

If your child has a 1:1 aide in a general classroom, s/he still may not be participating in the same educational activities as his/her classmates at all times.

Including Students With Disabilities

Students with disabilities are supposed to be included as much as possible within the regular education program of the local school. How can you tell if inclusion is a reality for your child? A good place to start is to have a look at what the law says.

Least Restrictive Environment LRE

In the past, children with disabilities were routinely educated separately from their typical peers. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) changed that practice with the LRE provision: Children with disabilities in public or private institutions must be educated with their non-disabled peers “to the maximum extent appropriate”.

Today, schools must strive to include all children in the general education program. A child with a disability is educated in a different setting only if the child cannot receive a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) in the general education environment with supports and services. Your child’s special education services and accommodations determine how much time s/he will be included with his/her typical peers.

The Continuum of Inclusion

Education placement is usually the last decision made when developing an Individualized Education Program (IEP). The IEP team, including you as parent/guardian, looks at the goals, services and supports in the IEP. The team then decides where your child should be educated. Your child may receive some specialized instruction in a separate classroom or office and some in the general classroom.

Keep in mind that placement means physically present. Being with an aide in the general classroom is less restrictive than receiving services in a separate location, but your child may not be participating in the same educational activities as his/her classmates at all times.



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Making Inclusion Work

Parents, teachers, students, administrators must work together to make inclusion a reality for all children to the extent possible.

Here are some things you and your school can do to make inclusion work:

- Make sure that all buildings, activities and programs are accessible to all students.
- Provide adapted curriculum materials, interpreters, trained staff, communication systems, and other accommodations to enable all students to have access to school programs.
- Improve access to education for all students by providing special services in regular classrooms.
- Provide opportunities for all students to develop good social skills (lunch bunch, buddy groups, etc.)
- Take advantage of and initiate community-based learning opportunities.

You can use your child's IEP to maximize his or her inclusion. Share your child's interests, abilities and strengths with the IEP team. List the goals you have for your child that can be accomplished in a regular classroom, in the neighborhood school, and in social situations involving students without disabilities.

Identify services and supports that s/he needs to achieve these goals in a regular education setting. Use phrases such as:

- "with typical students providing support"
- "with the help of a typical child"
or
- "in the presence of children without disabilities"

Keep track of how much time your child spends outside the classroom and ask if special instruction can be delivered in the regular education setting. Your child will benefit from being included

with typical peers, and they will benefit as well.

Resources

[Center for Diversity and Community Inclusion](#)

Located at University of Vermont, CDCI promotes opportunities for individuals with developmental disabilities
802-656-3131

[Inclusive Schools Network](#)

A web-based educational resource for families, schools, and communities that promotes inclusive educational practices.
281-440-4220

[Vermont Agency of Education](#)

Help with special education issues for schools and families.
802-479-1030

[Wrightslaw](#)

An online resource for special education issues.
877-529-4332