

What is Inclusion?

Inclusion is a term that expresses a commitment to educate students with special education needs in the school he or she would attend if the student did not have a disability. It involves bringing support services to the student rather than removing the student to a separate environment to access needed services.

Inclusion is, first and foremost, an attitude, a value and a belief system. **Inclusion** has been defined as a shared value that promotes a single system of education dedicated to ensuring that all students are empowered to become caring, competent and contributing citizens in an integrated, changing and diverse society. (*Steve Kukik, Former Director of Education for Utah*)

What does the law say about inclusion?

The term **inclusion** is not identified in the law. The legal basis for **inclusion** is found in Public Law 94-142 (The Education of All Handicapped Children Act, 1975) and the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, Reauthorized 1997). The term **Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)** is the legal force that drives inclusive education.

Least Restrictive Environment:

New York State's definition of **Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)** adopted by the Board of Regents and the New York State Education Department is as follows:

Least Restrictive Environment means that placement of students with disabilities in special classes, separate schools and other removal from regular educational environment occurs only

when the nature and severity of the disability is such that, even with the use of supplementary aids and services, education cannot be satisfactorily achieved. The placement of an individual student with a disability in the least restrictive environment shall:

- 1) provide the special education needed by the student
- 2) provide for education of the student to the maximum extent appropriate to the needs of the student with other students who do not have disabilities
- 3) be as close as possible to the student's home.