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■ WHAT IS INCLUSIVE EDUCATION?

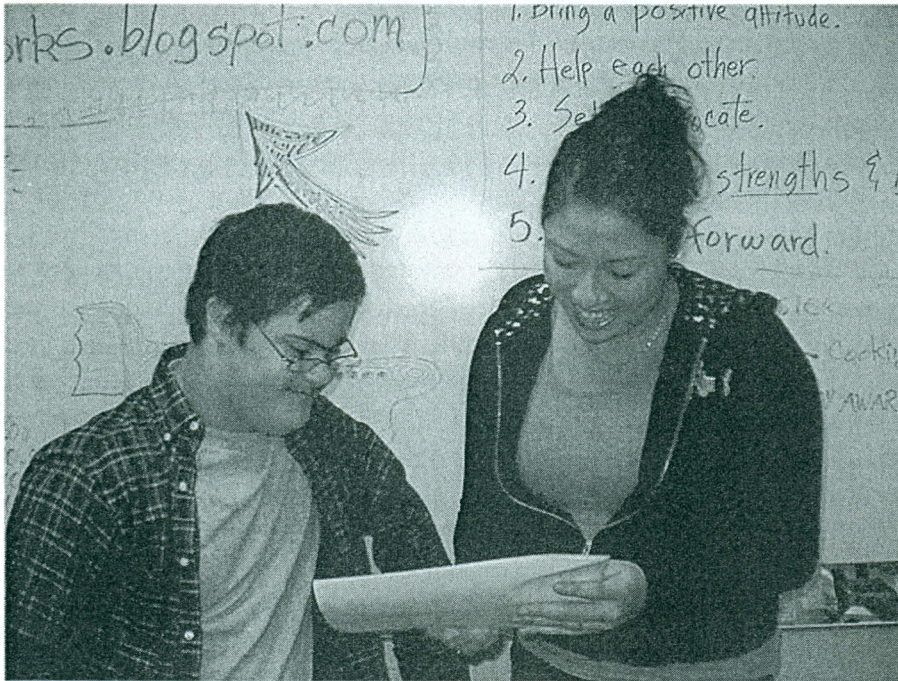
Inclusive education is full-time membership of students with disabilities in their chronologically age-appropriate classrooms with the necessary supports and services to benefit from educational activities (Lipsky & Gartner, 1992; Ryndak, Jackson, & Billingsley, 2000). Students do not need to be demonstrating grade-level performance but can gain valuable academic and nonacademic skills from participation in grade-level lessons. Supports and services include a wide variety of material adaptations and instructional accommodations, such as tactile or pictorial information, slant boards to hold materials upright, information made simpler and repeated verbally or signed, related service providers, and additional time to explore concrete items that are part of a lecture. Such supports are individualized to meet the unique learning needs of students having a wide range of moderate or severe disabilities and are embedded into the activities typically occurring in the classroom. The student is supported to learn in an environment with high expectations and is expected to be actively engaged in all learning opportunities. While the student may not be expected to learn the exact same content nor in the same manner as classmates, he or she should be challenged to learn as much as possible. Figure 1.1 highlights this expectation by showing a high school student giving a presentation to his class with the support of a peer.

Collaboration of team members is a hallmark of inclusive education. General educators, special educators, paraprofessionals, related service providers, and all critical team members share the responsibility for teaching students with moderate to severe intellectual disabilities in typical learning environments (Downing, 2008; Idol, 2002; Snell & Janney, 2005). Team members do not work in isolation or remove the student from class activities to address skills unrelated to the core curriculum. Instead, areas of need are addressed during typical class activities by various support persons who are highly qualified.

This collaborative approach entails preplanning for lessons that take into consideration the needs of the student and how the lesson will be taught. Planning so that all students of diverse needs and abilities can have access to and actively participate in class activities is termed *universal design for learning* (UDL; Rose & Meyer, 2002). Through this process of collaborative teaming to

Figure 1.1

A high school peer tutor supports another student giving a presentation



Photographer: Antonia Pond

involve all students in class lessons and activities, accommodations are considered with regard to presentation of material, learning arrangements, demonstration of knowledge learned, and evaluation from the onset of the lesson and not as an add-on piece. The intent is to value and respect different ways that students learn so that all students have access to the material presented.

Inclusive education also ensures access to the core academic curriculum for the student with moderate or severe disabilities, which is a legal mandate as per IDEIA (2004) and NCLB (2001; Dymond, Renzaglia, Gilson, & Slagor, 2007). When students are educated in general education classrooms, they have immediate access to the grade-level core curriculum that the entire class receives. Such access is much harder to ensure when students are educated in specialized settings with special educators who are not as knowledgeable about different grade-level standards. Soukup et al. (2007) found that instruction in self-contained special education rooms was not linked to the general education curriculum and concluded that the best place for students with disabilities to gain access to general education curriculum was in general education classrooms. Therefore, inclusive education is the process of students learning challenging material made meaningful and appropriate for their individual needs in general education rooms alongside their classmates with no disabilities.

■ WHAT IS NOT INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Inclusive education does not mean physically placing students in general education classrooms without the necessary supports and services. For instance, having a student with significant cognitive disabilities listen to a lecture in a high school physics class without simplifying the information, presenting it in an accessible manner, and relating it to the student's life is not what is meant by inclusive education. Unfortunately, such a practice has been associated with inclusion. As a result, it is no wonder that some educators fear its implementation in their schools (Carter & Hughes, 2006; Lohrmann & Bambara, 2006).

Inclusive education also is not hiring a paraprofessional to be with the student with moderate or severe disabilities throughout the day, getting materials for the student, telling the student what to do, assisting the student to perform tasks, and removing the student from the classroom when the student vocalizes distress. This hovering nature of paraprofessionals can lead to isolation by the student and an overdependence on an adult's assistance for all tasks (Giangreco & Broer, 2005; Giangreco & Doyle, 2007; Giangreco, Yuan, McKenzie, Cameron, & Fialka, 2005). Such a situation often occurs when the paraprofessional is not trained appropriately and is unsure of the goal of inclusive education or of the IEP goals for the student. The paraprofessional may feel the need to keep the student quiet, turn in correct work, and meet basic needs. However, when an adult is overly involved in the process and product of the student's education, learned helplessness on the part of the student can emerge (Giangreco & Broer, 2005; Giangreco et al., 2005). Once learned helplessness has been acquired, the student may not feel that he or she can perform a task without the support of an adult. Rather, the student is entitled to instruction from a highly qualified educator, which must be an important component of inclusive education.

In addition, inclusive education does not have the student sitting near the door or at the back of the room working with another adult on material that is unrelated to the class activity. Such a scenario occurs when teaming for a lesson is not occurring and the general educator has no ownership of the student with moderate or severe disabilities. The IEP for the student has been created with no attention to content standards for a particular grade and is comprised of unrelated skills that must be worked on separately from the class. In a truly inclusive classroom, the student should be an integral part of the class, actively participating in activities with peers to the maximum extent possible.

Having a student with moderate or severe intellectual disabilities visit a particular classroom for a period of time, from 30 minutes a week to several hours a day, also is not what is intended as inclusive education. Often, such visitations mean that the student comes to class when he or she can "handle" the coursework (e.g., art, music, library time) and therefore, very few if any accommodations are necessary. When a student is a visitor to a class, the manner in which the lesson is being taught may not have considered the unique adaptations and accommodations that are necessary to fully include the student. Expectations may be for the student to be physically present, quiet, and partially involved when possible. Such an arrangement does not reflect truly inclusive practices, and benefits related to inclusion are not likely to be realized. For

instance, when Schnorr (1990) studied the practice of "including" a young first grader with severe disabilities for a large part of the day, she found that the other first graders did not perceive him as a member of the class but rather more of a visitor. To obtain true membership for students with moderate to severe disabilities, full-time placement in chronologically age-appropriate classrooms is recommended. For elementary students, this means full-time placement in the age-appropriate class, and for middle school and high school students, it means attending different classes with peers as determined by a combination of required courses and electives.