

Book Reviews: Win-Win Advice for the Inclusive Classroom

Ingrid Hein,
The Kids' Country Club

Thank you for sharing your Win Win book with me. This is an awesome book! It is full of wonderful information to help parents and teachers understand children more fully. As a preschool teacher in an inclusive classroom, it's exciting to begin each school year with a new group of little ones; each with a different learning style. Some children will catch on quickly and others may take a little longer but one thing for sure is that we will all learn so much from each other. This book gives a wealth of helpful ideas, steps, solutions and insights that benefit all of the children in my classroom. Together, we'll create a learning environment where children with special needs and typically developing children will grow, develop and flourish. This book is a must have for every teacher!

By Dr. Shelley Kinash

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I have spent twenty-five years working toward socially valued roles and meaningful relationships with persons with disabling conditions. Thirteen of these years have been spent in a professorial position at the University of Calgary. Among many sources of literature that I have used to support meaningful inclusion of all learners into our grade-school classrooms, *Win-Win Advice for the Inclusive Classroom* is the most compelling, grounded, and user-friendly manual that I have come across. It is an essential read for all grade-school teachers for three reasons. First, it is loaded with plain language practical strategies. Second, it is value-based. It honors the voice of learners, parents, teachers, and all other learning professionals. Third, the pedagogical approach is applicable to all learners, including but not confined to those who have been identified as requiring special supports. Curb-cuts are the portion of the sidewalk that dips down flush with the street. Curb-cuts were implemented for wheelchair users. However, they are used much more frequently by in-line skaters, cyclists and parents pushing strollers. *Win-Win Advice* powerfully applies this concept. While the examples have been primarily drawn from the authors' experience with children with Down syndrome, the use of multi-sensory activities, educational technology, and curriculum adaptation work wonders for all learners.

By Christopher Carvalho

I was asked by Barbara and Claire to review this book prior to publication for feedback. Despite the honor of being asked, my first inclination being that this was “just another parenting book to read” among all the others we parents seem to have to read. Consequently, I put it off for a month. Finally, my sense of duty prevailed and I started to read it. Much to my surprise, I couldn’t put it down! As the father of a 4-year old son going into an inclusive kindergarten setting next year, I found myself thinking, page after page: “that relates to my situation,” or, “I didn’t think of that,” or, “I’m glad I found that out now, rather than later!”

This book is aimed at both teachers and parents. There is insightful, practical information, gleaned from years of experience with parents and teachers, and illustrated by pertinent examples, in every chapter that is useful for both parties. Some chapters lean more towards the teachers’ perspective; others lean towards the parents’. The sum total is that each partner in the child’s education gets a glimpse into the issues and difficulties faced by the other, and can assist each other in overcoming the difficulties to achieve the best possible environment for the child.

Various chapters in the book deal with: establishing the relationship and expectations with the teacher prior to the school year beginning; means of effectively and efficiently communicating with the teacher; adapting the curriculum; introducing your child with Down syndrome to the class; dealing with homework issues; dealing with your child’s self-image when other children are insensitive; parent-educator meetings; including your child in extra-curricular activities; peer-tutoring; child assessments; and probably the most difficult thing for a parent: “Letting Go.”

This book is a “must read” for any parent with a Down syndrome child in an inclusive educational setting and I strongly recommend it for any teacher with a Down syndrome student in their class. I would even suggest that it would be worthwhile for parents to buy a copy of this book for their child’s teachers. Reading “Win-Win Advice for the Inclusive Classroom” will result in a win-win situation for your child.

By Colleen Risdahl-Hamilton

“Win Win; Successful Strategies for Inclusion” is like a how-to book for parents of kids with Down Syndrome. Focusing on the paradigm that all children should have access to education in the regular school system, it is written in the voice of a credible, experienced parent that has “walked this walk”, and truly understands the joys and realities of raising a child with special needs. Navigating our education system is not easy with “typical” kids, let alone when trying to secure the acceptance and resources essential for a child with special needs. This book prepares you for what comes next, gives you the tools to approach it from a “win-win” perspective, and encourages you all the way. “Win Win” has something for all parents and families at every stage of school life; it spans preschool and kindergarten all the way to grade 12. Aside from being a great read, it is a marvelous reference that I will be able to come back to for years to come.

By Rose Churcher

As a parent of a junior-high student with Down Syndrome, I started reading this book with no expectations for anything new or helpful in it. To my surprise I found there was new information, as well as reminders for strategies I have forgotten. This is a useful book for parents just starting on the inclusion path and for the others who have been on the road for a while.

My daughter begins every school year excited about school. I am sure each teacher begins the school year with trepidation over her presence in their classroom and their worry that they will not be able to deal with the extra challenge. This book is an excellent guide for teachers who have a child with DS in their class. It can be read quickly and easily, and is useful as a reference to turn to when situations occur. It provides real information on how children with DS behave and why, as well as practical solutions for dealing with different situations. It has a common-sense approach for handling the variety of experiences that can occur.

My child has been in an inclusive setting all her life, and it has been a rewarding and educational experience for her, as well as for her teachers and her classmates.

By Katie Copithorne

As a mother of a ten year old daughter with Down syndrome and a former teacher, I found “Win Win Advice for the Inclusive Classroom” to be a must-read for both parents and educators on their journey of inclusion. The book is insightful, informative and useful! Packed with tips on the “how to’s”, questions from teachers and parents are answered in a clear, practical guide for home and school.

Giving value to the knowledge that inclusion is a shared experience between home and school, “Win Win Advice for the Inclusive Classroom” does just that. This book will help educators and parents acknowledge the shared journey and support open and honest communication between home and school.