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**Inclusive Teaching Guide**  
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# **Introduction**

Grade level: Elementary (K-5)

Area: All subjects

I believe that teaching special needs students requires the same strategies and practices as teaching general education students. In other words, good teaching practices for some students will be good practices for special needs students as well. Inclusion into the general education classroom holds so many benefits for special needs students (as well as others involved in inclusion) that I don't believe schools should deny anyone the benefits. All students have a right to expect the best possible learning environment; special needs students are no exception.

There is much fear in change; schools find it difficult to begin the process of including special needs students into general education classrooms. This fear can be overcome with education, resources, support, and the belief that inclusion is morally and socially right.

As the children we teach in inclusive classrooms become adults and have their own children, inclusion will be expected and accepted. Children taught in an inclusive classroom will be better prepared to interact with people with many differences in the real world.

## Partnering with Parents

In best practice teaching, teachers need a working relationship with parents to provide the best education for their students. This especially applies to students with special needs. Parents know their child better than anyone else; they will be able to tell the teacher his/her strengths and areas of need. Parents can be supportive in getting the services a teacher needs. Parents act as the teacher at home by being consistent with communication, rewards, and practicing skills at home (Friend & Bursuck, 1999/1996).

The Inclusive Education website suggests that in some cases, parents need to be educated about inclusion and the necessity of the home-school relationship. Parents of students with special needs may be reluctant to expose their child to an unknown environment. In that case, parents could be invited to observe the inclusive classroom to gain an understanding of how important inclusion is to the academic, social, and personal needs of their special needs child.

Friend & Bursuck (1999/1996) offer some advice on dealing with parents:

1. Understand the parents' perspective
  - Stress of caring for a special needs child
  - Prior interaction with schools
  - Personal beliefs about their child's future
  - Parent reactions to the disability include grief, ambivalence, or optimism
  - Financial stresses
2. Collaborate with parents
  - Help parents participate in school
  - Be sensitive to parents' point of view
  - Convey to parents that they are welcome in your classroom
3. Prepare for effective conferences
  - Clarify the purpose
  - Have needed materials available
  - Actively involve parents in discussions
  - Keep notes and follow up with parents
4. Enhance communication
  - Use technology (videotapes, audiotapes, telephone, and computer)
  - Send written communication home (checklists, newsletters, and notes)
5. Know parents' cultural & educational background
  - Differences in ways of communication
  - Differences in attitudes towards school

The Inclusion: School as a Caring Community website states four important ways that effective parent interaction can be blocked:

- Insensitivity to family differences
- Parents are viewed as adversaries, not partners
- Parents are viewed as less observant, perceptive, or intelligent
- Parents' priorities and expectations don't match those of professionals

# Collaboration

A general education teacher will interact with different kinds of professionals in the special education field. These include special education teachers, school psychologists, counselors, speech/language therapists, social workers, physical & occupational therapists, nurses, administrators, paraprofessionals, and other specialists. Special education teachers will likely be in contact with the general education teacher most often. A special education or resource teacher is responsible for coordinating student services and an IEP (Individualized Education Program) for each special education student (Friend & Bursuck, 1999/1996).

The Inclusion: School as a Caring Community website lists these roles of the resource teacher:

- Valuable member of the collaborative student planning team
- Facilitator of the team
- May be responsible for setting up the meetings
- Responsible for gathering the information generated at the meetings and having it recorded
- Assisting the teacher in writing the individualized education plan (IEP)
- Requesting professional support when needed
- Locating and ordering materials and equipment for learning
- Team teaching with the regular classroom teacher, allowing additional assistance to all students, including the one who has challenging needs
- Adapting materials to enable the student with challenging needs to participate in the regular curriculum
- Consulting with the teacher on strategies and teaching styles that will best meet the learning style of the student
- Participating in liaison between the school and the home.

To make inclusion effective and successful, collaboration between these professionals is necessary. Collaboration is working in a group in a way that all members of the group contribute equally. Friend and Bursuck (1999/1996, p. 71) say that “collaboration is *how* people work together, not *what* they do.” Collaboration can be found in many forms, from a team meeting to sharing teaching responsibilities.

Friend & Bursuck (1999/1996) consider the characteristics of collaboration to be:

- Voluntary
- Parity in relationships
- Share a goal
- Shared responsibility in decision making
- Shared accountability for outcomes
- Shared resources
- Growing trust and respect

Friend & Bursuck (1999/1996) also offer a “recipe” for effective collaboration:

- Shared value in working with others
- Communication & interaction skills
- Supportive environment (including administration & time)

Elaine E. Daack (Inclusive Education website) discusses three forms of collaboration that can be used to facilitate inclusion. These teaching models are consulting, teaming, and co-teaching.

**Consulting:** The special education teacher acts as a consultant for special education students to learn difficult skills or practice new skills. This model is appropriate in a smaller school with few special needs students.

**Teaming:** In this model the special education teacher is assigned to a grade level team to provide support in instructional strategies, adaptations, and behavior strategies.

**Co-teaching:** The special education and general education teachers teach together in a shared classroom. Both teachers are responsible for working with students with special needs and all teaching responsibilities. Some ways to implement co-teaching are:

- One teacher, one support - one teacher is more knowledgeable about the unit than the other
- Parallel teaching – Each teaches the same material to half the class simultaneously
- Station teaching – Teachers or students rotate with different content
- Alternative teaching – One teacher re-teaches a small group while the other teaches a different activity
- Team teaching – Teachers work together in teaching the whole class

# Authentic Multi-Level Instruction

Classrooms today contain a very diverse population of students. Teachers need to be aware of differences in students to be able to provide the best possible learning environment for everyone. To make our classrooms reflect the diversity of our students, teachers need to learn about differences in (Stainback & Stainback, 1996):

- Race
- Culture
- Family
- Gender
- Religions/holidays
- Skill/ability
- Discrimination

The diversity of our schools creates an opportunity to teach students in a multi-level way. Verna Eaton (Inclusive Education website) tells about differentiated instruction (also called multi-level instruction), an approach in which all students are taught the same lesson, but individual needs are met. This approach allows all students to be involved in learning at their level, using their strengths, and being evaluated based on their individual goals. The steps involved in differentiated instruction are:

- Identify concepts and students objectives  
Clarify the concepts and content used to develop the concepts
- Select a method of presentation  
Adaptations may be needed in the environment, materials, and teacher presentation  
Consider learning styles of students
- Select a method of student practice  
Provide guided choices  
Consider Bloom's Taxonomy  
Adapt student participation as needed
- Select a method of evaluation  
Determined by student's needs, abilities, and goals  
Use a variety of ways that students can demonstrate mastery and understanding

Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences has influenced education by suggesting that there are different kinds of intelligences, instead of just one that was previously thought (Kauchak & Eggen, 1998). Gardner breaks intelligence into seven categories: linguistic, logical-mathematical, musical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal. This theory calls for teachers to create learning activities that reflect the different kinds of intelligences that students may have. Here are several suggestions for creating a learning environment that encompasses the seven categories:

- Use multiability tasks
- Allow for flexible time requirements
- Provide enrichment activities
- Teach strategies
- Use peer tutoring and cooperative learning groups

Inclusion: A Guide for Educators provides a checklist to evaluate students' learning styles and a good description of each kind of intelligence (Stainback & Stainback, 1996, p. 123-127). (See next pages for checklist). Students with special needs may need more accommodations than multiple intelligence experiences can provide. Multi-level instruction is another teaching strategy that can be used to allow special needs students to participate in learning, but at a different level.

Authentic instruction is an important aspect of teaching a diverse group of students. The principles of authentic instruction are (Stainback & Stainback, 1996, p. 277):

- Higher order thinking
- Depth of knowledge
- Connectedness to the world
- Social support for achievement
- Inter-disciplinary learning
- Active learning
- Heterogeneous groups
- Diverse learning styles and abilities

Friend and Bursuck (1999/1996) stress the need to evaluate materials and teaching methods when creating an inclusive classroom. Materials that will need to be evaluated are textbooks, manipulatives & models, and technology. Check textbooks for:

- Major concepts are stressed, not details
- Comprehension support is provided
- Background information is activated
- Quality of writing

Some guidelines for using and choosing manipulatives and models are:

- Materials suit the concept & developmental stage of students
- Use a variety of materials
- Use verbal explanations along with materials
- Encourage active interaction
- Ask for student explanations
- Move beyond the concrete level when students are ready

There is so much technology available today. It is important for teachers to evaluate technology used in the classroom. Some general guidelines for using technology in the classroom are to define why you are using it, be familiar with it, provide guidance for students using it, and evaluate its effectiveness.

There are several methods of instruction that teachers use in the classroom. With a diverse group of students, it may be necessary to evaluate which method will be most effective in different situations and for different students. Four methods are described below.

Direct Instruction	Nondirect Instruction	Scaffolding	Independent Student Practice
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher-centered</li> <li>• Review &amp; reteach if needed</li> <li>• Present new content or skills</li> <li>• Provide guided practice</li> <li>• Provide feedback &amp; correction</li> <li>• Provide independent practice</li> <li>• Review frequently</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student-centered</li> <li>• Teacher acts as guide</li> <li>• Inquiry</li> <li>• Five steps: Define problem Propose hypothesis Collect data Evaluate evidence Make a conclusion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Present new strategy</li> <li>• Monitor guided practice</li> <li>• Provide varying contexts for practice</li> <li>• Provide feedback</li> <li>• Increase student responsibility</li> <li>• Provide independent practice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practice skills already learned</li> <li>• Make practice meaningful</li> <li>• Directly related to skills learned</li> <li>• Focus on fewer skills at a time</li> <li>• Students should be successful</li> <li>• Immediate feedback</li> </ul>

Evaluation of students is another major consideration in instruction. It is my belief that evaluation should be based on a student's achievement relative to his/her goals and ability. It is important to consider student needs when evaluating student assignments or tests. According to the Inclusion: School as a Caring Community website, there may not be any standards or point of comparison for some special needs students. Teachers still need to be accountable for evaluating these students; grades will be based on the progress and achievement relative to the students' IEP goals.

Other ways to evaluate students are through self evaluation and peer evaluation (Inclusion: School as a Caring Community website). Peers in the same cooperative group will be able to provide insight into the special needs student's social skills, behavior, life skills, and organization. The student can also provide valuable information about his/her own progress by giving feedback on instruction and selecting work samples that reflect progress.

Finally, teachers need to evaluate themselves. Some things to think about when reflecting on special needs students in your class are (Inclusion: School as a Caring Community website):

- Is the student being treated like the rest of the class?
- Does the student feel as though he or she belongs?
- Does the student enjoy being in my class?
- Are the strategies I am using effective?
- Is the student a more confident achiever?
- Has the student demonstrated educational growth?
- Has having the student in the class been a positive experience for the other students?
- Has this been a growing and satisfying experience for me, as the teacher and as an individual?



## **Accommodations & Adaptations** (Academic Challenges)

Special needs students that are included in a regular education classroom need to feel part of the class and also need to be challenged academically at their level. Teachers may need to make adaptations to the curriculum and learning activities in order to provide special needs students a challenging learning environment.

Some general strategies to individualize instruction for students are to vary the learning objectives, adapt materials and resources, vary teaching strategies, provide flexible time, and use technology (Kauchak & Eggen, 1998). Technology can provide reinforcement by using computers for practice and adaptive tutorials to introduce new material with feedback. Mastery Learning and Team-Assisted Individualization are two formats that enable teachers to provide flexible time for learning. In mastery learning, students learn at their own rate by learning one objective at a time and engaging in alternative activities for help in mastery of the objectives. Team-assisted individualization is similar to mastery learning, but students work in mixed ability groups for support. Students learn in different ways; it is important as a teacher with a diverse group of learners to provide opportunities to learn in different ways. Using texts written at different levels, study guides, magazine articles, and games are examples of ways to adapt materials and resources. Offer students choices in how they pursue the learning objectives. For example, students could write term papers or do projects and experiments to accomplish the same objectives.

According to the Inclusive Education website, there are nine types of adaptations:

- Size – number or amount of work
- Time – for learning tasks and tests
- Level of support – peer buddies, teaching assistants
- Input/Instruction – hands-on, cooperative groups, concrete examples, visual aids
- Difficulty – skill level, simplify directions
- Output/Task – verbal, written, hands-on materials
- Participation – extent and amount
- Alternate – same materials with adapted goal
- Substitute curriculum – different instruction and materials

The Inclusion: School as a Caring Community website offered many specific adaptations to use in the classroom for teaching techniques, adapting goals, changing the task, and providing prompts (see next page).

There is a need to review adaptations in order to continue to provide a stimulating and challenging learning environment for students. It is important to avoid planning too much for a student and missing the informal learning that happens in social situations. Also, avoid underestimating or overestimating a student's ability to work. Some questions to consider are:

- Will the skill be maintained naturally when it is not being worked on in the classroom?
- Is this a skill that will be used frequently?
- Is this skill appropriate for the student's peers and therefore for the student?

- Are the materials appropriate for the student's peers and therefore for the student?
- Is the activity presented in an age appropriate way?
- Does the activity enhance the student's image?
- Does this skill increase the student's independence?
- Does teaching this skill respect the student's and the family's background and preferences?
- Is there a good possibility of the skill being learned, or should it be accepted that the student will require help in this area, and the time be spent learning some other skill?
- Are there social benefits to the student acquiring this skill?

Basic skill instruction includes reading, writing, and math skills. There are four ways that basic skill instruction can be adapted for special needs students: pre-skills, selection and sequencing of examples, rate of introduction, and opportunities for practice and review (Friend & Bursuck, 1999/1996). It is important to assess students' pre-skills and teach the pre-skills directly before teaching a more complex skill. An example of teaching pre-skills is teaching students to decode words before they are expected to read trade books and answer questions about the book's content. The type of examples used in teaching should be similar to the problems that students are expected to do independently. The instruction should also contain the same vocabulary in the directions of student problems. For special needs students, some skills should be introduced more slowly to allow the students time to master those skills before introducing new ones. As is true of the whole class, special needs students need to practice the new skills they acquire to increase retention. This may require direct instruction and review.

Content area instruction, such as social studies and science, may also need to be adapted to meet the needs of special needs students. Much of the learning in content areas involves reading textbooks. There are many reading strategies to activate background knowledge, organize information, and teach new vocabulary (Friend and Bursuck, 1999/1996, Vacca & Vacca, 1999). Brainstorming, making word maps, making analogies, and putting words into categories are some strategies to teach new vocabulary. Graphic organizers, such as story maps and semantic maps, help students organize information while they are reading. To help students review the material, study guides can help organize information both while they are reading and after reading. Activating background knowledge involves arousing students' natural curiosity, making predictions, and asking questions.

# **Accommodations & Adaptations**

## **(Physical & Sensory Challenges)**

Teachers may need to make accommodations for students with physical and sensory challenges. These kinds of challenges include hearing impairment, vision impairment, and/or physical disabilities. Physical disabilities can include cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy, spinal cord injury, or any impairment related to the bones, joints, or muscles. Friend and Bursuck (1999/1996) offer some examples of learning tools that can be used with students with sensory or physical challenges:

### Vision Impairments:

- Large print materials
- Low vision devices (magnifying glass)
- Bright light
- Closed circuit television
- Portable notetaker
- Specialized computer software (screen reader, speech synthesizer)

### Hearing Impairments:

- Hearing aids
- FM system (microphone worn by the teacher and receiver worn by the student)
- Sign language
- Ability to see the teacher

### Physical Disabilities:

- Wide aisles and walkways
- Desks adapted for wheelchairs
- Handrails in classroom or hallway
- Accessible chalkboards and bulletin boards
- Safety plans for emergency drills

Students with other kinds of special needs may be included in the classroom. These may include epilepsy, autism, traumatic brain injury, asthma, diabetes, or cystic fibrosis. Accommodations in the classroom for students with these kinds of special needs may be needed as well. See the lists on the next pages for specific adaptations for students with epilepsy and traumatic brain injury.

## **Assistive Technology**

Assistive technology is defined as technological tools that allow individuals with special needs reach their goals using their own abilities (Inclusion: School as a Caring Community website). Examples include talking word processors, specialized keyboards, communication devices, arm and wrist supports, amplified telephone handsets, screen magnifiers, and environmental controls. The Kids Together, Inc. website gives specific examples of assistive technology in eleven categories (see next page). Another resource that may be helpful in learning more about specific kinds of assistive technology is the Alliance for Technology Access website.

# Building Community in the Classroom

A classroom community is a classroom of students, teacher(s), and others who all share in the responsibilities and rewards of being in that community. Everyone is accepted as they are and differences are not ignored, but embraced and used as learning tools. The Inclusion: School as a Caring Community website lists the benefits of building a classroom community for special needs students, general education students, teachers, and society (see list, next page).

Many times, students with special needs have difficulty making friends and being part of the community (Friend & Bursuck, 1999/1996). It is the teacher's responsibility to facilitate social interaction in the classroom and create a safe learning environment for all students. Teachers can do this by planning opportunities for social interaction, nurturing friendships and supportive behavior, and providing a positive role model. Some specific ways to do this are:

## Planning Opportunities for Social Interaction:

- Use student groups
- Students share materials
- Use cooperative learning
- Teach interaction skills

## Nurturing Friendships & Supportive Behavior:

- Special Friends program (students learn about disabilities)
- Circle of Friends (promotes support and friendships with special needs students)
- Brainstorm welcoming ideas for new students
- Pair students based on shared interest

## Providing a Positive Role Model

- Treat special needs students as full members of the class
- Speak in an age-appropriate voice
- Recognizing the abilities of special needs students
- Give special needs students classroom responsibilities

Teachers also play an important role in educating students about people with disabilities (Friend & Bursuck, 1999/1996). Teachers can use direct instruction, video and other media, demonstrate assistive technology, and use simulation activities.

Learning activities such as peer tutoring and cooperative groups can also foster positive social interactions (Friend & Bursuck, 1999/1996). Peer tutoring provides an opportunity for social interaction and academic support. Both the tutor and the tutee learn through the process of receiving one-on-one help and learning through teaching. Cooperative groups have four characteristics: positive interdependence (all succeed together), face-to-face interaction, individual accountability, and interpersonal skills are stressed. The benefits of both cooperative learning and peer tutoring are the same for general education students and special needs students. All students gain better social skills and learn to work together when using these approaches.

These are some of my favorite ideas to build a classroom community that I have seen in elementary classrooms.

- Wall of Fame
- Community Circle (also Morning Meeting)
- Classroom jobs for *all* students
- Displays of students work in classroom and hallway
- Warm and welcoming environment
- Star Attraction (student of the week)
- Talking Stick
- Talk sessions

## Dealing with Behavior Challenges

Classroom management is a major concern for all teachers. “Effective management and effective instruction are inextricably intertwined.” (Kauchak & Eggen, 1998, p. 332). The goals of an effective management plan are to promote learning and to develop independence in students, not to control students. Classroom management is not just about rules and discipline; it is about creating an environment in which all students are able to learn.

It is important to begin the school year with a clear management plan. If used consistently, students will understand what is expected of them and behavior problems will be fewer. When planning for classroom management, teachers must keep the following in mind (Kauchak & Eggen, 1998):

- Student developmental level
- Physical environment
- Classroom rules and consequences
- Classroom procedures

Prevention of behavior problems is the best way to deal with these kinds of challenges. Using effective teaching strategies and communication as well as creating a classroom environment that is conducive to learning will help prevent many behavior challenges (Friend & Bursuck, 1999/1996).

Even with the best management plan, there will be times when the teacher needs to respond to certain behaviors. Some minimum intervention strategies are “catch ‘em being good,” make low demands first, respond to the reason for bad behavior, and group disruptive students with non-disruptive students. There may also be times when it is more appropriate to ignore a behavior than to respond actively. See the list of strategies for managing surface behaviors on the next page (Friend & Bursuck, 1999/1996, p. 426).

With consistent behavior problems, it may be necessary to use a problem-solving approach to respond to the student’s behavior. The problem-solving steps are (Friend & Bursuck, 1999/1996):

- Identify the problem behavior
  - What is the student’s goal or intent?
- Observe and record behavior to better understand behavior
  - Is there a pattern?
  - Use a data gathering strategy
- Develop a plan
  - Can the behavior be stopped by changing classroom arrangement or instruction?
  - Will a group behavior management strategy work?
- Implement the plan
  - Use contracts with students, set a timer, check on student
  - Work with parents
- Monitor the plan
  - Continue to keep behavior records to monitor progress
  - Change plan as needed

Violence and aggression in the classroom need to be dealt with immediately by stopping the behavior and telling student(s) that it will not be tolerated. Long-term solutions include teaching problem-solving through communication rather than violence.

## Organization of the Classroom

The organization of the classroom is a very important part of teaching. It includes the physical organization of the room, as well as classroom climate, rules, routines, and use of time (Friend & Bursuck, 1999/1996). All students are greatly affected by these things, but sometimes a special needs student may need additional consideration in this area.

The physical organization of a classroom can affect noise and disruption, student interactions, and time that students are engaged. The use of space is very important in a classroom. Wall space can be used for displaying student work, rules, and bulletin boards. The lighting in the classroom can cause problems for some special needs students. Students with visual or hearing impairments need a well-lighted and glare-free work space. Other special needs students may be sensitive to light and will need to work away from the light source. Floor space is an important consideration in the classroom. Desks and tables should be arranged to allow enough space for wheelchairs to pass. Also, for students with visual impairments, the classroom arrangement should be predictable or at least inform these students before making major changes. The arrangement of desks has a big impact on how students work in the classroom. There is no magic formula; different students do better in varying arrangements. One thing that should remain constant in arranging desks is that the teacher should be able to visually monitor all student work areas. Storage areas should be accessible to all students if they will need to use them.

Classroom climate is the overall “feel” of the classroom. In an inclusive classroom it is especially important to create an atmosphere where differences are accepted. The attitude of the teacher sets the tone for the students. A positive classroom climate is friendly, respectful, trustworthy, cooperative, safe, supportive, and full of effective communication.

Rules and routines will be part of the classroom management plan, but also contribute greatly to the classroom organization. Many students need structure in their daily activities and will learn better in an environment with consistent, clear routines. “Rules help create a sense of order and expectations for a classroom” (Friend & Bursuck, 1999/1996, p. 119). Students will be able to spend more time on learning activities if they know what to expect.

The use of time in a classroom is an important aspect of organization. The more time that students are engaged in learning activities, the more they learn. Transition time is the time it takes to change activities. This is one way that instructional time is wasted. Students with special needs may need more time for transitions because of mobility or behavior issues. Students should know what to expect during transition times and know what materials are needed for the next learning activity.

Several hints for arranging the classroom are (Kauchak & Eggen, 1998):

- All students should be able to see the board, overhead projector, etc.
- Teacher should be able to move from one instructional aid to another without disruption
- Material should be accessible to all students
- Routines forgetting drinks, using the bathroom, sharpening pencils, etc. should be established
- Use what seat arrangement works in the situation
- Assign seats as a management tool

## SOURCES

Friend, M. & Bursuck, W.D. (1999/1996). Including Students with Special Needs. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

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Stainback, S. & Stainback, W. (1996). Inclusion A Guide for Educators. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.

Vacca, R.T. & Vacca, J.L. (1999). Content Area Reading. (6<sup>th</sup> ed.). New York: Addison Wesley Longman.

## WEBSITES

Alliance for Technology Access  
<http://www.ataccess.org/>

Circle of Inclusion  
[www.circleofinclusion.org/](http://www.circleofinclusion.org/)

Inclusion: School as a Caring Community  
<http://www.quasar.ualberta.ca/ddc/incl/intro.htm>

Inclusive Education  
<http://www.uni.edu/coe/inclusion/index.html>

Kids Together, Inc.  
<http://www.kidstogether.org/>

KITE: A Guidebook for Teachers of Young Children  
[www.pacer.org/kite/kite.htm](http://www.pacer.org/kite/kite.htm)

PALS (Peer Assisted Learning Strategies)  
[www.peerassistedlearningstrategies.org/index.asp](http://www.peerassistedlearningstrategies.org/index.asp)