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Introduction



How to Manage Your Inclusive Classroom offers ideas for addressing and planning for a wide range of individual abilities within the regular classroom. It will help you understand special needs students and the laws that affect their education.

Inclusion improves the educational system for all students. To be successful, it requires changes in the curriculum, how teachers provide instructional services and how students with and without disabilities interact during the school day. Schools must become caring communities in which the needs of all children are met.

Students with disabilities are placed in general, or regular, education classrooms with children of their own age. This placement allows them to develop a sense of community and fosters the social growth of all students.

Teachers must prepare the class to receive students with disabilities. They must be able to facilitate learning as well as promote the socialisation necessary for special students to be valued members of the group. Team teaching and collaboration between the school and home are vital to this process.

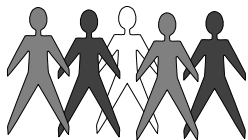
In most cases, special and regular educators will have shared planning times to discuss and adapt lessons for individual students.

When planning for inclusion, you may need to:

1. Adjust the curriculum to address the goals and objectives of your students' **Individual Education Plans (IEPs)**.
2. Create a physical environment that is adequate to meet the needs of all students.
3. Change how instructional services are delivered (video/audio rather than reading) and/or how students respond (drawing/speaking rather than writing).
4. Design flexible grouping to accommodate different activities and a variety of learning styles.
5. Ask teachers' assistants, tutors, parent or community volunteers or classmates to assist students with specific projects or assignments.

IEP goals and objectives should be determined with the input from all of the teachers and other professionals involved with students. The parents and, in many cases, students should be invited to participate in writing the document.





Implementation

Beginning a new program is never an easy task. Some people will be uncomfortable with the philosophy of inclusion or unsure about the potential changes that such a program will bring to their work environment. Hopefully, *How to Manage Your Inclusive Classroom* will help you be able to ease some of their concerns and provide answers to their questions.

To avoid feeling overwhelmed, plan a strategy that will gradually lead to your goal of total inclusion for all students. Remember to look at inclusion as a building process. It cannot be accomplished without significant cooperation and collaboration.

There are several important components that define successful inclusive classrooms. Ideally there should be a ratio between 1:6 and 1:12 of teachers to students, depending on the type and severity of handicapping conditions. Regular teachers team with one special education teacher and, if possible, one or more trained paraprofessionals. For example, there may be a need for health aides to be present in the classroom, depending on medical conditions of your included students.

Time must be allocated to allow for planning, meeting and attending workshops. Shared planning periods are vital for professionals to discuss and adapt lessons for their students. Time during the school day will be necessary for meeting with auxiliary personnel and contacting parents. In-service training can help teachers maximise their efforts and improve the quality of instruction to their students.

Regular education teachers will need assistance to become familiar with the format of the IEP. It is essential that they participate in writing the goals and objectives so these are compatible with the year level curriculum. The special education teacher can provide guidance when making decisions about what modifications are needed and which assessment techniques are best.

Many educators feel that multi-age grouping works best for inclusive classrooms. In multi-age settings, included students are less likely to think that their experiences are different from those of other students or that they are doing 'baby work'. This is because there will be children doing a wide range of learning activities. Multi-age grouping is particularly helpful if you are also integrating gifted students.

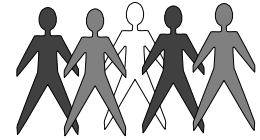
Another important component for the success of an inclusion program is the understanding and interest of administrators. Their cooperation and support will prove invaluable when resolving decisions regarding placements, scheduling, delivery of services and problems with parents. Therefore, before attempting to implement an inclusion program do discuss the idea with your building administrators. Ask them to help you plan a program that will best meet the needs of all students.

Individual Education Plan (IEP)

Name: _____

Goal: _____

Objectives:



Strategies for Team or Co-Teaching

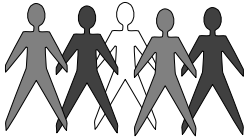
Team or co-teaching means that teachers gain partners to share everyday responsibilities. Team members need to agree on the philosophy and structure of their program. In an inclusive setting, they should agree that all students learn differently and are best taught according to their individual needs. They must trust each other as professionals and commit to fulfilling their separate duties. Team or co-teachers in inclusive classrooms must be open to using a variety of teaching methods and agree on behaviour management techniques.

In many inclusive classrooms, special education teachers and regular faculty members work side-by-side, forming an instructional team. Teachers are available to help all students, so everyone benefits.

Other schools maintain a separate team of special education teachers who act as resources for the regular staff. They observe, suggest intervention strategies and provide support to help the included students function as independently as possible in a regular classroom setting.

Benefits of Team or Co-Teaching

1. One teacher delivers the lesson while the other is free to circulate around the classroom, checking students to be sure they are on-task and understand what to do.
2. Teachers can use flexible grouping among several different classrooms.
3. Teachers can present lessons in areas of their greatest skill and interest.
4. One teacher is always available to do small group or individual instruction with students who need to have skills retaught or reinforced. The other teacher continues to work with the rest of the class.
5. One or both teachers can be trained in the use of technology.
6. Students' questions can be answered more efficiently, feedback can be provided more immediately and positive reinforcement can be given more frequently.
7. Each teacher can capitalise on such strengths as designing display boards, creating learning centres, or presenting hands-on activities.
8. One teacher can administer an oral test while the other gives a written one.
9. If one teacher is absent, the other can present the planned lessons. Therefore, students do not lose valuable instructional time.
10. Teachers will probably feel less isolated. The school atmosphere should become more cohesive and cooperative.



Welcome Friends Party

At the beginning of the school year, students will need to become acquainted with their classmates. You can plan this activity to encourage interaction among your students.

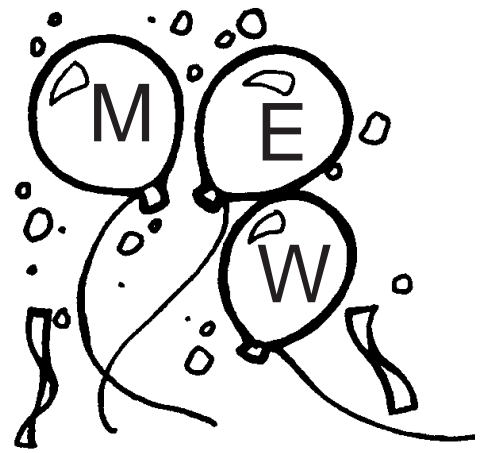
Refreshments: Ask each student to bring two servings of a favourite snack, one to eat and one to share. By doing this, you should have quite a variety. You may wish to provide juice, cups and napkins. **Warning:** Ask parents if their children have any food allergies or dietary restrictions.

Decorations and Game

Materials

14 balloons, thick permanent black marker, masking tape

Directions: Inflate 14 balloons. On each balloon, print one letter of the message 'WELCOME FRIENDS'. Attach a loop of masking tape to each balloon. Stick the balloons to the wall with the letters in scrambled order. Invite students to unscramble the message. Students may do one word at a time with a clue about which letter comes first or they may match the order of the letters to a preprinted card.



Art Activity

Materials

10 cm x 15 cm name tags, one for each student, crayons, safety pins

Directions: Ask students to design personal name tags. Tell them to print their names in the centre. Provide help as needed. Then, in one corner of their name tags, students should draw their own faces with the correct hair and eye colours. In each of the other corners, have them draw their favourite food, colour and a symbol to represent their favourite school subject. Use safety pins to attach the name tags to students.

English Activity

Materials

riddle cards (page 10), one per student

Directions: Have students complete the riddle cards to describe themselves. Provide assistance as needed. Tell students that they should not include their names on the riddle cards. When students have completed the cards, shuffle them and lay them face down on a table.

To the teacher: Direct students to the table. Have each student pick up one riddle card, read it and identify the student who wrote it by checking the name tags. Ask students to print the correct names on the riddle cards and be seated in a circle on the floor.