

## **Inclusive Education: A Reflection**

Inclusive Education is just education.

Throughout the ages until today, human beings have been born into families. While family structure differs, one element is essential to proper human development: socialization. A human baby will die without proper interaction of warm and loving caregivers. Children who are not properly nurtured in infancy develop life-long psychological and medical issues.

In family settings, family members learn from one another. Parents and children alike interact with one another in ways that enrich both generations. Both the development of the individual and the development of the family system is augmented by the contributions of each member. Young and older learn from one another, and synergistically grow and develop.

In ancient cultures, as well as in early American history, the notion of “separate education” for persons with disabilities was a foreign concept. If a child attended school, he or she attended the same school as his or her siblings. There was usually one school, with one teacher who was responsible to teach each student based on his or her abilities.

In 1975, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was passed and has been revised several times over the decades. Its most recent revision was in 2011. In essence, the IDEA was enacted to ensure that children with disabilities receive the same opportunities for education as their non-disabled peers. Education for all children is mandated to be “free” and “appropriate.”

In the decades since the IDEA was passed, public education has evolved from a completely “separate, but equal” approach to an inclusive model. As stated in the research synthesis points, “inclusion education” does not have one, specific, rigid model. Inclusive

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education is as varied as the municipalities that implement it. While programs vary widely, it is generally accepted that most inclusion programs - with the exception of early childhood programs - have made great strides in improving the quality of the education for each student. It has also been noted that *all* students benefit from an inclusive approach, just as ancient and early American cultures thrived on this model. Using a “team” approach of the teachers, therapists, administrators, parents, and students as equal partners in the educational system, the needs of individuals are being met and the capacity for learning of each student is augmented by the model.

Of particular interest, it has been noted what while parents of children with disabilities generally favor inclusive education, parents of children without disabilities can be equally as supportive of the programs in which they place their children. It appears that the “family style” of learning is best for *every* student - not just those with disabilities.

The assigned YouTube videos, as well as others that are on the same channel, give testimonials about inclusive education and its worth to all students. True, children with disabilities are served by being properly socialized (an inherent human need) in a “least restrictive environment;” however, research indicates that all students are enriched by the inclusive education model. As full members of the learning community each child - regardless of abilities - is nurtured at his or her own level, and solid learning results. Additionally, character traits and societal values of cooperation, empathy, compassion, helpfulness, accommodation, collaboration, and synergy are fostered through the inclusion model. Thus, inclusive education emerges as the premier model for the education of all children, regardless of abilities.