

What it Means to have an Inclusive Classroom

What Makes a Classroom Inclusive?

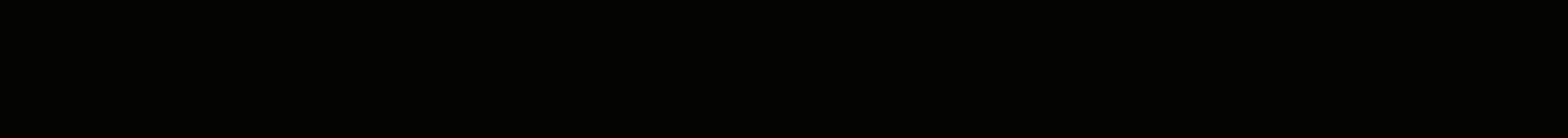
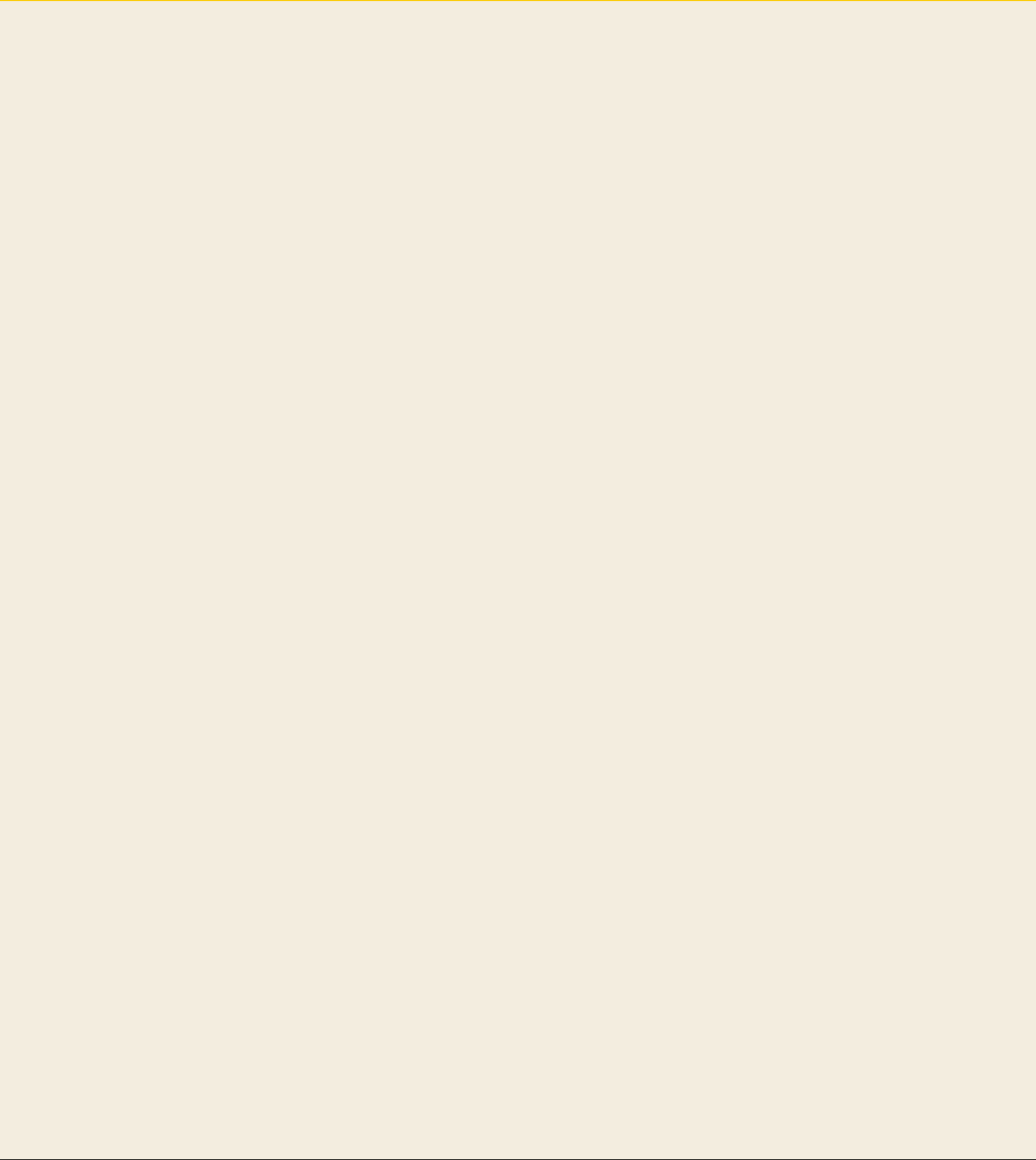
Children with disabilities have a right to a public education and to be part of the general education classroom. Federal legislation makes it clear that students with disabilities are included as general education students. This means that they are an important part of their general education class.

The benefits of inclusion are clear. We know that being included means students with disabilities spend more time on academics and achieve more. They participate in non-academic activities and develop broader social relationships when they have opportunities to interact with peers without disabilities. Students without disabilities also benefit from the variety of instructional strategies and accommodations used by teachers. They learn to help and value each other.

Inclusion is not just being in a general education class. Inclusion only works when your child is learning and applying meaningful content and meeting IEP goals with same-age classmates without disabilities. So, how do you know if your child is included in the classroom? Here are some observations you might make about the surroundings in an inclusive classroom:

- Desks are arranged in groups around the classroom. This allows for peer learning, engagement, and socialization among students. Students who collaborate productively will have more positive outcomes.
- Visual learning aids are used, such as daily schedules, timers, posters, and charts. Many students are visual learners, and even those that aren't can benefit.





What Can You Do To Support Effective Inclusive Practices In Your Child's Classroom ?

Ask your child's teacher what you can do at home to make it easier for your child to be included, such as helping with special homework projects or practicing vocabulary and communication skills.

Stay on top of what your child is learning at school. Ask your child's teacher to share the results of his or her weekly progress.

Read stories to your child about friendship and belonging. Talk about how to make friends at school. Ask your child to draw a picture or write about the meaning of friendship.

- How do friends help each other?
- What are some things friends do together?
- How can you make new friends?

Share ideas with the school about what is helping your child at home with learning, communication, or social/behavioral difficulties. Open communication between home and school will help support your child's routine and learning.

Be a school citizen. Participate in activities, such as the Parent Teacher Organization, or the School Advisory Committee. Volunteer for field trips and other activities where family members are needed.

Help support other families, especially those of students with disabilities. Even a small gesture such as a phone call or kind word can mean a lot when a family is struggling.

Thank teachers for efforts to include your child. Send thank you notes. Celebrate successes, no matter how small. Let the principal, superintendent, and school board members know how teachers are helping to include your child.