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Doing The Civil Right Thing: Supporting Children With Disabilities In Inclusive Classrooms

David J. Connor & Kristen Goldmansour

Setting

Fourth-grade inclusive classroom in a New York City neighborhood school, 2011

The room has two desks for teachers and several tables at which students sit in groups of four. The walls are covered with children's self-portraits, teacher-made charts of important content information and strategies for solving problems, vocabulary lists, student-created pie-charts of their multiple intelligences, and lists of class rules.

Characters

Ms. Fansler, a general educator in her late 40s. She has over twenty years of experience and has taught many of the parents of the children in her current class.

Ms. Chavez, a special educator in her mid 20s. She is in her second year of teaching and is enthusiastic about her role of supporting all students, particularly those who struggle the most.

Jayson, an excitable boy who switches topics of conversation very rapidly. His mother describes him as being "all over the place."

Kyoko, a mild-mannered, quiet girl who listens attentively to teacher directions, yet always watches how other students respond and follows their lead. She is the type of student who is often overlooked.

Trevor, a quirky, knowledgeable boy who usually keeps to himself, preferring not to join in group activities.

Twenty-two other students from diverse backgrounds, equally divided between boys and girls.

Opening Scene

Students are working in pairs at their tables, using dice, game boards, counters, and index cards to play math games. Two children are working on a class computer at the side of the room, using virtual manipulatives from a math education website. Ms. Fansler and Ms. Chavez nod toward each other, signifying that it is time to transition to the next period of the day. Ms. Fansler flashes the lights, a cue for students to become aware of the impending transition.

Ms. Chavez (to whole class): It's time to... Stop! (puts hands out in front of her).... Look! (points to her eyes).... Listen (cups both ears)!

Ms. Fansler: Okay, everyone. Please end your math games and put the materials back into the baggies. One of the partners put the baggies back on the math shelf, and everyone else come join us on the rug for Reader's Workshop.

The children begin to move in many directions. The teachers move quickly and purposefully to be in close proximity to Trevor and Jayson and to provide additional prompts if necessary. Trevor begins to show signs of anxiety about the transition. He does not put away his materials and argues with his partner that he has not finished the game. His partner looks confused and is at a loss as to what to do.

Ms. Fansler helps Trevor finish and clean up. En route to Jayson, Ms. Chavez stoops to help pick up dominoes dropped by another child, and Jayson starts to wander about the room. He ends up by the closets, opens the doors, and randomly examines what is on the shelves. He stands far away from the rug. Meanwhile, Kyoko is carefully observing her partner to see where she is going, and moves slowly, without speaking, toward the other children. She is one of the last to arrive at the rug.

Ms. Chavez (from across the room, direct but encouraging): Jayson, move to the rug.

Ms. Fansler (to Trevor): That's right, Trevor. All pieces in the bag. I'm glad that you like this game so much. Maybe you can do it again at the end of the day when you finish doing your science work.

Trevor's face conveys a mixture of being upset and angry.

Hearing Ms. Chavez's prompt, Jayson walks toward the rug. On his way he accidentally knocks over a basket of books, picks them up quickly, and then steps through the group of seated children to "his spot" at the back of the rug. Here he has a little more room to wiggle and likes the feel of the wall against his back. Kyoko sits nearby, eyes following the teachers' every movement.

Ms. Fansler (to Trevor): Thank you for cleaning up with everyone else, Trevor. Take a minute to get ready for the rug, and come join us as soon as you can.

Ms. Chavez (to Ms. Fansler): Shall we begin the minilesson?

Ms. Fansler (to class). Yes, I think we're all ready.

Exclusion as a Civil Wrong

The few minutes of classroom time described above symbolize an important shift in how educators have come to understand their roles and responsibilities in relation to differences among students. Over the last 25 years there has been slow but consistent growth in the numbers of inclusive classrooms designed to meet the needs of children with and without disabilities. In previous decades, Trevor and Jayson might have been placed in segregated settings for all or part of their school day, separated from their nondisabled peers—or even perhaps sent to “special schools” in other parts of the city. Kyoko, on the other hand, would likely have been in general education classes, but without any supports and services.

The history of inclusive education has all of the ingredients of an epic drama: fascinating stories, rich details, high-stakes legal cases, warring factions, ideological battles, unexpected developments, many success stories, and a share of tragedies. In some respects, from the start inclusion could be characterized as a three-steps-forward and two-steps-back process, subject to the push and pull of competing forces.

The actual impetus for the inclusion movement was the civil rights struggles of the 1950s, pioneered by African Americans who mobilized to protest their marginal status in comparison to European Americans. The effort to secure greater access to all that society offered resonated with other marginalized groups, including women, homosexuals, and people with disabilities.

In the disability rights movement, parents were instrumental in aggressively seeking opportunities for their children with disabilities to forge a better quality of life. It is through the actions of parents that the landmark *Education of All Handicapped Children Act* (PL.94-142) was passed in 1975. This law ensured an education for all children with disabilities and established local education authorities (LEAs) responsible for its implementation.

However, although schools created programs for children with disabilities, those children were often placed in segregated “special education” classes, corridors, or buildings. The inclusion movement grew in response to these segregated facilities that served as a form of educational apartheid, separating disabled and nondisabled children from one another. Instead of requesting that their children be included in general education settings, proponents claimed that it was their children’s *civil right* to be educated within a diverse classroom, one that truly mirrored the nation’s population.

Having the perspective that *all* children are equal citizens within our democracy helps educators understand why parents usually prefer inclusive settings (Fleisher & Zames, 2001). At the same time, we acknowledge the challenges—especially the complexity of collaboration—involved in creating inclusive classroom environments for all children.

Making Inclusion Work: Teacher Collaboration

Ms. Fansler and Ms. Chavez understand the premise of inclusive classrooms. They do not think in terms of “my kids” and “your kids,” but rather share the responsibility for ensuring that all the children in their classroom learn. Both teachers acknowledge that this collaboration is not always easy, nor typical in their school. In the following sections we describe some of the ways in which they have worked together to create their inclusive classroom.

Before They Taught Together: Creating a Partnership

When Ms. Chavez and Ms. Fansler found out that they were assigned to teach with one another, they both had expectations and ideas about how to make their partnership work. As the general educator, Ms. Fansler had taught collaboratively with several special education teachers over the previous decade.

Although only in her first year at the time, Ms. Chavez had been “learning the collaborative ropes” with another general educator and had a broad sense of what worked, what needed work, and what would not work.

Both Ms. Chavez and Ms. Fansler agreed that, before partnering, it would be beneficial to observe each other teaching in order to gain a sense of their two teaching styles in action. After being guests in each other’s classrooms, they met for a long discussion during which they described what they saw, what was successful, how students responded, and so on. They also compared their own learning and teaching styles, identifying similarities and differences, and also spoke about their own strengths and weaknesses.

In addition, during this time they shared their belief systems about educating all children and discussed how, as partners, they would share all responsibilities. Their administrator provided them with a list of topics developed by Cook and Friend (1996) (see Figure 1), and together they discussed each area that the two researchers had identified. Ms. Fansler and Ms. Chavez noted that some areas were “common sense,” others were familiar practices, and still others were new to them. They were pleased to have a framework for planning their collaborative classroom, as it provided guidance and encouraged them to prioritize and develop practices they determined would be crucial for success.

In brief, Ms. Fansler and Ms. Chavez were relieved that they did not have to create their inclusive classroom from scratch and were able to gain a sense of how they would begin to work collaboratively. Eventually, they would come to use all six of the coteaching models that Cook and Friend described, noting how some were particularly suitable for individualized instruction, some were better for group lessons, and some were better for whole class work (see Figure 2). In conversations, they acknowledged that coteaching requires a division of labor that values and maximizes differing areas of expertise (such as writing Individualized Education Programs). As with most partnerships, both teachers realized that thinking through how to manage theirs would take more time than they had originally anticipated, and they decided to meet once a week for a month in preparation for teaching together.

As They Taught Together: Reflecting on Practice

Ms. Fansler and Ms. Chavez also found that getting together each week during the school year to reflect on their coteaching was as important as their preplanning had been. At those weekly meetings, both teachers evaluated which aspects of the lessons were going well and which were in need of improvement, discussed any students who were “on the radar” for whatever reason, worked on solving problems that had arisen, and of course, mapped out the following week—including who was responsible for which tasks. Through assessing which instructional methods and modifications were working for Jayson, Kyoko, and Trevor (and for other students, both with and without IEPs), Ms. Fansler and Ms. Chavez determined what changes they needed to make in their practice.

Viewed by both teachers as a “sacred space,” the weekly meeting was a place where they honored a commitment to planning, revisited the multiple demands involved in coteaching, and focused upon the most important tasks at hand, asking themselves: How do we maintain and improve our inclusive classroom? What can be done differently to support students academically, socially, and emotionally? By keeping these questions in mind, and honoring their arrangement, Ms. Fansler and Ms. Chavez were able to coplan more effectively than they had with previous teaching partners.

Strategies for Access

Forming a partnership and reflecting on their practice were both in service of the heart of their work—the daily strategies they implemented to make learning accessible to all of their students. At the beginning of the semester, both teachers reviewed their class roster to verify which children had IEPs. Ms. Chavez then reviewed the IEPs and subsequently created an individual profile on a single sheet of paper (serving as a “snapshot”) for each of those students, noting ways in which Jayson, Kyoko, and Trevor (as well as other children) would require additional supports and services (see Figure 3).

Together, the teachers talked about each student’s needs. While it was important (and legally necessary) for the teachers to know the official categorization of the children’s disabilities, they also understood that a disability label is a double-edged sword. On one hand, labels can give parents, teachers, and even students themselves information about a particular “difference” (Mooney 2007; Robison, 2007; Rodis, Garrod, & Boscardin, 2001). On the other hand, a label can unduly influence how individuals of all ages are perceived within a deficit-based framework, emphasizing what they cannot do (Reid & Valle, 2004). Although Ms. Fansler found labels interesting, she believed in seeing and working with children herself before ascribing the perceived characteristics that accompany categories.

Jayson, for example, had been determined to have attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). His ability to focus fluctuated dramatically. Kyoko was identified as learning disabled (LD). She experienced difficulties in processing auditory language and also struggled in using expressive language, both orally and in writing. Trevor was recognized as having Asperger’s syndrome (AS). He exhibited a significant discrepancy between advanced academic skills and basic social interactions.

Knowing this information about their students helped both teachers plan, using the principles of [universal design for learning](#) (UDL). The concept of universal design originated in architecture, and stresses that all buildings, from their inception, should be designed to provide access to all community members, thereby negating the need to retrofit the existing structure. In applying the same principle to learning, teachers design lessons that provide all students access to learning, thereby allowing all children entry points into lessons, opportunities to be engaged, interactions to facilitate processing information, and choices to provide evidence of learning.

For example, providing six minutes for all students to have a “quickwrite” about a common topic they know (such as when they feel happiest) allows children to gather their thoughts, write at their own pace,

and choose the format (such as sentences, paragraphs, bulleted points, lists, poems, or phrases) they prefer. Once they have completed the quickwrite, all the students have the opportunity to share their thoughts about the topic because all of them are now prepared (albeit in different ways) to participate.

In addition to creating their lesson plans using UDL principles, Ms. Fansler and Ms. Chavez employed a range of individualized strategies throughout the day to support their students. While the teachers designed them specifically for students like Jayson, Kyoko, and Trevor, these strategies were often beneficial to many other children in the class as well.

A Selection of Strategies in Action

Jayson

Seating options. Not long into the semester Ms. Chavez provided Jayson with a visual menu of seating options so that he could make an effective choice about sitting through a large group lesson (Wannarka & Ruhl, 2008). This menu included sitting close to the teacher, being able to lean on a shelf or table nearby, standing at the back of the rug, or choosing a chair. A smaller version of the visual menu was posted near the meeting areas, as a reminder for Jayson to make a good choice. Although Jayson wanted to move most of the time, these limited options provided him with the opportunity to become more comfortable sitting (temporarily) and therefore more receptive to learning.

Movement Breaks. Interestingly, both teachers noticed how Jayson was able to focus better while (or after) moving. Ms. Chavez accordingly created options for movement breaks that included stretching, carrying materials, doing exercises, or taking crab walks. Depending on his energy level, Jayson was either asked if he needed—or was directed to take—a movement break. Afterward, he could choose his best listening spot. This brief strategic interlude meant that Jayson would most likely be the last student to arrive at the rug, minimizing or eliminating his waiting time.

Participation card/focusing techniques. Although both Ms. Fansler and Ms. Chavez used a range of cues effectively to help students stay on task (including nonverbal hand gestures, verbal prompts, and gently touching shoulders), they determined that Jayson needed additional support. Furthermore, they wanted him to use refocusing techniques that involved self-monitoring so that he could eventually internalize and therefore own a strategy to help him focus and remember to participate (Iseman, Silverman, & Jeweler, 2010). Ms. Fansler made up an individualized card for Jayson that stated that the area he was currently working on was to “determine importance” and “identify one or two key ideas.” Subsequently, he improved both in participation in class discussions and in keeping on topic.

Kyoko

Previewing and priming. A quiet child who never called attention to herself, Kyoko could easily be overlooked. However, as an individual with auditory processing problems, she was a student who

greatly benefited from previewing information, thereby priming her brain to “get ready to learn” (Jensen, 2005).

Ms. Fansler realized that Kyoko needed to preview key vocabulary and instructional materials and to have the opportunity to connect prior knowledge to new content before she could actively participate in class. At the start of a language arts class, she told Kyoko: “We are going to learn about *prediction*. This is a type of guess using information you already know.” Ms. Fansler gave Kyoko a simple laminated index card and customized a message for her, using an erasable marker (see Figure 4). The highlighted words were permanently on the card, and those beneath were created for the specific lesson. Since being given this support, when Kyoko left minilessons to do her independent work, she knew which information was important and exactly what to do.

Participation card/verbal prompts. Ms. Fansler and Ms. Chavez were aware that they needed to both “provide the language” to students who did not participate sufficiently in class discussions and to enhance their understanding of content (Tobin, 2005). For example, practicing verbal prompts that model possible responses allowed Kyoko to anticipate the language necessary for her verbal participation in a particular lesson.

Verbal prompts were also listed on a prominently displayed poster; they included: “I agree with...,” “I don’t agree with...,” “I was wondering about...,” and “I don’t understand the part when...”. After implementing this strategy, the teachers observed that Kyoko was not only using the targeted language but opening up in general, noticeably making more verbal contributions to the class.

Check-in. After Ms. Fansler gave directions, Ms. Chavez noticed that sometimes a few students appeared confused and needed clarification about what they were expected to do. Kyoko was one of these students and required time to “reboot” in order to switch activities. To avoid having Kyoko become stuck within a transition, Ms. Chavez purposefully checked in with her (and with other students), seemingly at random, to make sure that they knew what the next task was and how to complete it (Meltzer, 2010).

Trevor

Visual schedule and written directions. Ms. Chavez decided that to support Trevor’s transition between lessons and his readiness for work, he needed a visual schedule or checklist in the room (Reiff, 2005). Along with Ms. Fansler, she decided that it would be a good idea to create a class version to be universally implemented, and made a large visual schedule that contained pictures and words and included an arrow to show the sequence of activities. Once posted on the wall, this visual reminder proved to be helpful for all students. Trevor was then given a personal schedule, customized to help him prepare for ending activities and shifting to the next task. His schedule showed clearly what the expectations were for “finishing up” (e.g., placing materials on the correct shelf, putting his work in his class cubby, and making sure his desk was clear), and which activity followed.

Timers and clocks. Children often do not have a completed product when a classroom activity has ended. Both teachers were therefore aware that setting a timer at the beginning of an activity could help convey the related concepts of “being finished” and “having to stop working,” and could benefit all the students. Placing the class timer next to Trevor and his partner allowed them to track how much time they had left, set goals in relation to how they could best use that time, and countdown to help Trevor anticipate the signal for transition and prepare for stopping the game.

Break system. Ms. Chavez noted that Trevor, like Jayson, had trouble maintaining interest, focus, and motivation to sustain independent work. She recognized that Trevor often needed to engage with topics that were of particular interest to him, which essentially served to recharge his battery for working on topics that interested him less. She therefore established a break system with him, setting goals around chunks of work but also allowing him to alternate between the required task and self-selected activities that interested him more. Once he could switch between tasks, Trevor demonstrated better self-regulation and was able to sustain his attention to focus on schoolwork (Betts, Betts, & Gerber-Eckard, 2007).

Implications for the Field

As two career-long educators working in inclusive classrooms in New York City, we know the challenges of creating and maintaining such settings and the many forces that can detract from, inhibit, and even purposefully impede success. Nevertheless, we remain committed to inclusive education.

Citizenship Within a Democracy

Twenty years ago, Skrtic wrote, “Special Education...[is] the profession that emerged in twentieth-century America to contain the failure of public education to educate its youth for a full political, economic, and cultural participation in a democracy” (1991, p. 24). The alternative to inclusive education has been segregation, a tacit acceptance of attrition for students “marked” with disabilities. With segregation comes devaluation, a loss in cultural capital for individuals. This form of disempowerment actively disadvantages students who have been labeled as disabled. Statistics on the overrepresentation of students of color in disability categories, high dropout rates, unemployment, underemployment, and incarceration are testimony to system that fails too many of its citizens (Losen & Orfield, 2002).

The goal of schools should be to give all citizens access to knowledge and skills that provide them with the power to negotiate our complicated world and ultimately become employed. Furthermore, students should learn with, and from, each other—coming to know true diversity in terms of physical, cognitive, sensory, and emotional differences. In this way, artificial notions of “normalcy” that have served to diminish and devalue “disabled” children for so long can begin to change. As microcosms of society, classrooms must come to reflect, exemplify, and engage with actual diversity within America’s population.

Teachers as Partners

In many ways, Ms. Fansler and Ms. Chavez’s classroom may appear idealized. We acknowledge that developing strong, professional relationships may not come easily or quickly to educators who have been enculturated into working alone.

At the same time, we have seen enough classrooms like theirs to know that they can and do exist. When they do, they are created by teachers who engage in reflection about their practices, driven by a constant desire to improve their own skills in order to better coplan, coteach, and coevaluate their students. Over time, those teachers come to learn how to both give and take, when to step forward and when to step back, when to lead and when to follow. In sum, they learn by experiencing partnership with a fellow professional, as is required in other fields, such as medicine, science, law, and law enforcement. Sharing the responsibilities, challenges, and rewards of teaching provides ongoing, job-embedded real-life professional development. Such experiences are organic to each situation, and call upon both educators to prioritize a shared focus on the children they instruct.

We also recognize that teachers need committed support from administrators to grow and sustain collaborative practices. Educators in schools where coteaching is not working must ask, “Why is it failing?” If certain elements are missing, then the likelihood of success is significantly reduced. Research on successful inclusive classrooms emphasizes the importance of examining educator beliefs and values (Villa & Thousand, 1995), applying the principles of universal design for learning to their practice (Hitchcock, Meyer, Rose, & Jackson, 2002), promoting professional collaboration (Friend, 2005), building community (Sapon-Shevin, 2007), and challenging ableism—the discrimination against people with disabilities (Hehir, 2005). All educators must be aware of these factors and evaluate what can be changed in their school in order to collectively move in the direction of inclusive education.

Using Individualized Strategies

It is perhaps stating the obvious that learning is a highly complex phenomenon for all individuals and that within any classroom, students learn in many different ways. A major fear of both traditional special educators and many parents of children with disabilities has been that specialized attention will fall by the wayside on the superhighway of general education. We understand these concerns and the anxiety about the potential for losing something that was fought hard for and is assured by law: individualized instruction for students with disabilities.

However, we assert that inclusive classrooms predicated on universal design actively incorporate individualization on an as-needed basis. In Ms. Fansler and Ms. Chavez’s class, Jayson, Kyoko, and Trevor all received attention and customized support for their academic or behavioral needs. Throughout the year, both teachers monitored the children’s progress and adapted their strategies. At various times, for example, they knew that Jayson might need fewer breaks or more; Kyoko might internalize some sentence starters, and different ones could then be taught; and Trevor might begin to

generate his own checklists. The concept of individualized instruction is not lost, but actively encouraged—and expected—in an inclusive classroom that is grounded in pedagogical flexibility.

In closing, while much can be written about inclusive classrooms, we have focused on three broad areas inextricably intertwined when considering the *why* and *how* of supporting inclusive classrooms; the value of having classrooms that mirror the diversity of our society; collaborative teaching; and using individualized strategies. We believe that each area merits further exploration and discussion within school communities that are earnestly seeking to maximize equal access to education for all children within our democracy. For us, creating inclusive classrooms is the civil right thing to do.

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Figure 1: Precollaboration Discussion Topics

	Topic	Examples of Questions to Consider
1	Instructional Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What has been selected, and why? ▪ What are some other potential sources of content?
2	Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How do we each usually plan? (How have we each planned in the past?) ▪ How often should we meet? ▪ What should be the goals of our planning session? ▪ How will we “chunk” planning lessons and units?
3	Instructional Format	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How should the content be taught? ▪ · What are some methods that we each prefer?
4	Parity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How will we establish equality in the classroom? ▪ How will we maintain equality in the classroom?
5	Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What are some possible furniture arrangements that we can use to support different learning experiences? ▪ How can we provide the maximum access to students who use a wheelchair?
6	Routines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Who will do what? (Start lessons, signal transitions, check notebooks, collect and grade homework?)
7	Noise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What rules/reactions should we have when the noise level becomes too loud?
8	Discipline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What will be our mutually agreed-upon policy that will show a united team? ▪ How can we avoid “good teacher”/“bad teacher” situations?
9	Feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ When and how can we dialogue about how the lesson went?
10	Student Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What are the ways that will be used to evaluate students?
11	Teaching Chores	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Who will do daily tasks such as taking attendance, setting up the technology, checking supplies, or cleaning the board?
12	Confidentiality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What will be agreed upon in terms of confidentiality and trust?
13	Pet Peeves	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What are some things that each of us can’t stand? (It helps to learn about these early on.)
14	Other issues?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Is there anything we’ve missed?

Source: Modified from Cook and Friend (1996)

Figure 2: Advantages of Coteaching Models with Class Configurations

Format	Class Configurations	Advantages
One Teach, One Observe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Whole Class 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provides a systematic observation/data-collection system ▪ Creates the opportunity to switch roles ▪ Facilitates individual assistance to students ▪ Allows teachers to gauge student engagement and learning ▪ Permits teachers to give peer feedback to each other ▪ Maximizes opportunities for student learning
One Teach, One Drift	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Whole Class ▪ Individual 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Guarantees individualized attention for any student ▪ Creates the opportunity to switch roles ▪ Permits teachers to give feedback to each other ▪ Maximizes opportunities for student learning
Station Teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Small Group ▪ Individual 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provides an active learning format ▪ Increases small-group attention ▪ Encourages cooperation and interdependence ▪ Allows strategic grouping ▪ Increases response rate ▪ Permits teaching students with different aptitudes and skills ▪ Utilizes differentiated instruction ▪ May create options for student choice ▪ Allows both teachers to be perceived as equal
Parallel Teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Half Class ▪ Individual 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provides effective review format ▪ Encourages student responses ▪ Reduces pupil-teacher ratio for group instruction ▪ May encourage student competition ▪ Can accommodate students' learning styles and teachers' teaching styles ▪ Allows both teachers to be perceived as equal ▪ Allows teachers to immediately check information/content area with each other
Alternative Teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Small Group and Large Group ▪ Individual 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Facilitates enrichment opportunities ▪ Offers absent students time to catch up ▪ Keeps individuals and class on pace ▪ Offers time to develop missing skills ▪ Allows for integration of class transfers
Tag Team Teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whole Class Individual 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Creates a dynamic classroom ▪ Encourages and acknowledges multiple interpretations ▪ Provides multiple opportunities for presenting information ▪ Models listening, speaking, and working collaboratively in a partnership ▪ Encompasses varying approaches

Source: Modified from Cook and Friend (1996)

Figure 3: Examples of IEP Summaries

IEP Summary: Kyoko
<p>Student’s learning profile and areas of strength:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Strong reading skills ▪ Strong visual skills ▪ Strengths in active working memory ▪ Self-motivated and can complete independent task ▪ Enjoys working with partners and small groups
<p>Areas of need:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Weak auditory processing and therefore missing important information ▪ Weak word-finding skills; has a hard time forming language on demand ▪ Needs to improve use of “Wh” questions and to check for clarity ▪ Needs to expand ideas and topics during writing ▪ Needs to self-advocate in group activities and share ideas and thoughts
<p>Strategies that have been successful:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Word banks and visual verbal prompting ▪ Structured partner activities (group jobs and responsibilities) ▪ Extra processing time ▪ Previewing and priming with visual cue prior to group activities ▪ Regular positive feedback specifically in regard to her verbal participation in class ▪ Written directions for a tasks so she can self-correct ▪ Graphic organizers with visual cues when necessary
<p>Notes:</p> <p>Kyoko is quiet but not shy. She will often initiate a task without checking first to see if she is doing the correct task. She needs to be encouraged to ask for help and to stop and check her work using class visuals and/or peers.</p>
IEP Summary: Jayson
<p>Student’s learning profile and areas of strength:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Diagnosed with ADHD ▪ Learns best with tactile and kinesthetic activities ▪ Strong math skills ▪ Decoding on grade level ▪ Has a lot of ideas for writing projects ▪ Enjoys working with partners
<p>Areas of need:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Struggling with inference in reading ▪ Needs to improve independent reading and stamina; currently reading for approximately five minutes independently ▪ Struggles with organization of materials ▪ Can have a low frustration level for difficult tasks ▪ Needs to improve conflict resolution skills ▪ - Struggling with independently managing multistep tasks
<p>Strategies that have been successful:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Breaking schedule for self-regulation and movement ▪ Seating options ▪ Hands-on multisensory materials for minilessons

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Clear positive feedback after completion of tasks ▪ Written directions for all tasks ▪ Graphic organizers with tasks broken down
<p>Notes:</p> <p>Jayson enjoys academics and has a lot of great ideas to share. He really likes working with his friends. When he gets frustrated or overstimulated it is a good idea to remind him to take a break</p>

<p>IEP Summary: Trevor</p>
<p>Student’s learning profile and areas of strength:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Diagnosed with Asperger’s syndrome ▪ Learns best with visual concrete presentation of materials ▪ Decoding above grade level, comprehension on grade level ▪ Good writing skills ▪ Enjoys participating in group discussions, especially in social studies ▪ Enjoys working with his friends and familiar peers
<p>Areas of need:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Beginning to struggle with inference in reading; can miss important information ▪ Needs to improve independent reading and stamina; can lose focus and engage in self-stimulatory behavior after approximately eight minutes ▪ Struggles with organization of materials and finishing tasks on time ▪ Can become very upset when transitioning, especially when ending preferred tasks and when the transition is unplanned or unexpected ▪ Needs to improve conversation skills with peers
<p>Strategies that have been successful:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Break option for self-regulation, calming down, and sensory integration ▪ Visual cues for abstract concepts (these should be embedded in whole class visual charts) ▪ Individual daily schedule with specific new information about the day ▪ Written directions for all tasks ▪ Graphic organizers with visual cues
<p>Notes:</p> <p>Trevor’s independent work skills have improved a lot lately. He has mastered the use of his writing folder and the graphic organizers. This has greatly improved his ability to write independently and get all his ideas on paper. He can independently decide when he needs a break, and when the break is over he is rejoining the group activity. His next step is to be able to rejoin the group quietly and get right to work.</p>

Figure 4: Participation Card for Kyoko

If you aren’t sure what we are talking about you can:

- Check the bolded words on the white board
 - Ask the teacher, “Can you repeat that?”
 - Give a signal that you need a “check-in”
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