

InCEd

Inclusive Education

(Un)Manual

Steps Towards
Inclusive Learning
Environments



Erasmus+



erasmus+ and
european solidarity
corps agency



2023

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Fragments of the manual are free to use in any form of educational activity, with acknowledgement of the source provided.



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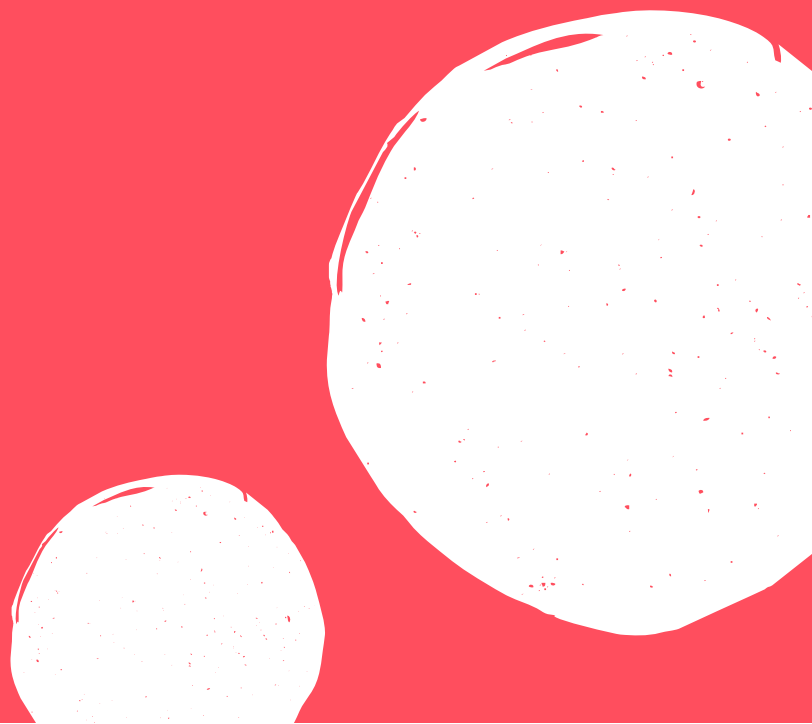


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**“If you
do not
change
direction,
you may
end up
where
you are
heading.”**

—Lao Tzu





1 INTRODUCTION

ABOUT THE PROJECT

Integration, inclusion, inclusive education and acceptance. These are frequently used buzzwords nowadays, by some people intuitively, and by others quite consciously. Most of us definitely want to live in a fair, equal society, but even more than equality, we need equity.

A constant desire to move forward led us to create a project titled “**IncED: Inclusive Education**” under the Erasmus+ programme.

The project aims to develop a practical manual for educators, as well as a concrete toolbox to get “hands on practice”. With five actors in the education and youth work fields from Estonia, Latvia, Portugal and Spain, we have engaged in this inclusive equity journey combining our expertise and experience. A combination of all our strengths, eliminating our weaker points.

To be more specific, the objectives of the project are:

- To demystify terms of mixed-ability and inclusive collaboration and highlight it as an opportunity rather than a challenge.
- To adapt existing and develop new educational games and methods for working in mixed-ability groups that can be used in non-formal and formal learning contexts for young people aged 13-18 years of age.
- To promote inclusive education among different types of stakeholders.
- To enrich the youth work and education fields with quality ready to use non-formal learning activities easily adaptable to mixed-ability groups.

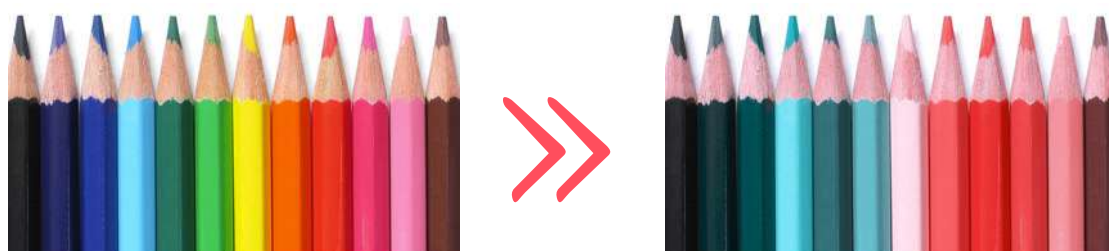
THE STORY BEHIND OUR VISUAL IDENTITY

"**Inclusive Education**" (IncEd) is a project about accessibility and inclusion in the education and youth work fields, and we wanted to make sure to put as much attention as possible into all details that can help us "walk the talk":

OUR COLORS

When looking at the colors that compose our visual identity, one might think that it is just one more palette of pastel tones, transmitting warmth, harmony or calmness. However, these colors have even more meaning behind: they are the ones that people with "tritanopia" perceive when looking at the usual "rainbow palette".

People affected by tritan color blindness confuse blue with green and yellow with violet. This is because the S-cones are completely missing and only long- and medium-wavelength cones are present.



OUR TYPOGRAPHY






OpenDyslexic is an open sourced font created to increase readability for readers with dyslexia. Letters have heavy weighted bottoms to indicate direction, so readers are able to quickly figure out which part of the letter is down, helping to recognize the correct letter, and keep the brain from rotating them around.

More information: <https://opendyslexic.org/>

ABOUT THIS MANUAL

The main aim of this manual is to encourage participation of young people with fewer opportunities and special needs in active social life and for the organizers of all kinds of social events not to be afraid of working with mixed ability groups.

In order to achieve this, in this manual you will find:

-  Our vision of inclusion in simple words with good and bad examples from personal experience and with a sense of humor.
-  Tools for inclusion and capacity-building.
-  Further info about the needs and potential of a mixed-ability group.
-  Examples of best practices to improve the quality of inclusive youth projects.
-  Concrete steps to become a successful organizer of inclusive events.



The image shows three pages from the manual. A red arrow labeled 'Case stories' points to the middle page, which contains a 'CASE STORY' section. A red arrow labeled 'Interactive content' points to the left page, which contains a '2 QUIZ' section. A red arrow labeled 'Tips from practice' points to the right page, which contains a 'TIP FROM PRACTICE' section.

NB!

This is not an academic work, but a compilation of experiences and cases from our practice.

**“The dream
begins with a
teacher who
believes in you,
who tugs and
pushes and
leads you to the
next plateau,
sometimes
poking you with
a sharp stick
called truth.”**

—Dan Rather



ABOUT THE ORGANIZATIONS BEHIND

So who is this "we"?

We are five educational actors from Estonia, Latvia, Portugal and Spain. A team of superheroes with very different superpowers who intend to create a very motivating, practical and useful manual for you.



NGO Vivere school (Estonia)

(Project coordinator)



www.viverekool.ee

www.facebook.com/viverekool

NGO Vivere school is a young and experimental organization that was conceived in 2018 to realize a long-held dream: the opening of an inclusive private school in Tallinn.

The concept of the school is to create an inclusive learning environment and to develop a support system including the development of new innovative methodologies and training for teachers and professionals working with children with accessibility needs.



Shokkin Group International (Estonia)



www.shokkin.org

www.facebook.com/shokkinint

Shokkin Group International is a network of youth organizations composed of youth workers, youth leaders, youth organizations and young people around Europe founded in 2015 in Estonia as a result of strong international bonds and cooperation history between grassroots youth organizations.

SGI contributes to development of training and non-formal learning activities and methods in youth work, also by offering open source and self-published educational games, expert articles and manuals for youth workers. The organization equips practitioners from the youth field with innovative methods, materials and hands-on experience.



Cesis Berzaine Primary School (Latvia)



www.csip.lv

www.facebook.com/CesuMezaSkola

Cesis Berzaine is a school with more than 300 pupils enrolled in various educational programmes. Historically a school only for children with special educational needs, their main value is human dignity: teachers who understand children's daily and future needs, believe in each child's ability to achieve, inspire and support children on their own way.

In the last few years the school has also opened a primary education programme offering neurotypical children inclusive education.



PRODUÇÕES FIXE
FORMAÇÃO / EDUCATING
CRIAÇÃO DE JOGOS EDUCATIVOS

Produções Fixe (Portugal)



www.facebook.com/ProducoesFixe

Produções Fixe is a small enterprise with social responsibility created in 2010 with a clear focus on several pillars: training in social and youth work (local, national and international), design, development and production of educational tools, community building, cultural heritage and creation of employability.

Over the past years, **Produções Fixe** have specialized themselves in the development of game-based learning tools on social relevant topics, and have intensified actions in the field of creating employability at local level by creating spaces where technology, digitalization and local resources (both human as material wise) go hand in hand.



Ticket2Europe (Spain)



www.ticket2europe.eu

www.facebook.com/ticket2europe

Ticket2Europe is an organization founded in 2016 in Spain with the mission to open up new paths and development possibilities for young people.

With a team of passionate and motivated people with the common dream of spreading the word about the magic of international experiences, its activities and projects focus on areas related to European values and topics such as human rights, social inclusion, peace building or youth employability.

ABOUT THE FUNDING BODIES



Erasmus+ is the EU's programme to support education, training, youth and sport in Europe. The programme places a strong focus on social inclusion, the green and digital transitions, and promoting young people's participation in democratic life.

Erasmus+ has opportunities for people of all ages, helping them develop and share knowledge and experience at institutions and organisations in different countries. The programme also offers opportunities for a wide range of organisations, including universities, education and training providers, think-tanks, research organisations, and private businesses.

Detailed information on these opportunities, including eligibility criteria, is available in the Erasmus+ Programme Guide.

More information: ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/about_en



To bring Erasmus+ as close as possible to the beneficiaries and make sure it works well across different countries, the EU works with National Agencies to manage the programme.

The National Agencies are based in Programme Countries and their role involves providing information on Erasmus+, selecting projects to be funded, monitoring and evaluating Erasmus+, supporting applicants and participants, working with other National Agencies and the EU, promoting Erasmus+ and sharing success stories and best practices.

“Theory is when you know everything and nothing works; practice is when everything works and nobody knows why. Here we combine theory with practice: nothing works and nobody knows why.”

—Albert Einstein





2 QUIZ

SOME ACTION BEFORE READING

Quizzes typically stimulate retrieval practice, which is the process of going back and recalling knowledge that has already been mastered by learners.

We invite you to give the following quiz a brave try. Some answers might confuse you, but don't worry, we are just looking for the most correct answer(s) out of the options offered.

Q1. What is social exclusion?

- Income poverty only.
- An increased social polarization between neighborhoods.
- A dynamic process that takes place over time.
- A phenomenon having random distribution across individuals or households.

Q2. What is the difference between inclusion and equity in education?

- There is no difference between these terms.
- Inclusive education is a principle that supports and welcomes diversity amongst all learners.
- Equity in the education process means the access: the probability that children from different social groups enter the education system.
- Equity means that everybody is treated the same way.

Q3. Why are Human Rights and inclusion closely linked?

- Inclusion is one of the basic Human Rights.
- They are linked only when it comes to people with disabilities.
- They are different concepts, they are not linked.
- Because inclusion means assuring that all support systems are available to those who need such support, as a civic responsibility, not a favor.

Q4. What do you think *protected characteristics* can be?

- Gender reassignment and sexual orientation.
- Planning events taking into consideration early birds and night owls.
- Disability and age.
- Owning real estate.

Q5. "Inclusive education" means:

- Multigrade schooling environment.
- All young people participate and are welcomed. It is age-appropriate and regular, where they are supported to play, learn, contribute and participate in all aspects.
- People with special needs can attend some classes along with the usual.
- Everyone has equal conditions and equal treatment.

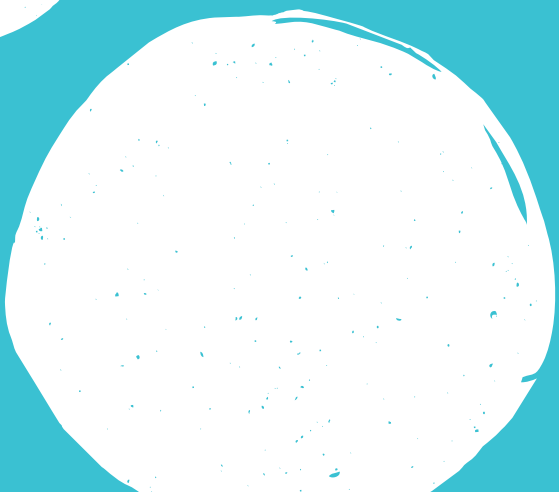
Q6. What are the benefits of inclusive education?

- The main benefit is for those who have developmental features at the expense of the rest.
- Everyone wins, an inclusive environment is very developing and enriching.
- It is a utopia, no one benefits from inclusion in general.
- The state wins by reducing the level of education for inclusive groups.

In one way or another, you will find the answers in our texts and in your thoughts. Or, at least, in our hearts. Enjoy reading!

**“Knowing is not
understanding.
There is a great
difference
between knowing
and understanding:
you can know a lot
about something
and not really
understand it.”**

—*Charles Kettering*





3 WHAT IS INCLUSIVE EDUCATION?

UNDERSTANDING THE CONCEPT OF INCLUSION

We can definitely say about inclusion that it depends on and affects everyone. **Each of us** can be the creator of an inclusive, diverse, accessible world, in which there can be a worthy place for everyone.

We will not enumerate here the advantages of a diverse and just world, but **each of us**, consciously or not, every day or once a month, can **do small things** that can make the environment and our rereationships more inclusive.

Very often, in order for the world around us to become more inclusive, we simply need to be more flexible and move away from stigma.

Most of the time it doesn't take much effort from us. Two easy examples? **Read.** In general, about everything, but in particular, at least a little about inclusion, differences, diagnoses, gender, etc. **Chat** with new people. Equally. Learn, notice for yourself how people differ from you.



CASE STORY

When gathering children for your child's birthday, think about whether fun will be available for everyone. When preparing a story for colleagues, consider whether to cope with the terminology or whether it is worth finding more accessible forms of presentation. Having met the unusual behavior of a person on the street, do not give a negative assessment. Do not set restrictions when choosing a colleague according to any criteria other than professional ones.

In general, it is important to understand inclusion in the broad context of different social groups (national minorities, gender, etc.). Throughout this manual, for instance, we will talk more about people with disabilities.

Society's readiness for change and the exclusion of exclusions, stigmas and barriers has implications for the idea of inclusion. However, inclusion implementation requires a general understanding of what inclusion actually is. We shall begin by defining *inclusion*.

Inclusion is seen as a universal human right. The aim of inclusion is to embrace all people irrespectively of race, gender, disability, medical or other need. It is about giving equal access and opportunities and getting rid of discrimination and intolerance (removal of barriers), and it affects all aspects of public life. Conversely, this means that young people with disabilities have the right to participate in any kind of youth projects.

According to The Harris Poll¹ research, people with disabilities are considered the largest minority in the world.

Social inclusion is the process of improving the terms on which individuals and groups take part in society: improving the ability, opportunity, and dignity of those disadvantaged on the basis of their identity.

This means that when planning resources, we must minimize those that cannot become part of the processes and are marginalized. As much as possible, all services offered by structures should be developed taking into account the diversity of life situations and identities.

Social inclusion is the origin of the variety by the "norm", and diversity is an opportunity by which everyone can enrich their social life.

Ask yourself what is "normal"?

If you take a specific example, it turns out that for different people the same thing will be both "norm" and "not norm". For example, eating frog meat is "not norm" for most countries, but French people will definitely challenge this statement.

1. <https://theharrispoll.com>



CASE STORY

Sometimes we see a physical difference between a person and us and it seems to us that this person is not like everyone else. It seems like this person is surely unhappy and it is necessary to feel sorry for it. In this situation, we should stop and ask ourselves if this is really true for this person and if it is really pity the feeling is expected from us.

On the other hand, not all types of medical disabilities are visible to the eye and obvious to others. Another important question is whether all people with disabilities should lead a healthy lifestyle, not have bad habits, etc. just because they are already "not healthy"? Can we assume that they are free to decide for themselves?

Inclusive education means that ALL young people participate and are welcomed in and by youth work and other educational settings, this being age-appropriate and regular, where they are supported to play, learn, contribute and participate in all aspects.

For this, more importance needs to be given to the way we develop and design our infrastructures, as well as the way we plan our activities and programmes.

Inclusive education is organized in a mutual and common learning environment where young people from different backgrounds and with different abilities effectively meet their needs in a responsive, respectful, supportive and accepting manner.

In contrast to nowadays very common 'separated' groups, inclusive education does not create settings where young people with other abilities or other special needs learn and grow up in isolation.

Does it sound like a tale about the world of pink unicorns? The way it is! But you can handle it if you want to. In many cultures that want to stop excluding individuals with specific needs, inclusive education has emerged as a critical objective.

Understanding who is **included**, who is **segregated**, and who is **excluded** from processes is crucial for addressing issues related to access and fairness in educational institutions.

Although there is not a single definition of special educational needs used throughout the EU², most definitions cover a wide range of disabilities, including physical, mental, cognitive, and educational limitations. However, special educational needs' target group also incorporates gifted and/or exceptionally gifted pupils.

Is it difficult to combine neurotypical students and those who require additional support in one space? Yes, it is often very difficult. Is it worth it? Again, yes, it greatly enriches everyone involved.

Imagine that we are talking about our own child. About our very beautiful and most beloved baby. Do we want our baby to know what kindness, mutual assistance, equality, acceptance are? Do we want all these wonderful qualities to be our child's skills? Can someone get a skill without practice? And do we want our child to practice all this?

Then, we must create a space where every child can develop and receive such skills. It should be as safe as possible, a thoughtful space, where there is support in case of need. This is a reasonably planned space for learning in a mixed-ability group.

In the strict sense of the word, any ordinary modern education is inclusive. Boys and girls study in the classes, children of different skin colors, from families belonging to different religious denominations from different parts of the city or from the suburbs, sometimes even children who do not know the language taught at school well. More and more classes are being attended by children of different ages. Now attention is focused more on building one's own educational trajectory than on "combing" everyone with the same brush.

Nevertheless, the term "inclusive education" is still quite scary.

2. European Commission, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, Access to quality education for children with special educational needs, Publications Office, 2019, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2767/440746>



CASE STORY

At school we dedicate a lot of time and energy to creating an atmosphere. We often receive not very pleasant comments that we should care more about the quality of education, and not about the environment. However, what we noticed after some years is that in the appropriate atmosphere, children do not cheat. They are not lazy. They just don't need to. They are interested in their own results and it is interesting to know in what direction they need to develop, if they want to.

We are convinced that this is due to the creation of the atmosphere. Let's just remember **Maslow's pyramid**: in order for me to become curious about everything in the world must be satisfied my **physiological needs** (air, food, drink, shelter, clothing, warmth, sex, sleep), **safety needs** (personal security, resources, health, property), **love and belongingness needs** (friendship, family, sense of connection, intimacy), and **esteem needs** (respect, self-esteem, status, recognition, strength, freedom). Only after there will be space for **Self-actualization needs** (the desire to become the most that one can be).



Figure 1. Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Retrieved from McLeod, S. A. (2022). Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Simply Psychology. www.simplypsychology.org/maslow.html

What do we gain if we choose it?

Every year, the concept of "psychological norm" is increasingly blurred. In an aggressive information environment, it is easy to lose sight of "what is good" and "what is bad". The psyche is coping worse and worse with the enormously increased amount of data, and we are becoming more vulnerable, irritable. As stress levels increase, our ability to accept other people, to recognize their right to a special lifestyle, decreases.

What is the way out of this situation?

Communicate with people who are different from you. If we teach our children to interact with peers who are different from them, then we will increase their ability to socialize. As a result, we will improve their mental state. They will not be afraid and reject others, which means that they themselves will become more calm and confident. After all, acceptance is a guarantee of one's own emotional balance.



CASE STORY

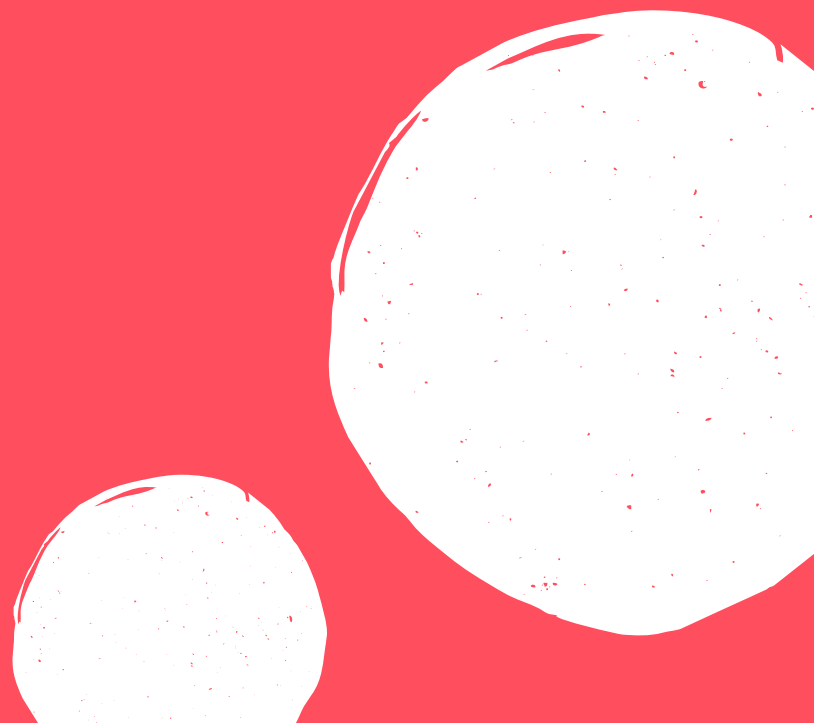
Once, at a language lesson with teenagers, we were working with the topic of specialization of schools and other educational institutions, for example, where they have studied before or plan to enter.

At the end of the lesson, we asked what is the specialization of our school? In a class of 14 teenagers from 14 to 16 years old, no one knew what to answer. We said that we have an inclusive school and we are proud of it. And the students said that we just have a cool school where everyone can be themselves and they never treated differences as something special.

By the way, the students in the class come from five different countries, one girl does not speak, there is a classmate with mental disabilities, a wheelchair user, and their class teacher wears a hijab.

**“Watch your words,
they become actions.
Watch your actions,
they become habits.
Watch your habits,
they become character.
Watch your character,
it becomes your
destiny.”**

—Lao Tzu





4 TERMINOLOGY

As a little warm-up before our chapter on terminology, we invite you to scan the QR code and access a [Mentimeter](#) where you can contribute to the definition of the word *inclusion*. When you think about inclusion, what are the three most important words that come to mind? Once you do so, you can also see which words are significant to others:



Terminology is such an academic word that often makes the reader feel bored. Usually, sessions about terminology in our projects before they start cause bewilderment and heated debates among the participants ("Why is this a separate topic for 1.5 hours?").

Let's figure out together how terminology is important.

From small everyday decisions to big steps that change everything, our life is made up of big and small choices that we make every day. One of these decisions is whether to use sometimes more cumbersome but correct terminology when talking about people with **accessibility needs**. Is the result worth my efforts?

The words spoken by a person are not just a sound, they are images that have a direct impact on our subconscious. When hearing a word, an image instantly appears in our mind. Try it yourself: if we say, or even better, write the word "cat", immediately before your eyes, floating out of the subconscious, an image of a cat appears.

Let's add the word "wet" to the word "cat", and the picture instantly changes. Why does this happen? Because each word is either a **picture** that we have seen before, or an **emotion experienced once**.

There is something behind every word! And this experience, which is *behind* the word, has the wisdom of the ages. There is a branch of the science of linguistics called semantics that dictates that **words that are close in meaning can still have big semantic differences**.

The way we call people with disabilities has an undeniable impact on our perception of the world. Over time, the language develops, and terms that a few years ago have been used ubiquitously, are beginning to be questioned. Therefore, it is important to explain what language and terms can be used when talking about people with disabilities or discussing related issues. For example, about a year ago it was OK to use the term “special needs”³. Now it has changed.

The use of inappropriate words can lead people to feel rejected or resentful, and may become a barrier to full and meaningful participation of people with disabilities.

At the same time, inclusive language is an important tool in the fight against ableism and rooted manifestations of this phenomenon. Manifestations of ableism take many forms, including the use of offensive and disrespectful words and expressions.

There are many different barriers and features and of course, it is impossible to know the correct terminology for all groups of participants. However, there are **five general rules** which, by knowing and using, will prevent you a lot of unpleasant situations.

1. THE "PERSON FIRST" PRINCIPLE:

It means that the person themselves is called first, and only then, their diagnosis. For example, instead of "autistic" you should say "a child with an autism spectrum disorder." Instead of "dyslexic" or "stutterer" use the language that puts the person first: “person with dyslexia” or “people with a stutter”.

When we label someone as autistic, schizophrenic, or dyslexic, we only hear a diagnosis. It becomes much more difficult for us to perceive a personality that exists separately from the attributes of the disease and is much more multifaceted than the image that the label allows us to see. Therefore, terms such as "autistic" or "down" are fundamentally wrong: we are always dealing with a person, not with a diagnosis.

3. "The term 'special needs' should no longer be used in relation to disability. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has no mention of 'special needs'. The term accentuates ableism, segregation and hierarchies. In an inclusive society, the needs of people with disabilities shouldn't be considered as 'special'. It is better to talk about 'accessibility needs'. Karina Chupina, Trainer & Consultant, Expert on Disability, Youth, Diversity & Inclusion.

2. AVOID LABELING AND STEREOTYPES:

Disability is part of everyday life and reflects the diversity of people. There is no need to dramatize disability and its significance should not be exaggerated. As a result, people with disabilities should not unjustifiably be portrayed as role models or "superhumans".

In addition, it is unacceptable to portray people with disabilities as vulnerable because of their disability. Vulnerability is the result of external circumstances and cannot be congenital or inherent in a particular person or group of people.

Avoid labeling and pointing out that a person has a disability. The focus should be on the person's skills or needs, and existing impairments should only be discussed when it allows for clarity or communicate important information.

3. DO NOT USE EUPHEMISMS:

Over time, some expressions have become widespread, replacing inappropriate words. However, many of these expressions reflect the misconception that disability is necessary in some way.

In this regard, avoid expressions such as "alternatively gifted", "sunny children", "butterfly children", "angel people", etc., since they are all euphemisms and may be considered patronizing or offensive. Euphemisms take us away from reality, making it possible to avoid talking about disability.

4. DISABILITY IS NOT A DISEASE OR A PROBLEM:

Disability is used in the context of abuse and illness in the **medical⁴ and moral⁵ model of disability**, while modern society strives to live with the use of the **social⁶ model**. This approach forms the idea of people with disabilities as objects of charity and compassion, thereby perpetuating negative attitudes and stereotypes about disability.

You can call people with disabilities patients only if they are medical care (and exclusively in this context).

4. In the medical model, disability is perceived as an impairment in a body system or function that is inherently pathological. From this perspective, the goal is to return the system or function to as close to "normal" as possible. <https://www.apa.org/ed/precollege/psychology-teacher-network/introductory-psychology/disability-models>

Be careful when using adjectives such as "normal", "healthy", or "full", especially in contrast. For example, it is wrong to say: "In this school healthy (normal) children and children with autism are taught. It would be more correct like this: "In this school, children with autism and normotypical (neurotypical) children are taught.

Try not to talk about disability as a space in which a person can be imprisoned (for example, "hostage of one's body") or beyond which a person can go (for example, "overcoming your disability"). The physical body and the human psyche cannot be considered in isolation from each other. Such expressions are manifestations of ableism and may be offensive to people with disabilities.

5. ALWAYS (BOTH IN WRITTEN AND SPOKEN LANGUAGE) USE ONLY RELEVANT TERMS:

Words used in everyday life do not cause problems for most people with disabilities. A person who uses a wheelchair may well be asked to go for a walk, and a hearing-impaired person can be asked if they have heard the latest news.

However, one should show caution when using set expressions and metaphors which include, for example, words like "blind" or "deaf". Under no circumstances should terms related to disability be used as insults or to express criticism. For example, you should avoid expressions such as "are you deaf?" when someone didn't hear us after several attempts. Likewise, one should not say that someone has Down syndrome or Parkinson's disease in order to indicate the irrationality of a person's actions or awkward actions.

5. In the moral model, disability is seen as having meaning about the person's or the family's character, deeds, thoughts, and karma. From this perspective, disability can carry stigma, shame and blame, particularly if the disability is seen as a mark of wrongdoing. Alternatively, disability can be seen as a sign of honor, faith or strength. <https://www.apa.org/ed/precollege/psychology-teacher-network/introductory-psychology/disability-models>

6. In the social model, disability is seen as one aspect of a person's identity, much like race/ethnicity, gender, etc. From this perspective, disability is believed to result from a mismatch between the disabled person and the environment (both physical and social). It is this environment that creates the handicaps and barriers, not the disability. <https://www.apa.org/ed/precollege/psychology-teacher-network/introductory-psychology/disability-models>

GLOSSARY

It's time to expand our universe. If you desire to feel its edges for yourself, then keep reading (or follow the [link/QR code](#) at the end of the glossary) to find several definitions and test yourself. Every definition has an answer, so there are no losers in this game!

A

ABILITY: the physical or mental power or skill needed to do something.

ABLEISM: an erroneous and preconceived notion of disability, based on the idea that the life of people with disabilities is not worth living.

ABNORMAL: different from what is usual or average, especially in a way that is bad.

ALTRUISM: when we act to promote someone else's welfare, even at a risk or cost to ourselves. Though some believe that humans are fundamentally self-interested, recent research suggests otherwise. Studies have found that people's first impulse is to cooperate rather than compete: toddlers spontaneously help others in need out of a genuine concern for their welfare.

C

CHILD WITH SPECIAL NEEDS: This is not a clinical term, and it is not considered an effective euphemism for, for example, defending the rights of children in the media.

The term denotes people who need special support under a particular law. For example, in 1997, the United States (where this term is legal) passed the Adoption and Safe Families Act, which focused on finding families for children with accessibility needs. Children with accessibility needs included those with medical, intellectual, and **psychological disabilities**.⁷ At that time, it became completely clear that it was much more difficult to find families for such children, so this law simplified the process of adopting children with "special needs" and provided families with the necessary services.

Another example can be the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, which guaranteed free, equal and adequate education to all children, including children with special needs, which included both gifted children and children with developmental disabilities. Therefore, it is important to understand that in some cases "special needs child" is a legal term and not a clinical one.

COLLABORATION: a mutually agreed action to achieve a goal by supporting each other, sharing experiences, helping to overcome difficulties and creating a positive and respectful working environment. Collaboration is implemented at different levels between different stakeholders such as learners, teachers, parents, educational management, educational institutions, local community.

COOPERATION LESSONS: different subject in which teachers cooperate planning the lesson according to the topic and curriculum.

D

DIFFERENTIATION: the methodological, didactic and organizational measures through which education and teaching are adapted to the abilities, motivations, interests and talents of a group of learners.

DIGNITY: the quality of a person that makes them deserving of respect, sometimes shown in behaviour or appearance.

DISABILITY: any condition of the body or mind (impairment) that makes it more difficult for the person with the condition to do certain activities (activity limitation) and interact with the world around them (participation restrictions).

DISCRIMINATION: any differential treatment based on a ground such as "race", colour, language, religion, nationality or national or ethnic origin, as well as descent, belief, sex, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation or other personal characteristics or status, which has no objective and reasonable justification. (§ 7 of the EM to GPR 15).

7. Examples of psychological disabilities include manic depression, bi-polar disorder, schizophrenia, personality disorders, post traumatic stress disorders, anxiety disorders, delusional disorders, and eating disorders. Psychological disabilities can create barriers to education in different ways.

E

EMOTIONALLY SAFE ENVIRONMENT: a set of physical, mental, social surroundings, as well as attitudes and interactions between learners, teachers and staff of an educational institution in which:

- a) No one is harassed or psychologically influenced (threatened, humiliated, ignored, etc.);
- b) Everyone has a feeling of protection;
- c) Everyone is confident about themselves and others and free from suspicion.

(Authors' work based on the National Service for Quality in Education; 2020; American Psychological Association, 2020; Skujina, 2000).

EQUALITY: the provision of equal rights, opportunities and resources to every individual. Equity emphasises fairness and equal opportunities in access to social goods (clean air and water, health and education, etc.) and services. In the context of education, equality has several manifestations:

- a) **Equity of access:** the probability that children from different social groups enter the education system.
- b) **Equity of retention:** the probability that children from different social groups remain in the education system up to a certain level without dropping out.
- c) **Equity of achievement:** the probability that children from different social groups will learn the same content at a given point in the education system.
- d) **Long-term equity:** the probability that children from different social groups will live relatively equivalent lives after and as a result of education.

(Authors' elaboration based on UNESCO's International Institute for Educational Planning, 2020; AntiDefamation League: Fighting Hate for Good, 2020).

EQUITY: the provision of fair and just treatment. This principle is anti-discriminatory, it requires tolerance of different cultures, fair treatment of all, respect for human rights, equality of opportunity and diversity *(National Quality Service for Education, 2019b).*

EUPHEMISM: is a mild or indirect word or expression substituted for one considered to be too harsh or blunt when referring to something unpleasant or embarrassing.

EXCLUSION: an instance of leaving something or someone out. If you love someone to the exclusion of all others, they are the only one for you! Exclusion is closely related to some words that have a positive or negative feel.

G

GROUP WORK: a form of learning organisation in which learners are divided into groups to work together on a given problem or task according to a goal set by the teacher and/or the learners.

In group work, learners:

- a) plan their group activities;
- b) integrate the knowledge and skills needed to complete the task;
- c) cooperate to make decisions and achieve the goal;
- d) manage disagreements and challenges;
- e) critically analyze their performance;
- f) present the results of their work.

In group work, it is important to clearly state the goal of the activity, be accessible to students when they have questions or need learning resources, assess and summarize the outcomes with learners, and discuss how to apply those outcomes in practical settings.

H

HUMAN-CENTERED APPROACH TO EDUCATION: an education policy that emphasizes the value and importance of every human being, the right to develop, fulfill their potential, meet their needs and pursue their interests. A human-centered approach to education offers a holistic and learner-centered approach, without sacrificing the goals of the educational standards or the interests of the educational institution in achieving excellence in learning.

Human-centered education focuses on the holistic development of the individual, which is expressed in two ways: a) externally as concern for other people, values and greater involvement in various processes and activities; b) internally as greater self-awareness and self-direction, as well as greater care and responsibility for oneself.

(Authors' work based on *Human-Centered Education*, 2018; Gill & Thomson, 2017).

INCLUSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT: a set of physical, mental, social surroundings, as well as attitudes and interactions between the participants in the learning process, which provide equal educational opportunities for all learners regardless of their: a) abilities; b) needs; c) health status; d) social status; e) economic status; f) gender; g) race; h) nationality; i) religion; j) political beliefs; k) occupation; l) place of residence.

An inclusive learning environment is supportive, healthy, friendly, protective and rights-based for learners and teachers. An inclusive learning environment provides learners with an approach that meets their specific needs, overcomes barriers to learning and reduces the risk of early school leaving.

An inclusive learning environment requires: a) sufficient qualified staff; b) sufficient resources; c) appropriate learning conditions. (Authors' compilation based on *National Service for Quality in Education*, 2019a; *UNICEF*, 2009; *UNESCO IBE*, 2013; *Skujina*, 2000).

INDIVIDUALIZATION: a principle of education and teaching which respects the particularities and uniqueness of each individual. It refers to the intention to select teaching and learning activities that are appropriate to the individual needs and interests of the learner.

Individualisation of learning and the development of individual learning and working resources take account of the individual learner's abilities and motivation, as well as the pace of learning and work. The teacher monitors the learner's learning based on a system of classes and lessons designed to cover specific topics. (*Böhm & Seichter*, 2018; *Bray & McClaskey*, 2013).

INTEGRATION: a two-way process with society, governments and local authorities facilitating, supporting and promoting the integration efforts of individuals. (*Information document for 6th cycle*).

L

LEARNED HELPLESSNESS: the behaviour exhibited by a subject after enduring repeated aversive stimuli beyond their control. It was initially thought to be caused by the subject's acceptance of their powerlessness: discontinuing attempts to escape or avoid the aversive stimulus, even when such alternatives are unambiguously presented.

In humans, learned helplessness is related to the concept of self-efficacy; the individual's belief in their innate ability to achieve goals. Learned helplessness theory is the view that clinical depression and related mental illnesses may result from a real or perceived absence of control over the outcome of a situation.

M

MARGINALIZATION: the act of placing a person or thing in a position of lesser importance, influence, or power; the state of being placed in such a position. Marginalization, also called social marginalization, occurs when a person or groups of people are less able to do things or access basic services or opportunities.

MENTAL RETARDATION: within the framework of the social model, there is the concept of **intellectual disability**.⁸ This is what used to be called "mental retardation". Today, this term is being abandoned, because many have begun to use the phrase "mentally retarded" in a pejorative sense, as a household insult. In such a situation, the term can no longer serve the interests of the people it used to name. Therefore, the term "intellectual disability" appeared instead. It does not have the task of being precise, because its purpose is not to make a diagnosis.

8. Intellectual disability (or ID) is a term used when a person has certain limitations in cognitive functioning and skills, including communication, social and self-care skills. These limitations can cause a child to develop and learn more slowly or differently than a typically developing child.

It applies to a heterogeneous group of mental development disorders regardless of etiology. It doesn't matter why a person has an intellectual disability, what matters is that it exists and affects the ability to function. Therefore, it is necessary to find the optimal forms of support, because they allow you to influence the level of a person's functioning, sometimes significantly raising it. In this regard, intellectual disability is not considered an absolute, unchanging feature.

MIXED-ABILITY GROUPS: refers to the practice of assigning students to classes or groups within classes randomly or on some basis other than ability or achievement (e.g., friendship, interest). Mixed ability groups can also be referred to as heterogeneous groups.

MOTIVATING LEARNING ENVIRONMENT: a set of physical, mental, social surroundings, material and technical resources, as well as attitudes and interactions between learners that initiate, activate and guide learners' activities and actions, encouraging them to learn and engage in the life of the educational institution. (Authors' work based on Martinson et al., 2015; National Service for Quality in Education, 2020; Skujiņa, 2000).

MUTUAL LEARNING: a process in which the parties involved in education (learners, teachers, educational leaders and staff, parents and different educational institutions) interact and cooperate to achieve a common goal, learning from each other and together.

Mutual learning at different levels (learner-learner; learner-educator; educator-educator, etc.) takes place both inside and outside the learning process. (Created by the authors based on Oganisian & Ozola, 2019).

N

NEGATIVE STEREOTYPING: the application to a member or members of a group of persons of a generalized belief about the characteristics of those belonging to that group that involves viewing all of them in a poor light regardless of the particular characteristics of the member or members specifically concerned. (§ 7 of the EM to GPR 15).

NEURODIVERSITY MOVEMENT: a movement that advocates for the rights of persons with developmental disabilities within the broader movement for the rights of people with disabilities.

In this movement, people with **high-functioning autism** began to play a leading role. Movement supporters with high-functioning autism believe that their diagnosis is not a pathology, but part of a person's normal neurocognitive variability, i.e. the result of natural variability in the genome and in the development of the central nervous system.

They coined the terms "**neurotypical**" and "**neuroatypical**" and advocate for the acceptance of neuroatypical people by society. They believe that it is not necessary to look for methods of correction and treatment to improve the lives of people with **autism** (at least for high-functioning people), but full acceptance by society and protection of rights. The leaders of the neurodiversity movement introduced the principle of "identity first" to replace the principle of "person first".

NORMAL: ordinary or usual, the same as would be expected.

O

OPPORTUNITY: an occasion or situation that makes it possible to do something that you want to do or have to do, or the possibility of doing something.

P

PERSONALIZATION: learners relate the learning process to their interests, needs, talents, passions and aspirations, actively participating in the planning and implementation of the learning process.

POSITIVE ACTION: includes temporary and proportionate measures or strategies to counter the effects of past discrimination, to eliminate existing discrimination and to promote equality of opportunity.

Stigmatization shall mean the labeling of a group of persons in a negative way. (§ 7 of the EM to GPR 15).

S

SEGREGATION: the act by which a (natural or legal) person separates other persons on the basis of one of the enumerated grounds without an objective and reasonable justification, in conformity with the proposed definition of discrimination. As a result, the voluntary act of separating oneself from other persons on the basis of one of the enumerated grounds does not constitute segregation. (§ 16 of the EM to GPR 7)

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING (SEL): the process of developing the self-awareness, self-control, and interpersonal skills that are vital for school, work, and life success.

SOCIAL INCLUSION: the process of improving the terms on which individuals and groups take part in society: improving the ability, opportunity, and dignity of those disadvantaged on the basis of their identity. This means that when planning resources, we must minimize those that cannot become part of the processes and are marginalized. As much as possible, all services offered by structures should be developed taking into account the diversity of life situations and identities.

SPECIAL EDUCATION: is general and vocational education for learners with accessibility needs and disabilities, or adapted to accessibility needs or disabilities.

Special education is intended to:

- a) facilitate learning for these learners;
- b) provide them with additional support;
- c) adapt pedagogical methods to their individual needs;
- d) provide special resources (e.g. specially trained staff, equipment, etc.);
- e) adapt, where appropriate, the content or learning objective of the curriculum. (Based on Latvijas Vēstnesis, 2020a; UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2009; UNESCO IBE, 2013).

SUPPORT MEASURES: targeted measures organised to achieve pedagogical, psychological, social or financial support for a learner identified as being at high risk of PMP in order to promote his/her ability and readiness to overcome the difficulties encountered. (ICSD, 2021).

SUPPORT STAFF: a group of specialists (educational psychologist, social pedagogue, speech therapist, special pedagogue, teaching assistant, school nurse, career counsellor) who provide pedagogical, psychological and social support to pupils. Support staff help learners with learning difficulties to develop better learning skills, and learners with special needs to overcome limitations in learning caused by health problems or developmental disabilities. (IK VD, 2021).

T

TALKING WALLS: a visual technique that allows small groups to work through tasks or problems, the results of which can then be shared with other participants. Talking Walls is ideal for two or more professions to explore their own and each other's roles and duties.

W

WORKING WITH GIFTED LEARNERS: whose potential is above average in one or more of these areas: intellectual, creative, social and physical.

It involved involves activities and methodological, didactic and organizational measures that adapt the learning process to the abilities, motivations, interests and talents of gifted learners in order to fully promote the development of their potential. The work with gifted learners should be carried out within the framework of differentiation of the learning process. (Developed by the authors, based on UNESCO IBE, 2013).

Take a look at our glossary in web version by scanning the QR code:



**“Challenges
are what
make life
interesting,
overcoming
them is
what makes
life
meaningful.”**

—Unknown





5 CHALLENGES

Challenges! Challenges?...

For sure, working with a mixed-ability group always offers us a way out of the comfort zone and challenges. You can treat it differently, be ready or not, but one thing is invariable: **it is the difficulties and challenges that enable us to develop and improve our competencies.**

In this chapter we have collected the main points that you should think about in advance. However... there will still be challenges!

1. GOAL SETTING

When working with any group objectively, it is very important to understand your **goals**. The reality is that often people either don't really want to work with a mixed-ability group (they have no choice, a tribute to modern trends, they forced them) or their big goal will somehow cope with the group in general. So the first challenge in such work is to determine the goals and objectives of the work. It is also important to determine what needs to be decided on your part, and what the group itself can put in place.

Be honest with yourself by replying to the following questions:

- *Why is it necessary to work with a mixed-ability group?*
- *Why am I doing this?*
- *What are the goals for myself and for the group?*
- *What tasks need to be completed?*



TIP FROM PRACTICE

And again about the atmosphere... It seems to us that it is very important when young people feel safe, relaxed and just good. This should always be the primary goal.

If we are talking about a short event (2 hours or 3 days), then we have a short time frame for its creation and here you can use an active physical environment, exercises that liberate and unite the group, imitations, role-playing tasks, work alternately in small and large groups with regular reflection.

If we are talking about a longer process, for example, about education in schools, universities, then depending on the background with which the members of this group came, the process of creating an atmosphere can take the whole year. But it is absolutely worth it.

And more about the result. **In a mixed-ability group, the result is almost always delayed, ambiguous or uneven.** That is the way it should be. Everyone has their own speed of perception, the level of readiness for information, the degree of desire to study or find out now.

It is very important that the person working with such a group does not expect otherwise. Expectations are the most common cause of burnout and disappointment.

2. PERSONAL DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE PARTICIPANT

When we talk about a mixed-ability group, we mean that among its members there are representatives of socially disadvantaged groups. This immediately implies that some (many?) of these participants may have dealt with bullying, physical and psychological abuse, addictions, etc. in the past. This is usually sufficient to influence the participant's behavior in new circumstances in an unfamiliar group.

In order to avoid the influence of past experience and skills on working in a group, it is worth asking yourself the following questions:

- *What do I know about the environment in which participants live?*
- *Am I aware of their traumatic experiences in the past?*
- *How can I make the atmosphere with the group as safe as possible?*
- *What methods can I use to reduce anxiety for the group as a whole and for each individual?*



TIP FROM PRACTICE

Times and morals are constantly changing. Today, neither the teacher nor the facilitator can use the same methods to gain authority from the group that were effective just some 5-7 years ago. Recent studies by American and European researchers tell us that it doesn't matter how handsome and smart you are when you walk into an audience or class, and it doesn't matter what cool, bright and unique things you bring with you. It is important whether you are ready to hear the group, share the pain and joy of everyone, ready to walk the path of learning together with sincere empathy and support.

This is especially true in the context of a mixed-ability group. The first thing that helps to defuse the situation and make the atmosphere friendly for the group is **humor**. Humor helps the participant experience positive emotions and thus relax. Always start with getting to know each other. Not from the formal, but from the present, where everything that the members of the group can tell about their interests, their experience, hobbies is important.

The simplest and most effective advice? Follow the group.

3. FINDING COMMON GROUND

Finding common ground with the mixed-ability group is quite a challenge (getting to know each participant to establish agreements, using inclusive language, etc.)

Each of the participants is special in any group, and in a mixed-ability group, they are especially special :). Ideally, in order to find a common language in a short time, a lot of preliminary work is required: studying all possible data about the participant, conversations with parents (if necessary and appropriate), individual conversations with the participant himself, etc.

It is important to answer the following questions:

- *What would be the common comfortable language for the group?*
- *What interests/features/usualities unite the group?*
- *What unites the group with me?*
- *What can be the link for the whole group in a difficult moment?*

It is important to remember that for international groups cultural differences will be an additional challenge.



TIP FROM PRACTICE

We talk a lot. In general and in particular with the members of the group. All together and alone. In small and large groups. It can be easy for some to talk about what really excites them, or what does not suit them in a group, while for others only the one on one will work.

It helps us to find moments that unite, and where we are different and can be a resource for another, and we adapt a lot. A recent study of the skills of teachers and youth workers in the Baltics showed that the large number of ready-made group work methods available on the Internet on various topics almost stole the ability to adapt different methods to a particular group.

Ready-made methods save us time, of course. But the ability to adapt is much more important. And one more thing: remember that we are always united and enriched by our differences.

4. TIME MANAGEMENT

Education is a process in which we have to achieve results. Yes, we can have a lesson/session/game plan to help us with that. However, different groups, especially mixed ability groups, may need different amounts of time to complete a particular task. This means that educators need to be flexible and have good time management skills.

The most common questions to be answered are:

- *How will we measure time? (visual schedule by minutes, hourglass, timer, etc.)*
- *For what stages of work can different amounts of time be needed for different participants?*
- *What will I do if any of the processes take more time than I expected?*



TIP FROM PRACTICE

Punctuality is a matter of respect and self-organization. When we talk about a mixed-ability group, this is doubly important. On the one hand, in such a group there is an intercultural concept of punctuality, punctuality as a way of expressing status or attitude, and on the other hand, there may be a painful importance of punctuality for people with mental disabilities. Thus, the issue of time management becomes even more significant.

Working with time limits is always a very creative and stressful process, as you constantly have to keep in mind the main plan for the lesson, as well as additional plans in case there is time left and vice versa, how to cut everything down if there is not enough time.

In the allocation of time in any class, it is important to arrange the elements and tools in order of importance. What definitely should be said and shown, and what can be sacrificed and transferred to the next lesson or self-study. When planning events, we always plan more time for various activities initially, always having a backup option in our pocket. Starting or finishing something out of time is only with the consent of the group. If a delay is unavoidable for significant reasons, inform the group and discuss the situation.

5. CREATING A SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

The presence of people with disabilities in the group is a resource in itself. Participants in the group overcome stereotypes in relation to each other, learn to help and support each other. However, creating such a safe and supportive environment is a separate task for educators. To solve it, an important place is occupied by team building and setting up work rules.

As a checklist, you can use the following questions:

- *What would be a comfortable, barrier-free and safe environment for this particular group?*
- *How can I create a secure environment with and for the group?*
- *What methods can I use to support participants form into a team?*



TIP FROM PRACTICE

Since groups are very different, despite all the preliminary efforts, sometimes we may not know all the features or limitations of each member of the group until the end (sometimes they themselves do not know this yet).

It is important to speak openly about the fact that feedback is very important to everyone in the group. The working principle: if you are not sure if it suits everyone: ASK!

And another very important point: What the group can do on its own, let it do on its own. It is important to create a safe environment and a platform for work and experimentation. In order to maximize the resource of such a group, you can offer joint free time with suggested (but not required) activities.

The group is well revealed by creative tasks, frequent changes in the place of work of the group. For example, never get the experience of accessibility of a city or transport or places of food to an ordinary person until he goes there with a person who has movement restrictions.

6. EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Building communication in a mixed-ability group is sometimes quite difficult. A lot depends on the experience of the participants, their level of anxiety or stress, their willingness to work together, etc. Effective communication is the process of exchanging ideas, thoughts, opinions, knowledge, and data so that the message is received and understood with clarity and purpose. When we communicate effectively, both the sender and receiver feel satisfied.

For communication to be effective, you need to think about:

- *Who am I communicating with? (age, race, ethnicity, gender, marital status, income, education level, subject knowledge, and professional experience)*
- *Which forms of communication should I prefer? (verbal and non-verbal, written, visual, listening)*
- *Is my message clear enough, correct, complete, concise and compassionate?*



TIP FROM PRACTICE

And yet again, about the atmosphere and the love of chatter.

It is important to create an atmosphere in which you would like to communicate with each other and possibly learn a lot about those with whom you are going to communicate: *What language do I choose to communicate? Is it really clear to the opponent or just me? Are we using the same terms? Do we put the same meaning in key terms?*

Things will go much more efficiently if you turn to the experience and knowledge that the members of the group already have. Yes, it may turn out to be different, but this only means that you need to give more different examples, which will undoubtedly enrich the experience of each of the group.

In our work, we always remember that people receive primary information through the organs of sight, hearing, taste, touch, smell, through the vestibular apparatus and the nervous system. Absolutely, in almost any conditions, you can use your hearing, while visualizing the process and often also making it tangible.

When working with mixed-ability groups, it is important to understand your participants. It will help to better understand their needs if there is a person in your team with equal requests. For example, if the group you work with has people with special health needs, then it would be good to have at least one person in your team who is in a similar situation. This will contribute to the disclosure by participants and their frankness, especially if there is some kind of situation concerning them.

7. BULLYING

More often than not, the problem of bullying in a mixed-ability group occurs in adolescents and people of mature age.

In the first case, due to inexperience, impulsiveness, hormonal instability, learned aggression, and so on, and in the second, more often because people do not understand what bullying is.

When the word bully is spoken to most of us, the brain draws pictures of physical violence or quarrels. However, bullying is far from just about that, and in silence and with a pleasant intonation, sometimes you can harm another person much more.

In order to avoid bullying in a group, it is important to know whether everyone understands the definition of the word. And it is even more important to understand that bullying is a kind of disease, it cannot be allowed to start. Otherwise, it will be very difficult to get rid of it. Prevention is the most important word in this topic.

A few check-up questions can be:

- *Do we all have the same understanding of bullying?*
- *Are there preventive moments during the entire training/course/year?*
- *How could I get the group itself to become my resource in the anti-bullying campaign?*



TIP FROM PRACTICE

Bullying is strictly speaking, a simplification of relations. If the world is black and white and some “others” can be distinguished by formal features, a favorable environment for bullying is created.

In our opinion, the most effective way to create an environment without bullying is to create an environment in which everyone sincerely believes in the thesis that we are all very different and this is our strength. And if this is clear to everyone, then any “other” and “different” do not raise questions. **Does it sound too easy to be true? It works, try it!**

There is an important point: often people get into a group with some experience of being in a bullying environment and it takes time for them to sincerely begin to share this thesis with you. Be patient and consistent, no concessions or exceptions on this matter.

Important note: all large social projects against bullying work at the level of prevention. When bullying already exists as a fact, it is necessary to deal pointwise and with specialists and instantly. All adults must work as a single team, with the same messages and requirements, not disregarding “little things”.

8. AGREEMENTS AND RULES

Some people, due to their characteristics, can sometimes behave in such a way that their behavior will reduce the quality of learning and interfere with others. Regardless of the particularities, we should try to enable the neighbor to exercise his rights to education, a calm and safe environment, and so on. In this sense, the issue of general discipline is very important.

To help you cope with such a challenge, you can ask yourself:

- *Do I understand what kind of behavior can be accepted by this group and me or not?*
- *Does the group have group rules/arrangements? Are all important points reflected there?*
- *How can I help the participant change behavior that bothers others/himself?*



TIP FROM PRACTICE

It is important to distinguish between behavior that you personally find unacceptable, or that public opinion makes it so, and behavior that really interferes with the group's work. For example, if someone in the group wants to walk during the class, and sometimes even jump, lie on the carpet, sit on the windowsill and look out the window, draw and listen to music with headphones, is this acceptable behavior? Of course yes! As long as it doesn't interfere with others.

Does this seem disrespectful to you, or do you think that he is distracting the rest from the activities? Most likely yes, but it is still acceptable behavior from a group member. However, if you start to ban all this (stopping the general topic, getting angry, making comments, etc.) your behavior is no longer acceptable.

And the rules. **The best rule is... NO RULES!** Rules are hard to follow. By anyone. Even the ones we made ourselves. But agreements are another matter. It is very important that they be simple, very clear to use and there should not be many of them.

9. LACK OF FUNDING

It is obvious that a group of different levels requires additional financial costs and this is often the reason why people do not want to work with such a group. And in fact it is. Often additional people are needed: translators, support specialists, accompanying people...

They might require specialized materials, additional equipment... not to mention the location of all activities and places of accommodation and food with a universal design.

However, most often it is possible to come to quite comfortable conditions by using the available materials, adapting them and discussing in as much detail as possible the accommodation and food and the learning process with the participants. In this way, compromises are reached that require small costs instead of big ones.

IMPORTANT! Such compromise solutions do not mean that you can make a deal with security, comfort and so on. They mean that it is always possible to find a solution and not to put insufficient funding as a barrier to the participation of all people.

Guiding questions in this process can be:

- *What is important for me in this situation is to determine...*
- *What kind of additional materials/equipment, etc. may be needed?*
- *Is there anything that can replace expensive solutions?*
- *Which of the existing resources ones can be adapted and how?*



TIP FROM PRACTICE

We adapt a lot. In many cases it is possible to adapt the available materials or equipment to the needs of the group, all that is needed is improvisation and creativity.

If we are talking about a lack of funds to receive specific support, then there is always an option to turn to local specialized (specializing in this feature) organizations, both non-profit and municipal or volunteer organizations. Most often, help without additional budget can be found there.

10. BURNOUT

Due to the specificity of the profession, the level of professional burnout among educators is considered one of the highest. Scientific studies of the peculiarities of pedagogical activity have shown that the work of educators is in the "risk group", characterized by tension, increased responsibility, the presence of a wide range of duties, which causes its chronic stress. The activities of educators are constantly connected with communication with a large number of people, so they are prone to symptoms of gradual emotional fatigue.

In addition, the educators' professional activity requires a high level of professionalism, easily and quickly adapting to the complex conditions of pedagogical activity and adequately reacting to various circumstances.

Here are some signs of burnout in educators: feeling drained after working on lesson plans or grading papers, dreading going into work every day, wishing you could leave your job and find something else to do with your life.

Issues requiring special attention:

- *Do you follow the rule "put on the mask on yourself first"?*
- *Do I adhere to professional criteria and take care of myself? (mentor, group and individual supervision)*



TIP FROM PRACTICE

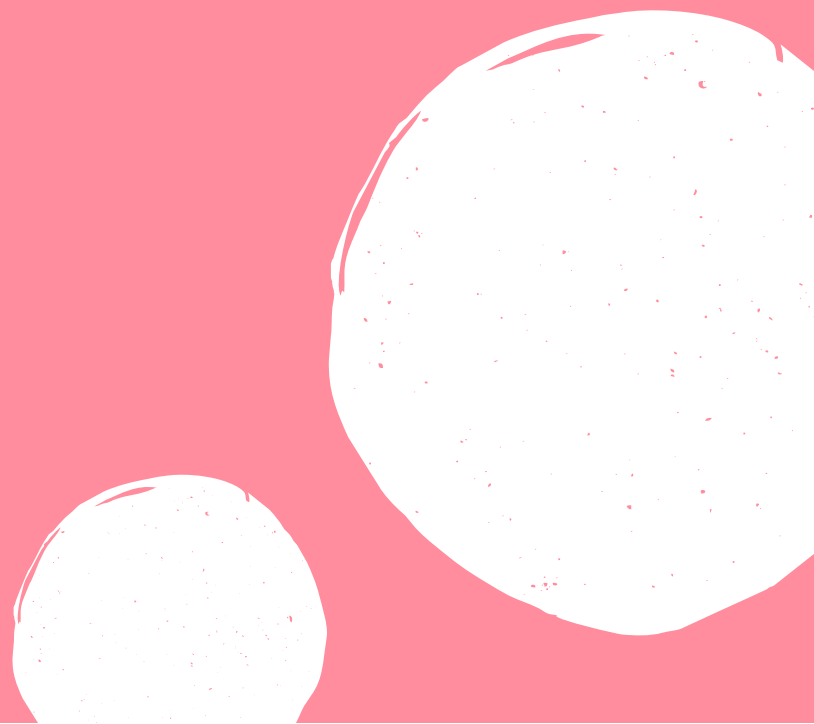
Here we want to remind you about expectations. Disappointment from the “wrong” result most often leads a person to professional burnout.

However, it is sovery difficult for us to give up expectations, especially when you put your whole soul into the process. We offer our employees the possibility of quarterly group supervision. This cannot replace individual supervision and work with a mentor, but it reminds you of the importance of taking care of yourself.

Share any results at every opportunity. Try not to underestimate them. One of our colleagues, a professional sports team, summing up the results of the academic year, told in complete delight how one of the students stopped ignoring him by the end of the year and began to greet him in physical education classes. These are all his achievements for the year and they were both happy. Patience to all of us!

**“Curiosity
killed the
cat.”**

—*English
proverb*





6 THE CYCLE OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION ACTIVITIES AND STRUCTURAL ADAPTATION

We are not cats, and curiosity is our best weapon. In order to achieve the desired outcome, thorough preparation is required. In this chapter we have put together the main stages of work with examples from our practice, which will definitely be useful for you, too.

1. PLANNING

Step by step - Team - Accessibility - Details

How to?

Step by step. First, it is vital to understand the concept of inclusion before you start the planning. Breaking work down into smaller chunks allows evaluation along the way and efficiently helps the team.

How is your team doing?

A good team is created by having open communication, patience, respect for each other, and shared, compatible goals. It is essential to have your team prepared for the challenges of inclusive education activities, since every team member should partake throughout the whole process.

Place and space: are they accessible?

An essential component of inclusion is accessibility. Assess the venue's accessibility to public transportation, the study rooms, and the recreational spaces. If applicable, create and distribute your handouts in alternative formats, such as an electronic version and in advance.

Attention to detail

Strong attention to detail is a characteristic that improves project performance and productivity while decreasing mistakes. You wouldn't want to skip organizing meals for people with different dietary or booking specialized transportation services when needed.



TIP FROM PRACTICE

When our team is engaged in planning, we do not skip this stage even when a similar event takes place in the same place several times. We always write a detailed plan indicating the exact time and actions. Who is responsible for what, what inventory is needed, etc.

The more detailed you write it down, the more “pitfalls” may emerge. If we are talking about a new method that we are planning with a group, then we literally play it on colleagues or relatives (more often on relatives :)) What does this give us? We see not only the big picture, but also the puzzles that make it up more clearly. And it also gives an opportunity to find out more if the team is ready, especially if someone is “new”.

Also, during the simulation, we can discover many important details that are not immediately obvious. Literally, physically walking along the path of the participant, we can understand what he may lack, what will be more convenient, and what will interfere in the room itself. Often, in order to understand how comfortable the room will be for the group, we ask for the expert opinion of colleagues who represent various social groups

2. IMPLEMENTATION

Plan “B” - Flexibility - Punctuality - Reflection

Ready?

Planning ahead is essential to be ready for any challenges in order to provide great experiences during your inclusive education activities. Additionally, even if your backup plan didn't work, it's crucial to provide a secure space where people may make errors and learn from them.

What about flexibility?

Are you ready to change your plan based on the needs of the group? If the participants are faced with working in a mixed-ability group for the first time, then it may be necessary to deviate quite strongly from the original plan in order to sort out all the basic questions, without which it is unreasonable to move on.

Why is being on time important?

Being on time demonstrates your value for the activity you are engaged in. While it is simple to be on time, failing to do so might indicate a lack of planning or a failure to take your educational activity seriously.

What should you know about reflection?

How are you right now? What actions should you take next? Why? Only through thoughtful reflection can we see where we are. There are several practical tools for reflection in daily practice, like reflection cards, interviews in pairs, or a reflection ball.



TIP FROM PRACTICE

Our team has a “superpower”: improvisation. Of course, it came to us with experience, so our “plan B” is in the mind.

For those who are beginning to hold events for groups of mixed-ability levels, plan B is highly recommended, which you will also write out in detail for yourself. And even in this case, daily reflections and feedback play a huge role. By collecting feedback from the participants and conducting reflection in the team after each day with the group, it is very likely that you will need to change something in the plan for the next day.

It is important to follow the needs of the group, and circumstances and features that were not obvious to you or the participants up to this point may be clarified.

3. EVALUATION

Being honest - Skills - Consciousness

Is it true?

According to Paulo Coelho, telling the truth and making someone cry is better than telling a lie and making someone smile. Encourage the members of the project team to be honest while discussing their reflections on working with groups of varying abilities. Talk about your team's achievements, knowledge you have gained, but also about challenges in order to improve the experience for your participants in the future.

Still scared?

“And once the storm is over you won’t remember how you made it through, how you managed to survive. You won’t even be sure, in fact, whether the storm is really over. But one thing is certain. When you come out of the storm you won’t be the same person who walked in. That’s what this storm’s all about.” — Haruki Murakami

Consciousness

It is important to understand that the consciousness of new knowledge, skills and experience for different people remains at different levels. The main thing that we offer ourselves and others here is open access :)



TIP FROM PRACTICE

Don't be afraid to publicly acknowledge your own mistake or lack of competence on any issue. It could be something minor, a small hitch in a speech, or some technical oversight that you admit publicly. It is also to recognize that you cannot know everything, and it is worthwhile to be able to admit this openly and gracefully.

For the participants this is a good example that lifelong learning is a reality and a necessity. Through such moments, barriers in communication are quickly erased. Don't burden your communication with expectations. You can “sow the seeds” and watch from afar when the seedlings will sprout. But everyone has their own time.

4. FOLLOW UP

Sharing knowledge - Team evaluation - Network

Sharing the acquired knowledge

One of the ways to increase your own knowledge is... to share it!

By sharing knowledge, we become not only richer in people for whom we have told something useful, but also smarter. Every time we share knowledge, we have the opportunity to analyze, question, convince, etc.

Team evaluation

Your team consists of the same people as the participants. Focus on it, including by collecting feedback, conducting reflection, and so on. Often they will be able to suggest absolutely all weak and strong points.

Don't go far!

Each group is unique, there are absolutely no strangers and random people and each group is an incredible resource! The networks created help the participants to stay in touch in the future and know that there are definitely people who support their views and where exactly they can be found. It is very important!



TIP FROM PRACTICE

In our team we never neglect evaluation. Just as the group itself is a very important resource for itself, so is the team a huge resource for identifying the weak and strong points of your work. If the work was intensive, it is likely that one person could not notice some details that eventually led to a significant distortion of the effect. The team together will almost always be able to understand exactly where the weak point is.

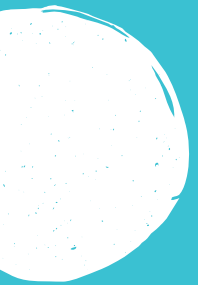
A teacher from our school was unexpectedly hospitalized one day. Before she could return, we had to substitute her. 14 adults collaborated with a class of 6 kids for 4 days. The outcome was dubious. The first two days were particularly challenging, since they required choosing work approaches that were suitable for the pupils, so we did our best and tried as much as we could.

Since then, everyone at school is expected to provide information on how they collaborate with their group, and there is always a supply of assignments available in case of teacher substitution. Right now, we actively attend each other's lessons to observe and learn.

Of course, it goes beyond that. Certainly, sharing benefits both the listener and the giver. We get our benefit right now when we share with you :) Give it a try!

**“Intelligence
is the ability
to adapt to
change”**

—*S. Hawking*



SOME WORDS ABOUT STRUCTURAL ADAPTATION

Public access is an important component of many human rights. One component of inclusive environments is the universal design.

How often do we believe a ramp or a lift will allow making a space barrier-free? However, a ramp is only one important part of a barrier-free environment, there are many other important components such as door and corridor width, sound and lighting adaptation, signs, and many others. Furthermore, even though you selected or built a barrier-free venue, certain attendees could find it difficult to get there if the public transportation infrastructure is inaccessible.

For the organization of a barrier-free architectural environment, the following are important:

PHYSICAL AVAILABILITY

Participants of the educational process have the opportunity to freely move around the premises, which includes both the premises and the surrounding areas. People have access to premises used for studying, recreation, and satisfying physiological needs.

SECURITY

Participants of the educational process have the opportunity to stay in the premises unhindered, visiting facilities (classrooms, conference hall, restroom, dining room, etc.) without the risk of being injured or causing damage to your property, structure or equipment.

INFORMATIVENESS

Participants of the educational process can independently navigate the space, which includes a navigation system for people with visual impairments, the presence of landmarks, instructions on the functions of the premises, the ability to apply for additional information and support, etc.

CONVENIENCE

The space should not just be suitable for "physical survival". People with disabilities have the same right to comfort as people without disabilities. Simple things like pillows in the conference hall, a chair in the shower, regular breaks for physical rest, etc. can be comforting.

A noticeable impact on the development of barrier-free design was caused by changes in the interpretation of disability, not from the point of view of certain limitations of a person (physical or mental), but **from the standpoint of the social potential of each person**, which is hindered by certain obstacles.

Ronald Lawrence Mace, an American architect, product designer, educator, and consultant, founded the Center for Accessible Housing (later - Center for Universal Design) in 1989 and coined the term "universal design". **Universal design** is a strategy that aims to make the design and filling of different types of environments, products, communications, information technologies and services accessible and understood by everyone and suitable for general use in as independent and natural a way as possible, preferably without the need for adaptation or specialized solutions.

Below we provide a small guideline of what should be paid attention to when thinking about the architectural accessibility of the educational environment, which you can use as a checklist:

	People with musculoskeletal conditions	People with vision impairment or low vision	People with hearing impairments
The surrounding area			
Passenger drop-off area			
Places for parking vehicles			
Ramps			
Doors			
Stairs			
Elevator			
Railings and handrails			
Toilet			
Sink			
Emergency alarm system			
Shower cabin			
Corridors			
Classroom			
Dining room			

When we talk about structural adaptation, it is important that it can be applied to different starting situations and according to this you may have different possibilities and it may require different amounts of resources from you.

What are we talking about?

It is one thing if you have a good budget and time to come up with and wisely plan the opening of a new adapted space (a youth center, training space, youth hub, etc.). In this case, by attracting different experts, relying on the experience of your own and colleagues, you can implement amazing solutions adapted to the majority.

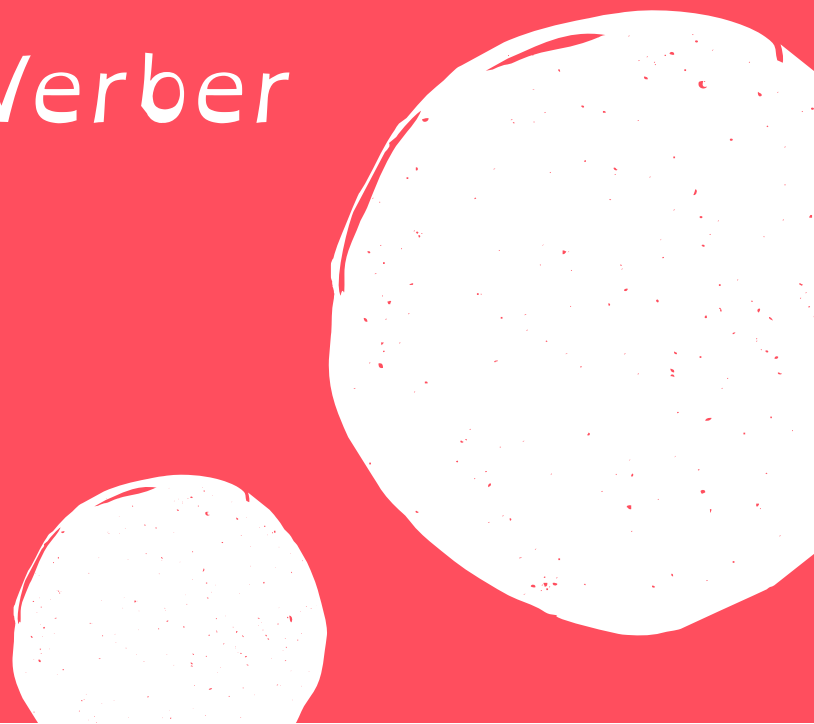
However, in life, most often we encounter a situation where it is important for us to be able to adapt an existing space for a group. And here is the moment for creativity and ingenuity!

Unfortunately, most places are not adapted (buildings, places for excursions or walks, etc.) but this definitely does not mean that you should abandon your plans! A lot of things can be planned and done “differently” and they will become more accessible to everyone.

The only exception is the health risk. You should not insist on a contact visit of a young person in a wheelchair if the event is on the second floor and only a spiral staircase leads upstairs. If you think you can carry up a person on your arms, that is a commendable idea, but you risk that person's health. Suggest an online format this time if the venue cannot be changed.

**“There is
always a
choice in life!
Take action or
run away.
Goodbye or
revenge.
Love or hate.
But don't
be idle!”**

—Bernard Werber





7 METHOD ADAPTATION

Already at the stage of planning an educational program, it is important to understand that we can never know exactly what characteristics members of the group will have. Therefore, we should always strive to build an educational program that is accessible to mixed-ability groups from the outset and be prepared to adapt as we go.

That is why the concept of **Universal Design for Learning** is actively developing in the world. The concept involves moving away from focusing on “average” people to taking into account the diversity and individual needs of everyone.

THE THREE PRINCIPLES OF UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING

PRINCIPLE I: THE “WHAT” OF LEARNING

Provide multiple means of representation

Learners differ in the ways that they perceive and comprehend information that is presented to them. For example, those with sensory disabilities (e.g., blindness or deafness); learning disabilities (e.g., dyslexia); language or cultural differences, and so forth may all require different ways of approaching content. Others may simply grasp information quicker or more efficiently through visual or auditory means rather than printed text.

Learning, and transfer of learning, occurs when multiple representations are used, because it allows students to make connections within, as well as between, concepts.

In short, there is not one means of representation that will be optimal for all learners, so providing options for representation is essential.

PRINCIPLE II: THE “HOW” OF LEARNING

Provide multiple means of action and expression

Learners differ in the ways that they can navigate a learning environment and express what they know. For example, individuals with significant movement impairments (e.g., cerebral palsy), those who struggle with strategic and organizational abilities (executive function disorders), those who have language barriers and so forth, approach learning tasks very differently. Some may be able to express themselves well in written text but not speech, and vice versa.

It should also be recognized that action and expression require a great deal of strategy, practice, and organization, and this is another area in which learners can differ.

In reality, there is not one means of action and expression that will be optimal for all learners. Providing options for action and expression is essential

PRINCIPLE III: THE “WHY” OF LEARNING

Provide multiple means of engagement

Affect represents a crucial element to learning, and learners differ markedly in the ways in which they can be engaged or motivated to learn. There are a variety of sources that can influence individual variation in affect including neurology, culture, personal relevance, subjectivity, and background knowledge, along with a variety of other factors presented in these guidelines. Some learners are highly engaged by spontaneity and novelty while others are disengaged, even frightened, by those aspects, preferring a strict routine. Some learners might like to work alone, while others prefer to work with their peers.

In reality, there is not one means of engagement that will be optimal for all learners in all contexts. Providing multiple options for engagement is essential.

The process of educational adaptation itself can include **two stages**:






1. IDENTIFICATION OF SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

To do this, you can use various tools, depending on the age of the people, the ability to communicate with them, the field of education, etc.

At this stage, it is important to pay attention to the following points, which may require adaptation of the methodologies:

- Visual impairments
- Hearing impairments
- Speech impairments
- Musculoskeletal impairments
- Intellectual Development impairments

Examples of tools for identifying special educational needs of students:





-  Online questionnaire
-  Conversation with parents
-  Conversation with students
-  Acquaintance with medical and personal documents
-  Observation

2. PROGRAM ADAPTATION

This stage may include:

- Checking the workspace for accessibility (e.g., is the space barrier-free? Can lighting cause unwanted reactions?).
- Checking technical solutions and tools (for example, will there be a presentation? Working with a computer? Using materials that require well-developed fine motor skills?).
- Adapting educational methods (e.g., can a person with a particular impairment complete the task on their own? Can all participants achieve their maximum result? Will everyone be able to read the instructions?).

Specific educational methodologies adaptation may include the following:

-  Splitting a complex task into several stages
-  Giving extra time to complete the task
-  Instead of reading material, using audio recordings and vice versa
-  Replacing a verbal answer with a written one and vice versa

When developing a methodology for an educational event, it is worth paying special attention to **work in groups**. Often, group work is the form in which students with special educational needs can achieve a common result.

When organizing work in groups, the educator makes sure that everyone's individual performance is visible and measurable to the other members of the group. It is also important to use different methods that would involve different channels of perception of information and allow students to present results in different forms.



TIP FROM PRACTICE

Working every day with a mixed-ability group of teenagers as teachers who need to achieve a certain educational goal, or at least start to “lie in their direction” together, and as people providing non-formal education to them, we can honestly say that the ability to adapt methods is our key skill. This is due both to the fact that the group is mixed-ability, and to the fact that we work with teenagers.

You never really know what is best for today. However, you can make a list of working methods for yourself and combine them. The **observation diary** is extremely useful: we write down how the meeting with the group went and everything we remember about external factors, our analysis, guesses, and thoughts. It may appear to be a tedious task at first. And it is, in part, because it requires self-discipline, time, and effort. However, it can be considered a part of the most intriguing research. After about 1-2 months, a diary like this becomes a source of discoveries and knowledge.

Of course, when it comes to not so long-term contact, there is no time for such a diary. But you can adapt very much and quickly. The main thing is to understand in which direction you need to change.

**“When it is
obvious that
the goals
cannot be
reached,
don’t adjust
the goals,
adjust the
action
steps.”**

—Confucius





8 DO'S & DON'TS

Talking about a group of young people that we do not select according to any additional criteria, such as health, skills, experience, competencies, etc., we can never be sure whether we have foreseen everything in advance.

Nevertheless, there are some Do's and Don'ts that are suitable for any group (not that they will be sufficient) to test yourself, make your checklist and be more confident in the success of the future event.

We are guided by this list when we organize international mobility projects, and it has been tested many times in practice. Don't let the length of it scare you. By gaining experience, you will be able to decide for yourself what to take from it and what not. But it's worth starting by studying the full list.

DO...

MEET POTENTIAL PARTICIPANTS ONLINE PRIOR TO THE ACTIVITY, IF POSSIBLE

Tell them everything about the future project, from preparation and the road to the venue, to small details of offsite events during the activity.

For what? If the participant is not experienced and has accessibility needs, he may not immediately understand and not tell you about possible barriers and you will not be able to provide the necessary support.

Walking the path mentally together, you will be able to simulate most of the situations and thereby push the participant to think about what exactly he may need for a comfortable and barrier-free participation.

GUARANTEE THE ACCESSIBILITY OF THE LOCATION (parking, presentation area, entrance, restrooms, seating etc.)

The first key to inclusion is **accessibility**. A person's interaction with the environment and the accessible modes of transportation is a vital ingredient of their mobility.

Our personal experience is that there are still not many venues that are adequately accessible for most participants, or renting such venues is expensive and therefore beyond the means of the organizers. In most cases, the environment can be adapted by the joint efforts of the venue administration and the organizers with the help of improvised means. Therefore, even if you have not found the ideal place for your participants, this should not become an obstacle to holding an event. It is definitely better to adapt the existing conditions in agreement with the participants and conduct a good project, albeit in non-ideal conditions, than vice versa. And here is a double benefit! You will not only carry out an excellent project, but also show with specific examples how to adapt less than ideal conditions.

It is very important that all premises are accessible: the entrance to the venue, halls, dining area, living room, toilet and shower, corridors, rest rooms. You should not be limited to the fact that only the hall and the living room will be available.

If the **access** to location is poorly planned and organized, people with varying abilities are further excluded from activities. Make sure you cover all the possible challenges: visual, motor, mobility, auditorial. Naturally, you should evaluate accessibility with actual participants. Even while it's hard to account for every use case, reaching every person can result in a variety of benefits.

ENSURE APPROPRIATE LIGHTING AND SOUND

In order to create unforgettable events, **light and sound** are fundamental. Even little adjustments can have a profound impact on the course of an entire event. For example, lower-level lighting, such as shade lamps and candles, often helps to relax. Desk and floor lights keep the feeling of coziness while boosting productivity. The maximum degree of productivity is typically stimulated by high-level lighting, such as fluorescent overhead lights.

TRAIN YOUR TEAM AND STAFF ABOUT ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSION

There is one famous legend that says that when John F. Kennedy visited the NASA base, already leaving it, he ran into a janitor. The President of the United States asked him: "What are you doing here?" To which he replied: "I launch rockets into space."

It is very important that all team members have common goals and values regarding inclusion. When the opinion and well-being of everyone matters to others, this is inclusion. Better results cannot be achieved if some teams use, for example, the correct terminology and talk about it, and the other part believes that it is completely unimportant.

MAKE AND SHARE YOUR HANDOUTS IN ALTERNATE FORMATS, SUCH AS ELECTRONIC VERSIONS

When you send the materials in advance, you give more time for all participants to prepare, if necessary, and permits access to materials for those using assistive technology.

Accessibility of your handouts guarantees that all learners can follow and understand the information provided and only increase your paper or presentation's engagement, clarity and readability.

CAPTION YOUR VIDEOS

Captions are frequently used to increase accessibility for people with a hearing impairment. Furthermore, we maximize the educational process of participants by offering the material to suit visual, auditory, and reading types of learners.

More than 100 empirical studies show that captioning a video enhances viewers' understanding, focus, and memory of the content. For example, in a University of South Florida research, 9 out of 10 students said that captions were helpful to learn about a subject.

COMPLY WITH REQUESTS RELATED TO ALLERGENS, FOOD SENSITIVITIES AND PREFERENCES

For a successful business transaction, a love date, a friendly meeting, acquaintances, people often choose cafes or restaurants. And, as a joint study by scientists from the Universities of Leiden and Westphalia (Germany) shows, they are doing the right thing, since eating together strengthens trusting relationships between people. Therefore, the task of any organizer is to make eating as positive and enjoyable as possible.

Often this depends, among other things, on how carefully the organizers reacted to the taste preferences of the participants, and it definitely depends on how carefully the organizers got confused with the menu due to food allergies, intolerances, and so on.

SCHEDULE EXTRA TIME FOR REFLECTION IN MIXED-ABILITY GROUPS

Often working in a mixed-ability group is new to the participants. Even if someone has already had such experience, this joint work always causes more emotions, questions, and various difficult and awkward situations.

Give the group more time to reflect and figure things out. Direct them to a frank conversation, if all participants are ready for this. Try to answer the most candid questions if you are competent enough to give reflection the right direction and show that this is a safe place to discuss all the questions that the group allows.

STICK TO YOUR PLAN

According to H. Stanley Judd, a good plan is “like a road map: it shows the final destination and usually the best way to get there”.

It can be quite challenging to determine an accurate impact of your efforts when a plan is altered too frequently or is never followed out. The changes weaken the plan, preventing it from being fully utilized. That is why we believe that following the plan is important.

BE FLEXIBLE AND ALWAYS HAVE A PLAN B

Participants can be affected by a huge number of external factors, a changing state, both physical and psycho-emotional, and so on. It may also happen that someone underestimated their need for support or overestimated their strength without experience. Sometimes in such cases it may turn out that there are serious features in participants who did not initially declare them. And they were sincere at that moment.

In such situations, you need to make a decision fairly quickly, so it is always good to have a plan A, B, C with different levels of complexity, involvement, with different speeds and levels of activity.

COLLABORATE WITH TEAM MEMBERS

Do you consider yourself to be a good team player? Although this is a simple question that is regularly asked during some interviews, this capability should never be disregarded. Whatever your position or industry is, you will eventually need to work with others to accomplish a task or assignment. The value of effective teamwork is found in its capacity to promote better problem-solving, provide a broader viewpoint, and enhance knowledge exchange.

CRAFT PROPER EVALUATIONS OR ASSESSMENTS

Without feedback, we could never get better. While being quite challenging, feedback is an excellent tool to evaluate success. You will discover what people who attended the event thought, how they found out about it, and what they liked most.

Make sure any evaluations or assessments include questions concerning access: wheelchair-accessible parking, wheelchair-accessible entrances, wheelchair-accessible seating and restrooms, hearing loops, helper pet-friendly policies, etc. are some of the aspects to think about.

IDENTIFY AND ELIMINATE POTENTIAL PARTICIPATION BARRIERS

It is important to identify and eliminate potential participation barriers, such as discrimination or a lack of facilities. When working with a mixed-ability group, your project obviously becomes more attractive, but also more challenging. Participants commonly encounter a challenge during the planning stage: a general lack of access to comprehensive project information. The person could find it difficult to predict if their stay will be barrier-free or whether they will receive the appropriate support. Being unable to move around independently, engage in activities without external help, or lack of access to certain services are just a few examples of participation barriers.

REVISE TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS

Make sure to check the logistics, especially if it is a first time trip. It is important to be sure that the participant has chosen a travel option that is likely to arrive on time for them and after they will have strength left for the project. Be ready to be in touch during the journey as support.

DON'T...

COMPLETELY DISREGARD YOUR INITIAL PLAN

The ability to improvise is very important. But before embarking on improvisation, it is important to have a structured plan on which to improvise. Otherwise, you risk losing your learning goals.

REJECT YOUR TEAMMATES AND PARTICIPANTS' SUGGESTIONS

In any group, it is important to hear and listen to the team and members, but in a mixed ability group, hearing can sometimes be the same as becoming safer or more adaptable.

BELIEVE IMPROVISATION IS YOUR BEST FRIEND

Australian Treasurer Joe Hockey argued in favour of adjustments to petrol prices in a radio broadcast in 2014. He wanted to emphasize that high-income individuals will be most affected by the tax increase. What he actually said was: "Well, the change to the fuel excise does exactly that; the poorest people either don't have cars or actually don't drive very far in many cases." Numerous individuals were offended by this comment, and the Treasurer shortly publicly apologized.

Hockey's example highlights how crucial it is to pick your words well and plan things in advance. There is less risk of making a comment that might cause issues if you prepare ahead of time.

ASSUME SOMEONE ELSE'S REQUIREMENTS AND NEEDS

Our ability to connect with people weakens when assumptions are made. Making your own ideas or researching someone else's requirements and needs online without directly asking about the best way to organize things is dangerous. If you consistently act as though you already know what other people are thinking, feeling and needing, you stop talking with them. As a consequence, lack of the communication leads to the fact that participants start to feel confined or misunderstood.

IGNORE OR REDUCE THE REFLECTION TIME

The world constantly proves that a successful person is one who understands the meaning of their actions and consciously relates to life. This requires conscious planning and design and cannot be achieved without the development of a reflective view, the ability to analyze and evaluate one's actions and the results achieved. Do not also forget: the outcome of the reflection should serve the learner in the first place, not you.

EXPECT EVERYONE TO KNOW THEIR WAY

You should not expect people with accessibility needs and/or fewer opportunities to know exactly how to arrange the trip if this is their first international project. Unfortunately, today it is still quite common to meet young people with accessibility needs who have not traveled outside their hometown. Sometimes their home area.

In this case, do not underestimate the fear of the upcoming journey and believe that by accompanying such a participant more carefully than others, you contribute to learned helplessness. It is important to make their "first time" quite independent and as much as possible accompanied by you at the same time. Be close, in touch all the time, but let the participant be as independent as possible. Help with advice, but do not do it for them. This is a time-consuming process, but worth it! And of course, a person who has not previously traveled may not know a lot about international logistics, may not correctly assess their capabilities when transferring, may not know the rules of airports, and so on. Your task is to imagine that you yourself are traveling for the first time and tell the young man the whole story from beginning to end.



CASE STORY

One day my husband accompanied a retired Spanish teacher on a difficult trip. She immediately stated that she couldn't do anything and there was no point in studying anymore, so she needed maximum support on the road. She was terribly stubborn. In everything.

Surprisingly, he had the patience to accompany this woman for 26 hours and never do anything for her. She was terribly angry in the process and immensely grateful for her new skills at the end. Only a year after this story, she had already traveled to six countries on her own!

OVERLOAD YOUR PROGRAM

In projects with a mixed-ability group, firstly the group itself is a great resource for all participants. Work and rest is in itself a process in which everyone gains new skills, knowledge and discoveries.

Secondly, it is important to take into account the fact that young people with accessibility needs can spend more energy on certain processes and, accordingly, get tired faster. In certain cases, people have limits on the time they can spend without rest in a horizontal position, in active communication and noise, etc. It is very important always to remember that many special needs are not always visible!

SPEND TIME ON SELECTING ACTIVITIES

We believe that almost any method can be fully or partially adapted to a specific group of participants. But still not 100%. It is important to understand that for a group of participants where there are people with visual impairments, you should not choose an energizer with throwing the ball from hand to hand. Or for a group where there are users of manual chairs, a method in which you need to jump high.

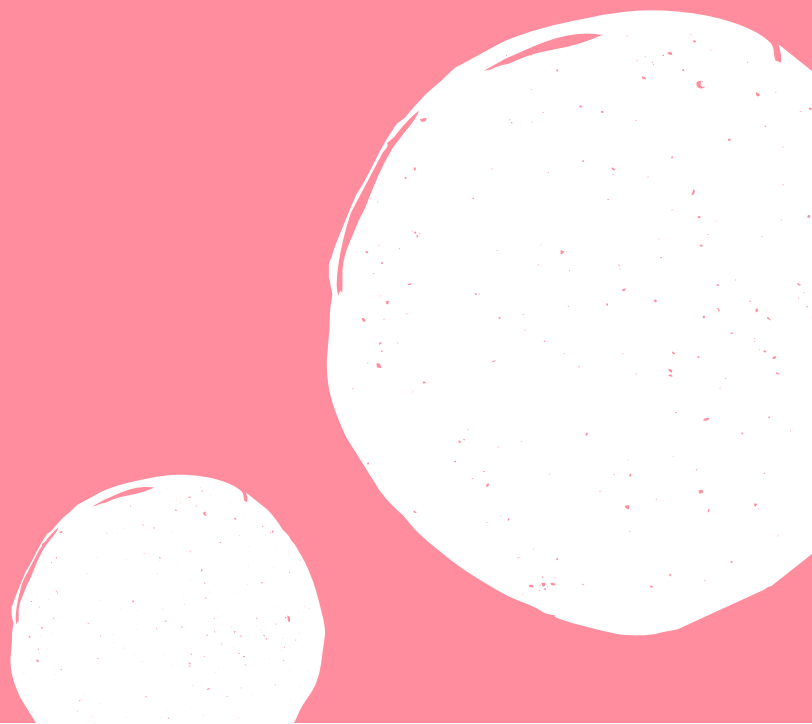
CARRY OUT THE PROGRAM IN THE SAME SPACE

The place of learning is our safe space, that's right. But it is important to give an opportunity to mixed-ability groups to be in different spaces, in different conditions. To give participants the opportunity to see what interaction can be like in such groups under conditions of different levels of comfort.

It is not good to change locations at the very beginning, it is important to do this when the group is already ready, in order to allow the participants to find themselves in a situation of success, having coped with the interaction in the group in more difficult conditions. And this is possible after obtaining certain knowledge and experience.

“There is
no friend
as loyal
as a
book.”

—*Ernest
Hemingway*





9 FURTHER RESOURCES

A little reading is all the therapy a person needs sometimes. The resources we offer you in this chapter look at key information on inclusive education from a theoretical perspective and explore how this translates into real life.

"To ensure equal learning opportunities for all learners, it is necessary to introduce an inclusive model of education, where all children and young people, regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional or other circumstances, have the opportunity to learn." (UNESCO, 1994).

Key values that are essential for all teachers working in inclusive education taking responsibility for all learners: diversity is seen as a resource and an asset, support for all learners, teachers' expectations are equally high for the achievement of all learners, collaboration and teamwork and personal professional development.

If you are interested, you can take a look at these resources we have offered and used in our work.

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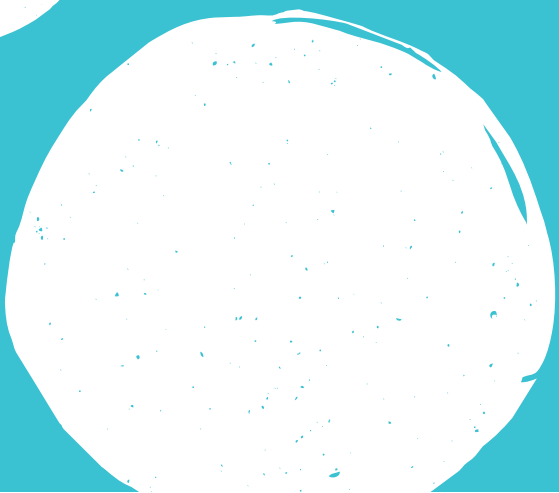
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**“How
wonderful it
is that
nobody
needs to
wait a single
moment
before
starting to
improve the
world.”**

—*Anne Frank*





10 AFTERWORD

Each of us every day is full of opportunities to change the world. **Especially starting with yourself.** This is amazing magic when by changing one small thought or trying to do something slightly otherwise, everyone can set an example to change the attitude of those who are around in general.

Moreover, the opportunities and venues provided are an extraordinary gift. It is possible to gain experience in a mixed-ability group and share your experience in international and local groups: this is the opportunity that the Erasmus program gives.

Erasmus programs allow you to change yourself, share, change others, and give a lot of hope and faith. Believe in yourselves, in people and in the values for which we participate.



QUIZ RESULTS

Q1

In our opinion, the most appropriate answer was **“An increased social polarization between neighborhoods.”**

MacDonald and Marsh (2005) list six components shaping social exclusion:

- Social exclusion is more than just income poverty: beyond economic marginality, there are political and cultural dimensions;
- Social exclusion is manifested through a combination of linked problems, and is the accumulation of interrelated difficulties that typify the condition and experience of certain groups;
- Social exclusion is not characterised by random distribution across individuals or households but is concentrated spatially. It is a product of increased social polarisation between neighbourhoods;
- Social exclusion is a consequence of a political economy by which some groups secure privilege and power at the expense of others;
- Social exclusion is a dynamic process that takes place over time;
- Social exclusion risks producing intergenerational effects as cumulative disadvantage is passed on from one generation to the next.

Q2

As for the difference between *inclusion* and *equity* in education, we would be glad if you chose **“Inclusive education is a principle that supports and welcomes diversity amongst all learners”** and **“Equity in education process means the access: the probability that children from different social groups enter the education system”**.

In many countries, inclusive education is still thought of as an approach to serving children with disabilities within general education settings. However, internationally it is increasingly seen more broadly as a principle that supports and welcomes diversity amongst all learners.

This means that the aim is to eliminate social exclusion that is a consequence of attitudes and responses to diversity in race, social class, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, migrant status and ability. As such, it starts from the belief that education is a basic human right and the foundation for a more just society.

Q3

As for the generality of such concepts as *human rights* and *inclusion*, then of course inclusion is one of the basic human rights and it means **"ensuring that all support systems are available to those who need such support: as a civic responsibility, not a favor."**

The concept of *human rights* has come out of the UN organizations and puts into writing what every individual should be getting in this world: from food, to education, to equal rights under the law, to privacy.

Inclusion is recognizing our universal "oneness" and interdependence, that we are "one" even though we are not the "same". Being inclusive means fighting against exclusion and all of the social diseases that exclusion gives birth to: racism, ageism, sexism etc.

www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights

Q4

There are few "**protected characteristics**", among which are gender reassignment, sexual orientation, disability and age. It is against the law to discriminate against someone because of:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

Q5

Absolutely "everyone benefits from inclusive education, an inclusive environment is very developing and enriching".

Inclusive education:

- *Helps all students reach their full potential;*
- *Creates a culture of acceptance and understanding;*
- *Builds friendships and bonds between classmates;*
- *Prepares students for life after school;*
- *Benefits the whole community;*
- *Increases self-esteem and confidence among students;*
- *Improves social skills among students;*
- *Welcomes diversity within schools and universities;*
- *Improves academic outcomes;*
- *Helps to reduce bullying and harassment.*

Q6

Finally, but importantly "inclusive education is when all young people participate and are welcomed and this is age-appropriate and regular, where they are supported to play, learn, contribute and participate in all aspects."

Just to make sure you were right from the beginning ;)



Inced

Inclusive Education

(Un)Manual

Steps Towards
Inclusive Learning
Environments



Erasmus+



erasmus+ and
european solidarity
corps agency