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Embracing Inclusion in Early Childhood Classroom

Do you have a child with special needs in your classroom? Whether they have a disability or a health or behavior problem, you know it will take extra patience, time, and might disrupt your normally calm classroom. How can you adapt when you know that this least restrictive environment is best for the child with a special need?

- First, educate yourself on the special need. Identify interventions that have proved successful.
- Talk to the family about their expectations and techniques they use to help the child succeed.
- Identify professionals providing intervention and ask for their help.
 - Discuss that all children are alike in many ways. Focus on similarities.
 - There are many books available that are at young children's developmental level.
 - Pat Thomas First Look Series includes: Don't Call Me Special (disabilities), I See Things Differently (autism), Everyone Matters (all children), Why Is It So Hard to Breathe (asthma), Why Am I So Tired (Diabetes)
 - Becky the Brave by Laurie Lears (Seizures)
 - Special People, Special Ways by Arlene Maguire (disabilities)
 - What's Different About You? by Heather Steiger (medical conditions, impairments, and disabilities)
 - My Friend Suhana: A Story of Friendship and Cerebral Palsy by Shaila Abdullah
 - Let the children experience the assistive devices: listening with a hearing aid, using a picture board, walking with a walker or cane, or sitting in a wheelchair.
 - Explain why the child gets extra snacks or stickers and they don't. All children want what others have, but they can understand and feel grown up knowing these items are helping the atypical child.

Inform the families of typical children of the benefits of learning empathy and being culturally sensitive. Help them understand that their child can become a leader and a peer mentor to the child with special needs. (It is important that you share the communication with the family of the child with special needs before disseminating information about their child.)



Developed by Suzanne Gellens for the Southern Early Childhood Association
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