

The Perspectives of Professionals and Parents on Inclusion in Head Start Programs

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This study examined the perspectives of professionals and parents on part-time inclusive preschool Head Start programs that included both children with and without disabilities. The purpose of this study was twofold: (a) to examine parent and teacher perspectives of inclusion on the developmental outcomes of all children and (b) to investigate their perspectives on what constitutes a high quality inclusive program. Thirty Head Start and Early Childhood Special Education preschool teachers, as well as 30 parents of children with and without disabilities participated in this study. The major findings indicated that both parents and teachers strongly agreed that all children with disabilities should learn in the same environment with their classmates without disabilities. The majority of parents and teachers had positive attitudes toward inclusion and perceived there were social, emotional and academic benefits for all children in inclusive settings. However, some of the teacher and parent participants were concerned about possible isolation for children with disabilities. In addition, findings also indicated that inclusive programs were still lacking some essential elements of a high quality inclusion program. Implications for practitioners and future research are discussed.

Keywords: Head Start, Inclusion, Disabilities, Professionals, Parents