What Does the Research Say About Inclusive Congregations?

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University of Kentucky

Faith & Flourishing
Embracing Inclusion for People with Disabilities, Their Families, and Congregations
April 22, 2016
Nashville, TN

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After this session, attendees will:

1. Discuss and analyze current literature on inclusive congregations.
2. Discuss the factors that contribute to successful inclusion.
3. Design strategies to use in faith communities.
Objective 1: Analysis of Literature

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Table 1
Journals Reviewed, by Audience, Publisher, Volume, and Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Journal</th>
<th>Audience</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
<th>Volumes/Years Reviewed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exceptional Children</td>
<td>CEC members</td>
<td>CEC</td>
<td>Vol. 63(2)–Vol. 74(1) 1997–2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Exceptional Children</td>
<td>CEC members</td>
<td>CEC</td>
<td>Vol. 29(3)–Vol. 40(2) 1997–2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young Exceptional Children</td>
<td>DEC of CEC subscribers</td>
<td>CEC</td>
<td>Vol. 1(1)–Vol. 10(4) 1997–2007</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- 69 articles with embedded references
- 7 articles with main topic

Special Education Literature

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Percent of Articles by Topic

- Diversity: 52%
- Coping/Family: 25%
- Community inclusion: 16%
- Evaluating Outcomes: 7%
- Trauma: 3%

Embedded Topics

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Percent of Articles by Methodology

- Theo/Descr: 54%
- Survey: 39%
- Direct observation: 7%
- Record review: 4%
- Other: 6%

Methodology

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• Description of inclusion in religious institutions
• Spiritual characteristics of cultural groups
• Special education in parochial schools


Recent Literature: Special Ed

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Recent Literature: Inclusive

10 years (2006-2015)
n = 72

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Faiths Represented

© Ault (2016)
Disabilities Represented

© Ault (2016)
Percent of Articles by Methodology

Methodology Represented

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- Special education literature is still limited
- Methodology is primarily theoretical/descriptive pieces
- Lack of experimental research
- Lack of publications across disability areas
- Lack of publications across faiths
- Few reviews of literature
Objective 2: Factors of Successful Congregations

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Parent Survey

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1. In what ways do families of children with disabilities participate in their faith-based communities?

2. In what ways do the individuals with disabilities participate in their faith-based communities?

3. What are the parental perceptions of factors that affect the participation of families of children with disabilities in their faith communities?

Parent Survey: Research Questions

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### Methodology

**Online & Paper Survey**

16. Rate each of the items below for how helpful they would be to you or your child in participating in a place of worship.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Not Very Helpful</th>
<th>Somewhat Helpful</th>
<th>Helpful</th>
<th>Don't Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accessible facilities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessible transportation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional support to participate in regular activities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special programs designed just for persons with disabilities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respite care</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent support group</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counseling sponsored by place of worship</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessible materials (e.g., large print, adapted curriculum)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welcoming attitude toward people with disabilities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Methodology

- Telephone interviews
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of disability</th>
<th>Variety of parent activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age of son/daughter</td>
<td>Variety of child activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>Type of inclusion model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance of Religion</td>
<td>Available programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of attendance</td>
<td>Helpfulness of programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size of community</td>
<td>Other programs needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of adult participation</td>
<td>Prevented participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of child participation</td>
<td>Helped participation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- N = 416
- 88% were mothers
Disability Category of Son/ Daughter

- Speech/Language
- LD
- Significant Health
- Orthopedic
- HI
- TBI
- EBD
- ADD/ADHD
- VI
- DD
- Mild ID
- Mod to Severe ID
- Autism

N = 409

Respondents © Ault (2016)
How Supportive Did Parents Find Places of Worship in Including their Son or Daughter?

- Supportive = 43%
- Sometimes supportive = 41%
- Not supportive = 13%

Results © Ault (2016)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Changed your place of worship because your child was not included or welcomed?</td>
<td>?%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refrained from participating in a religious activity because your child was not included?</td>
<td>?%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kept your child from participating in a religious activity because support was not provided?</td>
<td>?%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Been asked or expected to stay with your child at a religious activity so your child could participate</td>
<td>?%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Been asked by a person at a place of worship the best way to include your child in religious activities?</td>
<td>?%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

© Ault (2016)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Have you ever...</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Changed your place of worship because your child was not included or welcomed?</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refrained from participating in a religious activity because your child was not included?</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kept your child from participating in a religious activity because support was not provided?</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Been asked or expected to stay with your child at a religious activity so your child could participate</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Been asked by a person at a place of worship the best way to include your child in religious activities?</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

© Ault (2016)
Qualitative Results

Factors Affecting Families' Participation

- Characteristics of Sons/Daughters, Families, Communities (28%)
- Attitudes and Beliefs of Faith Communities (19%)
- Practices and Supports (Adaptations, Supportiveness) (45%)
- Knowledge and Expertise of Faith Community about Persons with Disabilities (8%)

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“Education on disabilities in religious settings is much needed. The more folks understand about a disability, the more often they will be open to its presence.”
(Mother of adult with ASD)

“The pastor specifically asked how he could help her, but he has no training or understanding about her disorder or needs.”
(Mother of a preteen with ASD)
“In a former church, the attitude was of acceptance and not fear. He was welcome to try anything and peers and adults were open to his challenges, not rigid.” (Mother of teenage son with ASD)
“There is either fear or resistance because of my child’s behavior. We are just not welcome.” (Mother of teenage child with autism)

“I brought my son to a cookout and nobody knew how to come up to me. I felt like I was making them uncomfortable. They would look at him funny when he would start ‘stimming.’” (Mother of preschool son with autism)

Attitudes and Beliefs (19%)
“He was overwhelmed by the noise and chaos in the children's church room and didn't know what to do, so his Aunt offered to take him to her church, a much smaller, less chaotic place. He loves it.” (Mother of preteen son with ASD)

“They hold activities on the beach which are not accessible to my child’s wheelchair.” (Mother of elementary child with TBI)
“Our church provides aides to kids with disabilities so they can participate in their small groups. Without an aide, I doubt my daughter would be able to be included much at all.”
(Mother of 6-10 year old with ASD)

“Our church is good about doing an inventory on each child with special needs to see how they can be included.” (Mother of elementary child with ASD)
“We have to pick and choose what we can participate in because sometimes there is no one to watch my daughter since childcare is only for children under 6 and my daughter is 14.” 
(Mother of teenage daughter with ASD)

“I have been offered to let her go to Religious classes but no accommodations are made to the curriculum and it would be way over her head and a waste of time.” (Mother of preteen daughter with mild intellectual disabilities)
Negative Experience Story
“When my daughter had her ceremony, there was a fairly good representation from the community and the temple leadership. When my son had his bar mitzvah, absolutely no one showed up other than family, and I was no longer on the board, so I don’t know what that played to it, but….when I chose not to renew my membership, I was very explicit that every child should have the support of their faith-based community when they go through any kind of event, be it confirmation or even just participating in religious school. But here was a kid that had special needs and went through quite an elaborate process to reach the point where he reached, and to not have anyone there to show, to demonstrate to him…of what an accomplishment that was, I think was pretty sad. “
“So the bottom line is, I believe that for faith-based communities… it’s the community aspect which is critically important, so to not have the community there just turned me off completely, so I stopped being a member. I just thought it was poor of the community, as well as not even having temple leadership there. “

“In part of my search for… a faith that is meaningful, I did attend a church.”
Positive Experience Story

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“Well, because he was pretty aggressive in a small group of kids, and so, despite our efforts and, you know, we’d be one-on-one with him, he would reach over and pull somebody’s hair, and I didn’t want him to get a bad reputation at church, because I knew those would be the kids he would grow up with.”
“His Sunday School teacher, is an occupational therapist, so he has knowledge of how to work with him, but the other thing that our church did is…like they, we do drama in our church service, and they did one on special needs children, special needs people just in general, just to make the congregation aware of how…how we view people who are different. Of course my husband and I cried through the whole drama [laughing].”
“And then they’re just now starting—we’re involved in starting a support group; our children’s minister is actually initiating it for families with special needs children.”

The one thing that helped us with [church name] is that we found them to be very supportive. And then it meant the children’s ministers met with us and said, “OK, what can we do to make it possible for your family to worship here?”
Objective 3: Useful Strategies
1. What are we doing well right now?

2. What could we be doing better?

3. What could we be doing differently?

4. What could we do right now to get started?

Getting Started:
Four Easy Questions

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From: Forest & Pearpoint, 1997
www.fsrdane.net/library/docs/FOURQUES.doc

Barriers & Solutions: Knowledge

- Knowledgeable Persons
- Training in Seminaries
- Use Established Programs
- Training for Volunteers

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1. Family meeting and development of an IRP
2. Religious School Observation
3. Meeting with the Religious School Director
4. Meeting with the Rabbi
5. Disability Awareness for Second Graders
6. Training for Religious School Teachers
7. Follow up Meeting with Parents, Rabbi, and Religious School Staff

Inclusive Framework

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- **Church school teacher (Barb)**
  - 47-year-old female
  - Associate’s degree
  - Attended church for 33 years and taught church school for 11 years
  - No experience with children with disabilities

- **Student (Hope)**
  - 5 years 7 months
  - Uses verbal and manual signs to communicate
  - Writes first and last name; counts to 20; recognizes basic shapes, colors, and numbers
  - In church school: sat in seat for 2 minutes, participated by listening to the lesson, and participated in crafts with assistance from adults
- Identified teacher behaviors to increase active engagement of students

- Three specific teacher behaviors
  - **Opportunities to respond**
    - T delivery of task direction in which Hope was given 3 s to respond to question identified as a learning objective.
  - **Behavior specific praise**
    - T delivery of positive and specific verbal feedback when Hope responded to a question or was on task.
  - **Opportunities to participate**
    - T providing Hope opportunity to actively participate in the classroom
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Training Session</th>
<th>Performance Feedback Sessions (Apply)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25 minute training session on each teacher behavior (time-lagged)</td>
<td>Data collected during 15 minute observation of class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teach - 5 minute presentation</td>
<td>After observation, . . .</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Show – Examples of behavior using materials and verbal examples</td>
<td>Specific praise on one occurrence of target teaching behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Try – Researcher asked teacher to demonstrate behavior when given scenarios</td>
<td>One example of when target behavior could have been used, but was not</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results: Effectiveness

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Barriers & Solutions: Characteristics

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Barriers & Solutions: Attitudes-Awareness

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- Provide good model for members
- Leadership as role models
- Persons with disabilities serving others

Barriers & Solutions: Attitudes

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WE WELCOME ALL KIDS

“We are committed to welcoming children with special needs into our programs and activities. We believe every child is created and loved by God. We are excited to have the opportunity to meet and minister to your son or daughter. . .”


Barriers & Solutions: Attitudes-Welcoming
- Use of powerpoints/ visuals
- Icons in program
- Accessibility in communications
- Large print materials
- Accommodations for hearing impaired

Barriers & Solutions: Attitudes - Welcoming

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Physical accessibility

Barriers & Solutions: Attitudes-Welcoming

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- Reaching out in relationships
- Personal invitations
- Meet outside of faith community

Barriers & Solutions: Attitudes-Welcoming

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- Peer Supports
- Pew Partners
- Hired/Volunteer Supports
- Effective practices
  - Visual supports
  - Picture schedules
  - Adaptations of learning objectives

Barriers & Solutions: Programs & Supports

© Ault (2016)
Barriers & Solutions:
Programs and Supports


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**Religious Education Support Plan for Children and Youth**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date: 2/1/08</th>
<th>Date of Birth:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child's name: T.F.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent's/Caregiver's Name:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone:</td>
<td>E-mail:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During Sunday School, parents can be found at:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Things the child enjoys doing:</th>
<th>Ways the child learns best:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Riding horses; Miracle League baseball; Movies; Books about horses, I Spy, picture dictionaries; Coloring; Spaghetti, Chocolate ice cream, M &amp; M’s</td>
<td>Learns best visually Visual schedules are helpful</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ways the child communicates:</th>
<th>Types of assistance needed:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communicates with speech, Sometimes difficult to understand. If you don’t understand ask yes/no questions to help clarify. For example: Are you talking about school? Can you go get it and show me?</td>
<td>Needs no assistance with eating. Uses pull-ups. Probably will not need to go to the bathroom, but if she has a BM, adult will need to assist in clean-up and change. Needs adult to accompany from room-to-room due to</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Physical Accessibility is the Beginning – Not the End
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Books & Monographs


Resources

© Ault (2016)
Articles


Resources

© Ault (2016)
Websites

http://www.adnetonline.org
The Anabaptist Disability Network works to support families of people with disabilities while giving churches the necessary resources to promote inclusion in their congregations.

www.pcusa.org/phewa
The Presbyterian Health Education and Welfare Association works to support social justice ministries within the church, including the Presbyterians for Disability Concerns ministry.

www.joniandfriends.org
Joni and Friends is a global outreach center that works with ministries worldwide to find ways for people with disabilities and their families to participate in the Christian faith.

www.blhs.org
Bethesda Lutheran Communities works with Lutheran churches to reach out to members of the church with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Resources

© Ault (2016)
The National Catholic Partnership on Disability work to involve people with disabilities in all aspects of church life through a broad range of ministries and resources.

The National Apostolic for Inclusion Ministry supports the full inclusion of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities in the Catholic Church.

Gateways is a Jewish organization based in Boston that works toward making Jewish education accessible for students with disabilities.

The Jewish Special Education International Consortium works to provide services to both children and adults with special needs in Jewish communities across the United States and Canada.

SMILE is an organization working to support Muslim children with disabilities and their families in Canada.
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