

1

Attitude & Belief

Everyone is important & valuable. Envision your program being a place where everyone belongs. Be proactive & intentional about creating an environment where friendship is modeled & fostered. Research shows that inclusion is successful when people simply believe it is the right thing to do & that IT IS POSSIBLE to achieve.

2

Know Your Kids – Not Their Diagnosis

We teach children, not diagnoses. Every child has strengths & weaknesses, gifts & talents, likes & dislikes. Everyone wants to be valued for who they are as a person- not for what categories they fit into. The individual characteristics of children are very different even within disability types. Learn what makes them feel encouraged, their triggers, and the ways to support their independence. Friendship grows from knowing, not labeling.

3

Open Communication

Be open to questions, comments & discussions. Recognize that uncomfortable or awkward interactions often come from uncertainty, inexperience, curiosity, unawareness, or lack of knowledge. People (including children) fear what they don't know & question what they don't understand. When faced with a difficult question or situation...

- Pause & reflect rather than reacting harshly or rashly.
- Ask for more information or clarification.
- Relate back to the individual & relate back to yourself.
- Strive to find common ground & connection to build a shared learning experience.
- Be honest. Admit what you don't know & commit to finding out.

4

Celebrate BOTH Similarities and Differences

Diversity without connection leads to separation. Diversity with connection builds empathy & learning. Help identify & celebrate what children have in common & what is unique about each child. Normalize difference as a unifier, not as a divider. Everyone has something to contribute. Create a safe environment for kids to show their uniqueness.

5

Let Kids Be Kids

Once you've planted these seeds, just step back & let them play. You have created an environment fostering respect, learning, & support. Encourage them to try. Equip them to struggle, solve, & succeed. Fun is an equalizer & smiles are universal!

Daily Check Points For Each Step ...

- Where am I strong & where am I stuck?
- What's working & what's not?
- Who is connecting & who is not?
- What successes do I see or struggles do I notice?
- What will I try or do today to help or support someone?

My Role

Foundational Steps Toward Inclusive Practice

(Detailed View)



1 Attitude & Belief

Everyone is important & valuable. Envision your program being a place where everyone belongs. Be pro-active and intentional about creating an environment where friendship is modeled & fostered. Research shows that inclusion is successful when people simply believe it is the right thing to do & that it is possible to achieve. It relies on mindset more than methodology.

When one person exhibits kindness, acceptance, & welcoming, others follow suit. Teach & practice these behaviors like you would any other skill. Affirm with your participants & staff daily what your inclusive values are & what they look like in action.

2 Know Your Kids – Not Their Diagnoses

We teach children, not diagnoses. Every child has strengths & weaknesses, gifts & talents, likes & dislikes. Everyone wants to be seen, heard, & valued for who they are as a person—not for what categories they fit into. The individual characteristics of children are widely diverse even within disability types. Generalizing based on diagnoses is far less effective than getting to know the child and can lead to harmful stereotyping.

Children with disabilities are motivated in the same ways every kid is. Learn the things that make them feel encouraged, their triggers, and the ways to support their independence. Friendship grows from knowing, not labeling.

3 Open Communication

Be open to questions, comments & discussions. Recognize that uncomfortable or awkward interactions often come from uncertainty, inexperience, curiosity, unawareness, or lack of knowledge. People (including children) fear what they don't know & question what they don't understand.

When faced with a difficult question or situation...

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- Ask for more information or clarification.

- Relate back to the individual & relate back to yourself.
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4 Celebrate BOTH Similarities & Differences

Diversity without connection leads to separation. Diversity with connection builds empathy & learning. Help identify & celebrate what children have in common and what is unique about each child. Normalize difference as a unifier, not as a divider. Everyone has something to contribute.

5 Let Kids Be Kids

Friendships aren't forced, they are fostered. That means that while you can't "make" children like each other, you can create an environment for them to respect each other, to learn from & about each other, and to support each other.

Relationships will grow naturally from there because children (with & without disabilities) are social beings. Step back & allow children to play & have fun. Encourage them to try. Equip them to struggle, solve, & succeed. Empower, don't control. Fun is an equalizer & smiles are universal!

Daily Check Points For Each Step...

Review the steps daily with a fresh perspective from a blank slate & ask yourself:

1. Where am I strong & where am I stuck?
2. What's working & what's not?
3. Who is connecting & who is not?
4. What successes do I see/struggles do I notice?
5. What will I try or do today to help or support someone?



Sample Ice Breaker / Get-to-Know-You Games

Stand Up

Sit on the ground back to back with your partner with knees bent and elbows linked. Now stand up together. Try it in threes and fours.

Trust Walk

One partner volunteers to be led with his/her eyes closed or blindfolded. The other partner leads the person for five minutes, taking very good care of the blind partner. After five minutes, switch roles.

Knots

Stand in a circle shoulder to shoulder. Ask everyone to reach out and grab two other hands. (You cannot have both hands of one person, and you cannot have the hand of persons on each side of you.) If possible, try not to criss-cross. Now, without separating hands, untangle so that all are standing in a round circle again.

Three Ball Pass or Silent Ball

Using something that's easy to catch, establish a pattern around the circle as follows: Leader says someone's name and tosses them the ball; they choose another person, say that person's name, and toss them the ball; continue in this manner until each person has caught and tossed the ball once. The ball will end the pattern in the hands of the leader. Repeat the pattern until it can be done quickly. Begin again, and after several people have caught and tossed the ball, throw in the second ball, using the same pattern sequence; then throw in the third ball. Challenge: After the group has mastered the pattern, have them reverse it. You can also play this silently after the first round and time them to see how long it takes for the ball to make it around the circle.



Snowball

Each camper writes his/her name on a piece of paper and wads it up. Campers form two lines facing each other. At a signal, they begin a snowball fight with the wadded up papers. At the end, each camper picks up a snowball and reads the name. They ask that person a question about themselves, and then share it with the rest of the group.

Lineup

Have campers line up in order of birthdate, height, number of family members, alphabetical order of middle name, etc. Have them do this without talking. This is a good way to get into random groups, or to focus/quiet the whole group.

Changes

Have campers get in pairs. Instructions are to look at your partner and notice and remember as much as you can about their appearance. Partners turn back to back and change three noticeable things about their appearance. Campers must guess what changes their partner made.