

Tip Sheets

Inclusion: Developmentally Appropriate Care for All Young Children

Acceptance, Belonging, and Inclusion

Acceptance and belonging are the essence of a child's reality. **Acceptance** occurs when there are opportunities to be with other people who may look or sound different from ourselves.

Belonging means having the same opportunities as anyone else to participate in life events, regardless of ability.

Inclusion is both a practice and a philosophy of care. To many, it conjures up words like belonging, acceptance, tolerance, community, and diversity.



The magic of young children is that they are able to learn so much from each other.

Children develop strong and positive attitudes toward differences through their experiences and their interactions with others.

- For the child with special needs, the world unfolds when shared with other children in natural settings.
- The worldview of children without special needs is broadened when they understand that people are much more than their disability.

Adults play important roles in the lives of children by modeling respectful behaviors. Diversity can be taught through direct instruction, the “teachable moment,” and selective intervention.

NAEYC & DEC Definition of Inclusion (2020)

“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 as full members of families, communities, and society.”

The desired results of inclusive experiences for children with and without special needs and their families include a sense of belonging and membership, positive social relationships and friendships, and development and learning to reach their full potential.

The defining features of inclusion that can be used to identify high quality early childhood programs and services are access, participation, and supports.”

Benefits of Inclusion for Children

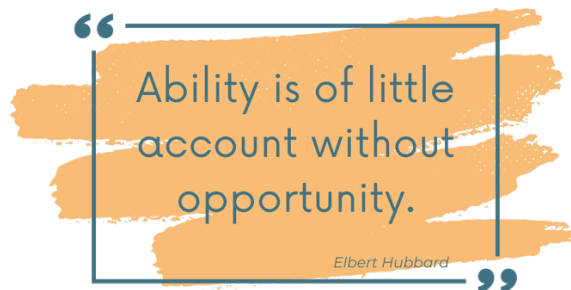
- Learn by imitating others
- Build interdependence and ability to deal with obstacles
- Notice similarities between themselves/others
- Develop better language/communication skills
- Learn self-respect by being a part of a positive, natural environment
- Learn to accept others as they are

Benefits of Inclusion for Families

- Understand that all children have behaviors that may challenge us as adults
- Discover that others can provide a secure, nurturing environment for all children
- Learn to accept children's strengths and needs
- Share common experiences

Benefits of Inclusion for Educators

- Develop networks of professional services and community resources
- Expand your knowledge about special needs
- Awareness that all people have unique needs
- Realize and appreciate differences
- Compassion, kindness, and respect for all



Developmentally Appropriate Care

Developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) involves the concept of the "whole child" which requires that we understand the child within the contexts of age, strengths, needs, family, community and culture. The quality of appropriate developmental care is enhanced by meaningful collaboration of adults significant to the child.

Developmentally appropriate inclusive care is:

- Age appropriate
- Developmentally appropriate
- Individually appropriate
- Respectful of the child and family

With parental permission, early educators may be able to strategize with specialists who are working with a child about accommodations that could be made in the child care program.

Additionally, specialists may have other resources to share with the child care provider including professional development opportunities such as workshops and trainings.

Key Messages of DAP

- Participation in life has little to do with a child's disability or ability.
- Children construct their view of themselves and their world during the first years of their lives.
- A children's sense of reality is formed by their early experiences.
- All children deserve opportunities to participate in childhood experiences.

Additional Resources

Friendship Circle | Children's books on diversity and acceptance of self and others
<https://www.friendshipcircle.org/blog/2015/11/13/six-childrens-books-on-diversity-and-acceptance-of-self-and-others>

NAEYC | Developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) position statement
<https://www.naeyc.org/resources/position-statements/dap/contents>

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Funding provided by the Minnesota Department of Human Services.

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