

Welcome to the Autism Classroom Resources Podcast, the podcast for special educators who are looking for personal and professional development.

**Christine Reeve:** I'm your host, Dr. Christine Reeve. For more than 20 years, I've worn lots of hats in special education but my real love is helping special educators like you. This podcast will give you tips and ways to implement research-based practices in a practical way in your classroom to make your job easier and more effective.

Welcome back. I'm Chris Reeve and I'm your host. I am super excited that you have joined us today. We have a really good episode for you today talking about inclusion. I'll be talking about what kinds of supports and what kind of structure we need when we're supporting students in a general ed environment, whether that is in a special class like music or art, or full day in general ed, what are the things that we need to think about in order to make their core program successful for them to enable them to make the most progress?

We all know that working with these students is not always a quick thing, so this is actually a two-parter. I'm going to start with some of the core things today and I will finish up next week with the rest of the core items. I'm very glad you're here. I am excited because this is something that comes up frequently in the Special Educator Academy.

We are in the midst of our study groups. We are actually just about to start our setting up classrooms study group which is one that we do every summer together where we actually start to go through the setting up classrooms to maximize engagement course as a group and we design classrooms so that by the time we get to the point where everybody's ready to go back to school, they can go back with some idea of how they're going to set up their classroom, how they're going to set up their schedule, how they're going to work with their staff, and feel fairly confident that they've got some ideas that they're going to try.

Then we can also be a sounding board for when school starts and things change, as they always do, we can serve as a sounding board and discussion area for them to come back to. But at least they've got a sound diving board to jump off of, so it's a really exciting time of year for me. That really rolls over into this and the different things I get to talk about here.

If you're interested in coming and joining with us for that, definitely jump right in, you can get a seven-day free trial at [specialeducatoracademy.com](http://specialeducatoracademy.com) and we would love to have you there. I am very excited today to talk about the structure and support that students need in larger environments so let's get started.

Now, obviously, I won't cover everything that they need but I'm going to start off with some of the basic organizational structural things we need to think about when students are going into any kind of larger environment, any of our students in special ed, particularly our students with autism, but many of our students with any type of special needs, they may be students with behavioral issues, they may be students with intellectual disability, any of our students who need the kind of support that we often provide in a self-contained or resourced classroom.

Our first step in planning are inclusion opportunities. Whether the students are fully included or going into a classroom or special for just part-time, we really do need to think about what the

goal is of them being there. When I say that, I'm not meaning that lightly. Whether a student is there all day or just one activity a day, it's really important that the IEP team has identified what the purpose of them being there is. Certainly, if they're included all day, the purpose is for them to be part of the curriculum.

But it needs to be understood by everybody on the team what the focus is. Is the focus that they are there participating in the curriculum? Are they getting a modified curriculum? Are they getting an accommodated curriculum? Are they expected to participate in all the different activities at the same level as the other students? What specifically are the goals of their being there?

The same is true particularly for students who are coming in for just part of the day. Let me give you an example. Let's take Ronnie. Ronnie's in middle school and he is included in science labs. Let's say that for Ronnie, the focus is on demonstrating mastery of the science curriculum without modifications. In that case, then we need to make sure that our focus of instruction with Ronnie in the science lab is going to be demonstrating mastery of the science lab.

Our focus of instruction is not going to be on how well he's working with a peer or a partner, it's going to be on demonstrating the science concept. Maybe we're doing some pre-teaching of the science lab before he goes so he's familiar with the lab itself and can demonstrate that he is understanding the science concepts. But we're not going to worry about whether or not he's doing it with a partner, we're not going to worry about how well he's interacting. The support personnel needs to know that is the focus.

However, if that science lab time was chosen as a time for Ronnie to specifically work on social skills and collaborating with a partner, then the focus is going to be on sharing materials and collaborating with the lab partner. If the expectation is not that he is mastering the science material, then we might teach the science concepts in his special ed classroom and capitalize on the time that he has with peers to practice social interaction.

In that case, any support staff, general ed staff needs to know that he is working on that social interaction and we're not worried about whether or not he's doing the science right. We're worried about whether or not he's sharing, taking his turn, collaborating well. In each case, we're teaching specific skills and the focus of our assistance and our teaching is going to be very different. The staff that is working with him is going to need to know that and he's going to need to know that.

We need to make sure that we've clearly defined the goals. Maybe we're doing both of those. If that's the case, they need to know that as well. We might do this using our Teaching Implementation Plan or the TIP. I've talked about that in previous episodes and I'll make sure there are links to those in our show notes because that's a really good way to outline that. But we want to make sure that staff and the student themselves are very clear about why is a student here, what is our focus?

The next thing we need to think about is communicating those goals to the staff. The TIP again is a good vehicle for doing that. It's important that they know what they're supposed to be

working on. Because I've walked into so many classes over the years where I've watched paraprofessionals or even the general ed teacher, the general ed teacher may be very focused on is he doing the science right or is he doing his math right and we may be, as the special ed people being very concerned about "is he interacting with his peers" that's why he's here, and they're like, "No, no, he can't be with his peers, he's learning his math."

It's like no, he's really here because we're working on his social skills. It turns out his parents think he's doing both. That may be a huge miscommunication among the IEP team. It's critical that the general ed teachers who plan the instruction and the staff who support the student and the special ed teacher who collaborates with all of them, no one can plan a lesson for a student if they don't know what they're teaching. The general ed teachers often don't know what to focus on for our students in special ed because they don't see the big picture if the student isn't with them all day long.

It's the same for the paraprofessionals. They don't know what to focus on if we haven't given them that information. I think that the TIP is a really good strategy or really good tool for identifying what are our primary goals for those activities and communicating that to them. You can identify the chosen goal to be taught, share the whole document or just that part of the document that the staff needs to support the student in the activity that they're with them for. Maybe they don't need the whole thing.

I like the TIP for several reasons for communication of the goals. First, you plan it according to the student's IEP so it assures that you covered all of your IEP goals. Completing the TIP is a really good exercise for thinking about where all of those activities, all of those goals are going to be covered, and it helps you really think about why is he going to this class and what are we doing during this time.

Second, it outlines how we're going to teach the skill, not just where, so it gives the staff the kinds of supports that they can use and it lets them know how they're going to take data during that time as well. It's a really good place to list out what kind of accommodations or modifications can be used as well. You could use the notes columns for that section too.

Another thing that we really want to think about is take your visuals. Because let's face it, most of our students that you're working with need tons of visual support. Many of you have your walls covered with visual supports in your special ed class. I'm sitting here with my water bottle and there's a sticker on it that says, "Shh! Just use visuals." So we have them all over the place.

Yet I go to visit so many classrooms and I watch the student leave the special ed classroom or leave the special environment or leave the resource room with no visuals. There are no visuals in the music room. There are no visuals in the PE area. There are no visuals in the general ed class. That doesn't make any sense because if he needs so much support and so many visuals in a special ed classroom that has more structure, doesn't he need more visual supports in a larger setting that has less structure? Of course, he does.

You probably need to take more visuals to the larger setting because they might have some of the same or different structures to the ones that you use in special ed, but you really want to

think about the fact that in a bigger situation with more students, with more going on, with less clarity and structure, you need more visuals and more structure outside of the special ed room than you do within your classroom.

Never let your special ed visuals stop at your classroom door and not go out into the rest of the school. You need more in other places. They need to go with you. I've actually got a post on how you can organize some of those schedules. Perhaps they move with the student, if your student is moving around the school, it can definitely be a huge challenge to take those with you. I recognize that.

Sometimes it makes sense to post them or keep them in the settings the students are in, are going to. Sometimes it makes sense for them to carry them with them. Ultimately, it would be best for the student to learn to be responsible for them. I've got some posts that I will share that give you some ideas about how to do that and it's got pictures that'll show you how to do that because, of course, I can't do that on a podcast.

Those are my first few tips and I'm actually going to share my other tips with you in our next episode so I'm not running too-too long. But these are ones that will get you started with the structure. You want to make sure that you have very clear goals, that those goals, I would suggest, are written down because, let's face it, no one has time to tell people what the goals are and when you tell them, they forget and there's too much to keep in your head.

You can have the goals written down where everybody can see them so that you're communicating those goals to the staff, so they're clear to everybody what those students are supposed to be focused on. Then take your visual supports and your structure for support that you're using with the student in your special ed environment, make sure that's being translated to your students in other environments that are larger and have less structure. You want to make sure you've got those transferring with them outside of your classroom.

Those are the two things that you really want to focus on to get started. I'll be back next week to talk about some other strategies that you're going to want to use with this as well to help your students be as successful as they can be outside of your special ed environment. Thank you so much for joining me this week. I really am excited about this topic.

I would love it if you would come share any questions that you have in our free Facebook group at the [specialeducatorsconnection.com](https://www.facebook.com/specialeducatorsconnection). We would love to have you join us there if you're a teacher or a teacher's assistant. I will be back next week with the continuation of this topic. I hope to see you then. Until then, I will probably be sitting here cutting out some visuals because you can never have too many.