



Important Features of a Quality Inclusive Program

Getting started with inclusion is a team effort. Everyone—parents, teachers, children—has something to contribute to create an environment where *all* children and their families feel welcome, and where *all* children can learn and be happy.

The following list presents important features of a quality inclusive program. These components can be accomplished when early childhood teachers, teaching assistants, administrators, therapists, special educators, and families work together in the interest of the child.

- Staff (administrators and direct service providers) are committed to the principle of inclusion and receive adequate ongoing training about inclusive practices.
- Both staff and families contribute to the assessment process and collaborate regularly in planning how to meet the individual needs of children. The assessment results are used in planning individualized educational plans for the children.
- The assessment process includes information from several sources (e.g., parent, teacher, special educator, therapist) and a variety of assessment methods (e.g., looking at children's work, observing children during play, administering checklists or tests while children are engaged in their natural environment).
- The rights of children and families to confidentiality are respected at all times.
- Communication with families occurs systematically and in ways that are responsive to the needs of the families. For example, a notebook or cassette tape is sent home with daily entries about the child, home visits are made, and conferences at school are encouraged.
- A system is in place for communication with other agencies to plan how to coordinate services to meet the needs of children and families.
- The physical environment is free of barriers that limit or prevent access and mobility.
- Teachers and specialists use a variety of instructional strategies to meet the individual needs of children.
- Teachers and specialists work together to ensure that children's individual goals and objectives are embedded into their daily routines and activities.