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Goers 1

*Writer's name*

Sarah E. Goers

*Instructor's name*

Professor Day

*Course*

English 101

*Date*

28 January 2001

*Title, centered*

1/2" indent (or 5 spaces) Is Inclusion the Answer?

*Opening definition of "inclusion," citing sources in parentheses*

1" Inclusion is one of the most passionately debated issues in public education today. Full inclusion, defined as placing all students with disabilities in general education classes, has three main components: the integration of special education students into the mainstream classroom, educational planning and programming, and the clarification of responsibility for appropriate instruction (Heinich 292). Although the intent of inclusion is to provide the best care for all children by treating both special and general education students equally, some people in the field believe that the full inclusion of disabled children in mainstream classrooms may not be in the best interest of either type of student. Disabled children will not benefit from a general education program unless the school is prepared to accommodate their needs; if placed in a school where their needs are not met due to low funding, unprepared teachers, or a lack of necessary resources, they most likely will suffer. For these reasons, the merits of full inclusion over partial inclusion or separate programs are questionable.

*Thesis established*

*Brief overview of paper's development following thesis*

1" Although individual children learn differently, students classified as "special needs" require significantly different types of instruction because of their physical, mental, or

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1"

emotional state. The degree of differentiated instruction that they require, and how best to provide it, is the basis of the ongoing debate about inclusion. Initially, full inclusion sounds like a wonderful step toward implementing the democratic belief that all people in all environments are to be treated as equals. In her lecture at William Rainey Harper College, however, Barbara Radebaugh explained the positions of the two major national teacher organizations on this issue.

The American Federation of Teachers (AFT) disagrees with full inclusion, believing that special needs students learn best in separate programs where they can receive the specialized instruction their disabilities require. On the other hand, the National Education Association (NEA) favors “appropriate inclusion,” a less extreme approach, in which each special needs student would receive a combination of general and special education throughout the school day (Radebaugh). In this way, students would experience the general classroom while still receiving some degree of specialized instruction.

While the teacher organizations debate the benefits of inclusion in terms of how disabled students learn best, other groups oppose inclusion because of how the changes might affect them. At a typical school, if a disabled student were to be placed in general education classrooms, the school would have to undergo changes including teacher training and a larger staff, both to assist the special needs child

*Lecturer's name identifies public address*

**TEACHING TIP**  
For an explanation of the difference between paraphrasing and nutshelling, refer students to pp. 185–86.

and to aid other students' adjustment to an inclusive environment (Block 6-7). Some opponents of inclusion include the parents of non-learning disabled students who fear that these changes will result in less attention for their own children and thus slow their academic progress. Other opponents, such as local taxpayers, cite the cost of these changes as reasons against inclusion (Rios).

In response to such arguments, protective laws have been enacted to ensure disabled persons equal access to appropriate public education, regardless of extra cost or others' fears. The Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 mandates that schools must provide free public education to all students with disabilities. The main tenets of the 1975 legislation declare that all learners with handicaps between the ages of three and twenty-one have the right to a free public education and an individualized education program involving both the school and the parents. Also protecting the disabled is the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which calls for serving children with disabilities in the least restrictive environment possible, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, which guarantees disabled people access to services provided by any institution that receives federal funding (Heinich 293).

Society has made great strides in protecting the rights of disabled students, and inclusion theoretically upholds their right to free

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used for transition to new  
topic*

*Source establishes historical  
background*

and equal education. There is still concern about the actual implementation of inclusive practices, however. In California, for example, journalist Denise Rios explains a situation whereby, as more parents opt to place children with special needs in regular classrooms, “state and education officials are grappling with several issues that could affect the future of special education. At the top of their list is funding.” According to Rios, financially strapped school districts use as much as 25% of their general funds to pay for federally mandated special education programs. Officials explain that this high percentage is a result of the federal government’s not fulfilling its monetary promises, costing local districts in California about \$600 million a year (Rios). Money must be taken from other scholastic areas to supplement the lack of funding designated for special education.

To help offset the expensive cost of integrating disabled students into the regular classroom, California officials contend that the federal government promised to fund 40% of program costs when federal mandates guaranteeing access for special education students were passed in 1975. However, government contribution has actually averaged only 7% or 8% of program costs (Rios). While money ideally should not be an issue when it comes to the well-being of students, the figures in a situation such as this are troubling. Since special education may demand a large amount of the

*Brief quotation specifies critical issue, followed by paraphrase of source*

*Facts and data support main point*

**TEACHING TIP**  
For an explanation of how and when to use statistics as evidence, refer students to p. 26.

already tight funds that most districts are working with, schools may be forced to use a high percentage of these limited resources on a minority of students, rather than the entire school. Without proper financial support from the government, money unfortunately does become an issue when it threatens to undermine the well-being of the majority of students.

When inclusive practices are implemented, teachers as well as students are forced to undergo dramatic classroom changes. Teachers feel a great deal of pressure in this debate in that many believe that they are not adequately trained to teach students with disabilities effectively. They are concerned that special needs students will therefore not receive the instruction that they need to succeed, and these teachers may be frustrated by their inability to provide appropriate instruction (Block 7). Without significant help from special education teachers in the regular classroom, teachers fear that inclusion could result in disaster due to their frustrations, lack of appropriate training, and students' distraction levels. Linda Jacobson describes the dilemma of general education instruction: "Because special education teachers often float among classes, regular classroom teachers sometimes are left on their own." She also notes the AFT's criticism of inclusive practices when "teachers are promised resources and training to make inclusion work, but school systems often don't deliver" (Jacobson).

Community College of Baltimore County pro-

*Paraphrase of original source, followed by source in parentheses*

*Only one citation needed for quotations from the same source that appear in sequence in a paragraph*

fessor Beth Hewett finds that while teachers receive information about a specific student's disability and how to offer fair classroom treatment, this information is usually only cursory. She eloquently echoes Jacobson's concerns through firsthand experience:

Our experiences with these students often are frustrating and unsatisfying because we do not know enough about how to help them. Recognizing our limited knowledge and skills in helping students with disabilities to read and write well, we often flounder and leave teaching situations feeling that we have missed a key opportunity to help a student address a particular challenge. Many of us would welcome rescue through more practical knowledge of the problems, better training to recognize and deal with them, and access to technological tools that address special needs. We sense that our students would be equally grateful if we were better prepared. (Hewett 1-2)

After observing the methods of teachers at the Landmark Institute, a private postsecondary institution renowned for its work with learning disabled students, Jacob Gaskins notes the importance of putting students through a battery of diagnostic testing and then teaching specifically to these diagnoses in a variety of modalities. In an institution like Landmark, with a student/faculty ratio of approximately 3

*Direct quotation longer than four lines set off from text without quotation marks, followed by source in parentheses*

*Valuable information paraphrased after naming author earlier in paragraph and noting page number of original source in parentheses*

to 1, teachers are able to tailor their instruction to give students personal attention. The sheer number of teachers, all of whom have training specific to all types of learning disabilities, along with access to, and training in how to use, supplemental learning tools, enables them to meet the wide range of needs and disabilities they encounter (73). Because these resources are not often adequately provided in public schools, however, many teachers wonder if inclusion is truly beneficial for students who have disabilities that require specialized instruction.

Some parents of disabled students and some disabled students themselves also do not agree with full inclusion. Mary Murchard explains in her article, "Special Schools Fall Victim to Inclusion," that many disabled students prefer to learn in a special education school because they like the small class sizes, the nurturing staff specifically trained to teach special needs students, the family atmosphere, and the many available specialized services. The parents of these students do not want to disrupt a system which their children are happy with and are afraid that their children will "fall through the cracks" in the general educational system. Unfortunately, many special education schools are being closed due to low enrollment, mainly because those parents who support inclusion have taken their disabled children out of special schools and placed them in regular education classes. Among parents who do favor inclusion, some nonetheless worry that the coun-

try is moving away from special education schools too fast for solid special education programs to be established in the general schools (Mushard).

As a solution, pull-out programs--in which disabled students are in the regular classroom for part of the day and special instruction classes for the remainder of the day--have been suggested. In this way, disabled students would have daily classroom instruction as well as one-on-one instruction. These programs offer a compromise to address the concerns of some educators that the individual needs of disabled students would be neglected when they are integrated into the general classroom (Block 7). However, while ensuring that at least part of the students' day will consist of instruction tailored to their needs, these programs do not ensure that the students' time in the general classroom will be productive. These programs are promising, but only to the extent that the students will also be receiving quality instruction in the general classroom; otherwise, they simply shorten the amount of unproductive classroom time. Thus, there is still a need for teacher training and adequate resources to help meet the needs of disabled students when they are not in the special education classes (Urbina).

Despite individual beliefs about which system is best, we can reasonably assume that the majority of society supports efforts to provide all children with the best possible care and education. When considering inclusion,

*Possible solution or compromise follows various sides of argument*

*Writer gives credit to source after summarizing, or nutshelling, the ideas from the source*

*Electronic sources without page numbers cited only by author*



it is necessary to look at the big picture by considering everyone involved. Unless the school is adequately prepared to provide proper services and meet students' individual needs, inclusion truly may not be the best solution for disabled students. If we want our children to be as successful as they possibly can be, each individual should be assessed and placed where he or she will learn most effectively, whether in a general classroom, a special education classroom, or a combination of both. While many people support inclusion because they feel that it is wrong to exclude anyone, they must also look at the potential problems inclusion may cause. Disabled students should receive proper respect for their needs without the intrusion of policy, funding, and what others, particularly those who are uninformed about the issue, decide they want.

*Conclusion summarizes main points and restates thesis*

List of works cited on a separate page

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List alphabetized by authors' last names

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For more on citing sources, see Ch. 32.

Urbina, Yolanda. "Full Inclusion of Disabled Children in a Regular Classroom." 8 Aug. 1998. 15 Oct. 2000 <<http://www.lgc.edu/academic/educatn/yolanda/lai.htm>>.