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The case for inclusion

Key ideas in this chapter

- Defining inclusion
- Concerns about inclusion:
  - teacher training
  - curriculum
  - resources
  - school organisation
- Benefits of inclusion
- One school works towards inclusion: a case study
- Outlining the process approach

This chapter sets out to provide readers with enough background information on the theory and practice of inclusion to be able to use the rest of the book in an informed way. It by no means serves as a comprehensive review of the theoretical underpinnings to the current movement towards greater inclusion, but rather is intended to provide a broad portrait of what inclusion is and why it is important, and to examine some of the main issues with which teachers and schools are dealing today.

What is inclusion?

As university researchers and teacher educators with a background and interest in the education of students with diverse learning needs, we are often in a position to speak with groups of other educators about inclusion. We sometimes find that these educators are misinformed and confused about inclusion. What exactly is inclusion and why is it important? We believe that, by its very

nature, inclusion cannot exist in environments where some students are educated separately or substantively differently to their peers, and this view is consistent with the vast majority of definitions of inclusion. Sometimes, however, it is easier to describe what inclusion *is not* rather than what it is. To clarify; educating students part time in special schools and part time in regular schools is not inclusion. Educating students in special, mostly segregated environments in regular schools is not inclusion. Educating students in regular classes, but requiring them to follow substantially different courses of study from their peers in terms of content and learning environment, is also not inclusion (unless all students in a class follow individual programs) (Loreman & Deppeler, 2001). It is not uncommon to hear educators speak of these examples as 'inclusion', furthering the confusion, but the fact is that there has been some degree of broad agreement on what constitutes inclusion for some time (see, for example, Sailor & Skrtic, 1995; Udtisky 1993).

At its best, inclusion involves the full participation of all students in all aspects of schooling. It involves regular schools and classrooms being responsive, willing to genuinely adapt and change to meet the needs of all students, as well as celebrating and valuing difference. Differences can be based on gender, culture, ability, sexual orientation, socio-economic context, religion, or any other area in which learning and/or development are impacted. This definition of inclusion does not imply that students with differing learning needs will not receive specialised assistance or teaching outside of the classroom when required, but rather that this is just one of many options available to, and in fact required of, all students (Loreman & Deppeler, 2001). Extra help in the course of a school day should be the norm for all.

'Integration' and 'inclusion' are two terms that have in the past often been used interchangeably by teachers and schools, as if they were synonymous. The idea of integration preceded that of inclusion, and there are important differences between the two terms about which educators are now becoming increasingly aware. One simple distinction between the terms is that integration occurs from the outside (Loreman, 1999). Integration programs were initially aimed primarily at students with disabilities, and attempted to place them into the existing classes and structures within a school. They endeavoured to 'normalise', to help a student fit into a pre-existing model of schooling. Inclusion differs in that it now goes beyond disability to include all forms of diversity, and assumes that all students are a part of the regular school system from the very beginning of school. This difference is more than one of mere semantics. Under the integration model, the student was expected to adapt to meet the requirements of the school; under inclusion, the school

adapts to meet the needs of all students. Schools, after all, primarily exist to meet the educational needs of students, not the other way around. Meeting those needs, then, is fundamental to the work done by schools. With inclusion, schools assume that a variety of students with unique needs will attend, and they welcome them, responding to individual differences in their pedagogy, school activities, and curriculum. Difference is acknowledged and respected. Becoming inclusive has proven to involve not only a change in the way schools are structured and work, but also a change in the attitudes of many special and regular education teachers, who might previously have viewed their job as being to educate a certain 'type' of child (Loreman, 1999). Indeed, positive attitudes are critical to the success of inclusion. Without the presence of positive attitudes from school staff, any attempt to include will almost certainly fail. All teachers need to be enthusiastic about meeting the needs of all children, and this enthusiasm needs to be fostered in teacher preparation programs and, perhaps just as importantly in school systems and individual schools.

Box 1.1: Elements of inclusion

Sailor and Skrtic (1995, p. 423) list the following elements in their early definition of inclusion:

• inclusion of all children with diverse abilities in schools they would attend if they had no disability
• representation of children with diverse abilities in schools and classrooms in natural proportion to their incidence in the district at large
• zero rejection and heterogeneous grouping
• age- and grade-appropriate placements of children with diverse abilities
• site-based coordination and management of instruction and resources
• 'effective schools'-style decentralised instructional models

Any teacher who has had experience with students with a variety of learning needs in regular classrooms will tell you that catering to this diversity can be a difficult and complex matter. Teachers need to be highly skilled and **motivated to be successful. This is not, however, an argument against inclusion.** It is because inclusion demands such high levels of teaching competence and organisational changes aimed at promoting effective learning that it is so important for schools to engage in it. Improving learning through the

development of outstanding educational practice should be a primary aim of every teacher and school (Loreman & Deppeler, 2001).

Initially, many of the educators we support through consultation and professional development want two things of us. First, they tend to want to know whether inclusion *really works* in schools. Second, they want to know *how to* make inclusion work in their schools. The answers to both questions are complex, and often disappoint those looking for quick, straightforward answers. Inclusion is context dependent, and because of this a recipe book' on how to include every situation can never exist. Your attitude, skills as a teacher and ability to solve problems, along with support from your colleagues and school, will ultimately contribute to your success as a responsive, inclusive teacher.

Having said that, not every attempt at inclusion is successful, and there are those who would have us abandon the practice for all but children with the most minor needs on that basis (see, for example, Kauffman & Hallahan, 2005; Mock & Kauffman, 2005). This view, however, represents flawed logic. Not every attempt at teaching mathematics is successful, but that doesn't mean that we throw up our hands and stop teaching it! Teaching mathematics is, of course, important and necessary. Good teachers try to find new ways to teach and use fresh approaches until they meet with success. The same can be said for good inclusive teachers. Inclusion is seen as important and necessary, so such teachers persist with new ideas and approaches until (hopefully!) they meet with success. There is sufficient evidence to suggest that inclusion—even of students with the most evident and significant differences—can work if teachers take a lead role and if schools have a culture of shared values and are genuinely committed to improving their practice (see Downing & Peckham-Hardin, 2007; Fox et al, 2004; Loreman, 2001). Individual teachers are not always in the position to promote a culture of shared values in their schools, but they can improve their own classroom practice to promote better inclusion, and in doing so act as an example of what is possible for others. We hope this book will help you to do that.

Box 1.2 Reasons why school inclusion may not work

- **Rationale.** The benefits of inclusion have not been communicated to those involved in the process.
- **Scope.** The changes necessary for inclusion to work are either too ambitious to begin with, or too limited

- **Pace.** Required changes are either implemented too quickly or too slowly, allowing enthusiasm for the change to drop off
- **Resources.** Adequate resources are either not provided to ensure inclusion can work, or resources are not allocated in a way that is helpful
- **Commitment.** Long-term commitment to inclusion is not fostered. It is seen as a 'fad'.
- **Key staff.** Staff members who are crucial to the success of inclusion may either not be committed, or could be taking on too much of the workload. This might alienate other staff members.
- **Parents.** Parents are not included in the school as collaborators.
- **Leadership.** School leaders are either too controlling, too ineffectual, or do not encourage staff to progress to higher goals.
- **Relationship to other initiatives.** Inclusion is dealt with in isolation from other school initiatives.

Source Hargreaves (1997).

The second question from educators, 'How can I make inclusion work at my school?', also cannot be answered easily or simply. Inclusion is context dependent, and as such there is no formula or prescription for how to successfully include all students that can be applied to all contexts. Inclusion works best with teachers who understand and demonstrate effective teaching and learning practices within a framework of collaboration and support from the school and local community. Even without that support from the school and local community, however, there is a lot you can do as an individual teacher to make your classroom more inclusive while continuing to reach out to your colleagues and wider school community.

In order to make inclusion successful, you must become good at problem solving. Of course, the problem is not the individual student. Rather, it rests with the school community and the individuals who comprise it. How are you going to meet the needs of all students? Coming up with creative solutions to problems as they arise, based on sound pedagogical platforms, shared values and positive leadership, represents the best way for schools and classrooms to become more inclusive. Solving problems often comes naturally to good teachers, who are called on to solve any number of problems in their interactions with students and other adults every day.

Box 1.3: Reasons for successful school inclusion

- **Rationale.** All school staff have been involved in the development of the rationale for inclusion, and the benefits of inclusion for all students are clearly communicated.
- **Scope.** The school has started off small (one or two students) and has been careful to learn from its mistakes and successes before moving incrementally forward to including other students.
- **Pace.** The pace of implementation for inclusion will vary from setting to setting. Frequent collaboration with all involved parties and regular reviews of the pace of change will help to ensure success.
- **Resources.** Where extra resources are available, they are accessed. Schools also must be creative about the best way to use resources to support inclusion. The provision of adequate resources will help to ensure commitment from those implementing inclusion.
- **Commitment.** Collaboration between all parties involved in inclusion will help to assure long-term commitment. When team members are involved in an initiative, they take more ownership of it, and have more of a vested interest in its success.
- **Key staff.** Key staff members are viewed as leaders and motivators whose job it is to ensure equal collaboration between all members of the school community. They are not seen as being any more responsible for the success of inclusion than any other staff member.
- **Parents.** Parents are welcomed in the school as collaborators, and supported so that their views, knowledge and skills are used and valued by school staff.
- **Leadership.** School leaders facilitate collaborative school teams working towards inclusion, support individual team members, and ensure that ideas are acted upon.
- **Relationship to other initiatives.** Inclusion is viewed as an integral part of general school improvement, and relationships to other initiatives are clearly outlined.

Sources Hargreaves (1997); McGregor & Vogelsberg (1998)

Teacher concerns about inclusive education

Many teachers are highly positive about inclusion, especially those who have had the opportunity to practise it and see the benefits. However, the idea of

catering to the needs of all students in a classroom is daunting to some, and is by no means without its controversies. Teachers are commonly concerned about four main areas with respect to inclusive education:

- training for inclusion
- appropriate curriculum for all students
- available resources
- school and classroom structures that inhibit inclusion.

Teacher training

Teachers and researchers often express concerns about training when discussing the capacity for teachers to cater to the different learning needs in inclusive classrooms. A common theme in the literature and in our discussions with educators is that regular classroom teachers feel they do not have the prerequisite skills and knowledge to enable them to effectively include students with significantly diverse learning needs (MacPherson-Court et al., 2003). It is clear that being a competent teacher in an inclusive context requires the acquisition of a specific set of skills, knowledge and attributes. Some teachers may believe that this specific set, which has traditionally been viewed as the domain of those specially trained in special education, requires the use of extraordinarily different teaching strategies to those generally seen in the regular classroom, and those taught in teacher preparation programs. However, it has been argued that this set does not differ significantly from the skills an effective teacher would need to possess in order to teach in a non-inclusive context (Lewis & Norwich, 2005). Loreman (in press) conducted an analysis of the literature in order to ascertain the sorts of skills, knowledge and attributes teachers entering the profession would need in order to enable them to effectively teach in an inclusive environment. The results were grouped into seven domains: an understanding of inclusion and respect for diversity; collaboration with stakeholders (including parents and professionals); fostering a positive social climate; instructing in ways conducive to inclusion; engaging in inclusive instructional planning; engaging in meaningful assessment; and engaging in lifelong learning. It might be argued that any effective teacher, regardless of context, requires competence in these areas. It boils down to sound pedagogy that works for all students, and the willingness to respond to challenges and learn new techniques as the need arises (Lewis & Norwich, 2005).

There are two main contexts in which teachers can develop the skills, knowledge and attributes they need in order to be effective inclusive teachers. The first of these contexts is in their initial teacher preparation. The second is through professional development as a practising teacher. Both are important.

It is unreasonable to expect that teachers will have advanced expertise in matters relating to inclusive education upon leaving their teacher preparation programs. Rather, beginning teachers should have a firm grounding in the fundamentals in order to enable them to function effectively as they enter the profession, and to provide a basis for ongoing professional learning (Ford, Pugach & Otis-Wilborn, 2001). It is this ongoing professional growth and reflection as a practising teacher that is critical to continued success in an inclusive classroom. Barber and Turner (2007) found that new teachers who engaged in professional learning opportunities through an induction program during their first year of teaching experienced an increase in confidence in working with students with special needs, and also felt that they had developed more skills in the area. Anderson, Klassen & Georgiou (2007) conducted a study of 162 teachers in inclusive classrooms in Australia and found that 84 per cent of these teachers felt confident in including students with disabilities, and that this confidence was highly correlated with the amount of special education training a teacher had. In other words, those with more special education training felt better prepared to include. Anderson et al. (2007) demonstrated that training is effective in assisting teachers in inclusive contexts. A significant concern from the literature that should also be highlighted, and which might be addressed through training, is teacher attitudes towards students who have different learning needs. Positive attitudes towards these students are essential to the success of inclusion programs; these attitudes, however, can and need to be fostered through training and positive experiences with students who have differing learning needs (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002). Practising teachers have a professional obligation to seek out opportunities for learning in this and other areas.

Further, while we encourage teachers to undertake extra training when they can, we also believe that, due to the uniqueness of every teaching situation, teachers have much to learn from each other in a collaborative and supportive school atmosphere. Collaboration with colleagues as a way to better cater to all students in a school is discussed throughout this book.

Curriculum

Issues surrounding the provision of curriculum suitable for all students in inclusive settings are central to successful inclusion (Dymond, Renzaglia, Gilson & Slagor, 2007; Giangreco, 2007). The idea that students with exceptional needs should be provided with individualised programming has been incorporated into the legislation or policy of almost every Western country for some years now (OECD, 1994a), and individualised education programs,

while they are not without their detractors, are more or less widely accepted as an appropriate tool for aiding in the education of students with significantly diverse needs. Nevertheless, the efficacy and morality of individualised plans are increasingly under scrutiny.

Supporters of individualised education argue that ensuring a student's specific educational goals are targeted and met can be done through the effective use of an individualised educational program (Jung, 2007). The careful and systematic structuring of appropriate educational goals for a student with different learning needs through the adaptation and modification of the regular curriculum, when done under the right conditions, is viewed by many as an excellent method of providing an appropriate education while also allowing for inclusion in a regular class (Tennant, 2007; Wilczynski, Menousek, Hunter & Mudgal, 2007).

While modification of curriculum to suit the individual student with differing needs is a widely accepted practice, it does have its critics. Teachers are generally expected to provide instruction in well-defined learning problems related to the specific needs of students with differing learning needs, while also ensuring that they are included in the regular program as much as possible (Soukup, Wehmeyer, Bashinski & Bovaird, 2007). Under this system, students with different needs may be viewed as being fundamentally different from their peers in how they learn and what they need to know. Indeed, the very act of implementing individualised plans in the context of a curriculum that is not generally written to include all students can be viewed as exclusionary (Lloyd, 2008). The idea of modification of the regular curriculum is based on a number of negative assumptions about students with diverse needs—for example, that students requiring such modification might learn at slower rates, are unable to perform certain required assessment tasks, and often require more practice and repetition to consolidate learning (see Lewis & Norwich, 2005). While each of these may be true for some individuals, such assumptions should never be applied prior to a thorough investigation of the nature of individual needs.

The increasing popularity of differentiated instruction, discussed further later in this text, raises a challenge to the need for individualised programs. Broderick, Mehta-Parekh & Reid (2005) recommend planning responsive lessons that differentiate instruction for all students from the outset, instead of modifying them for students with diverse learning needs. Further, for a number of years critics have viewed the process of individualised instruction as a means of singling out as 'other' and marginalising people with diverse abilities in order to exercise control over them through special programs (Corbett, 1993; Danforth, 1997; Evans & Vincent, 1997). Hehir (2007) refers to this kind

of thinking as ableism; the assumption is made that it is preferable for a child to learn skills representative of the majority (for example, walking rather than using a wheelchair), under conditions and assumptions dictated by the majority, even if a modified program is required in order to attain such learning. This type of thinking, Thomas argues, maximises the impact of disability and minimises the opportunities for students with disabilities (or, in our terms, any form of difference) to participate in schooling and the community.

Such a curriculum is also criticised for presenting students engaged in it with a form of learning that is too prescriptive. Such a tightly constructed plan of learning is seen by critics as leaving little opportunity for students to direct their own learning; as a result, the instruction becomes teacher-centred and moves away from social constructivist pedagogy (Loreman, 2009). We have known for some time that individualised goals frequently focus on specific skills rather than cognitive aspects of learning (Collet-Klingenberg & Chadsey-Rusch, 1991); Goodman & Bond, 1993; Weisenfeld, 1987). Often these skills are applicable only to a limited number of situations. There is some evidence to suggest that such narrow skill development is not a thing of the past, and continues to be the overriding focus of the curriculum for students with different learning needs. As one example, Wilczynski et al. (2007) outline a very specific and limiting range of such objectives for individualised programs, including such mundane tasks as matching objects and pictures, or waiting in line. These objectives, they suggest, are appropriate for students with Autism Spectrum Disorder. Not only does this view assume that students with autism all have similar needs (they may not), but also that addressing those needs requires a narrow, prescriptive approach.

Slee (2008) suggests that deploying strategies and resources intended to enable inclusion to work (such as the sorts of assessments that lead to individualised programs) can in itself be disabling and is a process that problematises disability (makes it a problem that must be addressed). To some degree, this supports the continued marginalisation and exclusion of students who are different. Slee advocates change in school systems, away from traditional special education and from using inclusion to remediate deficits in individuals. He argues that creative, irregular models of schooling should be considered as a means of moving away from this sort of thinking. Essentially, the view is that schools are institutions which no longer work well for students, and radical changes should be considered in order to produce a system that is more accommodating of all.

Whatever one's thoughts on the direction inclusive schooling should take in the future, it is clear that the present classroom reality of having to modify and adapt curriculum, and/or to teach in ways consistent with differentiated instruction and what is known as universal design, is something with which teachers

must become conversant. We believe that whatever the failings of our current techniques may be (and we acknowledge that there are many), it is possible to provide instruction targeted towards the strengths and needs of the individual student, while at the same time remaining inclusive in terms of the daily curriculum and activities conducted in a classroom. This book is based on that premise.

School resources

The need for additional funds to be provided to schools for the purposes of educating students with unique needs and strengths has long been, and continues to be, recognised by researchers (O'Shea & O'Shea, 1998; Wu & Komesaroff, 2007). Well over two decades ago Gow, Ward, Balla & Snow (1988) identified 'expensive and often wasteful systems of service delivery' (1988, p. 15) as being one of the barriers to effective integration in Australia. Idol (1997) admits that inclusion programs are expensive, but outlines ways in which schools can achieve more effective cost accommodations. These include utilising support staff to work with a number of students in a classroom, reconsidering how funds are spent and making changes where possible, using funding from other special programs within the school that already support students with diverse learning needs, and site-based decision-making. Each of these is consistent with what has come to be seen as best practice in the field today.

Yet there seems to be a perception amongst some educators that the extra funding often provided to support students with differing learning needs in Western schools is inadequate, and that an increase in that funding would assist in solving any number of problems they are currently experiencing (Loreman, 2001). Is this necessarily the case? Does extra funding improve the quality of the school experience for all children? There is some evidence to suggest that extra funding does produce inclusive programs that deliver more adequate instruction to students with differing learning needs that are more closely aligned to that received by students who do not demonstrate the need for extra funding (Skårbrevik, 2005). However, while a certain level of extra funding is important, it may not be as critical to the success of inclusion as one might think. Some have suggested that it is staff attitudes, the quality of school organisation and the capacity to think creatively that have a greater impact on the success or otherwise of inclusion (Ainscow & Sebba, 1996; Vislie & Langfeldt, 1996). Indeed, the additional resources and services provided by extra funding can sometimes work against inclusion by singling some students out in a classroom. We believe that while it is true that financial resources are often required to improve inclusion and assist in the daily care and well-being of some students, extra funds alone are not sufficient to ensure

successful inclusion. We hope to provide strategies for inclusion that do not necessarily require large amounts of additional funds for implementation.

Organisational structures

The ways in which many schools and classrooms are organised and structured are often not conducive to effective learning for many of the students they serve. This is especially apparent in secondary schools (Kennedy & Fisher, 2001; McGhie-Richmond, Barber, Lupart & Loreman, 2008). Teachers are often faced with inflexible timetables that schedule them with students for brief periods of time during which little can be achieved, especially with those students who might require longer to complete tasks or to organise themselves to begin learning after transition. Teachers can be constrained by the oppression of inadequate time in the day, and professional pressures to work through prescribed amounts of curriculum within a given time (Hilton, 2006). In becoming more inclusive, schools—and indeed school systems—will need to examine the ways in which they work. How should students be grouped to enable them to learn most effectively? How can teachers' workloads be managed in order to allow them to address individual needs? Ultimately, it is probable that structural and organisational changes made to allow schools to become more inclusive will benefit all students, not just those with evident different needs (Jorgensen, 1998; Kennedy & Fisher, 2001).

While there is often little an individual teacher can do about the way a school is structured and organised, what occurs in the classroom is influenced to a large degree by the teacher. This book will discuss ways in which schools can be organised better for inclusion while maintaining a strong focus on the individual classroom.

The benefits of inclusion

When inclusion is done well, everyone wins. The sorts of practices in which inclusive teachers engage have been shown to improve learning for all students, regardless of significant individual differences (or a lack of them). Importantly, there is scant empirical research evidence supporting segregated forms of education. Overall, it can be argued that research is currently slightly in favour of the superiority of inclusion as a practice (Lindsay 2007), and while more research is needed to categorically claim that an inclusive approach is defensible in all situations, the recent trends evident in research are clearly supportive of inclusion. It must be remembered that the concept of inclusion is relatively new, both as a practice and a field of research, so time must be allowed for the development of a substantial body of research on the topic.

The alternative—segregation—has existed for centuries, yet supporters of this approach still cannot advance a strong case either philosophically or in empirical research for its continuation (Connor & Ferri, 2007; Lindsay, 2007). There are, however, some long-held and generally unsupported beliefs that students with differing learning needs will disrupt classes and impair the learning of others in a class; that teachers will be unable to cope with the extra tasks expected of them, and that students with differences will ultimately receive an inferior education and possibly come through the process with damaged self-esteem. A growing body of research seems to indicate that many of these beliefs are founded more on myth, preconceived notions or anecdotal support than on any solid empirical evidence. Some of the main positive outcomes of inclusion that have been identified through a selective (but certainly not exhaustive) examination of the research literature are outlined below.

- Students with individual differences realise greater academic benefits such as higher levels of academic attainment than do their counterparts in non-inclusive settings, and are more likely to engage in the same courses of study as their peers (such as maths, science, language arts, and so on) when they are in inclusive settings (Fisher, Roach & Frey, 2002; Frederickson, Dunsmuir, Lang & Monsen, 2004; Newman & Institute of Education Sciences, 2006).

- The academic achievement of students without significantly diverse learning needs is not impacted by the presence of those who do have those needs. Indeed, there is evidence to suggest that their learning is actually improved by the presence of such students, possibly because teachers use different strategies and instructional technologies, and resources such as teacher assistants are available to help all students to learn (Cole, Waldron & Majd, 2004; Demeris, Childs & Jordan, 2008; Gallagher & Lambert, 2006; Hines, 2001; Kalambouka, Farrell, Dyson & Kaplan, 2007).

- Students with diverse learning needs benefit from the enhanced development of communication, social skills and other forms of adaptive behaviour in inclusive settings (Fisher et al, 2002; McDonnell, Thorson, Disher, Mathot-Buckner, Mendel & Ray, 2003). Indeed, the social benefits of inclusion are well illustrated in the research literature (Frederickson et al, 2004).

- Inclusion is more cost effective than segregated models of education in the long term, and we have known this for some time (Halvorsen, Neary, Hunt & Cesca, 1996; McLaughlin & Warren, 1994; Roahrig, 1993; Salisbury & Chambers, 1994).

- Students who are involved in helping others in their classroom through peer tutoring and other similar opportunities for interaction (common

in inclusive classrooms) reap the benefits of improved self-esteem, understanding of and empathy for difference, and friendships (Jones, 2007; Naraian, 2008).

- Teachers benefit from inclusive education. It can act as a catalyst for enhanced skill development in professional learning communities (Carrington & Robinson, 2004; van Kraayenoord, 2007).
- Inclusion seems to have a positive impact on post-school outcomes for students with special learning needs in areas such as gaining employment, the amount earned, and associated costs for support in the community when compared with non-inclusive educational environments (Alper & Ryndak, 1992; White & Weiner, 2004).

The arguments supporting inclusion are compelling. The opposing argument that students with differing learning needs receive an inferior standard of education in an inclusive setting, or that others are somehow disadvantaged, is difficult to sustain. The following case study, presented as a snapshot of a school trying to adopt an inclusive approach to education, illustrates this. While the school under examination had by no means perfected the art and science of inclusion, it is outlined as a real example of inclusion being realised at the school level. It is also an example of the need for schools and teachers to continuously be revising and adjusting how they work in order to maintain an inclusive environment.

Case study: Angela, age 16

Student information

Name: Angela

Age: 16

Year in school: 11

Included in school year: 11

School: Catholic girls' secondary (Years 7–12)

School region: Metropolitan; lower socio-economic area

School outcomes: Small percentage of graduates attend university. The majority enter the workforce after secondary school, or pursue studies in a technical or community college setting.

Family background: Family immigrated to the city from a non-English speaking country prior to Angela's birth. Family maintains cultural and language ties to country of origin, while also making an effort to integrate into a

multicultural society. Parents employed in 'blue-collar' jobs. Both were supportive of Angela furthering her education in an inclusive environment and pursuing leisure interests typical of teenage girls.

Noteworthy individual differences: Standardised assessments indicated significant developmental delays from early infancy. Full-scale IQ of 60. Receptive language ability measured at 8-year-old level, with reading level at Grade 4. Difficulty experienced in most academic areas, particularly language tasks, visual processing and problem-solving. Moderate deficit in short-term auditory memory. Verbal response time of 15–60 seconds (possibly the result of seizure medication).

At the time this study was conducted, Angela took a reduced number of subjects towards completing a regular Year 11 course of study. These subjects were English, mathematics, materials technology, and information technology. Six double periods per week were set aside as private study time to allow Angela an opportunity to catch up on her work. She used this time either to work on her own or to seek assistance from the special-education teacher. As the school did not employ paraprofessionals, the special education teacher also attended some of Angela's classes with her to provide support. Interviews indicated that untrained volunteers were also sometimes used in classes to provide extra assistance for the entire class, including Angela. Angela was described by her teachers as a pleasant and patient student to teach, although her disability did mean that she frequently required extra attention in class. Once she felt comfortable with a new teacher, she would politely request help as required.

Both Angela and staff made mention of the good relationship between students and staff at the school. One staff member remarked: 'Learning, or part of the platform of learning, is that young people develop good relationships with their teachers and with each other. That, I think, is fairly strongly an element of the school.' It appeared that the positive relationship between students and teachers extended to the wider school community not just those with diverse needs. Comments made in a recent survey of past students compiled by the school recognised the support and kindness shown to students by school staff. Angela's mother also recognised the effort school staff had made in supporting her daughter. She remarked: 'She has got the help of [special-education teacher] always, and she is having some extra help at the moment. I can[not] say anything about that school because there is not the money in the world that I can pay them.' While building a good relationship and offering staff support were seen to be important elements at the school, support for Angela also came from

her classmates. Angela, her teachers and her mother all remarked on how her class supported her. One participant remarked that 'all the girls have been very supportive with [Angela]. They care about her.' This support from the class ranged from understanding that Angela sometimes needed more help from the teacher to actually helping her themselves through informal peer tutoring.

Angela had a very positive attitude toward her school, her classmates and her teachers. She said she enjoyed going to school and was interested in what she was learning. So positive was her attitude to school that she made the comment: 'I don't like holidays that are too long; I get bored ... I was bored in summer; I just wanted to go back to school.' According to her teachers, she was also prepared to attempt difficult tasks before asking for help. When asked what she liked about each of her subjects, the common denominator was that she felt some sense of achievement in each class. She enjoyed making things in materials technology, solving problems in mathematics and typing successfully in computers. Some staff at the school indicated that an effort was made to treat Angela the same as the other students and to not make her feel she was different. They indicated that, although her work was modified, an attempt was made to provide Angela with an experience as close to the rest of the class as possible. Some teacher interviews indicated that Angela took responsibility for her own work and would ask for help only after trying to do it herself first. This idea of giving Angela the responsibility of work was also supported in her home.

Angela also viewed the extra help she was getting at the school in a positive light. In particular, she felt that the help given to her by the special education teacher was a pivotal element in her success at the school, and this view was supported in the interviews with other participants. Angela indicated that spending time with the special education teacher helped her to understand difficult concepts and pieces of work. At no stage did Angela mention any kind of perceived stigma associated with getting extra help at school. The special education teacher at the school performed a number of roles, all of which were reported to be helpful by both Angela and the staff. These included acting as a consultant to teachers, coordinating and training volunteers, assisting with modifying curriculum, support in the classroom and direct teaching.

The school claimed to operate within a culture of caring, kindness, and mutual respect and support. When asked about how this culture came about and why the school was a caring environment in which to work and learn, participants in the study had more difficulty in answering. The principal remarked: 'It does come back to relationships. We don't tolerate people shouting at kids

and we don't tolerate people being unkind to each other. At the base of that is probably some sort of a notion of justice.' The principal also cited an emphasis on teamwork at the school as a contributing factor to the school culture:

You're going to use team-based approaches to things. You're going to use ... group learning settings that are going to recognise the mix of abilities that are within any learning setting. You're going to recognise that the differences amongst people are things that should be celebrated. After all, in a group some are going to be able to contribute really well and provide leadership and rich insights into certain things, where some aren't. Flip the activity around and do something else and it all might be quite different.

Other reasons given for the positive culture in the school included the selection of a caring staff, good leadership from the principal, and the fact that the school was a girls' school. One participant felt that because it was a school for girls, more feminine qualities of cooperation and understanding were emphasised. Whether being a Catholic school made a difference to the culture of caring was a matter for debate. Some participants felt the pastoral aspect had no influence at all, while others believed that there was a moderate and positive effect on the school culture.

Angela received a significant amount of help with schoolwork at home. In particular, her mother frequently helped her with her daily homework. Her mother also tried to relate what Angela learned at school to home where possible. One example of this was getting Angela to help with cooking or asking her to read road signs when they were out in the car. Staff from the school reported that this extra support at home gave Angela a significant advantage at school. Angela's mother saw her role as being a support to Angela with her work and also a source of encouragement: 'My role is to try to encourage her. That is what I try to do always ... to encourage her to learn.'

The school received special funding in a conventional manner through the Catholic Education Office. Being a Catholic school, and therefore considered by the government to be a private school, the extra funding provided to Angela amounted to about 25 per cent of what she would have received had she attended a public school. The school could not be considered wealthy, and this funding was perceived to be inadequate by only two teachers. Most teachers, however, indicated that resources were adequate to support the learning of Angela and other students with diverse needs. Given the low level of special funding teachers were often expected to work with Angela with no extra staff

support. Generally staff felt that they were able to cope with the specialised assistance required by Angela and meet the needs of the class without this support. This was confirmed by brief classroom observations, where teachers were seen to be coping with directing the rest of the class while helping Angela. A peer tutor was used in one class, while Angela received some support from a group of her peers in another. One teacher was not even aware that Angela had a disability at the start of the year, but managed to include her successfully into the class with little assistance once she had discovered what her specific needs were. Some staff mentioned time as being a limiting factor. They felt that they could have been better teachers both for Angela and the rest of the class if they had more time, because it took quite a lot of time each lesson to assist Angela and to get her started with work. Sometimes, if the topic was challenging for the entire class, there was less time to spend with Angela. At the time of the study, the school was working on some organisational changes to try to assist teachers in dealing with issues of time.

After experiencing difficulties making friends and being teased in her primary school years, Angela finally made a friend in her first year of secondary school. While she was described by her mother and teachers as always being shy and preferring the company of adults, Angela managed to make more friends her own age as she progressed through secondary school. According to Angela, this was achieved by her making a conscious decision to approach other girls in the schoolyard and through proactive support from school staff. At the time of the study, Angela had one "best friend" whom she saw outside of school, as well as a small group of acquaintances at school. Her best friend was described as being very different to Angela—very outgoing and confident. The girls spent their time involved in common teenage activities such as going to see movies or listening to music. Interviews indicated that Angela was the victim of teasing from other students in primary school and from one student in her first year at secondary school. Teachers dealt with this at the time following a parent complaint. At the time this study was conducted, Angela did not get teased and was left alone by students who were not her friends.

The most likely post-school options were seen by Angela, her mother and her teachers as continuing education through a program for people with disabilities at the local community college prior to entering the workforce. This program has a focus on social and life skills. Concern was expressed by staff members at the school at the lack of post-school options for students with cognitive disabilities such as Angela.

Box 1.4: Ways in which Angela's school was inclusive

- Welcoming environment for students with differing learning needs
- Flexible scheduling available, allowing private study sessions
- Angela's available subject choice was the same as for all other students
- Assistance provided by special-education teacher and volunteers only as required
- Opportunities for formal and informal peer tutoring
- Positive staff attitudes towards inclusion
- Positive school leadership from principal
- School fostered an ethos of caring and respect for individual differences
- Curriculum was modified as required
- Friendship development supported by staff
- Team-based approach to inclusion was used
- Parents involved as partners

How to include all students in regular schools and classrooms

The remainder of this book is dedicated to providing you with background information, practical advice, tools and strategies to assist you to include students with diverse learning needs in your classroom. As can be seen in Angela's case study, whole-school commitment is an extremely important element of inclusion, and is a preferable context within which to teach, but we understand that the level of commitment to inclusion varies from school to school. This does not mean, however, that you cannot try your best to be inclusive in your own classroom. We hope that the information in this book will prove helpful to you even if you operate in a school that is not particularly committed to inclusion.

As you read further, be reminded that inclusion is context dependent. Your experience with a particular group of students will be different from the experience of others. There is no single 'correct' way of including all students; however, as suggested previously, there is a general process that you can implement and that will help you to be successful. The following chapters in this book detail that process.
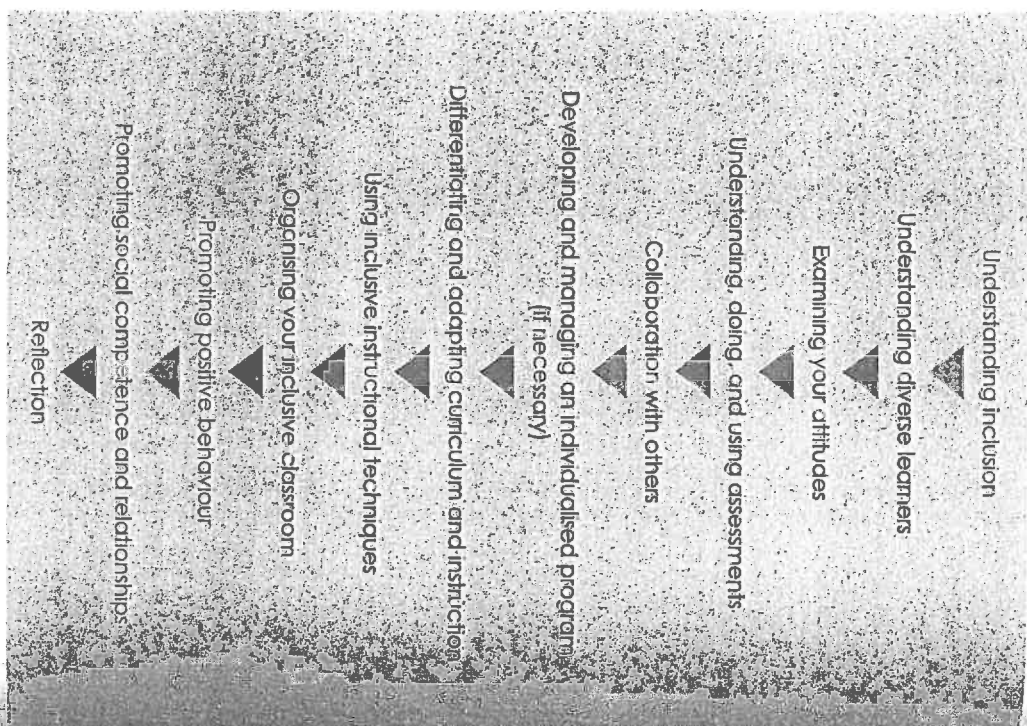
Figure 1.1 The inclusive education process

Understanding inclusion

Understanding diverse learners

Examining your attitudes

Understanding, doing, and using assessments.

Collaboration with others

Developing and managing an individualised program (if necessary)

Differentiating and adapting curriculum and instruction

Using inclusive instructional techniques

Organising your inclusive classroom

Promoting positive behaviour

Promoting social competence and relationships

Reflection

Key terms

Inclusion. Full inclusion of all students in all aspects of schooling.

Integration. A practice that preceded inclusion and aimed to involve

students, generally with disabilities, into existing classes and structures within a regular school.

For discussion and reflection

11 Some writers have argued that even if there was no research supporting its effectiveness, inclusion should be pursued because it is morally right. What are your views on this?

12 Considering that research has shown that inclusion is an effective approach, why do some parents not choose it for their child?

13 Many people believe that inclusion becomes more difficult the older a student gets. Based on your experience, is this the case? Why or why not?

Further reading

Connor, D.J. & Ferri, B.A. (2007). The conflict within: Resistance to inclusion and other paradoxes in special education. *Disability & Society,* 22(1), 63–77.

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Jorgensen, C.M. (Ed.). (1998). *Restructuring high schools for all students: Taking inclusion to the next level.* Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes.