

Your Child Belongs

AN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION SERIES FOR FAMILIES

Video 1: Your Child Belongs What Does Inclusive Education Really Mean For My Child?

Hello everyone and welcome to video one in the series. This one is going to be all about answering the question of What Does Inclusive Education Really Mean to My Child? I'm really excited to show you all of this because many of you are coming with questions and wonderings and excitement and somewhere in between and today we want to get really clear about what it looks like for your child.

All right, so video one in the series is going to start off with a story about Mark. Julie will set it up and then you'll be invited to pause this one and watch Mark's story. It'll be a reminder of that you need all the ingredients to make inclusive education work and then we're going to unpack just for a minute what is special education, just again so we have a common understanding.

We'll talk a little bit about why, meaning why would we even be on this journey and then we'll be talking about how do we ensure that supports and services are still provided for your child.

Okay, so we're going to kick it off with a little bit of a story about Mark but before we jump in there we just wanted to remind you that in the welcome video we have shown you your dashboard. Your dashboard has all sorts of incredible resources so if you haven't checked out your dashboard jump up to the welcome video and you can learn all about what is there.

So here's Mark and I first met Mark when he was in preschool and this is a little picture of him in preschool. He's somebody who has Down syndrome as an attribute. He happens to be clever and brilliant and funny and delightful and one of my favorite people in the world and I want you to notice that over here on the right hand side you're going to see some language that doesn't match what I just said about Mark.

Struggles with transition, knocks over large classroom items, regularly crying, refuses to share, needs to be the center of attention, when in a tantrum will kick anyone around him and unable to self-regulate.

When you hear those words I'm quite certain that there's a heaviness to that, a heavy feeling and in fact when we first started working with Mark at his school these words were written in his IEP, in his present level of educational performance and not only did it kind of nearly break that family's hearts.

but it was really important for them to see Mark in a brand new way in a different way and we the family, the family and I worked together with the team to really turn things around for Mark.

We're going to assume that you are on the other side you've seen it and you might have needed some Kleenex you might have had some really lovely realizations about Mark's experience.

I will tell you this Mark was included every minute of every day of his entire school life and unfortunately sometimes his family had to be the that pushed the school system to make it more inclusive

so that was a big part of my involvement with Mark and his family and his family's amazing and they did such a great job and our role, Christy's and my role is to say hey families you don't have to be the ones to push for this so hard we're going to help your school systems become inclusive in all sorts of ways so you don't have to do that work.

We did talk about these nine ingredients in the past and we want you to remember that in order for Mark to be successful we had to help this school system understand these nine components and we had to help make sure everything was in place so that Mark could be included successfully.

So then what does it look like or what does it begin to look like and we talk about what is special education and what it is not. So let's talk about what is what are we moving towards.

So in the United States and we're going to refer to the law several times in this recording and we're referring to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in the United States can vary in other countries of course. And the main premise is this notion that any student who has been identified as a student with a disability they are entitled to access to be able to participate and make progress in the general education content curriculum and peers.

So that basically just means that anything a student without a disability has access to can participate in or make progress towards a student that has an IEP has that same opportunity.

Julie let's skip over to the- what it is not. Because when we say access to the general education content curriculum and peers what does that instantly translate oftentimes for people? Special education it's a room it's a place it's a building it's something

Nope it's not a place it's not a person there are such things as special education teachers but special education teachers and paraprofessionals and related service providers can be providing supports in the general education classroom.

It's not a program, it's not separate from what all students have access to, it's not ability grouping, and it's not cohorting.

Now when Christy explained this she said it might be confusing to you because this is how you envision special education because of how your school system has taught you what it is and what we're helping you all understand is that in the United States most districts are trying to move away from this right hand thinking what it's not, and towards what it is. Using the federal law as a guideline.

So if we conceptualize special education as what's on the left hand side what it is, it's helping kids get access to general ed content curriculum and peers.

And so that's still saying that we're going to provide supplementary aid supports and services, we're still going to provide specially designed instruction, we're still going to have related services, we're still going to make accommodations and modifications we're just not going to do them in a separate place, by a separate person, or in a program that has the same title of the services. And that's a little bit hard to get our heads wrapped around.

We're still going to be responsive we're still going to be individualized we're still going to uphold the rights of students with disabilities we're still going to remove barriers so it's the same spirit the same intention which is helping your student grow and thrive and make progress it's just not going to be in an outdated way of doing business.

A lot of you might be wondering okay well why are we doing this? So I understand that we're getting closer to the alignment of what the federal law recommends but like okay why else and what we want you to know and I think there are just so many incredible important reasons inclusive education leads to improved outcomes and the question is why? The research, access to grade level peers raises expectations, and enriches learning.

We know that peer interaction builds real world communication skills. We know that inclusive settings foster friendships and reduce isolation. We know that feeling seen and supported in general education classrooms improves behavior and attendance.

We know that the best way to practice skills is to do so in real life scenarios. We know that diverse classrooms grow empathy and leadership and we know that inclusive teaching boosts collaboration and support for all. Some of you might go hmm okay where is this research? I want to know more about this research.

Today we're giving you a glimpse or an example to kind of share with you what the findings in general ed are and on your dashboard you're going to have a research summary if you're somebody who wants to really see, well what is this actual research say. The beauty of it is that the research is so clear that inclusive education is better for students with disabilities and students without disabilities that Kristie and I could no longer publish an article about 'Does Inclusion Work' because the question has been answered for a long time, for 20 plus years.

So let's start off with what are supports and services then let's talk about portability and that support is a verb.

So those are our three things friends we're going to do what are supports and services so that we have a common understanding why can they be brought to the student instead of bringing the student to them and then what do we mean support is a verb.

Okay so in IDEA there is something called the least restrictive environment requirement and essentially that is where we see in the law the concept of supplementary aid supports and services. The concept is that kids with disabilities should be educated with kids who don't have disabilities and vice versa, not separate not in separate programs places, spaces etc.

So let's take a look at what are supplementary aid supports and services. You have on your dashboard this really long checklist of sample supplemental aid, supports, and services. When you go take a look at that you're going to see that there are just extensive types of supports available meaning what the law says is you need to try all of these supports and services before even considering a resource room or a special education place or space.

So a great tip, we think of this as a Circle Maker tip if you've watched the Circle Maker video is this checklist could be taken to an IEP team meeting, a parent teacher conference, any conversation the team is having about what supports and services you're child needs and this gives you a set of examples to say have we tried, could we try, when did we try? How did it work, if we tried does it work at home, does it work at you know, your place of worship, does it work at the grocery store? Okay then it might also work in the classroom and like Julie said it can go both ways. If something works at school how can it now work at home and in the community.

So we've already mentioned that many of your school systems are doing this work because they're trying to get in line with the spirit of IDEA. They're trying to follow the law more carefully because it's better for kids academically, behaviorally, and socially.

So the other piece is that there is a specific court case called Ronker versus Walter and what they found is that instead of bringing kids out of the general education classroom and giving them supports and services and then returning them it's a lot better to bring those services and supports to kids right where they are in the general ed setting for many many different reasons.

For one if you think about you're going about your day doing your own thing and someone removes you and works on some other skill and then brings you back. It's very disruptive for the learner.

Instead what we're talking about is anything that your child needs your child might have a plethora of different types of needs all of that is good we're going to support your child right where they are and the experts or the services are going to come to your child in the classroom.

Here is an episode that Julie and I did for the inclusion podcast it's episode 47 and this is the Ronker portability test and it tells you a little bit more about what was it, why it matters, how it looks in action, what does it mean to do it in inclusive education, and so forth.

It goes on and on then it sort of says okay that was a while ago Julie and Kristie is there anything more recent? Yes, in 2017 there was another court case that really upheld this notion of a free appropriate public education in a least restrictive environment.

So we just want to draw your attention to that we might be going through things that you're unaware of, maybe your school district's unaware of them or you've heard about it but you need a little bit more support.

Yeah so a lot of people, a lot of families, parents say this would work really well if my child had a one-to-one support person and what we want to kind of share with you is there's a lot of research that suggests that a one-to-one support person isn't always the best answer.

Instead what is the best answer is focusing highly on what do people do to make your classroom more inclusive for your child. So I'm going to just share my screen. Yeah okay so what you see here is this is the handout that really explains what support is and isn't.

So some of you might say my child does have a one-to-one. Nobody's saying that your one-to-one won't be still in existence and it's really about how do we make sure that we help adult humans know and understand what to do to provide support.

Because unfortunately one-to-one paraprofessional support isn't always the best solution, but they might be arranging things or modifying things or posting things or designing things. They could be extending time for tasks previewing information etc. The thing to note though is that a paraprofessional isn't needed to do these tasks necessarily a general ed teacher can do these tasks a special education teacher can do these tasks related service providers can do these tasks and peers can sometimes do these tasks.

Okay so in this video series, this is video one and we were answering the question about what does it really mean for my child and hopefully your takeaway is that okay, it's their right under federal law in the United States to the least restrictive environment and that special education doesn't need to be a separate place or a person.

Hopefully you're also saying well what it really means is that there are benefits that there are you know there's so many research findings that suggest that everyone benefits when they're fully included. Then lastly hopefully you understand what it really means is that we can offer the supports and services that the IEP team has identified and we can provide those right where and when a student needs them.