

Is Your School Inclusive?

So how can a parent or teacher determine if their school is inclusive? The following indicators can serve as a guide for those interested in evaluating or developing an inclusive school. In an inclusive school, you should see:

- a school philosophy or mission statement that supports inclusive education;
- staff development opportunities that reflect an inclusive philosophy and inclusive practices;
- a school leadership team that promotes inclusion through written materials, presentations, staffing decisions, and building design;
- teachers using language that reflects the philosophy of inclusive education (e.g., “our students” vs. “your students” or “my students”);
- students with disabilities attending their neighborhood schools (the schools they would attend if they did not have a disability);
- students being educated in classrooms with their same-age peers;
- students with a wide range of needs and abilities being educated throughout the school (not concentrated in one or two classrooms);
- all students meaningfully participating in curriculum and instruction;
- a range of curricular adaptations and modifications offered to all learners;
- students moving with peers to subsequent grades in school;
- students with disabilities having the same school day (length of day, time of arrival and departure) as those without disabilities;
- students using the same transportation as students without disabilities;
- students using the same school spaces (e.g., lockers, cafeteria) and schedules as students without disabilities;
- all students having opportunities to participate in extra-curricular activities;
- curricular and extracurricular activities encouraging interactions between peers with and without disabilities;
- all teachers collaborating to address all students’ IEP objectives;
- all teachers collaborating to ensure effective instructional strategies (e.g., active learning, small-group instruction) are implemented to support diverse learners;
- all teachers promoting self-determination (e.g. student-led IEP meetings);
- related and supplemental services (e.g., mobility, speech) being provided through a trans-disciplinary team approach; and
- special educators, general educators, paraprofessionals, and related services professionals co-planning and co-teaching.

Educators charged with creating change in their schools can review this list and determine areas of need. Once these areas are identified, a plan for school improvement can be developed and strategies can be designed to create change and inspire progress.

Paula Kluth, *Is Your School Inclusive?*, 2005



“Even after inclusion is operationally defined, it remains an elusive term. Part of the confusion arises from assumptions associated with inclusion—that it is a program or that it is a research-devised strategy. The underlying assumption, however, is that inclusion is a way of life—a way of living together—that is based on a belief that each individual is valued and belongs.”

- Richard A. Villa and Jacqueline Thousand