



Are you maintaining an inclusive environment?

Inclusion—Main Benefits

DID YOU
KNOW



“It’s important ... to realize that special education students are first and foremost general education students.”

When kids are found **eligible for special education services**, it’s common for their families to worry that they’ll be placed in a different classroom than other kids their age. But most kids who are eligible for special education spend the majority of their time in general education classrooms. Many of those classrooms are what’s known as inclusive (or inclusion) classrooms.



In an inclusive classroom, general education teachers and **special education teachers** work together to meet the needs of all students.

This is key. As Carl A. Cohn, EdD, executive director of the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence, points out, “It’s important ... to realize that special education students are first and foremost general education students.”

Many schools have inclusive classrooms. In part, that’s because of the **Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA)**. This law says that students who get special education services should learn in the **least restrictive environment (LRE)**. That means they should spend as much time as possible with students who don’t get special education services.

Inclusive classes are set up in a number of ways. Some use a collaborative team teaching (or co-teaching) model. With co-teaching, there’s a special education teacher in the room all day.

Other inclusive classes have special education teachers **push in** at specific times during the day to teach (instead of pulling kids out of class to a separate room). In either case, both teachers are available to help all students.

Studies show that inclusion is beneficial for all students — not just for those who get special education services. In fact, research shows that inclusive education has positive short-term and long-term effects for all students.

Kids with special education needs who are in inclusive classes are absent less often. They develop stronger skills in reading and math. They’re also more likely to have jobs and pursue education after high school.

The same research shows that their peers benefit, too. They’re more comfortable with and more tolerant of differences. They also have increased **positive self-esteem** and diverse, caring friendships. Read on to learn more benefits of inclusive classrooms.

[continued]

4 benefits of inclusion...

1. Tailors teaching for all learners

All students learn differently. This is a principle of inclusive education. In an inclusive classroom, teachers weave in specially designed instruction and support that can help students make progress (achieve). These strategies are helpful for all students. Kids may be given opportunities to move around or use fidgets. Teachers often put positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) in place.

Another key **teaching strategy** is to break students into small groups. When teachers use small groups, they can tailor their teaching to the way each student learns best. This is known as differentiated **instruction**.

Teachers meet the needs of all students by presenting lessons in different ways and using the **Universal Design for Learning (UDL)** framework. For example, they may use **multisensory methods of instruction**. In math, that may mean using visual aids and manipulatives like cubes or colored chips to help kids learn new concepts.



Some classrooms may have an interactive whiteboard. On it, kids can use their fingers to write, erase, and move images around on the large screen. This teaching tool can also be used to turn students' work into a video, which can be exciting for kids and help keep them engaged.

2. Makes differences less “different”



Inclusive classrooms are filled with diverse learners, each of whom has strengths and challenges. Inclusion gives kids a way to talk about how everyone learns in their own way. They may find that they have more in common with other kids than they thought. This can go a long way in helping kids know that difference is just a normal part of life. It can also help kids build and maintain friendships. Fundamentally, including all students in the same classroom has many student benefits— socially, mentally, and in learning.

3. Provides support to all students

In more traditional special education settings, many kids are “pulled out” for related **services** like speech therapy or for other specialized instruction. An inclusive class often brings speech therapists, **reading specialists**, and other service providers into the classroom.

These professionals can provide information and suggestions to help all students. If kids aren't eligible for special education but still need some extra support, they can get it informally.

[continued]



Benefits of inclusion (continued)

4. Creates high expectations for all



In an Individualized Education Program (IEP), a student's goals should be based on the academic standards for their state. Those standards lay out what all students are expected to learn in math, reading, science, and other subjects by the end of the school year.

Differentiated instruction and co-teaching in a general education classroom make it easier for students with **standards-based IEPs** to be taught the same material as their classmates. In some schools, only certain classrooms are designated as inclusive. In that case, schools may assign general education students randomly to inclusive or non-inclusive classes. Other schools may choose students who benefit from the emphasis on meeting the needs of all learners at all ability levels.

Investigate the **supports and services** that might be available in an inclusive classroom. Explore the **various models of collaborative team teaching**.

Key takeaways

- All students benefit from the resources available in an inclusive classroom.
- The special education teacher can help all kids in an inclusive classroom, not just students who need special education support.
- In an inclusive classroom, teachers often break students into small groups and teach them based on their specific learning needs.

GOALS OF IDEA

- * Ensure access to the general curriculum
- * Reduce paperwork and focus on teaching and learning
- * Assist in costs for improving special education & related services
- * Prevent inappropriate identification and mislabeling of culturally diverse students
- * Ensure schools are safe & conducive to learning
- * Encourage parents & educators to work out their differences by using non-adversarial means

6 PRINCIPLES OF IDEA

- * Free appropriate public education (FAPE)
- * Appropriate evaluations
- * Individual education program (IEP)
- * Least restrictive environment (LRE)
- * Parent and student participation in decision making
- * Procedural due process