

The parent perspective: Inclusion and acceptance in the classroom

Tips for Teachers – from our Lived Experiences (ongoing list)

Plan in Advance:

- Discuss with the principal what funding is available for field trips if alternate forms of transportation are needed. This should happen early in the year, so that parents are not informed last minute that the child cannot attend a field trip
- Discuss ahead of time the types of field trips that are planned for the year to see if any changes need to be made
- Have a general question sheet for parents to fill in to make sure the teacher understands what the child can do/likes to do so that the teacher can take advantage of this knowledge.
- At the beginning of the year, encourage all the students to make a list of favorite activities, interests, shows, books, etc. so that appropriate /inclusive activities can be planned through the year.
- Plan physical spaces, desks arrangements, to accommodate equipment and movement
- Encourage teachers to have equipment eg. FM systems ready in advance and not just prepare them when they see the student
- Consider some accommodations such as visual schedules to be used for the entire classroom instead of exclusive for special needs student
- Planning in advance should make accommodations blend in and seem natural
- Help train teachers about children who have sensory issues

Focus on the Positive:

- If a child in the class has special equipment, ask them if they would mind letting the other students try
- Ask what their child likes to do and try to incorporate that into the group to promote inclusion. This might help the child to be motivated to take part as well as the other students.
- Encourage when able bodied child and child with disabilities are becoming friends and working together on class projects
- Praise when child figures out his/her own ways to become more independent.

Problem Solve Creatively:

- Maps, tests and other print were too small for a student to read, so they had the idea of taking a picture of the document with an ipad and enlarging it so the students could see it better
- Gym/recess - little things like changing the rules slightly so that each person gets some time with the "ball" in a ball sport.
- If child is hesitant to join circle, bring the circle to the child
- If playing a game like through and catch the ball, if the child can only catch but can't through for example, have the able bodied child through ball for him/her. He/she still feels part of the group because they can catch.
- Give everyone a role in group situations

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- Open and ongoing communication
- Use other children as models
- Break things down into small steps
- Pre-plan, organize
- Use technology

Collaborate with others:

- Have discussions with both the parent and child regarding what “inclusion” means for each of them. Eg. Parents may want the child in their stander during circle time, but the child feels like being in the wheelchair may make them feel more included
- Also, checking in with the parents often to make sure that their child is thriving and problem solve together. Teachers should respect the fact that parents know their child best and really listen to what they have to say and include them in the problem solving process.
- I think the teachers should help to educate the other students so that they will help to promote inclusion. There should be education sessions with kindergarten age up, so that these children understand diversity. For example: So that young children are not afraid of a child in a wheelchair or who looks a little different. We had a puppetry group come to my son’s school and do a play about different abilities to promote education and inclusion so that children would be more accepting.
- Depending on the age, maturity, appropriateness - have the student’s about him/herself to dispel any myths around disabilities and again, promote respect and inclusion. Some students are comfortable doing this, but not all children might be comfortable in doing so and having help to advocate might be an advantage.
- Focus on real interactions with all students
- Provide opportunity for parents and teachers to dialogue about unique abilities and needs of each child (eg. Mobility, toileting, feeding)

Helpful resources:

- Use books to help teach kids about different abilities - Books we recommend are *Big Al* by Andrew Clements, *It’s Okay to Be Different* by Todd Parr and *Wonder* by R.J. Palacio
- Spinclusion, www.spinclusion.ca.
A fun, interactive game that creates a welcoming and inclusive environment for children of all abilities and cultures.
- Puppetry
- The Marsha Forest Centre, <http://marshaforest.com/>
The Centre's program focus is the development of future leadership for inclusion through the creation of focused programs, materials and research that will create a world where Everyone Belongs.
- For TDSB teachers, The Tippet Centre
<http://schools.tdsb.on.ca/asit/standards/btstart/tippett.pdf>
The Tippet Centre provides a wide variety of educational resources to enhance student learning and teacher professional development.

Recommended Books:

Together we Rock toolkit (2011)

by John Draper

Overview: real examples and experiences, has useful templates, simple to read and understand, includes many different types of disabilities, sample questionnaires, includes a CD

A Survival Guide for new Special Educators (2013)

by Bonnie Billingsley, Mary T Brownell, Maya Israel, & Margaret L Kamman

Overview: examples for both teachers and students, gives examples of how a teacher can help students, helping students with accessibility

Emily Included (2011)

by Kathleen McDonnell

Overview: Emily has CP and uses a wheelchair. She wanted to go to regular school, however officials wanted her to go to a special school. A court battle ensued. Based on real life experience.

Action for Inclusion (1989)

by John O'Brien & Marsha Forest

Overview: How to improve school by welcoming children with special needs into regular classrooms. Some content and references are dated, but includes excellent philosophies that are still relevant. Also, provides great advice, particularly in regards to how to communicate with the child and family.

The Zones of Regulation (2011)

by Leah M Kuypers

Overview: A curriculum designed to foster self-regulation and emotional control. Provides practical tools for regulation and how to apply them.

Including Samuel (2014), www.includingsamuel.com

by Dan Habib, Mary Schuh, & Cheryl M Jorgensen

Overview: Shot and produced over four years, Habib's award-winning documentary film, *Including Samuel*, honestly chronicles the Habib family's efforts to include Samuel in every facet of their lives. The film also features four other families with varied inclusion experiences, plus interviews with dozens of teachers, young people, parents and disability rights experts. Includes a viewers' guide with discussion questions, resources and advice for parents, teachers, educators and administrators.

Building Bridges (2015)

by Ellen Yack, Paula Aquilla, & Shirley Sutton

Overview: sensory integration – therapy for children with Autism and PDD. For parents, teachers and other professionals. Includes checklists. Easy to read. Gives an overview of current theories/research.

From Disability to Possibility (2006)

by Patrick Schwarz

Overview: Draws on stories of both learners, families and teachers. This book will change the way you look at students with disabilities.

A Teacher's Guide to Including Students with Disabilities in General Physical Education (1994)

by Martin E Block

Overview: A comprehensive guide to making phys. ed. inclusion work for students of all ages. Includes a wide range of easily implemented, low-cost adaptations; realistic case studies that model problems and solutions; a helpful resource list; and practical guidance on key issues like safety, behavior problems, group games, and social acceptance.

Inclusion of Exceptional Learners in Canadian Schools (2013)

By Nancy Hutchison

Now in its fourth edition, *Inclusion of Exceptional Learners in Canadian Schools* is an outstanding introduction to inclusive education in Canada. In keeping with Canada's commitment to inclusive education, this text examines positive ways of including children of all needs and abilities in the regular classroom. Author and educator, Nancy Hutchinson draws on her extensive experience educating students to help shape the skills and strategies future teachers need to create an inclusive classroom by individualizing learning for each student regardless of their exceptionality.

40 Active Learning Strategies for the Inclusive Classroom (2011)

By Linda Schwartz Green and Diane Casale-Giannola

This practical guide connects research and application with over 40 strategies for today's inclusive classroom, including methods for differentiating instruction for children with special needs.

What Successful Teachers do in Inclusive Classrooms (2005)

By Sarah McNary, Neal Glasgow and Cathy Hicks

This guide focuses on maximizing student achievement by outlining a full range of research-based methods that can be interwoven to create the best instructional plan for special learners.