

# Research Highlights

## Topic: Positive Perceptions of Disability

Turnbull, A., & Bronicki, G. J. "Buzz" (1987). Using kid power to teach kids about mental retardation: A long-term follow-up. *Journal of the Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps*, 12(3). 216-217.

### BOTTOM LINE

Results of a previous study indicated that an older child teaching younger children about mental retardation does improve their attitudes toward people with mental retardation. The current follow-up study examines whether these positive changes in attitude remain the same over a period of time. The results indicate that participants maintained their positive attitudes for one year.

### TIPS

- Involve children in teaching other children about disabilities. Older children may be particularly adept at teaching younger children.
- When choosing children to be teacher, look for the individuals who have positive attitudes and a good understanding of mental retardation.
- Children who have personal experience with individuals with mental retardation may make the best teachers.
- Involve people who are respected members of the community, like basketball coaches and players, in teaching children about disabilities.

### KEY FINDINGS

- Participants' attitudes did not change in the time between the first and current studies.
- Participants' attitudes improved after the lessons taught by the first author and her two friends.
- The class that the friends taught scored as well as the class taught by the first author indicating that children with positive attitudes and a good understanding about mental retardation can teach other kids.

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## METHOD

- This study is a follow-up of a fourth grade science project conducted one year prior which investigated whether or not an older child teaching younger children about mental retardation could improve their attitudes about people with mental retardation.
- The majority (91%) of the third-grade participants in the current study had also participated in the previous research.
- Some participants were taught by the first author, who has a brother with mental retardation. Other participants were taught by two friends of the first author who spent time with her brother and, as participants in the previous year's study, had received high scores on the posttest.
- Three hypotheses were tested:
  - ◆ Positive changes in attitudes toward people with mental retardation will remain the same over a period of time.
  - ◆ Teaching kids about mental retardation will improve their attitudes toward people with mental retardation.
  - ◆ Any kid with a positive attitude and with a good understanding of mental retardation can teach other kids.
- Participants were pretested and posttested using *The Student Attitude and Perspective Scale*.
- Participants were taught about mental retardation using multiple methods including the use of a videotape of the Kansas University basketball team working with Special Olympics athletes.
- Scores from the previous study were compared with the current participant's scores.
- Scores on the posttests of children taught by the first author were compared with the scores of studies taught by the two other students.

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## RELATED PUBLICATIONS

- Turnbull, A., & Bronicki, G. J. "Buzz" (1986). Changing second graders' attitudes toward people with mental retardation: Using kid power. *Mental Retardation*, 24(1), 44-45.
- Turnbull, K., & Bronicki, G. J. (1989). Children can teach other children. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, (Spring), 64-65.