



Students' Perceptions of Instruction in Inclusion Classrooms: Implications for Students with Learning Disabilities

Important research summarized 20 studies of more than 4,600 students in kindergarten through Grade 12 that included 760 students with high incidence disabilities such as learning disabilities. The research looked at students' views, opinions, and attitudes concerning teacher practices in inclusive and general education classrooms. Seven areas were explored, as summarized in this handout.

In general, students with and without disabilities have similar beliefs and values on teacher practices in each area. Both groups want the same activities, books, homework, and grading criteria. They believe this to be fair. At the same time, the students recognized that not everyone learns in the same way or at the same speed. Students value instructional strategies that are adapted to individual student needs. Teachers are helpful to individual learning when they:

- Slow down instruction when needed
- Explain concepts and assignments clearly
- Teach the same material in different ways so that everyone can learn

Grading practices

The majority of students in the studies said that preferential grading for some students is unfair and creates a double standard. The students were divided about whether to give one grade for effort and another for accuracy. Almost all agreed that a passing grade based solely on effort is not fair. They said that the standards for a passing grade should be the same for everyone.

All the students view grades as providing feedback about their work. They view grades as an expected, necessary part of school life. They consider consistent grading criteria to be important for all students.

Homework

The most consistent belief was that everyone should have the same homework. Teacher practices that made homework easier include:

- Assign homework at the beginning of class
- Explain how to do the homework and give examples
- Provide time to start homework in class
- Assign small amounts of homework at a time
- Provide help with homework
- Relate homework to class work
- Check finished assignments and give feedback
- Establish a homework routine at the beginning of the year

Assignment Routines

- Assignments are easier for students when teachers:
- Provide clear, well-organized directions
- Allow students choice in their assignments
- Repeat instructions
- Tell students about the assignment early enough so they have ample time to complete it
- Explain how to do the assignment and give examples
- Help as needed
- Provide an understood purpose, clear benefits, and time for completion
- Describe how the work will be graded
- Give feedback

Helping practices

Students were asked who they prefer to help them in class and how they prefer to be helped. The practices most valued included help from:

- Teachers (general or special education)
- Other students
- Two-way, small, flexible student workgroups

Instructional practices

Across grade levels and disability status, students said the practices most helpful to them were to:

- Give extra time for work
- Provide students with choices and opportunities for creative expression
- Explain lessons carefully
- Help with math or reading
- Allow opportunities for interpersonal interactions
- Promote active, hands-on activities

Grouping

Students prefer working in mixed-ability pairs or groups to working alone or as a whole class. Most students like flexible rather than fixed groups. Younger students preferred self-selected groups and older (high school) students preferred teacher-selected groups.

Adaptations

An overwhelming majority of students see adaptations as a good idea. They also see them as being applied infrequently by their teachers. The types of adaptations seen as most useful are those that help students to understand difficult content material from textbooks. Students in this study said they do not feel that the use of instructional adaptations and accommodations for some students is unfair or negative. Most see that it can benefit all students regardless of disability status.

Summary

The results from this study are highly relevant to today's classrooms. More students with learning and other disabilities are receiving education in the general education curriculum and classrooms than ever before. As a result, they are achieving more. Parents and students may use this information in educational planning.