



Me, Too! Inside Preschool Inclusion

The Early Childhood Research Institute on Inclusion

Inclusion is about belonging and participating in a diverse society.

- Inclusion is not just a school issue – it extends to the communities in which children and their families live.
- Inclusion is not only a disability issue; all children and families have a right to participate and be supported in the schools and community.

For more information see:

*Odom, S. L. et al. (1996). Inclusion at the preschool level: An ecological systems analysis. *SRCD Social Policy Report, 10*, 18-30.

*Hanson, M. J. et al. (1998) The culture of inclusion: Recognizing diversity at multiple levels. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 13*, 185-210.

Individuals – teachers, families, administrators – define inclusion differently.

- Levels of the ecological system, priorities and responsibilities influence definitions of inclusion.
- People within the same system (e.g., one school or school district) may have extremely different views of inclusion.

For more information see:

*Beckman, P. J. et al. (1998). Communities, families, and inclusion. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 13*, 125-150.

*Odom, S. L. et al. (in press). On the forms of inclusion: Context and service delivery models. *Journal of Early Intervention*.

Beliefs about inclusion influence its implementation.

- The beliefs about schooling that families and professionals bring with them to the classroom influence how inclusive practices are planned and implemented; these beliefs are influenced by many complex factors.
- Beliefs about human diversity – culture, race, language, class, ability – influence how inclusion is implemented in schools and communities.

For more information see:

*Hanson, M. J., Gutierrez, S., Morgan, M., Brennan, E. L., & Zercher, C. (1997). Language, culture and disability: Interacting influences on preschool education. *Topics in Early Childhood Education, 17*, 307-337.

*Lieber, J., Capell, K., Sandall, S. R., Wolfberg, P., Horn, E., & Beckman, P. J. (1998). Inclusive preschool programs: Teachers' beliefs and practices. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 13*, 87-106.

Programs, not children, have to be “ready for inclusion.”

- The most successful inclusive programs view inclusion as the starting point for all children.
- Inclusion can be appropriate for all children; making it work successfully depends on planning, training and support.

For more information see:

*Janko, S., Schwartz, I. S., Sandall, S., Anderson, K., & Cottam, C. (1997). Beyond microsystems: Unanticipated lessons about the meaning of inclusion. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education, 17*, 286-306.

Collaboration is the cornerstone to effective inclusive programs.

- Collaboration among adults, including professionals and parents, within and across systems and programs is essential to inclusive programs.
- Collaboration among adults, from different disciplines and often with different philosophies, is one of the greatest challenges to successful implementation of inclusive programs.

For more information see:

*Lieber, J. A. et al (1997). The impact of changing roles on relationships between adults in inclusive programs for young children. *Early Education and Development*, 8, 67-82.

*Lieber, J., Beckman, P. J., & Horn, E. (in press). Working together to provide services for young children with disabilities: Lessons from inclusive preschool programs. In S. Graham & K. Harris (Eds.), *Working together*. Cambridge, MA: Brookline Books.

Specialized instruction is an important component of inclusion.

- Participation in a community-based or general education setting is not enough. The individual needs of children with disabilities must be addressed in inclusive program.
- Specialized instruction can be delivered through a variety of effective strategies, many of which can be embedded in the ongoing classroom activities.

For more information see:

*Frea, W., Craig, L., Odom, S. L., & Johnson, D. (in press). Differential effects of structured social integration and group friendship activities for promoting social interaction of peers. *Journal of Early Intervention*.

*Horn, E., Lieber, J., Schwartz, I., Sandall, S. & Li, S. (1998). *Supporting young children's IEPs in inclusive settings through embedded learning opportunities*. Manuscript submitted for publication.

Adequate support is necessary to make inclusive environments work.

- Support includes training, personnel, materials, planning time, and ongoing consultation.
- Support can be delivered in different ways and each person involved in inclusion may have unique needs.

For more information see:

*Lieber, J., Schwartz, I. S., Sandall, S., Horn, E., & Wolery, R. A. (in press). Curricular considerations for young children in inclusive settings. In C. Seefeldt (Ed.), *Early childhood curriculum: A review of research*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Inclusion can benefit children with and without disabilities.

- The parents of children without disabilities whose children participate in inclusive programs often report beneficial changes in their children's confidence, self-esteem and understanding of diversity.
- High quality early childhood programs form the necessary structural base for high quality inclusive programs; thus, all children benefit from them.

For more information see:

*Brown, W. H., Odom, S. L., Li, S., & Zercher, C. (1998). *Ecobehavioral assessment in inclusive early childhood programs: A portrait of preschool inclusion*. Manuscript submitted for publication.

*Hanson, M. J., Morgan, M., Gutierrez, S., Barnwell, D., & Beckman, P. (1997). Finding friends at school and at home: Parents' strategies for helping preschoolers develop friendships. *Exceptional Parent*, May, 24-26.

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