

"Being integrated does not mean being included": What factors contribute to school exclusion for autistic children?

AUTHORS

Margaret Schneider¹,
Vanessa C. Fong², &
Janet McLaughlin²

AFFILIATIONS

¹Wilfrid Laurier University, Department of
Kinesiology and Physical Education; ²Wilfrid
Laurier University, Department of Health Studies



INTRODUCTION

Autistic students face a higher risk of exclusion from school and related activities, yet the factors contributing to this issue are not well understood. To address this gap, the current study took place in Ontario, Canada's largest province, where diverse populations and varied inclusive education policies create unique challenges.

OBJECTIVE

The study aimed to examine the relationship between parent satisfaction with the Individual Education Plan (IEP) process and school exclusion, as well as to identify key factors parents believe predict school exclusion for their autistic children.

METHODOLOGY

A total of 412 caregivers from Ontario participated in an online survey, comprised of both open- and closed-ended questions.

QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

Greater satisfaction with the IEP
Process

Lower likelihood of being excluded from
school



OR = 0.74
p < 0.001



QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

Bullying by Peers

"Being integrated does not mean being included. The culture of the school does not embrace students whose learning is very different. Our son is ignored often by other students."

"Anti-bully[ing] is just a nice campaign. My son was often bullied in a way that children shouldn't know about. Just words and no punishment from the school, an open invitation to beat him again."

Inadequate Training and
Support of School Staff

"When my kids were younger, both were excluded as 'safety risks,' subject to frequent restraints, constantly sent home by 10 in the morning, denied transportation services, excluded from events and trips, subject to poorly trained, angry staff with no understanding of autism or behavior management."

"Unless I attend school field trips, my son can't go, there's not enough support. When special activities happen at school, certain assemblies, no accommodations are made."

CONCLUSION

The findings indicate that improved parent-staff relationships, collaboration in developing IEPs, adherence to IEPs, and increased funding for school support staff are essential for supporting inclusion and reducing the risk of exclusion.

