

All Inclusive



NEWS INFORMATION and BEST PRACTICES FOR INCLUSION IN MARYLAND

A Collaborative Effort from the MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, Division of Special Education and Early Intervention Services and the MARYLAND COALITION FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Special Education is a Service—Not a Place

The purpose of special education parallels the purpose of elementary and secondary education as a whole: *to prepare children to lead productive lives as citizens and members of the community.* Students who have disabilities often need special education services to develop skills for participating in the community as productive and contributing citizens and taxpayers. Participation as a learner, contributor and consumer in school lays the foundations for being a learner, contributor and consumer as an adult.

The age-appropriate general education class in the neighborhood school is the first placement of choice for all students, including those who have been identified as needing an Individualized Education Program (IEP).

The “neighborhood” school is that school assigned on the basis of the student’s residence. Some school systems make exceptions for family concerns such as day care and system practices such as magnet school

participation. These exceptions apply to all students, including students with disabilities. Removal or restriction from the school or class for reasons related to the disability is only appropriate if the student’s IEP cannot be satisfactorily implemented in that setting even with supplementary aids and services.

As some schools and school systems have begun to institute changes in their model of service delivery, they have encountered new challenges that require new solutions. Despite the successes of some schools and their models of successful inclusive practices, there remains great variability from school system to school system and sometimes from school to school within a system.

Based on successful inclusive education experiences in Maryland, it is clear that a key element for success is planning and the most significant factor in building an inclusive educational setting is the vision and leadership of the building administrator. Through our successes, MSDE recognizes and values the work necessary for building the capacity of our schools to serve all children in the general education setting.

Welcome to the *All Inclusive* monograph series.

Over the last 10 years, Maryland has made significant progress in increasing inclusive options for students with disabilities. In 1998, the Maryland State Department of Education, Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services convened a Task Force on Inclusive Education. The members were charged with making recommendations to increase the capacity of local school systems to include students with disabilities. This resulted in these monographs, the development of local Inclusion Projects, and courses that are being developed for Maryland's teaching staff.

In 2001, the Task Force is continuing to examine issues and make recommendations related to inclusive education practices. *All Inclusive* is a monograph series designed to explore best practices and recommendations for inclusive education in Maryland.

Welcome!

a brief history

How We Got Here!

In **1976**, public schools became legally responsible for the education of all students with disabilities. Rights and responsibilities were outlined in federal law and requirements for placement practices were made. The concern at that time was primarily access to services. Nationally, the focus was not on the place of service delivery but rather on basic program design. Programs for students who had never before been served by our public schools were developed. Sometimes buildings were built or wings of buildings were dedicated to those students whose disability most significantly impacted their ability to learn the general education curriculum.

By **1980**, there was increasing recognition of the instructional and social value of having students with disabilities placed in general education schools. Classes for students with learning disabilities were already there; model programs for students with more severe disabilities began emerging in neighborhood schools. While most of these programs contained students in a separate special education classroom, some students were “mainstreamed” into general education classes when they demonstrated the behavior and academic skills needed to do work that was close to grade level with little support. While these students may have earned their way into general education classes, they still did not “belong” to general education.

By **1985**, students with disabilities who had been exposed to the life of neighborhood schools and interactions with their non-disabled peers demonstrated increased social and communication skills. Students with disabilities were integrated into classes and activities with students who did not have disabilities. Consequently, more and more students received their special education services in classrooms with typical students; generally, a special educator would accompany a small group of students with disabilities into a class and provide the special education services there. . . . ▶▶

How We Got Here...*continued*

By the late 1980s, both parents and professionals were calling for all schools to offer the option of full-time placement in general education classes for all students with disabilities. The reasons involved more than just the legal right for all children to access the general education environment and centered on:

- ▶ the benefits of being a member of their local school community
- ▶ exposure to age-appropriate language and communication from peers
- ▶ opportunities for age-appropriate social and behavioral role models
- ▶ the benefits to typical peers in being exposed to the diverse populations with whom they will live as adults
- ▶ enriched learning opportunities afforded by access to the instruction offered in teaching the general education curriculum

By 1990, increased advocacy by families and the documented practices that demonstrated the benefits of inclusion for students with disabilities led to a demand for schools to be more inclusive. The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and the Maryland Coalition for Inclusive Education (MCIE) collaborated to develop a planning strategy and technical assistance approach to increase the ability of schools to include students, to demonstrate inclusive practices, and to promote change in the placement practices of school systems.

In the following decade, MCIE and MSDE worked with many school systems to provide support and training to increase inclusive options in Maryland.

an introduction to inclusion

What is Inclusion? The term inclusion implies a certain educational placement philosophy, interdisciplinary team planning approach, instructional method and attitude.

Educational placement philosophy.

Placement decisions for children with IEPs are made from the perspective that the general education program is the starting point. The placement of students with disabilities begins with age-appropriate grades and classes prior to any placement in a special education class.

Interdisciplinary team planning approach.

Classroom teachers, special education teachers and related services staff cooperatively plan for supports, accommodations and instructional strategies for students with IEPs. This requires team planning prior to class placement and ongoing team planning for the provision of supports and the delivery of instruction.

Inclusion DOES NOT necessarily mean that a student never leaves the class and is never paired with another student who receives special education services. Rather, it means that the student is truly a member of a class and is valued as much as any other student in that school. Inclusion means that a student will receive the support needed in order to be an active participant, contributor, and learner in his or her class, grade and school.

Instructional method.

Strategies to teach concepts and engage all students in a lesson are based on individual student needs and goals. Lessons are designed for a grade or group of students with accommodations built into the lesson plans to allow all students to participate in the lesson.

Attitude.

The administration and faculty accept “ownership” of all students who live in their jurisdiction as full and equal members of the school community. Whenever a student’s participation as a full member of the school is at risk, collaborative planning strategies are used to support the student as a participating learner in the school.

inclusion at-a-glance

What does an inclusive school look like? Over the last few years, many school systems have made efforts to include students with disabilities—students who previously received services in a special education class or school—in regular classes in their home school. This student-specific inclusion may have occurred because parents advocated for their child or because the school had some incentive to increase inclusive options. When this happens, inclusion is specific to the student and while the education for that student may be functional and meaningful, a deeper commitment to the principles and values of inclusion may or may not be present.

School-Wide Inclusion

Creative problem

solving...Special

education teachers

with regular educators

...principal acts as

a leader...Students

with disabilities are

not clustered into

groups...Innovative

practices are initiated.

With school-wide inclusion, students with disabilities are not clustered into groups, but are dispersed into regular classes attended by other students their age. Special education teachers do not have their own classrooms, but are assigned to teams or grades and work with regular educators in classes that have students with and without disabilities. “Pull-out” from regular classes may occur for tutorial purposes, community-based instruction, instruction in other parts of the school, counseling, or for privacy in receiving health services or instruction in hygiene. Often, removal for instructional purposes also includes students without disabilities who may benefit from the instruction, are part of a peer support program, or may be obtaining service credit as part of a community service requirement.

Schools that most readily and most successfully adopt inclusive education practices are generally those that are already engaged in school restructuring efforts. Such a school will seek out and use instructional practices in general education that are considered to be the most promising for student success. Inclusive schools are schools in which creative problem solving is embraced as its way of life. Problems are not viewed as a reason to send the student elsewhere. Rather, they are seen as opportunities for faculty, parents and students to meet and rethink the educational and social strategies being used to educate their students. They are schools where restructuring has begun and innovative practices are systemically initiated with faculty involvement. These are usually schools where the principal acts as a facilitative leader who recognizes the value of collaboration, teamwork and cooperative learning.

in an inclusive school...

In an effective inclusive school,
staff members, students and parents...

- ⌘ believe that all children belong as part of the school community
- ⌘ emphasize learning for all students
- ⌘ provide equal opportunities for all learners
- ⌘ equally value all persons
- ⌘ view each person as a unique individual
- ⌘ learn from and about people with diverse characteristics
- ⌘ work together in a problem-solving organization
- ⌘ share the responsibility for all students

An inclusive school is a place where everyone belongs, is accepted, supports and is supported by his or her peers and other members of the school community in the course of having his or her educational needs met.

Best Practices for Inclusion



Collaborative
Teaming



Constructive
Learning



Multiple
Intelligence
Approach



Cooperative
Learning



Multiple
Learning Opportunities



Authentic
Assessment

13 elements of inclusion

1. All students are members of their neighborhood school.
2. All students are assigned to age-appropriate grades in heterogeneous classrooms.
3. Student grouping and regrouping are based upon the individual interests and skills of all students and not only on disability types or labels.
4. Supports and special education services are provided in the classroom and coordinated with ongoing instruction.
5. Related services, (e.g., physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy) are delivered in general classroom settings and coordinated with ongoing instruction.
6. The provision of supports for students (i.e., instructional, curricular, behavioral) is viewed as a school-wide need.
7. The instructional materials used for typical students are modified for assignments, homework and tests, as needed.
8. Effective teaching strategies and differentiated instruction are used to meet the needs of every child and to accommodate the learning styles of all children in the class.
9. The general education instruction and curriculum are used as the base for instruction to meet IEP goals.
10. Planned and structured activities are in place to promote social inclusion and friendship development.
11. Students without disabilities are supported in welcoming other students who have disabilities.
12. Collaboration among general educators, special educators and other school personnel occurs on an ongoing basis.
13. School administrators provide vision and leadership and welcome all students into their schools.