

Inclusion in Early Childhood Education: A Brief Overview

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April 26, 2024

Early Childhood Education

- Programs aim to improve the lives of children and families through providing a safe and nurturing environment in developmentally appropriate settings (Essa & Burnham, 2019)
- This is accomplished by providing them opportunities they would otherwise not have at home
 - Enhancing socialization
 - Cognitive skills
 - Overall development (Burnham, 2019)

Inclusion

- The Division for Early Childhood and National Association for Education of Young Children
 - “Early childhood inclusion embodies the values, policies, and practices that support the right of every infants and young children and their family, regardless of ability, to participate in a broad range of activities and context as full members of families, communities, and society (DEC/NAEYC, 2009).”

Inclusion

- Inclusion of children with disabilities goes beyond just physically including them in the classroom
- Five domains (Webster, 2016).
 - Environment that respects diversity
 - Inclusion education for teachers
 - Support for inclusion in the classroom
 - Differentiated instruction and inclusion
 - Education parents on inclusion

Inclusion in Early Childhood

- Early childhood educators must lead with intentionality when creating participation opportunities
 - High quality, evidence based services and supports that are developmentally appropriate
- Screening and identification processes in place
- Developmental milestones tracking
- Ensuring access, participation, and benefit

Benefits

- Children without disabilities:
 - Association with increased emotional understanding
 - Positive attitudes towards children with disabilities (Forsythe & Larson, 2023)
- Children with disabilities:
 - Increase engagement
 - Social acceptance
 - Friendship/peer building building (Odom, 2012)

Parent Perspective

- Motivated to enroll in mainstream due to social interactions
- Parents felt that their child's development was supported by attendance at a mainstream center
 - In communication and behavior
- Positive development change in their child
 - Direct result of service quality and imitation through peer interaction
- (Blackmore, 2016)

Despite the clear advantages, of the 50,131 young children with disabilities enrolled in preschool special education, only 38% were fully included in their classrooms (Guralnick & Bruder, 2016).

Barriers to Inclusion

- Ensuring program quality
- Determining personnel and fiscal/contracting policies
- Arranging student transportation
- Teacher's attitudes and beliefs
 - Lack of collaboration
 - Children not getting the services they need
 - Teacher preparedness to work in inclusive settings
 - (Forsythe & Larson, 2016)

Common Themes in International Inclusion

- Cultural Differences
 - Wait and see
- Family and teacher attitudes
- Teacher Efficacy
- Resources and funding (Dwadi, 2022)
- Teacher training
- Knowledge of special needs
- Severity of disability (Lee, 2015)

Going Forward

- Access to preschool for all young children (Guralnick & Bruder, 2016)
- Universal standards for every program (DEC/NAEYC, 2009)
 - System of services and supports
 - Achieve an integrated professional developmental system
 - Influence federal and state accountability systems
- Teacher training in disability and inclusion

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