



Research Brief

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

FAPE-26

This study summarizes 20 studies of more than 4600 students in kindergarten through Grade 12. Of the students, 760 of them have learning disabilities. The studies, covering a 22-year period, looked at students' views, opinions, and attitudes on teacher practices in inclusive, general education classrooms.

Seven areas were explored:

Grading Practices, Homework, Assignment Routines, Helping Practices, Instruction, Grouping, and Adaptations. In general, students with and without disabilities hold similar beliefs and values on practices in each of the areas. Overall, both groups of students want the same activities, books, homework, and grading criteria, believing this is most fair. At the same time, there is wide recognition that not everyone learns in the same way and at the same speed. Students value the use of adapted instructional strategies based upon individual student need. Specifically, teachers who slow down instruction when needed, explain concepts and assignments clearly, and teach the same material in different ways so that everyone can learn are seen as more helpful to individual learning.

Grading Practices

The majority of students, across studies, said they believe that preferential grading for some students is unfair and creates a double or unequal standard. Students were divided in their views about possibly giving one grade for effort and another for accuracy. However, almost all the students agreed that giving a passing grade based solely upon effort is not fair, and the standards for a passing grade should be the same for everyone.

All the students view grades as a source of feedback about their work and an expected, necessary part of

school life. They consider consistent grading criteria for all students to be important.

Homework

The study's most consistent finding was the belief that everyone should be assigned the same homework. Teacher behaviors that make homework easier included:

- 1) assigning homework at the beginning of class;
- 2) explaining how to do homework and providing examples;
- 3) giving students time to begin homework in class;
- 4) assigning homework in small amounts;
- 5) providing assistance;
- 6) relating homework to class work;
- 7) checking homework after completion and giving feedback; and,
- 8) establishing a homework routine at the beginning of the year.

Assignment Routines

Some of the teacher behaviors that make completing homework easier for students are:

- 1) providing clear, well-organized directions;
- 2) repeating instructions;
- 3) informing students about the assignment early;
- 4) explaining how to do the assignment and giving examples;
- 5) providing assistance as needed;
- 6) providing an understood purpose, clear benefits, and time considerations for completion;
- 7) describing grading criteria; and,
- 8) giving feedback.

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The two behaviors seen as most helpful are giving clear, well-organized directions and allowing students choice in their assignments. Students said assignments are made more difficult when teachers use inconsistent language, will not answer questions, or do not give adequate directions.

Helping Practices

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

- 1) help from teachers (either general or special education);
- 2) help from other students; and,
- 3) help from two-way, small, flexible student workgroups.

Instructional Practices

Instructional Practices were rated as *most helpful* or *most bothersome*. Across grade levels and disability status, students view the following practices as most helpful:

- 1) giving extra time for work;
- 2) providing students with choices and opportunities for creative expression;
- 3) explaining lessons carefully;
- 4) helping with math or reading;
- 5) allowing opportunities for interpersonal interactions; and,
- 6) promoting 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, with younger students preferring self-selected groups and older (high school) students preferring teacher-selected groups.

Adaptations

Study questions revolved around whether adaptations, in general, are a good idea, and students' preferences for specific types of adaptations. An overwhelming majority of students view adaptations as a good thing, but also see them as infrequently applied by their teachers. The types of adaptations seen as most useful are those that assist students in understanding difficult content material from textbooks.

Summary

The results from this study are highly relevant to today's classrooms. More students with learning, and other disabilities, have greater access to the general education curriculum and classrooms than ever before. And, as a result, they are achieving more than ever before.

Students in this study said they do not feel, as is sometimes perceived, that the use of instructional adaptations and accommodations for some students is an unfair or negative thing. Most see that it can, in fact, benefit all students. The practices most students value are those that can be considered best educational practice, with relevance to both special and general education students.

For More Information

Klingner, J.K. & Vaughn, S. (1999). Students' perceptions of instruction in inclusion classrooms: Implications for students with learning disabilities. *Exceptional Children*, 66 (1), 23-37.

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