FAIR IS NOT ALWAYS EQUAL...

NOW WHAT?

Your quick guide to practical tips and strategies for reaching and teaching all learners.

CONTENTS

I have trouble focusing for more than 15 minutes.

I think better when my hands are busy.

I can talk about what I know better than I can write about it.

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FAIR IS NOT ALWAYS EQUAL

Last fall, we created a little poster that took off in a big way. Maybe you've seen it on social media:

We watched in amazement as the poster caught fire—by November, it had racked up nearly 30,000 Facebook shares. Teachers shared it with teachers who co-signed the "fair is not always equal" philosophy. Educators working hard to make this principle a reality chimed in with inspiring comments.

And some teachers asked the tough question this poster prompts: **Realistically, how do we tailor our teaching for 30 different students in the course of one school day?**

. . . NOW WHAT?

For busy teachers, meeting the diverse learning needs of all their students is a tall order. Classrooms are crowded, time is short, and standardized-testing pressures are high. With so many responsibilities clamoring for attention, how can you ensure that all students are getting the supports they need? How can you use the most effective approaches to teach and reach all kids and make your job easier?

We can't offer you magic formulas—but over the past few months, we've focused on bringing you practical blog posts with advice from some of today's most passionate and respected advocates of inclusive education. Real-life educators weighed in on how to differentiate instruction, implement universal design for learning, and make inclusion work. Our expert authors contributed tips, teaching strategies, and answers to pressing questions about UDL, co-teaching, peer supports, and more.

This toolkit is your handy guide to the strategies and success stories we've posted on the Brookes Inclusion Lab (www.brookesinclusionlab.com) since January 2016. We thought you might like to have the highlights and links to all the posts in one convenient place—and for anyone who hasn't been following along on the blog this year, this is a great quick-guide to what you might have missed. Keep it on hand and share it with your fellow educators, and be sure to let us know what other topics you'd love to see covered on the blog when we start the 2016-2017 school year together.

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universal design for learning (UDL)

Helpful tips to get you started!

"Start Small"

Expert Advice from Loui Lord Nelson

The author of the bestselling UDL primer *Design and Deliver* shared these real-world tips for getting started with UDL.

Say a busy teacher loves the idea of UDL but is intimidated by the time investment involved in changing the way she teaches. What advice would you give to that teacher so she can support every learner without burning out?

We all love saving time. Using past lesson plans. Sharing resources. Leaving a professional development with ideas or tools we can use the next day. We each have our own ways of saving time. My way is to start small. Focus on one guideline or checkpoint and use that to make a change to your learning environment that you can sustain. That way, there's no extreme investment of mental-energy or physical time.

LOW-TECH EXAMPLE: Your school doesn't have a lot of technology. You use your overhead projector each day to provide your students with their lecture notes. You normally write with a black marker. Today, you decide to use different colors to emphasize different points and you provide your students with colored pencils so they can do the same on their papers. Some of your students seem to miss the key concepts and vocabulary words when you give notes even through you talk about them. You decide to write those words with bigger letters. You even circle them while you're talking about them. It's a simple change that feels comfortable and you can begin to use in a variety of your lessons. Students have the option of using the colored pencils, but you encourage each of them to individualize their notes to emphasize the key points.

HIGH-TECH EXAMPLE: Your school has an interactive white board in each classroom. Every day, you project information on it and you've recently become more comfortable in using the pens to underline information that's projected. Now, you've decided to dig into the resources that come with the software. With the help of a teacher partner, you learn about the wide collection of images and realize that there are plenty of examples you can use for your lesson. You can choose to have the name of an object show up below the picture or have the students move the word so it's under the correct object. Instead of looking at a list of words, your students can see the words and associated pictures. You begin to brainstorm other ways you can use those still pictures and realize there are plenty of concrete and abstract concepts you can demonstrate with them.

Loui answered more UDL questions! Read the whole Q&A at http://bit.ly/QANelson

Script-Flips that Bust Mental Barriers to UDL

Worried that UDL will eat up too much time and too many resources?
If you're skeptical about UDL—or know an administrator with reservations—here are some helpful "script flips" from Whitney Rapp, author of *Universal Design for Learning in Action*.

The Script

The flip

This will take way too much time.

It might take more time to set up and plan a universally designed classroom and curriculum. But isn't it worth it? How much time is 'too much,' when we're talking about engaging and reaching all kids and improving outcomes for everyone?

It's just too much to ask teachers to do.

It's a lot of work, yeah. But if teachers invest the time to meet all students' needs now, they'll actually save time in the future. And besides, doing the most for every single student is our goal as educators.

We don't have the money to hire a UDL specialist.

We don't need an outside specialist or intensive teacher training for UDL. All we need is to follow the UDL principles and mindsets as we plan teaching practices and curricula.

I already differentiate for the few kids who need it; what's the difference?

Every single student will need some kind of differentiation at some point. And UDL goes far beyond just 'differentiating.' A differentiated strategy that's only available to a few students will help only those students; if it's made accessible to all children, many more will benefit.

That's a lot to do for just one student.

Maybe that one student introduced the need for a certain strategy, but if it's put in place, odds are many other kids will benefit. And if it is just for one student, do it anyway! That student is worth it. A classroom is only as good as the child it does the least for.

Read the whole post! Get 4 more script-flips at http://bit.ly/RappScriptFlips

Adapted from Universal Design for Learning in Action by Whitney Rapp, Brookes Publishing Co.

6 Steps to Planning UDL Lessons

1

Define flexible, clear SMART goals
• Ask yourself, "What is the goal of this lesson?" (The CCSS or your state standards will often serve as the base for your goal.) • Learning goals focus on what students need to understand (knowledge), what they need to able to do (skills), or their attitudes and beliefs (perceptions). • Effective learning goals are SMART: specific, measurable, attainable, results oriented, and time bound. • Share the learning goal with your students and give them multiple ways to accomplish it.

2

Consider learner variability
• Assess the readiness levels, skills, and needs of your learners and the challenges of the learning environment. • Anticipate learning gaps and barriers that may distract, frustrate, or confuse learners. • Apply UDL guidelines to plan for learner variability and determine what scaffolds are needed.

3

Determine appropriate assessments
• Choose assessments that provide meaningful information, are flexible, and assess individual student growth. • Find out what assessment accommodations are listed in students' IEP or 504 plans and provide these during instruction. • Assessments aligned with UDL help you answer critical questions: Am I teaching too fast or too slow? Is the information clear? Are students "getting it"?

4

Select methods, materials, and media
• Consider the types of assistance you need to include in order to address learner variability: scaffolds? Supports? Accommodations and modifications? • Ask yourself, "Am I providing appropriate experiences to build understanding and make learning memorable? Are my materials and media distracting or assisting learners?" • Choose methods, materials, and media that offer flexibility and relevance and balance assistance with challenge.

5

Teach and assess learning
• Put it all together and deliver your UDL lesson • Assess student learning with flexible, informative assessments matched to your learning goal.

6

Refine educator learning through self-reflection
• Review the data you collected through your assessments • Think about your observations. What worked well? What will you do differently next time? Did your students achieve the learning goal? What's next?

See how 3 educators implemented these steps in their lesson planning!
Read the full post at http://bit.ly/6StepsUDL

Adapted from Your UDL Lesson Planner by Patti Kelly Ralabate, Brookes Publishing Co.

UDL *in* ACTION
Success Stories

This year, we've gotten some excellent UDL success stories from educators across the country. Here's an excerpt from a story by UDL facilitator Stephanie Craig, followed by links to her full post and the other success stories our readers have sent in.

Believing Is Seeing
A UDL Journey | By Stephanie Craig

Success in the UDL journey looks many ways, but a common denominator is that the UDL traveler has taken time to make stops along the route to investigate those hidden gems off the beaten path. Successful UDL educators are persistent and downright stubborn as they learn who their learners are and how to break down barriers for them. They truly believe that every child who walks into their classroom can learn, and they will move heaven and earth to make that happen!

USE THE RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO YOU.

A few years ago, I was new in my position as UDL Facilitator at two elementary schools in my school district, Bartholomew Consolidated School Corporation in Columbus, Indiana. Every opportunity I had to read and/or talk to other educators about Universal Design for Learning, I took. I voraciously read books and perused the CAST website. The UDL framework had been an important piece in our district for some years, but until five years ago building resources were scarce. District resources were stretched. I was now in a position to spread the word, but many teachers were positive this was just another "thing" that would eventually disappear. Many times, teachers avoided me and the unspoken rule was never make eye contact, because everyone knew where that conversation would eventually lead. I decided to infiltrate with stealth. After watching and listening, I chose my first teacher carefully.

Kelly Cunningham taught fourth grade at the time and had a great attitude when it came to trying anything that might improve her teaching. I approached her and she excitedly agreed to begin working together. I explained that my request served both of us as we would learn the UDL Principles and guidelines at a deeper level and show other teachers rather than tell them of her success.

BE WILLING TO BE CHALLENGED.

As I delivered professional development in my buildings about learner variability, breaking down barriers, examining standards for barriers, using technology as an assistive tool and provided a plethora of resources, Kelly would often laugh and share with me later how she sat in those sessions thinking how ridiculous what I was saying sounded. As our collaboration blossomed into a full–fledged UDL driven friendship, we would work through the guidelines and brainstorm ideas . . .

*Keep reading at http://bit.ly/UDLJourney to learn about
Stephanie and Kelly's UDL classroom transformation (photos included!)*

**Want more UDL posts & success stories?
Go to www.brookesinclusionlab.com and
click the UDL tag under "Categories"**

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differentiated instruction

How-tos for helping all kids learn!

Differentiated Instruction

4 Key Principles and How-Tos

1 **Create a "working-with" learning environment** in which teachers and students share decisions and students take an active role in their own learning.

> **Example** An eighth-grade teacher frames the targeted learning outcomes for an upcoming unit and asks her students to work in small groups to brainstorm instructional activities that would assist the students in reaching their benchmarks.

2 **Expand your instructional repertoire** and create multiple pathways for learning in order to meet the diverse needs of students.

> **Example** A learning outcome in language arts might involve knowing specific literary elements, such as the element of setting. Using her knowledge of her students, the teacher creates multiple instructional options, including the use of a sequential graphic organizer for a student who is learning English, a software program that provides a list of descriptive terms and creates a web of categories, and small-group activities where several students create an alternative setting and analyze how that setting would alter the story.

3 **Assess throughout your instruction—**be creative, think inclusively, and ask students how they can best demonstrate what they've learned. A written paper-and-pencil assessment doesn't work for everyone!

> **Example** A first-grade teacher checks in with her students throughout instruction using the colors of a stop light (green = "good to go," yellow = "I need more practice," and red = "I just don't get it.") A sixth-grade teacher helps her students self-assess their progress on a four-week project by creating a "benchmark timeline" of weekly tasks. At the end of each week, students initial the timeline, indicating where they are in the task sequence.

4 **Develop a system of organization and management—**some simple routines for organizing and managing your differentiated classroom will make everything go much smoother.

> **Example** You might use your students as resources by designating class experts who can offer assistance to classmates. Implement an "Ask three before me" rule to encourage students to seek out classmates for help. Put your classroom community of teachers and learners to work!
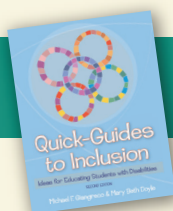
See http://bit.ly/HOW-TO-DI for the expanded post, including three more key principles and more classroom examples for each one.

Excerpted and adapted from Quick-Guides to Inclusion by Michael Giangreco & Mary Beth Doyle, Brookes Publishing Co.

5 Practical Differentiation Tips

Contributed by Beth Foraker of the National Catholic Board on Full Inclusion

1 Attach a Google image to every single new vocabulary word introduced into the classroom. Visual supports are not hard and are one of the single best ways to support struggling students.

2 Use color to help students see first, second, third in multi-step directions.

3 Create activities that are "low floor/high ceiling" (as suggested by math educator Jo Boaler). That means that the activity has a low enough floor that every single student in the classroom can participate and access the curriculum but has a high ceiling for students who are ready to fly and want to delve deeper into the idea. This is a mark of a truly great lesson. Once you see one in action, and you see how engaged your class is and how few behavior problems there are, you want to find a way to keep working toward it.

4 Be engaging and use technology when appropriate. For instance, if you are talking about Egypt, use Google Earth and put it up on a big screen and watch the map move from their hometown to Egypt.

I once had a student teacher do PE as a "walk" through California. She put up an image that was famous to California and the students had to do an exercise that went along with it—jumping up to pick oranges off orange trees in an orange grove, walking quickly across the Golden Gate Bridge, climbing Half Dome in Yosemite. This introduced these fourth-graders to their state while getting physical exercise. The activity was accessible to every student at his/her level.
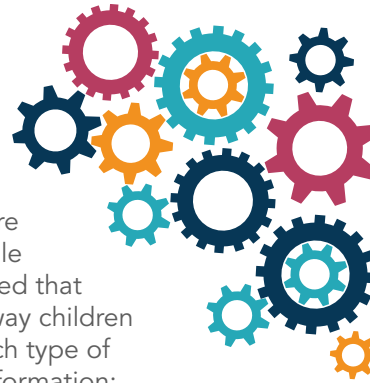
5 Frontload the information ahead of time for a student with a disability so that when you introduce it to the entire class, the student is seeing it for a second time. **Helping a student with a disability become the expert** sends a huge message of possibility to the whole class.

Read Beth Foraker's full post at **http://bit.ly/BFInclusion** for more great tips and two motivating success stories!

Differentiating Instruction
for 8 Types of Intelligence

Howard Gardner, a developmental psychologist whose research articles and books have been translated into more than thirty languages, outlined his groundbreaking multiple intelligences theory in his book *Frames of Mind.* He posited that there are eight main types of intelligence that affect the way children process and retain knowledge. Here's a chart that lists each type of intelligence and how each kind of learner absorbs new information:

HOWARD GARDNER'S EIGHT INTELLIGENCES	
INTELLIGENCE TYPE	**THIS TYPES OF LEARNER OFTEN...**
VISUAL-SPATIAL (PICTURE SMART)	• Learns best with visual icons • Is artistic • Is able to read maps, blueprints, and graphs, with ease
VERBAL-LINGUISTIC (WORD SMART)	• Has strong reading skills • Is able to write well • Can process academic lectures effectively
MUSICAL-RHYTHM (MUSIC SMART)	• Taps a beat with a pencil or foot or hums softly during silent work time • Processes information by associating it with beats and rhythms that allow them to make sense of data and store it in the brain • Learns and studies best with headphones on
LOGICAL-MATHEMATICAL (NUMBER SMART)	• Is good with math and numbers • Is a linear thinker • Needs order and systematic directions or steps in order to process the content
BODILY KINESTHETIC (BODY SMART)	• Is a good athlete • Has excellent fine motor skills • Benefits from concrete, hands-on learning activities
INTERPERSONAL (PEOPLE SMART)	• Enjoys socializing with others • Needs to interact with others in order to process information • Benefits from group brainstorming
INTRAPERSONAL (SELF-SMART)	• Processes information best by working alone in quiet solitude • Finds working with groups to be distracting
NATURALISTIC (ENVIRONMENT SMART)	• Gravitates toward natural patterns • Gains brain stimulation when in a natural, outdoor environment • Improves engagement with tasks when exposed to the sights, sounds, and smells of the outdoors

Adapted from *Strategic Co-Teaching in Your School* by Richael Barger-Anderson, Robert Isherwood, & Joseph Merhaut, Brookes Publishing Co.

Read the blog post at http://bit.ly/8intelligences for specific ideas on teaching to multiple intelligences during social studies, math, history, and science lessons.

Differentiating Instruction
through Service-Learning

Have you tried **service–learning** yet? This creative and effective teaching method is all about connecting standards-based instruction with service to your community. More than "community service" confined to after-school clubs, service–learning actually integrates with your curriculum and helps ALL students learn academic content while they give back.

Service–learning helps students with and without disabilities:

1 **Access the general curriculum** and increase academic achievement

2 **Promote generalization of skills and knowledge** as students make connections between curriculum content and the world around them.

3 **Develop critical and creative thinking skills** as the service–learning project poses unexpected challenges and curveballs.

4 **Build character:** studies show that students who participate in service–learning projects report a greater sense of responsibility, empathy, acceptance of diversity, and concern about the welfare of others.

5 **Develop communities and citizens** by providing students with more opportunities to interact and work together.

6 **Enhance career education,** including social skills, teamwork, common sense, a good work ethic, and critical thinking skills.

7 **Provide community-based instruction** that is more inclusive and equitable.

8 **Teach functional life skills** by blending functional activities with academic activities.

9 **Increase the "social role valorization"** of individuals with disabilities and teens in general as students demonstrate what they can contribute to our society.

10 **Reduce dropout risks** by capturing student interest—students who are engaged and motivated are often less likely to cut school or drop out.

Read the success story at http://bit.ly/inclusion-service to discover how service–learning helped a class of diverse fifth-graders learn key math concepts as they gave back to their community.

Adapted from *Great Ideas: Using Service–Learning and Differentiated Instruction to Help Your Students Succeed* by Pamela Gent, Brookes Publishing Co.

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co-teaching

Great teacher teamwork is a win for everyone!

Our Classroom, Our Students

An Expert Q&A with Elizabeth Potts and Lori Howard, co-authors of *How to Co-Teach*

Q: What are the benefits of co-teaching?

A: While we would love to be able to give you some hard numbers to describe the benefits of co-teaching, they don't yet exist. What we do know is that co-teaching gives teachers a colleague in the classroom, allowing two brains to work together to solve the complex puzzle that is teaching children, each bringing their own specific expertise to the classroom. Most general ed teachers bring to the classroom training related to curriculum and methods for teaching specific content. Special educators, by training, are focused on individual needs, goals, and gains. Combined, these perspectives can enhance learning for all students. Another benefit of co-teaching is that it lowers the student-to-teacher ratio. Two teachers in the classroom means more time for individual students and to help all of the students.

Q: What typically are the challenges of co-teaching for the general educator? for the special educator?

A: The general ed teacher must share their students and classroom. They have to make space for another adult in their classroom. Their classroom needs to become our classroom—that can be a difficult perspective shift. The special ed teacher must learn how to teach the specific content for all of the students. They are often most comfortable teaching individual or small groups of students—now they must teach an entire class of students. This can also be a difficult perspective shift. So, while each comes from a different perspective, they both must adapt to a new perspective of *our* classroom, *our* instruction, and *our* students.

Q: You identify 5 essential principles of effective co-teaching. What are they and can you briefly elaborate on them?

A: Our 5 principles of effective co-teaching are:

- respect perspectives
- practice communication
- focus on classroom teaching
- build student success
- improve and reflect on relationships

It is vital to respect the perspectives of your co-teaching partners so that you can have a healthy relationship and effectively work together for good classroom outcomes. Co-teaching is a complicated relationship that involves two people, people who have to communicate effectively, and you cannot communicate effectively without practicing your communication. The first two are vital so that the co-teaching pair can focus on classroom teaching and build student success—you cannot have student success without effective classroom instruction, and doing the best for our students is why we teach. Finally, it is important to improve and reflect on relationships so that we can continually improve how we work with others and as a team.

11 Things

Rockin' Co-Teachers Do

1 Say it proud.
Make sure both names are on the door and classroom website.

2 Communicate collectively.
Refer to the classroom as both of yours and talk about your shared space and joint teaching duties.

3 Switch it up.
Rotate co-teaching arrangements, and *often*. Switch on and off, leading lessons and supporting.

4 Get the message out.
Let the office know that any announcements should be addressed to both of you.

5 Schedule conferences
for times you both can be available.

6 Take turns leading the class to the next activity
with transitions. Both of you walk students to schoolwide events or to other classes.

7 Share any teacher space,
including the classroom, desks, tables, and supplies.

8 Check the language you use unknowingly
Use the phrases *our classroom*, *we created*, and *ours* instead of *my classroom*, *my class*, and *that is mine*.

9 Do the behind-the-scenes work together.
Both of you plan, design, and work on lessons, and work together to universally design lesson plans from the beginning.

10 Rotate and share in assessments and student conferences.
Assessment data is easy to talk about when both of you teach and assess each learner.

11 Collaborate to the fullest extent.
Problem-solve, critically reflect, and make changes to their classroom on an ongoing basis to provide the best inclusive education!

Adapted from *The Educator's Handbook for Inclusive School Practices*, by Julie Causton, Ph.D., & Chelsea P. Tracy-Bronson, M.A., Brookes Publishing Co.

Read the full post at http://bit.ly/RockinCoTeach!

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Stay tuned to the Brookes Inclusion Lab for more co-teaching tips!

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6 PRACTICAL TIPS *for* CO-TEACHERS

BRUSH UP ON STANDARDS BEFORE THE YEAR STARTS

"The special education teacher may be assigned to co-teach more than one grade level or content area, making it difficult to manage all of the standards that will need to be addressed. It may be helpful to review the standards at the start of the school year, prior to planning meetings with the general education teacher. This will help to familiarize the special education teacher with the general outline of the standards and provide background knowledge prior to the joint planning meeting."

FIND POCKETS OF TIME FOR CO-PLANNING

"Co-teachers may need to be creative in finding co-planning time: They may need to ask for this time, meet after school at a coaching practice, meet online via instant messaging systems, or speak on the telephone after school. Some co-teachers have been known to carpool to school together—a great way to find co-planning time!"

DETERMINE CLASSROOM LOGISTICS EARLY ON

"In [their] first meetings, co-teachers need to decide on the logistics of their shared classroom. What will the flow of the class period look like? What models of co-teaching are co-teachers presently comfortable with, and will they need to work on expanding to use more models? How will they decide on and establish routines and rules in the classroom? How will the co-teachers present themselves to the students as a co-teaching pair?"

BE SUBTLE WHEN MAKING ACCOMMODATIONS

"Co-teachers need to develop subtle ways of ensuring that they provide appropriate accommodations. If some students are getting an adapted assessment with more white space and additional prompts, for example, take care to hand out the assessments at the same time and in the same manner as if they were all the same. Do not have one teacher hand out the standard assessment and the other hand out the accommodated assessment, as this will draw attention to the differences."

FOLLOW THROUGH WITH THE PLAN

"After having [their] initial conversations, both parties need to follow through with the plan. That may mean that the special education teacher puts together a "cheat sheet" of information on the students with disabilities—highlighting goals, accommodations, and needs—to share with the general education teacher. It could be that the general education teacher gathers curriculum materials to share with the special education teacher, to help him or her gain a firmer grasp of the content."

PREPARE FOR SUBSTITUTE CO-TEACHERS

"Create a Substitute folder or accordion file that has important hints or tips on how the classroom functions. It could also have worksheets or activities that students can do. Give the folder (or file) to the substitute when you meet."

Tips excerpted from *How to Co-Teach* by Elizabeth Potts & Lori Howard, Brookes Publishing Co.

CO-TEACHING *in* ACTION
Success Story

Co-teaching expert Elizabeth Stein wrote in with a candid, thought-provoking guest post called "A Deeper Look into Co-Teaching Success." Here's an excerpt:

A Deeper Look into Co-Teaching Success
Guest Post by Elizabeth Stein

I could easily share an all-around happy-go-lucky successful co-teaching experience with you—but I won't. We all know what the traditional success story looks like. Two teachers who just make it work together, no matter what. It's the kind of success where two teachers have the respect, the ongoing communication, and the shared compassion to sustain positive learning experiences throughout the year. Those lucky students see what learning looks like and they know what successful learning feels like by participating in class every day.

When I reflect through my experiences to select one co-teaching success story, my mind naturally sifts through all recent and past inspirational and uplifting experiences. Of course many specific stories come to mind, and yet I keep returning to the experiences that were completely challenging and daunting. I keep returning to the stories that may not seem like a success at first glance. The process of sifting through to identify just one success story brought me to the awareness that each co-teaching experience has been a success. No kidding! How is that even possible, you ask?

It has become second nature for me to apply a more real-world, reframed definition of what success actually means. Typically, we think of a successful co-teaching experience as the one where students achieve and teachers co-plan, work together with parity, and collaborate in a respectful, consistent manner. I just keep thinking, Where does that leave all of the other realistic experiences? I just cannot think about all those memories as unsuccessful. My most challenging co-teaching experiences were, in fact, some of the most successful co-teaching experiences I encountered. Seriously! I learned so much about myself, all students, and my colleagues, and most important, I tapped into the ultra-innovative side of myself—the side that pushed through challenges to make sure that students could have the opportunity to achieve to the best of their abilities. Through these challenging co-teaching successes, I learned how tenacious I am—and how, when I keep what is right for students as my guiding light, I can make any co-teaching experience a success.

Read the full post at http://bit.ly/CoTeachSuccess to discover
what Elizabeth learned through her experience with one co-teacher—a partnership
that challenged her and ultimately led her to tap into new strengths as a teacher.

accommodations & modifications

Simple changes to help meet the needs of all kids!

ACCOMMODATIONS & MODIFICATIONS *How I Did It*

Nicole Eredics of the popular blog **THE INCLUSIVE CLASS** shares some tips on accommodations and modifications from her personal experience:

One year I had a student in my fourth grade class who had been previously diagnosed with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome. Some of the challenges that the student faced were a short attention span, impulsive behavior, and delayed cognitive growth. Attending and completing lessons, positive interactions with others, and understanding grade-level material were some of the areas in which the student required support in the form of accommodations and modifications.

After an initial intake meeting with the parents at the beginning of the school year, I was better able to understand the student's needs. In addition, I spoke with the student's previous teachers to learn what classroom strategies were successful. Within the first few weeks of the school year, I pinpointed several areas in our classroom and curriculum that were proving successful or becoming an issue for the student. With the help of the special education teacher, I developed some routines and strategies to keep "Student A" in my classroom, learning and making friends. Many of them incorporated the whole class and were beneficial for all students!

- I greeted all the students at the class door each morning and welcomed them into the room.

- Each student had an assigned hook to hang his or her backpack. I assigned Student A a hook that was closest to where I stood in order to decrease off-task behavior during the busy time.

- The first activity of every school day was a "Sponge Activity," which involved a crossword puzzle, word search activity, or reading. Student A worked on the activity for a predetermined amount of time, and then went to the computer to find and print off the weather forecast for the day.

- Once the students were finished with the Sponge Activity, I brought them together for a Morning Meeting. The students were given assigned spots, and I had Student A sit in a strategic location with the least amount of distractions. During the Morning Meeting, Student A gave the weather report to me to read or we drew the name of a student. Student A also had access to fidgets during this time.

- I verbally alerted the students to transitions and used a timer to help students make quick adjustments.

- Student A needed a modified program for English Language Arts. During instruction, Student A participated in the group activity or guided reading groups. Modification strategies were used; for example, interlined paper helped Student A print legible responses.

- Each student had classroom jobs. Student A was given jobs that could be done when work was finished or during unstructured time. For example, Student A would collect recycling once classwork was finished.

- Since recess could be a challenging social time, Student A would have a modified recess schedule. The first portion of recess was an unstructured yet supervised playtime, while the second half involved a predetermined, structured activity. For example, the student would help in the library, assist in the kindergarten classroom, or pass out newsletters to classrooms.

- Student planners were used to record homework and class events. If needed, either a classmate or I would scribe the homework for Student A.

Get more tips from Nicole—read the full Q&A at http://bit.ly/AccomQA

Accommodations & Modifications
8 Practical Teacher Tips

Break tasks into smaller steps.

For independent work time, post a to-do list on the student's desk (in words or pictures) of the big tasks that need to be completed. The student can complete them and cross out each task.

Extend time on tasks.

Slowly increase the time allotted for certain tasks, or allow the student to take a test in parts—one part on the first day, the second part on the next.

Reduce the amount of information on a page.

Adequate white space and a clean, distraction-free layout can make an assignment seem less confusing. Copy segments of an assignment onto different pages to increase white space. Students can also hold index cards or word windows on the page to limit information as they read.

Preteach.

Introduce a concept, term, or idea to a student before it's "officially" taught to the rest of the class. This can help the student start the class feeling prepared and more confident.

Use guided notes.

Develop handouts to help students take notes. Create an outline of the lesson and replace key terms and facts with blanks that students can fill in as they listen to your presentation.

Provide test-time helpers.

Try strategies like adding picture cues to test items, highlighting important words in the directions or questions, providing an example for each type of test item, reducing the number of alternatives for multiple-choice items, and letting the student circle the answer rather than write the letter.

Start a buddy system.

Have peers assist a student by providing copies of their class notes, earning extra credit by making a recording of the assigned chapters, and studying together after school.

Allow students to access text differently.

Make modifications to the text itself—shorten the amount of text, reduce the number of vocabulary words, or simplify sentence structures. Or keep the text intact and provide accommodations such as text-to-speech books or audio-books, highlighted text, or hyper-links to vocabulary definitions.

Get more ideas—read the full post at http://bit.ly/17Accoms

#1-4 from *The Educator's Handbook for Effective Inclusive Practices* by Julie Causton; #5-6 from *Modifying Schoolwork* by Janney & Snell; #7 from *Believe in My Child with Special Needs!* by Mary Falvey; #8 from *Maximizing Effectiveness of Reading Comprehension Instruction in Diverse Classrooms* by Berkeley & Barber, all from Brookes Publishing Co.

MAKING SCIENCE ENGAGING & ACCESSIBLE
An Accommodation Success Story

High school teacher Dan Bisaccio used UDL principles to design an environmental science unit around New Hampshire science process skills such as "apply scientific theories and laws to new situations to generate hypotheses" and content standards such as "describe the type of impact certain environmental changes, including deforestation, invasive species, increased erosion, and pollution containing toxic substances, could have on local environments" (New Hampshire Department of Education, 2006).

Mr. Bisaccio used effective whole-class teaching strategies and presented information in multiple ways, including text and videos. Although he presented a short lecture every day that aligned with the reading or homework, the students took an active part in their own learning by doing library research, conducting observations in the nearby woods, hearing a first-hand account from a New Hampshire forester, and engaging in small-group discussions and debates. At the conclusion of the unit there was a traditional multiple-choice test in addition to a performance exhibition in which groups presented arguments supporting their answer to the essential question.

Mr. Bisaccio also included individualized supports for Leslie, a student with significant disabilities fully included in his class. Leslie's IEP team used a routines-based planning process and format to design support plans for the teaching routines that Mr. Bisaccio frequently used.

For example, during the teaching routine in which students read from a handout and took notes, the students had to decode and comprehend the text, determine which information was important to write in their notebooks, highlight key words or other information, and ask questions to clarify their understanding. Leslie needed individualized supports for all aspects of participating in this routine, but it is important to note that she would not participate in an alternate activity—rather, the same activity with supports.

Here are the supports Leslie needed:

1 Enlarged text written at a first- or second-grade level containing the key vocabulary and concepts of the topic

2 Aided language boards or graphic organizers to enhance both receptive understanding and expressive communication

3 A notetaking template on her laptop

Read the full success story at http://bit.ly/AccomSuccess to see how Leslie succeeded with the help of these accommodations.

peer supports

How classmates can help each other learn!

5 peer support approaches

that benefit students with & without disabilities

Peer modeling

- Peers provide recorded or live demonstrations of targeted social skills
- Situations modeled should be familiar ones that students are likely to encounter
- Peers explicitly tell the observing student what they are doing and why
- Can be used informally during the course of the day or during formal, structured learning sessions

Peer buddy systems

- Peers provide incidental teaching during nonstructured, routine classroom activities
- Many buddy systems in lower grades emphasize increasing and improving a student's communication with peers
- More formal, structured buddy programs may focus on instructional support for secondary school students during inclusive classes

Friendship groups

- Lunch, recess, or after-school groups explicitly designed to bring together students with disabilities and their peers for socialization and fun
- Work especially well when inclusion is minimal or if a student with disabilities is new to a school
- May meet weekly around specific themes like the homecoming dance or school grounds improvement
- Good opportunity to build social relationships and provide informal support channels for students with disabilities

Cooperative learning

- Students work in small, mixed-ability groups and support each other's learning
- Competition is deemphasized in favor of cooperation, mutual support, and shared accomplishments
- All group members work together toward a shared goal; group is successful only when each member achieves the goal

Peer tutoring

- Students get one-to-one instruction on a particular topic, assignment, or skill by a classmate, a peer, or an older student
- Peer tutoring programs can use fixed roles for students or allow them to alternate between tutor/tutee roles
- Especially effective in incremental learning, in which there's one correct answer that the tutor is able to guide the tutee toward

PRACTICAL PRINCIPLES
for PEER SUPPORTS *Getting Students Ready to Help*

DON'T UNDERESTIMATE YOUNG PEOPLE

"Adolescents are often capable of much more than adults give them credit for. The current generation of students has grown up attending inclusive schools and classrooms, they are experienced at working collaboratively with others, they are savvy with new technologies and educational innovations, and they recognize their potential role in increasing the participation of their peers with disabilities in everyday school life. In other words, peers often have a good understanding of why inclusion is important and how they can help support it."

REMAIN FLEXIBLE

"Although students will need some initial orientation to their new roles at the start of the semester and an introduction to basic support strategies, educators can be flexible with how training is provided . . . . Students do not have to learn everything at the outset. Training can often be delivered informally through sharing additional strategies as new needs emerge; modeling appropriate interactions when necessary; or periodically meeting briefly with students before or after class, at lunch, or during down time in class."

ALIGN TRAINING WITH STUDENTS' NEEDS

"Peers are able to provide a rich and diverse array of supports to their classmates with disabilities. Peer support arrangements, however, are individually tailored interventions designed to help address just some of the educational and social support needs of students with severe disabilities in inclusive classrooms. Because support needs vary from student to student and class to class, peers do not need to be taught to provide every conceivable form of support. Rather, they only need to be shown the specific strategies they will need to support a specific classmate."

ANTICIPATE POTENTIAL CHALLENGES AND CONCERNS

"Consider from the outset some of the early questions and concerns students might have [and] make certain that the questions are addressed during orientation activities. Some of the common questions we hear raised by peer supports in schools are as follows:

- What do I do if my partner has behavioral challenges? Is it my role to address these issues?
- What if my partner decides he or she just does not want to work during a particular class?
- What if my partner and I find we do not get along as well as we thought we would?
- Who do I go to if I have questions, need help, or have something I would like to share?

Tips excerpted from Peer Support Strategies for Improving All Students' Social Lives and Learning, *by Erik Carter, Lisa Cushing, & Craig Kennedy*

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Peer Buddy Programs

Expert Q&A with Carolyn Hughes, co-author of *Peer Buddy Programs for Successful Secondary School Inclusion*

Q: How do peer buddy programs benefit students with and without disabilities?

A: We think of peer-buddy programs as a win-win situation for all students involved—those with and without disabilities. Benefits to students without disabilities include higher grades, improved academic performance, enhanced personal growth, increased awareness of disability issues, development of new friendships, and interest in careers in special education. As one peer buddy said, "The peer buddy program has allowed me to make new friends who have slight differences, but with more similarities than you could imagine!"

For students with disabilities, participating in a peer buddy program can expand involvement in the myriad activities that make up school life, such as school plays or sports, general education academic classes, and friendships with general education peers. Students with disabilities have learned new social, academic, employment, and life skills when interacting with peer buddies. As one student said, "I like having someone in biology class who knows the material and can explain things I don't understand."

Q: What would you say to an educator or school administrator who says "I'd like to start a peer buddy program, but we just don't have time"?

A: Starting a peer buddy program may seem overwhelming to educators or administrators. However, it's fine to start "small" by matching peers and students with disabilities in just one or two classes. Or educators may initiate informal strategies to promote interaction, such as inviting peers to join students with disabilities for lunch in the cafeteria or at sporting events or other extra-curricular activities. In general, educators and administrators are likely to be pleasantly surprised to learn that peer buddies actually are efficient helpers in the classroom and lighten a teacher's load by supporting their partners with disabilities. In addition, once a peer buddy program is established, participating students will recruit new peer buddies on their own.

Q: What are some hallmarks of an effective peer buddy program? Can you identify some traits/qualities that the most successful programs have in common?

A: Peer buddy programs are designed to promote positive educational outcomes for all students. Characteristics of successful programs include

A students with disabilities participating in the full spectrum of activities that comprise a typical school day

B active participation by students with disabilities in their general education classes

C students' progress on their IEP goals

D positive feedback from all participants—teachers, staff, and students—with respect to their experiences in the program

Read the full Q&A at http://bit.ly/CHughesQA

A WIN / WIN
Success Story

Excerpted & adapted from *Peer Buddy Programs for Successful Secondary School Inclusion*

McGavock High's Peer Buddy Program

One of the largest high schools in the state of Tennessee, McGavock enrolled more than 2,700 students, more than 300 of whom were receiving special education services. Students with disabilities—especially students with more severe disabilities—spent most of their school day in self-contained or resource classrooms, though they ate lunch in the cafeteria and attended some general education classes. The general and special education teachers felt the McGavock school community could and should do a better job supporting full participation and membership of students with disabilities. But with limited supports available to help teachers adapt curricula and make individualized accommodations, this was a challenging prospect. That's where the McGavock High peer buddy program came in—and here's how it helped.

Tyrell never had much of an opportunity to get to know students with disabilities at McGavock High School. Sure, he often passed these students in the hallway on the way to his classes or saw them eating together at a table in the corner of the lunchroom. But none of them were on the football team with him, enrolled in any of his classes, or participating in any of the extracurricular clubs he enjoyed. To be honest, Tyrell was a little curious about what life was really like for students with disabilities at his school. After all, his aunt had taken special education classes, and so had his cousin. But with all of the demands of high school life, he just never got around to finding out.

Allan had always dreamed of becoming a bodybuilder. Asking the coach about enrolling in a weightlifting class was an almost weekly occurrence. Coach Fischer always replied with a hesitant "maybe next semester, Allan." Coach Fischer didn't think he knew enough about teaching students with disabilities—and with 25 other students enrolled in his class, he didn't feel he had the time to provide the individualized support he thought Allan would need. Of course, Allan could always come to class if a paraprofessional would join him, but Allan said that would be too embarrassing. Besides, who would help Allan in the boys' locker room if he needed it? Allan would just have to wait until next semester.

Ms. Gladstone was very aware of the challenges to inclusion in general education encountered by students with disabilities at McGavock High. Like other special education teachers in her school, she desperately wanted to find a way to increase the social and academic participation of her students. But how? She brainstormed with a colleague from a local university about the possibility of having peers help support her students. After all, students were literally everywhere at McGavock—and when given the chance, they were often eager to help out their classmates with disabilities. Since an important goal for many of Ms. Gladstone's students was to increase their social interaction in general education settings, who better to involve in that effort than other students?

Keep reading at http://bit.ly/PeerBuddySuccess to find out how the McGavock High staff worked together to develop a peer buddy program— and how it changed life for Tyrell, Allan, and their peers.

VISIT THE BROOKES INCLUSION LAB FOR MORE!
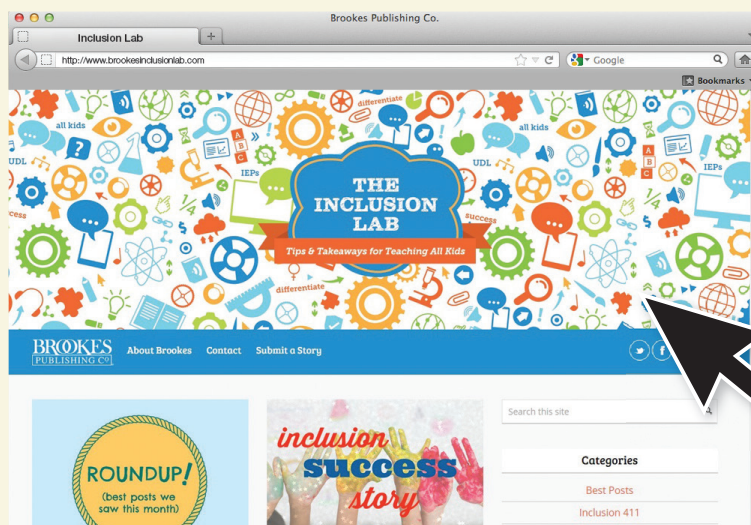
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