LEAST RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENT (LRE) SERVICE MODELS

CHRIS SCHEID | MASTER IN TEACHING 2021-2022 | ELEMENTARY EDUCATION | COLLEGE OF EDUCATION | WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY

INTRODUCTION

IDEA Part B Section 300.114 LRE (a)(2)(i-ii) declares, "to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities… are [to be] educated with children who are nondisabled." [1]

If the term inclusion refers to both placement and participation, and approaches vary by state, district, school, classroom, and student, are there measurable differences of student success between the commonly utilized models?

This inquiry seeks to explore which approaches have shown the highest efficacy at providing instruction to students with disabilities (SWD) in the least restrictive environment (LRE).

Research questions:

I ask the following questions from the perspective of a pre-service general education teacher:

- What service model approaches meet the individual academic needs of each student while facilitating the inclusion of SWD in the LRE?
- What service model approaches meet the social and emotional needs of each student while facilitating the inclusion of SWD in the LRE?
- What are the perceived barriers for implementing the most effective LRE service model approaches?

Questions surrounding what constitutes the removal of SWD from general education classrooms into special day classes or separate schooling have been excluded from this inquiry.

TPEP ALIGNMENT

"**Criterion 3:** Recognizing individual student learning needs and developing strategies to address those needs." [2]

"**Differentiation:** The teacher acquires and uses specific knowledge about students' cultural, individual intellectual and social development and uses that knowledge to adjust their practice by employing strategies that advance student learning. Student growth data must be a substantial factor utilizing the OSPI approved student growth rubrics." [2]

SERVICE MODELS

Push-in and pull-out refer to the place where SWD receive specifically designed instruction.

Push-in service models:

- If SWD receive specifically designed instruction inside the general education classroom with the support of a special education teacher, specialist, or a special education paraprofessional, then the services are referred to as push-in.

Pull-out service models:

- If SWD receive instruction outside of the general education classroom, from either a special education teacher or a specialist, then the term pull-out is used. Examples include small group or individual instruction in the special education resource room, speech, occupational therapy, physical therapy, and adopted physical education (APE) service settings.

INCLUSION

"**Inclusion** involves a process of systemic reform embodying changes and modifications in content, teaching methods, approaches, structures and strategies in education to overcome barriers." [3]

Inclusion refers to both placement and participation. [4]

ACADEMIC IMPACTS

Qualitative and quantitative studies reviewed for this inquiry note that SWD benefit academically from inclusive service models.

Positive Academic effects for SWD:

- SWD, including those with severe disabilities who respond nonverbally, benefit from comprehensive emergent literacy instruction within the general education setting (K-4) when using a program called Early Literacy Skills Builder (ELSB). [7, 8]

- For every one hour spent in general education, SWD measured increases in standardized test scores of approximately +.50 points in reading and +.37 in math. [5]

- Reading and mathematic scores on state assessments (Indiana) increased for SWD receiving education in a general education classroom for 80% or more of the day. [6]

SOCIAL IMPACTS

Qualitative studies reviewed for this inquiry note that *all* students benefit socially from inclusive service models.

Positive social effects for SWD:

- Improved communication skills. [5]
- Increased positive social engagement. [5]
- Improved self-determination. [5]
- Formation of diverse relationships, incidental learning, and the peer modeling of social behaviors. [8]

Positive social effects for typically developing students:

- Increased cooperation as part of the classroom/school community. [9]
- Increased acceptance, understanding, and tolerance of individual differences. [9, 10]
- Reduction of observed hostility and prejudices. [10]

PERCEIVED BARRIERS

Inclusion can be perceived as a burden if teachers do not have the necessary support systems, teamwork and cooperation, "Attitudes can therefore be both a cause and a consequence." [11]

Significant barriers to implementing inclusion models in the general education classroom:

- Collaborative team teaching (CTT) has a high fiscal cost and requires systematic restructuring. [12]
- Inadequate training and preparation for general education teachers and special education paraprofessionals. [13]
- Scheduling, staffing, and collaboration. [8]
- Inadequate communication between special education and general education teachers. [13]
- Limited available time devoted to push-in services. [13]
- Lack of systematic diligence in the process of Response to Intervention (RTI) and Multi-Tier Intervention Systems of Support (MTSS) significantly decreases their effectiveness. [12]
- Intersectionality of race, socio-economic status (SES), language, gender and special education placement for SWD are significant variables that must be accounted for in research. [5]

INCLUSION TOOL GUIDE

Utilize the following tools and strategies to blur the lines between special and general education:

- Implement CTT when possible, which involves a general education teacher and a special education teacher co-teaching in an inclusive classroom to create the LRE for SWD. [12]

- Implement hybrid service models (flexible push-in/pull-out practices) to promote inclusion of SWD to the greatest extent possible when CTT is not an an available option. [12]

- Build relationships with special education teachers and routinely share resources, time, and expertise. [12]

- Develop the skills needed to effectively participate in RTI and MTSS with systematic diligence to make data-driven collaborative decisions about what combination of tiered supports SWD need. [12]

- Develop the skills needed to effectively use Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and differentiated learning strategies for curricular planning and instruction. [12]

- Adopt the Ready for Rigor framework for Culturally Responsive Teaching to support culturally and linguistically diverse SWD facing intersectional discrimination, oppression, and SES inequities. [14]

- Utilize the twenty-two high leverage practices outlined by the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) and CEEDAR (Collaboration for Effective Educator Development, Accountability, and Reform) center. [4]

- Utilize ELSB program for inclusive small reading groups in early elementary. [7, 8]

- Seek out continuing education, peer mentorship and collaboration opportunities.

REFERENCES

INQUIRY PAPER