

Record

381

File Number
10337

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Title: Figuring Out What To Do with the Grownups: How teachers make inclusion work for students with disabilities

Original source: JASH Volume 17 Number 4

Resource type: Written

Publication Date: 01/01/92

Publisher info: TASH

Abstract

This article describes details of inclusion of students with severe disabilities using an extended example of one high school drama class. Based on research conducted in eight schools by a team of four researchers, the article describes three inclusion outcomes for both disabled and non disabled students (curriculum infusion, social inclusion and learning inclusion). It then describes how the drama teacher and the special education teacher provided teaching support, prosthetic support, and interpretive support to one disabled student by developing both collaborative and consultative relationships with each other. **Keywords: Education, School age**

Figuring Out What To Do with the Grownups: How Teachers Make Inclusion “Work” for Students with Disabilities

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This article describes details of inclusion of students with severe disabilities using an extended example of one high school drama class. Based on research conducted in eight schools by a team of four researchers, the article describes three inclusion outcomes for both disabled and nondisabled students (curriculum infusion, social inclusion, and learning inclusion). It then describes how the drama teacher and the special education teacher provided teaching support, prosthetic support, and interpretive support to one disabled student by developing both collaborative and consultive relationships with each other.

DESCRIPTORS: adults, collaboration, developmental disabilities, integration, peer relationships, support

For nearly 17 years the field of special education has been struggling to meet the challenges of educating students with severe disabilities. We have learned much. Little by little, we are discovering how to make schooling effective and successful even for very challengingly disabled students. As educators have acquired more and more confidence about what and how students learn, we have also become willing to reexamine where students learn. The language of “integration,” “mainstreaming,” “supported education,” even “least restrictive environment” peppers almost any conversation among educators today, and increasingly includes not just students with severe disabilities but any special education-labeled student (Biklen, Ferguson, & Ford, 1989; Gartner & Lipsky, 1987; S. Stainback & Stainback, 1990).

Our earlier efforts to integrate students with disabilities taught us that physical access was not enough (e.g., Biklen, 1985; Grenoi-Scheyer, Coats, & Falvey, 1989; Hamre-Nietupski & Nietupski, 1981; Schnorr, 1991), resulting in new calls for “inclusion” with its implications of social-connectedness, participation, exchange, and shared responsibilities. At the same time, proponents argued (Brown et al., 1989; Ferguson & Jeanchild, 1991; York & Vandercook, 1990) that inclusion should also build students’ competence both inside

and outside of school. That is, the social agenda of inclusion should not outstrip schools’ equally fundamental teaching responsibility. Schools must enable all students to actively participate in their communities so that others care enough about what happens to them to look for ways to include them as part of that community. If inclusion is to mean anything, it must mean that students with disabilities become full, active, learning members of the school community.

In pockets of reform across the country, school professionals, and families are seeking to provide students, especially those with more severe disabilities, and their general education teachers with the necessary supports to achieve a learning membership that is characterized both by social inclusion and ongoing functional growth. Too often, however, the balance seems elusive. One recurring theme of difficulties encountered involves how to define the roles of additional staff, whether general or special education, certified or classified, working within the context of general education classrooms. Although variously named, some authors recommend the use of an inclusion facilitator (Gartner & Lipsky, 1987; Porter, 1988; W. Stainback & Stainback, 1990; Thousand & Villa, 1990). Different authors offer various details, but there seem to be three themes in the role descriptions offered for an inclusion facilitator: broker, adaptor, and collaborator.

As a *broker*, the inclusion facilitator locates resources and matches them to needs in a way that will enhance and not deter the formation of natural supports to the student. As an *adaptor*, it is the facilitator’s role to develop and suggest changes in teaching plans so that the classroom teacher might better accommodate a wider variety of students in his or her lessons, including those labeled as eligible for special education. Finally, the brokering of resources, curriculum, and teaching suggestions best occurs, it is advised, when adults work in a *collaborative* manner, with all the resultant implications of trust, respect, interaction, and exchange between adults who may have never before worked closely alongside another adult.

Although descriptions of this facilitator role are help-

ful, for teachers in the role many questions can remain. How are these facilitator professionals to nurture the increasing comfort and "ownership" of the general education teacher and students? How can teaching and learning support be provided without unintentionally getting in the way of social connectedness. How exactly do multiple adults work together in settings that previously accommodated only one adult? If the facilitating teacher is not the "primary" teacher, does he or she risk assuming a de facto role as classroom assistant? What if the curriculum and teaching suggestions are not heeded? If specialist supports gradually "fade," what is to become of "special" educators? While there are certainly a variety of questions about how to achieve full inclusion, figuring out what to do with the grownups remains a frequently voiced issue.

This paper uses the example of one high school drama class to illustrate how teachers in many more schools and classrooms are "figuring out what to do with the grownups" when students with severe disabilities join the lessons and classrooms of their nondisabled peers. Although one situation provides the illustrations, the analysis depends on a much larger data base of qualitative field notes, researcher discussions, memoranda, and interviews with teachers, students, and administrators gathered by four qualitative researchers who have been following the efforts of teachers across eight schools, most for 2 years. In some situations we followed a single student as he or she moved out from the self-contained classroom. In other situations we focused on a few teachers within a building and their collective efforts to learn how to make inclusion work. In still other instances we studied whole schools (Ferguson, Jeanchild, & Carter, 1991). We chose those schools and classrooms we could access fairly often and easily and where faculty were actively engaged in changing teaching and learning for all the students in their schools. Some schools invited us to observe their efforts, others agreed to accommodate us when asked. We sought only to sample a range of examples, encompassing large and small schools in large and small communities.

In all we collected data in eight elementary, three middle, and six high schools located in a 300-mile stretch of a western state. Typically, students in this state who happen to have severe disabilities attend self-contained classrooms in chronologically age-appropriate schools. For the past 3 years achieving "supported education" for all students with disabilities has been one of seven goal initiatives of the State Department of Education. As a consequence, individual teachers, schools, and whole districts in all areas of what is a largely rural state are experimenting with "full inclusion" in various ways. Teachers of self-contained classrooms are disintegrating classroom walls by scheduling students more out of than in their classrooms. Districts are "bringing back" students previously sent to self-

contained classrooms operated by an intermediate school district in a neighboring town's schools. It is in this context that we sampled a variety of inclusion efforts.

Some 84 observations and 64 interviews have been repeatedly read, coded, and discussed by the research team. We are still not finished, but continue to follow teachers and schools as they expand and improve on their efforts to include even very severely disabled students in the life of the school community.

Our analysis led us to focus on several inclusion dimensions, each with several subareas: (a) the capacities of teachers and systems, (b) the processes that create unintended isolation of students within inclusionary settings, (c) the perspectives of included students, (d) the roles and relationships of adults, and (e) the varied meanings of support. This article discusses these last two dimensions of inclusive schools.

Following established qualitative analysis procedures (Bodgan & Biklen, 1983; Charmaz, 1983; Patton, 1990) we first read transcripts, memos, and field notes to identify incidents and events that seemed to be either repetitive or novel. We each read our own data, and two of us read data generated by each of our co-researchers. During analysis discussions, our collective understandings of both the data we had generated and those of our colleagues were extended, permitting the development of concepts and properties. For example, early on we focused on "unhelpful help," and began to identify incidents and events in the data that revealed various structural, logistical, curricular, and pedagogical dimensions that seemed to create a kind of invisible "bubble" around the students with disabilities, hindering instead of facilitating inclusion (Ferguson, Jeanchild, & Meyer, 1992). We also developed concepts, and eventually categories, related to role conflicts, role management, and support that are detailed here and together inform a theme that emerged in our investigation of inclusion: that effective inclusion depends on figuring out what to do with the grownups.

We chose drama class to illustrate what these teachers and students have taught us about how to use adults to support full inclusion in part because the example is novel. Too often high school seems a more challenging context for inclusion, especially for students with severe disabilities, because the curriculum and structures are so grounded in disciplinary distinctions. We also chose this example because the very nature of drama serves to highlight what in other contexts can be almost unnoticeable nuances. Let us be clear, however, that our analysis of teacher relationships and student supports emerges not just from the experiences of Nora, Rick, and Ethan, but also from what we learned from Mrs. Rains, Zack, Lisha, Mr. Nelson, Ms. Maxwell, Sarah, Marcus, Rina, Ms. Valmar, Tony, and so on. For the sake of both clarity and brevity, we illustrate here how

Rick and Nora constructed both sharing and educative relationships with each other, in order to then provide Ethan with the teaching support, prosthetic support, and interpretive support that resulted in social and learning inclusion in beginning drama at Greentree High School.

Beginning Drama at the Beginning

Students were scattered throughout the red plush theater seats in the "little" theater. Walls and stage were solid black, like a canvas awaiting the artist. Rick sat at a card table in the center of the stage taking attendance. It was only the second week of the term and he was still trying to memorize the names of 32 beginning drama students. Ethan offered no challenge. He was the only student using a wheelchair and always sat in the front aisle, very near the center of the stage, because his heavy motorized chair could not climb even the small theater seat aisles. Nearby Ethan's special education teacher, Nora, sat casually chatting with another student.

The class drew a wide range of Greentree students. Sitting up in back was a group of young men all in black, several with elaborate hairstyles. One in particular stood out: his hair was carrot red, shaved to about an eighth inch except for one long shock in the front that framed the right side of his face and cupped his chin. In contrast was a young woman with long brown hair dressed in a cashmere sweater, plaid pleated skirt, stockings, and pumps. Only the pearls seemed missing. Others were in jeans and cotton tops. Most were carefully outfitted in combinations of colorfully contrasting knit shirts, socks, and canvas shoes. High-top sneakers seemed de rigueur even for Rick, who was dressed in brightly patterned elastic-waist baggy pants and a T-shirt.

The class period mostly offered lecture/discussion with a few exercises for variety and practice. Rick first introduced the notions of "high-centered" and "low-centered" personalities. He asked students to adopt one of these generic persona and answer questions "in character." After a few exchanges, Rick asked the class to reflect on how they were depicting the two persona, generating a good deal of discussion about stereotype and class distinctions. Ethan sat quietly, sometimes leaning back to look at ceiling lights, occasionally yawning not closed. He didn't seem to be listening. Rick wandered as he talked and questioned. When he moved near Ethan, he smiled and touched Ethan warmly. At one point, while framing another question for Curt, Rick picked up Ethan's handkerchief and wiped the wetness that oral motor impairments constantly create around his mouth.

After several students' turns at the exercise, Rick reminded Ethan that he was going to ask him a yes/no

question and wanted him to answer in either a loud or a soft voice. More questions, first to Annie, then Paul, then Sheila: "Do you think of yourself as smart?" "Do you think of him [pointing out another student] as smart?" "Stupid?" "Is black your favorite color?"

Rick approached Ethan and asked "Do you like red?" Ethan replied, "Do you like red?" Rick tried again, only to have Ethan repeat the question again. Nora offered assistance, saying to Ethan: "Listen. It's a question. Do you like red?" Ethan still repeated the question. Both Nora and Rick tried to ask the question a different way and after three or four more exchanges with both Nora and Rick, Ethan finally offered, "I like red."

Rick asked Nora to explain to the class what just happened. "Sometimes Ethan doesn't understand what information a questioner wants," she explained, "but he knows that he is supposed to answer, so he repeats what he just heard." Rick expanded, adding that repeating is Ethan's way of "letting us know that he doesn't get the point and we have to try another way to help him understand." This led Rick to a larger point about communication and how important it is to actors on a stage. He pointed out that, as actors, they are going to have to communicate a great deal about a character very quickly and briefly, but they will not enjoy the luxury of having an audience that can tell them when it doesn't understand. "Ethan," Rick concluded, "can help us all learn how to imagine what might not be communicated so we can discover all the ways of communicating that will help more people understand what we are trying to convey with our character."

Near the end of class, Ethan's experience of drama class became part of the lesson again. For the past week the entire class had been doing relaxation exercises. Rick had promised that, by Friday, he would help them become so relaxed that they would fall asleep on stage. Wanting to introduce the idea of "subtext," Rick reminded the group of how Ethan was able to relax earlier in the week:

Remember how even Nora was surprised. He relaxed so much that both his arms stretched out and were flat on the floor! Nora was pretty excited because it is very hard for Ethan to relax since his muscles are always tighter than yours. Something you can do easily—stretching your arms out straight—is a very big accomplishment for Ethan. Now Ethan could do this thing that is more difficult for him because he was listening to my voice. I was talking about clouds and waves and using lots of words and imagery that Ethan probably didn't really understand, but *he was able to listen to the subtext*—the tone and underlying meaning—and it allowed him to achieve the exercise.

Setting Inclusion Parameters

As with many educators, Nora and Rick approached Ethan's inclusion in beginning drama as architects: neither completely knew exactly how it would unfold or what would be achieved, but there was a blueprint. Rick had an agenda of learning for the nondisabled peers that included at least a new awareness of disability, and, for some, an acceptance of Ethan as a classmate. Both teachers also had social and learning outcomes in mind for Ethan. The parameters of inclusion for all the drama students, including Ethan, were to learn substantively about drama and socially about being teenagers. In the process of applying these twin accomplishments to Ethan, the drama curriculum was also enhanced. Inclusion at Greenfield, and other schools we observed, occurred within the three parameters of curriculum infusion, social inclusion, and learning inclusion.

Curriculum infusion: How disability can teach. I expect that this year's beginning drama students will not soon forget the meaning of subtext. Other authors (Biklen, 1985; Fullwood, 1990) have remarked on the potential benefits of inclusion for nondisabled peers. Certainly Rick effectively used Ethan's experiences, and other students' experiences of Ethan, to elaborate the drama curriculum in a way that only Ethan's inclusion made possible.

As the year progressed, Rick's goal "to have the 'outside world' (at least as represented by Ethan's drama classmates) understand, to not recoil" became elaborated. Both Rick and Nora found many more unique ways in which Ethan's participation served to teach. One example nicely illustrates:

Rick: There are times when some of the kids are doing their improv, say, and Ethan will laugh. And then the kids will start laughing because they see him laughing. What I like about him is that he's very emotional with his responses. He's right there. And so he teaches the other kids . . . he teaches my kids to just go do it.

Nora: That came up even in the beginning when Ethan was afraid to get out of his chair, saying "No!" Rick commented then, "It's too bad everybody can't be as open as Ethan and just say, 'This is what I am afraid of. This is what I like, this is what I'm afraid of, this is how I'm feeling.'" So Ethan's openness is a positive thing.

Ethan's disability served to teach so much that Rick concluded by midyear that "there's a benefit in the fact that he is wheelchair bound" because it forces other students to design their improvisations around more novel constraints: "It's very good for the kids to say, 'Ethan can't walk. Okay. We were going to have him do this, how do we adapt for what we want?' I think that's the best learning."

I suspect that neither Rick nor Nora had fully antici-

ipated this particular curriculum infusion benefit. He and Nora had, however, planfully orchestrated many other features of Ethan's inclusion according to the twin parameters of social and learning inclusion.

Social inclusion: Learning to be a teenager in drama class. High schools tend to be richly varied environments with many differences, from clothing choices to students' appearance and behavior. On the way to drama class one morning we encountered a young woman dressed entirely in black with black hair mysteriously coiffed to stand straight up at least 12 inches into the air as if caught in some invisible suction (we later learned that Elmer's glue does the trick). As we passed, both startled but trying not to show it, Nora commented with a chuckle that "one of the things I really like about Greentree High is that we are definitely not the oddest."

Of course, this range of individual expression emerges in part because students are so uncertain about who they really are. Trying on different personas is simply part of the drama all students participate in during high school. Someone offering as many differences as Ethan, however, poses a particular challenge in adolescent culture.

Rick explained that, "At first, first term, they didn't want to touch him. They couldn't go near him. They were afraid of him because of the differences. Now some of the newer kids may be a little tentative, but . . ." Nora elaborated, "Rick and I have really tried hard to achieve a balance between wanting to 'set up things' and backing off, because you can't force quality interactions. We know that."

Rick was thoughtful about his need to model. "I pointed out that I knew that a lot of them were afraid. That's exactly what I said, 'I know a lot of you would see somebody like Ethan on the street and walk away, or go on the other side of the street. Or you see somebody drooling or dribbling or something and you just walk away. And I expect that.' I assured them that 'I'm not gonna force any of you to have any kind of interaction. I want you to understand that if you want to, this is the place to do it. We need to learn about people like Ethan and Ethan needs to learn that it's okay for him to say no to us.'"

Nora's involvement was a different kind of strategy. Part of the "setup" was that groups including Ethan also included Nora, especially in the beginning. Initially all the groups were assigned by Nora and Rick in part to ensure that students did not have to face the situation of picking Ethan before they were ready. Later, when students began to relax with Ethan's differences, they began to select their own groups. It didn't take long for a few of the women in class to invite Ethan into their groups, and for Ethan to choose some of the same women on other occasions. Regardless of how the groups were formed, however, Nora, and sometimes

Rick, came along: "So those groups got paid off a little bit because there was a grownup helping them. So it wasn't stigmatizing to have Ethan in the group."

Despite the challenge Ethan represented to this classroom and these students, a balance did not take long to emerge. Not every student, of course, but many came to see Ethan as a member of the class to greet, even downtown on Saturdays, to slap on the back, to applaud, and to invite into their group for the final exam assignment using combative techniques. Ethan quickly learned to identify students by their voices and could easily return a "Hi" with a "Hi, Angie, how are you?" As Nora noted, "Ethan is a pretty personable guy." Some students, of course, never became comfortable with Ethan and never sought interactions with him, but that seemed true among several of the nondisabled students as well.

Learning to include Ethan was certainly a challenge sometimes. When Kim and Sharon were planning the combative scene that would be their final for the unit, they struggled with how to include Ethan. The scene itself wasn't so difficult to create: Ethan would be going to a snack bar with one of the young women when another would approach and kick at his wheelchair, telling him to "get out of the way." They needed an epithet, however, and that was more difficult. Both students approached Nora and Rick: "What names could/should we call Ethan?," they asked, worried about being appropriate and hurting Ethan's feelings. Rick responded, "Call him the same kinds of names you would call your other friends." Both looked unsatisfied with this answer, but, after a pause, accepted it and returned to the rehearsal. Watching the interaction, I wondered if they weren't really trying to ask if it was okay to call Ethan "retard" or "crip." The teacher's response seemed to confuse them in part because these might very well be the names they would use with other friends. They decided on "jerk," but I think their question is illustrative of the nuances about acceptance that can occur, sometimes unnoticed, in inclusionary settings.

Perhaps the best way to summarize the social inclusion Ethan and his classmates experienced in drama class is with a brief story about the end of the year. As part of the end-of-year closure festivities and performances, Rick invited the class to select from among their number the male and female students that not only "showed the most improvement, but *also show the most promise as an actor.*" Reporting the outcomes to me after the fact, Nora and Rick explained that they were both surprised and moved to discover that Ethan received seven votes. "If it had only been improvement, I could see it," Nora explained, "Ethan really did learn a lot that everyone could see." "But promise as an actor!" Rick completed their thought: "It shows how

much they came to value Ethan as a *member* of the drama class."

Learning inclusion: Learning about acting. Ethan's parents supported inclusion in drama not so much with expectations of any specific learning, certainly not "promise as an actor," but with the hope that the experience might prove valuable for developing community theater connections after schooling ended. Yet Ethan did learn a good deal, surprising Nora and Rick as well as his parents, by the end of the first term.

The final exam was to perform a monologue; Ethan's was from the *Spoon River Anthology*. Ethan had never tried to remember lines and his speech was often difficult to understand, so Nora created the scene of an actress rehearsing her lines just before performance in her dressing table mirror, only Ethan was the "mirror." As Nora spoke each line, Ethan repeated it, speaking those lines he best remembered in unison with her, achieving a kind of underlining effect that they were her best remembered lines as well.

"He was amazing!" concluded Nora. "he pushed himself."

"By all rights," Rick added, "he shouldn't have been able to do it because his disability should have prevented him. He's not supposed to be able to do that."

"You know, all this memorization," elaborated Nora, "I think people were so amazed because that's not what people see every day . . . [but] just like everybody, you go above and beyond for tests. Ethan did the same as everybody else in the class because he really pushed himself for that final performance. It was really motivating to him."

Practicing for a performance, preparing for a test, getting nervous before a performance were all new learning experiences for Ethan that led to more and more as the year unfolded. By January, Nora was clear that

Ethan's goal is the same as for all the kids in Rick's class. I think Ethan is doing the exact same things about pushing yourself, trusting yourself, trusting others. That's what learning acting is about: it's about knowing what you can do, knowing your boundaries, and pushing yourself to those limits. I've seen Ethan do that the very first term.

A bit more cautiously, Rick expanded,

But I don't think Ed understands. I think he knows he's scared and I try to get him to trust, to get him to relax. When we had him go to sleep, he was so rigid, so afraid. Everybody laid down on the stage and he was so rigid! Then I talked to them and his body went almost limp he was so relaxed and he was not afraid. So maybe the goals are forgotten, then he gets tense again, and then you bring him back into a state of relaxation or understanding. It's a wearing down process of having

him relax/not relax, relax/go through stress, trust/not trust, more trust than not trust. . . . I'm not sure I know what is gonna be good for Ethan. I'm not sure what's good for anybody. It's just a process of chipping away at their misconceptions of themselves.

There were other things learned that were unique to Ethan. He seemed better able to manage "down time" without doing things that were inappropriate or distracting when Rick was lecturing, as well as in other settings and situations. Rick noticed midyear that Ethan was using different vocal inflections during exercises and passing conversations. Rick also found that Ethan was more relaxed about touching, initiating physical contact with other students, something Rick thought "especially important for people who use wheelchairs because they seem so physically cut off from everyone else."

As the year progressed, both Rick and Nora seemed to find more confidence in understanding Ethan's learning. From the beginning, however, it had been clear that learning was an equal part of the agenda. Sometimes he learned the same things in a slightly adapted way in the manner of "multilevel curriculum selection" (Giangreco & Putnam, 1990). Sometimes the activity or lesson provided a context for Ethan to learn something the other students did not need to pursue, in the manner of "curriculum overlapping" (Giangreco & Putnam, 1990).

Perhaps even more valuable was that what Ethan actually learned was not anticipated by his special education teacher, his parents, or the drama teacher. It was only the collective efforts of this triad to make learning occur in the context of drama class that actually resulted in a "curriculum" that none of these planners could have created independently. If "collaboration" means anything, surely it means this: that outcomes are achieved for the student (in this case, learning outcomes) that none of the adults could have designed on their own. The "whole" of a collaboration is more than the sum of its parts in what it produces for the student.

Designing the Supports

For Nora and Rick, the agenda became clear fairly quickly. Ethan, like everyone else in the class, would learn things about drama and about himself as a member of the social group called "beginning drama." It was equally clear to both Rick and Nora that Ethan would do this somewhat differently than the other 32 students. In fact, one of "the main reasons" that Rick agreed to Ethan's enrollment was "that Nora said that she would be there in class to provide support."

In watching inclusion efforts closely in some eight schools over the past 2 years, and less closely in many others, we have found that all the general education teachers we encountered initially requested "support"

in the form of another person. Faced with a student never before encountered, who comes with a reputation for difficult learning, this request for human support seems quite natural. On the one hand, person support promises someone to "talk things over with," a sign of teaching dependence on puzzling out teaching, even if only with themselves. On the other hand, the long separation of special and general education teachers seems to have resulted in such different approaches to teaching and learning that communication is awkward at best, and completely blocked at worst. It is as if these teachers are operating in different spheres of discourse, often using the same words only to misunderstand each other—dampening, even extinguishing the respect, trust, and exchange so necessary to real collaboration.

Support might only result in nothing really changing. The support person, "Velcroed" to the student with disabilities, all too often forms a "bubble" of isolation. The support promised by the other person can serve mainly as a barrier to the transactions that result in more successful and effective inclusion, providing more unhelpful than helpful help (Ferguson et al., 1992). Rather than remaining open ended, support should be more concretely described in ways that maximize the shared language and understandings that permit the kind of collaborative results Rick and Nora achieved for Ethan. Our observations and interviews suggest that support functions as genuinely supportive when it is framed from the student's rather than the teacher's perspective as either (a) teaching support, (b) prosthetic support, or (c) interpretive support. Ethan's drama class provides examples of each.

Teaching support. Ethan certainly needed a good deal of teaching support. As Nora commented about midyear, "Sometimes it gets really hard to work Ethan in because . . ."

Rick interrupts, "because theater is a verbal art. There are ways we [can] find for Ethan to communicate and it works very, very well; but the difficulty is . . . there are certain exercises Ethan can't be in because they are very verbally oriented."

Nora expands, "Ethan can be verbal, but you have to set it up in a way that accommodates *how* and *when* he can be verbal."

"I think it's a time factor," Rick continues. "If we have enough time to present the [idea, exercise] then he can work it through, but on the spur of the moment, in a 40-minute class, it's very difficult. . . . [Some] improves we don't set Ethan up in."

"But," Nora finishes the thought, "the ones where there's even a little time to create scenes we have Ethan there."

This exchange during an interview illustrates one facet of teaching support: Ethan received instruction from both adults, both in the planning of teaching (as

illustrated here) and in the doing of it. During the last day of rehearsal for the final exam for the combatives unit, for example, both Rick and Nora coached Ethan's group at different times during the period. First Nora explained to Kim and Sharon how to help Ethan understand that, when Kim said "Get out of my way!" as part of the setup for the skit, he should not back up. Later Rick practiced pretend-punching Ethan in the stomach, helping Ethan time his responsive "Ugh!" accurately.

A second, perhaps more important aspect of teaching support is that all the other students receive similar teaching support from both Rick and Nora. Whether the teaching decision involved Ethan or any of the other students, Rick and Nora repeatedly demonstrated an ability "to be flexible with each other," creating a dynamic drama teaching team.

An exercise involving memorization had not quite been completed on Monday, but Tuesday Rick had planned to do several other things. Rick and Nora had a brief exchange about whether or not to complete the memory exercise. Agreeing that they could accommodate the rest of the exercise and still manage the planned agenda, they both encouraged the class to assemble quickly. As the exercise proceeded, both teachers prompted and urged the students to work faster. It seemed clear to me, as the observer, that students viewed Nora as a co-teacher. She not only provided assistance and feedback but, like Rick, also sometimes participated in setting tasks for everyone. As she later explained, "They know I work with Ethan, but I'm [also] always participating [in the drama class]. I always say what I think. I talk and disagree or agree. I'm definitely a person with an opinion outside of Ethan. I don't just talk about special ed."

For his part, Rick began to use Nora as a teacher, not just a special education teacher. "I use her as a resource, I look at her as a colleague. [I pause] and say 'Nora, anything?' and she'll explain. I explain [something] as how it affects us as theater technicians, and then she'll say. . . . So she caps it. She talks about exactly what the theory is or the emotion or whatever it is." As a consequence of both Rick and Nora functioning as teachers with each other, the students also seemed to view them as colleagues, receiving and accepting teaching support from both. Students, more so than either special or general educators, seem able to experience all the adults in school as "teachers," neither discriminating nor warranting the discipline and specialist labels we adults so prize.

Prosthetic support. Students with severe disabilities have helped to teach all educators that all students can learn, although many students require supports for learning to proceed effectively. We refer to these non-instructional learning supports as prosthetic supports. Without being positioned well, or having a strategy for

asking a teacher to repeat an instruction when you didn't quite comprehend it, or a note taker in science because you cannot write yourself, learning is thwarted. Different from instructional assistance, prosthetic support never fades; it is always required to diminish or remove the impact of disability, or even just natural variations in ability. Most students, whether labeled or not, require some form of prosthetic support at one time or another. Some, like Ethan, require more support, more consistently provided. Inclusion works best when not only all the adults in a school, regardless of their official labels, but also the students, learn to provide prosthetic support, easily and naturally, when it is needed.

Ethan has poor visual skills. He can see, but he is a little nearsighted and his eyes do not work together well, making depth perception untrustworthy. Glasses only seem to compound his visual difficulties. Rick, Nora, and the drama students learned to wear white and other bright colors so that Ethan saw more than "little faces" when he looked at people against the stage's black backdrop. Several of the students assumed responsibility to open the only door through which Ethan could enter the little stage, assuring that he never had to wait, beeping his horn, risking tardiness. Ethan's need for these prosthetic supports never waned, but neither did the groups' willingness to provide them.

Interpretive supports. General education teachers who are beginning to work with students like Ethan, previously excluded from their classrooms, often say, in one way or another, that they need "support" because they do not know how to teach such students. Special educators, perhaps because of their focus on a unique instructional technology for students determined to require their services, often hear this teacher lament as a lack of teaching skill, and attempt to instruct their general education colleagues in how to teach. In some situations this might well be appropriate support. In many others, however, we have found that general education teachers are requesting *interpretive*, not teaching, support.

In order to create effective teaching/learning situations for most students in their classrooms, general education teachers do not have to know each student in intimate detail. In most classrooms, of course, there are always a handful of the 20-30 or more students that teachers must get to know much more closely in order to construct learning exchanges that are effective and sensible from the student's point of view. Making learning effective and sensible for Ethan, however, required a good deal more intimate knowledge. As Rick explained by way of example, "Ethan has a different way of communicating. I, unfortunately, don't know how to tap into that because I've got 32 students in this class." Rick may never have the time, given the demands of 32 other students, to acquire the level of

intimate knowledge about Ethan's communication, physical support needs, learning, emotions, and sense of humor that Nora possesses. She had only 11 students this year.

Perhaps Nora's most important function, from Ethan's perspective, was to provide Rick and the other students with the kinds of interpretive support that permitted Ethan to be fully included as a learning member of the class. Sometimes she provided these interpretive explanations directly to Rick and Ethan's classmates. Once a task was designed, according to Rick, "she'll say 'Ethan can't do this part because of this, this, and this, but' It's a resource, an expertise I don't have, and whenever I say, 'Nora,' they all listen to her because they know she knows what she's talking about."

At other times, Nora interpreted more indirectly. Rick was setting up an exercise that involved four students improvising on stage. They were to create a scene by speaking only numbers instead of words, with various intensities and inflections. Each observing student, including Ethan, was assigned a number. Whenever they heard one of the actors on stage use their number, they were to repeat the number with the same intensity and inflection. Rick assigned Ethan the number one, telling him to beep his wheelchair horn each time he heard the number. Nora, standing a little closer to Annie and Pam, the two students who began repeating Rick's instructions to Ethan to make sure he understood, countered Rick's instructions. Knowing that Ethan understood and could say numbers, she advised instead, just loud enough for Rick to hear across the stage, that Ethan say the number one each time he heard it. For his part, Rick noted Nora's change, nodding his recording of this new information about Ethan in his teaching memory.

"I watch how she works with Ethan and how she changes things." Rick went on to explain that this "flexibility" with Nora and Ethan led him to create more open-ended exercises, describing the details of participation for all the students more ambiguously and thus requiring everyone to participate in creating the learning tasks. By providing Ethan with interpretive support, Nora also helped Rick create more opportunities for other students to "figure out what they have, what they know, what they do well."

If providing teaching support required Rick and Nora too develop a collaborative relationship, the providing of interpretive support placed Nora and Rick in more of a consultative relationship. Nora provided interpretations about Ethan's learning that enabled Rick, and his drama students, to more independently design effective learning and social inclusion for Ethan. For many students with disabilities, this consultative aspect of interpretive support reduces the need for it over time. For other students, especially those with more complex

learning and prosthetic support needs, a need for interpretive support as well may never disappear.

Beginning Drama at the End

At the end of the year the beginning drama class usually performs a short play on the evening for a school and family audience. This time it was a play about teenagers composed of short skits loosely woven together by some choral lines at beginning and end. The audience was small, probably mostly parents, friends, and friendly teachers. Still, we could hear the tension and excitement backstage. Finally the houselights dimmed and the cast emerged to take assigned places among the risers. The effect was asymmetrically playful, but also pleasing. Ethan was in the back on the right. Nora sat near. The play began.

Ethan's lines were near the beginning. Turning to him, his classmate seemed to exaggerate his cue. Ethan responded, "In this high school there are 1600 students . . .," delivering his lines without error but without quite enough volume. Still, he was at least as understandable as the young woman from Korea who struggled to enunciate unfamiliar American words. The skits began, but soon Ethan was unable to quietly attend. First he called out to Nora, then he began waving and tapping. As if planned, Nora helped him leave as the lights dimmed during a pause between scenes and the play continued uninterrupted by Ethan's distracting waiting strategies. Near the end, he reappeared just as suddenly as he had disappeared, joining in the choral ending on cue and accepting the applause with his classmates. It was artfully, if extemporaneously, done.

Like the final performance, Ethan's experience in drama class was not without flaw. In January both Nora and Rick were absent for a few days, felled by flu. Unprepared, the substitute failed to involve Ethan in class, possibly undoing some of the social gains made in the past months. As an observer, I noticed times when I thought that Nora and Rick became so caught up in the teaching of drama together that Nora failed to provide the interpretive support that might have included Ethan, leaving him to observe passively. Ethan performed poorly in the final skit for the combative unit, at least in part because Sharon was absent and replaced at the last minute by Paul. Ethan's apparent confusion by the change, and resultant performance, poignantly illustrated his different learning, prompting Paul and Kim to openly ask Rick if their own grades would suffer.

Still, the experiences of Rick, Nora, Ethan, and all other teachers and students who shared their efforts to fully include students with disabilities in general education offer some valuable lessons for others seeking to follow the same paths. These teachers and students suggest that "figuring out what to do with the grownups" seems to proceed best when the adults focus less on

their relationships with each other and more on their joint relationships with students. Nora and Rick quickly moved beyond seeing each other as "special" or "regular" educators who must divide up the teaching task list according to these disciplinary distinctions. Nora was not Ethan's only teacher merely because she shared his special education label. Neither was she denied the opportunity to teach drama. From the beginning, Nora and Rick seemed able to focus on simply being drama teachers, each with different skills, interests, and knowledge, to be sure, but both as responsible for *teaching* all the students about drama and about being teenagers. By keeping the students' learning and social outcomes firmly in focus, Nora and Rick related to each other sometimes as collaborators and sometimes in more consultive roles, in the end supporting each other to be a better drama teaching team.

General education teachers getting involved in including students with severe disabilities do not so much require support in the form of a lesson planned, a curriculum adapted, a lesson taught. Rather, they require another person to, in Nora's words, "be flexible" with them as teachers, providing collaborative contributions or consultive information as needed to orchestrate the teaching, prosthetic, and interpretive support that will achieve for all students the experience of learning and social inclusion.

"Figuring Out What To Do with the Grownups" in Brief

Nora, Rick, and Ethan, as well as others we met, have taught us that achieving full learning membership for students with severe disabilities requires teachers, regardless of their official labels, to provide all students with three crucial supports (teaching support, prosthetic support, and interpretive support), by flexibly working within three inclusion parameters (curriculum infusion, learning inclusion, and social inclusion), through the development of two teacher relationships (collaborative and consultive) in order to accomplish one schooling outcome: *The purpose of schooling is to enable all students to actively participate in their communities so that others care enough about what happens to them to look for a way to include them as part of that community.*

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Received: April 17, 1992

Final Acceptance: August 3, 1992

Editor in Charge: Charles A. Peck

