

RESEARCH SUMMARY

Predicting the Frequency and Significance of Social Contacts Across Placements: A Bayesian Multilevel Model Analysis

Students with complex support needs have social contact that is higher in both frequency and importance when they are educated in a general education classroom rather than a self-contained classroom or a classroom in a separate school, a recent study suggests.

The study, which was part of a larger national research initiative that explored student placement and the academic, behavioral, and social/communication outcomes for students with complex support needs, looked at 92 students from across the United States who were in one of four academic placements: a general education classroom more than 80% of the time, a general education classroom/resource room blend, a self-contained classroom, and a classroom in a separate school. It looked at the total number of social contacts that the students had in each placement as well as at the perceived importance of those social contacts, as reported by teachers.

The study suggested that students in general education settings have higher numbers of social contacts. It pointed to findings that showed that students educated in general education classrooms at least 80% of the time had double the number of social contacts as students in separate schools. Teachers rated the social significance of those contacts as more important in general education than in more restrictive settings.

Though the study does not indicate that social contact is caused by placement, it does suggest

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- Students with complex support needs have more social contacts in general education classrooms than in more restrictive settings.
- Teachers rated the nature of social contacts for students with complex support needs as more important in general education classrooms than in more restrictive settings.

that educational placement has consequences on the development and importance of social contacts for students with complex support needs, and that placement in general education settings is more likely to yield social contacts in higher number and of greater importance.

Jameson, J. M., Hicks, T., Lansey, K., Kurth, J. A., Jackson, L., Zagona, A. L., Burnette, K., Agran, M., Shogren, K., & Pace, J. (2022). Predicting the frequency and significance of social contacts across placements: A Bayesian multilevel model analysis. *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities*, 47(4), 229–243. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15407969221136538>

