

GREAT EXPECTATIONS: AN OCEAN OF INCLUSIVE POSSIBILITIES



Office of Special Education, Alternative Outreach
and Psychological Services
Division of Special Education

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Introduction

Inclusive education has benefits for all involved. There is a significant body of evidence that cites rewards for students with and without disabilities when educated together within the general education classroom. When students with disabilities have opportunities for repeated interactions with non-disabled peers, they have demonstrated improvements in the skill areas of communication, socialization, reading, mathematical problem-solving, writing, and spelling, as well as the functional skills of everyday living.

In its efforts to realize these rewards in achievement for students with disabilities, Miami-Dade County Public Schools strives to comply with both state and federal mandates to educate students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment. As students with disabilities receive services in the general education classroom, teachers and support personnel are asked to refocus their view and personal history of teaching students with disabilities. This guide serves as a resource to assist educators in this endeavor.

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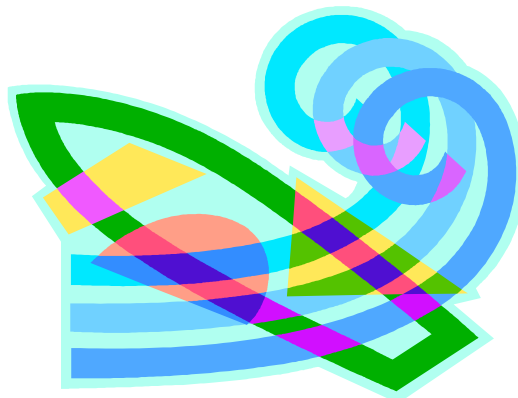
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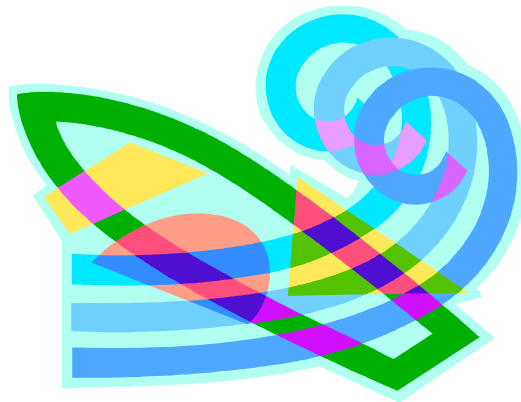
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Inclusive

Practices



INCLUSIVE PRACTICES

As inclusive practices are responsibly expanding in Miami-Dade County Public Schools, an increasing number of students with disabilities are receiving their educational services in the general education setting, to the maximum extent possible, with appropriate support(s). Consistent with the philosophy of inclusive practices, students with disabilities attend their neighborhood school, where they access appropriate educational services and establish bonds of support and friendship that can be maintained with neighborhood peers.

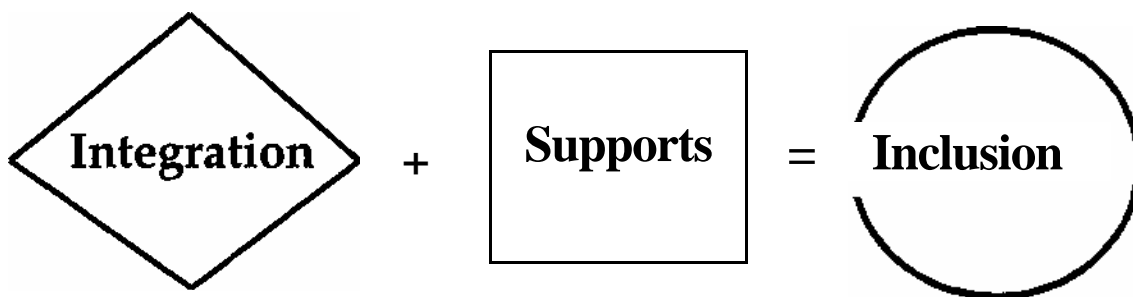
Implementing inclusive practices involves the understanding of inclusion as a philosophy, a process and a practice. Underlying the philosophy is the belief that each and every student is capable of learning, feels welcomed and is an integral part of the total school community. As a process, inclusion involves considering the individual needs of each student and providing effective instructional practices, strategies, and adaptations that will promote successful educational experiences. This entails collaborative efforts on the part of educators and others involved in the student's educational life. As a practice, inclusion involves an integration of beliefs with the process of meeting the student's needs, so that daily instruction in the classroom reflects high expectations for all learners with a commitment towards continual growth and improvement.

This section serves as a resource for specific information pertaining to inclusive practices and includes a rationale for inclusive practices, an Inclusion Brief developed by the Florida Department of Education (FDOE,2005), articles and web site resources.

INCLUSIVE RATIONALE

- ☺ Recognizes that all children learn at different rates.
- ☺ Provides age-appropriate classroom settings to challenge all children and frustrate none.
- ☺ Fosters self-esteem through individual learning success.
- ☺ Encourages cooperative learning for students and collaboration for staff.
- ☺ Highlights strengths of learners without focusing on weaknesses.
- ☺ Provides accommodations as necessary to enhance learning.
- ☺ Embraces diversity and teaches to uniqueness.
- ☺ Supports teachers and learners to meet needs of all.
- ☺ Encourages social interactions during and after school with non-handicapped peers.
- ☺ Provides opportunity for family participation in schools and neighborhoods.
- ☺ Siblings of labeled children begin to see that other children also have siblings with special needs.
- ☺ Supports become a service rather than a location.

Working Definition of Inclusion



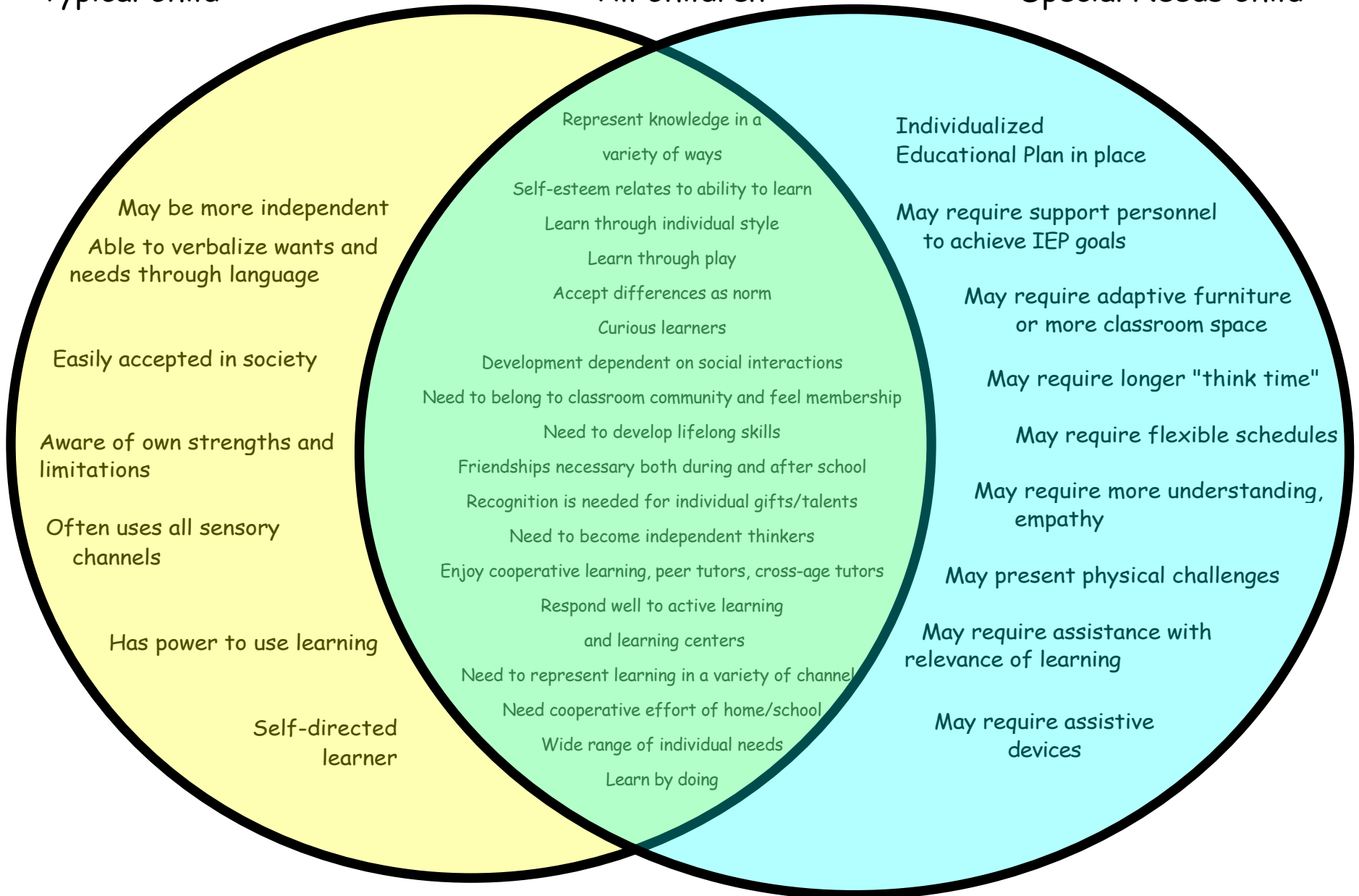
Source: Inclusion rationale and Venn diagram courtesy of
Inclusive Classrooms from A to Z: A Handbook for Educators by
G. Goodman

Children in the Classroom Are More Alike Than Different

Typical Child

All Children

Special Needs Child



What Do I Do Now?: A Teachers Guide to Including Students with Disabilities.

According to Giangreco (1996), Teachers who successfully teach students without disabilities have the skills to successfully teach students with disabilities.

Here are 10 recommendations to guide you:

1. Get help from colleagues
2. Welcome students in your classroom
3. Be the teacher of all the students
4. Make sure that everyone belongs to the classroom community
5. Clarify shared expectations with team members
6. Adapt activities to the student's needs
7. Provide active and participatory learning experiences
8. Adapt classroom arrangement, materials, and strategies
9. Make sure support services help
10. Evaluate your teaching

Source: ASCD 1996

DOE INCLUSION Brief April 2005 (ESE 12672)

Legal Requirements

Since 1975, federal law has required that students with disabilities have access to school and a free appropriate public education. In December 2004, Congress reformed and renamed the law. The new law, Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA, 2004), continues to require school districts to educate children in the least restrictive environment (LRE). Florida Statutes (F.S.) offer parallel language stating that, "Special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of exceptional education students from regular classes shall occur only when the nature or severity of the handicap cannot be satisfactorily accommodated with supplementary aids and services in the regular classroom." (Section 230.22(2) (2) F.S.) The emphasis on participation in the general education curriculum is intended to focus attention on the accommodations or modifications necessary to enable students with disabilities to access the general education curricula as well as a strong presumption in favor of a regular classroom placement.¹

The extent to which an individual student participates in the regular education setting with the use of supplementary aids and services is determined on a case-by-case basis by the individual educational plan (IEP) team. This requires individualized inquiry into the unique educational needs of each student so that the team can determine the possible range of aids and supports that would enable the student to be educated satisfactorily in the regular education environment before a more restrictive placement is considered.

Though the regular classroom is the first placement option for special education services to be considered, federal regulations and state laws also recognize that additional placement options may be necessary. Florida Statute states that "[a] continuum of alternative exceptional education placements shall be available." (Section 230.22(2) (1)F.S.). This portion of the law is designed to ensure that each student is educated in the LRE that is appropriate for the student. Among the specific options within the continuum are supplementary consultation, resource room, special class, special day school, or hospital/homebound instruction (Section 230.22(2)(4)F.S.).

LRE and Inclusion

Neither federal nor state law uses the term *inclusion*. However, both laws indicate a clear preference for educating students with disabilities in general education classrooms with their typical peers.² This preference has become recognized as inclusion. A comprehensive definition of inclusion was developed by the National Center on Educational Restructuring and Inclusion (NCERI).

Providing to all students, including those with significant disabilities, equitable opportunities to receive effective educational services, with the needed supplementary aids and support services, in age appropriate classrooms in their neighborhood schools, in order to prepare students for productive lives as full members of society. (1995, p.99)³

In order to sustain and expand inclusive schools, several factors must be considered. These include the following:

1. Inclusive practices require collaboration and interdependence among administrators, staff, students and family members.
2. Inclusive models promote more creative and efficient use of existing resources.
3. Students with disabilities are valued members of general education classrooms whose teachers hold high expectations for student success in the school and community.
4. Effective teachers use a variety of approaches, instructional strategies, and curricular adaptations that are tailored to each student's learning abilities, needs, styles, and preferences.
5. Professional development focuses on skills and capacities as well as thoughtful and reflective actions of staff.
6. Students with disabilities are included and carefully considered in the collection, organization, analysis, interpretation, and whole school planning related to student achievement data.⁷

A wide variety of research-based instructional strategies have been developed to meet the diverse learning needs of students found in Florida classrooms. A description of effective strategies and models as well as websites that provide more detailed information can be found below.

Effective Strategies/Models

1. **Collaborative Teaching Models** are service delivery options that include consultation, co-teaching and support facilitation. Information on collaborative teaching models can be found online at <http://www.floridainclusionnetwork.com>.
2. **Continuous Improvement Model (CIM)** is a quality-based approach that tracks student performances, is based on research, helps close the achievement gap between all racial and socioeconomic subgroups, and is performance-driven. Implemented at all levels, the CIM treats students individually by assessing how much they're learning at regular intervals.
3. **Cooperative Learning Structures** are specific combinations of student interactions designed to be used with almost any academic content to increase opportunities for all students to contribute and succeed. Information can be found online at <http://www.cooperativelearning.com>.
4. **Curriculum Accommodations** involve changes in instruction and assessment that are needed by students with disabilities to help them participate and make progress in the general curriculum. For more information on different curriculum accommodations, visit <http://www.cpt.fsu.edu/ese/>.
5. **Curriculum Modifications** are changes in content or what a student is expected to learn in the general education setting. Information on curriculum modifications can also be found online at <http://www.cpt.fsu.edu/ese/>.

6. **Differentiated Instruction** means teaching so that students have multiple options for taking in information, making sense of ideas, and expressing what they learn. For more information, search the <http://www.ascd.org> website for *differentiated instruction*.

7. **Positive Behavioral Supports** involve the assessing and reengineering of environments so students with problem behaviors experience reductions in these behaviors and increase social, personal, and professional quality in their lives. For more information, visit <http://www.pbis.org>.

8. **Peer Support Systems** usually pair a student with a disability with a same age classmate who does not have a disability. Models are designed to provide reciprocal benefits to students through peer modeling; relationship building; academic support; and expanded opportunities to socialize, communicate, and demonstrate learning competencies. For more information on peer supports, visit <http://www.jsel.com>.

9. **Response to Intervention (RTI)** is an integrated approach to service delivery that encompasses general and special education systems and requires multidisciplinary collaboration throughout. It is found in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) 2004, in direct alignment with the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act and referring to the practice of providing high quality instruction matched to students needs and using rate of learning over time to make important educational decisions.

10. **Strategic Instruction Model** promotes effective teaching and learning through two kinds of interventions to address the performance gap between what students are expected to do and what students are able to do. *Content Enhancement Routines* are teacher focused interventions directed at how teachers think about, adapt, and present their critical content in learner-friendly fashion. The *Learning Strategies Curriculum* contains student-focused interventions designed to provide the skills and strategies students need to learn the content. For more information, visit <http://www.ku-crl.org/iei/sim>.

Resources

We are fortunate in our state to have multiple resources positioned to assist schools and school districts to implement inclusive education practices. These include fiscal as well as human resources designed to provide professional development, learning opportunities, and information to educators, families, and community members. Links to the websites of several networks and special projects are listed below.

1. **The Florida Inclusion Network (FIN)** maintains a statewide network of facilitators to assist schools and school districts in the implementation of research-based effective and inclusive educational practices. FIN provides professional development and technical assistance designed to support students with diverse learning needs. <http://www.floridainclusionnetwork.com>
2. **The Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System (FDLRS)** is a statewide network comprised of nineteen local associate centers, five statewide specialized centers and five regional assistive technology labs. FDLRS provides statewide instructional and technology support to individuals and programs serving exceptional students and their parents, along with location and identification of children with disabilities or those who are at risk of developing special needs. FDLRS four major functions are human resource development, technology, child find, and parent services. <http://www.fdlrs.org>
3. **The Effective Instructional Practices Project (Project CENTRAL)** is a comprehensive, statewide project designed to identify and disseminate information about resources, professional development, and current and emerging research based instructional practices. <http://reach.ucf.edu/~central/index.html>.
4. **The Accommodations and Modifications for Students with Disabilities Project** develops products and provides services to school districts designed to support the implementation of the Sunshine State Standards for Special Diploma, course descriptions, and the use of appropriate accommodations and modifications for students with disabilities, <http://www.cpt.fsu.edu/ese/>

Endnotes

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2. National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities. (1997). *Least Restrictive Environment Background Text, Module 8*. Washington, D.C.3.
3. National Center on Educational Restructuring and Inclusion. (1995). *National Study of Inclusive Education*. New York: City University of New York.
4. Sapon-Shevin, M. (1999). *Because we can change the world: A practical guide to building cooperative, inclusive classroom communities*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
5. Carrico, M.L. (2000). *The placement dilemma: least restrictive environment*. Available at www.modrall.com
6. Staub, D. (1994) What are the outcomes for nondisabled children in inclusive settings? *Educational Leadership*, 52, 36-41.

Inclusion 101: Tips for creating inclusion-friendly classrooms

Make your inclusive environment conducive to better learning

The methods many educators use to teach students with both behavior problems and learning disabilities often fail to meet the challenges these special students face.

The answer to meeting many diverse learning challenges can be found in making alternative learning environments more conducive to study, participation and cooperation, says educational consultant Robi Kronberg.

"Inclusion of children with both behavior and learning problems is often more successful when students are in classrooms within communities that counted," said Kronberg. "Those classrooms and communities include staff who help students focus on learning and who nurture a sense of belonging."

Kronberg said students need "compatible instruction — they have to feel they are in a safe environment in order to feel confidence to learn."

Research focuses on the impact of the learning environment on the young brain, Kronberg said. "Sense and meaning are critical to the brain, especially where special education students are concerned," she said. "The term 'downshifting' is critical. When the brain is under anxiety or stress, a child is much more apt to be limited in his or her ability to think. And kids spend too much time in 'downshift' in some classrooms."

Kronberg cited several sources on the resiliency of former students managing stress, making choices and avoiding self-destructive behavior in the classroom. "Those who emerged successful looked back and remember someone who was special to them, usually a teacher. For some students, the parents aren't always around."

For children to become resilient in the classroom — and therefore become active learners — the school culture that surrounds them must include three main variables: Caring and support, high expectations, and meaningful participation.

What does your classroom need?

For an alternative classroom environment to have a "sense of community", it should emphasize several characteristics.

The school environment should have:

- Warm, supportive and stable relationships among all members of the school community.
- Constructive learning.
- An important and challenging curriculum.
- Intrinsic motivation.
- Attention to social and ethical dimensions of learning.

Caring and support. Kronberg said when 1,200 at-risk students from 9th through 12th grade who attended alternative schools were asked how they would get along in the "big" school, many said they would most likely only succeed if they had an adult or role model they could talk to. They said they would also be willing to become that role model, and return to the alternative school to talk to other students about how to "connect" with others. When asked what they valued most in a teacher, the number one answer was "a teacher who cares," Kronberg said.

High expectations and meaningful participation. "Students need to be challenged," Kronberg emphasized. "But we keep creating school structures to adapt to an increasing population of both students and adults in our schools." According

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Are your classrooms places where inclusion can take off?

The first step to making successful curriculum modifications is having a classroom where they are already taking place for all students on a regular basis.

"In accommodative classrooms, there are already a lot of inclusive practices taking place, so you don't need to do as many individual adaptations," said Rachel Janney of Radford University's Technical Assistance Center.

Adelle Renzaglia of the University of Illinois agreed. She said the following are principles of best practices in general education that make a classroom a place that welcomes inclusive placements:

- Child-centered individualized instruction and activities.
- Activity-based, hands-on learning.
- Project-based integrated learning that engages all students.
- Cooperative learning in which children have roles to play within a group, and work together toward a common outcome, but with individual goals.
- Thematic instruction and interdisciplinary units.

Planning for adaptations and curriculum modifications is essential for success, said Cyndi Pitonyak, a consulting teacher with the Montgomery County (Va.) Public Schools. Pitonyak said she uses a matrix that lists a student's schedule across the top, and IEP objectives down the side.

She places checks in any boxes where an activity is taking place, then uses color codes to point out where adaptations are already taking

(from previous page) to research, Kronberg said students need four components of meaningful participation from their learning environments: the feeling of competence, the sense of belonging, a feeling of usefulness and potency, or power from learning.

Facing barriers

A number one problem, Kronberg said that research reveals, is the size of many schools, especially secondary schools. "Many large schools don't provide enough accountability for both students and teachers," she said. Larger schools also unwittingly foster the isolation of staff members.

"Studies show there's a marked increase in student enthusiasm when co-teaching works in the classroom. There are more student dynamics and interest in the alternative classroom," Kronberg said.

The teaching environment, Kronberg stressed, must be one more of "working with" students rather than "doing to."

"A climate conducive to learning focuses more on working with students than simply doing the teaching," Kronberg said.

place, where consistent adaptations that need only a set-up can be put into effect, and where repeated adaptation will be necessary.

For students with behavior problems, the educational context often can provide insight into why a student acts out, she said.

In one case, with an elementary school student who had behavioral/emotional disabilities, story time provided a challenge, Pitonyak said.

The student routinely disrupted the group and was unable to sit and listen. By looking at his schedule, in combination with noting his good and bad times, the teachers came up with an intervention that worked.

They gave the student some tracing paper and some of his favorite cartoons to draw, and he managed to keep busy while story time was taking place, without being disruptive, she said.

Turning from contextual modifications to curriculum adaptations, Janney pointed out three common approaches:

- Simplify: Take concepts and streamline the lessons, focusing on important skills and concepts, or teach at a different level.
- Supplement: Introduce social, study-skills, communication and motor skills activities and objectives around the curricular activities.
- Functional Change: Place the emphasis on the functional school routine, home skills, community applications or vocational objectives.

Janney said it is important to make adaptations based on individual children's needs and abilities, not classifications or labels.

When educators take the "doing to" approach to a student, "they see the student as a 'problem' to be solved," Kronberg said. "But the real problem is the context or methods of instruction used for that student."

She added that IDEA mandates providing for general education teachers to be present at BEP meetings designed for special education and at-risk students will foster many districts' abilities to "work with" more troubled and learning disabled students. "Those mandates must be perceived by all of us as an opportunity to work together to meet the learning needs of a particular child," she said.

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The essentials of successful cooperative learning activities

By Jo Jakupcak

There is plenty of evidence that cooperative learning is a successful strategy for inclusive classrooms, but there is more to implementing cooperative learning than just putting students in groups.

A classroom that provides a wide variety of ways for students to demonstrate what they have learned is a rich environment that supports the learning styles of a diverse group of students.

Cooperation should be considered a skill to be taught. Collaboration that involves the work of each student must be nurtured. Teaching students in cooperative learning groups involves much more

than simply putting them into heterogeneously balanced groups; it requires the teacher to become a facilitator of learning, rather than a dispenser of facts. Truly cooperative learning contains five essential elements:

1. Positive interdependence.
2. Individual and group accountability.
3. Promotive interaction.
4. Teaching students the required interpersonal and small group skills.
5. Group processing.

The principles listed above enhance learning the content, but more importantly, they enhance the quality of interactions within the class as a whole, the collaborative teaching teams within the school building, and ultimately, -within the school system and community. **(continued on next page)**

Some examples of cooperative learning

Including a student with a severe disability

Jenny, a student who formerly had been served in self-contained programs, was included in an American history class as a junior in high school. Jenny's goals were in the areas of communication and employment training.

She was evaluated daily on 1) being on time for class; 2) making only appropriate verbalizations, rather than singing; 3) following directions; 4) bringing the correct materials with her to class; and 5) fine motor skills.

Jenny knew colors and, during map-making activity groups, she passed out colored pencils, directed others in the group regarding the correct colors to use, practiced identifying classmates by name, used communication skills and colored within the lines as a fine-motor exercise.

Others came to understand ways in which to model good classroom behaviors for her and to find ways to include her in the group's activities.

Including a student with a moderate disability

Hank understood addition and subtraction. He had learned the key words that signaled when to choose one operation over the other, but a learning disability that affected his long- and short-term memory made it difficult for him to do even single-digit math problems without manipulatives. During a cooperative group session, Hank held a small calculator. Other students spoke the numbers to be added or subtracted, and Hank entered them into the

calculator. He then discussed with the other students (who also were working on this skill) which operation to choose. While each student worked independently to solve the math problem and compare answers, Hank checked the problem by doing it on the calculator. Each group member was working at his or her highest skill level. Hank documented the correct answer, using the memory aid of a calculator.

Including a student with a mild disability

Angela was a member of a group of sixth-graders who were studying early world explorers. Angela read at second-grade level, but had very high auditory receptive skills. She understood what was discussed in class, and, by practicing many memory strategies, successfully passed oral tests of the same material her classmates were tested on. She was extremely dramatic and a fearless public speaker. During cooperative group work sessions, each group, comprised of three to four students, was assigned to look at the task and strengths of individuals in the group. The teacher supported the group as it planned

the best use of each person's skills, and she divided the jobs accordingly. The teacher valued the group planning process as much as the end result of projects and conveyed that value to all of her students.

There were many opportunities for students to display their creativity and grasp of a topic without the shadow of a single "right" answer. Angela added a richness of language and dramatic expression to the presentation of the research completed by the more capable readers in her group.

Many of the principles of good cooperative learning groups work to build the support systems needed for students who learn differently. The unique learning strengths and styles of each individual in a group come to be appreciated as students work together to see what each individual brings to the group as a whole.

"What can Jenny do to help our group?" becomes a question that lets everyone take part in the problem-solving process. Kids become engaged in learning the content together, but also in the larger picture of using the unique qualities of each group member.

They learn to plan as a group, to appreciate the richness that a diversity of views and skills brings to a given project, and to understand their own contributions to the group.

They learn skills in the area of communication, of conflict resolution, and of mutual support. Specific instruction in ways to help and to encourage one another without doing the work for another guides students toward positive group membership.

The overwhelming amounts of information every student is faced with today has finally made it clear to educators that there are a multitude of skills we need to be addressing with all students.

No longer can we assume that we will teach students only content. We must be engaged in teaching the process of group interactions, the communication skills that they will need. Cooperative learning groups provide a rich, supportive atmosphere in which to teach these skills and to support students as they practice them.

Cooperative learning skills are only a small part of the Training for Inclusive Education, or TIE Project for the State of Montana. The project was initiated to provide training for teams consisting of an administrator, a regular educator, a special educator, a paraprofessional, a parent of a student with a disability, and a related service provider from a Montana school district to address increasing inclusion opportunities for students with disabilities.

For more information contact the University of Montana's Rural Institute for Disabilities at (406) 243-2446, or Project TIE at The Montana Office of Public Instruction at (406) 444-2046.

Helpful Inclusion Web sites

Try these sites for suggestions on how to make your learning environment more inclusion-oriented:

www.quasar.ualberta.ca/ddc/incl/resource.htm

interact.uoregon.edu/wrrc/AKInclusion.html

www.includeme.com/webblink.htm

inclusion.uwe.ac.uk/csie/csiehome.htm

www.usoe.k12.ut.us/sars/Upi/virtualLibrary.htm

www.uni.edu/coe/inclusion/

www.newhorizons.org/spneeds_articles.html www3.kidstogether.org/

www.kidstogether.org/

www.bced.gov.bc.ca/specialed/sid/contents.htm

Strategies that work

The following are some teaming strategies that have been shown to support the development and achievement of all students, according to the U.S. Department of Education's ERIC Review publication focusing on inclusion.

1. **Classwide peer tutoring.** This technique involves all students in tutoring activities that improve achievement and student engagement, particularly for at-risk and low income students.

2. **Cooperative learning.** Strategies that group children of varying abilities into work teams to learn new material, prepare for tests or carry out projects. Each student is given an assignment, be it researching, recording answers or encouraging contributions from every member. Progress is measured individually and within the group.

3. McGill Action Planning System (MAPS).

Planning process promotes the integration of children with disabilities into the school community, using teams that include the student, his or her family, friends and general and special education staff. Teams look at the student's aspirations and strengths to develop an IEP.

4. **Peer buddy system.** Classmates serve as peer buddies (friends, guides and counselors) to students who are experiencing problems. It can be varied by pairing an older student with a younger one who is experiencing a problem, or two students who are experiencing similar problems.

5. **Reciprocal Teaching.** Students learn to improve their reading comprehension by questioning, summarizing, clarifying and predicting what is in the text. Best results are obtained when students receive direct instruction in the four cognitive strategies before they begin taking turns leading discussions about the text.

Adapted from 'Including Students with Disabilities in General Education Classrooms: From Policy to Practice,' by Jane Bumette, publications manager for the ERIC/OSEP Special Project at the ERIC Clearinghouse on Disabilities and Gifted Education.

ERIC can be reached at (800) LET-ERIC or via the world wide web at www.ed.gov.