



## Dwelling in Possibility

The Values, Beliefs & Habits of Inclusive Schools  
Dr. Paula Kluth  
inclusionrules.com

2025



**Paula Kluth, Ph.D.**

- researcher/consultant/author
- author of 14 books on inclusive ed (e.g., UDL, co-teaching, autism)
- former professor of education & K-12 inclusion facilitator
- [www.inclusionrules.com](http://www.inclusionrules.com)

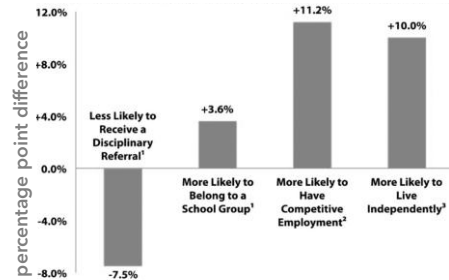


## What have we learned?

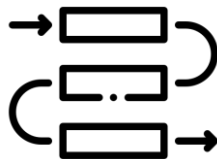


- Segregation doesn't work; segregation prepares people for segregation.
- The more inclusive opportunities became, the more students learned and the more complex they appeared to be.
- The next step is never easy; many of the gains made in the field have been through advocacy.
- Inclusion is not easy, but it provides the best outcomes by far.
- Asking big questions is crucial: What is possible?

\*benefits of inclusion extend beyond academics



Abt Associates |  
a summary of the evidence on inclusive education (2016)



pushing the process

Article

HAMMILL INSTITUTE  
ON DISABILITIES

## Educational Placement of Students With Autism: The Impact of State of Residence

Jennifer A. Kurth, PhD<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

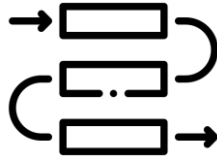
Typically, child characteristics such as IQ and severity of autism symptoms are thought to determine educational placement. The present study examines external factors, including state of residence and state funding formulas, to determine their potential influence on placement outcomes. Findings reveal that considerable variations exist among states in placing students with autism spectrum disorders in inclusive, mainstreaming, self-contained, and separate schools. This variation suggests that factors beyond child characteristics, such as IQ, play a major role in educational placement decisions. Furthermore, states in the Eastern United States tend to have more restrictive placement rates than states in the Western United States. State special education funding was found to have a minimal impact on placement outcomes. As a whole, it is unlikely that child characteristics alone determine placement outcomes.

### Keywords

inclusion, instruction, placement, autism, auditory processing

Focus on Autism and Other  
Developmental Disabilities  
2015, Vol. 20(4) 249–254  
© Hammill Institute on Disabilities 2014  
Reprints and permission:  
sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav  
DOI: 10.1177/1083426914547891  
journals.sagepub.com  
SAGE

Over, under,  
around, or  
through...  
find a way or  
make a way!



### Common mistakes:

- providing only the “real estate” of inclusion & not related supports
- not experimenting with a range of supports (assuming that one set of supports works for everyone)
- thinking that “inclusion” means that all students engage, perform, participate in the same way, with the same materials, and with the same targeted outcomes



### 20 Ways to Adapt the Science Lab

Too often, students with disabilities, especially those with more moderate and significant disabilities, are excluded from the rich and complex experience of the science lab. This is unfortunate as many a teacher would argue that if students are not engaged in hands-on science, then they are not really “doing” science. In other words, science is about learning ideas and concepts, studying vocabulary, and understanding theories, but it is also about observation, exploration, and discovery.

1. Be explicit about what you want students to know and do in each lesson and model what you want to see (e.g., language, behaviors, techniques) in the lab.
2. Post expected lab behavior on a poster or chart that is clear for all to see- (emphasizing safety guidelines). Draw students' attention to this information every time they work in the lab.
3. Organize your lab around “big questions” that all students can answer in some way. For instance, the question, “What



### presuming complexity

**Cole, S. M., Murphy, H. R., Frisby, M. B., Grossi, T. A., & Bolte, H. R. (2021). The Relationship of Special Education Placement and Student Academic Outcomes. *The Journal of Special Education*, 54(4), 217-227.**

- Matched scores & other variables (e.g., IREAD, days attended, primary disability).
- Researchers tracked progress over time (4<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade) and compared how included students compared to those primarily educated in special ed. environments.



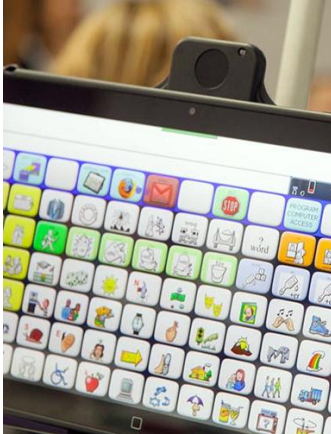
**Students who spent 80% or more of their time in inclusive classrooms did significantly better in both on reading & math assessments.**

**Gee, K., Gonzalez, M., & Cooper, C. (2020). Outcomes of inclusive versus separate placements: A matched pairs comparison study. *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities*, 45 (4), 223-240.**

- 15 pairs (matched 12 characteristics).
- One child = included and one = special education class.
- Ss observed across the school day: activities, contexts, and types of engagement. Outcome data were also analyzed: communication, literacy & numeracy.



**Students in general ed. classrooms demonstrated highly significant levels of progress as compared with the students in separate classrooms.**

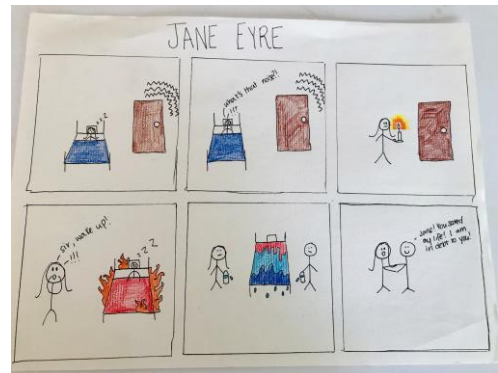


**initially:**  
Both girls had CP  
"intellectual disability"  
& were vocalizing parts  
of words & gesturing  
for communication.

**four years later:**  
The child who was  
educated in general  
education was still  
using her voice and  
gestures, but also  
using an augmentative  
communication system  
and knew 70 symbols  
in the device. The child  
served in a separate  
class was described as  
"nonverbal."



**seeking benefits for all**



**In inclusive schools, students without disabilities  
are more likely to:**



- achieve the same or higher grades (no negative impact noted)
- have greater opportunities to have friendships with students with disabilities
- demonstrate an increased acceptance, understanding, and positive attitude towards inclusion

[Szumski et al., 2017]

"In my school, you can't tell which students have disabilities and which ones don't!"



**100% for 100%**



**asking a different question**

**Why does she ever have to leave?**



**www.inclusionrules.com**

