



FACT SHEET

Empowering families, professionals,
and others interested in the well-being
and education of children and youth

Inclusive Education

Inclusion is a value. Inclusion means that everyone is an important member of their neighborhood, community, and school. Inclusion also means that each person receives the support needed in order to live and learn successfully and achieve their highest potential.

Inclusive education is based on the idea that every child deserves access to the same opportunities, experiences, and curriculum. Inclusive education is about children with all types of abilities and disabilities learning, playing, and building friendships together.

IN THIS FACT SHEET:

- What is inclusive education?
- What are the benefits of inclusive education?
- How does the IEP team make decisions regarding placement in the LRE?
- What are some of the supports and services that may be provided?
- What if the school district cannot provide the supports my child needs?

What is “inclusive education”?

Inclusive education means that all students, regardless of ability or disability, are placed in an age-appropriate general education classroom in their neighborhood school and provided all necessary supports and services to enable them to benefit from such placement.

What are the benefits of inclusive education?

Research shows that students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms have increased achievement in reading and math, increased classroom participation, and gains in social

skills and friendships. High expectations can lead children with disabilities to develop more confidence, independence, and a stronger sense of self.

Inclusion and The Least Restrictive Environment

The term “inclusion” does not appear in the law. Federal law (IDEA) requires that students with disabilities be educated in the least restrictive environment, often called “LRE.” The law requires states to establish:

“Procedures to assure that, to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities... are educated with children who are not disabled, and that special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only when...education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily.”

Placement must also be as close as possible to the student’s home.

Does the IEP team have to consider the general education classroom for every child?

All students must be considered for placement in the general education classroom, with supports and services, before exploring more restrictive alternatives such as a resource room, self-contained classes, or out-of-district programs. This must happen at every IEP meeting, even for students who are currently in non-inclusive classrooms or out-of-district.

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What are some of the supports and services that may be provided?

Supplementary supports and service might include, but are not limited to, use of consultants or itinerant teachers; modification of curriculum and instruction; integrated related services; training for the general educator; positive behavior supports; use of assistive and/or adaptive technology; in-class resource programs; team teaching; individualized instruction; provision of note takers; teacher aides; and team planning, which can include families, school personnel, students with and without disabilities, friends and community members.



What if the school district cannot provide the supports a student needs?

Placing students with disabilities into regular programs without the supports necessary to assure success is not inclusion. If the IEP team agrees that placement in the general education classroom is appropriate, the district must provide all necessary supports for students and teachers. Often, when districts lack the expertise or resources they need to support a student, they will enlist the help of consultants or other professionals.

Does a student have to meet certain requirements or academic standards to be considered for placement in general education?

No. A child need not be able to reach curricular standards of the rest of the class to be a classmate in a general education classroom. A student with disabilities cannot be removed from an age-appropriate, general education classroom solely because he/she requires modifications to the general education curriculum.

How does the IEP team make decisions regarding placement in the LRE?

An appropriate decision-making sequence begins with the discussion of the student's educational needs. A discussion of what constitutes an appropriate program must always come before the discussion of where it will be provided.

What about participation in general education activities outside the classroom for students educated in other settings?

Even if a student is educated outside the general education classroom, the IEP team must consider how he/she can interact with non-disabled peers outside the classroom. Each district board of education must provide the supports needed for students with disabilities to participate in nonacademic and extracurricular activities.

In making placement decisions, are there factors that may NOT be considered?

Districts may not make placement decisions based solely on factors such as blanket rules regarding the category of disability, severity of disability, or availability of educational or related services. For example, it is probably not appropriate if the district requires that all students with a particular classification go to a particular building or class, or if all students who need a particular related service go to where that service is traditionally provided.

For every student, the IEP team—including the parent(s)—must:

- Give consideration to whether the student can be educated satisfactorily in a regular classroom, not simply as it is, but with supplementary aids and services. At issue is whether the student's IEP can be implemented satisfactorily in the regular classroom with supplementary aids and services.
- Compare the benefits provided in a regular class and the benefits provided in a special education class.
- Consider the potentially beneficial or harmful effects that a placement may have on the student with disabilities and the other students in the class. The district must demonstrate that full consideration has been given to the complete range of supplementary aids and services that could be provided to address any harmful effects.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

- Federal rules on Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) placement: sites.ed.gov/idea/regs/b/b/300.114.
- NJ State rules on LRE placement (NJAC 6A:14-4.2): state.nj.us/education/code/current/title6a/chap14.pdf
- Early learning and inclusion: ed.gov/about/inits/ed/earlylearning/inclusion/index.html
- Considering LRE in placement decisions: parentcenterhub.org/placement-lre
- Benefits of Inclusive Education: kidstogether.org/inclusion/benefitsofinclusion.htm
- Why Inclusive Education: swiftschools.org/sites/default/files/Why-Inclusive-Education.pdf