

Towards Inclusive Education

Examples of Good Practices of Inclusive Education



Inclusion Europe

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Team of authors: Ingrid Körner, President of Inclusion Europe; Kay Tisdall, University of Edinburgh; Sonja Uhlmann, Down Syndrome Foundation Madrid; Bernhard Schmid, Lebenshilfe Vienna; Geert Freyhoff, Inclusion Europe; Daniela Rígrová, Inclusion Europe.

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Introduction

Education for All is closely linked to inclusive education. It is still a challenge and an unrealised wish for a lot of people with disabilities and their parents. Education is the key for inclusion, social justice and equal citizenship. Education is decisive for the chances of every human being. To be able to organise education in an inclusive way requires commitment to the idea of inclusion and to the richness of diversity.

Inclusive education, this term stands for a process of fighting for the inclusion of people with disabilities in the mainstream education system. Education for all is closely connected to the work for equal rights of people with disabilities and against their social exclusion. Education is seen as key to a society that is ready to welcome a wide diversity of different gifts and abilities. We consider an inclusive school system as the most effective tool for developing necessary skills and building solidarity among young people with special needs and their peers. It also creates a path for being better prepared for all kinds of work opportunities.

The reform of education systems is not only a technical task; it depends, above all, upon the conviction, commitment and good will of the individuals who constitute society. This is a sensitive question of public attitudes. We cannot deny that there are still people who do not agree with inclusive education and it is our task to find good arguments for the motion.

The right of education for all has been recognized as a fundamental basis for the future and has been included in a number of international documents, the most important being the recently adopted UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities.

The changes of understanding and attitudes to inclusion itself have gone through an evolution and this is reflected by the terminology. We recognize an important shift from **integration to inclusion**. Integration cannot be considered as a final vision of education for all, since it does not involve the whole range of necessary changes in the awareness and organization of ordinary schools. Integration is based on minorities joining the classroom without adapting the rules of the existing system: it is the task of the pupil with intellectual disability to change accordingly. Real inclusion is about changing awareness and organization of school systems and environments, focusing on diversity of learning needs and capabilities.

In 2005, UNESCO developed its **Guidelines for Inclusion: Ensuring Access to Education for All**. It has been intended to be a tool for revising and formulating plans for inclusive processes. In this document we find a good definition of inclusive education:

“Inclusion is seen as a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion within and from education. It involves changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies, with a common vision which covers all children of the appropriate age range and a conviction that it is the responsibility of the regular system to educate all children.” (Guidelines for Inclusion, UNESCO, p. 14, 2005)

Ingrid Körner,
President of Inclusion Europe

A Policy Framework for Inclusive Education

The right of *all* children to education – including children with intellectual disabilities – has been increasingly recognised at international, European and national levels. The right to education has long been recognised within international documents, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Goals towards universal primary compulsory education were set by the World Summit for Children in 1990 and re-stated in 2002. Further, the World Declaration on Education for All, with its revised 2000 framework for action, has set numerous goals including universal primary education and 50% improvements in adult literacy levels by 2015.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) has two articles dedicated to education. These articles cover:

Article 28: The child's right to education, and the State's duty to ensure that primary education at least is free and compulsory. Administration of school discipline should reflect the child's human dignity.

Article 29: The State's recognition that education should be directed at developing the child's personality and talents, preparing the child for active life as an adult, fostering respect for basic human rights and developing respect for the child's own cultural and national values and those of others.

Education is also mentioned within the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). Article 2 of the First Protocol states that:

No person shall be denied the right to education. In the exercise of any functions which it assumes in relation to education and to teaching, the State shall respect the right of parents to ensure such education and teaching in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions.

The European Social Charter contains a positive right to education, in Article 17. States should take "all appropriate and necessary measures" to provide children and young people with "a free primary and secondary education as well as to encourage regular attendance at school".

The legal status and enforcement mechanisms of these various policy frameworks differ across the policies and by countries' domestic law. For example:

- The UNCRC has international monitoring but not enforcement powers; The UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (UNCRPD – see below) has an additional but optional protocol States can ratify, that would allow individual complaints to be made to an international committee.
- Countries differ on the legal status of a Convention when they ratify it. In some countries, ratification brings it into or even above domestic law; in other countries, new legislation must be passed to incorporate the rights into domestic law.
- The ECHR has stronger enforcement mechanisms, through the European and typically domestic courts; the European Social Charter has a relatively weak mechanism depending on pressure by member countries.

While the right of all children to education has widespread recognition, the right to inclusive education is less well established legally. The definition of what constitutes inclusive education is still debated, as well as the relative merits of parental choice, and different types of schooling.

The Salamanca Statement (UNESCO 1994) established inclusive education on an international footing. Children with 'special educational needs' must have access to regular schools, and regular schools with an inclusive orientation:

"... are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all; moreover, they provide an effective education to the majority of children and improve the efficiency and ultimately the cost-effectiveness of the entire education system." (pp. ix)

Article 23 of the UNCRC addresses the rights of disabled children, who should receive special assistance (free of charge whenever possible) to ensure "the child has effective access to and receives education ... in a manner conducive to the child's achieving the fullest possible social integration and individual development ..."

The recent UNCRC has already been signed by most European countries, although not yet ratified by most (ratification means the State must implement the Convention). Article 24 goes much further than the Convention's predecessor, in requiring States to ensure an inclusive education system at all levels. This must be directed towards:

- The full development of human potential and sense of dignity and self-worth, and the strengthening of respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and human diversity;
- The development by persons with disabilities of their personality, talents and creativity, as well as their mental and physical abilities, to their fullest potential;
- Enabling persons with disabilities to participate effectively in a free society.

No definition of inclusive education, however, is given in the Convention's text, which could allow variability in national policy and practice.

The global education agenda, *Education for All*, has changed its approach for children with disabilities. It now firmly advocates an inclusive approach for all children, as being both efficient and in children's and societies' best interests. (UNESCO 2005)

At European Union level, there are numerous non-binding statements on children with disabilities' education but no requirement on member countries to have inclusive education. Technically, Article 13 of the Treaty of Amsterdam allows for appropriate action to combat discrimination on a range of grounds, including age and disability. This has led to the European Council Directive (2000) on equal treatment in employment and education, but this is only for more advanced training: e.g. vocational training or for professions. The European Charter of Fundamental Rights has a proactive right to education; it applies to everyone and is thus inclusive of children and adults with disabilities; and it mentions parental rights. The Charter has legal power only when challenging European Community Institutions or when nation states are implementing European Union law.

At the Council of Europe level, the European Social Charter includes the positive right to education (Article 17) and rights for persons with disabilities (Article 15) but does not particularise the rights of people with disabilities to education. Nonetheless the European Committee on Social Rights has allowed, and decided in favour of, complaints regarding education for children with disabilities. The European Court on Human Rights has focused on correct process, assessment and parental choice in interpreting Article 2, First Protocol, so that inclusive education does not have a strong footing through its court decisions.

So while most European countries have passed or are going to pass new education legislation on children with disabilities, there is considerable diversity on the support for fully inclusive education (OECD 2005). Official policy tends to be pro-inclusion for children with disabilities. Countries differ, however, on the extent of separate special educational provision. At one end is Italy, which promotes a fully inclusive system, in contrast to France and Germany, which have a considerable network of institutions (EADSNE 2003; Tisdall 2006). The divisions between mainstream and special schools are becoming less distinct in several countries, with specialist classes being located within mainstream settings and special schools being changed into resource centres for mainstream teaching. European countries differ considerably in their categorisation (or not) of children with disabilities, the implications of such categorisation for assessment, subsequent rights to support, and educational paths.

Towards Inclusive Education

In this publication we introduce six examples of good practice from different European countries. We have chosen good school practices and project presentations supporting inclusive processes through the work of non-governmental organizations.

The published examples fulfil the criteria of qualified and well established educational institutions fully engaged in the work for social inclusion of children with intellectual disabilities through inclusive education. All of them, the primary schools as well as the non-governmental organisations, follow the conceptual elements set up in the *Guidelines for Inclusion* (UNESCO 2005) and identified as the key elements that contribute to successful change:

- Clarity of purpose
- Realistic goals
- Motivation

The following examples show what kind of support the nominated practices provide and which resources have been used for achieving the goal.

The significant change of teaching strategies has to go along with a complete transformation of the teachers' role in the classroom. **Cleves Primary School**, United Kingdom, and **Sophie-Scholl-Schule Gießen**, Germany, are both inclusive schools with accessible environments, deep roots of respect to diversity and strong partnerships with all relevant stakeholders. In order to achieve inclusion in the education systems, organizational changes are required as well as the development of suitable tools. **Public School Padre Jerónimo**, Spain, represents a good practice example of developing classroom materials, teachers' training and an effective evaluation model. The Austrian project at **Praxishauptschule der Pädagogischen Hochschule Wien** shows a unique learning option for students at secondary school. In all four schools, multi-disciplinary teams care for individual needs of pupils and develop new methods of teaching. The good practice examples demonstrate answers to important questions, such as how the inclusion at primary school could be achieved and which tools were used to achieve that goal.

Special attention has to be paid to the methodological support and training of teachers so that the transition of mainstream schools towards inclusion can be as smooth and competent as possible, for school staff as well as for students. The success of inclusive education requires an effort, not only of teachers and school staff, but also of peers, parents, families and volunteers. Since the inclusive school demands much more cooperation from parents and peers than special or mainstream school education, the issue of peer relations and the role of parents of children with disabilities should not be neglected. Two project examples of non-governmental organizations, the Romanian **Rehabilitation Foundation & Educational Assistance and Resource Center "SPERANTA"** and the **Association Inclusion of the Brcko District** in Bosnia and Herzegovina are good complementary examples of projects covering support services for parents, teachers and other professionals. In creating these services, professional networks and disseminating information about inclusive education they push forward educational and social inclusion.

Teachers, parents, communities, school authorities and other stakeholders involved in the educational systems across European countries can serve as valuable resources in support of inclusion. Inclusive education is about improving learning environments but also about providing opportunities for all learners to become successful in their learning experiences. The successful examples from different parts of Europe demonstrate that the process of inclusion is not easy, but fully realistic.

Cleves Primary School, London, United Kingdom

An inclusive school within an inclusive authority, Cleves Primary School is a prime example of how a policy to include all children in mainstream schools can look in practice. In a fully accessible environment at the heart of a changing inner city multi-ethnic community, Cleves lives out the dream of a mainstream school place for any child. Key factors towards achieving this are: a) a deeply rooted ethos of valuing and celebrating diversity, b) innovative staffing structure & curriculum delivery and c) strong partnerships with outside agencies as well as with the governing body, parents and the local community.

Strengths:

- Implementing policy in practice
- Peer support and relationships
- Character of additional support and its organisation

Cleves Primary School was set up in 1992 as a resourced school in the London Borough of Newham, a Local Authority known for its strong commitment to inclusive education. The most recent report on local variation of implementation of national legislation and guidance found that in 2004 Newham had the lowest percentage in the country of pupils placed in special schools (0.06%). Whereas other Local Education Authorities were placing around 1 in 68 children in special schools (1.46%), in Newham the figure was closer to 1 in 1,667. The school implements the borough's policy of Inclusive Education and has 32 places for children with high level support needs including pupils with multiple and profound learning difficulties. The school has the capacity for 420 Primary pupils with a 52 FTE (full-time-equivalent) place Nursery.

All staff, parents/carers and children who are admitted to the school are fully aware of its inclusive nature. This is very obvious from the organisation and management of the school and the variety of equipment and resources available. Some parents and colleagues in different services may at first feel ambivalent about the value of an inclusive setting such as Cleves, but staff has come to expect that newcomers soon recognize that a school that includes children with high-level support needs is good for all the children and families in the community. In reality this means that the school thinks much more carefully about the structure of the school day, the way teaching and learning is organised and the monitoring and evaluative processes. Like all schools, Cleves faces the challenges of a changing educational world and all the implications of that in a school that has such a wide range and diversity of children.

Over 82% of pupils on roll come from a variety of ethnic minority communities and have a first language that is not English. The children speak 29 different languages; other than English the main first languages are Bengali, Urdu and a variety of African languages. Cleves is committed to providing good primary practice that is flexible and holistic in meeting the needs of the diverse school community. The school is working towards being a people centred school. The aims of the school include:

- *to provide an environment where each child of every race, gender, class and learning need is truly recognized, accepted and valued;*
- *to create an environment where there is a place for everyone and there is a feeling of belonging;*
- *to develop high positive self-esteem in all children and adults;*
- *to enable children to be aware of their interdependency on each other*

All policies and procedures take into account the diversity of children, staff and community that use the school; for example, the behaviour policy is based on developing relationships that take into account issues associated with children with challenging behaviour. The ethos of the school is based on the celebration of difference. This is reflected in every aspect of school life, for example the organisation and structure, the curriculum and the learning environment. The ethos of the school is for children to work together and support each other. Children work and learn in groups that include all the children.

There are a number of organisational and management structures that promote inclusion throughout the school. For example, there is a playtime at lunchtime but there are no playtimes in the morning or afternoon; instead, many opportunities for physical activities and social interaction are built into the daily

curriculum. The wings (see below) have access to the PE (Physical Education) Hall for a whole day so that there is adequate time for children to develop self-help skills. Lunchtime is seen as part of the curriculum with lots of adults supporting children and having lunch with them. The curriculum organisation is structured in a similar way to a secondary school, for example staff planning and teaching a curriculum area for several weeks with the children moving to the area dedicated for that subject.

With regard to the physical environment, the school is a single storey building with full access to all teaching and toilet areas for children and adults with mobility difficulties. There are specialist hygiene facilities, which allow for medical and other personal needs of pupils and adults to be met with dignity. The design of the school building is unconventional, in that the school has four Open Plan Wings: Early Years (Nursery and Reception groups), Key Stage 1 (Years 1 and 2), Key Stage 2A (years 3 and 4) and Key Stage 2B (years 5 and 6). The school also has a practical room with a kiln and facilities for clay work, two strong rooms and a multi-purpose-dining hall as well as a separate large hall with a sprung floor, which has a wide range of PE apparatus. There is also a specialist sensory studio that is timetabled for all children to use, a soft playroom in the Early Years Wing, a ball pool in the foyer and a relaxation room for each wing to use. Finally, the playground has recently been developed and now has a stage, seats, musical instruments, climbing wall, goal posts, climbing frames and more.

For all purposes the wings are viewed as one large classroom with five defined curriculum areas and a team of staff who work together to plan and teach the curriculum. The organisation of the Wings enables children to learn through experience in a rigorous approach to the curriculum. There is a balance between directed activities for Literacy and Numeracy and opportunities for children to plan when, not if, they undertake activities in other curriculum areas. Staff ensures that experiential activities have the same place and status in the curriculum as abstract activities. The children use a daily diary to record or evaluate their learning. This enables all to take full part in the range of learning opportunities, gives staff an additional form of record keeping as well as an opportunity to discuss with the children the process of evaluation and to celebrate the children's achievements. To ensure that the curriculum is appropriate and that the children are making progress and achievements, the school has adopted a rigorous process of monitoring and evaluation.

Contrary to the established UK system of one teacher in charge of a class of about 30 children and Learning Support Assistants providing one-to-one support for individual children, the staffing structure at Cleves is flexible: multi-disciplinary teams of teachers, nursery nurses and teaching assistants are led by Assistant Head Teachers to facilitate the learning of all children. This creative arrangement benefits everyone. Staff plans together to organise a differentiated curriculum that offers the best in good primary practice to all children. The success of Cleves seems to rely upon a deeply embedded philosophy of valuing diversity and a strong commitment to providing opportunities for all children to interact and learn from each other, as a means towards a more inclusive society of the future. In the words of a teacher: "By providing opportunities for interaction I have seen all children flourish in ways we had possibly been denying them." In the words of a 10-year-old pupil responding to the question: What do children with complex needs teach us?: "You have to take care of everyone because if we don't care life will be sad. It is our responsibility to care." There are many mainstream schools that, like Cleves, are constantly striving to develop inclusive provision for all learners. They have all devoted time and energy to review and to change their culture, their policies and their practice, seeing that as the key to inclusion.

Contact details of the school:

Cleves Primary School
Brigid Jackson-Dooley
Arragon Road, East Ham
London E6 1QP, United Kingdom
www.cleves.newham.sch.uk

Nominating organisation:

Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education (CSIE)
Dr Artemi Sakellariadis, Director, CSIE
New Redland Building, Coldharbour Lane,
Frenchay, Bristol BS9 2AE, United Kingdom
artemi@csie.org.uk

Sophie-Scholl-Schule, Gießen, Germany

Sophie-Scholl-Schule in Gießen is an inclusive school for all children. Accepting and appreciating heterogeneity is emphasized in developing teaching methods, school rituals and activities. Multi-professional teams of teachers, educators and therapists work together and accompany all children during the school day and parents find many opportunities to cooperate with the school.

Strengths:

- Transition between different stages and forms of education
- Teacher training and development
- Changing attitudes of teachers and other staff

Sophie-Scholl-School in Gießen was set up as a private school in 1998 by members of Lebenshilfe Gießen, e.V. Up to then children with intellectual disabilities had been sent to special schools and had no opportunity to attend public schools. Currently about 260 children attend Sophie-Scholl-School. They work in 12 groups at different age levels. Classes are built across two grades. Up to 22 children attend each class and five of them usually have special needs. There are two teachers per class during the lessons. They are – depending on the needs of the children - assisted by educators, nurses and/or young people during their social year. In the afternoon pupils take part in an interesting afternoon-program with a big variety of courses children can choose. The school house was built with a strong commitment to inclusive education. Therefore it is fully accessible for everyone, and its atmosphere is bright and friendly. All people – children and staff – like to be in the building (to work, to learn, to grow, to live...). Since Sophie-Scholl-School is a private school, governmental subsidy has to be completed with parents' school fees. For afternoon-activities a special funding is necessary and a lot of work is done in an honorary capacity by parents and professionals.

Teaching methods

In an inclusive school methods, results and effects of learning must vary from child to child and also must be measured individually. It does not make sense to teach all children the same in the same way and to expect them to learn the same thing. In an inclusive school we choose working methods tailored to every single child and we vary within topics and subjects in such a way that all children can participate. If we want children to learn together but not to learn the same thing at the same time, we need to identify methods of teaching that allow diversity. A day in school is divided into several phases of work and leisure. The rhythm of the day is visualized by pictures on the black board. During the day we change phases of tension and relaxation, of partner-, team- and individual work.

For several periods each day we work with the “weekly plan” or, “plan for the day”. We use this instrument so that every child can do his or her work on an individual level. Using the “plan” as the same instrument for all children is the chosen method. Within this frame everyone has working-time and has an individual workload and timing.

Another possibility in class is working on the same topic but with different tasks. Working in this way, firstly all of the class meets and the teacher summarizes the topic the class is going to work on. The pupils then ask questions and try to find interesting sub-topics which they would like to study. They also think about the methods with which they can get results for their questions. The ideas of the children contain experiments as well as reading and reproducing texts or the creative treatment of the topic (like building a model) up to useful training of a special tool. The different tasks have to be discussed with the teacher if they are invented by the children. Other tasks are instructions given by the teacher directly. If you have many different tasks concerning one topic it is very important to finally re-import results and working methods into the group: this is the reason why presentations are of very high interest.

The quality of teaching methods and class arrangements has to be very high to be successful in teaching a heterogeneous class. In the school team you can find a lot of reflection on different teaching methods

and pupils' results in class. Class teams meet once a week to reflect on the work and make a plan for the next stage. Teachers visit each other in class to reflect on development or setbacks. Doing so we can learn from each other's experience – for the benefit of all.

If a problem persists they ask the school-principle to have a look at the situation, because she knows how to train teachers. Methodologies are at last created by those who are involved in daily practice. Since the school has *multi-professional teams* in every class, they can take various different viewpoints on the issues. In team-meetings and special instruction meetings they discuss and try to develop new ideas.

Recognition of Heterogeneity

The most important insight for teachers is the recognition and acceptance of all children being different. If we not only accept heterogeneity but really understand that all of us profit from others, we will be ready to develop truly inclusive schools and societies.

We need to welcome – without exception - the differences of every child. This means that a *culture of mutual appreciation of diversity* and creativity in constructing teaching arrangements has to be developed throughout the school day. In the afternoon the school-house and garden needs to be a playground where all children meet for leisure time and friendship.

We also have to lay emphasis on raising independent personalities who can also get along with others. Children learn this positive attitude towards diversity from their first school day and during every single day in school. There are many circles where classes meet and everybody recounts what he or she has been or will be doing. Children find out by themselves that *every piece of work* must be appreciated – since a child exerted much effort. As a tool you can use class-instructions like “Work with Peter!” If children are told to take care of each other and work with one another, they will do so. When they think and talk about their working processes later on, they always find positive aspects of working together.

Development is movement: Partners for a learning institution

There are lots of possibilities for parents to take part in school development. They can represent *parents' interests* in regular conferences, and they take part in different school-development-groups. Here and everywhere staff and parents meet as cooperating experts.

Sophie-Scholl-School works as a learning institution. All members meet in a process of school-development. Many different types of circles and conferences are necessary during this continual process of school development. The outside-view is an important eye-opener for hidden themes or targets, so close contact to research and evaluation is important. During the last years we therefore had research done on the following topics:

- Movement and sports during lessons and during the school day (University of Marburg, 2007)
- Inclusive teaching methods: reality or dream? (University of Gießen, Germany 2006)
- Attitudes of children without handicap towards children with mental handicaps (University of Gießen, Germany 2005)

Challenges

Sophie-Scholl-Schule was set up ten years ago to work with grades 1 – 6. After grade 6 all pupils are divided into different schools – none of them with an inclusive concept. This is a dramatic cut for most of the children, especially for those who have no choice and are put into special schools without being asked. Since Sophie-Scholl-School is a school for *all* children, we decided to extend our school up to grade 10. We worked out a concept paper and asked for permission. If we get that, we will have to find a building and new teachers: The extension of our school is the biggest challenge in the years to come!

References and contacts:

Sophie-Scholl-Schule Gießen
Wiltrud Thies
Grünberger Str. 222
35394 Gießen, Germany

Tel.: +49 641 944 30-0 / 944 3011
www.sophie-scholl-schule-giessen.de
(part of www.lebenshilfe-giessen.de)

Public School Padre Jerónimo, Madrid, Spain

Public School Padre Jerónimo (Algete-Spain) is an Infant and Primary public school (from 3 to 12 years old) which educates 450 students. There is an average of 30-35 students with different special educational needs: psychological, visual, physical, etc.

Public School Padre Jerónimo is a good practice example showing how to develop and adapt students' materials for the classroom in order to enable all students to be included in ordinary schools. It demonstrates how to elaborate work documents which support better coordination of school staff and more effective organization of the school.

Strengths:

- Teacher training and development
- Changing attitudes of teachers and other staff
- Character of additional support and its organisation

The school decided to participate in the Integration Programme for Students with Special Educational Needs during the academic year 1987-88. Since then, the school has continuously revised the curriculum, updating it with strategies for students with special educational needs (SEN). These strategies involve the organization of the school staff, as well as the specific work of specialist diversity staff who deal with educational materials. Under these changes the school staff realized how their professional planning contributes to the main aims of the Inclusive School.

The School Executive considers that each school should devise its own strategies for the students' work on a general level, whilst also addressing special educational needs. There are some factors which are necessary for good practices in education.

Of primary importance in inclusive education strategies is the necessity of dialogue with as many parties in the educational community as possible. This means that communication with special needs students should involve dialogue with the school heads, the teaching staff, assistants, families and the students themselves. There should be room for individual needs, but a common philosophy should result from the dialogue between all parties concerned. This common philosophy should also be shared by all school staff members. By involving as many individuals as possible it enriches the result.

Each party should contribute to this inclusive process depending on their skills:

- The school - by providing organizational, professional and material structures;
- The educators - by planning methodologies in which the special need students are involved as well as by providing individualized activities that aid their intellectual and social development;
- The assistants and families - by being good examples of inclusion; and
- The students - by assuming the differences are an enriching aspect of diversity.

Another essential factor for developing a professional and coherent environment is the coordination of multidisciplinary team teaching each student with special needs. Once the Public School Padre Jerónimo became aware of the importance of such coordination it developed its own methods of management. At present, they plan specific meetings in which all teachers working with the same child coordinate their work. In order to simplify the coordination of the specialist teachers' work, the school has invented its own Working Sheets. The Working Sheet says how the common or modified curriculum is used and it functions as a real record of learning process of each child. The progress of different skills (for example: motor skills, language, reading, writing...) is being recorded and whether it has been achieved by the student with or without support.

The school staff consider that the practices of teaching staff should be as common in mainstream schools as possible, and this is the reason for having support staff for students with special needs in the classroom whenever possible. This could be a difficult way of working at certain levels and in certain subjects, but it

favours inclusion of students with special needs and increases the personnel resources in the class. When it is not possible, the teacher creates small groups (about 3-5 children) for specific activities. Even more specialized teachers (physiotherapist and speech therapist) use both practices, using assistants and small groups.

In terms of educational material, care is taken to use the same materials as far as possible for students with and without special educational needs. If these materials are far from the student's competence, they are adapted according to individual needs.

Finally, the teachers develop activity books adapted to each student. Their activity books aim to have the same educational outcome as the rest of the students, but are adapted to individual needs.

The follow-up of the educational process is undertaken in coordinated meetings involving all staff educating students with special needs. The staff have created special evaluation reports which are updated and checked annually. These evaluation reports collect data on the practices of all those involved in the education process from the professionals to the family. When evaluating educational progress, the staff adapt the evaluation reports in order to make them more realistic according to the education level of the students, but retaining the same form of evaluation for all students.

The school aims to involve the families in the most crucial moments of the education of children with special needs:

- by informing them how the school works with their children;
- by inviting them to participate in the follow-up and evaluation of the educational process of their children and;
- by providing them with proper information at the end of every school year and most crucially, at the end of the school attendance.

Public School Padre Jeronimo also promotes awareness about the school topics and any other relevant information. Doing so, the school makes the education of students with special needs not only a matter of a single family but also a matter of common interest.

By using this style of inclusive education, the benefits are far-reaching. The benefits of this education can be felt across the whole educational community, and echoes of this reverberate in society. The school strongly believes that if a child can be put in an equalised educational environment, there eventually will be a progressive social environment. This way the school not only influences the lives of students with special needs, but also affects the evolution of thinking on inclusion within social authorities and policy-making bodies.

References and contacts:

Public School Padre Jerónimo

Enrique Lázaro Nuñez

Calle Alcalá, 80

28110 Algete (Madrid), Spain

Tel.: +34 1 629 0522

E-mail: padrejer@centros2.pntic.mec.es and padrejer@telefonica.net

Practice Centre of Pedagogical Training School Vienna, Austria

The project "Mehrstufenklasse" has been developed as an experimental example running within the public educational system. In the "Mehrstufenklasse" are 10 to 16 year old students in one class including children with disabilities. The inclusive education in that class is achieved by accepting the natural feelings and behaviour of children at their particular ages. This attitude is the most important attribute of the teachers and the students themselves in inclusive education. The primary resource is peer-learning. The children learn to reflect on their own work.

Strengths:

- Transition between different stages and forms of education
- Peer support and relationships
- Listening to young people

The project of "Mehrstufenklasse" has been successfully running at the Practice Centre of Pedagogical Training School in Vienna since 2005. This type of learning option for Secondary school students from ten to sixteen is unique in Austria. The school is placed in a district with a high percentage of students from diverse cultural backgrounds, consequently with a different mother tongue than German. One of the main principles of this school is to face the reality and implement the most ideal teaching approach in practice as well as to monitor and evaluate this process from a scientific point of view in order to ensure as large an impact as possible on the school system. The project has been accompanied by a scientific survey over the last 2 years. Professor Dr. Wilhelm is supervising this exceptional model of a "Mehrstufenklasse". Together with her, the team of teachers implements the concepts of the reform pedagogy:

- to assist and educate the students following a performance-oriented curricula;
- to supply remedial-teaching when necessary;
- to integrate and include students with different disabilities into the learning process;
- to implement a fair and valid assessment or testing system, that always views the individual student at his/her personal developmental level.

The teachers' team sees the main task in educating the young learners and facilitating their autonomous cognitive and social learning. The social maturity gained in this mixed class with all its individual learners is considered as a great success to be achieved. It requires enormous acceptance and flexibility from all participants within this learning process. It is positive for students to take more responsibility for their education. The approach of teachers has an impact on motivation and success in the classroom.

Aims of the programme:

- to supply individual remedial teaching for all the diverse learners;
- to create and build up a supportive learning atmosphere where the learning process flows as smoothly as possible;
- to foster a warm atmosphere, where the students feel not only the teachers' interest for them but the interest and acceptance from their peers;
- to build up and enhance the learners' self-image and their beliefs in themselves and thus help them to learn in ways that are personal and significant for them;
- to reduce a "repeat" of a school year but to guarantee safety for the individual student who can "stay" in this class for up to five years;
- to help students to improve their performance towards a successful mastery of the "Hauptschule";
- to build up a supportive environment, where the students help, assist and accept each other, and where they learn to welcome "the newcomers" and to let "the old ones" leave;
- to enhance the self-esteem and the intrinsic motivation of the individual students who can find themselves as peers and mediators in this learning atmosphere;
- to promote and demand individual learning achievements for all students: the ones with the best cognitive capabilities or the ones with lower capabilities.

Evaluation

As the team wants to reduce anxiety and stress within this learning system, marks are only given during the school year when the student wants to get them. The parents are informed regularly about the personal achievements of their children, but especially at the end of a half term. All students receive a written report with marks at the end of a school year. The last year students then receive it twice, in January and at the end of the school year.

Organisation

The class consists of 18 - 22 students, including four to five students with disabilities. At this moment, there are 7 “leavers” concluding their last year in this class. Therefore, another 6-7 younger students will be welcomed to this class.

A group of 8 or 9 teachers usually work with the students. This team consists of subject teachers, five of whom obtain additional training and education, for example a Degree in reform pedagogy and Montessori, degree from sociology and mediation or diploma in special pedagogy for children with intellectual disability.

The students are enabled to learn individually and thus moving at a personal “speed” is guaranteed. The learning process is mostly arranged in topic based modules. The day is structured by the timetable of the students. At the start of any subject, and as necessary, the learning in class can also be teacher-centred, and then follows tasks that vary according to the levels of students and to different grades. Students with disabilities also get their “flow charts”, but they need more guidance by the teacher or a peer. The team of teachers design a “flow chart” that:

- enables the learners to create knowledge that is “digestible” for them in their personal developmental level;
- promotes self-organised learning where the students may choose the material that suits them the best;
- enables them to reflect upon their achievements gained at the end of the week;
- gives teachers and learners the space to communicate with each other, and to learn to cope with conflicts.

Assessing students’ learning, behaviour and their achievements

An ongoing assessment of the learners is guaranteed by the team of teachers, who exchange their insights and perceptions and seek advice either in pedagogical conferences or involve external experts. If necessary they arrange meetings with a physiotherapist, the psychologist for the school district, the medical doctor of the school or a social worker. The parents, and if necessary the head teacher, are constantly involved in the education process.

References and contacts:

Practice Centre of Pedagogical Training School
Hebbelplatz 1,
1100 Wien, Austria

Mag.Sabine Hofmann – Sabine.Hofmann@phwien.ac.at
Mag.Helga Hörndler – helga.hoerndler@chello.at

The Rehabilitation Foundation “SPERANTA” & Educational Assistance and Resource Centre “SPERANTA”, Timisoara, Romania

The RF and EARC “Speranta” provide services for children with disabilities and their families, but also for teachers and professionals. Annually, over 250 children are being provided with necessary psychological, pedagogic, medical and social support. With over 12 years of experience in inclusive education, the RF and EARC “Speranta” are now nationwide models of good practice. The most important recent achievements are: the IEN (Inclusive Education Network), the new centre for inclusive education that addresses the rural area, and the web portal www.copil-speranta.ro.

Strengths:

- Implementing policy in practice
- Changing attitudes of teachers and other staff
- Working together with other stakeholders

The RF and EARC „Speranta” have over 12 years of extensive background in inclusive education. The “Open Doors” project series, financed by OSI-MHI, is meant to change the attitudes towards disabled children, in order to facilitate their social and educational inclusion. EARC “Speranta” represents a nationwide model of good practice in this matter.

The Romanian legal framework stipulates the right to education for all children regardless of the type or level of disability. Legally speaking, children with disabilities have equal opportunities to participate in social life, including education. Still, lots of disabled children are unaccounted for in terms of education. Through the “Open Doors” project, the Rehabilitation Foundation “Speranta” and The Educational Assistance and Resources Centre “Speranta” began to develop services countywide in inclusive education and early intervention, aiming to assure equal chances to education for disabled children in rural area through promoting inclusive education.

The RF and EARC “Speranta” have initiated a national alliance (the Inclusive Education Network – IEN) united around the inclusive philosophy, that aims at refocusing the real implementation of the inclusive education legislation, so that no child is left behind. The goal of this project is to promote inclusive education in Romania by initiating, extending and developing the IEN as an action and lobby force for improving and implementing the inclusive education legislation. The project aims towards a better informed community by increasing the access to information and by facilitating the process of exchanging ideas and efficient communication between involved actors. This was realized by creating a web portal. Another output of the project will be the centre in Comlosul Mare, which was set up as a support service in rural area for 50 children with disabilities, their families and teachers. The centre is developed in partnership with the local school and town hall, following the “Speranta” model, and benefits a large rural community where there is no service of this kind whatsoever.

Some of the results and outcomes:

- The new centre in Comlosul Mare for supporting inclusive education in rural area
The “Open Doors” Centre in Comlosu Mare was opened in October 2007, as part of a project “Speranta” is running, called “Together towards an Inclusive Education”. The centre was developed in collaboration with several local partners: the City Hall, the Local Council and the school; also, the School Inspectorate and the Timis County Council support this initiative which is financed by the Open Society Institute MHI and the Rotary Club.
During the last few months, the team consisting of a psychologist, a speech-therapist and a support teacher has assessed over 30 disabled children and the intervention activities have already begun. The centre is prepared to address 50 disabled children in rural area.
- Increased level of acceptance towards differences between children

75% of pre-school age disabled children who attend our Centre are included in mainstreaming kindergartens

95% of school age disabled children who attend our Centre are included in mainstreaming schools. For these children, the level of participation within the educational community is increased – as parents and teachers report.

- Teachers with an inclusive education attitude and practical skills

The IEN was initially developed as a county-level alliance to support the inclusive education philosophy in mainstreaming schools and kindergartens in rural area. In less than 6 months after setting up the first partnerships, the decision was made to go countrywide via the World Wide Web. Developing an inclusive education network was needed to explore opportunities that a single organization could not, such as: to provide education services that meet the needs of the disabled children; to develop the organizations in order to trigger partnership structures between all education providers; to develop new ways to meet the community needs through constant collaborations and partnerships. The IEN is now open not only to education providers, but also to individuals who wish to join.

- The Inclusive Education Network (IEN), operating and growing

- Increased public visibility, responsibility and credibility of IEN members

- Viable partnership structures between education providers

“Speranta” has over 50 partnership contracts with inclusive education providers in Romania: kindergartens, schools, universities, NGOs and so on.

- Increased organizational capabilities of IEN members

- Increased capability of accessing community resources

The business community is increasingly and actively involved in promoting the inclusive education and ensuring additional financial support. Amongst our many generous sponsors, the Rotary Club has offered playground equipments, Christmas gifts for over 250 disabled children and other educational supplies.

- Increased and improved sustainability of the education reform at regional level

Presently we are running a lobbying campaign to promote the inclusive education in Romania. The first meeting with stakeholders at central level is scheduled to take place in Bucharest on 12 March 2008. The lobby is aiming to trigger an educational act that takes into consideration the early intervention and the inclusive education, in terms of concepts, education and services providers and basic rights.

- Products: information and training materials

We offer a collection of more than 10 books written by professionals in “Speranta” on different topics: Autism, ADHD, Asperger syndrome, challenging behaviour, learning difficulties, Down’s syndrome, multiple disability, early intervention and so on. Additionally, there is the Inclusive Education Magazine for which we are preparing the 8th issue; parents and teachers benefit from a large variety of informative materials on paper support and on the IEN web site.

An impact assessment of the project was made through organizing the “Steps towards an Inclusive Education Network” on November the 16th 2006 in Timisoara. The event gathered over 200 participants including: resource teachers in the network, principals of the schools and kindergartens in the network, parents, representatives of local authorities and other social actors, representatives of local and national educational authorities, and mass-media representatives.

References and contacts:

Rehabilitation Foundation „Speranta” and The Educational Assistance and Resources Centre “Speranta”
17 Fagului Street,
Timisoara, Romania
Tel./Fax +40 256 495 005
www.copil-speranta.ro

Letitia Baba, psychologist, Director RF & EARC “Speranta”, alinabestea@rdslink.ro
Alina Bestea, psychologist, Coordinator of School Inclusion Department

Association Inclusion of the Brcko District, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Association Inclusion of the Brcko District in Bosnia and Herzegovina is a professional and humanitarian, non-profit and non-political organization established in 2002 with the goal of aiding the inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities into society. The Association focuses on preventing the institutionalisation of children and people with intellectual disabilities, integration of children and youth in regular elementary and high schools, education of parents and community about their rights, and education of teachers in schools. The Association opposes segregation and advocates for changes in the legislation to ensure that people with intellectual disabilities are not in a position inferior to other members of society.

Strengths:

- Peer support and relationships
- Choice for parents and young people
- Changing attitudes of teachers and other staff

Based on the work of Association Inclusion there are no more special classes and special schools in Brcko District, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Around 400 children with intellectual disabilities are integrated in regular kindergartens, primary and secondary schools with adjusted individual curricula and professional support. In order to be able to address the special educational needs of these children, there are more than 750 teachers in Brcko District who need to receive training on inclusive approaches to education. In year 2006, 140 teachers and other professionals in two large schools have been trained to provide support to children with intellectual disabilities in regular classes. In year 2007 around 114 teachers from two other schools were professionally upgraded.

Around 40 children with severe intellectual disabilities are included in regular primary schools. Currently there are 9 children with severe intellectual disabilities who have finished their primary schooling and should start attending secondary school with their peers and gain independent living skills and some occupational training.

The Plan of Association Inclusion for children with severe intellectual disabilities is to continue their occupational training and secure employment through a Day Activities Program. In addition to training teachers and working with all the children in the classroom, they also work on raising awareness of the general public as well as stakeholders on the right of children with intellectual disabilities to inclusive education.

Special educators in cooperation with social workers, teachers and speech pathologists provide professional support to children with intellectual disabilities. After the training by Association Inclusion they continue working in schools, kindergartens etc. with children with intellectual disabilities. Together with teachers, special educators identify, evaluate, observe and determine the most applicable type of education for each child. They follow each child's adjusted individual curriculum, help teachers find and develop the most suitable didactic material. Furthermore, special educators also work with parents. They provide professional support to all parents and they also include parents in developing adjusted individual curricula for their child.

Based on advocacy efforts and through the work of Association Inclusion Brcko District a new *Law on Education* was introduced in 2003. The law states that children with mild disabilities should attend regular schools and children with intellectual disabilities can be integrated full time, part time or can attend special groups in regular schools. In 2004, the pedagogy standard was implemented in the whole Brcko District. The pedagogy standard is sub-Act to the Education Law. It requires lower numbers of children in groups which have children with learning disabilities (18 children in total). In 2005, the Instruction on obligation and way of forming professional teams in all schools was also implemented in the whole Brcko District.

The purpose of the project "Integration of children with intellectual disabilities into regular schools (2007)" was to hold inclusive education seminars for 130 teachers in 2 schools and to establish a model of support for children with more severe intellectual disabilities attending regular secondary schools. At the same

time, the project plans were to continue providing support to teachers working with children with intellectual disabilities who have already attended inclusive education training seminars, thereby ensuring that 400 children with intellectual disabilities can realize their right to inclusive education.

The project activities were implemented by experts (members of the NGO professional support team as well as 3 guest lecturers from the University of Zagreb) and included the participation of directors of schools as well as representatives of the Brcko District government. The training participants received a training manual (approximately 250 pages with theoretical background and practical examples).

When we started implementing this project we expected to be faced with negative attitudes of children in classrooms and their teachers. For example, some teachers had difficulties in accepting that with some children progress is slow, and that some children will not learn how to read and write. This is why we focused on training and supporting teachers. We also managed to secure financial resources to provide additional financial incentives to teachers working with children with intellectual disabilities. The teachers felt secure and supported and had a very positive influence on the remaining children in their classrooms who accepted the children with disabilities.

One of the barriers we did not account for was resistance from parents of children with more severe intellectual disabilities. Many of them believed that their child was incapable of attending regular schools, and expressed fear that their child would be ridiculed. This was because for years experts convinced them not to expect anything from their children. At the same time, a special school operates in the Tuzla Canton (neighbouring to Brcko District) which, for some parents served as a reinforcement that their children can not attend a regular school. We worked with these parents and built a trusting relationship and ensured them that support would be available to their child in school.

Maybe the biggest barrier to successful integration of children with intellectual disabilities is the lack of understanding of integration and inclusion by organizations from both the governmental and non-governmental sector. In order to overcome this barrier we are continuously working on sharing a common vision of inclusion by establishing models of good practice and promoting the positive outcomes of integration in the media.

Achievements

- Children with intellectual disabilities can realise their right to education in regular schools in their local communities (established legal framework)
- Teachers working in primary schools in Brcko District were trained to implement inclusive education and received support in their work.
- The model of support for children with more severe intellectual disabilities attending regular secondary schools was established.
- An Inclusive Education Support Team was formed in one secondary school which provided support to students with more severe intellectual disabilities and their families.
- The public and stakeholders became aware of the right of children with intellectual disabilities to attend regular schools.
- The project activities were evaluated by a team comprising teachers and special educators from the schools, members of our NGO and representatives of the Department of Education.
- For children with intellectual disabilities in Brcko District, being able to attend regular schools in their neighbourhoods with their peers had a positive impact on their quality of life. A positive impact was evident in emotional well-being, feeling of acceptance, social interactions, self-determination and self-image. At the same time, tolerance and acceptance was developed in children without disabilities who attend classes which include children with intellectual disabilities.

References and contacts:

Association Inclusion of the Brcko District, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Fehim Halilovic

Gornji Rahic, BB 76207 Brcko District

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Tel.: +387 49 512 650

inkluzija2005@yahoo.com

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Inclusion Europe

The European Association of Societies
of Persons with Intellectual Disabilities
and their Families

Inclusion Europe is a non-profit organisation. We campaign for the rights and interests of people with intellectual disabilities and their families. Our members are national organisations from 36 countries.

People with intellectual disabilities are citizens of their country. They have an equal right to be included in society, whatever the level of their disability. They want rights, not favours.

People with intellectual disabilities have many gifts and abilities. They also have special needs. They need a choice of services to support their needs.

Inclusion Europe focuses on three main policy areas:

- Human Rights for people with intellectual disabilities
- Inclusion in society
- Non-discrimination

Inclusion Europe co-ordinates activities in many European countries, including projects, conferences, working groups and exchange meetings. It responds to European political proposals and provides information about the needs of people with intellectual disabilities. Inclusion Europe advises the European Commission and members of the European Parliament on disability issues.

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For more information about PROGRESS see:

http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/progress/index_en.html



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Inclusion Europe

Galeries de la Toison d'Or - 29 Chaussée d'Ixelles #393/32 - B-1050 Brussels

Tel. : +32-2-502 28 15 - Fax : +32-2-502 80 10

secretariat@inclusion-europe.org - www.inclusion-europe.org

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