

Student Experiences in Inclusive School Settings

Perspectives of Students with and without Exceptionalities



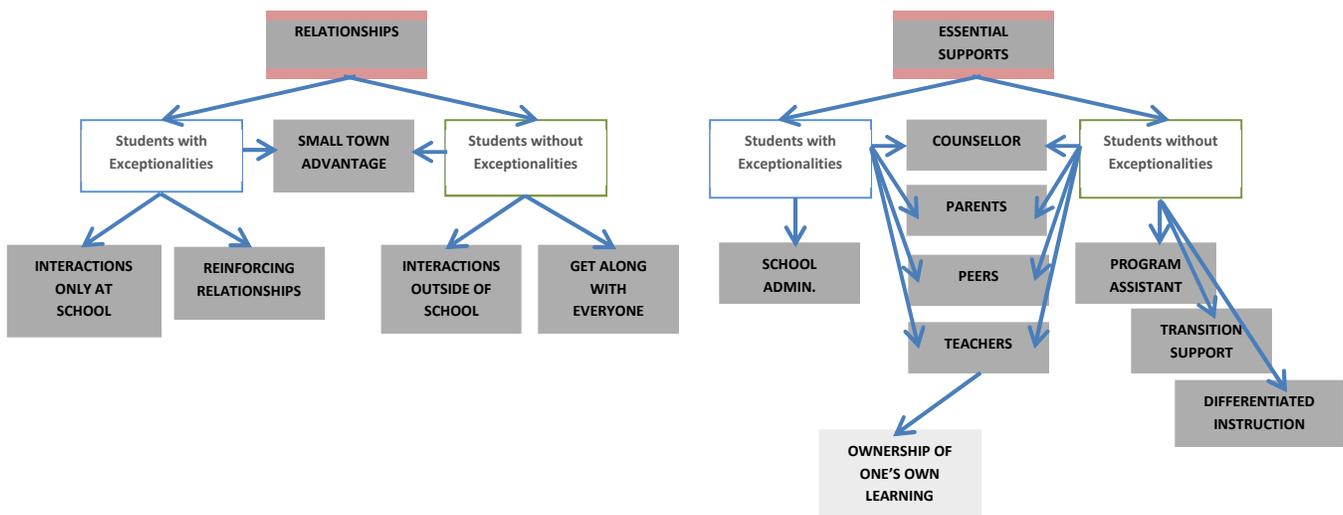
Pembina Hills Research Project



"Everybody knows each other really well, and we're all kind of...like the people in my class, I've known them since kindergarten, and so we are all kind of like a little family in there. And everybody knows everybody, and it's kind of cool." (Pembina Hills Student)

Summary of Findings

The Pembina Hills School District is generally doing a good job of inclusion! This finding is according to students who completed a survey and participated in interviews. The students rated school enjoyment as high overall, with the girls rating it slightly higher than the boys. This finding is consistent with current research in which girls tend to rate their school satisfaction higher than boys. In general, students with exceptionalities were less positive about the school environment than students without exceptionalities. One-on-one interviews with some students further explored students' beliefs about and experiences in school. Several types of supports essential to school success were revealed. **Teachers** were an important support to all of the students, particularly when trying to take ownership of one's own learning. When comparing the views of students with and without exceptionalities several key differences emerged. Students with exceptionalities described **relationships** in which interactions took place only at school; students without exceptionalities described relationships that extended beyond the school environment. When describing supports, the students with exceptionalities described support they received from the **administrative staff** at the school, while the students without exceptionalities did not. The researchers suggested that possibly this was because the administrative staff have more contact with students identified as having "special needs", as compared to the students without exceptionalities. The students without exceptionalities described support they received to **transition** to community life following school graduation; while the students with exceptionalities did not. In fact, the students with exceptionalities did not discuss their transition into the community following graduation at all, focussing only on their current year of school. The students without exceptionalities referred to **program assistant support** and **differentiated instruction** as crucial to their learning (i.e., two supports regarded to be for students with exceptionalities). This was a positive finding as it appears these supports were made available to ALL students to further enhance school experiences, a finding that aligns with the effective teaching research.



Useful Resources

- Loreman, T., McGhie-Richmond, D., Barber, J. & Lupart, J. L. (2008). Student perspectives on inclusive education: A survey of Grade 3-6 children in rural Alberta, Canada. *International Journal of Whole Schooling*, 5(1), 1-15.
- Does Inclusion help students: Perspectives from Regular Education and Students with Disabilities - <http://www.naset.org/782.0.html#>
- Six Steps to Talking to About Inclusion to Children - <http://blog.kitonline.org/2013/02/18/six-steps-to-talking-about-inclusion-to-children/>

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