



## *An Inclusive Approach to Early Education*

### 1. Define inclusion and describe some possible outcomes.

Inclusion is a setting where everyone learns the same curriculum, which has been modified to meet the specific learning abilities of all the students. Inclusion means that children with special needs attend preschool, child care, recreational programs, and school with typically developing peers. It is accepting and valuing human diversity and providing the necessary support so that all children and their families can participate successfully in the programs of their choice.

### 2. Identify a current public policy that directly impacts children with exceptionalities.

The IDEA, Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, became a law in 2005. IDEA guarantees special education and related services should be designed to meet the unique learning needs of eligible children with disabilities, preschool through age 21. It also guarantees that all children and youth, regardless of the severity of their disabilities, the right to a free and appropriate public programs for children under five years of age.

### 3. Describe past and current attitudes of serving children with exceptionalities in the public school system.

The attitude in the past was that children with special needs were put in an insulated bubble of a protected (self-contained) classroom. This small group of children stayed together, ate together and moved from grade to grade together. Although this is protective up to a certain point, it is also keeping the children from learning from their normally developing peers. I see and understand the “idea” of inclusion, but it is a really new concept to me that I am just now attempting to understand.

### 4. Describe one point from the text, lecture or class discussion that you found most significant in understanding the inclusive approach.

*“The difference between mainstreaming and inclusion is philosophical.”* Pg. 5. In mainstreaming, the child with disabilities had to be made ready to meet the existing expectations of the mainstream classroom. In inclusive education, children with disabilities are provided the support necessary so that the child can participate in the ongoing classroom activities.

### 5. Chapter one describes benefits and challenges of inclusion. Briefly describe an experience you have had related to inclusive practices and any benefits or challenges that resulted from this experience.

My oldest daughter, now 29 years old, was put in a self-contained classroom after repeating kindergarten. She had speech and hearing loss. At that time, the segregated classroom was the best thing for her. By the time she was in junior high, she was so entrenched in the self-contained classroom aspect that she was scared to go into the mainstream. We agreed that she should stay in the self-contained classroom and go out for as many contacts as possible. Through the remainder of junior high and high school, my daughter was in the self-contained classroom with half of each day spent in the mainstream classrooms for contact core subjects in the general education classes. She herself stated that the time she spent in the self-contained classroom was important and the only way she would have made it to graduation. The self-contained classroom was a safe home base from where she could go out for reading, math and fine arts as contacts in a mainstream class.