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The Establishment of an Inclusive Elementary School

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THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN INCLUSIVE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

by

Tina L. Hepp

A Research Project Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Education

REGIS UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

An Inclusive School is the Right Point of View

The purpose of this research and project was to review the literature and provide information on a website to help school personnel become knowledgeable about the inclusion philosophy, and to discuss the components that are needed to establish an inclusive elementary school. There was a vast amount of research that has been compiled in an organized and understandable way to help individuals understand the meaning of inclusion and the correct steps that teachers, principals, and parents must take in order to establish an inclusive elementary school. In this project the author hopes that elementary school personnel will put the inclusive philosophy into action; thus providing an inclusive education for all students to be accepted and have the opportunity for academic success in their elementary school community.
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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

In the year 2006, it is surprising that educators still struggle to establish an environment that is conducive to learning for all students. Villa and Thousand (1995) made the point that educators know that schooling must be based on assumptions about the future success of society. Yet, in many communities, elementary schools are organized to respond to the elite, and the status quo has been maintained, at least in part, by “sending away” (p. 31) every child who fails to learn from, or not challenged by educational approaches based on the 19th and 20th C. assumptions. In spite of all the challenges, there is a movement for elementary school personnel to establish an inclusive environment for all students.

Statement of the Problem

Many educators believe that they understand what inclusion means; however, many educators in the same building, including the administrators have a different interpretation of what this means for students. Educators need to have a common understanding about what inclusion means. Bateman and Bateman (2002) explained that the principal must demonstrate positive leadership to bring about change, as well as the ability to build collaborative teams. The principal is the driving force in the establishment of an inclusive environment where all students feel included within their school. Teachers must be trained in the natural environment, which means that there are general education students and special education students in the same classroom.
Providing this type of training will ensure a successful inclusive school. Daane, Smith, and Latham’s (2000) findings supported the need for teachers to observe in the inclusion classrooms for example, the natural environment so they can have first hand experience when they observe teachers as they collaborate and plan effective instruction. Therefore, there is a need for extensive preparation for teachers and administrators in order to ensure the success of an inclusive school, which in turn, leads to achievement for all students.

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project will be to provide the numerous definitions of what inclusion means, the leadership qualities that are needed, as well as the teacher training that must take place in order for inclusion to be successful in a school. The goal of the project will be to create a web page for elementary school personnel to use as an informative site to teach the components needed to establish an inclusive elementary school. In the review of the literature on inclusion, the focus will be on definitions of inclusion, leadership qualities, as well as the appropriate trainings that are needed, and what steps must be taken in order to establish a successful inclusive school for all students.

Chapter Summary

It is imperative that all elementary school personnel begin to understand and recognize how important it is to establish an inclusive environment in their schools. The intent of this project will be to inform and educate elementary school personnel about the crucial steps that must be taken so all students benefit from an inclusive setting.
In Chapter 2, the literature about inclusion will be reviewed in order to identify the importance of defining inclusion, leadership qualities of a principal, and teacher training that is needed in order to establish an inclusive school. The procedures used to establish an inclusive school will be explained in Chapter 3.
Chapter 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this project will be to help elementary educators develop clear definitions about what inclusion means so they can establish a successful inclusive elementary school. Also addressed is the need for positive leaders and the requisite leadership qualities for an inclusive school. The purpose of an inclusive school is to provide support and learning for all students. Therefore, teachers must be trained to work with students with varied abilities, and they need to be able to observe teachers who implement the inclusive model. Since there are several components that must be in place to establish a successful inclusive elementary school, in this review of the literature, this author will describe those components.

Definitions of Inclusion

An inclusive setting is defined as the meaningful participation of students with disabilities in the general education classroom (Bateman & Bateman, 2002). Idol and Griffith’s (1998) definition was very clear: inclusion is when students with disabilities receive their entire academic program in the general education classroom. Inclusion is different from mainstreaming because, when students are mainstreamed, they spend a portion of their day in the general education classroom and a portion of their day in a separated special education classroom. Also, Dixon (2005) reported that an inclusive setting is where all students are included, regardless of abilities or disabilities. Inclusion is not just physical inclusion, when students share the same physical space, but it is
a mindset. Dixon cited Snow (2001), an advocate for inclusion, who pointed out that “Being included is not a privilege to be earned, nor a right that is given to individuals. Inclusion is first and foremost a state of mind” (p. 3). Many educators believe that they understand what inclusion means; however, many educators in the same building, including administrators, have a different interpretation of what this means for students. Educators need to have a common understanding about what inclusion means. Bateman and Bateman explained that the principal must demonstrate positive leadership to bring about change and be able to build collaborative teams to achieve success. Guild (1990) explained that inclusive education translates into looking at the child’s strengths, not weakness.

History of Inclusion

Berger (2006) cited the landmark federal law, which was passed in 1975, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, also known as PL94-142. In 1990, this law was amended to become the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). In 1997, the law was amended again, but the name was not changed. The law was reauthorized again in 2004, as the Individuals Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA), which ensures that all children and youth with disabilities have the right to a free, appropriate public education for every child between the ages of 3-21, regardless of how seriously he or she may be disabled. The most controversial issue about the integration of students with special needs in schools is that of inclusion. Inclusion means that educational programming is provided within the general education classroom. Before IDEA was enacted into law, school personnel were free to claim that they did not
have services for children with disabilities and to deny these children access to the regular classes. The purpose of these laws is to improve education for all students.

Establishing the Culture of Inclusion

All participants involved in inclusion must be committed to the philosophy of inclusion (McLeskey & Waldron, 2000). Both staff and parents must understand the philosophy and the benefits of inclusion, especially the interventions and specific services that are available in an inclusive school (Least Restrictive Environment Coalition, 2002). The crucial element in the establishment of the culture of an inclusion school “Has more to do with how people feel and think than anything else” (McLeskey & Waldron, p. 146). When educators believe in what they do for all students, they can develop a successful inclusive program that is best for all students. An inclusive school culture is based on a strong sense of community, where everyone belongs and is accepted by peers and adults in the elementary school (Burnette, 1996).

Vygotsky’s View of Inclusion

Vygotsky (1987, as cited in Berger, 2006), was the first leading theorist to emphasize that children do not learn alone; their efforts are embedded within a social context. Berger reported that it took Vygotsky several years to develop his unique vision for the future model of special education, in his own words, “inclusion is based on positive differentiating” (p. 20). Vygotsky (1987, as cited in Gindis, 1999), suggested that a disability is perceived as an abnormality only when and if it is brought into the social context. Vygotsky noted that, from the social perspective, the primary problem of a disability is not the sensory or neurological impairment itself, but its social implications. As stated by Gindis, “Any physical handicap. . . not only alters the child’s
relationship with the world but above all affects his interaction with people” (p. 33). The use of inclusive education could alleviate this hindered relationship. When individuals accept one another due to their positive interactions, eventually, negative social consequences will become extinct. To further explain, the disability is a perception that is derived from the social context (Gindis). Also, Vygotsky was one of the first who acknowledged the limitations of IQ tests, based on his understanding that a disability is a process, not a static condition. Diamond (1999) explained that, if special needs students are expected to understand the social and cultural norms of the classroom, naturalistic intervention strategies must be used based on the practices in Vygotsky’s theory.

Attitudes of School Personnel about Inclusion

According to McLeskey and Waldron (2000), more than anything else, for successful inclusive school, it is necessary that teachers and administrators begin to think differently about: (a) what students are like, (b) what a school should be like, and (c) how education should be delivered in school. Students and teachers must understand that “fair must be defined as providing every student with what he or she needs rather than providing the same thing for every student” (p. 55). If the expectation is that all students have to achieve at the same rate, this would ensure that the special needs students would fail once more. As teachers and administrators build an inclusive school, their focus should be to ensure that all students are fully engaged members of the learning and social communities in their school. They should remember that equal is not always fair, and that fair is when student receives what s/he needs. Student learning is greatly enhanced when there is a collaborative culture within the school.
Teachers

Today, teachers are faced with a variety of challenges in education. In most classrooms, there will be students with special needs. Therefore, it is essential that teachers understand the various theories of learning, so they can help students reach their full potential (Elkind, 1993). Ayres and Meyer (1992) believe that teacher education must become more responsive to societal changes and that the movement toward inclusion, combined with increased attention to cultural diversity, can make school a place of personal growth and cultural enrichment for everyone. Also, Ayers and Myers explained that, in order to prepare children to be the citizens of tomorrow, educators must make the achievement of social and emotional goals as explicit as academic expectations. They referred to innovations such as the use of cooperative learning and interdisciplinary teaching implemented by the use of task forces and team structures. According to Friend, Reisling, and Cook (1993), the use of coteaching holds great promise to meet the needs of special needs students in the classroom. What they meant by coteaching is when the special educator and general educator collaborate and problem solve to ensure success for their students. However, coteaching can be difficult for some teachers. Lewis (1994) found that teachers can be very territorial. These problems were demonstrated in teachers’ remarks such as “My kids/her kids” (p. 12). Lewis found (1994), that, sometimes, general education teachers and special education teachers lacked mutual respect. Lewis recommended that: (a) general and special education teachers should have planning times together; (b) both need to be flexible; (c) both need to have access to test results and IEP goals; and the special educator should be willing to work with all
students in the classroom, including the higher ability students. As teachers collaborate for the good of students, a mutual respect will develop.

Guzman (1994) reported that, when teachers were interviewed about concerns of an inclusive school, they reported that some of the concerns were: (a) not being prepared for the multiple needs of the students, and (b) not understanding what inclusion meant for them as teachers. Ayres and Meyer (1992) maintained that: (a) the biggest concern is a clear definition of inclusion, (b) there is a need for more teacher training, and (c) there must be a clear direction of expectations. When teachers see themselves as facilitators of learning, and not just transmitters of knowledge, they began to impact student learning as they build cooperative learning strategies (Tompkins & Deloney 1995). Also, it is important that teachers visit schools where successful inclusive programs are in place. This allows teachers to ask questions and overcome negative beliefs about such programs. As one principal stated:

I do not have any teachers with a “bad attitude” toward inclusion the issue seems to be helping teachers understand what inclusion is, how it works, how students benefit from it. How could any teacher not support inclusion if they really understood what it is all about? I think it is an issue of what teachers believe and understand about inclusion. Will it work for students? Can they handle it in their classrooms? Will it affect students who are not labeled? Every teacher is willing to teach every student, if they feel the student will benefit and they (the teacher) can handle their classrooms. That is what teaching is all about. (McLeskey & Waldron, 2000, p. 58)

Landers (1995) reported that the graduates of teacher education programs should be prepared to teach all students. They need to have an understanding of both the concept and the dynamics of inclusion. Teachers, whatever their academic major or specialty, need to understand that they are responsible for the education of all children.
Importance of the Principal

Those who lead educators into change must be aware of the barriers to change and take the risks necessary to overcome them, for “the biggest risk in education is not taking one” (Villa & Thousand, 1995, p. 57). The principal serves as the philosophical backbone of an inclusive school (Klutch, 2003). Principals provide leadership, vision, and guidance for how to change the culture from segregated learning to collaboration and inclusion. Praisner (2003) explained that the principal must display a positive attitude and commitment to inclusion. As the leader, he or she directly influences “resource allocations, staffing, structures, informative flows, and operating processes that determine what shall and shall not be done by the organization (p. 135). To begin, the principal must address the teachers’ view, beliefs, and fears in regard to the issues of an inclusive school (McLeskey & Waldron, 1996). If the principal does not recognize the need for teachers to examine their belief systems, the need for change, and perhaps some of their beliefs in regard to inclusion and schooling, the inclusive program will likely entail only superficial change, or what Goodman (1995) called, “change without difference” (p. 1). The principal must address all of the teachers’ beliefs and concerns before a successful inclusive school can become a reality (McLeskey & Waldron). Also, the principal must keep the central mission of the school in the forefront and take action to accomplish this mission (Glatthorn, 1996). If the principal empowers general education teachers, special education teachers, and specialists to work together to make inclusion successful, then dramatic changes occur in both teaching behaviors and student learning. There are many responsibilities that the principal must assume as the instructional leader within an inclusive school. It is crucial for administrators to help teachers understand what
inclusion is and invite all teachers to be a part of the planning and design of the collaborative team structure as they develop and implement an inclusive program (Snell & Janney, 2000). As principals begin to build an inclusive school, they must continually provide resources for general education and special education teachers, such as: (a) staff development, (b) time for collaboration, (c) necessary support materials, and (d) key personnel that might be needed (Tompkins & Deloney, 1995). To put it simply, an inclusive school cannot be successfully implemented without the active support of the building principal. For successful inclusion, it must be assumed that living and learning together benefits everyone, not just special needs students (Villa & Thousand).

**The Need for Leadership and Collaboration**

When the principal keeps the central mission of the school in the forefront and takes action to accomplish this mission (Glatthorn, 1997), s/he can empower teachers through team leadership without abdication of authority. The mission statement can guide the design of: (a) the school goals, (b) the instructional program and activities, and (c) clarify the need for collaborative teams (Snell & Janny, 2000). When the principal empowers the general education teachers, special education teachers, and specialists, they can work together to make inclusion successful, and dramatic changes can occur in both teaching behaviors and student learning. When all professionals believe that all students can learn, in turn, this creates a climate and an expectation for all students to be apart of the learning community. The professionals in a school must model for their students how to celebrate strengths and differences in order for the school culture to begin to change. Teachers should show the same value, for the uniqueness of their peers and pupils, as they expect their students to exhibit (Klutch, 2003). When a shift in teachers’ thinking
occurs, they begin to believe that all students have the opportunity to learn with their peers, not because law requires it but because it is right (Ruder, 2000). Inclusion requires that administrators and specialist staff must assist the regular classroom teachers and students to work together to establish an inclusive classroom. Classroom teachers must assume the responsibility to establish class membership for every child. As problems arise, the group of professionals must work together to problem solve to encourage success for all students (Schattman & Benay, 1992).

Parental Involvement

In the widespread movement to provide an inclusive environment, engagement of parents in the educational process is essential, and perhaps should be looked at as a prerequisite for successful student and family outcomes at an inclusive elementary school. Burnette (1996) cited IDEA (1990), where it is articulated that parents have the right and responsibility to participate in decisions that affect their child’s educational needs. Parental support is a requirement in the establishment of an inclusive school. School staff and teachers should never leave the parent out of the educational equation, if they want students to have success in school (Eckman, 2001). In order to have a successful relationship with parents, educators need to be open, honest, trustworthy, and advocate for the students with special needs that they teach. Blue-Banning, Summers, Frankland, Nelson, and Beegle, (2004) reported that to parents of special needs students, that a competent professional is someone who is not afraid to admit he or she might not know something, but is willing to find out. When parents are engaged in the inclusion process, diversity is welcomed, and there is recognition of the important contribution that parents offer.
Best Practice

Praisner (2003), found that elementary principals’ participation in preparation programs and inservice training programs were correlated to a more positive attitude toward inclusion. The reality is that school administrators need to take part in the development and implementation of inclusion programs and, therefore, they need to be adequately prepared to do so. McLeskey and Waldron (2000), noted that it is important to ensure that “differences is ordinary” (p. 72) in a classroom, so that students with disabilities can be as natural and unobtrusive as possible, and that rhythm of the day for students with disabilities is as much like that of other students as possible. Students in an inclusive school need to be active participants in order for inclusion to be deemed successful. As the inclusive school personnel adapt the general education curriculum, there must be a fundamental change in the general education classroom so that it is understood that not all students will learn the same thing, in the same way, or at the same time. Schrag and Burnette (1994) explained that the use of inclusion provides the opportunity for all students not only to learn, but also to learn at higher levels. In an inclusive school, students work in flexible learning environments with flexible curricula and instruction that is accessible to all. Students work toward the same educational outcomes; what differs is the level at which these outcomes are achieved and the amount of emphasis placed on them.

Benevolent Collusion

Stokall and Gatin (2002) found that the focus of learning for some children with disabilities was the development of social rather than academic skills. Even though it appeared that the students with disabilities were engaged, essentially, they were just
helpers to the higher ability students. Even when students with disabilities tried to let educators know that they did not understand the material, often, the teachers tried to divert the student’s attention from the issue, rather than provide direct instruction. Overall, the Stockall and Gatin results were important because they revealed a dynamic web of interactive signs that demonstrated a context for the inception of benevolent collusion. If inclusion means being valued as a member of a learning community, then it is imperative that children with disabilities contribute to the group by the acquisition of the core cultural knowledge of the community. Stockall and Gatin put it in simple terms, it means that students with disabilities must learn to read. Unless students with disabilities learn to read, they cannot gain legitimate power within the world of school or in the larger community.

Social Interactions

Inclusion means that all students must become and feel as if they are a part of the community. Stephan and Calculator (1994) found that students, who were in an inclusive school, exhibited more appropriate social behaviors and engaged in more interactions with others. Also, Ruder (2000) found that more IEP learning goals were met in an inclusive setting. Teaching social skills must take place in the establishment of an inclusive school. It is imperative that teachers understand and know how to facilitate positive prosocial behaviors in children. When teachers are carefully trained to model emotionally competent behaviors, children can use these strategies to resolve conflict within their environment (Vestal & Jones, 2004). When students are properly included in regular classes, peer relationships are formed naturally. As students are educated about each other’s differences, they become more accepting because they have an
understanding of one another. The presence of strong friendships ties ensures that students, who are physically and academically integrated, do not become isolated within the classroom. It is difficult for students, who feel isolated and without friendships, to reach their potential as learners and members of society (Calculator & Jorgensen, 1994). McLesky and Waldron (2000) cited Cullinan, Sabornie, and Crossland (1992), who reported that one of the criteria to determine whether a student is fully integrated socially is to determine whether the child with special needs has at least one reciprocal friendship. A wide range of social interactions characterizes friends. Friends engage not only in reciprocal interactions (e.g. give and take relationships), but also in helping (McLeskey & Waldron). In an inclusive school, all are valued students. When professionals celebrate differences and establish opportunities for all students to affiliate with one another, students begin to build meaningful relationships and gain acceptance for one another (Villa & Thousand, 1995). It is essential that all know how to live together so all people can contribute as members of society. An integral part of the successful inclusion program is the development of classrooms and schools in which all students, including those with disabilities, have many opportunities and supports that allow them to become active participants in the social community of the school.

Controversy about Inclusion

The controversy that surrounds inclusion practices is centered on the placement of students in general education classrooms without appropriate supports (Burnette, 1996). Some teachers, parents, and community members are concerned that the use of an inclusive environment will negatively impact typical children. They fear that typical children will not have their academic needs met, and that the special needs children will
not be able to keep up academically. Some teachers have reported concerns that students will not understand why their expectations are different from those of students with special needs. Forest and Pearpoint (1996) stated that,

Many times the words you hear from teachers are: “But we don’t have enough money! But, we haven’t been trained to take care of those! But, I didn’t choose special education! But, I don’t have special curriculum guidelines, and I don’t have time to create special programs for ‘them.’ The other children will suffer!” We all recognize the phrases. Listen deeper. Most of the “buts” are about “me” and “I.” (p. 3)

Once these fears and misconceptions are addressed, most teachers are able to realize that inclusion enhances the learning and social interactions for all students.

Proponents for Segregation

According to Dixon (2005), advocates of segregated classrooms claim that students with special needs require educators to have specialized training to work with them. Dixon cited Baure (1994) who suggested that students with special needs should be in small classrooms with other students who have similar abilities. Barer stated that “he had a foster brother with special needs, and it would have been immoral to have compelled him to associate with students who had so much more capacity to learn, to think, and, to make decision than he had” (p.5). Also, proponents of segregation believe that it provides more individualized attention, and there are fewer pressures on the special needs students to keep up with the typical students, as well as being a financial efficiency (Dixon). In addition, proponents of segregation believe, that as students have different learning curves, each student in the class will not learn to their potential. Either the class will move too quickly for the special needs student and they will become overwhelmed, or the class will be slowed down, which leaves the typical student feeling unchallenged.
or distracted by all of the disruptions of the special needs student (Antoinette & Urban, 2003). Some proponents argue that general education teachers are frustrated and have negative views about inclusion; therefore, in an inclusive classroom, all students will suffer due to the general education teacher’s negative view. They continue to argue that inclusion is a tremendous burden on the general education teacher and that it decreases the quality of education for all students. They believe that typical students will resent the student with special needs in an inclusive setting. Proponents of segregation believe that typical students should have the means to take back their education when it is challenged by the inappropriate inclusion of a disabled student. Parents, who support segregation, believe that the curriculum of the general education classroom does not match the needs of their child. Their other big concern is that they feel that the typical students in the classroom will treat their child poorly (Berger, 2006).

Chapter Summary

The establishment of an inclusive school provides the opportunity for all students to affiliate with one another as they choose to and share common experiences with one another. Inclusive communities have the capacity to create a better future for everyone. When a principal builds collaborative communities and values diversity, the results can be a successful inclusive school where all students live and learn together. In this review of the literature on an inclusive elementary school, the author discussed the necessary components for a system change to occur in establishing an inclusive school. There has to be a clear definition of what inclusion means, so all educators can assess whether they have established an inclusive elementary school. The principal’s leadership role is vital to the success of an inclusive school, as well as teachers’ collaboration,
cooperation and willingness to learn and perhaps change their beliefs about inclusion. Overall, inclusion is a key principle in order to integrate more people with disabilities into society. Presented in Chapter 3 are the methods, procedures, and examples of the components needed to establish an inclusive elementary school.
Chapter 3

METHOD

The purpose of this project was to develop a web page for elementary school personnel to use as an informative site to teach the components needed to establish an inclusive elementary school. The lack of information and clear definition of an inclusive school came to this researcher’s attention as she worked in several schools that had not established an inclusive environment for all students. It was through this experience that she developed a great interest to provide information to all school personnel to help them to establish an inclusive elementary school.

Target Audience

This project was designed for all elementary school personnel in order to provide them with an informative website about the essential components. This resource could be used as an initial training about inclusion, or as a reference guide for school personnel to use as they establish an inclusive environment in their elementary school.

Goals and Procedures

The goal of this project was to provide elementary school personnel an informative website that they can use for initial trainings for the establishment of an inclusive school and as a reference guide to answer questions. This website will provide a brief review of the literature that demonstrates the need for an inclusive school environment. The website menu was organized to include all of the essential steps for
the establishment of an inclusive school, and examples were provided on the website.

Peer Assessment

Assessment of the essential inclusion components website was reviewed by four colleagues through informal feedback, recommendations, and suggestions for further research. Each colleague was given the web address and then asked to review it for ease of use for trainings and relevancy. Each reviewer provided comments, editing marks, and suggestions on the final website.

Chapter Summary

It was the researcher’s intent to encourage the establishment of an inclusive elementary school and, thus provide opportunities for all students to learn within the community in which they live. The ultimate goal in the classroom community is to celebrate students’ differences and send the message that everyone has value. As elementary school staff move to establish inclusive environments, they need to make sure that they have all of the essential components, such as: (a) the need for a clear definition about inclusion; (b) the need for positive, strong leadership; and (c) teachers’ access to training opportunities. McLeskey and Waldron (2000) stated that as elementary school personnel move to establish an inclusive elementary school, “They must develop a program that uses resources equitably to meet the needs of all students in the school. In short, they develop the best program they can, with the resources that are available, based on the belief that inclusive programs are in the best interest of all students” (p. 146).
Chapter 4

RESULTS

The purpose of this project was to develop a web page for elementary school personnel to use as an informative site to teach the components needed to establish an inclusive elementary school. The researcher knew that providing information and resources would help school personnel to embrace the philosophy of inclusion and give them the beginning steps to help school personnel establish an inclusive school. This author is hopeful that elementary school personnel will put the inclusive philosophy into action; thus providing an inclusive education for all students to be accepted and have the opportunity for academic success in their elementary school community.
This website was designed to educate principals, teachers and parents how to establish an inclusive school, so all children have the opportunity to become successful in their community.

**Definition of Inclusion**

An inclusive setting is defined as the meaningful participation of students with disabilities in the general education classroom (Bateman & Bateman). Idol and Griffith’s definition was very clear: inclusion is when students with disabilities receive their entire academic program in the general education classroom. Also, Dixon reported that an inclusive setting is where all students are included, regardless of abilities or disabilities. Inclusion is not just physical inclusion, when students share the same physical space, but it is a mindset.

Kathie Snow, an advocate for inclusion, stated:

“Being included is not a privilege to be earned, nor a right that is given to individuals. Inclusion is first and foremost a state of mind.”

If we expect students with disabilities to know and follow societal norms, each and every child must be able to participate freely within society, in order for each child to learn the norms.

Click [here](#) to view what research states about inclusive education.

Research has shown the importance of having clear definition about what inclusion means, if inclusion is going to be successful in an elementary school.
Common Misconceptions:

Please use these scenarios to bring about discussions, as you are establishing your inclusive school.

“They will learn more in a special education classroom.”

It’s shocking in this era that we want to create special education classrooms and segregate students because it is best for them. How is that best? The purpose for schooling is to help educate and lead our students into being successful members of our society. If you think about it, it’s quite simple; we are all unique individuals that must be valued by all...no one should be hidden in segregated classrooms. In order for all of us to understand the social norms of our society, we have to live within the society, not be excluded. The last time I checked there weren’t any special education “Targets” or any special education “McDonalds” that only serve people that are enrolled in special education classes.

“I can’t have special needs students in my classroom; I haven’t had any special education training.”

News Flash! When a child is born with down syndrome, a loud horn did not begin to blast, nor did a guidebook about down syndrome get delivered with the child as he/she was born. As educators we need to value all students and continue to focus on their strengths not their label! It is only then that we can truly call ourselves educators.
“It’s not fair that they don’t have to complete the whole project and still receive credit!”

Life’s not fair! It’s not fair that students are perceived by their disability instead of for who they are. Everyone grows from different opportunities. If everything had to be fair, then we would all have to drive the same cars, everyone would be expected to have the same income, and live in identical houses.

“This is how I run my classroom; if students can’t do what I expect they can’t be in here!”

Really? Let’s remember that public education is provided for all citizens… as educators we are here to educate all students and ensure success for all students. We need to remember Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development; we should teach all students at their appropriate developmental level. Teachers need to continually provide learning strategies and appropriate tools to help children access the curriculum. As educators we need to meet the needs of our students. They are not in our classroom to meet our needs.

“I’m expected to improve CSAP scores and have all of these different levels of students in my classroom. There’s not time!”

There’s not time not to help all students succeed! We must remember the purpose of education is to help students to become contributing members of society. This in turn helps our nation continue to become a better place. Everything feels difficult when we have to learn how to meet the needs of all students. Let’s spend more time learning how, instead of spending so much time finding reasons why it won’t work!

The misconceptions webpage was created to have educators begin to think about many statements teachers might have said, or believed about special needs students.

There are several scenarios that should bring about meaningful discussions about meeting the needs of all students.
Parental Involvement:

Parental involvement and support are requirements in the establishment of an inclusive school. School staff and teachers should never leave the parent out of the educational experience, if they want students to have success in school (Eckman).

Parents want educators to be open, honest, trustworthy, and advocate for the students with special needs that they teach.

Click here to view an example of parent tips.

Click here for more information about Parents Rights.
1. Share how your child learns best.

2. What are your child’s strengths?

3. What current strategies are you using at home that are helping your child be successful

4. Share with school personnel how you want them to communicate to you, about your child. (Example: email, phone, back and forth notebook, etc.)

5. Explain to them the importance of working together as a team. (Example: Making sure that the school personnel and you are using the same language, similar reinforcement.)

6. Share how your child follows direction the best. (Example, First, I need to, Second, I need to...etc.)

7. Explain what types of support systems your child might need. (Example, visual schedule, assistive technology)

8. Share how important it is that your child has the access to the same academic curriculum, (with adaptations if needed) as a student without disabilities.

9. Ask questions if you are unsure what school personnel is stating in the meeting.


“Educational Programs should be designed to facilitate inclusive attitude among all children.” Dr. Melanie Killen, University of Maryland
The parent involvement page is essential for helping parents have the appropriate tools and information so they can advocate for their child.
Teaching Strategies

Examples for Differentiating

**Reading:** Example for modifying an assigned chapter book

The student in your class should have the same opportunity of reading the same chapter book as their peers. It’s important for all students to feel valued and respected for what they know. Let’s say that the class is required to read the first three chapters and be able to answer questions about the chapters in a class discussion.

Example of Modifying: Pick a paragraph that the child is supposed to learn. Choose the paragraph carefully, one that would bring about the most knowledge and understanding to the student. The student is required to learn the paragraph, and the teacher will mark what chapter and page the paragraph is located. When it’s time to have the class discussion, the teacher will call upon the student that has learned that the paragraph, and the student will be able to answer the questions and participate within the discussion.

This will help the student to feel part of the classroom community, build confidence and the other children will also respect what the child has to offer to the discussion.

Click [here](#) to view an example of modifications & a modifications template.
Example of Modifications (Always know the child’s goals and then use the resources you have to modify). Here are some examples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class Standards</th>
<th>Goals on student’s IEP</th>
<th>Modification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Building Fluency</td>
<td>Learning the High Frequency words</td>
<td>Have your student highlight all of the words s/he knows in his/her book.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Then have him/her read aloud all of the high frequency words.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Double Digit math</td>
<td>Adding single digits to 10 Number sequence.</td>
<td><em>(Use the same problems in the math book that the other students are using.)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>problem</td>
<td></td>
<td>Break the numbers apart and add or subtract numbers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Example 32 + 14 (3 + 2 =/ 1 + 4 =)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Number Sequence: (1, 2, 3, 4,)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Modifications Template**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Class Standard</th>
<th>Goals on Student’s IEP</th>
<th>Modification</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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</tbody>
</table>

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This page was designed to help educators see that making modifications does not mean they have to have all new resources. The intent was to give practical ideas that educators can implement immediately.
IDEA 2004

Individuals Disabilities Education Improvement Act

Ensures that all children and youth with disabilities have the right to a free, appropriate public education for every child between the ages of 3-2, regardless of how seriously he or she may be disabled.

Click here for more information about IDEA 2004.

This is a crucial page of the website because it clearly states that students with disabilities need to have equal access to the curriculum. It is important that all educators understand the IDEA 2004 Improvement Act and the rights that students have in their elementary school.
Preparing for Inclusion

Crucial Steps that Must be Taken

All participants involved in inclusion must be committed to the philosophy of inclusion (McLeskey and Waldron). Staff and parents must understand the philosophy and benefits of inclusion, especially the interventions and specific services that are available in an inclusive school (Least Restrictive Environment Coalition).

When educators believe in what they do for all students, they can develop a successful inclusive program that is best for all students. An inclusive school culture is based on a strong sense of community, where everyone belongs and is accepted by peers and adults in the elementary school (Burnette).

Ten Steps in Developing an Inclusive School

* Begin with the discussion of schooling for all students
* Form a team
* Examine your school
* Examine other schools
* Develop a plan for the inclusive school
* Review and discuss the plan with the entire school community
  • Incorporate feedback from the school community regarding the plan for inclusion
* Get ready
* Implement the plan
* Monitor, evaluate, and change the inclusive program, as needed (McLeskey & Waldron)
Interview-Questions

Click here to view an example of interview questions for school Stakeholders.

Describe Your School

Click here to complete an activity on preparing your school for inclusion.

School Practice and Policies

Click here to describe your school's inclusion practices & policies.

Students with special needs and their teachers

Click here to complete an activity on matching your students’ needs & their teachers.
Activity II: Interview


Interview Stakeholders:
This activity entails interviewing persons in your school or school corporation who will be influenced by the changes you make in your school and/or who will be influential in determining whether your planned changes are successfully implemented. Stakeholders include teachers, students, parents, school board members, central office, and administration. Each team member should interview at last two stakeholders. In addition, the building principal should be interviewed.

When the interview is being written up, names of those being interviewed should not be used.

1. Attitudes, beliefs, and understandings of the school faculty and administration regarding inclusion.

Is inclusion a good idea?

Do students with disabilities benefit from inclusion?

Do typical students benefit from inclusion?

Should some students not be included?

Are you willing to accommodate for these students by adapting curriculum and instruction? Expectations? Grades? Classroom grouping? Discipline practices? Testing?

Do you have the time, resources, and expertise to successfully include students with disabilities?

Have your past experiences with inclusion or mainstreaming been mainly positive or negative?

2. Attitudes, beliefs, and understanding of other stakeholders (example: parents, central administration, school board members) about inclusion.

A) Is inclusion a good idea (do you support the concept of inclusion)?

B) Do students with disabilities benefit from inclusion?

C) Do typical students benefit from (or are they harmed by) inclusion?
3. What schools policies and practices are in place to support inclusion?

Address policies and practices related to topics such as:

A) Student grouping
B) Grading
C) Testing
D) Adaptations of curriculum and instruction
E) Discipline

4. What school policies and practices are in place that may impede the development of an inclusive program?

5. What changes will be needed in your school to better accommodate the needs of all students? Should your school be involved in these changes?

6. What are the strengths of your school that are in place to support inclusive programs?

7. What are the particular challenges that your school would face in developing or improving your inclusive program?

Guidelines that are helpful during the interview write-ups:

- During the interview, take notes that capture the critical elements of each response.
- After each question, restate for the persons being interviewed what you perceive to be the critical elements of their responses.
- Make changes and additions, based on the responses in the previous item.
- Immediately following the interview, make notes concerning your general impressions and reactions to the interview.
- As soon as possible after the interview, prepare a written summary of the responses.
Describe your school


1. Description of your school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description of your school</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How many students are in your school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the racial make up of your school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How many teachers are in your school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are class sizes?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other information</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Students with Disabilities in Your School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How many students with disabilities are in your school?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Break out students by grade level and level of support needed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are all students in their neighborhood or home school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How many students with a disability have your school as their home school?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. Support for Students with Disabilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Describe current services for each student</th>
<th>Define terms you use to describe the intensity of services.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student:</td>
<td>Service:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Additional Support in Your School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How many teachers?</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How many Paraprofessionals?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

37
### Students with Special Needs and Their Teachers


1. **Language Used (Systems Change)**

   **Is Inclusive Language Used?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>List terms used</th>
<th>Inclusive Language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Are the terms sensitive to individuals/politically correct/are the terms respecting all individuals?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. **Physical Inclusion (Are all Students Fully Included in the Life of the School?)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Are all students with disabilities in their home school?</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is the “rhythm of the day” similar to that of students who are not labeled? (Meaning: is the schedule, classes the same)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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38
3. Social Inclusion (Are Students Fully Included Socially in the Life of the School?)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do students with disabilities interact socially primarily with other students with disabilities?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do they interact with typical students a significant amount of time?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is an active effort made in your school to include students with disabilities in all school activities, extracurricular activities?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are formal methods used to facilitate social inclusion? (Example: Social skills training, or cooperative learning?)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are informal methods used? (Example: students with disabilities in clubs, at recess, games) Describe.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are formal or informal activities used in your school to improve social skills, encourage friendships among a diverse range of students, and so forth?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are students with disabilities excluded room specific opportunities to interact with typical peers? Examples: at lunch, recess?</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

4. Academic Inclusion (Are Students Fully Included Academically in the Life of the School?)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is the “rhythm of the day “ for students with disabilities in relation to their academic work similar to that of the other students? (Example: curriculum)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describe the types of support services provided to students with disabilities.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support for learning basic skills in reading</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support for learning basic skills in math</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What adaptive instruction is used?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. Special Education Teacher Roles and Function

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Are special education teachers included as typical members of the teaching staff? (Example: School wide professional development activities, curriculum committees.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do special education teachers have a professional role that is reasonable/satisfying and that has benefits similar to those teachers? (Example: Do students view the special education teacher as their teacher?)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does an “us vs. them” attitude exist (Example: special education vs. general education teachers of students with disabilities discussing “my” students, and general education teaches discussing their students.)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Establishing an inclusive school usually requires a change within the school culture in order for inclusion to be successful. There are many essential steps that must be taken if an elementary school is going to establish a successful inclusive philosophy.
Leadership Questions:

What are the hallmarks of an inclusive school?

When all professionals believe that all students can learn, in turn, this creates a climate and an expectation for all students to be a part of the learning community. The professionals in a school must model for their students how to celebrate differences in order for the school culture to begin to change. Teachers should show the same value for the uniqueness of their peers and pupils as they expect their students to exhibit (Klutch, 2003). For successful inclusion to occur the school community must believe that living and learning together benefits everyone, not just special needs students (Villa & Thousand).

What does a principal provide in an inclusive school?

The principal serves as the philosophical backbone of an inclusive school (Klutch). Principals provide leadership, vision, and guidance for how to change the culture from segregated learning to collaboration and inclusion. Praisner explained that the principal must display a positive attitude and commitment to inclusion.
How does a principal start to build an inclusive school?

To begin, the principal must address the teachers’ views, beliefs, and fears in regard to the issue of an inclusive school (McLeskey & Waldron). If the principal does not recognize the need for teachers to examine their belief systems, the need for change, and perhaps some of their beliefs in regard to inclusion and schooling, the inclusive program will likely entail only superficial change, or what Goodman called, “change without difference.”

What does a successful inclusion mission statement sound like?

The mission statement can guide the design of: (a) the school goals, (b) the instructional program and activities, and (c) clarify the need for collaborative teams (Snell & Janny). The principal must keep the central mission of the school in the forefront and take action to accomplish this mission (Glatthorn). The principal empowers general education teachers, and specialists to work together to make inclusion successful. It is then that dramatic changes occur in both teaching behaviors and student learning.

What resources should a principal provide when establishing an inclusive school?

As a principal begins to build an inclusive school, s/he must continually provide resources for general education and special education teachers, such as: (a) staff development, (b) time for collaboration (c) necessary support materials, and (d) key personnel that might be needed (Tompkins & Deloney).

“Inclusion is not a strategy to help people fit into the system and structures which exist in our societies; it's about transforming those systems and structures to make it better for everyone. Inclusion is about creating a better world for everyone.”

Diane Richler, President, Inclusion International
The principal’s leadership is essential to the establishment of an inclusive school.

These are potential questions that a principal may have when s/he is in the beginning stages of establishing an inclusive school.
Imagine there is a tree next to a pond in a meadow. There, a group of young animals is gathered, including a duck, a fish, an eagle, an owl, a squirrel, and a rabbit. They decide they want to have a school so they can be smart, just like people.

So the grown–up animals come up with a curriculum they believe will make a well-rounded animal: courses in running, swimming, tree climbing, jumping, and flying.

On the first day of school, little br’er rabbit combed his ears, and he went hopping off to his running class.

There he was a star: He ran to the top of the hill and back as fast as he could go, and oh, did it feel good. He said to himself, “I can’t believe it. At school, I get to do what I do best.”

After class, the instructor said, “Rabbit, you really have talent for running. You have great muscles in our rear legs. With some training, you will get more out of every hop.”
The rabbit said, “I love school. I get to do what I like to do and get to learn to do it better.”

The next class was swimming. When the rabbit smelled the water, he said, “Wait, wait! Rabbits don’t swim.” The instructor said, “Well, you may not like it now, but five years from now you’ll know it was a good thing for you.” The rabbit remained skeptical and quite apprehensive about the first time he would be asked to get in the water.

In tree-climbing class, a tree trunk was set at a 30 degree angle so all the animals had a chance to succeed. The little rabbit tried so hard to climb that he hurt his leg.

In jumping class, the rabbit got along just fine; in flying class he had a problem. So the teacher gave him a psychological test and discovered that he belonged in remedial flying, in that class the rabbit had to practice jumping off a cliff. His teacher told him if he’d just work hard enough, he could succeed.

A few weeks later, the rabbit went to swimming class, and the instructor said, “Today we jump in the pond.”

“Wait, wait!” the young rabbit said. “I talked to my parents about swimming. They didn’t learn to swim. We don’t like to get wet. I’d like to drop this course.”

The instructor said, “You can’t drop it. This class is part of the core curriculum and required for all animals. At this point, you have a choice: Either you jump in or you flunk.”

The rabbit jumped in. He panicked! He went down once. He went down twice. Bubbles came up. The instructor saw that he was drowning and pulled him out. The other animals had never seen anything quite as funny as this wet rabbit who looked more like a rat without a tail, and they chirped, and jumped, and barked, and laughed at the rabbit. The rabbit was more humiliated than he had ever been in his life. He wanted desperately to get out of class that day. He was glad when it was over.

He thought that he would head home, that his parents would understand and help him. When he arrived, he said to his parents, “I don’t like school. I don’t want to go to school.”
“If the rabbits are going to get ahead, you have to get a diploma,” replied his parents.

They argued, and finally the parents made the rabbit go to bed. In the morning, the rabbit headed off to school with a slow hop. Then he remembered that the principal had said that any time he had a problem to remember that the counselor’s door is always open.

When he arrived at school, he hopped up in the chair by the counselor and said, “I don’t like school.”

And the counselor said, “Mmmm, tell me about it.”

And the rabbit did.

The counselor said, “Rabbit, I hear you. I hear you saying you don’t like school because you don’t like swimming. I think I have diagnosed that correctly. Rabbit, I’ll tell you what we’ll do. You’re doing exceptionally well in running. You don’t need to work on running. What you need to work on is swimming. I’ll arrange it so you don’t have to go to running anymore, and you can have two periods of swimming.”

When the rabbit heard that, he just threw up!

As the rabbit hopped out of the counselor’s office, he looked up and saw his friend, the wise old owl. Br’er rabbit said, “I don’t like school! I hardly ever get to do what I’m good at.” Wise old owl cocked his head and said, “Br’er rabbit, life doesn’t have to be that way.”

(Reprinted with permission)

The article page will continually provide articles for school personnel to use and discuss as they establish an inclusive school.
Teacher Talents

It takes talent to meet the needs of all students. When teachers see themselves as facilitators of learning, and not just transmitters of knowledge, they begin to impact student learning (Topkins & Deloney). In order for successful inclusion to take place all educators must believe that living and learning together benefits everyone not just special needs students (Villa & Thousand). Teachers have to believe that, all means all, and that they are responsible for all students’ learning in their classroom. The most successful inclusive teachers understand the need to collaborate with fellow teachers, specialists and parents. This type of collaboration is best practice for all students. The talented teachers stand out above the rest because they build relationships, motivate, and engage all of their students everyday in their classrooms, which ultimately leads to higher student achievement (Gordon).

Voices of Educators

"Kids should be with kids. Mixed abilities and levels promote acceptance and diversity. Kids with special needs learn appropriate behavior, are more determined to put forth the effort in learning new skills, see the things that they are learning as more purposeful, and gain greater independence and self-advocacy skills than that of their peers who are not included in general education classes for the majority of their day. Typical kids benefit just as much by seeing how interacting with a student with special needs is truly no different then interacting with their peers, acceptance occurs and peers are less likely to be
discriminatory when they have had the chance to interact with students with special needs are placed in their classes year after year."

Lisa Tisher, Middle School Teacher

"I believe inclusion benefits all children. I believe it helps to teach typically developing children about differences, patience, tolerance and acceptance. I believe it teaches children with developmental delays about socially appropriate behavior and expectations. Inclusion requires adults to be role models. Inclusion can facilitate friendships. Inclusion requires training and an open mind to work correctly."

Cori Sullivan, Autism Specialist

"As I was sitting here thinking about what to write, my daughter asked what I was doing. (She has students with special needs in her class and loves everyone.) I told her I am writing something about the importance of inclusion. After explaining what inclusion was, and how some people feel that students with special needs should be in different classrooms, a classroom with kids that have similar needs." Her response was… “Mom they all ready are in a class with kids that have similar needs. “We all have brains that think, what else is there?” (quote: from a 7 year old)

"I have been lucky enough for the last 2 years to have children with disabilities in my classroom. I remember feeling scared, at first like I wasn’t qualified to teach these kids. I quickly learned that they are just like all the other kiddos in the class. The students, along with myself, have learned how important choices are, even form the simplest of them, like pushing in our chairs to holding open a door for a child in a wheelchair. I love watching how sensitive these kids have become. They really learn that not all of us are the same on the outside. But we sure are on the inside. We all have feelings and brains that think."

Tonya Saenz, Second Grade Teacher

"It’s difficult to describe the benefits of an inclusive setting using words. Many of the rewards are not tangible-especially at first. Over time the benefits to all students as well as teachers become clearer. In a nutshell the benefits include
solid differentiation of instruction, shared wisdom, an environment of trust and acceptance. As a teacher, inclusive ideals may seem daunting at first and the responsibilities overwhelming; however, with communication, some planning, and an open hearts and mind one realizes that any additional efforts returned ten-fold in ascending academic and social achievement for all students.

**Angela Horn, M.A., CCC-SLP, Speech Language Pathologist Middle School**

"I have to say that I have never seen a child's learning regress when they have been in an inclusive classroom. All children learn from what is around them and stimulation that is given to them. Children with special needs are not different. If I think back to the special needs children I have had in my inclusive classroom, ALL have learned to be a part of the community just by watching and doing along side "typical " children. Typical children also learn from special needs children. One important lesson they learn is that we all learn at different rates. They also learn that WE ALL are the same and WE ALL are different. Many adults could benefit from this opportunity."

**Laurel Hupp, Third Grade Teacher**

“Inclusion is not a strategy to help people fit into the system and structures which exist in our societies; it's about transforming those systems and structures to make it better for everyone. Inclusion is about creating a better world for everyone.”

**Diane Richler, President, Inclusion International**

“From an administrative viewpoint, authentic inclusion practices promote overall school unity. General and special educators take ownership of all students' learning, students feel that they have membership and a safe place in that school, and trust between parents and educators is built. This spirit of effective collaboration leads to true differentiated instruction and students receive the supports necessary to be successful in their lives.”

**Jami C. Miller, Middle School Principal**
The educator’s page is essential so educators can hear from one another about the positive implications that occur in an inclusive school.
Glossary of Terms

Advocacy

Action that is taken on behalf of oneself or theirs; a method parents of students with disabilities can use to obtain needed or improved services.

Education for All Handicapped Children Act

Also known as Public Law 94-142, which became law in 1975 and is now known as Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Re-titled in 1990 and reauthorized in 1977 and 2004.

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

A legal term referring to the fact that exceptional children must be educated in as normal an environment as possible.

The glossary page is to provide quick definitions of terms that are used when discussing inclusion.
References


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As educators use this web page the authors’ hope is that individuals will contact her through e-mail with additional questions, suggestions, or comments in regards to inclusion.
Chapter Summary

Presented in this chapter were the essential components and steps that must be in place to establish an inclusive elementary school. It is the author’s hopes that this website will continually provide updated information so elementary school personnel can understand the definitions of inclusion and the appropriate steps to build an inclusive elementary school. As school personnel become knowledgeable and recognize the importance of an inclusive environment in their schools, students will gain the opportunity of becoming successful and productive members of their community.

In Chapter 5 the author discusses the project, limitations of the project, and possible future recommendations for further study.
Chapter 5

DISCUSSION

The website was designed to educate principals, teachers and parents about the importance of establishing an inclusive school. The research has shown that many elementary school staffs are not sure what inclusion means or how to go about establishing an inclusive elementary school. It is the author’s hope that this website will improve the knowledge base of elementary school personnel by providing definitions about inclusion, and the steps that must be taken in order to establish an inclusive elementary school. The author’s ultimate goal is to provide essential information about inclusion, which will lead to inclusive communities and create a better future for everyone.

Objectives Achieved

It is believed that the use of this Internet website about establishing an inclusive school is an effective way to provide information and resources for many educators. The author had several opportunities to discuss the website with her colleagues, and other advocates about the benefits that this website provides, to educators, parents, and other interested parties, such as advocates, extended family members, etc. There is an extensive amount of research that has been compiled in an organized and understandable way to help individuals understand the meaning of inclusion and the correct steps that teachers, principals, and parents must take in order to establish an inclusive elementary school.
Limitations to the Project

A limitation to this project was the author’s lack of an opportunity to use the website with elementary school district personnel. Additionally, when school personnel uses the information and resources available to establish an inclusive school the author, was not able to see the year long process. If the author had more time she would be able to make the necessary changes that school personnel suggested to improve the website to become an even more effective resource for school personnel.

Another limitation to the project is the emphasis is on the elementary schools. It would be beneficial to extend to the inclusive philosophy to the middle and high schools.

Recommendations for Future Research

The author of this website intends to keep this website current and continually add relevant information that will be useful to teachers, principals and parents. The author plans to add a counter to the website, so she can see how many individuals are accessing this web page for inclusive information. As individuals contact the author, she will take suggestions from the contacts to continually improve this website. The author plans on adding video clips of inclusive schools in action, this is an important component, so individuals can see examples how teachers collaborate with one another to modify curriculum for their students in an inclusive setting.

There is much needed research in the area of inclusion. The author would like to see more research, in regards to training general educators as well as special needs educators. It would be so beneficial for all teachers to become aware of the legal requirements and the power of collaboration to enhance learning for all students.
Peer Assessment

Assessment of the essential inclusion components website was reviewed by four colleagues through informal feedback, recommendations, and suggestions for further research. Each colleague was given the web address and then asked to review it for ease of use for trainings and relevancy. Each reviewer provided comments, editing marks, and suggestions for the website. All four colleagues expressed that they were impressed by the amount of information provided for them on the inclusive website, they especially liked the links that were provided. Two of the links they found to be significant because they provide information about the special education law. All four colleagues expressed that they thought the Teaching Strategies page was very helpful, because it gave quick ideas about modifying a student’s work. Each reported that they would like to see this page expanded in the future.

Summary of the Applied Project

It is the researcher’s intent to encourage the establishment of an inclusive elementary school and, thus provide opportunities for all students to learn within the community in which they live. The author discussed the need for components in order for a system change to occur in establishing an inclusive school. The principal’s leadership role is vital to the success of an inclusive school, as well as teachers collaborating and cooperating and willingness to learn and perhaps to change their beliefs about inclusion. Overall, inclusion is a key principle in integrating more people with disabilities into society. Regarding the ends, all individuals should strive to weave people with disabilities into the larger fabric of society, thus, providing the opportunity to learn and accept one another’s unique qualities within our society (Berger, 2006).
REFERENCES


