



**FSU Center for Prevention
& Early Intervention Policy**

What is Inclusion?

Including School-Age Students with Developmental Disabilities in the Regular Education Setting

Inclusion is the full acceptance of all students and leads to a sense of belonging within the classroom community.

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DEFINITION

While there is no legal definition of inclusion or inclusive education, many organizations and advocacy groups have developed their own definitions.

Inclusive education, according to its most basic definition, means that students with disabilities are supported in chronologically age-appropriate general education classes in their home schools and receive the specialized instruction delineated by their individualized education programs (IEP's) within the context of the core curriculum and general class activities.

Inclusion is an effort to make sure students with disabilities go to school along with their friends and neighbors while also receiving whatever, "specially designed instruction and support" they need to achieve high standards and succeed as learners.

Inclusion is not the same as *mainstreaming* or *integration*. Mainstreaming attempts to move students from special education classrooms to regular education classrooms only in situations where they are able to keep up with their typically developing peers without specially designed instruction or support. Integration provides only "part-time" inclusion, which prevents the students from becoming full members of the classroom community.

The National Center on Educational Restructuring and Inclusion developed the following working definition of inclusive education:

"Providing to all students, including those with significant disabilities, equitable opportunities to receive effective educational services, with the needed supplementary aids and support services, in age appropriate classrooms in their neighborhood schools, in order to prepare students for productive lives as full members of society."



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Benefits of Inclusion

Including School-Age Students with Developmental Disabilities in the Regular Education Setting

Inclusive education provides benefits for all students and school personnel and serves as an exemplar for an inclusive society.

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RESEARCH

In a review of research on inclusion for both elementary and secondary schools, students' academic performance was found equal to or better in inclusive settings for general education students, even those considered to be high achievers.

In a three-year study of inclusive programming at the elementary level, in which a co-teaching model was implemented, both students with disabilities and low-achieving general education students experienced improvements in social skills and all students experienced increases in self-esteem related to their abilities and accomplishments.

Students with disabilities experience increased self-esteem by the mere fact they are attending classes in a regular education setting rather than in a special education setting.

In Florida, Hernando and Sumter Counties' District ESE personnel report that students who have transitioned to middle schools after participating in inclusive settings and curriculum from specific feeder elementary schools are scoring higher on the FCAT. In addition, student gains in self-esteem, desirable behavior, attendance, grades, and test scores have been noted for students with and without disabilities in inclusive classrooms. Finally, a greater number of students are better prepared to transition from elementary to secondary levels after participating in inclusive elementary programs.

Three concerns typically identified when considering outcomes for students without disabilities are whether or not inclusion will result in reduced academic outcomes, less teacher time and attention, or learned "undesirable" behaviors from student with disabilities. Studies using quasi-experimental designs to compare outcomes of students with and without disabilities in inclusive classrooms found that none of the concerns were realized.

Students without disabilities experience growth in social cognition and gain a greater understanding and acceptance of students with disabilities and of diversity in general when they experience inclusive programming. Students without disabilities also experience increased self-esteem and overall improvement in their own self-concept. Parents of students without disabilities confirmed the findings of overall improved outcomes as a result of the inclusion of students with severe disabilities within the regular education classroom.

Inclusion White Paper

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Recommended Practices

Including School-Age Students with Developmental Disabilities in the Regular Education Setting

Successful inclusion requires a shift in attitudes and beliefs of all school personnel and parents such that all involved truly believe that students with disabilities can succeed in the regular education environment.

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DEFINITION / RESEARCH

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Inclusive schools:

- embrace diversity,
- provide access to knowledge, skills, and information to all students,
- tailor learning to meet individual needs,
- encourage co-teaching and collaboration among general and special educators,
- collaborate with families and community members,
- think outside the box in terms of school structure and finance,
- maintain high expectations of all students,
- engage in continuous improvement, and
- promote and support inclusive communities.

The University of Minnesota and the Council for Exceptional Children identified key characteristics related to achieving positive learning outcomes for students with disabilities. They include a clear and common vision, active leadership, high expectations of all students, stakeholder involvement in school leadership, innovative practices, and professional development activities among staff, and the development of an inclusive and collaborative community of learning.

The use of a collaborative or co-teaching model, in which two to three adults share the responsibility of meeting the diverse needs of all students, results in better academic and social outcomes for those students.

Adequate and appropriate resources, support for both students and teachers, teacher training and planning time, and a commitment to a vision of success for all students is vital to the success of inclusive programming.

According to the *National Study of Inclusive Education*, students in cooperatively taught inclusive classes were on-task more often, had more opportunities for one-on-one instruction, and were engaged in more individual work.

The use of cooperative learning strategies results in, for students with and without disabilities, increased social skills, greater communication skills, the development of problem-solving skills, and enhanced learning.



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Laws Related to Inclusion

Including School-Age Students with Developmental Disabilities in the Regular Education Setting

Inclusive education provides benefits for all students and school personnel and serves as an exemplar for an inclusive society; one in which students with disabilities do not have to prove their ability and readiness to be included.

REFERENCES

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DEFINITION / RESEARCH

The U.S. Congress enacted the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 to ensure that all children with disabilities had access to public education. Provisions of this Act provided that all children with disabilities have equal access to a free and appropriate education, a unique program designed for these students in the least restrictive environment (LRE), and ensured protection of the rights of children and families.

Although the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 mandated the LRE, implementation in the schools was inconsistent. During the next 10 years, several lawsuits were brought to the federal courts by parents to obtain integration of their disabled children into a regular school environment. Students with disabilities were still not placed in the same classroom, but it was thought that their closer proximity to children without disabilities would help with the integration. At this point, the students with disabilities only participated in non-academic classes such as lunch and recess.

In *Roncker v. Walters* (1983), the Sixth Circuit upheld the right of a student with mental retardation to remain in a special program in the regular public school rather than be sent to a "handicapped only" school. The Court developed a feasibility test to provide supplemental aids and services into the regular classroom

The first "full inclusion" case was brought to the courts in 1989. In *Daniel R. R. v State Board of Education El Paso Independent School District* the 5th Circuit Court was to determine if the district was in compliance with the mainstreaming requirement when determining the appropriate placement of a 6-year-old boy with Down syndrome.

The Court abandoned the *Roncker* test and developed a two-question test to determine if the school district was in compliance with the mainstreaming requirement. The first question sought to answer whether the regular education classroom could satisfactorily provide the use of supplemental aids and services and the second question sought to determine if the child had been mainstreamed to the maximum extent possible. The court determined that even with the use of supplementary aids and services could not be achieved satisfactorily, and therefore Daniel should be placed in a special education environment. Most courts now apply either the *Roncker* or the *Daniel R. R.* tests as precedent for cases involving inclusion.



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ESE Enrollment

Including School-Age Students with Developmental Disabilities in the Regular Education Setting

The total number of students in all of Florida's 67 school districts continues to increase. The percent increase from fall of 1997 to fall 2001 is approximately 9 percent. Dade County has the highest number of students enrolled while Lafayette County has the lowest. The number of students in ESE programs also continues to increase. From school year 1997-98 to 2001-02 there has been an approximate increase of 16% of students enrolled in ESE programs.

	Total number of school-age students	Total number of school-age students with developmental disabilities
Elementary (K-5)	1,141,136 ¹	178,894 ²
Middle (6-8)	599,259 ¹	84,802 ²
High (9-12)	702,887 ¹	77,279 ²
Total	2,443,282¹	340,975²
White Non-Hispanic (K-12)	1,255,476 ³	269,943 ¹
Black Non-Hispanic (K-12)	599,039 ³	119,448 ¹
Hispanic (K-12)	493,608 ³	79,839 ¹
Asian/Pacific Islander (K-12)	46,954 ³	7,407 ¹
American Indian/Alaskan Native (K-12)	6,736 ³	1,412 ¹
Multiracial (K-12)	41,469 ³	7,420 ¹

1. Data from the Florida Department of Education, Education Information & Accountability Services, Fall 2001 (Data also includes student enrollment at the Dozier School, the Florida School for the Deaf and Blind, and the University of Florida Lab School).
2. Data from the Florida Department of Education, Florida School Indicators Report, Year 2000-2001.
3. Number of students by race/ethnicity for K-12 was calculated by subtracting the number of PK students from the total i.e., PK-12. The number of PK students was determined by multiplying the average number of students by race/ethnicity for PK-12 by a weighting factor that accounts for the low number of PK students enrolled compared to the other grades. The weighting factor was determined by dividing the total number of PK students for all races (56,879) by the theoretical amount of PK students that would be enrolled if every graduating class had the same number of students i.e., taking an average of the total number of students for PK-12 (2,500,161/14). Data from the Florida Department of Education, Education Information & Accountability Services, Fall 2001 (Data also includes student enrollment at the Dozier School, the Florida School for the Deaf and Blind, and the University of Florida Lab School).

Educational Environment of Students with Disabilities Ages 6-21			
1999-2000 School Year		2001-2002 School Year	
Total percent of students with disabilities who spend more than 80% of their week in segregated classrooms	51%	Total percent of students with disabilities who spend more than 80% of their week in segregated classrooms	52%
Total percent of students with disabilities who spend more than 80% of their week in regular classrooms	49%	Total percent of students with disabilities who spend more than 80% of their week in regular classrooms	48%

Data from Florida Department of Education, Division of Public Schools and Community Education, Bureau of Instructional Support and Community Services