



Using Inclusion and Advocacy to Effectively Enhance Equity for Students with Disabilities in a General Education Classroom

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Introduction

Literature Review:

- Students with Disabilities:
- More likely to experience isolation and negative implications than their peers in the school system. This leads to a rise in several issues such as feelings of frustration, negative behaviors, anxiety, and overall lowered self-esteem. When students encounter negative emotions related to their disabilities, they may become less likely to utilize accommodations. Additionally, many educators may be unaware of the difficulties that a student with a disability experiences and therefore may lack the resources or knowledge to provide adequate support. This gap can cause a classroom to be exclusive and inaccessible for all learners.

Occupational Therapy's (OT) Role:

- Helps empower students participating in school-based occupations by addressing their physical, psychosocial, cognitive, and sensory components of performance. (AOTA, 2022)

Overview of Guide:

- Purpose:
- Implement a comprehensive guide for educators to increase inclusion and accessibility in general education classrooms, promoting increased self-esteem and increased use of accommodations for students with disabilities.

Methods

Steps:

1. Create "A Comprehensive Guide to Understanding and Supporting all Learners in the Classroom"; includes video, printable fact sheets, and handouts.
2. The guide content incorporates evidence-based practice, OT concepts & information/ resources from the National Center on Health Physical Activity and Disability (NCHPAD).
3. Collaborate with the site mentor to disseminate and implement the guide with allied health professionals from NCHPAD's national network.
4. Curriculum adaptation of the guide, NCHPAD, and external resources.

Topics:

- Selected based on disabilities in academic settings and their functional needs.

Information Collection:

- A comprehensive review of web-based journals and National Disability Associations from multiple databases.
- NCHPAD mentor
- 18/54 websites selected

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion	Published from recognized organizations, and academic journals	Web-bases that included multiple media such as downloadable PDFs or graphic organizer	Relevant to the domains within the scope of OT practice
Exclusion	Published before 2015	Web-bases that required viewer to pay	Websites that are not accessible to all viewers (small font, poor contrast, moving parts)

Findings

Overarching Theme 1: Inclusion

Subtheme 1a: Inclusion and Accessibility

- Definition of inclusion and its impact on students' learning and personal experiences
- Benefits of inclusive environments in educational settings

Overarching Theme 2: Resources

Subtheme 2a : Who's in your Classroom?

- 4 common types of disabilities seen in classrooms
- Learning disabilities, Attention Disorder, Sensory Processing, Autism Spectrum Disorder
- On average 30-50% of general educators feel equipped to teach kids with mentioned above disabilities

Subtheme 2b: Who's in your Corner?

- Occupational Therapist (OT), Physical Therapist (PT), Speech Language Pathologist (SLP)
- Each specialized services plays a role in educating and supporting students and educators

Subtheme 2c: There's Room for Everyone

- Common sensory items and tools that can be incorporated into a general education classroom (i.e., fidget spinners, putty, light projectors, cotton balls, etc.)
- Handouts created with evidence-based resources

Subtheme 2d: Inclusion in the Classroom

- Simple social stories
- Check-in- checkout system

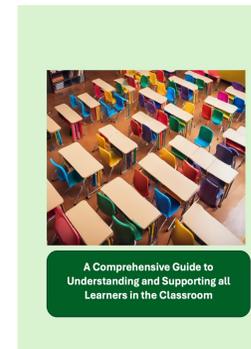
Overarching Theme 3: Laws

Subtheme 3a : Everyone Deserves the Right

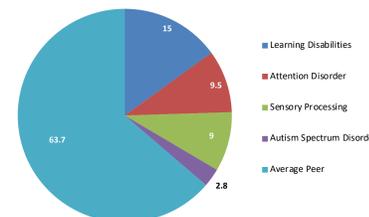
- 504 Plan/Individualized Education Program (IEP)
- Application for educators and their duty to monitor & report.

Subtheme 3b: Understanding Compliance

- Accommodations educators may experience with each of the mentioned disabilities.
- A student with dyslexia uses colored overlays on their reading materials and has access to audiobooks to help with comprehension.
- Behaviors that are common: oppositional, lack of planning, decreased initiation, etc.
- Ways to help support a student with a disability such as normalizing their accommodation's, provide positive reinforcements and how to use inclusive language.



Children Prevalence of 4 Common Disabilities



Scan me!

Discussion

The guide is to be disseminated through NCHPAD's national network of health allied professionals and educators. NCHPAD is a premier resource center for people with disabilities for health and wellness. NCHPAD's inclusive resources and programs are disseminated nationwide through partnerships, education opportunities, social media campaigns, community activities and online resources featured on the website [NCHPAD.org](https://www.nchpad.org).

The guide will serve as the foundation for an interactive training program for educators to advance their knowledge and understanding of inclusive practices in learning environments.

Limitations

- No human participants
- Unable to implement in a live classroom
- Use of secondary resources only

Further Direction

- Creation of a pilot study to implement a guide in the classroom.
- Assess the efficiency of the guide through assessment tools such as surveys, observations and Likert scales.
- Creation and implementation of professional development training modules to assess educators' knowledge and understanding of inclusion, and resources.

Conclusion

- OT supports and educates educators about inclusion and accessibility in a general education classroom.
- By providing a comprehensive guide, teachers are equipped with the tools and resources to create an inclusive and accessible learning environment.
- Educators will gain valuable insights on how to adapt their teaching materials to meet the needs of all learners, making their educational journey rewarding and satisfying.

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