

# Inclusion of Students with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities and Postsecondary Outcomes: A Systemic Literature Review

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## ■ A QUICK LOOK:

Unfortunately, many individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) never achieve meaningful paid employment or enroll in postsecondary education after graduation from high school. Although educational and workforce legislation has emphasized both inclusive education and competitive integrated employment for youth with IDD, no previous reviews examined the strength of evidence for the former as a pathway to better outcomes for this group. This systematic literature review searched research articles published between 1997 and 2018 and found that K-12 inclusive education was overall linked with better employment and educational outcomes after students graduated.

## ■ KEY FINDINGS:

- Inclusive education broadly linked to better employment outcomes (hours and wages) and higher likelihood of postsecondary education enrollment.
- Strengthens support for inclusive education as a predictor of postsecondary success for youth with disabilities (e.g., Mazzotti et al., 2020).
- Inclusive education was defined differently across studies—some researchers measured time in general education classrooms and extracurricular activities with peers; others examined the type of school students attended.
- Most of the studies were correlational in nature and used secondary data analysis in their investigations.
- One study used statistical methods to account for individual differences in participants in how inclusive education related to postsecondary education—they found inconclusive results.

## ■ PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE:

To create more positive employment opportunities for youth with IDD:

- Practitioners should emphasize high expectations for students to perform academically and gain skills and knowledge necessary to achieve their career goals.
- Inclusive education should be considered a key part of transition planning and programming alongside other major predictors of success for this group like previous paid work experience and participation in an internship.
- Transition practitioners should look to balance academic and vocational/career-oriented goals and activities for youth.
- Collaboration should extend not only to coordination between case managers in K-12 and vocational rehabilitation agencies, but also general educators who may provide insight into academic strengths that may be related to career aspirations.

## ■ MORE ABOUT THIS ARTICLE

The inclusion of individuals with IDD in K-12 and employment settings should continue to be an emphasis of policy and practice. Additionally, future research is needed to provide greater insight into the nature of this bridge between K-12 inclusion and competitive integrated employment in order to better inform transition planning and practice.

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