of the key proponents of inclusive education is the reduction of segregated classes and the promotion of mixed ability grouping both between and within classes. Houtveen and Van de Grift (2001) highlight drawbacks of ability grouping by stating that placement in low-ability groups imposes low expectations on students; that ability groupings often mirror social, ethnic, and class divisions; that assignment to an ability group is often a permanent allocation; that there is often less instruction delivered in lower-ability groupings compared to mixed-ability groupings; and that segregated low achieving students are further disadvantaged based on a lack of access to positive role models and social stimulation.

Furthermore, Shaddock, MacDonald, Hook, Giorelli and Arthur Kelly (2009 as cited in Mitchell, 2010) explored the impact of individual instruction for struggling readers. Their research synthesis demonstrated that classroom effect on student learning far outweighed the effect of
individual instruction (Shaddock et al, 2009 as cited in Mitchell, 2010). Pedagogically this is important in terms of promoting inclusion. Classroom and social interactions are key to student learning (Rix, Hall, Nind, Sheehy & Wearmouth, 2009). When classrooms are structured in a way that prevents the natural occurrence of social interactions between students or limits participation, certain groups of students are disadvantaged.

From Mitchell’s (2010) investigation into effects on student learning correlating to ability grouping and individual instruction, two critical results were uncovered:

- Research into ability grouping show that, overall, it has little or no significant impact on student achievement, although high-achieving students appear to benefit more than low-achieving students, who suffer from disadvantages in being placed in low ability groups (p. 155).
- Paradoxically, individual instruction has a low impact on student achievement, suggesting that the social context of the classroom is an important contributor to learning (p. 155).

Results from a previous systematic evidence review (see Appendix A) also highlight the importance of heterogeneous class structures on student outcomes. Three important findings resulted from the systematic review: 1) Either in an integrated or congregated classroom, students with LD had similar results in academic success (Fore, Hagan-Burke, Boon & Smith, 2008); 2) in one study, students without SEN who were educated in integrated classrooms did not appear to experience any disadvantage or advantage from being taught alongside students with SEN (Ruijs, Van der Veen & Peetsma, 2010); and 3) when ability/impairment was controlled, students with SEN who were taught in integrated settings were more likely to find employment and be economically independent post-high school (Myklebust & Batevik, 2009).
Note: In the TDSB, 65% of all students in Home School Program (HSP) or Intensive Support Program (ISP) classes are students who are identified as LD, Gifted, and students who only have an Individual Education Plan (IEP). It could be argued that these three groups are, theoretically, among the easiest to integrate into general education.

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Source: Research and Information Services, Toronto District School Board, June 2012

**Moving from a direct service to an indirect service delivery model:** In a direct service model, the specialists or consultants work directly with the students identified as having a SEN. In an indirect service model, the specialists or consultants work directly to support the teacher who has identified students in their classroom (Gravois, 2013).

**Implementing an Instructional Consultation Team (ICT):** Developed over 25 years of research and consultation, the ICT incorporates highly structured, data-driven, accountable school-based team (Gravois, 2013). “The core of the system is ensuring all resources, including classroom teachers, principals, special educators, Title 1, ESL, and so on, are equally trained in and adhere to a common process of collaborative, data-based problem solving as the primary service delivery process. Once trained, these team members operate in a Case Manager role, partnering with teachers to facilitate interactions that are consistent, uniform, and accountable” (Gravois, 2013, p. 123). Figure 1 outlines the ICT model. Over 500 schools in the United States are currently employing the ICT model (Gravois, 2013). Note: the implementation of this service delivery model does not reduce the role of professional or specialist services. The model supports the re-alignment of services, not the reduction of services.
Successful ICT models follow the following procedures: (Gravois, 2013, p. 125-126).

- The first step is to identify student needs and assess whether their teacher’s approach to instruction is a good match to address student needs. This ‘instructional assessment’ is completed by the ICT case manager and includes collaboration with the teacher (Gravois, 2013).
- Plans are organized by short-term, measurable goals (roughly 4-6 weeks) and are closely connected to the curriculum. The teacher, in partnership with the assigned ICT case manager, establishes student goals (Gravois, 2013).
- Prioritize strategies to support teachers in an inclusive classroom knowing that instruction will need to reflect student need (Gravois, 2013).
- The ICT serves as a rich resource to problem solve with teachers as well as provide opportunities for teachers to observe and learn from others’ approach to instruction (Gravois, 2013).
• "Additional resources are aligned with the plan established by the teacher in collaboration with the IC Team case manager and are guided by the goals established as part of the structured problem-solving process that has occurred" (Gravois, 2013, p. 126).

• Monitoring is ongoing. Both the classroom teacher and case manager are required to monitor student success. Gravois (2013) recommends teachers and case managers review students’ goals on a weekly basis. Once goals are met, resources are discontinued and a new series of goals are prepared. This stage is where flexibility in resource re-alignment is essential. Due to the frequent and regular monitoring of both teachers and case managers, resources that are no longer required by one student can be quickly re-allocated to another area of student need.

• "Beyond the progress of the student(s), schools must be supported to evaluate whether resource allocation is effectively producing the desired outcomes" (Gravois, 2013, p. 126).

**School-Based Student Services Teams:** Similar in structure and purpose, some schools in Canada have adopted a School-Based Student Services Team model of service delivery. Here is an example from New Brunswick.

The school-based Student Services Team should include a school administrator, resource teacher(s), classroom teacher(s), guidance counselor(s), and/or others that have responsibility in the school for the programs and services for students with exceptionalities. As with the district team, it is expected that this school-based team would meet on a regular basis (suggested once a week, but minimum twice a month) and would keep the principal informed (if he or she is not present at meetings) of discussions and actions in progress. When a Special Education Plan is developed, it will be the responsibility of one of the members of the school-based Student Services Team to direct the planning process, to involve the parents, to monitor the effectiveness of the programs that address the goals and outcomes of the plan, and to report on its effectiveness. The school-based Student Services Team is also important in helping schools to develop toward exemplary practice in inclusion and thus promote the planning, development, implementation and monitoring of Special Education Plans for students that relate to all aspects of their school life (Department of Education (New Brunswick), 2002, p. 8).

6. **School Boards That Have Made the Move or Currently Practice Inclusion**

Inclusive education in Canada began in Hamilton, Ontario (Crawford, 2005). Crawford (2005) writes, “Today there are no special schools, fulltime special classes or part time special classes in the Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic system. Every student, no matter what category or degree of challenge, is in a regular classroom in that system...Several other Canadian systems have followed the Hamilton-Wentworth example. The Yukon, Nunavut, and Northwest Territories, as well as the province of New Brunswick, have passed strong policies for inclusion” (p. 8). Other recognized school boards that practice inclusion were also reviewed. Included in this review
were New York City, Syracuse City School Board, Ottawa Catholic School Board, Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic School Board, New Brunswick (provincial model), Yukon (provincial model).

**New Brunswick**: The Department of Education in New Brunswick has made a firm commitment to inclusive, quality education (New Brunswick Department of Education, 2002). Elements of the model employed include:

- Emphasis on parent involvement in both referral and assessment practices, in the development of the Special Education Plan, are part of all planning strategies and meetings
- Structured a School-based Student Services Team (description in previous section).
- Allocation of resource teachers who collaborate with general education teachers as well as take part in the development and monitoring of the Special Education Plan
- There is a de-emphasis on classification of students
- Emphasis on planning and strategies in supporting students progress towards measurable goals
- Transition planning that begins in Grade 8 to prepare students for adult life
- Alternate placements are usually behaviorally based

**Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic School Board (2007)**

- Focus is on providing services, programs, and supports within the general education classroom
- Students attend neighbourhood schools
- Emphasis placed on program (development of IEP) over identification of exceptionality
- Language Resource Teacher who teaches students in Grade 1 (small groups)
- Incorporates a School Resource Team
- Eliminated segregated classrooms (all but two diagnostic, year long programs)

**Yukon** Department of Education (1995)

- Employs a non-categorical approach to exceptionalities
- Students identified by need, not by categorical label
- Student needs are addressed in the regular classroom (as far as possible)
- Each school has a dedicated school-based team, for planning and coordinating services and programming
- Dedicated Learning Assistance Teacher, Program Implementation Teacher, and school counselor
- Decisions and interventions guided by collected data
Two examples from the United States:

**Syracuse City School District** (2011)
- Promotes an inclusive model of education
- Demonstrates high-quality programs in early childhood
- Implemented the role of Consultant Teacher to support the inclusive model
- Dedicated special education team
- Introduced the Response to Intervention System
- Created a centralized model for overseeing planning and the IEP
- Focused professional development targeting reading programs and behaviour strategies
- Direct focus on providing equitable services across board

**New York City Department of Education** (current website) (not an inclusive school district but has adopted some inclusive strategies)
- Dedicated to providing instruction in the least restrictive environment
- Continues to use student categorization
- Have recently adopted Special Education Teacher Support Services (SETSS) who provides direct and indirect support to students with exceptionalities in general education

7. The Cost of Inclusion

One of the foremost barriers to mobilizing a shift towards inclusion is the impending cost. However, research shows that systems that adopt a model of inclusion cost less to implement and maintain than systems that support a special education model (Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education, 1997; Sreenath, Current). UNenable cites that an inclusive model of education is largely less expensive than a segregated special education model. Cost savings can be found in administration, management and transportation costs. However, UNenable warns that cutting funding for inclusive systems can be detrimental to its success. High quality, inclusive systems require committed funding (UNenable, Current, 2nd section).

In countries where this model has been implemented, important progress has been made. It has been found that if implemented properly, inclusive school programs have the potential to:
- be less expensive to implement and operate than special education services;
- In times of fiscal restraint, inclusive education services are politically and fiscally more sustainable than parallel systems of special education. It is politically more sustainable because the services are intended to benefit all students. The services are not perceived by taxpayers as an expensive "add on" which cater primarily to special interest lobbies in the disability sector. The services are fiscally sustainable because the goal of inclusive education is to achieve optimal pedagogical results for every public dollar invested in education. Overall such services cost a fraction of the
amount required to maintain a dual and distinct network of regular schools and special education schools.

- If implemented properly, inclusive education services can be less expensive to implement and operate than special education services (Porter, 2001, Section 2.1).

Although implementing an inclusive system requires a sustained fiscal commitment, the literature points to a less expensive system to maintain overall.

8. Conclusion

The literature reflects favorably on adopting an inclusive education model. The inclusive education approach aligns well with international human rights principles. Although there is a deficit of research documenting the transition process school boards have undertaken to move from a special education model to an inclusive education model, there are a number of reviews of empirical evidence that can be used to guide policy initiatives at the system, school, and classroom levels. Approaches to inclusion often address student need and are designed to support student goals, therefore direct strategies connected to specific identified exceptionalities or classification of ability were not emphasized. Suggested evidence-based strategies impacting service delivery included: removing systems of categorization, reducing or eliminating congregated classrooms or ability grouping, moving from a direct service to indirect service delivery model, as well as implementing an Instructional Consultation Team or School-Based Student Services Teams. Highlighted evidence-based in-class strategies included co-teaching or collaborative teaching, group and supported planning, peer-tutoring, and shared responsibility for learning. A few exemplars of school boards in both Canada and the USA were explored in terms of strategies each board employs to promote inclusion. Finally, the review explored literature discussing the cost-effectiveness of inclusion and found that although costs associated with transitioning to an inclusive model were not found, overall, inclusive systems are less costly to implement and sustain than models that support students within a special education model.
REFERENCES


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IDENTIFIED BARRIERS TO INCLUSIVE EDUCATION:
A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW
INTRODUCTION

Special education has been identified as a mechanism to advance equity among a student population with diverse educational needs. Through specialized support and accommodation, students are afforded more equitable education opportunities and can expect to achieve greater academic outcomes. International literature suggests that moving towards an inclusive model of education, as opposed to the currently employed parallel system, not only aligns with international human rights conventions (such as the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities), but also boosts social and academic outcomes for both students with and without Special Education Needs (SEN). The benefits of segregated placements as well as deficit oriented pedagogical approaches have been widely challenged (Mitchell, 2010). Processes around special education referrals and identification have been questioned as to their objective rigor particularly around whether assessment results which indicate impairment are being conflated with other socio-economic disadvantages (Artiles, Kozleski, Trent, Osher & Ortiz, 2010). Past Toronto District School Board (TDSB) reports on special education have demonstrated significant over-and under-representation of socio-demographic variables within exceptionality categories (Brown & Parekh, 2010).

In light of its pursuit to address historically marginalized groups, the TDSB is seeking to move towards greater inclusion of students identified with SEN. In order to facilitate this process, the TDSB’s Research department has conducted a systematic evidence review of literature looking specifically for studies that address barriers to and initiatives supporting inclusion. A systematic evidence review is an objective scan of international literature exploring emerging themes in special and inclusive education. The role of this review is to conduct a broad literature search, extract studies that fall under specified criteria, and to synthesize results in a way that is accessible and clear to policy-makers and educationalists.

METHODOLOGY

The systematic evidence review was conducted with stringent guidelines regarding the extraction and inclusion of education studies. The driving question behind the review was “What enables or disables inclusion of students with SEN in schools?” To begin the process, researchers tested several online search engines with various terms to see which terms in combination with which search engines produced the most relevant results. Initial “fishing” terms included: evidence inclusion education, evidence inclusive education disability, evidence based special inclusive education policy, evidence based practice mainstreaming, meta analysis inclusive education policy, systematic evidence review inclusive education policy, meta analysis effectiveness of inclusive education, evidence effective inclusive education policy, mainstream policy effective, effective mainstreaming policy inclusion, implementing inclusive education setting, benefits of inclusive education evidence, evidence based inclusive inclusion, literature evidence inclusion, studies evidence inclusive education, meta analysis on inclusion education, international trends in special education, international trends in inclusive education, meta analysis on ability grouping education.
APPENDIX A

After an initial search, three search terms that led to the most relevant results were selected: 1) evidence based inclusive special education, 2) evidence effective inclusive education policy, and 3) international studies in trends special inclusive education. All three search terms were then applied to three separate search engines (Google Scholar, ERIC, and ProQuest). The following criteria were applied in filtering articles to include in the review.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CRITERIA AT TITLE - ABSTRACT LEVEL</th>
<th>CRITERIA AT ABSTRACT - ARTICLE LEVEL</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Article</td>
<td>Evidence based results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Published 2008 to present</td>
<td>Clear methodology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not strategic towards specific</td>
<td>Based within urban public education system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>exceptionality</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not service/program specific</td>
<td>Addresses shift towards inclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Include first 50 results or less</td>
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In short, the first round of selected articles, based on titles and abstracts, had to be in article format, found within the first 50 results per term within each search engine, published in 2008 or after, could not be a strategy specific to an exceptionality (e.g., learning disability, autism, etc.), and could not be service or program specific (e.g., cognitive therapy, applied behaviour, etc.). The first round of the article search yielded 63 potential articles. Pulling from this initial collection of articles, based on full abstract and/or article review, selected articles were run through a second round of criteria which included: articles had to establish evidence based results, a clear methodology, be based within a relatively urban public education system, and must address barriers to or strategies for moving towards inclusion. Upon completion of the second round of screening, 20 articles were approved. After repeated articles were eliminated, 17 articles remained.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEARCH ENGINE</th>
<th>TERM</th>
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<th>ARTICLES THAT MET 2ND CRITERIA AT ABSTRACT LEVEL</th>
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<td>international studies in trends special inclusive education</td>
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<td>ERIC</td>
<td>evidence based inclusive special education</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td></td>
<td>evidence effective inclusive education policy</td>
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<td></td>
<td>international studies in trends special inclusive education</td>
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## Search Engine and Terms

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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>evidence effective inclusive education policy</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td></td>
<td>international studies in trends</td>
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<td></td>
<td>special inclusive education</td>
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## Number of Total Articles

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<th>NUMBER OF TOTAL ARTICLES WITHOUT REPEATS</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom placement</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identification practices</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interventions</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social inclusion</td>
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<td>Whole school focus</td>
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<td>Market influences</td>
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<td>Country policy comparisons</td>
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Subtract missing articles = total

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<th>TOPICS SELECTED DUE TO MULTIPLE FINDINGS</th>
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<td>Classroom placement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Identification practices</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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The following trends were included in the final review: teacher beliefs, classroom placement, and identification processes. Eleven articles were included.
APPENDIX A

RESULTS

Inclusion is an important aspect of current educational literature. After running the systematic review of evidence in search for barriers to and strategies for supporting inclusion, three important trends emerged. In brief, trends included teachers’ beliefs and attitudes towards inclusion, placement of students with SEN in congregated versus integrated classrooms and dilemmas around identification processes for students with SEN.

Tables 1-3 present the synthesis of results extracted from the systematic review of evidence.

Table 1: Teachers’ Beliefs and Attitudes Around Inclusion and Disability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SOURCE</th>
<th>OBJECTIVE</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION OF STUDY</th>
<th>OUTCOMES</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cook &amp; Cameron, 2010</td>
<td>The validity study aimed to evaluate whether teacher concern and rejection ratings correlated to the rate of engagement in individual, instructional-academic or non-behavioral interactions.</td>
<td>Validity Study: Teachers in inclusive classrooms rated their attitudes towards students either by concern or rejection. Teachers’ attitudes were correlated to observational data on teacher-student engagement in the classroom.</td>
<td>Teachers’ ratings of concern towards students were positively and significantly correlated to the rate of individual, instructional-academic interactions. Teachers’ ratings of rejection were positively and significantly correlated to individual, non-instructional-behavioral interactions.</td>
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<td>The comparative study sought to determine whether inclusive teachers’ concern or rejection responses towards students varied by student disability.</td>
<td>Comparative Study: Teachers in inclusive classrooms rated their attitudes towards students either by concern or rejection. Responses were correlated to student exceptionality type. A statistical analysis was conducted.</td>
<td>Teachers responded with greater concern ratings for students with learning disabilities (LD), cognitive disorders (CD), attention deficit disorders, and behavior disorders (BD) than students without identified disabilities. Teachers responded with greater rejection ratings for students with LD and BD than students without identified disabilities. Teachers also responded with greater rejection ratings for students with BD</td>
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<td>SOURCE</td>
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<td>Haq &amp; Mundia, 2012</td>
<td>The aim of the study was to compare the attitudes of pre-service teachers towards identified disabilities and inclusion by program of study (Bachelor of Arts in Education or Bachelor of Science in Education) as well as by gender.</td>
<td>Researchers implemented a field survey and collected results from 89 pre-service teachers. Questions looked at attitudes towards inclusion and various disabilities.</td>
<td>Results indicated that participants’ attitudes towards inclusion were generally positive. However, participants indicated that they preferred to include students identified with physical, learning, and health exceptionalities over students identified with visual, mental, or multicategory exceptionalities. Students with either behavioral or communication disorders were borderline positive for inclusion. There were no significant gender differences. Pre-service teachers from the Bachelor of Arts in Education Program were slightly more favorable towards inclusion and towards various disabilities, but the differences were not significant.</td>
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<td>Ben-Yehuda Leyser &amp; Last, 2009</td>
<td>This study set out to explore “the effectiveness of social inclusion of students with special educational needs (SEN) by examining the educational beliefs, and practices of teachers identified as successful inclusion educators” (p. 21).</td>
<td>The study had two phases: 1) interviews with 4 teachers; 2) a study of 24 teachers including an evaluation of whether they were effective in promoting social inclusion of students with disabilities. For this study, 782 students completed a sociometric questionnaire.</td>
<td>Teachers, who were shown to successfully socially include students, held an interest in the students’ background, maintained close communication with parents, held high expectations for students, and provided support for students to facilitate success. Successful teachers also believed in the full inclusion of all students with disabilities except for students who had severe cognitive or behavioural challenges. Successful teachers were highly co-operative and collaborative with special education teachers as well as demonstrated personal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Source</td>
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<td>Forlin, Loreman, Sharma &amp; Earle, 2009</td>
<td>An international comparative study seeking to uncover “the impact of teacher education focusing specifically on preparing pre-service teachers to work in inclusive regular classrooms, on their sentiments towards people with a disability, and their attitudes and concerns about inclusive educational practices” (p. 197). Special attention to demographic differences is considered as well.</td>
<td>Using a four-part measurement instrument, 603 pre-service teachers were polled across Canada, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Australia. Although all teachers were preparing to teach in regular classrooms, teachers in Australia, Hong Kong, and Singapore enrolled in coursework specific to meeting the needs of a diverse student body. The pre-service teachers in Canada, had this course work infused throughout various aspects of its curriculum. The instrument was implemented both during first and last lectures of the specific unit on inclusion. For Canadian pre-service teachers, the instrument was implemented at the beginning and end of their program.</td>
<td>Both confidence and knowledge around relevant legislation and policy significantly improved. Attitudes around inclusion improved, discomfort in engaging with students with special needs was reduced, and pre-service teachers’ concerns around meeting the needs of diverse learners were also reduced. Demographic variables such as previous qualifications, training and teaching experience correlated with the greatest degree of change. Pre-service teachers without an undergraduate degree or who already held a postgraduate degree demonstrated less likely to experience a change in attitude compared to teachers who possessed an undergraduate degree. Previous training on educating people with disabilities as well as prior teaching experience contributed to more positive and significant outcomes around attitudes even if change was at the same rate. Age and gender differences of pre-service teachers were not significant.</td>
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<td>Chiner &amp; Cardona, 2012</td>
<td>The study looked to uncover what factors may contribute</td>
<td>This study included 336 randomly selected regular</td>
<td>Of the participating teachers, 84% felt that inclusion developed tolerance and respect for</td>
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### APPENDIX A

<table>
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<th>SOURCE</th>
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<td>to teachers’ perceptions and attitudes around inclusion. Guiding research questions included whether “regular education teachers have positive perceptions of inclusion in Spain?” (p. 5) and whether these perceptions vary by teaching role, experience, and gender as well as skills, available time, resources, and supports.</td>
<td>education teachers from Alicante, Spain who were given the ‘Teachers’ Perceptions on Inclusion Questionnaire’. The survey included 12 items regarding teaching strategies and conditions.</td>
<td>differences; 65% supported the principles of inclusion; and 59% felt that segregating students based on disability was unfair. Only 40% thought it possible to include students with moderate to severe impairments and only 30% thought inclusion could work in the secondary school panel (results pg. 8). The majority of teachers cited not having enough time, skills, or resources to implement inclusion. Less than half of the teachers cited insufficient support from special education or specialists. Differences in perceptions of inclusion varied by grade taught but not by teaching experience or gender. Access to time, resources, or teaching skills did not affect teacher perceptions on inclusion.</td>
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### Table 2: Classroom Placement: The Debate between Congregated and Integrated Placements for Students with SEN

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<tr>
<td>Giota, Lundborg &amp; Emanuelsson, 2009</td>
<td>The aims of this study were to understand the ways and methods in which special education support was being implemented in comprehensive schools. It also aimed to explore the relationship between special education and attainment in Swedish schools.</td>
<td>The study sample drew from nationally representative cohort studies (roughly 35,000 people born in 1972, 1977, 1982, and 1987) (p. 561). Data was collected by Statistics Sweden over 29 years.</td>
<td>Special education continues to be implemented extensively within compulsory schooling. The study also confirmed “the allocation of support is clearly more related to factors other than ability/intelligence only” (p. 572). Students who are male, who have parents with low educational attainment, and non-Swedish students are more likely to be over-represented as recipients of</td>
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<td>education and student characteristics and academic achievement in Grade 9. The study looked at the evolution of special education delivery and structure.</td>
<td>special education. Most students received specialized support in inclusive forms and for short periods of time. Inclusive forms of support have risen. Exclusive and intensive forms of special education are more likely to be received when students are in Grades 4 and 5. The degree of special education support received had a negative correlation to achievement. The more extensive and earlier the intervention, the less likely students were to reach similar levels of academic achievement as their peers who did not receive the intervention. This is particularly evident in 'segregated' forms of support. Special education does not appear to be able to address the sub-optimal preconditions facing students who are struggling to learn.</td>
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**Fore III, Hagan-Burke, Burke, Boon & Smith, 2008**

"The purpose of this study was to examine classroom placement, inclusive versus non-inclusive, relative to the academic performance of students with specific learning disabilities in secondary content area classrooms" (p. 55).

"Fifty-seven high school students with learning disabilities were assessed using the Grade Level Short Form of the Multilevel Academic Survey Test (MAST). Their reading and math scores were examined relative to each student’s grade level, number of general and special education classes attended, and types of placement (i.e., inclusive or |

"The results revealed no statistically significant evidence to indicate that students’ academic achievement varied based on inclusive versus non-inclusive placement. The only statistically significant differences observed regarded participants enrolled in a general education literature class compared to those participants placed in a special education setting for literature” (p. 55). Findings are consistent with other research that suggests that academic achievement did not correlate with class placement. Although results also suggest that students in more inclusive
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<tr>
<td>Myklebust &amp; Batevik, 2009</td>
<td>This study investigated whether being taught in a congregated or integrated classroom effects future occupational outcomes for students with SEN.</td>
<td>The analysis was based on a longitudinal study (10 years) where 373 Norwegians were interviewed and surveyed. Schools participating in the study had varied approaches to placing students in either integrated or congregated classrooms. Allocations of placement based upon perceived ability only represented a trend and was not a constant therefore linking class placement to future employment could be tested.</td>
<td>Of students identified to have skills on the highest half of the functional scale and who were taught in both special and integrated classes, 54% were able to establish economic independence. Of students identified on the lower half of the functional scale, only 26% who were taught in special classes were economically independent compared to 55% who were taught in integrated classes. Of students who obtained competence, students taught in integrated classes were more likely to be economically independent (4% difference). Students who did not gain competence were less likely to be economically independent particularly if taught in a special education class (difference of 20%). Of students taught in either special or integrated classrooms who obtained a driver’s license, 58% were able to find gainful employment. However, only 6% of students who did not acquire a driver’s license and were taught in a special education class became economically independent compared to 41% of students who did not obtain a license but were taught in an integrated class.</td>
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<td>SOURCE</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ruijs, Van der Veen, &amp; Peetsma 2010.</td>
<td>“This study investigated whether there is a relation between inclusive education and the academic achievement and socio-emotional functioning of typical students, and, more importantly, whether inclusive education affects the achievement and socio-emotional functioning of more and less intelligent typical students differently. Furthermore, we investigated whether differences occur by type of SEN of the included students. Here, we made a distinction between students with behavioural, cognitive and other problems” (p. 351)</td>
<td>“Language and arithmetic tests were used to assess academic achievement. For socio-emotional functioning, both teacher and student questionnaires were used. A non-verbal IQ test was used to assess student intelligence. Based on the number of students with diagnosed SEN, the students without SEN were divided into several groups: typical students with no, a few and more than a few students with (certain types of) SEN in their class. Multi-level regression analyses were used to compare these groups” (p. 351).</td>
<td>“For academic achievement, no differences were found between students without SEN in inclusive and non-inclusive classes. In this, we found no emotional functioning, some differences were found, but the practical importance of these differences is unclear, since the effect sizes were small. The functioning of typical students does not meaningfully differ by type of SEN of the included students” (p. 351). There appears to be “no relation between inclusive education and the academic achievement of typical students” (p. 385). Aside from minimal increases in student-reported-confidence for typical students taught in inclusive classrooms, the study was not able to determine any affect on typically developing students in inclusive classrooms.</td>
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**Table 3: Identification of Students with SEN**

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<th>DESCRIPTION OF STUDY</th>
<th>OUTCOMES</th>
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<td>Lebeer, Struyf, De Maeyer, Wilssens, Timbremont, Denys &amp; Vanderveire, 2010</td>
<td>“This paper reports a field test of a new system of Graded Learning Support Classification Matrix to determine special educational needs (SEN) in a more systemic way, proposed by the Belgian Ministry of Education (Flanders Region), to put a barrier to the trend of referrals to special education schools. It is not directly determined by a child’s medical diagnosis, but suggests SEN to be a product of the needed level of curricular adaptation and classroom support, and the child’s broad category (cluster) of functional difficulties” (p. 375).</td>
<td>“A sample of 8648 pupils (aged 2.5-18) from regular and special education was assigned into the new matrix by collaborators of all 73 Centres for Pupils’ Counselling (CPC), according to a new criteria. Data were compared with current allocations” (p. 375).</td>
<td>According to the new framework, 20% of primary school age children have some form of SEN (4 times higher than previously reported). In terms of developing a greater understanding of funding needs and government resources, the authors suggest implementing this new framework based upon children’s characteristics and the extent of required curricular adaptation. The authors suggest that adopting this new framework moves away from the current psychometric approach to special education and adopts a social model of disability.</td>
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<td>SOURCE</td>
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<td>Norwich, 2009</td>
<td>“The aim of the overall study was to examine the perspectives of education practitioners and policy makers in specific school systems in the UK (England), the USA and the Netherlands about recognizing and resolving the three dilemmas of difference in relation to special and inclusive education. A secondary aim was to compare these perspectives with those from similar groups in the UK and the USA from the early 1990s” (p. 449). The three dilemmas of difference identified by this study are whether or not identification of SEN should happen and how, the relevance of a common curriculum, and questions around integrated or segregated placements.</td>
<td>This study was based on a larger comparative study looking at perspectives of difference drawn from 132 policy writers and education practitioners across England, the USA, and the Netherlands. “Participants were interviewed on a presented dilemma about the consequences of identifying children as having a disability or a special educational need” (p.447).</td>
<td>Results indicated that 78% of US participants, 85% of participants from the Netherlands, and 74% of participants from England had some recognition of the dilemma around identifying students with special needs. All but three US participants felt there was a possible resolution to the dilemma around identification. “The most frequent resolution rating was significant across all three participants groups – 38% for the USA, 48% for the Netherlands, and 32% for the English participants” (p. 454). Similarities drawn from the study regarding possible resolutions were: “reducing special education identification, adopting national and local developments to improve the general education system to become more inclusive and findings ways to go beyond negative labels” (p. 464).</td>
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DISCUSSION

Teachers’ Beliefs and Attitudes around Inclusion and Disability

Five studies reviewed for the systematic review of evidence highlighted teachers’ perceptions and beliefs around inclusion. Two studies (Haq et al., 2012; Chiner et al., 2012) looked specifically at both pre-service and regular teachers’ attitudes on inclusion and disability. Both studies uncovered that generally participants held a positive attitude on inclusion and agreed that the practice of inclusion was instrumental in developing tolerance and respect for difference as well as a more just approach to disability. Three of the five studies (Ben-Yehuda et al, 2009; Cook, et al., 2010; Haq et al., 2012) demonstrated that although teachers supported inclusion, they often held reservations regarding including students perceived to have more moderate to severe impairments.

Many teachers were concerned about not having enough time, skills, or resources to fully meet the needs of students perceived as having greater challenges. Concerns also emerged around lack of collaboration and support from special education educators or specialist staff. Cook et al. (2010) demonstrated how teachers were more likely to be open to supporting students with significant learning challenges or disabilities so long as students were agreeable and behaviour was not an issue. However, Forlin et al. (2009) were able to determine that with training and opportunity to engage in issues facing people with disabilities through pre-service teaching programs, teachers develop both confidence and knowledge towards tackling inclusion.

Classroom Placement: The Debate between Congregated and Integrated Placements for Students with SEN

The debate continues to wage over how and where students with SEN participate in their education. Rights and social justice advocates insist that full inclusion is the only option, whereas medical and educational specialists often see the benefits to intensive, treatment based settings and programming. The debate often leaves parent groups and students torn between what forms of education are best suited to their needs and objectives. The four studies (Giota et al., 2009; Fore III et al., 2008; Myklebust et al., 2009; Ruijs et al., 2010) focusing on classroom placement presented varying aspects of this debate with an overall leaning towards pushing for inclusive education as the most viable option for students with SEN. Giota et al. (2009) uncovered similar demographic distributions as earlier presented in the TDSB (Brown & Parekh, 2010). Giota et al. (2009) also noted that achievement for students receiving more intensive forms of special education interventions did not reduce the gap between students with and without SEN. The authors note that there is no way to know the extent of the gap without interventions (possibly a great deal more disparate) however, they also conclude that special education does not have the ability to address many of the underlying issues that impede academic achievement.

Comparative studies (Fore III et al., 2008; Myklebust et al., 2009; Ruijs et al., 2010) investigated the extent of advantage or disadvantage in congregated versus integrated
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placements. These studies determined: 1) students with learning disabilities held similar levels of achievement in both integrated and congregated settings; 2) students without SEN did not experience advantage or disadvantage by having students with SEN in their classrooms, and 3) that controlling for functional ability, students taught in integrated classrooms were significantly more likely to become economically independent in the future. Although none of the studies included in this review heralded significant academic or socio-emotional advantages for either students with or without SEN (with the exception of significant future economic security), the studies concluded that the interventions offered in segregated programming did not demonstrate positive impact on student learning.

Identification of Students with SEN

The two studies (Lebeer et al., 2010; Norwich, 2009) explored the dilemma of identification of students with SEN. Norwich (2009) suggested that in order to address the dilemma between stigma and acquiring resources can be somewhat resolved through the reduction of identification processes, by moving towards inclusion with the support of federal and local developments, and through addressing attitudinal barriers in reducing stigma. Lebeer et al.’s (2010) study supported these resolutions by proposing a new framework for identifying students with SEN that broadens the definition of SEN and places onus on educators to provide accommodations in the classroom and to reduce referrals of specialized, segregated schools.

CONCLUSION

Overall, results from the systematic evidence review support an inclusive model of education for students with SEN. Outcomes resulted in positive economic security for included students with SEN. Also, results did not reveal any negative outcomes for students without SEN taught within inclusive environments. Teachers are generally supportive of inclusion and results demonstrated that with support, training and knowledge, teachers feel more confident in tackling the inclusive classroom. New approaches to identification could also support the move towards an inclusive model of education where greater numbers of students are accommodated in their home schools and classrooms. In light of the absence of any positive outcomes reported for segregated programming, the results of this review should be considered in the development and evaluation of policy concerning placement and identification in the TDSB.
REFERENCES


