

Academic Performance of Students with Mild Intellectual Disability in Inclusive and Special School Settings

Vijendra Singh Naruka¹, Dr. Vinod Kumar Upadhyay²

¹Research Scholar, Department of Education, Maharaj Vinayak Global University, Jaipur, India

²Principal & Head, Department of Education, Maharaj Vinayak Global University, Jaipur, India

Email: vijendranaruka5@gmail.com; vinodjaipur.upadhyay@gmail.com

Abstract:

The present study examined the academic performance of students with mild intellectual disability studying in inclusive and special school settings. The main objective of the study was to compare the academic competencies of these students across different academic domains. A total of 100 students with mild intellectual disability were selected, including 52 from inclusive schools and 48 from special schools. The Evaluation of Academic Competencies for Children with Intellectual Disabilities (EACCID) was used as the assessment tool for data collection. The study followed a descriptive survey research design. The collected data were analysed using the mean, standard deviation, and an independent-samples t-test. The findings revealed significant differences between students in inclusive and special schools across several academic domains, including reading, writing, and money concepts. Inclusive school students performed better in reading-related skills and functional academic areas, whereas special school students performed better in writing skills. However, no significant difference was observed in numeration, computation, and measurement concepts. The study highlights the importance of both inclusive and special educational settings in supporting the academic development of students with mild intellectual disability.

Keywords: Intellectual Disability, Inclusive School, Special School

Introduction:

Education is a fundamental right of every child and plays a vital role in the holistic development of individuals. In recent decades, the concept of inclusive education has gained significant importance worldwide. Inclusive education emphasizes providing equal educational opportunities to all learners, including children with disabilities, within the regular school system. The aim of inclusive education is not only to improve academic learning but also to promote social interaction, acceptance, and participation among diverse groups of students. In contrast, special schools provide specialised instruction, individualised support, and structured learning environments designed for children with disabilities. Both educational settings have their own advantages and challenges, particularly for students with intellectual disabilities.

Intellectual disability is characterised by significant limitations in intellectual functioning and adaptive behaviour, which covers many everyday social and practical skills. Students with mild intellectual disability generally have an intelligence quotient (IQ) ranging from 50 to 55 to 70 and often experience difficulties in academic learning, problem-solving, communication, and social adjustment. Despite these challenges, many students with mild intellectual disability are capable of acquiring academic skills and developing appropriate social behaviours when provided with suitable educational support and learning environments.

Academic performance is an important indicator of educational success. It reflects the extent to which a student has achieved the learning objectives and mastered academic content in school. For students with mild intellectual disability, academic performance may be influenced by various factors, including teaching methods, classroom environment, individualised instruction, peer support, and the availability of educational resources. Inclusive schools offer students with disabilities the opportunity to learn alongside their typically developing peers, which may enhance motivation, exposure to the standard curriculum, and opportunities for collaborative learning. On the other hand, special schools provide individualised teaching strategies, specialised curricula, and trained professionals who can address the specific learning needs of students with intellectual disabilities. Therefore, it becomes important to examine how these different educational settings influence the academic performance of students with mild intellectual disability.

In addition to academic learning, the development of social skills is equally important for the overall adjustment and well-being of students with intellectual disabilities. Social skills refer to the abilities that enable individuals to interact effectively and appropriately with others in various social situations. These skills include communication, cooperation, empathy, self-control, and the ability to establish and maintain interpersonal relationships. Students with mild intellectual disability often experience difficulties in social interaction, understanding social cues, and adapting to social expectations. The school environment plays a crucial role in shaping these skills by providing opportunities for interaction, group activities, and peer relationships.

Inclusive educational settings may provide more opportunities for social interaction with typically developing peers, which can positively influence the development of social skills among students with mild intellectual disability. Through shared classroom experiences, collaborative activities, and peer modelling, these students may learn appropriate social behaviours and improve their communication abilities. Conversely, special schools often provide structured environments with smaller class sizes and targeted social skills training programs designed specifically for students with disabilities. These settings may help students develop social competence in a supportive and understanding environment. Given the potential differences in learning environments and social experiences between inclusive and special schools, it is important to examine how these settings influence both the academic performance and social skills of students with mild intellectual disability.

Understanding these differences can provide valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and researchers in designing effective educational programs and interventions that support the academic and social development of students with intellectual disabilities. Therefore, the present study aims to examine and compare the academic performance and social skills of students with mild intellectual disability studying in inclusive and special school settings. The findings of this study may contribute to a better understanding of the effectiveness of different educational environments and help in developing appropriate strategies to enhance the educational outcomes and social development of students with mild intellectual disability.

Review of Literature:

The literature review provides an understanding of prior research on the academic performance and social skills of students with intellectual disabilities, particularly in inclusive and special school settings. Several studies have highlighted the importance of educational environments in influencing the learning outcomes and social development of students with mild intellectual disability.

Sasikala and Swarnakumari (2020) conducted a study on the impact of inclusive education on children with mild intellectual disability with special reference to social skills and peer attitudes. The study reported that inclusive education provides opportunities for children with intellectual disabilities to interact with typically developing peers, which helps them develop appropriate social behaviours, cooperation, and communication skills. The findings indicated that students placed in inclusive classrooms showed improved social interaction and positive peer relationships compared to those who were segregated from mainstream settings.

Jain (2025) examined the impact of inclusive education on the academic performance of students with special needs. The study used a mixed-methods approach to compare the academic outcomes of students studying in inclusive classrooms and those in traditional special education settings. The results suggested that inclusive education, when properly implemented with adequate support and resources, can lead to improved academic achievement, higher self-esteem, and better socialisation among students with disabilities.

Madan (2024) investigated parental support and functional skills among students with mild intellectual disability attending special and integrated schools in Haryana. The study included a large sample of students from both educational settings and used standardized tools to measure functional skill levels. The results indicated variations in functional skill development across educational settings and levels of family support, highlighting the role of environmental and contextual factors in the development of students with intellectual disabilities. Amistad and Espacio (2025) examined incidental learning, reading skills, and social behaviour among learners with intellectual disability in special education programs. The findings revealed that incidental learning experiences in the classroom and daily activities play an important role in improving reading ability and social behaviour among students with intellectual disabilities.

The study emphasised that structured teaching strategies and supportive educational environments contribute significantly to both academic and behavioural development of these learners. Sajewicz-Radtke et al. (2025) conducted a multivariate study on the reading and writing abilities of students with mild intellectual disability. The research explored literacy development and cognitive processing abilities among these students and found that many learners with mild intellectual disability experience delays in literacy skills, including reading comprehension and written expression. The study emphasised the need for specialised instructional strategies and individualised educational interventions to improve academic outcomes for students with mild intellectual disability.

Statement of problem:

Education systems across the world are increasingly adopting the principles of inclusive education to ensure equal learning opportunities for all children, including those with disabilities. Hence, the present study investigates the “Academic Performance of Students with Mild Intellectual Disability in Inclusive and Special School Settings”.

Significance of the problem:

The present study is significant in several ways, as it contributes to the understanding of educational outcomes among students with mild intellectual disability. The study will help understand the academic performance of students with mild intellectual disability across different educational settings, namely inclusive schools and special schools. It will provide insights into the development of social skills among students with mild intellectual disability, which is an important aspect of their overall adjustment and participation in society. The findings of the study may help teachers and special educators adopt appropriate teaching strategies and classroom practices to enhance both the academic learning and the social development of students with intellectual disabilities. The study will assist school administrators and policymakers in evaluating the effectiveness of inclusive education and special education programs. The results may help improve inclusive educational practices by identifying the strengths and limitations of inclusive and special school environments. The study may help in designing intervention programs and support services that promote better academic achievement and social competence among students with mild intellectual disability. The findings may also guide future researchers in conducting further studies on educational placement, social development, and academic outcomes among students with intellectual disabilities.

Objectives:

- To study the academic performance of students with mild intellectual disability studying in inclusive and special school settings.
- To compare the academic performance of students with mild intellectual disability in inclusive and special school settings across different academic domains of EACCID.

Hypothesis:

H01: There will be no significant difference between students with mild intellectual disability studying in inclusive schools and special schools in the academic domains of EACCID.

Research Design:

The present study adopted a descriptive survey research design to examine the academic performance of students with mild intellectual disability studying in inclusive and special school settings. The descriptive research design was considered appropriate because it enables the researcher to systematically collect, analyse, and interpret data on existing conditions without manipulating variables. The study involved comparing two groups of students with mild intellectual disability, namely those studying in inclusive schools and those studying in special schools, across various academic domains measured through the EACCID assessment tool.

Sample:

The sample for the present study consisted of 100 students with mild intellectual disability studying in inclusive and special school settings. Of the total sample, 52 students were selected from inclusive schools and 48 from special schools. The participants were identified based on their diagnostic records and school reports indicating mild intellectual disability. The students were selected from schools that provide educational services for children with intellectual disabilities. The participants' ages ranged from approximately 10 to 16 years, and they were studying in different grade levels appropriate to their abilities. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, as the study specifically required students with mild intellectual disability from two different educational settings.

Tool:

Evaluation of Academic Competencies for Children with Intellectual Disabilities (EACCID): a standardised assessment tool for evaluating the academic competencies of children with intellectual disabilities. It measures various academic domains, including reading and writing skills, numeration, computation, and functional academic concepts. The tool helps in identifying the academic strengths and learning needs of students with intellectual disabilities. It is widely used by special educators, psychologists, and researchers for educational assessment and planning intervention programs. EACCID provides systematic information to support the development of individualised educational programs (IEPs) for children with intellectual disabilities.

Data Collection Procedure:

Data for the present study were collected from students with mild intellectual disability studying in inclusive and special schools. Prior permission was obtained from the respective school authorities before conducting the assessment. The participants were selected based on school records confirming mild intellectual disability.

The researcher personally visited the schools and administered the EACCID tool to the selected students. The necessary instructions were provided to the students before the assessment. The responses were recorded carefully in accordance with the tool's guidelines.

Statistical Techniques

The collected data were analysed using appropriate statistical techniques. The mean and Standard Deviation were calculated to understand the average performance and variability in students' scores. The independent-samples t-test was used to assess the significance of the difference between students in inclusive and special school settings. These statistical techniques helped test the formulated hypotheses and interpret the study's results.

Results & Discussion:

Table-1

Indicating mean, SD and t-values between intellectually Disabled children from inclusive and special schools for the Academic domains of EACCID.

Measure	School	N	Mean	SD	't'	Sig. Level
Reading Readiness, Auditory & Visual Perception	Inclusive	52	36.46	7.65	4.66	<i>p</i> <.01
	Special	48	29.69	6.89		
Word Recognition, Phonetic Analysis, Reading Comprehension (English)	Inclusive	52	36.44	8.33	4.70	<i>p</i> <.01
	Special	48	28.22	9.11		
Assessment of Reading Skills (Hindi)	Inclusive	52	42.27	8.97	4.50	<i>p</i> <.01
	Special	48	34.10	9.17		
Survival Reading Skills	Inclusive	52	6.76	2.56	4.08	<i>p</i> <.01
	Special	48	4.89	2.01		
Writing (Pre-writing skills)	Inclusive	52	28.31	7.39	4.06	<i>p</i> <.01
	Special	48	33.83	6.19		
Writing (Handwriting skills)	Inclusive	52	28.66	8.73	4.46	<i>p</i> <.01
	Special	48	35.90	7.50		
Concept, Numeration, and Computation	Inclusive	52	134.22	29.81	0.57	NS
	Special	48	137.22	22.47		
Time concept	Inclusive	52	26.89	7.98	2.01	<i>p</i> <.05
	Special	48	30.24	8.63		
Money concept	Inclusive	52	35.64	6.45	5.88	<i>p</i> <.01
	Special	48	27.50	7.31		
Measurement concept	Inclusive	52	13.77	4.44	0.98	NS
	Special	48	14.55	3.51		

Table 1 presents a comparison between intellectually disabled students in inclusive schools and those in special schools across the EACCID's academic domains. The mean scores, standard deviations, and calculated t-values are presented for each domain.

The mean score of students from inclusive schools ($M = 36.46$, $SD = 7.65$) is higher than that of students from special schools ($M = 29.69$, $SD = 6.89$). The calculated t-value is 4.66, which exceeds the critical value at the 0.01 level of significance. This indicates a significant difference between the two groups, suggesting that students in inclusive schools perform better in reading readiness and perceptual skills.

The results reveal that the mean score of inclusive school students ($M = 36.44$, $SD = 8.33$) is higher than that of special school students ($M = 28.22$, $SD = 9.11$). The obtained t-value is 4.70, which is significant at the 0.01 level. This indicates that students from inclusive schools demonstrate significantly better performance in English reading-related skills.

The mean score of inclusive school students ($M = 42.27$, $SD = 8.97$) is higher than that of special school students ($M = 34.10$, $SD = 9.17$). The calculated t-value is 4.50, which is significant at the 0.01 level. This suggests that inclusive school students perform significantly better in Hindi reading than students from special schools.

The findings show that the mean score of inclusive school students ($M = 6.76$, $SD = 2.56$) is higher than that of special school students ($M = 4.89$, $SD = 2.01$). The obtained t-value is 4.08, which is significant at the 0.01 level. This indicates that inclusive school students possess better survival reading skills than students in special schools.

The mean score of inclusive school students ($M = 28.31$, $SD = 7.39$) is lower than that of special school students ($M = 33.83$, $SD = 6.19$). The calculated t-value is 4.06, which is significant at the 0.01 level. This indicates that students in special schools perform significantly better in pre-writing skills than students in inclusive schools.

The results indicate that the mean score of inclusive school students ($M = 28.66$, $SD = 8.73$) is lower than that of special school students ($M = 35.90$, $SD = 7.50$). The obtained t-value is 4.46, which is significant at the 0.01 level. This shows that students studying in special schools demonstrate better handwriting skills compared to those in inclusive schools.

The mean score of inclusive school students ($M = 134.22$, $SD = 29.81$) is slightly lower than that of special school students ($M = 137.22$, $SD = 22.47$). The calculated t-value is 0.57, which is not significant. This indicates that there is no significant difference between the two groups in numeration and computation skills.

The mean score of inclusive school students ($M = 26.89$, $SD = 7.98$) is lower than that of special school students ($M = 30.24$, $SD = 8.63$). The obtained t-value is 2.01, which is significant at the 0.05 level. This indicates a moderately significant difference, showing that special school students perform slightly better in understanding time concepts.

The results show that the mean score of inclusive school students ($M = 35.64$, $SD = 6.45$) is higher than that of special school students ($M = 27.50$, $SD = 7.31$). The calculated t-value is

5.88, which is significant at the 0.01 level. This indicates that inclusive school students perform significantly better in money-related concepts. The mean score of inclusive school students ($M = 13.77$, $SD = 4.44$) is slightly lower than that of special school students ($M = 14.55$, $SD = 3.51$). The calculated t -value is 0.98, which is not significant. This suggests that there is no significant difference between the two groups in measurement concepts.

Therefore, H_{01} is accepted for two domains, namely Concept, Numeration & Computation, and Measurement concept, and rejected for the rest of the academic domains of EACCID. The results of the study indicated that students studying in inclusive schools performed significantly better in reading-related domains, including reading readiness, auditory and visual perception, English reading skills, Hindi reading skills, and survival reading skills. One possible explanation for this finding is that inclusive school environments provide greater opportunities for interaction with typically developing peers, which may enhance language exposure, vocabulary development, and reading practice. Peer modelling and collaborative learning in inclusive classrooms may also contribute to improved literacy development among students with intellectual disabilities.

These findings are consistent with the study conducted by Sasikala and Swarnakumari (2020), who reported that inclusive educational environments provide opportunities for social interaction and peer learning, which positively influence the communication and academic skills of children with intellectual disabilities. Similarly, Jain (2025) found that inclusive education can positively affect academic performance and social development when appropriate support and instructional strategies are provided.

The findings of the present study also showed that students in special schools performed better in writing-related domains, including pre-writing and handwriting skills. This may be attributed to the structured learning environment, smaller class sizes, and individualised teaching approaches commonly found in special schools. Teachers in special schools often use specialised instructional methods and provide focused training on fine motor skills and writing practice, which may enhance writing abilities among students with intellectual disabilities.

These results are supported by the findings of Sajewicz-Radtke, Radtke, and Zaremba (2025), who emphasised the importance of specialised instructional strategies and individualised support for improving literacy and writing skills among students with mild intellectual disability. Structured teaching methods and targeted interventions may play an important role in developing academic competencies in these learners.

The study also revealed that students in inclusive schools demonstrated significantly better performance in money concepts, while special school students showed slightly better performance in time concepts. Exposure to real-life situations, peer interaction, and practical learning opportunities in inclusive settings may help students develop a better understanding of functional academic skills such as money management.

These findings are consistent with the study by Amistad and Espacio (2025), which highlighted that incidental learning experiences and everyday classroom interactions can significantly improve both academic and social behaviours among students with intellectual disabilities.

However, the results indicated no significant differences between the two groups in numeration, computation, and measurement concepts. This suggests that these mathematical skills may depend more on structured instruction and curriculum rather than the type of school setting. Both inclusive and special schools may provide similar instructional opportunities in these academic areas.

Overall, the findings of the present study suggest that both inclusive and special educational settings contribute differently to the academic development of students with mild intellectual disability. Inclusive schools appear to promote reading skills and functional academic abilities through social interaction and peer learning. In contrast, special schools may provide stronger support for writing and structured academic training through individualised instruction.

Conclusion:

The study concludes that both inclusive and special school settings influence the academic performance of students with mild intellectual disability in different ways. Inclusive schools enhance reading and functional academic skills, while special schools provide stronger support for writing skills through structured, individualised instruction.

Educational Implications:

- Teachers in inclusive schools should use peer-assisted learning and collaborative teaching strategies to improve the reading and functional academic skills of students with mild intellectual disability. Such practices can enhance both academic learning and social interaction.
- Special educators should provide structured instruction and individualised training, especially for writing and fine motor skills, to support the academic development of students with intellectual disabilities. Appropriate teaching aids and remedial programs can further strengthen learning outcomes.

References:

1. Amistad, J. M., & Espacio, R. C. (2025). Incidental learning, reading skills and social behaviour of non-graded learners with intellectual disability. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*, 9(1), 215–223.
2. Jain, R. (2025). Impact of inclusive education on the academic performance of students with special needs. *International Journal of Research in Education*, 5(2), 45–52.
3. Madan, S. (2024). Parental support and functional skills among students with mild intellectual disability studying in special and integrated schools. *International Journal of Special Education and Rehabilitation*, 9(1), 37–44.

4. Sajewicz-Radtke, U., Radtke, B. M., & Zaremba, A. (2025). Reading and writing abilities of students with mild intellectual disability: A multivariate analysis. *Psych*, 7(2), 312–324.
5. Sasikala, B., & Swarnakumari, D. (2020). Inclusive education and its impact on the social skills of children with intellectual disability. *Indian Journal of Public Health Research & Development*, 11(6), 1050–1054.
6. Lal, R., & Sharma, A. (2009). *Evaluation of Academic Competencies for Children with Intellectual Disabilities (EACCID)*. Mumbai: SNDT Women's University.