

Inclusion Play Day

"Inclusion Play Day" is a concept developed at Pine Grove Middle School by physical education instructor Jeanne Tamberrino to address the need to make students aware of diversity. Under her guidance, seventh grade students' planned and designed activities for "Inclusion Play Day". During the planned event students from Pine Grove Middle School acted as Station Leaders or Peer Helpers to students with special needs who participated in various play day events. The students with special needs came from Pine Grove Middle School as well as other area schools in Baltimore County.

Best Practice 1: What recognized community need was met by your project? The purpose of "Inclusion Play Day" was for students to experience activities and situations to promote cooperation and self-esteem, as well as awareness and acceptance of diversity. It also was designed to provide a day of fun and physical challenge for students with special needs. Students who participated expressed a feeling of immense satisfaction in having been involved in an activity which made them more accepting and aware of the diverse lifestyles which individuals face. This project both meets the need of teaching our able bodied students how to more fully appreciate their peers who are physically/mentally challenged and provides a day of fun and socialization for students with disabilities.

Best Practice 2: How was the project connected to the school curriculum and curricular objectives? Students achieve the curricular objectives of: * Supporting the right of every person to participate in physical activities to demonstrate their respect for the rights of others, * To accept responsibility for the improvement of others including those who are less skilled, physically/mentally challenged or limited in language proficiency to assist as peer helpers and mentors, and; * Demonstrate personal responsibility by volunteering for leadership roles to assist classmates and enhance peer relations.

Best Practice 3: How did participants reflect on their experiences throughout the project? The students were consistently provided time to reflect individually and with their peers throughout the activity. Direct reflection with the teachers was conducted after the day's events. A description of the results of the reflection activities is as follows: * It assisted middle school students in becoming resourceful and creative when presented with real world problems requiring concerned meaningful societal responses. Additionally, this project has made the teacher aware of how she can create a sense of responsibility in middle school students. * The efforts to assist the various groups highlighted the fact that the able bodied students can and will lend a helping hand to physically/mentally challenged students. The students who participated were extremely responsive to having their peers interact with them during the "Inclusion Play Day" activities. Their ability to share during the day made it quite memorable for all involved, including me as an advisor. * The development of "Inclusion Play Day," by the students and for the students, still required that a teacher must be available as an advisor to provide a structure with parameters to keep such projects on target. This provides an environment where the project will succeed while young talent blossoms. Although Mrs. Tamberrino would never claim that the project was perfectly planned, the students adapted well to the challenge given to them.

Best Practice 4 & 6: How did students take leadership roles and take responsibility for the success of the project? How did you prepare and plan ahead for the project? Seventh grade students, under the direction of Mrs. Tamberrino, planned and designed the relevant activities for "Inclusion Play Day". These included the development of opening ceremonies, play and game activity stations, lunch, arts and crafts, and closing ceremonies. Each of these activities was designed so both physically challenged and able-bodied students participated jointly. This enhanced the spirit of cooperation and promoted awareness and acceptance amongst the participants. The steps for each of these activities were: 1. Identify other schools to be invited. 2. Determine the types of activities in which both physically challenged and able bodied students could actively participate together 3. Brainstorm with Mrs. Tamberrino as to the best schedule to be followed. 4. Detailed planning and scheduling of these activities 5. Obtain needed resources 6. Delegate responsibilities 7. Initiate the project 8. Develop an awards program Students were provided training in all the above referenced steps to aid them in providing the services. Mrs. Tamberrino acted as advisor and behind the scene coordinator. She was responsible for obtaining support form the school administration and coordinating assistance from local businesses to support the lunch activity.

Best Practice 5: What community partners were worked with on this project? What community partners were worked with on this project? Community partnerships that have been established include: * Fast Food Restaurants (e.g. McDonalds, Taco Bell, Popeyes, etc.) * Area Pizza Establishments (e.g. Papa Johns, Pizza Hut, etc.) The schools that were collaborated with include: * Maryland School for the Blind * Ridge Ruxton Schools * Autistic Students from Pine Grove Middle School * Parkville High School * Carney Elementary School * Timonium Elementary School

Best Practice 7: What knowledge and skills did students develop through this project? Able-bodied students had to gain insight and knowledge about various types of disabling conditions that affect their peers. They received background information about the disabling conditions, which included autism, visual impairment, developmentally handicapped and orthopedically limited. These students then had to learn how to interact with their peers at their own school and with students from other schools with these conditions. These students also learned to accept various responsibilities by either being a station leader or peer helper to the visiting students. In addition, students learned about planning and implementing a big event.