

Barbara J. Doyle, MS, Inc.

Clinical Consultant

#1 Forest Green Drive
Springfield, Illinois 62707



Phone: 217-793-9347
Fax: 217-793-4018

CREATING INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Shared as ideas to stimulate team discussions

INCLUSION IS NOT...

Inclusion: is not going away. Unlike mainstreaming in the 70s, the inclusion movement was led by people with disabilities themselves, with ethical and legal vigilance. The goal is to create a society in which everyone is recognized as valued, belonging and able to contribute, hold a job and have satisfying, mutually-beneficial, lifelong relationships. Less than one percent of adults with disabilities in the United States own their own homes largely because people in the workforce do not know that people can be “different” but capable, personable, and valuable employees.

Inclusion: is not a religion or a belief system. It is a method of providing instruction and creating community. Students with special needs do not have to be included with their more typical peers 100% of the time. Inclusion should be *individualized* as should all services for students with special needs.

Inclusion: is not geography, a place or program. It is not where the student sits or has a locker. It is a state of mind and a method of behaving. Inclusion means that everyone in the classroom succeeds: the teacher, the typical students and the students with special needs. It is based on everyone understanding one another and having sufficient supports to succeed.

Inclusion: is not one size fits all. Inclusion does not mean that the student with disabilities has to act exactly like children without disabilities or do exactly what more typical children do.

INCLUSION IS...

Inclusion: is behavior that is modeled by adults and learned by children, based on mutual understanding. It is an opportunity to develop relationships. It is only true inclusion if social relationships develop among the children with special needs and their typical peers. The goal of inclusion is to create communities where EVERYONE is valued, belongs, and is able to contribute. Inclusive education for students with special needs seems difficult because it has never been widely done before in the history of the United States!

WHY INCLUSION?

Families want inclusion so that their children will have rich educational experiences and opportunities to have friendships with children in their own neighborhoods. They want their child valued. They want their children to be able to work and contribute in adulthood. They may plan for their children to access higher education and training.

Special educators want inclusion so that students with special needs will have typical role models, relationships and experiences. They want students with special needs to be exposed to the grand array of information and experiences that are part of the general education environment. They want to see lifelong friendships develop as students with special needs and more typical children learn together.

Administrators want inclusion so that every student has access to the full array of services, opportunities and learning experiences to become productive citizens. Individualized services provided during childhood can reduce dependence on public dollars in adulthood. Every dollar spent in creating inclusive school communities can save many more dollars providing lifelong supports to someone who could not get a job because they were not known to be capable and employable. When students go to school together and really get to know one another, employability of adults with disabilities will increase as will opportunities to contribute to society.

Classroom teachers want inclusion so that all students have a successful educational experience and to build an intelligent community that does not exclude anyone because of diagnosis or differences. Teachers want all students to learn to value human beings and live and work successfully together. Teachers recognize that anyone can become the parent of a child with special needs. Educational experiences can contribute to more successful parenting.

People with disabilities want inclusion to create the groundwork for building inclusive communities. They KNOW that one of the best ways to create inclusive communities in the future is to change educational experiences in the present. They want inclusion to result in less financial dependence on public funds and less social isolation and loneliness.

HOW DOES INCLUSION BENEFIT STUDENTS?

Typical children learn the concept of “different but able,” helping them not only with students with special needs, but with the acceptance of themselves and their family members.

Inclusion prepares typical students for the workplace of today and of the future. The Americans with Disabilities Act requires that *qualified* people with disabilities be given access to jobs. Students must learn to be comfortable and appropriate with anyone who will later be in the workplace. They must learn how to make “reasonable accommodations” and adaptations in the workplace. Students who do not learn how to be comfortable and appropriate with people with disabilities will not rise to the top of any corporate structure of the 21st century.

Inclusion promotes the development of sensitive and effective communication skills. When students are educated together, typical students tend to develop superior and even exceptional communication skills that will help them communicate more effectively for the rest of their lives in their homes, places of work and communities.

Inclusion builds interest in a variety of careers. Students have an opportunity to become interested in helping others, teaching, designing assistive technology and creating a more inclusive world. This can lead to careers choices in areas such as medicine, research, education, engineering and psychology.

Inclusion IS reality. It should come as no surprise that today’s students will become tomorrow’s parents. Inclusion teaches that people are “naturally” born with a variety of differences and talents and are still valued members of society. Inclusion prepares students for the reality of parenting.

HOW DOES INCLUSION BENEFIT TEACHING STAFF?

Staff have opportunities to learn to teach everyone more effectively. When staff learn about teaching strategies for students with learning differences and other special needs, staff know how to implement a greater variety of methods for teaching all students.

Staff have opportunities to be even more creative, expanding and adapting standardized curricula, normal routines and typical teaching strategies and styles.

Staff learn to work more effectively with families. Students with special needs create opportunities to work more closely with families. School experiences have a profound impact on the lives of all family members!

Staff have daily opportunities to shape the future of our society for ALL of its members. Staff can model behavior, attitudes and communication skills that lead to mutual acceptance and understanding of people who are at first perceived as “different” so that everyone can *belong, participate, and contribute*. Staff have an opportunity to create a more inclusive society for their own family members who have differences and special needs.

WHAT ABOUT INCLUSION FOR STUDENTS WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS?

Inclusion for students with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) is evolving. Children and young adults with ASD have been historically placed apart from everyone and “housed” or “trained.” For some people, that “apart-ness” continued into adult institutionalization, financial dependency and social isolation. Inclusive educational experiences teach students with autism spectrum disorders how to be *a part of* society rather than *apart from* society.

The incidence of autism spectrum disorders is increasing dramatically. It is widely estimated that the incidence of ASD could be higher than one in every two hundred children born today. What would you want for a child with ASD if the child was a member of your family? The child with Asperger Syndrome, autism, pervasive developmental disorders or any other autism spectrum disorder could be your child, your sister’s child or your child’s child.

Students with ASD have an opportunity to develop relationships with children in their neighborhood and community. The student has peer models for learning new behavior, communication and academic skills. The child or young adult with ASD can develop a sense of belonging, shared responsibility and the need to contribute. School experiences and interesting activities can lead to career choices, employment, recreation, friendships, volunteer work, etc. All of this can lead to a higher quality of life and greater safety as the student’s abilities are recognized by a local peer group who later will become employers, and civic and social leaders.

INCLUSION TIPS...

1. Each inclusion opportunity has to be individualized. There is no one right way. Work closely with the families and the full educational team to create appropriate experiences and intervention strategies.
2. Learn the rules about confidentiality and follow them. The privacy of the students with special needs and their families is protected by law. Ask for a

copy of the confidentiality policy at your school. Remind others that you cannot engage in casual conversation about students and their families.

3. Teamwork is even more crucial in inclusion. Each student who has an IEP (Individual Educational Plan) has a TEAM of professionals to support successful inclusion. The members of a student's team include the people whose names are signed on the front of the IEP. Be sure you know who the student's team leader or case manager is.

Meet regularly, especially early in the year or as issues emerge. Have short, targeted meetings with a prioritized agenda. Meet with the parents as often as possible. Develop ways to communicate quickly as a team, perhaps developing confidential email groups, if permitted to do so where you teach.

If the inclusive experience is not proceeding successfully from your point of view, do not wait. Seek support. No one is expected or required to know everything! That is why every student who has an IEP comes with a TEAM.

4. Remember that goals and activities for the student who is included do not have to be the exact same goals and activities of the other students. Plan to adapt materials, expectations and goals as part of the "individualization" required in an IEP. Ask for help from team members.
5. Any staff person working to provide an inclusive experience for a student with special needs is entitled to ALL of the assistance needed to make the experience successful. ASK for help. ASK for training. ASK for technical assistance. ASK early. Do not wait until everyone has had many unpleasant experiences. You are unlikely to get the help you need unless you define what you need and when you need it. Tell team members so that they can support you. Use "The Rule of Three:" if this is the third time you have had an issue or problem working with a student, it is time to ask for help.
6. You can learn a lot about the child with special needs in your classroom by making a home visit as early in the year as possible. Go to the home as a LEARNER, and learn how the parents manage and understand their child. Learn what goals need to be addressed to help this student be a more contributing member of the family and community.
7. YOU create a successful, inclusive classroom by your attitude and behavior. Students will emulate you. Try to:
 - Speak respectfully to all students at all times.
 - Help the typical children understand what the child or young adult with autism or other disabilities needs or intends to communicate. Help the children learn how to "interpret" and respond appropriately.

- Speak on behalf of the student, interpreting the student's behavior to help make sense of what the student is doing in the minds of the other students.
 - Stay calm when any student is having a problem.
 - Remember that what you know about children, young adults and child development DOES apply to students with disabilities. When in doubt, opt for the most safe, kind and respectful intervention for the student.
 - With the parents' permission and obeying the laws of confidentiality, talk to teachers who have had a successful time including children with special needs. They will have many ideas and strategies to assist you. Staff and families working together across our country are creating wonderful schools that really "include" everyone!
8. Be sure to ask the parents for written information about medications that the student takes, allergies or special health information. Keep this with you in and out of the school building. In an emergency, medical staff will be very glad to have this information up to date and immediately accessible.
9. With my sister Emily Iland, who is the parent of a young-adult son who has ASD, we have written a book called ***Autism Spectrum Disorders from A to Z***. It was published in 2004 by Future Horizons, Inc. In 2005, Emily translated our book into Spanish, ***Los Trastornos del Espectro de Autismo de la A a la Z***. It is available via our website www.asdatoz.com. The website contains interesting articles that you can read and share as well as our schedule of upcoming training events. If we can be of any support to you or your district feel free to contact us. Your district has a copy of our book for you to borrow. Ask Bud about it.

10. Some words of wisdom to consider and discuss:

I have come to the frightening conclusion that **I** am the decisive element in the classroom. It is my personal approach that creates the climate. It is my daily mood that makes the weather. As a teacher, I possess a tremendous power to make a child's life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or humor, hurt or heal. In all situations, it is **my response** that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or deescalated, and a child be humanized or dehumanized.

Dr. Haim Ginott
Author: Teacher and Child

Each time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million centers of energy and daring, those ripples build a current that can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance.

Senator Robert F. Kennedy

We must BE the change we wish to see in the world.

Mahatma Gandhi

Interesting and Helpful Websites

Disability is Natural

<http://www.disabilityisnatural.com>

Dan Marino's Childnett.tv.

<http://www.childnett.tv>

Different Roads to Learning, Inc.

<http://www.difflern.com/default.asp>

Yes I CAN!

A social inclusion program for students with and without disabilities

<http://ici.umn.edu/yesican/>

Illinois Assistive Technology Project

Access to information and a FREE loan device program

<http://www.iltech.org/>

Autism Society of America

[http://www.autism-society.org/site/PageServer?
pagename=homepage](http://www.autism-society.org/site/PageServer?pagename=homepage)

Autism Society of Illinois

<http://www.autismillinois.org/>

Autism Today Website

Includes an opportunity to “ask the experts”

<http://www.autismtoday.com/>

Autism One Radio

Live and taped radio broadcasts on topics related to autism spectrum disorders

<http://www.autismone.org/radio/>

Talk Autism

Information and resources

<http://www.talkautism.com/>

Kids on the Block
<http://www.kotb.com>