

# Preschool Inclusion: What's the Evidence, What Stands in the Way, and What Do the Stellar Programs Look Like?



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# Some Bottom-Line Considerations Regarding Early Childhood Inclusion

# Bottom Line Considerations...



- High quality inclusive settings are the only environments with data consistently supporting children's superior learning AND non-inclusive environments have been shown to negatively impact children's learning.
- Fully inclusive options beat the alternative at a ratio of about 15 to 1.

# Bottom Line Considerations...



- Fully inclusive options have been shown to work for children across disability groups and levels of severity (children with developmental delays, mild to severe; children with ASD; children with multiple disabilities; children with significant social and emotional needs; children with hearing impairment; children with limited mobility).

# Bottom Line Considerations...



- Fully inclusive options tend to be of higher quality in general
- Greatest magnitude of effect is social (but also significant differences in communicative and cognitive skills)

So What's The Big Deal About  
Social Outcomes?

# What Having A Friend In Preschool Means For Later In Life Success



- Better academic skills
- Higher high school graduation rates
- Fewer special education services
- Better adult employment status
- Greater chance of independent living
- Better adult mental health
- Less drug/alcohol use in teen years

# It's Not Magic: Here is what friends do for each other



- Always involve and include their friend
- Look out for their friend's best interest
- Encourage exploration/learning new things

# And What About Typically Developing Children?



- Equal or greater cognitive and language skills
- Fewer challenging behaviors
- More advanced social skills
- More accepting attitudes toward individuals who are different

# Given All of These Data, Why Doesn't Everybody Do Inclusion As the First Placement Option?



- Myths are powerful things
  - Too expensive
  - Illegal to blend funds
  - Children need to be ready (developmentally) to benefit
  - Parents do not want it
  - Harm typical child learning
  - Cannot deliver necessary intensity of instruction
  - Too stimulating

What Do The Better  
Inclusion Settings Look  
Like And Operate Like?

# More Typically Developing Peers



- Ilene Schwartz – DATA Project
- Gail McGee – Walden Project
- Phil Strain – LEAP Preschool
  - All began with 50:50 ratio and abandoned that for 2 or 3:1 ratio
  - Enhances generalization opportunities in social domain
  - Minimizes behavioral contagion effects around challenging behavior and “autistic-like” behaviors
  - Minimizes “Buddy Burn-Out”

Everyday, all day long!

# Transdisciplinary Service Model



- Maximizes instructional generalization opportunities
- IEP & IFSP goals get addressed everyday all day
- Maximizes consistency of adult-child interactions

# Full Utilization Of Peer Influence



- Initiate social interactions
- Invite others to activities
- Take their hand and lead them there
- Respond to social bids
- Pass-out & Pick-up materials, props
- Model desired actions
- Praise, compliment peers
- Give play directions
- Help others complete a task/activity (give assistance)

# Predictable, Comprehensible Routines



## Daily Schedule

- Arrival
- Table Time
- Opening Circle
- Centers
- Story Circle
- Snack
- Outside
- Small Groups
- Closing Circle

## Opening Circle

- Greeting Song
- Calendar
- Child Choice Song
- Social Skill Lesson
- Choosing Centers

## Calendar

- Clap the Month
- Days of the Week Song
- Add Today
- Motor Cube
- Pattern
- Review

# Hundreds Of Learning Opportunities Embedded Across The Day



# Wide Range Of Evidence-based Practices Used And Their Efficacy Assessed Frequently



*The Division for Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children*



# End of 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Outcomes

