

Inclusion a Continuum A Parent's Perspective



INTO Special Education Conference

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A Little Bit About Me....

- Married to Tim, and we have 4 children
- I am a homemaker, we are dairy farmers
- Teacher in Our lady of Good Counsel School, Ballincollig, Co Cork (Special school)
- Columnist in the Irish Farmer's Journal
- Board Director of Cope Foundation
- Former Member of Boards of Management and Inclusion Ireland
- Chairperson of Informing Families Project, Cork
- Member of Steering Committee of HSE on Transforming Lives for people with disabilities

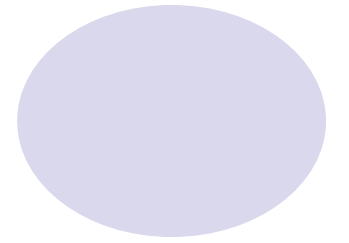
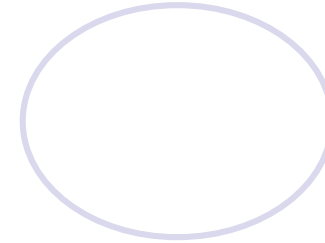
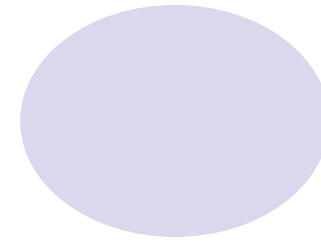
Hand on heart



Children with disabilities have -

- A right to be heard
- A right to be listened to
- A right to be asked
- A right to dignity
- A right to privacy and confidentiality
- A right to access health services
- A right to an education

Government Policy



Inclusion



Inclusion

Not being included means you are excluded

What does Exclusion feel like?

What happens when you are excluded?

What are the emotional reactions?

Self conscious, fearful -

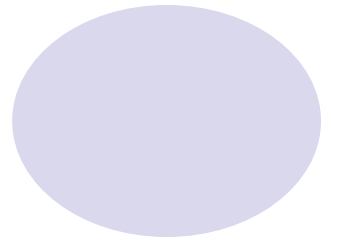
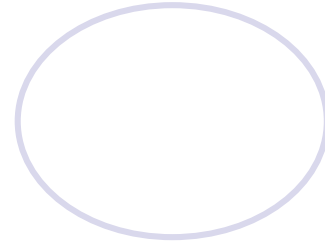
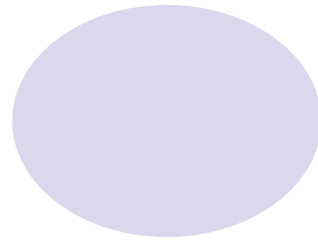
What are the physical reactions?

Sweating, shivering, feeling unsteady –

If you are a child with an intellectual disability -
fight or flight



Gordon Porter – What Is Inclusive Education



It is education where students with special needs are educated in local schools in age appropriate regular classroom settings with non-disabled peers, with the necessary supports to enable participation with their peers while also meeting their individual needs.



Teaching pupils with special needs

- is not easy But –
- It is exciting, challenging and hugely rewarding
- No matter what level of disability a pupil has it does not define what that child will achieve

The challenges faced by parents

- What kind of education?
- The decision – will often be informed by the logistics for that family
- Julie – she needed to learn. Mainstream – access.
- She needed flexibility and as she grew her needs changed.
- We needed to be lobbyists!

Diarmuid – intellectual disability



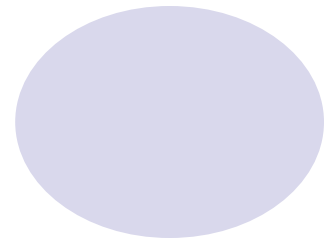
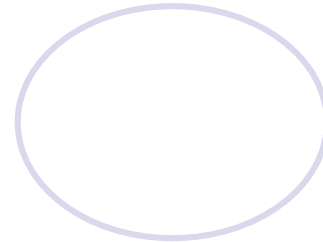
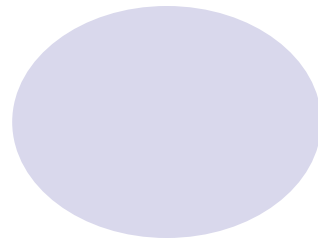
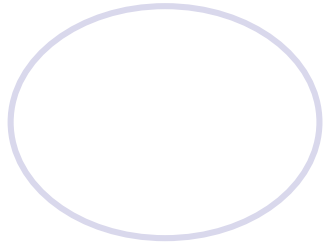
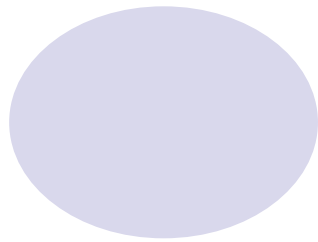
- Education
- Stimulation
- Social training
- Safe environment


Decision to send Diarmuid to Special School

- There was only one choice
- Diarmuid's education – brilliant (right emphasis)
- In hindsight – the problems
 - Lack of interaction with community
 - Lack of interaction with other families
 - Lack of services
- The fight was difficult every step of the way

Diarmuid's achievements

- Diarmuid works on the farm
- Contributes to family life
- Cultivates a positive attitude, friendly and good humoured
- He has represented Ireland in Special Olympics
- Diarmuid is a college graduate
- He lives a fulfilling life, he wants to be an actor in Hollywood.





Once the words are out of your mouth you can never take them back

- A good teacher understands sensitive communication
- Mind the jargon!
- Good teachers will develop good strategies
- Individual teachers can drive success stories
- An exceptional teacher preserves the dignity of each individual student



➤ Understand the Partnership with Families

- Expense and financial strain associated with disability
- Exhausting, strain on family's emotional resources
- Some parents will never accept that their child has a disability
- Never remove hope



the safe cross code

Stop, Look and Listen: Know the Code!

1

"Look for a safe place"

- Ensure privacy.
- Be family-centred - have significant others present for support as parents wish, with another team member present for ongoing support after the initial consultation.
- Have contact details and phone numbers ready to provide to parents.

2

"Don't hurry, stop and wait"

- Sit down together and collect your thoughts and emotions before starting to speak.
- Introduce everyone present and their role in the child's support. Always address and refer to the child by name.
- Allow uninterrupted time, have someone cover pager/phone calls during this time.

3

"Look all around and listen" – "Before you tell – ask"

- Assess family's perceptions of the situation. Pace all information to the individual family needs.
- Use simple, straightforward, understandable language. Explain all medical/technical terminology used and avoid jargon.
- Impart information slowly and clearly. Check that the information has been understood.
- Acknowledge that several consultations may be required.

4

"Let all the traffic pass"

- Ensure communication is sensitive and empathetic.
- Acknowledge the family member's emotions and respond to them.
- Respect each family's dignity and reactions, being aware of cultural diversity.

5

"Walk straight across"

- Provide frank, open and honest information.
- Acknowledge uncertainty and outline plans for ongoing assessment, care and supports.
- Be realistic but retain hope.
- Focus on the child rather than the disability.

6

"Keep watching and listening"

- Informing this family is the first step on the journey together supporting and caring for this child with disability.



Attributes of a good teacher

- Ability to teach in a way that students will learn
- Inclusion is facilitated by a good Individual Education Plan
- Empathetic and understanding of the individual needs of the pupil
- Ability to see the child first and not the disability
- Teaching the pupil with special needs is about improvisation and innovation
- Ability to recognise achievement
- Ability to celebrate the achievement

Inclusion is a Continuum



- Progress has been massive
- Where are we headed?
- Who is tracking and planning what Special Education will look like in 10 years?
- Will our idea of Inclusion lead to the most vulnerable students being excluded?
- You can make a difference!