

Video 2. How Can My Child Access, Participate, and Succeed in the Classroom?

Hey everyone, welcome to video number two in the series. This one is all about how can my child access, participate, and succeed in the classroom. Okay, pretty excited to share this video with you because we're going to move into, well, what do educators need to know and understand in order to do this well? You might say, well, why are you telling parents this? And it's because we want you to be able to envision what's possible.

Many times families haven't seen really good inclusive practices and so they don't quite know what it looks like. So we're going to show you some powerful classroom practices and we're going to explain a little bit about behavioral support, which will also be helpful in your own homes and in your own lives. And then we're going to talk further about individualized adaptations.

All of these things are in place in inclusive classrooms. You don't get less services or less anything. It's actually just moved to right where your child is so your child can be even more successful.

And just a quick reminder, you have a dashboard. It has all the resources that Julie and I might feel like we're flying through, but they're really there to support you. You can either pause the video, grab a download, save it for later, share it with others, whatever you need.

But we're going to talk about these powerful classroom practices, starting off with that when staff, doesn't really matter what their titles are, when they co-teach and collaborate, we have better outcomes for all students. So we're going to explain to you kind of what we mean by co-teaching and I'll just use myself as an example. So I taught special ed.

I was a special education teacher and I always co-taught with a general education teacher, meaning we would be in the same room sharing all the students together. And I was always thinking about my special education magic and making sure to put it in all the different lessons. And the general ed teacher was thinking about their knowledge of the curriculum and content.

And we were working together to make that happen for all kids. So when we say co-teaching, we're talking about anytime two or more adults are in the same classroom supporting your child in an inclusive classroom. And it can be general ed teachers plus special ed teachers.

It can be related service providers, paraprofessionals, anybody can help to co-teach. And then the roles can really vary. So everybody can participate in the planning, instruction and evaluation.

This is what's really important for families to understand is my child still receives services, but the services are received in an inclusive setting right where kids are, right when they need it. This idea of removing barriers or rather called ensuring access points. So what are access points? It's really basically just thinking about how does any student learn best? So this is not unique to students with disabilities, but of course it helps immensely when educators think about what's the best way of learning.

So as family members, what is your role? Well, you have this, you know, years and years of learning about how your child learns. Sharing that with your team is critical. Sharing what is relevant, what kind of things that they're into right now, what are they interested in, what do they like a lot? What do they get like so engaged about? Really important to ensure access points.

How do you reach and teach them on their, you know, on everyday interactions with them? How do you like cover a concept or an idea or a house rule with them? And they're not quite sure about it. So you change it in some way. This last one's kind of fancy.

It's called multiple means of expression and representation. It's just another way of saying, how do I show something? So let's say I've told my student or my child to get their shoes on and they don't get their shoes on. So I pick up their shoes and I say, put your shoes on.

That helped them. I did it with a little bit more of a visual support with the auditory. That's just showing that I'm talking to them, teaching them, supporting them in different ways.

So we have a handout that you can share with your team that are easy access points that anyone can provide without training, without a budget, without more professional development, that when a student is expected to do common everyday things at school, what could they do to provide access points? I'm going to give you one more example of access points to see if it helps. And that is, imagine this presentation if it was only auditory, meaning Christie and I just talked like a podcast and we had none of these visual supports for you. Well, it would be a little bit harder to learn this information.

So we've added an access point. We have a visual support for you. We're actually also co-teaching this content to people teaching this content, providing multiple access points for you as a learner.

That's just an example of what an access point is. One of the things that we share with all the educators that we work with is sometimes the best way to make more access points is to just add a couple choices in. Christie used the parenting example, put your shoes on, and the kid didn't get up, didn't put their shoes on.

So with the visual paired with it, the shoes, I see, I'm going to put my shoes on. Let's imagine maybe that helped. Or let's say it didn't help yet.

It could be about the timing. So many of you know that many of your children don't want to stop and do something right when you suggest it. So you might give them a choice.

Do you want to do this in one minute, three minutes, or five minutes? You have a choice. Any of those times will work fine for me as long as you get your shoes on. We're adding in some agency, some choice for students.

Yeah, so Julie's giving really powerful ideas. And some of you might go, no, the bus is coming, Julie. The kids got to put their shoes on.

So you have to be creative in what the choice is. Meaning, okay, you get to choose between your rain boots and your tennis shoes. You get to choose between your pink ones and your purple ones.

There's always some sort of choice that you can live with. What we help educators understand how to do is that we constantly add choices into instruction, not just for kids with disabilities, but for all kids, which allows them to have more agency, which allows them to be more motivated, et cetera. And so this is an example of 101 types of choices that you can build in.

So family members, as you're watching, you might go, ooh, I could think about this at dinner time. I could think about adding choices in to make my child more successful or whatever. And so just know that this is the kind of information that the educators that are working with us are receiving.

So those are just two quick tips that we think about when we think about what would the actual practices look like in the classroom. And that's that idea of co-teaching and collaborating. That's that idea of offering choices and access points.

And then Julie, let's tell them a little bit about the Because of Oliver, which will maybe bring all of the things we just talked about into a complete example of how it plays out. Yeah. So I'm just going to show you this visual because on your dashboard, you're going to hop right over to the video called Because of Oliver.

It's five minute animated video. But what you're going to see is a young child who has autism as an attribute, does not use verbal speech, but points to communicate. And you're going to watch how does a lesson change because of Oliver and the lesson actually becomes better for everybody in the classroom.

And in fact, Oliver's presence, as you well know, as family members, Oliver's presence actually makes the whole school better. So we're going to move on into, because we're talking about like how does a child that was maybe in a more restrictive environment, how do we imagine that looking in the general education classroom? So one of the things we talked about, we often talk about is the ready state of us as humans. And so when a learner is in a ready state from a neurological perspective, they're ready to learn, to grow, to be included, is much more successful.

So we talk a little bit about the hand model of the brain, which comes from Dan Siegel's work. Dr. Dan Siegel is a neuroscientist. We're doing a very quick version of it to explain this idea that in classrooms, we need to be helping students maintain or regain a regulatory state that allows them to be successful, allows them to make use of those choices.

Because I could say, you can wear your purple ones or your pink ones, and the kids could chuck their shoes at me. That's a real possibility, right, Julie? So choice isn't the only solution. We have to think about how do we keep lids on.

So let's learn about that. So I'm going to use my hand to show you kind of how this all works. And Dan Siegel really has drawn this comparison of the hand to the brain because it's actually really useful to put those ideas right in this hand model.

Meaning, if you take your thumb, stick it like this, and put your fingers over the top and turn sideways, this is the shape and size, not size, this is the shape of your brain. And in the very front, this is where you're regulated. So are your children.

It means that you can make really careful, thoughtful decisions. It means you can read and understand and comprehend and have empathy and all the beautiful things that we want. Unfortunately, all day long, humans, their lids flip and they end up going down through the frontal lobe, through the brainstem, closer to the spinal cord, and they're directed down here through the amygdala, hippocampus, etc.

And they go into fight, flight, freeze or faint. So our job is to help humans put their lids back on, get back into that good prefrontal cortex space. So again, I'll show you the drawing just so you can picture what's happening.

Now, the reason we're talking about this today is because when we support students who have behavior that challenges us, often people think we need to put them in separate spaces or places. And in reality, we have to help people put their lids back on. And we have to do that all day, every day with all the kids we support and work with.

And so like Julie was showing, when lids are flipped, that's when our fingers go straight up. That means we're no longer really relying upon that prefrontal cortex, but we're going to see big emotions. Remember I said the kid could chuck their shoes at me? That probably means my lid has flipped.

It's not a conscious thing. But we want you to understand that even if the concern for your child isn't, let's say, math or reading or science, but really around behavior and safety, that this still is all possible, is still their right, the research still supports it. And so we're going to share a quick handout that's on your dashboard about shifting mindsets, because this is probably the biggest place we have to go in terms of being able to think differently about inclusive education.

Oftentimes people get really nervous when there are big emotions and they're not sure what to do about them. So this is just a quick handout that says, oh, I need to shift that, okay, the kid isn't purposely being defiant. They're saying to me, ah, they need something.

This is not about permissive parenting. This is not about letting kids do whatever they want. We still are the adults.

We still have to be there to set rules and boundaries and so forth, but we also have to help their nervous system respond in a way that's productive. So instead of fixing the student, we really want to fix the environment. Instead of they're making a bad choice, they're just doing

what they can with the skills they have and we got to work on maybe giving them more skills, a different way to express their needs.

And so this handout is just something for you to use with, again, your IEP team, the educators who are working with you, that you all might need to see your child in a different light or from a different perspective, one from neuroscience. The very last thing I want to share about behavior is just this, and really it's what we help educators do all the time, is that when we see kids that are in fight, flight, freeze, or faint, we support them by helping them feel safe, seen, soothed, and secure. So this is really the crux of the work that we do with school systems to help them better understand behavior and better support all kids with behavior that challenges us.

Now sometimes with all of those supports in place, maybe we have co-teaching going on, maybe we have access points going on, maybe we understand behavior, there still needs to be adaptations for specific students to be successful. And we want to share this with you. Yes, adaptations are still in place, of course, and under adaptations we will see accommodations and modifications.

And we just want to share this language with you so that you're on the same page with your team. And it says, oh, no matter what accommodations my child needs, no matter what modifications my child needs, or under the umbrella of adaptations, we can still do that in an inclusive setting.