

## Inclusion Facts vs Myths

Inclusion is part of a much larger picture than just placement in the regular class within school. It is being included in life and participating using one's abilities in day-to-day activities as a member of the community. It is being a part of what everyone else is, and being welcomed and embraced as a member who belongs. Inclusion can occur in schools, churches, playgrounds, work, and in recreation. —[Kids Together, Inc.](#)

Inclusion may not be defined in special education law, but State and Federal resources *do* support inclusion. The purpose of special education is to ensure that all children who meet the [eligibility requirements for special education](#) services have access to a [free appropriate public education](#) that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living. Special education services are to be provided at no cost to the parents and must be provided in the [least restrictive environment](#).

The regular classroom in the school where the student would attend if not disabled should be the first [placement option](#) considered for each student before a more restrictive placement is considered. Research shows that inclusive classrooms benefit *all students*, as they make gains across all areas of development, have higher level social skills, and improved peer relationships. Inclusive classrooms tend to be of higher quality in general and benefit educators and systems by providing educators with an increased ability to identify barriers and greater access to professional development/early intervention practitioners, special education specialists, therapists and other colleagues who bring fresh perspectives and innovative teaching techniques. If you do not agree with your child's placement you have [dispute options](#) available to you.

A student's placement must be discussed annually. When the [Individualized Education Program \(IEP\)](#) team decides where a child will be educated, they must ask what can be provided so the child can stay in the regular education classroom. They must consider what supplementary aids and services (extra supports) will allow the child to be placed in a regular classroom environment. Examples might include accommodations, Assistive Technology, modifications to the curriculum, and/or special behavior strategies.

Students with disabilities who receive special education services often need [accommodations](#) in their educational program. Accommodations, including [curriculum adaptations](#), help a student accomplish IEP goals, participate and make progress in the general curriculum, participate and be educated with students with and without disabilities, and participate in extracurricular activities.

Accommodations often coincide with [Assistive Technology \(AT\)](#), which is any kind of technology that can be used to enhance the independence of a person with a disability. AT could be a pencil grip, a communication device, a calculator, a wheelchair, or text-to-speech services. AT helps to level the playing field by providing students with a way to fully engage in life's activities. AT devices are tools to help overcome challenges and enable people living with disabilities to enhance their quality of life and lead more independent lives.

With accommodations, students learn the same grade specific content, but their individual needs are accommodated, so *how* the student learns is changed. With [modifications](#), the grade specific content itself is modified, so *what* the student learns is changed. Modifications change what is learned and therefore can change the content of the grade specific curriculum. Examples of modifications include a student completing work on part of an academic standard or a student completing an alternate assignment that is more easily achievable. Students who receive special education services can work alongside their same age peers receiving accommodations and/or modifications to meet their individual needs.

All [behavior](#) happens for a reason. For some individuals with disabilities, behavior may be the only way they have to communicate a need or frustration. When challenging behavior interferes with the learning process, it must be addressed. Merely interrupting these behaviors is not enough. If a student's behavior impedes their learning or the learning of others, the IEP team must consider the use of positive [behavioral interventions and supports](#), and other strategies to address the behavior. Any needed interventions should be documented in the IEP.

If there is a pattern of behavior, families can request a [Functional Behavioral Assessment \(FBA\)](#), which is a process for collecting information to help understand why problem behaviors occur. [Using questions to find answers](#) can help families support the school team as they work together to discover the cause of the behavior. The data will help identify ways to address the behaviors. The FBA is then used to develop a [Behavior Intervention Plan \(BIP\)](#). The BIP must be based on the results of the FBA and should include a description of the problem behavior, the team's best-guesses as to why the problem behavior occurs, and an explanation of intervention strategies that include positive behavioral interventions & supports and services to address the behavior. You may request an FBA and BIP at any time if your child's problem behaviors are becoming worse, or when the team cannot explain to you why the problem behaviors occur.