

## Who are we?

We are a group of Midwestern parents, teachers, and community members brought together by the desire to support efforts that more fully include children with disabilities in our local schools. This quarterly newsletter is dedicated to enhancing the education of all our children by providing a place to celebrate successes and offering a forum to discuss the challenges associated with moving towards full inclusion.

# IN

Inclusion News

Winter 2007

## Call to Action

The mission of *IN* is to provide a forum for sharing ideas and resources related to inclusive education in Illinois and Iowa. To help us fulfill our mission, we welcome the following from you:

- ✓ Resources you've found helpful for parents and teachers.
- ✓ Success stories of inclusive experiences.
- ✓ Things you wish someone had told you sooner!
- ✓ Questions you'd like answered.

The editor can be reached by

**FAX**  
920•424•0858

**PHONE**  
920•424•7227

**E-MAIL**  
skonings@uwosh.edu

**INTERNET**  
www.inclusion-news.org

**POST**  
Department of Special Education  
University of Wisconsin – Oshkosh  
800 Algoma Blvd  
Oshkosh, WI 54901

We also are accepting donations to help fund future issues of *IN*. Checks can be made out to UW-Oshkosh and sent to the editor, Dr. Stacey Skoning at the above address.

Thank You!

Stacey Skoning, Ph.D.

## Accommodations for Children with Special Needs in General Education Settings

*Stacey Skoning*

One of the arguments against including children with disabilities in regular education settings is that making appropriate accommodations is too time consuming and too difficult for most teachers to do it well. In truth, once a framework for thinking about accommodations is established, the process requires very little additional time when teachers implement best-practices techniques in their classrooms. Peterson and Hittie (2003) remind us that there are four basic building blocks of inclusive teaching. If teachers are implementing these in their classrooms, the needs of many learners will be met without added modifications. Their four building blocks include multi-level teaching, scaffolding, multiple intelligences, and learning styles.

Multi-level teaching refers to instruction that provides opportunities for children of different abilities to work together at their own level of ability (Peterson & Hittie, 2003). This ensures that every child is being challenged in the classroom and that no student has it "easier" than another. This idea is supported by the work of Lev Vygotsky (1978) who used the phrase "zone of proximal development" to describe that next level of learning just beyond what students are currently capable of achieving independently. The support and assistance provided to students to help them reach the next level of learning is what Peterson and Hittie (2003) refer to as scaffolding. Scaffolding should allow students to perform tasks that are "just beyond their actual level of ability" (171). Accommodations that allow children to participate easily in all activities do not engage children in meaningful learning experiences.

Multiple intelligences, the third building block (Peterson & Hittie, 2003), helps teachers focus on how children are smart, rather than on how smart children are. Gardner (1983) originally identified seven unique intelligences. In our spring 2006 issue, we described eight intelligences. The ninth intelligence added was that of existentialism (McKenzie, 1999). This intelligence is found in those who are big picture thinkers. They need to understand the larger concept first and its significance before they are able to put together all of the parts and details.

*Accommodations Continued p. 2*

# Accommodations Continued

*Continued from p. 1*

Often intelligences correlate with students' preferred learning styles (the 4<sup>th</sup> building block). If teachers pay attention to how their students think and learn, there is less likely to be a mismatch between the way students learn and the kind of instruction being provided. Teaching can be tailored to meet the students' individual needs and increased learning should occur.

With these four building blocks in place, the needs of many students will be met without added support. However, to meet the needs of those with more significant disabilities, further modifications may provide improved support across academic, social/emotional, and sensory/physical domains.

Additional curricular adaptations can include:

- Changing the instructional arrangement (how students are grouped)
- Changing the lesson format (organization/methods used for instruction)
- Employing student specific teaching strategies
- Focusing on key curricular goals specific to the lesson and/or IEP (Individual Education Plan)
- Engineering the physical and social classroom environment
- Designing modified materials
- Selecting natural supports and supervision arrangements (Udvari-Solner, 1995).

The first two ways to adapt curriculum and instruction are done by most teachers as they plan each of their lessons. They include decisions like "Would this be taught best through lecture, demonstration, role playing...?" and "Should students work in pairs, individually, as a whole class...?" Often, altering the way instruction is delivered or the students with whom particular children are working may be sufficient to ensure their success.

The next three categories of adaptations also are thought about easily during initial planning. They ask teachers to implement strategies that help individual students be more successful and may include restating directions, offering instruction in both visual and auditory formats, offering students choices in the ways they complete assignments, or providing particular cues or prompts.

Additionally, effective teachers are aware of the goals of their students and build these into their lessons. It is not necessary that everyone focus on the same goals during an activity. A well designed lesson will have many points of entry and allow students to achieve their individual goals while working together to achieve a group goal. Finally, during planning teachers should consider environmental needs of their students. This includes not only the physical environment, but also the need for community building within the classroom. What strategies can be implemented that would encourage students to support each other?

The remaining two accommodation types do require more time of the teachers involved. However, they are often over-used by special educators. When general and special education teachers plan separately, the only choices left are to modify materials and add support. A shift to more collaborative planning allows for more of the other types of accommodations to be made which should result in a decreased use of the more time-intensive ones.

If none of these modifications are significant enough to allow the active and meaningful engagement of a particular student, Udvari-Solner (1995) reminds us that an alternative activity may be planned. However, this activity should not be one completed in a separate special education setting, or individually by the student

with a disability. It should be completed in an inclusive environment, involve other students without disabilities, and still focus on the same general education content as that which is being learned by the other students. You will know when you have created an effective alternate activity because you won't mind your other students "missing" what is going on in class since the alternate activity is an equally valuable learning experience.

Through the implementation of these strategies, accommodations can be developed that will enhance the active participation of all students in a general education classroom. Once they become part of your planning process and way of thinking, they also have the added benefit of taking very little time to develop.

## References

- Gardner, H. (1983). *Frames of mind: The theory of multiple intelligences*. New York: Basic Books.
- McKenzie, W. (1999). Multiple Intelligences Overview. *Walter McKenzie's One and ONLY Surfaquarium*. Retrieved January 23, 2008, from <http://www.surfaquarium.com/MI/overview.htm>
- Peterson, J. M. & Hittie, M. M. (2003). *Inclusive teaching: Creating effective schools for all learners*. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon
- Udvari-Solner, A. (1995). A process for adapting curriculum in inclusive classrooms. In R. A. Villa & J. S. Thousand (Eds.). *Creating an Inclusive School*. (pp.110 – 124). Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- Vygotsky, L. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

# IN RESOURCES

## The First Midwest Regional Conference on Autism Spectrum Disorders and Inclusion

This conference is being sponsored by the Autism Society of the Quad Cities and will be held on the campus of Augustana College, Rock Island, IL – April 19, 2008. We look forward to a full slate of nationally recognized speakers including Temple Grandin, Tom Wassink, Paula Kluth, Dennis Debbaudt, and many others.

Information regarding the conference, including hotel information and registration forms is available at [www.autismqc.org](http://www.autismqc.org).

**Villa, R. A. & Thousand, J. S. (Eds.). (2005). Creating an inclusive school (2nd Ed.). Alexandria, VA: ASCD**

This book will be helpful if you are looking for further information on accommodations that can be employed as part of the universal design process. Each of Udvari-Solner's kinds of accommodations described in this issue of *JN* is explained in further detail. Additionally, there are many suggestions for school-wide change that will be helpful for administrators and others who are trying to make the change to a more inclusive learning environment.

### Project Participate

Project Participate provides families, educators, administrators and therapists with simple strategies to increase the active participation of students with disabilities in school programs. Supported by a U.S. Department of Education grant (H324M980258), Project Participate facilitates team collaboration and promotes the appropriate uses of technology in the classroom. You can find them at the following web address: <http://projectparticipate.org>.

---

*Learning Continued from p. 4*

knowledge about the learning styles and abilities of all students.

Collaboration also is key when planning, preparing, and completing projects. We have to decide what is most important for each student and how to accommodate all students' varying needs. Do we need to supply materials? Do we need more visuals? Do we need to check progress step by step? All these discussions need to be a group effort and often can involve the student. Assessments are another major collaboration effort. As a team, we need to determine the best method to assess each child and then take the assessment materials and modify them appropriately.

### Organization

In order to make these accommodations, organization is crucial. Because changes do need to be made and each student's need is different, I need to have all materials prepared before the lessons so students can participate successfully. If notes need to be taken in class, one option is to copy the notes beforehand and

take out some key phrases so the student is still taking notes but isn't rushed to take all the notes. Another choice is to have a student use carbon paper while taking the notes so copies are made if needed. Both options require organization.

Aside from assessments and projects, daily independent work often requires some changes. I need to have all materials organized and modified ahead of time. All team members need to work together so that materials are prepared and lessons are modified.

Although my experience in the field is still growing, I feel I have learned some important lessons to successful inclusion. Not only have I learned the "ion"s to success, but I have learned specific strategies to help modify lessons and assessments. Overall the most important lesson I have learned is from my students. I have read and studied inclusion but now I have finally seen with my own eyes what a difference inclusion can make in a child's life. All the work and planning is worth the effort when you see a child's confidence, knowledge, and friendships grow right before your eyes.



# Learning by Example

Amy Von Bergen

After graduating from Augustana College with a degree in elementary education, I accepted a teaching aid position in a special education program. I quickly learned my responsibilities would include pushing-in with students to the regular education setting. I reflected on materials from my inclusion class and started the first day of school full of excitement and anticipation. Six months later, I have learned many lessons about inclusion that I will carry throughout my career. To sum up these lessons I give you the three “ion”s to successful inclusion!

## **Communication**

At Augustana I learned the importance of communication. I knew I needed to open the lines of communication right away. I introduced myself to the regular education teachers and we discussed the first unit they each would be teaching. We also talked

about the placement of students in the classroom and other daily accommodations. For instance, one of my students needs to be in the front row facing the board directly in order to stay focused and participate. We also planned to place students next to helpful peers in a location easily accessible to both me and the teacher.

I also needed clear communication with the special education teacher with whom I worked. This is very helpful in the academic setting and the social inclusion setting. I do accompany the students to both lunch and recess where we work on social skills with the school population. I communicate with their teacher on their progress; sharing what needs work and what they have mastered. I have found these lines of communication with both the regular and the special education teachers essential to the inclusion setting. All parties must



Miss Von Bergen (center) and her students

take a role to keep this line open to help students be included successfully.

## **Collaboration**

Successful collaboration means all parties work together on lessons and activities to create a successful learning environment for all students. All the teachers need to be on the same page and understand the goal of the lesson. For example, when the classroom teacher creates a lesson using group work, we often work together to choose the groups using our

*Learning Continued p. 3*

*IN* would like to thank the following:

Steering Committee Members – Ashley Faulstich, Mary Johnson, Betty Long, Teri Miller, Roxanne Nowinski, Leah Panther, Rick Ramirez, and Stacey Skoning

The University of Wisconsin – Oshkosh, College of Education and Human Services, for the printing and mailing of this issue of *IN*.

Safe Family Home Inspection Services, LLC, for sponsoring our website. They can be found at <http://www.safe-family-home-inspection.com>

# IN

## Inclusion News

Special Education Department  
University of Wisconsin - Oshkosh  
800 Algoma Blvd  
Oshkosh, WI 54901

PLEASE POST