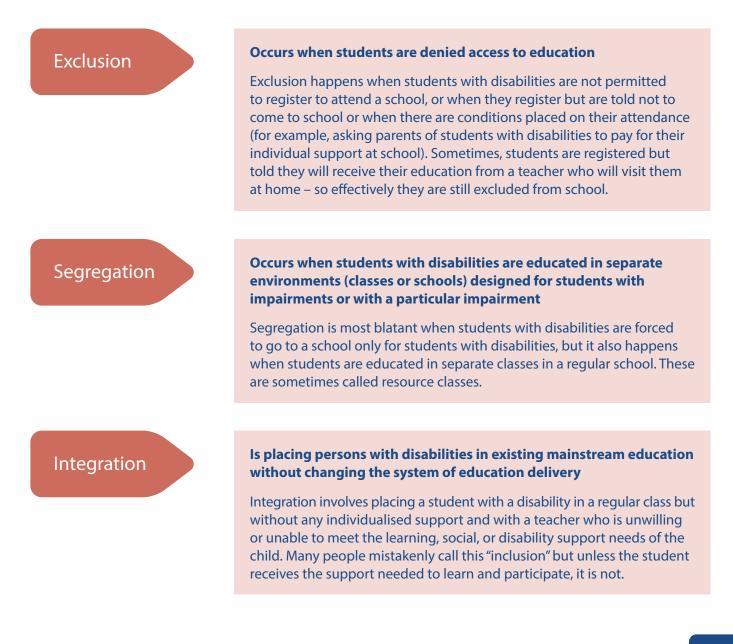# Inclusion, Integration, Segregation, and Exclusion: What's the difference?

Learners with disabilities engaging in school systems will experience one of four things – exclusion, segregation, integration, and inclusion.

The goal of inclusive education for all is that all learners will have access to true inclusion at school – but it is important for families to understand the difference between the four experiences – because often schools will use the term "inclusion" to describe systems that are really segregation or integration. By understanding true inclusion and how it differs from integration and from segregated systems, families can push for real inclusion at school.

Exclusion

Occurs when students are denied access to education

Exclusion happens when students with disabilities are not permitted to register to attend a school, or when they register but are told not to come to school or when there are conditions placed on their attendance (for example, asking parents of students with disabilities to pay for their individual support at school). Sometimes, students are registered but told they will receive their education from a teacher who will visit them at home – so effectively they are still excluded from school.

Segregation

Occurs when students with disabilities are educated in separate environments (classes or schools) designed for students with impairments or with a particular impairment

Segregation is most blatant when students with disabilities are forced to go to a school only for students with disabilities, but it also happens when students are educated in separate classes in a regular school. These are sometimes called resource classes.

Integration

Is placing persons with disabilities in existing mainstream education without changing the system of education delivery

Integration involves placing a student with a disability in a regular class but without any individualised support and with a teacher who is unwilling or unable to meet the learning, social, or disability support needs of the child. Many people mistakenly call this "inclusion" but unless the student receives the support needed to learn and participate, it is not.

Inclusion

Involves a transformation of the education system with changes in content, teaching methods, approaches, structures, strategies and review mechanisms

In an inclusive system, teachers are trained on inclusive teaching methods during their education and also receive ongoing professional development to respond to different learning styles and present lessons in different ways so that all students can learn. Resources are available to meet the individual needs of students with disabilities, such as modified curricula and adapted materials.

Your turn: Inclusion, Integration, Segregation, and Exclusion

Think about your own community – are there examples of each of these four systems that currently exist? What steps can families take to push integration, segregation, and exclusion towards the goal of full inclusion?

Exclusion

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Segregation

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Integration

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Inclusion

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