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Self Contained Classrooms

Self Contained Classrooms Support Students With Significant Disabilities

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By **Jerry Webster**
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Self-contained classrooms are classrooms specifically designated for children with disabilities. Self-contained programs are usually indicated for children with more serious disabilities who may not be able to participate in general education programs at all. These disabilities include autism, emotional disturbances, **severe intellectual disabilities**, **multiple handicaps** and children with serious or fragile medical conditions. Students assigned to these programs have often been assigned to less restrictive (see LRE) environments and have failed to succeed, or they started in targeted programs designed to help them succeed.

Requirements

LRE (Least Restrictive Environment) is the legal concept found in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act that requires schools to place children with disabilities most like the settings where their general education peers will be taught. School districts are required to offer a full continuum of placements from the most restrictive (self-contained) to a least restrictive (full inclusion.) Placements should be made in the best interest of the children rather than the convenience of the school.

Students placed in self-contained classrooms should be spending some time in the general education environment, if only for lunch. The goal of an effective self-contained program is to increase the amount of time that the student spends in the general education environment. Often students in self-contained programs go to "specials" -- art, music, physical education or humanities, and participate with the support of classroom para-professionals. Students in programs for children with **emotional disturbances** usually spend part of their day on an expanding basis in the appropriate grade level class. Their academics may be supervised by the general education teacher while they receive support from their special education teacher in managing difficult or challenging behaviors. Often, in the course of a successful year, the student may move from "self-contained to a less restrictive setting, such as "resource" or even "consult."

The only placement "more restrictive" than a self-contained classroom is a residential placement, where students are in a facility that is as much "treatment" as it is "education." Some districts have special schools made up of only self-contained classrooms, which might be considered halfway between self-contained and residential since the schools are not close to students' homes.

Other Names

Self-contained settings, Self-contained programs

Example: Due to Emily's anxiety and self-injurious behavior, her IEP team decided that a self-contained classroom for students with Emotional Disturbances would be the best place to keep her safe.

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School girl looking fed up

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child upset in classroom

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What Is the Concept of Regular Education?

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The Gold Standard for Special Education Teachers

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