



**The Inclusive Classroom
What Does it Look Like?**

Parent Toolkit



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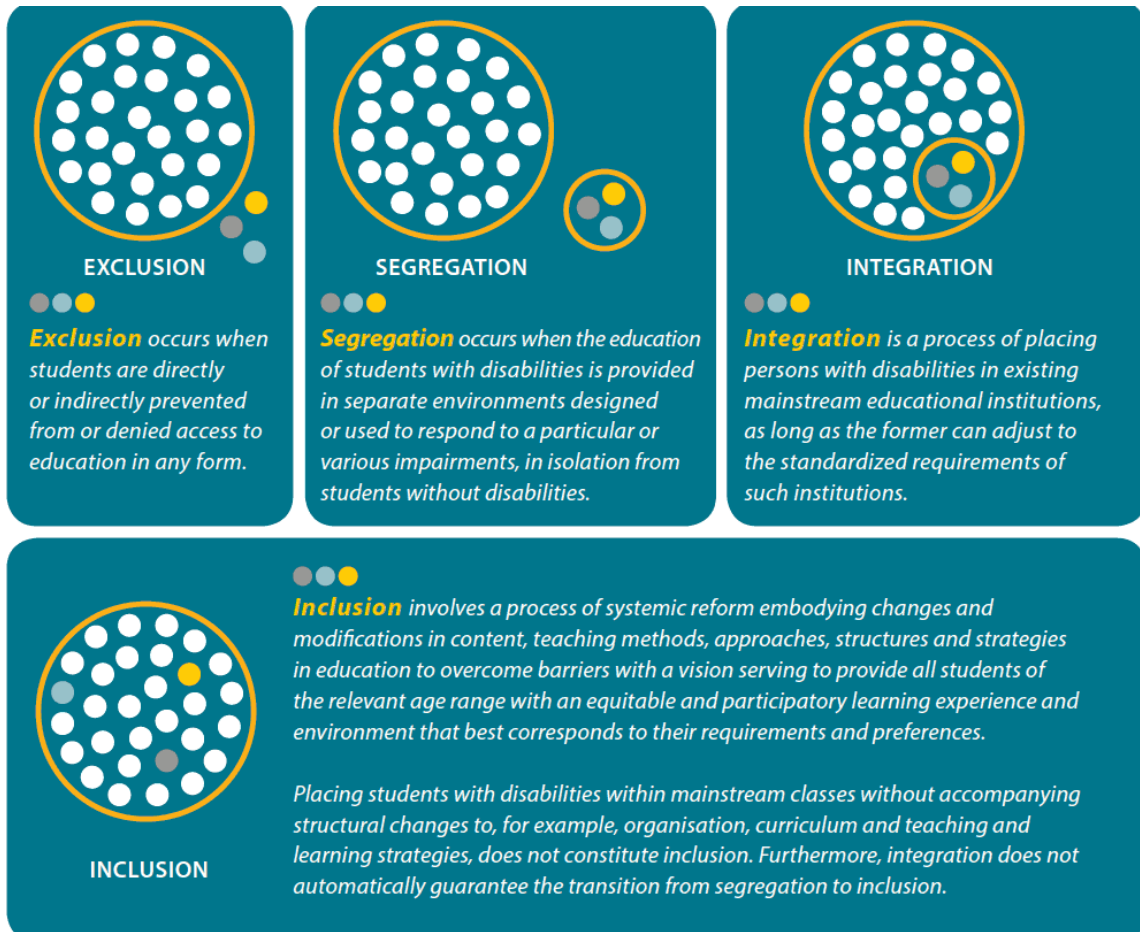


What does an inclusive classroom look like?

Inclusive education is when all students, regardless of any challenges they may have, are placed in age-appropriate general education classes in their own neighborhood schools to receive high-quality instruction, interventions, and supports that enable them to meet success in the core curriculum (Bui et al., 2010).

Schools and classrooms that embrace inclusion operate on the premise that all students, with or without disabilities, can fully participate in the classroom and the local school community. It involves a creative approach to making schools welcoming to all children. This may require teachers to adapt their teaching methods or modify lesson plans to ensure that every child can participate. It's all about designing an environment that fosters learning for all.

To understand it better, it's important to differentiate inclusive education from exclusion, segregation, and integration. Please refer to the graphic below.



(Hehir et al., 2016)

Research has demonstrated that students, both with and without disabilities, who receive education in fully inclusive settings perform better academically and socially than those who are educated in segregated or partially segregated environments like "education support units" or "resource classrooms." Despite the lack of evidence supporting such practices, segregated education unfortunately continues to be suggested as a viable option for families and educators.

Inclusive education is for all children, not just some. It is important to understand that being included in regular schools and classrooms is not something a child must be "ready" for or earn through certain qualifications. Any child, at any time, is ready to participate in inclusive education and should not be excluded based on their abilities or disabilities.

Questions to Ask

Here are some questions to ask yourself about your own school's effectiveness in providing inclusive, meaningful learning experiences for all students, both with and without disabilities:



In The Classroom

- Are all students sitting together?
- Are any particular students isolated or alone with an adult?
- Are all students asked for responses and encouraged to participate in class activities?
- Are there a variety of ways for students to participate in activities?
- Is there evidence of active learning?
- Are all students working in the same curriculum at varying levels of complexity?
- Are students supporting each other?
- Does each member of the teaching team express ownership for all students?

In the School Building

- Do all students feel they are part of a community?
- Are related services integrated into regular activities throughout the school day?
- Are all students actively encouraged to be part of and actually engaged in extracurriculars and social events at school?
- Does every student have opportunities to share gifts, talents, passions?
- Do IEP meetings actively involve students and include time to reflect on student success while incorporating student interest and strengths into the present level and goals?

In the School District

- Do the district's building principals understand and support inclusive principles?
- Do school leaders provide the resources and flexibility necessary to support inclusive practices?
- Do school leaders see how inclusive practices fit into overall school improvement and school redesign efforts?

Adapted from "Signs of an Inclusive School: A Parent's Perspective on the Meaning and Value of Authentic Inclusion."



Inclusive Education Checklist for Parents

The School

- Child attends their neighborhood schools (the schools they would attend if they did not have a disability).
- Child spends the majority of the day in the general education classroom.
- Child uses the same school spaces (e.g., lockers, entrances) as those without disabilities.
- Child has the same school day (length of day, time of arrival and departure) as those without disabilities.
- Child uses the same transportation as students without disabilities.

The Classroom

- Child's desk is included with the other groups of desks in the classroom.
- Child has access to and is included in classroom lessons and activities that are adapted or modified to meet his/her special needs.
- Child attends outside activities with the class, including assemblies, field trips, enrichment classes, and recess.
- Curricular and extracurricular activities encourage interactions between peers with and without disabilities.
- Child is an independent, valued, and respected classroom member.
- The child's paraprofessional facilitates access to the curriculum and classroom activities.
- The paraprofessional encourages child to complete work as independently as possible, while providing support when needed.
- Child receives specialist support (therapy, speech, and language) with minimal disruption to the class routine and program.
- Child can name classmates and has many common classroom experiences.
- Multisensory instructional materials are in use.
- Technology is in use (White boards, text-to-speech, speech-to-text, augmentative devices, assistive tech devices).
- A variety of seating accommodations are available.



- A variety of fidgets and manipulatives are available for use.
- Peer-to-peer groups are employed.
- Books about inclusion are available and in use.
- Affirming bulletin board messages are displayed with minimal clashing colors.

The Educators

- The teacher can identify your child's strengths and areas for improvement.
- Teachers use language that reflects the philosophy of inclusive education (e.g., our students versus your students or my students)
- Special and general educators collaborate to ensure the participation of all in general education classrooms.
- Special and general educators collaborate to address individualized education program (IEP) objectives of students with disabilities.
- Special and general educators collaborate to ensure the adaptation of the core curriculum for diverse learners.
- Special and general educators collaborate to ensure effective instructional strategies (e.g., active learning) are implemented to support diverse learners.
- Teachers promote self-determination (e.g., have students run their IEP meetings).
- Special educators, general educators, paraprofessionals, and related services professionals co-plan and co-teach when possible.

The Comfortable Classroom Checklist

Students on the spectrum will be the most prepared to learn in places where they can relax, focus, and feel secure. In order to create environments most conducive to learning for students with autism and their peers without disabilities, teachers may need to consider the sounds, smells, lighting, temperature, and seating options in the classrooms.

Student's name: _____

SOUNDS

This student needs the following:

- A desk away from noisy spaces
- A classroom with "reduced noise adaptations" (e.g., tennis balls on bottoms of chairs): _____
- Adaptations for noisy classroom rituals and/or routines (e.g., needs peers to "clap" using American Sign Language): _____
- To be verbally warned about upcoming loud noises
- To be excused from particularly noisy lessons (e.g., certain science experiments)
- Use of earplugs or headphones at certain times of the day:

- Independent work
- Group work/active learning
- Transitions
- Other
- Music/iPod for some activities: _____
- Independent work
- Group work/active learning
- Transitions
- Other

SMELLS

This student needs the following:

- Staff to limit use of scented personal care products
- A desk away from any strong smells in the classroom (e.g., away from the class pet, away from chemicals in the science room)
- To sit near the door of certain classrooms (e.g., art, family and consumer education): _____
- Access to a small personal fan
- Scent-related objects, materials, and/or items that help to calm, energize, or comfort the individual (e.g., scented oil or paper, lotion): _____
- Materials (e.g., markers, erasers) that are unscented

LIGHTING

This student needs the following:

- Opportunities to request seating in a darker part of the room
- A desk as far away from fluorescent lighting as possible

- A classroom that has incandescent instead of fluorescent bulbs or use of a lamp with an incandescent bulb
- A classroom that has and can use natural light as much as possible
- A classroom with upward-projecting rather than downward-projecting lighting
- Use of sunglasses at certain times of the day
- Use of a baseball cap or visor at certain times of the day
- Colored overlays or nonwhite paper (to avoid glare under fluorescent lights)
- Use of headphones or ear plugs (to avoid sound of fluorescent lights)

TEMPERATURE

This student needs the following:

- To keep a bottle of ice water at his desk
- To use a personal fan
- To sit near/away from the registers
- To sit near/away from the windows
- To keep a sweatshirt/hoodie at his desk

SEATING

This student needs the following:

- Option to sit on the floor at times
- Option to stand at times (behind a lectern if needed)
- Option to pace in a designated part of the room at times
- Seat cushion or balance cushion on his desk chair
- Fidget objects in or on his or her desk (e.g., koosh ball, paper clips, drinking straw)
- Study carrel to sit behind
- Seating options that may include the following:
 - Rocking chair
 - Beanbag chair
 - Lawn chair
 - Reading pillow (cushions with arms that prop the user upright)
 - Floor/exercise mats
 - Floor pillows
 - Couch or loveseat or large upholstered footstool (if available)
 - Exercise ball
 - Other _____



Articles

The Five Common Myths About Inclusive Education

This article dispels several common myths about inclusive education for students with disabilities.

<https://www.rand.org/blog/2020/06/the-five-common-myths-about-inclusive-education.html>

Quality Indicators for Effective Inclusive Education Guidebook

<http://inclusionworks.org/sites/default/files/QualityIndicatorsGuidebook.pdf>

Signs of an Inclusive School: A Parent's Perspective on the Meaning and Value of Authentic Inclusion

<https://includingsamuel.com/file/84/download?token=39EqFVA9>

5 Effective Teaching Practices for Students in Inclusive Classrooms

<https://www.thinkinclusive.us/post/5-effective-teaching-practices-for-students-in-inclusive-classrooms>

Co-Teaching: What do general educators and special educators bring to the table?

<http://archive.brookespublishing.com/author-interviews/potts-71691-interview.htm>

Supporting Students with Autism in an Inclusive Classroom – Paula Kluth's Top 10 Tips for Teachers

https://brookespublishing.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/kluths_top_ten_tips.pdf

7-Step Process for Implementing Inclusive School Reform

Includes teacher feedback forms and Q&A

<https://brookespublishing.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/causton-principals-handbook-1.pdf>

Videos



Including Samuel

Before his son Samuel was diagnosed with cerebral palsy, photojournalist Dan Habib rarely thought about the inclusion of people with disabilities. Now he thinks about inclusion every day. Shot and produced over four years, Habib's award-winning documentary film, "Including Samuel," chronicles the Habib family's efforts to include Samuel in every facet of their lives.

<https://includingsamuel.com/> &

<https://www.amazon.com/Including-Samuel-Dan-Habib/dp/B0052WC1W6>



Ruby's Rainbow: Ruby's Story of Inclusion

Liz Plachta, Ruby's mother shares that she wanted to share this series in the hopes that "this can be used as tool for both parents and educators alike to see the benefits of inclusion and having different learning styles and people of all abilities in the classroom."

<https://www.youtube.com/@RubysRainbow/search?query=inclusion>



SWIFT Domains and Features at Henderson School

Schoolwide Integrated Framework for Transformation (SWIFT) is a national K-8 center providing academic and behavioral support to promote the learning and academic achievement of all students, including those with the most extensive needs.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NRR67_osT-Q



Checklist of Sample Supplemental Supports, Aids, and Services

Directions: When considering the need for personalized supports, aids, or services for a student, use this checklist to help identify which supports will be the least intrusive, only as special as necessary, and the most natural to the context of the classroom.

Environmental

- Preferential seating
- Planned seating
 - Bus ◦ Classroom ◦ Lunchroom ◦ Auditorium ◦ Other
- Alter physical room arrangement (Specify: _____)
- Use study carrels or quiet areas
- Reduce/minimize distractions
 - Visual ◦ Spatial ◦ Auditory ◦ Movement
- Teach positive rules for use of space

Pacing of Instruction

- Extended time requirements
- Vary activity often
- Allow breaks
- Omit assignments requiring copying in timed situations
- Send additional copy of the text home for summer preview
- Provide home set of materials for preview or review

Presentation of Subject Matter

- Teach to the student's learning style/strength intelligences
 - Verbal/Linguistic ◦ Logical/Mathematical ◦ Visual/Spatial ◦ Naturalist
 - Bodily/Kinesthetic ◦ Musical ◦ Interpersonal ◦ Intrapersonal
- Use active, experiential learning
- Use specialized curriculum
- Record class lectures and discussions to replay later
- Use American Sign Language and/or total communication
- Provide prewritten notes, an outline, or an organizer (e.g., mind map)



- Provide a copy of classmate's notes (e.g., use NCR paper, photocopy)
- Use functional and meaningful application of academic skills
- Present demonstrations and models
- Use manipulatives and real objects in mathematics
- Highlight critical information or main ideas
- Preteach vocabulary
- Make and use vocabulary files or provide vocabulary list
- Reduce the language level of the reading assignment
- Use facilitated communication
- Use visual organizers/sequences
- Use paired reading/writing
- Reduce seat time in class or activities
- Use diaries or learning logs
- Reword/rephrase instructions and questions
- Preview and review major concepts in primary language

Materials

- Limit amount of material on page
- Record texts and other class materials
- Use study guides and advanced organizers
- Use supplementary materials
- Provide note-taking assistance
- Copy class notes
- Scan tests and class notes into computer
- Use large print
- Use Braille material
- Use communication book or board
- Provide assistive technology and software (e.g., Intelli-Talk)

Specialized equipment or Procedure

- | | |
|------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Wheelchair | <input type="checkbox"/> Walker |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Standing Board | <input type="checkbox"/> Positioning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Computer | <input type="checkbox"/> Computer software |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Electronic typewriter | <input type="checkbox"/> Video |



- Modified Keyboard
- Switches
- Catheterization
- Braces
- Customized mealtime utensils, plates, cups, and other materials
- Voice Synthesizer
- Augmentative communication device
- Suctioning
- Restroom Equipment

Assignment Modification

- Give directions in small, distinct steps (written/picture/verbal)
- Use written backup for oral directions
- Use pictures as supplement to oral directions
- Lower difficulty level
- Raise difficulty level
- Shorten assignments
- Reduce paper-and-pencil tasks
- Read or record directions to the student(s)
- Give extra cues or prompts
- Allow student to record or type assignments
- Adapt worksheets and packets
- Use compensatory procedures by providing alternate assignments when demands of class conflict with student capabilities
- Ignore spelling errors/sloppy work
- Ignore penmanship

Self-Management/Follow-Through

- Provide pictorial or written daily or weekly schedule
- Provide student calendars
- Check often for understanding/review
- Request parent reinforcement
- Have student repeat directions
- Teach study skills
- Use binders to organize material
- Design/write/use long-term assignments timelines
- Review and practice real situations
- Plan for generalization by teaching skill in several environments

Testing Adaptations

- Provide oral instructions and/or read test questions
- Use pictorial instructions/questions
- Read test to student
- Preview language of test questions
- Ask questions that have applications in real setting
- Administer test individually
- Use short answer
- Use multiple choice
- Shorten length
- Extend time frame
- Use open-note/open-book tests
- Modify format to reduce visual complexity or confusion

Social Interaction Support

- Use natural peer supports and multiple, rotating peers
- Use peer advocacy
- Use cooperative learning group
- Institute peer tutoring
- Structure opportunities for social interaction (e.g., Circle of Friends)
- Focus on social process rather than end product
- Structure shared experiences in school and extracurricular activities
- Teach friendship, sharing, and negotiation skills to classmates
- Teach social communication skills
 - Greetings ◦ Conversation ◦ Turn Taking ◦ Sharing ◦ Negotiation
 - Other _____



Level of Staff Support (consider after considering previous categories)

- Consultation
- Stop-in support
- Team teaching (parallel, supportive, complementary, or co-teaching)
- Daily in-class staff support
- Total staff support (staff are in close proximity)
- One-on-one assistance
- Specialized personnel support (If indicated, identify time needed)
- Instructional Support Assistant
- Health care assistant
- Behavior assistant
- Signing assistant
- Nursing
- Occupational therapy
- Physical therapy
- Speech and language therapist
- Augmentative communication specialist
- Transportation
- Counseling
- Adaptive physical education
- Transition planning
- Orientation/mobility
- Career counseling

SUPPORT	TIME NEEDED



Get Help from IncludeNJ

For more information please contact us.

Join our organization and collaborate with others with similar experiences to support inclusive education.



@includenj



@include_nj



@includenj

includenj.org