



# Possibilities

## Early Childhood Inclusion

Institute for Disability Studies - Project Prepare

Mississippi's University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities

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### Save This Date

#### Enhancing Communication and Interaction

The final of a series of four workshops, this workshop is intended to provide effective skills for increasing language development and quality interactions with all children. A variety of ideas will be presented that encourage language development in children to communicate using language as a tool for developing reasoning skills.

Hattiesburg – Aug. 12, 9 a.m.-12 p.m.

For more information, please contact Becky McPhail at 601.266.5163.



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

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

### PREPARE Essentials

For the recent Fourth Annual Mississippi Early Intervention Conference, the Hattiesburg Lake Terrace Convention Center was transformed from professional gray walls to a colorful array of spring-themed children's artwork throughout. Thanks to the young children in the Hattiesburg area, paintings, collages, and 3-D artwork were used to depict flowers, bugs, suns, butterflies, and much more. The conference was a success thanks in part to the involvement of childcare centers across the state. Several directors attended the two-day conference on April 27 and 28 where national speakers enlightened participants on a variety of topics related to working with children with special needs.

The highlight of the conference for childcare professionals was held Saturday, April 29, with national speaker Mary Rugg presenting on "Rubber Ducks, Hide 'n' Seek and Dirt! What Do They Have in Common? Ways to Help All Young Children Learn Through Everyday Activities!" Ms. Rugg talked with providers about the purpose of early intervention and how therapists can support care providers in developing competence and confidence to help all children learn. She stressed that children learn through everyday activities and it is the role of the childcare professional to identify and expand during play and language to extend development. As the workshop came to an end, Ms. Rugg identified the advantages of using a strength-based child portfolio. Participants left the workshop excited and ready to incorporate portfolios into their childcare centers to highlight the strengths and interests of the children they are serving. For more information about the portfolio and how to order, please visit [www.takealookatmeportfolio.com](http://www.takealookatmeportfolio.com).



#### In this issue:

PREPARE Essentials.....	1
A Teacher's Perspective.....	2
Web site Spotlight: Preschool Inclusion Connection.....	2
Resource Room: Lunch and Learn Trainings.....	3
Getting Started: ABCs and D of Play.....	3
Featured Activity: Summer Fun.....	4

## A Teacher's Perspective

In order to get more information on what it is like to be an early childhood educator, we asked Mr. Michael Dixon of North Panola Day Care in Sardis, Miss., to answer a few questions about his background, his views on working with children with disabilities, and why he thinks professional development is so important in the early childhood field.



**How did you become an early childhood educator?**

I received a degree from Rust College in Holly Springs, Miss., and began working at Greenhill Elementary

School. I had experience with some students not being able to comprehend basic letters and words and became dissatisfied with the quality of education these young children were receiving early on. I knew good learning experiences began with good early childhood education and, therefore, I began working at North Panola Day Care as a teacher.

**What is your greatest joy as an early childhood educator?**

As an educator, my greatest joy is simply working with the children. I love all children and know that they need and deserve more dedicated teachers to help them grow and learn.

**You attend numerous early childhood trainings and workshops. How has attending these trainings prepared you to work with children with disabilities?**

The trainings have taught me to feel comfortable around children with disabilities. I have learned so much, including how to notice the “red flags” of child development to know

when there might be a problem and what to do if a problem is detected. I have also learned how to make simple adaptations in my classroom to adjust for children with disabilities. Basically, the trainings have helped me to be alert and informed of ways to help children with disabilities learn.

**What advice do you have for other early childhood professionals?**

Basically, I would tell them to just attend as many workshops as they can. Because we teach in a field that is always changing, it is important to attend workshops not just for the contact hours, but, more importantly so you can actually learn what is being taught and then take that information back to your classroom. I go to trainings with the intention of benefiting my children first and myself second. Because I also serve as a teacher educator, I make sure to share the information I learn at trainings with teachers that I work with. The more you learn and share, the more the children will benefit from your teaching.

## Web site Spotlight

If you are currently serving or considering providing services to young children with special needs in your childcare center, then the Preschool Inclusion Connection Web site is for you! When you are just starting to practice inclusion, you may be faced with a variety of questions regarding how to set up your room or how you can adapt your classroom activities for children with special needs. This Web site is specifically designed to help early childhood teachers structure their classrooms and learning activities to meet the diverse needs of all the children they teach.

Not only does the Preschool Inclusion Connection site provide a variety of theme ideas for your centers, but it provides ways to adapt the

materials/activities for children with various special needs for each theme. The Web site provides detailed information of best practices and poor practices so early childhood educators can get a picture of how children learn the best and how they, as teachers, can structure their programs to foster early learning.

The site also features a “Parent Page” for each theme that provides you with ideas for ways of communicating your theme with parents to get them more involved.

A great Internet resource for learning more about early childhood inclusion and ways to implement it in your childcare centers is the Preschool Inclusion Connection Web site. To access this great resource, please visit <http://www.truecoaching.com/pic/index.cfm>.



## Resource Room

For the past few months Project PREPARE has conducted Lunch and Learn workshops. These trainings are designed to be practical "how-to" share groups to provide a fun and interactive way of increasing knowledge of early learning opportunities for all children. Training topics include "Learning in Centers," "Discipline and Guidance," "Musical Activities: The Foundation of Literacy," and "Interactive Reading." The Lunch and Learn trainings are held, upon request, at community sites across the state of Mississippi and consist of a one-hour meeting during lunch. There is no fee to attend or host a Lunch and Learn training. Each participant will receive one childcare contact hour for attending.

According to Lunch and Learn trainer and PREPARE staff member Sallie Minor, the trainings that have taken place so far have been excellent. Participants are eager for knowledge in early childhood education and these short lunch trainings are a great way to provide useful and practical information. According to Sallie, "early childhood education has been my passion for 33 years, and every day when I start my journey, whether it's visiting a childcare center or facilitating a training, I still get motivated just as I did in 1973 when I realized my passion. As a trainer I get a sense of satisfaction in my soul to be able to do what I love." Some of the comments the trainings have received so far indicate that participants are grateful to be able to learn what is appropriate for each age group and they like the everyday examples provided in the training. Participants have also indicated that they were glad to get some simple solutions for better enhancing teacher-child relationships.

If you would like to schedule a Lunch and Learn training in your community, please contact Sallie Minor at [sallie.minor@usm.edu](mailto:sallie.minor@usm.edu) or 601.329.1173.

## Getting Started: ABCs and D of Play

"There are few places outside his own play where a child can contribute to the world in which he finds himself." (author unknown)

As a childcare provider, you have a huge responsibility for providing stimulating and engaging activities for the children with whom you work. The engaging activities you plan and do are so beneficial for teaching children about the world. Therefore, how you interact with children is a critical aspect of the foundation for their development, play skills, social development, and, yes, even literacy development.

Quality interactions are a key component of fostering development and learning in young children. The following ABCs and D of play describe suggestions for enhancing interactions through play.

**A**llow the child to lead.

- Notice what the child is looking at or interested in.

- Watch the child's expressions and exaggerate your own when interacting.

- Look to the child's body language as cues for continuing play.

**B**e sure to talk WITH the child.

- Repeat sounds.

- Make associations.

- Sing and play with words.

- Play word games.

- Talk with the child about everything.

- Name what you see.

- Describe what you are doing.

- Ask questions.

**C**reate new experiences for the child.

- Encourage curiosity.

- Create adventures.

- Rehearse and extend new skills.

- Take trips.

**D**iscover the fun of books with the child.

- Read aloud.

- Use different voice tones and inflections.

- Make reading a part of your daily routine.

- Encourage the child to talk about books.

- Model listening for the child.

- What he or she has to say is critically important no matter how trivial it may seem to you.

- Ask questions.

- Expand on story experiences through play.

Making the most of shared playful moments with children involves getting on the child's level, imitating the child, interpreting what is happening, taking turns, commenting on things you observe, and asking the child questions then waiting for responses (whether a babble or words). Remember, the way you play and interact with the children you teach is what makes a difference in their world!



## Featured Activity: Summer Fun

Summer is a great time to teach children about fun things such as flowers, bugs, camping, vacations, and ocean animals. Each of these themes allows teachers and children to be creative when coming up with fun activities children will enjoy. The following are a few simple but creative ideas for teaching children about summer.

### Circle Time: "What I Like About Summer"

During circle time, encourage your children to go around the circle and tell their friends about their favorite parts of summer. Make sure to write these on a flip chart or poster board and read them aloud to the children to enhance the literacy experience. To extend this activity, have the children draw a picture of their favorite parts of summer and make sure to label what they have drawn.

### Literacy/Art: "Summertime Scrapbook"

An art project that also enhances literacy development is to make a fun and simple scrapbook about summer. As you talk to the children about flowers, encourage them to bring in a flower and help them press the flowers and attach them to their scrapbooks. They can also draw pictures of their favorite flowers, bugs, etc., to add to their books. When children go on vacations, ask them to bring in pictures from their vacations to put in their scrap-

books as well. By the end of the summer, each child will have a fun and full scrapbook of what they learned and experienced all summer long. The children will have a wonderful time reading their books to their friends!

### Art/Sensory: "Sunshine Painting"

Give the children their own pieces of construction paper and let them choose paint colors to represent their suns. Allow them to use a variety of mediums (paint brushes, cotton balls, feathers, flowers, their fingers) to mix the colors together to make their own version of the sun. Cut these out and attach them to the ceiling with yarn to provide a fun and colorful look to your classroom!

Suggested Books Related to Summer:

*Caterpillar Spring, Butterfly Summer* by Susan Hood

*Mouse's First Summer* by Lauren Thompson

*Summer's Vacation* by Lynn Plourde

*Clifford Keeps Cool* by Norman Bridwell

*Sun Dance, Water Dance* by Jonathan London

*Marshmallow Kisses* by Mari Takabayashi

There are plenty of other books related to summer, so have fun reading with the children. Remember to extend your literacy activities with a felt board, puppets, art projects or any other teaching tool you may have to involve the children in the experience. Have a wonderful summer!

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The University of Southern Mississippi  
Institute for Disability Studies  
118 College Drive #5163  
Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001

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US Postage Paid  
Hattiesburg, MS 39402  
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