

Why Choose Inclusion?

Accessibility
& Belonging
in Public Schools

March 26, 2025

Ramona Hattendorf,
The Arc of King County



This presentation is part of a series of workshops we are doing this spring as part of the [Inclusionary Practices Technical Assistance Network](#).

This is a statewide collaboration between the [Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction](#), WestEd, and education partners across Washington state.

One of these partners is the [Family Engagement Collaborative](#), and The Arc of King County is part of this collaborative. This spring we are hosting workshops to help educators learn more about disability and ways to support families, and help families learn more about inclusive learning and ways to navigate the special education process.



NAVIGATING SCHOOLS

The Arc
King County

Accessibility & Belonging

Special Education Basics

Conceptos básicos de educación especial

A series for families using special education services.



UNDERSTANDING DISABILITY

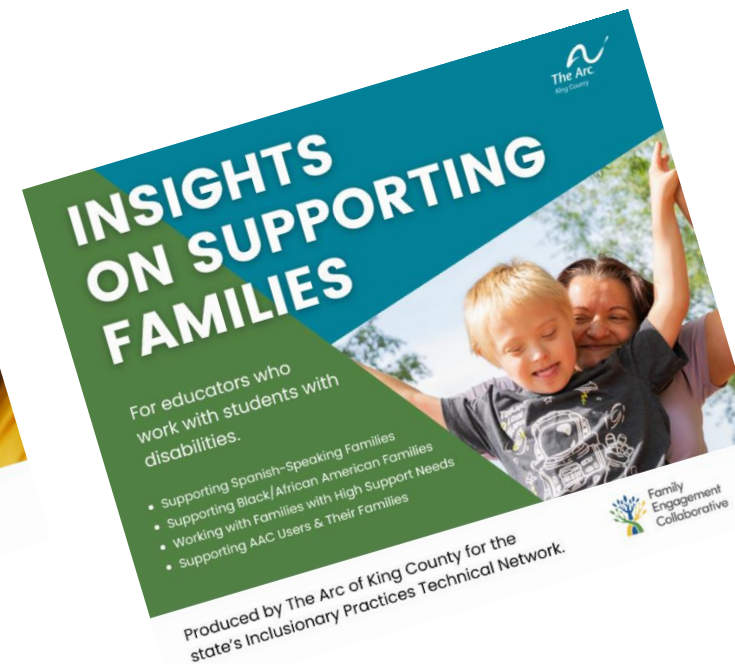
A class series for anyone who works with or supports students with disabilities.

- Autism: The Basics
- Cerebral Palsy: The Basics
- Disability is Diversity

Produced by The Arc of King County for the state's Inclusionary Practices Technical Network.

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Family Engagement Collaborative



INSIGHTS ON SUPPORTING FAMILIES

For educators who work with students with disabilities.

- Supporting Spanish-Speaking Families
- Supporting Black/African American Families
- Working with Families with High Support Needs
- Supporting AAC Users & Their Families

Produced by The Arc of King County for the state's Inclusionary Practices Technical Network.

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Family Engagement Collaborative

Produced by The Arc of King County for the state's Inclusionary Practices Technical Network.



Who we are ...

The Arc of King County promotes and protects the rights of people with intellectual or other developmental disabilities (IDD) so we can all live, learn, work and play in the community.

The Arc is driven by the fundamental belief that everyone deserves to write their own life story. That means:

- Real access to education
- Meaningful employment
- Quality healthcare
- Genuine community connections

At our chapter, we offer information and family support, systems navigation, education & civic engagement support. We also run a supported living program for adults with IDD.

We help (or refer!) on any topic. The most common are special education, housing, and Medicaid long-term supports.

<https://arcofkingcounty.org/>



Need assistance? ask@arcofkingcounty.org

Todays' presenter:

Ramona Hattendorf,

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Section 1

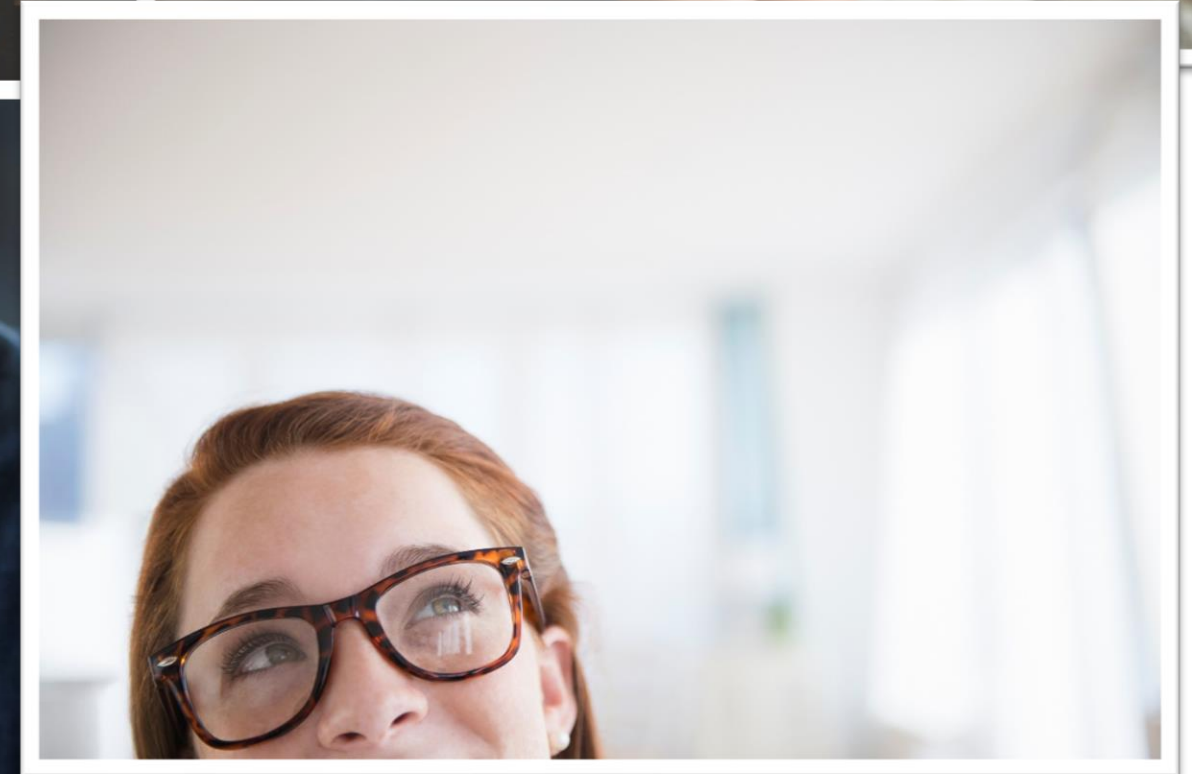
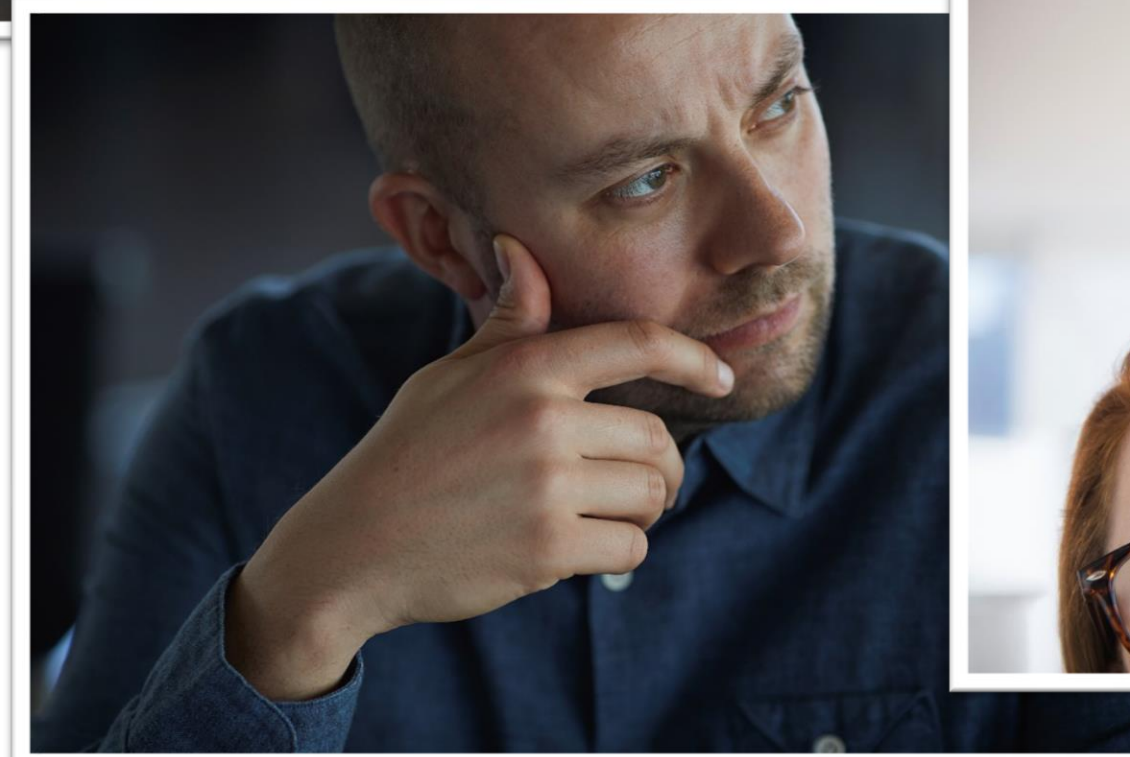
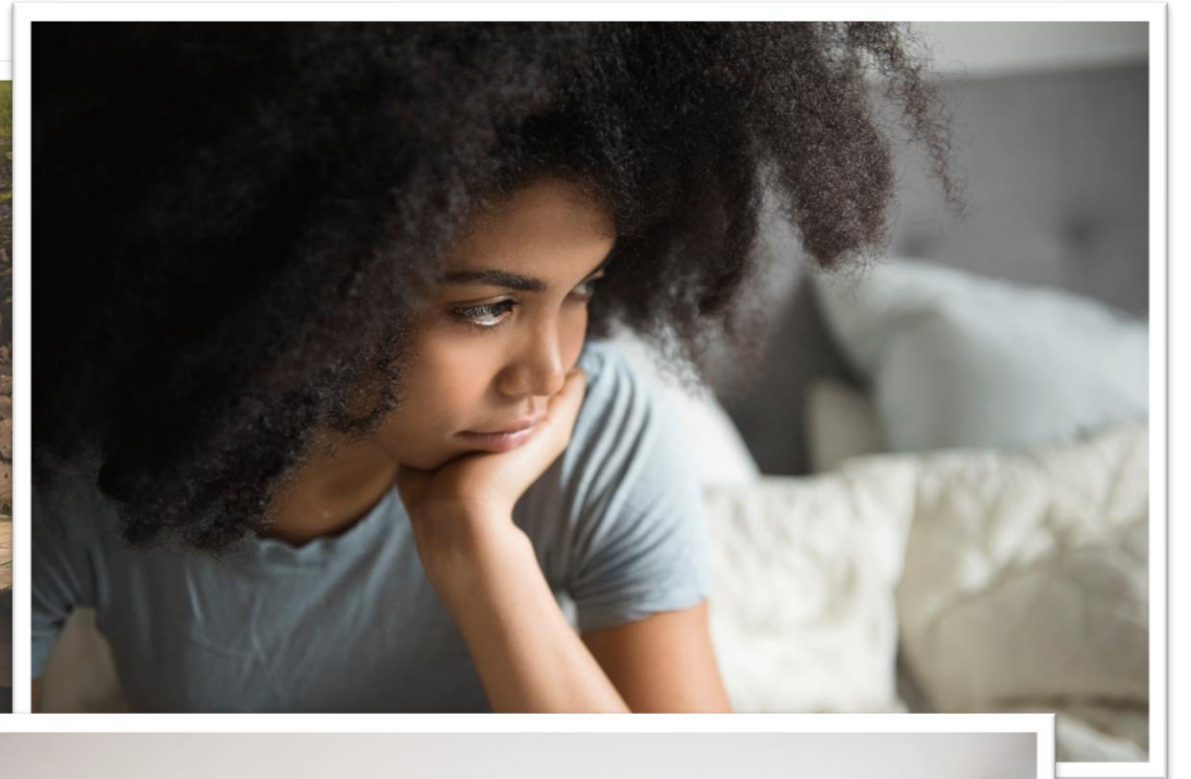
HOW DO YOU DEFINE INCLUSION?

3 questions ...

What qualities do you
associate with inclusion?

What qualities do you
associate with exclusion,
or segregation?

What images come to
mind when you think of
these terms?



What stage are you in?

- There are stages of change.
- On the matter of inclusive schools, where are you?



Precontemplation

- There is no problem. Why are people even talking about inclusive schools?



Contemplation

- Recognizes a problem and potential consequences of not acting, but not yet committed to making a change.



Preparation

- Actively creating a plan.



Action

- Plan is done. You are making the change!



Maintenance

Monitoring and adjusting, as needed.


Section 2

AN OVERVIEW (TO GROUND US)

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

What is needed to ensure
all kids get one?



The background is a solid teal color with a repeating pattern of white line-art icons representing various school supplies. These icons include soccer balls, atomic symbols, rulers, protractors, scissors, paper clips, glue sticks, notebooks, backpacks, light bulbs, and puzzle pieces.

PUBLIC EDUCATION NEEDS TO WORK FOR ALL STUDENTS

**Special
education
SERVICES ensure
access to
education**





**INCLUSIVE education
supports students
learning together.**

**It anticipates diverse
needs.**

It is accessible.

**It is responsive
to students.**





**PRESUMED
COMPETENCE** is the
assumption that
everyone has the
capacity to learn, think,
and understand,
regardless of diagnosis
or disability



BASIC RIGHTS

- Equal opportunity to benefit
- Equal opportunity to participate
- Schools can't deny access to students with disabilities, or require students with disabilities to be educated separately
- “Individualized” does NOT mean services need to be provided in segregated settings





**IDEA (Individuals
with Disabilities
Education Act) spells
out the rules for
special education
services**



**Section 504 of the
Rehabilitation Act of
1973 and Title II the
Americans with
Disabilities Act spell out
rights to equal access
and opportunity**



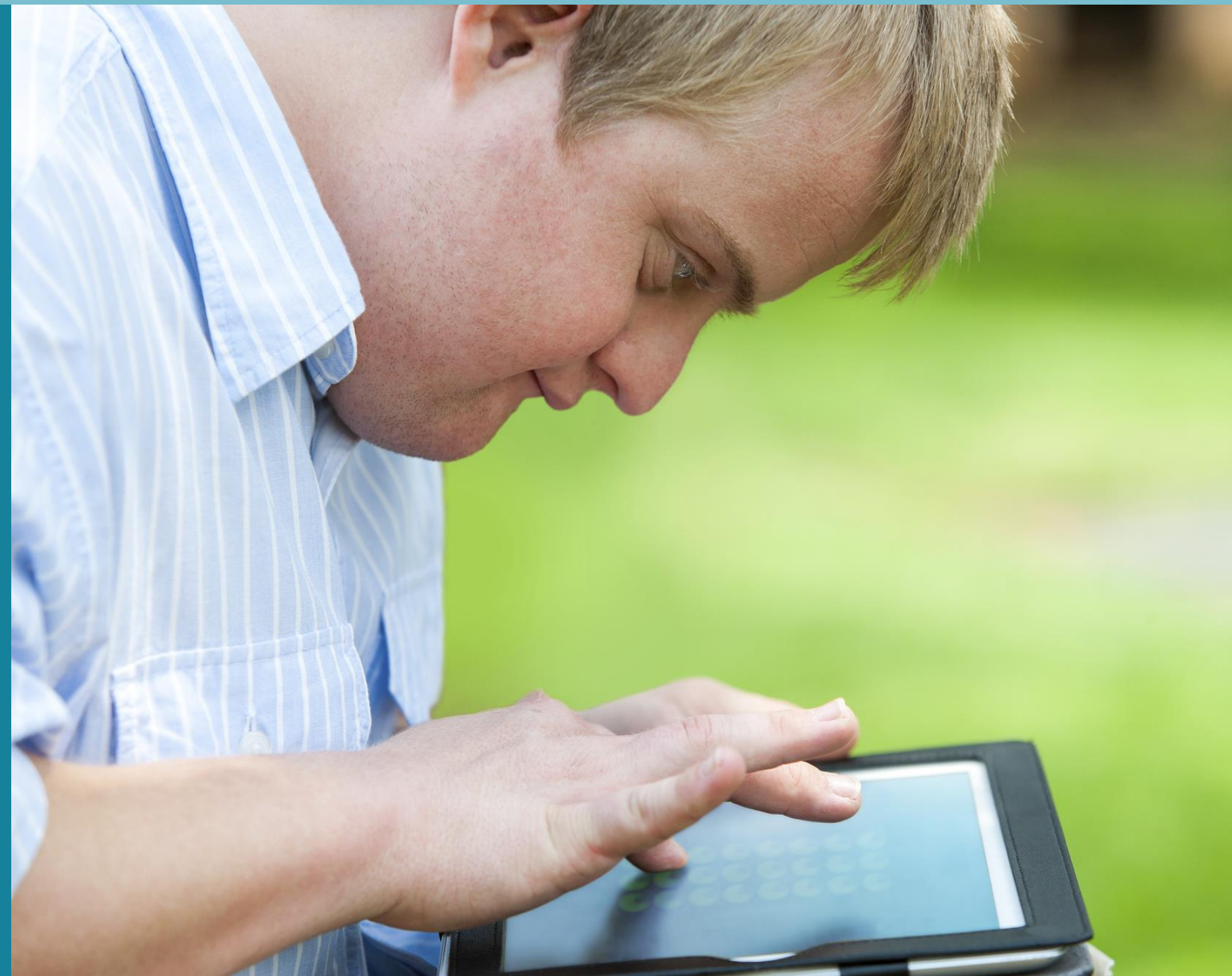


**Together, IDEA +
Section 504 of the
Rehabilitation Act of 1973 +
Title II of the Americans
with Disabilities Act
=
LEGAL framework for
inclusion**

RESEARCH BASIS

Decades of research show students with disabilities are not thriving in segregated classrooms.

- They may feel isolated within the school
- They may not have access to core curriculum or certain subjects
- They may be denied opportunities because of low expectations





**Students with and without
disabilities do better
academically and socially
when they learn together
in classrooms designed
to be inclusive.**



**Universal lesson:
When you design
things to be accessible
and responsive,
EVERYONE BENEFITS.**

**Inclusionary practices
are strategies that
teachers use to ensure
learning is accessible
and responsive**



**Our state now has an Inclusionary
Practices Technical Network to
support this**



MTSS

Multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) is a framework to identify what students need

- **It helps educators organize their efforts**
- **Teachers use it to identify WHO needs additional support, and WHAT support is needed**



**Tier 1 – Universal, core
instruction for all students**

Tier 2 – Targeted support

**Tier 3 – More intensive or
individualized support**

**When used to support inclusion,
the process can be used by teachers
to improve Tier 1 so it is more
accessible and responsive**



**Inclusion does not
“just happen.”
It is a choice.
It relies on presumed
competence and a
willingness to adjust
practices or strategies**

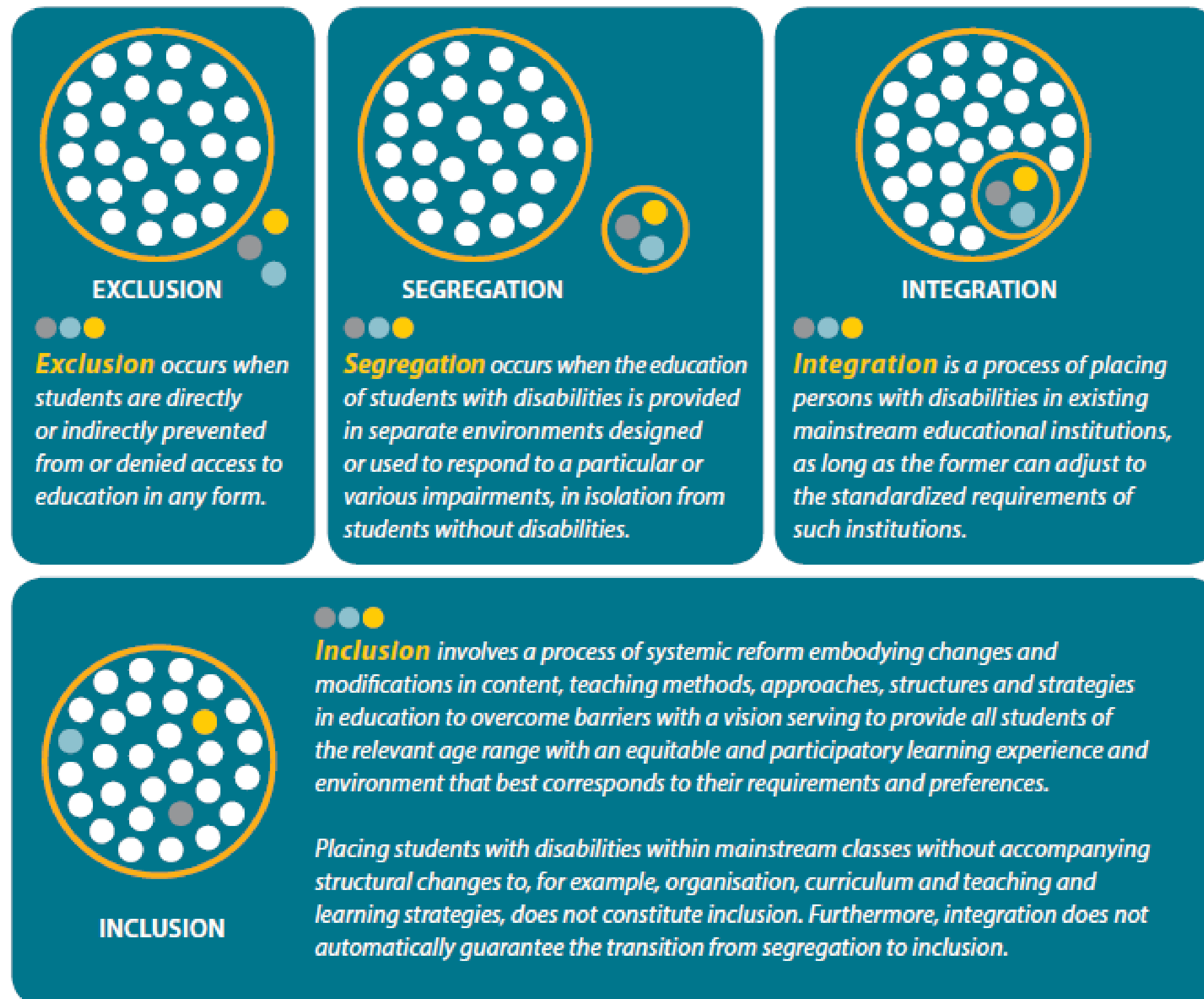
The state has been promoting and supporting inclusionary practices for several years.

This year, there are 2 focus areas:

- Including Black/African American students with disabilities in general education**
- Including students with intellectual and developmental disabilities in general education**

What is inclusion?

Educational environments for students with disabilities range from a complete denial of formal educational services to equal participation in all aspects of the education system. For this paper, we describe the educational experiences of students with disabilities using the following four categories:



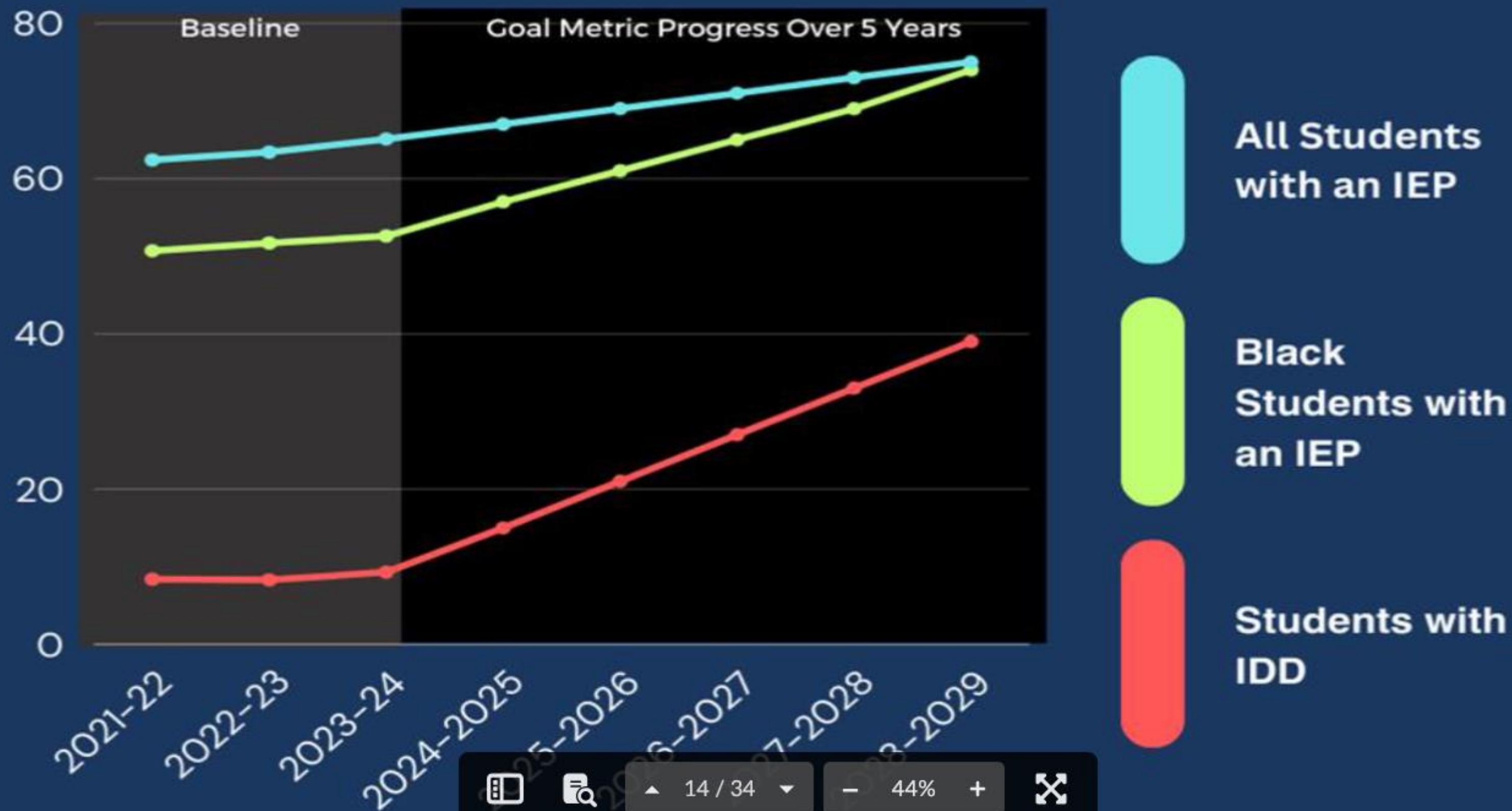
“Inclusion is not a strategy to help people fit into the systems and structures that exist in our societies; it is about **transforming those systems and structures** to make it better for everyone. Inclusion is about creating a better world for everyone.”

– Diane Richler, Past President, Inclusion International

Graphic: [A Summary of the Evidence on Inclusive Education created by Abt Associates.](#)

Uses definitions from the [United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities – General Comment No. 4.](#)

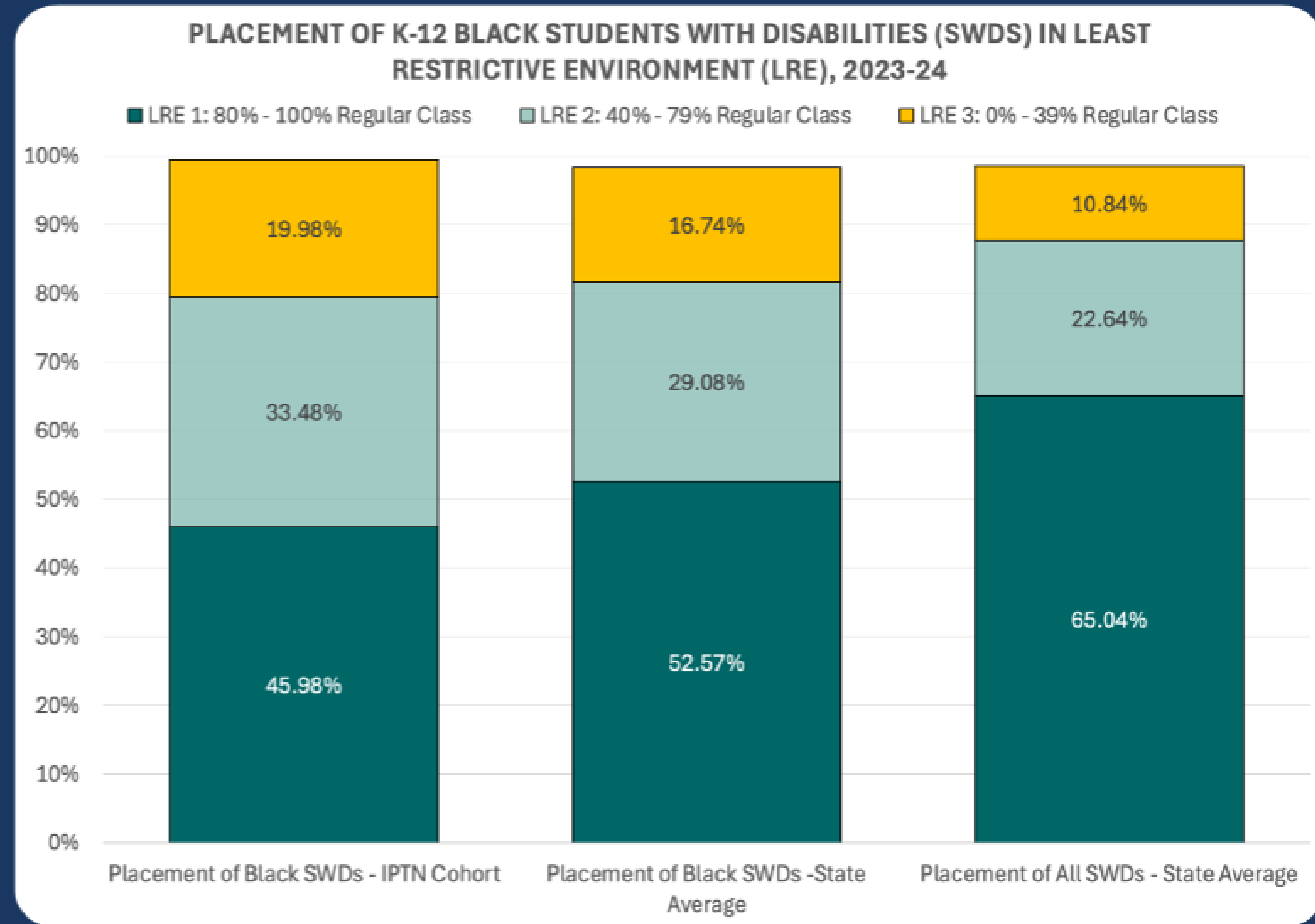
Percentage of Students with Access to General Education 80% or More of the Day



Why does the IPTN focus on Black students with IEPs?

52.57% of Black students with disabilities spend at least 80% of the school day in a general education setting.

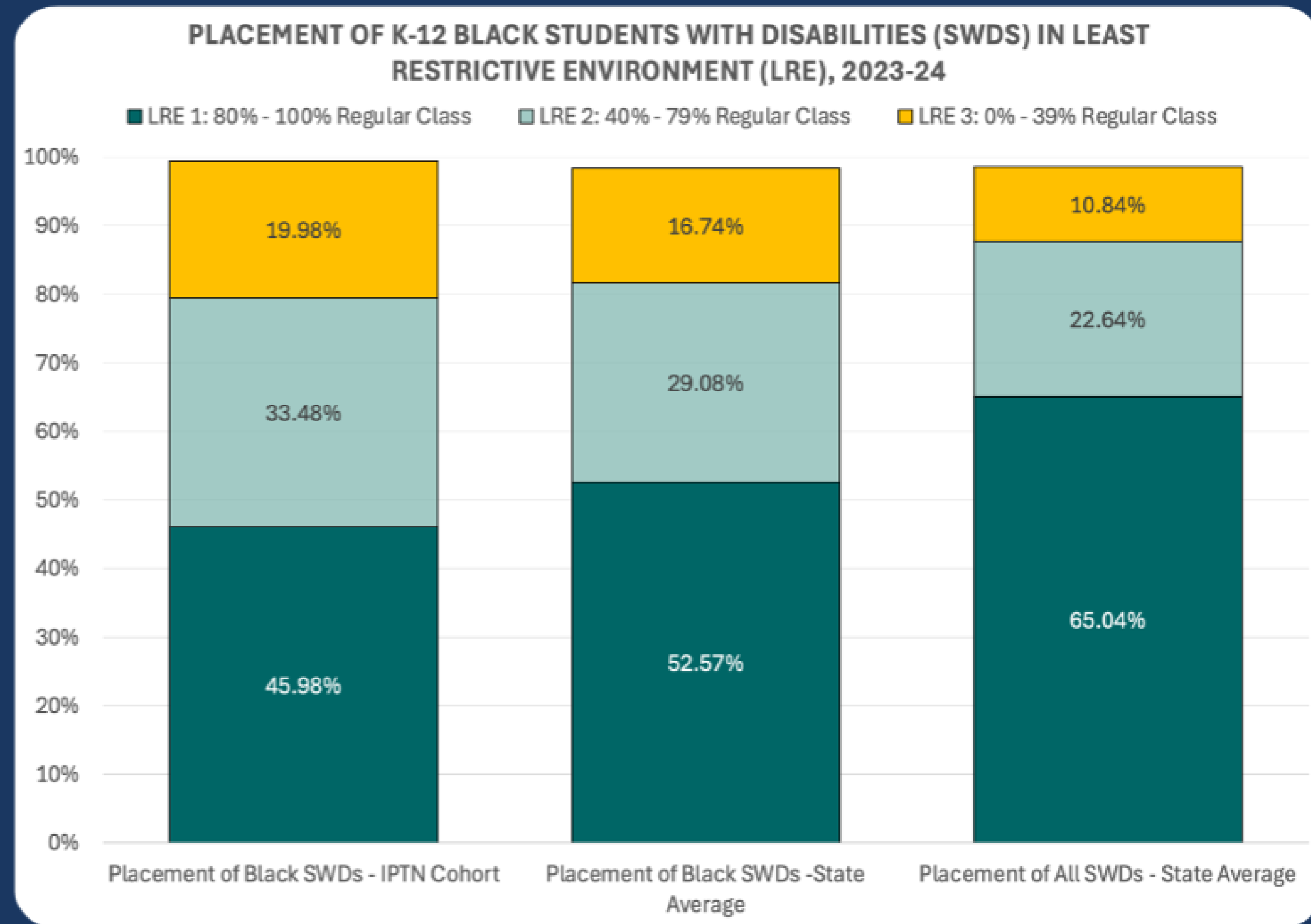
In comparison, **68.45%** of White students with disabilities spend at least 80% of the school day in the general education setting.



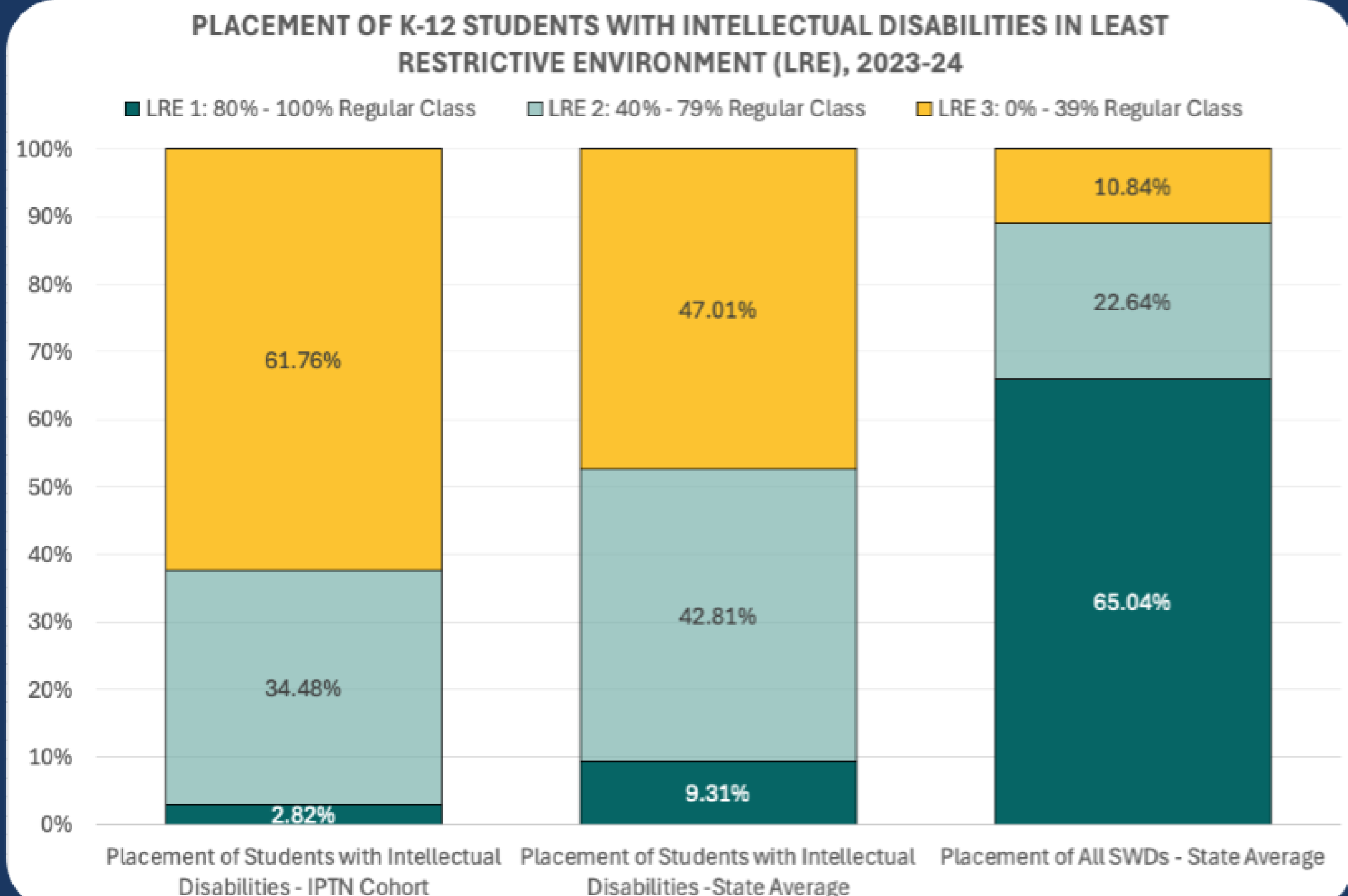
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In comparison, **68.45%** of White students with disabilities spend at least 80% of the school day in the general education setting.



Why does the IPTN focus on students with intellectual or developmental disabilities (IDD)?



2.88% of students with intellectual or developmental disabilities spend at least 80% of the school day in a general education setting.

Inclusionary practices: <https://ospi.k12.wa.us/student-success/support-programs/inclusionary-practices-technical-assistance-network-iptn>

End isolation: <https://ospi.k12.wa.us/student-success/health-safety/school-safety-center/reducing-restraint-eliminating-isolation-rrei-project>

Comprehensive inclusive education: <https://ospi.k12.wa.us/student-success/support-programs/comprehensive-inclusive-education>

Myths and facts: <https://ospi.k12.wa.us/sites/default/files/2022-12/Myths-Facts-Inclusionary-Practices.pdf>

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Section 3

THRIVING: THE RESEARCH BASIS FOR INCLUSION









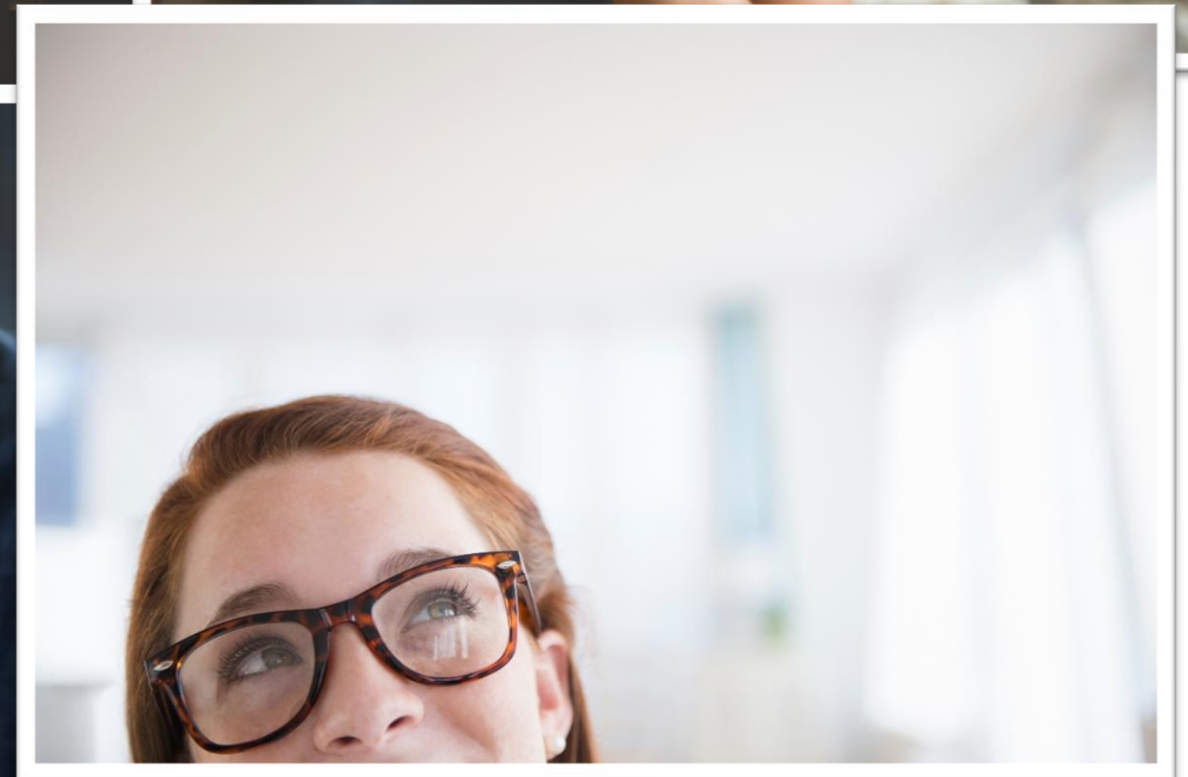
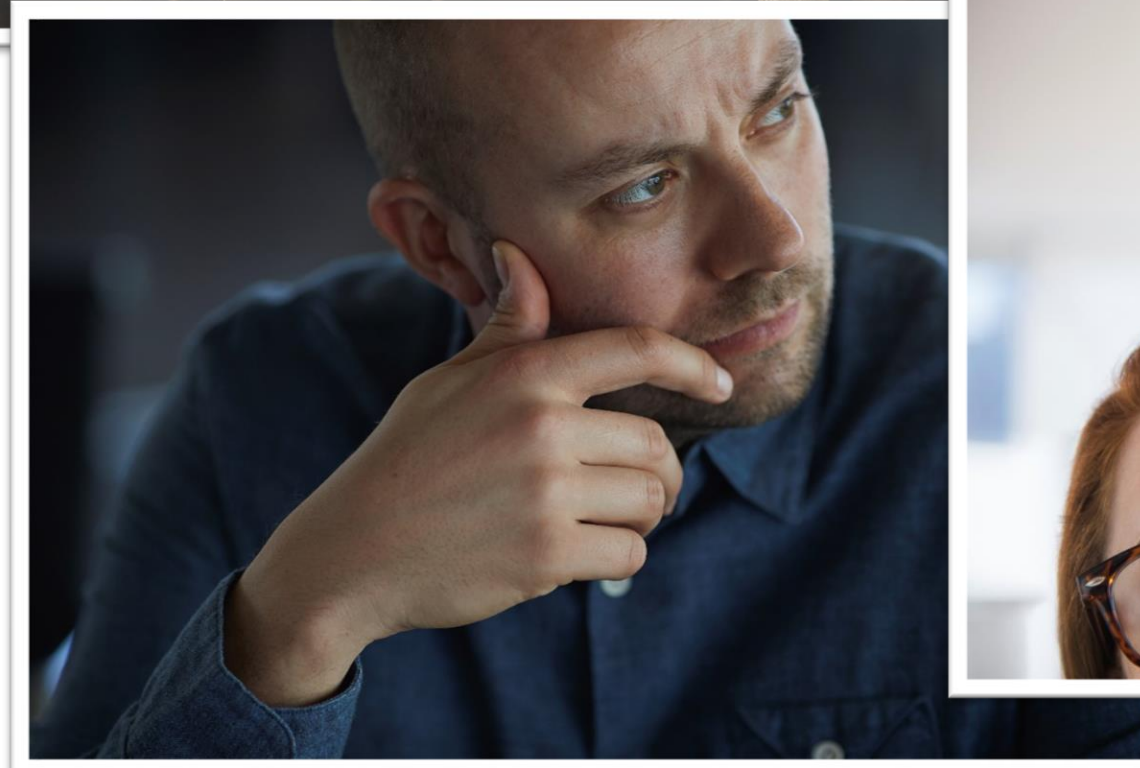
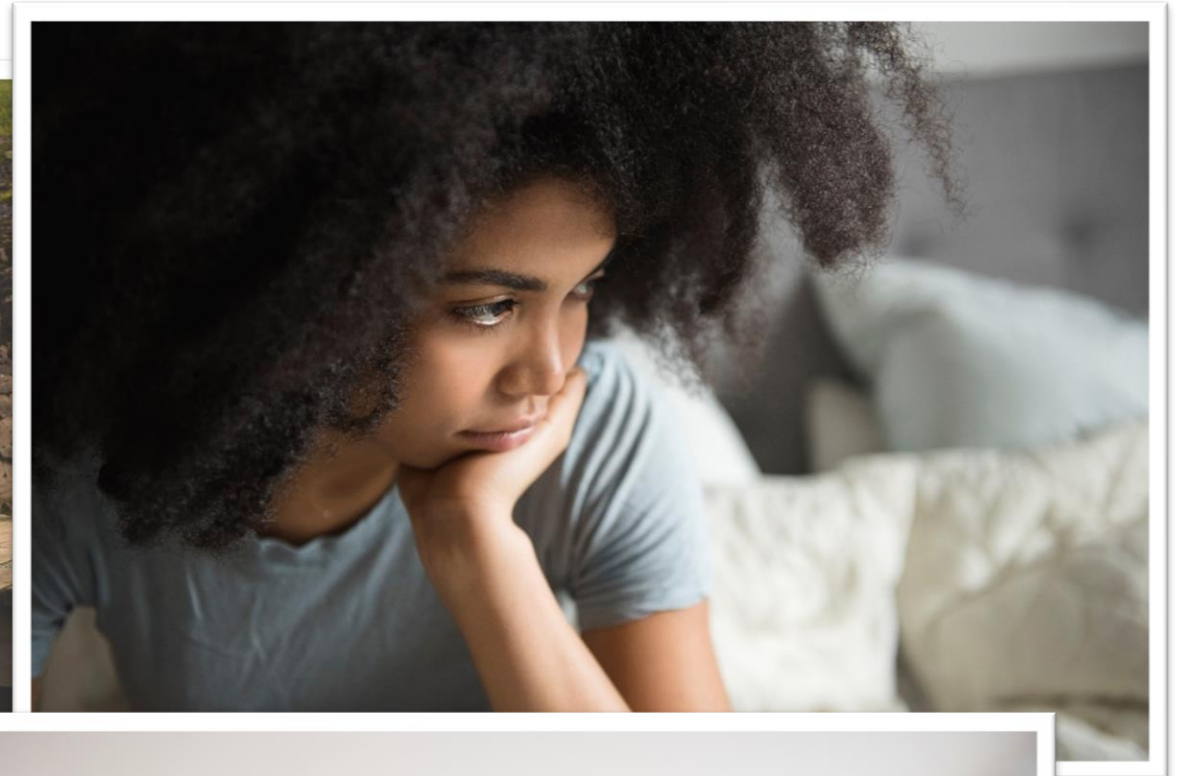
**What do these images
have in common?**

We talked about inclusion and exclusion. What about belonging?

What qualities do you
associate with
belonging?

What images come to
mind?

What about absence of
belonging? Alienation?



Why is belonging important?



“When each of these areas is addressed well, schools become learning environments in which students with disabilities thrive and are seen as valued and indispensable members of the school community.”

<https://publications.ici.umn.edu/ties/peer-engagement/belonging/introduction>

Experiences shape the brain

The brain is responsive & dynamic. It changes according to what we do and experience

It is super busy making connections when we are young, and it prunes back in teen years (prioritizes connections).

But it never stops being responsive and dynamic.

What might happen when children experience belonging?



**Experiences
good and bad
make us who
we are**



Stress affects the brain.

Some stress is
fine, good even

Toxic stress hurts
healthy
development



Good experiences and good skills help us heal

Stress – even toxic stress – can be buffered and mitigated with:

- Positive relationships
- Social & emotional skill-building
- Help from others to reduce stress (community support for housing or food insecurity; or work to combat racism, ableism and bias)

Belonging is not a given

It needs to be nurtured.

Lots of kids experience marginalization or exclusion when practices are not in place to nurture it.

All of us need to learn skills and use practices that promote belonging.



Disability is natural. It is part of the diversity of human experience and affects about 17% of kids. At some point, all of us will experience disability.

Graphic: TIES Center. "Dimensions of belonging."
<https://publications.ici.umn.edu/ties/peer-engagement/belonging/introduction>

Inclusion is important from the start

Children seek to belong and learn to connect socially from very early in life

Early inclusion promotes continued social connection and community; early isolation predicts longer-term isolation

The scientific base

IT CAN BE DONE!

Individualized, evidence-based strategies for children with disabilities can be implemented successfully in inclusive early childhood programs

IT WORKS!

Children with disabilities, including those with significant disabilities, can make significant developmental and learning progress in inclusive settings

*U.S. Department of Health and Human Services & U.S. Department of Education, "Policy Statement on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs."
September 2015*



The scientific base

KIDS LEARN FROM EACH OTHER!

Research suggests that children's growth and learning is related to peers' skills and the effects are most pronounced for children with disabilities

KIDS LEARN TOGETHER, WITH SUPPORT!

These outcomes are achieved when children with disabilities are included several days per week in social and learning opportunities with their typically developing peers and when specialized instructional strategies are used



*U.S. Department of Health and Human Services & U.S. Department of Education,
"Policy Statement on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs." September 2015*

It benefits everyone

Typically developing children ALSO show positive developmental, social, and attitudinal outcomes from inclusive experiences.

- Inclusion is important from the start
- Children seek to belong and learn to connect socially from very early in life
- Early inclusion promotes continued social connection and community; early isolation predicts longer-term isolation



Qualities of districts where inclusion is adopted

- Key personnel in positions to influence policy
- Shared vision for inclusion by key participants
- State and national policies
- Training/external support
- Organizational structure

The myth of expense

Inclusive programs are generally equal or LESS expensive than self-contained placements



*U.S. Department of Health and Human Services & U.S. Department of Education,
"Policy Statement on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood
Programs." September 2015*

Inclusion for Young Children with Disabilities: A Quarter Century of Research Perspectives

(Odom, 2012)

- None of this is new
- “Inclusion” more than physical placement. Conveys children with disabilities will become part of larger community.
- High quality inclusion = access, participation and supports
- Access = removal of barriers AND addition of multiple ways to promote learning
- Participation = promote engagement and belonging
- Supports = infrastructure that provides inclusive services

Myth of Clinical Judgment (Biklen, 1988)

Tendency: “...to view people with disabilities as (a) victimized by a disabling condition and (b) in need of treatment – not of rights.” (p. 128)

Assumption: Placement outcomes are a matter of professional evaluation and the individual student’s characteristics

Reality: So many external factors – funds, available placements, bureaucratic concerns, public opinion, locality – often outweigh any “professional” judgments; none of these are the choices of people with disabilities

Educational Placement of Students With Autism: The Impact of State of Residence

Jennifer A. Kurth, PhD¹

Abstract

Typically, child characteristics such as IQ and severity of autism symptoms are thought to determine educational placement. The present study examines external factors, including state of residence and state funding formulas, to determine their potential influence on placement outcomes. Findings reveal that considerable variations exist among states in placing students with autism spectrum disorders in inclusive, mainstreaming, self-contained, and separate schools. This variation suggests that factors beyond child characteristics, such as IQ, play a major role in educational placement decisions. Furthermore, states in the Eastern United States tend to have more restrictive placement rates than states in the Western United States. State special education funding was found to have a minimal impact on placement outcomes. As a whole, it is unlikely that child characteristics alone determine placement outcomes.

“State special education funding was found to have minimal impact on placement outcomes. As a whole it is unlikely that child characteristics alone determine placement outcomes.”
– Jennifer Kurth, PhD

“The Gap that Matters” – Paula Kluth

Students’ Current Grade Level	Percent Scoring at or Above Grade Level	
	Before Inclusive Reform	Two Years After Reform
All 5 th graders	55	66
5 th graders w/disabilities	18	43
All 6 th graders	54	72
6 th graders with disabilities	18	53
All 7 th graders	56	78
7 th graders with disabilities	29	70
All 8 th graders	48	62
8 th graders with disabilities	8	40
<i>Note.</i> These data follow the same student cohorts over three years. Data listed in the "Before Inclusive Reform" column reflect each student cohort's scores two years before its current grade level (for example, data from 3rd grade for students listed as currently in 5th grade). River View also made gains at each grade level from year to year (for example, comparing one 5th grade class to the next 5th grade class).		

... is the one between kids who are included, and those who are segregated

Often, focus goes to “the gap” in grade level performance growing between kids with disabilities and their gen ed peers – used as a reason to segregate

Inclusion Presumes Competence

SEGREGATION

When we segregate children according to perceived ability, we set a singular expectation of success or failure – we **cut off social connections and narrow learning opportunities**

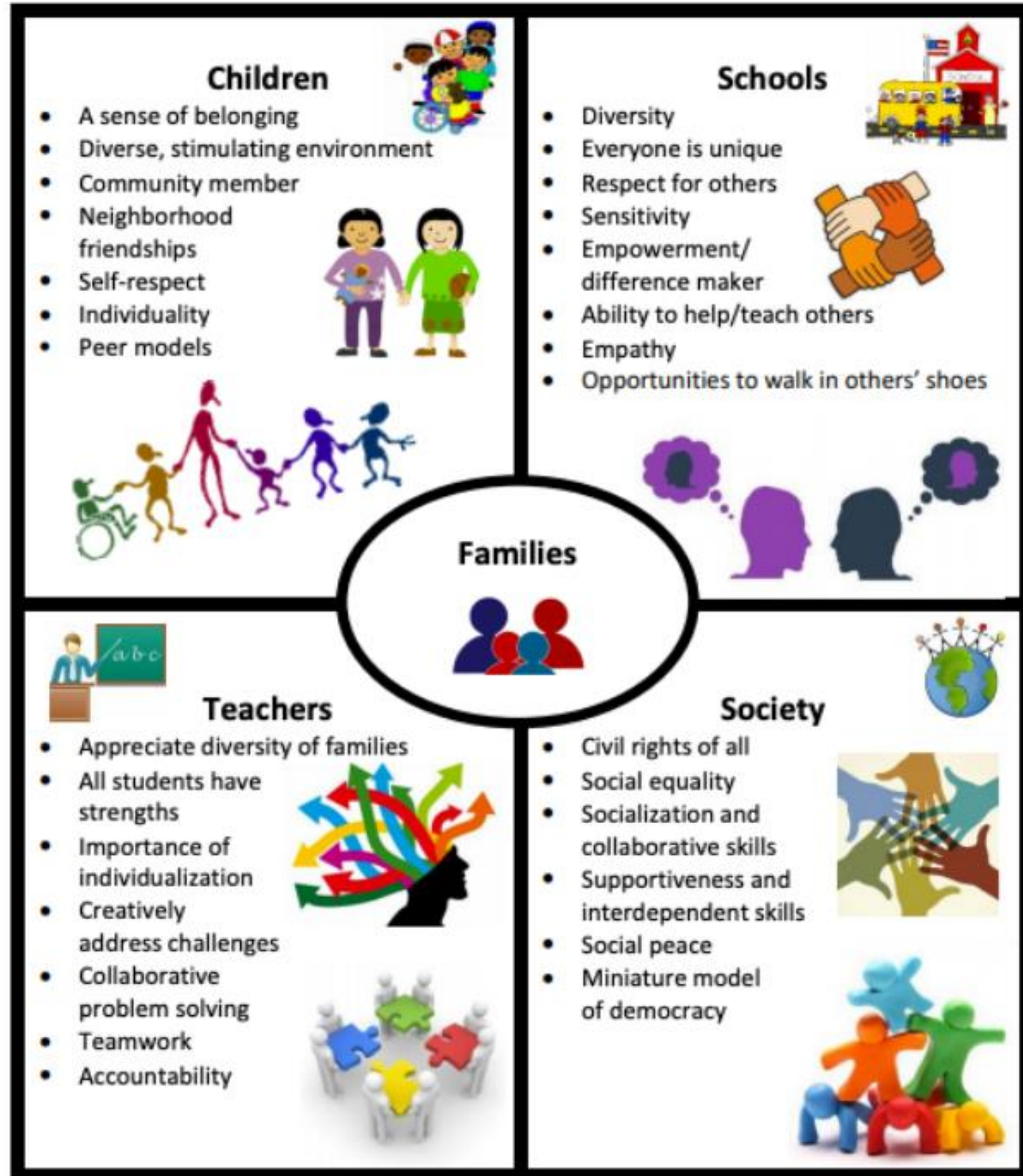
INCLUSION

In an inclusive classroom, children are given **access to varied learning opportunities and the space to develop** a strong sense of self – their skills, their individual needs, how they learn best and belong within their community.

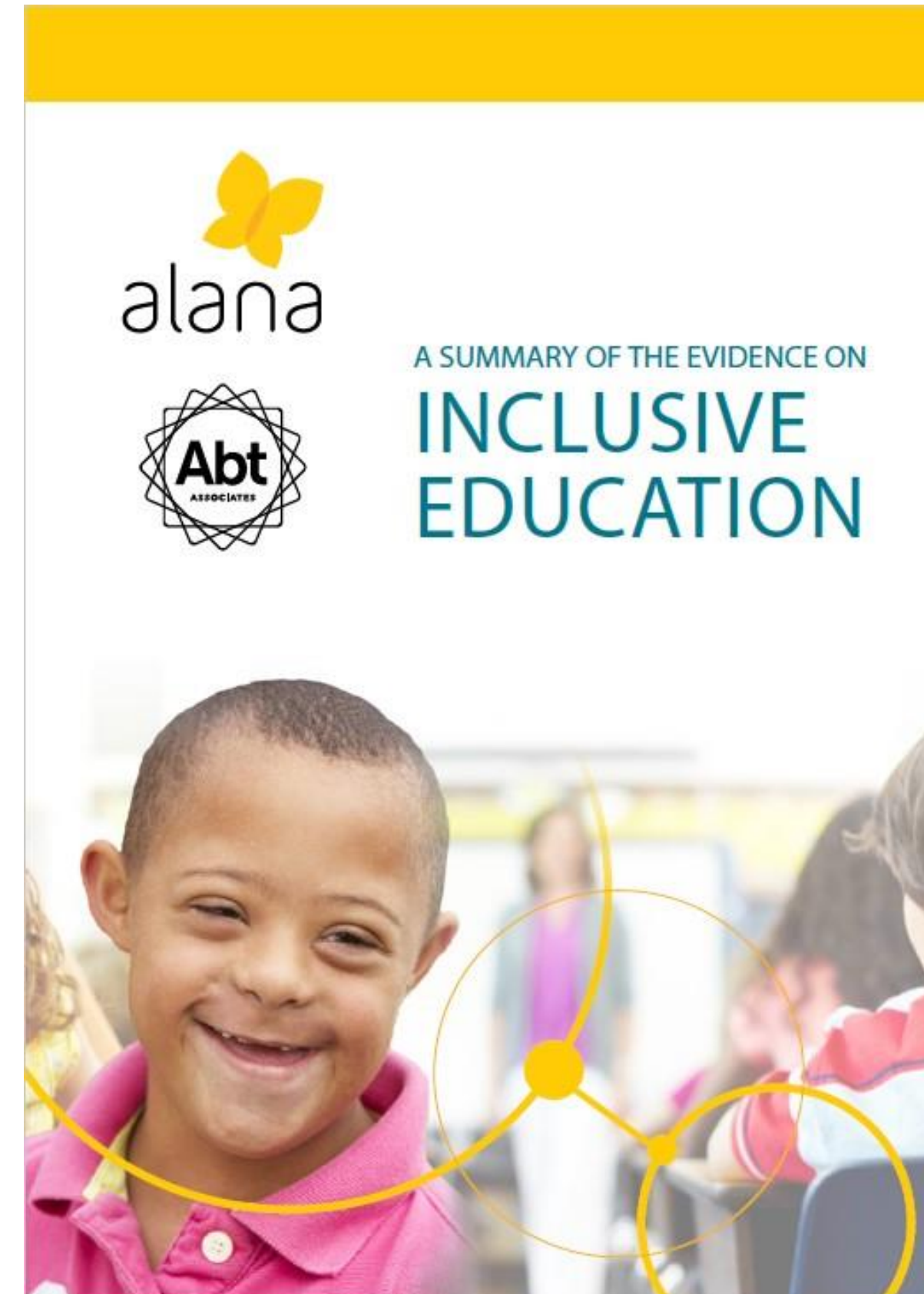


Inclusion Benefits Everyone

"Children that learn together, learn to live together"



from "Creative Educators at Work: All Children Including Those with Disabilities Can Play Traditional Classroom Games," by Donna Raschke, Ph.D., and Jodi Bronson, Ed.S., 1999



https://alana.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/A_Summary_of_the_evidence_on_inclusive_education.pdf

Shelley Moore: Transforming Inclusive Education



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RYtUIU8MjIY>

Access or inclusion?

1. An autistic child is placed in a regular ed classroom that offers a sensory area just for his use.

Access

Inclusion

2. Child works with the paraeducator at the back of the room.

Access

Inclusion

3. A local theater troupe offers one play a week with ASL interpretation, low lighting, no flashing lights, and lower volume level. These showings are specifically marketed through disability organizations.

Access

Inclusion

4. A town parade advertisements, in plain language, state that accommodations will be provided for anyone requesting them, there will be a noise level limit, the route and bathrooms along it will be accessible, and that there will be a person making sure that needed accommodations are made.

Access

Inclusion

5. A 4-year-old disabled child who uses diapers is warmly welcomed in the neighborhood childcare and placed in the 1-3-year-old group so that her toileting needs can be efficiently met.

Access

Inclusion

Belonging Reflection Tool



Although individuals can use this reflection tool, it is designed for collaborative reflection. To the greatest extent possible, talk with and listen to others at your school (e.g., teachers, related service providers, school counselors, administrators, paraprofessionals, families, students with and without disabilities). For each of the ten dimensions of belonging, reflect on what you are doing well and what could be done better or differently. To ensure this reflection leads to observable action, agree on taking at least three actionable steps that will make a noticeable difference in promoting inclusion and belonging at your school.

TIES Center reflection tool

<https://ici-s.umn.edu/files/tJ3RxCHKXX/belonging-reflection-tool?preferredLocale=en-US>

Creating Communities of Belonging

<https://publications.ici.umn.edu/ties/peer-engagement/belonging/introduction>

Dimensions of belonging	What are we doing really well right now in this area?	What could we be doing better or differently in this area?
Present Are students involved in all of the same spaces and activities as their peers?		
Invited Is the presence and participation of students actively sought out and encouraged by others at their school?		
Welcomed Are students received by others at the school with warmth, friendliness, and authentic delight?		
Known Are students viewed as unique individuals, recognized by their strengths, and appreciated for who they are?		

Dimensions of belonging	What are we doing really well right now in this area?	What could we be doing better or differently in this area?
Accepted Are students embraced without condition and viewed as equals by their peers?		
Involved Are students actively engaged with their peers in shared learning and common goals?		
Supported Are students given what they need to reach their full potential and truly thrive?		
Heard Are the perspectives of each student sought out, listened to, and respected by others?		
Befriended Have students developed relationships with their peers that are marked by mutual affection and reciprocity?		

Dimensions of belonging	What are we doing really well right now in this area?	What could we be doing better or differently in this area?
Needed Are students valued by others and considered to be indispensable members of the school community?		
Next Steps What actionable steps should we take next to ensure all students experience belonging in our school?		
1.		
2.		
3.		

Adapted from: Carter, E. W. (2020, November). *From barriers to belonging: Creating inclusive communities for everyone*. Keynote presentation at the International OCALICOR Conference.

Crafting and Implementing an Inclusive IEP

Introducing a new tool for IEP teams
A webinar for parents & guardians

- April 22, 4 to 5:30 pm
- Spanish & Somalia interpretation
- Online via Zoom. [Register here!](https://bit.ly/InclusiveIEP)

What does an inclusive IEP look like for students with high support needs?
This webinar unpacks [Comprehensive Inclusive Education](#), a new tool developed by the [TIES Center](#) and the state's [Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction](#).
It covers the 3 principles of comprehensive, inclusive education and 4 steps that IEP teams can use to support learners in an inclusive setting.

Presenters: Jaimee Kidder (Ph.D, BCBA), Special Education Program Supervisor at OSPI; and Gail Ghore (Ph.D) and Jennifer Sommerness (Ed.S), researchers with the TIES Center and the [National Center on Educational Outcomes](#) (NCEO) at the University of Minnesota



Scan for registration



Co-hosted by community sponsors:



Crafting and implementing an Inclusive IEP.

A webinar for parents & guardians

Register here: <https://bit.ly/InclusiveIEP>

Washington has a new tool for IEP teams to help them develop and implement inclusive IEPs, designed for students with extensive support needs.

Please join us **April 22, from 4 to 5:30 pm**, as we give families an overview. Interpretation will be provided in Spanish and Somali.

The online resource is available now, and it centers on meaningfully engaging family and student voices throughout the process of developing an IEP. It begins by building on a vision for each student, challenges limiting beliefs about inclusive education, supports meaningful collaboration with families, and provides a process for implementing inclusive education throughout the school day and across the school year.

The tool was created by OSPI and the TIES Center. You can access it here: <https://bit.ly/InclusiveIEPs>

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/6R3QNB2>

Please take the survey!