Using Havruta to Develop a Disposition Toward Inclusion

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Dr. Michael Boyle has identified three key elements for Inclusion to be implemented and to be effective in Catholic Schools:

**Knowledge** – information needed about children with disabilities and pedagogy in general.

**Skills** – abilities needed when teaching children with disabilities (in the regular classroom.)

**Disposition** – the prayerful understanding of why children with disabilities belong in our Catholic Schools, and in particular in the regular classroom (Inclusion.)
Knowledge and Abilities

From CatholicCulture.org:

Catholic Dictionary

Term
DISPOSITION

Definition
A quality or condition of a person necessary for the performance of some action. Commonly applied to the conditions required for the valid reception or administration of the sacraments, as the state of grace is required for the sacrament of the Eucharist or sincere contrition to receive absolution in the sacrament of penance.
Dr. Miguel Romero, Salve Regina University:

“Disposition” can also be rendered as “Habitus.”

“A habitus is a deliberately chosen and consistently exercised tendency to behave in a certain way.’’

“Dispositions” is the area where we need unique resources for Catholic Schools:

NCEA White paper – “One Spirit, One Body”

National Catholic Partnership on Disability

The Mustard Seed Project

National Catholic Board On Full Inclusion – Working toward full inclusion for Catholic Schools
And, we need resources to help others understand and develop their disposition for this work...

Why? Some faculty, parents and even students will never see the need for inclusion unless they are explicitly aware that it is a response to our faith.

How can we, as a Church, accomplish this goal of Inclusion?

We would never want to just pull out a few scripture passages to show that we are “right.”

We do want to find our way as a Church, and a teaching community, as to how God is calling us to include children with disabilities in our schools.
One possible resource is

Havruta
(alternate spellings: Hevruta or Chevruta)

In this session, we will:

1. Learn what Havruta is.
2. Practice as a group a Havruta study of one Gospel passage.
3. Practice, with one other person, a Havruta study related to Inclusion.
4. Share our insights from #3 above.
5. Look at real ways we can to use this method with anyone connected with Catholic Schools.
What is Havruta?

A Jewish technique for studying scripture with one other person.

It emphasizes that God speaks not only through scripture, but through the presence of other people in our lives.

In some ways, it is like Lectio Divina, in that it draws us into the text and helps us to see new connections that we never saw before. However, it involves two people, not one.

Havruta

A method whereby two students analyze and discuss a text.

Composed of three pairs of core practices*:

- Listening and Articulating;
- Wondering and Focusing;
- Supporting and Challenging.

*Theory of Havruta Learning
Havruta is:

Used in Yeshiva’s around the world. A respected method for studying and learning the Torah.

*Picture from “My Jewish Learning” website. Link available in final slide.*

Havruta Partners:

Are very carefully chosen.

Often work together because they tend to have opposing, rather than complimentary, views.

Often work together for years.
Why Havruta?

1. Inclusive
3. Respectful engagement.
4. “God speaks through other people in our lives.”
5. Emphasizes “Partnership.”
6. Encourages articulation of our views as advocates.

Also: Very helpful when there is conflict!

Imagine: You are one Havruta partner, and the person who disagrees with you (at least in your mind) can be the other.
Example: Matthew 15:21-28

Then Jesus went from that place and withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And behold, a Canaanite woman of that district came and called out, “Have pity on me, Lord, Son of David! My daughter is tormented by a demon.” But he did not say a word in answer to her. His disciples came and asked him, “Send her away, for she keeps calling out after us.” He said in reply, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” But the woman came and did him homage, saying, “Lord, help me.” He said in reply, “It is not right to take the food of the children and throw it to the dogs.” She said, “Please, Lord, for even the dogs eat the scraps that fall from the table of their masters.” Then Jesus said to her in reply, “O woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish.” And her daughter was healed from that hour.

Example of how Havruta can be used:

NCEA Guest Blog: Jesus Growth Mindset, and Ours
To begin, here are some basic ideas of questions to discuss that will work with any texts:

1. What does the text say?
On a really basic level, what is this text about? How do you know? What words or ideas are repeated in this text?
2. What does the text mean?
What is the deeper message that comes across in this text? Do you agree with this message? Why or why not? What metaphors or symbols do you see in the text?
3. What does the text mean to you?
How does this text relate to your own life? What have you experienced that is similar to something you see in this text? What could this text teach you?

*From “St. Mary’s Press, Using Hevruta in the Classroom.” Link available on the last slide.*

To help with Havruta, use some techniques from Lectio Divina:

1. Prayerfully ask God to help you understand what this scripture passages means in your life, right now.

2. Imagine you are there. What do you see? What do you hear? Who else is there? How do you feel?

3. What jumps out at you from this passage? Why?

4. Is there anything shocking or surprising here? Anything challenging or difficult?
Turn to the person next to you and discuss these questions:

1. Why do you think the disciples want to send this woman away?

2. What do you think has made her approach Jesus?

3. Why do you think Jesus refuses to heal her daughter?

4. What do you think has made Jesus change his mind?

5. Now that Jesus has made this choice, what will this mean in the future? For him? For his disciples?

Pick one to discuss with your partner:

Matthew 17:14-20 The Healing of a Boy with a Demon:
I'm not really sure (I or you) can do this. Others have tried to help me (my child, students with disabilities), and it hasn’t worked out.

Matthew 20:20 -28  The Mother of James and John
I want my children to be the best. It is my job as a parent to look out for them. I can’t really worry about other people’s children.

Matthew 9:18-26  The Officials’ Daughter and the Woman with a Hemorrhage
I am so worn down that I can’t really speak about this issue or even ask for help. I am upset that no one sees the urgency of my request.
How can you use this technique in real life?

1. Religion/Theology teachers use with Students.
2. An opening for faculty meetings throughout the year.
3. An opening for parent meetings.
4. Write about it in your principal/class newsletter in order to illustrate a point.
5. When a passage that you feel is particularly related to Inclusion is the reading of the day, ask your Pastor if he will consider that aspect in his homily.
6. If God speaks through other people, how can he speak through people who are not there?...
7. Use it at a principal meetings, for discussion about Inclusion in your Diocese.

9. If you have regional meetings for resource teachers, use it as an opening discussion.
10. On Social Media, share your insights about how various passages speak to you about Inclusion.
11. Share the idea of Havruta Study in regard to Inclusion with your Diocesan “Office of Disabilities Ministry” and your Diocesan paper. Ask them to write or blog about it.
12. Prepare for a difficult meeting with a family or teacher by using this method yourself. The “difficult” person is your Havruta partner. By their actions and opinions, what scriptural passage comes to mind? How can this most help you in your understanding of what God is calling you to do or to be?
Can we tweet about other passages that would be great for a Havruta study on Inclusion?

Tweeting as:

@engelworks

My email: dengel@saintrays.org

More Resources:

Using Hevruta in the Classroom - St. Mary's Press

Learning Together with Hevruta - St. Mary's Press

Seminary students using Havruta

My Jewish Learning - Havruta, Learning in Pairs
Any scripture passage can be studied this way, but here are some that might speak to you or your community about Inclusion in particular:

Galatians 3:23-29  “What Faith has Brought Us.” Because we are members of the body of Christ, “categories” of people no longer make sense.

Matthew 25:31-46  “The Sheep and the Goats” But Lord, when did we see you...?

1 Corinthians 13:11  “When I was a Child” Putting aside childish things.

Matthew 13:1-23  “Parable of the Sower” Why are we not always effective?

Matthew 28:16-20  “The Great Commission” Schools are teaching agents of the church.

Luke 2:22-38  “The Presentation in the Temple” How can we develop our ability to see potential in all young children?