

Inclusion Strategies for Deaf Students With Special Needs

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Deaf students with special needs typically have been excluded from schools and programs for deaf students, or educated in separate classes and programs in those settings. Such exclusionary or segregated arrangements deprive the students of full access to the communication, linguistic, and social benefits which are the strengths of deafness-focused programs. Not only are the deaf students with special needs barred from reaching their potential in such settings, but the other deaf students are deprived of opportunities to understand the wide range of human abilities and potential.

Schools and programs for deaf students try to justify the exclusion or segregation of students with special needs as being more beneficial for all students. In marked contrast, however, programs in which deaf students with special needs have been included in classes with other deaf students have demonstrated benefits for all of the students in those programs. The most remarkable benefits include linguistic, social, and academic skill development far beyond what had been previously expected of the students with special needs. In addition, all of the students developed humanitarian attitudes and skills—including compassion, altruism, and social conscience—the opposite of what is learned when they observe segregation or exclusion of individuals with special needs. All of the students also learned to appreciate and to utilize the strengths of all of their classmates, even those for whom the previous focus had been their special needs. At the same time the students either maintained their academic performance levels or exceeded what their academic performance had been prior to the inclusion of the deaf students with special needs.

Successful inclusion of students with special needs requires a paradigm shift in which diversity of students in many dimensions is not only tolerated, but also understood and valued. Classes with included students with special needs are viewed as collections of heterogeneous individuals with no outliers, rather than as a homogeneous unit with one or two students with special needs added in. Rather than focusing on the students with special needs, successful inclusion programs focus on the unique individuality of all students.

The success of classes and programs in which students with a variety of characteristics and needs are educated together requires changes in administration, faculty, and student attitudes (changes which usually result from experience); modifications of traditional school and classroom structures and procedures; and the implementation of specific teacher behaviors.

The following table lists 15 specific interrelated concepts which have contributed to the success of inclusive programs for deaf students with special needs. An explanation and example is provided for each area.


Concept	Explanation	Example
<i>Student-Centeredness</i>	In contrast to teacher-centered approaches, many elements of instruction are shared with students, including selection of curriculum content and instructional activities, scheduling, and student assessment. Curriculum and instructional methods are designed to meet the students needs, rather than trying to fit the students into predetermined curriculum and instruction.	A group of students became fascinated with static electricity and the fact that they could shock each other. They experimented, rubbing their feet on different surfaces and touching different things to see if they could get a shock. This curiosity let the students to check out a book from the library on electricity. In the book were different experiments related to electricity. The materials necessary for the experiments were not available in the classroom so the students wrote a note to the science teacher to ask to borrow the materials. The students used their center time to do the experiments in the book as well as create experiments of their own. They shared their experiments and their conclusions with peers and other teachers.
Individualized Approach	In contrast to a whole-group approach, teachers have different expectations for learning processes and outcomes for each student, even when the students are working together in a group activity.	
Activity-Based Learning Models	Much of student learning comes from activities and projects in which the students are active participants, rather than passive recipients of knowledge given by the teacher or other sources.	As we move into our study of the American Revolution we set up a simulation where the teachers and staff became a monarchy. We set up arbitrary rules and demands that the students had to follow. (the students had to bow to the queen, stand up for all adults, pay taxes to use chairs, the bathroom, their lockers and the water fountain. They had to pay a fine for talking, not standing in a line and not saying "Long live the Queen" when she passed by.) after a day of oppression the students began to rebel. Before the Queen would give up power, the students had to write up their declaration of independence and plan their revolt. The students were then able to bring their own personal experience to their study of the American Revolution.
Peer-Tutoring	Students assist one another in a variety of activities. Peer tutoring is beneficial not only to the recipients, but also to the tutors, because of the imbedded cognitive demands.	One student struggled with multiplication. Another student that knew his multiplication facts and had a different way of using his hands for counting sat with the student for several days and was able to effectively teach his peer multiplication. The student, being an adolescent, was able to accept help more readily from a peer than an adult.
Community Building	The class and school are viewed as communities to which individuals contribute in different and unique ways.	When a student with a behavior problem needed to move to a new class to be successful, our fifth grade class had a community meeting to discuss the situation. The students first discussed if we wanted the student to move to our class. It was required that we come to a consensus. After much discussion, the community decided to have the student move to our class. We then discussed how we could make this student successful in our class, what things could each of us do to make him succeed. The student moved to our class and met the students. They told the new student their expectations and how they would help him. The new student also determined goals for how he would contribute to the community. The transition was successful because it was a community of learners working together toward a common goal.

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Multiple Intelligences	Because the teachers expect that the process of learning and the demonstration of what has been learned will be different for each student, they structure instructional and assessment activities so that students with different approaches to learning can participate and learn optimally. All approaches to learning are valued equally.	In a project based social studies unit on the Revolutionary War, students were able to use their "intelligences" to learn and demonstrate their learning. One student did a research report on Benjamin Franklin (linguistic intelligence). Other students performed a play (kinesthetic intelligence). Two students worked together to build a cannon (visual-spatial intelligence). Some students wrote a newspaper article from the perspective of a Minuteman (intra-personal intelligence). Each product was a different, yet valid, demonstration of student learning.
Integrated Curriculum	Teachers develop interdisciplinary thematic units which coordinate instruction across traditional content areas. In programs with teachers who are content specialists, the teachers work in teams to develop thematic units.	In a high school, the students spent a quarter reading a book called Not Far From the Bamboo Grove. The book was the true story of a Japanese girl living in Korea with her family during World War II and their escape from prosecution. The English teachers facilitated the students reading of the book. While some students read the book independently, other students enjoyed the book through teacher "read-alouds." In science, students studied the chemistry of the atomic bomb. While the social studies teachers led discussions on the war, its causes, and its impact on our world today, the math teachers brought the statistics of the war, into the discussion. How many Americans died? What percentage of the Japanese population was killed by the dropping of the atomic bomb? Students read A Thousand Paper Cranes, and learned how to make origami cranes with the help of the art teacher. The home economics teacher helped students prepare Japanese food. Students learned about Japanese games, art and culture. To culminate the unit, the author came to the school and spoke to the students.
Internal Behavior Management Focus	Natural consequences are emphasized as outcomes of social behaviors, rather than artificial teacher-controlled consequences. Specific behaviors are used as teaching tools to illustrate ways for students to be responsible for their behavior and its results.	One student had a temper tantrum and broke a teacher's glasses. The student, after discussion with the teacher and the class, took responsibility for earning the \$200.00 to pay for the glasses. The student asked for help and the class responded by helping him organize a bake sale. The student with the help of his community was able to raise the money and pay the teacher for her glasses.
Self-Assessment	Value is placed on student assessment of learning, rather than basing assessment solely on teacher judgments.	At the end of the quarter, students are asked to pick their best writing from their writer's workshop portfolio to send home with their report cards. Attached to the pieces that they choose, students wrote why they felt that was their best work and what improvements they felt their writing showed. Students at the beginning of the year had a hard time identifying what is a good piece. As the year progressed, students, through practice, learned how to analyze and be critical of their own work.

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Authentic Assessment	The process of developing student products rather than tests is used as the primary basis for assessment of learning and progress.	After reading a book about the Vietnam War and studying the impacts of the war, a group of high school students wanted to fly to Washington, DC, to see the Vietnam Memorial. The students were told if they did all the work arranging the trip, they could do it. The students spent five months, raising money, writing grants, calling and comparing prices for airlines, vans and hotels, getting permission from parents and administrators, setting up appointments and organizing the itinerary. Although no teacher-made tests were given through the process, the success of planning led to the trip of a lifetime. Throughout the process, teachers could assess, authentically, many skills the students had learned.
Wholistic Approaches to Academics	As contrasted to analytical approaches which focus instruction on building up from specific elements, wholistic approaches put learning into and overall context of meaningful and functional experiences in order to develop student motivation and interest in the process of learning. Instructional materials are authentic "real-world" items, such as real literature or newspapers.	A discussion started in class about smoking and how it was cool. The students talked about who smoked in their family and how they felt about smoking. We then did a science experiment where we used a mechanical lung to smoke a cigarette. We compared the damage to the lung after smoking five cigarettes. The students then used this experiment to write up a lab report for the school science fair. Their lab report included materials, hypothesis, procedures, conclusions and further questions. Those questions led to further research about the effects of smoking on a person's health. The parents of two students called to complain that their children kept pestering them to stop smoking.
Process Orientation	Teachers recognize that, in learning environments, the quality of the process of developing a product is more important than the product itself.	Students in writer's workshop learn that a quick final product is not what is necessary for success. Like real authors, students write a draft that is revised through teacher and peer feedback for both content and grammar. Students may go through four or five drafts and editing before the final product is published.
Inquiry-Based Learning	Students' questions guide the curriculum topics and student research. Students are encouraged to question, and are shown how to seek answers to questions.	Students beginning the study of Native Americans did a "KWL" activity where they listed what they already knew (K) and then listed what they wanted to learn (W). The list of questions was used to guide the topics that teachers from various disciplines taught. The questions also provided various research topics for the students to investigate. The students came up with questions such as: How did Native Americans communicate? What were their religious beliefs? Did Native Americans from different areas have different languages, houses, customs and values? How did Native Americans treat the earth and its resources? When did Native Americans come to North America and how?
Journaling	To facilitate processes of communication, reflection, and evaluation, students and teachers routinely write in journals. Usually these are dialogue journals- student-to-teacher, student-to-student, teacher-to-parent, teacher-to-mentor, etc.	Using a student-to-teacher dialogue journal, a high school student was able to tell her teacher that she did not like the grade she got on her book report. Through the journal, the student was able to discuss something that upset her without having to bring it up in front of the class or talk to the teacher that she was angry with. The teacher responded with the opportunity for her to write why she did not agree with the grade, what she felt she deserved and why.

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Reflective Teaching	Through journals, anecdotal records, and discussion, teachers reflect daily on the effectiveness of the learning opportunities in their class, and work daily to improve the quality of their instruction.	Through writing an anecdotal record about a student that had run off from class for an hour, the teacher put down the details of what was said and done. While writing the teacher realized that she had spoken in anger and frustration, and that expressed emotion had scared the student, when what the student needed was to be comforted. Had the teacher approached the student in a different manner the results might have been different.

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