

What is a Whole Class Approach?

TOPIC:



What is a Whole Class Approach? Why do therapists talk about it so much?

WHAT:

Being a teacher in this day and age is hard! There are so many expectations and deadlines and benchmarks to meet, all while trying to nurture and teach the next generation.

A big part of therapy is 'embedding the therapy into everyday life' and of course this does not just mean at home but also school.

How can therapists expect teachers (who already have so much on their plates) to suddenly understand and support the children in their classes that are accessing therapy?

Good question! Firstly as therapists at Look Hear Australia, there is no expectation of teachers to do this (just for the record).

One thing often talked about is the Whole Class Approach. This is basically taking some of the key elements of the therapy goals and adjusting them to be able to suit the teacher and

the class. This means that hopefully (if done well) the teacher is able to embed this 'therapy' into their class easily and without added stress.

WHY:

It is widely known that if therapy can be embedded into everyday life, that there are many more positive outcomes for the child compared to a weekly therapy session. If parents can do some therapy at home (post on this coming soon!) as well as some things at school, the child is getting incidental therapy that doesn't feel like 'work' and is in 'real life' and not an artificial environment of a therapy room.

Kids also spend a good chunk of their time at school so it makes sense to have some therapy there (HOWEVER – that doesn't need to be at the expense of the WONDERFUL teachers sanity!!).



School

HOW:

So – how do can this been done as 'whole class approach'?

** Please note, this section on 'how' is designed for teachers

(Feel free to point your child's teacher to this post if you have talked about Whole Class Approaches and they aren't sure what you mean)

Key Tips for Teachers wanting to adopt a Whole Class Approach:

- Firstly – do what you can. You don't have to do every single thing that is recommended in the therapists' report. Anything that you can incorporate will be beneficial and no doubt you have already added some similar things that have been recommended into your day already. Also it doesn't have to be every single thing every single day.
- Take the things that work for everyone. Often therapists will recommend things like "movement breaks" – this could be a game of "Simon Says" for the whole class as a transition between tasks. Or simply a full class toilet break (which you are probably already doing, hence no need to add to much more in).
- Visuals work for everyone (think traffic signs) and there are LOADS of free ones that can be printed and used straight away. Take a look at our Visuals page if you have been told to use visuals. Sometime therapists are able to help out here by providing visuals they can email or print for you.
- Use the ideas that are working for your class. You might trial "Simon Says" and find there is just fights into lunchtime about who won. In which case maybe a dance video on the smart board might be more suitable.
- Sending children who need more movement or sensory breaks on "errands", children who may need more breaks that you can provide as a whole class might be the child to take the tuckshop bag up or take some books back to the library. These tasks can be a good way of children having a break in a socially acceptable way (even if you don't need library books) as it is less obvious and enables you to continue to teach the rest of the class.
- Adaptive equipment. Sometimes therapists recommend pencil grips, specialized seating and other equipment (normally with a sensory based adjustment in mind). To

make this a Whole Class Approach you might have different “equipment” (cool pencils etc) available to the rest of the class.

KEY TIPS:

It is ideal to have some therapy embedded into the class day, however this needs to be throughout as to not add extra work or stress to the teachers. You can also look at our Education and Schooling page by clicking on the link.

FURTHER READING:

Take a look at the Inclusive Schools Network website as they talk a lot about the advantages of inclusive teaching.

Together We Learn Better: Inclusive Schools Benefit All Children

The journey to becoming an Inclusive School may be long and challenging at times, but ultimately this journey can strengthen a school community and benefit ALL children. “Inclusion” does not simply mean the placement of students with disabilities in general education classes.