

The student's name was blacked out for online publication.

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Handicapped Students in a Mainstream Classroom

Imagine a high school classroom with 25 students in it. 23 of these students are your average students. Then you have 2 students in the classroom who both have severe physical and mental disabilities and are both emotionally disturbed. This would be a very frustrating situation for the general students, the handicapped students, and perhaps the teacher. These 2 handicapped students can not function like the other students can. They do not relate to the other students. Handicapped students are not going to be on the level of general students and are going to be unable to perform the same. The fact that some children are born with disabilities should not be overlooked. These children are different and should be treated this way. They are going to function differently and they must have a place to learn where they can adapt and be comfortable.

If severely handicapped students were integrated in to a mainstream classroom there would be many disadvantages and negative effects. The general educators of the mainstream classroom would have difficulty meeting all the needs. General classroom teachers are not trained to maintain severely handicapped students with in a general classroom environment. These general education teachers are unprepared to educate students with disabilities such as down's syndrome, severe hearing loss, etc ("Special..." par 14). These students must have an instructor that is qualified further than that of regular classroom teacher in order to meet their needs (Magnifico 95). These handicapped students will need more 1 on 1 attention and they will not receive this in a general classroom ("Special..."par.15). In this case if these students were put

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in a mainstream classroom, in order for them to have their needs met they would need a paraeducator for assistance at all times (Green 2). This would become a problem being that today there are only about $\frac{1}{4}$ as many special education teachers as are needed (Weiner 196).

Public education should give all students an opportunity to be taught by professionals meeting their individual needs. Some students must be looked at differently than others (Green 3). Not only would integrating handicapped students in a general classroom hurt the handicapped students but could also affect the general students in the classroom. The general students would have to accommodate for these handicapped students in many different ways. When you place students who are unable to sufficiently work on their own in a classroom of peers, who are fully capable of this, many disadvantages occur. The teachers must devote more time to the handicapped children lessening the amount of time the other students are being taught ("Special..." par. 15). When teachers start devoting more time to these students the expectations of the general students begin to lower due to the lack of instruction they are given. Handicapped students in a mainstream classroom could cause the standards of the general students to be lowered ("Special..." par. 15). This does not benefit the general student neither the handicapped student. Many handicapped students could be a disruption to the classroom because they are unable to control themselves and this could take away time of students work and instruction ("Special..." par. 15). Putting handicapped students in a mainstream classroom could also become very difficult in secondary schools because students switch classrooms throughout the day and many handicapped students are unable to do this on their own (Magnifico 95).

There are various opportunities available to provide a more sufficient means of social interaction with peers outside of the academic classroom. Handicapped students have opportunities to interact with students socially in other settings inside and outside of school that better meet their needs. It is very appropriate for students, of all abilities, to share assemblies,

lunchroom tables, extra curricular activities, library settings, school clubs, and other social settings. (Hayes) Other options like these will better help them to further develop their social skills. Another way of interacting handicapped students with their peers is a program known as peer modeling. If peer models were entered into a classroom of a handicapped environment they would be more motivated to interact with the handicapped students. "Emotionally disturbed children have great difficulty relating to other people in socially accepting ways" (Fleischner 2). The general students have more capabilities to help the handicapped children and will easier adapt in their classroom setting.

Many people today are for integrating handicapped students for different reasons. One reason they have for this is because they say if handicapped students are placed in a mainstream classroom they will have a higher self esteem level. It is often said that Handicapped students will feel better about themselves when surrounded by other students classified as "normal." Advocates also point to studies that find special education pupils who are mainstreamed tend to have higher self esteem ("Special..." par. 18). Although people think this to be true, placing students in a mainstream classroom could lower the self esteem of the student. The handicapped students are unable to function on the level of general students and will never be on this same level. Placing them in a classroom where they do not understand what is going on or can not do as well as the other students could become frustrating for the handicapped student (Hayes).

Another reason many people feel that integrating would be beneficial is the belief that this would eliminate discrimination. They feel that these handicapped students will feel equal and no longer be overlooked. "Many mainstreaming advocates say that mainstreaming benefits general-education students as well as special-education students; they believe that mainstreaming/inclusion promotes diversity in schools and helps all students to learn to accept others who are different from themselves"("Special..."par 18). Although handicapped students

should not be segregated they must not be overlooked. Their needs must be made aware of. “A free public education in the least restrictive environment for every student does not mean that all students have to be in the same classroom” (Green 3). Handicapped students can not learn in a regular classroom where there is little extra support (Green 2). These needs should not be overlooked. Today in high schools all students are segregated to meet their needs. Students are ability grouped. Just like there are honors classes and Advanced Placement classes offered for general students, who are gifted, to better meet their needs; handicapped students must also be ability grouped and placed in separate classrooms. These students are different and they must be treated this way to an extent. Just like mentioned earlier students can interact and be accepted in other areas that are going to be more beneficial.

A final reason for handicapped students being integrated is the interaction with normal peers and time to learn appropriate behavior. They believe these students will advance socially by observing others actions. Many say these students are deprived of this when segregated. Although students do not get a lot of interaction in their special classroom they will not get much more in a mainstream classroom. This is because of the lectureship form of most academic classes today. Again, this is where the peer modeling technique becomes very useful. If these handicapped students were involved in all mainstream academic classes they would miss out on many therapies needed, such as physical, occupational, speech and recreation.

“Today about 7% of the nation’s children need special education because they have physical or mental disabilities or are emotionally disturbed” (Fleischner 2). “It is estimated that only about ¼ of the handicapped children in the U.S. who require special education are being served” (Weiner 196). That ¼ of the students not being served is due to the neglect of these students needs. When this occurs and public schools do not provide a good school situation for the handicapped a nongovernmental organization is often started so that the child’s needs are met

(Weiner 196). Special education is more important now than ever. “More students are being diagnosed with special needs.” “There are more special needs categories,” this means that there is a wider expansion of needs and they must be met. All of these are reasons why handicapped students must not be overlooked by placing them in a mainstream classroom where they do not profit from it. Students who are severely handicapped deserve to have the attention and help needed to make them as successful as possible through out life.

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