

RESEARCH SUMMARY

The Relationship Between Special Education Placement and High School Outcomes

A landmark study, named one of the ten most significant educational studies of 2022 by Edutopia (Terada & Merrill, 2022), found that students in general education settings scored significantly higher on statewide assessments for reading and math than those in special education settings. In addition, it found that students educated in general education settings were more prepared for successful post-secondary and career opportunities.

The large-scale study tracked nearly 24,000 students and collected five years of data (2013-18) to compare the academic outcomes of Indiana high school students educated in general education settings at least 80% of the time with those of students who spent more time in separate special education settings. It included all students with disabilities whose assessment was completed using the Indiana State Test of Educational Progress (ISTEP+) and did not include the 1% of students with disabilities who were identified for the state's alternate assessment.

The study found that students educated in general education settings had a higher average standardized test score of 24.3 points for English and language arts as compared to those in separate special education settings. In math, students in general education scored an average of 18.4 points higher on standardized tests.

The study also revealed that students in general education settings were an average of 22% more likely to graduate by passing the state assessments than by being granted a waiver.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- Students with disabilities educated in general education settings have significantly higher reading and math scores on statewide assessments than those who spend more time in special education settings.
- Students educated in general education classes are more prepared for successful post-secondary and career opportunities than those in more restrictive placements.

Students in primarily separate special education settings were between 13% and 22% less likely to graduate with any kind of waiver than those in high inclusion settings.

Cole, S. M., Murphy, H. R., Frisby, M. B., & Robinson, J. (2022). The relationship between special education placement and high school outcomes. *The Journal of Special Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00224669221097945>

Terada, Y., & Merrill, S. (2022, December 7). *The 10 most significant education studies of 2022*. Edutopia. <https://www.edutopia.org/article/the-10-most-significant-education-studies-of-2022>

