

If your child has a 1:1 aide in a general classroom, they still may not be participating in the same educational activities as their 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 they will be included with their typical peers.

The Continuum of Placements

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.

The continuum includes the different options where children can receive services. These options include placements such as:

- a general education class
- a special education class
- a special education school
- at home, or
- in a hospital or other public or private institution



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Making Inclusion Work

Parents, teachers, students, and 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 their 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 they need 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

[University of Vermont Center on Disability and Community Inclusion](#)

Promoting inclusion for people with disabilities, enhancing student learning and faculty scholarship since 1974.
802-656-4031

[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](#)

Special Education Technical Assistance.
802-828-1256

[Vermont Legal Aid: Disability Law Project](#)

The project provides counsel and advice, brief service, and full representation to eligible clients and their family members.
800-889-2047