



Analysis of enrollment and inclusion policies for students with special needs specials in Brazil

Analysis of enrollment and inclusion policies for students with special needs in Brazil

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SUMMARY

This article analyzes Brazilian policies for enrolling and including students with special needs, seeking to understand how the legal framework and the practices of education networks combine to guarantee access, retention, and academic success.

The study is based on the constitutional recognition of the right to inclusive education, further strengthened by the Law of Guidelines and Bases for National Education (1996) and the Brazilian Law for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities (2015), which mandate priority enrollment in regular classes and criminalize refusal to enroll. The study also reviews additional guidelines, such as Normative Instruction 12/2012 of Paraná and social movement handbooks, in addition to analyzing data from the School Census and recent studies on the topic. The results show that, although the number of students with disabilities enrolled in regular classes has grown significantly, from 13% in 1998 to 95% in 2023, challenges related to retention and quality of learning persist. The age-per-year distortion rate reaches 36.6% among the target population of special education, and retention rates are much higher than in the regular education system. Difficulties are identified in resource allocation, ongoing teacher training, and intersectoral coordination. The conclusion is that effective inclusion depends on committed school management, collective pedagogical planning, strengthening Specialized Educational Services, and public policies that maintain the perspective of inclusive education. The study contributes to the debate on how to transform legal frameworks into practices that ensure equal opportunities for all.

Keywords: enrollment, school inclusion, special education, school retention, public policies.

INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education in Brazil was consolidated as a fundamental right under the 1988 Constitution, which mandated the provision of regular education for people with disabilities, preferably in the regular school system. The Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (LDB, Law No. 9,394/1996) incorporated this mandate by establishing special education as a service modality for students with disabilities, global developmental disorders, and high abilities/giftedness, providing for their priority enrollment in regular classes and requiring education systems to adapt curricula, methods, and resources to ensure learning and specific completion. The Brazilian Law for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities (LBI, Law No. 13,146/2015) reinforced this framework by criminalizing the refusal or difficulty in enrolling people with disabilities in public or private institutions and by prohibiting the charging of additional fees for Specialized Educational Services (AEE). At the same time, infra-constitutional norms, such as Normative Instruction 12/2012 of the Paraná Department of Education, prohibited the use of waiting lists or first-come, first-served basis to define vacancies and obliged schools to welcome and guide families during enrollment.

Despite regulatory progress, recent literature indicates that legislation does not always translate into inclusive practices. Authors such as Machado and Jordão (2021) emphasize that the LDB shifted the focus from disability to guaranteeing the right to learn, but that some schools still ignore the guidelines and reproduce segregating models. Research by Baptista (2019) and Landim (2022) highlights the conflict between integrative models and policies that reinforce segregation, such as Decree No. 10,502/2020, whose validity was suspended by the Supreme Federal Court. Furthermore, data from the School Census and Bulletin 84 of the Unibanco Institute show that, although the number of enrollments in regular classes grew from just over 337 thousand in 1998 to 1.7 million in 2023, indicators such as age-year distortion and failure remain high, revealing that attendance at school does not guarantee permanence and academic success.

Given this scenario, this article analyzes enrollment and school inclusion policies for students with special needs in Brazil, problematizing the connection between access, retention, and academic success. The objective is to examine current legislation, complementary guidelines, and practices adopted by school systems, identify challenges in policy implementation, and discuss the allocation of resources and support necessary for enrollment to translate into effective inclusion. The analysis is based on legal documents, reports from public agencies, School Census data, and recent studies in the field, seeking to provide support for administrators, teachers, and researchers committed to a truly inclusive school.

1. ANALYSIS OF ENROLLMENT POLICIES AND THEIR CHALLENGES

1.1 Legislation and general guidelines

Brazil's school inclusion policy is supported by a framework of laws that seek to ensure that children and young people with disabilities not only have access to school, but also attend regular classes, receive specialized support, and have their rights protected. The constitutional framework is found in Article 208 of the 1988 Federal Constitution, which guarantees regular education for people with disabilities, preferably within the regular school system. The Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (LDB) Law 9.394/1996 regulated this right in Chapter V, establishing that special education is a modality aimed at students with disabilities, global developmental disorders, and high abilities/giftedness. Article 58 of the LDB establishes that these students should be served preferentially in regular schools; only in exceptional cases may they attend specialized classes or schools. Article 59, in turn, requires education systems to adapt curricula and provide support services to ensure specific completion of education for those unable to complete elementary school within the regular timeframe and accelerate the learning of gifted students.

Recent literature reviews emphasize that this legislation transformed the notion of special education by shifting the focus from disability itself to guaranteeing the right to learning. Machado and Jordão (2021) note that the LDB took a major leap forward by determining that schools are required to offer curriculum, methods, and resources capable of serving all students; thus, special education ceased to be a segregated service and became a cross-disciplinary modality. According to



According to these authors, the inclusion of students with disabilities in the regular network only does not occur when specific needs require specialized classes or schools.

The Brazilian Law for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities (LBI) Law 13.146/2015 details the right to education and defines discriminatory behavior. Article 8 of the law states that refusing or hindering the enrollment of a person with a disability in a public or private educational institution constitutes a crime, punishable by imprisonment of one to four years and a fine. This classification is important because it holds administrators accountable and prevents exclusionary practices, ensuring that schools cannot require additional documents or charge extra fees based on a disability.

The Statute also ensures that specialized educational services (SEAs) should preferably be provided in regular classrooms, complementing schooling, and prohibits charging additional fees for the service. This guideline reinforces the centrality of SEAs as a tool for equalizing opportunities, preventing learning difficulties from serving as a justification for segregation.

Based on the LDB and LBI, various organizations and social movements produce guidance booklets. The "School for All" manual (Down Movement) reminds that denying enrollment to students with disabilities is a crime and advises parents to speak with the school. If the institution persists in denying enrollment, it is recommended to contact the Department of Education and contact the Public Prosecutor's Office. The document emphasizes that enrollment in regular classes is a constitutional right and that any doubts about curricular adequacy do not justify refusal.

State departments also issue supplementary regulations to prevent discrimination in enrollment. Normative Instruction 12/2012 of the Paraná Department of Education, for example, prohibits the use of first-come, first-served or waiting lists to determine the shift or class for students with disabilities. It stipulates that school administrations must guide families on procedures and adhere to the official schedule, ensuring transparency and preventing bureaucratic requirements from being used to discourage enrollment. Similar regulations exist in other states and municipalities, reflecting the understanding that inclusion begins at enrollment and continues with family support.

Since 2008, Brazil has had a National Policy on Special Education from the Perspective of Inclusive Education (PNEEPEI), which guides school systems to enroll students with disabilities in regular classes and provides for AEE in multifunctional resource rooms. The 2008 PNEEPEI is cited in the Organization of Ibero-American States' publication "Education in Focus 2024" as a milestone that aligns the country with the global movement for inclusive education systems. However, Decree 10.502/2020, which established the new National Policy on Special Education (PNEE-2020), sparked intense debate. Baptista (2019) argues that special education has been a field of contention among social and political groups, seeking to influence policymaking and, at times, expand philanthropic structures through public funding.

In a 2022 study, Caroline Landim examined the context in which decree 10.502/2020 was drafted and the reactions of various stakeholders. The author notes that the decree was published on October 1, 2020, and regulated specialized schools and classes, as well as prioritizing family choice of type of care.

This innovation, according to Nascimento and Wunsch (2021) and Iacono and Parada (2021), introduced the concept of "lifelong learning", allowing the target audience of special education students (PAEE) to remain indefinitely in institutions

specialized courses, which can delay your certification and keep you away from other students.

Rocha, Mendes, and Lacerda (2021) argue that the decree's wording favors non-attendance in regular schools and encourages the creation of a parallel system; by shifting responsibility from the state to the private sector, the document could increase segregation. Faced with criticism, the Brazilian Socialist Party filed a Direct Action of Unconstitutionality, and the Supreme Federal Court suspended the decree in December 2020. The debates highlight the tension between integrative and segregationist models and the importance of maintaining the perspective of the 2008 PNEEPEI (National School of Education), which emphasizes regular schools as spaces for inclusion.

The legislative discussions are taking place amid a growing enrollment of students with disabilities. According to data from the 2023 School Census released by the National Institute of Studies and Educational Research Anísio Teixeira (INEP), 1,771,430 enrollments of students in the special education target audience were recorded. Of these, 62.90% are in elementary school; the remaining enrollments are distributed among early childhood education, high school, regular vocational education, and EJA, according to an organizational chart released by INEP. The survey also found that 53.7% of those enrolled have an intellectual disability, followed by 35.9% of students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). There are also 163,790 enrollments of people with physical disabilities, 86,867 with low vision, 41,491 with hearing impairment, 38,019 with high abilities/giftedness, 20,008 with deafness, 7,321 with blindness, and 693 with deafblindness. Another 88,885 enrollments are for people with two or more disabilities. The survey highlights that 95% of students aged 4 to 17 attend regular classes, a percentage that has been growing from 94.2% in 2022.

Although enrollment in regular classes is high, reports warn of the need for policies that guarantee retention and academic success. Bulletin 84 of the Unibanco Institute (2022) notes that the age-grade distortion rate among students with disabilities reaches 36.6%, compared to 7.7% among the non-disabled school population. The document warns that inclusion cannot be limited to enrollment; investment is needed in teacher training, specialized educational services, and adaptations to help these students advance through the educational stages.

Legal guidelines require schools to assume specific responsibilities during enrollment. The Paraná regulatory instruction, by prohibiting queues and establishing schedules, exemplifies the need for standardized procedures and family support. The "School for All" booklet recommends that parents demand adherence to the official calendar and document any refusals. This initial dialogue between management and guardians is crucial for building trust and planning adaptations.

Continuing education is another crucial element in realizing rights. The Education in Focus 2024 report emphasizes that the LBI (2015) and the PNEEPEI/2008 strengthened inclusion as a fundamental human right and that it is necessary to resume investments in the training of administrators and teachers, encourage specialized educational services, eliminate architectural and communication barriers, and strengthen intersectoral cooperation. The publication also highlights that the implementation of the PNEEPEI/2008 required the reorganization of education networks, the expansion of resource rooms, and partnerships for the AEE (Special Education Program), demonstrating that the consolidation of the policy depends on funding and technical support. Geisa Kempfer Böck, in turn, points out that

Continuing education coordinated between regular classroom and special education teachers is a pillar for the implementation of inclusion; the discontinuity of training programs creates gaps and perpetuates exclusionary practices.

An analysis of Brazilian legislation reveals significant progress in recognizing the right to inclusive education, but also highlights persistent challenges. The LDB and LBI establish solid foundations by determining that students with disabilities must attend regular schools and by criminalizing refusal to enroll them. State regulations, such as Normative Instruction 12/2012, and guidance materials, such as the "School for All" booklet, complement this framework by prescribing enrollment procedures, prohibiting waiting lines, and providing guidance to families.

The debate surrounding PNEE-2020 demonstrates that the way policies are implemented is as important as the legislation itself. Contemporary researchers criticize the possibility of reinforcing segregationist models and advocate for maintaining PNEEPEI/2008, which focuses on regular schools as the core of inclusion. At the same time, School Census data reveal that the majority of students, the target audience for special education, are already in regular classes, although indicators of age-grade distortion show that the challenge of retention and learning persists.

To fulfill the constitutional mandate of access, retention, and success in school, education systems need to coordinate legislation, training, and resources. School management must plan the use of resource rooms and specialized support, ensure communication with families, and foster a welcoming environment. The combination of robust legal standards, up-to-date enrollment data, and contemporary research provides a critical framework that guides policies so that initial enrollment translates into qualified retention and academic success.

1.2 Implementation in schools, challenges and resource allocation

Despite the regulatory progress described in the previous subchapter, the implementation of inclusion policies faces concrete obstacles in schools.

Various studies and reports indicate that, in the late 2010s and early 2020s, practices of indirect exclusion, lack of team training, and insufficient use of resources allocated to special education still persist. This subchapter analyzes these challenges and the need to coordinate the allocation of human, material, and intersectoral resources so that enrollment translates into retention and academic success.

The seminar "School Management for Equity: Inclusive Education," organized by the Rodrigo Mendes Institute in partnership with the Unibanco Institute, brought together experts, administrators, and researchers to evaluate the implementation of inclusion. Former Municipal Secretary of Education Cleuza Repulho reported that in the same neighborhood, schools accommodated approximately 60 children with disabilities, while others received none. Although the law guarantees a place, school administrators suggested that families seek another institution with "better" conditions. This indirect refusal is not due to a lack of places, but rather due to administrative obstacles or staff guidance to redirect the student. Repulho also reported that some schools discourage the participation of students with disabilities in assessments such as the Prova Brasil, ANA (National Literacy Assessment), or ENEM (National High School Exam) to avoid



alleged reduction in performance rates, highlighting a practice that violates equity and makes the performance of this population invisible.

Another problem identified is the return of funds due to ignorance. The seminar report points out that several education departments fail to utilize federal resources allocated for specialized educational services, resulting in funds being returned to public coffers. This situation highlights the need to train administrators to access and implement programs and agreements, as well as improve communication between federal, state, and municipal agencies.

Although the LDB guarantees universal access and prohibits making enrollment conditional on the presentation of documents, many schools still require medical reports or specific reports to complete enrollment. The "School for All" booklet states that the lack of a report should not prevent enrollment and advises parents and guardians to seek dialogue with the school or report it to the Public Prosecutor's Office if denied. The insistence on requiring documents attests to a medicalized approach that violates the law and can delay access.

The reports also highlight the teams' lack of preparation for initial care. Cleuza Repulho observes that many teachers are familiar with classical thinkers such as Vygotsky and Wallon, but they don't know how to interact with a child with Down syndrome, especially in Early Childhood Education. There's a lack of practical training in dealing with different types of disabilities, the use of assistive technologies, curricular adaptations, and alternative communication. The researcher emphasizes that multidisciplinary work involving health, social services, and education is essential to ensure schools don't become overwhelmed. Without this support, there's a tendency to send students to Youth and Adult Education (EJA) after years of lack of learning, turning the program into a dumping ground for students with disabilities who haven't received adequate support.

Beyond administrative barriers, inclusion depends on the political will of authorities and the engagement of school staff. Repulho asserts that inclusion cannot exist without being tied to public policies; a government decision is needed to establish clear goals and sustain them over time. The expert emphasizes that the commitment of school administration, pedagogical coordinators, and teachers is crucial to overcoming prejudices and transforming school culture. Contemporary researchers reinforce this view. Baptista (2019) analyzes that special education is a field of political and institutional dispute in which philanthropic and welfare groups attempt to capture public resources; the lack of public commitment favors exclusionary practices and the maintenance of parallel systems. Nascimento and Wunsch (2021), discussing decree 10.502/2020, show that transferring responsibility to families and the private sector can increase segregation.

Implementing inclusion requires not only financial resources but also the organization of teaching time. The Rodrigo Mendes Institute study mapped schools considered best practices and found that all had specific planning schedules involving teachers from both the regular classroom and Specialized Educational Services (AEE). This ongoing contact allows for reflection on barriers and the development of personalized strategies for each student. The joint planning space also serves to share concerns, organize curricular adaptations, discuss the use of assistive technologies, and analyze assessment data. This model responds to the criticism that AEE, when isolated, becomes



a “ghetto” within the school; by integrating teachers, it strengthens co-responsibility and avoids transferring all the burden to the specialist teacher.

The Ministry of Education's guidelines reinforce the centrality of Special Education (SEA). The document "National Policy on Special Education from the Perspective of Inclusive Education" (PNEEPEI/2008) defines SEA as a complementary or supplementary service to schooling, with the function of identifying and eliminating barriers, organizing pedagogical resources, and promoting student participation in regular classrooms. The book "Education on the Agenda 2024" states that consolidating PNEEPEI requires investing in multifunctional resource rooms, teacher training, assistive technology, and intersectoral coordination. The publication emphasizes that the continuity of training programs is essential; interrupting these initiatives creates gaps and delays. The emphasis on intersectoral cooperation is particularly relevant: linking education, health, and social assistance allows for addressing issues such as diagnosis, rehabilitation, accessible transportation, and family support.

For enrollment to translate into effective learning, resources must be allocated equitably. The LDB (Brazilian Educational Standards) mandates that education systems offer specialized educational services, with qualified teachers and appropriate pedagogical resources. However, the effectiveness of this provision depends on adequate investment. The Rodrigo Mendes Institute seminar noted that, due to lack of knowledge, departments fail to exploit available resources. This includes funds from the National Fund for the Development of Education (FNDE) for purchasing equipment, building multifunctional resource rooms, and training teachers. This scenario reinforces the importance of transparency and training administrators to access and implement public policies.

In addition to financial resources, it is essential to invest in human support. Repulho emphasizes that without support professionals, such as Libras interpreters, interpreter guides, support teachers, and caregivers, inclusion becomes mere rhetoric. Landim (2022) defends the same position in her analysis of national policy: the author argues that a lack of multidisciplinary planning leads schools to refer students with disabilities to adult education (EJA). The topic is also addressed in *Educação em Pauta 2024*, which proposes the creation of reference centers for assistive technology and accessibility, as well as intersectoral actions to eliminate barriers.

Finally, inclusion policies cannot ignore territorial inequalities. Cleuza Repulho points out that, even in cities with a tradition of investment, there are neighborhoods with highly inclusive schools and others with total dropout rates.

Monitoring the allocation of vacancies and resources is therefore essential to identify and correct imbalances. Education networks need to establish transparent criteria for the distribution of equipment and professionals, considering vulnerability and demand indicators.

The combination of subthemes highlights that implementing inclusion in Brazilian schools goes beyond the act of enrollment. It requires political will, ongoing training, integrated pedagogical planning, effective use of available resources, and intersectoral coordination. The return of funds due to lack of knowledge and the indirect rejection of students with disabilities show that many of the challenges stem from management and attitude, not simply a lack of resources. Successful initiatives demonstrate that dedicating time to joint planning between regular and special education teachers, using multifunctional resource rooms, and investing in ongoing training are key.

These are strategies that enhance learning for all students. Equity also involves monitoring enrollment distribution and ensuring that all schools, in all neighborhoods, receive support to serve children and adolescents with disabilities.

The theoretical insights provided by contemporary authors such as Baptista (2019), Nascimento & Wunsch (2021), Landim (2022), and the reflections presented in *Educação em Pauta 2024* reinforce the idea that a genuine inclusion policy must confront the tendency to create parallel systems and delegate the choice of segregated schools to families. Only with public commitment, family participation, and adequate resource allocation can enrollment translate into retention, learning, and academic success for all.

2. Access, permanence and academic success

Building an inclusive education system involves three inseparable dimensions: guaranteeing access, promoting retention, and ensuring academic success. Brazilian legislation, analyzed in the previous chapter, defines enrollment in regular classes as a right, but realizing this right requires observing enrollment data, quality indicators, and pedagogical planning practices. This chapter discusses access trends in recent years, analyzes retention and quality indicators, and proposes ways to combine enrollment with appropriate pedagogical support.

The trajectory of school inclusion in Brazil can be seen in the evolution of the School Census. In 1998, there were 337,000 enrollments of students in the target audience for special education (PAEE), of which only 13% were in regular classes. The political and social movement in favor of inclusion, combined with legislation that made enrollment in regular schools mandatory, changed this scenario. The Learning in Focus Bulletin No. 84 from the Unibanco Institute, published in 2022, shows that in 2021, the country registered 1.3 million children with disabilities, global developmental disorders, or high abilities/giftedness enrolled in basic education, and that 93% of them were in regular classes. This significant leap indicates that, in just over two decades, enrollment numbers quadrupled, and the majority of students migrated from special classes to the regular school system.

More recent data demonstrates the continuation of this growth. The 2023 School Census report, released by the National Institute of Studies and Educational Research Anísio Teixeira (INEP), recorded 1,771,430 enrollments of students with disabilities or disorders. Of the total, 62.90% were in elementary school, 16% in early childhood education (284,847 enrollments), and 12% in high school (223,258 enrollments). The same document indicates that 53.7% of these students have an intellectual disability (952,904 enrollments), 35.9% have Autism Spectrum Disorder (636,202 enrollments), while the remainder have a physical disability, low vision, hearing impairment, high abilities/giftedness, deafness, or blindness.

Furthermore, 95% of students aged 4 to 17 are in regular classes, a percentage that increased from 94.2% in 2022. These data demonstrate that Brazil has made progress towards universalizing enrollment in regular classes and diversifying services, but they also reveal that the majority of students with disabilities are concentrated in elementary school and have different needs for support.

The expansion in enrollment results from investments in policies such as the National Policy on Special Education from the Perspective of Inclusive Education (PNEEPEI/2008) and the strengthening of Specialized Educational Services (AEE). According to the Organization of Ibero-American States' report "Education in Focus 2024," the implementation of PNEEPEI aligned Brazil with the international movement for inclusive education systems. In recent years, government strategies such as the creation of multifunctional resource rooms, the expansion of AEE, and teacher training explain part of the increase in enrollment in regular classes. This success, however, is not uniform: it is concentrated in regions where education departments obtain federal funds and invest in accessibility; in other contexts, a lack of information results in the return of funds, which limits the expansion of services.

2.1 Permanence, quality and success indicators

Access is a necessary but insufficient condition to guarantee retention and success in school. Bulletin 84 itself warns that "inclusion needs to go beyond enrollment," as many enrolled students remain in class without learning. One indicator of this gap is the age-by-year distortion rate: in 2021, 36.6% of students, the target audience for special education, were at least two years behind their age-appropriate grade, while among other students the average was 7.7%. The failure rate corroborates this inequality: in 2021, 10.7% of students with disabilities failed, compared to 1.6% of others; before the pandemic (2019), the rates were 16.9% and 4.3%, respectively. These differences highlight that, despite being present in schools, students with disabilities still do not have the same opportunities to learn, advance to the next grade, and complete basic education.

The causes of age-year distortion are multifactorial. First, pedagogical barriers persist: many teachers lack expertise in differentiated teaching strategies or accessibility resources. There's a lack of training to address specific disabilities, implement assistive technologies, and adapt the curriculum.

According to the school organization, enrollment can lead to indirect exclusion. Repulho notes that some schools do not encourage the participation of students with disabilities in external assessments to avoid compromising performance indicators, in addition to diverting students to Youth and Adult Education (EJA) classes when they fail to advance at the appropriate age. These practices reinforce inequality and demonstrate that retention is linked to school culture and assessment management.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated exclusion. Ferrando and Rosario's (2021) research on scientific literature related to inclusive education during the pandemic notes that the emergency transition to remote learning exacerbated barriers. The study identifies challenges such as a lack of adapted school transportation, poor physical infrastructure, lack of technological devices and internet access for all students, and a shortage of accessible materials, situations that lead to school dropouts and loss of school days. The research reports that remote learning, although necessary to maintain the calendar, increased exclusion because training, technical, and structural deficiencies created a "what we have for today" scenario. Even with connectivity and materials, there was a lack of dialogue, collaborative activities, and interaction; teachers and students faced difficult situations, especially in

This is the case of students with disabilities, who require specific tools and support to participate. These findings indicate that the pandemic has exposed the precariousness of inclusion and demonstrated that continued participation depends on infrastructure and planning, especially in remote learning contexts.

Indicators such as dropout and completion also need to be analyzed.

Although the School Census does not report dropout rates disaggregated by type of disability, studies by state departments indicate that dropout rates are higher in high school, where there are fewer enrollments of special education students. This phenomenon is related to the reduced availability of special education services and increased academic demands; many students leave school due to inadequate support or lack of learning prospects. The Unibanco Institute report reinforces that the pandemic may have increased dropout rates, as many students lost ties with school during remote learning and did not return to in-person activities. Retention, therefore, depends on the reorganization of high school education and the creation of active search mechanisms that involve families and social services.

2.3 Planning of pedagogical support and articulation of support

To transform enrollment into effective learning, school management needs to coordinate enrollment with pedagogical support planning and the allocation of support professionals. The document "School Management for Equity" identifies that, in successful cases, schools set aside regular time for collective planning.

Three institutions analyzed had specific time slots dedicated to pedagogical planning involving regular classroom and special education teachers; this ongoing contact allows for reflection on barriers, development of individualized strategies, and sharing concerns. In a school culture that values planning, respect for differences is incorporated into the Political-Pedagogical Project (PPP), which begins to treat diversity as a principle and guide inclusive practices. Periodically revisiting the PPP ensures that management reevaluates its actions in light of student needs and social changes.

Specialized Educational Services (SEAs) are the main policy for supporting school retention and success. The 2008 PNEPEI (National Educational Program for Children and Adolescents) defines SEAs as a complementary or supplementary service, with the function of identifying, developing, and organizing pedagogical and accessibility resources to eliminate barriers. However, SEAs only fulfill their function if they are coordinated with the work of regular classroom teachers and are provided during extra hours. Educação em Pauta 2024 (Education in Focus 2024) highlights that consolidating SEAs requires continued investment in resource rooms, teacher training, assistive technology, and intersectoral collaboration. The report highlights the need for reference centers or centers for assistive technology and continuing education programs that transcend the biomedical model and adopt the social model of disability. Training needs to integrate SEAs and regular classroom teachers, valuing collaborative methodologies and peer teaching.

Another aspect of support is coordination with health and social assistance policies. Repulho emphasizes that schools cannot shoulder all responsibilities alone; health, education, and social assistance must ensure support for families. In the case of students with multiple disabilities, the presence of professionals such as physical therapists, occupational therapists, and psychologists is essential.

so that they can participate in school activities. Intersectoral cooperation also involves ensuring adapted school transportation, adequate nutrition, clinical monitoring, and access to social benefits, ensuring that families can afford to keep their children in school.

In the area of assessment, education systems must adopt practices that do not penalize students with disabilities. The culture of failure and exclusion in external assessments discourages retention and contradicts the recommendations of international organizations. Implementing formative assessments that consider the learning path, combined with the use of individual development plans and educational support plans, can reduce age-grade distortion. It is also essential that teachers and administrators engage in dialogue with families to explain assessment criteria, expectations, and learning goals.

Analysis of enrollment data and quality indicators shows that Brazil has made significant progress in providing access to basic education for children and adolescents with disabilities. In less than thirty years, enrollment grew from just over 337,000 to approximately 1.7 million, and the proportion of students in regular classes jumped from 13% to 95%. This progress reflects the consolidation of legal frameworks, social mobilization, and investment in public policies. However, retention and academic success remain challenges. The age-by-year distortion, failure, and dropout rates show that many students remain excluded from school, without adequate access to learning. The pandemic revealed the fragility of inclusion strategies, as the lack of infrastructure and planning for remote learning exacerbated exclusion.

Overcoming these challenges requires ensuring that enrollment is accompanied by individualized pedagogical support, collective planning, access to accessibility resources, ongoing training, and intersectoral work. Positive experiences indicate that when SES and regular classroom teachers plan together, barriers are identified and overcome. The commitment of management teams and the support of sustainable public policies are crucial for inclusion to move beyond rhetoric and become a reality. Finally, the analysis reinforces that school inclusion benefits not only students with disabilities but all students, as it fosters a culture of respect for differences, cooperation, and pedagogical innovation. Retention and academic success are, therefore, achievable goals as long as society, education systems, and schools assume the responsibility of fully implementing the right to inclusive education.

2.4 What about schools that deny enrollment to children with special needs?

Refusing to enroll a child with special needs in regular education is a serious problem that violates rights and goes against the principle of inclusive education. However, rather than simply punishing, it's crucial to understand the reasons behind this refusal and offer support so the school can adapt and resolve the issue.

Schools that refuse to enroll these students often face challenges such as:

Here are some of the major infrastructure issues schools claim to face:

- **Lack of physical accessibility:**

- o **Ramps and elevators:** The absence of ramps or the presence of ramps with an inadequate slope prevents access by students in wheelchairs or with reduced mobility to different floors and areas of the school.
- o **Adapted bathrooms:** Many schools do not have bathrooms with grab bars, enough space for wheelchairs, or sinks at the correct height, which compromises students' autonomy and dignity.
- o **Narrow doors and corridors:** Insufficient width of doors and corridors can impede the passage of wheelchairs or other support equipment, isolating the student in certain areas.
- o **Inadequate flooring:** Slippery, uneven floors or floors with steps without tactile markings pose a risk of falls and make it difficult for students with visual or motor disabilities to move around.

• **Inadequate resources and equipment:**

- o **Classrooms:** The lack of height-adjustable tables and desks or inadequate furniture arrangement can hinder student participation in the classroom.
- o **Assistive technology:** Schools without computers with screen reader software, electronic magnifying glasses or adapted keyboards are unable to offer the necessary technological support for students with visual or hearing impairments or motor.
- o **Audiovisual resources:** The lack of resources such as assistive listening systems (for students with hearing impairments) or materials with subtitles and interpretation in Libras impedes access to educational content.

• **Lack of Support Spaces:**

- o **AEE (Specialized Educational Assistance) Room:** Although legislation provides for the creation of these rooms, many schools do not have the physical space necessary to offer the complementary and specialized assistance that students need.
- o **Rest or Rehabilitation Areas:** In cases of students with specific medical conditions, the lack of a suitable place for rest, administration of medication or carrying out therapies is a problem.

- **Lack of pedagogical preparation:** Many teachers do not have the necessary training to deal with the diversity of needs and develop appropriate teaching strategies.

- **Lack of resources:** Schools may not have adapted teaching materials, assistive technologies or support professionals, such as Libras interpreters, Braille experts, occupational therapists and caregivers.

- **Infrastructure issues:** The lack of accessibility in bathrooms, classrooms and common areas makes it difficult for students with physical disabilities to move around and participate.

- **Prejudice and fear:** There is a fear that inclusion may harm the learning of other students or that the school will not be able to meet the child's needs.

It's important to emphasize that, while these issues represent real challenges, they don't justify denying enrollment. The law requires schools to adapt to accommodate students, and the government has a responsibility to provide the necessary support for this adaptation. Refusing enrollment based on infrastructure issues is illegal and reinforces the cycle of exclusion. The solution isn't to bar students, but rather to seek resources and solutions to make the school environment truly accessible and inclusive.



3. How can we help the school solve the problem?

To transform this reality, a joint effort is needed between the schools, families, government agencies, and society as a whole. Support can come from several fronts:

1. Training and qualification

- **Offer courses and workshops:** Governments and universities can offer continuing education programs for teachers, administrators and all school staff, focusing on inclusive education, differentiated pedagogical strategies and the use of accessibility resources.
- **Create communities of practice:** Encourage the exchange of experiences between schools that are already successful in inclusion and those that are just starting out, through meetings, study groups and online platforms.

2. Pedagogical and Infrastructure Support

- **Provide support professionals:** The government must guarantee the hiring of specialized professionals, such as AEE (Specialized Educational Assistance), psychologists, speech therapists and occupational therapists, to work in schools.
- **Provide resources and assistive technologies:** It is essential that schools receive funds to purchase materials such as braille books, screen reader software, magnifying glasses, adapted keyboards and height-adjustable desks.
- **Invest in accessibility:** Renovation and construction work should prioritize the installation of ramps, elevators, accessible restrooms and tactile flooring, making the school environment safe and welcoming for everyone.

3. Awareness and culture change

- **Promote a culture of inclusion:** The school can carry out campaigns, lectures and activities that involve the entire school community - students, parents and staff - to demystify prejudice and show the benefits of diversity.
- **Involve the family:** Establishing a close partnership with parents or guardians is essential for the school to understand the child's needs and create an individualized support plan.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This analysis of enrollment and inclusion policies for students with special needs in Brazil revealed a trajectory marked by significant progress, but also by persistent challenges. Since the enactment of the Law of Guidelines and Bases for National Education (LDB) in 1996, the country has strived to build a legal framework that guarantees access to education for all, regardless of their physical, sensory, or intellectual disabilities. The creation of the National Education Plan (PNE), with its ambitious goals, and the ratification of international conventions reinforce this commitment to inclusive education.

However, the practical implementation of these policies still faces significant barriers. The study demonstrated that, despite the significant increase in the enrollment of students with disabilities in regular schools, mere physical inclusion does not guarantee effective pedagogical inclusion. The lack of ongoing teacher training, the scarcity of adapted pedagogical resources, and the absence of multidisciplinary support in schools are bottlenecks that compromise the quality of education.



offered to these students. The research points to a gap between what the law prescribes and the reality experienced on the school grounds.

In a scenario of uncertainty and setbacks in certain public policies, it is essential that society and the State renew their commitment to education as an inalienable right. The future of inclusion in Brazil depends not only on maintaining existing laws, but also on continued and strategic investment in accessible school infrastructure, the appreciation of education professionals, and the building of a truly inclusive school culture that celebrates diversity as a value, not an obstacle. The journey toward equitable, quality education for all is underway, and its continuation requires vigilance, dedication, and joint action from all stakeholders.

For enrollment to translate into retention and academic success, it is essential to overcome the merely formal normative logic. This requires committed school management, collective pedagogical planning among regular classroom and special education teachers, investment in continuing education, financial resources, and intersectoral collaboration. It is also necessary to consolidate the National Special Education Policy from the Perspective of Inclusive Education, ensuring that setbacks do not reintroduce segregating models. Ultimately, school inclusion must be understood as a human right that benefits all students, as it fosters respect for differences, cooperation, and pedagogical innovation. Only with consistent public policies and social engagement will it be possible to realize the promise of a school for all.

Thus, rather than simply prohibiting, the path to truly inclusive education also involves empowering and supporting schools. Only then will they feel safe and prepared to fulfill their social and legal role.

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