



Inclusion: Middle and High School

What is inclusion?

Inclusion describes an approach toward education that allows children who require additional educational services to receive those supports in regular classrooms with typically developing peers. The goal of inclusion is for all children and youth with disabilities to attend school in the least restrictive environment possible (typical schools and classrooms) and receive the support they need to be successful. Inclusion in middle and high school is similar to inclusion in elementary school, but there may be some differences.

What is least restrictive environment?

Public law requires that to the maximum extent appropriate, children and youth with disabilities are educated with their typically developing peers. It also states that special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children and youth with disabilities from the regular classroom occurs only if the disability is such that education in regular classes with use of extra services cannot be satisfactorily achieved.

What factors should be considered?

Special education is not a “place” but a coordinated offering of services. The most important part of learning is *effective instruction*, not location of the instruction. It is very important to look at your child’s needs, determine the content and method of teaching, and *then* identify the least restrictive setting where the program can be accomplished. Children and youth with autism spectrum disorders (ASDs) frequently need specialized instruction; in other words, your child should have supports that are based on his needs.

The most effective instruction for children with ASDs provides many opportunities for the child to practice targeted skills until he learns the skills. The most effective programs are those that measure your child’s progress by collecting data on the targeted (or desired) skills so that the professionals teaching the skills know if the method is effective for your child. Data-driven programs that provide your child structure and supports and focus on the development of communication skills are the most likely to lead to success.

How is inclusion different in middle and high school?

In middle and high school, the concept of inclusion is the same as in elementary school. However, because class schedules become somewhat more complicated in middle and high school, how a youth is included may change as she transitions into higher grades. Some youth may be able to continue to participate fully in regular education classes, such as math, reading, science, and social studies. Other youth may be included for part of their school day in classes often referred to as *specials*, such as art, music, and physical education, but then move to a smaller setting for more individualized teaching in academic areas. Inclusion should continue to be very individualized as children get older.

In high school, there may be more opportunities for inclusion given the wider range of classes offered. At the same time, high school may be a time when some youth with ASDs spend more time in classes that focus on the development of more functional or day-to-day skills or prepare them for postsecondary schooling or employment.

How do we keep the end goal in mind?

According to www.specialeducationadvisor.com/thoughtful-inclusion, “The bottom line is, does the inclusion of this child in the curriculum help him to learn social information about how to work well with others (e. g. problem solving, group participation, etc.) while also learning the academic information of the classroom to help the student develop functional skills for transitioning into the adult world? Because at the end of the day or the end of a child’s life as a student in public education what really counts is whether he has developed skills to help him be more successful as an adult.”

Resources

American Academy of Pediatrics HealthyChildren.org:

www.HealthyChildren.org

National Autism Center: Inclusion: www.nationalautismcenter.org/learning/inclusion.php

US Department of Education Building the Legacy: IDEA 2004: Least Restrictive Environment: <http://idea.ed.gov/explore/view/p/%2Croot%2Cstatute%2CI%2CB%2C612%2Ca%2C5%2C>

Winner MG. Thoughtful inclusion. Special Education Advisor: Special Education & IEP Advisor Web site. www.specialeducationadvisor.com/thoughtful-inclusion

The recommendations in this publication do not indicate an exclusive course of treatment or serve as a standard of medical care. Variations, taking into account individual circumstances, may be appropriate. Original document included as part of *Autism: Caring for Children With Autism Spectrum Disorders: A Resource Toolkit for Clinicians*, 2nd Edition. Copyright © 2013 American Academy of Pediatrics. All Rights Reserved. The American Academy of Pediatrics does not review or endorse any modifications made to this document and in no event shall the AAP be liable for any such changes.

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