

Fostering Inclusion in Stamford's Community-Based Preschools

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Understanding Inclusion in Early Childhood Programs

Definition: Inclusion integrates children with disabilities into early childhood programs alongside their non-disabled peers.

Goals: High Expectations and Active Participation

Supports: Accommodations and Evidence-Based Services

Inclusive Scope: Benefits all children, fostering development, friendships, and a sense of belonging, whether they have mild or significant disabilities.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION. (n.d.). *Policy statement on inclusion of children with disabilities in early childhood programs*. The Administration for Children and Families. <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ecd/policy-guidance/policy-statement-inclusion-children-disability-early-childhood-programs>

What Does the Research Say?

Research Findings:

- Inclusion benefits all children, both with and without disabilities.
- Using evidence-based, individualized strategies leads to success in inclusive settings.

Key Insights:

- Children with disabilities, including those with significant needs, make substantial developmental and learning progress.
- Inclusive programs support significant gains in various developmental domains.

Challenges in Stamford's Community-Based Preschools

- Staffing shortages and lack of training make it hard to support students with special needs.
- As a result, students with challenging behaviors are often expelled.
- This limits fair access to early childhood education in Stamford.

Data Overview from 2023-2024 School Year

Total Evaluations at APPLES: 256

B23 Referrals: 130

Community Referrals: 126

- Support over 80 early childhood programs including School Readiness, Head Start, Child Day Care Funding, Private Funded Programs and Home Daycares

Addressing the Challenge

Developing and Implementing an Inclusion Toolkit

- Create and share a toolkit with strategies and resources for diverse classroom needs.
- Provide educators with tools to manage behaviors and promote inclusivity.

Implementation Plan and Goals

Development Phase: In the next 3 months, create a comprehensive inclusion toolkit for preschool classrooms at Children's Learning Centers in Stamford.

Implementation Phase: Over the following 3 months, implement the toolkit and hold training workshops at these centers.

Success Metrics: Aim for at least 80% positive feedback from educators on the toolkit's effectiveness and usability.

Step 1: Development of Inclusion Toolkit

Objective: Create a comprehensive inclusion toolkit by December 2024 with essential resources and strategies to help CLC preschool staff support students with special needs.

Form a Committee: Gather a committee of stakeholders, including educators, special education experts, and community members, to guide the toolkit's development.

Vision Development: Establish a clear and shared vision for the toolkit's purpose and impact by September 2024.

Organize Content: Divide the toolkit into sections based on specific areas of expertise to ensure it is thorough and useful for addressing various challenges.

Step 2: Training on Inclusion Toolkit Implementation

Objective: Train CLC preschool staff on using the inclusion toolkit by March 2025.

- **Scheduling:** Schedule all training sessions by December 2024 for full participation.
- **Assessment:** Evaluate training effectiveness through post-session evaluations and staff feedback by April 2025.

Step 3: Feedback Collection and Analysis

Objective: Collect and analyze feedback to improve the inclusion toolkit by Spring 2025.

- **Feedback Forms:** Design feedback forms to gather user insights by January 2025.
- **Focus Groups:** Conduct focus groups in May 2025 to get detailed feedback from users.
- **Data Analysis:** Analyze feedback data and compile a report by April 2025.
- **Review and Revision:** Review feedback with the project team and discuss possible toolkit revisions based on insights.

Criteria for Success

Pre- and Post-Training Assessments:

- Check how well the training works with tests before and after to see what staff learn and how they use the toolkit.

User Satisfaction:

- Get at least 80% positive feedback from staff within six months, showing the toolkit helps improve inclusion at CLC preschools.

Current Progress Update

Professional Development (PD) Initiatives:

IEP Document Training:

The first PD session in August will focus on understanding the Individualized Education Program (IEP) document for Child Learning Centers' preschool staff.

Specialized Training with Cooperative Educational Services (CES): Training sessions will be held to work with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) teachers and assessment team members.

Committee Formation: Special education teachers, a PreK curriculum coach, administrators, a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA), a school psychologist, a speech pathologist, an occupational therapist (OT), a physical therapist (PT), and a parent.

Expanding the Reach of the Inclusion Toolkit

- **Presentation:** Present the toolkit at School Readiness Council meetings
- **Scaling Up:** Implement the toolkit in all preschool programs in Stamford
- **Collaboration:** Work with the 0-5 District Committee to align toolkit strategies
- **Online Access:** Add the toolkit to the district website for easy access and new teacher/paraprofessional handbooks

Thank You!



Resources

Barton, E. and Smith, B. (2015). [*The Preschool inclusion toolbox: How to build and lead a high-quality program.*](http://products.brookespublishing.com/The-Preschool-Inclusion-Toolbox-P834.aspx) Baltimore, MD: Brookes Publishing. Available online from <http://products.brookespublishing.com/The-Preschool-Inclusion-Toolbox-P834.aspx>

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Resources

- https://ectacenter.org/~pdfs/topics/inclusion/preschool_inclusion_finance_toolkit_2018.pdf
- [Including Children with Disabilities in Connecticut Early Childhood Programs](#)
- [Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center Connecticut's Resource for Children with Disabilities; Empowering and Educating Families](#)
- [Guidance Document: Inclusion of Disabled Children in Early Childhood Programs | The Administration for Children and Families \(hhs.gov\)](#)
- <https://www.inclusivechildcare.org/parents-grandparents-and-caregivers>
- <https://ibcces.org/blog/2016/07/15/behavior-strategies/>
- <https://tubitv.com/movies/697442/forget-me-not-inclusion-in-the-classroom>
- [Habits of Systems Thinking Courses](#)
- [SRBI Support](#)
- [Quality Inclusion Checklist](#)
- [Including Children with Disabilities in Connecticut Early Childhood Programs](#)
- [Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center Connecticut's Resource for Children with Disabilities; Empowering and Educating Families](#)
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