

BASIC PEDAGOGICAL STRATEGIES OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION FOR STUDENTS #5

As I read the title for this presentation, suggested by the Scientific School organizers, I wondered what it called for, what it meant. Then I looked at each word, seeing guidance. Meetings such as we are having this week have explored and re-explored what inclusive education means. That much is clear. The meaning of pedagogy was clear. But what does “basic” mean in this context, and “strategies”. The dictionary told me that “basic” can mean “simplest in level”. Strategy can mean “a plan of action or policy”.

Thus, I shall go to the basic level of policy and then to how educators set in place an action plan for education of learners with disabilities. These are given life in the Salamanca Statement Framework for Action on Special Needs Education of, June, 1994. From the Salamanca Statement.

We believe and proclaim that:

- Every child has a fundamental right to education, and must be given the opportunity to achieve and maintain an acceptable level of learning
- Every child has unique characteristics, interests, abilities and learning needs
- Education systems should be designed and educational programmes implemented to take into account the wide diversity of their characteristics and needs
- Those with special education needs must have access to regular schools which should accommodate them within a child centred pedagogy capable of meeting these needs

- Regular schools with this inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all; moreover, they provide an effective education to the majority of children and improve the efficiency and ultimately the cost-effectiveness of the entire education system

Educators and others connected to schools need to be committed to positive change. Without commitment by all, the inclusive infrastructure being developed will be endangered and change will not occur as it should.

STRATEGIES

A number of organizational and pedagogical strategies supportive of change to an inclusive process have been put in place by educators. The areas of pedagogical strategies I deal with in this presentation are Schools as Inclusive Learning Communities, Positive Modeling, and Collaboration/Cooperation. The most important of these strategies is development of schools as inclusive learning communities committed to the same ideals. The area of Enabling Adjustments (associated with the concepts of differentiation, adaptation, modification, and accommodation) was dealt with in an earlier presentation.

In my view “basic strategies” does not simply refer to ways to teach students with disabilities in classroom settings. There are other, earlier strategies. The focus must shift to the manner in which schools form themselves for inclusion and issues of relationships as well as teacher formulated classroom programs. Inclusion calls for new ways of thinking. One thing to remember is that teaching inclusively calls for pedagogical strategies used with any student, strategies well-known to any teacher, except that the

process of teaching must take the individual and her or his learning needs more so than in the split education system of regular education and special education.

The School Community

One of the most fundamental strategies is that schools be conceived and organized as communities that function to support all students in equitable manner. Note that I do not say "in equal manner". This means doing the same for all, a one size fits all approach. Equity means to meet the individual student where he is and working to meet her or his individual needs.

The following groups are considered integral parts of a school community. All the parts work together to develop inclusion for all. The formation of a school team, all contributing their unique skills, is the most basic of all inclusive education strategies.

The School Community
Mutual Effort and Mutual Support

Administrators

- Daily leadership
- Set tone of the school
- Facilitate inclusive process
- Obtain needed supports
- Support teachers

Teachers

- Daily leadership
- Set tone of the school
- Set models for all students
- Teach all students
- Work collaboratively

Special Education Teachers

- Advise and support teachers
- Facilitate teacher and student learning
- Find needed resources
- Work collaboratively

In-school Team

- Guides inclusion process
- Solves problems
- Set priorities
- Supports teachers

Peers

- Support each other
- Respect each other
- Model for each other

Parents

- Support the school
- Bring needed knowledge of students
- Connect home to school

Ethic of the Entire School

18120 Yang St
Wenon 60000
17480 Yang St
M-W 9-5, Th-F 7-9

20 David Dr.

- Is an academic and social community
- Shares a common vision for equity
- Sees every student as a learner
- Every student works from the regular curriculum
- Incorporates collaborative ethic and practice
- Puts enabling adjustments in place for every student needing them
- Has an in-school team responsible for guiding the inclusive program
- Works from a base of mutual respect and mutual effort

Activating Schools for Inclusion

- Decide to work toward inclusion based on principles of social justice
- Undertake administrator education on structuring an inclusive school
- Undertake teacher & other staff on best inclusive practice
- Invite parents & all students to join in the inclusive process
- Identify primary areas for inclusion: curriculum professional development, resources, collaboration
- Specify policies & procedures related to administration of inclusion
- Create an in-school planning and review team responsible for developing an inclusion plan and the steps to be taken
- Develop inclusion checklist for the school & for classrooms to serve as a guide to inclusion and an easy way to evaluate progress
- Create an in-school team to guide development of individual education plans focused on abilities and needs of students
- Work with all students to develop a peer support ethic and structure
- Work from the general curriculum for all students
- Extend inclusive action to all areas of school activity: classrooms, hallways, playground, extra-curricular activities, and events
- Work toward removing labels from students and seeing everyone as a learner

Is Your School Ready for Inclusion?

- Is there a school mission statement that expresses beliefs toward inclusion?
- Do all staff subscribe to the statement?
- Have staff had opportunities to discuss any concerns they might have?
- Are concerns actively considered by all and collaborative decisions reached?
- Have classroom teachers, administration, special education teachers, parents, students, and appropriate others been involved in planning?
- Have academic and social expectations for student inclusion been clarified?
- Have expectations for regular students been clarified?
- Have collaborative structures been discussed, agreed on, and established?
- Have collaborative structures for all aspects of the school been considered?
- Has professional development been offered?

- Are plans made for continued professional development?
- Is there a plan for continuous review of the inclusive program's progress?

All of the above are parts of the an overall school organization strategy designed to underpin inclusion.

Modeling as a Pedagogical Strategy

The advent of inclusive education is so recent that many teachers and students are not familiar with persons with disabilities. Similarly, many students with disabilities are not familiar with people of their age without disabilities. The result of this lack of familiarity is that close contact is avoided, students with disabilities are seen as requiring special treatment due to perceived differences. A primary strategy in inclusive settings is to bring the two groups together so that each gains understanding of the abilities and needs of each other.

Tashie, Shapiro-Barnard, & Rosetti in their 2006 book, *Seeing the Charade: What We Need to Do and Undo to make friendship happen*, address the issue to teacher modeling of appropriate interactions. They speak directly to need for a strategy of modeling for teachers to stimulate understanding, familiarity, and even friendships.

First we address teachers. The political powers that be are working hard to convince us that the only way to improve our schools is through testing and accountability. And so while your priority may be creating a just and caring class community where all students can and will learn, you know your students are not being tested on how well they work together. And you know that friendship and belonging are not part of the fill-in-the-blank assessment. And so you wonder if supporting friendship is still your job.

When you started teaching, you rejected the old adage of “you don’t have to like me, you just have to learn from me.” And because you know that unless children feel a part of the learning community they will not achieve to the best of their abilities, you have strived to make your classroom a place where children’s needs are met and achievement can soar.

Supporting social relationships for students is not something to do once the “real work” of teaching is done. Students cannot learn when their basic needs for belonging are not met. Supporting friendships for all students is part of all teachers’ jobs.

Hutchison, Load, & Lord (2010) discussed “Why Friends?” They make the following points.

- Providing companionship for people of all ages.
- Playing a role in identity development, autonomy, and self-esteem.
- Experiencing social support.
- Playing a preventative role in health related issues, such as obesity, smoking, isolation or dementia.
- Establishing a part of being a valued citizen.

The Clash of Charity and Inclusion in Social Development

In the past, as Lucy Wood of the United Kingdom has pointed out, a natural reaction to the situation described above was that interaction, when it occurred, was based in a charitable model. Working from a charitable model will never result in equity and getting to know each other.

Fortunately, a number of publications, such as those by Hutchison, Lord and Lord of 2010 and Tashi, Shapiro-Barnard, and Rosetti of 2006 recently have appeared. As the latter authors have stated, “One by one, we came to realize that friendship (or lack of it) was the elephant in the room. Everyone knew it was a problem, but nobody wanted to talk about it.” These two books and other writings on how to develop strategies to promote positive interaction now are available.

A charity-based approach to pedagogy defeats much of the potential of inclusive education. It places those with disabilities as different, less capable than other students. Developing the school atmosphere of being a welcoming community, combating discriminatory attitudes, and building an inclusive community called for in the Salamanca Statement is defeated by charitable relationships and perceptions. As much of the rationale for inclusive education is to bring all students together in equitable school experiences and the pervasive charitable approach of many defeats this rationale, pedagogical strategies to stimulate equity, familiarity, and friendship are needed. And, as noted by Bunch and Valeo (2004), “the dearth of literature on the development of friendships when it comes to supporting those who advocate inclusion.” What we have learned from schools that stimulate positive student-to-student and teacher-to-student relationships is that understanding, familiarity, and friendship develops at a much higher rate than in schools echoing special education thinking.