

Impact of Teacher Attitudes on the Inclusion and Academic Progress of the Student with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities: A Case Study

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Abstract

The effect of teachers' attitudes on a child's achievement and enrollment plays a vital role in the Inclusion and Academic Progress of a student with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The purpose of the present study is to report a qualitative single case study exploring the role of teacher attitude on the implementation of the inclusion process and student achievement of a child with intellectual and developmental disabilities in an inclusive environment. Using narratives collected from two teachers and the student's parent, this paper shows that the perceptions and practices of teachers in their classrooms play a significant role in promoting or preventing inclusion and learners' achievement. The results confirm that teachers' positive attitudes are essential for perceiving the learning environment as effective. Similarly, parental opinion discovered that they conformed to being key partners with teachers to improve children's academic performance. Educators, policymakers and all stakeholders involved in the process of improving education for children with intellectual and developmental disabilities will find this study helpful when planning for more effective implementation of inclusive education policy and practice. The study found that teacher attitudes significantly impact the inclusion and academic progress of students with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Positive attitudes and adaptive strategies enhanced student outcomes, while negative attitudes hindered growth, underscoring the importance of professional development and teacher-family collaboration.

Keywords: Teachers Attitude, Intellectual and Developmental Disability, Academic Progress.

Introduction

Inclusive education can be defined as a process of involving students in mainstream classrooms without compromising their learning needs. Since early childhood, promoting inclusion has become a common goal of many countries to enhance the democratization process of community development (Hernández-Sánchez & Ainscow, 2018). The developments of the last decades in IE have been remarkable through research work, new legislation, and the trend toward inclusion (Amor et al., 2019; UNESCO, 2015). However, these advancements have not helped all the students to the same extent, and students with IDD continue to feel socially and educationally marginalized (Buchner et al., 2020).

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As in many other nations, even though most countries are signatories to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006), many countries provide parallel systems of secondary education that reinforce split (United Nations, 2016). Students with IDD continue to be kept in segregated settings because of curricular objectives that are aimed at skills for life and areas of concern due to scarcity of resources and teachers' expertise (Kurth et al., 2014). IDEA (2004), ESSA (2015), and the ADA (1990) are policies of inclusive education which encourage the provision of instruction in the least restrictive environment. That being said, key areas still require attention on effectively adopting and executing these policies to and for students with IDD, leaving synthesized findings from further research to determine the effectiveness of inclusion as well as the profiles of academic and post-school outcomes for the students involved (U.S. Department of Justice, 2016).

The significant facets of implementing inclusive education include teachers' attitudes towards it. Traditionally, teachers have demonstrated concern in accepting learners with disabilities, particularly children with severe learning impairments. Some issues elaborated include the time-consuming nature of delivering individualized lessons, the lack of support services, and inadequate training (Forlin et al., 1996; Center & Ward, 1987). Positive attitude consultant teachers are confident in affecting student accomplishment, modifying contents, and implementing mainstream classrooms. Such attitudes enable students with disability to perform academically and socially better (Dapudong, 2013). Teachers with no preservice or in-service preparation, specifically in the area of inclusion, may not feel prepared, resulting in low self-efficacy and poor instruction. Hernandez (2022). The study also identified a positive attitude towards inclusion as one which facilitates proper relationships and involvement of students in the class. Self-fulfilling prophecy refers to the tendency in which teacher expectations affect students by elevating the performance of those to whom much is expected while restricting the potential of the students who are expected less of them (Cameron & Cook, 2013).

While many teachers with high self-efficacy may resist integration, arguing such factors as scarcity of resources and lack of proper training, others are ready to learn and employ appropriate integration strategies (Bender et al., 1995). Fluctuations in attitudes and practices justify further efforts to promote significant change in teachers' competencies in inclusive education practices (Coombs-Richardson & Mead, 2001).

Teaching in a positive context leads to receiving better results due to better attitudes, including aspects such as the proliferation of inclusion policies, high expectations, and superior teaching approaches (Krischler et al., 2019). On the other hand, negative attitudes fuel segregation and decrease the chances of education equality for everyone (Francisco et al., 2020). For improvement, teachers must give training, material, and other supportive instructions to establish effective inclusion procedures (Hernández-Saca et al., 2023). Another future research direction is the analysis of attitudinal changes in teachers as a part of policy initiatives and systemic change to support the practice of inclusive education and equity for learners.

Significance of the Study

In light of this, the study seeks to present a case analysis of how positive and supportive teacher attitudes can create a positive classroom environment to improve these students' education. On the same note, it also aims to explain the loss of academic and social productivity among students with IDD and the detriments of negative teacher attitudes towards them. This research is significant in the current global discourse on inclusive education since it offers recommendations that educators, policymakers and interested stakeholders can use to make education more supportive for learners with disability. Thus, the study calls for professional development and training interventions

whose primary focus will be on a teacher's prejudice and the provision of inclusion best practices to develop quality education for students with IDD.

Study Objectives

1. To explore the impact of teacher attitudes on the inclusion and academic progress of a student with intellectual developmental disabilities.
2. To analyze how instructional strategies teacher affect the academic outcomes of students with intellectual developmental disabilities.

Research Questions

1. How do teacher attitudes impact the inclusion and academic progress of a student with intellectual developmental disabilities?
2. How do teachers' instructional strategies affect the academic outcomes of a student with intellectual developmental disabilities?

Literature Review

The term Intellectual and Developmental Disability (IDD), referred to as mental retardation or mental delay, is a persistent condition identified by low intellectual functioning (IQ below 70), difficulties in adaptive behaviors, and limited academic achievement, with its onset occurring before the age of 18 (AAMR, 2002; AAIDD, 2010). Challenges in conceptual, social, and practical learning domains characterize IDD. While earlier definitions primarily emphasized low IQ, the significance of maladaptive behaviors was a central feature. It also considers the individual's ability to adapt to their community and improve with appropriate support systems (Luckasson et al., 2002).

Intellectual and developmental disability results from a congenital, perinatal, or postnatal process or a combination of genetic, developmental, or inflicted/induced factors or a combination. These can include genetic disorders, poverty, parents'-child interactions, and substance use. Nevertheless, the cause is often elusive in about 50 per cent of the population (Beirne-Smith et al., 2006).

Traditionally, IDD has been categorized into four levels of severity: The most common types are mild, moderate, severe, and profound. The most recent classifier is the one offered by the AAIDD, which based its classification on the need for support—intermittent, limited, extensive, or pervasive (AAMR, 2002). This model eliminates restraints while centering on the specific support techniques for the learner.

Teachers' attitudes play an essential role in the enrolment and learning achievement of students with IDD. Positive attitudes facilitate academic and other social success among students, while negative attitudes hinder successful inclusion (Taylor et al., 2005). Teachers who embrace the policy of diversity and having diversity have a significant influence on the growth and development of special needs children, specifically children with IDD. Inclusive education acknowledges differentiated teaching methods, accommodations, and learning-teaching methods that involve group work. These approaches assist in handling individual needs, enabling students with IDD to overcome obstacles regarding the flow of information, memory and even manipulation of skills, as Browder et al. (2006) recommended.

Our IDD students experience delayed development in their cognition functions, especially in memory, problem-solving, and attention. According to Hunt and Marshall (2002), these difficulties require specific approaches like scaffolding and teaching learning strategies.

Students with adaptive challenges are usually faced with social and communication problems attributed to distractibility and problems with perceiving social signals. Teachers can solve these

problems using peer interaction and pragmatic communication (Kaiser, 2000). Depression that comes from numerous failing attempts would reduce the natural drive or desire that students with IDD have towards learning. Such effects can be prevented by positive reinforcements by teachers who set achievable targets, which enhance the increased level of resilience among the learners (Beirne-Smith et al., 2006).

Intellectual developmental disability should be best managed with integration and openness for all management forms. For possible difficulties to be surmounted, they require encouragement and support (Shree & Shukla, 2016), so the attitudes held by a teacher can go a long way in influencing the learning achievements of students diagnosed with intellectual developmental disabilities. Positive perceptions, as well as other issues of inclusion, promote learning and integration as well in social aspects. Opportunities in staff development, implementation of flexibility, and application of students' strengths contribute to developing a positive education environment that supports students with IDD. It aims to eradicate exclusion and discrimination while providing personalized intervention to cater to people's individual and varying requirements (Baglieri et al., 2011).

Inclusive practices promote learners' active participation and engagement, thus revealing academic and social success (Ainscow & Miles, 2008, p118). Nonetheless, difficulties, including teacher stress, insufficient training, and resource deficit, limit the proper application of approaches (Fedulova et al., 2019; Alsolami & Vaughan, 2023). Overcoming these barriers entails teamwork, versatility and constant improvement to facilitate effective classroom practices that enhance complete learning and participation by every learner (Guðjónsdóttir & Óskarsdóttir, 2016; Florian, 2010).

Methodology

The purpose of this research based on a qualitative case study was to identify and describe the effects of teacher attitudes towards integration and academic achievement of a student with intellectual developmental disabilities using thematic interviews with two teachers and the student's parents. The conclusion revealed teacher perception as well as the strategies that were used in the research, shed light on understanding the impacts of the perception in an inclusive practice embraced by the teachers portraying the success attained by the student, including the positive attitude advances as provided by Braun and Clarke in their study (2006).

Student's Case Description

A learner diagnosed with intellectual developmental disability (IDD) was given admission to a special education school. On first contact with a child, an initial screening test called the Portage Guide was administered to determine an initial approximate complaint level. Two months later, the Slosson Intelligence Test was given to determine the student's IQ, and the result showed that/her IQ was 60. Considering these assessments, the procedure of developing an Individualized Education Program (IEP) was provided to address student's special education needs efficiently.

Over the next five years, the student steadily progressed toward achieving the goals outlined in the IEP. Regular assessments and monitoring evidenced significant improvement in both academic performance and adaptability. By 2021, the student's progress was substantial enough for the school administration to consider transitioning her into a general education classroom at a neighboring school.

The transition was carefully planned. The student received a warm welcome from her general education teacher, and a collaborative partnership was established between the special education teacher and the general education teacher. This partnership was pivotal in ensuring the student's continued progress within the inclusive classroom setting.

Data Collection and Analysis

The researcher interviewed two teachers and the child's parents during the data gathering. During the interview, the researcher documented notes, recorded participants' voices and wrote the interview protocol. The transcripts were reviewed, and hours were spent sorting the data into chronological files for more straightforward analysis. Coding in the next step was used to categorize the data with a view of placing the data into an appropriate cause-related category as exemplified in the open coding process below: The interpretation stage entailed assigning meaning to already analyzed data as well as reconstructing prominent themes of interest within the teachers' attitudes towards inclusion. In the last phase of the study, the synthesis and generalization stage, the researcher integrated all aspects of inclusive education.

Analysis and Interpretation of Teacher's Interviews

The interview with R's teacher, who teaches her in a general education classroom, revealed a highly positive attitude towards inclusion and a strong commitment to supporting her academic and social development. The teacher deeply understood R's unique needs and emphasized fostering an inclusive environment that promotes equity and participation for all students. Several key themes emerged from the open-ended interview, highlighting the teacher's proactive approach, inclusive instructional strategies, and belief in the potential of students with intellectual disabilities (IDD). These themes provide valuable insights into the pivotal role of teacher attitudes in enhancing the inclusion and academic progress of students with IDD in mainstream classrooms.

The identified themes included

Teacher's Positive Attitudes Towards Inclusion

Inclusivity and Diversity

The teacher views that the inclusion of students with intellectual and developmental disability as an opportunity to create a classroom community that is inclusive and varied.

Teacher's view: *"I feel that an inclusive environment enriches the classroom by promoting diversity and empathy among students."*

Emotional Fulfillment and Professional Reward

The teacher experiences personal and professional gain through observing students with IDD progress and development. A teacher responded *"R's growth as a learner gives me satisfaction as a teacher whenever I watch her even smallest progress."*

Empathy and Social Development Among Peers

Inclusive education is very important for the growth all student's empathy, understanding, and interpersonal skills. A teacher responded *"it's motivating me to observe that how her presence fosters kindness and understanding in other fellows."*

Enhanced Confidence and Self-Esteem for Students with Disabilities

The teacher agrees that inclusion has boosted the self-esteem and social learning of the students with intellectual and developmental disability. A teacher responded *"it makes me worthy to see the positive impact on R's self-esteem and social skills."*

Adaptation of Teaching Strategies

The focused teachers remain willing to adapt and will try to modify their actions and procedures for teaching students with IDD. They tailor down the instructional methods which the student can comprehend and learn at his or her own level. A teacher responded *"for example, if I am explaining*

a new piece of concept in class, I have to modify it in a way that I would provide more illustrations or use other teaching aids like additional visuals or hands-on activities to make her get it."

Adjusted Pacing and Flexibility

The teacher helps the students to get more time and make learner more comfortable by changing the speed of delivery of student. A teacher responded *"I provide extra time for her to finish her work, and modify my teaching according to the learning progress of the child."*

Positive Reinforcement

The teacher employs positive approaches to increase the self-esteem and the desire of a particular learner. A teacher responded *"positive reinforcement plays vital role; I always reward her even if she did a simple thing right giving her the confidence to do more."*

Incorporating Student Interests

When delivering lessons, the teacher provides content according to interest of student and this makes the student be more willing to do tasks in a classroom as well as interacting with fellow students. A teacher responded *"I also strive to use their interests in the lesson, as much as I can, in order to increase the desire to learn the content and interact with other students."*

Collaborative Support from Special Education Team

The teacher's positive attitude is also strengthening their work by collaborative support from the special education team. This partnership lets the teacher to feel equipped and ready to help the students and other learners by providing prosperous learning environment to prevail. A teacher responded *"guidance from special education teacher and accessibility of resources help R succeed that helps me stay positive and committed to inclusion."*

Family Engagement

Involving families in the educational process is one of the important conditions for teachers to receive the necessary knowledge and support for the students with IDD. A teacher responded *"participation of families are a natural component of the learning process of a particular student. Communication with parents can be useful in order to get some important information about the student's capabilities, problems, and requirements."*

These themes reveal concern and commitment of the teacher in ensuring that R is included and appreciated among the learners and more to the extent that she is made to realize her maximum potential in education. When the first teacher transferred to another school, R's new teacher interview revealed that she had a very negative perception about inclusion and did not try to make the necessary adjustment to meet the child's needs.

Teacher Negative Attitudes towards Inclusion

Challenges of Inclusion and Teacher Overload

Teachers shared their concerns and difficulties they have in addressing the integration of students, like R with intellectual and developmental disabilities in mainstream schools. Also teacher have other responsibilities where students need personalized attention hence compromising to handle the class. A teacher responded *"I begin to pay individual attention that sometimes makes me spend much time with her than the rest of the class; this always leads to imbalance of managing the class"*

Impact on Classroom Dynamics and Peer Interaction

There are concerns about how the integration of a learner with IDD affect the class. Teachers are concerned with issues of social exclusion of the student as well as possible disturbance of other learners. A teacher responded *"at times, she is rowdy and her management affects the smooth flow of the class activity; the meeting of her special needs is very tasking and can come with a lot of stress."*

Insufficient Support and Resources for Effective Inclusion

Teachers have reported that there is not enough training, limited teaching assistants or teacher aids for catering general teacher's students with intellectual and developmental disabilities needs in general classrooms. This makes teachers lack the confidence in assisting the student make the necessary progress. A teacher responded *"the other issue I also have is absence of specialty specialized resources and service to help her do well within this environment."*

Slower Academic Progress and Teacher Concerns

They are also worried because the learners with IDD are often slower academically compared to other learners in a class. This results to frustration and perception that inclusion is likely to have a negative impact on the performance of the whole group. A teacher responded *"her learning progress is slower and when she does not receive support; it seems like inclusion is more of a detriment to learning for the other students."*

Lack of Training and Resources

Teachers could be overwhelmed, underprepared and unable to handle the children with IDD because they are rarely trained as to how best to teach such children. A teacher responded *"it becomes difficult for me to teach R effectively because of lack of training on how to handle children with IDD."*

School Policies and Expectations

Policies on integration are seen by the teacher as unclear, and there is no sufficient support from school in this question. However, there is an expectation that students with IDD should be included in the regular classroom; there is neither adequate assistance nor materials to guide teachers in fulfilling this expectation. Teacher's view is as below:

The current school policies do not offer clear direction or support to facilitate implementation of inclusion. That means there is an expected student like R in a classroom but since there is no proper structures in place, it becomes very hard to implement it effectively.

In the case, the teacher finds it difficult to handle R both in terms of her learning ability and her behavior implying doubts in the physical possibility of integrating students with IDD into a regular classroom. Regarding the questions asked, people mentioned that some of those barriers emanated from the attitudes of the teacher with regard to R and the support given to her.

R's Parents Experiences about Their Child Regarding Both Teachers

It was very insightful when I got to interview R's parents regarding their experience as sampled by her two teachers with different attitudes towards her disability affecting her inclusion and progress in school. The parents focused on the friendly attitude of the first teacher and happy carried out how their child feels comfortable in an environment that recognizes her needs. On the other hand the parents complained of the second teacher who was very rude and interfere in the

growth of R and dampened her morale. The key themes that emerged from the parents' perspectives included

Child's Background information

At the age of four "R" was diagnosed with Intellectual disability by psychologist. the child has mild retardation. She has attended speech and occupational therapists, as well as special education teachers. "R" has been attending the current school for the past three years and the opportunity avails an inclusive classroom that rewards her with development challenges.

Parents shared their views as follows:

Active Participation of Family Involvement

The parents are active in their child's education and ensure they check on the child and school more often than necessary. Parents responded *"in slightly more detail, I am profoundly engaged in "R"'s schooling by participating in all School meetings and being in touch with the teachers, special education staff."*

Home Support Strategies

Educational tools, practice in social skills, positive reinforcement and planned and structured routines to help the learner are some of the strategies employed by parents. Their actions involve academic tutoring together with training on life skills besides addressing issues of behavior. Parent's view is as follows:

To enhance R teaching and learning we scheduled a structured teaching time, use of picture cards, educational application and reading. We also ensure that our students develop their ability to interact with their peers through role-play, encouraging student conduct by use of a reward chart, and teaching practical life skills.

Experience with Inclusion

R has enhanced interactions with peers and self-esteem by implementing inclusion. She has got Access to a diversified curriculum that has enhanced her curiosity and learning. Also increased empathy and awareness have changed perception of peers which has made it a less isolating environment. Parents responded *"inclusion has brought about the improvements on social skills and confidence of R, curriculum awareness, and has contributed to the improvement of the attitudes of other students in the class, thus the reduction on bullying of students like R."*

Positive Teacher Attitudes

Understanding, flexibility and recognition of small achievements are key factors good teachers bring to their students with IDD. Parents responded *"there are several positive attitudes observed teachers such as R's teacher Ms. Khan is patient, motivated and modifies her teaching activities according to children's capabilities that really enhanced R's self-esteem."*

Negative Attitudes

It revealed that there is inadequate preparation about how best to work with learners implementing integration within classrooms. The exclusion of R made me realized that every teacher should be trained how to handle children with disabilities during organized group efforts. Parents responded

As the teacher shifts their concerns to an incident that took place on the classroom the teacher felt that it was inappropriate to have an integrated classroom therefore

excluded their child, A, from a group activity. which caused frustration and isolation for R.

Positive Teacher Influence on Social and Emotional Well-Being

Parents understand the belief of teachers that their efforts and positive outlook contribute much to proper social relations and feelings of children with special needs. Parents responded

"the ingredients related to teachers that have come out very strong for R include positive teacher interactions. It makes friends for R which has proved very useful for his overall development in terms of social and self esteem."

Negative Teacher Influence

R's some teachers' attitude has a negative impact on her emotional status and she feels rejected and frustrated. But, there are some changes in the teacher training and support that has helped her in her social relationship and emotional sphere. Parent's view is as follows

Some of the unresponsive teachers made negative displays of non-support or attention to her and this made her developed frustrations and feels isolated. But continuous reforms on how teachers are prepared socially have contributed to better experiences in social and emotional well-being of her.

Findings

This case features qualitative work that investigates the effect of teachers' perceptions on the achievement and enrollment of a child with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD) in a general school. A specific teacher encouraged the student verbally, enabling the student to develop fully. On the other hand, the negative attitude of another teacher was not favorable to the student's learning-making and development, particularly in the aspect of inclusion, besides influencing the students' education and creating disappointment and frustration among the parents, who had to withdraw their child from school, the case shows how important attitude is when delivering education to students with disability. It makes it necessary for training, education and support of teachers to address the needs of disabled students by providing them with the appropriate help they need in everyday study. Some parents criticized the school for failing to consistently offer them the kind of support they needed. Even though one of the supportive teachers asked the questions, they were upset by the unsympathetic and non-accommodation from a second teacher. The school had negative experiences, which affected the parents' trust in the school, and the child felt helpless that the parents pulled the child out of the school. The parents were particularly keen on sustained positive teacher attitudes and the imperative role of the schools to educate all children without segregating them. This case raises funding issues for teachers' professional learning and the resources required to enable disabled students to learn. Consequently, due to the teacher's supportive behavior, the students' socialization skills were enhanced. She began to build new friendships and became accepted by her fellows, who sometimes supported her and helped her solve issues. Such a factor was significant as it enabled her to progress academically and in her learning.

However, in the middle of the course, the student was transferred from one teacher to another since the previous teacher had been transferred to another school, and then it changed to a negative one. The new teacher failed to address the students' requirements and focused on poor performance in her academic work due to slow learning and troubles with the material. These changes in the dynamics of teaching deprived the student of the opportunity to establish a positive learning-teaching relationship. At the same time, a negative perception by the teacher and the failure to involve the special education team in the learning process acted against the student's learning

progress. Based on this, the consensus was reached that the student may be taken back to the special education program in which she had otherwise demonstrated learning progress. However, the student and her parents did not welcome this decision. As a result, this particular student was isolated from her peer group, which ended a potentially successful experience of inclusion for this particular student. The family was disappointed after coming out of the school. It describes goodwill teacher attitudes and the role of participation for children with special needs learning; it shows how a prepared integration method can result in achievements concerning the academic and social aspects of human life.

Discussion

The study results reported in vectors of this case are consistent with research supporting the importance of teachers' perceptions of the enrolment and academic achievement of students with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD). Teacher attitude, proven to foster students' engagement and academic achievement in science, involves patient and sympathetic attitudes and modifying teaching strategies and methods. For example, in the case of Pelt (2020) indicated that teachers perceived supportive attitudes towards inclusion as the only significant predictors of revised instructional practices requiring student achievement. On the other hand, negative attitudes or resistance to change teaching behaviors can jeopardize the academic and/or social learning of children with IDD. According to Carey (2024), low levels of teacher training and teachers' negative attitudes towards inclusion are associated with learning loss for children with disabilities. It is well known that improving the quality of teachers is one of the critical spheres which determine the effectiveness of professional development. Quality training prepares teachers to foster an environment for the participants and manage the participants, including those with different forms of IDD. The article by Pelt (2020) discovered that continued professional development improves positive teacher attitudes towards inclusion, improving students' performance.

Additionally, communication between teachers and families of the child with IDD is critical in promoting the child's learning. Teacher-parent collaboration and consensus in the goals and objectives of a student assist in the formulation of synergy, resulting in improved student success. In his article, Vaz et al. (2015) provide valuable information on how such cooperation contributes to inclusive education. Therefore, this case study re-affirms that when supported by professional learning and collaboration with families, positive teacher attitudes are significant in promoting the integration and academic achievement of students with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Conclusion

The research highlighted the fact that school climate plays a significant role in learner integration and achievement of persons with intellectual and developmental disorders. Different patterns of teacher attitude, which include patience, empathy and flexibility exhibited through preparedness to change mode of teaching, were also found to increase student participation, academic performance and integration. Teachers who implemented differentiated instruction provided consistent feedback and encouraged peer interactions created an inclusive classroom environment supporting student development. On the other hand, negative beliefs like low expectations or refusal to change plans to help the student prevented the student from academically and socially. Such views were confirmed by parents from the point of view of successful cooperation with teachers, which means that communication is high among all parties. Thematic analysis also revealed the need to enhance teachers' professional development to enable them to support teaching and learning for children with IDD.

Recommendations

1. Teacher education programs should prepare teachers to comprehend, implement, and adapt such policies by creating special learning programs for students with IDD with the assistance of an Individual Education Plan (IEP).
2. System coaching and collaborative working relationships between the teachers should be fostered via team teaching, peer counselling, and interdisciplinary teams.
3. Workshops and discussions should be held at least once or twice a year to (re)share and discuss the current best practices, approaches and experiences in responding to the needs of students with IDD.

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