



# POSSIBILITIES

## Early Childhood Inclusion

Institute for Disability Studies - Project PREPARE ♦ Issue No. 6 ♦ Spring 2005

Mississippi's University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities

### Save these dates...

Join IDS for the 3rd annual  
**Early Intervention Conference**  
**April 5-6, 2005**  
**Jackson Medical Mall**  
**Jackson, Mississippi**  
 For more information,  
 contact **Sonia Carr** at  
**(601) 266-4204**

### Literacy and Numeracy Workshops:

- ♦ **Hattiesburg**      **April 16**
- ♦ **Greenwood**     **April 23**
- ♦ **Tupelo**           **April 30**
- ♦ **Jackson**         **May 14**
- ♦ **Gulfport**        **May 21**

For more information on  
 these **PREPARE** trainings,  
 contact **Becky McPhail** at  
**(601) 266-4208**

**April 29, 2005**  
 Join **Project PREPARE** for  
**Conversations About Infants**  
**and Toddlers with Special**  
**Needs. For more Information,**  
 contact **Susan Phillips** at  
**(601) 606-9226**



IDS/Project Prepare staff member, Kristie, provides on-site assistance at a local child care center. Madison, a three-year old, enjoys computer time with her peers throughout the day.

### PREPARE Essentials

Project PREPARE staff members have traveled across the state to 11 child care centers and two Head Start centers completing the ECERS-R environmental evaluation, providing on-site technical assistance and literacy and numeracy materials to their respective classrooms. We are pleased to announce PREPARE has received funding for 2005. Funded by the Mississippi Department of Human Services, Project PREPARE provides professional development opportunities, support and resources to enable programs to better serve children with special needs and their families. There will be more opportunities for your center to be involved with training, environmental evaluations, and on-site technical assistance. This year, PREPARE is working to develop a model inclusive center in each of the nine DHS districts. These centers will have resources and provide opportunities for child care providers to observe best practices in operation.

We would like to thank the following centers for their participation in on-site technical assistance during 2004:

- |                                  |                                  |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Christian Learning Center        | Kids Are Kids Learning Center    |
| Families First Children's Center | Kiddieland                       |
| Little Blessings                 | Noah's Ark Day Care Center, Inc. |
| Gordon Head Start Center         | Noah's Ark Christian Center      |
| Grenada Head Start Center        | North Jackson Day Care           |
| Kare It Patch II                 | North Panola Community Day Care  |
|                                  | Ridgecrest Weekday               |



**Project PREPARE is funded by the Mississippi Department of Human Services.**

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## A Therapist's Perspective

T.J. Shappley, a physical therapist, serves children ages birth to three years in South Mississippi through First Steps. In this perspective article, T.J. reflects on her experiences as a team member at child care centers. As a physical therapist, I enjoy the opportunity to work with a variety of child care centers and their staff. There are several things that you can do as a provider to help the child with special needs excel.

First, try to be flexible when scheduling visits from the different therapists. Everyone who works with children knows how valuable nap time is, but some children with special needs require a more flexible nap schedule, possibly due to medications or diagnosis. Keep in mind that meal times can provide therapists, such as occupational therapists, the opportunity to address feeding issues or help children learn to use their spoons and forks.

Second, remember that a child care provider is a valuable member of the team. It makes my day when a child's teacher asks me what can be done to help a child reach his/her therapy goals. The teacher, who spends every day with the child, will often have ideas that help therapy progress.

If the therapist does not provide you with suggestions to help the child reach his or her goals, ask the therapist what adaptations will improve areas that you are having difficulty with. Children progress faster if therapy activities are replicated throughout the week during typical child care routines.

Lastly, child care providers can help therapists by preparing the child for the visit in a positive manner. When a teacher says, "Your friend is here to play with you," it is much more inviting to a child than, "Your therapist is here to work with you." When a therapist provides services in the natural environment of the classroom, you will have

the opportunity to observe interactions that you can replicate throughout the week.

Thanks again for all you do to help all children reach their full potential!



"Child care providers are valuable team members as parents, teachers, and therapists strive to help children excel."

## Resource Room

Project PREPARE will be hosting a variety of workshops across the state over the next year. Each of the workshops provides child care directors and providers the opportunity to earn child care contact hours and learn more about various topics. Trainings include

- ◆ Inclusion Institutes  
Provide information and support for inclusion of children with disabilities in child care centers
- ◆ Literacy and Numeracy Workshops  
Promote best practices and fun activities



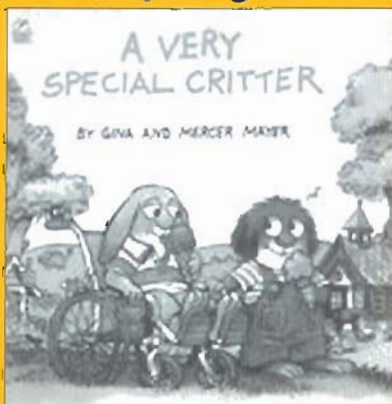
related to pre-reading and math in the early childhood classroom

- ◆ Screening and Resources Workshops  
Highlight tools for indicating possible developmental delays in young children and explore local resources
- ◆ Regional Training Workshop  
Presented by a national speaker to discuss social-emotional development and guidance of young children

- ◆ Early Intervention Conference  
Scholarship opportunities to attend the two-day conference to discuss issues related to inclusion of children with special needs
- ◆ Conversations About Infants and Toddlers with Special Needs  
Interactive video network training featuring families of young children with special needs and their perspective

Contact PREPARE staff with any questions or to register for upcoming trainings at (601) 266-4208 or toll free at 1-888-671-0051. You can also obtain more information on-line at [www.ids.usm.edu/ProjectPrepare.asp](http://www.ids.usm.edu/ProjectPrepare.asp).

## Book Spotlight



*A Very Special Critter*, written by Gina and Mercer Mayer, is a wonderful children's book for you and the children to discover. Mayer has written a series of over 80 books about "Little Critter" including *I Was So Mad* and *Just My Friend and Me*.

This entertaining, colorful book explores the feelings of Little Critter when he learns a critter in a wheelchair would be starting school the next day. At first, Critter was a little scared because he had never known anyone in a wheelchair. Critter and

the other students became very curious about the new special critter and soon realized there are many more likenesses among the critters than differences.

Some children in your class may experience these same emotions when they first meet someone who uses a wheelchair or with a disability. *A Very Special Critter* validates these feelings and allows teachers the opportunity to talk to children about likenesses and differences.

## Getting Started: Curriculum Modification

This edition of *Possibilities* features the fourth type of curriculum modification: **Use Child Preferences**. When a child with a special need enters your center, you may soon realize there are some changes that need to be made for the child to participate as fully as possible. Some modifications discussed in past issues of *Possibilities* included environmental supports, material adaptations, and simplifying the activity. These issues are archived and available for print at [www.ids.usm.edu/ProjectPrepare.asp](http://www.ids.usm.edu/ProjectPrepare.asp). When considering modifications, take into account the interests of each child in your class. Incorporating these interests into the activities and centers in the classrooms ensures the children will participate and enjoy each experience.

A child's preferences should guide your center materials and weekly curriculum topics and activities. For a child with special needs, you may find that he/she is not taking advantage of an available activity or center in your class. By identifying and integrating his/her preferences such as a favorite toy or song, more participation will result. When a child with special needs is able to participate in the classroom activities, play with toys, and interact with peers, he will have better opportunities to develop and learn. The following examples exemplify how you can incorporate child preferences in your class.



If a child typically stays in the same center doing the same activity and you want him/her to experience new things, incorporate that favorite activity with the new. (Left) A child consistently played with cars in the block area so the teacher moved the favored toys to art and let the child roll the car wheels in paint.

If a child has difficulty remaining on his/her mat during nap, sitting in circle time, or transitioning from one activity to a next, allow him/her to hold a favorite toy.

If a child has a difficult time to paying attention when playing with tabletop materials such as puzzles, add the child's favorite things to the activity or center. For example, if the child likes dolls, add puzzles with dolls or a matching game using pictures of dolls from catalogs.

If a child has difficulty returning inside from outside play, ask a favorite friend or teacher in the class to tell him, "Johnny, we're going inside, come walk with me. When we get in we can play in the sand table together (example of a favorite activity)."

If a child refuses to go to the library center, add books that will interest him or pair him up with a good friend. For instance, (right) books are added about dinosaurs, and the young boy and his friend enjoy the library center.



Adapted from *Building Blocks for Teaching Preschoolers with Special Needs* by Susan R. Sandall and Irene S. Schwartz

The next issue of *Possibilities* will feature the fifth curriculum modification: special equipment. If you need assistance with modifying the curriculum for children with special needs, contact Nicole Briceno with the Institute for Disability (IDS) at (601) 408-8919.



Meet the Institute for Disability Studies' Project PREPARE Staff:

- ◆ Jane Siders, Ed.D.  
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- ◆ Shannon Haley-Mize, M.S.  
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- ◆ Susan Phillips, M.Ed.  
Coordinator, Families First Children's Center
- ◆ Kristie Bowlin, M.S.  
Early Childhood Specialist
- ◆ Becky McPhail, A.S.  
Support Staff

To contact members of IDS staff, call 1-888-671-0051.

## Featured Activities

### Theme – "Differences and Similarities"

Collect a variety of pictures of wheeled objects including several kinds of wheelchairs. During circle time have children select the picture they want and go around the circle and have the children describe the objects in the pictures they have selected. Ask "What is it called? What is it used for? What does it carry?" Explain some people use a wheelchair to get from one place to another and ask if they know anyone who uses a wheelchair. To extend this circle time, listed below are a few ideas for activities:

- Have children form groups according to different sets of the wheeled objects (all objects with four wheels, two wheels, objects that carry a lot of people, carry one person, etc.)
- Make a "Things with Wheels" collage by providing magazines and newspapers to locate additional items with wheels.
- Introduce the word "accessible." Explain that a ramp helps make a building accessible to people using wheelchairs. Tell the children you are going on a walk around the building to see if it is accessible. Take along a few wheeled items so children can experience firsthand what it means for a building to be accessible. Use baby carriages, shopping carts and, if at all possible, a wheelchair to see if a person could use the bathroom, drink water, or turn in the hallway.

*Possibilities* is a free newsletter published quarterly by the Institute for Disability Studies at The University of Southern Mississippi.

PREPARE, a project of IDS, is funded by the Mississippi Department of Human Services (Grant # 525Q7452).

To subscribe or to submit materials (pictures, articles, etc.) for consideration, contact Nicole Briceno at (601) 408-8919, 1-888-671-0051, or [Nicole.Briceno@usm.edu](mailto:Nicole.Briceno@usm.edu)

[www.usm.edu/ids/ProjectPrepare.htm](http://www.usm.edu/ids/ProjectPrepare.htm)

Alternate formats available upon request.

AA/EOE/ADA | FCS 52943 5183 3/05



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