

10 Practical Ways to Foster Inclusion

High school inclusion for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) can happen in natural ways that primarily involve having students with I/DD in the same places, for the same activities, at the same times as their peers without disabilities. Innovative educators and paraprofessionals can take on different roles that allow students with I/DD to take part more fully in the range of activities offered by schools. For some, this means re-thinking disability as well as the ways special education staff spend their time. Helping students with disabilities blending into the fabric of the school community, and be viewed in terms of strengths and positive contributions, is the ultimate goal of inclusion.

The following are 10 field-tested ideas to help expand or strengthen inclusion in your school:

1. Develop class schedules in typical ways.

- Use the same class scheduling system everyone else uses to create a plan for all 4 years of high school.
- Help students and their families look at the classes offered to students in the same grade level.
- Make sure classes connect with the student's interests and goals.
- Just like everyone else, help all students with disabilities map out a course of study that will prepare them to accomplish their postsecondary education and employment goals.

2. Add or expand co-teaching.

- Special educators can be lead teachers for a portion of instructional time working with *all* students in conjunction with general educators.
- Special educators bring expertise in universal design for teaching, scaffolding of information, and ways to accommodate for multiple learning styles.
- Special educators can modify and adapt content and materials for anyone in a class who has a need.
- Co-teaching can be integrated into one or two courses at a time per grade level based on demand for classes and educator knowledge/strengths.

3. Make homerooms/advisory time inclusive.

- Include students with I/DD in general education homerooms so they can access activities such as: meeting with advisors to discuss school and grade-level issues; checking in on status of academic performance; getting extra help with assignments; and making plans for participating in school events, field trips, and service projects.

4. Support students with disabilities to use & serve as peer tutors.

- Include peer tutoring in a variety of subjects and allow students with disabilities to be tutors for peers in areas in which they excel.
- Encourage students with disabilities to share their personal experiences to help their fellow students better understand the nature of their disabilities and how those impact their lives.

Benefits of Inclusion

Inclusion is linked to better post-school outcomes for youth with disabilities, including college attendance and employment.

School inclusion goes hand-in-hand with preparing all students to be college and career ready.

Students and educators gain a deeper understanding of similarities between students with and without disabilities.

Peer-to-peer relationships evolve as students spend time together.

All students benefit from getting to know others who are different from them.

5. Facilitate and encourage inclusion at school events.

- Foster student interactions at field trips, dances, assemblies, and student body meetings by having students go with their inclusive homeroom or advisory class and provide limited adult supervision. (No hovering)

6. Foster fully inclusive lunchtimes.

- Ensure students with I/DD are included during lunchtime - whether that is based on their classes, grade, homeroom or random assignment – whatever method is used for all other students.
- Encourage peers to help students with disabilities who may need assistance with purchasing or carrying their lunch rather than assigning an adult.



7. Expand participation in sports, clubs, and extra-curricular activities.

- Provide students with I/DD information about *all* clubs, sports, and activities that are available at their grade level.
- Students with and without disabilities who do not possess keen athletic abilities can serve as sports' team managers and helpers.
- Encourage peers without disabilities to invite students with I/DD to clubs or activities of interest.
- Consider holding meetings during lunch or study hall times if afterschool transportation is an issue.

8. Extend in-school work experiences to everyone.

- Offer all student jobs found within the school to both students with and without disabilities to help them gain valuable work experiences together (e.g. running the school store or coffee shop, assisting with office tasks, helping in the cafeteria, and working on grounds-keeping).
- Avoid setting up separate jobs only for students with disabilities.

9. Promote service learning for all students.

- Ensure that students with and without disabilities are completing their service or volunteer requirements for graduation in the same places and at the same times, based on interests and schedules.

10. Provide shared career exploration activities.

- Build connections between special education staff and vocational/technical teachers to support students with I/DD to engage in career exploration and planning, such as classes, on-line research, business tours, career fairs, guidance counseling, and career presentations with peers who do not have disabilities.

Additional Resources

[Seeds of Inclusion Conference](#) – every March at UW-Oshkosh

[Inclusive Schools Network](#) – a variety of ideas and resources: