

Inclusive Teaching Guide
(Elementary Level)
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All children have the right to receive an education in the mainstream where they are accepted, are provided with proper supports, and are provided with an opportunity to receive an education which challenges their needs and their capabilities. This is why inclusion is so important and must be enforced. An inclusive school includes everyone “irrespective of talent, disability, socioeconomic background, or cultural origin” (Stainback & Stainback, 3). For this reason, schools should not be asking the question of whether they should be an inclusive school. Rather, schools should be continuously searching for ways to make inclusion of all students as effective as possible, where all of the needs of the children are met. When inclusion is properly implemented in a classroom, all the members of the classroom as well as the entire community will benefit from it.

Teachers play a very crucial role in creating an effective inclusive classroom. As a future elementary school teacher, I understand how important inclusion is and plan on doing my best to provide my students with an appropriate education that meets their needs and capabilities. I plan on creating a community in my classroom where children are able to receive and provide support to one another in order for them to understand, respect, and interact with peers who may be different from themselves. I believe that if children learn to accept and value differences while they are young, they will be able to grow into caring, accepting, and respectful citizens.

Parents also play a very important role with inclusion. Parents want what is best for their children. This holds regardless if their children have a disability or not.

However, it seems like parents who do have a child with a disability have to work harder to ensure that their child receives an education that is full of opportunity and possibility. Parents of students who have academic, social-emotional, or sensory-physical disabilities may have to play a more active role in their child's education to ensure their child's success in school.

I plan on having the parents of my students involved with their child's education as much as possible. In order to involve the parents of my students, there are a number of things that I can do. I will make it clear to parents that I truly care about their children and want what is best for them just as they do. I will let them know that I will always be willing to meet with them. I will meet with them before school, after school, during lunch, or at any time that is convenient for them. I understand that they may be busy with work or other things so I will be willing to work with them and make time for meetings concerning their child. Another thing that I will do so that parents know how their child is doing in school, is make phone calls on a regular basis or send letters home. If there is a concern that I have about a student, this is a good way to let parents know about it. However, this will not be the primary purpose of these phone calls and letters. Instead, they will be used as a way of letting parents know positive and motivational things about their children, such as if they are improving on tests and homework, or just to let them know if their child showed remarkable behavior towards a peer in class. For parents concerned about homework, students will have an assignment notebook where they must record their daily assignments so they will know what they have to do. Parents can look at this daily with their children to make sure that they complete their assignments. Also, for students who seem to be having difficulty in school, who maybe

are social-emotional, I will contact parents immediately to try to figure out what the cause is of the child's problems and make suggestions on things that might help the child. I will also listen to the concerns and suggestions of parents so that I can do my best to help in the classroom.

Besides working with parents of students, collaboration within the school must also take place to ensure a successful inclusive classroom. There are a number of specialists present in most schools who can help provide support to students and teachers. A few of these people who can provide support include support teachers, co-teachers, speech therapists, aides and paraprofessionals, resource room teachers, special education teachers, and more. Hopefully, when I become a teacher, I will have in-class support, as opposed to "pull-outs", which is what occurs in most schools. Ideally, I would like to have team teaching in my classroom. I believe that team teaching is an excellent resource for students and teachers. Having a second teacher in my classroom, like a special education teacher, will provide me with the opportunity of exchanging thoughts and ideas with another educator on what can be done in the classroom to create the most effective learning environment and community. We will be able to put our ideas together and think of ways in which we can design lessons that will engage children at multiple levels, adapt curriculum to fit the needs of all the children in class, and address any concerns about children that we might have. Also, by having a second teacher in the classroom, more time can be devoted to each child, which is great for children who might need a little more help and attention. With a team teacher, students might not feel and look isolated from the rest of the class, who might otherwise have to sit in the back of the class or next to a support person where it is evident that they are receiving specialized help.

When a regular education and a special education teacher are in a classroom together, aid can be provided to all students in a fashion that does not single any student out from the rest.

I realize however, that not all schools provide teachers with the opportunity to team-teach. If I am not able to work with a second teacher in the classroom, I would definitely take any in-class support that I can get. However, if I do not receive in-class support, I would still make the most out of obtaining advice and assistance from school specialists. A good way to do this is to have several meetings where teachers and other specialists can work together and find ways of making inclusion successful, such as but not limited to an IEP meeting. It is amazing how many creative ideas a group can come up with when they are committed to making something work.

In order to make any classroom work, an authentic curriculum must be developed for the year, as well as effective teaching approaches. In any given classroom one could expect to find that all children are different. They have different interests, needs, desires, capabilities, and ways of learning. Therefore, as a teacher, I understand that I must develop teaching strategies and curriculum that will provide students at multiple levels of ability access to a meaningful education.

As a guide, I will use Gardner's theory of multiple intelligence to develop teaching strategies that will engage the multiple intelligences and learning styles of children. The first area of intelligence is linguistic intelligence. A few things that I will include in the curriculum to assist and facilitate linguistic learners are storytelling, writing poems, plays, publishing writing samples, and writing in a journal.

A second area of intelligence is logical-mathematical. To aid and facilitate this intelligence, I will do such things as having students design and conduct science experiments, perform calculations, use calculators, recognize number patterns, work on problem-solving, and so on.

Spatial intelligence is a third area of intelligence. To help facilitate learning through spatial intelligence, I will provide my students with the opportunity to work with charts, maps, and graphs. I will have them draw pictures relating to topics that we discuss in class and on things in their life that they might wish to create an art piece on.

A fourth area of intelligence is bodily-kinesthetic. A few activities that I can do with students in the classroom to incorporate bodily-kinesthetic intelligence are to develop actions such as dancing, running, jumping, and so on, to demonstrate certain concepts and answer questions. Also, hands-on science experiments, plays, and field trips can help children with bodily-kinesthetic intelligence.

Musical intelligence is a fifth area of intelligence. To incorporate this intelligence in the classroom, I can use songs and rhymes to teach lessons, or I could have music playing in class while students' work on projects. I could also have students develop their own rhymes, raps, or songs about a particular topic in class and share it with the rest of the class if they would not mind.

A sixth area of intelligence is interpersonal. Interpersonal learners work well with others. Therefore, activities that can be done in the classroom to facilitate this intelligence should focus on having students work with other students in the classroom, or with friends and family outside of the classroom.

Intra-personal intelligence is another area of intelligence. To incorporate intra-personal intelligence in the classroom, students can keep journals about their thoughts and ideas, spend time alone in class, maybe during reading time, and allow students to do choice projects.

The final intelligence area is the naturalist. To incorporate this intelligence into the classroom students can care for a living organism in class such as a pet or a plant, I could move lessons outdoors if possible, and I could have students write papers or draw pictures about the environment or about their communities.

When designing curriculum for my classroom, I plan to create thematic units that integrate these multiple intelligences as well as a number of subjects, and focus on hands-on, inquiry based learning. I plan on using dittos and worksheets as little as possible. It is important that students are involved and interested in school and I do not believe that worksheets are a way to get them interested. Therefore, by getting to know students' interests and abilities, I can create lessons that will interest them and get them enthusiastically involved with their work. Children get the most out of information when they find it meaningful, such as when it focuses on their experiences, interests, families, and communities.

Another important thing that I will stay away from is spending the entire class time lecturing and writing notes on the board. Students must be active, not passive learners as when they spend the day absorbing what the teacher is saying. To become active learners, I will give students the opportunity of choosing things they are interested in working on. These choices will involve things such as what books they want to read, what topic they would like to write a paper on, or what approach they will take with a

project (i.e. drawings, songs, written papers, word-processed papers). Allowing students to make choices is important because not all children have the same interests or the same abilities. Therefore, when students choose projects based on their abilities, they will be given the opportunity to work on something that challenges them to the next level, which means that they are not working on something that is too easy nor way too difficult for them.

Peer interaction and acceptance is also very crucial for creating an inclusive classroom that is full of active learners. For this reason, I will have several activities where children will be working in groups. In these groups students will be able provide support to one another and draw on each other's strengths. Group work will enable students to work with peers who they see as being different from themselves and help them realize that everyone is an important part of the class community. Working in groups in the classroom will help prepare students for a community outside of the classroom as well.

Once general curriculum and teaching strategies have been decided upon, my job as an educator is not over with. It is important to know about every student and pay close attention each student to determine whether my approach to teaching is working for all. If it is not, then I must make accommodations and adaptations so that all of the needs of my students are met. Some of these anticipated accommodations and adaptations will be made for students with academic challenges.

For students who have a learning disability, adaptations and accommodations can be made to help facilitate their learning. Students can be given additional time for reading, use books on tape or computer software, and can partner up with a buddy who

can do things such as reading a story aloud and writing down ideas. Also, instructions for tests can be read aloud, all directions can be given verbally and visually, material can be provided for home use, alternative projects can be offered in place of written assignments, grading and assessment can be modified, and difficulty of assignments can be reduced. When working on math, students can be provided with things such as fact sheets, manipulatives, and calculators. There are also hundreds of other accommodations that can be made. I have only listed a few of them. To specifically decide on what accommodations should be made, it is necessary to continuously assess the needs and the progress of the students.

It is important to realize that goals and objectives can and should be modified for students. It is not fair to expect the same things from all students considering that students have different needs and capabilities, which is why multi-level instruction is so very important. However, one should realize that once adaptations have been made to accommodate the needs of a particular child, some of these accommodations can be evaluated and revised to fit the needs of the entire class, so that no child feels singled out or excluded.

Accommodations and adaptations must also be made for children who have physical and sensory challenges. Students who are deaf and hearing impaired have trouble communicating their thoughts to others and receiving information. One thing that can be done to accommodate deaf or hearing impaired students is to have an interpreter present in the classroom. However, this can be very expensive. If an interpreter is not available, students can be taught basic signs to help aid in communication. Furthermore, discussions will take place in a position where everyone can see the speaker, everything

that is discussed in class can be written down and passed out as handouts, and computers can be used for communication. There are computers that will type what is being said, which can help students communicate with other students who are hearing impaired.

Being able to communicate with others is very important. Some students may have difficulty communicating verbally or might not be able to speak at all.

Accommodations and adaptations must be made in the classroom so that these students are able to communicate with others and are included. For students who are able to speak, but have difficulty, it is important that they do try to communicate verbally. When we know what it is they want, we must allow them to tell us without interrupting. We do not want to finish their sentences for them. However, there are some students who may not be able to verbally communicate at all. For these students, a computer would be an excellent tool to use to communicate with others. There is computer software available that will read text. Communication boards can also be used where pictures or text are on a board, which a student can point to in order to convey a message. For students who are unable to physically point to items on a communication board, such as someone who has cerebral palsy, a device such as a pointing stick or a head pointer might be necessary. Electronic communication boards can also be used where a joystick, eye gaze, or a head pointer is used to select a message.

Accommodations for students who have a visual impairment must also be made. For students who are blind or visually impaired, materials will be provided in the classroom such as books on tape, talking computer software, material in braille, large print books, and computer software to magnify images on the computer screen and print

out large sized text. A few other things that can be done in the classroom include tape recording lectures, having a buddy to read with, and a buddy who can aid in mobility.

For students who have a physical disability, such as a student in a wheelchair, accommodations such as having resources placed in a position where they are more readily accessible and having the entire room wheelchair accessible is important. Other accommodations can include having large pencils and rubber on a desk so that students can manage materials better.

Adaptations will also be made in the curriculum so that students with physical and sensory challenges will be included in all assignments and activities. If they are not able to participate in the same way as other children can, there is always another way in which they can participate and contribute just as much as the other children do. It is a matter of finding what they are good at and challenging them to their next level.

As I previously mentioned, these are only a few of the accommodations that are available and can be made in a classroom so that all students are effectively included in a classroom. There are a number of other accommodations that can be adapted. It is important to understand the needs and the capabilities of the students, and then decide what other things can be done to make their learning and involvement as effective as possible.

The physical design of the classroom is a factor that can determine just how involved students become in school. Creating a classroom environment that is fun, interesting, and suited for diverse learners is important. I will arrange the desks and tables so that they support group interaction. The desks and tables will be pushed together. Having the desks and tables grouped together will allow students who have

physical and sensory challenges to move around the room by creating a recognized and spacious pathway. Also, I believe that students feel a sense of comfort when they have someone sitting next to them. However, it is also important that students have other alternative learning environments to go to. There will be spaces set up in the classroom where children can go when they want to work alone. There will be areas for different activities such as an area for reading, an area for math work, an area for science, an area for messy work, a computer area, and so on. These areas will have a number of seating choices for students and will be wheelchair accessible. The different types of chairs will include cushioned chairs, chairs of various heights, bean bags, and area rugs. It is important to provide these different learning centers and chairs so that they are accessible and can support students of different physical body types and abilities. These learning centers can also help make all students feel comfortable, and safe.

I will have a number of different books in the classroom that students can read. The shelves the books will be on will be low, so that all students of all abilities will be able to reach them. I will have a number of materials available such as large pencils, markers, crayons, manipulatives, and rubberized pads that can help some children who have difficulty reaching for and grasping objects. For students who have a visual impairment, a seating arrangement near the front of the room might help them see the board and overheads better, and it can also help them focus on what the teacher says if they are not able to see what is written.

The room will be decorated with bright colors and with the work of the students. By placing the work of students on the wall, it will give them a sense of pride and make the classroom feel more comfortable and fun. There will be a homework wall that will

contain the homework for the week. There will be a series of encouraging statements on the walls to help them reach their goals and to remind them that if they need help they have a classroom community willing to help. Included is a sample of how the room might look.

In any community, such as a classroom, problems will arise. Often times teachers do not want to deal with behavioral challenges in the classroom, so they automatically scold or send their students to the office. This type of reaction does nothing to solve the problem, I believe that it actually can cause students to misbehave even more. As a teacher, I will not attempt to solve behavioral problems in this fashion. Instead, I will try to understand what students are trying to communicate when they act out.

When a child exhibits a behavioral problem or challenge in my classroom, I will use Glasser's list of human beings basic needs to try to determine whether or not the child's needs are being met. These basic needs are survival, love and belonging, power, fun, and freedom. These needs must be met inside and outside of the classroom. To meet the needs of my students in the classroom, I will design activities that are not boring but fun. I will allow them to make several decisions on their own, so that they are interested in their work and they have a sense of freedom. I will create a classroom community where all of my students feel safe and loved.

I will also try to determine whether children who have behavioral problems are having their needs fulfilled outside of the classroom. I will speak to parents who could possibly help me understand what the child is missing at home and together come up with ideas and strategies to meet their children's needs. I will talk to my students and ask them why they are misbehaving and together try to think of ways and things we can do to

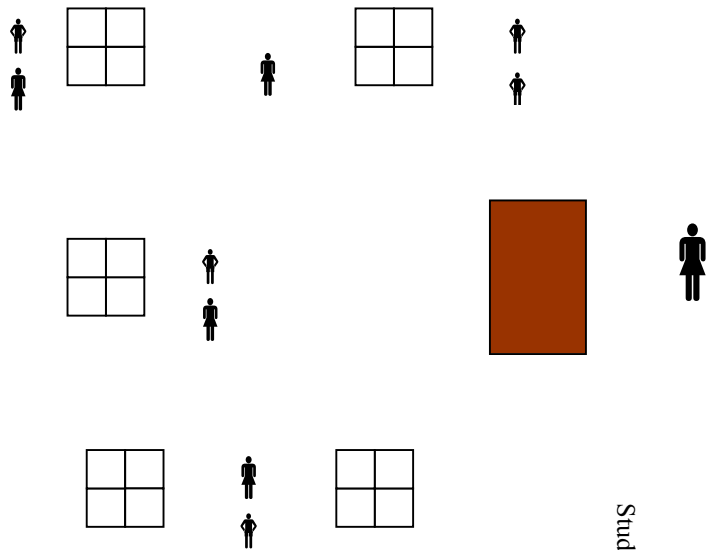
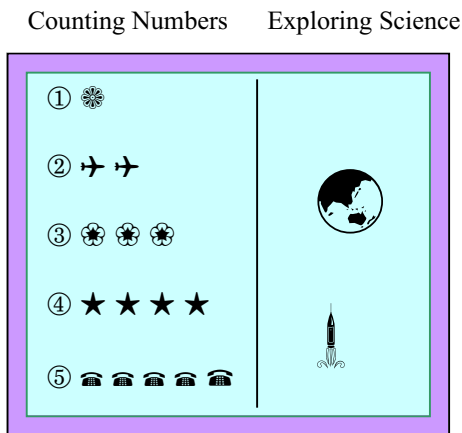
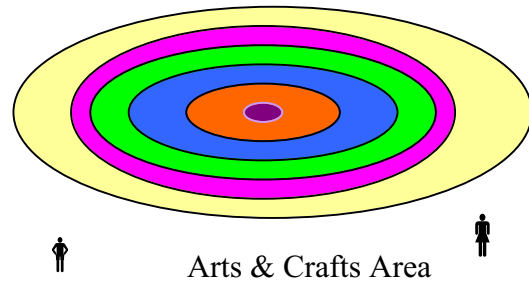
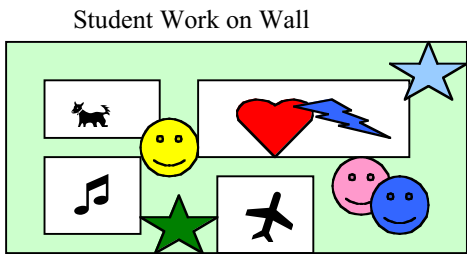
change their behavior in a positive way. I will encourage peer mediation so that students can receive help from their peers, whom they may feel more comfortable talking to. Peer mediation is a wonderful way to bring students closer and build a strong community.

In order for authentic learning to take place in a classroom, there must be a positive classroom culture and sense of community present. Students must be able to feel a sense of belonging and feel like they are valued members of a group. Teachers play a very significant role in helping to create a community within a classroom where all students are included. I believe that building a positive, caring community should begin at the beginning of the year. When the school year starts, I plan on having several activities where the class gets to know all of the members in the class, such as games, songs, and other activities. During this time, students will share information about themselves such as what their likes or dislikes are, information about their family and friends, and information about their cultural heritage. By doing this, students will be able to let the class know about the community they have outside of the classroom and what they have to offer to the community in the classroom. During this time it is important that students interact with one another and get to know each other. One way I plan on getting them acquainted is by having them work in groups. Students will go around the class having other students' sign their paper under a season and they must sign their name under the person's season also. For the first few weeks of class, I will tell the students to partner up with their seasonal partners. After a few weeks have passed by, I will begin to have students work in different groups, based on different levels of interests and abilities. In their groups, all children will be expected to contribute. All members of a classroom

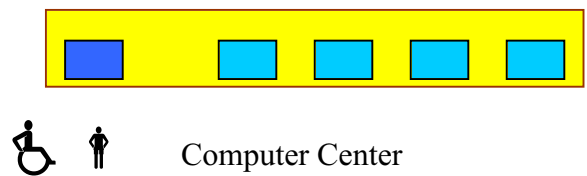
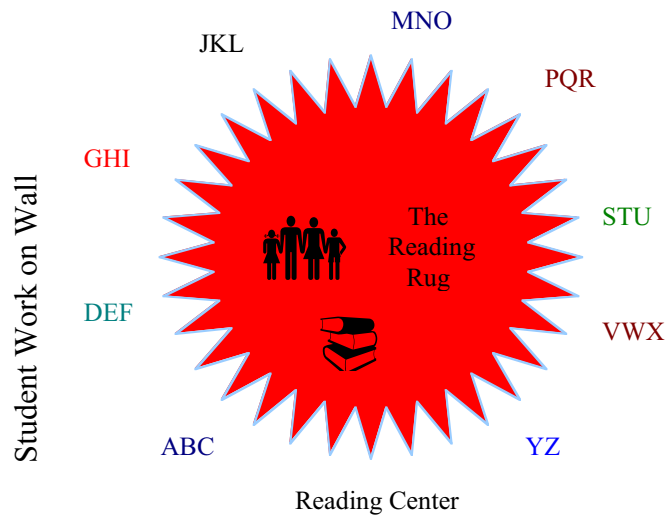
unique and have something to offer, therefore everyone will be expected to give and receive support.

During the school year, I plan on having several other activities to build community. We will read books about differences so that students will be able to learn about things and people they do not already know about. We will discuss how students are similar and different from these people and how all people are important and valuable members of a community. Students in class will be assigned particular jobs that they can do. This will make students feel a responsibility and importance to the rest of the class. When there is a problem or concern, we as a group, will try to think of ideas and solutions to try to resolve the problem or students will be able to try to solve problems by discussing it with peer mediators.

Just as there are a number of different ways in which one can make accommodations and adaptations to curriculum, deal with behavioral problems, and design a classroom, there are also a number of different ways a teacher can build a positive community in the classroom. Finding strategies to use in your classroom are a matter of will and desire, and realizing how important it is to meet the needs of your students. As a future teacher, I realize that it is up to me to make sure that all of my students are successfully included in my classroom, with no students being neglected or mistreated. All students deserve the right to an education regardless of their cultural background, socioeconomic status, or ability. I must continuously search for ways to make learning as effective as possible for all of my students. I truly believe that when proper arrangements are present, inclusion benefits all members of a classroom.



Math & Science Center



Classroom Layout

Reference

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