

# Strategies for Supporting Children with Special Developmental/behavioral Needs in Preschool Settings

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# Why Inclusion?

- **Beneficial for children with special needs**
  - Possible benefits for social and language outcomes (Rafferty et al., 2003)
  - Opportunities for social interaction with typical peers
- **Beneficial for typically developing peers**
  - Educational and social outcomes not negatively affected (Odom et al., 2011)
  - Children in inclusive classrooms show greater knowledge and acceptance of disabilities (Diamond & Huang, 2005)
- **Children's needs not yet identified as different**
- **Legal mandate for inclusion (Least Restrictive Environment principle)**

# How prevalent is Inclusion?

- **In 2011, 85% of students with disabilities spent at least 40% of their time in a general education setting** (U.S. Department of Education, 2012)
- **In 2002, around 1/3 of children with disabilities were included in early childhood education settings as their primary educational placement** (Odom et al., 2011)
- **In fiscal year 2011, 12% of children in Head Start had identified disabilities** (HeadStart Fact Sheet 2011)

# Possible Challenges to Inclusion

- **Providers may not have training or access to information about caring for children with special needs** (Dinnebeil et al., 1998)
- **Children with special communication needs (e.g. language delays, autism) may have difficulty getting their needs met**
- **Children may be disruptive in the classroom, interfering with learning/safety of other children**
- **Children with disabilities may not be accepted by other children or may not interact with other children**
  - Children with disabilities are more likely to interact with adults and less likely to interact with other children than those without disabilities (Brown et al., 1999)

Supporting Children with Special Needs in Preschool

# Strategies for Supporting Communication in the Classroom

# Environmental Arrangement

**Setting up the environment so that children must communicate to get their needs met.**

**Putting favorite activities in sight but out of reach (on a high shelf, in a hard-to-open container).**

**Leaving out important parts of activities (e.g., give paper but not crayons; give a marble ramp but no marbles).**

**Giving “inadequate portions” (e.g., only three goldfish crackers instead on a whole plate; only one crayon instead of the whole box).**

# Incidental Teaching

Using naturally occurring opportunities for communication to teach new skills.

Teaching related to the child's current interest or activity.

Approach the child and decide on a teaching target (e.g., teaching colors or shapes when the child is playing with a shape sorter; teaching saying the word "cracker" when the child wants another cracker)

Start with a more open-ended question, then provide increasingly more support until the child is able to be successful.

## Example if child wants a cracker:

1. Look at the child expectantly to see if he will say "cracker."
2. Ask child "What do you want?"
3. Model saying the word "cracker."
4. Shape the child's hand into a pointing gesture and have him point to the box of crackers.

Including Children with Special Needs

# Strategies for Supporting Students During Classroom Transitions



# Visual Schedules

**Using a picture schedule to help children anticipate and manage classroom transitions.**

**Visual schedule should be posted where each child can see it. Children can also have individual schedules.**

**Schedule should be reviewed at the beginning of day. Then, use pictures to remind children a few minutes before each transition.**

**When an activity is finished, this is indicated on the schedule (by removing a picture with Velcro, marking it “all done”, etc.)**

# Active Transitions

**Giving children choices or tasks to do during transition times to reduce idle or unoccupied time.**

**Giving children choices on how to get from activity to activity (e.g., Do you want to hop like a bunny or fly like a bird into the line?)**

**Rewarding children with a fun activity for waiting patiently (e.g., everyone get a chance to turn over a rain stick while waiting in line).**

**Singing songs or being active but stationary (e.g., balancing on one foot, doing jumping jacks) while children are waiting for others to be ready.**

INCLUDING CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

# Strategies for Supporting Social Interaction and Encouraging Pro- Social Behavior

# Group-wide Reinforcement

Praising and rewarding children for good behavior in front of a group to encourage other children to also display these behaviors.

**Brings attention to children with good behavior instead of those with bad behavior!**

**When only a few children are following directions, place attention and praise on what a good job they are doing to encourage others to join in. Then praise those who join as well!**

**Can have a “marble jar” or other way of tracking kids’ accomplishments as a group. Each time a child is “caught being good” he/she earns a token toward a whole-group prize.**

# Peer-mediated Intervention

Supporting children with special needs by teaching peers strategies for interacting with these children effectively.

**Peers who are well-liked, attend school regularly, are willing to participate, and are able to focus on an activity for at least 10 minutes may be good choices as peer models.**

**Peers receive training and role-play practice with teachers on several skills that may be helpful in scaffolding interactions with less socially-competent peers.**

**Skills taught to preschoolers can include organizing play, sharing, providing assistance, and providing affection and praise.**

**Teachers initially guide interactions between peers to remind peers to use skills. Later, peers may need only a prompt to begin and need less support to use their skills.**

# For More Information

- **Environmental arrangement/communicative temptations**
  - Milieu teaching—chapter with more information about implementation [at: http://kc.vanderbilt.edu/kidtalk/files/papers/Hancock2006.pdf](http://kc.vanderbilt.edu/kidtalk/files/papers/Hancock2006.pdf)
  - Project ImPACT—parent-training model of teaching social-communication that includes environmental arrangement strategies, more information about materials, trainings and the program [at: http://psychology.msu.edu/AutismLab/Project%20Impact.html](http://psychology.msu.edu/AutismLab/Project%20Impact.html)
- **Incidental teaching**
  - Description of and evidence for incidental teaching [at: http://www.txautism.net/uploads/target/IncidentalTeaching.pdf](http://www.txautism.net/uploads/target/IncidentalTeaching.pdf)
- **Visual Schedules**
  - [Templates: www.do2learn.com](http://www.do2learn.com), for making visual schedules
  - Description and evidence for use of visual schedules for children with autism [at: http://www.txautism.net/uploads/target/VisualSupports.pdf](http://www.txautism.net/uploads/target/VisualSupports.pdf)
- **About peer training**
  - National Professional Development Center on Autism Spectrum Disorders, [at: http://autismpdc.fpg.unc.edu/sites/autismpdc.fpg.unc.edu/files/PMII\\_Steps-EC.pdf](http://autismpdc.fpg.unc.edu/sites/autismpdc.fpg.unc.edu/files/PMII_Steps-EC.pdf)
  - Harris, 2009 instructional article [at: http://www.pakeys.org/uploadedContent/Docs/Higher%20Ed/2011%20Conference/P%20HarrisKathleen%20Building%20A%20Learning%20Community%20Handouts.pdf](http://www.pakeys.org/uploadedContent/Docs/Higher%20Ed/2011%20Conference/P%20HarrisKathleen%20Building%20A%20Learning%20Community%20Handouts.pdf)

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