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Hey, everyone, this is Katie Novak, and you're listening to the education Table, a micro podcast where I answer your questions about inclusive education in ten minutes or less. In today's episode, we're tackling the important question, is there evidence that inclusion is good for all learners? We'll explore this through the lens of universal design for learning, multi tiered systems of support, and differentiated instruction. We will also examine evidence from the hair reports and the stance on inclusion from the United nations let's dive in high school, track was an amazing experience for me. I was a natural runner and hurdler. But the thing I loved most about track was it allowed me and so many of my friends, even those who absolutely despised running, to participate in a sport together.

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I loved the 100 meters hurdles, the 400 meters race and relay, and the triple and long jump. But I had friends who excelled at the shot put, others who threw the javelin, and still others who were long distance runners. We were every shape and size, fast and slow, and we still had an amazing time together. I loved that at every practice we stretched together, we hit the weight room together, and we warmed up alongside each other. For some, that was a jog around the neighborhood, and for others, it was a little bit of interval training on the track. I remember thinking it was so awesome that we had opportunities to choose what group we wanted to be with, whether we wanted to sprint or stretch, hit the pool or lift weights.

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And goodness, there was literally nothing better than the really hot New England days where we all came together and had popsicles at the end of practice. So why on earth am I telling you this story about my love of track and field? It's because I was part of a group that was often separated in school. We didn't often have classes together, many of us, because we were in different tracks and levels. But in track we were together and we all felt like we belonged there. And it was literally my favorite place to be in high school. But these environments where everyone is together and thriving should not be limited to extracurricular activities. This sense of challenge and belonging and community is really what inclusion is about, and that should be present in all of our classrooms. So let's dive into the research.

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There is substantial evidence supporting the benefits of inclusive education for all learners. The Hare reports highlight that inclusive settings contribute to improved academic outcomes for students with and without disabilities. According to these reports, students in inclusive classrooms perform better on standardized tests and have higher graduation rates compared to their peers in non-inclusive settings, specifically, students with disabilities in inclusive settings had a 15% higher likelihood of achieving proficiency in reading and math compared to those in segregated settings. The United Nations and their policy guidelines on inclusion in education emphasized that inclusive education is a fundamental human right and is essential for achieving high quality education for all learners. The guidelines highlight that inclusive education leads to better academic and social outcomes and helps to build more inclusive societies.

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As an example, the UN reports that inclusive education can lead to a 10% increase in graduation rates for all students. So, through the lens of UDL, mtSs, and differentiated instruction, the benefits of inclusion become even clearer. UDL principles ensure that all students have access to the same learning experiences as their peers by providing multiple means of engagement, representation, and action and expression. The National center on Universal Design for Learning indicates that these practices not only support students with disabilities, but they enhance learning for all students. For example, a study from the center found that classrooms implementing UDL saw a 20% increase in student engagement and participation, and this is for all students. MTSS, with its focus on tiered supports, further reinforces the value of inclusion.

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According to a study published in the Journal of Special Education, schools implementing MTSS see significant improvements in academic performance and behavioral outcomes, specifically a 25% reduction in disciplinary referrals and a 30% increase in reading proficiency. Differentiated instruction also plays a critical role inclusive education. Research by the mother of differentiated instruction, the brilliant Carol Tomlinson, shows that when teachers differentiate instruction based on students interests and learning profiles, all students benefit. So the proof is in the pudding, but how do we make inclusion a reality? To implement inclusive practices effectively? Start with a diagnostic assessment to understand the variability in your classroom, you can use tools like artificial intelligence to determine necessary options and choices for students based on the results of that diagnostic.

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For example, it might tell you specific learning needs, supports that you need to design and or pathways for challenge, and then you can use this assessment to determine how to universally design instruction. What options and choices do you need based on that diagnostic starting point? Once you have that information, our next practice is hold on, start over. Once you have diagnostic information and you know how wide the variability is within your learning environment and what supports and challenges you may need to design. Leverage blended learning models like a station rotation to create an inclusive learning environment. In a station rotation model, you're blending the best of teacher direct instruction, online learning, and offline learning as students interact with their peers. So one station could feature digital adaptive tools allowing students to work at their own pace and their own level.

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Another station could focus on collaborative projects where students are working on critical thinking and collaboration and teamwork. Finally, you can have a teacher led station to give targeted feedback and support through differentiated instruction to make sure that every student receives the resources they need to work towards the same firm goals. You can also encourage student led learning by giving students choices for how they learn and demonstrate their understanding, and this shifts some of the planning to students. For example, you can focus on a standard and ask students to share what they've learned by either writing an essay or producing a video when it's relevant to the standard and or giving a multimedia presentation. Don't feel like you always have to be the one coming up with the options. Simply say, these are the goals that we're working towards.

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Here is the starting points of many people in the class. We'll have lots of different stations and opportunities for you to learn, and I want you to have flexibility to share what you are learning so that I can better adopt feedback and strategies for you to do this. Simply share the firm goal of the assessment, the rubric that you're going to use to determine mastery, and then ask students how they want to learn and how they want to share what they know. And this minimizes the pressure to try to personalize learning in an inclusive classroom because students are helping to personalize their learning in the classroom, just like we were all able to make our own choices in my high school track days. So to wrap up, there is robust evidence that inclusion is beneficial for all learners.

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We need to leverage UDL, mtSs, and differentiated instruction to create inclusive environments that work better for all learners. We do this through firm goals, flexible means by leveraging blended learning and by shifting to student led. The hair reports and the United nations both highlight the positive impact of inclusive education on academic and societal outcomes. By implementing some of these strategies, you can start fostering a more inclusive classroom where all students learn at high levels and feel like they belong. Thank you so much for joining me at the education table. Please subscribe to get notified of new episodes and be sure to check out the show notes for more resources on inclusive education. Until next time onward.