



THE INCLUSIVE LINK

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INCLUSIVE EDUCATION – WHAT TEACHERS HAVE TO SAY

Since the first issue of The Inclusive Link in 2010, we have been doing all the ‘talking’: telling our readers the meaning of inclusive education and its rationale, promoting this universal philosophy from various aspects and sharing strategies on fostering inclusion in schools.

In this issue, we invite you to listen to TEACHERS! Let us hear from those who are at the forefront in practising inclusion! What does inclusive education mean to teachers? Let’s hear about their challenges and achievements, their coping strategies and their advice to other fellow teachers.

We dedicate this issue to the kindergarten teachers in Sibul, Sarawak who have so willingly shared their thoughts, feelings and experiences for this publication. We hope that their views will touch our readers’ heart as much as they have touched ours 😊

WHAT INCLUSIVE EDUCATION MEANS TO TEACHERS

‘An equal opportunity for children with special needs to receive the same education as typical children, and to be valued by the society.’

‘Inclusive education means children with special needs being included in the ordinary class, learning among typically developing children, and being treated fairly.’

‘Inclusive education gives the special child the chance to go to the same school as typically developing children and play with them. Children with special needs deserve the same right to enjoy childhood as other typical children. They should not be isolated or rejected due to their special needs.’

‘Inclusion allows all children to play and learn together in the same learning setting, and to become part of the school. It enables the typical children to interact, understand and help children with special needs and through this, they will develop a caring attitude, patience and tolerance within them.’

‘Inclusive education is an education system where children with special needs learn in the general classroom with collaboration between the special education teacher and other teachers.’



Quote for Thought

‘When a child with special needs enters a classroom, children react much more naturally and faster than the adults. While the adults are still thinking of a way to introduce this new friend, the other children have already come up to the special child to hold his or her hand and walk with the child toward the play area.’



FROM TEACHER TO TEACHER... TEACHERS SHARING THEIR INCLUSION EXPERIENCES

'At the beginning, teachers feel helpless and frustrated. Now, they are happy, proud and able to appreciate the child with special needs. The typically developing children change their attitudes and behaviour toward the child with special needs. For example from non-acceptance to acceptance, from using harsh words to giving encouragement and assistance, from rejecting to offering help.'

'Initially, the parents of typical children objected to having children with special needs in the class as they were worried that the teacher might neglect their children if they were to pay attention to the special needs' child. Parents are also worried that their children might pick up bad behaviour or habits from the special child. The way to overcome this is to communicate more with the parents, show them examples (e.g. photos) of the children playing together and helping each other. Over time, parents change their perception as they see improvement in their own children. As for the children, we always use stories to inspire them, to teach them to appreciate and to love those around them.'



'I have experience dealing with a child with mild autism and a child with behavioural problems. At the beginning, these two children made me exhausted. The child with autism kept walking around in the class and cannot sit still to participate in any learning activity with the other children. The child with behavioural problems is like a time bomb; often throwing tantrums, hiding under the table and refusing to participate in any activities. By learning through observation and using different approaches (soft and stern), I gradually got the children to follow my instructions. The teacher and child relationship improves over time. Occasionally, they will suddenly hug the teacher and say, "I love you." This is very gratifying and touching.'

'The problem I had faced was communication with the children with special needs. In my first few encounters with the children, I did not think that they have special needs. But after while, I realised that they have some communication problems, thus I sought professional help and searched for information online. From then on, I paid more attention and listened more patiently to their words and gestures. In the process, I learnt to be more patient in teaching them.'

'When the child with special needs throws a tantrum or cries non-stop, the teacher must first calm down and avoid getting upset with the child. Then, give the child things he likes [to calm him down], explain to him that it is wrong to throw a tantrum and ask him to say what he wants.'

'I will tell the teacher to be prepared and accept the children without any doubts. The teacher has to be warm hearted, loving and humble. She has to make sure she does her homework (i.e. find out more information on the child's disability, communicate with the child's parents and special education coordinator). She also has to put much effort and get down on the child's eye level when she wants to speak to the child. The teacher must always evaluate the child's performance.'

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