



What is Inclusion?

Inclusion is the practice of educating all students together—students with disabilities and students without disabilities—regardless of their abilities or readiness. It is more than placing students with disabilities in a room with their peers without disabilities. With true inclusion, students with disabilities can access the general education curriculum, classrooms, and typical school activities. Rather than having the student go to a segregated setting for specialized instruction and support, the student receives these supports in the general education setting.

Inclusion IS

- 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

- Expecting all students to do the same thing, at the same time, in the same way
- Dumping students into general education classrooms without supports for students and teachers
- Educators working in isolation
- Students always grouped by ability
- Watering down curricula: Most students will take the FCAT and aim for a standard diploma

We can't afford to water down our curriculum and instruction!

Who Benefits from Inclusion?

For students with disabilities, inclusion will:

- Improve social and communication skills
- Increase academic achievement
- Allow participation in more school activities
- Foster the development of relationships with peers without disabilities

Students without disabilities will:

- Learn more from the strategies used to support students with disabilities
- Learn to understand, value, and advocate for people who have disabilities

Educators will:

Become more skilled in teaching **all** students
Learn to share responsibilities for educating **all** students



What Does the Law Say?

Both No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (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.

Highlights From NCLB

- All students are held to high standards.
- Emphasis is placed on implementing research-based, effective, educational programs and practices.
- All teachers must be highly qualified in the subject areas that they teach.
- Accountability measures increase for schools, districts, and states.
- All students with disabilities are included in accountability measures.

For more information about NCLB, please visit the Department of Education's Web site:
<http://www.ed.gov/nclb/landing.jhtml>

Highlights From IDEA

- 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.

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

Accessing the General Education Curriculum

Students with disabilities must have access to the general education curriculum. In Florida this means **all** students must receive instruction aligned with the Sunshine State Standards (SSS).

Students with disabilities access the general education curriculum through:

- Differentiated instructional methods
- Unique accommodations and supports to enhance learning and ensure participation in statewide assessment (FCAT)
- Curricular modifications based upon Access Points and SSS
- Alternate assessment aligned with Access Points and SSS

Each student's Individual Educational Plan (IEP) provides details about the supports and services that the student receives and indicates necessary accommodations or modifications.



What's the Difference Between Accommodations and Modifications?

Accommodations

- Change how students are taught and demonstrate what they have learned
- Allow students to work toward a standard diploma
- Are aligned with the Sunshine State Standards

Modifications

- Change what students are expected to learn and demonstrate
- Lead to a special diploma
- Are aligned with Sunshine State Standards Access Points and the Florida Alternate Assessment

The Importance of Collaboration

All 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.

Although there is no single "right" way to include students with disabilities, research shows that these students can be successful when two teachers combine their expertise and talents to support learning. However, 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. They also make sure that common planning time is built into the weekly schedule of collaborating teachers.



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/>

Although collaborative teaching is a big change for most teachers, school leaders can support new partnerships 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 inclusive educational practices.



What Else Makes Inclusion Work?

- Ongoing support from the principal and other administrators
- A school culture that values and embraces diversity
- A comprehensive plan for inclusion that allows for flexibility and continuous improvement
- Flexible approaches to teaching and learning
- Instruction and assessment adapted for different kinds of learners
- Collaborative, job-embedded professional learning opportunities related to inclusion and effective instruction

Mainstreaming vs Inclusion?

Old Beliefs: Mainstreaming

Students with disabilities performing at or near grade-level could learn in the general education classroom with minimal support. Students had to “earn” their way in. General and special education teachers engaged in few collaborative opportunities to support the needs of students with disabilities.

New Beliefs: Inclusion

Students with disabilities are not required to perform at a specific level of mastery before they can become full members of the general education classroom. General and special education teachers work together to adapt to and provide for the needs of all students.

Some Instructional Practices that Support Inclusion:

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



For More Information

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and visit our website at: www.FloridaInclusionNetwork.com