

Chapter-by-Chapter Study Guide

Facilitator's Guide to *More Inclusion Strategies That Work!* *Aligning Student Strengths With Standards* by Toby J. Karten

Part I. Fundamentals of Honoring Potentials and Strengths of Students and Teachers

Chapter 1. Concentrating on Students' Strengths and Curriculum Standards

Summary With Practical Applications

Students in inclusive classrooms are often assigned tasks that do not tap into their strengths and coursework that ignores their interests or abilities. Metacognition and self-advocacy are essential inclusive elements for teachers and students. Being cognizant of individual students' interests and strengths allows students to shine, both emotionally and academically. Rather than just answering specific questions related to the facts presented in Chapter 1, educators are given activities that allow them to creatively apply the knowledge through synthesis and evaluation to expand and stretch their own classroom repertoires. Students in inclusive classrooms need the opportunity to display their learning in a variety of ways as well, to develop better critical thinking skills across the curriculum. Although an inclusion template does not exist, the implementation of sound basic educational principles ensures that classrooms are designed to not only welcome but also enhance the

inclusion of students with and without disabilities to experience successful outcomes. Research supports the ongoing merits of inclusion, but the teachers are the ones who ultimately transfer this research into effective classroom practices with accommodations designed to help but not enable their students.

Discussion Questions

1. Can disabilities have positive characteristics?
2. What can teachers do to maximize the strengths of students with disabilities, yet not sacrifice the learning of other students?
3. Do accommodations or modifications jade the resulting learning outcomes?
4. How can curriculum standards be applied to classroom lessons, if all students do not have the same entering prior knowledge?

Activities

● *a. Strategically Starting With Strengths*

Time: 30 minutes

Materials: Index cards

Facilitator gives each participant an index card to anonymously create an individualized list of his or her top five strengths, for example, perceptive, mechanical, philosophical, analytical, compassionate, and organized. The facilitator then collects the index cards, shuffles them, and distributes one to each person in the group. The next step is to ask each participant to decide what profession he or she thinks the person on the card would best be suited for, and a profession that would probably be the worst choice for that person. If a person has his or her own card, then advise that person to be self-reflective and not share that information with others until the end of the activity. Collectively, the class shares the accommodation or modification choices. The group draws conclusions about how sometimes it's difficult to expect people and students to conform to assigned job responsibilities or classroom standards.

● *b. Stepping Into the Classroom: Best Versus Worst Scenarios*

Time: 30–40 minutes

Materials: *More Inclusion Strategies That Work! Aligning Student Strengths With Standards* (pages 6–25)

Ask participants to TYP (Talk to Your Peer/Partner). Together, each pair selects positive characteristics of two disabilities listed on pages 6–25 and writes classroom dialogue that tells the academic, behavioral, and physical reactions of students during a given lesson

on _____. Allow participants to fill in the blanks to select their own subject, based upon personal experiences, population, age group, and applicability. If the group is a larger one, then participants can TTTQ (Talk to Their Quartet or Quintet) and role-play a classroom scenario/dialogue for students, teachers, or coteachers to capitalize on students' strengths in inclusive classrooms.

● **c. Inclusion PAYS**

Time: 30–40 minutes

Materials: *More Inclusion Strategies That Work! Aligning Student Strengths With Standards* (page 39 and research quotes as outlined on pages 4–25), journals

Educators follow instructions delineated on page 39 and choose two quotes about students with differences and/or the standards from Chapter 1. If participants prefer to have more room to write their responses, they can divide lined paper into three columns, heading the first with a letter *P* to paraphrase the quotes; the second column with the letter *A* to analyze the quotes, saying whether they agree or disagree; and the third column with the letter *Y*, standing for you, and how the quotes relate to their teaching practices. The facilitator can also share other education and journal articles to involve the group in additional district-specific curriculum research.

Self-Reflection and Journal Writing Prompts

● **d. Inclusion Poem**

Do you think that sometimes classroom activities are unsuited for students with disabilities? Why does a deficit paradigm limit the potentials of students with disabilities? Read the *Inclusion Poem* in the preface (page ix) and tell if you think it has applicable classroom merits. Could you add your own stanza to the poem?

Resources for Extending Your Learning

The following books, organizations, and online sites are recommended for extending your learning in the areas of strengths, standards, and disabilities.

Council for Exceptional Children. (2003). *What every special educator must know: Ethics, standards, and guidelines for special educators*. Arlington, VA: Author.

Gregory, G., & Chapman, C. (2002). *Differentiated instructional strategies: One size doesn't fit all*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Klass, P., & Costello, E. (2003). *Quirky kids*. New York: Ballantine Books.

National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities. <http://www.nichcy.org>.