Teaching Students with Special Needs: Inclusion Strategies for the Classroom Teacher

A Distance Learning Graduate Course
Presented in Cooperation with The MASTER Teacher
and featuring Wendy Dover,
author of The Inclusion Facilitator

Course Syllabus
"It is important to remember that inclusion is not one model. Each child's needs may dictate a different model, and a child may be involved with a combination of models throughout the day. Inclusion will encourage schools to build programs around individual student's needs rather than trying to fit students into existing programs.

Things will look different and be different. Schools are challenged with the task of developing not only programs, but also processes that will give those programs the flexibility to change with the changing needs of the student population – month after month, year after year."

Wendy Dover

*The Inclusion Facilitator*
Rationale

With the passage of Public Law 90-142 in 1975, educators were given the mandate to educate students with special needs in the least restrictive environment, to educate the disabled with the non-disabled to the maximum extent appropriate. In response to this mandate, the "mainstreaming" approach to education emerged. With mainstreaming, students with disabilities were in special classes and only allowed to be educated in regular classrooms when it was deemed appropriate by a special education team or when specific educational criteria had been mastered.

In 1990, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act reauthorized PL 94-142 and refined the concept of "least restrictive environment." As a result, a revised approach to educating students with special needs was developed. That approach is referred to as Inclusion.

Broadly defined, inclusion is the practice of educating all students, with and without disabilities, in heterogeneous classrooms. The concept of inclusion differs from mainstreaming in that it allows students to exercise their basic right to be educated with their peers. With inclusion, services are provided to students with special needs within the regular classroom, even if their goals are different from the rest of the class. With inclusion, students are removed from the classroom setting only after modifications, strategies, and support have been provided in the regular classroom setting.

While the concept of inclusion is being widely accepted as a viable process by which to educate students with special needs, educators differ in their interpretation and implementation of inclusion practices. Inclusion involves change and change is always difficult. Of course, educators realize that as students in the regular classroom setting become increasingly more diverse, curriculum materials and classroom practices must be adapted, modified and changed. The question is how to accomplish these changes in a way that accommodates students with special needs and, at the same time, meets the needs of the other students in the classroom.

The objective of this course is to address educators' need for assistance and support in developing and implementing modifications and accommodations for special needs students and to illustrate how these strategies can improve and individualize the curriculum for all students in the classroom setting. The course will also address the need for collaborative instruction efforts with other staff members to maximize their inclusion program.
Course Design

This course has been designed for school professionals as a distance learning experience in a guided study format. The instructional design of the course involves reading, reflection, video study, classroom application, critical thinking, planning and evaluation.

"Inclusion Strategies for the Classroom Teacher" is also an outcome-driven experience. The outcome, the goal, of this course is to produce school professionals with the knowledge and skills to effectively include all students in classroom instruction.

To successfully complete course requirements, participants will process and organize information gained through videotapes, learning activities, readings. For each session, they will also plan for the implementation of course information and then evaluate the results once their implementation has been completed.

In addition, participants will develop procedures to identify special students' strengths and areas of need, to review the appropriateness of current curriculum materials and instructional strategies, to adapt and modify lesson plans, and to work in their teaching situations to implement new inclusion strategies.

The distance learning model of this course provides a program of study that guides participants through a series of learning team activities. As learning means gaining information, organizing it for use, and then putting it into action, the course of study is designed to guide participants in applying what they are learning in their own teaching situations.

The course is composed of 15 instructional units, requiring 50 hours of learning activities and 100 hours of planning, implementing and evaluating classroom assignments: Total course work hours equal 150.

1. Fifty (50) course work hours in which teachers will work in learning teams to process and organize information gained through videotapes and readings.

2. One hundred (100) course work hours in implementation time with students either in their classrooms or in co-curricular or extra-curricular activities.
Course Title

"Inclusion Strategies for the Classroom Teacher"

Course Description

"Inclusion Strategies for the Classroom Teacher" is a three semester hour or five quarter hour graduate course designed to give teachers the theory and skills to modify curriculum materials, lesson plans, and classroom activities to best include special needs students in the regular classroom. The course provides information on the theoretical foundations of inclusion, provides sample lessons for instruction, and prepares participants to conceive more ideas about how to effectively include all students in regular classroom instruction.

Course Goals

The goals of this course are to give participants an understanding of the inclusion process, to increase their awareness of modification strategies and activities, to offer them a diversity of successful inclusion practices, to guide them in developing their own strategies, and to prepare them to work collaboratively with other staff members in the inclusion process.

Course Outline

Session #1: Identifying Current Knowledge and Establishing Course Goals
1. Course Overview
2. Participant's current understanding of mainstreaming vs. inclusion
3. Inventory of participant's perceived needs in the area of inclusion
4. Establishing participant's personal course goals

Session #2: De-Mything Inclusion
1. Federal Law Mandates
   a.) PL 94-142 and IDEA and how they affect educators
2. Service delivery models
   a.) Mainstreaming
b.) Regular Education Initiative
   c.) Inclusion
3. The role of team building in successful inclusion programs
4. Guidelines and strategies for building a successful inclusion program

Session #3: Building Consensus for Modifications
1. An examination of the issues involved in inclusion
2. An examination of the complexity of curricular and/or classroom modifications
3. Strategies for building consensus regarding modifications and accommodations
4. The Clarification Checklist
   a.) Solving conflicts and problems encountered in inclusion

Session #4: Creating Student Information Profiles
1. Documenting individual student instructional preferences and skill levels
2. Facilitating communication of student information from special education programs to regular education programs
3. Transitioning from one educational setting to another
4. Promoting collaboration in the development of inclusive educational programs

Session #5: Taking the First Step: Strategies for Effectively Communicating About Special Students
1. Strategies for assessing students' needs
2. Using the PassPORT System
3. Using the IEP Quick Look Form
4. Using the Student Matrix Worksheet

Session #6: Adaption/Modification Options: Levels and Descriptions
1. Categorizing adaption/modification areas by level
   a.) No adaptations needed
   b.) Reinforcing an activity or content
   c.) Adapting/Modifying the activity or content
   d.) Developing parallel activity or content
2. Determining Professional Project

Session #7: Strategies for Making Curriculum Modifications
1. Helping students with assignments and requirements
2. Reducing the number of outcomes or selecting appropriate outcomes
3. Using more appropriate or functional materials
4. Incorporating student skills as listed on the student's IEP
Session #8: Individual Student Modification Planning
1. Examining regular classroom curriculum for appropriateness
2. Coordinating regular classroom curriculum with student's IEP
3. Providing appropriate support to special students
4. Planning for further adaptions or modifications

Session #9: Instructional Co-Planning Documents
1. The importance of collaboration between regular education and special education teachers
2. Providing written documentation of the co-planning process
3. Facilitating joint curricular and instructional planning for all students
4. Ensuring accountability for assigned responsibilities by all involved staff members

Session #10: Strategies for Co-Planning and Co-Teaching
1. Co-Planning Strategies
   a.) Subject Area Co-Planning
   b.) Unit Co-Planning
   c.) Daily Lesson Co-Planning
2. Co-Teaching
   a.) How to write a Co-Teaching plan

Session #11: Collaborative Teaching
1. Structuring a co-teaching partnership for direct student services
2. Guidelines for first year co-teaching
3. Developing a written plan for co-teaching
4. Identifying main areas of concern to most beginning co-teachers and facilitating their resolution

Session #12: Strategies for Collaborative Teaching
1. Defining and assigning team member roles and responsibilities
2. Identifying special education staff personnel who may be involved in a partnership
3. Clarifying the role of the paraprofessional in a co-teaching situation
4. Defining areas of staff development that will enrich and develop a co-teaching team

Session #13: Modification Strategies: Language Arts and Communication Skills
1. Instructional strategies for helping students edit their own written work and fostering creative writing skills
2. Strategies for encouraging oral expression and dialogue in the classroom
3. Using parallel assignments in secondary English and literature classes
4. Maximizing classroom displays and bulletin boards

Session #14: Modification Strategies: Mathematics and Problem Solving
1. Management strategies for teachers who are responsible for students at different instructional levels
2. Problem-solving activities designed to foster practical applications
3. Practice and reinforcement of basic skills development
4. Strategies for instructing a group of students with diverse math or computer skills

Session #15: Modification Strategies: Science, Social Studies and Physical Education
1. Science: suggestions for improving sequencing, grouping and memorization of information using "strip story" strategies as well as modification suggestions for laboratory activities
2. Social Science: ideas for instructing basic map skills and map reading
3. Physical Education: various activities that allow the disabled student to partially participate with the whole class in a given activity

Session #16: Modification Strategies: Academic and Social Skills
1. Activities for building relationships and improving trust with students
2. Using personal monitoring and contracts to improve behavior
3. Teaching social skills for working independently or in groups
4. Developing and implementing strategies for transition times

Session #17: Securing Feedback on Professional Project
1. Identifying lesson and modifications for project
2. Gaining feedback from colleagues
3. An evaluation of the feedback
4. Planning for project implementation

Session #18: Reflection, Synthesis, and Planning
1. Reflection on key insights gained in the course
2. Identifying key course concepts
3. An evaluation of inclusion documentation procedures
4. Planning for future use of course concepts
Participant Characteristics

This course is designed for teachers and administrators in grades kindergarten through twelve. Participants will have a bachelor's degree and a valid teacher credential (if applicable). There are no other prerequisites.

Instructional Materials

Instructional materials for this course include:


b.) Course Media:

i.) Video: “De-Mything Inclusion"
ii.) Video: “Taking the First Step: Strategies for Effective Communicating About Special Students”
iii.) Video: “Strategies for Making Curriculum Modifications”
iv.) Video: “Strategies for Co-Planning and Co-Teaching"
v.) Video: "Modification Strategies: Language Arts and Communication"
vi.) Video: "Modification Strategies: Mathematics and Problem Solving"
vii.) Video: “Modification Strategies: Science, Social Science and Physical Education”
viii.) Video: “Modification Strategies: Student and Classroom Skills"

c.) Course Workbook.

This book contains summaries of course content, pre-video viewing activities, discussion questions, activities, worksheets, classroom application assignments, and learning reports.

d.) Course Instructions.

This booklet contains detailed instructions on how participants should proceed through the course work. Also included are instructions for the professional project and the synthesis paper.

e.) Bibliography.
Learning Activities

1. For each of the fifteen (15) sections of this course, participants will complete the following activities:

   a.) Read the assigned chapters of the course text.

   b.) Read supplemental articles in the course of study book.

   c.) Discuss knowledge gained through reading assignments with study team members or, if participant is enrolled as an individual, reflect on readings and how they apply to their teaching situations.

   d.) View instructional videos.

   e.) Meet with study team to discuss course material in terms of participants’ own students or reflect upon information presented in the video and how it might apply in their classroom.

   f.) Record summary of study team and/or personal reflection activities in progress report.

   g.) Design an application of course content in their teaching situation.

   h.) Implement and evaluate the effectiveness of the classroom application or, if implementation is not possible, describe anticipated results once application is complete.

   i.) Summarize classroom application design, application experience, and evaluation in progress report.

2. At the conclusion of the course, participants will submit the fifteen progress reports and a professional paper to the crediting university for grading.
Course Outcomes

Our courses been designed to provide a learning environment in which participants’ individual and collaborative efforts result in positive change in the classroom. The courses are designed to promote a quality graduate educational experience through the attainment of the following outcomes:

To successfully complete the program, participants will:
1. Utilize student performance profiling to identify the special needs and abilities of students.
2. Develop an approach to inclusion that meets the needs of all students, including those students with special needs.
3. Develop, implement, and demonstrate proficiency in teaching strategies designed to create a caring and encouraging learning climate in their classrooms.
4. Develop, implement, and demonstrate proficiency in teaching strategies in each of the five levels of modification and adaptation.
5. Develop, implement, and evaluate strategies for co-planning and co-teaching in an inclusive classroom environment.
6. Demonstrate proficiency in the use of course planning forms (PassPORT, Lesson Modifications, Test Adaptations, Organizers, etc.) to improve student achievement.
7. Reflect upon and evaluate course experience in terms of the future use of information and skills gained.
8. Acquire and utilize the skills in building learning networks that they may continue to utilize as lifelong learners.

Course Assessment

Participant achievement will be measured by a combination of the following:

1. An evaluation of participant's 15 progress reports. (Outcomes 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5.)
   
   Each progress report will be evaluated for:
   – Completeness and quality of responses.
   – Accuracy of information.
   – Appropriateness of classroom application.
   – Quality of reflection.

2. An evaluation of participant's professional project and course paper. (Outcomes 6, 7, and 8.)
   
   The professional project and paper will be evaluated for:
   – Inclusion of required components.
   – Synthesis and analysis of course concepts.
   – Attention to organization, spelling, and grammar.
Bibliography


