Inclusion Is a Right

"Early childhood inclusion embodies the values, policies and practices that support the right of every infant and young child and his or her family, regardless of ability, to participate in a broad range of activities and contexts as *full members* [emphasis added] of families, communities and society" (National Association for the Education of Young Children, p. 2).

Where are we in Virginia? In response to the requirement for inclusion from the U.S. Department of Education, members from the Virginia Department of Education's Early Childhood Network reviewed the current data from the Commonwealth of Virginia. While school divisions across Virginia have implemented inclusive practices at various stages, systemic change is still needed. Child count data trends over the past years indicated that many preschoolers with disabilities (>19,000 students currently, December 2018), received the major portion of their services in non-inclusive settings. Since the initial publication of *Inclusive Opportunities for Preschoolers Planning Guide* in 2007, the Commonwealth of Virginia has made minimal progress in offering services to preschoolers with disabilities in inclusive environments (Virginia Department of Education, 2019, p. 4).

Get Ready to engage your community and reflect on "why" inclusion matters.

View the *SpecialQuest video about Marvin and Jack* (https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/children-disabilities/specialquest/session-3-adults-disabilities-creating-long-term-vision) (Session 3: Adults with Disabilities: Creating a Long-Term Vision: Part 1) from the viewpoint of two adults with disabilities to discuss community/staff attitudes on inclusion and the importance and value of participation.

Review the joint position statement (https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/resources/position-statements/DEC_NAEYC_EC_updatedKS.pdf) from the Division of Early Childhood and the National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Get Set

Delve into the current guidance developed at the Virginia Department of Education through the Virginia Guidelines for Early Childhood Inclusion, April 2018 (http://www.doe.virginia.gov/early-childhood/curriculum/inclusion/early-childhood-inclusion-guid.pdf). This guidance document is designed to assist Virginia's school divisions and early childhood communities in identifying, developing and sustaining inclusive opportunities within high-quality early childhood programs for children with disabilities.

Implement a systems approach to preschool inclusive practices using the newly revised Inclusive Planning Opportunities for Preschoolers Planning Guide 2019 (http://ttaconline.org/Resource/JWHaEa5BS76DY3ONBvM4zA/Resource-ipop-inclusive-placement-opportunities-for-preschoolers-manual-updated-2019), which supplements and provides specific steps to build and sustain inclusive practices in the early childhood setting and extends the information in the Virginia Guidelines for Early Childhood Inclusion, April 2018 (http://www.doe.virginia.gov/early-childhood/curriculum/inclusion/early-childhood-inclusion-guid.pdf).

Go to these 2019 resources to train staff and systems to implement inclusive practices in Virginia.

IPOP (Inclusive Placement Opportunities for Preschoolers) Manual (http://www.doe.virginia.gov/early-childhood/curriculum/inclusion/early-childhood-inclusion-guid.pdf): Each module consists of a PowerPoint and activities and handouts to supplement the training located on TTAC Online (http://ttaconline.org/). All materials can be downloaded and modified to meet system needs.

- Module 1: Planning for Inclusion
- Module 2: Teaming and Collaboration
- Module 3: Fostering Social Relationships
- Module 4: Setting Up the Environment
- Module 5: Self-Regulation and Control
- Module 6: Using Assessment
- Module 7: Embedded Instructional Practices
- Module 8: Performance Monitoring

IPOP Appendix (http://ttaconline.org/Resource/JWHaEa5BS76DY3ONBvM4zA/Resource-ipop-inclusive-placement-opportunities-for-preschoolers-manual-updated-2019)**:** Includes sample documents and other resources to support your LEA in implementing inclusive practices.

Inclusive Classroom Profile (ICP) (https://products.brookespublishing.com/The-Inclusive-Classroom-Profile-ICP-Set-Research-Edition-P969.aspx) by Elena P. Soukakou, which can help to assess the inclusive classroom. For additional resources on the ICP, click on the link and scroll down to the resources at Brookes Publishing.

"Inclusion is a right that values the membership and participation of children with disabilities in typical settings" (Gupta, 2014, p. 9). Now you have the "Why?", the systems approach, and the "How?" to implement, begin, assess, expand and sustain inclusive practices in the early childhood setting.

"Research consistently demonstrates that high-quality, *inclusive* [emphasis added] environments are associated with positive outcomes for young children.... *inclusion* [emphasis added] has been at the heart of policy, professional standards, and research for decades. For more than 35 years, IDEA and other federal mandates concerning early childhood (EC) (e.g., Head Start) have encouraged educational services for children with disabilities to be delivered where education is needed" (Barton & Smith, 2015, p. 2).

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This news brief is a collaborative effort of the Virginia Department of Education Training and Technical Assistance Centers at George Mason University and James Madison University. This issue was prepared by the staff at the VDOE TTAC at George Mason University. For questions about content, please contact Sheryl Fahey (sfahey@gmu.edu), Jackie Kilkeary (jkilkear@gmu.edu) or Debi Stepien (dstepien@gmu.edu).

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