Inclusion of children with disabilities in the classroom (or mainstreaming) can be a very rewarding experience for everyone involved. Children with disabilities are children first. They can thrive in an environment that is accepting of differences and where adults strive to meet each child’s individual needs.

For the teacher, including children with disabilities in the class means helping these children lie, learn, play, and make friends in the least restrictive environment. This environment offers chances for each child to become independent. By working with parents, specialist, and staff members to adapt the facilities and program structure to meet the individual needs of children with disabilities, you can help these children to accomplish as much as possible like normal developing children.

Planning for children with disabilities requires careful thought and often the assistance of specialists. It is very significant to know the child’s acquisition style, likes and dislikes, and how the particular disability may or may not affect the child’s learning and activities. Task analysis – a process of breaking down tasks into sequential and manageable steps so the child is successful at each step – is one method that may be helpful.

Sometimes adjustments in the daily schedule are recommended because the children may need to have their day paced differently. For example, they may need extra quiet time or an opportunity to get up and move around more during circle time. Transition times are often challenging for children with affecting or concentration problems. You will need to assist these children improve managing strategies for these
times. Clarifying ahead of time that a transition is approaching may help a child to get ready for it. Having a teacher or friend with the child during a transition time may help to make the transition easier and smoother.

Children with behavior problems may need further help managing their behavior. Some children need very concrete demonstrations of how to share toys or play cooperatively with other children. Many children with disabilities, including language-delayed children, benefit from demonstrations along with verbal directions.

Extra support for staff is an important element of addressing the needs of children with disabilities in the classroom. A short time during each day should be set aside for the staff to discuss management and curriculum concerns regarding the entire class, especially children experiencing difficulties with various aspects of the overall program. It is also helpful to secure assistance from appropriate outside professionals. These specialists can often provide insights about the child’s needs and strengths and strategies for working with the child. Opportunities to participate in training sessions, and frequent contact and communication with parents are also useful for the classroom teacher.

**References:**
