



**Newwingate  
School**

# Creating an Accessible Learning Environment for Pupils with Autism

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*Adapted from a teacher development session delivered in St Eustatius and Saba, in the Dutch Caribbean August 2023.*

In this  
session...



- Re-visit the theory of inclusive education
- Provide an overview of autism and the impact that this can have upon learners, teaching practices and approaches

# Inclusion

- **Inclusion in education is about valuing all children and the environment that best suits their learning equally. This might be best attained within a mainstream school, or a special school. The aim is to increase the participation and reduce the exclusion from the local school communities and the culture that accompanies them.**
- In order to be fully inclusive, schools might need to restructure their teaching and learning practices to accommodate individual learners. Barriers to learning should be reduced and this can benefit the whole school community. Where differences between students exist, they should be viewed as learning opportunities for the whole school and teachers should be fully trained and resourced adequately in order to implement any differentiation required within the classroom.
- There are many definitions of inclusion. [Lynch and Irvine \(2009\)](#) describe ‘authentic inclusion’ as:  
  
“a unified system of public education that incorporates all children and youths as active, fully participating members of the school community; that views diversity as the norm; and that ensures a high-quality education for each student by providing meaningful curriculum, effective teaching, and necessary supports for each student.”

## Additional definitions of inclusion in education from the Index for Inclusion, involve:

- Valuing all students and staff equally.
- Increasing the participation of students in, and reducing their exclusion from, the cultures, curricula and communities of local schools.
- Restructuring the cultures, policies and practices in schools so that they respond to the diversity of students in the locality.
- Reducing barriers to learning and participation for all students, not only those with impairments or those who are categorised as 'having special educational needs'.
- Learning from attempts to overcome barriers to the access and participation of particular students to make changes for the benefit of students more widely.
- Viewing the difference between students as resources to support learning, rather than as problems to be overcome.
- Acknowledging the right of students to an education in their locality.
- Improving schools for staff as well as for students.
- Emphasising the role of schools in building community and developing values, as well as in increasing achievement.
- Fostering mutually sustaining relationships between schools and communities.
- Recognising that inclusion in education is one aspect of inclusion in society.



### Inclusion Audit

For a specific group/subject or lesson, think about how you meet the key drivers of the inclusion index. As you do this think about how you do this and what this looks like in practice and within your classroom.

Lesson/Subject/Group:

Inclusion Index	Always	Often	Sometimes/ Occasionally	Rarely	Never
Value all students (and staff) equally					
Increase the participation of students in, and reduce their exclusion from, the cultures, curricula, and community of the classroom.					
Restructure the cultures, rituals, routines, and practices in my classroom to respond to the diversity of my students.					
Reduce barriers to learning and participation for all students, not only those with impairments or those who are categorised as 'having special educational needs'.					
Learn from attempts to overcome barriers to the access and participation of particular students to make changes for the benefit of students more widely					
View the difference between students as resources to support learning, rather than as problems to be overcome.					
Acknowledge the right of students to an education in my classroom.					
See your role as to build a community and develop values, as well as increase achievement.					
Foster mutually sustaining relationships with your students					

### Take

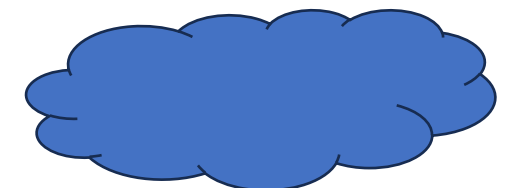
Take a moment to reflect upon your classroom.

### Consider

Consider how you apply the inclusion index in your current practice.

### Be Honest

Be honest as this is not a test of who does the best! This is to get you thinking



Take a  
moment to  
think...

- What are the strengths of autistic students?

### **Autistic Strengths**

This is not to suggest that all autistic people have a savant-like super ability (as in the film Rain Man). Rather, some cognitive strengths tend to be more prevalent in the autism community. A worldwide survey of over 200 autism

- Attention to detail
- Strong sense of morality (eg honesty, lack of judgmental attitude, etc)
- A preference to work on repeated or monotonous tasks
- Expertise in a specific area
- Mathematical abilities
- Creative talents (eg look at the world differently)
- Artistic skills (eg music, drawing, visual arts)
- Visual perception
- Intellectual functions
- Technical abilities (computer skills, engineering)
- Trustworthiness
- Loyalty
- Kindness
- Good memory

**Maintaining an inclusive learning environment...**

- Layout: seating allows all pupils to see/hear the teacher
- Acoustics: background noise is reduced
- Use of Wall Space: resources and displays are accessible and encourage independent use.

**Multi-sensory Approaches, Including ICT...**

- Use of ICT
- Use of preferred learning approaches, such as auditory or visual
- Use alternative ways of communication e.g. symbols, images...
- Use alternative ways of recording and assessing.

**Working with Additional Adults...**

- Other adults as partners not teachers
- Commitment to pupil independence
- Joint planning and review.

**Managing Peer Relationships...**

- Flexible grouping
- Buddying/peer tutoring
- Circle of friends

**Adult-Pupil Communication...**

- Language used is positive and respectful.
- Careful praise/correction
- Prepared questions for individuals/groups
- Use of preferred communication style.
- Giving time to think.

**Formative Assessment/Assessment for Learning...**

- Choice of objectives/success criteria/peer assessment.
- Expectations/challenges
- Communication issues

**Motivation...**

- Engagement/enjoyment
- Rewards/praise
- Including pupil strengths/interests
- Relevant contexts
- Encouraging learning from mistakes
- Use of ICT for fun
- *Can-do* ethos: readiness to *problem-solve*.

**Memory/Consolidation...**

- Developing use of a range of memory aids.
- Helping pupils devise their own strategies for remembering.





How many of the 8 principles of good practice for general autism education do you think have been embraced in your classroom??