Mainstreaming, The Foundation for Inclusion

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Mainstreaming, The Foundation for Inclusion

Abstract
My literature review portion of this project discussed the history of mainstreaming, in addition to its advantages and disadvantages. It also talked about the social effects of mainstreaming and the impact teachers' attitudes have on its success. In addition, it discussed a number of effective mainstreaming strategies along with current practices of inclusion. The study I conducted for this project focused on one participant who is integrated into a general education setting from his special education setting. I observed and recorded the participant's on-task behavior, along with his social and academic interactions in both settings.

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Abstract

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Introduction

For my capstone project I wanted to focus on mainstreaming/inclusion. As an educator, I think it is extremely important that we meet the needs of all of our students, especially students with disabilities. Many school districts have “inclusion” classrooms, but are they really practicing inclusion or are they still practicing mainstreaming? If they are practicing inclusion, are they truly meeting the needs of all of the students in their classroom, or are some students still falling through the cracks? I currently work as a teacher assistant in an 8:1:1 special education setting, in the suburbs of Rochester, where the students are integrated into the general education classroom throughout the day. I primarily work one-on-one with one of the students in this setting. I became interested in this topic when I started working in this classroom. I wanted to look at whether or not this student’s placement was best meeting his individual needs.

I began this project by conducting research for my literature review. My literature review portion of this project discusses the history of mainstreaming, in addition to its advantages and disadvantages. It also talks about the social effects of mainstreaming and the impact teachers’ attitudes have on its success. In addition, it discusses a number of effective mainstreaming strategies along with current practices of inclusion.

Traditionally, special educators have assumed primary responsibility for educating handicapped students. However, recent litigation and legislation at the state and national level require that handicapped students receive a free education commensurate with their needs and, where appropriate, be educated with their non-handicapped peers.

The EHA, renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), eventually required schools to provide students with disabilities with more specialized educational services.
Mainstreaming or inclusion in the regular education classrooms, with supplementary aids and services if needed, is now the preferred placement for all children.

After conducting my literature review, I completed my study, which focused on one particular student who is integrated into a general education classroom from his 8:1:1 special education setting. I looked at both his general education and special education settings in order to determine which setting was best meeting his academic and social needs.

I also conducted interviews with both his general education teacher and his special education teacher to find out their thoughts on whether or not they were meeting the needs of this particular student. I also investigated whether or not they felt they were practicing inclusion, or if it was just mainstreaming with a new name.

The goal of my study was to determine which setting, the special education setting or the general education setting, was best meeting the student’s academic and social needs. I looked at both his academic and social interactions within his general education setting and his special education setting. I also looked at the number of verbal and non-verbal prompts the student required to stay on task in each setting. Along with collecting the data for my research, I described both the general education setting and the special education setting in detail to help readers understand the circumstances in which the data was obtained.

As an educator, I am going to do everything in my power to make sure each student’s individual needs are being met in each setting he or she is in throughout their school day. It has become common to create “inclusion” classrooms, but are the “inclusion” classrooms that we create, best meeting the needs of all of our students?
Literature Review

This literature review was completed to examine research written about the effectiveness of mainstreaming in special education. Articles were chosen that discussed the advantages and disadvantages of mainstreaming, social effects of mainstreaming, teachers’ attitudes towards mainstreaming and effective strategies used in mainstreamed programs. This literature review discusses the findings of the research, focusing on the best practices for teaching mainstreamed students.

“Traditionally, special educators have assumed primary responsibility for educating handicapped students. However, recent litigation and legislation at the state and national level require that handicapped students receive a free education commensurate with their needs and, where appropriate, be educated with their non-handicapped peers” (Hudson, Graham & Warner, 1979, p. 58).

Before the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EHA) was enacted in 1975, U.S. public schools educated only one out of five children with disabilities. During this time some students with disabilities lived in state institutions that provided limited or no educational or rehabilitation services and some students were completely excluded from school. Other students attended school but were not receiving the educational services that they needed in order to be successful. Many of these students were in separate buildings or programs that didn’t allow for them to interact with any non-disabled students nor allow them to learn basic academic skills.

The EHA, renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), eventually required schools to provide students with disabilities with more specialized educational services.
In the 1980’s the mainstreaming model began to be used. Students with mild disabilities were integrated into the regular classrooms. Students with major disabilities remained in segregated special classrooms for most of the day, and had the opportunity to interact with their non-disabled peers for only a few hours each day.

In 1997, IDEA was modified to strengthen requirements for properly integrating students with disabilities. All public schools in the U.S. are responsible for the costs of providing a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) as required by federal law. Mainstreaming, or inclusion in the regular education classrooms, with supplementary aids and services if needed, is now the preferred placement for all children. Children with disabilities may be placed in a more restricted environment only if the nature or severity of the disability makes it impossible to provide an appropriate education in the regular classroom.

A number of questions I looked at answering as a part of my research include: what is mainstreaming? What are the advantages and disadvantages of mainstreaming? What are the social effects of mainstreaming for students with disabilities? What impact does the general education teacher’s attitude have on the success of a mainstreaming program? What are the most effective mainstreaming strategies?

History of Mainstreaming

"Mainstreaming is the education of mildly handicapped children in the regular classroom. It is a concept that is compatible with the least restrictive environment provision of P.L. 94-142, requiring that all handicapped children be educated with their normal peers whenever possible" (Stephens, Blackhurst, & Magliocca, 1988, p. 1). As Stephens et al. (1988) discussed the idea behind mainstreaming is to provide students with disabilities with equal
opportunities as their non-disabled peers. This can be done by placing them into the general education classroom, if not for the entire day, at least for part of the day.

Mainstreaming is not mandated by federal legislation or is it addressed in the Education for All Handicapped Children Act. However, Schloss (1992) discusses how mainstreaming is the desirable outcome when the regular education classroom is the least restrictive environment appropriate when judged against the individual’s learning and behavioral features. With or without accommodations mainstreaming is appropriate when the educational and behavioral characteristics of a student are such that effective instruction can occur in this environment.

Schloss (1992) defines mainstreaming as, “the placement in a regular classroom environment with or without other accommodations” (p. 235). In many cases the regular classroom setting with other accommodations is minimally restrictive because of the substantial contact with learners who are not disabled and immersion in the regular classroom environment. Schloss (1992) discusses how this type of placement is typically appropriate for students with mild to moderate learning behavioral problems. However, it is important to note that in all cases the individual student needs to be assessed to see what the best option as far as the least restrictive environment is for him or her.

Often students with disabilities are mainstreamed into regular classes during specific time periods based on their skills. Many educators believe that educating children with disabilities alongside their non-disabled peers fosters understanding and tolerance, ultimately better preparing students of all abilities to function in the world beyond school.

Advantages of Mainstreaming

Lewis and Doorlag (1995) discuss the benefits of mainstreaming. They discuss how one of the major benefits of mainstreaming is that students with disabilities are able to remain with
their peers and therefore, are not segregated from normal school activities. “Success is most likely when general education instruction is individualized and when support is available not only to students with special needs but also to their teachers” (Lewis & Doorlag, 1995, p. 12). Students with disabilities can achieve academic success in mainstreamed classrooms if they are provided with the necessary services and programs to help meet their needs.

Students with disabilities can learn social cues, body language, speech and age appropriate activities from their peers. Through interacting with their general education peers they can also learn classroom routines to help foster their independence.

It is also proven that general education students also benefit from association with students with disabilities. Providing the opportunity for all students to interact within school provides them with a realistic introduction into society.

Lewis and Doorlag (1995) also mention how students are not the only ones benefiting from mainstreaming. Special educators benefit through mainstreaming by getting the chance to serve more students. General education teachers benefit from the support they receive from the mainstreaming team.

Studies also show that students with disabilities who are mainstreamed have higher academic achievement, higher self-esteem and better social skills. By including students with disabilities in the general education setting, students with disabilities have shown to be more confident. Also, by providing students with disabilities the opportunity to be included in the general education setting allows students to learn social skills through observation and ultimately helps them gain a better understanding of the world around them.

Disadvantages of Mainstreaming
Of course, difficulties may occur in the mainstreaming process. One major difficulty is the experience of the general education teacher involved in the mainstreaming process. Many teachers may not have the qualifications or experience of working with students with disabilities and therefore, may be reluctant to participate.

Along with teachers, parents and students may be apprehensive about the mainstreaming process. Parents and students may be comfortable being in a self-contained special education classroom with a small group of children. Therefore, they may be nervous about mainstreaming into a larger general education classroom. Allen (1992) discusses how parents also may be concerned whether or not the special needs of students with disabilities will be met adequately in a mainstreamed program. Will teachers have the time to meet their child’s individual needs? Another concern may come from the parents of the general education students; will their children be shorthanded because the teacher is focused on meeting the needs of the students with disabilities?

Other disadvantages of the system include; social issues and costs. Often students with disabilities who are mainstreamed feel socially rejected by their classmates. Also, schools may not be provided with additional financial resources to meet the needs of all of their students.

Social Effects of Mainstreaming

With the emphasis on mainstreaming students, educators increasingly are concerned with the social difficulties of students with disabilities. When you’re mainstreaming students with disabilities into classrooms with their non-disabled peers, socialization is a concern. Many students with disabilities lack the social skills necessary to interact positively in a large classroom environment. Cartledge, Frew, & Zaharias (1985) discussed how students with disabilities tend to be rejected by their non-disabled peers. They discuss a variety of factors that
they believe to be associated with why these students are being rejected including; non-disabled children’s negative attitude towards the disabled students, disabled children’s inadequate social skills, and regular teachers’ poor attitudes and inadequate skills for teaching disabled students. All three factors discussed are highly likely reasons why students with disabilities struggle socially when mainstreamed into the general education classroom. Although Cartledge (1985) et al. discussed these factors years ago; these are factors that are still seen in schools today.

Peters (1990) discussed how positive socialization occurred at the classroom level when: teachers role-modeled equal norms and expectations for all students, support from teachers to modify and accommodate individual differences was timely and appropriate, and teachers were willing to negotiate responsibilities and roles regarding ongoing instructional support in order to accommodate individual differences within the general education classroom.

Peters (1990) also stated that among individual students in the classroom, positive social integration was supported when: students could make their own choices regarding task organization, students were motivated and engaged in the opportunities that were available to them, and students gained competencies in a wide range of social interaction strategies. Overall Peters (1990) believed that positive social integration was shaped by the personal resources and socialization skills of individual children.

Cartledge et al. (1985) stated that in order to foster positive peer interactions for all students, greater attention needs to be given to other areas such as; informal conversation and play skills. Many students, especially students with disabilities, lack the social skills that enable them to carry on or initiate an informal conversation with a peer or an adult. Many of these students also lack the play skills necessary to interact in what one might consider a simple game of tag. If students are going to be mainstreamed into the regular classrooms and included in
activities such as lunch and recess, they need to be taught how to have an informal conversation. They need to be taught how to take turns and how to play commonly known tag games.

Therefore, regular classroom teachers as well as special area teachers need training in methods to help students acquire peer-related interpersonal skills. "Mainstreaming social skills curriculum model should focus on: (a) developing more positive attitudes toward students with disabilities, and (b) developing requisite interpersonal skills in the disabled students, particularly conversation and play and sport skills" (Cartledge et al., 1985, p. 139).

In most cases, non-disabled peers prefer to socialize with other non-disabled peers, which is why social interventions should not only focus on enhancing the acceptability of students with disabilities but should also focus more directly on the social dynamics of the classroom.

Teachers' Attitudes

Hudson et al. (1979) discusses how in order to have a successful mainstreaming team, special educators and regular educators need to consistently communicate their thoughts and beliefs related to mainstreaming. Working successfully together requires a lot of cooperation, proper training, careful planning and most importantly, appropriate attitudes.

"The intent of mainstreaming and PL 94-142 can be destroyed if regular classroom teachers are not properly trained, if they do not receive adequate support services, and if they do not possess positive attitudes toward mainstreamed handicapped learners" (Hudson et al., 1979, p. 59).

Hudson et al. (1979) summarized the results from the questionnaire in the article which suggest that regular classroom teachers' attitudes are not supportive of mainstreaming the handicapped child. Many of the teachers did say they were willing to provide services for special education students in the classroom but were apprehensive about the effect that it may
have on their teaching and their students. Some of the reasons teachers discussed for being reluctant to mainstreaming included; lack of time, support services, and the necessary training to teach students with disabilities. If general education teachers do not have positive attitudes about mainstreaming programs, the success of mainstreaming programs are in jeopardy.

Janney et al. (1995) states that “if general education teachers are to be committed to a mainstreaming program, they need to gain a better understanding of the overall purpose for integration” (p. 14). They need to grasp an understanding of integration and be open-minded about the mainstreaming process in order to help it become successful.

Effective Mainstreaming Strategies

Allen (1992) discusses a variety of implications for teachers for effective mainstreaming. He begins by discussing the importance of individualizing programs and activities to meet each child’s specific needs and abilities. In order for educators to effectively mainstream students with disabilities, they need to make sure the programs or activities meet each student’s individual needs.

Allen (1992) also talks about the importance of recognizing that there are no well-defined markers between normal, at-risk, and developmentally disabled children. Not one student is alike so teachers cannot have the attitude that all students with disabilities perform or act the same way. Also, how important it is to remember that the range of normalect is broad and that many so-called normal children have developmental irregularities. This means that every student has academic strengths and weaknesses and it is important for educators to recognize that and to do all that they can do to meet each student’s individual needs.

“Avoid the possibility of limiting children’s learning by labeling; a label often becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy” (Allen, 1992, p. 63). Often labeling a child can have a negative affect
on the child. As educators it is important to try many different strategies and approaches with a child before you attempt to get the child labeled.

Allen (1992) also shares his beliefs about the value of play as an avenue for learning for all children, those with disabilities and those without disabilities. However, it is important to remember that many students with disabilities do not play spontaneously, nor do they know how to play.

"Arranging a balance of large and small group experiences, both vigorous and quiet, so that all children, at their own levels, can be active and interactive participants" (Allen, 1992, p. 63). Giving students the chance to work in small groups and large groups within your classroom provides them with the opportunity to work and interact with their peers.

Allen (1992) stresses the need for educators to structure a learning environment in which students with disabilities and students without disabilities can participate together in a variety of activities related to all areas of development. Creating a classroom environment in which all students are included and given equal opportunities to participate in all classroom activities is the key.

Scruggs and Mastropieri (1992) describe in detail eight general areas that they believe all students must be able to function in, in order to succeed in a mainstream environment. They discuss all eight areas in detail and then provide a number of effective strategies for improving or dealing with problems in these areas.

For students with attention deficits they suggest to increase proximity and modify the rate and presentation of the curriculum. If a student is inattentive or off task, often by the teacher simply moving closer to that student so that he or she thinks the teacher is attending to them, improves their attention. Also, many students often get lost if the material is presented at too fast
of a rate, or at too high of a level, so it is important for teachers to slow down the rate of presentation and to include lots of visual materials to help engage the students.

For students with memory deficits they suggest intensifying instruction for later recall. This can be done by having students highlight or underline important information within a text and then rereading or repeating the information several times.

To help students with low intellectual ability Scruggs and Mastropieri (1992) suggest providing students with additional time to learn. “Low functioning students can learn more like their mainstreamed peers if they are given additional time to learn content (Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1992, p. 395).

Another strategy to use is to employ discovery learning, inquiry, or constructivist approaches. Many students do not benefit from information directly communicated to them from their teachers. Instead, they benefit from having the chance to discover information. This is not saying that all students benefit from engaging in discovery activities, some might benefit from direct instruction from the teacher, but students need to be provided with the opportunity to learn the information in whichever way works best for them.

Strategies to assist students with language problems include; allowing sufficient time for responding and assisting students in developing listening skills. “Students who have expressive language problems, may simply require additional time to think up responses” (Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1992, p. 397). Therefore, teachers should allow sufficient “wait time” before requiring the student to respond. Teachers can assist students in developing listening skills by using consistent patterns for cuing students to listen.

“The relationship between learning and behavior has been well documented; for this reason it is important to establish that observed problems in classroom behavior are not caused
by learning problems” (Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1992, p. 397). For working with students with withdrawal, aggression, disruptive behavior, or social skills, the following are a few strategies that Scruggs and Mastropieri (1992) suggest. Two strategies are direct appeal and proximity, which were both previously described as strategies for working with students with attention deficits. Reinforcing positive classroom behavior is another strategy proven to be effective with students with social or emotional behavior issues.

Lack of motivation can also be the consequence of academic deficits. Strategies to assist students with lack of motivation or lack of interest include; creating a positive, caring classroom and establishing goals for learning. It is important to have high expectations for all students and to encourage students to work hard. Helping students set their own learning goals can help improve their attitude towards schoolwork and learning. Scruggs and Mastropieri (1992) describe the importance of having students receive some sort of “reward” when a goal has been reached, such as “free time” or another desired activity.

Another major cause of mainstreaming failure that Scruggs and Mastropieri (1992) discuss is the students’ lack of basic skills such as; reading, writing and math skills. Two of the strategies they discuss to help students who are lacking basic skills in the mainstreamed classroom are employing peer mediation and intensifying instruction in the special education setting. Peers have been proven to be effective basic skill tutors for students with disabilities. In most cases students would rather get help from a peer or a friend, rather than an adult in the classroom. By having the special education teacher provide more intensified instruction on basic skills, the hope is that these students will be able to learn the skills they are lacking at a much more rapid pace. It is more productive to teach basic skills in isolation rather than teaching them among other information in the general education classroom.
The final strategies Scruggs and Mastropieri (1992) discuss relate to study and organizational skills. Two ways teachers can assist students with these skills is to provide structure on all assignments and to teach general study techniques to the students.

In another study completed by Scruggs and Mastropieri, in 1994, they revealed seven variables which appeared to be meaningfully associated with observed mainstreaming success, across categories of disability and grade level. The seven variables included; administrative support; support from special education personnel; an accepting, positive classroom atmosphere; appropriate curriculum; effective general teaching skills; peer assistance; and disability-specific teaching skills.

"In interviews, all building administrators also voiced strong support for mainstreaming efforts and were well informed about mainstreaming activities being undertaken in their buildings" (Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1994, p. 794). It is important for administration to be on board and supportive in order for mainstreaming programs to be successful.

Scruggs and Mastropieri (1994) discuss how the ongoing support of special education personnel appeared to play a critical role in the mainstreaming success. In the general education classrooms, teachers were accepting of divergent answers and created a positive classroom environment for all of the students.

Meeting the curriculum can be a huge issue when working with students with disabilities. In one study students were given the chance to explore and investigate without relying on literacy skills. This helped students with disabilities who were performing typically below grade level in reading and writing.

Teachers in the classrooms used effective teaching skills to meet the needs of all of the learners. Scruggs and Mastropieri (1994) summarized many of these strategies as "SCREAM
variables: structure, clarity, redundancy, enthusiasm, appropriate pace, and maximized student engagement” (p. 799).

All non-disabled peers were used as peer tutors to assist students with disabilities.

“Interestingly, the idea of students helping other students as a normal class function appears to have been accepted by students with disabilities” (Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1994, p. 801).

Lastly, Scruggs and Mastropieri (1994) describe how the general education teachers, most of which were not formally certified to work with students with disabilities, learned how to adapt their instruction to meet the needs of each student.

Current Practices

Mainstreaming was a term used in the past to describe the process of pulling students from their special education classroom and placing them in a general education setting (i.e. art, gym, or social studies) for a small period of time each day. However, mainstreaming is no longer a common term used in the education setting today, rather the term inclusion is used. Inclusion describes the process of integrating students for part of the day or the full day in the general education setting.

Stout (2001) describes inclusion as a term which expresses commitment to educate each child, to the maximum extent appropriate, in the school and classroom he or she would otherwise attend (p. 1). This process uses a push-in model, which involves providing support services to the student in the regular classroom, rather than using a pull-out model which would take the child away from his or her regular classroom in order to receive support services.

Those who believe in inclusion essentially believe that the child should spend their day in the regular classroom, unless the services the child needs cannot be provided in the regular classroom.
Federal laws do not require inclusion, but require that a significant effort be made to find an inclusive placement. For example, The Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), as amended in 2004, does not require inclusion. Instead it requires that children with disabilities be educated in the least restrictive environment appropriate to meet their unique needs. However, IDEA acknowledges that the regular classroom is not the appropriate placement for all children. Therefore, the law also requires school districts to have a continuum of placements available, in order to accommodate the needs of all children with disabilities. The continuum of placements extends from the regular classroom to residential settings. Although a continuum of placements is provided, districts should first always assume that every student’s first placement is in the regular classroom.

In order for inclusion to be successful, the inclusion model must employ practices that focus on high expectations for all and rejects the remedial approach to teaching that leads to lower achievement. “All placement decisions should be based on a well-developed IEP with an emphasis on the needs of the child, his/her peers and the reasonable provision of services (Stout, 2001, p. 6). Each child has his or her own unique needs that must be met.

“There are those who believe that all students belong in the regular education classroom, and that “good” teachers are those who can meet the needs of all the students, regardless of what those needs may be” (Stout, 2001, p. 1).

Conclusion
This paper started off by defining mainstreaming and then discussing its advantages and disadvantages. It also discussed its impact on social integration of students who are mainstreamed along with a variety of effective mainstreaming strategies. Lastly, it discussed the term inclusion, and how inclusion is implemented in today’s schools. Through my research I
realized that communication and correspondence between the general education teachers and the special education teachers is vital in the success of mainstreaming and/or inclusion. Both the general education teachers and the special education teachers need support, materials and ongoing staff development to be master teachers in this partnership. The above will add credibility to this strategy and guarantee success for all students with disabilities. Also, the school administrators along with their district administrators need to be advocates and provide strong support, praise and encouragement to their instructors.

Methodology

Setting

The general education setting consisted of twenty, third graders. Sixteen of the students are in the general education setting for the whole day. Two of the students with disabilities are integrated into the general education setting for mathematics, science and social studies. The other two students with disabilities are integrated into the general education classroom for science and social studies only. The child this study focused on is integrated into the general education classroom for mathematics, science and social studies.

During mathematics the lessons are primarily discussion based. The teacher usually begins the lesson with a mini-lesson. During this point she is standing in the front of the classroom. Then the students either practice the new skill with a partner or independently. The teacher at this point is walking around the room providing assistance to those who need it, or pulling a small group of students who are struggling to the back of the classroom. At this time the participant is either working one-on-one with his teacher assistant or with a partner. Students are actively engaged in their work, whether they are doing a hands-on activity or a worksheet from their math binder. At the end of the lesson the teacher brings the whole group together
again to discuss the activity or worksheet the students were required to complete. Occasionally students are placed into smaller groups to work on an activity as well.

The students' desks are in rows or clusters of three or four. The participant's desk is in the front corner of the classroom near the door, which makes it easily accessible for him to transition in and out of the classroom. The student is positioned near the front of the class, which makes it easier for him to see the board and the speaker. See the diagram of the classroom in Appendix A.

The special education setting is an 8:1:1 multi-age classroom. This classroom consists of four, third graders and three, fourth graders. There is one special education teacher and two teacher assistants. The students' desks are grouped together by the chalkboard near the front of the classroom. The room is easily accessible for the students to transition in and out of throughout the day. The room has two tables, which the teacher uses to conduct group activities. During the afternoon English/Language Arts block, only the third graders are in the classroom.

The teacher usually begins a lesson either with the whole group, or breaks up the class into their reading groups. If the class is broken up into groups the teacher has one of the teacher assistants lead a group while she focuses on the other group. Due to the student teacher ratio, students are often given the opportunity to work one-on-one with an adult in the classroom. See the diagram of the classroom in Appendix B.

Participant

The participant I worked with for my study is an eight year old, Caucasian male, in the third grade. His primary language is English. He is a healthy child from an affluent home. He attends a school in the suburbs of Rochester. He spends a part of his day in an 8:1:1 multiage special education classroom and a part of his day in a general education classroom. I selected
this participant to work with because he is integrated into the general education setting for mathematics, science and social studies. The participant is diagnosed with multiple disabilities including, cerebral palsy and pervasive developmental disorder.

Procedures

This study compares the data collected in the general education setting with the data collected in the special education setting. Data was collected twelve times in each setting over a two month span. Data was collected in the mornings during mathematics in the general education setting and in the afternoons during English/Language Arts in the special education setting. I observed and recorded the participant’s on-task behavior, along with his social and academic interactions. See Appendix C for sample observation form. The following questions were answered as a result of the data collection:

How many prompts does the student require to stay on task?
How often are social interactions occurring?
What types of social interactions are occurring?
How often are academic interactions occurring?
What situations are academic interactions occurring in?

I also created interview questions (see Appendix D) for his general education teacher and special education teacher to gather their thoughts and beliefs about his inclusion. The teachers answered questions such as:

What is your philosophy on inclusion?
Do you think this placement is the right fit for this particular student?
Is this student’s placement beneficial or detrimental to the other students in the classroom?
Do you feel you are meeting the academic and social needs of the student in your classroom?
Both the student and the student’s parents were made aware of the study. The student’s parents signed a consent form (see Appendix E) to give their permission to have their child be a part of the study. All names and identification information were not included to maintain confidentiality.

Findings/Results

The graph in Appendix F shows the number of verbal and non-verbal prompts the student required in each setting during the study. The student required thirty-one verbal prompts in the general education setting for putting his head down (See Appendix F). The student required eighteen verbal prompts in the special education setting for not being focused (See Appendix F). The student required nine non-verbal prompts in the general education setting for putting his head down (See Appendix F). The student required five non-verbal prompts in both settings for not being focused (See Appendix F).

The graph in Appendix G shows the number of social interactions the student had in each setting. The social interactions on the graph are broken up into two categories, interest and forced. A number of the social interactions that occurred were of a topic of interest for the student. Other social interactions occurred because an adult prompted or forced the student to engage in an interaction. In the general education setting the student had four social interactions related to his interest and two forced social interactions (See Appendix G). In the special education setting the student had eight social interactions related to his interest and two forced social interactions (See Appendix G).

The graph in Appendix H shows the number of academic interactions the student had in each setting. The academic interactions are broken up into three categories, which describe the settings in which the academic interactions occurred. In the general education setting the student
had fourteen one-on-one interactions, four group interactions, and one peer interaction. In the special education setting the student had eight one-on-one interactions and seven group interactions.

Out of the two questionnaires that were distributed, two were returned. Both participants have been working in the special education setting for over four years.

The general education teacher believes if inclusion is properly managed it is a beneficial program to all children. The special education teacher believes programs need to be tailored to meet the specific needs of each individual child.

The special education teacher believes that the majority of the student’s time is spent on social interactions in the classroom. The general education teacher believes that 10% of the student’s time is spent on social interactions in the classroom. The general education teacher believes that approximately 90% of the student’s time in the class is spent on academic interactions. The special education teacher believes that 70% of the student’s time is spent on academic interactions in the classroom.

Both teachers feel that they are meeting both the social and academic needs of the student in their classroom, but that there is always more that they can do. The general education teacher feels that the student’s placement is beneficial to the other students in the class. She feels that it enhances something that cannot be taught by books or activities.

Discussion

According to my data the participant requires a number of verbal and non-verbal prompts to help him stay on task in the general education setting and the special education setting, even with the appropriate accommodations. Therefore, I believe the participant is a student who has trouble focusing in general, no matter what the setting may be.
In both settings the student was either engaging in a conversation about a topic of interest, or being forced to interact socially with peers or adults. Although efforts were continuously being made to help the participant interact socially, this student could benefit from being taught how to socially interact with peers. Cartledge et al. (1985) stated that in order to foster positive peer interactions for all students, greater attention needs to be given to other areas such as; informal conversation and play skills. Many students, especially students with disabilities, lack the social skills that enable them to carry on or initiate an informal conversation with a peer or an adult.

The participant seemed to engage in the most academic interactions with his one-on-one teacher assistant. There were a few instances in which the participant academically interacted with a peer, but his one-on-one was always there supporting him. “Arranging a balance of large and small group experiences, both vigorous and quiet, so that all children, at their own levels, can be active and interactive participants” (Allen, 1992, p. 63). Giving students the chance to work in small groups and large groups within your classroom provides them with the opportunity to work and interact with their peers. Both settings allowed for group and peer work but the participant often chose to work with his one-on-one instead. I think the participant needs to be encouraged to work more often within a group or with a peer to give him the chance to interact and to help him become more independent.

After interviewing both of the participant’s teachers, I feel that they both truly support inclusion. They each have four years of experience in a special education setting and are willing to do everything that they can to help meet the academic and social needs of the participant. They both think the participant is in the right setting and is benefiting from interacting with his peers.
Conclusion

One of the limitations to my study was that I collected my data during two different subject areas. I collected my data during mathematics in the general education setting and during English/Language Arts in the special education setting. Another limitation to my study was that the time of day that I collected my data was different in each setting. I collected my data in the morning in the general education setting and in the afternoon in the special education setting. Both of these limitations were due to the classrooms’ schedules. Another limitation was that I only collected data on one student, so the results may just be specific to that child.

When I began my literature review I only found information on mainstreaming and most of the resources I initially found were outdated. Now that mainstreaming has developed into inclusion, I thought it was important to also research about current practices in inclusion. When conducting my research I did not find any sources that discussed any studies similar to the study I conducted.

The next steps to further this research would be to complete a similar study on a larger group of participants in order to see if my results occur across all participants. If the schedules allow for it, it would help to observe or collect data on the participants at either the same time of day or during the same subject area in each setting. I could also conduct more research to attempt to find out if any similar studies have been completed and compare my results to their results.

The overall purpose of my study was to collect data to help me decide whether or not this particular situation is truly an example of inclusion, or if it is just mainstreaming with a different name. After interpreting the results of my data I have come to the conclusion that this particular situation is in fact an example of inclusion. The data from the graphs show that the participant is
having a similar number of social and academic interactions in both settings. The data also shows that the participant is requiring a similar number of verbal and non-verbal prompts in each setting. Based on the data and the interview results, I think that both settings are the appropriate placements for this individual student. Both of the participant’s teachers are willing and able to provide the support the student needs in order to become successful in each setting.
References


Appendix A
Appendix B
Appendix C

Date: _______________ Classroom: _______________ Time: __________

On-task Behavior

Prompts

Social Interactions (adults/peers)
Who initiates?

What are the responses?

Academic Interactions (adults/peers)
Who initiates?

What are the responses?
Appendix D

Interview Questions

General Education Teacher:

1. What is your philosophy on mainstreaming or inclusion?
2. Were you given a choice to whether or not you wanted to teach a blended classroom?
3. What is your background in special education?
4. Do you think this is the right fit for this student?
5. On average what percentage of the time does the student spend on academic interactions in your classroom?
6. On average what percentage of the time does the student spend on social interactions in your classroom?
7. Do you think the student’s placement is beneficial or detrimental to the other students in the class?
8. Do you feel you are meeting the academic and social needs of the student in your classroom?

Special Education Teacher:

1. What is your philosophy on mainstreaming or inclusion?
2. What is your background in special education?
3. Do you think the student works better in small groups or in large groups?
4. On average what percentage of the time does the student spend on social interactions in your classroom?
5. On average what percentage of the time does the student spend on academic interactions in your classroom?
6. Do you feel you are meeting the academic and social needs of the student in your classroom?
Appendix E

Dear Parent or Guardian of ______________________
11/10/08

I am a student in the graduate special education program at St. John Fisher College. I am required to complete a capstone course as a part of my major. I've chosen to write my capstone on mainstreaming in education. For my capstone I need to complete a case study. I will need to take data on your child's academic and social interactions, both in the general education classroom and the special education classroom.

I would like your permission to complete a case study on your child as a part of my research. If you have any questions please feel free to contact me.

Thank you for your support.

Corie Muzza
dm8962@hotmail.com
(716) 485-1751

I give my permission for Corie Muzza to complete a case study on my child.

Child Name: ________________________

Parent Name: ________________________

Parent Signature: ________________________ Date: ___________
Appendix G
Appendix H

Academic Interactions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Interactions</th>
<th>General Education</th>
<th>Special Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One-on-One</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Number of interactions