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Disabled Children's Education

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), enacted in 1975, mandates that children and youth ages 3 to 21 with disabilities be provided a free and appropriate public-school education. In America many classrooms are not inclusive for disabled students, causing disabled children to not get the quality education that they need to be functioning adults later in life. According to the website *National Center of Education Statistics*, the overall percentage of students being served in programs for those with disabilities decreased between 2004–05 (13.8 percent) and 2013–14 (12.9 percent). I will discuss how I believe that this solution can be solved and how others believe how his issue can be solved. My proposal states that we need to add classes for teachers to take to be prepared to teach disabled students, add extra teachers into classrooms, and only separate disabled children if necessary. There have been many proposals on how to fix these issues but no one solution has been one hundred percent effective, and it will take many ideas, and variables for this solution to be solved.

Context and Background

Children who have disabilities do not get the quality education that they need like their fellow non-disabled peers. What caused this problem is that many teachers and people in general are uneducated about how to identify children with disabilities. Without teachers knowing how to identify the more concealed disabilities they do not know how to teach disabled children with those disabilities. School systems separate disabled children and abled bodied students into

different classrooms, but it makes the problem of inclusion worse. Studies have found that children with disabilities are less likely to start school and they are more likely to drop out of school earlier before completing their high school education than non-disabled children.

Disabled children are heavily affected because they are being deprived of the quality education that they need and deserve. Many people are involved in the discussion of disabled children's education and how to make schools more accessible for all children. This discussion ranges from parents, teachers, school boards, and even to fellow classmates of disabled children. The government have created laws such as Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with disabilities (UNCRPD) to improve disabled children's education. The Parents of disabled children have been arguing and pushing for their children to be able to have a better education. Parents also want to be involved in their children's education to make sure that they are getting the finest education that they could possibly get.

Back before laws were set for disabled children in the school system many disabled children struggled throughout their school years. Specifically, children with ADHD severely struggled because they were put in a "normal" classroom setting, but they did not fit the parameters of "normal." These children were classified as bad because a "normal" classroom is very restrictive, but these children need a more open and inclusive environment to learn in. School systems have started to improve to make schools more inclusive for disabled students and abled bodied students alike. Schools have kept all types of disabilities in mind, mental, physical, noticeable and veiled ones when making schools more inclusive for their disabled students. Many countries also have the problem of inclusion for disabled children in their educational

systems. Other countries have put several laws in place to correct these issues but continue to struggle for these laws to modify these issues for the better.

Overview of other proposals

Other proposals to fix the quality of disabled children's education have been to separate them into different classrooms, so that they can learn in an environment with other children who are like them. There have been many situations in classrooms that were integrated with disabled students and abled body students that caused problems for the other students and the teacher. These problems usually occurred because a disabled student would get disruptive and sometimes violent in class. In the article *Can inclusive education do more harm than good?* the author Rachael Sharman, a lecturer in psychology who works at the University of the Sunshine Coast, explains her experience with inclusive classrooms. Sharman describes how in her child's class a disabled student sometimes became violent and sometimes disrupted class causing the teacher to stop teaching just so the teacher could calm the disabled student down. This caused a disruption in her daughters learning which raised many concerns and questions. Sharman said, "I was curious as to how much of their time was routinely spent in this fashion, and whether this impacted their learning." Several parents are apprehensive towards having disabled children in the classroom with their children because they believe that they can be a distraction and hinder their children from learning properly. This method was the initial way that schools were divided, but his method has not worked and has seemed to cause more problems to disabled children's education than to help it. In my opinion separating children away from their peers will not work unless it is necessary to the child's benefit.

Another proposal to fixing the problem is to get rid of special education classes and make all classes inclusive. This is a very popular opinion and it has been put into place in many areas.

Parents especially advocate for their disabled children to be able to learn and grow with their peers in the same classroom. There is a group called Advocates for Inclusive Education (AFIE), which pushes for schools in North Carolina to have successful inclusion of children with disabilities in regular education classrooms. This organization makes sure that all their children are getting implemented into these classrooms just like their abled bodied peers are, because their children need to be with their peers. Though parents push for “inclusive” class rooms, there has been the issue of what the actual definition of what “inclusive” is. The National Center on Educational Restructuring and Inclusion (NCERI) defines inclusion as: Providing to all students, including those with significant disabilities, equitable opportunities to receive effective educational services, with the needed supplementary aids and support services, in age appropriate classrooms in their neighborhood schools, to prepare students for productive lives as full members of society.

Explanation of proposal

There are many different aspects to my solution, and my solution to this problem would be to separate disabled children from their peers only when necessary, and to educate teachers to make their classrooms more inclusive for disabled students. I believe that there should also be a required teacher’s assistant required to be in all classrooms in case a teacher needs help with a disabled student.

For my proposal to be enacted, the government will need to make laws for schools to incorporate into their systems. Congress will need to pass laws aimed specifically at disabled students like they did in the year 1990 when the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was made into a law. School systems will also need to create new classes for their teachers to take to prepare them for teaching a new way. Two major resources that will be

needed would be money and to create classes for teachers to take to better educate them on how to teach disabled children. Under educated teachers are one of the main reasons that inclusion is such a prominent problem. According to the article, How Teacher Training Hinders Special-Needs Students, “a study in 2007 found that general-education teachers in a teacher-preparation program reported taking an average of 1.5 courses focusing on inclusion or special education, compared to about 11 courses for special-education teachers.” Another resource that will be needed are new teachers, who need to be hired so there can be an extra teacher in each classroom for extra help. A secondary teacher would be the classroom just in case there is an incident and while the secondary teacher could address the situation, the main teacher can continue to teach so that no one’s learning is interrupted or jeopardized. Without these resources this new idea will not be able to work properly.

My proposal should only take a couple of years at most, due to the government needing time to pass certain laws for schools to follow. It will also take some time for teachers to take the specific classes to prepare them to teach in a more inclusive way to incorporate their disabled students, into their newly established lesson plans and curriculums. There will also need to be a certain amount of time to search for new teachers who are already qualified to teach disabled students, so they can help the main teacher in the classroom. If my idea works there will be a lot of new opportunities, and school systems will be a lot more better for all students and teachers. My idea makes classrooms more inclusive for disabled students by keeping them with their classmates instead of separating them. According to Jackie Mader, a multimedia editor who has covered preK-12 education and teacher preparation nationwide wrote “Students with disabilities who are placed in general-education classrooms get more instructional time, have fewer absences, and have better post-secondary outcomes. Studies also show there is no negative impact on the

academic achievement of non-disabled students in an inclusion classroom.” This will not only improve disabled children’s learning, but it will also teach abled bodied students to be more accepting to their peers who have disabilities.

There are many teachers who agree that they did not get enough special education training to know how to teach disabled students. In the article Teachers say they do not get enough training around special ed issues, writer Jennifer Guerra interviewed an abundance of teachers to see how much special education training that they had received. Within this article a teacher from Eastern Michigan University said “I took one class ... it was approximately six weeks long. It was just a lecture format, with multiple choice tests – no practicum component.” Another teacher from Michigan State University explained, “I had some general courses in college, but nothing to make it adequate. There needs to be more, specifically with autism or defiance disorders.” Teachers from around the country all seem to experience the same thing when it comes to knowing what to do and how to teach disabled students. My proposal has not been used in any school systems the way that I have proposed it.

Response to naysayers

School systems have recently made improvements on how inclusive their schools are but there are still people who disagree with inclusion. According to the article, Concerns About and Arguments Against Inclusion and/or Full Inclusion “Tornillo (1994), president of the Florida Education Association United, is concerned that inclusion, as it all too frequently is being implemented, leaves classroom teachers without the resources, training, and other supports necessary to teach students with disabilities in their classrooms. Consequently, “the disabled children are not getting appropriate, specialized attention and care, and the regular students’ education is disrupted constantly.” This naysayer is not correct because if teachers are trained

correctly all students will receive the proper education that they need, and no child's learning will be interrupted. By implementing my ideas of school inclusion, school systems will be able to appropriately accommodate to all students disabled and abled bodied alike.

Conclusion

Many school systems have been making efforts to make their schools more inclusive for disabled students, though there is still a long way to go. If schools implement my proposal it would help further the education of both disabled students and abled bodied students. My proposal would also help teachers learn how to interact with all their students to create a more welcoming, and inclusive environment. This problem will take time to solve but if the government, teachers, and all involved work together to fix this problem, it can be solved.

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