'I'NCLUSION?

WHAT MAKES AN INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM?

Before we begin, let's start with a warm-up activity. Ask yourself - what do I know about inclusive classrooms?

Based on the images below, what are some elements used in these classrooms, that make them inclusive? Note down your points in the bubbles provided, and feel free to add on more bubbles as your ideas grow!

INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM
THE CLASS THAT THRIVES ON DIFFERENCES

◇ An inclusive classroom aims to provide all students with the opportunity to progress in the same general curriculum in the public education system, allowing the learning goals to be achievable, using wide differences in their abilities to see, hear, speak, move, read, write, understand English, attend, organize, engage and remember (Lewis & Norwich, 2005)

We hope that you have completed the warm-up activity, and are excited to learn more about inclusion! On the top right hand corner of this page, we have shared a summarised aim of an inclusive classroom. Now, you may ask - what does the term "differences" mean?

DIFFERENTIATING INSTRUCTION AND DIFFERENCES IN STUDENTS' ABILITIES

Differentiating instruction means adjusting or changing the pace, level or type of instructions in your teachings, in response to individual student's needs, styles or interests.

Differentiated instruction examples include providing:
a. the right challenging instruction to motivate students based on the student's particular capabilities
b. flexibilities and varieties of choices about what they will learn and how they will show what they have learned. For example, selecting books or topics, working independently or with a partner.
c. a clear focus on essential learning, not on 'side trips'. Differentiating does not mean activities that are only fun, but do not focus on significant learning.
d. instructions where students can actively engage in the content that conveys depth and breadth

To learn more about inclusion, go to www.include.sg

TRADITIONAL CLASSROOM

- Covering the curriculum is my first priority and directs my teaching.

- Learning goals remain the same for all students.

- I emphasise mastery of contents and skills.

- I primarily use whole–class instruction.

- All students complete the same activities.

- Students use the same informational resources (books, articles, websites)

- I usually use the same assessment tools, products or projects for all students, at the end of an instructional content.

INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM

- I base my teaching on students learning needs as well as on the curriculum.

- Learning goals are adjusted based on student's needs

- I emphasise on creating critical thinking and the application of learning.

- I use several instructional formats (for example, whole class, small groups, partners, individuals).

- Where appropriate, I give students opportunity to choose activities based on their interests.

- I match students to specific informational resources based on their learning needs and abilities.

- I use ongoing assessments to track student's learning through instructional sequences, and allow usage of a variety of ways for them to show what they have learned.

RECOGNISE THE NEEDS,
DIFFERENTIATE THE LESSON

◇ This activity invites you to widen your perspective on "the needs of a learner".

Meet Ryan, a child who may remind you of one of your learners in your class. Let's take a look at his needs through a fresh pair of lenses.

Meet Ryan

Ryan is a quiet and easy-going learner. He is generally compliant, and is friendly with his peers. However, he rarely initiates or engages in class activities. When given an opportunity to participate, he often seems shy and nervous. He takes awhile to respond to questions. His answers are also rather irrelevant to the questions asked.

Let the flower bloom!

After briefly knowing Ryan, how would you support him if he was one of your students? Where would you start? What are some things that come to mind?

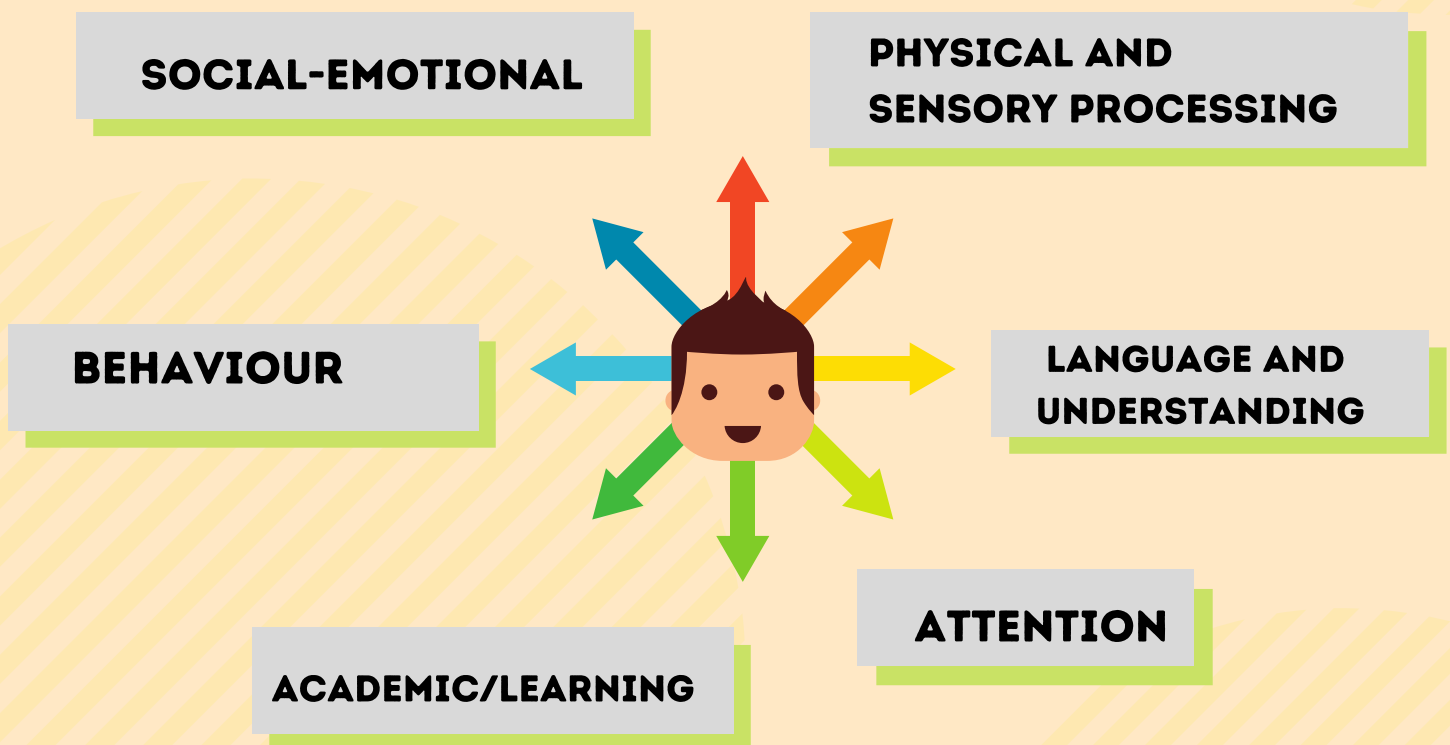Pen your thoughts in the petals below.
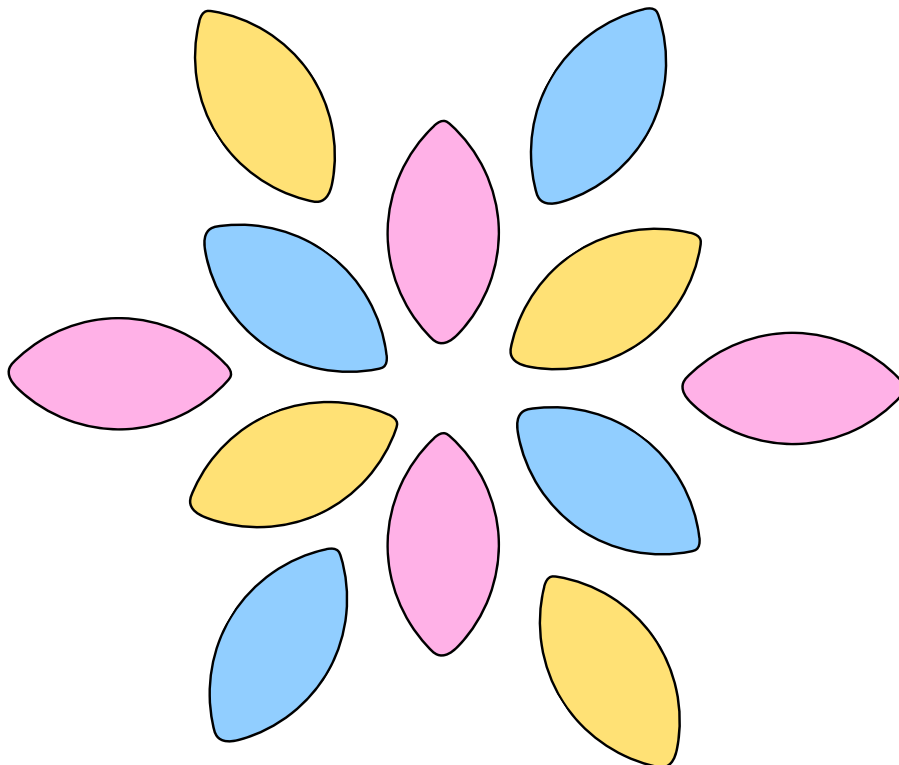
RECOGNISE THE NEEDS,
DIFFERENTIATE THE LESSON

This activity may raise some questions in your mind, such as - Why are individual's needs brought up alongside the promotion of differentiating instructions in creating an inclusive classroom?

Simply put - following the global trend, when the policies changed, the term used changed too (DPAS, 2016; Lewis, 2005; Vislie, 2010). However, the practices used are gradually and dynamically shifted from exclusion, to integration and then to inclusion. Being able to understand and recognise the needs of the learner is therefore one of the most important components in developing inclusive education.

LET'S START BY LOOKING AT
THE LEARNER'S DEVELOPMENTAL NEEDS

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL

PHYSICAL AND
SENSORY PROCESSING

BEHAVIOUR

LANGUAGE AND
UNDERSTANDING

ATTENTION

ACADEMIC/LEARNING

Different educational contexts, levels and cultures may prioritise developmental needs differently. Some common areas are intellectual, spiritual, emotional, moral, academic, physical, social, and aesthetical development.

In this kit, we provide you with an example of a holistic overview to support your thought process in identifying Ryan's needs.

WHAT DOES EACH NEED LOOK LIKE?

PHYSICAL AND SENSORY PROCESSING

Are Ryan's basic needs met? This is pretty straightforward. He may be withdrawn, or quiet is in class due to hunger, or fatigue from lack of sleep at home. Always ensure that the child's basic needs are met before considering other factors.

Have you heard of "motor planning difficulties"? If you observe the learner who consistently experiences difficulty with producing ideas of what they should do, sequence and plan a course of action like Ryan, it is common that they may withdraw from participating in class activities.

Inadequate sensory processing performance can be one of the factors causing hyporeactivity in a less-active learner. The learner who responds lesser, or is less involved in the multiple steps instructions, may be having a hard time processing and digesting all sensory stimuli being conveyed at the same time. In Ryan's case, he chose to switch off as it was overwhelming for him, but for some, the learners can experience "sensory overloaded", which can lead to other presentations, such as being fidgety.

LANGUAGE AND UNDERSTANDING
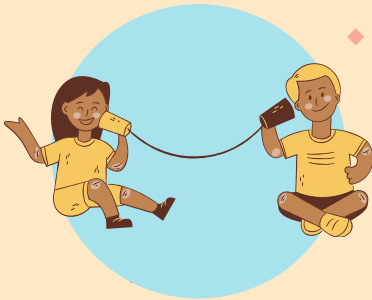
Having difficulty understanding instructions or following the pace of the lessons could be caused by a lack of receptive language development. Ryan, therefore, needs to acquire limited vocabulary to understand and comprehend the task.

A quiet learner may also have limited vocabulary to express their thoughts and feelings, which then leads to difficulty in putting words together to form sentences.

Sometimes the child is provided with lesser opportunities to interact and learn to form relationships with peers, teachers, or other adults and acquire limited social skills, in or outside school. Having an exceeding or high screen time is often a cause of this difficulty.

Often, a child, who is just beginning to learn English as a second language, goes through a silent period where they seem withdrawn and hesitant to participate. During this time, the child may be actively observing and listening to the people around them. This period can last up to a few months.

WHAT DOES EACH NEED LOOK LIKE?

ATTENTION AND LEARNING

◆ When the child has persistent difficulties in paying attention, staying quiet, or often seen as daydreaming, it could be caused by the child's psychological condition, such as having attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), or physical condition such as feeling unwell, or environmental conditions such as having a late bedtime routine, or a combination of all of the above.

Another common factor causing less or lesser active participation in the class is that the child has inadequate learning ability such as a developmental delay in reading, writing, reading or Math abilities.

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL

Some children choose to be quiet when he/she sees no rewards in communicating with others. For example, a child who often observes his/her teaching reminding the class to be quiet, and notices that those who were often noisy, may get reprimanded.

Having inadequate social skills in relating to others can lead to low self-esteem, as he/she is not capable to relate to others successfully in a social setting, such as the classroom, or playground.

BEHAVIOUR

From a psychological perspective, being quiet can be a child's personality. For example, an introverted child usually prefers a quiet and calm environment. He may be a deep thinker and is highly sensitive.

A shy child may be nervous or fearful of social judgment and a social environment. Shyness can be a cause of concern if the child does not speak in a specific social setting, for example, is shy at school but could speak freely at home.

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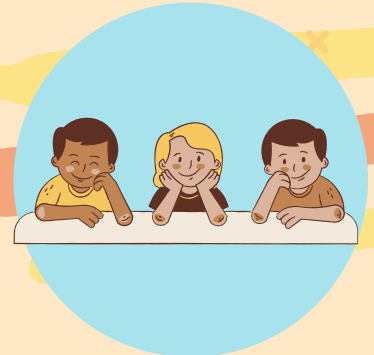
After learning more about differentiating instructions and the learner's needs, it is now time to assemble the pieces together.

In this activity, you may refer to the previous pages and note down your ideas about what you can do to turn your classroom into a friendly one for all learners in the bee's hive.

I can differ my lesson by
(e.g. differ the communication using picture card)

to make the learning accessible for all my learners.

I will try..

Use of_____
(e.g. song, manipulation)

can make _____ lesson
(e.g. math lesson)

accessible for all my learners.

This is my team
(e.g. the occupational therapist, my co-teacher, my principal, etc.,)

These are the materials I need

who I can work with, to make the learning accessible for all my learners.

to make learning accessible for all my learners.

LET'S BUILD THE HIVE

In this activity, we would like to use Ryan's story to demonstrate how inclusive practices can be utilised and make learning accessible not only for Ryan, but for all learners too!

I can differ my lesson by
(e.g. differ the communication using picture card)

using multi-sensory instruction e.g. provide options for physical actions to teach a new vocabulary with a picture card and song

to make the learning accessible for all my learners.

I will try..

re-arrange the seating for the learners e.g. have the distractable child sit far from the window or near by the more active peer.

Use of _short verbal instructions with visual instructions_

can make _Science_ lesson

accessible for all my learners.

This is my team
(e.g. the occupational therapist, my co-teacher, my principal, etc.,)

– co-teacher to take turns or to remind me of the movement breaks
– co-teacher to use the same seating plan when I am away
– update family of the support plan for Ryan and seek carers to give Ryan positive affirtmations when he shaers about his day in school
– review effectiveness and progress with co-teachers and carers after two months

who I can work with, to make the learning accessible for all my learners.

These are the materials I need

1. Seating plan for the classroom
2. Picture cards
3. Visual instructions

to make learning accessible for all my learners.

REFERENCES

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