Social Inclusion

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Background

- Disability affects 1 in 4 people in the U.S. and more than one billion people worldwide (UN World Health Organization, 2011).

- The Center for Disease Control (2019) defines Disability Inclusion as "*making sure everybody has the same opportunities to participate **in every aspect of life to the best of their abilities and desires.***"

- There is significant research and legislation that focuses on the value and benefits of inclusive education and inclusive classrooms.

- Federal law has included a commitment to pay 40% of the average per student cost for every special education student (NEA).

- US Federal Government states they will spend $13.1 billion on funding special education in 2018 (NEA).

- According to the U.S. Department of Education (2010) 36% of secondary students with Autism and 17% of students with Intellectual Disabilities now spend most or all of their day, 80% or more, in their classes with peers without disabilities.

- A lot of research has been done explaining about inclusive classrooms but not much has been done to support the benefits of Social inclusion and how it can be carried out.

- Unfortunately in schools and communities Social Inclusion doesn't exist to the fullest extent that it should.

Purpose

- A significant amount of research has demonstrated the educational benefits of successful inclusion in school classrooms. Because of this, there is now significant legislation, programs, and resources that supports inclusive education (Amado et al., 2013).

- The primary purpose of this research report will be to analyze existing research on the value of, and the need for more resources focused on Social Inclusion in schools.

Methods

- Corresponded with the Communications Coordinator of KIT (Kids Included together*)*

  - KIT is a national nonprofit dedicated to promoting acceptance of differences by teaching people how to meaningfully include children with disabilities or complex needs. KIT also helps organizations create and sustain inclusive environments in which all children can thrive. In doing so, we help drive the national conversation around disability inclusion in child and youth programs. (www.kit.org) I was provided a list of targeted reference materials specific to Inclusion of children of all abilities.

- Contacted SWIFT (Schoolwide Integrated framework for Transformation)

  - SWIFT, is a Center that works with state education programs, school districts, and schools to help them support all students in inclusive schools. SWIFT provided a significant reference list of research, articles and reports regarding inclusive schools and education practices.

- Used the UConn library website and researched the topic of social inclusion and found multiple articles related to the topic.

- As a person who has lived with a disability and experienced both Social Exclusion and Social Inclusion, part of my research comes from these experiences and the experiences of many other individuals with disabilities I know.

Results

- The value of social inclusion and extracurricular activities, has recently begun to receive more attention (Chung et al., 2012; Kleinert, Miracle, & Sheppard-Jones, 2007; Pence & Dymond, 2015).
  - Positive Impact and Benefits of Social Inclusion
    - Learn age appropriate, academic, social, functional, communication skills.
    - Improved sense of community
    - Improved quality of life
    - Improved health

- Half (50.6%) of youth with autism and nearly one quarter (24.8%) of youth with an intellectual disability had never been invited by other students to social activities (e.g., at their home, to a party) during the past twelve months. Nearly half of youth with autism (44.3%) and almost one-sixth (16.4%) of students with intellectual disability reported never spending time together with friends outside of school during the past year (Carter et al., 2005).

- A large proportion of students with autism (83.5%) or intellectual disability (41.5%) were reported to never or rarely receive telephone calls from friends (Carter et al., 2005).

- National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 data, Wagner et al. (2004) reported that only 33% of students with intellectual and developmental disabilities participated in any extracurricular activities (Agran et al., 2016).

- Powers et al. (2005) reported that only 11% of IEPs in a sample included any reference to extracurricular activities (Agran et al., 2016).

Discussion

- This report focused on analyzing existing research to determine the need for Social Inclusion, of those with disabilities, and how effectively Social Inclusion is being implemented in schools.

- It is clear from multiple research studies that there is not only significant benefits for students with disabilities, but also for those without disabilities who participate together in social activities.

- There is strong research showing students with disabilities are frequently socially isolated with limited social networks (Chung,et al., 2012; Kemp & Carter, 2002; Shepard-Jones et al., 2002)

- One of the primary limitations of this research is that many of the research reports analyzed were from a list of references that came from the non-profit, KIT, and could have a strong bias towards the value and need for increased Social Inclusion initiatives and training.

- Another limitation is that there needs to be more research that would determine if the parents and students with disabilities have an interest in participating in Social Inclusion programs and activities.

Discussion

- Federal legislation and education policy have required schools to provide students with disabilities, equal access to a standard education curriculum, and there are significant resources focused on providing this inclusive education. Yet, the data supports that there is limited emphasis in schools directed towards the non-academic inclusion of those with disabilities. There needs to be more Social Inclusion programing in the schools.

- There needs to be training and education for school administrators, teachers, and parents. This training needs to explain the significant, long term value and benefits associated with Social Inclusion. This training also needs to emphasize that IDEA legislation, includes equal participation in all aspects of school, not just education, and, parents have a right to include social goals in IEP's.

- The research points strongly to the fact that far more emphasis and focus needs to be on bringing an end to social isolation and exclusion of persons with disabilities. This should begin with education and programing in schools that support many more opportunities for students of all abilities to be Socially Included.

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