

## **Inclusion of Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD): What does the Research Say?**

In Trends in Identification of Students with ASD, Effective Educational Programs for Students with ASD, and the Rationale for Inclusive Education (2005), Jorgensen, McSheehan, Sonnenmeier, and Nisbet conducted a literature review of effective educational programs for students with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD). They identify the following as “essential characteristics of quality educational programs for students with significant disabilities including ASD:

- ✓ Social equality (Bogdan & Taylor, 1987; Hahn, 1989);
- ✓ Staff and programs that reflect an understanding of the larger socio-cultural context in which children and families experience ASD and related cultural competence (Lynch & Hanson, 1998);
- ✓ High expectations for the development of literacy skills and academic achievement (Donnellan, 2000; Rossetti & Tashie, 2002);
- ✓ Family and consumer participation and self-determination (Turnbull, 2001);
- ✓ Supporting communication through access to vocabulary, technology, conversational opportunities with a variety of partners, and physical support (Bondy & Frost, 1994; Wetherby & Prizant, 2000);
- ✓ Natural settings and general education class placement (Jorgensen, 1998; National Research Council, 2001; Nisbet & Hagner, 1987; Noonan & McCormick, 1993);
- ✓ Interdisciplinary service delivery (Rainforth, York, & McDonald, 1992);
- ✓ Positive behavioral approaches (Lovett, 1996);
- ✓ Intentional facilitation of social relationships and community participation (Strain & Danko, 1995; Strully & Strully, 1992); and
- ✓ Individualized, early, and intensive assessment, instruction, and support (Falvey, 1995; Greenspan, 1999; Guralnick, 1997; Jorgensen, 1998).”

The following are the findings from their research literature review:

- ✓ Students learn more in inclusive classrooms than in segregated ones;
- ✓ All students can benefit from being taught academic curriculum content;
- ✓ Important functional skills can be taught without segregating students with disabilities from typical classmates;
- ✓ The education of students without disabilities is not adversely affected by the presence of students with disabilities (this is confirmed by a doctoral dissertation based on the study of state test performance of students without disabilities in classrooms with students with disabilities);
- ✓ Diversity enhances community and improves the educational experience for all students;
- ✓ IDEA puts a presumptive value on inclusive placements over more restrictive placements; and
- ✓ There are negative consequences to segregation.

For additional information, see Brief Highlights of Research on Inclusive Education, a paper presented on April 10, 2009, at the Inclusive Education Leadership Summit by the Institute on Disability in Durham, New Hampshire.