

Firstname Lastname

English 102

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I-Search

What I Know

The topic of disabled children's learning environment and what would be best for them is extremely controversial recently. There are many different sides to the subject. Some teachers believe disabled children in the classroom would distract the others from doing adequate work because of the accommodations that would need to be made. Parents also tend to worry about how it may affect their child's learning if the teacher is too focused on helping the disabled students. Many teachers wouldn't think twice about having a disabled student in the class. After all, they add diversity, new personalities, strengths, and skills to the learning environment. I believe there are great advantages to having disabled children in mainstream classrooms. They learn to be more independent, and from an early age they can learn how to get past their differences. They can build better relationships, and develop better intrapersonal skills for later in life. I think it can also be beneficial to the class as a whole. Having a disabled child in the class can often make able-bodied children more understanding and kind. When they learn that some people need more help or special accommodations, kids tend to be more giving and selfless. As I've been researching I have come across some questions of my own such as: "At what grade level would the kids be allowed in an average classroom?", "Would only certain types of disabilities be integrated?"

and “How do the parents of these children feel about the topic?” I have already found some scholarly journals about the disabled learning environment that’s helped me gain some insight on the benefits of special education classrooms as well.

The Search

I began the search looking through scholarly journals and peer reviewed articles on different database pages at the library. I went through different newspaper websites and looked at interviews as well. I found a blog-style website called “We Have Kids” that really gave me a good insight on what it’s like to be a parent in that situation. It has some good stories from mothers about what they’ve gone through with their kids being disabled and in school. There are also many teachers who tell their account of what it’s like making their classroom inclusive for those with disabilities. The site describes the benefits of having disabled children in a mainstream classroom not only for the child, but the class as a whole, which was extremely helpful when I was looking for pros and cons. There are many questions I had as I got deeper into the research process such as; “What do administrators have to consider when integrating special needs children into mainstream schools?” I found some good information, but I wasn’t finding exactly what I was looking for. When I got home one night I decided to try searching again with different key words. I used “disabled children in mainstream classrooms” and that finally gave me the results I needed. Because my topic is relatively new, I didn’t find much else besides a few academic sources. Many websites I went on had different opinions on the topic and some went in more detail than others. It was challenging finding interviews on disabled children and what learning environment works best for them, and I think it has to do with parents wanting privacy.

What I Learned

I learned that if a disabled child is to be put in what we would consider to be a “normal” classroom, they have to be in at least one “normal” class first to see how they handle it. Most disabled children do better in either an inclusion class, where the special services they need are brought to a normal classroom, or in a special education classroom where the student is brought to the services. What I’ve found is that most parents prefer the inclusion type class for their child, but in some cases when the disability is too severe a special education classroom is best. By using both the regular classroom and student’s individualized time in special education classes, they are exposed to mainstream students but also get the attention they need for their disability. I believe including disabled children in mainstream classrooms improves not only academic achievement, but self-esteem and social skills as well. The other side to this topic is about the other children and what would be best for them. Obviously, it can be distracting when other kids see what accommodations are being made for the disabled child. The question is what is best for both groups of children. They both have different needs and preferences, and it is also proved beneficial for them to learn how to work together. Disabled children should start being integrated into mainstream classrooms around 3rd or 4th grade. By this time, they should have well enough communication skills to help them describe what accommodations they might need. They are also young enough that the other kids will understand that they are different, but in a way that adds diversity to their classroom. They need to see inclusion of disabled students as something positive, rather than a burden. It would also depend on the severity of the child’s disability. If a child has no way of communicating their needs and must have constant supervision, a mainstream classroom probably isn’t the best for them.

Works Cited

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