

## WHAT IT MEANS TO HAVE AN INCLUSIVE SCHOOL

### What is an Inclusive School?

Inclusion is a civil right for **all** students with disabilities. It allows them to be with their peers for instruction and learning, with supports for their challenges.

The Florida Department of Education collects Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) data that report the percentage of time that students with disabilities spent with their peers without disabilities. State and District LRE data (and other information about students with disabilities) is available annually in the State and Local Education Agency (LEA) Profile, found at <http://www.fldoe.org/academics/exceptional-student-edu/data/>. School LRE data is available from your school district or your child's school. As a rule of thumb, the higher the LRE percentage in the regular class setting, the more likely that a school is inclusive. It is always a good idea to ask questions!

**Look inside for more signs of inclusion ...**



### How does your Child's School Rate on Effective Inclusive Practices?

Since 2013, Florida Statutes have required each school and district to complete the Best Practices for Inclusive Education (BPIE) self-assessment process at least once every three years. The school BPIE includes 34 indicators of inclusive practices based on peer-reviewed research, current literature, and best practices across Florida and internationally. School teams, made up of various stakeholders (including parents), rate themselves on the level of implementation on these indicators, and then select priorities for targeted activities, which should be included in planning for short and long-term improvement efforts.

School leaders know that there are a multitude of variables that affect student outcomes. They also know that real change takes time. The BPIE process is designed to result in the development of goals that improve student outcomes over the long term. Your school's administrator can share with you the results and priorities of the most recent school BPIE, as well as specific activities that the school has planned for focused improvement over time.

Spending time in your child's school, talking to the people who work there, and observing how students interact are good ways to identify inclusive practices and share your views on inclusive education.

For more information on the school and district BPIE, please visit [www.FloridaInclusionNetwork.com](http://www.FloridaInclusionNetwork.com).

# A Visit to an Inclusive School

The parents of DeShawn Griffin are nervous. The school year is almost over and DeShawn will be leaving Central Middle School. DeShawn is an active young man with a great sense of humor and many friends. He has a learning disability and has struggled academically.

The move to high school has raised many questions for the Griffins: Will he be able to stay in the regular education classes or will he be put in special education classes? Can he get the help he needs to pass the state assessment and his college entrance exams? Will he be able to keep the social confidence he has? The Griffins know that DeShawn's future depends on what happens in school over the next four years.

The Griffins decide to visit West High School, where DeShawn will go in the fall. When they call to make an appointment with the principal, the secretary suggests allowing enough time for touring the campus.

After their tour, the Griffins talk in the car about their impressions of the school. The principal, Mrs. Sierra, did several things they liked. She:

- Spoke of her commitment to making sure each student has the same opportunities for learning in the general education high school classes.
- Asked DeShawn about the things that helped him be successful at Central Middle School.
- Invited the Griffins to schedule another meeting with the special education teacher to review DeShawn's IEP goals and discuss ways to support him in his transition to high school.
- Committed to supporting the special and general education teachers as they worked together to teach DeShawn and the other students in his classes.
- Discussed how they could all work in partnership to meet new challenges.

The Griffins also reviewed some of the things they observed during their tour of the school:

- Teachers referred to students with disabilities as just "part of the class". Many classrooms had two teachers working together in a variety of ways.
- ALL students were learning together and working on projects in small groups.
- ALL students were eating together and socializing during lunch activities.
- There were many posters around the campus encouraging students to respect each other and value differences.
- ALL students were involved in clubs.
- A Peers as Partners in Learning program was actively providing support for students with disabilities in general education classrooms.

The Griffins have scheduled a meeting with the exceptional education teacher and are all feeling good about the year ahead. DeShawn is thinking he might even try out for the junior varsity basketball team.



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So, how do inclusive schools work to ensure that all students belong and are successful together?

Look and listen for the following signs:

## Inclusion in Action

### School Environment

- Do all students attend their neighborhood school?
- Is person-first language\* used school-wide? ([www.vsafli.org/archives-resources](http://www.vsafli.org/archives-resources); People First Brochure)
- Do all students arrive and leave at the same times?
- Are most students with disabilities included in the general education setting 80% or more of the day?
- Are students with disabilities considered as general education students first?
- Are the facilities used by students with disabilities comparable to those available for general education students?
- Is there a campus-wide behavioral support system in place at the school?
- Does the school plan for and conduct ongoing disability awareness activities and events?

### Leadership and Collaboration

- Are decisions about instructional setting determined based on individual student needs rather than labels or available services?
- Does the school have a person who is in charge of inclusion?
- Does the school use an inclusive scheduling process when planning for supports?
  - Are teachers for special education part of grade/department teams?
  - Does the school use a problem-solving process to look at student progress?
- Are families part of decision making?
- Are families welcomed and valued partners at the school?
- Are families provided with resources for learning and support?
- Are school staff passionate about the achievement of ALL students?
- Is there a vision of shared responsibility for the success of all students at the school?

### Relationships

- Does the school have a focus on positive social relationships for all students?
- Do students solve problems and learn together?
- Are all students recognized for rewards and honors?
- Do all students receive the support they need to be successful?
- Are students with disabilities considered full members of the school community?
- Do all students enjoy opportunities to follow their interests and make plans for their future?
- Do all students have ways to socialize at lunch, recess, and between classes?

### Instruction and In-Class Supports

- Do all students have access to a variety of resources that allow them to access the curriculum?
- Do all teachers use a variety of strategies (small groups, differentiation, co-teaching, peer supports) to teach all students?
- Are the Florida Standards the basis for instruction for all students?
- Is a Universal Design for Learning approach used?
- Are paraprofessionals an important part of the school supports?
- Are services including academic supports and therapies for students with disabilities provided in varied locations?
- Do teachers understand the difference between accommodations and modifications?



## Informative Resources

For Families of Pre-School Aged Children:

[www.ectacenter.org/families.asp](http://www.ectacenter.org/families.asp)

For Family Involvement in the Schools:

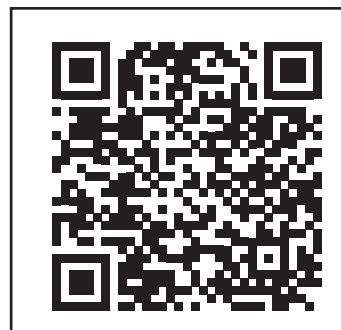
[www.inclusiveschools.org/category/resources/family-involvement/](http://www.inclusiveschools.org/category/resources/family-involvement/)

For Inclusion in the Community:

[www.ncd.gov/publications/2012/Sep272012/Ch13](http://www.ncd.gov/publications/2012/Sep272012/Ch13)

Inclusion Articles and More:

[www.parentcenterhub.org/inclusion/](http://www.parentcenterhub.org/inclusion/)



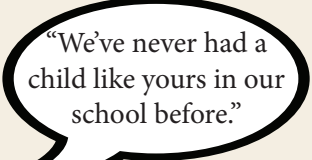
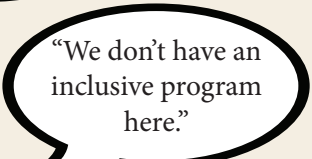
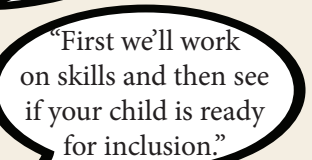
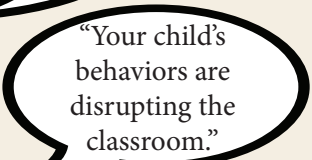
Scan the QR code to check out our other F.A.C.T. Folios for a deeper look into inclusion!

## Contact Us

Find your nearest FIN facilitator on our website:

[www.FloridaInclusionNetwork.com](http://www.FloridaInclusionNetwork.com)

or call toll-free 1-888-232-0421

The teacher or principal Says:	Respectful messages you could share:
	<p>Yes, although all students are unique we know Susan will need specialized physical assistance during the school day. She has already experienced success in a variety of settings with the right support. We will certainly work with the education team in getting them the information and help they need to implement her IEP.</p>
	<p>Juan has been in inclusive classrooms ever since kindergarten and has made great progress. We'll work closely with the education team to develop a program for Juan that includes supports for him and his teachers. His teacher from last year has already offered to help.</p>
	<p>Amy really needs to learn skills in the setting where she will use them, and she benefits from having good role models. She may not have all the skills that the other students have, but, with support, she can achieve important goals in the general education classroom.</p>
	<p>We understand how frustrating TuYen's behaviors can be. But we've learned at home that when TuYen can communicate his wants and needs, his behavior is much better. We'll work with you to develop a positive behavior improvement plan that will improve his communication skills and make him less disruptive.</p>