

WHAT IS INCLUSION?



INCLUSION MEANS:

- **Offering** the same opportunities for people with and without disabilities
- **Welcoming** everyone
- **Building** a community where everyone feels respected and valued
- **Emphasizing** cooperation
- **Seeking** to understand, celebrate and support everyone's differences
- **Presuming** everyone's competence
- **Ensuring** a safe and socially comfortable environment for all
- **Teaching** that all people deserve respect, understanding and dignity



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Resources for inclusion

[www.includingsamuel.com/
resources](http://www.includingsamuel.com/resources)

- **Reaching** out to people who are excluded or marginalized
- **Honoring** the intrinsic value of each person's life
- **Providing** training and support so that everyone can feel successful

In schools: Inclusion means that students with disabilities are educated full-time in age-appropriate general education classrooms in their neighborhood schools with support provided to enable students, teachers and the entire school community to succeed.

In youth-serving organizations (like the Boy/Girl Scouts, Boys & Girls Clubs, camps, recreational sports, etc.): All children have equal opportunity to participate with their typically developing peers, with support from peers, staff or volunteers.

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

In schools throughout the country, inclusive education is becoming a reality. Students, families, teachers, administrators, policy makers and community members are recognizing the benefits to everyone when each student is valued as a learner and is welcomed as a member of general education classrooms and school communities.

In 1975 the Education for All Handicapped Children's Act guaranteed universal access to a free, appropriate public education for children with disabilities. In 1997 and again in 2004, this act was reauthorized as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The law mandates that, to the maximum extent appropriate, students with disabilities are educated with students who do not have disabilities. It also requires that these students receive specialized instruction and supplementary supports and aides that enable them to make progress in the general education curriculum.

THE IMPACT OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

For 30 years, researchers have been studying the impact of inclusive education on student performance, professional achievement and social success. Students with disabilities, educated in general education classrooms, are more likely than their peers who are educated in separate classrooms to:

- Acquire reading and math skills
- Graduate from high school
- Go on to post-secondary education
- Have better communication skills
- Obtain meaningful employment
- Have friends and relationships
- Be welcomed and contributing members of their communities.



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Research on Inclusive Education

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INCLUSION MYTHS AND REALITIES

Myth: Inclusion is all about spending more money.

Reality: Since 1975, federal law has required schools to provide a “free, appropriate, public education” to all students, regardless of their level of ability. School districts and the federal government already designate money for special education. Inclusion is a philosophy and a value. It means that all individuals are given equal opportunity to learn and engage with their peers.

Myth: Students with disabilities learn more in separate schools or youth programs.

Reality: No studies conducted since the late 1970s have shown an academic or social advantage for students with intellectual and other developmental disabilities placed in separate settings (Falvey, 2004).

Myth: Including kids with disabilities will compromise the quality of the program for others.

Reality: Inclusion is shown to benefit all youth and raise program quality overall (McGregor and Vogelsberg, 1998).

Myth: If a young person has a certain type of disability, there are things he or she can't do.

Reality: While there may be traits typical of specific disabilities, every individual is unique. Always start by assuming someone can do something and always respect the person's individuality. That starts with using people-first language (see “Words Matter” section).

Some content in this section is adapted from the Paths to Inclusion resource guide at www.IncludingAllKids.org and www.includingsamuel.com.

