



THE INCLUSIVE LINK

Issue 01/2010

INAUGURAL ISSUE

This is the first issue of **The Inclusive Link**, a newsletter for preschool teachers keen to know more about children with special needs and how to include them in their classrooms.

The Inclusive Link aims to provide information, strategies and tips on topics and issues that affect children with special needs and suggestions for inclusive education. We welcome questions and comments from readers.

WHAT IS INCLUSIVE EDUCATION?



This is a tricky question as inclusive education means different things to different communities, and is being practiced at different levels in different countries.

Inclusive education is based on the principles of social justice which embraces equal rights and opportunities for all, and rejects discrimination and exclusion. It advocates for a society where children with special needs and their peers without special needs can learn together, as well as from each other, in the same classrooms.



In Malaysia, we are still struggling to understand and implement an education system that is inclusive and non-discriminatory. The government has taken some measures to implement inclusive education in public schools, and private enterprises such as kindergartens and child nurseries have started to open their doors to children with special needs. But we still have a long way to go.

The Persons With Disabilities Act, enacted in 2008, is a major milestone in our journey towards inclusive education. It states that *“Persons with disabilities shall not be excluded from the general education system on the basis of disabilities, and children with disabilities shall not be excluded from pre-school, primary, secondary and higher education.”*



Did you know?

Inclusive education was first adopted internationally at the World Conference of Special Needs Education at Salamanca, Spain in 1994. The **Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action** is based on the principle that **ordinary schools should accommodate all children**, regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions.

ATTENTION AND LISTENING DIFFICULTIES

Attention and listening skills refer to the ability to focus and maintain attention on what is heard or to stay “on task”. These are important skills for all children to learn and participate in classroom activities.

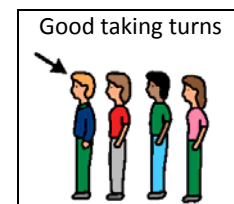
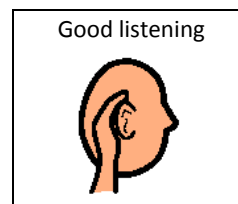
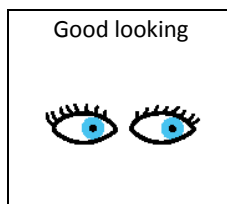
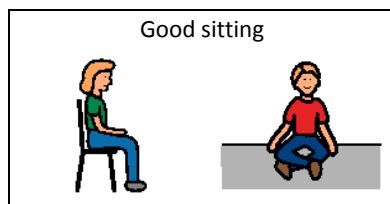


Children can have difficulties with attention and listening for a variety of reasons. In the classroom, the child may:

- be easily distracted by background noise and things that are happening around them
- be very fidgety or have difficulty sitting for any length of time
- disrupt activities by distracting other children or display inappropriate behaviour
- have difficulty taking turns in conversations and in games
- be quiet and withdrawn or seem to be “in their own world”
- have difficulty listening to and following instructions
- have difficulty answering questions

Strategies to help children with attention and listening difficulties

- Use visual cue cards to reinforce the rules of good attention and listening in the classroom



- Role play is a useful method of demonstrating good listening skills
- Use social stories to model good attention and listening behaviour
- Make sure you have the child’s attention before giving them an instruction i.e. by calling their name, by getting their eye contact
- Reward (i.e. praise, give child the thumbs up/ high 5) good attention and listening and be specific with praise i.e. “Well done for good listening”, “Good sitting Annie”
- Motivate children to pay attention by using a variety of teaching techniques i.e. alternating between visual, auditory, and practical or hands on activities
- Reduce background noise and distractions or provide a quiet area to work where possible
- Keep instructions short, speak slowly and repeat if needed
- Check regularly for understanding by asking the child “What do you have to do now?”
- Consider the position of the child in the classroom i.e. where is he/she being seated? Where possible, let the child sit in front among good role models in a position where good eye contact can be maintained with the teacher
- Work for periods of time appropriate to the child’s attention level with frequent breaks between tasks
- Encourage the child throughout tasks to help refocus their attention

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