A Comparison of the Achievements of Special Needs Children within Regular Classes and in Separate Classes

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Abstract: This research has dealt in investigating the differences between children with special needs whoare integrated into regular classes with children with special needs learning in closed special educationclasses, regarding the extent of improvement in their achievements in reading comprehension andmathematics, as well as social involvement. Twenty-nine students from the 2nd and 3rd grades participatedin the research (average age: 8.4 years and deviation from the norm: 0.6), all defined as students ofspecial education, 14 of whom were in the 2nd grade (48%) and 15 of whom were in the third grade (52%).Some of the students were integrated into a parent class and others learned the basic subjects of readingcomprehension and mathematics in a special closed class, though the division was not uniformthroughout the entire research. Ten teachers also participated in the study – 6 regular teachers and 4teachers of special education, 1 of whom teaches the special education class and 3 of whom teach theintegrated students.

Data were collected using three types of tools: a questionnaire open to teachers of regular education toexamine their attitudes and perceptions about the differences between the educational frameworks ofthese terms of meeting the needs of children with special needs and in terms of achievement in readingcomprehension and arithmetic and the integration of social, questionnaire open to teachers of specialeducation to examine their attitudes and perceptions about differences between educational frameworksof these terms of addressing the needs of children with special needs and in terms of achievement inreading comprehension and arithmetic and their integration into the social and interviews are open tostudents in grades 2 and 3 students in two frames above questions dealt with preference learningframework, variance and degree of satisfaction of the student teaching framework where he is now.Research findings pointed to the fact that the presence of students in an integrated class helps themadvance in their own capabilities, in their social involvement and in their scholastic achievements. Theassistance and support that the students received in the integrated classes from the staff of teachers – bothof regular education and of special education – improves their scholastic achievements.

It should be noted that the students expressed their desire to be integrated and continue learning in theclass with other students, and not to leave the class – in order to avoid the negative stigma associated withleaving the class to learn with teachers of special education.

The study shows that there is great importance to the extent of cooperation between teachers of specialeducation. and teachers of regular education. The greater the cooperation, the greater the students'achievements and social involvement. We recommend integrating more subjects for the students andorganizing advanced courses in schools on the topic of staff work, in order to discuss importantpedagogical issues to solve problems and make decisions. It is suggested that a continued research bemade in which the population of students can be expanded to include students from higher classes inschools and to integrate the parents as well. The parents' opinions and cooperation with them will enablethe school to form a clear policy in dealing with the topic of advancement of children with special needs.

1. Introduction

In this paper, the difference between the integration of children with special needs in regular classrooms has been examined compared to the integration of children with special needs in a closed special education class, regarding the extent of their respective improvements in achievements in reading comprehension and arithmetic, according to their perception and the teachers' perception, as well as the extent of their social integration within the school system. For the purpose of the study students from the second and third grade were chosen from a regular elementary school in which, on the one hand there was an integrated class, and on the other hand there was a closed special education class in which the children learn separately. The purpose of the study was to compare the perceptions of the students achievements in the two settings and to examine if there is a difference between the integration of children with special needs in an integrated class as compared to children learning in a closed special education class, regarding their scholastic achievements in the subjects of reading comprehension and arithmetic, in their social involvement and in the teachers' perceptions (Jordan, 2012).

There is great importance to the continuous contact between regular students and those with special needs who study in the same learning setup, as the integration causes the support and strengthening of their feelings, raises the extent of their self satisfaction and pushes them to live and learn and be integrated within one social group setting (Heiman, 2004).

In light of the lack of information regarding the characteristics of the integration in various settings of special education, the current research has dealt in examining the influence of the integration in the two settings, upon the improvement in the scholastic achievement of the students in reading comprehension and arithmetic, the perception of self image, social integration,

and in the perception of the teachers. The definition of the differences that will be found between the two settings is likely to enable a better understanding of the connection between institutional components and the students' scholastic achievements and social and personal achievements – and more efficient planning regarding scholastic systems in schools.

2. Integration – what is it?

The educational approach that advocates integration is based upon a fundamental concept that perceives the pupil as an undividable personality, and education as a complete uniform task in its purpose and manner of execution. This approach is contrary to the pedagogical doctrines that divide the teaching process into activities not connected with one another – as if the teacher comes to impart upon his students pieces of knowledge that are separated from one another, and to develop independent emotional characteristics in them. These doctrines were widespread in the past and they largely determine the teaching methods even today.

The concept of integration (completion, assembly) means the process of conceptual integration of bodies that were separate and their perception as one unit. In our context, integration means the education of special needs children in regular classes. This is a perception that demands that all special needs children be educated with their colleagues as much as possible. "The philosophical foundation of this approach is - Educational opportunity equal to all." "Integration means the temporary educational and social integration of special children with regular children," all the children having equal means and opportunities to learn all the time. The integration is based upon defined, personal needs that require a responsible classification so that suitable programs can be made by educators and administrators who deal either in regular or special education.

In this system, theoretically more than placement in classes is necessary: social and guiding integration are needed, and the integration is to take place through suitable instructors and special programs.

3. The purposes of integration – hardships and achievements

Both regular children and retarded children go willingly to school and that they are happy to learn. Integrated classes support and strengthen the children's personal feelings of satisfaction and their desire to live and learn, and their desire to integrate into another social group (Russ, Chiang, Rylance & Bongers, 2001).

The regular integrated children, according to Ronen, suffice to learn the same amount of learned material as their friends in regular (not integrated) classes. It should be noted that there is a fear that the integration of disabled children in a class will cause insufficient efforts by the regular children to absorb the learning material Social learning has captured an important place in the integrated classes, so that the children nurture direct contacts, they learn to help one another and to accept help, they become accustomed to being considerate of others, and in their growing years they learn to reveal and accept handicaps and weaknesses in themselves and others. It has been found that disabled children that participated in the partially integrated program received substantially higher marks than those that learned only in separated special education classes (Amanda & Samuel, 2013).

The interaction gives the retarded child a feeling of self recognition and not a stigma of himself. For him to integrate socially, he must meet expectations of the environment. He also needs the education of the regular children because learning, ambition and social normalization are important factors that influence a child's progress. We note that social problems arise in an integrated class and stem from the behavior of retarded children. Most people have scant information about children with mental handicaps and this causes fear and prejudices. Tension is created as these children do not react like regular ones and this causes desertion of the retarded child, despite his capabilities (Russ et al., 2001).

The definition of special education is: the totality of educational, psychological, medical and social approaches and services given to children (and adults) who have been defined as disabled physically, mental and emotionally, for a long or short term. It also serves as a preventative service that intervenes in the treatment of the child, when initial symptoms of difficulties in adjustment are recognize education The purpose of preventative treatment is to precede treatment in order to prevent greater substantial irregularity. The educational dimension of special education is inter-professional in essence and includes doctors, nurses, social workers, teachers, psychologists and additional elements (Long, Stephenson & Carter, 2014).

The purpose of special education is – the rehabilitation of the child who is limited in his ability and his guidance to a normal social and professional life, as much as possible, according to his maximum ability. Hence we learn that one should aspire to motivate the best educational and therapeutic means in order to enable the integration of the child in the educational framework as much as possible (Dingle & Brownell, 2011).

The population of special education according to the division of the Israeli Board of Education and Culture includes:

1. Mentally retarded children (children with severe and deep mental retardation, with medium retardation, with mild retardation - and borderline children).
2. Children with emotional disturbances (children with medium to severe emotional disturbances, children with mild emotional disturbances).
3. Children with learning handicaps.

4. Aggressive children and those with behavioral disturbances.
5. Disabled children and those with handicapped senses (C.P., orthopedic disability or physical handicap, sensory handicaps in sight and hearing and the chronically ill).

4. The child with special needs in the integrated class

There are two types of disability –disability that cannot be healed such as: physical handicap, medium and below retardation, difficult diseases, etc. – where the quality of life can be improved with the aid of the special education setting - and children with mild scholastic- educational difficulties who through suitable treatment and education can be helped to overcome problems and be integrated back to the regular setting.

An integrated class works by a system where a certain number of special children learn in a parent class and belong to it totally. The class is considered a regular class and two teachers are integrated together in it during the course of work. One is the teacher of regular education and the second teacher of special education comes to the class from MTIA (a local regional support setting), or works in the same school (Mofet Institute, 2005).

The integration of students with special needs is likely to nurture habits of assistance and tolerance amidst those that are not handicapped, and they can develop social open-mindedness, sincerity, support, and the formation and development of listening, accepting and self awareness skills. The ideology upon which the idea of integration is founded is the advancement the self worth and enhancement of the social image of the handicapped child within the social population in which he lives. But for regular children too, the integration may mold their cultural values and attitudes, enabling them to accept variation and see various domains of life as being legitimate and positive.

There may be great importance to the concerned, comprehensive and over-all work of the staff regarding all the students in the class, both regular and those with special needs, as the two teachers of the regular education and special education may have to cooperate together and develop equal responsibility towards all the students of the class –the division of jobs between them being based upon equality and mutual respect. Together they will have to locate the special students of the class, to prepare comprehensive didactic diagnoses for them and thereafter prepare and implement suitable work programs.

5. The research questions

The main research questions are:
A. Will children with special needs prefer learning in one of the following educational settings -a closed special education class or an integrated class – and does this preference change according to the educational setting in which the students actually study?
B. Will there be differences in the perception of achievements in reading comprehension and arithmetic by children with special needs that learn in an integrated class with regular children, compared to those that learn in a closed special education class?
C. Will there be differences socially and emotionally in children with special needs integrated in a parent class compared to those in a closed special education class?
D. Is it necessary to extend the subjects for students in the two educational settings (integrated class vs. closed special education class)? And is the help that the students receive in the subjects of reading comprehension and arithmetic sufficient?

6. Method

Participants

The research took place in an elementary school for regular education in two educational settings: one was an integrated class and the other was a closed special education class. Twenty-nine students from the 2nd and 3rd grade participated in the study (average age: 8.4 years and deviation from the norm: 0.6), defined as students of special education – from which 14 students studied in the second grade (48%) and 15 in the third grade (52%). From the 2nd grade 8 boys & 6 girls participate education In the 3rd grade 10 boys & 5 girls participate education Some students from the 2nd and 3rd grade were integrated in the parent classes and some of the other students learned the basic subjects of reading comprehension & arithmetic in a closed special education class; division was not uniform throughout the study.

It should be noted that due to the small number of special education students in the school, 29 students are actually the entire population of special education students in the second and third grade classes and they were all invited to participate in the study; almost all of them were found to be suitable. These students are defined as having scholastic disabilities, with difficulties in attention and concentration, distraction, difficulties and slowness in carrying out and completing tasks, poor and limited vocabulary, knowledge of some of the letters in their mother tongue, non-mastery of combinations with many spelling mistakes, in arithmetic mastery of plus and minus up to 100 with difficulties in multiplication and division.

Ten teachers also participated in the study – 6 regular teachers and 4 special education, one of whom teaches the special education class and three of whom teach the integrated students.

All of the teachers are alumni of teacher training institutions with a Bachelor of Education degree and several years of experience, between 5 and 10 years. The difference between the special education teachers and the regular teachers is in their training. The special education teachers completed their B.Education in special education

while the regular teachers completed their B.Education in one of the subjects relevant to regular education. During all the years of experience of both types of teachers, no mention was made of their participation in any sort of continuing studies.

Apparatus:

The research data was collected through three types of tools:

1) **An open questionnaire for teachers who teach in regular education**. The purpose of the questionnaire was to examine the attitudes and perceptions of these teachers regarding differences between the said educational settings in their supplying a solution for the needs of children with special needs and in the achievements in reading comprehension and arithmetic –and in their social integration.

The questionnaire was created for the current research and included six open questions. These questions dealt with the preferences of learning institutions, the extent of cooperation between the integrated teachers and the special education teachers, and the examination of the progress of students with special needs in the social aspect, in their adapting to the class and in their cooperation with others.

2) **An open questionnaire for teachers who teach in special education**. The purpose of the questionnaire was to examine the attitudes and perceptions of these teachers in differences between the said educational settings in their supplying a solution for the needs of children with special needs and in the achievements in reading comprehension and arithmetic -and their social integration.

The questionnaire was created for the sake of the current research and included nine open questions. These questions dealt with examining the influence of separate learning upon the students' achievements in the subjects of reading comprehension and mathematics, the level of motivation amongst the students, their social

progress, adaptation in the class and cooperation. Likewise, the teachers were asked about expanding separate learning for additional school subjects

3) **Interviews of students**. Twenty-nine short interviews were held with the students of the 2nd and 3rd grade who learned in the two settings – based upon the 6 open questions that were formulated for the current study that enable total freedom of speech for the students. The questions dealt on the subject of preferences of various learning settings and the extent of the student's satisfaction with the framework in which he was studying. It should be noted that in most cases there was deviation from the written questions, in accordance with the unique situation in each interview.

All questions and questionnaires and observations clearly formulated and transferred teachers and students who do not belong to the study, following the comments received and re-formulated questions were used for the study.

The procedure

The study took place in an Arabic elementary school in Central Israel that has a heterogeneous population of students, where the socioeconomic situation of the parents was middle class and above. The organizers of the research study came to the school and met with the students and teachers and each one was asked to fill in a questionnaire in the presence of the study organizers–so that they could explain and help in the filling out of the forms. Additionally, the author received approval from the parents of the children who participated in the research.

7. Design and Results

All the findings are questionnaires of regular education teachers, special education teachers, and the results of student interviews were analyzed by qualitative method. Furthermore, some of their words were assigned to the outstanding students in the surgery itself to illustrate their views more clearly**.**

The students' interviews

(1) *Differences in learning preferences in the various educational settings by actual educational setting*

The research question was designated to examine the preference of special needs students to learn in one of the following educational settings - a closed special class or an integrated class – and to see whether this preference changes according to the educational framework in which the students actually study. To examine this question, a Chi Square test (x^2) was performed to check the independence between the preference patterns of the two educational settings and the educational setting to which the student belonged when the research was held. In the x^2 test with succession correction of Yates for a 2 x 2 table, significant dependence was found between the preference in learning style and the actual learning setting, x^2 (1,n=29)=3.96, p<0.05.

In Tab. 1 the students' frequency distribution is presented according to preference patterns and according to the framework in which the student was actually learning.

The data of the Table point to the fact that the preference of learning in a special class or being integrated in a parent class varies according to the setting in which the students actually study: Amongst students integrated within a parent class, a clear preference was shown for studying in an integrated class (70%), while amongst students studying in a special class, preference was shown for studying in a special class (77.7%),

Table 1: Frequency distribution of students regarding preference of learning method according to the educational framework in which the student was actually learning

Method of learning				
Prefer a special class		Prefer integration in parent class		
Students learning now in a special class	Students now integrated within a parent class	Students learning now in a special class	Students now integrated within a parent class	x^2 (1,n=29)
3(b)	4(b)	0(b)	7(b)	
4(c)	2(c)	2(c)	7(c)	
Total: 7	6	2	14	

p<0.05

In Figure 1 the frequency distribution in the students' responses is presented regarding the reasons for the preference in learning style (special class). The data of the Figure point to the fact that most of the students' answers pointed to a preference for a special class due to physical conditions, and additional reasons that were mentioned were avoidance of stigma and better understanding of the material learn education.
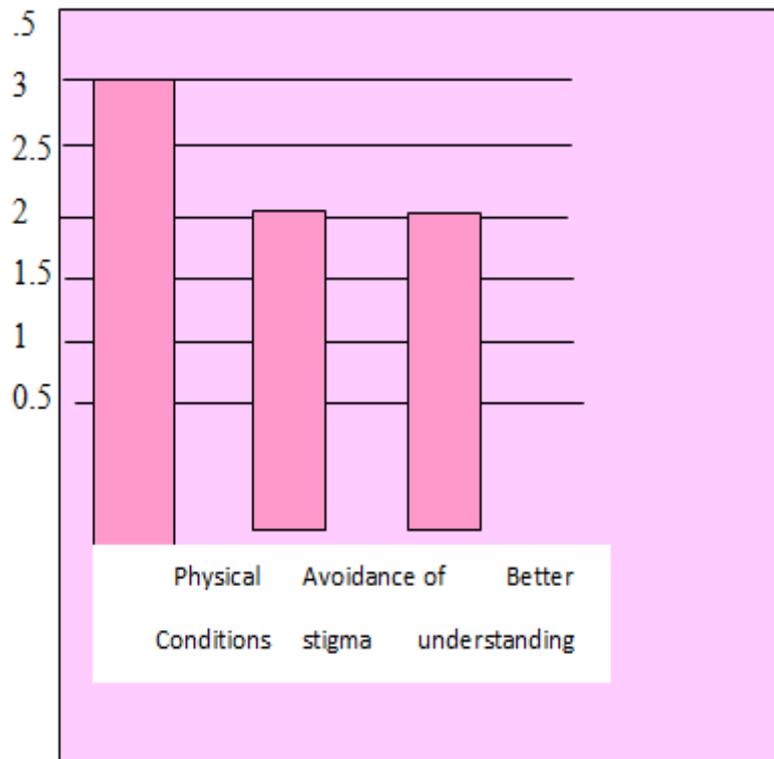

Figure 1: <u>Frequency distribution of students regarding reasons for preference of learning methods (special class)</u>

In Figure 2 the frequency distribution in the students' responses is presented regarding the reasons for the preference in learning style (integrated class). The data of the Figure point to the fact that most of the students' answers pointed to a preference for an integrated class in order to be like most students, and additional reasons that were mentioned were scholastic output, decision of parents and avoidance of stigma.
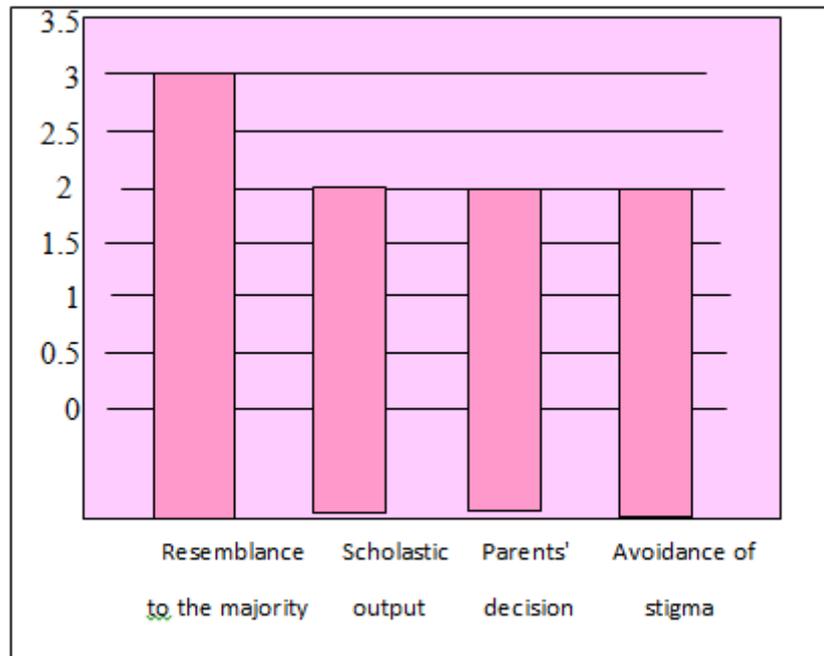
Figure 2: Frequency distribution of students regarding reasons for preference of learning methods (integrated class)

Example of quotes from students:

Preference of a special class:

- "I prefer learning in a separate, small class because students in the class disturb me. They take everything from my pencil case. In a separate class I'll learn better."
- I prefer by the teacher (special class); it's better. But Mommy says that next year I must go back, learn with my classmates. She doesn't want me to learn in special education"
- I prefer in a separate class, so that I'll have better marks, I'll have marks of 100."
- By the teacher (in a special class) it's better. Why, before I didn't know the letters. Now I know half of the letters and I know how to read."

Preference of integration within a parent class:

- "I don't want to leave the class; only weak students go out to learn with a teacher of special education" (in a closed special class).
- "I prefer to continue learning within the class with the other students."

- I prefer that the teacher will teach me in the class, and not to go out to the class of the weak (students). Mommy told me not to go out to class of the weak."
- I prefer to stay with the class with the other students because I want to learn with my classmates and participate in the lessons; (if I go out) I miss lessons."

(2) Differences in perception of achievements according to educational setting

The second research question intended to investigate whether differences exist in the perception of achievements in reading comprehension and arithmetic by special needs children learning in an integrated class with regular children, compared to those who learn in a closed special class. In order to examine this question, a Chi Square test (x^2) was performed to investigate the independence between the perception of scholastic achievements and the educational setting to which the student belonged at the time the research was held. In the Chi Square (x^2) test with succession correction of

Yates for a 2 x 2 table, significant dependence was found between the scholastic achievements and the actual learning setting, x^2 (1,n=29)=5.24, p<0.05.

In Table 2 the frequency distribution of the students is presented according to perception of achievements and according to the educational framework in which the student actually was learning (in a special class or integrated within the parent class).

Data point to the fact that the perception of scholastic achievements varies by the setting in which the students actually study: Amongst students integrated within a parent class, a decline in discernment of achievements was shown (82.3%), while in students studying in a special class, a rise in achievement perception was shown (66.6%).

Table 2: <u>Frequency distribution of students regarding a rise in scholastic achievements</u> according to the educational framework in which the student actually was learning

Scholastic achievements				
Rise in achievements		Decline in achievements		
Students learning now in special class	Students now integrated in parent class	Students learning now in special class	Students now integrated in a parent class	x^2 (1,n=29)
3(b)	2(b)	2(b)	7(b)	
5(c)	1(c)	2(c)	7(c)	
Total: 8	3	4	14	

p<0.05

Example of quotes from students:

Achievements rose:

- "Because of the help that I get in class from the teacher my marks got much better."
- My marks went up. I want the teacher to keep helping me in third grade also. I want to keep getting 100 in tests."
- Yes, very much. I had a test in Arabic and I got 100. The teacher makes things I don't understand clear to me."
- My marks rose; even without teacher's help I manage, but I like when she helps me."

Achievements declined:

- "My marks didn't go up. In many cases they even went down."
- Being in A special class made the competition less and so my marks went down."

(3) Preferring of future learning methods according to actual educational setting

This question intended to investigate the students' wishes to continue in the same framework in which they had learned this year versus their desire to learn like the other students. In order to examine this question, a Chi Square (x^2) test was performed to investigate the independence between the preference in learning method for the next year and the educational setting to which the student belonged at the time the research was held. In the x^2 test with succession correction of Yates for a 2 x 2 table, no significant dependence was found between the preference in learning method for the next year and the setting to which the student actually belonged x^2 (1,n=29)=0.006, p<0.05.

In Table 3 the frequency distribution of the students is presented according to future preference patterns, according to the setting in which the student was learning.

Data show that the preference in future learning method in a special class or an integrated class does not vary by the setting in which the students study; by students in both settings, a clear preference was shown to continue learning in the same setup.

Table 3: Frequency distribution of students regarding future preference in learning method, according to the educational setting in which the student was learning at the time the research was held. (in a special class or integrated within the parent class)

Method of learning for the following year				
To continue learning in the same setting		Not to continue in the same setting (change from current framework)		
Students learning now in special class	Students now integrated in a parent class	Students learning now in special class	Students integrated now in parent class	$x^2(1,n=29)$
4(b)	6(b)	1(b)	3(b)	
4(c)	8(c)	1(c)	2(c)	
Total: 8	14	2	5	

p<0.05

In Figure 3 the frequency distribution in the students' responses is presented for the preference in future learning method. We see the main reason for preference for continuing to learn in the same setup was receiving help, and additional reasons were receiving high marks and personal support.
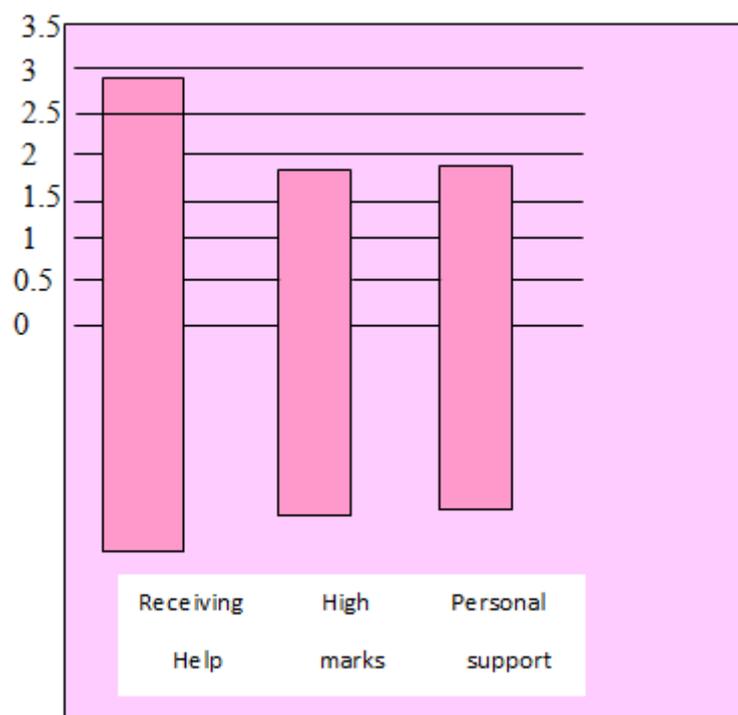

Figure 3: Frequency distribution of students in preference of future learning methods

In Figure 4 the frequency distribution of the students is presented for the preference in future learning method, (change in current setting). We see that the main reason for preference for changing the current setting was the students' desire to integrate back to the previous class, and additional reasons that were noted were receiving help and the parents' opposition to their remaining in a special education setting.
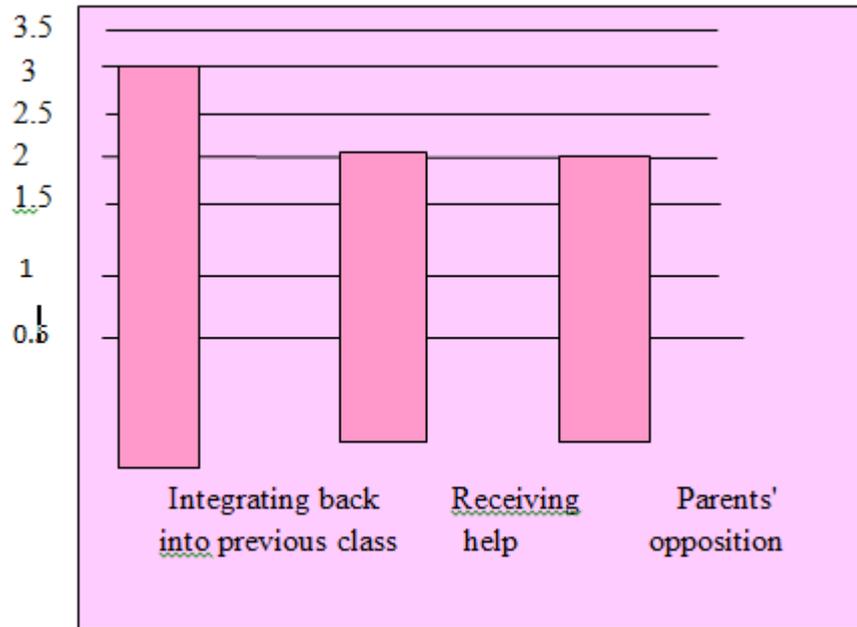
Figure 4: Frequency distribution of students in preference of future learning methods (change in current framework)

Example of quotes from students:

Continuing to learn in current setting:

- "My marks went up but even without the teacher's help I manage, but I like when she comes to help me and I want her to continue helping me in third grade also."
- I want the teacher to continue helping me in third grade also and I want her to help me in English and Hebrew, especially in English, so that I get better marks."
- "Yes, I want her to keep helping me in third grade too. I want to keep getting goods marks on tests."
- I want teacher to keep on helping 'cause I want good marks. I'll be angry if she stops."
- My achievements went up. If the teacher stops learning with me they'll go down again. I want her to keep learning with me even though she sometimes yells at me when I don't do the assignments."

Change in present framework:

- "I don't want the teacher to continue helping me in the third grade because now I know everything and I don't need any help."
- "I don't want the teacher to help me next year. I want to learn like all the other students. My mother will help me at home, she teaches me like a teacher."

(4) *Expanding the learning in additional school subjects according to actual educational setting*

This question was made to examine expansion of the learning in additional school subjects besides reading comprehension and arithmetic, and to determine whether the desire to expand varies according to the setting in which the students are actually learning. To examine this question, a Chi Square (x^2) test was done to check the independence between the expansion of the learning and the setting to which the student belonged at the time the research was held. In the x^2 test with succession correction of Yates for a 2 x 2 table, significant dependence was found between the expansion of subjects and the

educational setting to which the student actually belonged, x^2 (1,n=29)=4.02, p<0.05.

In Table 4 the frequency distribution of the students is presented according to expansion of learning patterns and according to the student's framework.

The data of the Table point to the fact that the desire to expand learning subjects varies according to the educational setting in which the students actually study: Amongst students integrated within a parent class, a lack of desire was shown to expand with additional learning subjects (75%), while amongst students studying in a special class, a desire was shown to expand with learning subjects beyond those being learn education (69.2%)

Table 4: Frequency distribution of students regarding expansion of learning subjects according to the educational framework in which the student actually was learning when the interview was held (in a special class or integrated within the parent class)

Expansion of learning subjects				
Wanting the expansion of learning subjects		Not wanting the expansion of learning subjects		
Students learning now in special class	Students now integrated in parent class	Students learning now in special class	Students now integrated in a parent class	x^2 (1,n=29)
5(b)	3(b)	2(b)	4(b)	
4(c)	1(c)	2(c)	8(c)	
Total: 9	4	4	12	

p<0.05

In Figure. 5 the frequency distribution of the students is presented regarding the expansion of learning subjects (special class). The data point to the fact that most prefer receiving help in various subjects, thereafter in Hebrew, English and finally in the sciences.
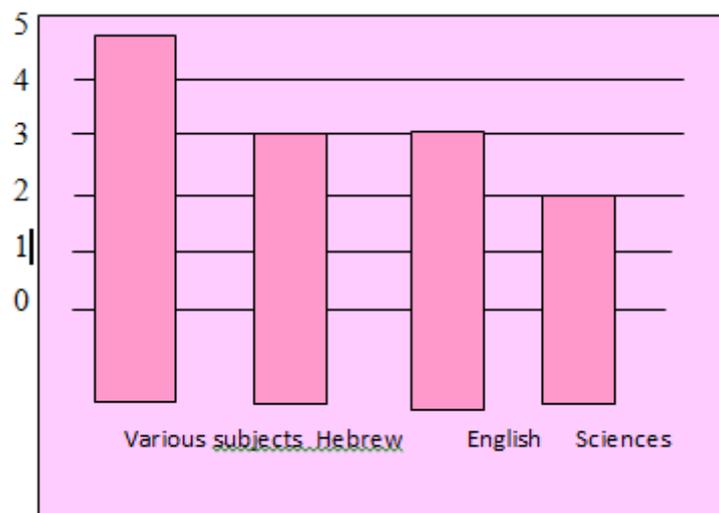

Figure 5: Frequency distribution of students re. expansion of subjects (special class)

In Figure 6 the frequency distribution of the students is presented regarding the expansion of learning subjects (integrated class). The data of the Figure point to the fact that most of the students prefer receiving help in the subject of English, thereafter in Hebrew, the sciences and finally in various subjects.
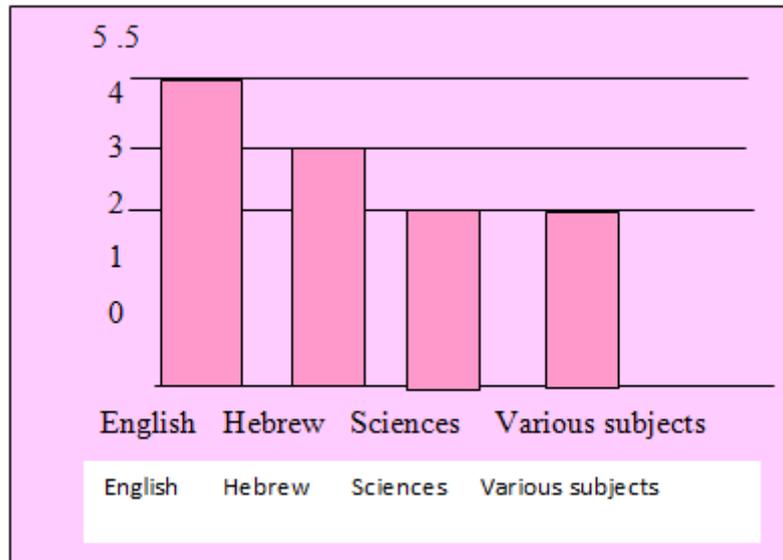
Figure 6: Frequency distribution of students re. expansion of subjects (int. class)

Example of quotes from students:

Receiving help in various school subjects:

- "The teacher helps me very much and I would like her to help me in English and Hebrew also. In the other subjects, I don't need it."
- "I want to get help in Hebrew because that subject is hard."
- "I would like the teacher to help me in all subjects because I want to be the best in the class. I want to be a teacher when I grow up."

Not receiving help in various school subjects:

- "I want the teacher to keep helping me in arithmetic and Hebrew only. In the other subjects I get good marks."
- "I prefer to stay in a separate class, to learn other subjects by the special education teacher."

(5) Desire to come to school and participate in the activities that take place there according to actual educational setting

This research question was designated to examine the desire of students to come to school and participate in the activities that take place there, and to determine whether this desire varies by the setting in which the student is learning. In order to examine this question, a Chi Square test (x^2) was performed to investigate the independence between the desire to come to school and the actual educational setting to which the student belongs at the time the research was held. In the x^2 test with succession correction of Yates for a 2 x 2 table, significant dependence was found between the desire to come to school and the actual educational setting x^2 (1,n=29)=5.48, p<0.05.

In Table 5 the frequency distribution of the students is presented according to the desire to come to school and according to the actual educational setting in which the student actually was learning (a special class or integrated within the parent class)

The data of the Table point to the fact that the desire to come to school and participate in the activities that take place there varies according to the educational setting in which the students actually study: Amongst students integrated within a parent class, a lack of desire to come to school was shown (76.5%), while amongst students studying in a special class, a desire to come to school was shown (75%).

Table 5: Frequency distribution of students regarding the desire to come to school and participate in the activities that take place there according to actual educational setting where the student was learning at the time the interview took place

Desire to come to school and participate in the activities that take place there				
Desire to come to school		Lack of desire to come to school		
Students learning now in special class	Students now integrated in a parent class	Students learning now in special class	Students now integrated in a parent class	x^2 (1,n=29)
6(b)	3(b)	1(b)	4(b)	
3(c)	1(c)	2(c)	9(c)	
Total: 9	4	3	13	

p<0.05

In Figure 7 the frequency distribution of the students is presented regarding the desire to come to school and participate in the activities that take place there (special class). The data of the Figure point to the fact that most of the students come to school to receive help, thereafter to get good marks and finally to meet with friends.
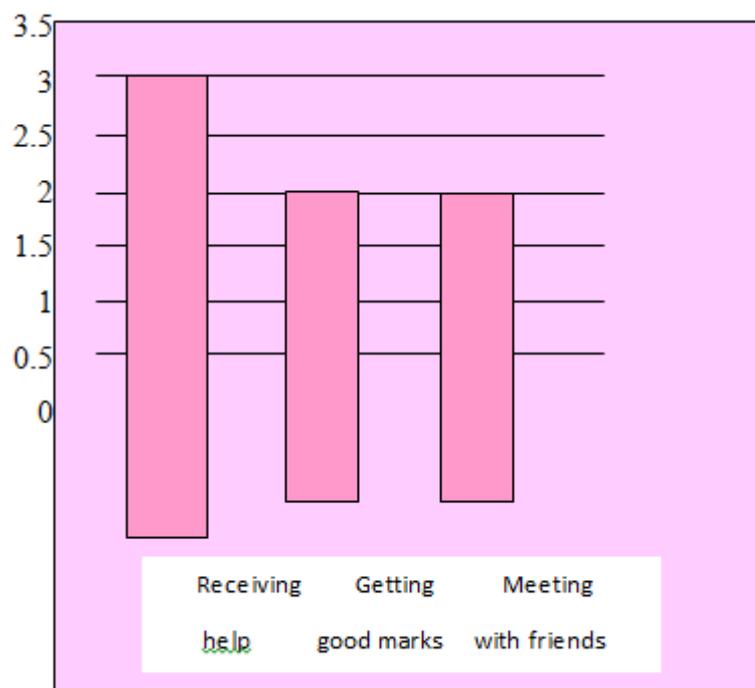

Figure 7: Frequency distribution of students re. desire to come to school (special class)

In Figure 8 the frequency distribution of the students is presented regarding the desire to come to school and participate in the activities that take place there (integrated class). The data point to the fact that most students come to school to meet friends, thereafter because of support and encouragement from parents and finally due to the need to learn.
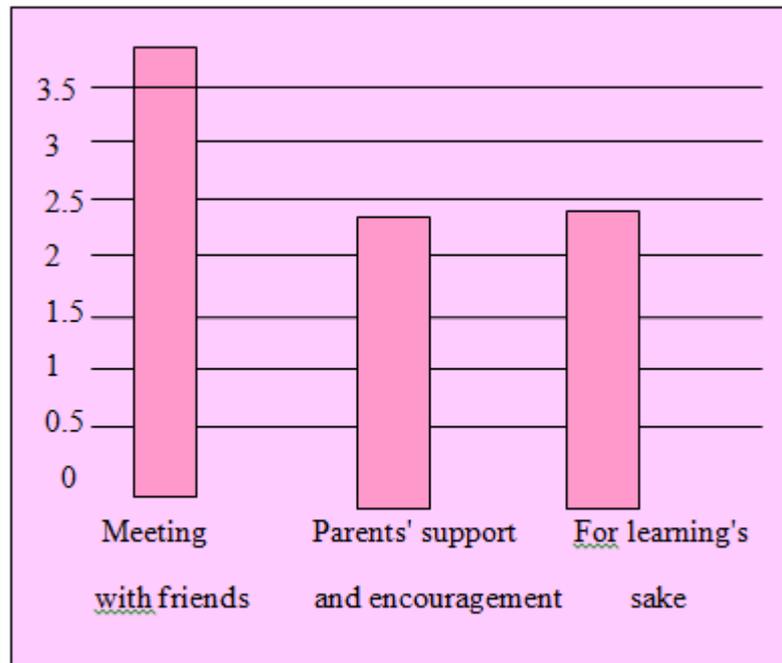
Figure. 8: Frequency distribution of students re. desire to come to school (integrated class)

Example of quotes from students:

Like to come to school:

• "I like to come to school. I like to come to school so that I will learn and I will have good report card so that I will learn a good profession in the future. I want to be a lawyer or an engineer." (quote from a student studying in a promoting class)

• "I like to come to school, because whoever doesn't learn misses out."

Do not like to come to school:

• "I like to come to school a little, because they give a lot of homework."

• "I don't like to come to school, but my sister does."

The teachers

(1) The teachers were asked whether the separate learning through a special class raises or lowers the students' achievements in reading comprehension and arithmetic, compared to integration. (The question was directed to special education teachers.)

All the special education teachers claimed that learning in a special education class raises the achievements and marks of the students substantially.

Causes of improvement in achievements according to the teachers:

• The learning is suited to the ability and needs of the students.

• The children's ability to concentrate and focus grows.

• The students learn almost individually with a small number of students.

• More intensive efforts are put into the students.

(2) They were asked if the learning in the framework of the special class raises or lowers the motivation of the students. (Question was directed to special education teachers.)

All the teachers claimed that learning in the special education framework brings about more motivation compared to integration.

Causes of rise in motivation amidst students in a special class:

• The student is successful and receives good marks, therefore his motivation grows.

• The learning suited to the level causes success and to a rise in motivation.

- The students are calm and not pressured and this raises their motivation.

8. Discussion

The main purpose of this research was to investigate the differences between children with special needs integrated in a parent class and those who learn in a closed special class – regarding the preferences in learning methods and the perception of scholastic achievements in reading comprehension and arithmetic.

The first research question intended to check whether children with special needs would prefer to learn in one of the following educational settings: a closed special class or an integrated class – and whether this preference varies according to the education framework in which the students actually study. Findings of our study show that there is a difference in the preference of learning methods between children with special needs integrated in a parent class compared to those that learn in a special class.

The pattern that emerges from the findings is that a student who learns in a specific setting prefers to continue studying in the framework in which he is now. This pattern of findings corresponds with findings of studies that were published in research literature that showed that children generally prefer the educational setting to which they actually belong. This finding can be explained because there is satisfaction from the setting to which a student actually belongs and there may also be fear of trying a new unknown setting that the children are not used to (Gavish & Shimoni, 2006).

We see that students that learn in an integrated class revealed preference to continue learning in an integrated educational setting. This finding corresponds with a finding from the research of Avissar & Almog (2003), in which it was found that regular children needs retarded children both go willingly to school and reveal motivation to learn. The integrated classes supported and strengthened the children's personal feeling of

satisfaction and their desire to learn and integrate in another social group. The integration gives the retarded child a feeling of self knowledge and prevents a stigma. The mentally retarded child also needs to be educated amongst regular children in order to advance in his scholastic achievements and social normalization. (Vaughn & Swanson, 2015).

Findings of our research even pointed to the fact that students that learn in a special class revealed preference to continue learning in this type of educational setting. These findings correspond with findings in Avissar & Almog study (2003) which showed that children with special needs are repelled from amongst the regular population and they therefore prefer to continue learning together. All special education teachers preferred the closed promoting class for the improvement of achievements and self images of the children with special needs, compared to regular teachers who were divided in their opinions, half in favor of integration and half in favor of a closed special class.

We claim that the unequivocal preference of the special education teachers for a closed special class does not only stem from concern for the special child's need, which is very important to them – but also from concern for their needs; they feel more independence and confidence with the children without outside influences (the regular teachers) and they also feel more flexible in giving over material without outside examination.

Another question examined was whether there would be differences in the perception of the achievements in reading comprehension and arithmetic by children with special needs an integrated class with regular children, compared to those in a closed special class.

The findings of our research pointed to the fact that there is a difference between the students in the two educational settings regarding the discernment of a change in level of scholastic achievements. While students with special needs

learning in an integrated class thought that there was a decline in the discernment of scholastic achievements, the students who learned in a closed special class thought that there was a rise in the perception of scholastic achievements. These findings correspond with findings in the study of Bishara (2005) that examined the influence of school characteristics upon the advancement of the population of students with special needs in a special class and found them to be very influential upon the advancement of the students' achievements. Heimen (2004) noted that the achievements of integrated students are influenced by their presence in a class that includes regular children. This can be explained by the fact that students in an integrated class compared their scholastic achievements with the regular students, whose achievement level was seemingly higher – and therefore the level of achievements of the special needs students was perceived as lower. In comparison, the achievement level amongst students who learned in a special class was compared to those who were similar to them and this could lead to a more objective judgment of their achievement level (Mandic et al., 2012).

Most teachers that teach regular education and also teach special education claim that the two frameworks improve the marks of students with special needs in mathematics and reading comprehension but that the preferred setting for the improvement of marks is the closed promoting class where the relationship with the student is more personal, focused and planned; notwithstanding, the special education teachers claim that in an integrated setting it is very difficult to build a good intervention program because that also depends on the teacher teaching the class at large and that because of a lack of cooperation between the integrated teachers and the regular teachers, the intervention cannot be made more efficient. Additionally, many times special education teachers think that the regular teachers treat them like learning assistants and not teachers on an equal basis. Literature confers

great importance to concerned, comprehensive work of staff regarding all students, both regular and those with special needs, as the two teachers of the regular education and of special education must cooperate and develop equal responsibility towards all students of the class –the division of jobs between them being based upon equality and mutual respect.

An additional question that was examined in the framework of this study was whether there would be social and emotional differences by children with special needs integrated in the parent class compared to those learning in a closed special class.

Findings of the research show that within the interviews of the students it was very difficult to receive a true picture concerning the extent of their participation in the social activities in the school. But, in the course of the interviews it was revealed from the teachers' responses that the social aspect had been neglected and that there was no clear program to socially integrate children with special needs. Here no differences were found between the special education teachers and the regular ones. Regular teachers did not relate to the social aspect but half of them claimed that leaving a child in a parent class helps him socially and he would not be looked upon as irregular. In contrast, the special education teachers claimed that special education students from both frameworks were socially neglected and that some of the home-teachers ignore their social needs and are not prepared to integrate them in social class activities and prefer to "throw" these students to the special education teachers. It can be claimed that at the students' young age it is not so influential upon their self image, that the scholastic achievements are more important than the social aspect. But, results of this approach will show up in another year or two and they will have bad influence on the students and are likely to cause their dropping out from the system. Thus, an additional important dimension to the success of the integration process is the student's social

integration and not only the academic one. A teacher has a most important role in the process of the student's social acceptance, to ensure that he develops social abilities, which are more important than intelligence and achievements (Sharon, Shachar & Levine, 2005).

Therefore it is very important especially at a young age to build and carry out social programs whose purpose is the social integration of the students with special needs, to prevent negative phenomena such as the loss of desire to learn and the improvement of marks that come at the expense of social integration (Tasse & Lecavalier, 2000).

In the course of the study the question was investigated whether there is a need to expand learning subjects for students in the two educational settings and whether the help that students receive in the subjects of reading comprehension and arithmetic is sufficient. The findings of the research pointed to the fact that there is a difference between the students in the two educational settings regarding the preference for expanding the learning subjects to other areas. While students with special needs learning in an integrated class revealed a lack of desire to expand in additional subjects, the students with special needs learning in a special class revealed a desire to expand. This finding can be explained by the fact that students with special needs learning in a parent class are forced to cope with a pace of learning of regular students- something that is likely to create a feeling of a burden in learning and lack of desire to cope with new learning areas that are likely to create an even larger scholastic burden. On the other hand, in a special class, the pace of learning is more suited to the students and therefore the desire to expand the learning subjects is likely to reflect more efficient coping with the pace of learning necessary and even the desire to improve the level of scholastic achievement.

All teachers claim that the children's difficulty is general and is expressed in all subjects. Hence, it is important to find a solution for the instruction of the other subjects and certainly not to suffice with reading comprehension and arithmetic. But, the teachers know that this is very hard to implement, due to lack of resources during the hours of learning (Avissar, 2002).

In summation, it should be noted that the various special education settings that are activated within regular education are truly important for the advancement of scholastic achievements and social development within children with special needs. These settings should lead to good results in the long range as well, if only we are wise enough firstly to consider the personal needs of the children with a planned personal curriculums that serve all their needs – and secondly to ensure the cooperation of the teachers in the classes who must willingly work in cooperation to execute the various plans; these teachers must keep broadening their knowledge and learning various techniques on the relevant subjects in the teaching profession (Jordan, 2012; Margalit, 2003).

9. Conclusions and recommendations

From the research and literature written we see that the settings of special education can add to the advancement of scholastic achievements of special needs students and to the improvement of their social and emotional needs at a young age-but these achievements will not be realized if the system is not wise enough to integrate the social aspect and does not build programs for social integration of them; for, at older ages integration into society is the key to success and materialization of achievements acquired at a younger age.

An additional very important subject of great importance is the extent of cooperation between the special education teachers and the regular teachers. The Law of Special Education of 1988 determines that ",,, that preference should be given for the placement of the child with special needs in a recognized learning institution that is not an institution of special education." The spirit

of the law requires a change in thinking and perception amongst teachers and principals of institutions of regular education who have begun to absorb special education students within their schools. However, in order for this policy to succeed, there must be cooperation and proper staff work between the regular teachers and the special education teachers.

In addition, it is recommended that continued-studies courses take place on the subject of staff work. The purposes of the advanced courses are to make the teachers' horizons broader, to teach and update their information in fields of knowledge, to protect against attrition, and increase of professionalism in teaching.

We recommend that an additional study be done that will also collect data amongst the students with special needs that are in higher classes – 4th-6th grade – and to check the scholastic and social aspect in these frameworks. The research should include data on the attitudes of regular students towards students with special needs and collect data from regular students and parents of special needs students concerning their integration in the regular educational setting. Thus a more extensive picture can be gotten and schools can form a clear policy to deal with the subject.

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