

Figure 8.3: Inclusion Myths and Facts

INCLUSION MYTHS *and* FACTS

Inclusive education is the general practice of educating many kinds of learners and meeting the needs of all. An inclusion classroom, more specifically, is a specially designed class that brings together typical students and students who have special needs, providing a wide array of support and enrichment opportunities that are differentiated to benefit every student in the class, as described below.

MYTH	FACT
<p>Inclusion classrooms are only for students who have special needs.</p>	<p>Most students in an inclusion classroom do not have special needs. Studies have shown that students with <i>and</i> without special needs benefit academically and socially from placement together in an inclusion classroom. Students who <i>do not</i> have special needs benefit from the extra opportunities for enrichment available in a classroom with two teachers. Students who <i>do</i> have special needs benefit from being less isolated and having access to more opportunities for socialization and learning. All students in the room benefit from being part of this diverse, creative, and stimulating classroom community.</p>
<p>Inclusion means that the district is tossing students who have special needs into “regular” classrooms to save money.</p>	<p>Inclusion classrooms are not just “regular” classrooms—they’re better! Inclusion classrooms provide two credentialed teachers who work as a team to provide a variety of exciting learning opportunities. A tremendous amount of training, planning, and ongoing collaboration between the two teachers goes into creating and maintaining a learning environment that’s optimal for everyone in it. No one is “tossed” into an inclusion class; students are selected for it.</p>
<p>Having kids with special needs in the classroom will take too much of the teachers’ time away from the typically developing kids.</p>	<p>Inclusion teachers are trained to use a teaching method called <i>differentiation</i>. Based on the fact that no two learners are the same, differentiation guides teachers to adapt the delivery of the curriculum to best meet the needs of every single student rather than forcing every student to adapt to a rigid, one-size-fits-all curriculum. Differentiation leads to creative opportunities for both individualized support and enrichment.</p>

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Figure 8.3: Inclusion Myths and Facts (*continued*)

MYTH	FACT
Some kids who have special needs can be very disruptive or require a lot of support. They will be too difficult for the teachers to handle in an inclusion classroom.	It's true that inclusion is not the best fit for every student. That's why students who have special needs are not automatically placed in inclusion classrooms. Very careful consideration is given to ensure that the inclusion classroom, with its full size and grade-level curriculum, will be best suited to each student's needs. If it is determined that a student's placement in an inclusion classroom would constitute a barrier to learning for <i>any</i> students in the room, then an alternative classroom setting is recommended for that student.
The behavior of students with special needs will be a bad influence or will distract other students.	Every classroom of children has its share of undesirable behavior. If students who have special needs do act out, their behavior is usually a way of communicating distress. Most inclusion teachers are expert at decoding those behaviors and addressing the cause of the distress in ways that resolve the behavior quickly and also prevent it from recurring. You may see students wearing noise-cancelling headphones or using assistive technology. Tools like these help prevent acting out behavior. As in all classrooms, positive behaviors are clearly reinforced for all students.
Students with special needs who are placed in self-contained special ed classes instead of inclusion classrooms will be left out of schoolwide activities or events.	Inclusive education is a concept that extends beyond the walls of the classroom to ensure that the entire school is a welcoming place for every student. Children with special needs who are not placed in inclusion classrooms are still absolutely part of the inclusive school community. School-wide events and activities will be differentiated to the greatest extent possible so that all members of the school community can participate.
Students who don't have special needs are placed in inclusion classrooms because the school is trying to sneak them into special education.	There is no trickery, deception, or spin involved in inclusion. Students who do not have special needs may be placed in an inclusion class because they have demonstrated strong social skills or have shown that they would benefit from individualized enrichment that goes beyond the standard curriculum. Others may present with unique talents that warrant opportunities to learn through creative expression and exploration. Differentiated inclusion classrooms are generally able to allow for more individualized enrichment and support than many other kinds of classrooms can, all while pursuing grade-level curriculum.
Some students with special needs are allowed to do things other students are not allowed to do, like chew gum or get more time for tests. That's not right. Everything should be equal in the classroom.	It's true that, in some circumstances, certain students will be allowed to engage in activities or opportunities that others will not. Treating every student equally would mean making sure every child gets exactly the same thing, which actually goes against the goals of a differentiated inclusion classroom. Instead of giving every student the same thing, inclusion classrooms give every student what he, she, or they need. It is better than equal; it is fair.

Note: This form is available for download at www.ascd.org/ASCD/pdf/books/BorsonResources.pdf and also at <http://barbaraborson.com/InclusionMyths-Facts.pdf>