
Educational Environments

NHED FACT SHEET



New Hampshire

Department of Education

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Resource Room vs. Self-Contained Educational Environments

Special education refers to the tailored educational services and support provided to individuals with disabilities, learning differences, or other exceptional needs to help them reach their full potential. Special education programs are designed to address the unique learning requirements of these students and ensure that they receive an appropriate and inclusive education.

Resource room:

A resource room is a specialized educational environment within a regular school where students with disabilities or learning differences receive additional support and specially designed instruction, typically for a portion of their school day. Students in a resource room often spend most of their time in regular classrooms but may visit the resource room for specially designed instruction and assistance with subject areas as needed. Special education teachers provide individualized or small group specially designed instruction to help students with their academic and behavioral needs. The goal of a resource room is to provide the necessary support while promoting inclusion within the general education environment to receive direct instruction aligned to the curriculum.

Ed. 1100.3 Continuum of Alternative Learning Environments (Ages 6-21)

Resource Room: A child with a disability attends a regular class and receives assistance at or through the special education resource room for no more than 60% of the child's school day.

Self-Contained Classroom:

A self-Contained classroom is a separate and more intensive educational environment for students with more significant disabilities or exceptional needs. In a self-contained classroom, students spend the majority or all their school day in this specialized setting, apart from the general education environment. These classrooms are typically smaller and staffed by special education teachers who are trained to work with students with more complex needs. The curriculum and instruction are still aligned to the general curriculum in self-contained classrooms however they are highly individualized to meet each student's specific needs and may focus on modified general curriculum, life skills, functional academics, and behavioral support.

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Self-Contained Special Education Class: A child with a disability attends a self-contained special class for more than 60% of their school day.

In summary, the main difference between a resource room and a self-contained classroom in special education is the level of inclusion and the intensity of support provided to students. Resource rooms offer support within the general education environment and are typically for student who can benefit from part time or specific assistance, while self-contained classrooms provide a more comprehensive and separated environment for students with more significant needs. The choice of placement depends on the individual student's needs and is determined through the IEP process in consultation with the IEP Team.