



## The Practice of Inclusive Education in Public Schools

## The Practice of Inclusive Education in Public Schools

Author: Layane Lima Dill Pereira

- Graduated in Literature from the Higher Technical Educational Center of Western Paraná
- Postgraduate degree in Children's Literature from São Braz College
- Postgraduate degree in Special Education - Special Needs Assistance, from Faculdades Integradas do Vale do Itaipó
- Postgraduate degree in Early Childhood Education, from the Faculty of Pinhais

### Summary

Inclusive education represents one of the greatest challenges in contemporary education, especially in public schools, which often face a shortage of material and human resources. The ideal of a truly inclusive classroom involves respecting differences, promoting equity, and offering effective learning conditions to all students, including those with disabilities. This article discusses the main challenges of implementing inclusive education in public education settings, analyzing policies, pedagogical methodologies, and successful experiences. The study also highlights adaptive teaching practices and teacher training strategies, aiming to understand how to make inclusion a possible reality even in contexts of structural limitations.

**Keywords:** Inclusive education; Public school; Disability; Teaching methodologies; Equity.

### Abstract

Inclusive education represents one of the greatest challenges of contemporary educational systems, especially in public schools that often face limited material and human resources. The ideal of a truly inclusive classroom implies respecting differences, promoting equity, and offering real learning opportunities to all students, including those with disabilities. This article discusses the main challenges in implementing inclusive education in public schools, analyzing policies, teaching methodologies, and successful experiences. The study also highlights adaptive teaching practices and teacher training strategies, aiming to understand how to make inclusion a tangible reality even in contexts of structural limitations.

**Keywords:** Inclusive education; public schools; Disability; Teaching methodologies; Equity.



## 1. Introduction to Inclusive Education in Public Schools

Inclusive education is a principle enshrined in international treaties, national legislation, and pedagogical guidelines that defend the right of all to education, regardless of their physical, sensory, intellectual, or social conditions. In Brazil, documents such as the 1988 Federal Constitution and the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (LDB, 1996) establish that education must be universal and accessible, while the National Policy on Special Education from the Perspective of Inclusive Education (2008) reaffirms the commitment to integrating students with disabilities into regular schools. This perspective breaks with segregationist models and places equity as a central value in the educational process.

Despite regulatory advances, the practice of inclusive education in public schools faces numerous challenges. The reality of overcrowded classrooms, limited infrastructure, and insufficient human resources contrasts with the ideal advocated in educational legislation and policies. Teachers often report difficulties in reconciling traditional methodologies with the specific needs of students who require curricular and pedagogical adaptations, highlighting the gap between what is predicted in theory and what is implemented in everyday school life.

Another challenge is teacher training. Many public school teachers did not receive adequate training in dealing with diversity during their initial training. Although continuing education programs have sought to fill this gap, there is still a long way to go in preparing professionals to deal with different types of disabilities, using active methodologies and inclusive teaching strategies. This demonstrates that inclusive education depends not only on material resources, but above all on the qualifications and awareness of educators.

School inclusion also involves a cultural shift. Accepting diversity requires administrators, teachers, students, and families to understand that difference is not a barrier, but an opportunity for collective learning. Studies show that inclusive classrooms foster the development of empathy, cooperation, and solidarity among students—elements that transcend the school environment and contribute to building a more just society.

However, advances in legislation and pedagogical discourse are not yet uniformly reflected in practice. Many public schools lack Libras interpreters, Braille materials, assistive technology resources, or physical adaptations for students with motor disabilities. This lack creates a paradox: although enrollment of these students is guaranteed, actual learning conditions are still compromised.

International experience can serve as a reference. Countries that have made progress in inclusive policies, such as Canada and Finland, demonstrate that effective inclusion depends on consistent investment in infrastructure, teacher training, and integrated public policies. In Brazil, the lack of continuity in government programs and the dependence on local initiatives make it difficult to consolidate a robust and sustainable inclusive policy.

Thus, the introduction to the topic reveals that inclusive education in public schools is a field of tension between theory and practice, the ideal and the possible. Building truly inclusive environments requires not only political will and financial resources, but also pedagogical commitment, school community engagement, and cultural transformation that values diversity as an intrinsic part of the educational process.

## 2. Structural Challenges and Limited Resources

One of the main obstacles to implementing inclusive education in Brazilian public schools is limited structural resources. Many institutions still operate in old buildings, lacking appropriate architectural adaptations for students with physical disabilities, such as access ramps, adapted restrooms, and Braille signage. This reality highlights the disconnect between inclusive legislation and school infrastructure, making the environment a space that often excludes rather than welcomes students.

In addition to physical barriers, there is a shortage of adapted pedagogical resources. Accessible materials, assistive technology software, alternative communication equipment, and other resources necessary for inclusive learning are still scarce in most public schools. When they do exist, they often depend on donations or specific projects, making inclusive practices unstable and uneven across different school systems.

Another challenge is insufficient funding. Although government programs allocate funds for inclusion, fragmented public policies and bureaucracy in school management hinder the efficient application of these resources. In many cases, resources arrive irregularly or are insufficient to meet all demands, leading to improvisation that compromises the quality of services provided to students with disabilities.

The lack of specialized professionals is also evident. The presence of sign language interpreters, support teachers, and educational psychologists is limited to certain regions and schools, creating unequal access. In more peripheral areas, this lack is even more critical, limiting the possibilities for true inclusion. The result is that many teachers end up overwhelmed, having to take on responsibilities that go beyond their initial training.

Overcrowding in classrooms is another factor that compromises the success of inclusive education. Classes with more than thirty or forty students make individualized support unfeasible, especially when there are students who require special attention. In this context, inclusion risks becoming merely formal, without achieving concrete results in terms of student learning and development.

It is important to emphasize, however, that limited resources should not be interpreted as a justification for exclusion. On the contrary, it highlights the urgent need for public policies that prioritize inclusion as part of educational equity. Investments in infrastructure,



Teacher training and hiring support professionals need to be seen not as expenses, but as investments in the future of a more just and inclusive society.

Thus, the structural challenges and limited resources in public schools highlight the need for a collective effort. Governments, school communities, and civil society must work together to overcome these barriers and create conditions that allow for the effective participation of all students, regardless of their physical, sensory, or cognitive abilities. Without this effort, inclusive education risks remaining a distant ideal, rather than becoming established as an effective practice in everyday school life.

### **3. Teacher Training and Capacity Building for Inclusion**

Teacher training is one of the central pillars for implementing inclusive education in public schools. Teachers are the direct mediators of the teaching-learning process and, therefore, need to be prepared to deal with the diversity of educational needs in the classroom. However, many undergraduate programs still offer a superficial approach to special education, limited to theoretical content and lacking practical experience that enables the actual application of inclusive pedagogical strategies.

Continuing education is, in this context, an indispensable resource. In-service training programs allow practicing teachers to acquire new knowledge and techniques related to inclusive teaching. Such programs should go beyond one-off, isolated courses, adopting a continuous updating perspective that keeps pace with changes in pedagogical practices and assistive technology resources. Ongoing education enables the development of a reflective, critical, and innovative approach to the challenges of inclusion.

Another essential aspect of training is awareness. More than mastering techniques, teachers need to develop empathy and an understanding of diversity. Teacher training must, therefore, encompass ethical and cultural dimensions, ensuring that inclusion is not seen as a burden, but as an opportunity to broaden educational and social horizons. This means recognizing that each student possesses potential that can enrich the learning environment, even when significant adaptations are required.

The lack of adequate preparation leads to direct consequences in pedagogical practice. Insecure teachers tend to adopt attitudes of veiled exclusion, avoiding proposing adapted activities or delegating responsibility to other professionals, such as support teachers. This reality reinforces the need for public policies that strengthen initial and continuing education, so that all educators feel like protagonists in the inclusive process.

In addition to technical and ethical training, it is necessary to invest in spaces for exchange between teachers. Study groups, communities of practice, and collaborative networks enable educators to share experiences, strategies, and challenges, creating an environment of mutual support. This type of practice strengthens an inclusive culture, as it promotes cooperation among professionals and reduces the isolation of teachers in complex situations.



Another important point is the integration of theory and practice. Teacher training for inclusion should not be limited to normative content, but should also offer concrete experiences in inclusive schools, supervised internships, and real-world experiences with students with disabilities. This approach provides meaningful learning, preparing teachers to face the everyday challenges of inclusion.

Therefore, teacher education and training constitute the foundation for building a truly inclusive public school. Without prepared teachers, even the best structural resources and public policies are insufficient. It is the teacher who ultimately transforms the classroom into a space of equity, ensuring that inclusion ceases to be merely a normative ideal and becomes an effective and transformative practice.

#### 4. Adaptive Pedagogical Methodologies

Effective inclusion in public schools necessarily requires the adoption of adaptive pedagogical methodologies that consider the diversity of learning rhythms, styles, and needs. Traditional teaching, based on lectures and standardized assessments, proves insufficient for heterogeneous classes. Therefore, active methodologies, centered on the student and the collective construction of knowledge, become effective alternatives to ensure that all students can fully participate in the educational process.

One of the most promising approaches is collaborative learning, which involves group activities, encouraging cooperation between students with and without disabilities. This practice promotes not only content learning but also values empathy, respect, and solidarity. Furthermore, it encourages student autonomy and strengthens socio-emotional skills, essential for comprehensive development.

Another strategy is pedagogical differentiation, which consists of adjusting content, methods, and assessments according to the needs of each student. In inclusive classes, this may mean offering materials in different formats, proposing alternative activities, or adapting assessment criteria. This practice does not imply reducing academic demands, but rather recognizing that each student takes different paths to achieve the same educational goals.

The use of assistive technology also has great potential. Text-to-speech software, alternative communication apps, and inclusive digital platforms expand the opportunities for participation of students with disabilities. Even in contexts with limited resources, creative strategies, such as the use of recycled materials or manual adaptations, can fulfill a similar function, demonstrating that inclusion is more a matter of attitude than cutting-edge technology.

Adaptive methodologies must also value meaningful learning. This involves relating the academic content to the students' realities, using practical examples.



interdisciplinary projects and activities that make sense in everyday life. By including real-world, contextual experiences, the teacher creates opportunities for all students to engage in the process, regardless of their limitations.

Another important aspect is curriculum flexibility. Inclusion requires schools to abandon rigid, standardized models, allowing for adaptations that address individual needs without compromising educational quality. This flexibility must be accompanied by assessment policies that consider not only academic performance but also the student's personal and social progress.

Therefore, adaptive pedagogical methodologies are indispensable tools for the practice of inclusive education. They represent the embodiment of the principle of equity in the classroom, allowing all students to actively participate in the educational process. By adopting these strategies, public schools demonstrate that inclusion is possible even in the face of structural limitations, provided there is creativity, pedagogical commitment, and human sensitivity.

## **5. The Role of the School Community in Inclusion**

Building a truly inclusive public school depends not only on teachers and administrators, but also on the engagement of the entire school community. This includes students, families, administrative staff, and even the local community that interacts with the institution. The process of inclusion requires that everyone involved understand the importance of embracing differences and collaborating so that each student has the opportunity to fully develop their potential.

Families play a fundamental role in this context. When involved in the school process, they can provide relevant information about their children's specific needs, strengthening the bond between home and school. Constant communication between parents and teachers helps adjust teaching practices and find joint solutions to challenges faced in the classroom. Furthermore, family involvement reduces the social and psychological isolation of students with disabilities, promoting their appreciation within the community.

Classmates are also active agents of inclusion. Daily contact with diversity fosters the development of empathy, cooperation, and a sense of community. Peer tutoring programs, in which students without disabilities support peers with specific needs, strengthen bonds of solidarity and transform the school environment into a more human and collaborative space. This practice not only promotes learning but also contributes to the development of citizenship for all students.

Administrative and school support staff also play an important role. Doormen, lunch ladies, and cleaning staff, when sensitized and trained, contribute to creating a welcoming and safe environment. Small gestures, such as helping with mobility or offering emotional support, make a significant difference in the lives of students with



disability. This demonstrates that inclusion is a collective commitment that goes beyond the confines of the classroom.

School management, in turn, must coordinate the participation of all these stakeholders, creating an inclusive institutional culture. Pedagogical projects that embrace diversity, regular community meetings, and the promotion of cultural events that value differences are effective strategies. When management takes a leading role in inclusion, it establishes clear guidelines that guide the daily practices of the entire team.

The external community can also collaborate. Partnerships with universities, NGOs, and local businesses can provide material resources, offer training, and promote activities that strengthen inclusion. This interaction expands the support network and enriches the school experience, demonstrating that the responsibility for inclusive education does not fall solely on the educational system, but must be shared by society as a whole.

Thus, the school community's role in inclusion goes far beyond mere coexistence. It is a collective endeavor that requires dialogue, cooperation, and ethical commitment from all involved. Only when the community embraces inclusion as a core value can the ideal of equity become a concrete reality within public schools.

## **6. Public Policies and Legal Frameworks for Inclusion**

The implementation of inclusive education in public schools is intrinsically linked to the public policies and legal frameworks that guide the education system. In Brazil, the 1988 Constitution established education as a right for all and a duty of the State, including the guarantee of specialized services for people with disabilities. The Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (LDB, 1996) reinforced this commitment, while the National Policy on Special Education from the Perspective of Inclusive Education (2008) outlined the mandatory inclusion of students with disabilities in regular classes whenever possible.

The Statute of Persons with Disabilities (Law No. 13,146/2015) represents another important milestone, as it defines inclusive education as a non-negotiable principle and establishes that refusal to enroll students with disabilities in public and private institutions is prohibited. This legislation reinforces that inclusion is not a concession, but a right guaranteed by law, the violation of which constitutes discrimination subject to legal liability.

At the international level, documents such as the Salamanca Declaration (1994) and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) have strongly influenced national policies. These instruments emphasize that inclusive education is a fundamental condition for building just and democratic societies. Brazil, as a signatory to these agreements, has committed to implementing practices that ensure the full participation of all students in the educational system.



However, the gap between legislation and practice remains significant. Although legal frameworks establish clear guidelines, many public schools struggle to fully comply with the requirements. Lack of resources, the absence of specialized professionals, and the weakness of teacher training policies result in inclusion that is often only formal. This gap highlights the need for greater investment and more effective oversight mechanisms.

Another challenge is the discontinuity of public policies. Changes in government often result in shifts in educational priorities, which compromise the consolidation of inclusion programs. Without continuity, innovative projects and successful initiatives end up being interrupted, preventing the development of a solid and sustainable inclusive policy. This instability undermines the confidence of teachers, administrators, and families in the effectiveness of inclusion.

Despite these difficulties, successful experiences demonstrate that it is possible to move forward. Municipalities that invest in ongoing training, hiring support professionals, and adapting infrastructure have achieved positive results. These examples reinforce that the practical implementation of legislation depends on political will and social mobilization, which push for greater effectiveness of public policies.

Therefore, legal frameworks and public policies represent the foundation of inclusive education, but their consolidation depends on consistent investment, administrative continuity, and active participation from civil society. Inclusion, beyond a right guaranteed by law, needs to become a political priority and an ethical commitment of the State so that public schools can truly welcome all students in their diversity.

## 7. Successful Experiences and Good Inclusion Practices

Although inclusive education in public schools faces numerous challenges, there are also successful experiences that demonstrate the viability of inclusion when there is collective commitment and well-structured policies. Many of these practices involve creativity, resilience, and strong engagement from the school community, revealing that a lack of resources is not an insurmountable barrier when there is pedagogical will and institutional support.

A common example is the implementation of multifunctional resource rooms, established by the Ministry of Education (MEC), which offer additional pedagogical support to students with disabilities. In these rooms, specialized teachers work individually or in small groups, promoting adapted activities that support cognitive, motor, and social development. When integrated with the regular classroom, these practices promote inclusion and expand learning opportunities.

Another good practice involves the use of collaborative methodologies. Schools that have adopted peer tutoring projects, in which students without disabilities assist peers with specific needs, report not only academic progress but also significant improvements in school life. This type of strategy strengthens a culture of empathy and solidarity, fostering an environment of cooperation that transcends curricular content.





Continuing teacher training also stands out among the positive experiences. School systems that invested systematically in teacher training observed greater teacher confidence in dealing with students with disabilities, resulting in more creative and adaptive teaching practices. This investment contributed to the reduction of attitudinal barriers, demonstrating that training is one of the main drivers of inclusion.

Interdisciplinary projects involving art, sports, and technology have also yielded impressive results. Inclusive theater workshops, adapted sports tournaments, and accessible digital activities are examples of initiatives that integrate students with and without disabilities into collective activities, reinforcing the idea that school is a space for coexistence, learning, and valuing differences. These practices demonstrate that inclusion is not limited to the academic realm, but encompasses the integral development of students.

Another relevant point is the strengthening of participatory school management. Experiences in which administrators involved families, teachers, and the local community in developing inclusive projects yielded more consistent results. This shared management ensures greater collective commitment, creates support networks, and increases the chances of initiatives' sustainability.

These successful experiences indicate that, even in contexts with limited resources, it is possible to advance the construction of inclusive public schools. They reinforce that inclusion does not depend exclusively on financial investments, but also on pedagogical planning, teacher training, community participation, and an ethical commitment to equity. Thus, they become inspiring examples for other institutions and public policies.

## Conclusion

An analysis of inclusive education practices in public schools reveals a complex field, permeated by structural, pedagogical, and cultural challenges. Inclusion, although guaranteed by national and international legislation, still faces significant barriers in everyday life, especially in environments with limited resources. However, it is also clear that such barriers do not make inclusion unfeasible, but rather require creativity, commitment, and collective engagement.

Teacher training emerges as a central element in this process. Prepared, sensitive, and skilled teachers are capable of transforming the school environment, adapting methodologies and creating real learning conditions for all students. The lack of this training, on the other hand, compromises the quality of inclusion, highlighting the urgent need for public policies that prioritize the ongoing training of education professionals.

Adaptive pedagogical methodologies demonstrate that inclusion is not only possible, but enriching for the entire school community. Collaborative teaching, pedagogical differentiation, and the use of assistive technology resources expand opportunities for

learning and promote values of cooperation and respect. These practices reinforce that diversity should not be seen as an obstacle, but as a potential for collective growth.

The participation of the school community is equally essential. When engaged, families, classmates, staff, and administrators create a welcoming environment that fosters the retention and development of students with disabilities. Inclusion, therefore, is a collective endeavor that demands dialogue, empathy, and shared responsibility.

Public policies and legal frameworks provide the necessary support for inclusion, but their effectiveness depends on administrative continuity, consistent investment, and adequate oversight. The discontinuity of government programs is one of the biggest obstacles to the consolidation of inclusion, requiring greater political commitment to educational equity.

The successful experiences analyzed demonstrate that it is possible to overcome adversity and build inclusive public schools even when faced with scarce resources. These examples serve as inspiration, demonstrating that inclusion is viable when it combines pedagogical creativity, participatory management, and community engagement.

The ethical dimension of inclusion must also be emphasized. Ensuring that everyone has access to quality education is not only a legal obligation, but also a moral commitment of society. Inclusive schools symbolize respect for human dignity, diversity, and the inalienable right to education.

In short, implementing inclusive education in public schools is a challenge that requires coordination between public policies, teacher training, innovative methodologies, and community participation. More than simply complying with legislation, it's about building a school that reflects the values of equity and social justice, capable of developing citizens prepared to live in a pluralistic society. Inclusion, when effectively practiced, transforms not only the school but the entire community in which it operates.

## References

BRAZIL. Constitution of the Federative Republic of Brazil of 1988. Brasília, DF: Federal Senate, 1988.

BRAZIL. Law No. 9,394 of December 20, 1996. Establishes the guidelines and bases for national education. Official Gazette of the Union, Brasília, DF, December 23, 1996.

BRAZIL. Ministry of Education. National Policy on Special Education from the Perspective of Inclusive Education. Brasília: MEC/SEESP, 2008.

BRAZIL. Law No. 13,146 of July 6, 2015. Institutes the Brazilian Law on the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities (Statute of Persons with Disabilities). Official Gazette of the Union, Brasília, DF, July 7, 2015.

SALAMANCA DECLARATION. World Conference on Special Needs Education: Access and Quality. Salamanca: UNESCO, 1994.

UN. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. New York: United Nations, 2006.

MANTOAN, MTE School inclusion: points and counterpoints. São Paulo: Summus, 2006.

GLAT, R.; PLETSCH, MD Inclusive education: culture and school life. Rio de Janeiro: 7 Letras, 2011.

PRIETO, RG Inclusive education: reflections on pedagogical practice. Campinas: Autores Associados, 2006.

CARVALHO, RE Inclusive education: dotting the i's and crossing the t's. Porto Alegre: Mediação, 2016.

SANTOS, MA; PAULINO, MM Inclusive education in Brazilian public schools: challenges and perspectives. *Brazilian Journal of Special Education*, Marília, v. 25, n. 1, p. 45-62, 2019.