“You’re Going to Love This Kid!”

A PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PACKAGE for Teaching Students with Autism

Paula Kluth
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“What is Autism?” Web Sites Featuring Voices of the Spectrum (inside back cover)
Introduction

Since I began my work as an inclusion facilitator, and more and more often since the publication of the first edition of “You’re Going to Love This Kid!” I have had the privilege of meeting countless students with autism and many devoted teachers, paraprofessionals, therapists, administrators, and parents. In traveling from state to state and even country to country, I find that when educators are committed not only to inclusive education but also to a problem-solving process, learners with (and without) autism thrive and find success. In my travels, I have found that students with a range of needs can be supported to participate in academic instruction, school routines, and the social life of the inclusive school. My goal is to help spread an understanding of how this can be done and to provide concrete examples of what it looks like and sounds like. This project is also designed to answer common questions about logistics, attitudes, and strategies to make inclusion work so all students are supported to succeed and achieve their potential.

Over the years, I have shared a lot of ideas about autism and inclusion in my books and, more recently, on my web site, but one piece that seemed missing was a real showcasing of the techniques I have described. In my work in schools, I was often asked, “Can we see this somewhere?” Until now, it was hard for me to answer that question. I certainly know of many wonderful inclusive schools, but knowing of a great school in Boise, Idaho, won’t help a teacher in Chicago, and even when teachers do find time to observe and exchange ideas across districts, this experience is typically shared by only a handful of staff members. For this reason, I felt it was time to go beyond the book. This DVD was created not only to be able to show and tell but also to give individual schools, districts, and preservice and in-service teacher programs an entire collection of materials (e.g., video clip, lesson ideas, questions, worksheets) that can be used to study, explore, and reflect on the philosophy and practices necessary to support all learners—including those with autism and Asperger syndrome. It is also my opportunity to get to “chat” with many more of you than I could in my workshops and consulting work.

In pairing this DVD with the information, examples, stories, and practical tools found in “You’re Going to Love This Kid!” (2nd ed., which is expanded greatly from the first edition; Kluth, 2010) and my other books, I hope to offer you the next best thing to a real classroom chat. I hope you enjoy the video and find the snapshots of staff and students to be helpful and perhaps even inspiring.
How to Use This Video

Half-Day Staff Development Plan (3 hours)

Inclusion Worksheet (30 minutes)
• Begin with a short discussion of inclusion. Distribute the Is Your School Inclusive? Checklist, and let participants fill in the checklist with comments.

Film Viewing (60 minutes)
• Show the “You’re Going to Love This Kid!” film.

BREAK (15 minutes)

Teaching Strategies Discussion (30 minutes)
• Go through each of the seven strategies, stopping at each one for remarks and/or to ask a related question from the guide.

Lesson Discussion (30 minutes)
• Break the group into three sections, and assign each a lesson: Bernard and Nick, Jacob, or Gage. Distribute the lesson descriptions from the facilitator’s guide to the groups, and have participants answer the questions relevant to their section. Have the small groups rejoin the larger group and share their answers.

Action Plan (15 minutes)
• Develop a short action plan. Distribute the action plan worksheets, and have participants work alone, with a partner, or in small groups.

Full-Day Staff Development Plan (6 hours)

Inclusion Worksheet (30 minutes)
• Begin with a short discussion of inclusion. Distribute the Is Your School Inclusive? Checklist, and let participants fill in the checklist with comments.

Film Viewing (60 minutes)
• Watch the “You’re Going to Love This Kid!” film.

BREAK (15 minutes)
How to Use This Video

Discussions: Teaching Strategies (75 minutes)

- Break participants into seven groups, and have each small group look at one of the strategies in depth.
- Give each group a copy of the related page in the facilitator’s guide so that group members can read the associated quotations and have a copy of the questions. Have each group answer the questions and consider the recommendations.
- Each of these seven groups will then share with the larger group a poster containing 1) how we are doing, or a miniplan for improving practice in this area; and 2) a most significant “take away” from thinking about this strategy (e.g., we need more structured opportunities for students to improve social skills across the school day).

LUNCH (45 minutes)

Small-Group/Jigsaw Teaching and Learning: Lessons (60 minutes)

- Break participants into groups of three. This will serve as the base group for this activity. Once participants are in their base groups, they will each choose a classroom of focus (Phyllis/Sheila, Amy, or Kendra/Kate). Then, using a jigsaw format (Kagan, 1994), have all of the participants assigned to Phyllis/Sheila meet as a group. Have all of the participants assigned Amy meet as a group, and so forth. Direct participants to talk about what they saw in the video, discuss what techniques they see in their own classrooms, and choose two or three questions to answer from the facilitator’s guide. Then, have all of the participants return to their original base groups and share key points with their two group members.

BREAK (15 minutes)

Film Viewing (30 minutes)

- Show the Speaking of Inclusion film. Use the questions from this facilitator’s guide to lead a short whole-group discussion afterward.

Action Planning (30 minutes)

- Develop an action plan. Distribute the action plan worksheets, and have participants work alone, with a partner, or in small groups. Don’t forget to use the completed Is Your School Inclusive? Checklist as a resource for the plan.

Two-Day Staff Development Plan (12 hours)

DAY 1

Inclusion Worksheet (30 minutes)

- Begin with a short discussion of inclusion. Distribute the Is Your School Inclusive? Checklist, and let participants fill in the checklist with comments.

Film Viewing (90 minutes)

- Distribute “You’re Going to Love This Kid!” Viewing Guide, and ask participants to take notes as they view each section of the film.
- Show the “You’re Going to Love This Kid!” film.
- After the film, have participants “turn and talk” to a partner about one or two of their responses in each section.

BREAK (15 minutes)
Discussion and Web Search: Autism (60 minutes)

- Have participants choose a student with autism to discuss.
- Distribute Characteristics of Autism, and ask participants to fill out the form (with a partner or small group) with their target student in mind.
- Distribute What is Autism?: Web Sites/Blogs Featuring Voices of People on the Spectrum, and ask participants to visit two or three web sites or blogs to get more information about autism.
- If time permits, encourage each group to discuss how autism is understood by professionals, parents, and individuals on the spectrum. Have participants note similarities and differences.

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LUNCH (45 minutes)

Continuation of Discussion and Web Search: Autism (30 minutes)

- After participants have completed the before-lunch activities, encourage them to discuss how autism is understood by professionals, parents, and individuals on the spectrum. Have them note similarities and differences.

Partner Interviews: Inclusion (60 minutes)

- There are four habits of mind outlined in the film: Act as a Teacher and as a Learner, Watch Your Language, Presume Competence, and Seek Benefits for All. Start by having participants watch the Habits of Mind section one more time. Then have participants break into pairs and interview one another about the habits. Interview questions can range from “How do you interpret this habit?” to “Give me an example of how you engage in this habit” to “What other habits do you feel are important for teachers in inclusive schools?”

End-of-Day Review (30 minutes)

- Distribute End-of-Day Review, and ask participants to fill in one idea for each category.
- With a partner, have each participant share one question he or she still has, one “aha!” moment he or she has experienced, and one strategy he or she has learned.

DAY 2

Opening Activity: Whip (15 minutes)

- Using a “whip” structure (Harmon, 1995), move around the classroom, point to each person one at a time, and have each person share a one-sentence summary of the previous day.

Small-Group/Jigsaw Teaching and Learning: Lessons (60 minutes)

- Break participants into groups of three. This will serve as the base group for the activity. Once participants are in their base groups, they will each select a classroom of focus (Phyllis/Sheila, Amy, or Kendra/Kate). Then, using a jigsaw format (Kagan, 1994), have all participants assigned to Phyllis/Sheila meet as a group. Have all participants assigned to Amy meet as a group, and so forth. In these groups, participants will talk about what they saw in the video, discuss what techniques they see in their own classrooms, and choose two or three questions to answer from the facilitator’s guide. Then, have participants return to their original base groups and share key points with their two group members.

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BREAK (15 minutes)
How to Use This Video

Film Viewing (60 minutes)

- Distribute Speaking of Inclusion Quick Write and give participants about 10–15 minutes to complete the form.
- Show the Speaking of Inclusion film, and encourage participants to add the thoughts of the educators in the film to their own notes.
- Use the questions from the facilitator’s guide to lead a short whole-group discussion afterward.

——— LUNCH (45 minutes) ————

Collaborative Activity: Teaching Strategies (90 minutes)

- Break into seven groups, and have each small group look at one of the strategies in depth.
- Give each group a copy of the related page in the facilitator’s guide so that participants can read the associated quotations and have a copy of the questions. Have each group answer the questions and consider the recommendations.
- Have each group share with the larger group a poster containing 1) how we are doing, or a miniplan for improving practice in this area; and 2) a most significant “take away” from thinking about this strategy (e.g., we need more structured opportunities for students to improve social skills across the school day).
- If there is time, have each group visit the suggested web links for the different strategies.

——— BREAK (15 minutes) ————

Action Planning (60 minutes)

- Develop an action plan. Distribute the action plan worksheets, and have participants work alone, with a partner, or in small groups. Don’t forget to use the completed Is Your School Inclusive? Checklist as a resource for the plan.
- Have each person, pair, or group share their plan with the larger group.
- Discuss possible follow-up and supplemental activities (see page XX for ideas).

Additional Ideas for Staff Development

- View just the inclusion section of the film. Have staff members watch the clip and then do a walk through of classrooms and of the school in general to look for evidence of a school culture that is positive, welcoming, and inclusive.
- View just the autism section of the film. Then, host a panel of parents and or students from your school. Ask them to define autism and talk about helpful supports.
- View just the strategies section of the film. Then, have a small group of teachers collect materials, examples, and illustrations of how they are already using these strategies or how they could more successfully do so. Have these teachers use the video clips and their own content to present these ideas to the whole staff.
- View just the lessons section of the film. Then, have participants identify one of their own lesson plans that meets the needs of a wide range of learners. Have participants interview one another about their decisions, any adaptations they have made, and how they create support for students with autism.
How to Use This Video

• Throw an inclusion fair at your school. Choose a few days or a week (perhaps National Inclusive Schools Week, http://www.inclusiveschools.org/week2010). The fair can be housed in a staff lounge or large conference room. Bring in ideas for curricular adaptations (visuals, adapted literature, learning games), post inspirational quotes, set up a laptop with a list of great web sites posted next to it, and display helpful books (both for staff and students) at a resource table. In one corner, set up a television or computer and play “You’re Going to Love This Kid!” or Speaking of Inclusion and other films related to inclusive schooling. Invite staff to visit and maybe even conduct miniworkshops during the event.

• Watch Speaking of Inclusion, and create your own version of the film to either show at the end of the workshop or to use in future trainings.

• At your workshop, ask different participants to move to an adjacent space for 10–15 minutes at a time and provide answers to these prompts:
  o A commitment I am willing to make to reach and teach all students better is _____________
  __________________________________________________________________________________.
  o A commitment I am willing to make to reach and teach students with autism better is ______
  __________________________________________________________________________________.

Have participants answer these questions by holding up written signs featuring their responses. Then, take a photo of each participant holding up his or her sign. Put the photos together in a PowerPoint presentation or on a web site to remind all participants about their commitments to inclusive education and to their students.

Additional Ideas for University Courses

• View just the inclusion section of the film. Have students compare the views and practices of the teachers in the film with other definitions of inclusion they have seen or read.

• View just the autism section of the film. Then, host a panel of parents and or students from your community. Ask them to define autism and talk about helpful supports. If you have students in your course with autism spectrum labels, include them on the panel as well.

• View just the strategies section of the film. Have small groups of students conduct informal research on each of the strategies. Ask them to explore best practices in education and how these recommendations fit with what is known about teaching and learning in general.

• View just the lessons section of the film, and have students identify some of the strategies and supports offered to students with autism. Then, have students download lesson plans from various web sites (e.g., HotChalk Lessons Plan Page: http://www.lessonplanspage.com) and examine them. Review the lesson plans to see if ideas are included for accommodations, differentiating instruction, or otherwise supporting diverse learners.

• Watch the Speaking of Inclusion film, and have students create questions that could be asked of teacher educators, preservice teachers, practicing teachers, families in the community, students with disabilities, and students without disabilities. Consider allowing students to create a version of this film as one of their course assessments or as extra credit.

• Consider using the Speaking of Inclusion film as part of a broader study of autism and inclusion. Have students read chapters of “You’re Going to Love This Kid!”: Teaching Students with Autism in the Inclusive Classroom, Second Edition (Kluth, 2010) that correspond with sections of the film, and discuss both pieces together. For instance, watch the lessons section after reading Chapter XX: Lesson Planning.
Inclusion

When we’re including students, we are thinking about how do we make our schools responsive to every learner that walks in the door? How do we really appreciate, identify, and honor the individuality and the uniqueness that our learners bring? And how do we provide an appropriately challenging education to all? —PAULA KLUTH

Inclusive Schools

Inclusion in the early days was interpreted to mean that we are thinking about and considering the needs of students with disabilities and we’re bringing them into our general ed. classrooms. Today, many researchers and practitioners see inclusion with what I call the bit “i” or the capital “I” —inclusion for everybody. —PAULA KLUTH

Inclusive schooling stresses interdependence and independence, views all students as gifted, and values a sense of community (Falvey, Givner, & Kimm, 1995; Sapon-Shevin, 2007). According to Udvari-Solner, it also supports civil rights and equity in the classroom.

[Inclusive schooling] propels a critique of contemporary school culture and thus, encourages practitioners to reinvent what can be and should be to realize more humane, just and democratic learning communities. Inequities in treatment and educational opportunity are brought to the forefront, thereby fostering attention to human rights, respect for difference and value of diversity. (1997, p. 142)

Like Udvari-Solner, I define inclusive education as something that supports and benefits all learners. I also see it as a social action and political movement. If “inequities in treatment and educational opportunity are brought to the forefront,” for instance, teachers and community members might question practices such as tracking and standardized testing that segregate, stratify, and often harm students. If schools create “more humane, just, and democratic learning communities,” then all students will be valued and seen as important members of the school, including students from all racial and ethnic groups, students new to the school and community, students using English as a second language, students who identify themselves as gay and lesbian, and students marginalized for having different types of bodies (e.g., students deemed “too skinny,” those with weight problems). Inclusion is more than a set of strategies or practices; it is an educational orientation that embraces differences and values the uniqueness that each learner brings to the classroom.

How is your school doing in its commitment to inclusive schooling? See Table 1 to evaluate some of your practices and policies.

IN THE BOOK

For more information about inclusion, as well as more tools like the Is Your School Inclusive? Checklist, check out Chapter 2 of “You’re Going to Love This Kid!” (Kluth, 2010).
School Culture

What does the school look like and what does it feel like? Is it democratic? Do all students feel welcome, including kids who have ethnic differences, racial differences, differences in sexual orientation, gender differences, students with and without disabilities? –PAULA KLUTH

Often, the culture of a school is apparent to visitors the moment they walk in the front door. School outsiders can learn a lot about a school by the ways the walls are covered, the types of teacher conversations overheard in the hallways, and the ways in which students are engaged. All of these elements are aspects of school culture.

Fullan and Hargreaves described school culture as the Guiding beliefs and expectations evident in the way a school operates, particularly in reference to how people relate (or fail to relate) to each other. In simple terms, culture is “the way we do things” and relate to each other around here. (1996, p. 3)

If the culture is open, accepting, and caring, inclusive schooling can thrive. If the school culture is competitive, individualistic, and authoritative, however, teachers will find it impossible to grow inclusive schooling. Cultivating a safe, positive, and robust school culture may be the most difficult piece of creating an inclusive school, but it is also, perhaps, the most critical piece. See Table 1 for ideas for creating a more supportive school culture.

### Table 1. Suggestions for creating an inclusive school culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School leaders and educators concerned with creating an inclusive school culture might implement the following practices:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Hold informal brown-bag lunches with small groups of teachers, staff members, students, and parents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Invite parents and community members to visit classrooms, help with projects, and serve as resources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Use suggestion boxes or electronic bulletin boards, and implement suggestions from all stakeholder groups in the school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Give students and teachers opportunities to socialize.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Make time for school celebrations, both small and large.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

IN THE BOOK

Shaping school culture takes a group effort. For guidance on collaborating and cooperating with colleagues, check out Chapter 12 of “You’re Going to Love This Kid!” (Kluth, 2010).

Habits of Mind

In every classic example of students finding “unexpected” success, we find a teacher who believes that all students can learn and who implements practices in order to make this expectation come true (Keller, 1954; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Matthews, 1988; Meier, 1995; Moses & Cobb, 2001; Savarese, 2007). Clearly, teachers have incredible power to inspire learning and create important change in schools and in communities.

This part of the film is dedicated to the role of the teacher as an educational leader and change agent and stresses how central the attitudes, beliefs, and actions of teachers are to the cultivation of inclusive education. Four specific habits are discussed in the film. They are 1) act as teacher and learner, 2) watch your language, 3) presume competence, and 4) seek benefits for all.
Act as a Teacher and as a Learner
Ask questions like, “What can I learn from this student? What is this student trying to show me? What are the complexities that this student brings to the classroom? What are some of the gifts this student brings to the classroom?” –PAULA KLUTH

What does this habit mean to you? How does it look in your school?

Watch Your Language
Instead of saying, “He can’t even sit for 10 minutes,” it may be more helpful to say, “He can sit for 7 minutes.” And it’s not to say that you don’t talk about challenges, but we always want to be thinking about, “How am I thinking about this particular learner. Am I looking for the complexity in a child or am I making assumptions that will not be helpful?” –PAULA KLUTH

What does this habit mean to you? How does it look in your school?

Presume Competence
Students with autism are some of the most deceiving kids on the planet. And when I say that, I mean that so many students do not have reliable communication, do not have a way to express what they know. We don’t know what they know. –PAULA KLUTH

What does this habit mean to you? How does it look in your school?

Seek Benefits for All
Oftentimes we’re asking the question, “What do students without disabilities learn in an inclusive school? What do they get out of it?” And it’s the wrong question. You know, what do all students get out of diversity in their schooling environment? –PAULA KLUTH

What does this habit mean to you? How does it look in your school?

IN THE BOOK
For a more extensive exploration of the role of the teacher, including 10 Ways to Support Student with Autism and Promote Inclusive Schooling, check out Chapter 3 in “You’re Going to Love This Kid!” (Kluth, 2010).
Autism

There are really three areas of autism that are identified as areas of struggle or uniqueness…social deficits, communication deficits and stereotypic patterns of behavior and thoughts and movement. I tend to see these three areas as differences versus deficits because for some learners some of the time, these characteristics manifest as deficit areas. They’re challenges for kids. And for some people some of the time, some of these differences are actually helpful to people. So, I tend to think about them in a more neutral way than the traditional definition. —PAULA KLUTH

In the book “You’re Going to Love This Kid!” (Kluth, 2010), I share additional definitions of autism that come from people with autism, experts who experience the disability every day, who know what it feels like to have a disability label, and who struggle with societal notions of normalcy.

One of the most notable aspects of the definitions put forward by people with autism is the fact that so many individuals across subgroups and labels define autism by the gifts it brings them. This is not to say that everyone who experiences autism always experiences it as something positive. In fact, many individuals with autism describe it as something very difficult and painful at times. I highlight the positive spin that some put on their definitions, however, to show the discrepancies that often occur among typical ways of viewing autism and the ways of knowing employed by people on the spectrum. Consider a few ways in which some individuals describe the gifts associated with their label:

I like being different. I prefer having AS to being normal. I don’t have the foggiest idea exactly what it is I like about AS. I think that people with AS see things differently. I also think they see them more clearly. (Hall, 2001, p. 15)

We can describe a situation like no one else. We can tell you what intangibles feel like and secret flavors taste like. We can describe for you, in unbelievable depth, the intricate details of our favorite obsessions. (Willey, 2001, p. 29)

I believe Autism is a marvelous occurrence of nature, not a tragic example of the human mind gone wrong. In many cases, Autism can also be a kind of genius undiscovered. (O’Neill, 1999, p. 14)

NEED MORE?

For more autobiographical descriptions of autism, check out Chapter 1 of “You’re Going to Love This Kid!” (Kluth, 2010).

Communication Differences

Many students with autism have communication differences that affect speech and language, and many use few or no spoken words. For students who do speak, their speech may have unusual qualities. For instance, a student may have unusual speech intonation or use repetitive speech (echoing the words of others). Furthermore, conversational timing and rhythm may be difficult for someone with autism to learn or use. Students might also struggle with using language. Some students, for instance, have difficulties using pronouns or learning the rules of conversation. Others may find figurative language (e.g., jokes, metaphors) hard to decipher.

Students may have difficulties with expressive or receptive communication. That is, they may have trouble sharing thoughts and ideas or struggle to understand what they hear or see. Many students experience difficulties with both receptive and expressive communication.
IN THE VIDEO, you’ll see teachers finding creative ways to support student communication. For example, Diane Kamil, has word processors available for some of her third graders:

The students absolutely have become independent, working with AlphaSmarts over the year. I think just the motivation of having this little laptop on their desk helps them stay engaged in activities. Kids with autism who use AlphaSmarts, I feel like actually can get better work done. I really feel like having the AlphaSmart available, particularly with kids who struggle with fine motor skills, allows them to get more finished. It’s faster, it’s more efficient. I can respond to it quickly. –DIANE KAMIL

Social Differences

A common stereotype is that students with autism are not interested in social relationships. John Elder Robison, the author of the runaway bestseller, Look Me in the Eye, explains that, in his case, nothing could have been further from the truth:

I did not ever want to be alone. And all of those child psychologists who said, “John prefers to play by himself” were dead wrong. I played by myself because I was a failure at playing with others. I was alone as a result of my own limitations, and being alone was one of the bitterest disappointments of my young life. (2007, p. 211)

The characterization of the person on the spectrum as aloof or disconnected is as pervasive as it is potentially damaging. Although some individuals with autism do report that they need time alone or find some social situations challenging, some of these same individuals also claim that they crave social interaction and friendship. That is, it is possible for a person with autism to both struggle with and want relationships. In fact, some individuals with autism claim that being with people is not challenging, but the “things” that accompany being with people (e.g., conversation, compromise) make building friendships difficult.

Other students find social situations difficult because they lack the skills necessary for successful “typical” social interactions. For instance, individuals with autism may not be very good at reading subtle social signals. If a person yawns or begins putting on a jacket, most people would read this as a signal that the individual is getting ready to end the conversation and go home. For some individuals with autism, reading these subtle signs is a real challenge.

IN THE VIDEO, you’ll see a special, but low-key, program a few teachers put together to help kids learn social skills and make friends in a safe environment. As Autism Program Director Sheila Danaher describes,

Lunch Bunch is a great way to build community. We really wanted to show students, at a really small group level, what that child’s strengths are. And the best way to do that was around lunch. So, we get a group of students together. And, in our case, it’s usually three or four within one classroom with disabilities. And then they get to invite a friend. So, we kind of structure in the beginning of the year so that every single child from that classroom gets an opportunity to come and have lunch with a teacher and this group of students. –SHEILA DANAHER

Repetitive/Stereotypical Movements

Some of the repetitive or stereotypical movements commonly seen in students with autism are hand flapping, rocking, and finger flicking. Donnellan and Leary (1995) have described these be-
behaviors as movement differences. Movement differences describe symptoms involving both excessive, atypical movement and the loss of typical movement. These difficulties may impede postures, actions, speech, thoughts, perceptions, emotions, and memories (Donnellan & Leary, 1995; Leary & Hill, 1996). Individuals with movement differences may walk with an uneven gait, engage in excessive movements (e.g., rocking, hand flapping, pacing), produce speech that is unintentional, stutter, or struggle to make transitions from room to room or situation to situation.

A movement difference can cause difficulties with the dynamics of movement such as starting, executing (e.g., speed, control, target, rate), continuing, stopping, combining, or switching movements. The complexity of disturbed movements may range from simple movements to those affecting overall levels of activity and behavior.

**Fascinations**

Many individuals with autism have a deep interest in one or a variety of topics. Some interests are commonly seen across individuals with autism (e.g., trains, animals, electronics); others seem more unique to an individual person. For instance, Sean Barron, a man with autism, once had a great interest in the number 24. At another point in his life, he became fascinated by dead-end streets (Barron & Barron, 1992). Phil Dougherty (2006) shares that his daughter, Jenny, has been, at different times, fascinated with slugs, fire alarms, and recycling symbols.

**IN THE BOOK**

For examples of fascinations and ideas of how to use them as teaching tools, check out “Just Give Him the Whale!” (Kluth & Schwarz, 2008). Also, to help students understand how teachers might use certain students’ fascinations in the classroom, check out the children’s books, Pedro’s Whale (Kluth & Schwarz, 2010) and A is for “All Aboard!” (Kluth & Kluth, 2009).

**IN THE VIDEO**

For examples of fascinations and ideas of how to use them as teaching tools, check out “Just Give Him the Whale!” (Kluth & Schwarz, 2008). Also, to help students understand how teachers might use certain students’ fascinations in the classroom, check out the children’s books, Pedro’s Whale (Kluth & Schwarz, 2010) and A is for “All Aboard!” (Kluth & Kluth, 2009).

- Try to determine the function of students’ repetitive behaviors—are the behaviors a reaction to something you can control? Do they help the student? Have you noticed any special interests in your students? Think about ways you can incorporate them into lessons or classroom routines.

**Sensory Differences**

People with autism tend to have unusual sensory experiences. Students may exhibit hypo- or hyper-responses to visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, tactile, vestibular, and proprioceptive senses; all of these can have an impact on a student’s classroom performance and behavior (Kern et al., 2006; Myles et al., 2004). Among the sensory “violations” that people on the spectrum report are fluorescent or intense lighting, food with unappealing textures or tastes; speech that is too loud or too fast; unexpected or painful sounds; perfumes or strong odors; chaotic visual fields; rooms that are too warm or too cool; and scratchy clothing (Janzen, 2003; Myles, Cook, Miller, Rinner, & Robbins, 2000).

To make matters more complicated, responses to sensory stimuli will change throughout the day, depending on each individual’s “sensory threshold” or level of tolerance (Aquilla, Yack, & Sutton, 2005, p. 202).
IN THE VIDEO, a principal talks about how sensory supports for students who need them can be incorporated into the classroom:

Inclusion ideas work really well for everybody...when you make those choices available to kids in the class to sit with a weighted snake around their neck or sit on a bumpy chair or sit in a cushion, that those don't become distractions and problems and more work. They become part of their classroom climate, and all of that can support learning, not detract from it. —JOHN PRICE

IN THE BOOK

For ideas on how to modify and adapt materials to overcome (or take advantage of) sensory differences, check out the section called “Environment and Sensory” in From Tutor Scripts to Talking Sticks (Kluth & Danaher, 2010).
Individualizing Objectives and Standards

And so [some of my students with disabilities], I might expect them to just tell me the basic level like, “This is metamorphic rock; this is an igneous rock,” whereas my higher level thinkers, I might ask them to maybe compare and contrast how they came to be or how they’re used by different people. So, I’m able to differentiate within those targets. —KENDRA LARMOUR

Ultimately, the goal of education is not for all students to be perfectly alike, and in practice all students cannot or should not be able to do the same thing at the end of a school year. For this reason, national, state, and district standards must be adapted for individual students.

One way to adapt standards is to fracture them into levels of attainment. In other words, they can be broken down into incremental objectives, providing teachers and students with a way to personalize content while using the same or similar curriculum, instruction, and materials.

Examples of adapted standards include the following:

• “The student will write for five different audiences” can be adapted to “the student will independently write an e-mail.”

• “The student will be able to explain causes of the Civil War” can be adapted to “the student will identify a cause of the Civil War.”

• “The student will know that the Earth is a planet” can be adapted to “given a picture of all of the planets, the student will identify the Earth.”

Suggested Resources


Suggested Web Links

Education World: National Standards
http://www.educationworld.com/standards/
This site links to state and national standards across content areas and grade levels.

National Center on Educational Outcomes
http://www.cehd.umn.edu/NCEO/
The National Center on Educational Outcomes provides leadership in the participation of students with disabilities in national and state assessments and in standards-setting efforts.

IN THE BOOK

Check out Strategy 91, Adapted Standards, in From Tutor Scripts to Talking Sticks (Kluth & Danahe, 2010).
Getting It Off the Page

One of the differentiation techniques that I [advocate for is] get it off paper. So, what I mean by that is—for math, for instance, instead of filling out a number...we'll do a number line where they can hop. They can hop the even numbers. They can hop the odd numbers. We'll use the human calculator where children can actually stand, and there's a calculator on the floor, and they can tap it out. And many of my students have really poor fine motor skills and need a lot of movement, so if they can get out of the chair and out of the book, it's always much better and really more successful for them. —SHEILA DANAHER

As Sheila Danaher emphasizes in this opening quote, many students with autism need teachers to move lessons off the written page, to make learning more active, and to create opportunities for engagement with materials. Getting it “off the page” is, of course, a helpful strategy for all learners, but for individuals with autism who have fine motor problems and movement differences, it can be the difference between their presence in a classroom and their participation in that classroom.

Ideas for getting it off the page include the following:

• Provide opportunities for partner and small-group learning.
• Incorporate learning games and activities.
• Allow student to glue, attach, draw, sculpt, or design instead of write.
• Have students visit web sites, engage in WebQuests, and explore new technologies.
• Have students work with objects, models, and artifacts instead of worksheets, notebooks, and pencils.
• Create or use materials that require or allow for movement (e.g., interactive whiteboards).
• Put interactive materials on the classroom floor, on the walls, or up and down the hallways.
• Use drama and role play.

Suggested Resources


Suggested Web Links

The Access Center
http://www.k8accesscenter.org/default.asp
The Access Center is a national technical assistance (TA) center. You will find articles, forms, and PowerPoint presentations on differentiated instruction.

CAST
http://www.cast.org/pd/index.html
The CAST web site offers hundreds, if not thousands, of ideas for expanding learning opportunities for all. Technology is a special focus of this site.

National Service Learning Clearinghouse
http://www.servicelearning.org/
This site is a one-stop-shop for everything related to service learning. Your will find project ideas, recommended reading, and resources for both kids and their teachers.

WebQuest.org
http://webquest.org/
Want to “get it off the page” and find it on the internet? Check out this resource-rich site. It includes hundreds of WebQuests on subjects that range from the Civil War to popular literature.
IN THE BOOK

Check out *From Tutor Scripts to Talking Sticks* (Kluth & Danaher, 2010) for dozens of ideas, including the Human Calculator (Strategy 77).

Responding to Sensory Needs

When you make those choices available to kids in the class to sit with a weighted snake around their neck or sit on a bumpy chair or sit in a cushion,...those don't become distractions and problems and more work. They become part of their classroom climate, and all of that can support learning, not detract from it.  —JOHN PRICE

Sometimes students are unsuccessful because they are uncomfortable or feel unsafe or even afraid in their educational environment. Providing an appropriate learning environment can be as central to a student’s success as any other teaching strategy or educational tool and, as John Price points out in the quote above, supports that help one often help all.

In order to create environments that are most conducive to learning for students with autism and their peers without disabilities, teachers may need to examine how the classroom looks, feels, and functions. Helpful questions that can help us evaluate learning space for individual students include the following:

- How does the noise level in the classroom affect the student?
- How, if ever, is music used?
- What materials are in the environment? Are they adapted for the learner? Age-appropriate? Varied?
- What types of visual input or cues (e.g., picture schedule, written reminders) are in the work space?
- Is the lighting appropriate? Is it too bright or too dim for some learners?
- What seating options does the student have?
- Are the surroundings motivating, interesting, and created, in part, by students?

Some specific suggestions for adapting seating and lighting are also offered here.

Seating

Having a few different seating options in the classroom can potentially boost the educational experiences of all learners. Options to try include the following:

- Beanbag chairs
- Rocking chairs
- Reading pillows
- Floor pillows
- Carpet squares
- Couches, loveseats, arm chairs, or large footstools;
- Stadium chairs for large group sitting on the floor
- Video game chairs
Students (with and without disabilities) may also prefer to sit on the floor for some part of the day. Teachers can even design instruction that calls for students to sit on the floor or students might be given the option to sit on the floor or at their desks.

**Lighting**
The right lighting can sooth, calm, energize, or inspire students. The wrong lighting, however, can be annoying, distracting, and even painful for students with autism. Children and adults with disabilities have reported problems in particular with florescent lights. Florescent lighting, the most common lighting used in classrooms, can affect learning, behavior, and the comfort level of students with autism, learning disabilities, and anxiety and other related problems. If the lighting does seem to be a concern for the student, you may need to experiment with different ways of using light:

- Try lower levels of light.
- Take advantage of natural light as much as possible. Sit your student with sensory problems close to the windows. Be aware that during certain points in the day (late morning, midday), even natural light can be overpowering for some students.
- Use upward projecting rather than downward projecting lighting.
- Experiment with different types of lighting. Turn on the front bank of lights but not the back, or turn on alternating banks of lights.
- Suggest sunglasses. Sunglasses might be worn during recess or can even be tried indoors (especially near florescent lighting). A baseball cap can also help students avoid direct exposure to light.
- Move the student’s seat. Sometimes the problem is not the lights themselves but the reflection of light on a wall or other surface.
- Change older florescent bulbs. They tend to flicker more as they age.

**Suggested Resources**


**Suggested Web Links**
American Chronicle (*Goodbye to Fluorescent Bulbs*, a blog entry by Donna Williams)
http://www.americanchronicle.com/articles/view/21592

Indiana Resource Center for Autism (Sensory Integration: Tips to Consider)
http://www.iidc.indiana.edu/irca/Sensory/sensoryIntegrate.html
This handout was created by two seasoned autism consultants.

Learn about how and why teachers are choosing to use exercise balls instead of chairs.
IN THE BOOK

See Chapter 5 of “You’re Going to Love This Kid!” (Kluth, 2010) for more information on sensory supports and on creating a comfortable classroom for students with autism.

Employing Positive Behavior Supports

Some days, he has situations with behaviors where he’s agitated. He’ll come in where he’s a little bit agitated, his day has gone off. You just come over and you make sure that he has all of his colors and things out and say, “Okay, here you go. You can draw Beetlejuice for 5 minutes and then I need you to come on and do what we’re doing.” So, we’ll give him a little bit of extra time and a little bit of extra room when he’s agitated. He’ll draw for a while, I’ll bring him to topic, we’ll go back. I’ll say, “Okay, you have a break. You can draw for a while.” Go back to topic and then we’ll give him a break again. —AMY HERMANSON

In an inclusive classroom, some behaviors of students with disabilities may require more support and intervention than behaviors of their typically developing peers might. This is particularly true for students who have behavior problems stemming from sensory needs, communication differences, or social struggles. These individuals may need teachers to think more creatively and to consider a range of supports that may offer structure, guidance, information, and comfort.

The techniques used by teachers in the film are varied, but most have the common characteristic of being positive. That is, the teachers are often proactive rather than reactive. They teach rather than punish, and they build on student abilities rather than focus on challenges. The following are positive supports teachers can try.

Focusing on Relationships

Perhaps the best way to better understand behaviors is to seek ways to connect with students and work hard at building relationships with them. This is especially important when students do not have a reliable way to communicate; these students cannot easily express thoughts and feelings, so teachers must form relationships with them and their families in order to support them in meaningful ways.

Evaluating Curriculum and Instruction

When a student is struggling, especially when he or she is struggling in one environment or subject area more than others, teachers should consider if the content or the instruction needs to change. Some of the most common causes of challenging behavior in students with autism include

• Curriculum that is dull and lacks variety (e.g., same flashcards repeatedly)
• Curriculum that is not age-appropriate (e.g., an 9-year-old working on color identification)
• Instruction that is a poor match for the individual’s learning style (e.g., a very active student is required to sit for long periods of time)
• Instruction that is incompatible with the learner’s challenges (e.g., asking a student with fine motor problems to write all assignments instead of allowing typing)
• Not enough opportunities for communication, conversation, and choice making (e.g., nonverbal student participates in lessons without augmentative and alternative communication)
• Not enough social interaction (e.g., too much learning in 1:1 settings)
• Not enough fun or joy in the day (e.g., not enough of the student’s interests embedded in activities)
Tapping into Interests

In another one of my books, “Just Give Him the Whale!” (Kluth & Schwarz, 2008), my coauthor, Patrick Schwarz, and I shared a story about Mr. Rye, a teacher who tapped into his student’s interest in order to develop a relationship with him. Kip, who loves tractors, was shocked when Mr. Rye invited him to lunch and proceeded to ask him all about John Deere, Case, and other companies that the student revered. This was a turning point in Kip’s education as no teacher had ever treated his love of farm equipment as anything more than a tolerable quirk. Using the same philosophy, Amy Hermanson used Jacob’s love of drawing to prepare him for learning and to calm him down after a difficult moment.

Teaching New Skills

Sometimes teachers focus on addressing a behavior when it would be more useful to focus on addressing the individual’s needs and on building the student’s competencies. Students may need to learn a new skill or to obtain information about something in order to feel more competent and comfortable. The use of visuals can be incredibly helpful in providing information, as can social narratives, previewing experiences and materials, and using role play and drama.

In addition to teaching skills that may increase student independence, help them communicate better, and expand opportunities, keep in mind that you may also want to teach skills that specifically help students feel calm and gain control of themselves during challenging moments (e.g., progressive relaxation).

Offering Safe Spaces and Breaks

Teachers should make quiet study or relaxation areas available for any student who seems to need to get away. The library might be used or a few chairs might be set up in the hallway for any student who needs a break from the chaos of the classroom. The most important part of creating a safe space, of course, is ensuring that the area will not be used or viewed as a place of punishment.

Breaks might also be offered inside the classroom if students simply need time away from an activity. Students might be offered short reading, pacing, or fidgeting breaks, for instance.

Suggested Resources


Suggested Web Links

The Alliance to Prevent Restraint, Aversive Interventions and Seclusion
http://aprais.tash.org/faq.htm

The Alliance is a group that has formed to end aversives such as physical isolation and prolonged restraint. You will find resources such as a media toolkit and a speaker’s bureau on the site. If you know a child who has been injured at school or who is in danger of being injured, you need the information on this site.

Imagine Consulting (David Pitonyak’s Home Page)

Pitonyak’s site offers several sensitive and useful articles (including a few in Spanish) on supporting students with significant disabilities and plenty of information on behavior. This is a great site for those supporting teenagers and adults.
Gentle Teaching
http://www.gentleteaching.nl/
This site is focused on fostering gentleness in schools—especially for students with significant behavior needs.

IN THE BOOK
In addition to the sections noted above in “Just Give Him the Whale!” (Kluth & Schwarz, 2008) check out Chapter 9, Rethinking Behavior, in “You’re Going to Love This Kid!” (Kluth, 2010).

Using Visuals

With a student who may not read well, I may have pictures instead of writing with dry erase markers. I think visual supports are extremely effective. It removes the need to discuss, you know, “Why can’t I take a break now? Why do I have to do this now?” I can remove myself and say, “The schedule says…” and it takes away the confrontation. —JENNIFER LARRY

Since individuals with autism often have strong visual skills and—at the same time—struggle with auditory skills, visual supports can be very effective as a teaching tool (Arwood & Kaulitz, 2007; Cohen & Sloan, 2007; Dyrbjerg & Vedel, 2007; Savner & Myles, 2000). Since written words, pictures, and objects stay put and do not “disappear” like speech, visuals allow cues and information to remain available to the student and, therefore, greatly reduce stress and anxiety. Furthermore, when a student has the use of visuals, his or her chances of success on tasks are increased; he or she can be as independent as possible. A few popular visuals used in the classrooms I visited include activity schedules, first/then boards, choice menus, and written words.

Activity Schedules
An activity schedule cues a student through a task with photographs. The number of activities and steps per activity can be adjusted based on the needs and abilities of the learner. For some students, activities will need to be depicted step by step in order for the child to complete the activity independently. For others, a few words on an index card might be sufficient.

First/Then Boards
First/then boards are the most basic type of picture schedule you can provide, but they can be useful for any student, no matter the age or need. A first/then board is simply a piece of paper or laminated board that helps the student quickly understand the order of two activities and, specifically, what task or activity must be completed before a preferred task or activity can be started.

Choice Menus
Menus may offer students just a handful of choices or several. Menus are sometimes provided because students cannot look at an environment and see what the options are; they therefore need a tangible representation of these options (e.g., a menu of exercises appropriate during physical education warm-ups). Teachers may also make menus for things that are tangible or in sight (e.g., indoor recess games); the purpose of a menu in this case would be to narrow options, quickly allow the student to see what is available, and supplement any verbal explanation by the classroom teacher about what is available.
Written Words
Written words/cues can also be used as visual supports for learners with autism and Asperger syndrome. Written words can be produced on the spot to cue students or word or phrase cards can be created beforehand to use across contexts and environments. Some teachers even carry a memo pad or small wipe board for this purpose. Sometimes, it can be more comforting for students to see written explanations of, for instance, why the schedule changed, rather than hearing the teacher explain. Writing or drawing an explanation of why the schedule changed can also be helpful. Words and cues can also work throughout the day to help students navigate the day.

Suggested Resources


Suggested Web Links
Amy Laurent’s Professional Web Site
http://www.amy-laurent.com/
Laurent’s site offers many resources, including a tip or idea of the month presented via YouTube with a how-to tutorial. Not all of the tutorials relate to visual supports, but many of them do.

Technical Assistance Center on Social Emotional Intervention
http://challengingbehavior.org/do/resources/teaching_tools/tytc_toc.htm
The “teaching tools” page of this web site contains directions for not only making a First/Then Board but also for creating at least a dozen other supports for students with learning and social needs.

Using Graphics in the Classroom
http://www2.drury.edu/dswadley/graphics/index.htm
This site is a big list of web sites that teachers can use to find new graphics for classroom materials and curriculum.

Creating Peer and Social Supports
One of the supports that we use for a student who is in a regular education classroom so that he can be a little more social with the students in the room is by showing some pictures. If you turn it on and you press the button, you can record messages on here about different events that he attended. And then he can come in Monday, and he can press the button, and it will describe what happened to him over the weekend. And then that way, other students can comment on it and discuss it with him. So, this is just a great way to get other students involved in socializing with him. —AMY MOLL

Although no teacher can create friendships among students, every educator can create conditions in the classroom that will give students opportunities to strengthen social relationships, learn about and from each other, and get and give support. The hope is, of course, that these opportunities will eventually lead to the development of friendships.
Developing and sustaining a school community requires that educators use strategies and practices that purposefully encourage and teach sharing, learning, interdependence, and respect. For example, teachers might encourage community through cooperative learning experiences, conflict resolution opportunities, games, class meetings, service learning, social-justice education, cross-age and same-age tutoring and mentoring, and school and classroom celebrations.

Some specific suggestions for providing social support are also offered here.

**Build Relationships Through Activities**

Some students who find conversation and “typical” ways of socializing a challenge are amazingly adept at socializing when the interaction occurs in relation to a favorite activity or interest. One teacher from the film, Sheila Danaher, invites students with and without autism to eat lunch together, play games, and have “dance parties.”

**Role Play**

Role play is another strategy that many students find helpful when learning to socialize. Students may need only a quick verbal role play to get through a situation (e.g., rehearse steps involved in ordering lunch from the cafeteria) or a full dramatic role play can be used in which the teacher or other students take on different parts. Role plays can be used to practice a specific situation (e.g., singing in a concert) or to improve certain skills (e.g., greeting people). One of my former students often asked his brother to role-play “teenager conversations” with him. The student’s brother would bring up a topic, and the young man with Asperger syndrome would practice entering and staying in the conversation.

**Social Secrets**

For many learners with autism, participating in a social interaction is like playing a game without knowing the rules or the objectives. Some individuals with autism report that the social demands of making small talk or walking into a party can create stress, anxiety, and panic. Students report that they often feel as if everyone else knows the social secrets necessary for success and they do not. For these reasons, it can be very helpful to explicitly teach students about social situations.

Sharing secrets may involve giving students information as situations arise. For instance, if a student is at a school dance and seems confused about what those at the dance expect of her, the teacher might approach her and suggest that she get a snack, approach some friends to talk, or join other students on the dance floor. Some students may even want these options in writing.

It is important to remember that sharing social secrets is important, even for students who do not speak or have reliable communication. Just because a student cannot express confusion related to social situations does not mean he or she will not be puzzled about them. To err on the side of caution, teachers should provide information about social situations to every student.

**Friendship-Focused Individualized Education Program Goals**

Along with targeting social skills for students who need such support, friendships and social connection can also be focal points of the individualized education program (IEP). As Tashie, Shapiro-Barnard, and Rossetti (2006) pointed out in their seminal book, *Seeing the Charade: What We Need To Do and Undo to Make Friendships Happen*, we can’t exactly write a goal such as “Luis will have three good friends on 4 consecutive days with 80% accuracy”! Instead, we must write goals that create the necessary conditions for friendships to flourish as well as make sure that the supports and services are geared toward relationship building and academic growth. Both can be achieved without sacrificing the other, and most people would agree that human connection, socialization, and feelings of belonging help individuals learn and feel motivated, so focusing on friendships should never be seen as something extraneous to the “real work” of schools.

**Suggested Resources**


Suggested Web Links

Dennis Debbaudt’s Autism Risk and Safety Management
http://autismriskmanagement.com/links.html
This unique web site should be in the “favorites” folder of every teacher, police officer, and parent. It has publications, links, and safety products to review.

Pacer Center’s Kids Against Bullying
http://www.pacerkidsagainstbullying.org/
This unique site empowers kids to support one another and create safer school environments.

Peaceful Playgrounds
http://www.peacefulplaygrounds.com/
The purpose of Peaceful Playgrounds is to introduce teachers to the many choices of activities available on playgrounds. Articles, a blog, and an array of products (e.g., stencils for creating structured games) will help any school create better options for students with and without disabilities during recess.

IN THE BOOK

See Chapter 6 of “You’re Going to Love This Kid!” (Kluth, 2010) for more information on providing peer and social supports.

Collaborating and Co-Teaching

I think having a working relationship with my paraprofessional, a good working relationship is imperative. I think the best way that I’ve been able to coordinate that energy is to take the time to learn about the person I’m working with and make them feel like they are just as important to the classroom as the general teacher is. –DIANE KAMIL

In inclusive classrooms, the adults shift and share roles and responsibilities in order to expand their own skills, further their own knowledge, and give students access to a wider range of supports. In inclusive schools, lesson planning involves not only teachers but also, in some cases, therapists and paraprofessionals. Designing classroom rules and establishing guidelines for the school community originates from all team members as well, including students and their families, and both special and general educators are responsible for IEP development and implementation.

Co-teaching is one way educators in all of the featured schools collaborated to meet the needs of all students. Co-teaching typically involves a specialist and a classroom teacher jointly planning, instructing, and evaluating heterogeneous groups of students in general education classrooms (Murowski, 2009; Walther-Thomas, Korinek, McLaughlin, & Williams, 2000). By intentionally varying their roles, the co-teachers share responsibility for their classes. Three common co-teaching structures used in the classrooms I visited are duet teaching, one teach/one assist, and parallel teaching.

Duet Teaching

Duet teaching simply involves two adults working together to provide instruction. These “duet” presentations (Greene & Isaacs, 1999) typically involve both adults engaging in primary teaching roles in the class; instructors take turns leading class discussion, answering student questions, and facilitating the lectures and activities, for example. The classroom scene with Sheila Danaher and Phyllis O’Hara is an example of duet teaching. There are points in the lesson where both teachers...
are at the helm of the classroom providing instruction. At other times, they rotate from group to group, assisting learners with their assigned tasks.

**One Teach/One Assist**

Another structure, one teach/one assist, involves teachers sharing lesson delivery responsibilities; one leads the lesson while the other supports in some way (Cook & Friend, 1995). The lead person is usually in charge of the content while the assisting teacher adds examples; shares humor or anecdotes; or takes notes on a chart, chalkboard, or easel. Or one instructor can act as lead teacher while the other floats throughout the classroom, providing individual assistance and facilitating small-group activities. This structure can be seen in the science lesson with Kendra Larmour taking the lead in the lesson and Kate Haskett floating around the room, giving cues and assisting all learners.

**Parallel Teaching**

Parallel teaching involves splitting the class into equal sections and providing each group with the same lesson or activity (Cook & Friend, 1995). This structure lowers the student–teacher ratio and, therefore, “is useful when students need opportunities to respond aloud, to engage in hands-on activities, or to interact with one another” (Cook & Friend, 1995, p. XX). Parallel teaching can also be used when teachers want to introduce smaller groups to two different activities, concepts, or ideas; the two instructors teach different content for some part of the class and then switch groups and repeat the lesson with the other half of the class. One version of parallel instruction can be seen in the film. At one point, Diane Kamil is working with a small group on a reader’s theater rehearsal and Jennifer Larry is helping students write short essays on AlphaSmarts.

**Suggested Resources**


**Suggested Web Links**

Circle of Inclusion

http://www.circleofinclusion.org/

This site is a favorite of educators trying to maintain energy around inclusive schooling. The “methods and practices” section is the most relevant to those interested in collaboration.

Co-Teaching Connection

http://www.marilynfriend.com/

Dr. Marilyn Friend’s web site focuses on collaboration and provides co-teaching resources. Innovative practices are highlighted.

Power of 2

http://www.powerof2.org/

This web site, sponsored by the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), is specifically designed to help schools more of their collaborative models forward.

**IN THE BOOK**

See Chapter 12 of “You’re Going to Love This Kid!” (Kluth, 2010) for more information on collaboration and co-teaching.
Phyllis O'Hara and Sheila Danaher with Bernard and Nick

I think the biggest thing I've learned about students with autism is that it's really fun....I've just had a great time. We just have fun together. We're able to have really fun conversations. And sometimes I'm just like I just want to sit down and hang out here with you, and let's talk about, you know, the weather and the map. And it's been a really wonderful experience.  

--PHYLLIS O'HARA

Lesson Summary

In this lesson students were creating performances of fables. Some of the groups were taking fables and using them to create their own stories, and some of them were using a reader's theater script.

Adaptations and Key Supports

In this lesson, Phyllis and Sheila employ many techniques to engage their diverse learners including the following.

Accessible Lesson Formats

In this clip, Phyllis and Sheila are using reader’s theater and some small group discussions. Prior to the lesson, Phyllis introduced a learning game, and following the lesson, students worked on another collaborative activity. Phyllis and Shelia use a lot of structures that are “elastic,” or accessible to many learners. That is, they plan formats that are varied and that allow for different types of contributions from different learners:

I mean, it’s hard for any student to sit in a reading and writing class for 100 minutes. So, getting students on their feet, having them in different groups, working with different groups of students just helps, I think, keep the concentration, keep the interest, keep the ownership in the class.  

--PHYLLIS O'HARA

Adapting Materials

These teachers are expert at adapting learning materials. In fact, Shelia Danaher was my coauthor on From Talking Sticks to Tutor Scripts (2010), a book I wrote about differentiating instruction by creating accessible instructional materials, and many of the featured materials in the book were from Phyllis’s classroom. These teachers have adapted books in many different ways; they have used similar books on a common theme, added highlighter tape, inserted graphics and symbols, and supplemented with audio. They have also adapted materials by using technology such as AlphaSmarts and computers. Finally, they routinely make changes to lesson materials used daily. They have created math “helper” binders, pocket-sized cue cards to help learners complete tasks, and adapted worksheets and notebooks tailored to students’ individual needs. Phyllis describes some of the adapted materials featured in the video clip, including simple changes like the addition of a word bank:

Some of the adaptations that I’ve provided for students with disabilities were one of the students, we took see-through tape and placed it over his lines so that it was automatically highlighted for him. When the students were determining character traits for their characters, some of the students with disabilities had a word bank to choose from, rather than just having broad, pick any words.  

--PHYLLIS O'HARA
Collaborative Planning

Like many co-teachers, Sheila and Phyllis cannot co-teach every hour or even every day. They do, however, engage in regular collaborative planning. These two teachers (and sometimes other collaborative partners, e.g., therapists and paraprofessionals) map out upcoming units as a team, decide on themes and key questions, and discuss how to adapt these themes and related materials and strategies. See Figure 1 for a lesson planning form used by these co-teachers.

Varying Questions and Adjusting Objectives

One of the easiest ways to adapt for students with different needs is to simply vary daily questions. Even in the same whole-class discussion, teachers can adjust how they interact with each student. For instance, a teacher might ask one student, “Can you finish this sentence: A mountain is like a ___________?” Another student might be asked, “Do you know what a comparison like this is called?” Still another student might be asked, “What is a simile you might have used in this passage?” Phyllis explains that she often does this in an impromptu fashion as she moves from student to student and group to group:

Some of the ways I differentiate when I’m talking to kids are, in some cases, you can say, “Where should we place this scene?” But with other students, I would say, “They’re eating in this scene. Where might you eat?” And then we would get to the fact that the scene should be set in the kitchen. –PHYLLIS O’HARA

TIP FROM SHEILA

I think when you’re thinking about kids with autism and how you want to set them up for success, you really want to first—we do a parent inventory in the beginning of the year, finding out what are things that they really like, what are their favorite, you know, snacks, what are their favorite activities, and then really trying to build some of those things in as naturally as you can within the classroom.

Questions

• Sheila and Phyllis are a great example of a co-teachers who don’t have the opportunity to teach together on any type of regular or predictable schedule. That is, they collaborate by occasionally co-teaching, by regularly coplanning, by sharing resources, and by educating one another about their processes and expertise. How do co-teachers in your school collaborate when they don’t necessarily have the opportunity to teach together day in and day out?

• Phyllis makes a conscious effort to vary her cues and questions when working with different learners throughout the day. Many teachers do this work unconsciously (but often still effectively). Do you do this work? Do you consciously or unconsciously vary your interactions with learners?

• In this clip, you can see some of the adapted materials used by this team, including using highlighting tape on books and word banks on student planning sheets. If an observer entered your inclusive classrooms, what types of curricular adaptations would he or she see? What types of materials (or changes to materials) would the observer notice that would help students with autism gain access to the curriculum and instruction?

IN THE BOOK

Although not extensively covered in the video, strategies for teaching language arts are covered in great depth in the book “You’re Going to Love This Kid!” (Chapter 8; Kluth, 2010) and in a book I coauthored with Kelly Chandler-Olcott (2008), “A Land We Can Share”: Teaching Literacy to Students with Autism.”
Amy Hermonson with Jacob

Jacob has required a lot of creativity on my part, which I have enjoyed. For example, he loves artwork, so he’s done most of the publishing work on the brochure today. He’s the one that went in and gathered the pictures that he needed on the computer. He picked the graphic layout. He picked all of the different visuals... and he placed them where he wanted them.  

–AMY HERMONSON

Lesson Summary

In Amy Hermanson's lesson, students are engaged in informal research with peer partners. They are collecting information to create informational brochures on genetic disorders.

Adaptations and Key Supports

In this lesson, Amy employs many techniques to engage her diverse learners including the following.

Allowing Different Students to Make Different Contributions

As Amy Hermanson shares in the quote above, she has different targeted outcomes for different learners and provides opportunities for different students to make different contributions to the classroom and to learning experiences.

In this lesson, Jacob’s peer is doing most of the organizing of the material and providing the cues for which pieces of material to add where. For his part, Jacob does most of the typing, chooses the supporting images, and illustrates the brochures.

Using Talents and Fascinations

Amy regularly uses Jacob’s interest in both drawing and Beetlejuice (a favorite film) to keep him calm during transitions and to involve him in lessons. In the clip, you can hear Amy cuing Jacob to use his colored pencils to finish his brochure. She shared that she often uses his artistic talent not only to increase his participation but also as a preventative behavior support. If Jacob enters science class feeling a bit frustrated or anxious, Amy might suggest that he do some drawing for a few moments to create a positive state of mind before he jumps into the science lesson.

Paraprofessional Spot Checks

In parts of the clip, you can see a paraprofessional provide spot checks as Jacob is working with his peer partner. Whenever possible, the support provided is unobtrusive; is spread throughout the classroom environment; and is focused on the entire class, not on a specific student or group of students.

This type of support has been one of the explicit goals of Stoughton Public Schools. Paraprofessionals are encouraged to facilitate relationships between peers, help students obtain natural supports, and coach students to work more independently. Instead of working next to a student and providing a lot of direct support, paraprofessionals are asked to provide “as needed” support and to collaborate with classroom teachers to provide the best support for the student with disabilities and their peers in the inclusive classroom.

Peer Support

In this lesson, Jacob works closely with a peer. Amy is very purposeful in her pairings of all learners in her classroom, and the match she makes for Jacob is no exception. Peers are expected to work collaboratively and to give and get support from one another.
Active Learning
According to Amy, Jacob does his best work when given opportunities to move, talk, share, and interact. This is one of the many reasons Amy’s class was selected for Jacob; she uses plenty of activities, labs, and small-group discussion. Amy notes in the film that Jacob’s excitement for the class really emerges when he is involved in his learning:

He’s amazing to watch in lab. He loves to get up and get going. He likes to do things that are hands-on. He likes to see things. And he’s so much more comfortable than he was when we tried first semester. And just seeing his interactions and just the excitement to be in the classroom because he’s never done anything like what we do.  — AMY HERMONSON

TIP FROM AMY
One of the key things [I do is try to keep students comfortable]. And one of the adaptations has been seating. And so, we grouped Jacob across from a girl that he’s very familiar with. And then the two seats that are next to him, we’ve at times had to change….So then, we just move them around and we move them as a class so it’s totally imperceptible to the kids. And we get people there that Jacob’s comfortable with.

Questions
• Seating and purposeful groupings are two of the adaptations provided for Jacob. Are teachers in your school aware of options for seating, grouping, and changes in classroom environment?
• Jacob’s teacher creates lessons that are active and interactive. Using movement, collaboration, and activities to teach are common practices in elementary schools (especially in the early grades) but become less common in later years. What percentage of time do students in your middle or high schools spend moving, talking, or interacting? What differences do you notice in the attention, motivation, and performance of students with autism (and those without) when students have such opportunities?
• Jacob’s love of and talent for drawing is used as a tool in Amy’s classroom. How do you use students’ gifts, talents, and fascinations?

Kendra Larmour and Kate Haskett with Gage
As a science teacher and a teacher that believes very strongly that I’m a teacher of all students of all abilities at all times, I believe that it’s very important that every single one of my students, with or without disabilities, leaves my classroom knowing how to question the world around them and have an understanding about where they live and where they are and how it all fits together.

— KENDRA LARMOUR

Lesson Summary
Students in this middle school science lesson are examining metamorphic and igneous rocks. They are discovering the differences between the two types of rocks and identifying properties of each.

Adaptations and Key Supports
In this lesson, Kendra employs many techniques to engage her diverse learners including the following.
Adapting Instructional Objectives
Kendra and Kate work together to create appropriate learning targets for their students with disabilities. Not every student will learn the same content as his or her peers in any given day, week, month, or year, but both teachers expect all students to study the “big ideas” of the class and learn science-related goals and objectives.

At the beginning of each unit, I provide my students with the list of our essential learning targets, which are typically 7 to 10 things that every student needs to learn. And within those targets, I differentiate. And so, my lower level students, like Gage or other students with learning disabilities, I might expect them to just tell me the basic level like, “This is metamorphic rock, this is an igneous rock,” whereas my higher level thinkers, I might ask them to maybe compare and contrast how they came to be or how they’re used by different people. So, I’m able to differentiate within those targets. So, I’m able to assess all students at their levels. –KENDRA LARMOUR

Co-Teaching
Kendra occasionally is supported by and co-teaches with Kate Haskett. Both teachers work with all students, and both teachers suggest and implement adaptations for learners needing alternatives in curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

Using Clear Visual Directions
Kendra uses PowerPoint and a projector to share clear visual direction of each day’s lab or activity. You can see one of her slides in the background when she is at the front of the class with Gage demonstrating the steps of the lab.

Incorporating Music, Singing, and Dance
Kendra incorporates music when possible. The song she is playing in the end of the lesson (and the one her students are standing and dancing to) is called We Are the Rocks by Musically Alligned (http://www.songsforteaching.com/hood/rocks.htm).

Peer Support and Coaching
One of the most commonly used supports in Kendra’s classroom is peer collaboration. All students are expected to teach and help one another. This is true not just for students with autism but for all students. Kendra talks about it as a trust she has for her learners:

If you give some ownership to some of the other students in the classroom, they’ll definitely rise to that occasion. –KENDRA LARMOUR

Providing Sensory Support
Kate, a learning specialist, explains in the film how she works with Kendra to create in-class options for Gage to get movement breaks:

Gage is a very low-arousal student, so many times during science class he walks. And we keep him helping and assisting. And we do not—I don’t require him to sit down because if he sits down he usually falls asleep. –KATE HASKETT

Creating Opportunities for Participation
Kendra and Amy have designed unique classroom roles for students who may need more options for participation and who need to practice skills that go beyond the classroom curriculum and instruction:

Having Gage in my class has forced me to be a little creative in that making sure that he’s always involved. He has jobs, things that he does for the class. He’s always very helpful. He helps me pick students. He takes care of our classroom pets. The students in the class are really good about making sure that he’s involved, too. So, they’ve definitely helped make that difference for him. –KENDRA LARMOUR
TIP FROM KENDRA

I believe that in order to be successful at [inclusion], you have to be very flexible on a day-to-day basis, which is something that has taken me a while to learn, that what worked one hour isn’t going to necessarily work in the next hour, that I need to kind of go with the flow.

Questions

• Too often, students with disabilities are “unsuccessful” in inclusive classrooms because it is too difficult for them to participate or access the content. In Kendra’s classroom, there are many ways for students to participate and to gain access to the content. What elements of lesson design do you see that enable Gage and other diverse learners to be successful?

• Music and movement are both routinely integrated into Kendra’s lessons. This is not unusual in elementary schools but is somewhat unique in secondary education classrooms. How can teachers—especially in middle and high school—bring more novelty, joy, collaboration, and fun into their own classrooms and what impact might doing so have on students?

• Gage has some roles and jobs that other students do not have. He takes care of some pets and helps out with choosing students for groups, for instance. In other classrooms, students might make announcements or collect work. These types of roles can be a nice support for learners who need to practice social or communication skills or for those who simply require more movement than daily lessons typically allow. Do you use such alternative roles to help learners with autism learn new skills and make contributions to their inclusive classrooms? If so, what types of roles have students adopted? Are the roles connected to learners’ personal talents and interests? Are they varied? Interesting?
After we assembled the “You’re Going to Love This Kid!” film, we realized we still had fantastic interview footage sitting on the cutting room floor. This footage tells an important story about inclusive education and supports that are key for learners on the spectrum.

As you watch the film, consider what your own answers might be to the featured questions. You might want to reflect on these follow-up questions as well.

**What Is Inclusion?**

- Inclusion is presented as a process in this film. How do you see inclusion?
- A dinner party metaphor is used here to describe inclusive schooling. What metaphors would you use and why?
- What are the most common struggles you see in inclusive schools? How can they be overcome?

**What Are Some of the “Whys” of Inclusive Education?**

- A few “whys” are presented in these clips. What are your own personal “whys”?
- Some nonacademic benefits are highlighted in these interviews. What other nonacademic benefits come to mind when you watch this section?
- What are the academic “whys” of inclusive education?

**How Can Inclusion Help a Student with Autism?**

- In what ways have you seen inclusion profit learners with autism?
- What are the obvious benefits of inclusion for students with autism? What benefits are not so obvious?
- A few different curricular adaptations are described in this clip. In your opinion, how do proper adaptations help teachers see the benefits of inclusion?

**How Can Inclusion Help All Students?**

- How have you seen inclusion help your school community?
- How have you seen inclusion help individual students without disabilities?
- What specific steps do schools need to take in order to make inclusive schooling beneficial for everyone?
How Can the School Community Support Inclusion?
- How do all of your school community members define inclusive education? What roles do all staff members play in teaching and supporting all?
- Are the extracurricular activities in your school inclusive? If yes, what adaptations are used to make them accessible to all?
- What are the social benefits of cocurricular and extracurricular activities? What are the other potential benefits?

How Can Families Support Inclusive Schools?
- Do all families in your district or school understand the “hows” and “whys” of inclusive education? If not, how might the community be educated?
- What structures (e.g., parent–teacher organization, inclusion or diversity committee) are available for families and community members to support your school?
- What kinds of roles do families have in your schools? Do they have instructional roles? Give input on policy? Help to create adaptations?

What Roles Do Administrators Play in Inclusive Schools?
- What roles should administrators take in promoting inclusion?
- Specifically, how should school principals support inclusion?
- What barriers are minimized or eliminated when administrators support inclusive education?

How Can Critical Friends or Consultants Help with Inclusion?
- Have you worked with a consultant or critical friend? If so, what roles have they taken?
- How can a school team increase the effectiveness of a relationship with a critical friend or consultant?
- In your community, who are all of the “outside” supporters you might connect or partner with to create change or provide support?

How Can Paraprofessionals Enhance Inclusive Classrooms and Contribute to the Learning of All?
- It is always a challenge to provide enough education and training to paraprofessionals. What staff development experiences or activities do you feel are most critical for these team members?
- What roles do paraprofessionals play in your classrooms? Do they work with small heterogeneous groups? Do they ever lead lessons?
- How can teachers and paraprofessionals demonstrate equity and collaboration in the classroom?

What If We Just Said “Yes” to Inclusive Education?
- How do your staff members say “yes” to inclusion? When do you say “no” and why?
- What new strategies can you use, what new policies can you implement, or what new programs can you suggest to create a more inclusive experience for all learners?
- Is it a challenge to keep inclusion moving forward? How do you keep the momentum around inclusive education going in your school or district?
"You're Going to Love This Kid!" Viewing Guide

As you watch the film, jot a few notes in each of the two columns: 1) quotes and ideas to discuss and 2) questions to discuss. When the film is finished, look back over this worksheet, and circle the three to five items you are most interested in sharing with the group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inclusion</th>
<th>Quotes and ideas to discuss</th>
<th>Questions to discuss</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Autism</td>
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<td>Teaching strategies</td>
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<td>Lessons</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Speaking of Inclusion</em></td>
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"You're Going to Love This Kid!": A Professional Development Package for Teaching Students with Autism in the Inclusive Classroom by Paula Kluth.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Is There a School Philosophy or Mission Statement in Support of Inclusion?</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>If No, Actions That Might Be Taken</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do Staff Development Opportunities Reflect an Inclusive Philosophy?</td>
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<td>Does the School Leadership Promote Inclusion Through Written Materials, Presentations, and So Forth?</td>
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<td>Do Teachers Use Language That Reflects the Philosophy of Inclusive Education (e.g., <em>our</em> Students versus <em>your</em> Students or <em>my</em> Students)?</td>
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<td>Do Students With Disabilities Attend Their Neighborhood Schools (the Schools They Would Attend If They Did Not Have a Disability)?</td>
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<td>Are Students Being Educated in Classrooms With Their Same-Age Peers?</td>
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<td>Are All Students Participating Meaningfully in Curriculum and Instruction?</td>
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<td>Do Students Move With Peers to Subsequent Grade Levels in School?</td>
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<td>Do Students With Disabilities Have the Same School Day (Length of Day, Time of Arrival and Departure) as Those Without Disabilities?</td>
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<td>Do Students Use the Same Transportation as Students Without Disabilities?</td>
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<td>Do Students Use the Same School Spaces (e.g., Lockers, Entrances) as Those Without Disabilities?</td>
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Is Your School Inclusive? Checklist
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<th>Yes</th>
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<th>If no, actions that might be taken</th>
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<td>Do all students participate in extracurricular activities?</td>
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<td>Do curricular and extracurricular activities encourage</td>
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<td>interactions between peers with and without disabilities?</td>
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<td>Do special and general educators collaborate to ensure the</td>
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<td>participation of all in general education classrooms?</td>
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<td>Do special and general educators collaborate to address individualized education program (IEP) objectives of students with disabilities?</td>
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<td>Do special and general educators collaborate to ensure the</td>
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<td>adaptation of the core curriculum for students with unique</td>
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<td>effective instructional strategies (e.g., active learning) are</td>
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<td>implemented to support diverse learners?</td>
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<td>Do teachers promote self-determination (e.g., student-led IEP meetings)?</td>
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<td>Are related and supplemental services provided through a</td>
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<td>transdisciplinary model?</td>
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<td>Are special educators, general educators, paraprofessionals,</td>
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<td>and related services professionals coplanning and co-teaching</td>
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<td>when possible?</td>
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Kluth, P. (2005)
### Characteristics of Autism

Before you watch the film, think of a student with autism you know. Keeping this learner in mind, fill in the first column and list some of the specific differences you see in that individual. Then, watch the film and take notes on how the characteristics of autism are described and on some of the ideas suggested.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student's differences</th>
<th>Ideas for supporting these differences</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication differences (e.g., eye contact makes conversation challenging, uses echolalia)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social differences (e.g., difficulty with turn taking, has a hard time entering games on playground)</td>
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<td>Repetitive behaviors and fascinations (e.g., flicks fingers, loves trains)</td>
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<td>Sensory sensitivity (e.g., craves deep pressure, sensitive to loud noises)</td>
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Speaking of Inclusion Quick Write

Before you watch Speaking of Inclusion, take a moment to answer the following questions. After you watch the film, compare your answers with those offered in the interviews.

1. What is inclusion? 

2. What are some of the “whys” of inclusive education? 

3. How can inclusion help a student with autism? 

4. How can inclusion help ALL students? 

5. How can the school community support inclusion? 

6. How can families support inclusive schools? 

7. What roles do administrators play in inclusive schools? 

8. How can critical friends or consultants help with inclusion? 

9. How can paraprofessionals enhance inclusive classrooms and contribute to the learning of all? 

10. What if we just said “yes” to inclusive education? What would that look and sound like?
End-of-Day Review

One question I still have:

One “aha!” moment I experienced:

One strategy I learned:
Inclusive Schooling Action Plan

**Directions**
- After watching the movie and discussing your school's needs, identify a goal that will help you grow your inclusive school.
- Then, using this form, develop a plan for this goal (copy this form and complete forms for any other goals you want to set).
- After the meeting, make sure everyone gets a copy of the plan (including stakeholders who were not at the meeting).
- Keep your plan visible and bring it to all subsequent meetings.
- Update when needed.

**Goal:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Necessary actions</th>
<th>Person responsible?</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
<th>Resources</th>
<th>Communication plan</th>
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<tr>
<td>What steps do we need to take to get to this goal?</td>
<td>Which individuals will carry out the step?</td>
<td>Be as specific as possible.</td>
<td>What we need (money, training, materials)</td>
<td>Who is involved? What methods will we use to provide updates? How often will we update?</td>
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<td>Step 1</td>
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<td>Step 4</td>
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**Tools/methods of evaluation (e.g., survey, observation, focus group)**

**Evidence of success:**
- We will know we are getting close to our goal when ____________________________________________
- We will know we have reached our goal when ____________________________________________


What is Autism?: Web Sites Featuring the Voices of Those on the Spectrum

Michael John Carley: http://www.grasp.org/
Temple Grandin: http://www.templegrandin.com/
David Hamrick: http://www.weatheringautism.org/
Liane Holliday Willey: http://www.aspie.com/
Brian King: http://spectrummentor.com/
Wendy Lawson: http://www.mugsy.org/wendy/
John Elder Robison: http://johnrobison.com/
Sue Rubin: http://www.sue-rubin.org/
Stephen Shore: http://www.autismasperger.net/
Sarah Stup: http://www.sarahstup.com/
Donna Williams: http://www.donnawilliams.net/
Wrong Planet: http://www.wrongplanet.net/