



Social Inclusion Inclusion Practices Handbook





Introduction

A school is a perfect setting where existing disparities in society can be bridged if the school creates a positive environment and fosters mutual understanding and growth. Through such an education, the boundaries between the education centre and other elements of students' lives are permeated. It has been found to provide pedagogical tools and strategies for developing student competence and class membership and participation. Inclusion is based on the belief that people not only work but live in inclusive communities; they work with people of different races, religions, economic backgrounds, aspirations, etc. In the same vein, children of all ages should learn and grow in environments that resemble the environments that they will eventually work and live in. Through engaging with people from different socio economic backgrounds all groups come to learn, respect and appreciate each other in new ways.

Based on the spirit that schools must be sites for inclusion and social integration, the 25 per cent reserved seats in private unaided schools for children from economically and socially disadvantaged backgrounds established in Section 12(1)(c) of the Right Education Act (RTE), 2009, has the objective of bringing together in the same classroom children from different background. The presence of these 25 per cent kids should alter the pedagogical nature of the classroom so that the knowledge base from where these children come from — farming, weaving, services, carpentry and construction, practical vocations like repair of vehicles, electricity, plumbing and so on becomes a part of the classroom, that can greatly benefit the other 75 per cent who are now cut off from the informal sector knowledge base that still dominates the Indian economy¹.

Though poverty is often used as an excuse by educators for low academic performance of students, there is also lot of evidence of schools that do succeed with economically disadvantaged students. As educators, we can have no excuse to let any child fail. Poverty calls for key information and smarter strategies, not resignation and despair². This handbook has the objective to encourage teachers to develop methods, such as group activities and interactive learning that facilitate greater interaction among children of different socioeconomic and caste backgrounds. In the next pages, teachers can find easy-to-implement practices that will help them promote a more child-friendly environment within their classrooms.



Benefits of Inclusive Classrooms

Socially inclusive classrooms have been found to be beneficial for all children. Some of the themes which illustrate the benefits are³:

Social Justice and Citizenship

Conversations about equity, membership and opportunity for all children are naturally occurring and common conversations in inclusive classrooms. "We all belong" is the message children in these environments hear time and time again. In one classroom, these words are a motto posted on the wall. In another classroom this message is lived by the act of a child asking her friend with a disability to join her on the rug. The idea that a classroom is a community is not unique to inclusion, but inclusive classrooms make the idea real and provide children with frequent opportunities to practice and discuss the idea.

Safe Environments

All students come to situations where they may struggle. Children in inclusive classrooms realize that this is a natural part of learning. Asking for help is expected and encouraged. Teachers model how they handle their own challenges by using 'think-alouds'. Children begin to embrace difficulties in a problem-solving approach. They are taught to pay attention to their own needs for support and to their own learning styles. Over time children both with and without disabilities come to recognize their differences and see them as ordinary.

Communication

There is a fundamental belief in inclusive classrooms that all individuals are communicative, however communication can take on many different forms. Within inclusive classrooms, individuals have the opportunity to learn how to communicate with individuals who may communicate in nontraditional ways. In addition, students have access to multiple ways of expressing themselves and understanding others.

Academic Performance

In the US, it was found that the average learning rate in more integrated schools (schools with a higher level of socioeconomic diversity) is 30% higher than that in less integrated schools (Palardy G., 2008). Students at integrated schools have also been found to have a 68% higher chance of enrolling in college (Palardy G., 2013).

Other Skills and Attributes

There are multiple studies which show that ALL students build critical thinking and skills of collaboration and complex communication in integrated classrooms (Potter, 2014). In an analysis of private schools in Delhi which admit poor students, Rao (2013) found that wealthy students who have poor classmates are more pro-social and generous, discriminate less and are more willing to interact with the poor, and finally, do not suffer any drop in their own academic performance.

From slums to Japan- a Ray of Hope

Lalit, a student now studying in Asia Pacific University-Japan, was born and brought up in the slums behind Bluebells School International, New Delhi. His father, a rickshaw puller, never imagined that he will be able to send his son to an international school, while he could barely afford to feed Lalit and the family. However, driven by the ideals of social inclusion, Bluebells International a decade, admitted since students like Lalit in their school. Treated equally and compassionately by his teachers and high-income peers, Lalit not only topped his classes at school, but also earned a scholarship to study at Asia Pacific University.





Upward Cycle

- 1. Positive interacting influences from parents and teachers
- 2. Parents maintain strong aspirations
- 3. Teachers show commitment
- 4. Children respond to learning opportunities and support
- 5. Exclusion resisted



- 1. Dysfunctional parent-child interaction under economic and emotional stress
- 2. Pattern of difficult relationships repeated with teachers
- 3. Social relations re-cycle the adverse effects of material disadvantage and behaviour difficulties reinforcing the exclusion

Vicious and Virtuous Circles in Child Development

How to Inculcate Values in Children from Different Background

Strong, secure relationships help stabilize children's behavior and provide the core guidance needed to build lifelong social skills. Children who grow up with such relationships learn healthy, appropriate emotional responses to everyday situations. But children raised in poor households often learn fail to learn these responses, to the detriment of their school performances

It is much easier to condemn a student's behavior and demand that he or she change it than it is to help the student change it. Every proper response that you don't see at your school is one that you need to be teaching. Rather than telling kids to "be respectful," demonstrate appropriate emotional responses and the circumstances in which to use them, and allow students to practice applying them.

To shift your own responses to inappropriate behavior, reframe your thinking: expect students to be impulsive, to blurt inappropriate language, and to act "disrespectful" until you teach them stronger social and emotional skills and until the social conditions at your school make it attractive not to do those things.

You cannot change your students' bank account, but you can change what's in their emotional account. It may require a considerable shift in your thinking. It is fruitless simply to demand respect from students; many just don't have the context, background, or skills to show it.



Instead,

- Give respect to students first, even when they seem least to deserve it.
- Share the decision making in class. For example, ask students whether they would prefer to do a quick review of what they have learned to consolidate and strengthen their learning or move on to new material.
- Avoid such directives as "Do this right now!" Instead, maintain expectations while offering choice and soliciting input (e.g., "Would you rather do your rough draft now or gather some more ideas first?").
- Avoid demeaning sarcasm (e.g., "How about you actually do your assignment quietly for a change?").
- Model the process of adult thinking. For example, say, "We have to get this done first because we have only enough time for these three things today." Keep your voice calm and avoid labeling actions.
- Discipline through positive relationships, not by exerting power or authority. Avoid such negative directives as "Sit down immediately!" Instead say, "We've got lots to do in class today. When you're ready to learn, please have a seat."



Inclusive Classroom and How

Teachers need to consider the socio-economic and cultural backgrounds of their students as they tend to learn a lot from their socio-cultural practices. And thus they need to modify the teaching-learning processes to link it to the social reality to make it relevant for children.

How We Can Achieve Successful Integration

An inclusive approach to education involves⁴:

- creating an ethos of achievement for all pupils within a climate of high expectation;
- valuing a broad range of talents, abilities and achievements;
- promoting success and self-esteem by taking action to remove barriers to learning;
- countering conscious and unconscious discrimination that may prevent individuals, or pupils from any particular groups, from thriving in the school, and
- actively promoting understanding and a positive appreciation of the diversity of individuals and groups within society.

According to Jensen (2009) the following are some simple practices which will help create and maintain inclusive classrooms, such that all children learn, and learn well. If a practice is been implemented by a school, you will find in parenthesis the name of the school.

Connect with students' lives

- Learn about each of your students' interests, background, and what makes them unique. This will help to identify, link, and analyze the factors that could affect children's learning. Also you will be able to identify the differential learning needs and interests of children from diverse backgrounds⁵.
- Make some time to ask children from economically and socially disadvantaged background about their difficulties at school and make them share their experiences. (Ahlcon Public School)

Encourage interaction and strengthen peer relations

- Teach basic but crucial meet-and-greet skills. When students introduce themselves to other classmates, teach students to face one another, make eye contact, smile, and shake hands.
- For group work activities, group together children from different background to avoid self-selection. (The Riverside School)
- Make students aware of the consequences of bullying their classmates.
- When teachers realized that a student is being bullied, they must ask bullies why they are bullying their friend and whether or not they think of the bullied student's feelings.

Components of inclusive Schools

Engaging Parents

Bilungual Teaching

Ethos of Respect

Culturally inclusive curriculum

Responds positively to diversity

Collaborative learning

Create a positive atmosphere

- Avoid labelling children from economically and socially disadvantaged backgrounds. (Salwan Public School)
- Always refer to the school as "our school" and the class as "our class"; avoid using a "me-and-you model" that reinforces power structures.
- Acknowledge students for small instances of effort and achievement.
- Celebrate effort as well as achievement; praise students for reaching milestones as well as for fulfilling end goals. Pack acknowledgments and celebrations into every single class.
- Reduce the parallels with prison. For example, instead of using bells play songs for class transitions.

Empower students

- Teach students how to deal with anger and frustration (e.g., counting to 10 and taking slow, deep breaths)
- Introduce learning-oriented consequences. For example, a student who throws objects in the classroom may be assigned a cleaning or beautification project for the room.
- Teach students to set goals to focus on what they want.

Course content

- Use examples that reflect the diversity of the students' socio-economic background.
- Encourage all students to participate and give examples from their communities which are relevant to the lesson being taught.
- Organize students' presentations to assess their understanding of the content that is taught in class.
- Ensure that all activities are creative rather than money-based so that children from economically and socially disadvantaged background do not feel excluded because they cannot afford to take part in them. (Loreto School)
- Try to reduce homework to the minimum by incorporating time for homework in class or right

after class. In higher grades when academic requirement increases, school can be responsible for children with no academic support at home, without making the parents feel bad or inferior. (Ahlcon Public School)

Remedial classes

- Provide special language support classes for kids from economically and socially disadvantaged background as they do not get that support at home. These classes are open to other children as well, and focus on reading, writing and speaking skills to build confidence and bridge the academic gap, if there is any.
- Provide remedial classes every day for all children who need academic support and not just economically and socially disadvantaged children, to avoid tagging children. (Bluebells School International, Chinmaya Vidhyala, St. Mary's School, The Riverside School, The Shri Ram School, Loreto School)
- Remedial learning should not be pushed to exams, but instead happen on a daily and weekly basis.

Start a Mentor-Mentee program

- Mentoring is a way supporting children who are having a hard time adapting to school. (Loreto School)
- Pair students who have learning difficulties with students from more advanced classes.

Celebrate diversity

• Organize on a regular basis activities to promote diversity. Have children from different background make a presentation about their religion, family and hobbies⁶.



Students with Disabilities

All children must feel that they are part of the classroom. If there are students with disabilities you will need to identify their needs to facilitate their learning process and adapt your teaching methods accordingly. This might affect the rooms used, activities, lecture delivery, the format of materials, coursework and assessment methods⁷. Below are some practices that will make the classroom more amicable to students with disabilities⁸.

Peer support

- Provide opportunities to facilitate positive interactions among classmates to promote understanding and acceptance. Peer support ensures that students with disabilities feel well accepted.
- Have the students in your class find out 5 things about other students. This could include, favorite movie, size of family, favorite hobby, etc. Leave time for sharing.
- Have students list the characteristics of good friends. Once their list is done, provide a discussion about the students with disabilities being able to have those same characteristics. This helps students realize that they can be good friends with students with disabilities.
- Challenge your students to find two new friends (encouraging those with disabilities). Over a period of two months, and then ask them to talk in front of the class about their new friendship.

Working with children with severe handicaps⁹

- Prior to supporting the specific goal, it is important to make sure you have their attention. Typically, you'll be using a very direct teaching method.
- As much as possible, use grade appropriate materials.
- Identify some clear goals/expectations and stick with it, it takes a great deal of time to see success in most cases.
- Be consistent and have predictable routines for everything you do.

- Make sure that everything is relevant to the child you are working with.
- Track progress carefully which will help you define when the child is ready for the next milestone.
- Remember that these children don't often generalize so be sure to teach the skill in a variety of settings.
- When the child has reached the goal, be sure to use the skill regularly to ensure mastery of the skill continues.

Vision impairments¹⁰

- When addressing the student who is blind or visually impaired, speak in a normal tone of voice. You'll want to identify yourself to them when approaching and let them know when you're leaving.
- Don't think you can't refer to sight such as: "see", "look", "watch" or "read". A blind student will use these words in their vocabulary just like those who are sighted. It's OK to use phrases like, "Look over here", etc.
- Blindfold a student and require a few tasks in the classroom for them to do like sharpening a pencil, finding their math book etc.
- Adapt your teaching styles, such as speaking and writing clearly, or writing larger on the board, and present learning materials in different formats. If visual aids are being used in the classroom, be sure to supply verbal descriptions
- Pupils with a visual impairment must have the opportunity to meet with others who have a visual impairment.
- Help create 'circles of friends' for certain students to provide support for attending school activities.
- The blind and visually impaired student is simply a normal child with the same rules and expectations as other children in the classroom. They should be required to fulfill the obligations any child their age are expected, but should also be provided with the necessary modifications and support when required.

Bilingual Teaching: the Why and the How

A major barrier to inclusion can be language. Students from disadvantaged backgrounds are likely to have little or zero knowledge of English and limited opportunities for exposure. In an English-medium school with peers who are already well-acquainted with English, these students will face many challenges. Bilingual teaching, which involves the use the mother tongue along with English, in varying amounts, can prove to be a solution to this challenge.

Why? Benefits for Disadvantaged Students

- Bilingual programs have been found to be much more accessible and inclusionary for disadvantaged students.
- If the mother tongue is used for instruction in content areas like Maths and Science, the child's learning does not have to be postponed till he/she learns English¹¹.
- Initial literacy in the mother tongue also means children can already make the connection between spoken and written communication. When they are taught English explicitly, they will find it easier to pick up these skills.
- Use of the mother tongue will provide a stronger sense of identity and self-worth to children. This can translate to social confidence.
- Children would feel more comfortable and welcome in such an environment, compared to one where they are immersed in a foreign language.
- Use of the mother tongue will also foster self-expression and participation.

Benefits of Bilingualism

Higher Intelligence

Studies have shown that bilingual students generally academically outperform and score statistically higher on standardized college entrance exams than those who only speak one language.

More Grey Matter

Grey matter makes bulk of nerve cells within brain, it is responsible for muscle control, sensory perception such as hearing and seeing, memory, emotions and speech.

Studies have shown an association with grey matter and increased intellect, especially in areas of language, memory and attention

Studies using brain imaging showed that a bilingual brain has denser grey matter compared to monolingual participants

Boost in Brain Power

Recent research shows that bilingualism is a form of brain training - a mental 'workout' that fine-tunes the mind

Speaking two languages profoundly affects the brain and changes how the nervous system responds to sound



General Benefits

The benefits of bilingual education are not exclusively for EWS children. Their peers from advantaged backgrounds also stand to gain from this kind of education. It may even prove to be superior to an English-only education.

Bilingualism has been found to have the following benefits¹²:

- 1. Brawnier brains: Children who learn a second language before the age of five have been shown to have denser gray matter.
- 2. Delayed dementia: Learning more than one language boosts the brain's cognitive reserves and delays the onset of dementia.
- 3. Superior self-regulation: The discipline required to switch between two languages increase a child's ability to focus on an individual task.
- 4. Reading readiness: Children who learned to read in their mother tongue were found to have enhanced phonological awareness and English reading skills

The Benefits of a Bilingual Education

How?

There are different methods of teaching in a bilingual (Hindi/English) setting, depending on the ratio of languages used and the phasing of the transition to the second language (here, English). The exact method to be used may be decided by the teachers, according to their judgment.

The following are some tips and strategies which may be used while teaching English as a second language¹³.

- Create an environment that allows all students to be comfortable taking risks, and making mistakes.
- Adjust the amount of teacher-to-student and student-to-student talk ratio to include more student talk.
- Pre-teach background knowledge/key vocabulary or concepts students will need for each unit before moving ahead.
- Flexible grouping configurations within the classroom allow students to actively participate and ask questions when they don't understand.
- Put away the red pen! Students' grammar and spelling are still in the developmental.
- Stages resist the urge to correct every mistake they make on paper.



Inclusive School and How

Schools are not only places of academic learning, but places of social learning as well. Parents, teachers and community members must work together to promote a more inclusive environment.

First Generation Learners

A large percentage of the children from economically and socially disadvantaged backgrounds education seeking an first-generation learners. Their parents have no formal education or even know how a classroom looks like. These kids have a huge disadvantage with respect to their peers because their parents are not able to participate in their education. Also many of them live in environments that do not encourage them to learn and continue their education.

Strategies for Parents of First Generation Learners

- Include parents and provide adult support and outreach. Build strong, long-term relationships, identify the most critical areas of need, and offer content that parents need most. Offer on-site programs on such topics as nutrition, hygiene, cleanliness, family planning, physical abuse, social confidence and study skill coaching for children. (Bluebells School International, The Riverside School)
- Teach English language skills to parents of economically and socially disadvantaged children. (Bluebells School International, The Riverside School)
- Hold parent-teacher meetings in Hindi so parents can interact with each other and be sensitive to the diversity in their children's school. (Chinmaya Vidhyala, Ahlcon Public School, The Riverside School)
- To involve parents from first generation learners in the school environment, start a volunteer program where they can participate in various activities from supporting the teacher or the administrative staff. (St. Mary's School)
- Provide guidance, counselling and training to all parents in order to sensitize them to the idea of social inclusion. (St. Mary's School)

Parental and Community Engagement

Learning is not limited to the classroom. Parents and teachers must work together to make a positive contribution to the child learning. To get parents involved, the school must consider the diversity in languages and family background of its community. Below are some practices aimed at increasing parental engagement at school¹⁴.

- Report student achievements in culturally sensitive and respectful ways.
- Consult with all families and community members to identify issues and concerns within in the school.
- Ensure that all families and community members have access to school leaders.
- Place 'welcome' signs around the school.
- Review current school practices on inviting families and community members to participate and consider how this could be improved
- Talk to parents twice a week to inform them about its children performance and the curricula. Parents will start familiarizing with school curriculum and get more involved. (The Riverside School)
- Send circulars in Hindi and English (Salwan Public School)

Conclusion

It is important that teachers work together and share practices with learning purposes. When teacher gather and share their ideas and resources, a meaningful and learning community is created, and the sense of belonging and professionalism developed in the community can strengthen teachers' commitment to their profession and motivate them to continually improved their practice (Grossman et al. 2001). Professional development is about teachers learning, learning how to learn, and transforming their knowledge into practice for the benefit of their students' growth.

Teachers may find difficulties in preparing the class content, especially if the classroom is composed with children from different backgrounds/knowledge. Teachers must take advantage of the knowledge of other teachers.

- Collaborate to design material for teaching a subject or any other pedagogical resource. This will provide an opportunity to find new ideas and working methods
- Discuss at the end of the day with the teaching staff to find out what worked and what did not work with children. At the end of the year also discuss what worked for a particular child and what did not. This information must be passed on to the next teacher to redesign their strategy as per the child's need. (St. Mary's School)
- Share with your colleagues success stories more than you share frustrations.

Finally, always remember that low academic results should not be attributed to economic background of children. Teachers are responsible for performance of all children.



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