

Class 1

What kids need to thrive:

The research basis
for inclusive learning

June 13, 2024













What do these
images have in
common?



What emotions
come up when
you think about
inclusion?



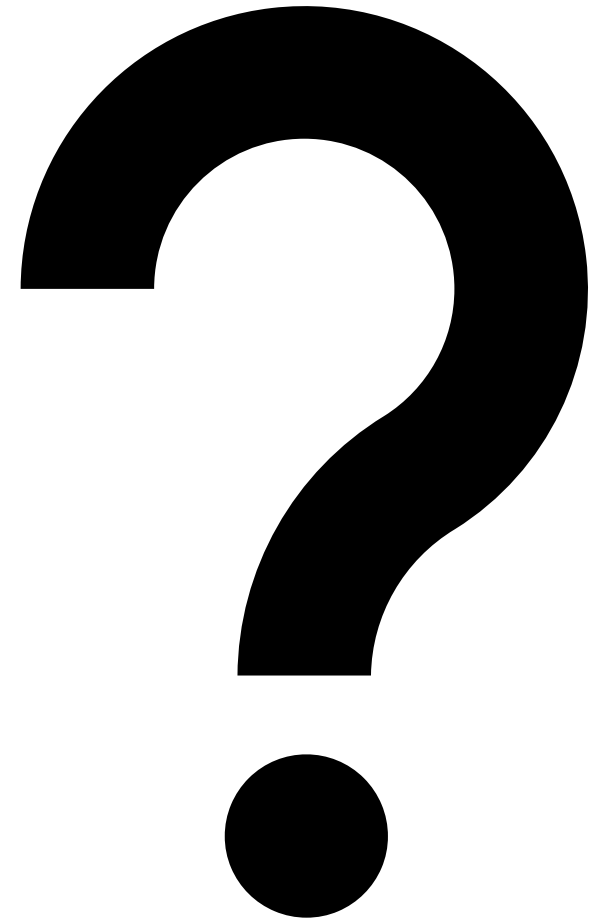
Please answer in the chat, if you can.
Does anyone want to share out loud?

What about
exclusion?



Please answer in the chat, if you can.
Does anyone want to share out loud?

What about
belonging?





Belonging is supported by research

“When each of these areas is addressed well, schools become learning environments in which students with disabilities thrive and are seen as valued and indispensable members of the school community.”

SOURCE: Carter, E. W., & Biggs, E. E. (2021). *Creating communities of belonging for students with significant cognitive disabilities (Belonging Series)*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, TIES Center. <https://publications.ici.umn.edu/ties/peer-engagement/belonging/introduction>



Brain science

The rationale behind many
public services for children and families,
including access to early learning

LEARN MORE:

<https://developingchild.harvard.edu/science/>

Experiences shape the brain

The brain is responsive & dynamic. It changes according to what we do and experience.

It is super busy making connections when we are young, and it prunes back in teen years. It prioritizes connections.

But it never stops being responsive and dynamic.



Experiences good and bad make us who we are



Stress affects the brain.

Some stress is fine, good even

Toxic stress hurts healthy development



Good experiences and skills help us heal

Stress – even toxic stress
– can be buffered and
mitigated with:

- Positive relationships
- Social & emotional
skill-building

No one is born with skills

We develop them
across our lifespan.

We can be
intentional about
improving them.



School can support relationships

Preschool, childcare, and play-based learning give children opportunities to develop relationships and experience empathy.



Reducing unhealthy stress is also important

Nobody does this alone.

Our communities reduce stress by reducing housing and food insecurity, and by combating racism, ableism, and bias



Foundational

- Build relationship
- Strengthen skills
- Reduce stress



**What does
this have
to do with
inclusion?**



Inclusion fosters belonging and membership

It helps children develop responsive relationships with adults and children outside the home.



Inclusion helps children develop life skills


Children with and without disabilities, each with their own gifts, help each other develop core skills when they learn and play together.



Inclusion reduces stress

When learning environments are designed for access and inclusion, children experience less stress.



The background features a light blue sky and a white horizon line. Three handprints are visible: a large blue one in the center, a yellow one on the right, and a smaller blue one on the left, all slightly out of focus.

Inclusion is important
from the start

Children seek to belong
and learn to connect
socially from very early in
life

Early inclusion promotes
continued social
connection and
community; early
isolation predicts longer-
term isolation

At its core: Inclusion is about healthy development and wellbeing.

Belonging, acceptance, and empathy are needed in the home and out in the community.



Belonging is not a given!

It needs to be nurtured. Lots of kids experience marginalization or exclusion when practices are not in place to nurture it. All of us need to learn skills and use practices that promote belonging.



Disability is natural. It is part of the diversity of human experience and affects about 17% of kids. At some point, all of us will experience disability.



EXCLUSION

Exclusion occurs when students are directly or indirectly prevented from or denied access to education in any form.



SEGREGATION

Segregation occurs when the education of students with disabilities is provided in separate environments designed or used to respond to a particular or various impairments, in isolation from students without disabilities.



INTEGRATION

Integration is a process of placing persons with disabilities in existing mainstream educational institutions, as long as the former can adjust to the standardized requirements of such institutions.



INCLUSION

Inclusion involves a process of systemic reform embodying changes and modifications in content, teaching methods, approaches, structures and strategies in education to overcome barriers with a vision serving to provide all students of the relevant age range with an equitable and participatory learning experience and environment that best corresponds to their requirements and preferences.

Placing students with disabilities within mainstream classes without accompanying structural changes to, for example, organisation, curriculum and teaching and learning strategies, does not constitute inclusion. Furthermore, integration does not automatically guarantee the transition from segregation to inclusion.

“Inclusion is not a strategy to help people fit into the systems and structures that exist in our societies; it is about **transforming those systems and structures** to make it better for everyone. Inclusion is about creating a better world for everyone.”

– *Diane Richler, Past President, Inclusion International*

SOURCE: A Summary of the Evidence on Inclusive Education created by Abt Associates.
Uses definitions from the [United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities – General Comment No. 4](#).

What the research says ...

IT CAN BE DONE!

Individualized, evidence-based strategies for children with disabilities can be implemented successfully.

IT WORKS!

Children with disabilities, including those with significant disabilities, can make significant developmental and learning progress in inclusive settings



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services & U.S. Department of Education, "Policy Statement on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs." September 2015
<https://www2.ed.gov/policy/speced/guid/earlylearning/joint-statement-full-text.pdf>

The scientific base

KIDS LEARN FROM EACH OTHER!

Research suggests that children's growth and learning is related to peers' skills and the effects are most pronounced for children with disabilities.

KIDS LEARN TOGETHER, WITH SUPPORT!

These outcomes are achieved when children with disabilities are included several days per week in social and learning opportunities with their typically developing peers and when specialized instructional strategies are used.



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services & U.S. Department of Education, "Policy Statement on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs." September 2015

It benefits everyone

Typically developing children ALSO show positive developmental, social, and attitudinal outcomes from inclusive experiences.

- Inclusion is important from the start
- Children seek to belong and learn to connect socially from very early in life
- Early inclusion promotes continued social connection and community; early isolation predicts longer-term isolation



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services & U.S. Department of Education, "Policy Statement on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs." September 2015

Qualities of districts where early childhood inclusion is adopted

- Key personnel in positions to influence policy
- Shared vision for inclusion by key participants
- State and national policies
- Training/external support
- Organizational structure



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services & U.S. Department of Education, "Policy Statement on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs." September 2015

The myth of expense

Inclusive programs are generally equal or less expensive than self-contained placements.

Inclusion for Young Children with Disabilities: A Quarter Century of Research Perspectives

(Odom, 2012)

- “Inclusion” more than physical placement. Conveys children with disabilities will become part of larger community.
- High quality inclusion = access, participation and supports
- Access = removal of barriers AND addition of multiple ways to promote learning
- Participation = promote engagement and belonging
- Supports = infrastructure that provides inclusive services

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1053815111430094>

Myth of Clinical Judgment

(Biklen, 1988)

Tendency: “...to view people with disabilities as (a) victimized by a disabling condition and (b) in need of treatment – not of rights.” (p. 128)

Assumption: Placement outcomes are a matter of professional evaluation and the individual student’s characteristics

Reality: So many external factors – funds, available placements, bureaucratic concerns, public opinion, locality – often outweigh any “professional” judgments; none of these are the choices of people with disabilities

Educational Placement of Students With Autism: The Impact of State of Residence

Jennifer A. Kurth, PhD¹

Abstract

Typically, child characteristics such as IQ and severity of autism symptoms are thought to determine educational placement. The present study examines external factors, including state of residence and state funding formulas, to determine their potential influence on placement outcomes. Findings reveal that considerable variations exist among states in placing students with autism spectrum disorders in inclusive, mainstreaming, self-contained, and separate schools. This variation suggests that factors beyond child characteristics, such as IQ, play a major role in educational placement decisions. Furthermore, states in the Eastern United States tend to have more restrictive placement rates than states in the Western United States. State special education funding was found to have a minimal impact on placement outcomes. As a whole, it is unlikely that child characteristics alone determine placement outcomes.

“State special education funding was found to have minimal impact on placement outcomes. As a whole it is unlikely that child characteristics alone determine placement outcomes.” – Jennifer Kurth, PhD

“The Gap that Matters” – Paula Kluth

Students' Current Grade Level	Percent Scoring at or Above Grade Level	
	Before Inclusive Reform	Two Years After Reform
All 5 th graders	55	66
5 th graders w/disabilities	18	43
All 6 th graders	54	72
6 th graders with disabilities	18	53
All 7 th graders	56	78
7 th graders with disabilities	29	70
All 8 th graders	48	62
8 th graders with disabilities	8	40

Note. These data follow the same student cohorts over three years. Data listed in the "Before Inclusive Reform" column reflect each student cohort's scores two years before its current grade level (for example, data from 3rd grade for students listed as currently in 5th grade). River View also made gains at each grade level from year to year (for example, comparing one 5th grade class to the next 5th grade class).

... is the one between students who are included, and those who are segregated.

Often, focus goes to “the gap” in grade level performance growing between kids with disabilities and their gen ed peers – and is used as a reason to segregate.

Inclusion presumes competence

SEGREGATION

When we segregate children according to perceived ability, we set a singular expectation of success or failure – we cut off social connections and narrow learning opportunities.

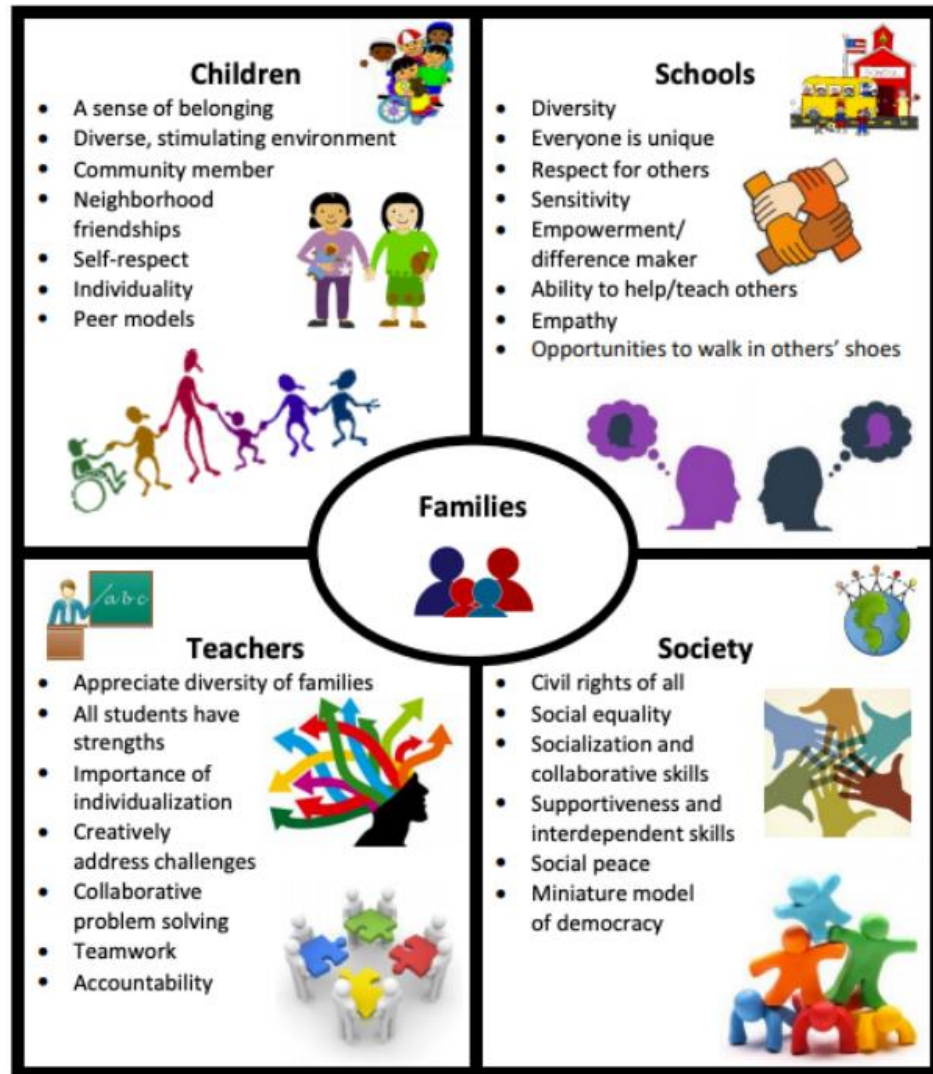


INCLUSION

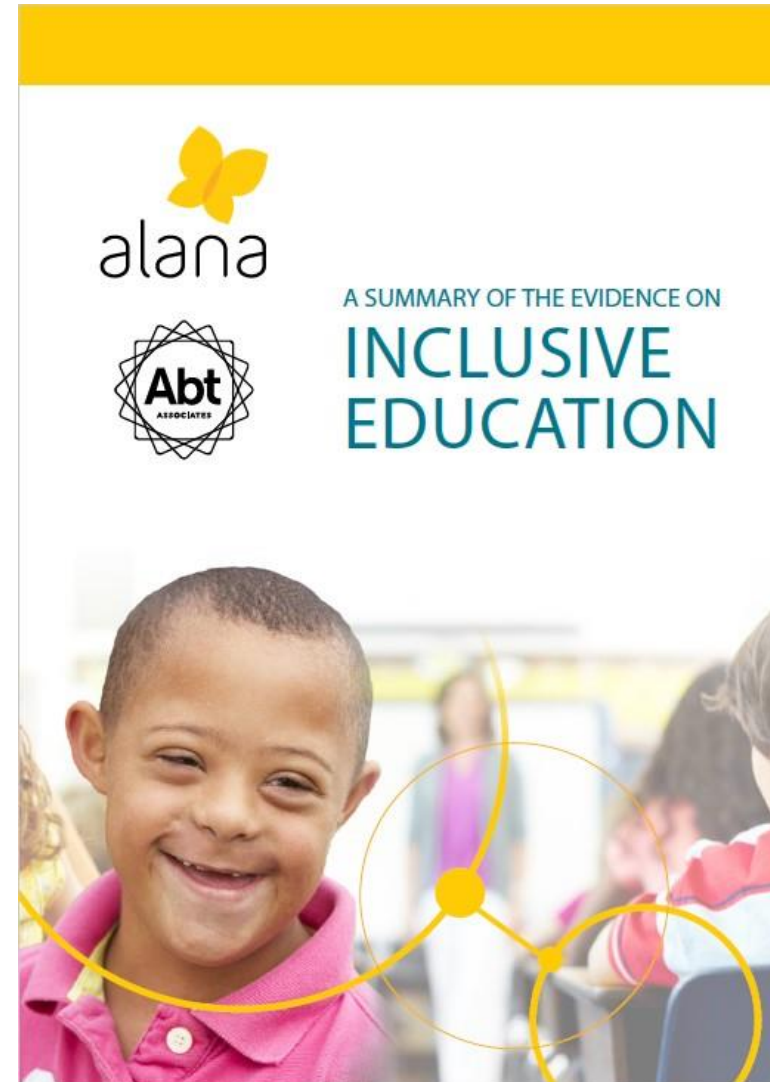
In an inclusive classroom, children are given access to varied learning opportunities and the space to develop a strong sense of self – their skills, their individual needs, how they learn best and belong within their community.

Inclusion Benefits Everyone

"Children that learn together, learn to live together"



from "Creative Educators at Work: All Children Including Those with Disabilities Can Play Traditional Classroom Games," by Donna Raschke, Ph.D., and Jodi Bronson, Ed.S., 1999



SOURCE: https://alana.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/A_Summary_of_the_evidence_on_inclusive_education.pdf

Shelley Moore: Transforming Inclusive Education



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RYtUU8MjIY>

Access or inclusion?

1. An autistic child is placed in a regular ed classroom that offers a sensory area just for his use.

Access Inclusion

3. Child works with the paraeducator at the back of the room.

Access Inclusion

4. A local theater troupe offers one play a week with ASL interpretation, low lighting, no flashing lights, and lower volume level. These showings are specifically marketed through disability organizations.

Access Inclusion

5. A town parade advertisements, in plain language, state that accommodations will be provided for anyone requesting them, there will be a noise level limit, the route and bathrooms along it will be accessible, and that there will be a person making sure that needed accommodations are made.

Access Inclusion

6. A 4-year-old disabled child who uses diapers is warmly welcomed in the neighborhood childcare and placed in the 1-3-year-old group so that her toileting needs can be efficiently met.

Access Inclusion