

# IEP PLACEMENT TIPS FROM IDEA

## Considering Benefits of General Education

*"[IDEA] presumes that the first placement option considered for each child with a disability is the **regular classroom** in the school that the child would attend if not disabled..."*

2004 IDEA Regulations CFR, 2006, p.46588

IDEA requires that placement decisions start with consideration of the classroom and school that the child would attend if not disabled. Unfortunately, many IEP teams do not make individualized placement decisions, instead basing it on category or severity of disability, configuration of service delivery, or habit. The following **benefits associated with general education settings** are provided to assist IEP teams. Corresponding research is listed on the following page.

### **Potential Benefits for the Child in General Education Settings**

- Higher math and reading scores<sup>1, 2, 3</sup>
- Higher literacy, math, and communication skill growth<sup>4</sup>
- Greater growth in social skills<sup>2, 5, 6</sup>
- More participation in school and community groups<sup>5</sup>
- More and more important social contacts<sup>7</sup>
- Increased rates of preparedness for higher education and career opportunities<sup>1, 8</sup>
- Higher likelihood of gaining competitive employment and living independently<sup>5</sup>
- Lower likelihood of the use of restraints<sup>9</sup>

### **Potential Benefits on the Quality of Services in General Education Settings**

- Less distracting environments<sup>9</sup>
- More access to age- and grade-appropriate learning materials<sup>10</sup>
- More access to positive peer models for behavior, learning, communication<sup>2, 10</sup>
- More access to peer support<sup>10</sup>
- More access to general education teachers<sup>2, 4, 9, 10</sup>
- More likelihood of achieving IEP goals<sup>4</sup>
- Less instructional time from less qualified instructors (e.g., paraprofessional)<sup>2, 9</sup>
- Lower likelihood of educator focusing on other adults rather than on students<sup>9</sup>
- Lower frequency of nonacademic instruction<sup>9</sup>
- More student-centered instruction<sup>10</sup>

If someone claims potential harmful effects of more time in general education settings, **ask to see the research.**



### Endnotes of research supporting claims of benefits of general education:

1. Cole, S. M., Murphy, H. R., Frisby, M. B., & Robinson, J. (2023). The relationship between special education placement and high school outcomes. *The Journal of Special Education*, 57(1), 13-23. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00224669221097945>
2. Mansouri, M. C., Kurth, J. A., Lockman Turner, E., Zimmerman, K. N., & Frick, T. A. (2022). Comparison of academic and social outcomes of students with extensive support needs across placements. *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities*, 47(2), 111-129. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15407969221101792>
3. Cosier, M., Causton-Theoharis, J., & Theoharis, G. (2013). Does access matter? Time in general education and achievement for students with disabilities. *Remedial and Special Education*, 34(6), 323-332. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0741932513485448>
4. Gee, K., Gonzalez, M., & Cooper, C. (2020). Outcomes of inclusive versus separate placements: A matched pairs comparison study. *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities*, 45(4), 223-240. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1540796920943469>
5. Marder, C., Wagner, M., & Sumi, C. (2003). The social adjustment of youth with disabilities. *The Achievements of Youth With Disabilities During Secondary School: A Report From the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2)*. SRI International. [https://nlts2.sri.com/reports/2003\\_11/nlts2\\_report\\_2003\\_11\\_complete.pdf](https://nlts2.sri.com/reports/2003_11/nlts2_report_2003_11_complete.pdf)
6. Newman, L., & Davies-Mercier, E. (2005). The school engagement of elementary and middle school students with disabilities. *Engagement, Academics, Social Adjustment, and Independence: The Achievements of Elementary and Middle School Students With Disabilities*. SRI International. [https://www.seels.net/designdocs/engagement/All\\_SEELS\\_outcomes\\_10-04-05.pdf](https://www.seels.net/designdocs/engagement/All_SEELS_outcomes_10-04-05.pdf)
7. Jameson, J. M., Hicks, T., Lansey, K., Kurth, J. A., Jackson, L., Zagona, A. L., Burnette, K., Agran, M., Shogren, K., & Pace, J. (2022). Predicting the frequency and significance of social contacts across placements: A Bayesian multilevel model analysis. *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities*, 47(4), 229–243. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15407969221136538>
8. Mazzotti, V. L., Rowe, D. A., Kwiatek, S., Voggt, A., Chang, W.-H., Fowler, C. H., Poppen, M., Sinclair, J., & Test, D. W. (2021). Secondary transition predictors of postschool success: An update to the research base. *Career Development and Transition for Exceptional Individuals*, 44(1), 47-64. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2165143420959793>
9. Zagona, A. L., Kurth, J. A., Lockman Turner, E., Pace, J., Shogren, K., Lansey, K., Jameson, M., Burnette, K., Mansouri, M., Hicks, T., & Gerasimova, D. (2022). Ecobehavioral analysis of the experiences of students with complex support needs in different classroom types. *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities*, 47(4), 209–228. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15407969221126496>
10. Jackson, L., Agran, M., Lansey, K. R., Baker, D., Matthews, S., Fitzpatrick, H., Jameson, M., Ryndak, D., Burnette, K., & Taub, D. (2022). Examination of contextual variables across and within different types of placement for elementary students with complex support needs. *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities*, 47(4), 191-208. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15407969221132248>

Brief summaries of some of these studies are available on [E&E's Resource page](#).

