

EDUCATION AND SOCIAL COHESION

Sector focus



Educational care and support professionals

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Contents



INCLUSIVE EDUCATION	3
MEASURES AND SUPPORTS TO ADDRESS DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION	6
SPECIFIC PROFESSIONAL PROFILES.....	12
INCLUSIVE EDUCATION, IN FOCUS.....	15
SOURCES CONSULTED	16

Inclusive education

The **Convention on the Rights of the Child**, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on November 20, 1989, provides in Article 2.1 that «States Parties shall respect and ensure the rights set forth in the present Convention to each child within their jurisdiction without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status».

Diversification, adaptation, personalisation... are all formulas and approaches deployed in educational centres to work with the multiple diversities brought by the students in order to offer **quality and equality of opportunities**. These approaches have been grafted from the notion of inclusive school, which aims to include all measures and educational support to respond to diversity and the learning needs of students.

«An inclusive school is one in which different pupils can learn together, a school that excludes no one, because there are no different categories of students, there is only one category of pupils, without any kind of adjectives, who -evidently- are different. In the inclusive school there are only pupils, period, without adjectives; there are no ordinary pupils and special pupils, but simply pupils, each with their own characteristics and needs. Diversity is a natural fact, it is normality: the most normal thing is that we are different (fortunately)»

P. Pujolàs and J. R. Lago (2006)

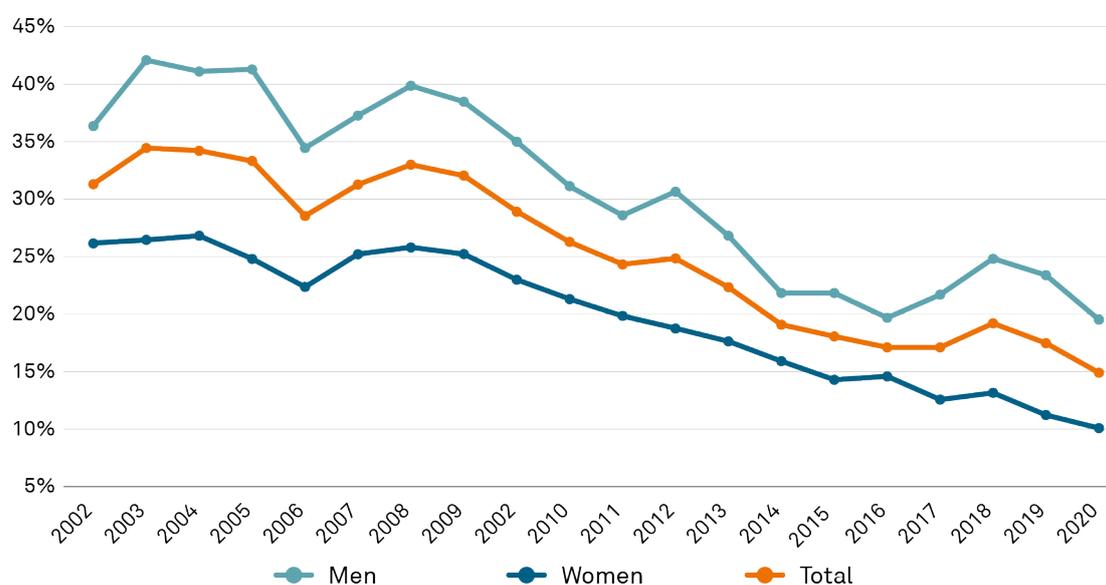
The concept of inclusive education is not new, but moving decisively towards a more **inclusive and integrating** educational model, in line with European standards, is a future trend that will clearly have an impact on employment.



Early school dropout

In this context it is important to introduce the country's [Offensive for School Success, Plan for the Reduction of School Failure in Catalonia \(2012-2018\)](#). Basically, the aim of this program is to **detect learning difficulties early** in primary and preschool education and intervene. To achieve this, courses of action are defined in schools and resources are provided to teachers in relation to the educational needs of pupils. Advancing towards an inclusive education means not only educating all students, but also giving everyone the power to achieve educational success from each individual's means.

Figure 1. Evolution of early school dropout in Catalonia (2002-2021)



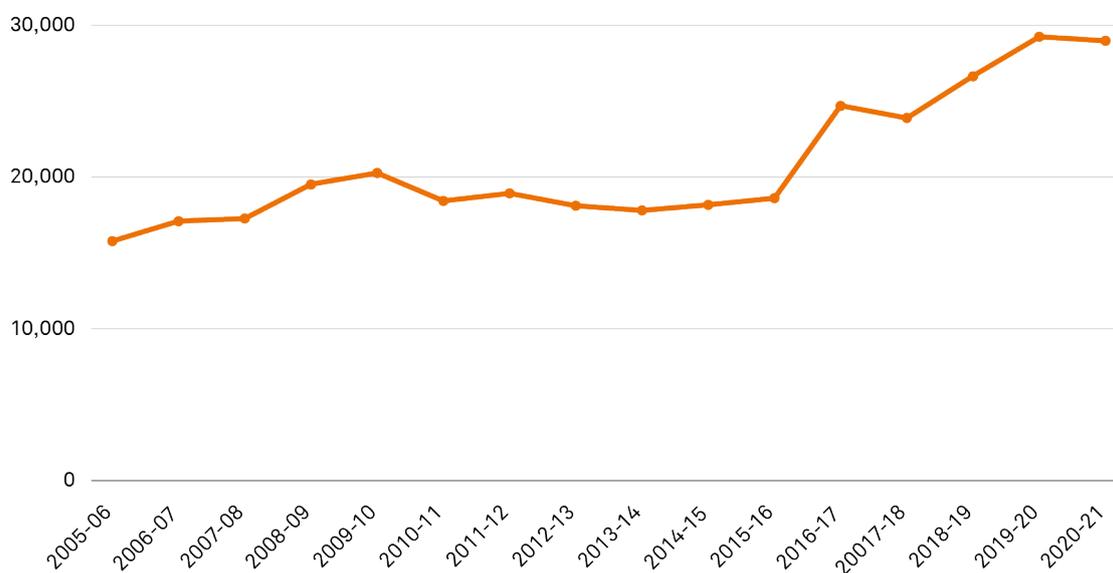
Source: Prepared by the authors, based on data by the Spanish Ministry of Education and Vocational Training.

Special Educational Needs

However, efforts must be made to move from an inclusive school to an **inclusive education system**. A system for everyone, without barriers in all areas of formal and non-formal education (kindergartens, schools, high schools, artistic education schools, adult schools, education and leisure services, and professionals who support, advise and supervise). Along these lines, the [decree 150/2017, of 17 October](#), on the **provision of educational care for students within the framework of an inclusive education system** was approved. It aims to achieve the presence, participation and learning of all pupils in ordinary classrooms. The main novelty is that **students with special educational needs (NEE)** are educated in ordinary schools (exceptionally, families may apply for schooling in a special education centre for pupils with a serious or severe disability).

The positive trend in recent years of students with special educational needs in schools in ordinary schools is mainly due to the improvement in their **early detection** and also an **extension of the categories established** for the recognition of special educational needs. In this regard, the school year of 2020/2021 stands out, in which 78.8% of students with special educational needs were educated in ordinary schools.

Figure 2. Evolution of students with special educational needs in the educational system (2005-2021)



Source: Prepared by the authors, based on data by the Department of Education, Generalitat of Catalonia.

The inclusive orientation of school policies and practices is therefore no longer an option but a priority. The professionalism of the collectives of teachers, non-educational staff and legislators in a truly inclusive system should be linked to their ability to reduce the barriers to the participation and learning of all students, without exception, as only in this way will quality education be ensured.

In this sense, the role of **educational personnel (teachers and non-teachers)**, as well as their reorganisation and maximisation -along with the best use of other resources already available in the school environment- are key elements to transform the way in which inclusive educational support is conceived and deployed. A new socio-educational scenario that will require new professional profiles, new skills and, of course, further training to face the challenges of attention to diversity. This is a present and future trend which has a direct impact on employment, especially in the **professional education and support profiles**.

Measures and supports to address diversity and inclusion

Advancing towards schools for everyone is a process of constant improvement in which the entire educational community must be involved. Experiencing difference as a positive factor and finding increasingly appropriate ways of responding to diversity is a challenge that involves families, institutions, educational administration and all professionals in education. It is about creating **secure and welcoming communities** and developing **inclusive values** that guide the decisions taken at the educational centre on day-to-day policies and practices.

In this regard, centres must plan their measures and educational support based on observing the progress of the students and their needs, in order to give each student the appropriate level of support to improve their level of competence:

- **Educational care measures** are actions and actions organised by centres aimed at reducing barriers to the educational environment.
- **Educational support** is the personal, material and technological resources and the contextual and community aids that the centres use to make the planned measures effective and functional.

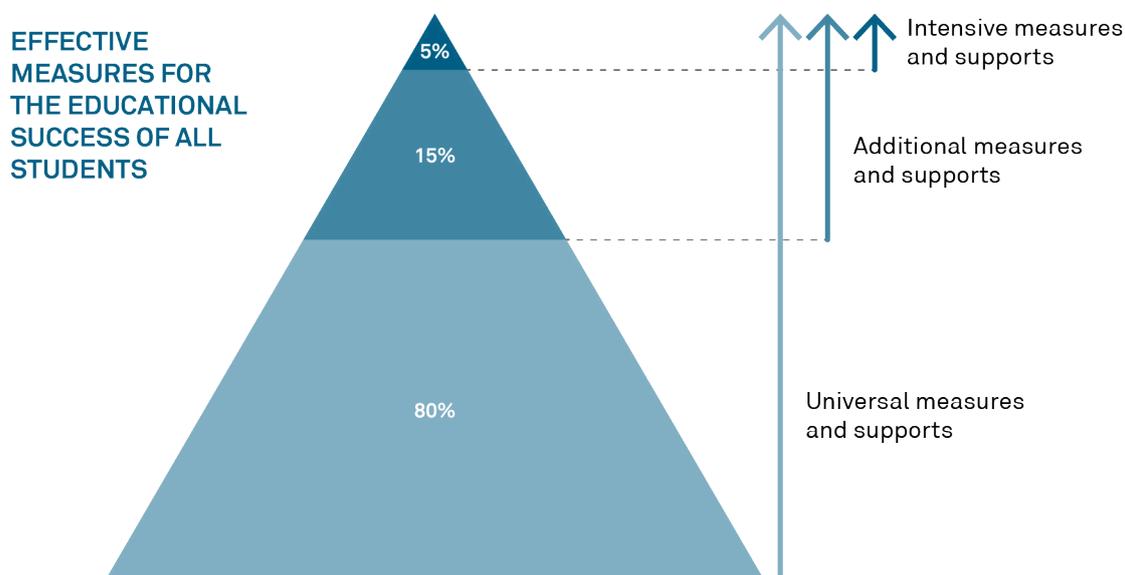


«Supports must be used to adapt the school to the student, and not the student to the system»

Muntaner (2000)

The level of measures and supports is a process for responding to the needs of all students based on **three basic components**:

1. Providing all students with high-quality **universal education**.
2. Establishing an **evaluation system that allows early identification and intervention** aimed at pupils at risk of obtaining limited results in their learning process.
3. **Assessing the effectiveness of the intervention** according to the progress of the students with the aim of introducing modifications to improve the quality of the pedagogical proposal.

Figure 3. Measures and supports for the educational success of all students

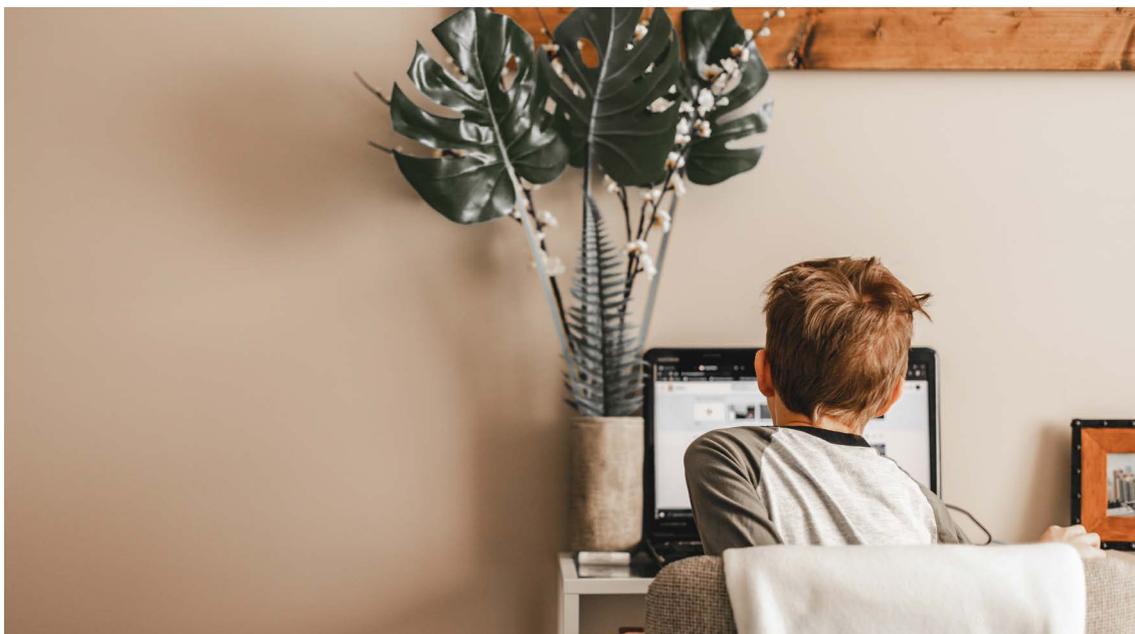
Source: Prepared by the authors, based on data by the Department of Education, Generalitat of Catalonia.

Universal measures and supports

At the base are universal interventions **aimed at all students** of the centre, which are actions and practices of educational, preventive and proactive nature. All of them aim to: 1) make the learning context more flexible, 2) provide strategies to minimise barriers, 3) ensure meaningful learning and 4) ensure the coexistence and well-being of the entire educational community.

These actions allow the creation of inclusive educational contexts. The most remarkable are:

- **Personalised learning:** methodologies that allow flexible forms of work (environments/spaces, corners/workshops, cooperative learning, project-based learning, peer-to-peer learning, digital support, etc.) to take place.
- **Flexible organisation of the centre:** flexible grouping of students, shared teaching, flexible schedules, participation of families, flexible organisation of space, inclusive organisation of leisure stays, etc.
- **Formative assessment and self-assessment:** Student self-assessment (self-evaluation and co-evaluation, rubric, learning folder, etc.) and formative assessment of teachers (summaries, outlines, concept maps, etc.).
- **Tutorial action and guidance processes:** individualised tutorial action, group tutorial action, specific programmes and projects (school mediation, emotional education, 3/18 philosophy, etc.) and academic and professional guidance.



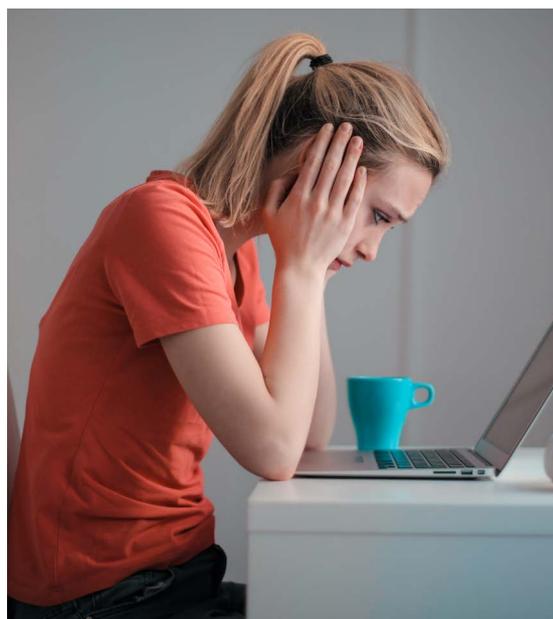
Additional measures and supports

At a second level, additional measures and supports are strategically **designed for pupils who have unique or vulnerable personal circumstances** (permanent or transitory) **with the risk of early school dropout**. Actions that allow adjusting the educational response, focusing intervention on those aspects of the learning process and personal development that can compromise personal and school progress. In this context, the “**educational and supportive care professionals**” that are responsible for implementing the additional measures and support, to complement the functions of tutors and other teaching professionals, are involved.

Based on the detection of the needs of pupils by the tutor, the family and the teaching team (if applicable, the **EAP – Educational Psychology Advisory and Guidance Team**) develop measures, among others, such as:

- **Specific tutorial measures of action.**
- **Support from special education teachers.**
- **Support from educational guidance teachers.**
- **Personalised School Support:** flexible, temporary and preventive support, to care for the various student learning rates and which offers individual or small group support to the students who need it (primary education).
- **Intensive Enhancement Program:** Temporary support for the consolidation of basic primary skills, and improvement of linguistic skills (Catalan and Spanish) and mathematics (1st and 2nd years of ESO).
- **Linguistic and Social support:** addressed to foreign students who need specific support to follow the learning of the areas and the mastery of the language. The acquisition of communication skills is encouraged.

- **Curricular diversification programmes:** organization of content and subjects of the curriculum different from that established in general for students requiring it (3rd and 4th years of ESO).
- **Newcomers' classroom:** organisational and methodological strategy to care for new students who enter the education system, where they feel well cared for and valued for having tools to start their teaching-learning process.
- **Home care:** support for pupils suffering from prolonged illnesses during periods of convalescence above 30 days, so that they can receive educational care at the home from the teacher.
- **Hospital classrooms:** children or young people who require hospitalisation and cannot temporarily follow their studies can receive educational care with activities adapted to the clinical state and time of stay.
- **Day hospitals for teenagers:** partial hospitalisation care units with different therapeutic and educational resources that want to avoid the detachment of these teenagers from the education system.
- **Educational centre teaching units in the Department of Justice:** educational care support for minors and young people who, as a result of the internment regime or other measures, cannot attend schools.
- **Educational units in DGAIA centres (General Department for Childcare and Adolescence):** support for children and adolescents in situations of high social risk, who temporarily cannot attend school.
- **Promotion of Roma in Catalonia:** for the schooling of Roma students, they work on prevention, diagnosis and early action with the school promoter, a professional member of the Roma people who acts as a positive reference.



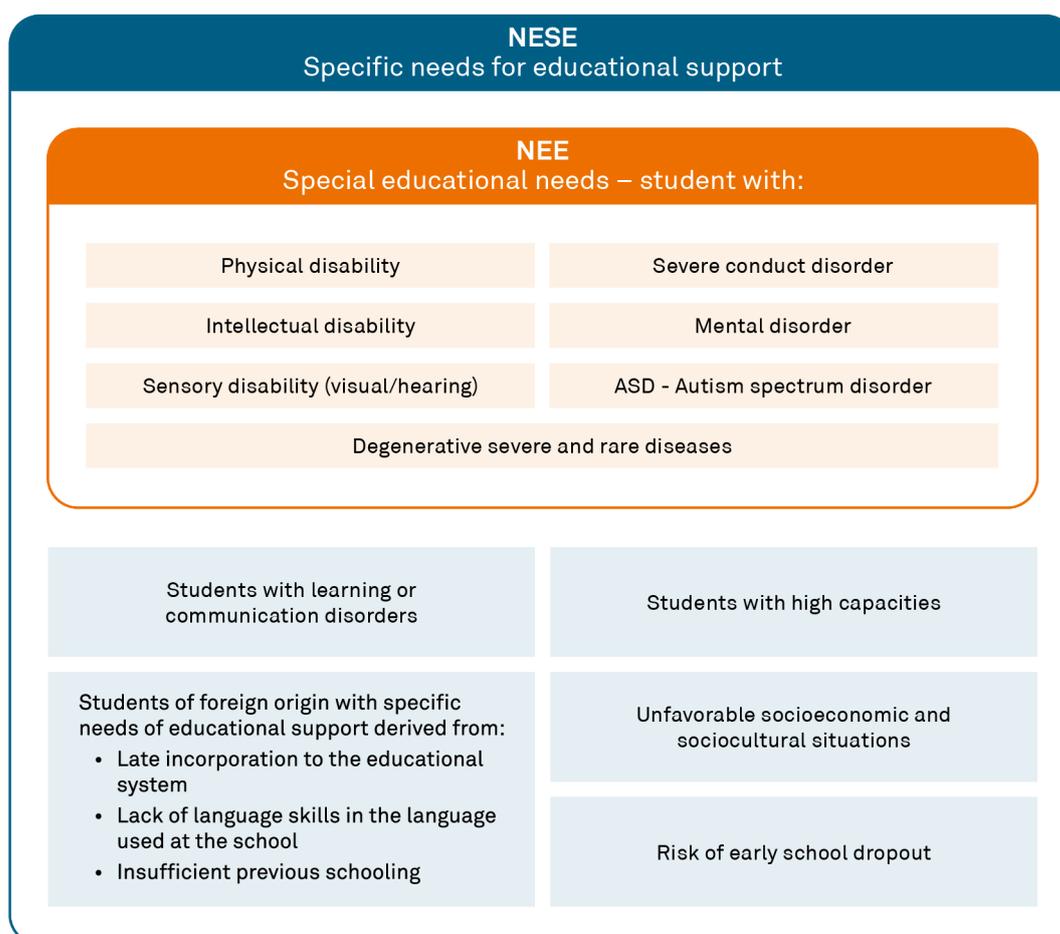
Intensive measures and supports

At a third level, intensive measures and support that are extraordinary educational actions **adapted to the uniqueness of students with Special Educational Needs (NEE)**, allow the educational response to be adjusted in a cross-cutting manner, with a regular frequency and without a time limit.

Based on the recognition of NEE in the report of **Specific Needs for Educational Support (NESE)** drawn up by the EAP, or the **early school drop-out risk** recognition provided for in the same report, in the case of the Shared Schooling Units (UEC) the latter support resource is implemented. In short, UECs are educational centres that aim to ensure the necessary educational care for students with NESE derived from the failure to adapt to the school environment. They offer the possibility of following the ESO stage in a small group, according to the corresponding individualised curricular adaptations.

NESE are identified and evaluated by considering the performance of the student within their **educational context**, regardless of their personal and social status, with the aim of providing them with the necessary support to promote their learning in a fair manner. The need to ensure the inclusion of all students makes it necessary to establish a classification that allows to designate and define categories of educational support needs. These categories and definitions do not define the person, but **temporary or permanent conditions** experienced by the person. The categories to better adjust intensive measures and supports are listed below:

Figure 4. Specific Needs of Educational Support (NESE)



Source: Prepared by the authors, based on data by the Department of Education, Generalitat of Catalonia.

The application of these measures involves the prior preparation of an **Individualised Support Plan** which must specify the objectives, the professional team involved in the coordination, the methodological adaptations and the progress monitoring indicators that allow the effectiveness of the measures to be assessed and the necessary readjustments to be made. It is deployed in **specific educational measures**, beyond the support of educational care staff, such as:

- **Intensive supports for inclusive schooling:** extraordinary endowment of professionals in the normal environments of the centre to address educational needs that require support throughout schooling.
- **Intensive supports for hearing and language:** professional support for the schooling of pupils with hearing impairment who require special equipment and professional specialisation in ordinary centres.
- **Comprehensive classroom support programs:** particular educational and therapeutic resource which aims, on a temporary basis, to care for students with needs associated with serious mental disorders in ordinary school contexts.
- **Shared schooling units:** addressed to students from third year of ESO with a risk of premature school dropout, resulting from social maladjustment, aggressive and pre-criminal conducts or other behaviours.
- **The educational offer of special education centres service and resource providers:** programmes to support schooling, assisting in direct care or implementing programmes to stimulate communication and language, emotional self-regulation, support for motoring and mobility, or others.
- **Other measures:** new opportunities programmes or the reduction of the duration of some educational phase for highly qualified students could be an example in this line of intensive measures and support.

By supplementing these measures, the [decree 11/2021 of 16 February](#) on **admission and programming of the educational offer**, for the first time reserves places for students with NEE, adjusted to each territory to **improve equity** between all students and **fight school segregation**. In order to ensure adequate care for students with NEE, mechanisms are activated for the early detection of vulnerable students during the registration process (and not once enrolled). The aim is to redistribute students with financial support and reduce the maximum number of students per group (the objective is to reach ratios of 20 students per teacher).

In addition, the **Educational Opportunities Improvement Plan** is introduced, targeted at centres with a more educational complexity. It aims to compensate for educational inequalities of socioeconomic origin.

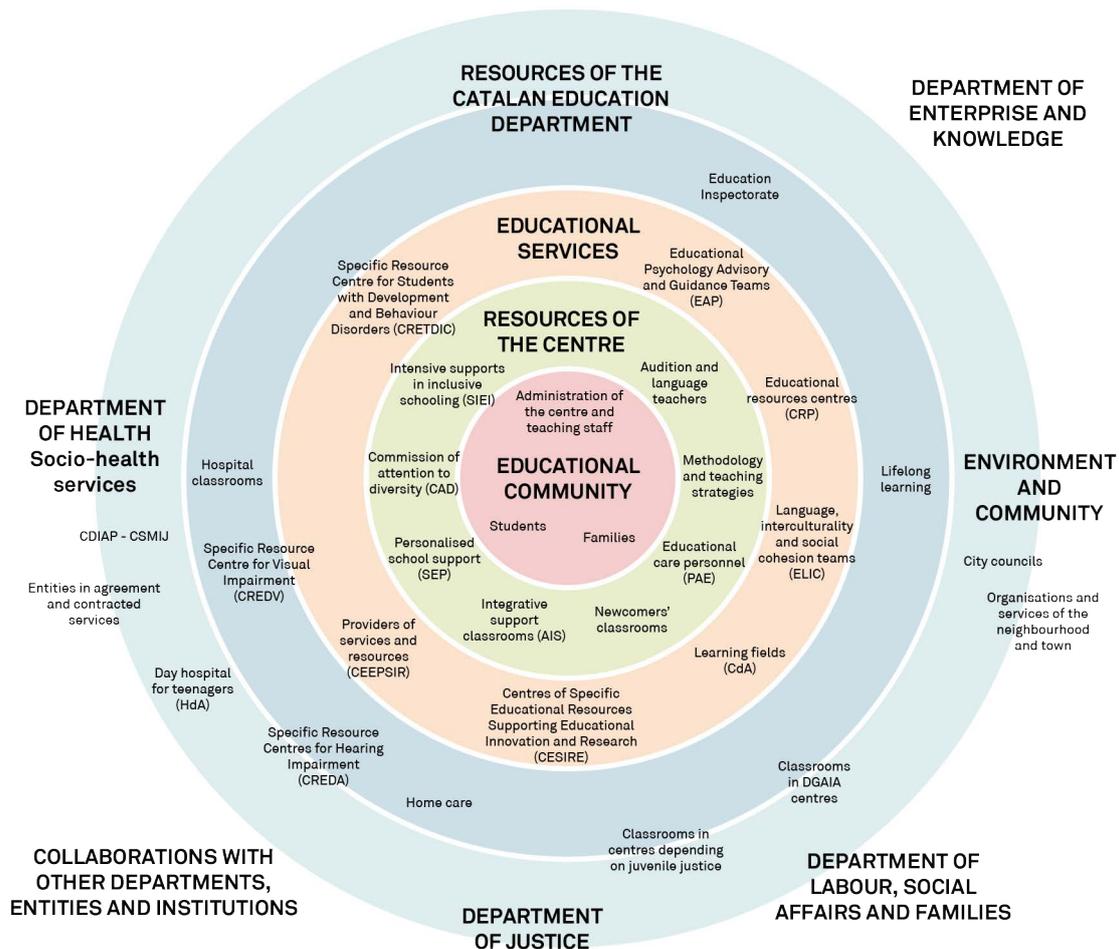
Specific professional profiles

While teaching professionals need to be trained in terms of care for students with NEE and the management of diversity and inclusion in classrooms, this paradigm shift in the education sector also makes it necessary to count on **non-teaching professional profiles for educational care and support**.

These professional figures are involved in a networking framework, specifically in tasks that allow the creation of an educational and community context rich in learning opportunities, strategically organised to **act in a preventive and cross-cutting way**, and focused on care for students and their family. In this regard, there is a tacit agreement between professionals to share and be co-responsible for a single educational project, cooperating with families and the community for the benefit of children and young people in the territory. From this perspective, educational care and support professionals can be integrated into the multiple jobs that coexist in the **network of supports dedicated to inclusive education**.

Graphically,

Figure 5. Network of supports to inclusive education



Source: Prepared by the authors, based on data by the Department of Education, Generalitat of Catalonia.

Currently, in Catalonia there are professional non-teaching profiles in charge of accompanying students who require the implementation of additional and intensive measures and support.



Diversity care and inclusive education teacher: a professional profile that is usually recognised as a **special education educator**, since their main function is to support students with special educational needs (NEE) so that they can participate in the centre's activities, and apply work programmes related to personal autonomy, the acquisition of hygiene habits, social skills, mobility and displacements, sensory stimulation, life skills, transition to adult life and preparation for the world of work, schooling in ordinary centres and special education centres. They gradually take on a more active role in **coordination teams**, establishing close relations with services such as EAP, CDIAP (Centres for Child Development and Early Care), CSMIJ (Centre for Children and Youth Mental Health), etc. This figure allows the correct documenting of socio-educational intervention, as well as the student response in order to adapt and improve the teaching and learning process.



Special Education Assistant: this professional dedicates much of their working time to developing **care functions** in the educational centre. Basically, their tasks are focused on helping students with NEE moving through the classroom and inside and outside the centre, with their means of mobility if needed (wheelchairs, walkers, crutches, etc.). They also assist students with the control and changes of position necessary to guarantee their mobility and in aspects of their personal autonomy (hygiene, nutrition, daily care, etc.) to ensure that they can participate in all activities and carry out their specific treatments in the educational centre, if applicable. They also take care of the pupils at the entrance and exit of the centre and during recreation and lunch break. In collaboration with other teachers and non-teaching professionals, they **provide verbal and/or written information to the teacher** about the activities and actions of students with NEE.





Support assistant (caretaker): responsible for implementing the measures and supports included in the Individualised Support Plan in the different areas, with the aim of facilitating the centre's effort to include all students in regular classrooms. Their primary job is to ensure the **autonomy**, as well as the **regulation of behaviour**, **safety** and **health** of the child, adolescent or young person they work with: not only they aid in their physical well-being, but also ensure their emotional well-being. The figure of the caretaker is complex because each student is different and the demands they will receive regarding their role may vary greatly from case to case.



Educational psychologist: a professional who can **guide and advise** in different socioeducational contexts on a threefold aspect: teaching teams, teachers and families. Their scope of intervention, basically, focuses on supporting the teaching and learning process and uses appropriate strategies, methodologies, instruments and resources to: optimise the comprehensive teaching aimed at students; give academic-professional guidance to the teaching team and to teachers -such as helping to prioritize and nuance didactic learning content-; offer training around the psychological and evolutionary characteristics of students to the various members of the educational community, as well as to become a key figure in working with children, adolescents and young people with educational needs.

This professional works in **multidisciplinary teams** in their territorial field in assessment, monitoring and guidance. This profile can be found in the Educational Psychology Advisory and Guidance Teams (EAPs), or in the Shared Schooling Units (UECs). In terms of the latter, the Department of Education reaches agreements with certain local entities and corporations to offer these complementary activities, considering the experience and specialisation in caring for young people and adolescents at risk of social exclusion.



Language and social cohesion advisor: a professional profile working in educational environments carrying out activities aimed at **promoting the inclusion and attention to the cultural and social diversity of immigrants** in host societies. Their scope includes all actions dedicated to preventing risk of exclusion, responding to interculturality, coexistence and social cohesion, up to the promotion of knowledge and use of language. Above all, they are a professional figure supporting students and their families, but also teachers at the centre, management teams or other agents of the educational community, since they are also involved in community work programmes in their area of intervention.

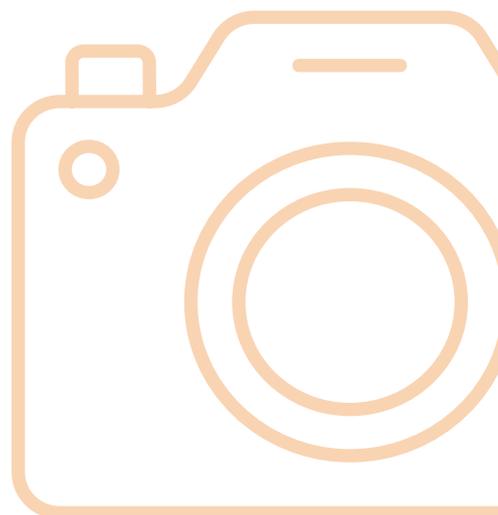
Inclusive education, in focus

Promoting the social inclusion of people in all areas of life, from childhood to old age, is still today a claim and a struggle to guarantee rights to a socioeducational practice. Educational teams and families are constantly calling for the set of resources, especially the compromised additional and intensive measures and supports.

In any case, the **inclusive orientation** of public policies and school practices is no longer an option but a priority for advancing quality education. It is therefore essential to enhance and make visible the decisive role played by the professionals of teaching and educational care and support in creating a truly inclusive system, which minimises the barriers to the participation and learning of all students. To celebrate diversity and to live it as a positive factor is the trend for the future, and families, educational centres and all education professionals are already working on it.

Currently, in the city of Barcelona there are **6,798 students** (3.04% of the total enrolled students) **identified as NESE** in compulsory and post-compulsory teachings. 68% of students are enrolled in ordinary schools, in 450 schools. However, **14% of students who are students in ordinary schools have intensive measures and support.**

As mentioned above, there is still a long way to go to achieve a fully inclusive education system in Catalonia, with educational measures and support deployed at 100% to adapt, personalise and diversify the intensity of support according to the students' NESEs. Essentially, providing education centres and professionals with educational care and support requires **extraordinary endowments** in ordinary socio-educational environments which are apparently costly to implement.



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- ANTONI SHKRABA Pg. 13 Assistant helping girl with special education needs.
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