

# Should disabled children be mainstreamed in public schools

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Should Disabled Children Be Mainstreamed In Public Schools? There is considerable controversy on the issue of mainstreaming especially when it comes to children with disabilities. The supporters of mainstreaming argue that disabled children can and must be taught in a mixed environment along with other children who do not have any handicap, while the opponents of mainstreaming believe that disabled children can be better taught in separate, special environments (Williams & Algozzine, 1979). Mainstreaming poses many problems and it should not be allowed in public schools where the special resource materials to meet the needs of the disabled children are scanty.

The supporters of mainstreaming argue that all special children have an equal right to the opportunity of social inclusion (Decker & Decker, 1977). The opponents of mainstreaming do not disagree; no rational minded person can deny the rights of social inclusion of disabled children. But the question is: does mainstreaming ensure social inclusion of the disabled children? The answer is unfortunately, in the negative. In a book titled: ' Alone in the mainstream: A deaf woman remembers public school', Olivia shares her experiences as a deaf student in a mainstream environment (Rossetti, 2005). Olivia has shared her experiences of the painful social isolation she felt while being mainstreamed in a school where she was the only deaf child and how the environment and being different from other children made her feel like a solitaire. ' I was alone among so many people because they were not like me' (Olivia; cited in Rossetti, 2009). The main principle underlying mainstream is social inclusion; what's the point in it if the mainstreamed children despite being a part of it, remain isolated in the normal

environment?

The advocates of mainstreaming also claim that disabled children can be taught in regular public classrooms (Williams and Algozzine, 1979). This is also not as simple as it appears. The success of a special child in a regular environment depends upon two main factors, one: the type and extent of disability and second is the attitude of teachers. Children with physical handicaps are usually a bit more accepted by regular children and teachers as compared to those who are mentally handicapped (Williams & Algozzine, 1979). Teachers also often have differential attitudes towards the special children and otherwise (William & Algozzine) and according to Decker & Decker (1977), exposure to discriminatory attitudes of teachers and other students can elevate the feelings of rejection, fear of education and social anxiety among the disabled children.

Loudaros (2009) argues that a special environment develops dependency among the disabled children and they find it difficult to cope with the real world in their practical life because they are so used to the protected and special environment. To counter this argument, here is the review of a study conducted by UNICEF (2000). Resource materials which have specially been developed and designed for optimized learning of the disabled children is not available in public schools anywhere; there is a total lack of facilities and resource material for the learning of special children (UNICEF, 2000). Is it fair to deprive the disabled of what they can learn in a special environment just to expose them to a mixed social environment? According to SEDL (2011), public schools are already faced with great pressure to build up educational standards and it would be very difficult for the teachers to maintain a high

educational standard if they are also to teach disabled children without any special or additional resources.

To conclude, special environments designed according to the needs of disabled children are the best source of learning for them. Mainstreaming is only a fair option if the regular teachers are given additional training in special education, are provided with additional facilities and resource material needed by special children and counseling is provided to counter discriminatory behaviors.

#### References:

Decker, R. J & Decker, L. Mainstreaming the LD child: A cautionary note. SAGE. 12. 3 (1977): 353-356.

Loudaros, S. Is it because I'm different? 2009. Web. 28 May 2011. Rossetti, Z. Review: ' Alone in the mainstream'. Disability Studies Quarterly 25. 2, (2005).

SEDL. Inclusion: The pros and cons. 2011. Web. 29 May 2011. < <http://www.sedl.org/change/issues/issues43/concerns.html>>.

UNICEF. GAM: Children in mainstream schools. 2000. Web. 28 May 2011. < [http://www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/index\\_14290.html](http://www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/index_14290.html)>.

Williams, R. J & Algozzine, B. ' Teachers' attitude towards mainstreaming'. JSTOR: The Elementary School Journal 80. 2 (1979): 63-67.

#### OUTLINE

Introduction and thesis statement (Last sentence of intro paragraph is the thesis statement).

Arguments in favor of thesis and supporting the thesis by addressing counter arguments.

Mainstreaming v/s ensuring social inclusion

Special needs

Biased attitude of teachers and fellow students (Discrimination)

Dependency v/s rich learning

Conclusion.