

ABSTRACT

RATES OF INCLUSION AMONG STUDENTS WITH AUTISTIC-LIKE BEHAVIORS, MENTAL RETARDATION, AND SPEECH AND LANGUAGE IMPAIRMENTS

National data have demonstrated a trend toward inclusive educational placements for students with a variety of disability types; however, data for students with autism were not included (McLeskey & Henry, 1999). The prevalence of autism spectrum disorders (ASDs) has increased substantially over the past few decades. The present study addressed whether educational placements have become less restrictive for students with ASDs. National data from the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) were analyzed to address the changes in inclusion rates for students placed under the special education categories of Autistic-Like Behavior, Mental Retardation, and Speech Language Impairment from 1995 to 2005. Children with Autistic-Like Behaviors and Mental Retardation were increasingly placed in less restrictive environments. Educational placements for children with Speech and Language Impairments remained stable, with the majority of students already placed in the least restrictive environment. Implications of the findings and future research directions will be discussed.

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