

The Importance of Inclusion for our Schools and our Children and our Youth

RADFORD UNIVERSITY

Virginia Inclusive Practices Center



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(<https://www.vaboard.org/>)

For more information on the Inclusive Practices Center, go to www.radford.edu/vipc



The 3 Big Questions for Today

What is Inclusive Education?

Why is it important for our school?

Why do we need to take action now?



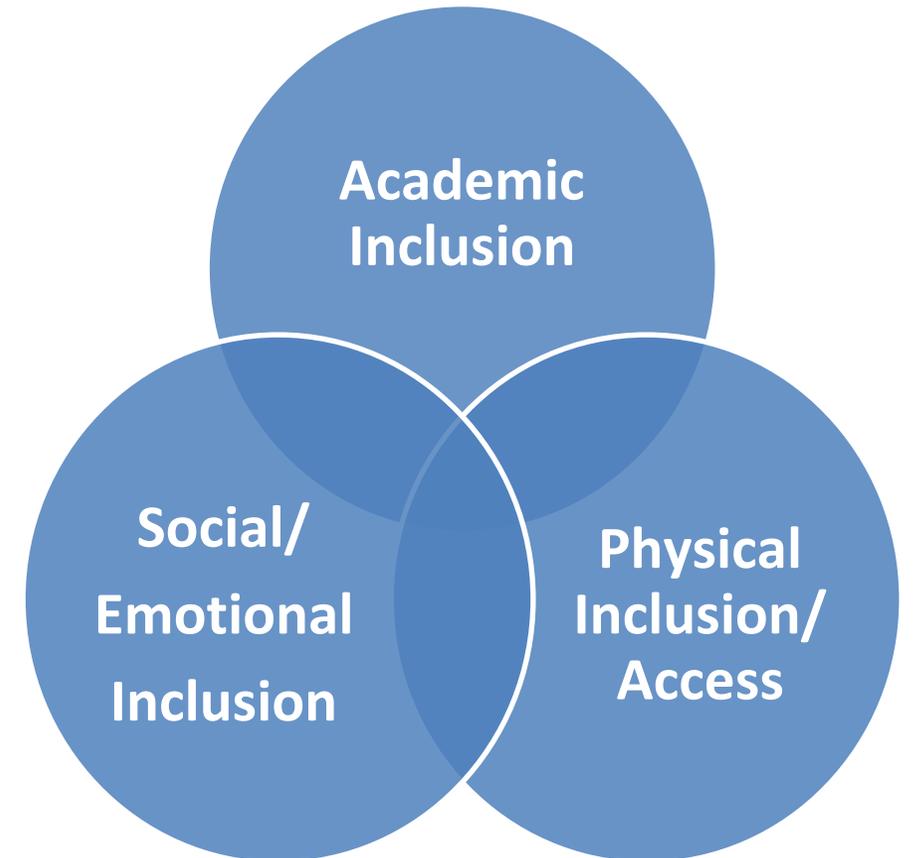


What is Special Education?

Special education is the implementation of **specially designed instruction**, at no cost to the parent(s), to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability (§ 22.1-213 of the *Code of Virginia*; 34 CFR 300.39). Specially designed instruction addresses the unique individual needs of the child that result from the child's disability and **ensures access to the general curriculum and the same educational standards that apply to all children** (34 CFR 300.39(b)(3)).

What is Inclusive Education?

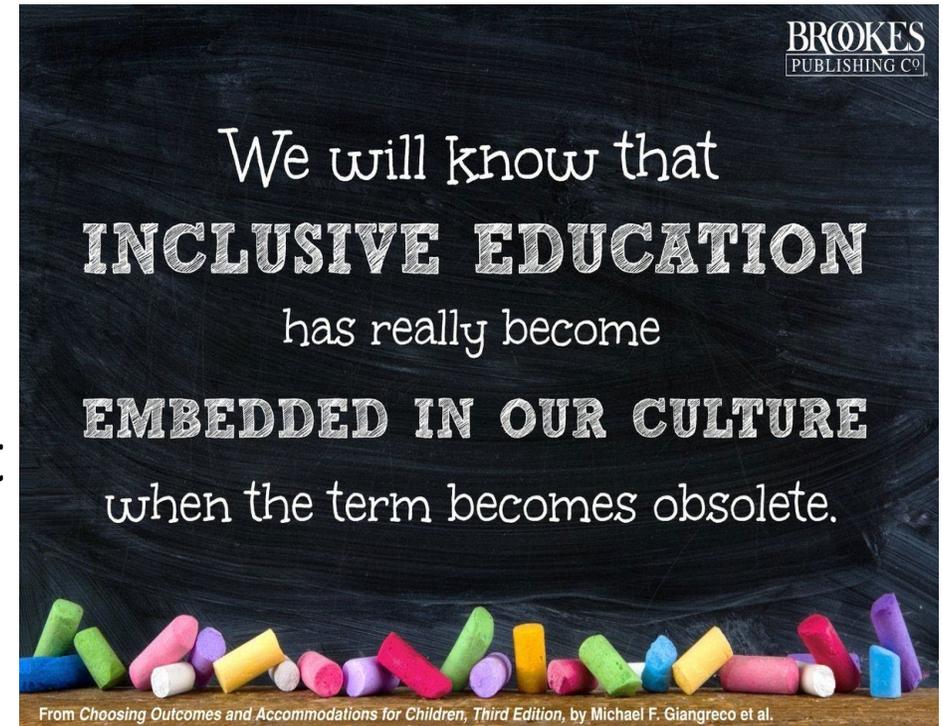
- ✓ ALL Students are **Competent and Capable** of Learning
- ✓ **FULL Participation** in General Education Setting
- ✓ **REQUIRES Access, Belonging,** and High Quality **Teaching**



Best Practice Recommendations - Inclusive Education for ALL Students with Disabilities

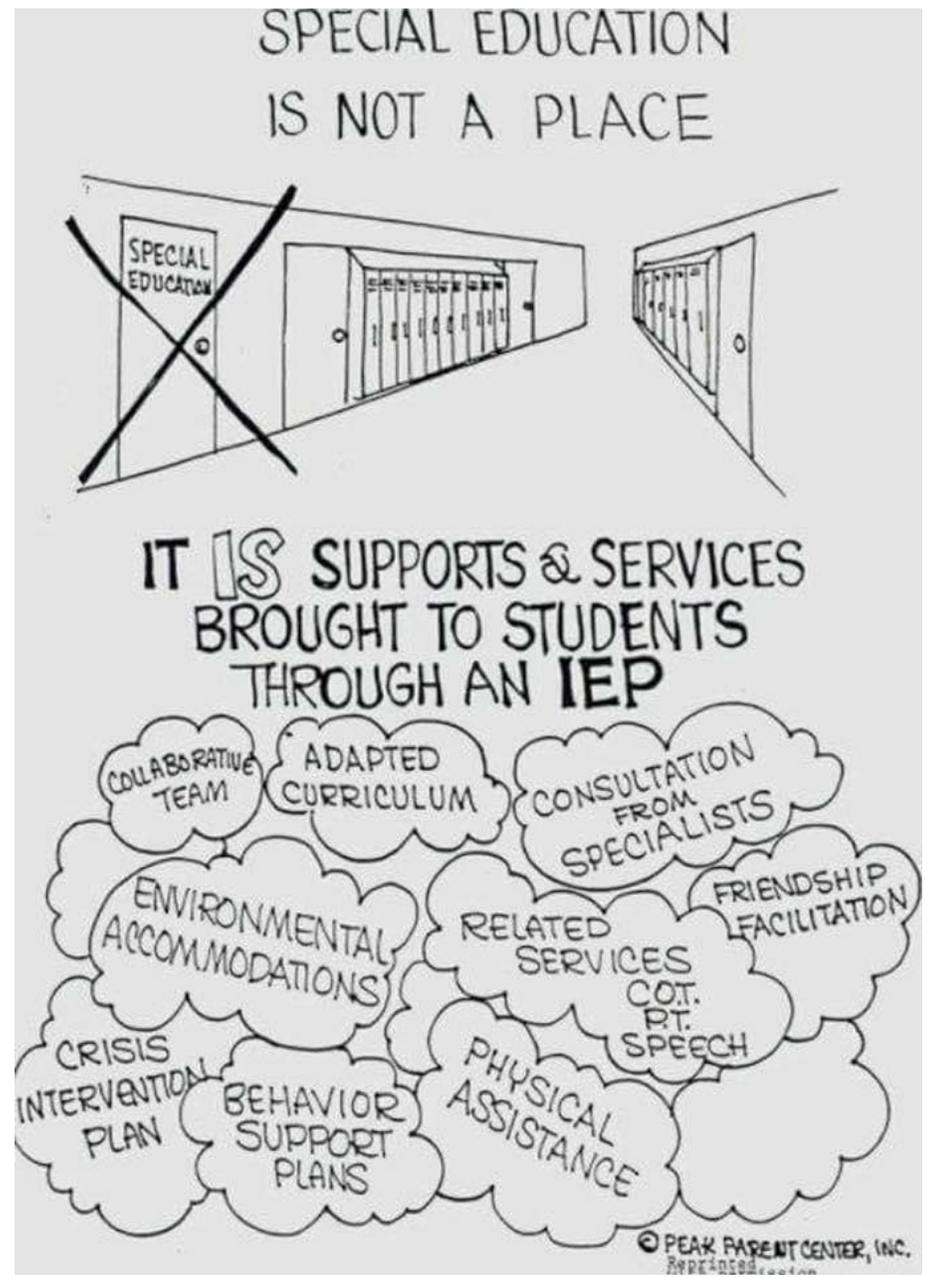
90% of students with IEPs should have the general education classroom as their primary placement.

80% of students with IEPs should be receiving instruction in core academic content in the general education classroom with special education support through co-planning and co-teaching (Villa & Thousand, 2016).





Myth #1 Special Education is a Place





Special Education is a Service not a Place

- ✓ Disability does NOT dictate placement (8VAC20-81-100, FAPE)
- ✓ Delivery of supports and services in the general education classroom
- ✓ Learning environments are designed to be accessible and challenging
 - Universal Design for Learning
 - Differentiated Instruction
 - Co-Teaching Models





Myth #2

Inclusion is only for students
with milder disabilities



Meet Damian

<https://youtu.be/4oNMJuILM>



Classrooms Need to Change

Classrooms needs to change to support **ALL students**:

- *Integrate* or “push in” needed supports and services into the general education classroom
- Universal Design for Learning (UDL)
- Differentiation
- Co-Teaching Models



Myth #3
Inclusion hinders the
academic progress of
students without disabilities



Positive Academic Outcomes

Academic performance of students without disabilities in inclusive settings was better than students in non-inclusive settings (Castro, 2007).

Higher attendance rates for both students with and without disabilities (Castro, 2007; Rea, McLaughlin, & Walther-Thomas, 2002).

Students with disabilities in inclusive settings had higher test scores in math and reading, fewer absences, and less disruptive behaviors than students in non-inclusive classes (National Center on Inclusive Education, 2011).



Myth #4

Students with significant disabilities will not be accepted by students without disabilities and will be bullied

Inclusive School Culture





Myth #5

Inclusive education is
more expensive than segregated
settings for special education

Cost

Inclusion does not cost more even when you consider the additional teacher training needed (Grieco, 2019; Stetson, 2013).

In her work with schools over 25 years, Stetson found that schools typically already have sufficient resources available – they are just not being used effectively and efficiently. Inclusion is no more expensive when schools **carefully re-examine how they are currently using the resources they have.** (Stetson, 2013)



Why Inclusion?

Inclusive Education is not just about special education. It represents a larger vision for schools and educational services that support the academic and social/emotional/behavioral success of all students.



Benefits include:

- Higher Academic Achievement
- Higher Educational Outcomes
- Increased Access to Curriculum
- Decreased Challenging Behaviors
- Greater Social Benefit
- More Valued Community
- More Independent Futures



Why Now?

The majority of students with disabilities are not achieving even basic competency in core academics

VA Standards of Learning Assessment	% of students with disabilities passing
English	48%
Writing	42%
Math	48%
Science	50%
Social Studies	57%



Why Now?

The statewide averages in Virginia for inclusion of students with disabilities:

- Only **65% are included** 80% or more of the school day
- 10% are included less than 40%
- 4.3% are in a separate school for students with disabilities
- Only **59% of students** with disabilities graduated with a regular **diploma**; 1.7% drop out of school (last data available 2017-2018)

How does our division measure up?

Disruption of Special Education Services and the Social Isolation Caused by the Pandemic Makes Inclusion an “Economic and Moral imperative.”

The United Nations UNESCO declared last year at the height of the pandemic that “inclusive education should be a ‘non negotiable’ right for all children.” [Universal, inclusive education 'non-negotiable' | UN News](#)

In a new report- [The Disparate Impacts of COVID-19 on America's Students](#) - The US Dept. of Education has made this official declaration: “For many elementary and secondary school students with disabilities, COVID-19 has significantly disrupted the education and related aids and services needed to support their academic progress and prevent regression. And there are signs that those disruptions may be exacerbating longstanding disability-based disparities in academic achievement.”

The JLARC report released in November 2020 <http://jlarc.virginia.gov/landing-2020-special-education.asp> called for pre-service and inservice teachers to be prepared to understand the goals and benefits of inclusive education for all students. It also recommended that school divisions be required to conduct division-wide assessment and create division wide-plans to enhance inclusive practice.

The report also pointed out that Virginia relies on out-of-school placements to a greater degree than 37 other states, and cites the current CSA funding policies as a key factor in hampering school divisions’ ability to serve children with special needs in their local schools. They recommended that control of these funds be returned to the VDOE and that significant revisions in the funding mechanism occur. <https://www.vaco.org/jlarc-releases-report-on-childrens-services-act/>



Moving Forward

Make a division commitment to increase the number of students included in our general education classrooms for 80% or more of the school day.

Create a Framework for Inclusion and develop division-wide and individual school Inclusion Action Plans that:

- Creates a Culture of Inclusion
- Enhances special education/general education collaboration
- Builds capacity for inclusive practices



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