Introduction to Inclusion

The definition that we use for inclusion has more to do with social equity and applies to all kids, not just kids with disabilities. For example... kids with second language issues, gifted kids, and kids who qualify for Title 1 programs because of circumstances of poverty. Our view of inclusion is about all kids.

—Wayne Sailor on “The Inclusive Class Podcast”

It seems today that most schools claim to be inclusive. And why wouldn’t they? We know from over 30 years of research in special education that inclusive schooling results in tremendous gains for students with and without disabilities. And what’s more, inclusive schooling reflects the inclusive lives that exist in our families and communities—in other words, inclusion is the real world!

But many schools that claim to be inclusive are, in fact, practicing mainstreaming rather than inclusion. Mainstreaming involves allowing students with disabilities to participate in some, but not all, general education activities. These mainstream activities generally involve the “specials” such as lunchtime, art, and music. Some schools practice reverse inclusion in which students without disabilities are brought into segregated special education courses for select activities, again, generally specials.

We, on the other hand, are advocating for true inclusion. To us, this means that a student, regardless of his or her disability label, is a full member of an age-appropriate general education classroom. The general education classroom is the homeroom, and the general education teacher is the teacher of record, with special education teachers and support staff assisting the general educators in providing all of the supports and services the student needs to be successful in that general education setting.

Furthermore, inclusive education is relatively easy to do poorly, and when it’s done poorly it reinforces the idea that inclusion cannot work. Doing inclusion well requires thought, organization, and a commitment to making it work. It is not successful by accident!
And this is the purpose of our book: to provide you, the inclusion facilitator who is a teacher (general or special education), support staff member (paraprofessional or related service provider), administrator (principal, director, inclusion specialist), or family member with practical tools to make inclusion work, and work with relative ease, at your school or district by giving you the tools to organize, strategize, and implement inclusion.

This book is unlike other books in that we do not develop inclusive strategies for a specific population of students (such as students with autism or students with learning disabilities). We believe that good teaching and good planning are good for all students, regardless of label. As inclusion facilitators for many years, we have developed or been taught a myriad of teaching and planning tools and strategies that we have found to be effective, and we pass them on to you in this book. We hope that you find them as practical as we have!

**OUTCOMES OF INCLUSION**

Desegregation has been important as a social movement for decades. In the 1950s, Gordon Allport’s *The Nature of Prejudice* outlined the roots and nature of prejudice and promoted what he calls the *intergroup contact theory*. Allport’s theory addressed race relations, but is applicable to special education. Namely, Allport argues that prejudice is reduced when majority and minority groups have common goals, a perception of common interests, and common humanity between the groups. Superficial contact, such as when students with disabilities are mainstreamed into select activities in the school day, can be detrimental to group relations. But when students work to achieve common goals, get to know one another as individuals, and work together on equal footing, prejudice and discrimination are reduced (Allport, 1954).

Beyond theoretical constructs, inclusion matters as well. Research over several decades documents that inclusive education is associated with improved cognitive and academic skills (Dore, Dion, Wagner, & Brunet, 2002; Fisher & Meyer, 2002; Hedeen & Ayres, 2002; McLeskey, Henry, & Hodges, 1998; Meyer, 2001), self-determination skills (Hughes, Agran, Cosgriff, & Washington, 2013), social skills, and peer acceptance (Causton-Theoharis & Malmgren, 2004; Cawley, Hayden, Cade, & Baker-Kroczyński, 2002; Dore et al., 2002; Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2001). In a review of the literature in 1998, McGregor and Vogelsberg documented a number of positive outcomes of inclusive education for students with and without disabilities, including skill acquisition, social development, and impact of inclusive education on students with and without disabilities, their parents, and teachers.

**What is inclusive education?**

Simply placing children with disabilities in the classroom and school they would attend if they did not have a disability is a first step toward inclusive education (Austin, 2001; Cook, 2001; Downing & Eichinger, 2008; Giangreco & Broer, 2005). Placement alone, though, is not
an indicator of inclusive education. In fact, we think that just getting in the door is more like dumping a student off than inclusion. Instead, inclusion means that the student must have access to all of the supports and services he or she will need to participate fully in general education activities and curriculum (Burstein, Sears, Wilcoxen, Cabello, & Spagna, 2004; Downing & Eichinger, 2008; Mulvibill, Cotton, & Gyaben, 2004; Pivik, McComas, & LaFlamme, 2002). This indicator of inclusion suggests that services will come to the student, rather than the student going to the services. Inclusive education also embodies a philosophy of accepting, valuing, and respecting all students (Carrington & Elkins, 2002).

Inclusion facilitators accept that all students learn at different paces and in different ways, and value the contributions of this diversity to their classrooms. Inclusive schools are also accommodating to all learners (Thomson et al., 2003): The school facilities are accessible, as are curricula and activities. Inclusive education means that students with disabilities are full-time members of general education (Foreman, Arthur-Kelly, Pascoe, & King, 2004), not “visitors” who come to the class for certain activities and not others. Full membership extends beyond the classroom to the playground, lunchroom, and extracurricular activities (Kleinert, Miracle, & Sheppard-Jones, 2007). Inclusion facilitators collaborate to ensure the entire school experience, from the playground to the dance floor, is accessible and inviting to individuals with and without disabilities. Last, inclusive education means that each child, regardless of his or her learning style, pace, or preference, is given a high-quality education with meaningful curriculum and effective teaching (Ferguson, 1995). In other words, each student is provided with a challenging, meaningful learning experience that will enable every student to reach his or her maximum potential.

**What is successful inclusion?**

Knowing when a child is “successfully included” can be rather difficult to describe or rate. We have chosen to use the criteria for successful inclusion outlined by Cross, Traub, Hutter-Pishgahi, and Shelton (2004):

- The student made progress on his or her individualized goals.
- The student made gains in personal development, including acquiring knowledge and skills that are anticipated for all children.
- The student was welcomed by teachers, staff, and peers and accepted as a full member of the group.
- The student’s parents were pleased with their child’s growth.
- The student appears to be comfortable, happy, and part of the group setting.

Districts, schools, and individuals will be at different stages of implementing successful inclusive education, and frankly, the process of implementation is never really done. There will always be improvements to be made and challenges to overcome. A simple self-assessment, as shown in Figure 1.1, can be used as a guide to assess a school or district’s commitment to and preparation for inclusive education.

**Case Study: Mrs. Simpson Self-Assesses**

To determine the state of inclusive education in her current school setting, Mrs. Simpson, a special education teacher at Harvard High School, completes a self-assessment to identify current practices, barriers, and facilitators of inclusive education in her school district. Her reflections are included in Figure 1.1.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes, Describe</th>
<th>No, Describe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Do all students attend their “home school,” or the school they would attend if they did not have a disability?</td>
<td>Students are bused to district programs (e.g., autism self-contained program at Holmes High School).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Do students with disabilities experience the same options for participating in curriculum, activities, and extracurricular activities as nondisabled peers?</td>
<td>No participation in core academics, no participation in school sports teams or school activities like school plays, afterschool dances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Are a range of supports available and provided in general education settings, including assistive technology (AT), related service providers, adapted curriculum and materials, and social facilitation?</td>
<td>Paraeducator supports are available (can be shifted from self-contained setting to general education classes); AT equipment can be shifted; specialized equipment (e.g., CCTV) can be brought to a particular classroom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Is there an attitude of acceptance of diversity, or there is an “us” and “them” mentality at the school?</td>
<td>Teachers and administrators are friendly to students and special education staff. School has diversity goals in strategic plan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Are the school facilities entirely accessible? Are curricular and extracurricular activities accessible to all learners and participants?</td>
<td>School buildings and restrooms are ADA-compliant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Are students with disabilities full and equal members of classrooms and school activities?</td>
<td>At this time, students with disabilities receive most instruction in self-contained classrooms. Students with significant disabilities eat lunch together at a separate lunch table in the cafeteria.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Are the needs of students with disabilities considered in the planning of school activities, such as dances, parties, and playgrounds?</td>
<td>Rooms/buildings are physically accessible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Do general education teachers and administrators support the efforts to include children with disabilities?</td>
<td>Gaining allies—Mrs. Jones (English), Mr. Honbo (Home Ec) are supporters.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 1.1 Inclusion Education Self-Assessment**
Upon completion of this self-analysis, Mrs. Simpson is able to identify the resources that are already available to her as well as those factors that are not yet in place that will be necessary to make inclusion "work" in her school.

### How do I start an inclusion program?

As you read this book, you may be in a situation in which your school is still segregated, whereby students do not attend their home school, do not attend general education classes, or do not participate in the full range of general education classes and activities. In this section, we discuss tips for beginning inclusive education for the first time or renewing a commitment to inclusion.

#### Build a team

Inclusion is not something that can be done alone. It is important to have a team in place. This can be done in many informal ways. For example, educators and administrators can simply eat lunch with other staff or complete extra duty together to get to know one another and share information and ideas. Educators and parents can provide plenty of support and encouragement to new allies. Educators and parents can also share their work with school and district leadership, sharing plans for inclusion and being open to their feedback. Finally, educators can use the tools throughout this book to create an inclusion plan to share with school and district leadership, including how students will be supported and their learning progress documented.

#### Inspire, don’t dictate

It is easy to try to persuade others to implement inclusion by citing federal law (e.g., the Least Restrictive Environment provision of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act), case law (e.g., *Oberti vs. Board of Education*, 1993), or the research support for inclusion. However, educators are a practical group. Educators tend to believe it when they see it and support those things that work. Thus, the surest way to a teacher’s
heart is through inspiration. Work closely with teachers to help assuage any fears. Demonstrate for them the support they will receive, professionally and for their students. Be prepared to “get your hands dirty” and problem-solve together.

**BOX 1.3**

The mediocre teacher tells. The good teacher explains. The superior teacher demonstrates. The great teacher inspires.

—William Arthur Ward

**Meet people where they are**

Have frank conversations with your colleagues or your child’s teacher(s) about inclusion. Ask them about their biggest fears, and help them find solutions. Ask them about their greatest skills or gifts. Build on their strengths, beliefs, and desires. Nobody is going to be 100% prepared, ever. If we wait until 100% of people feel 100% prepared, we will deny generations of students the opportunity to learn and develop. Every day is a learning experience and a chance to grow. Make sure everyone knows that they will be respected and supported for doing their best and that perfection is not expected.

**Be prepared to start small, but do it well**

Many of us aim to have all of our students fully included and supported immediately. It may be necessary, however, to start inclusion on a limited basis (e.g., supporting inclusion for one student at a time) while you build allies and skills. The ultimate goal is that all students will be fully included. The pace of progress will vary based on the needs and skills of individual teams and schools. No matter the pace of implementing inclusion, make sure that those students who are included are well supported, as are their teachers.

**Don’t give in to failure or the naysayers**

Expect imperfection. Expect setbacks. Implement your strategies to the best of your ability, all of the time. Gather data to know what is working and what is not. Make changes to address problems as they become known. Highlight what is going well, and be prepared to learn from those who disagree. When faced with “we don’t do that here,” take a step back and look at the individual child’s needs. Identify the first step that you can take immediately even without financial resources; maybe mainstreaming during recess or lunch is possible at this time. Again, “all means all,” and the end goal is that all students are always included. But building success one step at a time is reasonable. When you find yourself faced with a disagreement with school staff or colleagues, refrain from a quick retort. Instead, propose to talk later and take time to reflect on the other person’s statements. Consider the person’s perspective and what he or she might need or be feeling. Is the person unsure of what to do? Lacking resources?

**Be prepared to be an “attitude ambassador”**

Showing up with a positive attitude is contagious. Others will want to be near you. This is perhaps one of the easiest strategies for gaining allies and support. You might want to send
your colleagues or child’s teacher(s) specific notes, highlighting the positive things you’ve noticed they are doing for students and the school and their efforts toward inclusion.

**Identify obstacles, barriers, and setbacks**

Understand what has not worked or what acts as a barrier to inclusion. This could be physical, such as having classrooms on a second floor with no elevator access; practical, such as course and supervision schedules; or attitudinal, such as a belief that only some students are capable of learning. Also identify your setbacks. Oftentimes, our first intervention or idea does not work. Once these obstacles, barriers, and setbacks are identified, they can be addressed. It will be critical to employ your allies in this task. A chart such as the one in Figure 1.2, showing concerns in one column and solutions or “let’s try this” in the column next to it, can be used to facilitate a full discussion of inclusion. Also, consider gathering data on student performance, and be open to trying things in different ways.

**Case Study: Mrs. Simpson Problem-Solves**

In an effort to identify barriers to inclusion at her new school site, Mrs. Simpson meets with paraeducators, parents, general education teachers, and administrators to identify current barriers to inclusive education. As a group, they first brainstorm the list of barriers. Mrs. Simpson writes down each concern. After the concerns are listed, the team turns its attention to possible solutions, as seen in Figure 1.2.

**Figure 1.2 Barriers and Solutions to Inclusion**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barrier to Inclusion</th>
<th>Possible Solution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No staff training—how can we do something we aren’t trained to do?</td>
<td>Use early release days for ongoing training. Invite faculty from local university. Devote professional development day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bullying</td>
<td>School assemblies; peer tutors; start a circle of friends/best buddies program. Educate! Contact other schools in district and set up sharing program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of materials (leveled readers, AT devices, etc.)</td>
<td>Lending library? Find materials online.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not enough time</td>
<td>Designate common planning times for each grade level. Consider block scheduling?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class size is too big already</td>
<td>Keep natural proportions (not all students with disabilities will be in same class).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Money (never enough)</td>
<td>Move resources from self-contained class to general education classes or a common pool (materials, funds).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test scores, making Adequate Yearly Progress?</td>
<td>Make sure students take correct assessment, including alternate if appropriate. Use special education expertise to support all students in class, not just those with designated special needs (e.g., floating paraeducator, co-teaching).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science lab is not safe, accessible for students with physical disabilities</td>
<td>Assign paraeducator and/or peer tutor to ensure safety as needed. Provide adapted desks and other equipment in science lab so that it will be accessible.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
With this brainstormed list of concerns and ideas, Mrs. Simpson and the team can now divide responsibilities, as needed, to work on implementing the plan. For example, Mr. Jones, the science teacher, will obtain wheelchair-accessible desks in the science lab. Mrs. Simpson will contact the other schools in the district to see what adapted materials they have already created. The principal, Ms. Martinez, will investigate professional development opportunities for her staff. Thus, at the end of the meeting, voices of concern have been heard and validated, and a plan of action has been put in place!

**Be prepared to provide information**

Many of your colleagues or child’s teachers may have limited experience with diversity and designing lessons to accommodate diverse learners. Discuss strategies for differentiation and ensure that providing inclusive education is not akin to lowering expectations. Rather, guarantee that through differentiation and universal design, expectations for all students will remain high; students will just demonstrate their knowledge of those high expectations using varying means. Provide information to your colleagues about individual students, including their strengths, needs, and preferred accommodations.

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**Box 1.4  Differentiated Instruction and Universal Design for Learning**

**What Is Differentiated Instruction?**

Differentiated instruction (DI) simply means teaching the way the child learns. It is a proactive approach in which the learning needs of students are identified and planned for ahead of time. For example, some students are visual learners; providing visual aids during lessons and teaching students to create graphic organizers while working are methods of differentiating instruction and supporting the needs of diverse students in a classroom.

**What Is Universal Design?**

Like differentiated instruction, universal design for learning (UDL) is a proactive framework that acknowledges that not all learners have the same learning needs. Instead, educators can provide multiple means of representation (how information is presented), multiple means of expression and engagement (how students demonstrate what they know), and multiple means of engagement (how to build student motivation and interest).

**An Analogy**

The goal for students in our current educational system is to meet state, or Common Core, educational standards. We can think of meeting these educational standards as the peak of a mountain (C. Lanterman, personal communication, November 9, 2012). Our goal, or high expectation, is for students to reach this peak by the end of the school year. How one meets that goal, however, can vary. For example, some people might hike up a peak via the most direct and steep route. Others may plan a path that is less direct and less strenuous, winding their way up the mountain. But there are even more ways to ascend a mountaintop! Some people may ride to the top on horseback. Others may ride a ski lift. Still others may take a helicopter to the top. In short, there are more ways than one to reach the peak of a mountain. Likewise, there are more ways than one for students to learn and demonstrate their knowledge and reach learning standards. Through knowing student learning styles and preferences, and matching instruction to student needs with UDL or DI techniques, educators can ensure the learning of all students.
Have a big bag of tricks

All teachers should have a big bag of tricks. No students learn the same thing in the same way at the same rate. We must be able to try many different teaching strategies to reach all of our students. It is critical to gather data and make reflective decisions about if or when changes in instruction are needed to help students learn.

How do I maintain an inclusion program?

Once inclusion has been established, there must be a committed effort to sustain and strengthen it. Research into failure of school reforms has identified a number of factors that contribute to failure; inclusive education has been shown to fail to maintain over time when there are changes in leadership, teacher turnover, and changes in state and district assessment policy (Sindelar, Shearer, Yendol-Hoppey, & Liebert, 2006). To help ensure that inclusion is maintained over time, we suggest a number of strategies.

Build on your successes

It will be important to recognize what is going well, and why, so that those successes can be strengthened and expanded. Frequent discussions with colleagues, sharing of information, and problem-solving will be essential. Similarly, identify any challenges or setbacks, and develop strategies to address them. And take some time to toot your own horn! Invite district administrators and school board members out to observe inclusion in action. Applaud the efforts that have been made, and take time to recognize what is working (and why it should be supported and valued), by writing letters to school board members or school administrators to celebrate and recognize what is going well.

Develop strong leadership for inclusion

One of the reasons inclusion failed in the study by Sindelar and colleagues (2006) is that the leadership for inclusion ceased to exist. Leadership would ideally come from administrators, but passionate, effective, and committed teachers and parents can also be instrumental leaders. Teachers who fill this leadership role may take on schoolwide responsibilities, such as being department chairs at their schools; participating in interview panels to make sure any new teachers, paraeducators, or administrators share a commitment to inclusion; and maintaining a focus on inclusion in the school and district, such as making sure the school website or mission statement demonstrates a commitment to inclusion (see Chapter 2 for more ideas). Parents who fill this leadership role may host parent information nights, meet with school board members, sponsor professional development for teachers, collaborate with their site administrators and teachers to identify supports and resources needed to make inclusion a reality, participate in the parent-teacher association to give voice to the needs of diverse learners, and do many other actions to support inclusive education.
Administrator Insight

Throughout this book, we’ll provide insight boxes targeted for administrators. If you happen to be a school or district administrator, this box is for you! If, on the other hand, you are a teacher, paraprofessional, or parent, you might use the information in these boxes as a starting point to strike up conversations with school or district administrators.

The administrator insight in this chapter is advice for administrators who have adopted, or are planning to adopt, an inclusive school model (Janney, Snell, Beers, & Raynes, 1995).

### BOX 1.5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advice for District Administrators</th>
<th>Advice for Principals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Give a “green light” to do what is best for all students.</td>
<td>• Set a positive tone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Direct without dictating. Focus on participatory planning and decision making.</td>
<td>• Start with teachers who volunteer to include students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Involve everyone in planning and preparation.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Provide resources; offer to handle the logistics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Start small and build on your successes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Give teachers the freedom they need.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>


**Commit to collaboration and shared decision making**

The maintenance of inclusion cannot rest on one person; rather, a dedicated team must be created. This team can consist of any number of individuals, including parents, paraeducators, and general and special education teachers. It is important, however, that this team collaborates frequently and shares responsibility for making decisions and maintaining inclusive practices. The best collaboration doesn’t necessarily happen during district-mandated collaboration time, but during day-to-day interactions.

**Commit to ongoing training**

Inclusion facilitators must commit to ongoing training to implement best practices and keep updated of any changes in knowledge, skills, or laws. Ongoing training will also help inclusion facilitators differentiate fact from fiction, thus guiding parents and other educators through the complicated maze of information that can be found online and in other popular media.

**What are the tools in this book?**

The purpose of this book is to give inclusion facilitators the organizational tools needed for implementing inclusive practices with all students. In our experiences we have noticed that educators and parents often attend conferences or read books about inclusive practices and feel, “This is great! I want to do this! But I don’t have the time.” We propose that having in place the organizational structures, such as scheduling supports, collaborating with others, developing “teacher as executive skills,” and developing and implementing inclusive individualized education programs will enable educators to have more time!
In each chapter, you’ll find tools we’ve designed or been taught, and used ourselves in schools, to support students, families, and teams. We include case studies to model the purpose and how to use the tools in our schools. In our daily practice we adapt each of our tools to meet an individual student or teacher’s need and invite you to do the same by downloading files from our website and editing to suit your purposes.

**Why is this book divided into three parts?**

We’ve divided the book into three parts (Part I: Setting Up Inclusive Education, Part II: Implementing Inclusive Education, and Part III: Expanding Inclusive Practices) to meet the needs of our readers who are likely in different stages of developing or providing inclusive education services to students. While we certainly encourage reading the book from beginning to end, we know parents and educators have limited time to read and research in the middle of the school year and often need a go-to resource for addressing a specific need. We encourage you to begin with the chapters that address your current starting place and needs and then recommend furthering your reading when you’re ready to move on to the next phase of inclusive education planning or improvement.

Please be sure to go to the website (http://www.corwin.com/theinclusiontoolbox) to download the forms and resources from this chapter!