

OPINION: “New Bedford has a flawed special needs education system.”

“Both of my daughters go to Campbell Elementary school in New Bedford. They are both special needs and in the integrated preschool program which is a mix of special needs and non-special needs students.

Recently I had to fight for my youngest daughter to get better services put in place for her, along the way I came across information saying there should be no more than seven students on IEP’s in the classroom for it to be considered an integrated classroom.

Today I tried to speak to the principal at Campbell asking her for the number of students on an IEP in my daughter’s classroom and she refused to give me this information and claimed it was a breach in confidentiality. I expressed to her several times I didn’t want any information on any other children just a simple yes or no on if the school is following the guidelines to how many children on IEP’s should be in this type of classroom. She still refused to answer me and told me she would speak to the special educations director Sandy Ford.

Sandy Ford contacted me later that day and informed me that **all** of the classes are currently exceeding the limit of children that should be on an IEP (and who’s to say it won’t increase) because there is nowhere else to place them. She informed me that they have put in for a waiver with the state to increase the number of students on an IEP that can be in the classroom but they have not yet been approved.

So this means our children’s education should be compromised? What about the non-special needs students in this type of classroom that are meant to be role models and are now in a

mostly special needs classroom? Sandy Ford acted as if it was no big deal this was going on and there was nothing anyone can do!

But I'm here to say that can't be right. The state decided long before now the proper number of students on IEP that should be in this style classroom for the best chance of a proper education. So why is it that because we need more classrooms like this, instead of having more classrooms like this we are dumping children just starting school and learning how the structure works into already full or past full classrooms?

We need to do more, if you have a child on an IEP in an integrated program please call, email, your child's school, the school department, the state of education, say something do something because your child is not even considered to be in an integrated program once the classroom exceeds the seven on an IEP and if you're a parent of a role model in this type of classroom. I would also invite you to call, email, say or do something, anything because how is your child getting the proper education they need as well?

I'm not sure where to go, or who to turn to, but I'm sure if enough of us become concerned and fight for our children something will get done!!! Could you please share this in hopes to make some sort of dent in the flawed special education system we have?"

– Sincerely a concerned parent."