

**MODULE ON FOSTERING ABLE-BODIED
CHILDREN'S ACCEPTANCE OF DISABLED
PEERS**



Samarthanam Trust for the Disabled®

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ABOUT THE MODULE

Dedicated to all the kids who live it every day and succeed anyway

Academic and social benefits of inclusive education are interconnected – **all students, including students with disability, are likely to achieve more academically if they are socially part of their classroom.** Further, from a longer-term health perspective, students who feel socially excluded and isolated are at higher risk of experiencing mental health issues, such as anxiety and depression.

Peer connection in the classroom is more likely to lead to peer connection in the playground and ultimately social connection in workplaces, the community and life generally.

Teachers are central to the classroom experience and in a position to influence the degree and quality of each student’s peer connection and social inclusion.

Merely having a student with a disability in a mainstream classroom does not mean that the student feels “included” or is perceived as “included” by their peers. Inclusion and belonging are more about the student’s relationships within the classroom. For example, a student with a disability receiving most of their instruction from a teacher aide or special educator in the corner of a mainstream classroom may well feel and be seen by their peers as the “other” in the classroom. Physical presence in the classroom is necessary, but not enough. **Peer connection is critical for inclusion in the classroom.**

This module gives you some ideas for helping students understand different disabilities. Keep in mind that two people can have the same disability and still be very different.

You may also have students who have some of the disabilities described here but are not at all similar to what is described. That is not uncommon.

The activities suggested in the module can be used to talk about disabilities in a general way and build understanding. Many of the activities can be used to explain more than one disability. People with cerebral palsy might be in a wheelchair or have problems with their hands as described under “Physical Disabilities. If you don’t find the exact disability you are looking for, think instead of the problems it causes.

We applaud your efforts to educate all students. We hope you find the activities in the module helpful.

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STRATEGIES FOR FOSTERING ABLE-BODIED CHILDREN'S ACCEPTANCE OF DISABLED PEERS

Introduction

Eliminating social barriers and creating a learning environment that enhances the potential for positive social interaction between disabled and non-disabled children in mainstreaming preschool and elementary school classrooms is an ongoing concern for early childhood educators. Questions relevant to this issue are: what attitudes do able-bodied children have towards those who move, think, behave, speak, communicate, or learn "differently" than the norm? What kinds of reactions to and interactions between disabled and able-bodied children can teachers in early childhood educational settings expect to encounter? What strategies can teachers call upon to if able-bodied children exhibit patterns of rejection when interacting with disabled peers?

Helping Children with Special Needs Make Friends

Child care providers can help young children as they develop friendships. Some children with special needs will make friends very easily. Others may need an adult's help in connecting with peers in their classroom. One easy way to begin encouraging peer interaction is to watch for children who show an interest in each other or in similar activities. If a child with a special need appears interested in a peer, or another child is making attempts to connect with the child who has a special need, you can encourage and strengthen their budding friendship using the suggestions below.

- **Allow children time alone together**, both in the classroom and by encouraging parents to arrange play dates.
- **Organize the play area.** Small, spaces, such as a reading corner, encourage closeness. Materials and playground equipment that require two children promote working together and communication.
- **Encourage playfulness.** Within reason, allow noisy, silly, and active play among children. Some children with special needs have been relatively isolated and have never had the opportunity to experience the closeness created by shared laughter.
- **Set up play situations.** Assign children who have shown an interest in each other or in similar activities to a small group. Set up an interesting activity near both children, and encourage them to engage in it.
- **Reinforce positive behavior.** Encourage all children who are playing well together.

- **Be an appropriate role model.** Join the children in play at key moments. You might step in and play a supporting role in order to keep the interaction going or take a second to explain a child's actions that the friend might not understand.
- **Give the child with a special need for a leadership role.** Encourage that child to make decisions, lead a part of an activity, or distribute popular materials. Peers may be more likely to see that child as an interesting playmate if the child has a leadership role.
- **Role Paying Activities:** Role playing activities appropriate among groups of orthopedically disabled and nondisabled children involve allowing non-orthopedically disabled children to experiment moving with crutches or wheelchairs. Use of wheelchairs and crutches by able-bodied preschoolers could be done in the play area, or in an outdoor setting depending on the able-bodied child's level of comfort. Discussion of the difficulties, as well as enjoyment, experienced when rolling in a wheelchair or navigating on crutches presents orthopedic, mobility disabilities as a surmountable challenge, not an impediment
- **Include All Students In Class Activities.** If a student with a disability is regularly NOT being *actively* involved or engaged in particular class lessons or activities or is being regularly EXCLUDED from particular activities, whether because of one-on-one learning or separate programs, then peers are less likely to see that student as a "full" or "equal" peer. Asking questions that your student will be able to answer, requesting your student repeat another student's answer or simply using teaching examples that give the student the opportunity to be involved and contribute, each represent ways of enhancing the connection of that student with the class lesson, even when they are learning at a different pace. All students should be engaged n the core class lesson.
- **Use Peer Tutoring as Both an Academic and Social Connection Tool.** The students in your class can help to teach concepts to a student who may require additional learning support. Some students will relish that opportunity as part of, or after completing, their own work. Teaching another student forces a student to first understand the concepts themselves and accordingly reinforces those concepts for their own benefit. From an academic benefit perspective, peer tutoring in inclusive classrooms has been shown to be mutually beneficial to both students. From a social perspective, it also provides the opportunity to develop quality peer connection. Peer tutoring is academically beneficial, socially powerful and personally enriching.
- **Put Yourself in The Place of Your Special Student.** You should regularly ask yourself "How would I feel if I was in the place of my student? What would the other students think?" These questions will prompt considering whether your response should be to take deliberate steps to minimize "exceptionalising" the student and/or to foster understanding and acceptance in peers. Testing your class structure, practices and the impact of any adjustments from the perspective of all of your students is an important cross-check.

EXAMPLES OF ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITIES FOR HEARING DISABILITY

Activity 1 - Not being able to hear

You need:

- a pair of foam earplugs
- for each student a radio, TV, fan or anything else that can make “white noise”

What to do:

- Show students how to put in the earplugs.
- Put on the “white noise”. If using a TV, put it on a station with no reception and turn up the volume — loud enough to be distracting. If using a radio, set it between stations so you only hear static. If using a fan, turn it up on high.
- Read a long newspaper article or book passage.
- Read rapidly, using a soft voice, mumbling monotone, running words together and pausing in odd places.
- Ask students 5 questions about the content of what you read. Continue talking quickly in a soft, mumbling voice. Remove ear plugs, turn off white noise and discuss (in a normal voice) how not being able to hear clearly felt.

Activity 2 - Lip-reading Instructions for the teacher:

Divide the class into pairs. One of each pair is A and the other B.

Give them the relevant instructions on next page and briefly explain the exercise. They should not see each other’s instructions. Have them take turns lipreading, while their partner “reads” (moving their lips but making no sounds) a list of words or sentences. • •

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In their pairs, they should:

- “say” each word or phrase once only;
- go through the whole exercise before they tell each other the answers;
- when they finish discussing what they learned about lipreading; and return to the main group to share their ideas.

Discussion:

Allow 15 minutes for the exercise in pairs, then have everyone return to the main group.

Ask questions like:

- How successful were you at lip-reading?
- What helped make lip-reading easier?
- What does this show about lip-reading?

Points about lip reading:**Lip reading is not easy:**

- a lot of guessing is involved;
- most people can lip-read a little; some people are better at it than others;
- some people are easier to lip-read than others;
- it is impossible to lip-read unless you can clearly see the mouth and face of the person talking; some words look alike on the lips, so single words are very difficult to lip-read; it helps if you know the topic.

Ways to make lip reading easier:

- the person lip reading must see the speaker;
- the speaker's mouth, jaw, and eyes must be clearly visible and it helps to see the speaker's eyes
- use sentences rather than single words; give clues to the subject;
- speak a little slower than usual, keeping the normal rhythm of speech;

Instructions for Person A

Don't let your partner see this page! Read the following list of words - moving your mouth but making NO sounds and without moving your hands. Say each word only once. After each word, give your partner time to write down the word.

Word list: ship, Jim, chimp, punk, mud, bun, jeer, cheer, jib, chip

Now your partner will do the same for you but with a different list of words. Write down what you think was said.

Next, read the sentences below to your partner. Move your mouth but make NO sounds and don't move your hands. Say each sentence only once. Give your partner time to write each one down.

Sentences:

- Would you like tea or coffee?
- Do you take sugar?
- Here's the milk for your cereal.
- Would you like more toast?
- Do you prefer jam or marmalade?
- Would you like some eggs?

Now your partner will do the same for you with different sentences. Write down what you think was said.

This time tell your partner (really talking) that you will read sentences about breakfast. Now silently (moving your mouth but making NO sounds) read the sentences, again. This time you can use your hands if you want. Give your partner time to write down what you said.

Now your partner will tell you a clue and then silently read their sentences again. Write down the sentences.

Show each other the words and sentences you read out. Check how many you got right each time. What did you learn about lip-reading that you can share when you return to the main group?

Instructions for Person B

Don't let your partner see this page!

Your partner will say a list of words to you. Try to lip-read your partner and write each word down.

Then read the following list of words to your partner - moving your mouth but making NO sounds and without moving your hands. Say each word only once. After each word, give your partner time to write down the word.

Word list: bad, man, pat, bat, sheep, cheese, tea, she, pound, mount

Now your partner will read you some sentences. Write down what you think was said.

Next, read the sentences below to your partner. Move your mouth but make NO sounds and don't move your hands. Say each sentence only once. Give your partner time to write each one down.

Sentences:

- It looks a bit cloudy.
- It might be quite hot.
- I think we're in for a storm.
- It looks like the wind's getting up.
- It looks like we're in for a good day.

Now your partner will tell you (out loud) a clue. Then they will read sentences and may use hand gestures. Write down what you think was said.

This time tell your partner (really talking) that you will read sentences about the weather. Now silently (moving your mouth but making NO sounds) read the sentences, again. This time you can use your hands if you want. Give your partner time to write down what you said.

Show each other the words and sentences you read out. Check how many you got right each time. What did you learn about lip-reading that you can share when you return to the main group?

ACTIVITIES FOR INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY

Activity 1 Difficulty understanding

Have 2 students sit back to back. Give one student a paper with an abstract shape on it. **(Example of an abstract shape is given in the next page)**. Without seeing each other, he/she must explain to the other student how to draw the shape. Give the second student a pencil and piece of paper. He/she must draw the shape following the first student's directions. What were the problems? What would have helped?

Activity 2 - How it feels

Make a paper copy for each student of the "German Test" Do the same with "Test Your Awareness" on Below is the "German Test."

German Test

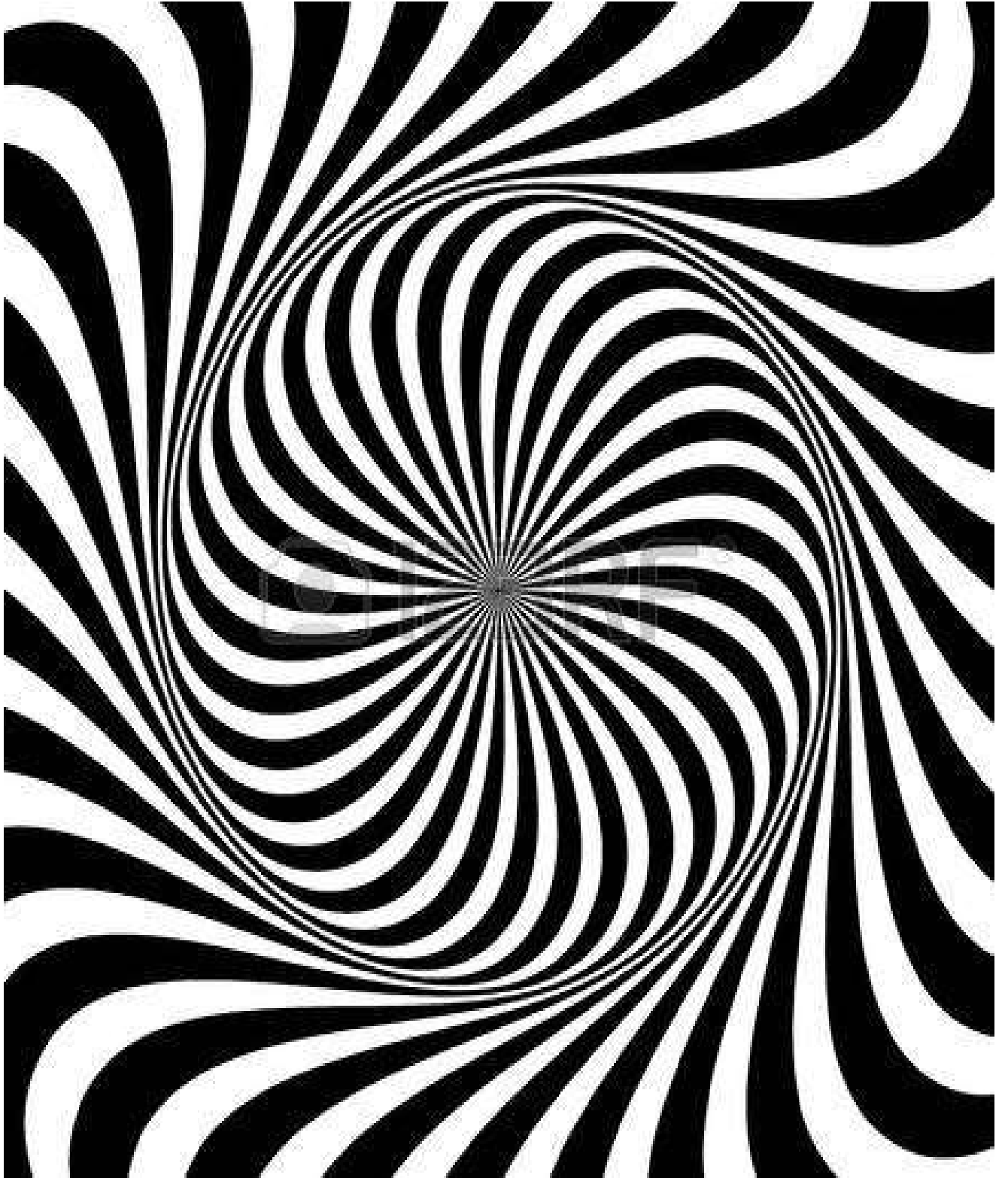
Der Deutsche hat an und für sich eine starke Neigung zur Unzufriedenheit. Ich weiß nicht, wer von uns einen zufriedenen Landsmann kennt. Ich kenne sehr viele Franzosen, die vollständig mit ihrem Geschick, mit ihren Ererbissen zufrieden sind. Wenn sie ein Handwerk ergreifen, so stellen sie sich die Aufgabe, durch dasselbe, wenn's möglich ist, vielleicht bis zum 45., 50. Jahre eine gewisse Vermögensquote zu erreichen; haben sie die, so ist ihr ganzer Ehrgeiz, sich als Rentier bis zu ihrem Lebensende zurückzuziehen. Vergleichen Sie damit den Deutschen; dessen Ehrgeiz ist von Hause aus nicht auf eine nach dem 50. Jahre zu genießende Rente gerichtet, sein Ehrgeiz ist schrankenlos. Der Bäcker, der sich etabliert, will nicht etwa der wohlhabendste Bäcker in seinem Ort werden, nein, er will Hausbesitzer, Rentier, er will nach seinem größeren Berliner Ideal schließlich Bankier, Millionär werden. Sein Ehrgeiz hat keine Grenzen.

(Im Reichstag, 9. Oktober 1887)

1. Eine starke Neigung zur Unzufriedenheit hat der _____.
2. Mit ihrem Geschick und ihren Ererbissen sind viele _____.
3. Sie stellen sich die _____ eine gewisse Vermögensquote zu _____.
4. Der Ehrgeiz der Deutschen ist _____.
5. Der Bäcker will Hausbesitzer, _____ werden.
6. Nach seinem größeren _____ Ideal will er Bankier, Millionär _____.
7. Keine _____ hat sein Ehrgeiz.

The above text is from a speech by Otto von Bismarck before the German Reichstag on 9 October 1887.

ABSTRACT SHAPE



Test Your Awareness

First, read the sentence in the box below.

FINISHED FILES ARE THE RESULT OF YEARS OF SCIENTIFIC STUDY COMBINED WITH THE EXPERIENCE OF MANY YEARS.

Now count the F's in the sentence. Count them only once. Do not go back and count them again.

ACTIVITIES FOR AUTISM

Activity 1

This activity is designed to show how people with autism are bothered by things most people don't notice. People with autism are often extra sensitive to noise, movement and even things like background noises most of us don't notice. Remember, not everyone with autism has these problems.

Divide the class into groups of 5. Explain that they will each have a job to do. Go over their jobs and tell them they will start when you give the signal.

One student in each group will play the part of someone with autism. The other 4 people each have different jobs:

- Person #1 - You will play the part of a person with autism. Your job is to try and listen to what Person #5 is reading to you so you can take a test on the material. Try to ignore everyone else.
- Person #2 - Stand behind the student playing the part of someone with autism. Rub the edge of an index card (or piece of cardboard) against the back of their neck. You do not need to rub hard, but keep doing it over and over.
- Person #3 - Grab a book (any book will do), lean close to Person #1 and read in a loud voice the entire time.
- Person #4 - Pat Person #1 on the head and shoulder the entire time.
- Person #5 - Using a normal voice, read a paragraph to Person #1 then ask them questions about what you read. D

Have all the students take a turn being Person #1 before you discuss it. How did it feel to have so much commotion going on? Did it make them want to scream or get away? Were they able to concentrate on the paragraph being read? What might have helped?

ACTIVITIES FOR LEARNING DISABILITIES

Activity 1 - Say what?

Show Slide.. Have the class read it out loud. They must read the COLOR the word is written in, not the word itself.

Afterward, discuss how your brain wants to read the actual word. Even when you can make yourself do it correctly, you have to read much slower than normal. This is an example of how difficult it is for students with learning disabilities to get through the day. Their brain understands what needs to be done, but they have to struggle to make it come out right.

Not being able to do this activity correctly does not mean you are not smart. It just means that your brain wants to do something different.

Activity 2 – Backwards

Write a number of different sentences backward on a piece of paper. Giving them very little time, ask different students to read them correctly. Keep interrupting the student by urging them to hurry or tell them “This should be easy for you.”

Example:

“ehT kcalb tac tas no eht toh nit foor”
“The black cat sat on the hot tin roof.”

Discuss:

What were the difficulties faced in deciphering the sentence? Did being told to hurry help or make it harder? What would have helped?

ACTIVITIES FOR PHYSICAL DISABILITIES

Activity 1 - In a wheelchair

Borrow a wheelchair from a disability agency or see if the school nurse has one.

Have each student take a turn sitting in the chair. Have them try different activities:

- Going from one part of the building to another,
- Pushing the wheelchair with their hands
- Going through the lunch line
- Getting a book off the top shelf in the library
- Playing a game in the gym or playground (soccer, basketball, chase, etc.)
- Going to the bathroom
- Going through an outside door
- Being in a group where everyone else is standing up

Discuss how being in the wheelchair felt. What would have made things better?

Students in wheelchairs are often left out of games or PE or given the job of keeping score.

Discuss how this would feel. What if you hate keeping score? No one likes to be treated as if they are helpless. If you see someone in a wheelchair, don't just do things for them. Ask if they want help first.

Activity 2 - Using one hand

Have students try different activities using only one hand.

- Tying their shoes;
- Going through the lunch line and eating lunch;
- Opening a jar that has a screw-on lid;
- Playing catch;
- Holding a stack of papers and handing out one at a time; and
- Going to the bathroom.

Discuss the problems the students had. What if they couldn't use either hand? What problems would there be if they were in a wheelchair AND couldn't use their hands?

ACTIVITIES FOR VISION IMPAIRMENT

Activity 1- Blindness

You need A good blindfold. A room with several occupied chairs and one or more vacant chairs. Put odd obstacles on the way to the chair, and/or face the chair in an unexpected direction. Leave the door halfway open.

What to do

Explain that you will need 2 students - a “guide” and a “blind person.” You will be rearranging the room. The guide’s job is to help the blind person come into the room and go to the chair without running into anything. They can tell them how to do it and can also touch them to help guide their way. Make sure the blindfold is on and foolproof. Send the 2 volunteers into the hall and rearrange the room. The vacant chair should not be too easy to get to.

Hint: Most “guides” grab the blind person and push them around. This usually results in the “blind” person running into things. “Guides” usually don’t describe the path, and say “look out” instead of “stop” at major obstacles.

When the chair is reached, “guides” usually spin the “blind” person around and push them into the seat, then leaves without explanation.

Discuss:

- Did the guide do a good job?
- How would it feel to be the blind person being dragged or pushed?
- What would be more helpful than saying “look out”?
- How did the 2 volunteers feel?

Repeat the activity, doing it the right way.

Activity 2 - Blurred vision

Use overhead projector. Use any overhead with a lot of text.

Make sure the projector is out of focus so that the words cannot be read. Tell the class to copy the information. Then ask questions about the text. Discuss how frustrating it is when you are trying and paying attention, but can’t see.

What are the ways the class could be helpful to someone who has vision problems? Be sure to point out that they should ASK before helping. Some people would rather do things for themselves.

GENERAL POINTS

- Always name the child when you address him or her. This is important for **EVERY CHILD** in the class
- Make these children aware of the presence of any barrier (steps, etc) if any, that are present in the school
- Persuade other children to interact socially with children with disabilities
- Persuade other children to accept children with disabilities as their friend. Encourage children with disabilities to participate in as many physical activities as possible
- Ask the classmates to help organize work and other such material for children with disabilities, if needed
- Persuade the nondisabled children not to make derogatory references to children with disabilities
- Persuade the peers not to make fun or talk at the back of children with disabilities
- The teacher can assign a buddy who can help a child with a disability in activities like taking notes, learning or preparing the child for examinations
- Persuade nondisabled children not to push any child in order to prevent any possible injury.
- Persuade nondisabled children not to make faces if a child walks or talks in a different manner
- **Promote socialization** – Do not simply place your student (and his/her aid) in a separate area from other students. If possible, give your special needs student a place within a group of peers.
- **Behavioral expectations** – Your classroom rules should be the same for ALL your students. There may be additional guidelines to help a special needs student meet those expectations, but it doesn't mean you change the rules for one or two of your students.
- **Visit other schools** – If you are just starting out with an inclusive classroom, take some time to visit along with other children, other places where inclusion is in full swing.