

Philosophy, Principles and Practices Of Inclusive Education

An effective inclusive school is where a school ideally creates a community that values diversity and includes people as they are. (Hyde, Robert and Conway, 2010). Incorporating an inclusive environment contributes to not only a rich fabric of school culture but it also adds to the “shared understandings of various contexts or life situations that are interpreted from relationships and collaboration” (Keefe and Carrington, 2007, p. 28).

To create a successful inclusive school, your school needs a philosophy that follows principles and a number of strategies to put those principles into practice. Education Queensland demonstrate through a Strategic Plan of how their aim is to focus on supporting health and well being of all students and staff as well as creating a safe environmentally stable working and learning environments (Department of Education and Training, 2001-2015). UNESCO, The World Conference on Education for all was one of the very first milestones for inclusion within education through the Salamanca Statement in 1994. This international organisation was the first real acknowledgement of children with special needs and disabilities to be included within the regular school setting (Hyde et al, 2010). It was created to “support inclusive education to promote equal access and equitable outcomes for all students and achieve its worldwide goal of education for all” (Ludlow, 2012, p.6). The four key points outlined within the Statement are the foundation of what all state, national inclusion and legislation documents derive from.

Not only does the Salamanca statement help a school achieve a high-quality philosophy, it also has aspects that contain safe environments, community and inclusion of all people. Therefore I have created one as an example of what I believe a schools philosophy of inclusion should be theoretically based around :- a school should endeavour to encourage all their community to be inclusive through commitment to themselves and working towards a society in which people with differences are supported and involved in adapting classrooms environments to build a successful school community that focuses on the strengths and gifts of each person through values, ideologies and attitudes.

To help achieve this philosophy some principles will need to be put into place within your school and its community. Some main principles include:

- The welcoming of all students
- Developing strategies to stop bullying or harassment
- Show and implement ways to explain to students how to treat one another
- Individualise assessment for diverse learners
- Provide Individual Classroom Outlays/Plans
- Collaborate with Parents and Community

Each school will develop their own principles through the Education Queensland documents as well as through their own schools experiences. To make sure that diversity is valued within the school community. In Australia, ACARA (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority) provides outlines for each state to help each school within these regions be successful in inclusive strategies within their schools and community (ACARA, 2011). Each State is different in the way they approach inclusive schooling. Within Queensland principles as well as practices are outlined to help and guide schools in the right direction. These include both school based principles and principles that teachers can incorporate within their classroom.

Main Principles Include:

Principles for Creating a Successful Inclusive School	
Whole School	In-Class
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide leadership that contributes to creating a school climate that is welcoming of all students and establishes a culture of respect that is evident in all school policies, programs and practices. - Work collaboratively to embed an inclusive approach to curriculum development, teaching, learning, assessing and resources selection across school, based on an understanding of disadvantaged, social injustice and marginalisation. - Establish open and positive relationships with parents/carers and community to improve access to programs, facilities, information and expertise. - Treat all students with dignity so they can enjoy benefits of education and same general rights and opportunities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop and use a range of classroom practices, strategies, materials, individual classroom plans, assessment and reporting process that gives all students opportunities to demonstrate and communicate their knowledge, understanding and skills. - Provide all students with teaching and learning that they need for success in school and beyond. - Use and share information and opinions from the broader community to promote inclusion of all students. - Work with parents/carers and broader community to improve student participation in social, recreations, vocational and academic pursuits - Monitor student's progress and provide regular formal and informal reports to parents/carers.

(Queensland Government, 2006)

These principles provided from The Queensland Government provide a framework for how to implement and initiate successful inclusion within your own school and classroom as well as valuing diversity throughout the whole school. To create a successful inclusive community within your school, you need a clear school planned curriculum as well as assessment, reporting, professional development and the help of parents and community (Queensland Government Practices, 2006). All support in the classroom, will guarantee that your students can not only feel safe but also supported and cared for (Peterson and Hittie, 2010).

If these practises are correctly utilised in school, it will furthermore help teachers support all students from diverse backgrounds. It will also help to improve their achievement levels and completion of schooling (Queensland Government, 2006). Research now shows that it is so important for children with disabilities to be taught in an environment with non-disabled children. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires that students with disabilities be included with non-disabled children and that steps are taken to ensure the comfort of the children with disabilities is met within the regular classroom. This act also looks at the appropriateness of each child's individual needs, therefore if the child is not able to be in a regular classroom, he/she should not be placed in one as it will not be beneficial for the individual. This is why there are so many practices to help insure that children can be integrated into the regular classroom when it is appropriate for the child (Phillips, 2008). Overall these strategies, principle and practices help teachers acknowledge the diverse characteristics of students and help maintain a safe, supportive and inclusive learning environment.

Practices and Collaboration Of Inclusive Education

Throughout an inclusive classroom, parent or family participation as well as help are critical (Peterson and Hittie, 2010). Reif and Heimburge (1996) state, that “the key elements for a successful school is shared responsibility or partnership in education involving teamwork of the school personnel, parents, students and the community” (p. 105). Therefore by collaborating and integrating these people into the classroom and school, furthermore guarantees more children participation and success.

“Research shows that children do better in schools when parents are involved and play a positive role in their children’s education” (Reif and Heimburge, 1996, p. 105). This is also valuable to children with learning disabilities as having those extra helpers and parental guides help encourage and allow the children to be more confident and can receive further direction if they require it. Sharon Link from Research Starters (2008) also agrees that parents are valuable to children within their learning environment in school as she talks about how parents influence children’s early development through the daily activities that children automatically do with them. She also goes into detail about how parents provide great opportunities for their children when they encourage and get involved. She believes that it influences their learning and development greatly.

Additionally it is vital that the parents of students who have learning disabilities attain extra collaboration with you as the teacher. This is so all monitoring, reporting and communication can be discussed so that the individual’s needs are being met (Reif and Heimburge, 1996). Education Queensland also includes this within their inclusive education framework as they outline that parents and carers are a ‘critical resource’ within a school community and that as teachers we need to provide them with accessible information and collaborate with them. (Queensland Government, 2006).

Another influential impact within the inclusive classroom is the help and relationships within the professional community. This is an indicator that to create inclusiveness within a classroom you should utilise the teaching teams that are available within your school. This includes specialists, aids, parents as well as other teachers. This is all a part of how you manage yourself and all your students whether they have a disability or not. Soodak (2003) states, "The inclusion of children with disabilities in general education classes provides an opportunity for teachers to identify classroom management policies and practices that promote diversity and community" (p.327).

The importance of an inclusive community is so valuable to show and represent throughout the classroom/ whole school. "Inclusive communities experience power throughout shared understandings of various contexts or life situations, they are not only interpreted from relationships, but also collaboration" (Keeffe and Carrington, 2007, p. 28). Therefore if teachers incorporate all learning students in their classrooms and use the practices and demonstrate the correct attitudes to those students who may have a disability then all children can perceive this and learn as well as display it themselves. Community is so vital; as it helps us build upon ourselves as individuals. If teachers incorporate community-building management within the classroom it will furthermore create and facilitate more friendships, collaboration, parent involvement and change behaviours of some students (Soodak, 2003).

Learning Experiences and Strategies Of an Inclusive Classroom

Teachers play the most valuable role of inclusion within a school as they are the adults who need to work out and make sure that the children who have disabilities are being sufficiently catered for. For example if a child with Autism was joining my class I would make sure that I have consulted with the parents first. This I feel is important as then you can not only talk about the child and how he/she learns but also how he/she reacts to certain things or in certain ways. I feel that it is also vital to ask and collaborate with the parents about what techniques they might use at home and in various situations.

As stated earlier parents are so influential to all children within their learning so if a child with autism or any disability was within my class I would try and make-sure that parental collaborating occurred 1-2 times a week as “parental involvement for special education students is a key component contributing to effective intervention with autistic children” (Link, 2008, p.2).

Another important aspect that I would need to consider is the arrangement of my classroom. The arrangement of space within the classroom contributes to the participation or distraction of students. I would place a child with a disability either up the front of the classroom away from high traffic areas to try and keep their concentration level and attention with myself. I would also consult with the student/s where he/she feels most comfortable sitting within the classroom. Also different working areas in the classroom will helps students with behaviour, work time, attention and performance.

Also I believe that with any students whether they have a disability or not the use of visual representation within the classroom is a fantastic strategy. More so in this case though if i did have a student with Autism a visual representation of the daily schedule, classroom rules or basic jobs or behaviours that need to be attained is a great way to help children with autism understand and work comfortably.

As a teacher within my classroom I could possibly set up a 'chilled out area'. So that if students with or without disabilities become anxious or apprehensive they can use their own initiative to go and take some time to themselves to re-gain their thoughts and processes by either reading or quiet music or just relaxing or some mild playing. I feel this will create a safe and happy environment with my classroom.

Overall I feel it is important for other students to recognise and assist the student with autism or a disability as it not only is providing and helping the student with a disability to learn social skills but it also is helping the students without a disability, as they learn about these individual situations within society. From this, they then can learn empathy and to accept the students as well as be role models. Throughout Inclusive Education everyone benefits from it, and as Loreman and Deppeler (2005) state "Everyone Wins" (p.11). This inclusive atmosphere is so valuable to have as then all students can feel safe and welcomed within their learning environment.

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