

Making Inclusion a Reality



What you can do to promote inclusion for your child:

1. **Encourage your child to participate in activities where she can meet children her same age with different abilities.**

When looking for activities, consider your child's interests.

2. **Search the Internet for activities or organizations that your child may want to join.**

3. **Help your child develop friendships with classmates or other neighborhood children.**

Set up opportunities for your child to be with children he likes or children who show an interest in him. Teach your child how to make and keep friends.

4. **Share your goals and expectations for your child.**

Before you meet with the school and decide upon your child's Individualized Education Plan (IEP), meet with his teachers, therapists and others to discuss your goals, expectations, and future placement preferences for him.

5. **Know the rights you and your child have to an inclusive education.**

What schools can do to promote successful inclusive education:

1. Consider inclusive education first.

Special education services can be provided in many different settings. Schools are required to consider the general education class before considering any other setting for your child to receive special education services.

2. Support each child's learning.

Teachers support learning in inclusive classrooms in three ways. First, they teach so that students with differing abilities and learning styles can understand and participate. Second, they modify assignments when they are too difficult. Third, they model respect and encourage friendships.

What families can do when they meet resistance in accessing inclusive education for their children:

1. Get and share information.

Some schools do not support a family's desire for inclusion, because they are used to providing special education services to students in separate classes. Or they may not understand how to make inclusion work for all children. Carefully explain to your child's teachers, principal or IEP team why you believe inclusive education would be best for your child.

2. Enlist the help of others.

Sometimes it is helpful to bring in an advocate. This person will make sure that your preferences about your child's placement are heard. This person can also help explain the benefits of inclusive education and how to make it happen in your child's school. You may find someone to help by contacting advocacy organizations or special education parent group.

3. Become your child's advocate.

It takes time and energy to make inclusion happen in a school that is resistant to change. Stay focused on what you believe is best for your child. Listen carefully to the arguments against your child's inclusion in a general education class and use what you learn to advocate for change. For example, if you are told that your child is not ready for the general education class, ask what supports could be provided to help make her successful in the class.