

CONNECT Project - Module 1 – Inclusion Embedded Interventions to Promote Participation

STEP 1: Dilemma

Luke's Story

Teacher's Perspective (Jackie)

My program has become more inclusive and they have placed a child with significant disabilities into my class. I'm just not sure I'm ready for this. I had one course in college that focused on working with children with disabilities, but this consisted of an overview of children with different types of disabilities. It didn't really tell me what I should be doing in the classroom. I had a practicum in an inclusive program, but inclusion in this program meant that children with disabilities got to play with the other children on the playground and sit with them during lunch. My co-teacher and I have a classroom of eight children, mostly two year olds turning three. Now Luke has joined our group. He is an engaging three year old, with curly-hair and a sweet smile. But he also has pretty significant language delays and limited experience being around other children. Although Luke uses a special communication device and knows some sign language, he still needs a lot of help expressing himself. His parents are hoping that his social development will improve by being around peers. My biggest concern is whether I will be able to address Luke's learning goals, while trying to address the needs of all of the other children in my class. Am I expected to work one-on-one with Luke every day, and, if so, who will supervise the other children? Will Luke have therapists coming into the classroom to work with him, and how will that work? What are the best ways to help Luke learn how to play with the other children and participate in learning activities such as story time and center time? And I want to involve Luke's family in making these decisions.

Luke's Family's Perspective (Christine)

When we first thought about enrolling Luke in a child care program, we were nervous and excited at the same time. At the time, we were receiving early intervention home-based services and Luke had already come so far with the help of his therapists. We had a great part-time nanny who loved him dearly, and put a lot of energy into teaching him. We were somewhat reluctant to give that up. But we knew that Luke was missing the social piece in his development, not being around many children his age, and we heard great things about this particular school. Everyone talked about the idea of inclusion, which was new to us. He would be in the same classroom as typically developing children, but we were hesitant. Would he actually be playing and participating in this classroom? My biggest concern was communication. Luke is able to communicate quite well within our family, but that is because we are familiar with his signs, his augmentative communication devices, and his general likes and dislikes. Would a teacher have the skills or the time and desire to gain the skills to successfully communicate with Luke in order to truly include him the classroom? If he can be successfully included, we are hopeful that Luke will learn more being surrounded by peers and be motivated to try new things. It is an opportunity for him to learn how to fit in with children his own age, make friends and be part of a community. The teacher we met, Jackie, seems open to working with Luke, although she also acknowledged that she doesn't have a lot of experience working with children with disabilities, and knows only a few signs. We were hoping that Luke's speech goals would continue to be addressed through one-on-one therapy with his specialists, but the director told us that these goals will be embedded into Luke's daily routines and activities in the classroom. That makes sense to us in theory because that's basically what we had been doing at home already. But are we ready to hand over the reins to a teacher who also has an entire classroom to manage? We aren't sure.

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CONNECT Project Activity Worksheet

Activity #1: What is the Dilemma?

Identify the important information from the two perspectives you have just heard/read using the outline below.

1. Describe Luke: (for example – 3 years old)

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2. What are the goals you heard stated for Luke:

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3. Describe characteristics of the classroom and program:

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4. Describe any possible practices that you heard mentioned that might work in the classroom to support Luke's participation:

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5. In your own words, describe the dilemma – the particular challenge – the teacher faces in her classroom.

Activity #2: Combination of Teaching Strategies

Watch the video clips and identify the different types of teaching strategies being used in combination.

1. Describe the different teaching strategies that you see happening for the child with disabilities.

2. Explain how the strategies are being used to support the child's participation.

3. Describe how the strategies are supporting the education and development of the children without disabilities.
