

# Table of Contents

<b>ABOUT THE AUTHOR</b> . . . . .	<b>ii</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION</b> . . . . .	<b>1</b>
About This Book . . . . .	3
<b>PART ONE</b>	
<b>PROMOTING LEARNING IN THE INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM</b> . . . . .	<b>5</b>
<b>CHAPTER ONE</b>	
<b>UNDERSTANDING THE INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM</b> . . . . .	<b>7</b>
Know What Your Students Know. . . . .	7
Social, Emotional and Academic Growth . . . . .	10
Raising Awareness . . . . .	11
Behavioural Issues . . . . .	12
Social Issues . . . . .	13
Communication Issues . . . . .	15
The Role of the Educator . . . . .	16
Moving Beyond Stereotypes . . . . .	16
<b>CHAPTER TWO</b>	
<b>ORGANISING FOR INSTRUCTION</b> . . . . .	<b>19</b>
Response to Intervention (RTI) . . . . .	20
Cooperative Learning . . . . .	24
Differentiated Instruction (DI) . . . . .	25
Understanding by Design (UbD) . . . . .	26
Universal Design for Learning (UDL) . . . . .	28
Multiple Intelligences, Sensory Modalities and Technology . . . . .	30
Organising Structures and Instruction . . . . .	33

**CHAPTER THREE**

<b>ADDRESSING STUDENT NEEDS . . . . .</b>	<b>41</b>
Fourteen Points for Success. . . . .	41
Strategic Learners . . . . .	42
Attention and Motivation . . . . .	44
Pacing and Complexity . . . . .	45
Effective Co-Teaching Practices . . . . .	47
Appropriate Interventions . . . . .	48
Looking Past the Label . . . . .	55

**CHAPTER FOUR**

<b>USING ASSESSMENTS, ACCOMMODATIONS AND DATA . . . . .</b>	<b>61</b>
The Data . . . . .	61
Accommodations and Modifications . . . . .	62
Avoiding Learned Helplessness . . . . .	66
Sample Curriculum Lessons. . . . .	68
Functional and Alternative Assessments . . . . .	69
Functional Behavioural Assessments . . . . .	73
The Merits of Mistakes . . . . .	74

**PART TWO**

<b>STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE CURRICULUM PRACTICE . . . . .</b>	<b>77</b>
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**CHAPTER FIVE**

<b>LITERACY AND COMMUNICATION . . . . .</b>	<b>79</b>
Reading Differences . . . . .	79
Reading Strategies . . . . .	80
Writing Strategies. . . . .	84
Communication Strategies . . . . .	88
Strategies for ELs. . . . .	91

**CHAPTER SIX**

<b>MATHEMATICS . . . . .</b>	<b>103</b>
Maths Representations . . . . .	103
Moving Maths Beyond the Worksheet . . . . .	104
RTI Maths Recommendations . . . . .	105
Maths Strategies . . . . .	106
Strengthening Computational Fluency . . . . .	107

**CHAPTER SEVEN**

<b>SOCIAL STUDIES AND SCIENCE . . . . .</b>	<b>.115</b>
The Social Studies Curriculum . . . . .	.115
The Science Curriculum . . . . .	.116
Social Studies and Science Strategies. . . . .	.117

**CHAPTER EIGHT**

<b>ART, MUSIC AND MOVEMENT . . . . .</b>	<b>.127</b>
Artful Education. . . . .	.127
Music Matters . . . . .	.129
Moving Beyond the Pages. . . . .	.130
Life Skills. . . . .	.131

**CHAPTER NINE**

<b>AN INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACH . . . . .</b>	<b>.133</b>
Lesson Strategies . . . . .	.134
Thematic Planning . . . . .	.137

**CHAPTER TEN**

<b>TRANSITIONAL PLANS . . . . .</b>	<b>.139</b>
Setting Goals . . . . .	.139
Strategies . . . . .	.140

**PART THREE**

<b>MAINTAINING THE INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM . . . . .</b>	<b>.145</b>
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**CHAPTER ELEVEN**

<b>PROFESSIONAL COLLABORATION . . . . .</b>	<b>.147</b>
Inclusion Players . . . . .	.147
Communication . . . . .	.149
Professional Development. . . . .	.151
Interventions . . . . .	.152

**CHAPTER TWELVE**

<b>HONOURING INCLUSION . . . . .</b>	<b>.157</b>
Disability Awareness . . . . .	.157
Helping All Learners to Succeed. . . . .	.160
Inclusion as an Evolutionary Process . . . . .	.161

**APPENDIX**

<b>ABBREVIATIONS . . . . .</b>	<b>.163</b>
<b>REFERENCES AND RESOURCES. . . . .</b>	<b>.165</b>

# Introduction

The general concept of inclusion is the meshing of general education and special education to benefit all learners. This includes valuing cultural, academic, social, behavioural and emotional differences. In inclusive classrooms, students with special educational needs are treated as integral members of the general education environment and are provided with collaborative support systems that honour peer relationships and provide access to meaningful curricula (Causton-Theoharis, 2009).

While the concept of inclusion seems simple enough, researchers, practitioners and legislators express differing thoughts about inclusion's implementation. Societal attitudes, legislation, educational philosophies, administrative directives, family involvement and teacher expectations are all factors that influence the implementation and effectiveness of inclusive school programs. For example, common core assessments have been designed to provide the appropriate accommodations from a test's inception rather than adding them on later as an afterthought. This may replace the need for alternate assessments based on modified achievements (Samuels, 2010). Some teachers, administrators, students and families embrace these new test designs, while others do not approve of the changes. Even though common legislation exists, inclusion must be individually defined and implemented through a variety of applications.

No one method is appropriate for all inclusive classrooms. Educators must explore a variety of strategies to determine which create the desired connections between the students and the curriculum, taking into account students' academic, social, emotional and behavioural levels; interests; and diverse abilities.

Inclusion interventions are meant to honour the belief that all students are capable of meeting high expectations and to offer the academic, social, emotional and behavioural benefits that allow students to achieve their highest potential. Inclusion interventions connect the instruction to each and every student's unique needs.

Inclusive classrooms need to be equitable and heterogeneous and offer placement, instruction and support for students with exceptionalities (Winzer & Mazurek, 2009). Providing students with opportunities to achieve regardless of current circumstances, prior attainments or predetermined expectations is part of the inclusion process (Ollerton, 2009). In other words, teachers should hold high expectations for their students, regardless of students' past achievements. Intentional design with deliberate planning and continual communication is crucial (Dukes & Lamar-Dukes, 2009).

The goal of inclusion is more than just preparing students to pass tests and increasing academic levels. Students with developmental needs may have behavioural, social, emotional or communication goals included in that general education setting. Research asserts that teaching students how to behave and interact with each other fits naturally within integrated school environments (Marchant & Womack, 2010). For example, students with autism showed improvements in the areas of behaviour management, communication and social skills when inclusion interventions such as applied behaviour analysis and inventories were infused in the curriculum (Waddington & Reed, 2009; McGarrell, Healy, Leader, O'Connor & Kenny, 2009). Such methods help students acquire and maintain skills in discrete steps through much practice and positive reinforcement with appropriate rewards, such as smiles, increased verbal praise and tokens.

Full inclusion, which refers to placing students of all abilities in the general education classroom regardless of the type or severity of the disability, has many challenges (Ferguson, 2008; Karten, 2010a). Proponents of full inclusion want the general education classroom to be the only placement, yet without the appropriate accommodations, students may very well end up being excluded under the guise of inclusion. The general education classroom needs to be restructured in a way that allows students' needs to be appropriately met. Many students with special needs who succeed in the general education classroom receive appropriate scaffolding that allows for the provision of necessary academic, physical, emotional, social and behavioural accommodations and modifications. If the programs are not modified, the general education classroom is actually excluding students with special needs even though they are physically included.

Although inclusion is not always an easy process to implement, collaboration and structured plans will yield successful results for students (Hollingsworth, Boone & Crais, 2009). Overall, inclusion has been a unifying concept for special and general education (Gavish, 2009). For example, when special education practices enter the classroom, general education teachers are able to see the benefits of differentiated instruction. When general and special education teachers collaborate, all learners are viewed as exceptional students who are worthy of achieving solid educational foundations within the inclusive environment.

*Inclusion Strategies and Interventions* focuses on helping educators maximise learning in today's inclusive classrooms, where learning, physical, communicative, emotional, social, behavioural, sensory, perceptual or cultural differences exist. Interventions are meaningless unless they are connected to the individual profiles of unique students. Diversity is a way of life in inclusive classrooms that honour individual student levels and abilities. Education is never exclusively about the subjects taught; it is also about who is seated in the room. The classroom audience defines the lesson delivery, the depth of the concepts, the intervening strategies, the pace of the lessons, the types of collaborative structures, the lesson plans and the curricular decisions made. Savvy inclusive educators always remember that inclusive classrooms consist of individual learners.

## About This Book

This text is divided into three parts. Part 1 centres on promoting learning in inclusive classrooms. The first chapter introduces the students in inclusive classrooms and focuses on the unique abilities that they possess, providing the foundation for the rest of the book. Once this baseline knowledge is established, chapter 2 then describes ways to organise the inclusive classroom utilising principles such as RTI, differentiated instruction, understanding by design, universal design for learning, multiple intelligences, multisensory approaches, peer mentoring and cooperative learning. Appropriate related services such as assistive technology are also discussed. Chapter 3 moves into the actual creation of an inclusive classroom and outlines interventions for particular categories of learners. Effective co-teaching practices are also described. Chapter 4 highlights realistic accommodations and how they are directly linked to students' assessment data to establish meaningful accountability.

Part 2 offers strategies for effective curriculum practice, stressing the importance of creating strategic learners who are equipped with study skills through educationally solid collaborative lesson deliveries. Chapter 5 concentrates on literacy and communication, and presents multisensory and structured reading programs, along with explicit writing instruction. Strategies for English learners are also included. Chapter 6 delves into mathematics instruction and provides RTI maths recommendations. The disciplines of social studies and science are explored in chapter 7, while chapter 8 dives into the important but often overlooked domains of art, music, movement and life skills. Chapter 9 demonstrates the merits of an interdisciplinary approach, which links the instruction across the curriculum and proves that subjects do not have to exist in isolation. To close part 2, chapter 10 discusses transitional plans for successful postsecondary outcomes.

Part 3 outlines how to nourish and continually maintain the inclusive classroom, focusing on what needs to be done to consistently achieve the desired outcomes for students, teachers and families. Chapter 11 discusses professional collaboration and the inclusive players who create that collaborative environment, including co-teachers, related staff, administrators, professional learning communities, families and the students themselves. Chapter 12 ties it all together and serves as a conclusion to the book with reminders about how evidence-based practices can effectively meet and honour students' needs within inclusive classrooms. This final chapter also includes an investigation of where we are now, along with curriculum implications and a review of the inclusive practices.

The appendices offer handy resource material, including a list of abbreviations and a reference list.

There are several ways educators can deliver learning goals minus the standardisation. Differentiated instruction, universal design for learning, understanding by design, team planning, cooperative learning, peer mentoring and collaborative communications are all viable ways in which inclusion is applied to today's classrooms. It is important that teachers are not overwhelmed by the complexities inclusion presents but instead are prepared with an awareness about their students that is combined with an array of inclusive strategies. This

# ONE

## Understanding the Inclusive Classroom

*"I hated the shorter line when we went to lunch and specials. My class only had ten kids in it with two teachers. The other classes had so many more kids. I just knew that everyone was looking at me and thinking, Boy, is he stupid or what! Now, because I did OK in that other class, I am back in the bigger classroom with my friends for most of the day. That's where I have social studies and science and go to P.E., art and music with the kids who ride the bus with me and live on my block. I still do my reading and maths in a separate room with a different teacher and other kinds of books. Sometimes the smaller room is OK. When I'm with the resource group, I don't care as much about stuffing up, and the teacher helps me learn the things I need to know. When I was younger, I hated school and sometimes myself. Now, I have more friends, and school isn't so bad."*

It is tough for some kids to fit in when others view them as being different. This affects their self-esteem, which in turn influences academic performances and social interactions. Special education classes that set kids apart and flag them as "different" still exist today, but they are rapidly being replaced by classes that employ teaching strategies that accept and embrace all students (without the stigmatisation). Today, differences are becoming the norm in heterogeneous inclusive classrooms.

### Know What Your Students Know

There are, broadly speaking, thirteen classifications of disability for students aged three to twenty-one:

1. Autism
2. Traumatic brain injury (TBI)
3. Deaf-blindness
4. Visual impairment including blindness
5. Deafness
6. Speech/language impairment
7. Hearing impairment

learning materials – such as counters, shopping circulars, guest speakers and excursions – honour learners who need abstract concepts solidified with actual hands-on opportunities and materials.

Educators should assist students with above-average skills to continually expand their knowledge with enrichment activities and offer remediation and accommodations to help students with special needs understand the curriculum in different yet challenging ways. Standards must be connected to students' lives with relevant lessons. Yes, it is important to honour curriculum standards, but it is even more important to honour your classroom audience.

**Question to Investigate**

**How can teachers deliver a lesson to the whole class to honour individual levels, modalities and intelligences and still keep track of interventions and goals?**

Collaboratively, student support teams decide upon interventions, problem solve and then formally intervene with measures and ways to monitor effectiveness based upon individual student needs. Differentiation is applicable for those with both lower and higher skills, and this ensures that no-one in the class stagnates.

Prominent educational psychologists Andrew Roach and Stephen Elliott (2008) report on several ways to assess fidelity to programs, including filling out self-reports, keeping checklists and logs, analysing work samples, and documenting observations and data on software programs. Interest inventories such as a multiple intelligence survey can be completed for students of all year levels. Active learning is then directly connected to students with accurate documentation as teachers keep consistent formative data on interventions implemented. If students have individual education plans, then the progress towards meeting the listed goals can be documented each term and shared with parents through home mailings at the same time that school reports are sent home. The RTI Intervention Plan and RTI Progress Monitoring forms help educators monitor the effectiveness of specific classroom interventions every six to eight weeks.



# SIX

## Mathematics

*"I had the right answer; I wrote 200. I did  $18 \div 9$  and then added two zeros. Why isn't that right? Oh, I did it again. The problem was  $81,000 \div 90$ , not  $18,000 \div 90$ . For sure, the kid who sits next to me, the one I hate, had the right answer, 900. The way I see things, especially letters and numbers, is just different. It's not fair!"*

Quantities, arrangements, patterns and symbols involving shapes, whole numbers, fractions and decimals can be confusing to students. However, if students are given appropriate scaffolding during mathematics, the advanced skills they learn will not only help them to better understand and sort out these aspects of maths but also to negotiate everyday situations. Mathematics is not exclusively about numbers. The National Curriculum advocates a comprehensive curriculum for maths with thinking, problem solving and reasoning as the focal points. Students in prep to year 8 need a core of knowledge to be successful in mathematics. The secondary school curriculum builds upon the skills learned in the lower years with courses such as algebra, geometry, statistics, probability and discrete mathematics. The curriculum framework for mathematics spirals throughout the years, from basic maths skills to algebra to probability to proportions and beyond to achieve solid long-term mathematics curriculum goals and standards. Conceptual understanding, procedural fluency and automaticity of facts all are crucial and interrelated (U.S. Department of Education, 2008). Effective educators of inclusive classrooms deliver the maths curriculum in a way that acknowledges and addresses different rates of learning and positively alters negative student attitudes towards mathematics.

One way to improve students' attitudes towards maths is by applying it to the context of their lives. Students need to know how to apply logical reasoning to justify procedures and solutions and to devise and examine different representations to connect mathematics to everyday life activities. Systematic instructional approaches advance maths skills (Steedly, Dragoo, Arafah & Luke, 2008); innumerable skills are gained with the delivery and solidification of curriculum standards through structured instructional goals and objectives for students of all ability levels.

### Maths Representations

Concrete representations of abstract concepts help students gain understanding. For example, listening to a presentation about the value of coins and notes is quite different from

## NINE

# An Interdisciplinary Approach

*“You’ll see; things will click.’ That’s what I’ve heard since I was little. ‘You’ll be fine,’ my year three teacher said, ‘just wait until you are older, and then things will really click.’ Now we’re learning about the Renaissance, a time of rebirth in Europe, a gazillion years ago. Just what does that mean? I leave this class and then go to algebra and chemistry. No rebirth there, just dead things floating around in my brain. Nothing ‘clicks.’”*

Often students view school as a series of fragmented subjects that are disconnected and irrelevant to their own lives. In contrast, interdisciplinary units offer learners a chance to establish “aha insights” that connect the concepts, allowing for a deeper exploration. Interdisciplinary units, built around common themes, empower educators with fun and creative ways to delve into the curriculum. Subjects connect to each other as skills are taught across the disciplines (Gardner, Wissick, Schweder & Canter, 2003; Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 2001).

Setting up these units involves outlining which core curriculum standards will be addressed, eliciting students’ interest, and collaborating with other teachers and staff. For instance, if the students love cars, then that could be a theme of study. Explorations may include writing a biography of or business letter to Henry Ford, examining the scientific aspects of combustion, investigating the pricing and quality of cars from decades ago to now, creating a medley of songs about cars, comparing and contrasting economy and luxury cars, designing an advertisement featuring a favourite car, and creating a car prototype, to include the disciplines of English, science, maths, social studies, art and music.

Establishing connections between fragmented subjects also allows students the opportunity to form associations and apply what they learn in one subject or year to the next. Teachers help by linking the learning to students’ lives and establishing connections with the real world by applying concepts to daily tasks in jobs and life. Both teachers and students gain knowledge about the classroom audience and the subjects in stimulating and enriching ways (Lee, 2007).