



Achieving Inclusion: Strategies for Creating Inclusive Classrooms for ALL Students

INCLUSIVE
schooling

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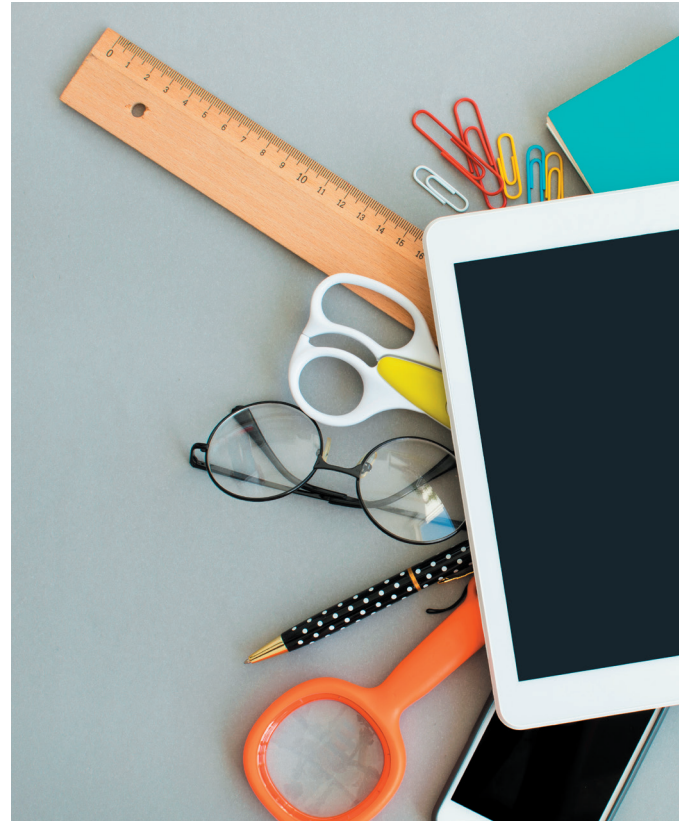
Introduction

In the beginning of the school year, Sam Mack was simultaneously excited and worried about having Eloise in her 7th grade English Class. Mack had never taught a student with Down Syndrome in her 10 year teaching career. She had seen Eloise in the halls, knew she was into robotics, and could tell she was very close with her peers, and knew Eloise had been included since kindergarten. But after reviewing Eloise's Individualized Education Program (IEP) Mack wrote down a list of concerns that she wanted to bring up with the family and last year's co-teachers. Eloise did not read on grade level; how was she supposed to access the books read in class? She couldn't sit and stay focused for longer than 10 minute stretches; but English Language Arts (ELA) was a 90 minute block! Upon an even closer look at Eloise's IEP, Mack learned she was not able to write legibly; but in English class... writing is key! Mack wondered, "How am I supposed to teach Eloise how to write a persuasive argument 5 paragraph essay with citations? How am I supposed to have her analyze poetic conventions when she is reading on the 2nd grade level?" Mack felt extremely conflicted because, although she wanted Eloise to be successful, she remained concerned she would not be able to help Eloise meet common core standards and provide her with enough support, while also meeting the needs of all of the other students in class.

A week or so later, Mack had the opportunity to meet with Eloise's family as they planned for her inclusion. During the meeting Mack wrote down a key phrase Eloise's mother had said during the meeting, "Focus on what Eloise CAN do. It is the best way to educate her." Mack left the meeting still feeling worried, but began drafting a new list— not of concerns, but of Eloise's strengths. Here's what the new list looked like:

What Can Eloise Do?

- She can listen to text and make meaningful connections
- She can sit and listen for up to 10 minutes
- She enjoys being with her peers
- She loves music and singing
- She works well in small groups
- She likes creating stories
- She is able to type her ideas
- Does well with bullet points
- Can explain key concepts
- Does well with hands on learning
- Does best with verbal assessment



And this was the list before Mack even had Eloise in class! Mack realized the key to success would start by noticing all of Eloise's strengths and interests and then working to incorporate those into the lesson design. When educators and professionals work to create successful inclusive classrooms — they always use student strengths, incorporate creative teaching strategies, and encourage peer interaction and support. At the end of this article, you can see what Mack learned and what an example lesson looked like in her 7th grade ELA class. Because, as Mack stated, "every single lesson I taught was much better, more engaging, more accessible to all.... because I had Eloise in my class."

Situations in which educators are new to including students with disabilities in general education or are concerned about how to do the work effectively and ethically are not unusual. Across different states, school districts, and even school buildings and grades, meaningful inclusive educational opportunities for students with disabilities vary greatly. However, achieving inclusion is critical to the success and well-being of our students, schools and communities. And it is supported by educational research and the law. So, in this article, we provide educators with seven key strategies for implementing collaborative and effective inclusive education opportunities for every single learner.

Strategy #1. Learn Why Inclusion is Much Better

We have worked in the field of education for decades as teachers, researchers, faculty members preparing future teachers, and as consultants working with educators and leaders in schools around the world. We know firsthand that when educators commit to deeply learning about inclusive education, there is a greater likelihood of success and positive outcomes for all students. To achieve such success, it's important to begin with deepening everyone's understanding of: 1) what inclusive education is, 2) the basic human need for belonging, 3) the educational research related to inclusive education, and 4) the legal frameworks that support inclusive education.

What is “Inclusive Education”?

When students with disabilities receive special education supports and services in general education settings alongside peers without disabilities, this is called inclusive education. But we believe inclusive education is much more than special education services and supports and much more than simply educating students with and without disabilities together. We believe inclusive education is a bold and courageous call to disrupt the inequities too often found in existing educational systems. Below, we have defined inclusive education in the following way.

Inclusive education means that we no longer accept that separate classrooms, separate schools, and separate lives are in the best interest of any student. Separating people by ability disadvantages everyone. Belonging is a human need. Our educational system, practices, and spaces need to be reimaged.

Every student is valued because of their strengths, gifts, and even challenges. As disability is simply diversity. Everyone benefits from meaningful participation and opportunities to learn grade level content with diverse peers. We must trust that all students come to us as incredible whole people who do not need to be fixed (Causton & Pretti-Frontczak, 2021).

You can download the full definition of Inclusive Education at <https://inclusiveschooling.com/definition-of-inclusion>

To bring this definition to life, educators create spaces that welcome and celebrate students' multiple identities and abilities, prioritize collaborative teaching between teachers and school professionals, design accessible and engaging instruction for all, and provide positive behavior support for all students. At the heart of it all, inclusive educators build meaningful relationships and focus on creating a sense of belonging for each and every student.

***Inclusive education
means providing students
with access to support w
hen it is needed***

The Basics of Belonging

Belonging is a deep psychological need that all human beings have. We are hard-wired to seek connection with others and are constantly looking for signals that we are welcome, accepted, valued, and physically and emotionally safe so we can be our whole, authentic selves. Additionally, our nervous systems need repeated information to show us that if we struggle, we will be met with grace, kindness, and acceptance.

Outdated notions of separate spaces and places to build skills (e.g. academic, behavioral, or social) outside of the general education classroom need to change drastically to create a truly inclusive school. We must welcome all students as members of the general education environment, and students and educators must have appropriate and at-the-ready support.

When we provide students with disabilities the appropriate supports and services in general education settings, they report a greater sense of belonging and can provide them with meaningful access to friendships and high expectations. And inclusive settings increase the positive socio-emotional learning for students without disabilities, too.

We cannot create a sense of belonging for ALL if some students are still in separate programs or classrooms

Educational Research to Support

Inclusive Education

Benefits of Inclusion. Educational research has consistently shown that educating students with and without disabilities together is better for all (Choi, et al., 2017; Kart & Kart, 2021; Molina Roldán, et al., 2021; Owen-DeSchryver, et al., 2022).

When students with disabilities are educated in inclusive settings they make greater progress on IEP goals and grade-level standards (Cosier, Causton-Theoharis, & Theoharis, 2013; Choi et al., 2020; Cole et al., 2021; Dell’Anna et al., 2022). In fact, research shows the more general education classes a student is enrolled in, the closer to grade level the student will be in reading and math abilities (Test et al., 2009). Inclusion also increases communication skills and interpersonal skills for students with disabilities (Foreman, Arthur-Kelly, Pascoe, & King, 2004; Woodman, Smith, Greenberg, & Mailick, 2016).

Access to inclusive education also supports students with disabilities to establish a larger network of friendships (Copeland & Cosbey, 2009; Jackson, Ryndak, & Wehmeyer, 2008) and increases the likelihood that they will join in extracurricular activities and see friends outside of school (Newman, Wagner, Cameto, Knokey, & Shaver, 2010). Inclusion for students with disabilities also leads to fewer disciplinary referrals and fewer absences from school (Dell’Anna et al., 2022; Test, Mazzotti, Mustian, Fowler, Kortering, & Kohler, 2009). And when looking to the future, inclusion in general education is a critical predictor of graduation from high school, access to post-secondary education, gainful employment, and independent living (Mazzotti, et al., 2021; Test et al., 2009).

Including students with disabilities in the general education classroom also strengthens the classroom as a whole. Research has shown that when students with disabilities are included, teachers create classrooms that focus on student strengths, increase student access to resources and technology, implement teaching strategies that reach all students, and teach skills of collaboration and interdependence (Bouillet, 2013; Hehir & Katzman, 2012; Skiba & Losen, 2015). And, while some argue students with disabilities may slow down the education of their peers, research shows that academic achievement increases or

stays the same for students without disabilities in inclusive classrooms (Causton-Theoharis & Theoharis, 2008; Choi et al., 2016; Hunt, Staub, Alwell, & Goetz, 1994; McDonnell, Thorson, & McQuivey, 2000; Theoharis & Causton-Theoharis, 2010).

Despite all this evidence of the positive outcomes of inclusion, many students continue to receive special education services in segregated special education classrooms where they do not have as much academic, behavioral, or social success. Becoming familiar with the problems of segregation for students with disabilities, summarized next, is an important step in understanding the need to continue to create inclusive educational systems.

Problems of Segregation. Most educators can quickly recognize the negative impacts of removing students from general education to receive special education supports: lost learning time; student confusion upon return to class; limited communication between professionals about what happened in the separate setting and/or what is happening in the general education setting; lack of skill generalization from one setting to another. But what becomes even more frustrating for educators is that research consistently shows that the segregated special education classes and settings are not effective.

Specifically, segregated settings are often justified because school teams believe they will provide benefits such as 1) more direct instruction time from special educators; 2) reduced environmental and behavioral distractions for students; and 3) more individualized support to help students achieve grade-level content. But research shows the opposite is actually true. Students in segregated special education classes and programs: spend less time on academic instruction; receive support more often by paraprofessionals than highly qualified educators; experience higher levels of distractions; and receive less individualization of instruction (Barrett et al., 2020; Causton-Theoharis et al., 2011). In short, segregation of students with disabilities is not only ineffective for creating socially just schools where all students can feel a sense of belonging, it also goes against best practices and as we explain next...U.S. law.

Legal Frameworks that Support Inclusive Education

As an educator it is important for you to be familiar with the ways in which U.S. law discusses and supports inclusive education. Below we outline key terminology and guidance from the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (2004), the federal law that governs special education in this country. And we share as well as court cases that provide additional guidance and clarity related to inclusion and the law.

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). Perhaps the most important legal language for inclusive education comes from the U.S. federal law governing special education - Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA 2004) is the section entitled Least Restrictive Environment or LRE.

LRE states that, to the maximum extent appropriate, school districts must educate students with disabilities in the regular classroom with appropriate aids and supports, referred to as “supplementary aids and services,” along with their nondisabled peers in the school they would attend if not disabled (IDEA, 2004).

Under LRE, the general education classroom is the first place to be considered for placing a student with a disability before more restrictive options are considered. And a child with a disability cannot be removed from a general education classroom merely to meet the needs of the school staff. 34C.F.R. 300.116 (b)(3)(e). Perhaps the most important legal language for inclusive education comes from the U.S. federal law governing special education - Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA 2004) is the section entitled Least Restrictive Environment or LRE.

Supplementary aids and services. These aids and services are what educators can use to successfully support students in general education. And while they are legal essentially, these are the strategies, devices, equipment, materials, and yes, the incredible human resources that educators can use to effectively support students in general education. Examples might include the use of graphic organizers or digital tools like a tablet or laptop, recorded lectures, reduced seat time, simplified language, models on assignments, or assistance from a special educator, paraprofessional, or professional development for the whole school team. Supplementary aids and services are the creative and supportive ways educators can work to adapt the general education curriculum, instruction, and environment to provide students with meaningful access. Legally, educators must utilize all of the possible supplementary aids and services before determining that a student needs to leave the general education classroom. You can review a sample listing of supplemental aids and services in Table 1.

Table 1. Short List of Sample Supplemental Aids and Services

Environmental <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preferential seating • Reduce physical or visual clutter 	Equipment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to laptop or tablet • Augmentative communication device • Modified keyboard
Material Supports <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limit amount of material on page • Record texts and other class materials • Provide assistive technology and software (e.g., Proloquo2Go, Co:Writer) 	Modifications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give directions in small, distinct steps including written and verbal • Allow student to record or type assignments • Grade product and process separately
Pacing Supports <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extended time requirements • Create a menu of break options • Provide home set of materials for preview or review • Chunk assignments into separate parts 	Presentation of Subject Matter <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teach in different formats (e.g. Say it, Graph it, Show it, Write it, Draw it, Demonstrate it, Act it out) • Provide prewritten notes, an outline, or graphic organizer • Provide tactile materials and manipulatives
Self-Management Supports <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daily schedule • Check often for understanding/review • Design/write/use scaffolded assignment timelinesr 	Social Interaction Supports <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use frequent partner and group work • Teach and support time to practice specific social skills • Use peer tutoring
Human Supports <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation Support • Stop-in Support • Co-Teaching Support • Counseling • Physical Therapy 	Adaptations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide oral instructions and/or read test questions • Use open-note/open-book tests • Modify format to reduce visual complexity or confusion

Supplementary aids and services. When people in the U.S. say Inclusion is the law, what is meant is two fold: First that LRE is not only clearly stated in IDEA, but U.S. courts have interpreted LRE and IDEA to give far more insight and clarity into what is legally required of schools related to inclusive education. U.S. courts have provided school districts and educators with clear and specific guidance related to inclusive education under IDEA. What follows in Table 2 is a summary of several of the most important legal cases related to inclusive education in the U.S. The table is designed to provide you with more detailed information about longstanding and more recent legal precedent for inclusive education. While each case is important, we find that Roncker (1983), Endrew (2017), and L.H. (2018) are some of the most powerful rulings for teachers to understand. Specifically, these cases provide inclusive education guidance such as: 1) services are portable, meaning they can and should be brought to your child in general education (Roncker); 2) the IEP should provide your child with high expectations through challenging goals and the opportunity to make progress on those goals (Endrew); and 3) the school cannot recommend a segregated setting simply because the school/staff is not prepared to support inclusion in general education (L.H.). If you would like to explore the laws related to inclusive education in more detail, visit www.wrightslaw.com.

Table 2. Inclusion Related Court Cases

Name of Case	Description of Case
Brown v Board of Education (1954)	Established that education must be made available to all on equal terms. Separate but equal is inherently unequal. Advocates for people with disabilities transferred this concept of equal opportunity to students with disabilities
PARC v Pennsylvania (1972)	The PARC plaintiffs argued that children with mental retardation could benefit from educational programs, and that these experiences did not have to be academic and could involve other training. Furthermore, the PARC plaintiffs argued that since the state provided students without disabilities a free education, the state could not deny students with mental retardation this same right.
Roncker v Walter (1983)	This case challenged the assignment of students to disability specific programs and schools. The ruling favored inclusive, not segregated, placement and established a principle of portability. It is not enough for a district to simply claim that a segregated program is superior. In a case where the segregated facility is considered superior, the court should determine whether the services, which make the placement superior, could be feasibly provided in a nonsegregated setting (i.e., regular class). If they can, the placement in the segregated school would be inappropriate under the act (IDEA).
Daniel R.R. v State Board of Education (1989)	In this case the court decided not to follow the Roncker test and developed its own test. First, the court must examine whether, with the use of supplementary aides and services the child could be included in the classroom. Next, if the child could not be included, the court asks whether the child was mainstreamed to maximum extent possible.

Name of Case	Description of Case
Sacramento Unified School District v. Rachel H (1992)	In this case, the courts developed a four-part test: 1) the educational benefits from the regular classroom; 2) the non-academic benefits of interaction between students with and without disabilities, 3) the impact of the student with disabilities on the teacher and other children in the classroom; and 4) the cost of supplementary aids and services required for mainstreaming the student”
Endrew F. v. Douglas County School District (2017)	In this case, the Supreme Court clarified the standard of a free, appropriate public education (FAPE) under the IDEA. It ruled that the correct standard of FAPE is whether or not a school district has created an IEP in which the student has: 1) challenging and ambitious goals in their IEP, and 2) can make progress according to their own individual needs.
L.H. v Hamilton County Department of Education (2018)	In this case, the court ruled that the self-contained placement the school provided the student was more restrictive than necessary and therefore in violation of IDEA. The court also explained that school staff cannot choose to exclude a student from general education simply because they are “unwilling or unable to properly engage in the process of mainstreaming L.H....rather than isolating and removing him when the situation became challenging.”

***In excellent co-taught classrooms
all staff share instructional planning
responsibilities, instructional duties,
and ownership for student outcomes***

We have now introduced our definition of inclusive education, the basics of belonging, and the educational research and legal frameworks supporting inclusion. In other words, much of the “what” and the “why” of inclusion. Next, we share the critical practices and structures that help educators to implement inclusion effectively, or, the “how” of inclusion.

Strategy #2.

Co-Teach and Collaborate to Reach All Students

Inclusive education necessitates educators work together to teach a wide range of learners. Sometimes this comes in the form of a co-teaching relationship, other times this can be consultative support. No matter what it is called, any time multiple adults are responsible for the teaching and learning of a diverse group of students, effective co-teaching and collaborative practices need to be utilized. In this strategy, we outline key ideas that will help you to implement inclusive teaching most effectively by diving into who is on the team, co-teaching approaches, understanding the consultant role, co-planning for success, and how to tackle challenges with optimism.

Collaborative Teams

As an inclusive educator you will collaborate with several teams of professionals – a team might include the general educators or special education teachers, paraprofessionals, therapists (e.g. occupational, physical, speech and language pathologist), school psychologists, behavior specialists, instructional specialists, social workers, vision teachers, and audiologists. You will also collaborate with the student and the family. A critical part of this collaboration is figuring out how to work together effectively and efficiently to support students to have access to and make progress in the general education classroom and curriculum. For support working within this type of inclusive collaborative team, we recommend getting clear on roles and responsibilities. Check out this [Google Drive document](#) with common responsibilities that can be shared across team members. To use this form, read through this list of roles and responsibilities and determine which person on your team will have (p) primary responsibility; (s) secondary responsibility; (sh) shared responsibility; and/or (i) input in the decision making. Complete the form and then be sure to check out the questions at the bottom - they will help you customize for your situation.

Co-Teaching Defined &

6 Co-Teaching Models

When a general educator and a special educator work side-by side in the classroom for part or all of the day, this is often called co-teaching. Co-teaching in inclusive classrooms however, means any time two or more adults share responsibilities in the design, delivery, and evaluation of lessons. In other words, co-teachers can spend five minutes together or five hours, co-teachers can work together in real time or at different times and in different places, and co-teachers can be general educators and special educators or any combination of team members. There are many different ways adults can co-teach. We often use six models, three of which have particularly well-documented benefits for increasing responsiveness to students, an ability to create more access points to learning and the creativity and flexibility to make learning more novel and fun (Hackett, Kruzich, Goulter, & Battista, 2021). The top three co-teaching models include station teaching, one teach-one make multi-sensory, and parallel teaching. For additional support with implementation of the six co-teaching models see this [handout](#).

Consultative Models

When schools use collaborative and inclusive service delivery, it is not always possible to have general and special educators co-teaching together for part or all of the day. Similarly, it can be challenging to have schedules align so that therapists or specialists can co-teach regularly with general educators. So in addition to co-teaching models, special educators and related service providers often serve in consultative roles alongside general educators. Consult models are frequently used and can be highly effective to support inclusive education. We have outlined key consultative roles next.

- **General education teachers** consult with a variety of special educators, specialists, and related service providers to develop curriculum that meets the needs of all learners. They will also work with the team to embed individualized IEP goals and supports for the students into lessons and activities.
- **Special educators** who serve in consult roles will primarily provide general education settings with in-class support on a regularly scheduled basis and/or provide behind the scenes support with lesson planning, coaching, and adapting content and materials. These types of supports work to meet the needs of students with disabilities and other students with diverse needs in inclusive settings.
- **Related service providers** who serve in consult roles will primarily provide students on their caseload with interventions that are embedded into general education lessons or activities. For example, they may run a station and work with all students, but have specific skills for their caseload students embedded. They can also provide grade-level or building-level training and support to staff in order to meet the needs of many students in inclusive settings.

Consultative service delivery is a highly effective way to support grade level teams and students with lower level support needs in general education settings. No matter the co-teaching or consultative models you use as educators, you will want to focus on ways to co-plan for inclusive success.

Co-Plan for Success

Effective planning is at the heart of all good teaching. But planning becomes even more critical when you have multiple teachers and professionals working together, responsible for creating content and supports for a diverse group of learners. When co-teachers plan together, they have increased opportunities to use each other's expertise and strengths to create lessons that better support all students. Planning together also means that co-teachers can more readily use the effective co-teaching models (discussed above), that often require more collaborative preparation, such as stations, parallel, and one teach/one make-multisensory.

Co-teaching or collaborative teams should start by assessing their planning needs. For example, determine what you need to do face-to-face and what can you do with online communication and planning tools (e.g. video conferencing and shared digital documents). Once you have these needs sorted, you may realize that you need more face-to-face time than your schedules currently allow. We suggest working with your administration to determine how you might be provided with more co-planning time. If that is not possible, many teachers find that carving out time before or after school or during student independent or technology-based work can be effective times for face-to-face planning. We also encourage you to plan creative ways to shuffle staff and get more planning time by creating cross curricular and multi-age level projects. We have included a shared digital planning document for your use, [linked here](#).

Tackle Problems with Optimism

When challenges arise, some educational teams can begin to ask questions such as, “Is inclusion working?” or “If the child is not succeeding, isn’t it time for a separate class or program?” Instead of spending time on these types of questions, we recommend understanding how to get the school team into a positive collaborative mindset to help cultivate greater optimism, creativity, and motivation. Here are a few ways you can collaborate effectively:

- 1) co-create a vision for your inclusive classroom;
- 2) build upon team member’s strengths;
- 3) express gratitude for each other;
- 4) ask questions and share successes that inspire hope and possibility
(e.g., keeping things child-centered, strength-based, and focused on possibilities).

More educators and schools will be able to implement inclusive practices effectively when they begin to use the question “how can we make inclusion this work?” as their guiding framework.

In this strategy we have reviewed many of the wonderful and beneficial ways educators and related service providers can work together to create more inclusive and collaborative service delivery for students. But we wanted to create a stand alone strategy about the next inclusive team member role: the paraprofessional. While often used to support the inclusion of students with disabilities, in practice, the role is not always as effective as educators would like. So, next we get clear on smart ways to leverage this team support to achieve meaningful inclusion.

Strategy

#3.

Smart Paraprofessional Support

Paraprofessionals can provide important social, physical, academic, and behavioral supports to help students with disabilities succeed in general education settings. They can be one of your most powerful human resources, and their work is critical to the success of so many students and so many teachers.

Prefix “para” means next to or alongside. Paraeducator therefore means someone who works alongside educators. The job title paraprofessional is described in section 14B of IDEA 2004:

Paraprofessionals. . . who are appropriately trained and supervised, in accordance with State law, regulations, or written policy. . . are to be used to assist in the provision of special education and related services. . . to children with disabilities. (20 U.S.C. § 1412)

The key to working with paraprofessionals is to remember that they need guidance and training. Educators, it is your job to provide that support and guidance. Without effective training, their use can result in unintended consequences, such as impeding social interactions between students and independence. Below we have identified three key ways to support paraprofessionals on how to include students with disabilities most effectively.

Write it down. You not only want to have paraprofessionals' job descriptions and daily schedules written down, but you also want to have specific instructions about how they can provide students with support during each lesson and activity. For example, during a stations activity, you might create a simple task card for the paraprofessional that reads:

Or, you can include them in your digitally shared lesson plan or weekly plan that you share with the entire team. This way the paraprofessional has access to the whole plan for context, and has clear expectations from you about their role in class. For example, in the lesson plan you might identify that the paraprofessional can create simplified direction cards for a few students in advance of the class. Then, during the lesson, they will float around the room to support all students during the small group activity.

Lose the Velcro. Side by side, or "velcro", support from paraprofessionals can be stigmatizing and distracting to the student with a disability and their classmates. Instead, general and special education teachers should direct paraprofessionals to reduce that type of "velcro" or side by side support, and instead, use less intrusive supports that help the student feel more confident, independent, and included. One of the most effective ways is to teach paraprofessionals to provide students with silent or invisible supports as often as possible. See Figure 2 for several ways to help paraprofessionals implement these types of support.

READ THIS BOOK ALOUD TO THE STUDENTS:

- On page 3 ask, what do you notice about the colors?
- On page 4 ask, Who do you think the main character is?
- What colors feel like brave colors to you?
- Turn and talk: Everyone think of a time you were brave.
- Share it with a friend.

(be prepared to share about a time you were brave with the group)



Figure 2. Effective Ways to Provide Invisible or Silent Support

1. **HIGHLIGHT THE DIRECTIONS.** On a complex or dense worksheet or lab, use a highlighter to help the student easily identify key directions.
2. **CREATE A CHECKLIST.** Create a checklist of written directions for the student to follow (e.g., 1. read with a partner, 2. answer the question, 3. find another partner and compare).
3. **PROVIDE A MODEL.** For example, prior to an in-class task being assigned, model a similar math problem with the work shown and the correct answer on the top of the worksheet.
4. **ENLIST A PEER.** For example, say, “Claire, can you help Javier get his coat’s zipper started if he needs help?”
5. **CREATE MATERIALS IN ADVANCE.** For example, have key vocabulary from the lecture listed and defined on a piece of paper or pre-cut materials so that cutting is not required by the student.
6. **FLOAT.** Rather than sit next to the student, stand and move about the room to be available for everyone’s support.
7. **PREP FOR DISCUSSION.** For example, for students with complex support needs or who are building skills, write down several questions the students can ask or comments they can share during a class discussion.
8. **GUIDE THEM.** Create a graphic organizer or other guided notes templates to help students organize key ideas from a lesson.

FROM CAUSTON, J., & MACLEOD, K. (2021). THE PARAPROFESSIONAL'S HANDBOOK FOR EFFECTIVE SUPPORT IN INCLUSIVE CLASSROOMS, SECOND EDITION.

Teach Paraprofessionals How to Prompt

In addition to providing paraprofessionals with strategies and examples for providing more invisible or silent supports, you can also teach them how to prompt students by using the least intrusive supports. A prompt is a way of supporting a student to use a skill or behavior. There are a variety of different types of prompts that we have evidenced in Figure 3, The Prompting Ladder ([and found here](#)). When supporting paraprofessionals to use The Prompting Ladder, you can explain that we begin using prompts at the bottom rung of the ladder (the least intrusive supports) and move up only as far as necessary (toward more intrusive supports) to support the student. Then, we always want to return back down the ladder as quickly as possible.



THE PROMPTING LADDER

Early Childhood example with the target skill of *initiating cooperative play during center time*

Not applicable

Adult taps the child's hand with a toy that another child has asked for, or provides gentle pressure to child's back when another child asks for them to play

Examples of what to say/sign:

- Give Jake a ____ (insert object label).
- Help Ivy ____ (insert an action).
- You be the ____ (insert a role or job).

Adult shows the child a photograph or line drawings of children playing cooperatively

Adult engages in cooperative play with children by sharing/exchanging materials, assisting, and taking on roles that pertain to the play scenario

Examples of what to say/sign:

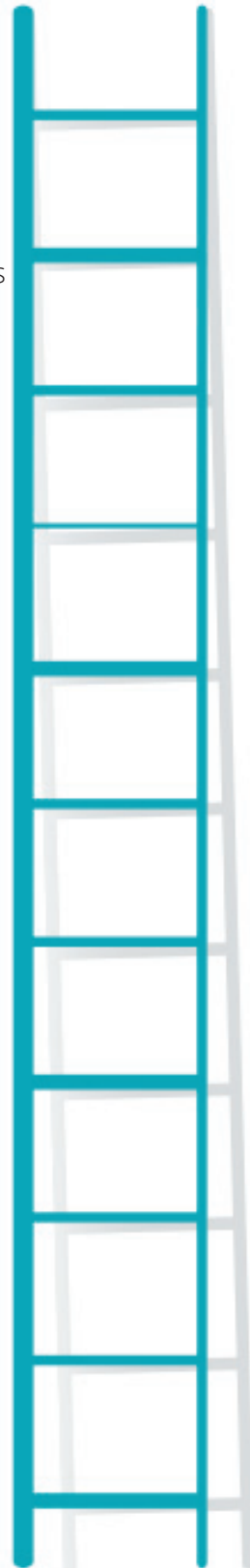
- Jake needs more ____ (insert object label).
- I wish someone could help ____ (insert an action).
- I wonder who could be the ____ (insert role or job).

Point to materials that are needed or requested by others playing in the center

Child is given a few minutes to see if they will engage in cooperative play

Other children are playing cooperatively across the different centers

Centers are available where multiple children share and exchange or assist one another with materials and take on jobs, roles, or identities



Full physical

Partial physical

Verbal prompt

Visual prompt

Modeling

Indirect Verbal prompt

Gesture

Wait Time

Natural Cue

Invisible/Materials

Fading Support

When you are working with an inclusive and collaborative school team, especially when there is paraprofessional support involved, one key feature of providing effective support to students with disabilities is to determine IF, WHEN, and HOW adult support will be faded. For example, if a student receives a visual prompt from an adult to transition from one activity to another, once they have built confidence and success with that skill, it may be appropriate to fade the use of the visual prompt moving forward. In another example, if a student uses a wheelchair, that support might never be faded, but the team can consider how to increase the student's independence with the wheelchair. Specifically, maybe a friend pushes the wheelchair or the team considers an electric wheelchair.

One key feature of providing effective support to students with disabilities is to determine IF, WHEN, and HOW adult support will be faded.

There are several questions about fading the entire team should discuss with anyone involved in the direct student support, especially paraprofessionals (Causton & MacLeod, 2021, p. 145). After discussing these questions with the school team, you can work to create a specific plan to use less intrusive supports throughout the day for the student.

Fading Supports Team Questions

1. During what activities, or time periods is it absolutely necessary to be physically near this student?
2. During those times in which adult support is needed, is it possible to fade to independence (done by the student) or interdependence (done with the support of a peer?)
3. Can anyone else in the environment provide more natural supports?
4. What changes to classroom structures, or content might help this student become more independent or interdependent?

Next, we dive into powerful practices you can use to create truly inclusive Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) for students. The IEP is the document that will legally and practically guide your work to achieving successful inclusion for your students with disabilities.



Strategy #4. Create an Inclusive IEP

The Individualized Education Plan (IEP) is where teachers and families come together to create meaningful inclusive education for students with disabilities. In this section we outline key ways to design effective inclusive IEPs that focus on student strengths, consider inclusive services not minutes, include students and family as key collaborative members, and write goals that help to achieve inclusion.

Presume Competence and Start with Strengths

Teacher perception of the learner is a critical predictor for student success, so we must approach all learners with the belief that they are capable and proceed as if they will be able to learn grade-level content. If we lower expectations for students, even those with the most significant support needs, we too often make assumptions that are incorrect and detrimentally impact students. To presume competence means to give students the benefit of the doubt and then to look hard for the evidence. For example, assume that every student will benefit from learning age-appropriate academic curriculum; support students to show understanding using their strengths; and question your stereotypes—how someone looks, walks, or talks does not tell you how they think and feel. For more strategies about how to presume competence, [you can access our handout here.](#)

Students and Families as Members of the IEP

Working with families as co-equal partners in the IEP is critical for the success of inclusion. They have been including their child since day one and have a deep and wide toolkit of strategies to support their child. Tapping into their knowledge and expertise is critical, legally and practically. It is also important to include the student meaningfully in their own IEP meetings, even beginning at a young age. In fact, including a student in their IEP is one of the best ways to help them develop the necessary self-advocacy and self-determination skills that will set them up for long-term success. To begin this work, you want to ask students (and families) about their strengths, talents, and dreams, as well as what is and isn't working for them at school. Begin to help students plan a comfortable level of involvement in their meeting, whether that means presenting information in a slide show or creating a video in advance, or preparing a discussion of their strengths, needs, accommodations. As you continue to support your students to participate in their IEPs, they should work toward leading their IEP meeting. This not only makes for a more effective IEP and meeting (and increases family participation and engagement), it also ensures that students are able to advocate for their rights, needs and services once they leave high school.

More than Minutes

When schools begin to provide more collaborative and inclusive services to meet student IEP needs, school teams often continue to imagine the number of “minutes” a student might have with the special education teacher or related service provider in the general education classroom. But in inclusive classrooms, co-teachers and collaborative professionals are jointly responsible for supporting students with disabilities to meet their IEP goals. This means all educators and staff will work together to meet student service “minutes” using the collaborative service delivery we discussed above (e.g., co-teaching, consultant, paraprofessional support). To help collaborative teams with this important shift, we suggest using a IEP Program Planning Matrix (Figure 4) to seamlessly integrate IEP goals throughout the school day. By doing this, you can identify when the student can work toward that particular goal and identify which adult from the collaborative team is available to take data related to that goal. Using an IEP matrix helps teams to shift from the question, “who will be supporting the student when the IEP goal is targeted?”, but instead ask, “when during the general education day does it make the most sense to target this goal?”

Figure 4. IEP Program Planning Matrix for Aidan.

IEP Goals (in a few words)	Class Schedule					
	ELA	MATH	SOCIAL STUDIES	SCIENCE	ART	LUNCH
USE IPAD TO TYPE WRITTEN RESPONSES	X		X	X		
INITIATE CONVERSATION WITH A PEER USING PRE-RECORDED PHRASES ON IPAD	X	X	X	X	X	X

When an X is present the goal can be practiced and any adult in the room (general educator, special educator, related service provider) can take data on the student's progress.

Write Inclusion Oriented Goals

A student's individual goals on the IEP should be driven by the student's strengths and what the student, their family, and the school team would like them to accomplish over the course of the year. Goals should be individualized and directed by the student's needs and should also assist in connecting the student to the general education curriculum and to their peers (IDEA, U.S.C. 1414(d) 2004). When drafting a student's IEP goals, consider how the goals can guide you and the team to work on academic and social skills in natural and inclusive environments.

MORE SPECIFICALLY, IEP GOALS SHOULD:

- 1) Use supports and curriculum that are age-appropriate;
- 2) Lead to meaningful outcomes for the student;
- 3) Support learning the general education curriculum with peers; and
- 4) Occur in natural settings and times throughout the day.

For example, social skills can be practiced in cooperative groups while learning science. Working on communicating wants and needs can take place before, during, and after, just about any lesson or activity. Students do not need to be in a separate location to practice skills related to an IEP goal. We've shared the following PreK-12 example IEP goals from teams we've worked with to help you craft meaningful and inclusive IEP goals.

When drafting a student's IEP goals, consider how the goals can guide you and the team to work on academic and social skills in natural, inclusive environments.

Example IEP Goals

- ♥ While working in cooperative groups with two-four peers without disabilities, Noah will successfully take turns four out of five times.
- ♥ When given example models as support, access to calculator, and directions read aloud, Tanya will independently solve multi-step equations connected to grade-level math content with 80% accuracy in four out of five trials.
- ♥ When provided with a grade-level passage and access to his text-to-speech app, Naomi will provide at least three accurate details from the passage in three out of four trials.
- ♥ During daily activities, Sam will explore investigate (e.g., bang, close, crumple, dump, flip, hand, hit, open, poke, pound, pour, pull, push, put in, scoop, shake, squeeze, swipe, take back, touch, turn, wind) three different objects in order to make something happen (i.e., intentionally cause an effect to take place), each day for two weeks.
- ♥ Trevon will share information verbally (e.g., answering questions, telling, commenting) or non-verbally (e.g., selecting, pointing) five times a day for six consecutive days.
- ♥ During daily activities, Emma will use a variety of two and three word phrases to greet, inform, and respond, and will be understood by familiar adults and peers. To be understood by familiar adults and peers, Emma will produce/say the final consonant sounds of /p,t,d,k/ with two or less sound deletions in 10 phrases, across three consecutive observations.

Strategy #5 Inclusive Lesson Design

In this section we will discuss how to create lessons that are inclusive by design. Inclusive lessons ensure multiple access points, provide scaffolding, anticipate the need for adaptations, rely upon natural supports, and involve students to ensure that the support given is preferred by the most important person when it comes to lesson design-- the student.

Ensure Multiple Access Points

When creating inclusive lessons, it is best to limit activities that require students to complete learning in the same way - in a single way. Instead, always plan to universally design instruction and differentiate to give all students, especially those who experience learning differences, with multiple ways to flexibly engage with learning and show what they know. Universally designed lessons are planned with student diversity, including strengths and needs, in mind. Students might work on similar standards or goals (e.g. retell stories, including key details, and demonstrate understanding of their central message or lesson) but they can do so

in different ways and using different entry points using differentiation. For example, educators can provide students with different stories based on interest and reading levels to increase access and motivation. Some students might listen to their story while others might read it silently. Options for retelling the story are also provided, with some students retelling verbally, others creating a Google Slides retelling with visuals to support, while others might create a drawn story map. Finally, some students might also need additional layers of support built in, for example, access to definitions of key vocabulary words from the story, main points

highlighted, or the story provided in their native language. Providing universally designed instruction not only benefits all students, it shows students that educators value diversity.

Provide Scaffolding

Breaking your universally designed learning into smaller chunks is an important instructional practice to support all students. And for each small chunk of the learning, it is important to provide students with a supportive tool or structure. These scaffolded chunks and tools or structures can take many forms, such as pre-teaching vocabulary, utilizing student prior knowledge and interests, using visual supports like graphic organizers, images, or objects, and providing structure and time for feedback from peers and educators. For example, if a class is expected to read a text and write a persuasive argument about the text, scaffolding can include reviewing how to find the main idea in the text, using a graphic organizer to help students chunk the process of identifying a central persuasive argument and providing support for that argument, and later providing a structured peer review process for students to support each other in reviewing their work.

Any student, not just those with disabilities can struggle as they learn complex skills, aim to generalize use of skills, and adjust or adapt to changing situations and contexts. To scaffold learning for students, educators should aim to create a match or best fit between the content, context, and student. For example, if a student is struggling with how to perform a skill correctly or within the allotted time, the team can shift from a task that is abstract to something that is concrete, or something with many steps and parts, to a single construct or step. Further, teams can scaffold by simplifying things, focus on what is familiar and of interest to the student, and keep the focus on them vs. having to do things about others or with others in a collaborative way. Making simple “tweaks” to a lesson can make all the difference for a student’s access.

Anticipate Adaptations

While universal design and scaffolding are the first steps in creating accessible instructional design for all, students with disabilities will sometimes need further adaptations (e.g. accommodations and modifications) in order to access and participate in the lesson. By definition adaptations are any changes to the environment, curriculum, instruction, or assessment designed to help students participate meaningfully in general education settings/daily activities. Adaptations include accommodations and modifications.

Accommodations are changes in how a student accesses information and demonstrates learning. Accommodations do not substantially change the instructional level, content, or performance criteria. The changes are made to provide a student with equal access to learning and equal opportunity to show what he or she knows and can do.

Modifications are changes in what a student is expected to learn. The changes are made to provide a student with opportunities to participate meaningfully and productively along with other students in classroom and school learning experiences. These do include changes in level, content, and performance criteria.

Providing a student with a digital audio version of a novel, written or visual step-by-step directions for how to complete his model of a cell, raised-line paper, or a modified timeline activity focusing on the three big ideas from the Civil War are all examples of accommodations and modifications that would ensure success for specific students. If you are interested in learning powerful ways to adapt any lesson, you can find 100 examples of how to adapt anything in a [handout here](#).

Rely Upon Natural Supports

The term natural supports refers to using existing supports that are already available to all students in order to increase access for students. For example, peer support is one of the best, most natural ways to create inclusive classrooms and provide effective support for all students. When students come to expect that they must work in teams or partnerships and they learn from teachers that it is their job to help each other, inclusive support and empathy becomes the norm.

You can have students support each other in multiple ways, such as setting up strategic learning partners or teams (make sure they each have specific roles and clear outcomes for their roles), using peers as reading or math buddies, providing peer check-ins or peer-reviews, or even setting up peer support for communication. The research on peer relationships and support is crystal clear: it improves the academic, behavioral, and social experiences of students with and without disabilities and is a natural support that is embedded into the general education setting.

However, some caution is necessary regarding the use of peer support. Avoid creating only “helping relationships” for students with a disability. For example, if Jose is always helping Susie (e.g. with reading, organization, and spelling), be sure to structure and facilitate times in which Susie can support Jose or others using her strengths (e.g. with online research skills or art and design). This allows for more equal relationships to form.

A powerful way to provide purposeful peer support in any class is to consistently use inclusive and purposeful groupings. These types of heterogeneous or mixed-ability groupings have many benefits for all students – they increase student learning outcomes and self-confidence, encourage a diversity of ideas and opportunities for learning from a wide range of peers, lead to higher conceptual understanding for all learners, and increase understanding and support peer-to-peer peers. You can find our handout dedicated to structuring and facilitating inclusive groupings [here](#).

*When students choose the type
and level of support it is more
effective because it is
generally accepted.*

Involve Students

If you are unsure about how to provide support, when to provide support or how much support to provide, you do not need to make that decision alone. Always bring the student into that conversation. Ask students about the type and level of support that they want or need. It not only helps them to better understand their learning needs; it provides opportunities to make decisions about their learning and advocate for themselves. When students choose the type and level of support it is more effective because it is generally accepted.

Strategy

#6

Provide Inclusive Behavioral Supports

Even though IDEA specifically requires IEP teams to consider the use of positive behavioral interventions and supports and other strategies to support students with disabilities, schools across the country continue to suspend, exclude, and expel students with disabilities at a significantly higher rate than their nondisabled peers (U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, 2022). Further, students with the label of emotional disturbance are more likely to be served in separate classes, programs and schools than all other students with disabilities (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, 2020). Therefore, we must work to reduce these inequities and approach students with challenging behaviors in more positive, effective, and compassionate ways.

In this strategy we provide educators with 3 critical ways to implement inclusive and positive behavior supports. First, we highlight the connections between challenging behavior and the brain, we explain how to reduce stressors and help them to feel seen, safe and soothed, and how to create student success plans grounded in a sense of collaboration, belonging and community.

Understand the Brain and Behavior

Educators must understand that challenging or “bad” behaviors from students, although unwanted, are not wholly unexpected. Challenging behaviors are simply a natural human response to a stressed neurological system. As stressors impact our body, we seek safety using the fight, flight, freeze, or faint responses. When students enter this state and do not yet have effective coping strategies, their behaviors are communicating to us that they need help. As educators, we must 1) recognize that behaviors are communication and 2) support students by helping them to develop self-regulation skills and effective coping strategies. When we understand challenging behavior in this way, we can work to develop skills that help our students to feel safe, seen, and soothed.



Reduce Student Stressors

Students (and all humans for that matter) are at their best when operating from the “ready brain” or the prefrontal cortex. But when our neurological system is stressed, our prefrontal cortex goes “off-line” and we respond with big emotions that aren’t always well received by others. These big emotions are often termed challenging or bad behaviors by educators. And one easy and general solution to helping with challenging behavior is to help to soothe students’ systems by recognizing and reducing stressors. To help with this, we provide a few strategies to reduce stressors for students. [Click here for a full list of 10 strategies.](#)

**GO
QUIET**



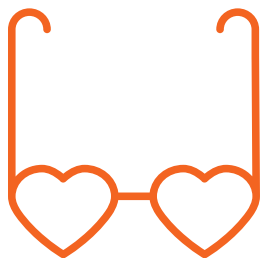
**approach silently, use non-verbals,
limit auditory processing demands**

**ASK
OPEN-ENDED
QUESTIONS**



**skip the directions and corrections,
pause between questions, aim to
understand their perspective**

**GIVE VISUAL
SUPPORT**



**write, draw, and/or display directions,
provide options for capturing thoughts
and ideas, make the unpredictable
...predictable**

Create Collaborative Student Success Plans

Even when we understand that behavior is communication and work to reduce student stressors, we may still need to support some students with challenging behaviors in more robust or intensive ways. But this doesn’t mean simply designing a behavior intervention plan aimed at stopping “bad” behavior, or reinforcing “good” behavior. Instead, we want to work with the student and family to identify ways to help the student feel safe, seen, and soothed and build new skills to support them in the future.

We have created a Collaborative Student Success Plan process (Causton & MacLeod, 2020) to help educators do this more intense, comprehensive work. To start, the success plan team should be gathered and can include anyone who cares about the student. The process should then help the team brainstorm solutions to specific problems and stressors the student is experiencing that may be leading to their challenging behaviors. Rather than focus on changing “bad” or reinforcing “good” behavior, the process focuses on 1) understanding the student from a holistic perspective, 2) building strong relationships between student, teacher and school community, 3) increasing the student’s sense of belonging and 4) embedding actions that help a student to develop new skills like self-regulation, self-awareness and self-compassion. Educators can use the following steps to create a Student Success Plan with the student:

STEP 1: Discuss students strengths and talents

STEP 2: Discuss student challenges and challenging behaviors

STEP 3: Consider the context from a holistic perspective– strengths, skills, needs, family, friendships, history e.g. what supports are working? what role does the classroom, school, home, climate and culture play?

STEP 4: Design a plan for increased belonging e.g. what academic, social, teacher, peer supports does the student/team/family need?; how can the student’s strengths be leveraged?; what instructional or environmental changes can we make to better support the student?

STEP 5: Agree on actions including specific action steps, who is responsible, the timeline, and how to measure success.

If you want more detailed information on how to create a Student Success Plan you can [read our article here](#) or dive into some of our behavior supports in our Inclusive Education Resources found in Appendix B.



Strategy

#7.

Build a Network of Support

We want you to be wildly successful as an inclusive educator. So, we recommend building a network of support for yourself. In this strategy we take you through finding or building a community of inclusive educators, seeking out excellent professional development, and celebrating your big and small successes in order to sustain inclusive practices.

Find/Build a Community

To sustain inclusive education practice, we encourage you to find or build a network of support. Look for like-minded colleagues who energetically lift you up, help you to problem-solve, and are there when you need someone to learn from or reflect with on ideas and practice. Mentors, grade-level partners, co-teachers, walking-partners, book club members, colleagues from your teacher preparation programs or graduate studies are all connections to cultivate. We are more likely to implement new practices and tackle challenges with optimism when we are supported by a community.

Seek Out Professional Development

There is nothing quite like meaningful professional development (PD) to support educators' work implementing the strategies highlighted in this article — inclusive collaboration, lesson design, and positive behavior supports. Powerful PD can be accessed in all sorts of formats, group sizes, and lengths, and can include podcasts, videos, conferences, book studies, coaching, problem-solving sessions, classroom walkabouts, or even formal mentors. As educators we encourage you to ask your school administrators to provide effective PD on inclusive practices outlined in this article. If you are curious about where to start, we have included helpful resources in Appendix B.

Celebrate Often

In addition to ongoing learning and professional development, it is also important to pause, reflect, and celebrate your inclusive work! You can celebrate small and big moments, as well as challenges that lead you to deeper understanding or learning. Plan for formal celebrations in your school, and create space for informal celebrations too. You might celebrate inclusive practices at the start of every staff meeting. Hold a Snack & Share faculty session where school teams can come together to share ideas, celebrations, and resources. Or maybe you start a Thank-a-Thon at the end of the year, asking every staff member to write, text, or call someone within the school to thank them personally for something they've done related to inclusive education practices. However you plan to celebrate, try turning it into something routine so that you can maintain inclusive momentum in your school throughout the year.

Conclusion

Over the course of the year, Eloise's inclusion in her 7th grade general education classes had a powerful impact on her success, her peers, and her school team. When her teacher Sam Mack and the 7th grade inclusive team worked together to create inclusive learning experiences for Eloise, they not only met Eloise's needs, but improved access and support for every single 7th grader. Take for example the way Mack approached a lesson on analyzing poetic conventions. Rather than teach the way she had in past years, in which all students read the same poem and wrote an analysis essay about meaning, tone, speaker and audience, Mack co-designed the lesson with the special educator and kept Eloise's strengths and needs forefront in her mind. Eloise was musical, social, learned well by listening to more complex text rather than reading it, and benefitted from writing supports like typing and graphic organizers. So, this time around, Mack had students each choose a favorite song, listen to it, and analyze the song lyrics for poetic conventions. To provide the writing support Eloise needed, all students were given a graphic organizer that could be accessed digitally or on paper to support their analysis. And Mack included simple definitions of each poetic convention on the graphic organizer for additional support for Eloise. Then, after their individual work, students were purposefully paired to discuss their songs and analysis with a peer. Mack found that ALL students were more deeply engaged, supported and grasped the poetic conventions more quickly that year than in previous years. Mack explained to us, "Every lesson went like that! Sure, it was more brainstorming and more time... I had to make time to connect with the special educator and of course, I had to check in to make sure we were targeting Eloise's IEP goals too. But wow, every lesson was better because of Eloise. Inclusion for all students should simply be the norm."

Inclusive lessons, classrooms, teams, and schools can and should be the norm. Inclusion isn't a practice that schools can choose to adopt or reject. It is a legally supported, evidence-based practice that continues to result in positive outcomes for students with and without disabilities. Where and how a child is educated are some of the most important educational decisions a team can make, and teachers are an absolutely essential component of the decision-making and implementation team. We are hopeful that as educators, you can utilize the strategies and resources shared in this article, which are grounded in decades of research and practical guidance to help you do this work. And remember, you are not alone, you are working within a powerful, collaborative team. We cannot WAIT to watch as you achieve inclusion for every single student.



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Appendix A • List of Linked In-Text Inclusive Schooling Resources

- **Definition of Inclusive Education:** <https://inclusiveschooling.com/definition-of-inclusion>
- **Roles & Responsibilities Checklist for Co-Teaching, Co-Instruction, & Co-Serving:** Google DRIVE document
- **6 Co-teaching Models:** <https://inclusiveschool.s3.amazonaws.com/co-teaching+approaches.pdf>
- **Co-Teaching Lesson Plan Template** Google DRIVE document
- **The Prompting Ladder:** <https://inclusivehandouts.s3.amazonaws.com/General+Handouts+/Prompting+Ladder+Examples.pdf>
- **Strategies for Presuming Competence** <https://inclusivehandouts.s3.amazonaws.com/General+Handouts+/strategies+for+presuming+competency.pdf>
- **100 Ways to Adapt Anything** <https://inclusiveschool.s3.amazonaws.com/100+tips+to+adapt+anything.pdf>
- **45 Ways to Inclusively Group Students** <https://inclusivehandouts.s3.amazonaws.com/General+Handouts+/45+ways+to+inclusively+group+students.pdf>
- **10 Ways to Reduce Stressors** <https://inclusivehandouts.s3.amazonaws.com/General+Handouts+/10+ways+to+reduce+stressors.pdf>

Appendix B • List of Inclusive Education Resources

VIDEOS

Deej- <https://www.deejmovie.com/>: “In this first-of-its-kind collaboration between a veteran filmmaker and a nonspeaking autistic, Robert Rooy and DJ Savarese share editorial control as they attempt to navigate the challenges of representing autism. Deej, the result of this often difficult partnership, is a story told largely from the inside, by DJ – not by his parents or autism experts or even the camera. At its core, Deej reflects the sort of participation that disability rights advocates insist upon: “Nothing about us without us.”

Disability Roadmap- <https://likerightnowfilm.com/film/3356/My-Disability-Roadmap>: “Samuel Habib, 21, wants to date, leave home, go to college. But he drives a 350-pound wheelchair, uses a communication device, and can have a seizure at any moment. Determined to find his path forward, he seeks out guidance from America’s most rebellious disability activists. Will they empower him to launch the bold adult life he craves?”

Intelligent Lives- <https://intelligentlives.org/>: “Three pioneering young American adults with intellectual disabilities...challenge perceptions of intelligence as they navigate high school, college, and the workforce. Academy Award-winning actor and narrator Chris Cooper contextualizes the lives of these central characters through the emotional personal story of his son Jesse, as the film unpacks the shameful and ongoing track record of intelligence testing in the U.S.”

This is not about me- <https://thisisnotaboutme.film/>: “Filmed in an observational style, This Is Not About Me gives a glimpse into Jordyn’s daily life interweaved with visits to Jordyn’s schools and interviews with teachers that worked closely with her. Jordyn guides us through difficult moments in her childhood. Piece by piece, her story reveals how professionals misunderstood her and pushed her deeper into a broken education system. Despite this system, Jordyn thrived, but her story is not one in a million. There are thousands of students like Jordyn who have something to say.”

Wretches & Jabberers- <https://www.wretchesandjabberers.org/>: A “compelling documentary chronicles the world travels of disability rights advocates, Tracy Thresher and Larry Bissonnette, in a bold quest to change attitudes about the intelligence and abilities of people with autism...In the film, Tracy and Larry take to the road to promote awareness of the hidden intelligence in those who face speech and communication challenges, connecting with others like them across the globe who struggle to find a means of expression.”

Who Cares About Kelsey- <https://whocaresaboutkelsey.com/>: This film “documents the lives of students with emotional/behavioral challenges, and shows innovative educational approaches that help these students to succeed – while improving the overall school culture and climate...Who Cares About Kelsey? will make viewers reconsider the “problem kids” in their own high schools and spark new conversations about an education revolution that’s about empowering—not overpowering—our most emotionally and behaviorally challenged youth.”

BOOKS

Causton, J. & MacLeod, K. (2020) From Behaving to Belonging: The Inclusive Art of Supporting Students who Challenge Us. ASCD.

“Julie Causton and Kate MacLeod detail how teachers can shift from a “behavior management” mindset (that punishes students for “bad” behavior or rewards students for “good” or “compliant” behavior) to an approach that supports all students—even the most challenging ones—with kindness, creativity, acceptance, and love...We need to transform our classrooms into places of love. To that end, this book represents a paradigm shift from a punitive mindset to a strengths-based, loving approach and encourages the radical act of creating more inclusive and caring schools.”

Causton, J., MacLeod, K., Pretti-Fontcak, K., Rufo, J., & Gordon, P. (2020) The Way to Inclusion: How Leaders Create Schools Where Every Student Belongs. ASCD.

“The research is clear: Including students with disabilities in general education classrooms is the most effective way for all students to learn...Chock-full of research, resources, and seasoned advice, The Way to Inclusion walks you step-by-step through the inclusivity change process, from envisioning your path to reimagining the roles of existing staff and everything in between. The book outlines seven clearly defined milestones tied to an Action Plan that will help you stay the course with so vital an initiative.”

Causton, J. & MacLeod, K. (2021) The Paraprofessional’s Handbook for Effective Support in Inclusive Classrooms (Second Edition). Paul H Brookes.

“What does a great paraprofessional need to know and do? You’ll find real-world answers from two experts in the second edition of this bestselling guidebook...An essential hands-on guide for new and seasoned paraprofessionals—and a must-have for the educators and other professionals who support them—this empowering book takes the guesswork out of this critical classroom role so you can help students with disabilities reach their full potential.”

Fialka, J. Feldman, A. & Mikus, C. (2012) Parents and Professionals Partnering for Children with Disabilities: A Dance that Matters. Corwin.

"Rich with humor and heart, this highly readable book offers helpful steps for self reflection, personnel preparation, and parent-professional training. Educators and parents will find expert guidance for listening to each other's music, trying out each other's dance steps, and working toward a new dance that includes contributions from all—with the ultimate reward of seeing children achieve their highest potential."

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Fialka, J. Feldman, A. & Mikus, C. (2012) Parents and Professionals Partnering for Children with Disabilities: A Dance that Matters. Corwin.

"Rich with humor and heart, this highly readable book offers helpful steps for self reflection, personnel preparation, and parent-professional training. Educators and parents will find expert guidance for listening to each other's music, trying out each other's dance steps, and working toward a new dance that includes contributions from all—with the ultimate reward of seeing children achieve their highest potential."

Grisham-Brown, J. L. & Pretti-Frontczak, K. (Eds.). (2011). Assessing young children in inclusive settings. The blended practices approach. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.

"This comprehensive text provides explicit guidance on developing a successful curriculum framework, working effectively with families and other team members, tailoring instruction to each child's individual needs, and embedding learning opportunities that address all children's goals. Teachers will learn from the field's most current research, and they'll get a full continuum of strategies for teaching young children with diverse abilities. Practical information on authentic assessment and data-driven decision-making is also woven throughout the book."

Jung, L. A., Frey, N., Fisher, D., & Kroener, J. (2019). Your students, my students, our students: Rethinking equitable and inclusive classroom ASCD.

"This book — written not for "special educators" or "general educators" but for all educators —addresses the challenges, maps out the solutions, and provides tools and inspiration for the work ahead. Real-life examples of empowerment and success illustrate just what's possible when educators commit to the belief that every student belongs to all of us and all students deserve learning experiences that will equip them to live full and rewarding lives."

Kluth, P. & Causton, J. (2017) 30 Days to the Co-Taught Classroom: How to Create an Amazing, Nearly Miraculous & Frankly Earth-Shattering Partnership in One Month or Less.

"In just 30 days, this book will introduce you to the information, competencies and habits you will need to become a great co-teaching partner. The authors will help you get to know your co-teacher, understand each of your roles, improve your planning and co-planning skills, expand the structures you use to teach and support students and even celebrate your accomplishments...Take just 30 days, and change your life —and the lives of all of your students!"

Kurth, J.A. & Gross, M.N. (2014). The Inclusion Toolbox: Strategies and Techniques for All Teachers. Corwin.

"Featuring materials relevant to all stages of implementation, The Inclusion Toolbox is an all-in-one resource that combines research-based strategies and practical tools to help you design and implement a truly inclusive education program...With user-friendly online resources and practical strategies, this comprehensive guide will help you make inclusion a reality!"

Pretti-Frontczak, K. & Grisham, J.L. (Eds.) (2022). Assessing young children in inclusive settings: The blended practices approach (2nd ed.). Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.

"Prepare current and future teachers with the second edition of this comprehensive textbook, an in-depth guide to the how and the why of high-quality assessment in the context of inclusive early childhood settings. Readers will learn how to select and use assessment instruments, conduct authentic assessment during daily activities and routines, collaborate with families and other team members, and much more."

Appendix B • List of Inclusive Education Resources

Tomlinson, C. A. (2017). *How to differentiate instruction in academically diverse classroom*. ASCD.

"First published in 1995 as *How to Differentiate Instruction in Mixed-Ability Classrooms*, this new edition reflects evolving best practices in education, the experiences of practitioners throughout the United States and around the world, and Tomlinson's continuing thinking about how to help each and every student access challenging, high-quality curriculum; engage in meaning-rich learning experiences; and feel at home in a school environment that "fits.""

Woodlock, M., & Novak, K. (2021). *UDL Playbook for School and District Leaders*. Cast.

"The authors lay out a step-by-step process to remake your leadership skills and methods through the inclusive principles of Universal Design for Learning. Creating multi-tiered systems of support, delivering effective and inspiring feedback, and embedding the UDL principles throughout your culture and curriculum—these are just some of the topics covered by two veteran school leaders."

WEBSITES

<https://www.inclusiveschooling.com>: Headed by inclusion experts Drs. Julie Causton and Kristie Pretti-Frontczak, the mission of Inclusive Schooling is to "strengthen inclusive mindsets, heartsets, and skillsets of educators and school administrators by partnering with school districts from across the world to deliver transformative and engaging professional development". A page dedicated to family resources offers numerous tools to support family advocacy towards an inclusive education for your child.

<https://swiftschools.org>: "SWIFT is a national technical assistance center that builds whole system—state, district, school, and community—capacity to provide academic and behavioral support to improve outcomes for all students" using an equity-based multi-tiered system of support model. Parent and family resources are provided in English and Spanish, and links to regional parent technical assistance centers are provided.

www.thinkinclusive.us: "As the official blog of MCIE [Maryland Coalition for Inclusive Education, Inc.], we exist to build bridges between families, educators, and people with disabilities to advocate for inclusive education. We do this by publishing content from disabled advocates, parents of children with disabilities, and educators who are "all-in" for inclusion. Visitors to the website can sort the content by advocacy, community, education, videos, and podcast episodes.

www.wrightslaw.com: "Parents, advocates, teachers, and attorneys come to Wrightslaw for reliable, up-to-date information about special education law and advocacy for children with disabilities." The website is extensive and comprehensive, and serves as a go-to resource for many educators and families of children with disabilities.

<http://idea.ed.gov>: As the official website for the U.S. Department of Education's Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), it offers information on IDEA law as well as many resources from the Department and its grantees. Resources include but are not limited to policy documents, the official IDEA statute, regulations, and annual reports, information on grants, state specific information, IDEA updates, and newsletters.

ARTICLES

Causton, J., MacLeod, K., & Pretti-Frontczak, K. (2021). *Ready... Set... Success: A Formula for Leading Schools with Love*. *Educational Leadership*, 79(2), 21-25.

"For compassionate discipline to be more than just a good intention, it requires a framework. School districts often find it difficult to ditch traditional behavior management practices like punitive or public discipline tactics, even when their goal is to implement a discipline program that promotes support and love. The authors present a Ready, Set, Success framework as a practical guide for authentically including students using humanistic behavioral support."

Causton, J., Udvari-Solner, A., & MacLeod, K. M. (2017). *Creating educational adaptations, accommodations, and modifications*. In F. P. Orelove, D. Sobsey, & D. L. Gilles (Eds.), *Educating students with severe and multiple disabilities: A collaborative approach* (5th ed., pp. 407–435). Paul H. Brookes.

"Now in its fourth edition, this highly respected, bestselling textbook gives undergraduate and graduate students up-to-the-minute research and strategies for educating children with severe and multiple disabilities. This popular core text—for 15 years, a staple of teacher training programs in special education and related fields—thoroughly prepares preservice professionals with comprehensive coverage of the topics they will need to know about. With the practical, research-based guidance in this textbook, future educators will learn how to educate students with severe and multiple disabilities in the setting where they will best be served."

Causton-Theoharis, J. N. (2009). *The golden rule of providing support in inclusive classrooms: Support others as you would wish to be supported*. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 42(2), 36-43.

"The golden rule for adult support in inclusive classrooms is to support others as one would wish to be supported. Adequately applying the golden rule requires knowledge and imagination. Educators need to know the effect of their actions on students. The author also discusses the need for fading support, as reflected in the literature."

Causton-Theoharis, J. & Theoharis, G. (2008). *Creating Inclusive Schools for ALL Students*. *The School Administrator*. September, 24-30.

"In this article, a former principal at Falk Elementary School in Madison, Wisconsin, describes his school's shift as it sought to create an inclusive school for all students and establish an authentic sense of belonging. Nationwide, schools and districts from Concord, New Hampshire, to Whittier, California, and from Cambridge, Massachusetts, to Charlotte, North Carolina, are undertaking inclusive school reform with positive results."

Giangreco, M.F. (2004). "The stairs didn't go anywhere!": A self-advocate's reflections on specialized services and their impact on people with disabilities. In M. Nind, J. Rix, K. Sheehy, & K. Simmons, K. (Eds.) (pp. 32-42). *Inclusive education: Diverse perspectives*. London: David Fulton Publishers in association with The Open University. "The information included in this article is based on a semi-structured interview conducted with Norman Kunc by Michael F. Giangreco on July 4, 1995 in Montreal, Quebec, Canada....Norman Kunc (pronounced Koontz) is a sought-after consultant and speaker on a wide range of educational, disability, and social justice issues. He was born with cerebral palsy and attended a segregated school for students with disabilities from the age of three until 13 when he was included in a general education school."

Jorgensen, C. M., McSheehan, M., Schuh, M., & Sonnenmeier, R. M. (2012). Essential Best Practices in Inclusive Schools. National Center on Inclusive Education | Institute on Disability / UCED | University of New Hampshire.

"How can educators create inclusive classrooms where students with intellectual and developmental disabilities not only participate and communicate, but also learn academic content? The groundbreaking model in this book is the answer. Practical, forward-thinking, and person-centered, The Beyond Access Model, a researched approach developed by three inclusive education experts from the University of New Hampshire's Institute on Disability, shows education professionals what meaningful inclusive education looks like and gives them the critical guidance they need to make it happen."

Kluth, P., Villa, R., & Thousand, J. (2001, December/January). "Our school doesn't offer inclusion" and other legal blunders. Educational Leadership, 59, 24-27.

"25 years after Congress passed the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (now called the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act), many educators and administrators still do not understand the law or how to implement it. This article discusses three reasons for this situation and suggests benefits of understanding the law."

ONLINE COURSES

Causton, J. & Pretti-Frontczak, K. (2021) Co-Teaching for the Inclusive Classroom: Creating Phenomenal Co-Teaching Tea Inclusive Schooling.- <https://www.inclusiveschooling.com/co-teaching-od/>

"This is a four-part series that is for PreK-12th grade educators who are co-teaching or who will start co-teaching soon. It is perfect for teams of general and special education teachers who want to get really clear on recommended practices for all aspects of co-teaching. This series is also perfect for Itinerant Teachers and Inclusion Facilitators. You'll learn invaluable strategies for communicating, coaching, and consulting with others."

Causton, J. & Pretti-Frontczak, K. (2021) Para-Bytes. Inclusive Schooling.- <https://www.inclusiveschooling.com/parabytes-sp/>:

"Para-Bytes are innovative and user-friendly professional development designed specifically for busy PreK-12 paraprofessionals, teaching assistants, and one-on-one aides. Para-Bytes are organized into four categories that cover EVERYTHING paraprofessionals need to know to provide incredible inclusive support to all students. Each "Byte" is conveniently organized around the most common questions paraprofessionals ask."

Causton, J. & Pretti-Frontczak, K., & MacLeod, K. (2021) Beyond Treats and Timeouts: Support for Challenging Behaviors. Inclusive Schooling.- <https://www.inclusiveschooling.com/beyond-treats-and-timeouts/>

"This is a four-part on demand series for PreK-12th grade special and general education teachers, related service professionals, paraprofessionals, educational leaders, coaches, and inclusion facilitators ready for a different approach to behaviors that are challenging. Each session provides practical strategies for shifting from a "behavior management" mindset (that punishes students for "bad" behavior or rewards students for "good" or "compliant" behavior) to an approach that supports all students—with kindness, creativity, acceptance, and love."

Bondie, R.S. (2022). Differentiated Instruction Made Practical. Harvard University.- <https://pll.harvard.edu/course/differentiated-instruction-made-practical>:

"By using a four-step teacher decision-making framework and implementing structured classroom routines rooted in research on cognition and motivation, you will increase equity, access, rigor, and engagement for all students. This program will prepare you with the agile thinking required to analyze problems of student learning and then make decisions to adjust and differentiate instruction within given time and curriculum constraints."

The Iris Center Peabody College (2021). High-Leverage Practices. Vanderbilt University.- <https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/resources/high-leverage-practices/>:

"Developed by the Council for Exceptional Children and the CEEDAR Center, high-leverage practices are 22 essential special education techniques that all K-12 special education teachers should master for use across a variety of classroom contexts...This interactive alignment tool, developed in collaboration with CEEDAR, identifies which IRIS resources provide information on HLPs."

Involving Families in Assessment and Intervention: A Toolkit for Early Childhood Educators- [https://brookespublishing.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/](https://brookespublishing.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Involving-Families-in-Assessment-Toolkit_FINAL.pdf)

Involving-Families-in-Assessment-Toolkit_FINAL.pdf: "In this toolkit, you'll get strategies, tip sheets, and other tools for keeping families involved and engaged throughout the whole process of assessment and intervention. Discover the why and the how of family participation, get guidance on overcoming challenges, and find links to more helpful resources."

The Early Childhood Family Engagement Framework Toolkit: Maryland's Vision for Engaging Families with Young Children- [https://marylandfamiliesengage.org/](https://marylandfamiliesengage.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/maryland-family-engagement-framework-toolkit.pdf)

wp-content/uploads/2019/01/maryland-family-engagement-framework-toolkit.pdf: "This toolkit was designed to support Maryland's early childhood community as they implement strategies of the Framework to promote family engagement in early care and education settings and to improve families and children's outcomes by promoting a two-generational approach."