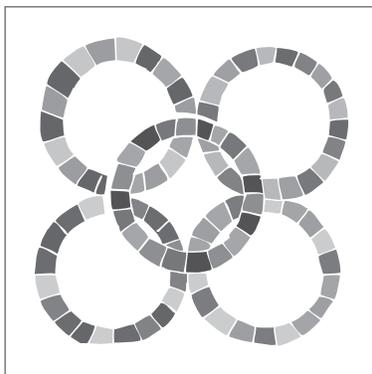


Quick-Guides to Inclusion

Ideas for Educating Students with Disabilities

SECOND EDITION



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Be the Teacher for All Your Students

When a student with disabilities is placed in a general education class, a common misunderstanding is that you, as the classroom teacher, are primarily a host rather than a teacher. Many teachers welcome this notion with open arms. It means someone else is responsible for actually teaching the student with disabilities. This makes sense to many teachers who already feel they have too much to do and wonder if they have the skills to be successful with their students who have disabilities. There's just one catch: merely hosting doesn't work very well.

When the teacher serves as host, it's someone else, such as a paraprofessional, special educator, or another support person, who takes turns working with the student who has a disability in the back of the classroom or in a different room. The teacher ends up having minimal or superficial interactions with this student and not having a good handle on what is going on with him or her educationally. This does not sit well with many teachers because they want to, and should, be in charge of activities and people in their classroom.

Yet some teachers say they don't really think of the student with disabilities as one of *their* students. I've heard teachers say, "I have 26 students plus John [a student with disabilities]. My job is to teach my 26 students and Karen's job [paraprofessional] is to teach John." This "hosting" approach perpetuates a lack of ownership and responsibility for the student's education, and too often it leaves major curricular and instructional decisions to hard-working but potentially underqualified paraprofessionals.

Although your student with disabilities should expect to receive individually determined special education supports, I strongly encourage you to really be the teacher for all the students who are placed in your class. That means knowing what all your students are learning and personally spending time teaching each of them, including your students with disabilities.

Be flexible, but don't allow yourself to be relegated to being an outsider in your own classroom. You are successful teaching students without disabilities; that means you have the core set of knowledge and skills to be successful teaching students with disabilities. Teachers who have embraced the challenge of teaching their students with disabilities often report that they have learned approaches that benefit their entire class and that they keep using after the student with a disability has moved on to the next grade.

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