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Kluth, Paula, Jacqueline Thousand, and Richard Villa. "'Our School Doesn't Offer Inclusion' and Other Legal Blunders." *Educational Leadership* Dec/Jan. (2002):24-27. Print.

The purpose of the article is to inform readers about the legalities behind inclusion in the classroom in order to clear up any misconceptions or false ideas about how inclusion works or what is required by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. With readers' education, the authors hope to help change the current practices of keeping students with disabilities contained separately in specialized classrooms and instead promote placing students with disabilities in regular classrooms as much as possible.

Schools have taken a long time to implement the part of IDEA that requires the schools to place students with disabilities into inclusive settings with other students without disabilities. Some schools may claim to be working toward inclusion slowly so as to help teachers and students with the transition, but the pace may just be a way to procrastinate putting inclusion into effect. There are three common misconceptions about inclusion that affect whether it is used or not. First of all, there are those who consider inclusion a program that a school can choose to accept or reject, but inclusion is not a policy schools can outright refuse. A student is entitled to the least restrictive environment; if a student with disabilities can be successfully educated in a general classroom, then the school is required by law to place him or her there. The second misconception is that, for inclusion to work, the student with disabilities must be able to perform the same skills as the students without disabilities perform in the general classroom. However, students with disabilities are still able to participate in the general classroom by working on individualized goals and lessons within that context. Families do not have the burden of proof to demonstrate that a student with disabilities belongs in the general classroom; the school must explain why the student is not placed in that setting. The third misconception is that superior specialized programs can be an excuse for not placing a student with disabilities in the general education classroom; students are often placed in separate environments without trying inclusion first. A student's placement must be determined on an individual basis, not on the basis of the disability's diagnosis.

The authors recommend that educators and administrators review the language and implications of IDEA in order to help them create school policies and procedures, evaluate existing special education programs in their schools, and make better decisions regarding placements and offered services. Knowing this information can help prevent lawsuits and provide an enhanced learning environment for both students with and without disabilities. In addition, this knowledge will lead to a more equal and just society.

I am grateful for the example illustrating Malcolm's inclusion in the middle-school social studies class. It's easy to say that we need to put students with disabilities in our general education classrooms, but it's harder to envision what that would actually look like. Malcolm's specific example puts the information in a real context and thus makes it more useful. Also, I paused on page 25 where it says "if schools can successfully educate a student with disabilities in general education settings... then the student's school must provide the experience." That seems like a vague standard; "successfully" can have varying degrees, and who decides whether the education is having success or not? Having such a subjective criterion may be one of the contributors to why inclusion is not implemented more in today's schools.