

6. Supports for Teachers of General Education Classes

by Anne-Marie Guzman, Camille Marder, Mary Wagner, and Jose Blackorby

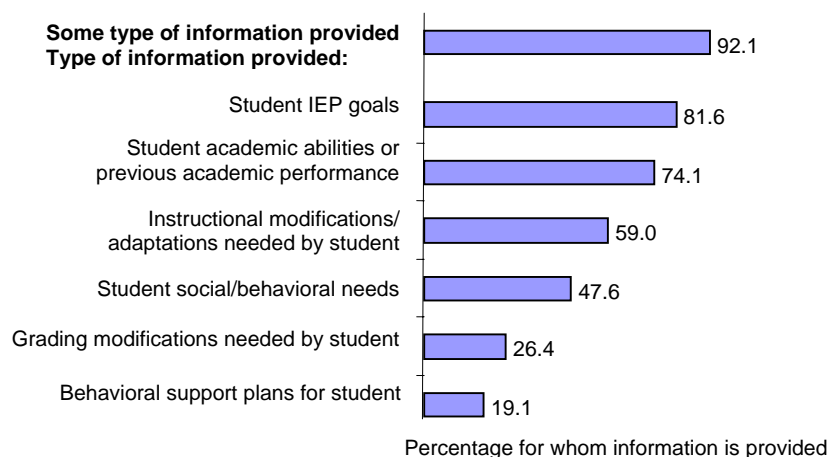
Students and teachers alike require support to create positive learning environments in general education settings. This chapter focuses on the extent, type, and adequacy of supports that are provided to educators serving students with disabilities in general education language arts classes.

Information Provided to General Education Teachers about their Students with Disabilities

The successful inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classes depends on many factors, including careful planning, parent collaboration, supports for students and teachers, and accommodations for students' disabilities (Brownell et al, 1997). An important ingredient in the inclusion process is information provided to general education teachers in preparation for the enrollment of a student with a disability in their classes. Appropriate information about the student provides teachers with a clearer picture of the student's capabilities and educational history. It also serves as an important starting point for the design and delivery of instruction that is maximally effective for an individual student.

- Teachers of more than nine of 10 students with disabilities in general education language arts classes report that they receive some type of information about them before the students attend their classes (Exhibit 6-1).

Exhibit 6-1
Information Provided to General Education Teachers before the Enrollment of Students with Disabilities in their Classes



- The most commonly provided types of information relate to students' IEP goals and about their academic abilities or previous academic performance. Information about instructional modifications and students' social or behavioral needs also are commonly provided.
- Behavioral support plans are the least commonly provided type of information.

Information Provided to Teachers: Disability Category Differences

- Students with speech impairments are the least likely group to have information shared with their general education teacher (Exhibit 6-2); more than one in eight have no information about them provided to teachers.

Exhibit 6-2
Information Provided to General Education Teachers before the Enrollment of Students in their Classes, by Student's Disability Category

Percentage with teachers who receive:	Learning Disability	Speech/Language Impairment	Mental Retardation	Emotional Disturbance	Hearing Impairment	Visual Impairment	Orthopedic Impairment	Other Health Impairment	Autism	Traumatic Brain Injury	Multiple Disabilities
Some type of student information	95.6 (1.7)	86.1 (3.0)	94.8 (3.2)	95.3 (3.2)	94.2 (2.4)	94.2 (2.3)	94.2 (2.1)	94.9 (2.2)	98.9 (1.3)	95.9 (3.9)	94.2 (6.1)
Information about student's:											
IEP goals	88.5 (2.6)	70.5 (3.9)	86.3 (5.0)	89.0 (3.2)	79.1 (4.1)	81.8 (3.7)	82.9 (3.4)	82.9 (3.6)	93.6 (3.1)	81.6 (7.7)	93.1 (6.6)
Academic abilities or previous academic performance	79.6 (4.1)	66.1 (4.2)	76.3 (7.2)	74.5 (3.9)	72.2 (5.0)	76.1 (4.8)	78.4 (4.5)	76.7 (4.9)	85.7 (4.5)	63.0 (9.6)	86.8 (8.8)
Instructional modification/adaptation needs	74.7 (3.5)	34.5 (4.1)	62.2 (7.0)	60.0 (5.1)	75.6 (4.4)	82.6 (3.7)	69.6 (4.2)	72.9 (4.5)	77.6 (5.2)	78.2 (8.2)	79.8 (10.5)
Social/ behavioral needs	47.8 (4.1)	37.9 (4.2)	58.0 (7.2)	82.6 (3.9)	43.5 (5.0)	56.3 (4.8)	56.8 (4.5)	58.8 (4.9)	84.9 (4.5)	49.9 (9.9)	83.1 (9.8)
Grading modification needs	34.9 (3.9)	14.9 (3.1)	34.3 (6.9)	26.2 (4.5)	16.9 (3.8)	17.9 (3.7)	26.1 (4.0)	32.6 (4.7)	26.0 (5.5)	43.2 (9.8)	27.0 (11.6)
Behavioral support plans	20.2 (3.3)	10.1 (2.6)	24.9 (6.3)	58.8 (5.1)	16.1 (3.7)	17.0 (3.6)	14.6 (3.2)	24.7 (4.3)	51.8 (6.2)	21.9 (8.2)	41.3 (12.9)
Sample size	300	257	89	178	251	267	291	246	189	75	48

Standard errors are in parentheses.

- Although information about students' IEP goals is the most common form of pre-enrollment information provided about students across the disability spectrum, students with autism or multiple disabilities are

particularly likely to have this information provided to their new general education teachers.

- Students with emotional disturbances, autism, or multiple disabilities are more likely than other students to have information regarding their social or behavioral needs and behavioral support plans provided to their new teachers.
- Three-fourths or more of students with learning disabilities, sensory impairments, autism, traumatic brain injuries, or multiple disabilities have information that is related to instructional modification needs provided to their general education language arts teachers.
- One-third or more of students with learning disabilities, mental retardation, other health impairments, or traumatic brain injuries have information about needed grading modifications provided to general education language arts teachers when those students enroll in their classes.

Student Information Provided to Teachers: Grade Level and Demographic Differences

- Teachers of students with disabilities in upper elementary and middle schools grades are more likely than teachers of younger students to receive information about the modifications and adaptations needed by students. Whereas 42% of first through third graders with disabilities have teachers who receive information about instructional modifications and adaptations and 16% have teachers who receive information about grading modifications, 72% of students with disabilities above the fifth grade have teachers who receive information about instructional modifications and adaptations, and 34% have teachers who receive information about grading modifications.
- Differences among racial/ethnic groups are few in regard to information provided to their teachers. The exception is that information about students' social or behavioral needs is provided to the teachers of 50% of white students and 30% of Hispanic students.
- Information provided to teachers does not vary for students with different levels of household income.

Supports for General Education Language Arts Teachers of Students with Disabilities

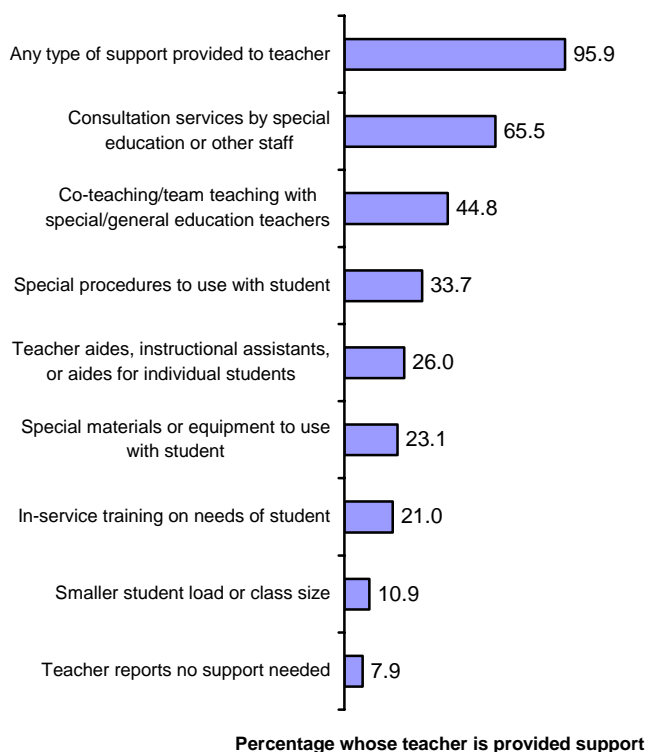
In addition to information about students, general education teachers may require additional support to be successful in teaching students with disabilities. Such support can vary dramatically in cost and in scope. For example, in-service training may help to increase teachers' skills in working with specific approaches

or types of students. In contrast, some students may require a full-time aide to succeed in general education classes.

SEELS investigated the extent to which general education teachers who have students with disabilities in their classes receive seven types of support: special materials; in-service training regarding the needs of students with disabilities; co-teaching or team teaching with a special education teacher; special procedures to use with a student; consultation by special education or other staff; a teacher aide, instructional assistant, or personal aide for an individual student; and a smaller student load or class size.

General education language arts teachers receive a range of supports to meet the needs of students with disabilities in their classrooms (Exhibit 6-3).

Exhibit 6-3
Supports Provided to General Education Teachers of Students with Disabilities



- The vast majority of students with disabilities have teachers who report receiving some kind of support to assist them with these students. About one student in twelve have teachers who indicate that no support is needed.

- By far the most common type of support provided to general education teachers of students with disabilities is consultation by special education staff or other staff.
- Slightly fewer than half of students with disabilities have general education teachers who either co-teach or team-teach with a special education teacher.
- General education language arts teachers of about one-fourth of students with disabilities receive special materials or equipment or assistants in the classroom, and teachers of about one-fifth receive in-service training on the student's needs.
- The type of support least commonly provided teachers is reduced student load or class size.

Supports Provided to Teachers: Disability Category Differences

- Virtually all students, regardless of disability, have general education language arts teachers who receive one or more supports for use in teaching students with disabilities (Exhibit 6-4).
- Very few students with disabilities have general education language arts teachers who assert that they do not need supports to teach those students.
- Students with speech impairments are an exception to the patterns followed by students with other types of disabilities, in that their teachers are less likely to indicate that they need support, least likely to receive five of the seven types of support investigated, and among the least likely to receive the other two types of support.
- Consultation with special educators is the most common support provided to teachers for students in all disability categories, with the exception of students with visual impairments or multiple disabilities, for whom consultation is provided about as often as one other service.
- Students with mental retardation or multiple disabilities are the most likely to have teachers who receive a reduced student load.
- Students with multiple disabilities are the most likely to have teachers co-teach or team-teach with a special education teacher; together with students with autism, they are the most likely to have teachers with aides, instructional assistants, or aids for students; special procedures to use with the students; or in-service training on students' needs. Students with autism also are the most likely to have teachers who receive consultation services by special education staff.
- Students with learning disabilities are also among the most likely to have teachers who co-teach or team teach with a special education teacher.

- Students with mental retardation are among the least likely to have teachers who receive in-service training on their students' needs or special procedures to use with their students.

Exhibit 6-4
Support Provided to General Education Teachers, by Disability Category

Percentage for whom support is provided	Learning Disability	Speech/ Language Impairment	Mental Retardation	Emotional Disturbance	Hearing Impairment	Visual Impairment	Orthopedic Impairment	Other Health Impairment	Autism	Traumatic Brain Injury	Multiple Disabilities
Any type of support	96.1 (1.6)	95.1 (1.9)	99.0 (1.4)	95.9 (2.0)	97.8 (1.5)	98.3 (1.2)	98.1 (1.2)	96.6 (1.8)	100.0 (--)	98.6 (2.3)	100.0 (--)
Types of support:											
Consultation services by special education	73.2 (3.6)	53.3 (4.3)	69.4 (6.7)	73.8 (4.5)	72.1 (4.6)	74.8 (4.2)	70.4 (4.2)	65.5 (4.8)	81.0 (4.9)	78.7 (8.2)	74.4 (11.4)
Co-teaching/team-teaching	58.2 (4.0)	28.3 (3.9)	49.1 (7.2)	40.2 (5.0)	33.0 (4.8)	32.8 (4.5)	34.3 (4.3)	50.1 (5.0)	48.9 (6.3)	56.4 (9.9)	64.6 (12.5)
Special procedures to use with student	35.6 (3.9)	25.7 (3.8)	25.8 (6.3)	49.0 (5.1)	42.3 (5.0)	46.4 (4.8)	38.5 (4.5)	46.4 (5.0)	69.2 (5.8)	49.2 (10.0)	53.6 (13.0)
Teacher aides, instructional assistants, or aids for student	27.8 (3.7)	17.8 (3.3)	43.2 (7.2)	26.2 (4.5)	25.8 (4.5)	35.2 (4.6)	45.1 (4.6)	35.2 (4.8)	61.1 (6.1)	43.8 (9.9)	78.7 (10.7)
Special materials or equipment to use	25.8 (3.6)	15.4 (3.1)	32.0 (6.7)	15.3 (3.7)	51.1 (5.1)	79.9 (3.9)	40.5 (4.5)	29.7 (4.6)	31.7 (5.8)	45.2 (9.9)	53.1 (13.0)
In-service training on needs of students	27.0 (3.6)	12.5 (2.8)	15.4 (5.2)	18.1 (4.0)	26.6 (4.5)	27.0 (4.3)	20.0 (3.7)	25.3 (4.4)	47.5 (6.3)	25.8 (8.7)	38.7 (12.7)
Smaller student load or class size	14.4 (2.9)	6.2 (2.1)	23.1 (7.2)	10.4 (3.1)	9.5 (3.0)	6.0 (2.3)	9.9 (2.7)	8.7 (2.8)	5.0 (2.7)	16.0 (7.3)	21.7 (10.8)
Percentage whose teachers indicate no support is needed	2.2 (1.2)	17.7 (3.3)	1.0 (1.4)	2.6 (1.6)	2.5 (1.6)	3.3 (1.7)	3.3 (1.6)	3.1 (1.7)	--	--	4.4 (5.4)
Sample size	298	255	90	179	251	267	291	244	186	74	48

Standard errors are in parentheses.

Supports for Teachers: Grade-Level and Demographic Differences

- Students with disabilities in middle school grades are more likely than students with disabilities in the early elementary grades to have teachers who receive in-service training on the needs of those students (27% vs. 14%) and less likely to have teachers who co-teach or team-teach with special education staff (50% vs. 35%).
- Supports that are provided teachers do not differ significantly by student's demographic characteristics.

General Education Teachers' Perceptions of Supports

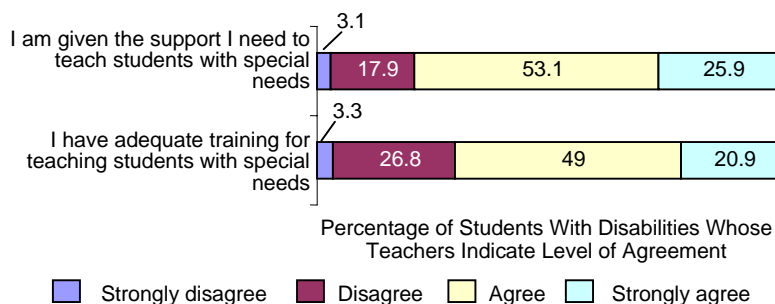
Teachers are most likely to succeed with students with special needs when provided with appropriate supports and training. Several recent studies have shown that if teachers are not prepared to teach students with disabilities, they may not provide adequate services and supports to those students (Brownell et al., 1997; Pugach & Johnson, 2002). SEELS asked teachers to evaluate the adequacy of the supports they received by expressing their degree of agreement with the following statements:

“I am given the support I need to teach students with special needs.”

“I have adequate training for teaching students with special needs.”

- About one-fourth of students with disabilities who receive language arts instruction in general education settings have teachers who “strongly agree” and about half have teachers who “agree” that they are adequately supported in teaching students with special needs (Exhibit 6-5). About one in five have teachers who report that they do not receive adequate support for teaching students with special needs.

Exhibit 6-5
General Education Language Arts Teacher's Perceptions of Adequacy of Training and Support



- General education teachers are somewhat less likely to report that they are adequately trained to teach students with disabilities than that they are adequately supported. Among students with disabilities who receive language arts instruction in a general education class, about one-fifth have teachers who “strongly agree,” and one-half have teachers who “agree” that they are adequately trained. Thirty percent have teachers who report that their training is not adequate for teaching students with disabilities.

Exhibit 6-6
General Education Language Arts Teachers' Perceptions of Adequacy of Training and Support, by Disability Category

	Learning Disability	Speech/ Language Impairment	Mental Retardation	Emotional Disturbance	Hearing Impairment	Visual Impairment	Orthopedic Impairment	Other Health Impairment	Autism	Traumatic Brain Injury	Multiple Disabilities
Percentage whose teachers strongly agree or agree with the statement:											
I am given the support I need to teach students with special needs	78.9 (3.1)	79.2 (2.5)	70.4 (6.4)	85.4 (3.4)	76.7 (4.0)	84.4 (3.3)	82.7 (3.3)	74.2 (4.2)	78.5 (5.1)	89.6 (5.8)	89.9 (7.9)
I have adequate training for teaching students with special needs	69.6 (3.5)	69.2 (2.9)	70.8 (6.4)	76.3 (4.1)	69.2 (4.4)	73.2 (4.0)	73.3 (3.9)	70.4 (4.3)	75.6 (5.3)	83.2 (7.1)	89.2 (8.2)
Sample size	343	487	95	203	275	301	324	273	200	80	51

Standard errors are in parentheses.

- There is a 20-percentage-point range across disability categories in the percentage of students whose general education language arts teachers “agree” or “strongly agree” that they are adequately supported and adequately trained to teach students with disabilities.
- Students with traumatic brain injuries or multiple disabilities are the mostly likely to have teachers who agree that they are adequately supported and trained.
- Students with mental retardation are among the least likely to have teachers who report that they were supported or trained. Students with learning disabilities, or speech, hearing impairments, or other health impairments also are relatively less likely than others to have teachers who report that they are adequately trained to teach students with disabilities.
- Students with disabilities from low-income households are less likely than others to have teachers who report that they were given adequate support. Sixty-eight percent of students in the former group, compared with 83% of students in other groups, have teachers who report adequate training.
- Teachers’ perceptions of support or training do not differ across grade levels or racial/ethnic groups.

Summary

Teachers and students alike require both information and supports to make inclusion work. Nearly all general education language arts teachers serving students with disabilities receive information about a student with a disability before his or her enrollment in their classroom. The most common form of

information provided relates to students' IEP goals and academic needs. For students with behavioral disabilities (e.g., emotional disturbance, autism), relevant information (e.g., a behavioral support plan) often is provided.

General education teachers also receive direct supports to help with students in inclusive settings. The most common form of direct support is consultation with special education staff or other staff. However, team teaching and special instructional procedures are frequently provided as well. Instructional assistants and aides are provided most commonly to teachers of students with mental retardation, orthopedic impairments, autism, or multiple disabilities.

Finally, most students with disabilities in general education classes have teachers who report that they receive supports necessary to educate students with disabilities in general education. However, one in five students with disabilities in general education settings have teachers who report that they do not receive adequate support, and almost one in three have teachers who report that they are not adequately trained to teach students with disabilities.

References

- Brownell, M. T., Smith, S. W., McNellis, J. R., & Miller, M. D. (1997). Attrition in special education: Why teachers leave the classroom and where they go. *Exceptionality*, 7(3), 143-155.
- Pugach, M. C., & Johnson, L. J. (2002). *Collaborative Practitioners, Collaborative Schools. Second Edition*. Denver, CO: Love Publishing Company.