

## Chapter 68

# Behavioral Impacts Associated With Students With Disabilities in Australian Schools: The Need for a Deeper Understanding of Inclusivity and Their Learning Journey

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### ABSTRACT

*This chapter explores the link between students with disabilities, the behaviours they exhibit, the impact this has on their schooling, and the impact upon others. The author's school has a population of about 1,000 students, of whom over 10 percent have verified disabilities. According to Education Council (2016), data regarding the number of students with disabilities is inconsistent between schools in Australia's states and territories, however, there are schools throughout Australia that have large numbers of students with verified disabilities. This is reinforced by the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (2018) where in 2017 there were about 18.8 percent of Australian school students with a verified disability. It is not surprising, therefore, that these statistics are concerning and research continues to be a priority. Identifying appropriate pedagogies and more effective management strategies for these students will benefit them, their families, and the community, and contribute to solving pressing issues in these students' lives.*

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter will outline how the behavioral issues of mainstream students affect the behaviors displayed of students with disabilities in a mainstream setting. In order for a student in an Australian school to be recognized for a learning difficulty or disability, a number of assessments must occur and be verified through the government department of education. The Department of Education and Training (2015)

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writes that verification of students is the process of confirming that a student's identified impairment requires significant educational adjustments. The behavioral impacts and issues are compared against the policies and frameworks that Australian schools have utilized to overcome boundaries within education and influence the inclusion of special education students in mainstream schools. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2019) there was approximately 295,000 students with disabilities that attended schools within Australia in 2012. Furthermore, the Australian Bureau of Statistics notes that a staggering 86% of those students attended a mainstream school. In Queensland schools, for an intellectual disability to become verified within schools, the student needs to achieve an IQ of 70 or below. At times, verifying students with various disabilities and difficulties may be a daunting task. In addition to the students who have a verified disability, Schechter (2018) argues that there are a number of students that go unverified throughout their schooling lifetime and receive little to no support. The behaviors exhibited in a mainstream classroom can be difficult to manage as there is a mixture of verified, unverified, and students that do not display disabilities. Due to this, this chapter will report on how the behaviors of mainstream students affect the behaviors displayed by all other students in the room and the impact that this has on their future learning and results. The objectives of this chapter are to provide information to current and future educators that informs them of the need to be mindful and plan meticulously in order to reduce the number of behavior issues in classrooms. Furthermore, this chapter has been set out to provide strategies and ideas to reduce behavior incidences and the reasons these behaviors may be displayed.

## **BACKGROUND**

Families of students with disabilities in Australia have an important choice in their schooling. That choice is to decide whether or not to send their students to a special school, where the school has been created in order to support students with a range of disabilities, or to send their student to a mainstream school, which attempts to be inclusive of everyone. Students in mainstream schools display a number of different behaviors which may be interpreted incorrectly by students with disabilities as regular behaviors. This in turn creates a conundrum for the students with disabilities as they may try to replicate these behaviors. A number of different factors will come into question throughout, including socioeconomic status, hereditary factors, self-efficacy and behavioral factors of mainstream students and students with disabilities. Kahu and Nelsen (2018) states that students' self-efficacy is critical to behaviors displayed. Furthermore, Yu and Singh (2018) concur, indicating that students whom stem from low socio-economic backgrounds are more likely to have lower motivation levels and self-drive. Schools far from capital cities and in low socioeconomic areas have a higher rate of behavior incidences and a lower level of educational outcomes. If the behaviors are uninterrupted and not substituted, the behaviors may turn into chronic challenging behavior. These chronic behaviors can negatively impact a variety of life outcomes for individuals with intellectual disability.

As student behaviors in schools continue to be an issue the Australian government has continued to support schools by implementing legislations, laws, and guidelines on how to appropriately engage students. Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority states that all students are entitled to access age-equivalent curricula. This statement encompasses all students, in all subject areas, regardless of ability. In addition to this, inclusion in mainstream schools is a topic that is getting a lot of current interest with people being impartial to the idea of mainstream schooling for students with disabilities.

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