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[Home](#) » [Publications](#) » Career and Technical Education, Inclusion, and Postsecondary Outcomes for Students With Disabilities

CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION, INCLUSION, AND POSTSECONDARY OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

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We use longitudinal data on all high school students in Washington State, including postsecondary education and workforce outcomes, to investigate predictors of intermediate and postsecondary outcomes for students with disabilities. We pay particular attention to career and technical education (CTE) enrollment and the extent of inclusion in general education classrooms, as prior research suggests these factors may be particularly important in influencing the outcomes of students with disabilities. We estimate models that compare students with other students within the same school district, who are receiving special education services for the same disability, and have similar baseline measures of academic performance and other demographic information. We find generally weak relationships between CTE enrollment in any particular grade and intermediate and postsecondary outcomes for students with disabilities, though we replicate earlier findings that students with disabilities who are enrolled in a “concentration” of CTE courses have higher rates of employment after graduation than students with disabilities who are similar in other observable ways but are enrolled in fewer CTE courses. We also find consistently strong evidence that students with disabilities who spend more time in general education classrooms experience better outcomes—fewer absences, higher academic performance,

higher rates of grade progression and on-time graduation, and higher rates of college attendance and employment—than students with disabilities who are similar in other observable ways but spend less time in general education classrooms.

Published: May 2017

Resource:  WP 177.pdf

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