

Inclusion Tips for Teachers and Kids

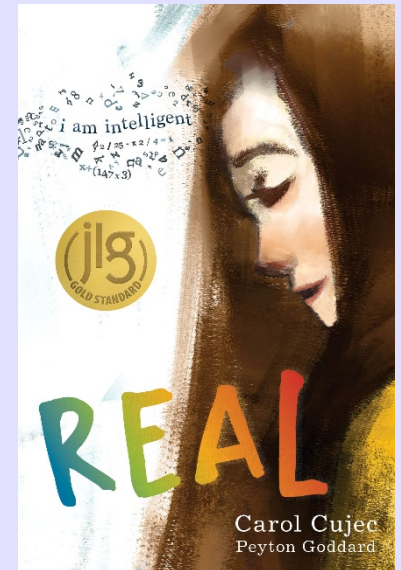
by Carol Cujec and Peyton Goddard, authors of *REAL*

Presume competence

- ✓ Believe that there are wisdoms in all kids, whether or not these wisdoms can be measured in traditional ways.

Encourage diverse friendships

- ✓ Peyton writes, "To have friends is the most important thing for all people. Without friends, there is no joy." Charity lives a hard life of isolation and is overjoyed by the first friendship bonds she develops. It opens her eyes to how much joy can come from friendships.
- ✓ Reach across boundaries of difference. Even when it seems like someone is not listening, keep trying. Peyton writes, "It might not appear that I want to tease a dear, dear conversation with you when we meet, but I longingly do. Yet I have no way without your openhearted help. It poignantly is hard as we both conquer our jitters and you say hi and ask if I'm ok with you offering high five. I'm joyous if you try."
- ✓ Believe that YOU can make a difference for others.



Be understanding when someone is having a bad day

- ✓ Try walking in their shoes (for example, try not speaking for half a day—type or write your words instead of talking).
- ✓ Listen with your heart—people perceive what you feel about them.

Find creative ways for everyone to participate

- ✓ A child needs movement to help them focus. Can they stand and participate? Sit on a ball or a wobble cushion? Use a fidget or do a puzzle while listening?
- ✓ A child has trouble using a pencil. Can they use a marker? A weighted pen? A motorized sensory pencil?
- ✓ A child needs an alternative to writing. Can they point? Type? Tell a friend? Draw a picture?
- ✓ Classmates are great resources and can offer support and creative ideas to help their friends be successful.

Think of Inclusion as an extension of social activism

- ✓ Realize that valuing and including kids at a young age is the precursor for them having a good life, as opposed to the lonely, segregated, barely tolerable existence that Peyton felt before she could communicate.
- ✓ By giving kids the opportunity to know those who are different, they can all become more caring citizens of the world. We need this!