



Strategies for Beginning a Successful Inclusion Program

Teacher Reflection Page

Before beginning an inclusion program and at the beginning of each school year, discuss and act upon the issues listed below. Take time to share these items with your colleagues.

1. Schedule planning and collaboration time. Special education and regular education teachers need time to share concerns and areas of expertise. This cannot be done in five minutes while walking down the hallway!
2. Consider your own attitude and the attitudes of other teachers regarding meeting the needs of disabled students, and communicate the benefits of inclusion to their parents.
3. Look at students with disabilities as people first. Concentrate on other attributes rather than the disability. For example, instead of saying, "My deaf student" refer to the student as "My student who loves cats" or "My student who can never find a pencil." All students with disabilities have other attributes besides the disability.
4. Be willing to collaborate with and teach with another teacher. You must adjust and compromise on some things, but you will learn many new things from your colleague, too.
5. Don't be afraid to ask for help. Contrary to popular opinion, this is not a sign of weakness. Other professionals routinely consult colleagues, especially about difficult cases. Teachers should do the same.
6. Discuss logistics such as scheduling, paperwork, use of materials, ways of grouping students, etc. Decide the 'nuts and bolts' issues ahead of time. When teaching with another teacher, watch for gaps and overlaps. A gap occurs when each of you assumes the other is responsible for a given task and the task does not get done. An overlap occurs when both of you do the same task that only needed to be done once.
7. Visit other classrooms and other schools to see how they are implementing inclusion. You will gain good ideas and will learn from their mistakes. There is no need to "reinvent the wheel." Learn from others!
8. Make sure the non-disabled students have their needs met, and communicate the benefits of inclusion for them to their parents.
9. Learn differentiation strategies. These often work well with disabled students.
10. Brainstorm strategies for dealing with standards, standardized tests, and other assessments. Modifications are usually needed for disabled students.