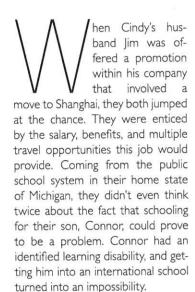
Inclusive Education: Learning for All



a speech therapist to help with his positive peer modeling. vocabulary development, social skills, schools." Cindy explained.



move to Shanghai, they both jumped rights of students with dyslexia and other specific learning disabilities. These at the chance. They were enticed individuals are legally entitled to special services to help them overcome and acby the salary, benefits, and multiple commodate their learning problems." (International Dyslexia Association, 2012)

So, one can imagine Cindy's surprise when she started searching the webprovide. Coming from the public pages of schools she was interested in having Connor attend in Shanghai. school system in their home state Most stated that they would not accept students who had identified learning of Michigan, they didn't even think disabilities. "They blamed it on a lack of resources. They said that they couldn't twice about the fact that schooling support students with needs and some even said that parents should consider for their son, Connor, could prove staying in their home countries rather than bringing them to Shanghai."

to be a problem. Connor had an That was 2005. Cindy did not end up bringing Connor to Shanghai due to identified learning disability, and get- the lack of appropriate services at the time. "We had to pass up our dream ting him into an international school to do what was right for our son. I don't regret it, but I still feel disappointed that schools could not, or would not, accommodate his needs.'

"When Connor was at his school Cindy was looking for an inclusive classroom in an inclusive school. She in Michigan, he had support services wanted a classroom where students with learning disabilities learn alongside provided by the school district. A spe-students without disabilities. Inclusive classrooms are set up both physically cial educator came into his classroom and educationally to support all learners. Every child has a right to an educathree days a week for forty minutes at tion, to belong, and to be accepted into a school community.

a time to work with him and several Inclusive classrooms are beneficial for all students. Students with special others on reading comprehension learning needs learn alongside their peers and benefit from a challenging and reading fluency," says Cindy. instructional level. Unlike self-contained classrooms where children with Connor was also pulled out of the needs only socialize with children who have similar learning needs, students in classroom two times a week to see inclusive classrooms socialize with their typical peers and learn from consistent,

The benefits of inclusion for students without special learning needs are and language pragmatics. "This is so plentiful. Students learn that we live in a diverse world and understand how normal in America, that I just never to get along with all people. They develop empathy as they appreciate and even considered it would be a probaccept others into their classroom community. Working with students who lem when applying to international learn differently can be difficult, but ultimately, this is real life. As students graduate and enter the work force, they find themselves in an environment In America, "The Individuals with where people accomplish tasks differently than themselves. With inclusion, Disabilities Education Act 2004 students get a head start on this skill. The biggest benefit, however, comes (IDEA), Section 504 of the Rehabilita- from the instruction. In an inclusive classroom, a trained special educator cotion Act of 1973, and the Americans teaches with the regular classroom teacher. They plan their lessons together with Disabilities Act (ADA) define the and are able to determine how to differentiate the lessons for the individual

learners in their classroom for all students; the ones who need extra support as well as the students who need to be challenged.

An inclusive classroom provides the students with the tools they need for success. James, a student with ADHD and sensory processing disorder, sits on an exercise ball to help provide the sensory input he needs to stay focused. Kaylene wears noise cancellation headphones to balance out the extraneous noises in the room. These help her focus on her teacher's voice and not the sound of the air conditioner or outside noises. Stanley uses voice to text software to dictate his essays as his writing disability prohibits him from writing down his thoughts in a fluent and organized manner. Abby, a student who has poor reading comprehension, has her social studies test read aloud to her so she can show her learning. In this way she is showing her learning of the social studies concepts rather than her reading ability. Running an inclusive classroom takes talented, committed individuals who believe that all children have this right, as it is a difficult endeavor. The inclusive classroom encourages students to show their learning through their strengths while building upon their challenges.

There are many positive outcomes for students with needs who are placed years, I have clearly seen a shift in the in an inclusive setting, but are there any positives for 'typical' learners? Yes, according to Kristen Pelletier, Head of Learning Support at the International School of Brussels: "Students who have exposure, education, and guidance ently. For a growing number of schools about how people learn differently acquire a skill set that enables them to the shift has been from 'Should we?'



work more effectively in teams, and to understand that every member has something to offer, precisely because of their difference. All members of an inclusive community have a reduced fear of human differences, which becomes evident in their interactions with people within the school and wider community."

Many schools in the Asia region have been successfully servicing students with mild learning needs for over a decade. In 2002 a group of international teachers created the Special Education Network In Asia (SENIA) to create a network forum for any professionals working with children with special educational needs in Asia. Since that time, they have held a yearly conference in different parts of the continent that includes educators, professionals and parents dedicated to supporting children with special learning needs. This support network is vital to both professionals and parents who find themselves alone in their tireless advocacy for their students.

The momentum of inclusion is growing. "Having collaborated with many



international school leaders over the thinking in regard to accepting and supporting students who learn differto 'How should we?'," says Pelletier in a 2013 article.

In the past few years, Shanghai and other major cities globally have witnessed a shift in attitude and acceptance regarding including students with special learning needs in their international schools.

This is encouraging news for families such as Cindy's. The next time a job opening comes up for John in another country, they may actually get to go with the confidence that Connor will get the education he deserves.

BY LORI BOLL

Pelletier, K. (2013, April 19). Who Are Our Schools For? The Case for Inclusion. Retrieved October 20. 2014.