

Inclusion in Immersion Education: Identifying and Supporting Students with Additional Educational Needs

Subjects: [Education & Educational Research](#)

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This entry reviews the research around identifying and supporting students with additional educational needs (AEN) in immersion education. This is important as it is clear from international research that teachers in this form of education experience challenges due to the lack of availability of minority language services, assessments, interventions, and resources. The international research and literature on the positive practices that can be implemented in immersion education to help teachers and schools overcome the challenges they encounter is reviewed. The themes included in this entry are inclusive pedagogies, assessment, literacy, mathematics, and challenging behaviour.

inclusion

additional educational needs

assessment

intervention

mathematics

language

literacy

Inclusive education involves the removal of barriers so that all students can access education, regardless of their abilities [\[1\]\[2\]\[3\]](#). It is based on the premise that the education system, or the school, needs to adapt to meet the needs of the student, rather than the emphasis being on the student changing to “fit in”. The understanding is that all students can learn when presented with appropriate learning opportunities [\[4\]\[5\]](#). To achieve inclusion in education, all students should be treated equally, and accommodations to the environment and teaching/learning strategies should be made to ensure equality of access to the curriculum [\[6\]](#). Immersion education is an effective form of bilingual education where students are immersed in a new language, where they become bilingual whilst also maintaining their first language development [\[7\]](#). In this form of education, the day-to-day language of instruction in the school is a minority language, for example, Irish in Irish-medium education. In this context, the students receive all their education through Irish (e.g., mathematics, history, geography) except for formal English and modern foreign language lessons. There are many benefits of immersion education for students with additional educational needs (AEN), for example, developing their linguistic ability, bilingualism, cognitive advantages, social and communication development, and higher levels of self-esteem [\[8\]\[9\]\[10\]\[11\]\[12\]\[13\]\[14\]\[15\]](#). Students with AEN may require additional support or accommodations to enable them to access the curriculum, for example, differentiation, additional teaching support, or physical adaptations. Foreign language classrooms offer numerous opportunities for students with AEN to develop social skills through peer interaction and communicative practice [\[16\]\[17\]](#). This can help boost their confidence and motivation to communicate [\[18\]](#).

Even though there are many benefits of this form of education, there have been concerns about the suitability of bilingualism and immersion education for students with AEN [\[19\]\[20\]\[21\]\[22\]\[23\]\[24\]](#). Much of this advice is based on

misconceptions such as it would be too difficult for these students to learn a second language, it would place too much pressure on them, confuse them, or delay their first language development [24][25][26]. These misconceptions have discouraged many students from enrolling in immersion education, and they have also led to students transferring to monolingual schools due to their learning difficulties [19][20][21][22][23][24]. However, recent research on the benefits and suitability of immersion education and bilingualism for these students has been positive [19][27][28][29][30]. Some studies make a valid argument around the moral and ethical implications of exempting students from learning second/minority languages or withholding them from attending this form of education [17][26][31]. One of the cornerstones of inclusion is that every child with AEN should have an equal right to attend the same form of education as their peers. However, within the contexts of immersion education worldwide, it is stated that schools and teachers face difficulties accessing assessments, resources, and interventions through minority languages [32][33][34]. This entry reviews the international research and literature on the positive practices that can be implemented in immersion education to help teachers and schools to overcome the challenges they encounter. The themes included in this entry are inclusive pedagogies, assessment, literacy, mathematics, and challenging behaviour. The inclusive practices reviewed are important for immersion education teachers as inclusive practices in the immersion education classroom are vital to ensure that students are not exempted/removed from this form of education, but, instead, provided with opportunities to thrive within it [35].

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