

## Creating Inclusive Activities for Children with Disabilities

*"Diversity is being invited to the party; inclusion is being asked to dance."* –Verna Myers

Thank you, Room Parents! We would never be able to prepare fun and exciting learning experiences beyond our daily instruction without your tireless efforts. At Cherry Run, we want to create opportunities for ALL students to participate fully in schoolwide activities. Let's focus on ABILITIES instead of differences. ☺

However, we can understand how this can seem like an incredible undertaking if you do not have a lot of experience in planning inclusive events and activities. Feeling hesitant about how to create opportunities for all students, fear of the unknown, and being uncertain where to turn for help can make the task seem insurmountable. For that reason, we have gathered a few ideas, tips, and tricks to help you as you look ahead to all that you will do this school year.

1. **Ask parents.** Parents know their children best, and they are always the best resource for ideas if you aren't sure where to start! This is always a good first step if you know the parents; however, teachers will not be able to provide contact information without consent from the students' parents. Once you have this information, don't be scared to reach out! Caregivers and parents want the best for their children, and they are usually more than willing to offer support and guidance.

*Helpful Hint:* One easy way to reach out to parents is in your Welcome Letter. You might add this to your letter before you send it out: "We want to do everything we can to make all room-parent-planned activities inclusive for all of the students. If there are specific accommodations or modifications with regards to activities or events that you think would help us better support your child, please feel free to let us know. Please note that this is completely optional."

2. **Plan activities with all children in mind.** Some events lend themselves well to including all children: outdoor games, social activities, and classroom parties are wonderful opportunities for students with disabilities to feel like a part of the school community without feeling singled-out. However, you might recognize that certain parts of the activities will be more difficult for some students—perhaps because of motor skill deficits, physical limitations, and differences in learning.

As you are preparing, try to think of accommodations you could provide for those students. This might mean having pieces of an art project pre-cut for students with motor deficits, providing larger/modified supplies for outdoor activities or those activities with smaller pieces, and giving students who might struggle with multi-step directions visuals before they complete tasks. Also, it's always a great idea to prepare some alternative activities for students who appear to get overwhelmed with what you are asking them to do.

3. **Prepare the children.** All children thrive with clear expectations and a clear schedule. Before beginning an extended activity, talk with students one-on-one. Explain to them what they will be doing, how they will be completing activities, and ask them if they have any specific questions. Again, providing them with visuals (like schedules and checklists) can ease some of their anxiety about participating.

And always, always, if you need anything—please reach out for teacher support. If you have questions, feel free to call me at 202.222.8298 or email me at [jbdelaney1@fcps.edu](mailto:jbdelaney1@fcps.edu). I will be happy to give you specific ideas or insights and help in any way that I can. Looking forward to a fantastic, exciting, and fun-filled year for all of our students!

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