



Creating an Inclusive Classroom

- 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 Cohesion¹
 - 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.

¹ Montessori. London Lectures. 1946

- **Environment Support** ideas
 - 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.
 - “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.
 - Alternative seating- exercise ball, a foot stool, Jacket Around the Chair, Rolled Jacket, variations in “sitting.”
 - Low, natural light (Avoid over- head fluorescent lighting). Floor lamps.
 - Headphones to cancel noise, or provide calming or stimulating music.
- **Learning Support** ideas
 - 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.
 - 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.
 - Provide lots of time for repetition, exploration, experimentation, new ways of completing a task.
 - Follow the child’s interests.
- **Relationship Support** ideas
 - Watch- Wait- Listen- be thoughtful about not intervening unless behavior is dangerous to self or others. Let mistakes happen.
 - “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.
 - Make “special time” together and keep your commitment.
 - Provide as many opportunities for independence as possible.
 - Special “friends,” “work buddies,” peer tutoring, and “sensory partner” can be a wonderful support to children who have social challenges.
 - 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.
 - 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
 - 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
 - Other Sensory Support ideas to have in your classroom.
 - ✓ Burrito Roll- wrap in a work mat
 - ✓ Deep Massage roller
 - ✓ Jacket Sitting
 - ✓ Lap desk
 - 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 lobes
- ✓ 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-**
 - Hug, hold, or sit near him.
 - Do NOT talk.
 - Deliberately slow your breathing with deep breaths- the child will sync his breathing to yours.
 - Stay with him until he is calm.
 - When calm talk with him about what happened. Support and reflect any feelings he expresses.
 - Plan how he might make amends.