



Teachers and Teacher Aides Working Together

Creating Inclusive Classrooms
Module 9 Workbook



Nāku to rourou
nāu te rourou
ka ora ai te ākonga.

With my basket and
your basket the
learner will thrive.

Published by the New Zealand Ministry of Education.
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About this resource

Background

Teachers and Teacher Aides Working Together is a set of modules that teachers and teacher aides complete together.

Each module in this series is a 'ready-to-use' pack with a presentation, workbook and activities so learning can be put into practice. Some modules include self-paced e-learning. The module materials come in different formats to allow choice about how you learn.

Find out more at [Teachers and Teacher Aides Working Together](#).

The modules follow an inquiry cycle. The workbook has a section for each step in the cycle.



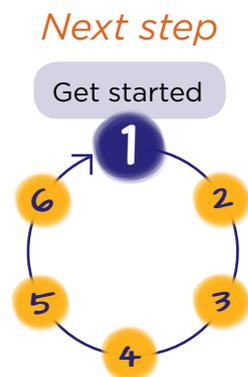
If you are leading the learning, refer to the [Facilitator Quick Guide](#) and gather any additional materials needed to complete the activities.

Download the learning materials from the [Module 9 page](#) of the Teachers and Teacher Aides Working Together site.

Note that you have some choices about how you access the module materials. This is the PDF workbook format. It includes links to required resources and printable worksheets for the activities. If you are working with hard copy, you will need to access the online version to activate the links.

For an enhanced online reading experience, access the [e-workbook for Module 9](#). In the e-workbook, activity sheets are Google Docs that you can print, download as Word documents or copy to your own Google Drive for working online.

You also have the option to download a PowerPoint or view a narrated presentation.





1. Get started

Start by watching the short video. Then read the cartoon and key principles. They introduce the main ideas covered in this module. Discuss these as a group. The learning outcomes describe what you'll achieve once you've completed the six steps.



Watch the video about using [classroom layout and support staff strategies to support a student's learning and peer interaction](#) at the Ministry of Education's teacher aide Vimeo album.

“ Having an adult by a student's side for all or most of the school day can actually interfere with a student's inclusion as a participating member of the classroom community. ”

Giangreco et al., 2005, p. 28

“ I would like to get less support and I would like to decide who supports me... and in which parts of my schedule ...
If I were allowed to use the computer more I wouldn't need so much help at school. It's not much fun having all these old ladies hanging around me all the time. ”

Secondary school student, quoted in Egilson & Traustadottir, 2009, p. 27



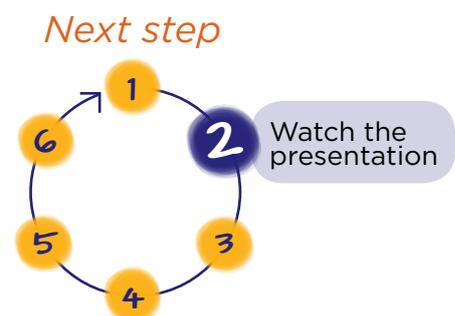
Key principles

- Teachers are responsible for creating learning environments that support all learners.
- In inclusive classrooms, all students have opportunities to be as independent as possible. They are connected to others and self-determining in their everyday decisions.
- The role of the teacher aide is to support teachers to create the conditions necessary for an inclusive classroom environment.
- The ways some teacher aide support is used may have negative impacts on students.
- Excessive one-to-one support for a student may reduce teacher engagement with the student and their sense of responsibility for them.
- When teacher aides spend a lot of time in close proximity to a student, those students can become over-dependent on adults and their peers may keep their distance.
- Teacher aide support should help ensure that all students in the classroom are learning alongside and with their peers and teacher.
- ‘Natural supports’ are the everyday relationships and opportunities in a school that can help all students participate. These supports should be considered for students with additional learning needs.
- Peers are important natural supports.

Learning outcomes

This module is intended to support teachers and teacher aides to achieve four aims:

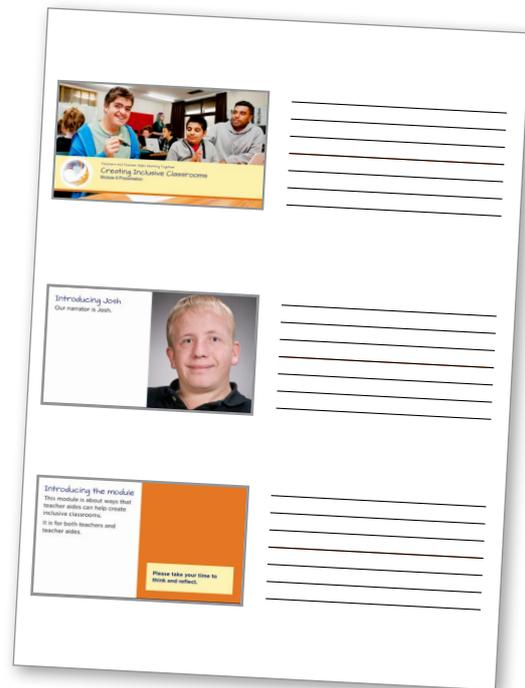
1. Identify and describe how they can influence the opportunities all students have to engage and participate in learning.
2. Identify effective and ineffective ways of creating an inclusive learning environment.
3. Plan and implement a new strategy that supports opportunities for students to participate and contribute in a shared learning activity.
4. Reflect and evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy in enhancing student contributions and participation.



2. Watch the presentation

Watch the presentation about the *New Zealand Curriculum*. Read the discussion on the next pages for further information.

Visit the [Module 9 e-workbook](#) to download or watch the presentation.



Further information

Why this module?

Teachers are responsible for creating learning environments that support all learners. Teacher aides are responsible for helping teachers create the conditions that enable this. In inclusive classrooms, all students are as independent as possible, connected to others and self-determining in their everyday decisions.

This module is about the ways that teacher aides can help create inclusive classrooms. The teacher aide practices that the module covers are:

- supporting students in the classroom
- reducing one-to-one time with a teacher aide
- reducing excessive teacher aide proximity.

One-to-one may limit teacher involvement

International research has found that when a teacher aide works one-to-one with a student, the amount of engagement between the student and teacher can be reduced. Giving students access to high-quality teaching is the best way to positively influence their education. Therefore, anything that jeopardises this – even well-intentioned support – can be problematic. The research also found that when teacher aides work more flexibly within the classroom, teacher–student engagement reaches higher levels (Giangreco, Broer, & Edelman, 2001).

How close is too close?

Teacher aide proximity refers to how close the teacher aide is to the student. Examples of excessive teacher aide proximity are:

- sitting very close to the student
- staying with the student throughout the school day
- staying with the student everywhere in the school
- maintaining physical contact with the student (holding hands, having the student sit on their lap).

If an adult maintained this level of proximity to a student who did not have additional learning needs, people would think it was a little odd. So why is it OK for a student with additional learning needs to have this level of contact?

Keeping close to students who need some extra support is borne out of good intentions. But staying too close can interfere with the relationships between the student and the teacher, make a student over-dependent on adults, get in the way of peer interactions and reduce a student's personal control (Giangreco et al, 1997).

Staying in the classroom

Students who receive one-to-one support from a teacher aide are more likely to be separated from their classmates than other students. This happens when a student:

- works with a teacher aide at the back of the classroom
- is removed from the classroom because they are disrupting other students
- leaves the classroom for personal or physical care
- receives a reward for positive behaviour when engaging in an independent task that is separate from their peers.

Again, these practices have good intentions but result in students spending less time in the classroom and with their peers, which reduces the student's access to their teachers, peers and, ultimately, learning.

Using natural supports

'Natural supports' are the everyday relationships and opportunities that exist in schools and communities to help people participate and be included. Everyone relies on natural supports. We may think of ourselves as 'independent', but actually we are 'interdependent' – we rely on people and systems in our lives and communities. There is a growing emphasis on using natural supports and promoting interdependence for people with disabilities or additional learning needs.

Peers are an important natural support. Rather than aiming for a student to complete a task independently or with minimal adult support (from a teacher aide), why not aim for the student to complete the task by asking a peer for help? This presents a two-way learning opportunity where each student learns different things from the other.

Working together

Teachers have responsibility for the learning programme for all the students in their class, as well as the strategies and teaching approaches. The way a classroom environment is set up can support students to participate or it can provide a barrier to participation. Similarly, the strategies used can enhance or inhibit student opportunities to participate in learning and be successful. This means thinking about teaching and learning in new ways and accepting that practices that suit one student may not suit another.

It may be that specialists or specialist teachers are also involved in identifying specific strategies

to support students or the whole class. Some schools use parent-teacher conferences, planned meetings or Individual Education Plan (IEP) meetings as opportunities for their families and whānau (families) to share their preferences for support. These discussions enable teachers to use teaching strategies that explicitly reflect family and whānau preferences.

Teachers have responsibility for discussing plans and modelling strategies with their teacher aides. Regular feedback and meetings are beneficial in order to compare knowledge about student preferences.

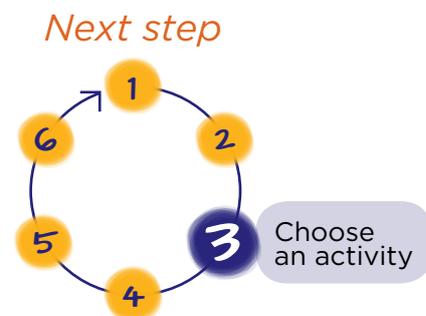
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Giangreco, M. F., Edelman, S., Luiselli, T. E., & MacFarland, S. Z. C. (1997). Helping or hovering? Effects of instructional assistant proximity on students with disabilities. *Exceptional Children, 64*, 7-18. Reprinted with permission of the [Council for Exceptional Children](#).

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3. Choose an activity

Choose one or two activities to do in pairs or small groups. Go to the back of the workbook for each activity's instructions, worksheets and resources.

Activity 1

Using natural supports

In this activity, reflect on how natural supports are used in your classroom, and how they could be used more.

This activity works best when it is done by teachers and teacher aides who regularly work together.

Activity 2

Strategies for inclusive classrooms

Read a number of practical strategies that teacher aides can use when working in classrooms. Talk about the strategies you already use, those you could use more often and those you could start using.

This activity works best when it is done by teachers and teacher aides who regularly work together.



Activity 3

What students say about teacher aides

In this activity, read quotes from students about teacher aides. Discuss the impact teacher aides have on their students and how this relates to your work with students.

Activity 4

Classroom seating plans

Look at the different seating plans in a range of classrooms and the positions of students with additional learning needs and teacher aides. Talk about your experience of effective seating plans and consider the evidence about teacher aide proximity.

Activity 5

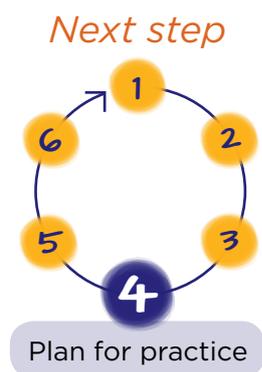
Teacher aide proximity

Read an article that summarises the literature about teacher aide proximity. Discuss how teachers and teacher aides in your school manage how closely teacher aides work with students with additional learning needs.

Activity 6

Exploring online resources about effective teacher aide practice

In this activity, you will explore a section of the guide *Supporting effective teacher aide practice* on [Inclusive Education](#). It covers content about how teacher aides can support student independence and ownership of their learning.



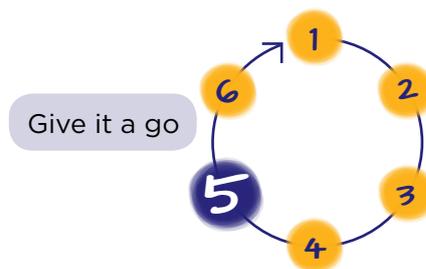


4. Plan for practice

It's time to plan how you will put your learning into practice. Try one of these suggestions in your work together over the next few weeks.

- Talk with senior management about surveying students to find out how they think teacher aides should support students. Collate and analyse what students say. What themes do you notice? Discuss how you could work differently in the classroom, based on the students' ideas.
- In activities 1 and 2, you discussed a number of strategies for supporting students in the classroom and encouraging independence. Select one strategy to try in your class. Decide what the teacher's and teacher aide's roles will be. Try the strategy over several weeks.
- If you identified teacher aide proximity or where a teacher aide sits in the classroom as something that could be improved, make a plan for change. Your school's learning support coordinator (SENCo) may be able to help you plan and implement this.

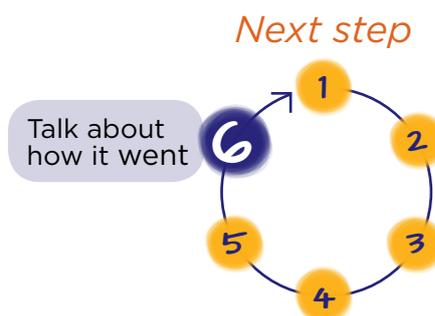
Next step





5. Give it a go

Implement the strategy you decided on in Step 4. Use the space below to make notes about what you did and how it went.





6. Talk about how it went

Meet to talk about how the strategy from Step 4 went. Discuss and plan how you might adapt or modify your practice. Use the questions below to guide your reflection.

- What did we try?
- What happened when we did this? How did the students respond to the strategy?
How did the adults experience and respond to the strategy?
- How might we change our practice next time?
- What have we learned about how teacher aide support can enhance inclusive practice?
- To what extent are we enhancing inclusion in the classroom?
- What are we going to do next to encourage all our students to contribute and participate?

Possible next steps

When thinking about what you might do next, consider the other topics in this series:

- Teachers and Teacher Aides: Who Does What?
- Keeping Our Work Confidential, Professional and Safe
- Supporting Students with Complex Needs
- What Do We Think about Disability and Diversity?
- Identifying Students' Strengths
- Students Participating in their Individual Education Plans (IEP)
- Understanding the New Zealand Curriculum
- Fostering Peer Relationships
- Supporting Student Learning in the Whole Class
- Teacher Aide Interaction that Supports Student Learning

Visit [Teachers and Teacher Aides Working Together](#) to access these modules.



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9 Creating Inclusive Classrooms

Using natural supports

Activity 1

In this activity, reflect on how natural supports are used in your classroom and how they could be used more.

This activity works best when it is done by teachers and teacher aides who work together regularly.



Working in pairs or a small group, refer to the worksheet on the next page about using natural supports. The left-hand column lists five ways to enhance a student's independence by using naturally-occurring supports.



Think about students you both work with. Discuss each natural support and identify the ways you can work together in the classroom to encourage students to become less dependent on teacher aide support and more independent in everyday activities.



Write your ideas in the right-hand column.

9 Creating Inclusive Classrooms

Using natural supports (continued)

Activity 1

Natural supports in the classroom

Our strategies and ideas

Position the teacher aide so that all students engage with the teacher and their peers.

Keep the student fully involved in all class activities, learning alongside their peers.

Encourage peers to support each other.

Encourage independence and interdependence (working on own and working with others).

Provide less support over time

9 Creating Inclusive Classrooms

Strategies for inclusive classrooms *Activity 2*

Read the practical strategies that teacher aides can use when working in the classroom. Talk about the strategies you already use, those you could use more often and those you could start using.

This activity works best when it is done by teachers and teacher aides who regularly work together.



Working individually to begin with, read the twenty-four different strategies (see over) that teacher aides can use when working in a classroom. This is a comprehensive list of practical ideas that can help many students in the class. As you read, identify the strategies you currently use.



Work in pairs or small groups to talk about the strategies. Discuss any you are unsure about.

Talk about the strategies you currently use and those you could use more often. Identify one strategy you could start using.



Use the classroom strategies planning tool to record a strategy you will:

- **keep** using
- use **more** often
- **start** using.



Module 7 describes the concept of Universal Design for Learning (UDL). UDL provides teachers with a framework for creating an inclusive classroom curriculum. Module 7 also explains the concepts of “adaptations” and “differentiations”. These are changes that can be made to the curriculum to make it more accessible to students.

Module 10 provides an opportunity to explore the strategies scanning, roving, listening in, and supporting attention.

9 Creating Inclusive Classrooms

Strategies for inclusive classrooms (continued)

Activity 2

Strategy	What does this mean?
<i>Focus on strengths</i>	<p>Think about what the student can do. For example, a student may not be able to read, but she may be able to draw well and use labels. When peers are reading a piece of work, a buddy could read aloud so the student has access to information. The information could also be downloaded on the student's computer for her to access. Instead of writing a summary, the student could use drawings and labels to record the key points.</p>
<i>Ask the student</i>	<p>If you are unsure how to provide support or how much support to provide, ask the student.</p>
<i>Keep expectations high</i>	<p>Before adapting resources, content or tasks, ask yourself whether the student actually needs these changes. Sometimes it's best not to change expectations but to change the type or level of support.</p>
<i>Scanning</i>	<p>Stand or sit where you can see everyone working; observe the students at their task.</p>
<i>Roving</i>	<p>Move between students and groups to take a closer look at the students and their work.</p>
<i>Listening in</i>	<p>Spend time listening to what students are saying as they are working.</p>
<i>Supporting attention</i>	<p>Ask simple questions that help students to understand what is required of them and help them remain engaged in the task.</p>
<i>Break tasks into smaller steps</i>	<p>Sometimes students prefer a 'to do' list or a schedule that breaks a task into smaller steps. For example, a student may need to write a story. They could tick each step as it is completed: write a title, write a sentence, write another sentence, complete the story, read my work.</p>
<i>Extend time on tasks</i>	<p>Students may be able to complete the same work as everyone else if they are given extra time to do so. It may be useful to spread the task over two or more sessions rather than do it in one block.</p>

9 Creating Inclusive Classrooms

Strategies for inclusive classrooms (continued)

Activity 2

Strategy	What does this mean?
<i>Present a limited amount of information on a page</i>	<p>Some students prefer information presented in uncluttered and clear formats. Consider whether pictures are distracting or whether they support the student's understanding of the content. Consider whether the words are large enough and whether there is enough white space around them. You could take action to improve this. For example, you could cut up a piece of written text and glue the strips on to a bigger piece of paper, leaving plain gaps between the text.</p>
<i>Offer support; do not just give it</i>	<p>Check that support is actually needed. Encourage students to ask peers for support first. If a student says they do not want your support, respect their wishes. Offer support to others around the student.</p>
<i>Use a quiet voice</i>	<p>When students are working, use a quiet voice to avoid distracting others or embarrassing them within the classroom.</p>
<i>Make things concrete</i>	<p>Concrete examples such as pictures and video clips may help students understand concepts better. These resources can be used with the whole class, in line with the principles of Universal Design for Learning.</p>
<i>Teach organisational skills to everyone</i>	<p>Use schedules, checklists and calendars with all students to reinforce completing tasks and keeping things organised. These supports can be used for all students.</p>
<i>Change the materials</i>	<p>Sometimes changing the materials provided to students can make a difference. Experiment with this and give students choices about which materials they want to use to complete work.</p>
<i>Use a timer</i>	<p>Timers can be useful across a range of students who like to know how long tasks will take or require extra organisational support. Timers can be used manually by students and/or teachers. They can be used on the computer as a visual and/or audio prompt. You could share a range of timers, such as clocks, stopwatches and sand timers.</p>

9 Creating Inclusive Classrooms

Strategies for inclusive classrooms (continued)

Activity 2

Strategy	What does this mean?
<i>Pre-teach</i>	<p>Before beginning a new unit of work or introducing new concepts, teach core language so those students who take longer to grasp language and ideas have some prior understanding of the new learning.</p>
<i>Structured peer support</i>	<p>Work cooperatively in a positive and empowering way to support all students. Research shows that cooperative groups improve learning for all students. Peer support and cooperative work skills require structured teaching so that students understand how to work together. Be clear about not setting up certain students as 'helpers' to other students. Everyone having roles and supporting students to feedback means active learning by all members of the team.</p>
<i>Use movement</i>	<p>Some students who have difficulty memorising information may find it easier to use movement to learn new information.</p>
<i>Provide extra opportunities to practise</i>	<p>Some students require extra opportunities to practise skills. They may not need a lot of time, but they may need to practise regularly. Timetable some practice time. Use headphones and computer and set a timer. Provide games and activities that practise information retention and that students can be play together.</p>
<i>Use key phrases from a student's first language</i>	<p>For English language learners, ask them to teach you some key phrases in their first language. Use these in your daily work.</p>
<i>Ensure assistive technology is charged and ready to go</i>	<p>Some students require assistive technology, such as iPads and laptops, to be able to complete work alongside their peers. A laptop that is not charged is a barrier to participating in class. Teach students to take responsibility for charging equipment.</p>
<i>Redirect peers</i>	<p>Students often identify a teacher aide as being responsible for a specific student. They may approach the teacher aide rather than attempting to communicate with the student directly. Where possible, redirect peers to the student or students involved.</p>
<i>Observing</i>	<p>Take the time to observe and get to know students. Observe them as classroom members. Note how they participate, what skills they already have and how they work with others in their classrooms.</p>

9 Creating Inclusive Classrooms

Strategies for inclusive classrooms (continued)

Activity 2

A strategy I use that I will keep using is:

A strategy that I will use more often is:

A strategy that I will start using is:

9 Creating Inclusive Classrooms

What students say about teacher aides

Activity 3

In this activity, read quotes from students about teacher aides. Discuss the impact teacher aides can have on their students and how this relates to your students.



Working individually to begin with, read the student quotes (see over). These are things that students have said about teacher aide support in their classrooms.



Work in pairs, small groups or a large group to talk about the quotes.

Discuss these questions:

- What is your reaction to these quotes?
- What impact is teacher aide support having for these students?
- How is support from a teacher aide affecting the students' participation, self-esteem and sense of belonging?
- If you have talked with your students about teacher aide support in the past, compare their views with the quotes.
- If you asked students in your class what they thought about having teacher aide support, what do you think they would say?

9 Creating Inclusive Classrooms

What students say about teacher aides (continued)

Activity 3

I would like to get less support and I would like to decide who supports me ... and in which parts of my schedule ... If I were allowed to use the computer more I wouldn't need so much help at school. It's not much fun having all these old ladies hanging around me all the time.

Egilson & Traustadottir, 2009, p. 27

Like when I was in third form, I kept sending teacher aides away because of the teacher. I just didn't know quite how to handle the teacher aide and the teacher was in the same situation and they were trying to teach me something and I was just confused and I didn't like the subject in the end anyway.

Rutherford, 2008, p. 127

Rachel wanted to "make teachers more aware that we are actually capable of doing things, not being left out". She wondered if disabled students were left out because of teachers' planning. And not working with the students and their families to see what can actually be done. "Cause some teachers just don't think, some of them are pretty blonde when it comes to it ... that's just putting it nicely."

Rachel, secondary school student, quoted in Rutherford, 2008

The teacher draws up the seating plans. They tend to leave a desk (for the teacher aide) just in case, but in the classes like maths and computers where I don't really need a teacher aide, I have someone sitting next to me. In economics it was fine because I didn't use the teacher aide very much... then she sat at the back until I needed her so I had someone sitting next to me ... you're being like a normal person.

Adam, secondary school student, quoted in Ward, 2011

Last year I sat in class and I didn't know what the teacher means. Now I have (a teacher aide) and she listens, tells me in my language. I understand. I am good at Maths cos she tells me and I understand. With no (teacher aide) I don't know what the teacher says.

Eleni, secondary school student

The teacher aide deliberately moved away from Jack to let him work with the other students. One of Jack's peers said to the teacher aide: "Jack is getting so clever so what will you do when you don't have a job?"

Hugh, year 8 student

Tane: "I don't have to do [my work] because [the teacher aide] will do it for me. She writes it in my book."

Tane's teacher asked if he could read out loud what the teacher aide had written.

Tane: "Nah. Can't read the words."

Tane, year 6 student

9 Creating Inclusive Classrooms

What students say about teacher aides (continued)

Activity 3

A new teacher aide started in the school. One of Jack's peers said to her: "If you don't understand what he wants just ask us cos we know what he says."

Rebecca, year 8 student

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- Rutherford, G. (2008). *Different ways of knowing? Understanding disabled students' and teacher aides' school experiences within a context of relational social justice (PhD)*. University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand.
- Ward, A. (2011). Let's talk about teacher aides. *Kairaranga*, 12,(1) 43-50.

9 Creating Inclusive Classrooms

Classroom seating plans

Activity 4

Look at the range of classroom seating plans and the positions of students with additional learning needs and teacher aides. Talk about your experience of different seating plans and consider the evidence about teacher aide proximity.



Working in pairs or small groups, look at the sample seating plans (see over) that show a range of classrooms.

Discuss where the students with additional learning needs and the teacher aide are positioned in relation to the teacher and the rest of the students.

How do these seating plans relate to your experience of classroom seating and effective arrangements for including students with additional learning needs?



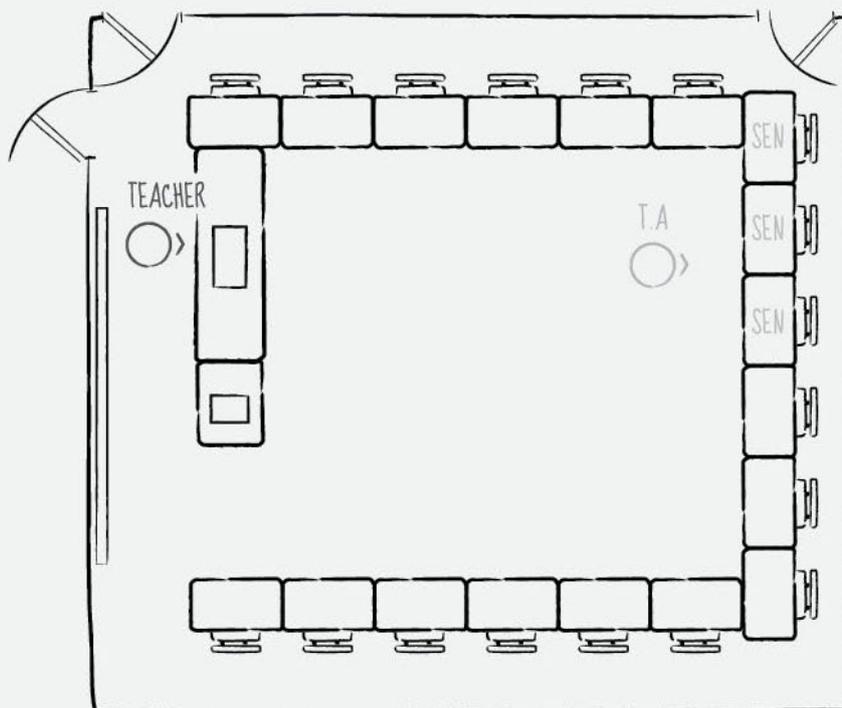
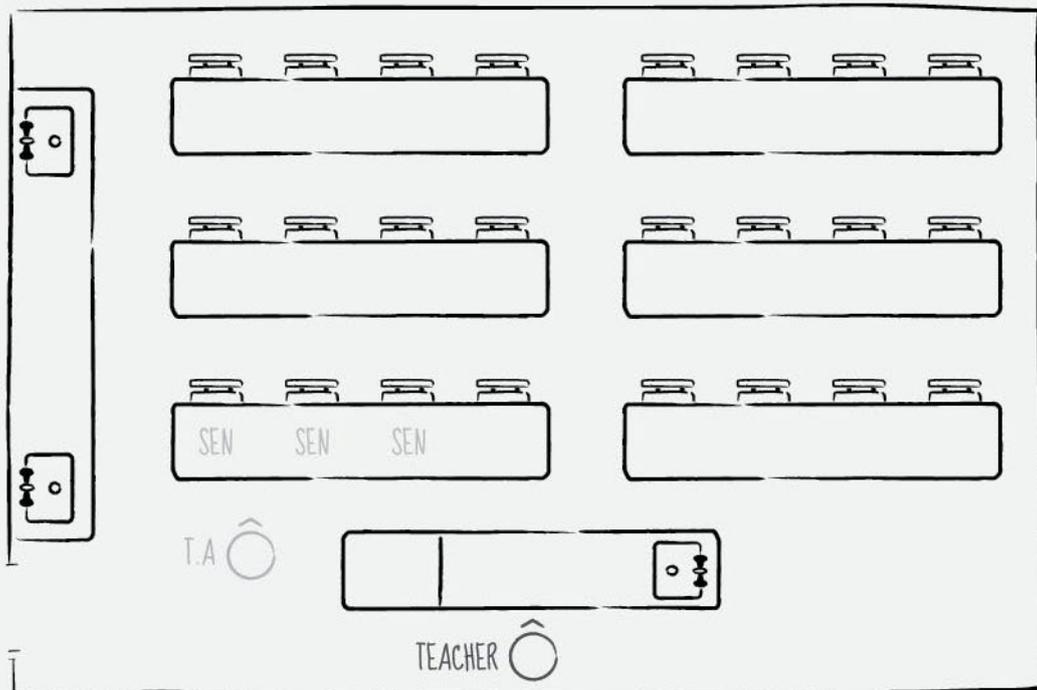
Use the blank seating plans (see over) to show how the teacher, students and teacher aide could be positioned for maximum inclusion. Label your plan.



Read on to learn about what research has shown is best practice in relation to positioning students with additional learning needs and teacher aides in inclusive classrooms.

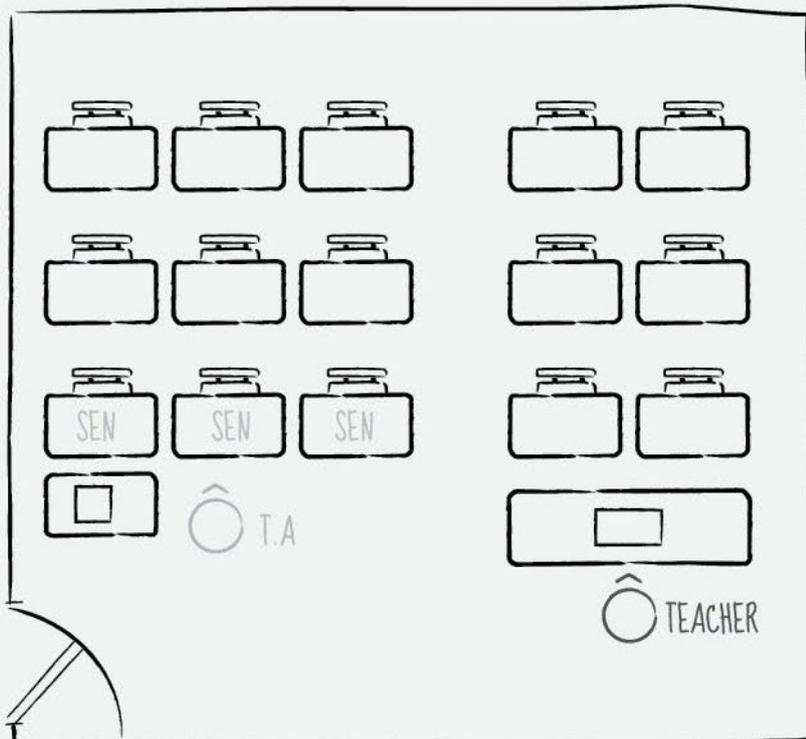
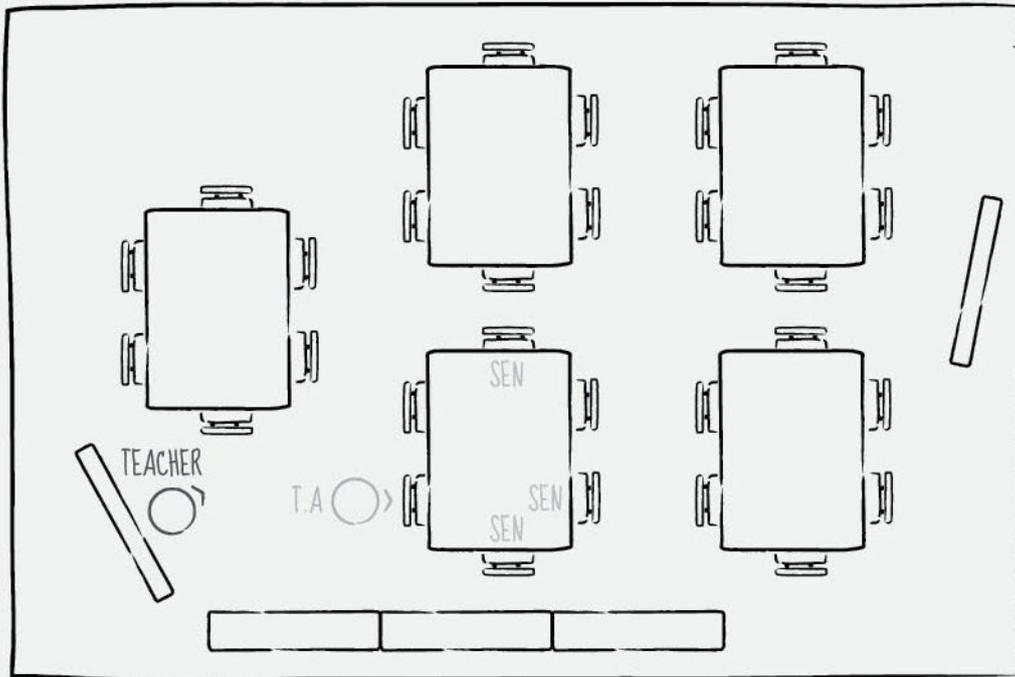
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Classroom seating plans (continued) Activity 4



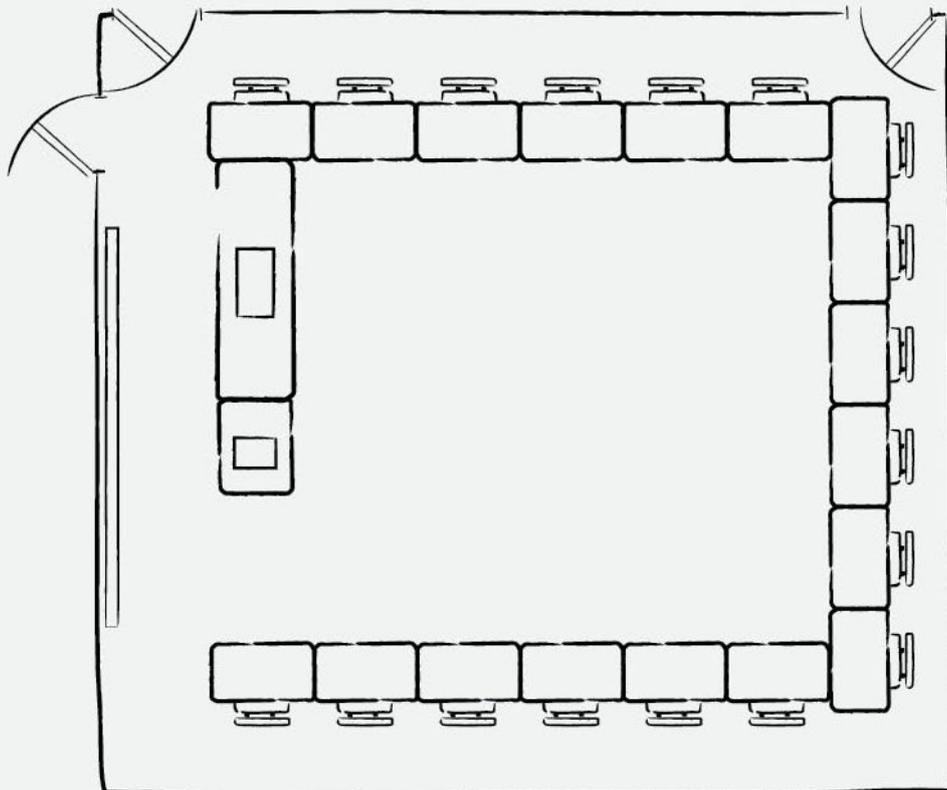
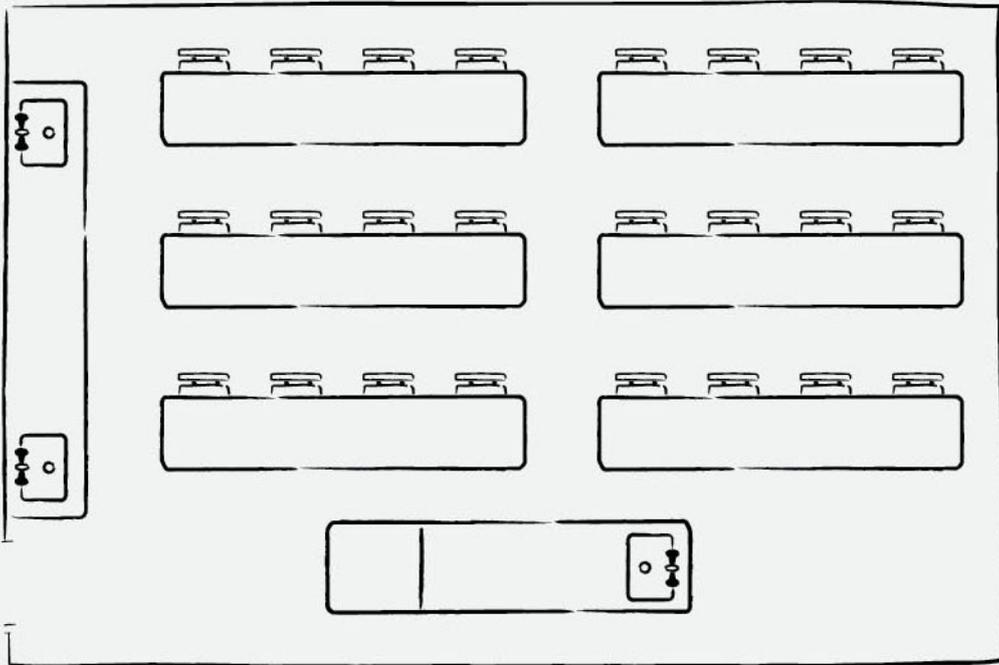
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Classroom seating plans (continued) Activity 4



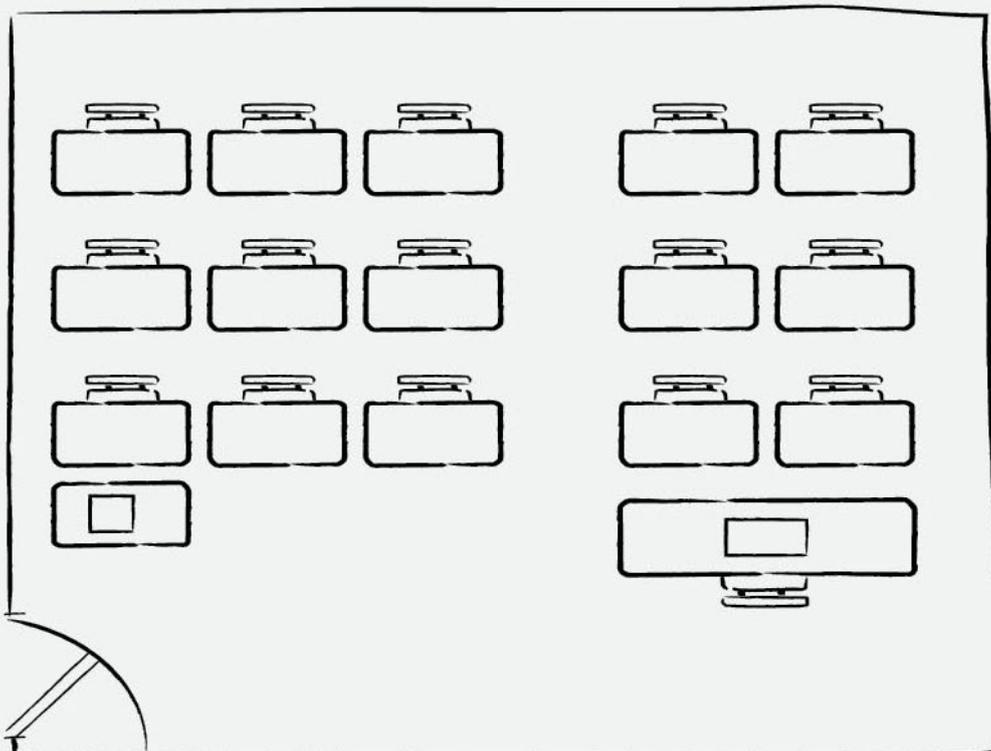
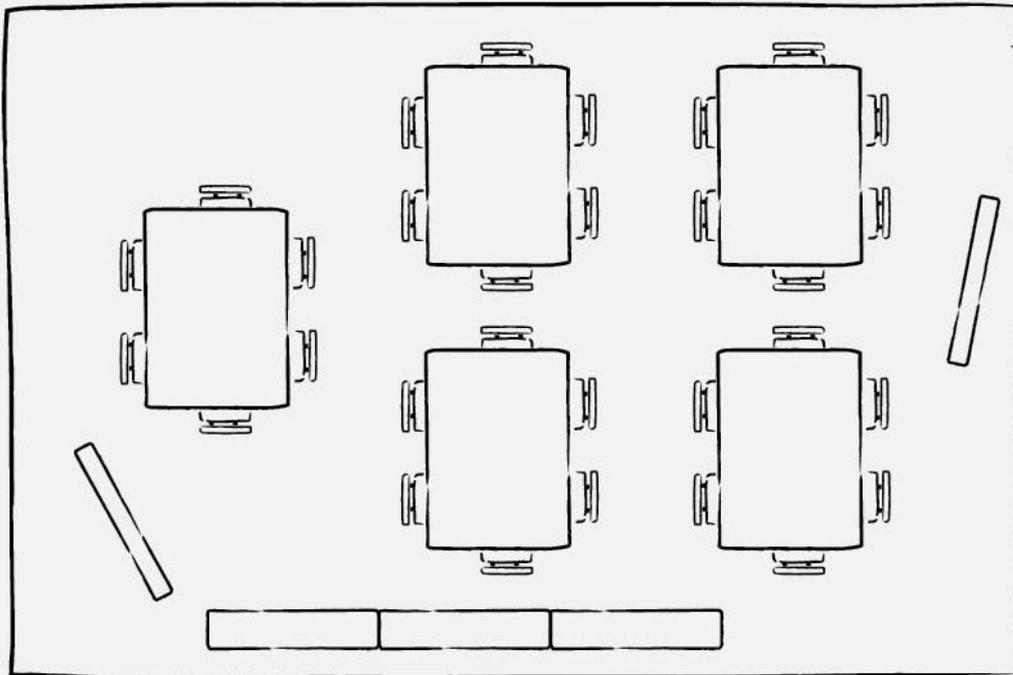
9 Creating Inclusive Classrooms

Classroom seating plans (continued) Activity 4



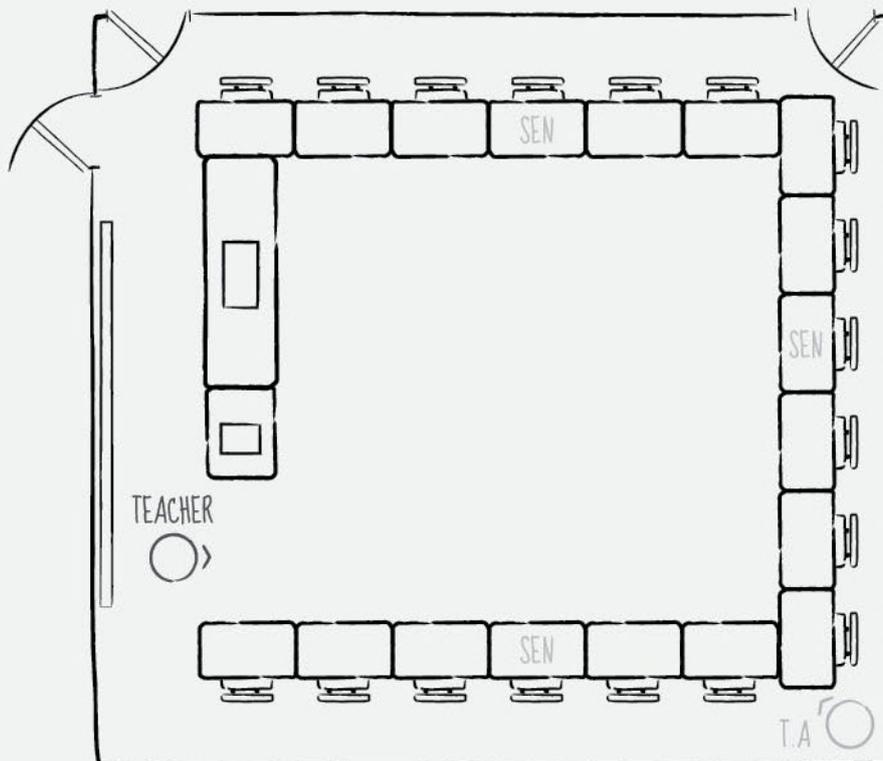
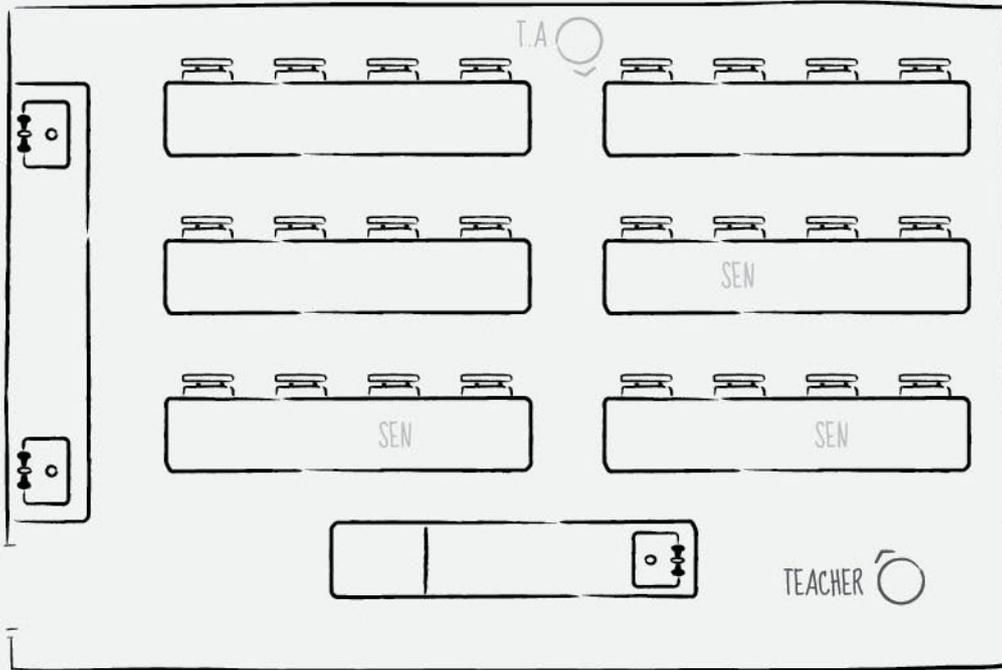
9 Creating Inclusive Classrooms

Classroom seating plans (continued) Activity 4



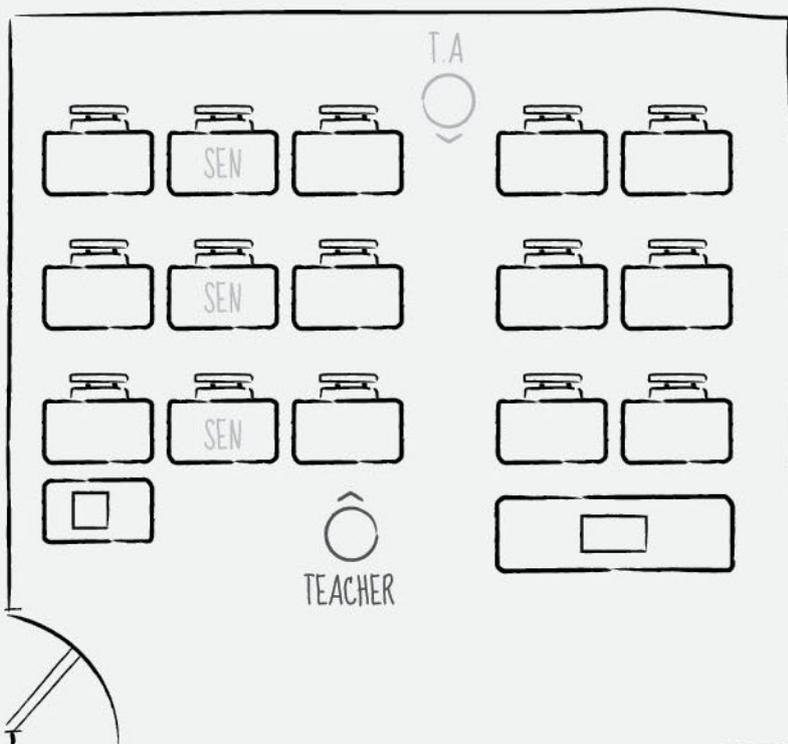
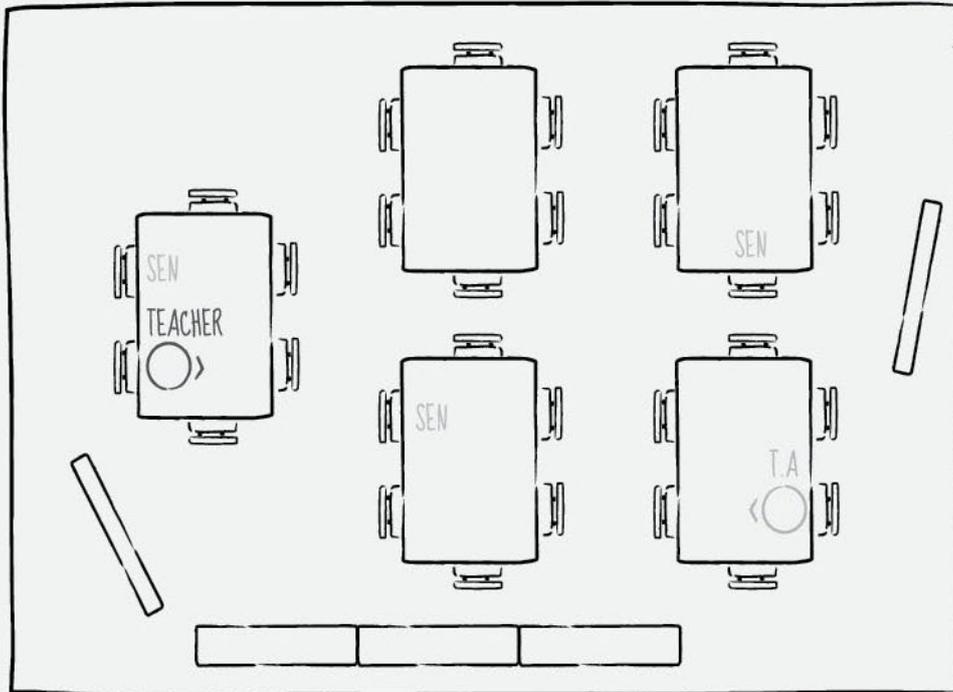
9 Creating Inclusive Classrooms

Classroom seating plans (continued) Activity 4



9 Creating Inclusive Classrooms

Classroom seating plans (continued) Activity 4



9 Creating Inclusive Classrooms

Teacher aide proximity

Activity 5

Read an article that summarises the literature about teacher aide proximity. Discuss how teachers and teacher aides in your school make decisions about and manage how closely teacher aides work with students with additional learning needs.



Read the article “Impact of proximity of teacher aides and support Strategies: Advantages and disadvantages”, written by Helen Stevens and published in *Kairaranga* ([Full text available here](#)). The article summarises literature about the impact of teacher aide proximity. ‘Teacher aide proximity’ relates to how closely and intensively a teacher aide works with an identified student.

Highlight any new or interesting information.



Working in pairs, small groups or a large group, talk about any information you highlighted and discuss these questions:

- The research suggests that teacher aides working in close proximity to students with additional learning needs can get in the way of the student participating in the classroom and interacting with their peers. In what ways does the article highlight how teacher aide support does this?
- Reread the definitions on page 41 of teacher aide ‘types’:
 - teacher aide as a ‘stand-in for the student’
 - teacher aide as ‘a help-teacher’
 - teacher aide as a ‘back-up resource’.

Think about how teacher aides work in your school. Which of these three types is more common?

- How does the article affirm the way teacher aides work in your school and how does it challenge practices within your school?



If you have questions or suggestions about teacher aide proximity, talk to others in your school about this activity, such as a member of the senior leadership team.

References

Stevens, H. (2010). Impact of proximity of teacher aides and support Strategies: Advantages and disadvantages *Kairaranga*, 11,(1) 40-44.

Note: *Kairaranga* is a journal supported by Resource Teachers: Learning and Behaviour (RTLB) and Massey University. It contains articles about New Zealand schools and teaching issues, including a number that focus on teacher aides.

9 Creating Inclusive Classrooms

Exploring online resources about effective teacher aide practice

Activity 6

In this activity, you will explore a section of the guide *Supporting effective teacher aide practice on Inclusive Education*. It covers content about how teacher aides can support student independence and ownership of their learning.



Explore the section of the guide *Supporting effective teacher aide practice* about supporting student independence and ownership of their learning.



Discuss the content you have just explored.

To support your talk, consider these questions:

- How do teacher aides support student independence in your school?
- What teacher aide practices are used in your school to encourage students to take ownership of their learning?
- Are there any approaches you have just explored that you could adopt?



If you have questions about supporting student independence in your school, talk about this activity with others, such as a member of the senior leadership team.