

Course: Introduction to Inclusive Education

6413

Semester: Spring, 2021

Assignment # 1

Level: BEd (1.5 Years)

Q.1 Explain the terms adaptation, accommodation and modification in reference or context of inclusive education. How an inclusive classroom teacher can use this knowledge for the inclusion of special need children?

Adaptation

“Adaptation is the physical or behavioural characteristic of an organism that helps an organism to survive better in the surrounding environment.”

Living things are adapted to the habitat they live in. This is because they have special features that help them to survive. The development of these special features is the result of evolution due to gene mutation. These mutations aid in survival and reproduction and pass on from one generation to the other.

Adaptation is essential for the survival of living organisms. Animals, which are unable to adapt to changing environmental changes die. These adaptations are a result of genetic changes. The animals that survive pass on the mutated genes to their offsprings. This is known as natural selection.

Adaptations such as camouflage and colouration protect them from predators. DNA mutations help in the longer survival of animals in dangerous environments and these traits of survival are passed onto future generations. These adaptations make it possible for a variety of creatures to thrive on planet earth.

Charles Darwin studied turtles of two islands. The turtles present on one island had short legs, straight shells and derived food present low to the ground. A few turtles migrated to another island, where the food was much higher up. The turtles with longer legs survived. Their necks elongated and shells became rounded over the course of time. Thus, the population on the new island grew with these adaptations in their species.

Accommodation

An accommodation is a reasonable adjustment to teaching practices so that the student learns the same material, but in a format that is accessible to the student. Accommodations may be classified by whether they change the presentation, response, setting, or scheduling. For example, the school may accommodate a student with visual impairments by providing a large-print textbook; this is a presentation accommodation.

Examples of accommodations:

Response accommodations: Typing homework assignments rather than handwriting them (considered a modification if the subject is learning to write by hand). Having someone else write down answers given verbally.

Presentation accommodations: Listening to audio books rather than reading printed books. Agencies like Recording for the Blind and Dyslexic in America and RNIB National Library Service in the UK offer a variety of titles on tape and CD. These may be used as substitutes for the text, or as supplements intended to bolster the students' reading fluency and phonetic skills. Similar options include designating a person to read text to the student, or providing text to speech software. (Considered a modification if the purpose of the assignment is reading skills acquisition). Designating a person to take notes during lectures. Using a talking calculator rather than one with only a visual display.

Setting accommodations: Taking a test in a quieter room. Moving the class to a room that is physically accessible, e.g., on the first floor of a building or near an elevator. Arranging seating assignments to benefit the student, e.g., by sitting at the front of the classroom.

Scheduling accommodations: Students may be given rest breaks or extended time on tests (may be considered a modification, if speed is a factor in the test).

Modification

A modification changes or adapts the material to make it simpler. Modifications may change what is learned, how difficult the material is, what level of mastery the student is expected to achieve, whether and how the student is assessed, or any another aspect of the curriculum.

For example, the school may modify a reading assignment for a student with reading difficulties by substituting a shorter, easier book. A student may receive both accommodations and modifications.

Examples of modifications:

Skipping subjects: Students may be taught less information than typical students, skipping over material that the school deems inappropriate for the student's abilities or less important than other subjects. For example, students whose fine motor skills are weak may be taught to print block letters, but not cursive handwriting.

Simplified assignments: Students may read the same literature as their peers but have a simpler version, for example Shakespeare with both the original text and a modern paraphrase available.

Shorter assignments: Students may do shorter homework assignments or take shorter, more concentrated tests, e.g. 10 math problems instead of 30.

Extra aids: If students have deficiencies in working memory, a list of vocabulary words, called a word bank, can be provided during tests, to reduce lack of recall and increase chances of comprehension. Students might use a calculator when other students are not.

Extended time: Students with lower processing speed may benefit from extended time in assignments and/or tests in order to comprehend questions, recall information, and synthesize knowledge.

How an inclusive classroom teacher can use this knowledge for the inclusion of special need children?

Some students with special needs are not good candidates for inclusion many schools expect a fully included student to be working at or near grade level, but more fundamental requirements exist: First, being included requires that the student is able to attend school.

Some students are suggested to be entirely excluded from school because of their physical condition and degree of severity of their disability, (for example, due to long-term hospitalization), or some are educated outside of schools (for example, due to a disability that completely restricts the mobility). These students do not prove to be good candidate for inclusion.

Additionally, some students with special needs are poor candidates for inclusion because of their effect on other students. For example, students with severe behavioral problems, such that they represent a serious physical danger to others, are poor candidates for inclusion, because the school has a duty to provide a safe environment to all students and staff.

Finally, some students are not good candidates for inclusion because the normal activities in a general education classroom will prevent them from learning. For example, a student with severe attention difficulties or extreme Sensory Processing Disorders (SPD) might be highly distracted or distressed by the presence of other students working at their desks. Inclusion needs to be appropriate to the child's unique needs.

Most students with special needs do not fall into these extreme categories, as most students do attending the schools, are not violent and do not have severe sensory processing disorders,

etc. The students that are most commonly included are those with physical disabilities that have no or little effect on their academic work for example children with diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, food allergies, paralysis. Students with all types of mild disabilities and students whose disabilities require relatively few specialized services can be accommodated in inclusive classroom with some modifications and adaptations.

Underlying the process of inclusion is the postulation that the general classroom teacher has strong knowledge and understanding about the needs of different learners, teaching techniques and curriculum strategies. Florian and Rouse (2009) state: 'The task of initial teacher education is to prepare people to enter a profession which accepts individual and collective responsibility for improving the learning and participation of all children' (p. 596). Savolainen (2009) notes that teachers play an essential role in quality education and quotes McKinsey and Company who say: 'the quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers' (p. 16). Studies suggest (e.g. Sanders and Horn, 1998; Bailleul et al., 2008) that the quality of the teacher contributes more to learner achievement than any other factor, including class size, class composition, or background.

Therefore the need for 'high quality' teachers equipped to meet the needs of all learners becomes evident to provide not only equal opportunities of learning for all, but also education for an inclusive society. Reynolds (2009) says that it is the knowledge, beliefs and values of the teacher that are brought to bear in creating an effective learning environment for pupils, making the teacher a critical power in education for inclusion and the development of the inclusive school.

A "teacher" is any individual who systematically guides a child's learning within a specific formal or non-formal learning environment. The teacher is the one who understands the minds of the learners and bring permanent change in behavior through learning. The climate of the classroom changes with the attitudes, moods and behavior of the teacher. In the process

of including SENC teacher plays the key role for transference of knowledge and this goal can be attained if the teacher processes the following characteristics:

Belief: The teacher believes that all children, girls, poor or wealthy children, language and as well as disabled children—can learn.

Involvement: The teacher is involved in locating school-age children who are not in school to see that they get education.

Strong Knowledge base: The teacher possesses the Knowledge about conditions/diseases that cause physical, emotional, and learning disabilities. He can help and train unhealthy students to get proper care.

Skills: The teacher has the skill to impart learning and modify manners of the pupil.

Power: The teacher has the power to influence and bring attitudinal changes in the diverse population of the classroom then school and then at society level.

The teacher has the content to impart to the diverse students by adapting techniques and using methodologies. Above discussion reveals that the teacher is the major component of the classroom structure as he has to implement learning strategies to literate and educate the variety of students with uneven levels of learning.

Reference

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Q. 2 Explain the concept of inclusive school and its philosophy. Also suggest strategies to support the inclusive schooling in Pakistan?

concept of inclusive school & Philosophy

Inclusive education suggests that it is the right of all children to get education in regular schools of their community. It further directs that classroom teachers are responsible to educate the children and they are the final authority to make adaptations to accommodate SENC with regular school children without special needs. This does not mean that all children will necessarily receive all instructional services in the regular classroom and it doesn't aim that students must spend all the day in general education classes. These students must receive specialized and individualized instructions, or that the SENC in general education classes have to learn the core curriculum only. Rather it means that if a trained disciplinary team decides that students require specialized instruction further than the regular curriculum, need services beyond the ability of the classroom teachers e.g. therapies or specialized services, then they receive these services in their community school. Moreover the classroom teachers are responsible to provide all the required elements of his or her program plan. Generally in schools we come across the students with different learning levels and different learning methods, all students do not score high some are low achievers but the teacher accommodates all of them, if we have a SENC in our class a considerate attitude of the teacher with some modification and extra support he /she can be provide an inclusive environment. As you must know from previous units, that extra support means provision of special need services. These special need services include availability of aids, physical structure and professional help. Usually every school has the availability of professionals like, doctors, psychologist and speech pathologist, only aids and modification in physical structure has to be provided according to the need of the children that are being included. The target of the inclusive school is total inclusion of the child in the society therefore regular

community schools should accommodate SENC in education and other socialization activities.

There is always a philosophy behind every school system. In turn the philosophy is based on our concepts and attitudes. When we have a philosophy of creating an inclusive school the objectives will be modified accordingly. Here we will see the child with his strengths rather than weaknesses and will try to identify his needs. While building the physical infra structure we will build a barrier free school then we will try to train teachers accordingly. We will also focus to make learning inclusive as much as possible. Finally we will be able to provide education in a least restrictive environment. Excellence of inclusive school plan is based on the organization of school philosophy that is independent, democratic principles of inclusion, belonging and provision of quality to all children. The quality inclusive system believes in taking the student's needs as "the whole child" and not only on academic achievement. At least, the three aspects are to be considered significantly; the social & emotional development, and personal & collective responsibility and citizenship. Different countries maintain the philosophies with a few variations such as the following.

- Every child belongs to the school.
- Every child is welcome to the school.
- It is the right of the every child to get quality education.
- There should be no discrimination in the children with special needs and all of them are equal.
 - Every child is able to learn.
- Children with special needs should be educated in regular classroom/school.
- Disability is not the reason for denial to admission in school.

Educating each and every child is the responsibility of teacher.

School should be supportive for learning and teaching.

Mission statement is more important in maintaining a philosophy of school. Mostly the headmasters or principals of the school are shouldered the responsibility to state school philosophy. And they are assisted by all those who are related to children's education including parents, community members and student representatives. In this way, a school can serve the purpose of a community where everyone belongs is respected by the community and is supported by all.

The philosophical view of inclusive education is to bring all students together in one classroom and community, regardless of their strengths or weaknesses in any area, and seeks to maximize the potential of all students.

Inclusion is an effort to make sure that diverse learners – those with disabilities, different languages and cultures, different homes and family lives, different interests and ways of learning – are exposed to teaching strategies that reach them as individual learners.

Inclusive schools ask teachers to provide appropriate individualized supports and services to all students without the stigmatization that comes with separation.

Teachers in inclusive classrooms vary their styles to enhance learning for all students.

Also suggest strategies to support the inclusive schooling in Pakistan?

School leaders play an important role in promoting and sustaining inclusion in schools.

Without their efforts, schools cannot change or improve to become places where all students are welcome, and where all students learn essential academic and non-academic lessons in preparation for life in the community. Much effort has been devoted to understanding the process of change in school settings. While it is a complicated process, there are some commonly agreed upon findings that are helpful in understanding, how change happens:

Change is a process, not an event.

Getting ready for change (development) is vastly different from the implementation of school level changes.

Organizations do not change until the individuals within it change.

Changes come in different sizes and take different amounts of time and resources to take hold.

Change happens from the top-down, the bottom-up, and horizontally.

- Administrative leadership is essential to long term change success.
- Mandates set the course, but a sound process will make or break success.
- The school is the primary unit for change.
- Facilitating change is a team effort.
- Appropriate supports and interventions reduce the challenges of change.
- The context of the school influences the process of change.

There are various critical elements for enhancing the efficiency of teachers and effectiveness of inclusive schools. Stainback and stainback as cited by Dash, 2005 stated that following practical strategies can help to make inclusive schools effective.

Establish a school philosophy

Follow the principles of natural proportions for enrolling special needs children.

Include individuals (students with disabilities, parents, non disable students and teachers in decision making and planning.

Develop networks of support for students and teachers.

Integrate students, personnel and resources.

- Adapt the curriculum.

Maintain flexibility

Schaffner & Buswell as cited by Dash, 2005 suggested four additional strategies for making inclusive school effective.

Provide strong leadership.

- Promote a school wide and classroom culture that welcome, appreciate and accommodate diversity. Use deliberate processes to ensure accountability.
- Celebrate success and learn from challenges.

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http://www.ibe.unesco.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Inclusive_Education/Documents/IE_TeacherEducation.pdf

Q.3 Discuss the ecosystem of an inclusive classroom. Also highlight the issues regarding classroom management, existing instructional material and approaches in an Inclusive Classroom?

Ecosystem Of An Inclusive Classroom

The term ecosystem is an adapted term that is used in biology to explain the populations of a defined area and their communication with each other and their shared environment. Today, the term has also been used in anthropology, sociology, psychology, economics, political science, and business, frequently differentiated in many of these fields as a “social ecosystem” rather than a biological or ecological one. Current social scientists also add a key word to the definition of ecosystem—information—identifying what is exchanged between and among the interdependent organisms. All the contexts of our lives may be thought of as some type of ecosystem, i.e. frames of reference in which we interact with others and with

our environment. From the point of view of education, a classroom, a school, and a school district are all educational ecosystems.

Classroom Management

Martin & Sugarman (1993) said “Classroom management refers to those activities of classroom teachers that create a positive classroom climate within which effective teaching and learning can occur”. Research over the past 30 years indicates these rituals and routines as cornerstones of classroom management are critical to effective teaching and learning. In a poorly managed classroom, teachers struggle to teach and students usually learn less than they should, and there are abundance of discipline issues (Martin & Sugarman, 1993; Rose & Gallup, 2004) while a well-managed classroom provides an environment in which teaching and learning can flourish.

The inclusion of children with disabilities in general education classes provides an opportunity for teachers to identify classroom management policies and practices that promote diversity and community. Community-building management strategies that facilitate friendships, collaboration, parent involvement, and address challenging behaviors in a positive, proactive, and educative manner are consistent with the goals of inclusive education. In addition, in order to develop a truly inclusive school community, management policies and practices that are inconsistent with inclusive education--such as exclusionary discipline policies--need to be addressed by teachers and administrators.

In inclusive classes, it is very important to create a sense of community, one that shows your interest in and accessibility to students and which encourages your students to learn about you and participate in the learning process. The goal is to get you and your students to better understand each other. Creating this sense of community and its positive psychosocial environment can motivate your students to learn, get them involved, and help them to learn to their fullest, even under seemingly crowded conditions. Moreover, students have reported a

greater sense of value in their learning and earn better scores when a teacher is truly willing to help them learn.

Classroom management is a holistic and comprehensive approach. It has three major interactive facets: proactive, supportive and reactive. Proactive classroom management involves the procedures that promote successful learning and appropriate behaviors. This involves the teaching, accommodating the student's needs and establishing classroom environment and climate. Supportive classroom management deals with effective instructional procedures to facilitate and maintain successful learning and appropriate behaviors. It involves the instructional factors and skill embedded in teaching, lesson planning and administrative components of classroom management. While reactive management model consists of the teacher's methods to change the student's unsuccessful learning and misbehaves into successful learning and appropriate behaviors. Teachers can be effective classroom managers by adopting new approaches to meet the diverse needs of their students.

instructional material

Differentiated instruction is the practice of modifying and adapting instruction, materials, content, student projects and products, and assessment to meet the learning needs of individual students. In a differentiated classroom, teachers recognize that all students are different and require varied teaching methods to be successful in school. They see their role as creating that environment for their students. Differentiation includes a wide range of strategies and methods such as:

Adaptations, modifications, and accommodations

- The individualization of instruction is an important part of special education. Instruction and schoolwork are tailored to the needs of the child. Sometimes a student may need to have

changes made in class work or routines because of his or her disability. Modifications can be made to:

what a child is taught, and/or

how a child works at school.

· Sometimes people get confused about what it means to have a modification and what it means to have an accommodation. Usually a modification means a change in what is being taught to or expected from the student. Making an assignment easier so the student is not doing the same level of work as other students is an example of a modification. An accommodation is a change that helps a student overcome or work around the disability. Allowing a student who has trouble writing to give his answers orally is an example of an accommodation. This student is still expected to know the same material and answer the same questions as fully as the other students, but he doesn't have to write his answers to show that he knows the information.

What is most important to know about modifications and accommodations is that both are meant to help a child to learn.

approaches in an inclusive classroom

Inclusion classrooms can accommodate children with a wide range of learning styles and needs. Teachers meet everyone's needs by presenting lessons in different ways. For example, they may use a lot of visual aids to add interest and increase understanding. When teaching math, they may build the lesson around manipulatives such as cubes or colored chips that can help kids learn new concepts. Some inclusion classrooms use an interactive whiteboard, which is a bit like a computerized chalkboard. Kids can use their fingers to write, erase and move images around on the large screen. This teaching tool can also be used to turn students' work into a video, which can be exciting for kids and help keep them engaged. One of the key teaching strategies in inclusion classrooms is to break students into small groups. This

way, kids can be taught according to their particular learning style and ability. This is called differentiated instruction.

References

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Q.4 Discuss the concept of instructional and accommodation adaptations in teaching-learning process of children with special needs in an inclusive classroom?

In recent years a number of stated intentions and written policies towards the achievement of inclusive education have been enacted across a range of contexts (Booth & Ainscow, 1998).

The clear implication of the inclusive education movement is that mainstream schools seek to restructure so as to provide for an increasing diversity of educational needs and eliminate the problem of students who fail to fulfill their learning potential (Avramidis et al., 2000).

However, despite the widespread advocacy of inclusion in educational discourse and policy guidance, the question of how children's divergent needs are best met within educational systems still remains a highly debatable and controversial issue (Dyson & Gallannaugh, 2007; Florian, 2005). To put the above controversy into perspective, a considerable number of authors (Ainscow, 2007; Dyson & Millward, 2000; Low, 2007) have argued that much of that debate pertains to the poor implementation of inclusive programs, rather than the opposition towards the concept of inclusion per se. While, for example, it is generally agreed that teachers need to have an increasingly large repertoire of instructional strategies to meet students' divergent needs, little descriptive information is available regarding the types of

instructional adaptations that are necessary in implementing an inclusive school program (deBettencourt, 1999; Salend & Duhaney, 1999; Schumm, et al., 1995). Limited is also the information concerning the kinds and effectiveness of instructional adaptations in teachers' everyday practice, within the mainstream classrooms, which aim at responding to students' diversity (McLeskey & Waldron, 2002; McIntosh, et al., 1993). The overall picture emerging from the vast majority of relevant studies suggests that regular education teachers do not usually differentiate instruction to meet students' diversity in regular classrooms. In addition, few instructional adaptations are provided for those with identified SENs and difficulties in learning (deBettencourt, 1999; McIntosh, et al., 1993; Schumm, et al., 1995; Vaughn, et al., 1994). Mainstream teachers seem to be concerned about finding ways for responding to students' without disabilities increasing diversity in terms of academic background, level of mastery skills and interests. More importantly they mostly feel under-resourced and ill-equipped to master this task. The amount of difficulty they already face in the teaching process increases considerably, when students with disabilities are included in their mainstream classes (McLeskey & Waldron, 2002). Baker and Zigmond (1990), found, for example, that the teachers in the mainstream primary schools they studied, taught in single, large groups and seldom differentiated instruction or made adaptations based on students' needs. Besides, on a survey addressing adaptive instruction (Ysseldyke, et al., 1990), regular education teachers did not specify classroom adaptations for students with disabilities. Although students with disabilities appear to be accepted by their teachers, they could be characterised as «passive learners» who are rarely engaged in the learning process, either by themselves or due to the teachers' initiation (McIntosh, et al., 1993). These findings have been endorsed, somewhat, in a subsequent study by Vaughn and her colleagues (1994), who suggested that instruction in mainstream classes was not differentiated to meet the needs of students with learning disabilities and that few instructional adaptations were provided. In

such instances, teachers' adaptations tended to be largely incidental, inconsistent, idiosyncratic and not part of the overall plan for an individual student in the classroom or at the school level (Miner & Finn, 2003; Schumm, et al., 1994). Consequently, if students who are mainstreamed are going to learn successfully in the general education classroom, then they will have to meet the expectations set by the teachers for all students in the classroom (Vaughn & Schumm, 1994). Within the context of inclusion, teacher acceptability of various adaptations is a critical issue in understanding why accommodations are made or not made for students facing difficulties (Subban, 2006). Consequently, it is also important to note that managing to understand why teachers tend to implement or avoid the implementation of certain adaptations in their classrooms is a difficult and demanding process, mainly due to: a) the complexity underpinning teachers' decisions over instructional practices, b) the multifaceted aspects of teaching, and c) the impact that the unique contextual and educational characteristics of different national systems exert on teachers' decision-making processes (Kohler et al., 2008). Despite these complexities, analysing teachers' acceptability of routine adaptations is a key variable for understanding their compromise in teaching diverse students in inclusive classrooms and for learning to what extent they are ready to adapt and differentiate instruction. Moreover, studying how teachers approach adaptations may contribute not only to identify teacher preference, but also the various barriers and impediments to implementing them (Cardona-Molton, 2003; Scott, et al., 1998). In the light of the above, this paper aims at addressing the need for additional information, regarding teachers' convictions of instructional adaptations in regular education settings. It reports on and discusses a recent research project, considered to contribute to this emerging field, by examining Greek teachers' responses to instructional adaptations. This is the first time that such an exercise has been conducted in Greece, and comes at a time when policymakers are considering the next step in developing more inclusive provision in an educational system in

which provision unfolds around a nationally prescribed and restricted curriculum. Rational and aims of the Instructional accommodations and adaptations may be the most important area that the inclusion teacher will address. Because students with disabilities may not perform at the same levels of other students in the classroom, the general education teacher needs to be prepared to make accommodations and adaptations to his or her lesson plans so that each student has an opportunity to learn the material.

An accommodation is a reasonable adjustment to teaching practices so that the student learns the same material, but in a format that is accessible to the student. Accommodations may be classified by whether they change the presentation, response, setting, or scheduling. For example, the school may accommodate a student with visual impairments by providing a large-print textbook; this is a presentation accommodation. A modification changes or adapts the material to make it simpler. Modifications may change what is learned, how difficult the material is, what level of mastery the student is expected to achieve, whether and how the student is assessed, or any another aspect of the curriculum. For example, the school may modify a reading assignment for a student with reading difficulties by substituting a shorter, easier book. A student may receive both accommodations and modifications.

Understanding Accommodations·

Modifications of Learning Material·

Accommodations and Testing·

Using Alternative Assessments for Special Needs Students at Home·

Meeting Individual Needs in Lesson Planning·

Sample Rubric for Cursive Writing

Accommodations, modifications, and alternative assessments may be considered compulsory for a special child with special needs to succeed while working on materials for learning. A student who is not capable to read or write at grade level may be able to understand and

participate in debate about material that is read aloud and taught at the child's age-appropriate level. A child who is not capable of recalling numbers facts may be able to solve grade appropriate problems by using a calculator. Or a child with cerebral palsy may be able to accomplish modified physical education with special equipments and carefully chosen exercise.

Both the terms accommodations and modification can be used interchangeably frequently, but in their effect on teaching and learning, they are not indistinguishable. But they have noticeable difference in meaning as we relate them to the special education. Both these terms are used in the federal law, IDEA that provides children with disabilities equal access to curriculum and ensures them a chance for achievement. As IDEA is a federal law, it guarantees an appropriate, free, public education. It is taken into account that whether a child is capable of being taught at home or not, the public schools are under obligation to make that access available to all school-aged children. It is not obligatory for the parents to use these services or may opt out. For students, an accommodation provides many substitute ways, to acquire information or share what they have learned with you. We cannot minimize the difficulty level or expectations for the student's achievement through the use of accommodation, even if there may be changes in teaching materials used, testing materials, or even in the instructional environment.

Educators often make accommodations for individual students informally as they teach, but children with special needs may require more formally documenting the need for specific accommodation through an IEP or a 504 plan. The purpose of accommodation is often misunderstood by the parents. And sometime they do not realize their duties. For instance if a child had suffered eye muscle damage see clearly enough to see without the glasses. If the parents allow their child to see without glasses just because he can see without them, then the

effect of that choice would be likely mean that the child could not clearly see reading material.

However, the child could play with his peers and read independently with the use of glasses. Physical disabilities are easily identified in comparison to learning disability. Learning disabilities are invisible and they are slightly more difficult to diagnose where as physical disabilities are rather easier to discriminate. The use of appropriate accommodation serves to enlarge the scope of possibilities. Accommodation will not make the disability to go away. It should be taken into consideration that when developing and implementing accommodations, strategies and modifications, what works for one student may not work for another. Keep it individualized for optimum success.

References

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Q.5 Develop an IEP for a special need child with psycho-social problems in an inclusive classroom?

IEP stands for Individualized Education Program (alternatively called an "Individualized Education Plan," "Individual Education Plan," or some combination thereof). This is a legally binding document that spells out exactly what special education services your child will receive and why. It will include your child's classification, placement, services such as a one-on-one aide and therapies, academic and behavioral goals, a behavior plan if needed, percentage of time in regular education, and progress reports from teachers and therapists. The IEP is planned at an IEP meeting.

The individualized part of IEP means that the plan has to be tailored specifically to your child's special needs -- not to the needs of the teacher, or the school, or the district. Goals, modifications, accommodations, personnel, placement, all should be selected, enforced and maintained with the particular needs of your child in mind. "We don't do that," for example, is not an individualized response. If your school has never had a child like yours (and since your child is an individual, they haven't), and now they do, and a service is appropriate to his or her needs, then they do that now IEP is an educational plan that is organized for the special child's in order to enhance their educational capabilities. A child who has difficulty learning and functioning and has been identified as a special needs student is the perfect candidate for an IEP. Kids struggling in school may qualify for support services, allowing them to be taught in a special way, for reasons such as:

learning disabilities·

attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)·

emotional disorders·

cognitive challenges·

autism·

hearing impairment·

visual impairment·

speech or language impairment·

developmental delay

Your child's IEP team creates the IEP. Each person on the team plays an important role. By the law, the team includes:

1. Student's parent(s). Law gives parents the legal right to participate in all of their child's IEP meetings. As the parent, you're a full and equal member of the team.

After all, parents probably know your child's strengths and struggles better than anyone else. Parents concerns and suggestions about his education are invaluable.

2. At least one of child's general education teachers.

3. At least one special education teacher or other special education provider.

4. A school district representative knowledgeable about both general education and special education. This person also should have the power to make decisions that involve school resources. In other words, if the school rep thinks your child should be given speech therapy, she should have the power to make that happen.

5. A school psychologist or other specialist who can interpret the student's evaluation and test results.

6. When child turns 16, he'll be expected to participate as a member of his IEP team and help develop a transition plan. A representative from an outside agency, such as a post-high school vocational program, may join meetings.

7. Parents also have the right to invite others to attend child's IEP meeting. Be sure to send the school advance written notice of additional attendees. Parents may find it helpful to invite:

8. A professional you've hired, who has knowledge or expertise about child. Examples: a private tutor or health-care professional (such as a speech-language pathologist).

9. A friend to serve as an "extra pair of ears" or to take notes for parents.

10. A translator, if parents deaf or don't speak or read English fluently. They may ask the school to provide a translator. Law requires that school districts do their best to accommodate parents who need this service.

11. Parents' child. If child is young, parents may want to talk this over with the IEP team. Consider child's age, how his condition affects him, his level of maturity and his ability to understand the information discussed during an IEP meeting.

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