

# FACT.Folio

Fostering Achievement and Community Together

Family F.A.C.T. Folio

Volume Four, Spring 2008

Brought to you by the Florida Inclusion Network

## ***Inclusive Classrooms — Is Your Child IN or WITH?***

***Children with disabilities have a right to a public education and to be part of the general education classroom.***

The benefits of inclusion are clear. We know that being included means students with disabilities spend more time on academics and achieve more. They participate in non-academic activities and develop broader social relationships when they have opportunities to interact with peers without disabilities. Students *without* disabilities also benefit from the variety of instructional strategies and accommodations used by teachers. They learn to help and value each other.

But just being **IN** the general education classroom is not inclusion. Inclusion only works when your child is learning and applying meaningful content and meeting IEP goals **WITH** same-age classmates without disabilities.

*He looked at the Sea World map and said "I don't think we've covered this area, Mom." I know they're doing map skills at school, but I didn't expect him to apply them the way he did!*

Quote from a parent with a child with a disability.



**When you think about inclusion for your child, here are some questions to ask:**

- ❖ Does your child regularly work alongside students without disabilities?
- ❖ Does the general education teacher interact with and know your child well?
- ❖ Does your child receive supports in a way that doesn't call attention to his or her disability?
- ❖ Does your child have friends in and out of the classroom?

***What other things are important for you to know about your child's inclusive classroom?***

### ***Our Mission Statement***

The Florida Inclusion Network provides learning opportunities, consultation, information and support to educators, families, and community members, resulting in the inclusion of all students.

Look  
inside for  
more ways  
to tell if your  
child's classroom  
is really inclusive!



# Even young children understand what makes a classroom inclusive.

Take a look at this example from Calusa Elementary School in Dade County, Florida:



## How can you tell if inclusion is working for your child?

- When you visit the classroom, you see your child participate in learning activities with same-age peers that do not have disabilities.
- When you attend parent-teacher conferences, the general education teacher seems to know your child well and has high expectations.
- When you visit the classroom, you see your child's classmates helping each other in academic and other activities.
- Your child uses technology to support learning and communicating with classmates who do not have disabilities.
- Your child brings home a variety of work that gives him or her a chance to demonstrate strengths and interests.
- Your child is usually able to do homework assignments independently.
- Your child's seat in the classroom does not always separate him or her from peers without disabilities.
- Your child's daily schedule is mostly in the general education classroom.

*While parents want their children to achieve academically, they care as much, sometimes more, about whether their child is happy in school and feels part of the group.*

---

## ***Here are some signs of a healthy emotional climate for your child:***

- Your child is not segregated from others during classroom activities.
- The classroom is safe for you child to move about.
- Your child participates in extracurricular activities, such as sports or clubs, with students who do not have disabilities.
- You have heard or seen evidence of the teacher's commitments to diversity of all kinds.
- Your child likes going to school.
- The teacher celebrates the accomplishments of all students throughout the year.
- Your child speaks positively about other students in the class.
- Your child is greeted by other students in his or her classes.

Although your child's classroom may not have all of these inclusive qualities, the checklists above can help you start a conversation about what you'd like to see happen for your child.

Sharing your thoughts and wishes with teachers can often help them picture ways to increase participation and learning for your child.

There are many other resources available for you to share with you child's teachers. Check out the resources on the next page for more information.

The important thing to remember is that the things you see happening in inclusive classrooms can benefits **ALL** students, not just your child!



# What can you do to promote effective inclusive practices in your child's classroom?

**A**sk your child's teacher what you can do at home to make it easier for your child to be included, such as helping with special homework projects or practicing vocabulary and communication skills.

**S**tay on top of what your child is learning at school. Ask your child's teacher to share the results of his or her weekly progress.

**R**ead stories to your child about friendship and belonging. Talk about how to make friends at school. Ask your child to draw a picture or write about the meaning of friendship.

- How do friends help each other?
- What are some things friends do together?
- How can you make new friends?

**D**ownload a copy of Making Friends: Ten Tips to Help Your Child Make Friends. Just visit our Web site, FIN Products section, or contact your local FIN Facilitator.

**B**e a school citizen. Participate in parent activities, such as the Parent Teacher Association. Volunteer for field trips and other activities where parents are needed.

**T**hank teachers for efforts to include your child. Send thank you notes. Celebrate successes, no matter how small. Let the principal, superintendent, and school board members know how teachers are helping include your child.

**Check out the following Web sites for more ideas to support inclusion for your child:**

[http://www.dvusd.rog/assets/pdfs/department\\_education/Disability\\_Awareness.pdf](http://www.dvusd.rog/assets/pdfs/department_education/Disability_Awareness.pdf)

[www.inclusiveschools.org](http://www.inclusiveschools.org)

[www.projectparticipate.org](http://www.projectparticipate.org)

[www.tash.org](http://www.tash.org)

[www.nichcy.org](http://www.nichcy.org)

<http://www.iod.unh.edu/index.html>



**Just visit our Web site and click on "Meet the FINs": [www.FloridaInclusionNetwork.com](http://www.FloridaInclusionNetwork.com)**