



Inclusion

What is inclusion?



Inclusion is a common term used when talking about the education of a child with special needs. It means that every child in a school, regardless of disability, has the right to be included as part of the school community. The federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) says schools must provide every child with a free and appropriate education in the least restrictive environment possible. Inclusion is determined based on the

needs of the child, and the state is required to offer a continuum of options. It is up to the parents and school staff to determine the best class placement for a child with special needs.

To make sure a child with a disability receives the needed services and that educational goals are written, an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) is written. The parents, teachers, and providers create this plan together, and use it as a “roadmap”

Three important facts about inclusion:

1. Inclusion is a team decision. Inclusion means young children, with and without disabilities, play and learn in a variety of places and activities. As a parent, you must advocate — or speak up — for your child until you feel the child is in the best learning environment.

2. Inclusion means to be part of a group. Even if your child has special needs, teachers

should help him/her develop strengths and talents, to help them feel a part of the larger school community.

3. Everyone benefits from inclusion.

Research shows that children *with* and *without* special needs, and their families, benefit from inclusion because it teaches life lessons on acceptance and tolerance.

through the child’s early education. The IFSP is reviewed and can be updated every six months. At age three, a similar plan, called an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), will be created each year.

Inclusion is not only important for children with special needs. It also encourages ‘typical’ children to accept children with disabilities, and shows that the school values each child equally.

The law entitles children with disabilities to special services that will help them be more successful in school. Call your local school district if you have questions about inclusion, services, or ways to better prepare your child for school.

Ways to help your child:

ONE

Work to form an active partnership with your school’s early childhood program. Take part in community services that give your child opportunities to be involved in social programs and activities.

TWO

Share everything you know about your child with the educational team — strengths and weaknesses, likes and dislikes, and any areas of concern.

THREE

Be your child’s greatest

Resources:

Call [Early Access](tel:1-888-IAKIDS1) at 1-888-IAKIDS1 if you have child development questions or concerns.

Link to an [Area Education Agency](#) in your region for more child and family information: www.iowaeea.org. Find a contact for your area under the [AEA Directory](#) tab.

The [PBS Parents](#) website provides an in-depth article about inclusion, and information on many issues and challenges parents face.

The Division for Early Childhood (DEC) has a helpful [checklist](#) for parents who need help figuring out what program or classroom setting is best for their child.

[ED.gov](#) has complete information on IDEA, the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

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advocate. If you feel uneasy about your child’s placement, or that a need is not being met, speak up. Never be afraid to be a “squeaky wheel” on behalf of your child.

FOUR

Consider options for your child to learn with other children. Talk to teachers, parents, and your child’s doctor. Gather information so you can best advocate for your child.