

[BIRDS CHIRPING]

[TEXT ON SCREEN: What is inclusion?]

[CHATTER]

[TEXT ON SCREEN: Integration]

STUDENT

I don't understand why I'm at the back of the class. I wish I was like everyone else. I want to do what they are doing. But here I am doing the same old number activity, watching as my classmates learn something else. Don't they know that they're setting me up to fail? Don't they know they hold my future in their hands? I want to work in my class, learn what they are learning and do the activities they do. But here I am, stuck at the back, limited by low expectations.

Having a one-on-one teacher aide just teaches me to rely on them and means I get less attention from the teacher. I'm not included in the classroom, I am in the same room but segregated from my peers, sat to the side or back working on different things and missing out. I want to be free to learn with my peers, reach my full potential and be seen to be like everyone else. I need something to change.

[CHATTER]

[TEXT ON SCREEN: Perceived inclusion]

You may be wondering what was wrong with this picture? I am in the classroom with my peers, sitting in my seat, learning the same things as everyone else. You may think this is inclusion, but it's not. I am stifled, limited and held back from reaching my full potential. Though I love my teacher aide, I don't get to think for myself. In fact, a lot of the time, my teacher aide does it for me, even whispering the answer in my ear when I already know it. The more she is with me, the more I realise that there is no point in me thinking for myself because she will give me the answer anyway. I'm sure there are other kids who also need her help. Does she need to be with me? Can't she help others? Surely if I need help, I can put my hand up and ask my teacher like my friends do. My friends and classmates want to help me, but by having someone right next to me, they can't.

I need to learn from my peers, be able to do group work and be challenged. I want to be allowed to fail or succeed and learn from it. I need something to change.

[CHATTER]

[TEXT ON SCREEN: Inclusion]

Can you find me in the crowd? Inclusion is more than just a word, it is a culture, a mindset and an expectation that everyone can and will learn and succeed along their age-appropriate peers. I know it can be challenging to include me in the learning, as sometimes I might require extra resources and information. But giving me space to learn from my teacher and peers is the best way to challenge me and allow me to grow.

I want to learn the same things as my classmates and I want teachers to have the same expectations of me as of my friends. My learning may need to be modified but I still want the opportunity to show what I can do, not focus on what I can't. Treat me the same as any other student and watch me flourish. I will rise to the challenge of expectations you set for me. Are you ready to really include me?

[MUSIC PLAYING]

[TEXT ON SCREEN: Brought to you by Down Syndrome Queensland]