

**BASIC PEDAGOGY OF INCLUDING
LEARNERS WITH DISABILITIES
(And anyone else)**

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**Prepared for
The Large Conference
Faculty of Education Student Federation
York University, Toronto**

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CLASSROOM CULTURE

Every classroom has its own culture. Those inside the classroom, the teacher and the learners, create their culture. While similar in many ways to the culture of other classrooms, the culture of any individual classroom is unique.

The leader in creating the culture of the classroom is the teacher. It is this person who sets the tone, whether it be positive and encouraging or negative and destructive.

Think back of the various classrooms of which you have been a part, including those you are in this year. What in the leadership of your teachers meets your needs and abilities as a person and as a learner?

- We all need a classroom culture where we all are accepted, where we all are seen as learners, and where we all can participate.
- Difference in race, ethnicity, and gender do not alter this need.
- Neither does difference in ability.

THE PREFERRED MODEL OF EDUCATION FOR ALL (EFA)

EFA is the call of the United Nations, UNICEF, UNESCO, and other world-level organizations pursuing equity in education for all learners to be included in education beside their peers. Inclusion is becoming the choice of many nations. It is the way the world is turning in terms of education.

It is argued that inclusion of all learners, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, and ability is more in keeping with social justice and students' rights than are other approaches to education. Those who support inclusion of learners with disabilities believe it is the right of these students to be educated in the company of their typical peers. The inclusive approach is seen as resulting in higher social and academic achievement for all, advancing citizenship, and leading to stronger community.

THE BASIC PRINCIPLES OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

- All children, youth, and adults are learners.
- All learners have a right to a place in the regular classrooms of community schools.
- All learners have individual abilities and needs which should be recognized.
- Teachers and learners are colleagues in the act of learning.
- Regular teachers should take the lead in the education of every learner in their classrooms.
- Regular teachers have the knowledge to take the lead, though they benefit from the support of administrators, specialist teachers, parents, and their students.
- The learning of all students should be based in the regular curriculum.

ADAPTING CURRICULUM FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION-A PROCESS

- 1. Identify educational goals for students within the general education program. The curriculum is best viewed as a fluid continuum and not as segmented by grade levels and expectations.**
- 2. Agree with teaching colleagues, parents, and others on the teaching content derived from the general curriculum**
- 3. State your expectations for student performance on these goals.**
- 4. Consider your teaching approach.**
 - a. Can you teach this learner as you would other students?**
 - b. If yes, go ahead.**
 - c. If not, keep reading.**
- 5. Consider enabling adjustments (EAs) to support teaching**
 - Amount of learning**
 - Time needed**
 - Support needed**
 - Skill level**
 - Output**
 - Participation level**
 - Alternate goals**
 - Alternate curriculum**
- 6. Assess progress through interaction with learner and her/his work, checking with other involved personnel, and checking with parents.**
- 7. Not working out? Consider further adjustments with input from others involved in the learner's education.**

AREAS OF ENABLING ADJUSTMENTS

- **Amount of learning**
Expectations for any student are based on the individual's abilities and needs. Adjust amount of learning in keeping with needs and abilities. E.g. learn the main points of a history lesson; do 4 math questions instead of 8.
- **Time Needed**
Increase the time needed to complete a task. E.g. more time for tests; give time for thought before answering an oral question.
- **Support Needed**

Individual attention level increased through teacher, educational assistant, volunteer, or other person time. E.g. tape record lesson; teach needed vocabulary prior to lesson; read lesson content aloud to student.

- The teacher continues to teach all learners. None are turned over to another person for their education.
- **Skill Level**
Adjust difficulty level, problem, type, rules, types of support used in keeping with needs, abilities, and learning style. E.g. rewrite material at student's level.
- **Output Method**
Adjust method of showing learning. E.g. written response rather than oral and vice versa, pointing response, pictographs, computer, demonstration of skill.
- **Participation Level**
Individualize participation and contribution within a group keeping within student's capacity. E.g. colour map drawn and lettered by peers; be scene manager in theatre classes; write-up discussion notes on computer for group.
- **Alternate Goals**
While teaching the same lesson to the entire class, individualize goals for this student. E.g. On a lesson smoking the goal for others is to understand the medical effects of smoking, for this student the goal is to know that smoking is harmful.
- **Alternate Curriculum**
Work at different level of fluid curriculum. While class is beginning algebraic equations, student is working on word problems requiring basic math skills. While other students are working to incorporate newly learned vocabulary into their writing, this student is learning words important in understanding the immediate environment.

COLLABORATIVE GROUPS

Neighbour Share

- Quick chats between students to clarify a point, give a direction, ask a question, or otherwise clarify a task.

Homework Friends

- Checking homework together. Compare homework efforts, discuss when different answers are obtained, explain problem process, share ideas, clarify concepts.

Know-Want-Learn Groups

- Encourage students to review what they already know about a topic, state what they need to learn, study the topic together, review together (Useful when approaching a new topic.)

Test Review Group

- Use when a test is coming up. Cooperatively review notes, text on key topics. Focus on significant events, vocabulary, or content. Use highlighting for emphasis.

Drill Partner

- Use to embed knowledge using back and forth practice on math facts, vocabulary, science facts, dates, spelling, etc.

Book/Play Review Partners

- Use to learn more about different books. Students interview each other about what they have read, main characters, plot, significant events.

Reading and Listening Partners

- Use to increase reading comprehension and listening skills. Have completed a written assignment partners read to each other what they have written to check story line, clarity, organization, content, vocabulary richness.

CLASS TONE (What works for teachers)

- Be friendly. Recognize your students as people with outside interests and lives.
- Model acceptance of all students and all efforts. Whether you are aware of it or not, your students do look to you for leadership.
- Talk to your class on the concept that equal treatment is not always fair. Some learners are at different points than are others. Equity means treating all individuals in terms of their unique abilities and needs.
- Let your students know you are a committed teacher and that you enjoy your work, though it can be challenging at times.
- Model cooperation by working with others.
- Understand that being in a regular class can be scary for students who have been educated separately and who have not had the model of typical peers with regard to behaviour and application to task.
- Underline for students, parents, and others that all learning is academic and challenging at one's level of learning. There are no better or worse learners.

- **Work with class on the concept that working with diverse others is a valuable skill that will help everyone in their lives.**
- **Talk to your students about the idea of individual differences and learning styles. Explain your teaching style and how you adjust it for those students who learn best from a different approach.**

Gary Bunch

EXAMPLES OF VARIOUS ENABLING ASJUSTMENTS

The Special Education Model served us well in introducing learners with disabilities into formal community-based education systems. It taught us that these students can learn. They function adequately within common educational structures, though the Special Education Model sacrifices normal social interaction for a focus on academics.

However, time moves on and change occurs. A new model for education of students with disabilities, Inclusive Education, has developed in recent years.

As noted earlier, the Inclusive Education Model rejects almost all of the beliefs supporting the Special Education Model. The foundational belief of inclusion is that learning with typical peers in ways similar to these peers is academically and socially more beneficial for these students. Next to this is that typical teachers should and can be the central figure in the education of learners with disabilities. Inclusive education means that regular classroom teachers take ownership of all students in a class regardless of difference. The regular classroom teacher is the only person who can make all students feel that they belong. We know that all students perform more strongly if they feel accepted and that they are learning. teacher needs expert support. Educational Assistants will be of value, though directed more by the typical teacher than by a Special Education Teacher.

The overall result of these beliefs is that change to a quite different model of education, one that did not reflect the limitations of the Special Education Model, is considered appropriate. Inclusive Education is not simply an extension of the Special Education Model. It is a wholly different Model based on the tenets of Education for all

and social justice for all, and one which brings all students together for interaction and learning for mutual academic and social benefit.

THE BASICS OF INCLUSIVE THOUGHT

That learners with disability are much more like typical students than they are different cannot be over-emphasized. Each has a personal learning style. The regular classroom teacher understands the concepts of learning styles and how to apply them. A newer thought is that the strategies involved apply to all learners, including those labeled with disabilities.

Learners with disabilities wish to interact with other students in the classroom and school. They are stronger in some areas of learning and less strong in others, just as are the typical students. All students benefit from teachers who understand that all students gain from a carefully planned program moving from the known to the unknown. You all know that theory. I know it works for all learners. I know that they are eager to learn and to become part of the classroom and school community. They do not wish to be singled out for unusual attention. Singling out reinforces any differences that exist and creates two groups of students. Learners with disabilities wish to learn as best as they can from teachers who believe in them. We now know that regular classroom teachers can fill this role when appropriately supported.

The above qualities exist in every student. Knowledge of these qualities is part of every teacher's professional preparation and teaching experience. Individual needs do not change the qualities, though they may require more thought by teachers. When issues seem to be outside the classroom teacher's immediate understanding, it is a good idea to have support from others, such as someone with deeper knowledge of disability. That

support should not mean that another person (e.g. a special education teacher or an educational assistant) take over responsibility. That is special education thought. Inclusive thought is that special education teachers, parents, peers, and others can be part of a team under the leadership of the regular classroom teacher who remains responsible for all students. The only person in the regular classroom who can make all students believe they belong in the regular classroom is the regular education teacher.

I now turn to thoughts and teaching strategies around teaching management found to be effective when employed appropriately.

BASIC TEACHING STRATEGIES

Students must be uppermost in the mind of the teacher. An effective teacher tries to understand how the students in her or his class learn best. Then he or she plans an approach to teaching that fits, in general, how the class of students learns. While most students will be able to work comfortably within this general approach, it may be that some students have specific learning needs, which should be considered.

The following are a series of mini-teaching strategies on which the teacher might draw. At the same time, the teacher needs to monitor the effectiveness of the strategies and develop others. Good sources for adding to one's teaching repertoire for such students are other students, the family, other support personnel, and other teachers in meeting the challenges of practicing inclusive teaching.

Always strive for strategies that keep all students in the class working as a group. Avoid special education thinking as a basis for your teaching decisions. Inclusive thinking is a stronger approach to ensuring academic and social progress for all.

What Works for Students

The following are teacher management ideas. Most would be beneficial for all students, not only those with diagnoses as having various disabilities. Some ideas raise student confidence and pride, some relate to student-to-student supportive interaction. None demand significant teacher time. None call for participation of special education teachers or educational assistants. All advance inclusion.

Dealing with the Curriculum:

A major pillar of inclusive education is that all students work from the same curriculum. Being seen to share the same teaching topic means sharing some of the same basic knowledge. This brings equity to the classroom experience. This does not mean that all students deal with exactly the same aspect of the lesson topic at exactly the same complexity, at exactly the same speed, with exactly the same expectations. But all students learn together in the same curricular area under the classroom teacher's instruction, even though someone, students or others, are assisting the students with disabilities and any other students requiring additional support.

Teachers know that all students have different learning strengths and levels. They know they need to teach to the individual student in the context of the class. A thoughtful teacher automatically adjusts how he or she teaches various students. A continuing part of the role of teacher is to enable all students to progress. Teachers should watch out for special education thinking.. At first it is so easy to slip back into familiar ways. The teacher's objective is to enable the learning of all students. I refer to what the teacher does under the umbrella of differentiated instruction as routinely making Enabling Adjustments. I believe this term makes more sense to teachers and others than do terms

such as differentiated instruction, accommodations, and modifications. The latter are terms created by bureaucrats and senior administrators, not teachers, and do not address just how to strengthen teaching. In addition, many parents do not understand these ‘fancy’ terms, but most know the meaning of ‘enable’ and ‘adjust’.

Questions to Ask Yourself While Teaching

- What are the most important points of this lesson for all students? Which are minor points that elaborate a topic, but are not fundamental?
- How do my students learn best? Does anyone need a different approach, which supports his or her best learning?
- What Enabling Adjustments can I use in this situation?

Handling Enabling Adjustments

Enabling Adjustments are basic to inclusive thought. After a brief work-up period, most teachers will begin to employ Enabling Adjustments as just one more teaching tool to be used as required. Teachers will expand their repertoire of Adjustments as a natural part of what they do. Professional development sessions will add to their repertoire, as will conversations with colleagues. Special education teachers and educational assistants, parents, and other students also are valuable sources for ideas.

As noted, the teacher at any level of education is constantly making adjustments: Inserting a little extra challenge for those who can speed ahead; reducing the level of vocabulary for other students. Just walking near certain students whose attention tends to wander will motivate them to increase attention. There are examples of easy adjustments designed to lead all students to the greatest individual progress. The term “individual progress” is of importance. It is the glue that binds all classroom teaching together. My

experience is that typical classroom teachers quickly understand the reasoning and methods behind enabling adjustments. After all, it takes the teacher a bit of time to work enabling adjustments into her or his teaching repertoire. But it can be done fairly quickly, particularly if not too much is attempted to fast. Inclusion is a process. I have seen teachers teach this way in countries as varied as Canada, Malta, India, Hong Kong, the United States, Germany, and Italy. I also have seen what I refer to as enabling adjustments employed successfully in schools in Moscow and Ulan Ude.

General Enabling Adjustments

The following are examples of areas where Enabling Adjustments will be of value. This is a work in progress, which will be added to as teacher practice requires and need arise.

- Amount of learning: Change the amount of learning for this student. E.g. learn main points but not minor points; complete 4 questions instead of 8; write 3 sentences instead of 6.
- Time needed: increase the time allowed to complete a task. E.g. more time for tests, time before answering an oral question.
- Support needed: Individual attention level increased through use of volunteers, peers, or other person.
- Skill level: Adjust difficulty level, problem type, rules, types of supports used.
- How the student shows learning: Adjust method of exhibiting learning. E.g. written response rather than oral and vice versa, pointing response, pictographs, demonstration.

- Participation level: Individualize participation within student's capacity. E.g. colour map drawn and lettered by peers. Hold up a change of scene sign as part of a play. Collect papers or other student work. Clean chalkboards.
- Alternate goals: While teaching the same lesson to the entire class, individualize goals for this student. On a lesson on effects of smoking the goal for others is to understand the medical effects of smoking. For this target student the goal is to know that smoking can make you ill.
- Alternate curriculum level: While other students are working to incorporate newly learned vocabulary into their written work, this student is learning the meaning of words describing some scene from the lesson.
- Vocabulary: Teach vocabulary before a lesson. Use peers or parents.
- Reading assignment: Record reading assignment so that student can listen to the information.
- Bolster understanding: Have the target student and the peer partner taking turns reading aloud.
- Use hands on techniques to reinforce lesson: E.g. role-playing, preparing different foods, use drawing, cutting and pasting colouring, dance.
- Social participation. Allow students to choose partners some of the time and assign partners at others.
- Don't overuse or use Enabling Adjustments only with target students. Use them with other students at times. Let everyone try to use them at times. Team up certain students who both can gain from the activity.

- Understanding expectations: Repeat directions on an individual basis. Write directions out for student or on chalkboard for all.

Managing Attention Concerns.

Student attention to a lesson may wander for a variety of reasons. The student might be concerned about something at school or home. Being bullied at school, for instance, is known to occur with students with disability more than with other students. The student may not feel well. Feeling ill or in pain is more frequent with some students than with others. Watch for the student being unable to understand a lesson because of confusion or a health or other problem.

Asking the student, or checking with parents or other students may be revealing.

- Let students know of special events or changes of class routines in advance.
- Keep a daily schedule on the chalkboard and draw attention to it at various times.

Use student assistants to do this and other appropriate tasks.

- Limit the number of materials and questions big dealt with at the same time.
- Walk past the desks of certain students to remind them to attend to the task.
- Provide recovery time after physical or exciting activities before starting next lesson.
- Support oral instruction with visual cues when possible.
- Organize students in small groups for part of the day.
- Have a nearby student remind peer of need for attention to task.
- Allow students to stand and stretch at the back of the room for a few moments.

Some students cannot handle long periods of sitting.

- Ask student to review task instructions orally for you.

Management Plan for Behaviour: Observation is a Powerful Tool

Most students do not act out for no reason. Usually there is a reason. When acting out occurs, it is not likely to last for a long time or be frequent. It is the rare student who acts out with frequency for no reason. At times there may be medical needs, as with migraine headaches. Responding to being bullied may cause the behaviour. Often teachers may not see the bullying occur and only see the reaction of the person being bullied. Being aware of possible bullies helps. Other students may be able to tell teachers when they see that a student is likely to act out. Frustration with schoolwork that is too difficult might be a cause. However, the best tool is the observant eye of the teacher. Once the source of the inappropriate behaviour is known, the teacher can intervene as appropriate.

Step 1: Identify behaviours of concern.

List inappropriate behaviours.

Focus on 1 or 2 central behaviours. You cannot address all at the same time.

Step 2: Observe target students in various settings.

Watch for what sets off behaviour.

Compare behaviour to what is happening at the time.

Step 3: Observe what other students are doing.

Are the behaviours the same?

Why? Why not?

Step 4: Can you put things together through careful observation and discussing the situation with parents and anticipate inappropriate behaviour?

Can you avoid triggers for behaviour?

Other people, including parent and other students, can be helpful.

Participation with Other Students

Collaboration among students is increasing internationally as a teaching tool. It benefits all students and is of particular value for some. The days of the quiet classroom are passing in many jurisdictions. Now the idea is for quiet when that is suitable, for instance during a test, and oral and physical cooperation when an activity calls for that. This works at all levels of education, though as education continues, the appropriateness of one or the other will increase or decrease according to the subjects of study.

- Neighbour Share: Allow quick chats between students to ask brief questions, clarify a point, give advice on how to approach a lesson.
- Homework Friends: Set a time for 2 students to compare homework efforts, discuss any problems, explain the approach to questions, clarify concepts.
- Know – Want – Learn Groups: (Use when introducing a new topic.) Encourage students to review together what they already know about a topic, state what they need to learn now, present the topic for study, review together what they have learned.
- Test Review Groups: (Use when a test is coming up.) Cooperatively review notes/text on vocabulary, key topics, significant events. Quiz each other.
- Drill Partners: (Use to embed knowledge using back and forth practice.) Students ask each other questions on mathematic facts, science facts, literature readings, important dates, spelling, vocabulary.