

## **Regular Classroom Adaptations for Special Education Inclusion Students** (based on a first grade classroom)

I strongly believe that the key to an inclusion model for a student (special education, second language learner...) is adapting the curriculum to meet the child's needs. Some people construe that as "dumbing down the curriculum." Consider this analogy: I go lift weights with my friend who is much stronger than I am. (Perhaps he has lifted weights longer than me. Maybe he works out more frequently than I do. Or perhaps he is just genetically stronger than I am.) When he has finished his set, we will have to lower the amount so I can lift it. If we were to leave the weights the same, I would be unable to lift it leaving me frustrated, embarrassed, in pain, and probably unwilling to lift weights again. By simply adjusting the amount I lift, I can participate in the same activity as my friend but at my own level. I will still get stronger and because I am having success, I am more likely to continue.

### **Classroom Adaptations**

Literacy (Reading, writing) (Our school uses the CELL [California Early Literacy Learning] framework which adapts to all learning levels in the classroom.)

1. **Guided Reading groups:** Students are placed into ability based reading groups where specific skills such as phonemic awareness, comprehension, word attack skills, and sight word recognition can be individualized for instruction. Students also receive leveled readers to transfer and implement these skills. During guided reading groups, students participate in literacy centers in which child-centered activities re-teach phonemic, reading and writing skills. Students also work with partners from other ability groups at the centers as well as sixth grade student helpers.
2. **Read Aloud:** The teacher reads out loud to the classroom a variety of books from fiction to non-fiction modeling reading and comprehension elements. Through whole group instruction, the special needs student is placed in a safe learning environment in which the love of great books is fostered and the desire to read is born. Additional instructional support can be offered through cooperative learning groupings such as student partners.
3. **Independent Reading:** For 15 minutes each day, the students are given the chance to sit anywhere in the classroom and read books from their book bags (leveled readers), classroom library books or school library books. Students may also read with partners from other reading groups. The students are also given a 6<sup>th</sup> grade reading buddy that they read with one day a week. The reading buddy is instructed to work on specific skills or strategies each week such as story retelling. During this time, the teacher pulls students for one on one reading assessments to better inform instruction in guided reading groups and read aloud.
4. **Shared Reading:** Poems and songs are written on charts for the teacher and students to read together. Through predictable text, rhyming, and musical patterns, students participate in whole group reading and singing. Various phonics skills are also

taught including letter sounds, rhyming words, and syllables. The charts are hung in the classroom for the student to familiar reread to literacy centers. The songs and poems are also thematically connected to other subjects in the curriculum helping to build student background knowledge.

5. **Interactive Writing:** Interactive writing is a strategy in which the teacher and all of the students share the pen for a writing piece. Through interactive writing, grammar, spelling, and writing strategies are introduced and modeled by both the teacher and the students. Interactive writing provides a structured learning environment in which good writing skills are taught over and over. The repetitive nature of instruction fosters learning for the special needs student.

6. **Independent Writing:** Independent writing truly allows for individualized instruction. Students are given the chance to implement writing and spelling strategies to construct meaning. It also forms a strong assessment tool as to where the student is with various spelling, writing, and story skills. With a special needs students who is still at the beginning stages of the writing process, teacher dictation and peer assistance can be used.

7. **Spelling:** Our classroom uses a phonetic based spelling program (Saxon Phonics) teaching sequential letter and blend sounds and building upon that knowledge. Not only does this weave a strong phonics element into the reading program, but it is also carried over into other literacy elements such as shared reading, interactive writing, and guided reading groups. It also provides an explicit assessment of what phonic skills are mastered by the student to better inform and adapt instruction. The special needs student can also have their own spelling list isolating specific phonics skills at their ability level.

8. **Mathematics:** The math curriculum is adapted for the special needs student in two ways. Each day, repetitive math mini lessons are taught and re-taught through whole group and partner activities such as mystery bag, coin can, 100-second check, problem solving, counting, and calendar. In addition, each day a new skill is introduced matching the scope and sequence of the math program and the state core curriculum. Standard math practices of activating prior knowledge, direct instruction of new skill, hands-on learning (manipulatives and visual learning), guided practice and independent work are used daily. The special needs students can also be accommodated through small group assistance during independent work. The assignments can also be modified to better fit the student's needs.

9. **Additional Assistance:** Our school America Reads students along with school business partner volunteers pull special needs students daily for one-on-one assistance in reading, writing, spelling, and mathematics. By working with the same student every day, they begin to develop a rapport and support base for the student that reinforces what is taught in the regular classroom.