

Reasons against segregated schooling

The arguments against segregated 'special' schooling and evidence of the damage it causes continue to accumulate. Segregation hurts individuals and society. It is a major barrier to inclusive schooling and inclusive communities. There is a growing body of research findings, personal testimony and experience which support the human rights imperative to phase out segregation in education and fulfill children's entitlement to fully supported inclusive education based on non-discrimination, equal opportunity, and participation as agreed under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and following the social model of disability:

- Segregated schooling has never been proved to be superior to mainstream.
- There is no compelling body of evidence that segregated 'special' education programmes have significant benefits for students.
- Research shows that segregated 'special' schooling has been associated with:
 - impoverished social experiences, abilities and outcomes
 - reduced academic experiences in terms of curriculum provision, outcomes, examination opportunities and accreditation
 - lower student aspirations and teacher expectations
 - high absence rates
 - difficulty re-integrating into the mainstream
 - poverty in adulthood
 - poor preparation for adult life.
- Negative consequences for segregated pupils identified in the research also include: depression, abuse, lack of autonomy and choice, dependency, lack of self-esteem and status, alienation, isolation, fewer friends, more restrictive interpersonal relationships, bullying and limited life styles.
- The discrimination inherent in segregated schooling offends the human dignity of the child and is capable of undermining or even destroying the capacity of the child to benefit from educational opportunities.
- The existence of segregated 'special' schools stifles creativity of mainstream schools about how to respond to diversity and weakens their responsibilities to include all learners. It undermines efforts to develop inclusive education by draining resources from mainstream, which in turn sets back the development of inclusive communities.
- The existence of 'special' schools contributes to insecurity and fear of rejection by those in the mainstream.
- Retaining segregated 'special' schools is out of step with the Government's learning disability policy, *Valuing People*, which set a target for closing the remaining 21 long-stay segregated 'mental handicap' hospitals by 2004.
- Segregated schooling appeases the human tendency to negatively label and isolate those perceived as different. It gives legal reinforcement and consolidation to a deeply embedded, self-fulfilling, social process of devaluing and distancing others on the basis of appearance and ability in order to consolidate a sense of normality and status.
- Segregated schooling perpetuates discrimination, devaluation, stigmatisation, stereotyping, prejudice, and isolation – the very conditions which disabled adults identify as among the biggest barriers to respect, participation and a full life.
- Segregated schooling does not lead to inclusion.

For a full list of references relating to this leaflet, contact CSIE for free pamphlet, *Reference list for: Reasons against segregated schooling*

For a full explanation of the human rights case against segregated schooling, see *Social and educational justice: the human rights framework for inclusion* by Dr Sharon Rustemier, from CSIE, price £10 incl. UK p&p.

For a more detailed account of the evidence, see CSIE Occasional Paper 1, *The case against segregation in special schools – a look at the evidence* by Dr Sharon Rustemier, price £3 incl. UK p&p.

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