

## 2007 Project PREPARE Workshops Registration Form

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Childcare Facility \_\_\_\_\_  
 Director's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Street/PO Box \_\_\_\_\_  
 City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Please check which workshops you would like to attend.

### Informal Ongoing Child Assessments

- June 28 5 p.m. - 8 p.m. Cleveland
- June 29 Noon - 2 p.m. Pearl
- June 30 9 a.m. - Noon Tupelo
- July 21 9 a.m. - Noon Hattiesburg
- July 28 9 a.m. - Noon McComb
- Aug. 4 9 a.m. - Noon Meridian
- Aug. 11 9 a.m. - Noon Jackson

### Individualizing Learning Centers

- July 21 9 a.m. - Noon Cleveland
- July 24 5 p.m. - 8 p.m. Tupelo
- July 21 1 p.m. - 4 p.m. Hattiesburg
- July 28 1 p.m. - 4 p.m. McComb
- Aug. 3 Noon - 2 p.m. Pearl
- Aug. 4 1 p.m. - 4 p.m. Meridian
- Aug. 11 1 p.m. - 4 p.m. Jackson

### Interactive Reading

- July 17 Noon - 1:30 p.m. Meridian
- Aug. 30 Noon - 1:30 p.m. Meridian

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

**Or fax to**  
 601.266.5114  
 Attn.: PREPARE

If you are interested in hosting a staff development or workshop in your region and would like the staff of Project PREPARE to guest present, please contact Elizabeth Beavers, 601.266.6790.

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

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To subscribe or to submit materials (pictures, articles, etc.) for consideration, contact Susan Phillips at 601.266.5163, 1.888.671.0051 or [Susan.Phillips@usm.edu](mailto:Susan.Phillips@usm.edu).

Alternate formats available upon request.



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THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI  
 INSTITUTE FOR  
**DISABILITY STUDIES**

## Save these dates

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



Project PREPARE is funded by the Mississippi Department of Human Services, Office for Children and Youth (GR# 525Q7472).

*The child care workers's orientation towards change, for the children and youth whom they serve, is also part of what makes child care a special profession." Thom Garfat (1988)*

# Possibilities

## Early Childhood Inclusion

Institute for Disability Studies - Project Prepare  
 Mississippi's University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities  
 Issue No. 12 • Summer 2007

## PREPARE Essentials

The concept of inclusion may seem straightforward; however, the commitment and willingness involved with truly offering an inclusive environment can often be challenging. When challenging experiences arise, child care providers can and should rely on community and state resources. The PREPARE Web site provides a detailed description of resources available in our state. For more information or support in successfully creating an inclusive environment, please visit [www.usm.edu/ids/prepare](http://www.usm.edu/ids/prepare) or call 1.888.671.0051.

We have all heard the term "inclusion" many times, but what does it really mean? Inclusion is based on the philosophy that all children have the right to be included with their peers in age-appropriate activities throughout life. An inclusive child care setting is one in which all children, both those with and those without special needs, have an opportunity to play and learn together. In this setting, the special needs and interests of every child at the center are addressed.



When practicing inclusion, a good point to keep in mind is that all children can learn as long as the information is presented on their level. This means that simple adaptations to the way you present ideas, conduct activities, and use the equipment you have are all you need to do to be able to work with a child with special needs. Although practicing inclusion does take commitment, it is a valuable practice and there are many benefits to all involved. Children with special needs are able to learn from their peers who are typically developing and the children who are typically developing are able to learn from their peers with special needs. Not only do the children benefit but so do the parents, teachers, and the community at large. The next time you have a parent of a child with special needs ask to enroll his or her child in your program, try not to focus on the changes you will have to make to include this child and instead think about how enrolling this child will change your program for the better!

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## Perspectives of Inclusion

The following are excerpts from parents and children involved in Families First Children's Center, an inclusive child development center operated by the Institute for Disability Studies at The University of Southern Mississippi in Hattiesburg.

### From the parents of a child with special needs:

Three years ago my husband and I came to a crossroads in our lives when we had to make a decision involving our son, Channing, and his child care situation. Channing was born with Fragile X Syndrome and we had a tough time with child care placements. We had been asked to withdraw Channing out of two private child care institutions. Of course, we didn't know what to do and since he was enrolled with the Institute for Disability Studies, we were referred to Families First Children's Center.



I spoke with the director of FFCC and the entire staff welcomed Channing with open arms. Like most parents we had to work and it was exceptionally hard for us to find somewhere we could leave our son. It is beyond measure what this center did for our family. Not only was it important to find a place we could trust but Channing has drastically excelled in so

many areas. The staff members of FFCC are loved more than they will ever know and words cannot describe how much they mean to our family. The word SPECIAL in special needs certainly has more than one meaning!

Shandra and Stephan Hust, Channing's parents

### From children enrolled at FFCC:

"Channing doesn't use words to talk but he talks in other ways." Andrew, Age 4

"I want a turn to help Anna in her chair." Zander, Age 3

"He isn't always nice but he is learning. One day he will be because we keep showing him how to take turns." Zack, Age 4

"Mattie has special legs that don't work like mine, but she gets around just fine. She has this cool walker." Shelby, Age 4

"I have all kinds of friends and they have me." Ramey, Age 5

### From a parent of child who is typically developing:

As a parent of a toddler, I could not ask for a better school for my child. I feel that the level of education and early childhood experiences that are being provided to my child are above and beyond that of any other place in this city. This program provides access to so many different areas of learning; for example, music, art, sign-language, and most of all learning to play and respect other children with special needs. This is one of the most important things that my child has learned from being a part of this inclusive program. The faculty and staff are dedicated to making sure every child feels equally loved and is treated the same. You can really tell that they love their job! I knew when Ella came home at 16 months and said "Bless you Mommy" after I sneezed that we were in a great a great program.



There are many reasons why I wanted my child to be at FFCC. The one that is most important to us is the value that everyone is loved and respected no matter their needs and I feel strongly that this program has really taught her that compassion.

Mindy Fitzgerald, Ella's Mom



"Young children can only be truly included if their educators understand their needs, and how to meet such needs through practices which aspire to excellence. For inclusion is about much more than location — it is more than simply "being" in a setting — it is about making sure that young children and their families are offered opportunity fully to participate in events and developments." Peter Clough & Cathy Nutbrown (2005)



## Resource Room: Communication with Parents

When working with children who have special needs, daily parent-teacher communication is essential. A section of the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale – Revised (ECERS-R) is devoted to interactions between parents and staff. The book explains the importance of sharing your philosophy and policies with parents through a written parent handbook. Your center's handbook should include your philosophy on including children with special needs in the typically-developing classroom and should clearly state your goals for the education of all children. Because parents are not always aware of events planned at your center, make sure to have some form of daily communication whether it is through written notes to parents or a short exchange when parents pick up their children. Regular parent-teacher conferences are helpful, especially when a developmental delay is suspected or diagnosed. These brief conferences allow parents to be more involved in planning goals and educational experiences for their children and serve to keep the communication lines open. Be open about questions and concerns you have and provide referral information to parents as needed. By working together with the parents at your center, you can ensure that your program is providing the best possible services to all the children you serve!

## Survey Time !!!

*Project PREPARE needs your opinion.*

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

## Getting Started: Inclusion

Many times child care centers claim they do not serve children with special needs in their programs because they do not know how to care for them. The truth is, however, practicing inclusion is really as simple as 1, 2, and 3. First of all, you must find out what inclusion really is. Second, you must make a commitment to provide the best care possible for all children, including those with special needs. Finally, you must learn where to find the resources that can help you practice inclusion.

There are several useful resources that may be helpful as you begin to include children with special needs in your child care centers. A great Web site that provides basic information about inclusion is [www.circleofinclusion.org](http://www.circleofinclusion.org). The site contains an informative Preschool Inclusion Manual that is useful for learning how to serve children with special needs. The Institute for Disability Studies (IDS) operates the Technology Learning Center (TLC). TLC loans specialized equipment and provides training and other services to professionals working with individuals with disabilities. Another great place to check out adaptive toys, books, and equipment is the First Steps Early Intervention Library in Jackson.

For more information on inclusion or how to get started, please visit the Project PREPARE Web site at [www.usm.edu/ids/prepare/index.html](http://www.usm.edu/ids/prepare/index.html).



"Inclusion is about acknowledging that we all have potential, but that it is sometimes locked away. Time and patience and the trying of many keys may be necessary to open the door." Joyce Moore (2003)