

Topsy-Turvy Upside Down: Considering Educational Inclusion by Jo Chopra, Latika Roy Foundation

Jo Chopra very delicately and beautifully voices the feelings of kids with special needs and gives a unique perspective of including rather than just accepting them. She says such kids really make humans being human.

Mindsets, different standards, large number of kids in classrooms, competition and the Almighty Syllabus! Different needs and different standards. These are the barriers keeping us from inclusion. If we try and see the flip side, it will awaken the human being in us.

I could find many strategies to be considered for inclusion such as:

- Open Door Policy (Any kid is welcome)
- Kindness (accepting the way the kid is!!)
- Never forget the obvious. (Testing for hearing and vision)
- Names (remember names- especially in large classes teachers often are too busy to do this)
- Adaptive Classrooms (to meet their needs and make things very easy for them)
- No Tests. Learning by trial and error (We learn walking by trial and error. Imagine if we were tested to walk and stamped as failures.)
- Teamwork (collaborative activities instead of competitive ones)
- Buddy System
- Sign language (Actions need neither vocabulary to express nor translation to understand)
- Different Expectations (depending on the abilities)
- Creative Participation (breaking up our activities so that all get something to do)
- Praising Effort and not Success.

Also ways to tackle needs of children who have sensory handicaps:

Visual: Sit with them, find ways for better lighting and seating arrangements, use of coloured chalks and multisensory materials. Check in frequently.

Hearing: Sit with them, find better seating arrangements, use signs, pictures and multisensory materials. Check in frequently.

Neurologically disabled: Reduce distractions. Show and don't just tell. Break into the simplest possible chunks and one at a time. Practice and repeat. Have visual timetables and social stories.

Session Materials:

- Topsy-Turvy Upside Down: Considering Educational Inclusion - link to PowerPoint

- Inclusive Education Information Sharing Network <http://www.eenet.org.uk/>