

Teachers and peers' attitudes towards pupils with handicap.

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The first part of this research effort reviews the literature with respect to teacher attitudes toward pupils with handicap. The second part of the study presents two recent research investigations concerning the attitudes of peers towards their pupils with handicap. Several important findings emerge from the literature: (1) successful inclusion of students with handicap was positively correlated with the level of teacher experience; (2) teacher attitudes towards children with Down Syndrome were more positive than toward students with other developmental disabilities; (3) teacher attitudes were negatively correlated with concerns about students with potential behavior problems; (4) teachers who were part of a support program had more positive attitudes about students with handicap than did traditional classroom teachers; (5) preschool and primary school teachers had attitudes that were more positive than their colleagues who teach at secondary schools; and (6) teachers in Italy showed more positive attitudes than did their Australian or American colleagues.

Sociometric techniques were utilized to study the attitudes of peers toward pupils with handicap. The main results were as follows: (1) typical peers were more likely to select students with handicap when asked who they would like to assist in classroom activities; (2) students with handicap were chosen even less than typical peers who were not popular when asked with whom they would want to confide a secret, spend free time or study together; and (3) students with physical disabilities were more likely to be chosen than children with mental retardation by their typical peers.

The most significant finding was that the greater the length of exposure to students with handicap in integrated settings, the greater the positive attitudes of typical peers and the greater the level of acceptance. This confirms the hypothesis that exposure to students with handicap over time reduces negative attitudes and rejection.

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