

# What Is Inclusion?

Inclusion is the practice of educating all students together – students with disabilities and students without disabilities – side-by-side in the general education setting in their neighborhood school. It is based on the premise that students with disabilities can be full participants in their classrooms and in the local school community. Students with disabilities can receive specially designed instruction and supports in the general education setting and across the school environment with their same-age peers.

## Inclusion **IS**

- A civil right
- All students learning together regardless of labels
- An atmosphere that promotes a sense of belonging, equality, acceptance, and individual worth
- Collaborative, integrated services by education teams
- Supports and adaptations within the general education curriculum and settings
- Highly effective, research-based instruction and assessment

*In other words ... it's good teaching!*

## Inclusion **IS NOT**

- Educators working in isolation
- Grouping students by ability
- Scheduling students into general education classrooms without supports for students and teachers
- Watering down curricula
- Expecting all students to do the same thing, at the same time, in the same way

*We can't afford to lower our expectations and standards for students with disabilities!*

## Who Benefits from Inclusion?

*Students with disabilities will:*

- Improve social and communication skills
- Increase academic achievement and positive behavior
- Foster the development of relationships with peers without disabilities at school and in the community

*Educators will:*

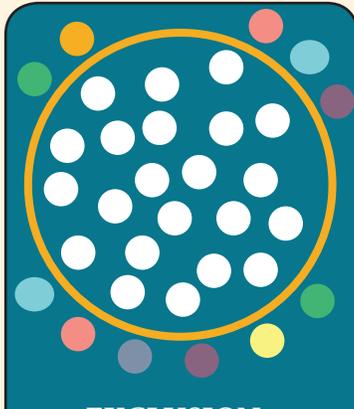
- Become more skilled in teaching all students
- Learn to share responsibilities for educating all students
- Develop more satisfying and collegial professional relationships

*Students without disabilities will:*

- Engage in academic tasks at a higher and deeper level
- Benefit from the strategies used to support students with disabilities
- Increase awareness and sensitivity to human needs, differences and diversity, and social justice



# Inclusion, Integration, Segregation, Exclusion



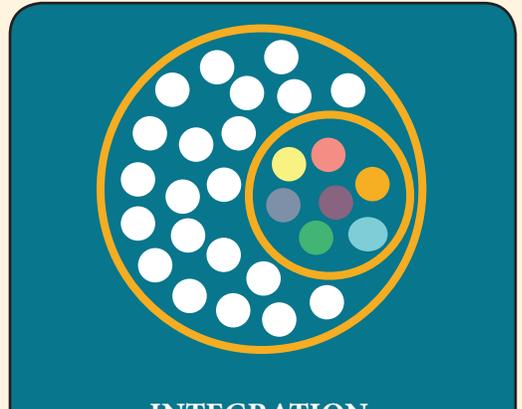
## EXCLUSION

**Exclusion** occurs when students are directly or indirectly prevented from or denied access to education in any form.



## SEGREGATION

**Segregation** occurs when the education of students with disabilities is provided in separate environments designed or used to respond to a particular or various impairments, in isolation from students without disabilities.



## INTEGRATION

**Integration** is a process of placing persons with disabilities in existing mainstream educational institutions, as long as the former can adjust to the standardized requirements of such institutions.



## INCLUSION

**Inclusion** involves a process of systemic reform embodying changes and modifications in content, teaching methods, approaches, structures and strategies in education to overcome barriers with a vision serving to provide all students of the relevant age range with an equitable and participatory learning experiences and environment that best corresponds to their requirements and preferences.

Placing students with disabilities within mainstream classes without accompanying structural changes to, for example, organisation, curriculum and teaching and learning strategies, do not constitute inclusion. Furthermore, integration does not automatically guarantee the transition from segregation to inclusion.

## The Importance of Collaboration

Inclusion requires collaboration between general and special education teachers, paraprofessionals, related service providers, and families. Teachers must work together and share responsibilities for ongoing assessment, instruction, and achievement of all students. Effective teams regularly consult, plan, and problem-solve to analyze the needs of their students. In inclusive schools, family members are viewed as partners in decision-making.

Figuring out how, when, and where to provide the right type and amount of support involves planning by teams that include general and special education teachers, administrators, and other key staff. Together, they must develop a school-wide schedule based on analysis of student needs rather than labels. By using a student-centered approach to scheduling, teams ensure that existing school staff and resources are aligned to meet the needs of all students and provide teachers with opportunities for collaboration.

For information about service delivery models and teacher certification requirements, please visit the Florida Department of Education's Web site at <http://www.fldoe.org/articulation/CCD/>. School leaders can support collaboration by defining and developing each teacher's role in the inclusive classroom. Effective leaders create a culture of trust by providing ongoing, team-focused learning opportunities that support best practices for inclusive education.

# What Does the Law Say?

Both Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (IDEA) provide guidance on how to educate students with disabilities. Neither law specifically mentions inclusion. Instead, the laws say students with disabilities should be placed in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) and should have access to general education curriculum and settings. Additionally, a recent Supreme Court ruling [Endrew F. v. Douglas County School District RE-1, 580 U.S.\_\_(2017)] has raised the standard for receiving a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) to say that an individual educational plan (IEP) should be “reasonably calculated to enable a child to make progress appropriate in light of the child’s circumstances.” This means that every child should have the chance to meet challenging objectives.

## Highlights from ESSA 2015

- All students are considered as general education students first.
- All students must be taught to high academic standards that will prepare them to succeed in college and careers.
- Students with disabilities are to be included in accountability measures and appropriate accommodations must be provided to improve the rates of inclusion of students with disabilities in regular assessments.
- Schools must address the needs of those at risk of not meeting the high state academic standards through implementation of evidence-based interventions, activities, and strategies.
- Schools use technology, consistent with the principles of universal design for learning, to support the learning needs of all students, including children with disabilities.

For more information about ESSA, please visit the Department of Education’s Web site:  
<https://www.ed.gov/essa>

## Highlights from IDEA 2004

- IDEA has a strong preference for educating students with disabilities in regular classes with appropriate aids and services.
- The general classroom must be the first placement considered by the IEP team.
- Students with disabilities should be removed from the regular educational environment only when the nature or severity of the disability of a child is such that education in regular classes, with the use of supplementary aids and services, cannot be achieved satisfactorily.
- IEP teams should plan for each child with a disability to participate with nondisabled children in extracurricular services and activities, including meals, recess periods, and any other school activity to the maximum extent appropriate to the needs of that child.

For more information about IDEA, please visit the Department of Education’s Web site:  
<http://idea.ed.gov/>

## Highlights from Florida Statutes [1003.57(1)(a) 2013]

- A school district shall use the term “inclusion” to mean that a student is receiving education in a general education regular class setting, reflecting natural proportions and age-appropriate heterogeneous groups in core academic and elective or special areas within the school community;
- A student with a disability is a valued member of the classroom and school community;
- The teachers and administrators support universal education and have knowledge and support available to enable them to effectively teach all children;
- A teacher is provided access to technical assistance in best practices, instructional methods, and supports tailored to the student’s needs based on current research.

For more information about Florida’s rules and regulations, please visit the Florida Department of Education’s website: <http://www.fldoe.org/>

## Accessing the General Education Curriculum

All students with disabilities must have access to the general education curriculum. In Florida, this means all students must receive instruction aligned with the Florida Standards and Next Generation Sunshine State Standards. Students with disabilities access the general education curriculum through:

- Use of Universal Design for Learning
- Differentiation of instructional methods
- Individualized accommodations and supports to enhance learning
- Participation in the Florida Standards Assessment (FSA), with accommodations, as designated by the IEP

A very small number of students with significant cognitive disabilities access the general education through Access Points that are aligned with the standards. This decision is made by the IEP team, and requires written consent from the student's parent(s). Access Points can be used in any setting. Students who use Access Points will access the standards through:

- Curricular modifications based upon Access Points and Florida Standards
- Participation in the Florida Standards Alternate Assessment (FSAA) aligned with Access Points and Florida Standards

Each student's IEP provides details about the specially designed instruction, supports, and services that the student receives and indicates goals and necessary accommodations or modifications.

## What's the Difference Between Accommodations and Modifications?

### Accommodations

- Are aligned with the Florida Standards and the Florida Standards Assessment
- Change how students access information and demonstrate performance including changes to presentation, response, setting or scheduling

### Modifications

- Are aligned with Florida Standards Access Points and the Florida Standards Alternate Assessment (FSAA)
- Change what students are expected to learn, including changes to content, requirements and expected level of mastery

## What Else Makes Inclusion Work?

- A plan for inclusion that allows for short- and long-term improvement efforts, based on the School's Best Practices for Inclusive Education (SBPIE) self-assessment priorities
- A school culture that values and embraces diversity
- Collaborative activities and planning between special educators and general educators
- Job-embedded professional learning opportunities related to inclusion and effective instruction
- Ongoing support from the principal and other administrators

## Some Instructional Practices that Support Inclusion:

- Differentiated instruction
- Collaborative teaching
- Flexible grouping
- Universal Design for Learning
- Multi-sensory instruction
- Assistive/instructional technology
- Tiered lessons
- Cooperative learning
- Formative assessment
- Accommodations and/or modifications
- Positive behavioral supports
- Scaffolding
- Visual supports
- Peer supports



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