Inclusion vs Exclusion

To complete this activity, fold your paper in half. Label the left column “Inclusion” and the right column “Exclusion”.

Inclusion. What does the word mean? Take a moment to think about an event during your childhood or teenage years when you belonged to a group and felt part of the community. Perhaps you were a member of the band or orchestra, a club, a sports team, or it was a family event. Close your eyes, and step back in time. Think about the event, the people involved, and the feelings associated with the event. Think about how you felt when you participated in or belonged to this group. When you are ready, take a moment to write words in the Inclusion column that describe how you felt when included.

Now think about exclusion. Take a moment to recall a childhood event from which you were excluded. Perhaps it was a bus ride when you sat alone, an activity or party to which you were not invited, or a family event at which a sibling received all the attention. Once again, close your eyes and return to that moment. Think about how you felt. Write words in the Exclusion column that describe how you felt.

Now compare the two word lists. Which is longer? More often than not, the second list pertaining to the exclusion activity is longer. Powerful words such as *lonely, misunderstood, rejected, depressed,* and *unhappy* usually are the first that come to mind. On the other hand, the words associated with the inclusion activity include *content, happy, belonging,* and *accepted.*

As students enter school, there is a strong desire to be accepted by their peers. They want to belong, feel safe, and be part of the school community. Students accepted by their peers and those who feel part of the group are more liable to learn. Students who are comfortable and happy are less likely to be afraid to take the educational risks involved in learning. When students are consistently excluded from classroom activities, it is difficult to make friends, establish a sense of belonging and feel part of the community.

Taken from *The Paraprofessional’s Essential Guide to Inclusive Education b*y Peggy A. Hammeken