



Washington State Community Advocacy Coalition 2026 Federal Issue Paper



Inclusive, Responsive and Accessible Education

Access to early support; high quality, inclusive education pre-K through grade 12; and accessible, post-secondary education are crucial to securing meaningful employment, independence, and health and well-being for individuals with disabilities.

Early Supports

Therapies and family education in the 0 to age 3 years [remain critical](#) to ensure children with developmental delays can access learning needed to reach their potential.

What is Needed Federally:

Robust funding for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Part C.

Inclusive Learning, Pre-K To Grade 12

[Research shows](#) all students benefit from inclusive learning, with greater academic and social and emotional growth, and preparation for adulthood. Segregating students with disabilities and using other exclusionary practices hurts educational outcomes.

What Is It?

When educators use inclusive learning practices, they anticipate diverse learners and [design the general education setting](#) to be accessible and responsive. They use a “push in” model where services are provided in the general education setting, to the maximum extent. They also promote belonging and empathy to create safe learning communities.

Unfortunately, most students with developmental disabilities remain segregated in self-contained classrooms or separate schools, despite what research shows and federal requirements that students with disabilities be educated alongside peers without disabilities to the maximum extent appropriate.

Exclusionary and harmful practices like restraint and isolation (also called seclusion) are also disproportionately used against students with intellectual and developmental disabilities, causing [trauma and long-term harm](#).



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In 2019, Washington state launched a technical assistance program to promote inclusion and reduce exclusionary practices that disproportionately segregate students with intellectual disabilities and Black students with disabilities. In 2023, the state launched a similar program to reduce restraint and eliminate isolation.

What is Needed Federally:

- Full IDEA funding, including training and technical assistance. The federal government covers just 11% of IDEA costs. In 1975, Congress set a goal of 40%
- Strong civil rights protections and resources for oversight and technical assistance. This includes enforcement of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and IDEA.
- Federal law that protect students with disabilities from discrimination in school voucher programs. If students are using public funds for their education, then Section 504, ADA, and IDEA rights must follow them to the setting of their choice
- [Keeping All Students Safe Act](#) or similar federal legislation to ban isolation/seclusion and limit restraint to true emergencies. Funding to provide support for proven, effective strategies

Transition and Post-Secondary Education

Students with disabilities need access to high quality, person-centered transition services that prepare them for work and civic engagement, as well as accessible post-secondary education, including options for college and career and technical education (CTE).

What is Needed Federally:

Full funding of IDEA (for transition services); oversight and enforcement of rights under Section 504 and the ADA to ensure an equal opportunity to benefit from publicly funded CTE and college programs.

Additional Resources:

- [What is Early Intervention and Why is it Important?](#)
- [A Summary of the Evidence on Inclusive Education](#)



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- [Extended Myths & Facts about Inclusionary Practices in Washington State](#)
- [Inclusive-Principal-Leadership-in-MTSS-2025.pdf](#)
- [Restraint & Seclusion Resource Document](#)
- [Supporting Students with Disabilities in Transitioning to Adulthood – NASBE – National Association of State Boards of Education](#)

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