Researchers compared academic outcomes of students with disabilities in the U.S. state of Indiana placed in more inclusive settings with those placed in less inclusive settings. Students with disabilities spending 80% more time in inclusive classrooms did better in reading and math than peers. The study shows differences in diploma types of students in more encompassing and less encompassing settings.

Public Law 94-142 was passed in November 1975. It was followed in 1990 with the IDEA and the Americans with Disabilities Act. Only 64% of students with disabilities are in the general education classroom 80% or more of their day. Only 10% to 12% of those with disabilities read at a proficient level, and 6% to 8% in math.

The study investigates the relationship between inclusion and academic outcomes. The study’s design incorporates the most significant school and student-level variables found in the research that relate to the student, school, referral, placement, and outcomes. By including these variables, the results of the study enable their impact to be considered in policy and practice. The data, methods, and analytical procedures for the current study replicate those of the author's prior study.

The use of observational data sets is not unusual in educational research. Propensity matching has been chosen as a method to account for these differences in baseline characteristics between subjects in treatment and control groups. The primary aim of conditioning or establishing the likelihood of assignment to a treatment or control group is to achieve balance on the observed data.

The state of Indiana confers one of two types of diplo-partisanmas upon graduation, a general or a Core 40 diploma. The second outcome (general diploma) regards whether a student is awarded a general diploma via passing the state assessment versus attainment via a waiver. To explore the role of placement most proximal to the time of gradua-ulent education, additional graduation analyses were conducted. Four main categories are matched on 10th-grade ISTEP scores.

Study followed two cohorts of all students who receive special education services in Indiana. Data were obtained through a data share agreement with the IDOE. Primary disability categories in this study included Cognitive Disability, Learning Disability, Autism and Deaf/Hard of Hearing. The study’s cohorts include students who were in the sixth and seventh grades in 2013.

A study comparing students in Indiana Statewide Testing for Educational Progress (ISTEP) and English Language Arts (ELA) found that high inclusion students had higher average standardized test scores and math scores. The study also found that graduation analyses support high inclusion, with an average of 22 percentage points higher for students in high inclusion settings to graduate with a core 40 by passing the state assessment than via waiver. However, the probability of graduating with any kind of waiver was between 13 and 22 percentage points higher for low inclusion students than for high inclusion students.

The Journal of Special Education 57(1) published the findings of a study on students with disabilities and their general education peers. The study found that students in general education most of the time would have higher academic achievement. The findings related to diploma type also speak to differential expectations.

The criteria to determine the FOI also enable the decisions concerning the use of effective programs and strategies. We believe that the inclusion of students with disabilities is an issue of social justice. The study does not address qualification viewpoints in inclusive versus separate classroom environments. The use of reading and math scores could be acknowledged as a limitation.

This informed decision-making will enable placement of students based upon expectations for student success and a belief in student capabilities. The nature of the student sample in this study is a limitation in that low incidence, high need students with severely disabilities were not included. Understanding the relationship between inclusive placements and the 1% of students with disabilities who take the alternate assessment is an area worthy of research.