I. **An inclusive classroom** provides for the academic and social needs of all students, including those experiencing challenges as a result of environmental, situational, or physical factors.
   - An inclusive classroom which respects and accepts all children is beneficial for all, regardless of individual need.

II. **The truths and myths of special education:**
   - 13% of school aged children have identified “special needs.” This figure does not, however, include those diagnosed with ADHD, Sensory Processing Disorder, or Environmental/Situational factors.
   - A child is not a label and an official diagnosis doesn’t come with an educational plan for an individual child.
   - A child with special needs often exhibits behaviors more frequently or intensely than others but teaching and management techniques are not significantly different.
   - Environmental, learning, relationship, and sensory supports that are good for one child are generally good for all children.
   - Children with “special needs” experience world in ways that effect perception, interpretation, and/or response that impacts learning, attention, movement, communication, emotional/behavioral response, and social skills.

III. **Creating an Inclusive Classroom includes the Adults, the Children, and the Prepared Environment:**
   - The role of the teacher includes:
     - Self-reflection of attitude toward working with children with challenges.
     - An examination of personal prejudice and bias.
     - Reviewing previous knowledge and training.
     - Reframing personal thinking to adjust expectations.
     - Communication with peers, parents, and students.
     - Modeling an acceptance of ALL students in the classroom.
The role of the community of children includes:

- The opportunities to develop Social Cohesion\(^1\)
- Opportunities for peace education- silence game, walking on the line, grace & courtesy, group projects.
- Open, honest and respect conversations- class meetings, role plays & stories, mutual encouragement and support.
- Leadership- peer tutoring, behavior mentoring, “buddy” system, special “chores” and roles.

IV. Creating an Inclusion Plan: The Importance of Management, Prevention, and how to handle intervention

Management:

- Preparing an environment well automatically manages behavior/learning challenges.
  - A warm, peaceful, and emotional secure environment includes:
    - Clear, consistent ground rules which are reinforced with kind, firm limits and structure for teaching positive redirection.
    - Consistent daily routine and schedule.
    - Social skills teaching and support through the year.
    - Open, clear, consistent communication between adults.
  - A beautiful physical environment which includes:
    - Thoughtfully prepared activities and materials to meet student’s needs.
    - Organized arrangement on shelves.
    - A room arrangement that provides for movement, observation, space to work and socialize.
    - Minimal sensory distraction- visual, auditory, olfactory.
  - Carefully planned transitions with a regular routine, well sequenced steps, and warnings for children who need it.

Prevention: Techniques and Tools for Minimizing Challenging Behaviors

- Based on through, comprehensive, and on-going observation.
  - The who, what, when, where, and how of what you are seeing.
  - Looking for abilities and challenges- and changes over time.
  - Look for triggers and cues preceding challenging behaviors.
  - Analyzing, reflecting and designing a plan.
  - “special need” vs. “normal” behavior challenge.

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\(^1\) Montessori. London Lectures. 1946

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• **Environment Support** ideas
  o Quiet Area- a closed corner of the classroom with a small rug, small table, cushion, print of an outdoor scene, small lamp, a battery-operated candle, an object to hold and admire, a basket with hand weights 1-3 lbs., a small medicine ball, a few yoga pose cards, stretch bands. Space for one.
  o “Office” work space- a work table, facing a wall, for a particular student. May have a small lamp, file organizer, items the student finds comforting without distracting.
  o Alternative seating- exercise ball, a foot stool, Jacket Around the Chair, Rolled Jacket, variations in “sitting.”
  o Low, natural light (Avoid over-head fluorescent lighting). Floor lamps.
  o Headphones to cancel noise, or provide calming or stimulating music.

• **Learning Support** ideas
  o Work Plan- Balance active with passive activities, include sensory input if needed, include movement and/or rest breaks. Change over time to follow the child’s progress.
  o Provide presentations to respond to child’s needs. Be precise but flexible. Scaffold in small well sequenced steps that provide success. Use multi-sensory components based on student need. Limit or add language as needed.
  o Provide lots of time for repetition, exploration, experimentation, new ways of completing a task.
  o Follow the child’s interests.

• **Relationship Support** ideas
  o Watch- Wait- Listen- be thoughtful about not intervening unless behavior is dangerous to self or others. Let mistakes happen.
  o “Catch” the child engaged in positive behavior (be careful not to interrupt concentration!) with a special hand or face signal the two of you have agreed on.
  o Make “special time” together and keep your commitment.
  o Provide as many opportunities for independence as possible.
  o Special “friends,” “work buddies,” peer tutoring, and “sensory partner” can be a wonderful support to children who have social challenges.
  o On days when a child is particularly challenged, let him “shadow” you. He goes where you go, sees the lessons you give, and benefits from your modeling of self-control.
• Give the child with challenges special leadership opportunities- line leader, table setter, doing a chore he enjoys.

• **Sensory Support** ideas- almost all children benefit from “heavy work” activities, sensory supports won’t hurt children who don’t need them- they just won’t choose these activities.
  o **Montessori “heavy works”**
    ✓ Shaving Cream on a Wall Mirror
    ✓ Washing and Scrubbing activities
    ✓ Large, heavy transfer activities
    ✓ Hammering
    ✓ Sweeping, mopping, carpet sweeping, vacuuming
    ✓ Large polishing activities
    ✓ Many food preparation activities
  o **Montessori Sensory Supports**
    ✓ Art- play doh, clay, straw painting, finger painting, hole punching, stapling.
    ✓ Playground- swings, slide, climbing/hanging bars, wheel barrows, wagons, rakes, shovels, sandbox, gardening box, tires, logs.

• **For children with ongoing sensory needs + challenging behaviors provide:**
  ✓ Regular, consistent routines of sensory input.
  ✓ A session of 4-5 minutes of “heavy” input for muscles and joints, tactile- deep touch, oral input.
    ➢ Wall pushing with hands, then feet for 30-45 seconds each
    ➢ Jumping jacks, Foot Stomps
    ➢ Isometrics with arms
    ➢ Spinning, hanging
    ➢ Oral input- Gummy bear, Sour dough pretzel, nut butter on celery
    ➢ Bear Hug
  o **Other Sensory Support ideas to have in your classroom.**
    ✓ Burrito Roll- wrap in a work mat
    ✓ Deep Massage roller
    ✓ Jacket Sitting
    ✓ Lap desk
  o **Teach Self-Regulation activities.**
    ✓ Deep Breathing
    ✓ Aroma Bracelet- a sweat band with glued gaze for a few drops of essential oils Calming: lavender, vanilla, coconut Stimulating: mint, eucalyptus
✓ Massage palms or ear lopes
✓ Silence game in the quiet area
✓ Functional Fidget- a small, common object that gives the child sensory input through the hand- pen, paper clip, hair band, small squeeze ball

Intervention: Techniques and Tools for Handling Challenging Behaviors

• Suggest he try some sensory inputs.
• Suggest he spend time in the quiet area.
• An Exit Plan- with the child, make a plan for him to exit (ideally on his own) the classroom. Include the place, a signal, and some self-regulatory activities he can engage in.
• If a child is out of control and in danger of hurting himself or others, you must intervene and remove him from the classroom.
• If the child is out of control-
  o Hug, hold, or sit near him.
  o Do NOT talk.
  o Deliberately slow your breathing with deep breaths- the child will sync his breathing to yours.
  o Stay with him until he is calm.
  o When calm talk with him about what happened. Support and reflect any feelings he expresses.
  o Plan how he might make amends.