E-202 Inclusive Environments

Purpose

Promote a safe and welcoming classroom and school community where individual differences are valued, embraced, and evident. Ensure all students, regardless of cognitive, physical or academic level, have opportunities to grow, develop and learn in healthy ways.

Our program provides care to age-eligible children without regard to race, religion, color, creed, gender, cultural heritage, parent/guardian marital status, parent/guardian political beliefs, parent/guardian sexual orientation, disability or special needs, child's toileting ability, medical condition, HIV status, or any other consideration made unlawful by federal, state, or local laws. The Americans with Disabilities Act requires that reasonable accommodations be provided to people with disabilities. The law covers children with disabilities seeking reasonable accommodations in an early learning setting, as well as the parents/guardians served.

Philosophy

- All students belong and are valued as equal members of our school community.
- Teachers plan intentional and meaningful ways to engage students with disabilities in a wide range of learning opportunities, activities, and environments that are available to all children.
- Teachers plan goals that are student specific, with appropriate supplementary aids and services.
- Instructional strategies and methods used increase participation and progress of students with disabilities.

Benefits of Inclusive Classroom Environments

Benefits for Students	Benefits for Teachers	Benefits for Families
• Developing an appreciation and respect for the unique characteristics and abilities of each individual • Increasing abilities to help and support all classmates, with a sensitivity toward others' differences • Providing opportunities to experience diversity of society in an educational environment • Enabling development of friendships and	• Exchanging information about instructional activities and teaching strategies, thus expanding the skills of both general and special educators • Developing teamwork and collaborative problem-solving skills to creatively address challenges regarding student learning • Promoting the recognition and appreciation that all students have strengths and are contributing	• Feeling positive about themselves and their children by seeing their children accepted by others, successful and inclusive setting, and belonging to the community where we live • Feeling positive about themselves and their children by seeing their children appreciate the value of diversity in others • Extending opportunities beyond the school

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strengthening a positive self-image by engaging in activities with peers • Promoting opportunities to communicate, self-advocate, and be educated with same-age peers	members of the school community	community by fostering school friendships in neighborhood activities and social events

Dumaresq, C. and Tommasini, J. Teachers' Desk Reference: Practical Information for Pennsylvania's Teachers.

Strategies for Facilitating Inclusion

We conduct individualized screenings and assessments of the particular needs of a child and family and engage in an interactive dialogue with parents/guardians, caregivers, and medical professionals to identify reasonable accommodations and to safely integrate the child into the program, given each individual's capabilities, and to give the family full access to and participation in our programs to the extent feasible. Any information regarding a child, a child's family, or other matters discussed with center management or staff will be held in the strictest confidence.

- Screen students for potential delays and refer for further assessment when results indicate an area of concern.
- Incorporate IEP goals into lesson plans.
- Select books and other materials that support and include students who have a wide range of abilities to see, hear, speak, and learn.
- Offer multiple ways for students to interact with and respond to curricula and materials.
- Develop a close collaboration with special education staff.
- When eligible, access state special child care funding to hire additional staff.
- Provide staff with necessary training and educational support.
- Arrange the classroom environment to encourage proximity to peers and full access to the learning environment.
- Adapt materials to increase participation by ALL children.
- Simplify activities, dividing into small tasks to reduce the number of steps.
- Adapt activities to challenge individual children, as needed.
- Identify individual child's preference and interest in various play activities and use to encourage successful learning.
- Provide both adult and peer support.
- Provide adaptive materials and equipment as needed.