

My Positive Experience with Inclusion Written by Marc Anthony Mendez

Hi my name is Marc Anthony Mendez and I am 15 years of age. I have attended an inclusion program since the 2nd grade. I am expressing my positive and personal experience about inclusion and I will talk about what makes good and bad teachers.

Since the second grade the inclusion teachers knew I had Autism and despite the disability, they pushed the disability to the side and focused on my abilities. They knew that with inclusion I could do better academically and they were right!

Currently I continue to take all city and state-wide standardized tests. This would not be possible without my inclusion programs. I have learned to socialize with students who have disabilities and those in my general education school setting.

Inclusion has helped me to succeed in school and in my community. I am now able to get out on my own and that would not be possible without the encouragement I received from my inclusion teachers.

Many people fail to understand that inclusion is needed because it is the bridge that brings us closer to the general education curriculum; it also gives us that special push that we need to make it on our own.

Many students are graduating today and moving on to college because of inclusion. My friend Erik Siquenza has done just that thanks to inclusion. I highly recommend the program.

At times I am also able to walk to and from school because inclusion has given me great confidence in myself, a confidence so strong that I am working harder for a regents diploma and I want to move on to college. I would love to get a degree and become a guidance counselor. I also enjoy helping and advocating for people with disabilities.

Many people with Autism are not able to socialize but with the inclusion program I want to say that the program has helped me to make friends. I was always lonely and hoping to have a friend or two, now with inclusion I have many friends. We get out in the community. We go to the movies, bowling, and museums. I am also invited to go to their houses or they come to mine.

I don't think I would have been able to reach as many goals as I have without inclusion. The reason is because when I was a year old I lost my speech for 7 years and despite not having speech many inclusion teachers believed that somewhere inside me I would be able to speak again and I did.

I enjoy giving speeches at different seminars when asked. I enjoy sharing my personal experiences with anyone who is interested in learning and helping someone with Autism.

I would like to add that many teachers are in this field because they truly want to help students with disabilities, those teachers who are really serious should please take the time to see the story of Temple Grandin who has Autism.

I guarantee you that after watching her movie "THINKING IN PICTURES" you will get a better understanding of what it feels like to understand the disability of Autism.

Please continue to keep inclusion front and center for many years to come. Give students with disabilities a chance to prove to all that these programs are working.

I just got my first job at Apple Bee's this summer, I had a great experience and I must admit I don't think I would have been able to work at my job without my inclusion programs.

Inclusion has helped me and many other students to learn how to embrace our disabilities because we know in our hearts that these programs work well and will help students who have disabilities get through their school academics, and go to college so that one day we can also have a great quality of life.

I also put together a brief list of what makes good teachers and bad teachers this information is from my own personal experience throughout my school years.

WHAT MAKES A GOOD TEACHER

1. A teacher must be compassionate and understanding.
2. Know the students strengths and weakness work on the students abilities not the students disability.
3. Be a teacher and also be like a guidance counselor at the same time try to understand what makes the student interested in his subjects.
4. The teacher must inspire and motivate the student to do his or her work.
5. The teacher must be careful what she writes when she grades a paper. For example one teacher graded my paper by putting in big letters 'WRONG' THEN HIGHLIGHTED THE WORD, instead be more sensitive and tell the students he or she needs more help.
6. Always be proud of the student you are working with. The students success is all because of your help. Reinforce good behavior and tell the student when he or she is doing well in school.
7. Always tell the truth if you feel that the student is not progressing well. Tell the parents and the student that you will do your best to help him or her. Get the student additional help, find resources to help the student succeed.
8. Smile this relaxes the student when they work together.

Build the students confidence he will remember you always if you do.

WHAT MAKES A BAD TEACHER

1. A bad teacher thinks about the "PAYCHECK" rather than the students intelligence.
2. A bad teacher mocks the students weaknesses and gets disappointed when the "STUDENT DOESN'T GET THE WORK". Then decides she will absolutely do nothing for the student.
3. The teacher just simply doesn't like the student and does not give the student a chance to learn.
4. Bad teachers don't know when students need a five minute break.
5. If the teacher just passes the students and lets them slide through the school system then she is a bad teacher.
6. The teacher yells at the student because of his or her failures. I have had teachers tell me "I WILL NEVER GET IT" I will not mention any names like that in the past.
7. Bad teachers do not give the student a chance to express himself. It is a gift to be autistic and have speech let us express what we don't understand.
8. Bad teachers ignore the signs when a student is being bullied at school, teacher may be aware but acts lazy or cowardly and is afraid to face the situation.
9. Bad teachers don't go to trainings or the DOE's website to learn more about students with disabilities.

I can go on and on but I will give my other peers a chance to talk
Thank you!