Ten Tips for Special Educators

Collaborate, communicate and promote the participation of students with disabilities in the inclusive classroom.

- **Visit the regular classroom.**
  Measure student progress and participation in the general education classroom. Your lesson modifications, adaptations, and learning goals will be more meaningful.

- **Define roles and expectations.**
  Go to classroom teachers and explain your role and how you can help. Specify what you will need to increase student participation. Discuss discipline and behavior expectations.

- **Use the expertise of others.**
  Do not waste time researching content areas. Solicit the classroom teacher's participation. Ask for the syllabus, learning objectives, outcome standards, rubrics and any other content information.

- **Develop a rapport with others.**
  Talk with teammates and administrators in person! Encourage others to voice concerns, hopes and fears. Even a two-minute chat between classes can establish collaboration.

- **Watch your language!**
  Teamwork stems from good communication. Use people-first language. Avoid acronyms or language specific to your field.

- **Invite students to IEP's.**
  Students who attend their own meetings understand their role and responsibilities. Ask students, family, friends, teachers and other professionals to share their goals and expectations with the student.

- **Promote student-teacher relationships.**
  Brag about student strengths! Tell classroom teachers how students can participate. Never apologize for placing a student in a general class or promise that a student will "not be a bother."

- **Use friends as natural supports.**
  Let peers walk together between classes, program communication devices and assist at lunch.

- **Supervise classroom aides.**
  Give paraeducators explicit instructions. Outline duties in detail. Always follow up and monitor how things are going in the classroom.

- **Promote active, experiential learning!**
  Alternative methods encourage active learning for ALL students. Assist classroom teachers plan cooperative learning groups, learning centers, and project-based lessons.