

See Us, Hear Us: Neurodivergent and/or Disabled Students' Sense of Belonging in Class

Neurodivergent and/or disabled individuals report a lower sense of belonging and higher rates of exclusion across educational and professional contexts, including within teacher preparation. Toward the goal of addressing these inequalities, a mixed-methods study was undertaken to examine factors shaping disabled and/or neurodivergent college students' experiences of belonging and support in an introductory special education course using an explanatory sequential design with a follow-up explanations variant. Results from the quantitative phase revealed statistically significant differences between disabled and/or neurodivergent students ($n = 28$) and nondisabled and/or neurotypical peers ($n = 37$) across all five survey questions, with effect sizes ranging from small to moderate ($r = 0.284$ to 0.507). Themes from the qualitative phase and integrated analysis indicated specific instructional factors that can be used to inform equity-minded revisions to course design and pedagogy toward more accessible learning for all.