

Presented by Lauren Simmons
Tupelo Public School District



Introduction

Welcome to today's session on fostering an inclusive school environment.

Objective: Equip educators with strategies to ensure every student feels valued and supported.

Why this matters: Research shows that inclusive classrooms improve academic performance and social development.

WHAT IS INCLUSIVE EDUCATION?

All students, regardless of any challenges they may have, are placed in age-appropriate general education classes that are in their own neighborhood schools to receive high-quality instruction, interventions, and supports that enable them to meet success in the core curriculum.



Research

Many studies over the past three decades have found that students with disabilities have higher achievement and improved skills through inclusive education



Parents

On average, parents were somewhat uncertain if inclusion was a good option for their SWD but the more experience with inclusive education they had, the more positive parents of SWD were about it.



Teachers

Teachers with more experience — and, in the case of teachers, more training with inclusive education — were significantly more positive about it.



Strategies

- Use a variety of instructional formats
- Ensure access to academic curricular content
- Apply universal design for learning



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Understanding Inclusivity

Definition: Inclusivity means creating a learning environment where all students, regardless of background, abilities, or needs, feel respected and engaged.

Example: A math teacher ensures word problems reflect diverse cultural experiences so all students relate to the content.

Why It Matters: Students who feel included show higher levels of engagement and confidence.

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Closing Remarks

Key Takeaways: Inclusivity benefits all students, small changes make a big impact, and continued learning is essential.

Encouragement: We each have the power to shape an equitable and welcoming learning environment.

Next Steps: Implement a strategy discussed today and reflect on its impact.

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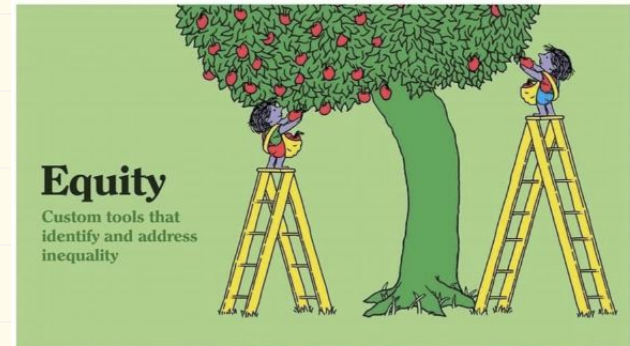
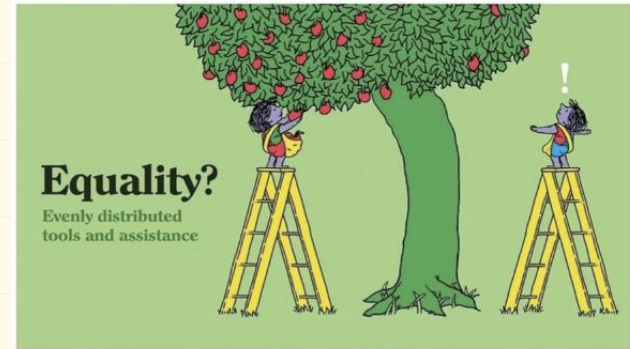
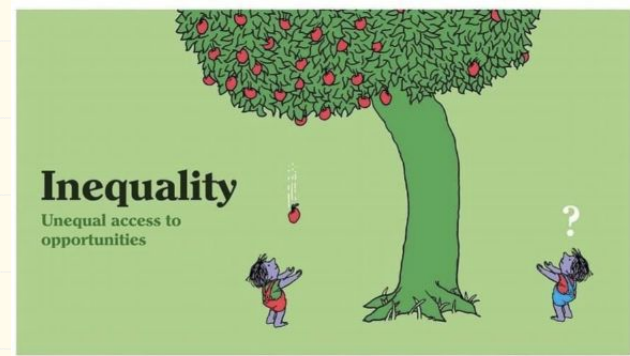


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Equity vs. Equality

Equality: Giving all students the same resources.

- **Equity:** Allocating resources based on individual student needs to level the playing field.
- **Example:** Providing additional tutoring support for **English Language Learners (ELLs)** rather than assuming the same resources work for all students.
- **Activity:** Discuss in pairs how equity might look in your subject area.



Addressing Equity in Education

Identify Gaps: Reviewing achievement data to see where disparities exist.

- **Systemic Barriers:** Unconscious biases in grading, discipline, and curriculum choices.
- **Strategy Example:** A history teacher incorporates multiple perspectives in lessons about major historical events.



Culturally Responsive Teaching

Definition: Teaching practices that recognize and honor students' cultural backgrounds.

- **Strategy 1:** Using diverse texts that reflect students' identities.
- **Strategy 2:** Encouraging students to share their experiences in discussions.
- **Example:** A literature class reads "The Hate U Give" alongside classic texts to discuss themes of identity and justice.



Supporting Diverse Student Needs

- **Differentiated Instruction:** Adapting lesson delivery to meet various learning styles.
- **Accommodations:** Extended test time, speech-to-text software, alternative assessment methods.
- **Example:** A science teacher provides verbal instructions and visual aids for students with learning disabilities.

WHAT IS DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION?



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Differentiating instruction may mean teaching the same material to all students using a variety of instructional strategies, or it may require the teacher to deliver lessons at varying levels of difficulty based on the ability of each student.

Four ways to differentiate instruction



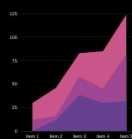
Content

- Match vocabulary words to definitions.
- Read a passage of text and answer related questions.
- Identify an author's position; provide evidence to support this viewpoint.
- Create a PowerPoint presentation summarizing the lesson.



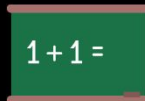
Process

- Provide textbooks for visual and word learners.
- Allow auditory learners to listen to audio books.
- Give kinesthetic learners the opportunity to complete an interactive assignment online.



Product

- Read and write learners write a book report.
- Visual learners create a graphic organizer of the story.
- Auditory learners give an oral report.
- Kinesthetic learners build a diorama illustrating the story.



Environment

- Break some students into reading groups to discuss the assignment.
- Allow students to read individually if preferred.
- Create quiet spaces where there are no distractions.

Practical Applications for Educators

- **Step 1:** Incorporate student choice in assignments.
- **Step 2:** Use multiple assessment methods (e.g., projects, presentations, essays).
- **Step 3:** Build relationships with students by learning about their interests and cultures.
- **Example:** A PE teacher modifies activities to include students with physical disabilities.



STUDENT CHOICE IS MORE THAN SIMPLY
PICKING A TASK. IT'S ABOUT OWNING THE ENTIRE
LEARNING PROCESS.

JOHN SPENCER



Action Steps and Commitment

- **Immediate Actions:** Reflect on personal biases and assumptions.
- Implement at least one inclusive practice in the next lesson.
- **Long-Term Goals:** Advocate for school-wide policies that support equity.
- Participate in continued professional development.
- **Example:** A schoolwide initiative to ensure classroom libraries reflect diverse authors.



Reflection and Discussion

- **Question 1:** What challenges have you faced in creating an inclusive classroom?
- **Question 2:** Share a strategy you've used to support diverse learners.
- **Group Activity:** Brainstorm ways to make your classroom more inclusive.

