INCLUDE A DUDE…

**ABSTRACT**
Learners take on the roles of different stakeholders involved in the education of students with additional needs in order to gain an appreciation of the multiple perspectives in inclusive education.

**KEYWORDS**
Inclusive education; Student with additional needs; Disability

**CONTACT**
Dr Chris Kilham, University of Canberra, chris.kilham@canberra.edu.au

**DESCRIPTION**
‘Include a Dude’ assists participants to collaborate online in order to address a number of problems that commonly confront students with disabilities in mainstream settings. Participants:
- enact the role of a stakeholder (student, parent, teacher, principal, aide)
- react to given stimulus situations according to instructions that assume they are familiar with the literature on inclusion.

**AUDIENCE/GROUP SIZE**
The ideal number of participants in each group (or ‘pod’) is 6-8. This role play was implemented in Semester 1, 2008, within the subject “Responding to Individual Needs”. This is a mandatory subject which was undertaken by undergraduates in early childhood, primary and middle school education in the Faculty of Education, University of Canberra. The following format was used:
- Participants are allocated to tutorials of approximately 20 participants, each with their individual tutor/moderator.
- Participants are given a choice of a role play or an alternative assignment. (Typically, 5-9 participants from each tutorial group chose the role play.)
- For smaller numbers, tutorials may be combined; for larger numbers it is recommended that participants be split into two independent pods in the one tutorial group.
- Participants communicate within pods but not across them.

**LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES**
This role play is designed to help participants to:
- Investigate how a role play may be used as a teaching-learning activity
- Reflect on different perspectives on an issue through exposure in a supportive environment
- Develop teamwork skills in an online environment
- Extend online literacy skills
- Expand their understanding of “inclusive education”.

**TIME AND SETTING**
- This role play runs for four weeks plus a reflection week.
- It is set in the present day and explores contemporary issues around inclusive education.
**PROCESS**

**Briefing**
- Participants are allocated a role, and given public and private information about their role identity and stance.
- Depending on their role, participant may be given different instructions. For example, they may be asked to:
  - discuss ‘least restrictive environment’
  - cite the Disability Standards for Education or other legislation
  - explain inclusion vs integration
  - use disability-first language (or not!)
  - devise a particular teaching or transition strategy
  - suggest a non-age appropriate activity
  - discuss normalization, social role valorization, differentiation, accommodation etc

**Interaction / Debate**
- In weeks 1-4, participants can email individuals/everyone in their pod. They are expected to research their responses and provide at least two references each week for their comments.
- In week 1, the stakeholders introduce each other and air their views about inclusion at a meeting at the beginning of the school year to decide how the school will approach the education of two students with additional needs.
- In week 2, the stakeholders focus on academic inclusion, particularly literacy and numeracy and are required to evaluate particular inclusive strategies.
- In week 3, attention turns to social inclusion. Participants are informed that pupils at ABC school construe the accommodations for 2 students as unfair, and begin to bully those students. The participants have to react to this situation.
- In week 4, the focus turns to debates about prize giving and the end-of-term concert.

**Debriefing**
- In week 5 participants write an evaluation of their experience.
- A face to face debrief and ‘coming out’ is conducted during the weekly tutorial which have been running parallel to the role play.

**ASSESSMENT**

Individual assessment takes into account the quality of the student’s participation on the role play, as well as a reflective evaluation of their experience. The participation consists of contributions of 400 words over several sessions per week. The evaluation asks students to address the following questions:

1. Consider all the postings in your group and choose the best and most important point that was made about inclusive education by one of your fellow role-players. Explain why you think your chosen posting was of such high quality. (NB: You cannot choose your own posting!)
2. Reflect on your role play experience. What are the advantages and disadvantages of using role play as a teaching-learning activity? Did these apply to you, and if so, why/why not? Use benefits/ difficulties/ insights from your own experience this semester to support your view.

**FACILITATOR ISSUES**
- Participants need to be encouraged to interact rather than posting their 400 words in a single submission at the end of the week.
- Some participants are instructed to act contrary to good practice (e.g. not to use disability-first language) and they may need reassurance that this is ‘OK’ because it is in-role.
- Facilitators are encouraged to take on the role of a new teacher at the school to highlight relevant issues or ask naive questions that encourage participants to explain their decisions.