Teaching Those Who “Color Outside the Lines”

Recognizing & Reaching Children with Special Needs & Their Families

Presented by
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Children, inclusion, services, childhood, professionals, early development, quality, support, access, philosophy, education, learning, disabilities, families, programs, opportunities, practitioners, accountability, education, full needs, members, standards, activities, range, program, different, early, childhood, supports, professional, definition, wide, necessary, participation, potential, educational, integrated, meaningful, systems, goals, outcomes, care, young, pre-intervention, necessary, and, early. 

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Position Statement on Inclusion

“Early childhood inclusion embodies the values, policies, and practices that support the right of every infant and young child and his or her family, regardless of ability to participate in a broad range of activities and contexts of full members of families, communities, and society” (DEC, 2009).
Why Inclusion?

Inclusive experiences give children with disabilities and their families:

• a sense of belonging,

• support positive social relationships and friendships, and

• promote development and learning so children can reach their full potential.
Inclusive early care and education is...

...where children of all abilities and backgrounds live, learn and play together

...where all children can participate in all daily activities because the activities and routines are planned to meet the needs of each child

...where each child’s individual strengths and needs are valued
Inclusive early care and education looks like...

- Children with different abilities, interests or backgrounds playing and learning together
- Every child is involved in all daily activities
- Materials or activities are adapted to meet different needs of children
- Activities are based on children’s interests, building on and repeating their successes to increase good feelings about themselves
- Needs of the children are the basis for the daily plans and schedules
Features of High Quality Inclusion

• Access

• Participation

• Supports
Access

Young children with disabilities have access to a full range of activities and learning opportunities in diverse early care and education programs and other natural environments.
Participation

Adults find ways to help young children with disabilities participate and engage fully in a variety of activities. They promote children’s meaningful ‘belonging’ in intentional ways.
Supports

Adults who promote early childhood inclusion have the supports they need to help young children with disabilities. These supports include ongoing training and professional development.
“My son will be living and working with a diverse population of people. I want him to be accepted both out of school and in school. For me, that’s why inclusion is a key.”

“To me, there is no such thing as “inclusion”. There is simply “real life”.” Parents of children with disabilities.

“Inclusion involves all kinds of practices that are ultimately practices of good teaching. What good teachers do is to think thoughtfully about children and develop ways to reach all children.” Teacher of 2nd Grade in an Inclusive School Setting

“Inclusion is based on the belief that all people work and live in inclusive communities, with people of different races, religions, aspirations and abilities, and children should learn and grow in similar environments.” Professor of Special Education
“The idea of belonging and membership, being part of a community, is a basic human need. It’s one of the principles of our democratic society. We all have the same needs, we want to be loved, we want to have friends, we want to feel that we are making a contribution in our families, in our communities....We learn about understanding what someone’s interests and point of view are by interacting with them. To include everyone is to open up those possibilities for learning and appreciating our humanity.”

Dr. Joseph Putner, Educator
CARE

Collaborate: Building meaningful relationships

Advocate: Seek resources and supports

Relate: Walk a Mile in My Shoes

Educate: Learn all that you can
• **Collaborate:** Partnering with parents and other professionals in addition to building meaningful relationships will lay the foundation for sharing information that may be uncomfortable and for finding resources. When parents feel that you have their child’s best interest at heart; when you have communicated all of the strengths and great things about their child as well as areas of concern consistently; when you’ve intentionally listened and sought their feedback and suggestions; then parents are more likely to be receptive of information shared regarding your concerns.
ADVOCATE

• Advocate: Be vigilant in seeking resources and supports for children with disabilities. Having resources readily available will help parents as they strive to seek answers and support. Be proactive and have a plan in place for sharing concerns, for identifying strategies to support the child, for documenting what’s working and what may still be needed, for making referrals and for working with local early interventionists.
• **Relate**: Remember that, although you may have worked with several children with disabilities, for most parents this may be their first experience and their primary concern will be for their child. Always relate to parents with compassion and genuine concern. Be mindful of the stages of acceptance they may experience and patiently work with them through every phase (denial, anger, bargaining, sadness, and/or acceptance). Remember every child and family is unique and will require your understanding.
• **Educate:** Learn all that you can about working with young children with disabilities. Adopt a philosophy that supports inclusive practices and have a communication plan in place for sharing your philosophy with other parents as well as the local community. And above all, commit to educating all children, working with them where they are and challenging them to achieve what is appropriate and reasonable for them.