

Dear School Team,

A parent is requesting their child be educated in an inclusive classroom. It is well within a parent's right to request an inclusive classroom, and remember a parent is legally a co-equal part of the educational team. We wanted to answer some commonly asked questions. If you have additional questions please contact me at drjulie@inspireinclusion.com.

Thank you,

Dr. Julie Causton

Is Inclusive Education a research based practice?

Educational Research is quite clear on the benefits of Inclusive Education for all students. Currently, schools are driven by outcomes. School leaders are focused on implementing evidence-based practices in order to drive their instruction with the expectation that they will have greater academic outcomes. In looking at the evidence for inclusive schooling and the outcomes that occur when students with and without disabilities are educated together, no where is the body of research more clear—inclusive schooling produces greater academic and social gains for students with and without disabilities (*Causton-Theoharis & Theoharis, 2008; Copland & Cosbey, 2009; Cosier, Causton-Theoharis, & Theoharis, 2013; Jackson, Ryndak, & Mathot-Buckner, 2001; Peterson & Hittie, 2003*).

Does inclusive education impact academics or behavior?

Research has shown that when students with significant disabilities are educated in general, rather than special, education settings their academic outcomes increase and instances of challenging behavior decrease (Dawson, H., Delquardi, J., Greenwood, C., Hamilton, S., Ledford, D., Mortweet, S., Reddy, S., Utley, C., & Walker, et al., 1999[C3]). Demonstrating this, a review of 50 studies comparing academic performances of students with disabilities included in general education with those who were not indicated that students in the inclusive setting had higher average academic growth (80th percentile) than those who were segregated (50th percentile) (Weiner, 1985 as cited in TASH, 2009). It has been shown that students with disabilities in inclusive settings earn better standardized assessment scores, and achieve higher grades overall, as compared to their counterparts segregated special education settings (Rea, McLaughlin, & Walther-Thomas, 2002). To be more specific, inclusive schooling research demonstrates that when students with disabilities are included in the general education classroom they make greater academic

gains (Freeman & Alkin, 2000; Rea, McLaughlin, & Walther-Thomas, 2002; Waldron & McLeskey, 1998) and progress in developmental measures (McDonnell et al., 2003; Rea, McLaughlin & Walther-Thomas, 2002). Research also shows that students with disabilities have increased academic engagement related to standards based curriculum when they are members of the general education classroom (Agran, Alper, & Wehmeyer 2002; Dore, Dion, & Wagner, 2002; Hunt, Farron-Davis, Beckstead, Curtis, & Goetz, 1994). In addition to the academic gains, students with disabilities had higher performance in areas of social competence (Fisher & Meyer, 2002; Freeman & Alkin, 2000). In a recent study, Cosier (2010) analyzed thousands of students across hundreds of districts and found that the more time in general education correlates directly to academic achievement.

What about the other students?

The academic and social benefits of inclusive education extend beyond just students with disabilities to impact those without disabilities as well (Baker, Wang, & Walberg, 1994; Cole, Waldron, & Majd, 2004; Fisher & Mayer, 2002; Fisher, Pumpian, & Sax, 1998; Freeman & Alkin, 2000; Fryxell & Kennedy, 1995; Hunt & Goetz, 1997; Kennedy, Shulka, & Fryxell, 1997; McDonnell, Mathot-Bucker, Thorson, & Fister, 2000; Petterson & Hittie, 2003; Sharpe, York, & Knight, 1994; Waldron & McLeskey, 1998). Studies have revealed increased academic performance of students without disabilities placed in inclusive classroom settings (TASH, 2009), and/or found achievement for students without disabilities to be equal to or better academic when in inclusive settings (Salend & Duhaney, 1999). Research on this topic has revealed that placing students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms had no impact on amount or disruption of instruction time (Staub & Peck, 1995); which is an argument commonly made against inclusive models. In this achievement-based era of educational accountability, schools must make certain to provide all learners (most especially students with disabilities) opportunities to academically advance. Inclusive education has proven to be a vehicle of such equitable and positive outcomes.

For students without disabilities the results are equally as important. Students without disabilities were found to show a deeper level of acceptance for diversity when educated alongside students with disabilities (Fisher, Pumpian, & Sax 1998; Krajewski & Hyde, 2000;). And most importantly, to speak to the common argument that students with disabilities will stunt or slow down the education of students without disabilities, research overwhelmingly demonstrates that achievement increases or stays the same for students without disabilities in inclusive classrooms (Causton-Theoharis & Theoharis, 2008; Theoharis & Causton-Theoharis, 2010; Hunt, Staub, Alwell, & Goetz, 1994; McDonnell et al., 2003; Odom, Deklyen, & Jenkins, 1984; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1994).

Systematic inclusive schooling that utilizes best practice is not only the most effective way to educate students with disabilities, but it leads to greater academic and social outcomes for students without disabilities as well.

But what if this student can't keep up with the general education curriculum?

Schools and families often believe that students with disabilities cannot be educated inclusively because the achievement “gap” between the student and his or her peers is too great, or the student can’t “keep up” with peers without disabilities. The law, however, states that a child’s placement in school is based on individual needs, not achievement, skills, or cognitive level. The role of special education is to provide the academic supports to help a student with disabilities access the general education content. This does not mean the student needs to engage with the curriculum in the exact same way as their peers without disabilities, or practice the same skills as their peers without disabilities; there is no prerequisite to participate in inclusive education.

For example, if the 9th grade social studies students are expected to hand in a 5-page research paper on the Korean War, but Jennifer has significant disabilities which effects her ability to read and write, she can interview a Korean war veteran and create a digital for her project instead. Her teacher will assess her based

on the content revealed through her interview, the organization of her digital story, her participation and social interaction with peers during class activities, and her demonstration of new interview and digital storytelling skills. This example illustrates how students with disabilities can participate in general education without engaging in the same ways or mastering the same skills as their peers without disabilities. Jennifer was working on individual skills and goals within the context of a general education lesson, and her teacher created individual adaptations and modifications to support her success. She didn't need to master all of the same skills or have the same abilities as her peers in order to participate in an inclusive class. Jennifer's teachers simply adapted for her so that she could demonstrate competence.

For Malcolm to be successful in his classroom, his teachers need to provide him with a range of "supplemental supports, aids, and services," one of the law's requirements (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 20 U.S.C. § 1412 [a][5]). Supports, aids, and services might include a piece of assistive technology, use of an education consultant, instruction from a therapist, support from a paraprofessional, peer tutors, different seating or environmental supports, modified assignments, adapted materials (such as large-print books, graphic organizers, or color-coded assignment books), curriculum that is differentiated to meet the needs of the learner, time for teachers' collaborative planning, co-teaching, training for school personnel, or any number of other strategies, methods, and approaches. Schools do not need to provide every support available, but they must provide those required by the student with disabilities.

Do we have to provide this student with an inclusive education?

Inclusion is sometimes discussed as if it were a policy schools can decide to adopt or not. But special education is not a program or a place. Federal law governs that all students with disabilities have the legal right to be educated in the Least Restrictive Environment

(LRE) and cannot be removed from a general education classroom simply because the school is not prepared to meet that child's needs. (34C.F.R. 300.116 (b)(3)(e)). LRE essentially means that school districts must educate children with disabilities in the general education classroom to the maximum extent appropriate; must provide appropriate supplementary aids and services; and must educate children with disabilities alongside their non-disabled peers, in the school the child would attend if he or she did not have a disability (IDEA, 2004).

IDEA (2004) mandates that the school must provide the student with all of the necessary supports and services in the general education classroom before even considering a move to a more restrictive environment. Therefore, if a school can successfully educate a student with disabilities in general education settings with peers who do not have disabilities, the school must provide that inclusive experience.

Are other schools doing inclusion?

Yes, in fact many schools are becoming completely inclusive due to the academic, social benefits for all students.

Where can we get training about inclusive education?

There are many people and organizations that can provide training for inclusive education. Below are some highly recommended places to start.

- *Dr. Julie Causton's Inspired Educator*
<http://www.inspireinclusion.com>
- *TASH — Equity, Opportunity and Inclusion for People with Disabilities offers live web training and pre-recorded training*
<http://tash.org/conferences-events/training/>
- *Dr. Richard Villa*
<http://www.ravillabayridge.com/>
- *Dr. Paula Kluth*
<http://www.paulakluth.com/work-with-me/>
- *CAST (Center for Accessible Instructional Materials)*
<http://www.cast.org/>

Where else can I turn for information about inclusive education?

Films

- *IncludingSamuel*
- *AutismisAWorld*
- *EducatingPeter*

Books

- Kluth, P. (2003). *“You’re going to love this kid”: Teaching students with autism in the inclusive classroom.* Baltimore: Brookes
- Udvari-Solner, A., & Kluth, P. (2008). *Joyful learning: Active and collaborative learning in the inclusive classroom.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press
- Sapon-Shevin, M. *Widening the Circle: The Power of Inclusive Classrooms.* Boston, MA: Beacon
- Causton-Theoharis, J. (2009). *The Paraprofessional’s Handbook for Effective Support in the Inclusive Classroom.* Baltimore, MD: Brookes.

Websites

- <http://www.inspireinclusion.com>
- <http://www.paulakluth.com>
- <http://www.wrightslaw.com>
- <http://www.k8accesscenter.org>
- <http://www.k8accesscenter.org>
- <http://www.nichcy.org>
- <http://www.taalliance.org>
- <http://www.facebook.com/InspireInclusion>
- <http://inclusiveschools.org>
- <http://idea.ed.gov>

Articles

- Kluth, P., Villa, R., & Thousand, J. (2001, December/January). "Our school doesn't offer inclusion" and other legal blunders. *Educational Leadership*, 59, 24-27
- Causton-Theoharis, J. & Theoharis, G. (2008). *Creating Inclusive Schools for ALL Students*. The School Administrator. September, 24-30.
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Listing of Supplemental Aides, Supports & Services

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
- Define area concretely (e.g., carpet squares, tape on floor, rug area)
- 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 lists
- 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

Materials

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

Specialized equipment or Procedure

- | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Computer | <input type="checkbox"/> Computer software |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Electronic typewriter | <input type="checkbox"/> Video |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Modified keyboard | <input type="checkbox"/> Voice Synthesizer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Switches | <input type="checkbox"/> Augmentative communication device |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Customized mealtime utensils, plates, cups, and other materials | |

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

Support

- Instructional Support Assistant
- Behavior assistant
- Signing assistant
- Occupational therapy
- Physical therapy
- Speech and language therapist
- Augmentative communication specialist
- Transportation
- Transition planning

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