

Switch Activities Promote Classroom Inclusion for Young Students

Inclusion is more than just a physical presence in the classroom. Inclusion means integrating all children in the classroom, including those with special needs and diverse backgrounds. All students learn when they actively participate in school lessons and interact with others. Assistive technology can often provide a bridge for students with disabilities to actively participate and learn along with their typically developing peers.

Using a switch in the classroom may be a great way to include all students in a variety of enjoyable and educational activities. The following activities use a switch and are an excellent way to promote inclusion among all classroom students.

Students of all ages enjoy blowing bubbles; now all students have the same opportunity by using a switch. By simply connecting a switch and a bubble-making machine to AbleNet®'s PowerLink® 3 environmental control unit, any student can “blow” bubbles! All the students can take turns using the switch to turn the bubble machine on and off. To add more enjoyment to this activity, hook up a radio and another switch to the PowerLink® 3 and let the students control the bubbles and the music!

Musical chairs is another switch activity that uses a PowerLink® 3 and a radio. It's as easy as: 1) connect the switch and radio to the Power- Link® 3, 2) set up the chairs, and 3) start the music. If a student is unable to move around or sit in the chairs, have that student be in control of the music. That way, all the students are able to participate in this fun game.

Another enjoyable activity for students of all ages is Bingo. With the use of a switch and an All-Turn- It™ spinner from AbleNet®, any student can call out the Bingo numbers to the other students. By pressing the switch, the All-Turn-It™ spinner will randomly select a number to be called out. Additionally, a communication device could be connected with a switch to help the students call out numbers.

Along with these games, many educational activities can be adapted for switch use including reading books. The Bookworm™ literacy tool

from AbleNet®, allows books to be recorded into it and played back with the push of a button. By connecting the Bookworm with a switch, any student could access the story by pressing the switch. Students who are nonverbal could have a peer record the story and take turns pressing the switch.

Furthermore, books or songs could be recorded into AbleNet's Step-by-Step™ communicator and connected to a switch. With the switch, any student could have a “voice” when the class sings a group song or reads a line from a book aloud.

Using the computer and a switch leads to even more opportunities for inclusion among students. Many software programs have scanning capabilities that allow for a switch to be used to control the program. One such program is BuildAbility® by Don Johnston, Inc. Using BuildAbility® students can create

Why Use a Switch?

Switches provide students with disabilities the opportunity to enhance their learning, recreation, socialization, and communication. Switches also enhance students' independence and participation by giving them access to switch-accessible toys, communication devices, computers, appliances, and power wheelchairs. Although a switch is an indirect method of access, it provides individuals with disabilities a method to access the environment when unable to use other means.

a slideshow and access the slideshow using a switch. Students can make stories using this program and share them with the class.

Choose and Tell: Nursery Rhymes by Inclusive Technologies is another switch software program that is fun, educational, and supports inclusion. In this software program, students

choose where their favorite nursery rhyme characters will visit, how the character will travel there, and what the character will do. Choose and Tell: Nursery Rhymes has scanning capabilities that allow any student to select a choice using a switch. Using a switch, all children have the opportunity to make a selection and tell their version of the story. This makes a fun and silly activity the entire class will enjoy.

Basic switch programs such as Switch Arcade and Switch Puzzles by Simtech Publications allow students with disabilities to learn cause and effect and still participate in entertaining computer games. These software programs are fun for everyone and all students will want a chance to play the switch software. Have students play together and help each other solve the puzzles or play in the arcade.

Switch activities allow many students with disabilities to be active participants in the classroom. Using a switch gives students the opportunity to be involved with their classmates in the classroom and promotes inclusion among peers. All of the products listed are available from the Simon Technology Center Library. For more information on these products or other switch-accessible ideas, please call the Simon Technology Center at 952-838-9000.

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