

THE ROLE OF TEACHERS IN THE SOCIAL ADAPTATION OF TRANSFER STUDENTS FROM REGULAR SCHOOLS TO SPECIAL SCHOOLS

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Abstract

The transition of students with intellectual disabilities from mainstream to special education schools involves multifaceted academic, psychological, and social adjustments. Shifts in classroom environments, social interactions, and prior experiences of peer exclusion significantly shape a student's emotional security and willingness to engage in school activities. This case study examines the exact functions teachers perform to facilitate social assimilation, alongside identifying the supporting factors and structural barriers at SLB C Setyadarma Surakarta during the 2025/2026 school year. Operating within a qualitative descriptive framework, data collection relied on semi-structured interviews, field observations, and institutional records, with validity established through source and methodological triangulation. The thematic analysis highlights six core interconnected teacher roles: classroom manager, motivator, facilitator, demonstrator, mediator, and evaluator. Key operational strategies include individual learning plans, structured emotional validation, specific classroom duties, peer-to-peer mediation routines, and open home-school dialogue. Social adaptation succeeds when reinforced by welcoming peer dynamics, an inclusive institutional climate, and collaborative teaching practices, whereas prior interpersonal trauma and inconsistent parental reinforcement at home represent major obstacles.

Keywords: Teacher Roles, Social Adaptation, Transfer Students, Intellectual Disability, Special Education.

INTRODUCTION

Social adaptation requires individuals to learn new environmental demands, establish relationships, and adjust their behavior. They must secure social acceptance without sacrificing their fundamental need for psychological safety. Within school environments, this adaptation appears through active communication and strict rule compliance. Cooperative group work and a strong sense of community belonging also signal success. While important for all students, this developmental process carries massive weight for transfer students. They must decode entirely unfamiliar norms, social networks, and behavioral expectations. Current literature identifies peer acceptance and interaction skills as essential elements for successful school adjustment (Atieka, 2019; Rahmawati & Suryani, 2022; Saputra & Gunawan, 2024; Wulandari & Hermanto, 2023).

The Republic of Indonesia Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System guarantees the right to transfer schools. However, fulfilling administrative requirements does not automatically ensure a smooth social transition. Transfer students frequently face shifting curricula, different instructional methods, unique teacher

communication styles, and established peer hierarchies. For children with special needs, particularly those with intellectual disabilities, these systemic changes present a complex challenge. Their ability to read social cues, adjust responses, and communicate personal needs rarely develops at the same pace as their typical peers. Studies on student mobility highlight that transferring demands rapid adjustment to entirely new social rules and relationships (Fadhilah & Suparno, 2021; Nugroho & Wijayanti, 2022; Setiawan & Budiyanto, 2023; Siti, 2019).

These challenges escalate significantly when the transfer follows a history of bullying. Bullying does not end the moment the mockery or physical exclusion stops; it leaves deep psychological scars. Victims often develop hypervigilance, deep distrust of strangers, a refusal to join activities, and shattered self-confidence. Therefore, the receiving school environment must function actively as a space for emotional recovery. Placing the student in an appropriate classroom is merely the first step. They need repeated confirmation that the new school is safe, the teachers are reliable, and their peers will not repeat the painful rejection patterns of the past. Social support acts as the primary foundation for adaptation in these vulnerable populations (Anggraini & Purwanto, 2021; Lestari & Sunardi, 2024; Permana & Sugiarti, 2023; Salma, 2023).

This specific phenomenon emerged clearly at SLB C Setyadarma Surakarta during the 2025/2026 academic year. Student K, a 12-year-old fourth grader, previously attended a mainstream elementary school. Extreme difficulties keeping up with the academic pace, combined with severe peer bullying, caused K to develop school refusal, keeping him home for an entire year. After transferring to SLB C Setyadarma, K demonstrated a remarkable social transformation. He shifted from complete withdrawal to becoming cheerful, polite, sociable, and highly active in school events. This transformation did not happen by chance; it grew directly from systematic teacher guidance and a highly welcoming school climate (Cahyani & Kasiyati, 2022; Sari & Iswari, 2021; Utami & Suharmini, 2024).

Previous studies on transfer student adaptation mostly examine movements between mainstream schools. For instance, Papa (2016) demonstrated that transfer students adapt by displaying friendliness, respecting school community members, and adjusting to local norms. While that research provides a strong baseline, the dynamics change entirely when a student with intellectual disabilities moves from a mainstream setting to a special school. The transition involves more than just making friends. It requires a complete shift in instructional approaches, the restructuring of academic demands, trauma management, and the active restoration of the student's sense of competence (Papa, 2016; Putri & Yusuf, 2023; Ramadhan & Aini, 2021; Susanti & Abidin, 2022).

In this context, the classroom teacher holds a highly strategic position. Teachers interact with students most frequently, manage the classroom rhythm, read emotional shifts, connect students with peers, and communicate progress to families. Minsih and Galih (2018) categorize teachers as managers, facilitators, motivators, demonstrators, mediators, and evaluators. This specific framework provides an excellent lens for analyzing Teacher A's methods, as these six roles blend seamlessly into daily activities rather than operating in isolation. A teacher's motivational capacity directly builds a student's confidence and willingness to learn (Fitriani & Haryanto, 2024; Kurniawan & Mumpuniarti, 2023; Minsih & Galih, 2018; Nurzannah, 2022; Widiastuti & Wibowo, 2022).

This research asks: how do teachers facilitate the social adaptation of a transfer student moving from a mainstream school to SLB C Setyadarma Surakarta, and what factors support or hinder this process? The study aims to detail the execution of these teacher roles, analyze the connections between different support components, and identify conditions that accelerate

or delay social adaptation. Practically, these findings offer special education teachers, school administrators, and parents a clear blueprint of effective support strategies during critical transition periods (Anwar & Wahyuni, 2021; Dewi & Jauhari, 2022; Maulana & Yuliani, 2024).

Social adaptation operates as a phased process where students slowly recognize their new environment, build interactions, understand rules, and secure a comfortable social position. This trajectory rarely moves in a straight line. During the early transition phase, a student might display intense curiosity mixed with severe anxiety. They might join one specific activity eagerly while completely rejecting others, or appear comfortable at their desk but panic in large groups. Consequently, tracking adaptation requires continuous observation over time rather than isolated behavioral snapshots (Hasanah & Maryani, 2021; Indriani & Raharjo, 2023; Rizky & Handayani, 2022).

In this study, adaptation indicators extend far beyond basic compliance or academic participation. We measured adaptation through observable social behavioral shifts documented in the field data. These included increased cheerfulness, polite communication, ease of socializing, active involvement in school events, willingness to help classmates, and acceptance of classroom responsibilities. These indicators confirm that adaptation involves deep affective, relational, and participatory dimensions (Astuti & Widodo, 2023; Firmansyah & Ningsih, 2024; Pratama & Rini, 2021).

A student's transfer history heavily dictates the necessary support structure. Students moving purely for administrative reasons usually enter the new environment with greater readiness than those fleeing academic failure or severe bullying. In K's case, a full year of school refusal indicated a massive psychological burden. Highly demanding approaches could easily trigger feelings of inadequacy, while overly protective methods risk stunting the student's growth. Teachers must carefully balance psychological safety with realistic developmental challenges (Anggraini & Purwanto, 2021; Lestari & Sunardi, 2024; Salma, 2023).

Students with intellectual disabilities require instructional delivery that is concrete, incremental, repetitive, and matched to their actual capabilities. Regarding social adaptation, this principle means teachers must demonstrate rules, tasks, and social expectations through direct examples and consistent daily routines. Abstract explanations about making friends or taking responsibility rarely succeed. Students need tangible experiences: practicing how to greet people, taking turns, helping others, completing tasks, and receiving immediate feedback (Cahyani & Kasiyati, 2022; Fadhilah & Suparno, 2021; Utami & Suharmini, 2024).

Providing individualized support does not mean isolating the student from the group. In this case, the teacher seamlessly blended classical group instruction to maintain community dynamics with an individualized approach targeting specific ability levels. This combination proves vital because special education aims to do more than simply raise academic scores; it strives to integrate the student as a fully participating class member. Individualization serves as a tool to unlock group access, rather than building exclusive dependency on the primary teacher (Pratiwi & Yuniati, 2023; Saputra & Gunawan, 2024; Wulandari & Hermanto, 2023).

We utilized the six-role teacher framework to organize the research findings. As a classroom manager, the teacher structures the physical environment, time, methods, and interactions to make learning accessible. As a motivator, the educator builds willingness, delivers reinforcement, and helps the student survive emotional roadblocks. Acting as a facilitator, the instructor provides opportunities, support, and a secure atmosphere. The demonstrator models concrete steps. As a mediator, the teacher bridges relationships between the student, peers, the school system, and the family. Finally, as an evaluator, the teacher observes the process, records progress, and adjusts strategies based on live monitoring data (Fitriani & Haryanto, 2024; Minsih & Galih, 2018; Widiastuti & Wibowo, 2022).

These six roles operate as a mutually reinforcing system. Classroom management without motivation creates rigid, lifeless order. Motivation without facilitation reduces support to empty praise. Facilitation without evaluation leaves the teacher guessing about effectiveness. Mediation fails entirely without a safe classroom climate. This framework helps explain not just what the teacher does, but exactly why these connected actions successfully drove K's social adaptation (Kurniawan & Mumpuniarti, 2023; Nurzannah, 2022; Ramadhan & Aini, 2021).

METHODOLOGY

This research applied a qualitative approach utilizing a descriptive case-study design. We selected this design to gain a deep understanding of the mentoring process within a highly specific context: the social adaptation of a transfer student with intellectual disabilities at SLB C Setyadarma Surakarta. Case studies allow researchers to connect student behavior, teaching strategies, school culture, and family factors into a single cohesive narrative. This approach perfectly aligns with qualitative methods aimed at evaluating educational processes in their natural settings (Fattah, 2023; Sugiyono, 2020; Susanti & Abidin, 2022).

We conducted the study during the even semester of the 2025/2026 academic year, with field observations running from November 2025 through July 2026. The research took place at SLB C Setyadarma Surakarta, located in the Nusukan area of Banjarsari, Surakarta. We selected this location specifically due to the presence of a mainstream transfer student and the active involvement of the classroom teacher in the adaptation process. We chose research subjects purposively based on their direct involvement and deep knowledge of the student's transition (Anwar & Wahyuni, 2021; Dewi & Jauhari, 2022; Maulana & Yuliani, 2024).

Table 1. Subjects and Positions of Informants in the Study

Informan	Usia	Posisi/Keterangan	Kontribusi Data
Teacher A	59 years	Grade IV Teacher; >30 years of teaching experience	Primary informant regarding mentoring strategies, learning, and evaluation of Student K.
Teacher E	54 years	DAPODIK Administrator and Admissions Committee	Provided student background data, entry files, and details of the initial transition phase.
Teacher D	26 years	Curriculum Coordinator	Contributed data on institutional guidelines, school-wide events, and peer-mediation systems.
Student K	12 years	Grade IV Student; transfer from a mainstream school	The primary case subject whose social behavior changes were observed across activities.

Data collection relied on structured and semi-structured interviews with teachers and relevant school staff. We used interviews to extract the transfer history, support methods, behavioral shifts, and mentoring obstacles. Participant and non-participant observations occurred during academic hours and local content classes to monitor the student's interactions with teachers, peers, tasks, and the general school environment. Document analysis

supplemented the data by tracking the student's academic history and developmental records (Hasanah & Maryani, 2021; Indriani & Raharjo, 2023; Rizky & Handayani, 2022).

We tested data validity using source and technique triangulation. Source triangulation involved cross-referencing information from Teacher A, Teacher E, and Teacher D. Technique triangulation cross-checked the results from interviews, observations, and document analysis. The data analysis followed the interactive Miles and Huberman model, encompassing data reduction, descriptive narrative display, and final conclusion drawing. We protected the subject's identity by using initials. Because the subject is a minor with a highly sensitive social history, the results focus strictly on the mentoring patterns and behavioral changes without revealing personal identifiers (Astuti & Widodo, 2023; Firmansyah & Ningsih, 2024; Pratama & Rini, 2021).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Case Trajectory and Initial Transition Phase

Before transferring to SLB C Setyadarma, K attended a mainstream school where he severely struggled to maintain the required academic pace. These cognitive hurdles intersected violently with a pattern of bullying, ultimately destroying his willingness to attend class. K dropped out of school entirely for one year. This history proves that his core problem extended far beyond academic delays; he suffered a catastrophic loss of safety and trust in educational environments. During the initial entry into the SLB, teachers focused entirely on environmental familiarization, building a trusting relationship, and encouraging gradual classroom involvement (Anggraini & Purwanto, 2021; Lestari & Sunardi, 2024; Permana & Sugiarti, 2023).

The teacher deliberately avoided setting high academic targets early on. The immediate priority was building the student's willingness to attend, follow routines, accept basic interactions, and feel like a member of the class. Once the student felt secure, the teacher systematically increased responsibilities and engagement. The field data recorded a profound shift in K's behavior, moving from a closed-off, withdrawn state to becoming a cheerful, polite, sociable, and active participant. This change confirms that the new environment did more than just remove barriers; it actively unlocked social potential that remained hidden previously (Cahyani & Kasiyati, 2022; Fadhilah & Suparno, 2021; Utami & Suharmini, 2024).

Operationalizing the Six Interconnected Teacher Roles

The empirical data collected over the nine-month observation period revealed that the six roles played by Teacher A functioned as an integrated ecosystem rather than isolated actions. This structured approach, along with its specific adaptive targets and behavioral indicators, is summarized in Table 2

Table 2. Teacher Roles, Field Strategies, And Significance For Social Adaptation

Teacher Role	Field Implementation Strategies	Adaptation Target	Observed Behavioral Markers
Classroom Manager	Blended small-group instruction with tailored individual activities. Reading lessons progressed gradually using specialized multi-tier booklets, adapting to the student's current processing speed.	Maintained active membership in the peer group while providing specific skill support.	The student completed individual tasks smoothly while remaining physically integrated within the main classroom.

Teacher Role	Field Implementation Strategies	Adaptation Target	Observed Behavioral Markers
Motivator	Applied steady verbal praise, implemented the morning '5S' welcoming ritual at the school gate, and provided clear emotional validation. When the student shut down, the teacher allowed quiet cooldown time before speaking.	Rebuilding core emotional safety, restoring trust in adults, and renewing the desire to participate.	The student ceased school refusal behaviors, smiled frequently, and expressed positive anticipation regarding school activities.
Facilitator	Created a non-judgmental environment and assigned specific classroom responsibilities such as line-leading, clean-up duties, and peer-assistance tasks.	Cultivating institutional belonging, personal agency, and natural prosocial habits.	The student took pride in classroom chores and initiated cooperative actions with peers during free play.
Demonstrator	Modeled both learning tasks and routine social interactions step-by-step using safe, physical learning materials.	Removing abstract cognitive demands and making social rules highly visible.	The student copied the modeled steps accurately and mastered daily routines with increasing independence.
Mediator	Introduced school spaces during orientation, actively guided peer interactions, and maintained a continuous communication log with the student's family.	Connecting the student across the school ecosystem and aligning school and home routines.	The student navigated the campus confidently, built stable friendships, and received aligned reinforcement at home.
Evaluator	Combined occasional formal skill checks with daily tracking of social attitudes, recording all updates in a comprehensive narrative log.	Tracking real-time progress, identifying new barriers, and dynamically adjusting teaching strategies.	The teacher caught emotional dips early and adjusted task difficulties before behavioral outbursts could occur.

The Teacher as Classroom Manager

The role of the classroom manager appeared clearly in Teacher A's ability to balance the needs of the whole group with K's specific individual requirements. The teacher utilized classical learning to ensure K gained experience studying alongside peers. Simultaneously, the teacher adjusted the actual learning materials to match K's actual cognitive level. For reading skills, the teacher used kindergarten-level workbooks in a step-by-step manner, moving from alphabet recognition to syllables, and finally to simple sentences. When tasks are too difficult, students relapse into feelings of failure. When separated entirely from the group, they lose

interaction opportunities. Adaptive management prevents both risks (Fitriani & Haryanto, 2024; Minsih & Galih, 2018; Widiastuti & Wibowo, 2022).

The Teacher as a Motivator

The teacher generated motivation through verbal reinforcement and strong emotional connection. The '5S' welcoming tradition at the school gate served as a simple, highly consistent daily ritual. For a student carrying a history of severe peer rejection, a warm morning greeting acts as powerful confirmation that the community actually wants them there. Furthermore, when K experienced emotional roadblocks or refused to study, Teacher A did not force compliance. The teacher gave the student time to calm down before reopening a dialogue. This emotional validation helped the teacher maintain academic demands without ignoring psychological distress (Kurniawan & Mumpuniarti, 2023; Nurzannah, 2022; Ramadhan & Aini, 2021).

The Teacher as a Facilitator

Acting as a facilitator, the teacher engineered a safe atmosphere and carved out specific opportunities for K to take on roles. Assigning cleaning duties, involving him in congregational prayers, and letting him help classmates proved that K was a contributing group member, not just a passive recipient of aid. Shifting the student's identity from 'the one who needs help' to 'the one who helps' accelerates self-esteem recovery. The teacher also actively prevented discriminatory behavior in the classroom. The environment normalized varying ability levels, building safety through protected participation rather than social avoidance (Anwar & Wahyuni, 2021; Dewi & Jauhari, 2022; Maulana & Yuliani, 2024).

The Teacher as Demonstrator

Because students with intellectual disabilities rely on concrete learning, the teacher constantly acted as a demonstrator. The teacher physically acted out academic steps and practical activities, allowing the student to follow along incrementally. Using safe, tangible objects removed the heavy cognitive load of decoding abstract verbal instructions. This role also extended to social learning. The teacher modeled how to greet people, perform chores, and assist friends. By providing a consistent visual model, the teacher gave the student a clear, repeatable structure for social participation (Hasanah & Maryani, 2021; Indriani & Raharjo, 2023; Rizky & Handayani, 2022).

The Teacher as Mediator

During the orientation period, the teacher mediated K's relationship with the physical environment, reducing spatial anxiety and building familiarity rapidly. More importantly, the teacher actively bridged K's relationships with peers, ensuring that social integration was not left to chance. Peer acceptance acted as an incredibly powerful factor, giving the student immediate social proof that this new school operated differently from the last. Mediation also reached into the family dynamic. The teacher reported progress and obstacles to the parents to ensure home continuity. However, data indicated that parents were not always proactive in monitoring the communication book, proving that successful mediation requires active participation from both sides (Astuti & Widodo, 2023; Firmansyah & Ningsih, 2024; Pratama & Rini, 2021).

The Teacher as Evaluator

Evaluation involved both formal academic testing and continuous daily observation of social attitudes. This dual approach perfectly matched the mentoring goals, as K's development could never be accurately measured by academic scores alone. Tracking his willingness to attend, interact, accept tasks, and manage emotions provided critical data. The evaluation acted as the foundation for rapid strategic adjustments. If the student appeared stressed, the teacher temporarily lowered demands; as confidence spiked, responsibilities increased. Evaluation served as a dynamic feedback loop rather than a final judgment (Fadhilah & Suparno, 2021; Nugroho & Wijayanti, 2022; Setiawan & Budiyanto, 2023).

Analytical Synthesis of Influencing Factors

The speed and quality of K's social adaptation were shaped by an ongoing interaction between internal student qualities and external environmental factors. These elements are categorized and summarized in Table 3.

Tabel 3. Faktor yang Memengaruhi Adaptasi Sosial Siswa K

Category	Identified Factor	Influencing	Operational Meaning in the Adaptation Process
Supporting Factors	Inherent Attributes	Personal	K's natural politeness, warmth, and basic desire to learn served as an excellent foundation, making the student highly receptive to teacher guidance and peer contact.
Supporting Factors	Inclusive School Climate	School Micro-	Warm, non-judgmental acceptance from classmates removed the fear of social threat, allowing the student to abandon defensive withdrawal behaviors.
Supporting Factors	Cross-Institutional Teacher Alliance		Active coordination among teaching staff during arts, cultural, and religious events expanded the student's opportunities for safe social participation.
Inhibiting Factors	Unresolved External Trauma	Interpersonal	Deep scars from chronic mainstream bullying created initial hesitation, social anxiety, and cautious defensive reactions during the early weeks.
Inhibiting Factors	Inconsistent Continuity	Home-School	Limited home monitoring of the communication log and minimal task reinforcement at home slowed down the consolidation of new social and academic habits.

Here is the translation of the provided text, crafted with an academic tone suitable for international journals, ensuring natural flow and technical precision.

Peer acceptance acts as a powerful catalyst for positive behavioral shifts. This acceptance is further solidified when reinforced by a supportive school culture and synchronized teacher coordination. These dynamics demonstrate that a student's internal traits only become effective tools for growth when the surrounding environment provides a genuinely responsive framework (Hidayat et al., 2022; Rahmawati & Suryani, 2022; Wulandari & Hermanto, 2023). Attributing success solely to a student's individual "will" ignores the essential contributions provided by the broader school system (Anwar & Wahyuni, 2021; Maulana & Yuliani, 2024; Widiastuti & Wibowo, 2022).

Conversely, barriers to adaptation often exist in an interconnected state. Past trauma may heighten the need for predictable, consistent routines, while limited family involvement

can hinder the consolidation of new habits outside the classroom (Lestari & Sunardi, 2024; Permana & Sugiarti, 2023; Rizky & Handayani, 2022). Consequently, educators should avoid labeling school refusal or withdrawal as mere laziness. Instead, these behaviors must be interpreted as vital signals regarding the student's sense of psychological safety, the appropriateness of task difficulty, and their overall readiness to engage (Anggraini & Purwanto, 2021; Indriani & Raharjo, 2023; Utami & Suharmini, 2024).

Elective activities such as local cultural studies, traditional puppetry performances, and religious gatherings expand social contexts beyond formal academic lessons. Such activities remain essential, as they allow students to demonstrate hidden talents that might not surface during routine reading or writing tasks (Firmansyah & Ningsih, 2024; Hasanah & Maryani, 2021; Sari & Iswari, 2021). Success in non-academic domains can improve a student's social standing within the peer group, ultimately serving as a bridge toward greater academic participation (Astuti & Widodo, 2023; Pratama & Rini, 2021; Ramadhan & Aini, 2021).

Adaptation as a Process of Recovery and Participation

The findings show that K's social adaptation functions as both a recovery and a participatory process. Recovery involves rebuilding a baseline of safety following peer victimization. Participation entails engaging in class activities, taking on responsibilities, and forming peer relationships. You cannot separate these two elements. Safety without participation leaves the student comfortable but entirely passive, while forcing participation without psychological safety quickly becomes an oppressive burden.

K's transformation from a withdrawn state to a cheerful and active disposition proves that initial behaviors do not permanently define social capacity. Context heavily dictates these actions. The student withdrew when the previous environment presented pressure and stigma. However, when the new setting offered acceptance, structure, and support, latent social skills emerged. This reality highlights the absolute necessity of viewing student behavior contextually, rather than as a fixed personality trait.

These results align with Papa's (2016) study on transfer student adaptation, which identified adaptability, friendliness, and respect for school members as key markers. Yet, K's case broadens this understanding. For a student with an intellectual disability and a history of bullying, friendliness and participation do not merely represent personal coping strategies. They are the direct outcomes of systematic support from teachers and the broader school environment.

The Six Teacher Roles as a Mentoring System

This study supports Minsih and Galih's (2018) framework detailing the teacher's roles as a classroom manager, facilitator, motivator, demonstrator, mediator, and evaluator. The uniqueness here lies in applying all six roles specifically for social adaptation, rather than just instructional management. Classroom management controls the level of challenge. Motivation restores the drive to learn. Facilitation opens up spaces for participation. Furthermore, demonstration supplies tangible examples, mediation bridges relationships, and evaluation keeps instructional strategies highly responsive.

These six roles operate as a continuous cycle. The teacher manages the classroom and facilitates a safe psychological experience. This positive experience organically boosts student motivation. The educator then models specific actions and mediates peer involvement. After evaluating the resulting changes, the teacher uses this feedback to refine the next management cycle. This cyclical pattern explains exactly why seemingly basic actions—such as greeting a

student at the gate or assigning cleaning duties—carry massive impacts when executed consistently and linked with other supportive steps.

Individualized approaches hold immense value, but educators should not mistake them for constant one-on-one tutoring. In this context, individualization primarily meant adjusting material difficulty, learning pace, emotional responses, and assigned responsibilities. Meanwhile, the teacher intentionally preserved the collective group space. This model works perfectly for special education because it treats individual needs and social membership as parallel, equally important goals.

The Role of Peers and School Climate

Peer acceptance served as the primary catalyst for K's behavioral shift. Teachers can certainly open the door to interaction, but the actual quality of adaptation depends heavily on the student's direct experiences with the group. When peers actively refused to repeat past patterns of mocking or exclusion, the student received undeniable social proof that the new environment was genuinely different. This lived proof holds far more weight than any verbal reassurance because the child experiences it repeatedly in daily activities.

An inclusive school climate here means much more than merely accepting special needs students administratively. True inclusivity shines through everyday habits like greeting everyone, erasing status distinctions, sharing activities, and distributing responsibilities fairly. Within a special school context, the term 'inclusive' refers specifically to a deep-rooted culture that accepts and values varying ability levels across the entire school community.

Inter-teacher collaboration broadens the consistency of support. If only Teacher A applied a warm approach, the student would face confusing, contradictory responses during different activities. Support from the curriculum department, admission committees, and local content instructors helped the student experience a highly uniform pattern of acceptance. This cross-situational consistency rapidly accelerates the formation of psychological safety.

Parental Partnership as an Area for Strengthening

The data confirms that teachers communicated with parents, yet continuity of support at home remained suboptimal. Families did not consistently or proactively utilize the communication book or review academic tasks. This disconnect creates a significant hurdle, as social and academic habituation relies entirely on repetition. When school strategies abruptly stop at home, the student must constantly readjust to conflicting sets of demands.

Partnership should never mean transferring the teacher's professional responsibilities onto the parents. The teacher firmly retains their professional role at school. Meanwhile, the family provides routine consistency, positive reinforcement, and valuable updates regarding the child's home behavior. Two-way communication is essential. The school must not just report problems; it should share simple, actionable strategies for the family and highlight achievements worth maintaining.

Realistic home reinforcement can include checking the communication book, briefly reviewing tasks, practicing basic greetings, assigning simple household chores, and praising the child's efforts. Schools must tailor these strategies to fit the family's available time and capabilities. Otherwise, these tasks quickly morph into an unsustainable burden.

CONCLUSION

The teacher acts as the central engine driving the social adaptation of transfer students with intellectual disabilities moving from mainstream to special schools. Teacher A successfully executed six complementary roles: classroom manager, motivator, facilitator,

demonstrator, mediator, and evaluator. The teacher operationalized these roles through adaptive learning, morning welcoming routines, emotional validation, assigned duties, concrete media, peer mediation, and continuous progress monitoring. This comprehensive system effectively dismantled the student's defensive walls (Anwar & Wahyuni, 2021; Dewi & Jauhari, 2022; Maulana & Yuliani, 2024).

Successful adaptation materialized when K transformed from a withdrawn child into a cheerful, sociable, and highly active community member. Internal character traits, peer acceptance, an inclusive climate, and teacher partnerships heavily supported this change. Bullying trauma and suboptimal home mentoring served as the primary obstacles. These findings confirm that social adaptation does not stem from a single method. It grows from repeated safe experiences, appropriate challenges, and consistent relationships. Ultimately, the teacher possesses the unique power to transform a terrifying new school into a therapeutic environment where vulnerable students can learn, belong, and rebuild their confidence (Hasanah & Maryani, 2021; Indriani & Raharjo, 2023; Rizky & Handayani, 2022).

Study Limitations

This single-case study provides rich contextual depth but lacks statistical generalizability, requiring contextual adaptation before applying findings. Its primary limitations stem from relying mainly on school personnel—omitting direct student and parent perspectives—and presenting behavioral data descriptively rather than using quantitative social adaptation tracking instruments.

Practical Implications

Schools should structure student transitions through tailored mentoring programs based on initial baseline assessments of student history and needs. Educators can foster successful adaptation by combining consistent welcoming routines, effort-focused task feedback, daily observational tracking, and structured parent communication tools like daily progress logs.

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