



THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI  
 INSTITUTE FOR  
 DISABILITY STUDIES

# Possibilities

## Early Childhood Inclusion

Institute for Disability Studies - Project PREPARE  
 Mississippi's University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities  
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### PREPARE Essentials

Project PREPARE staff promotes inclusion of children with disabilities in child care centers in Mississippi's cities and communities. Trained early childhood specialists promote the importance of including at-risk children and children with disabilities in programs with their typical peers. Staff members also provide education and assistance to child care center directors and staff so that they can effectively teach children in an inclusive environment.



Project PREPARE staff members truly enjoy conducting workshops that address various topics such as "Designing Inclusive Environments," "Enhancing Communications and Interactions for Children at Risk" and "Including Families in the Early Childhood Inclusive Environment." We thank all of those who have attended our workshops and those who plan to attend in the future. Even though our workshops stress inclusion of children with disabilities, we also strive to address developmental topics that relate to ALL children.

At the end of each Project PREPARE workshop, we ask participants to complete an evaluation form to determine if the training met their needs. We are always seeking ways that we can improve and better serve those of you that are working with young children. Our hope is that the information we provide will assist providers as they strive to enhance the lives of children and their families.

We are currently seeking input from child care center directors and staff about training needs. We hope that you will take the time to fill out the survey included on page 4 so that we can provide training and services that are relevant and meaningful. We are interested in your input.

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"Children are great imitators. So give them something great to imitate." - Anonymous



## A Director's Perspective of Inclusion

by Phyllis Kitchens, Director of Mantachie Head Start

### Why do you feel it is important to include children with special needs in early childhood programs?

We feel that all children should have equal access and opportunities regardless of whether or not they have a disability. We try to focus on the similarities among children. We believe that all children should be treated with respect. We include children so that they all have the same opportunities to play and learn.

### What are some ways that you involve parents, including those who have children with special needs in your program?

I always try to meet and greet each parent personally when a child enrolls in our program. I talk to them about our program and the different options they have to choose from. I also ask them to tell me about their child. Throughout the year, we continuously communicate. I always try to communicate directly with parents as often as possible. I believe information gets to parents more effectively and efficiently this way. Twice a year, we have parent-teacher conferences. We also send notes to parents, make frequent phone calls, go on home visits, and have monthly parent meetings. We have found that our attendance at parent meetings has increased since we have included a short program by the children. They may sing or recite nursery rhymes. We always look for creative ways to involve parents.

### How do you create an environment in which all children are valued?

At Mantachie Head Start, we see all children as unique individuals. All children are special and add so much to the classrooms they are in. We try to provide a happy learning environment where all children can learn and feel good about themselves.

## Getting Started: Homemade Books

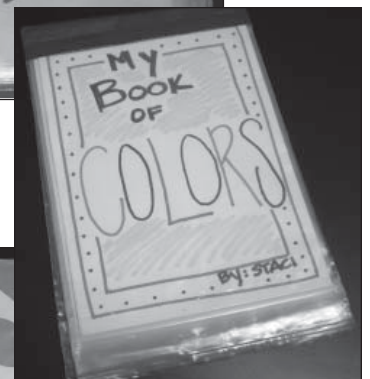
In this section, you will find a useful and inexpensive method to make a variety of books to place in your reading or interest areas.

### Materials Needed:

- Plastic zipper bags
- Construction paper
- Markers
- Magazines and/or pictures
- Scissors
- Glue
- Stapler
- Vinyl tape

### Instructions:

- Cut construction paper to fit inside bags to serve as pages.
- Decide on a topic for your book (examples: animals, counting, healthy eating, colors, etc.).
- Choose pictures that relate to your topic.
- Glue pictures and label them on each page.
- Create a title page and include your name as author.
- Place construction paper pages inside bags. Make sure pages are put in correctly, leaving room to staple along the left hand side so pages can be taken in and out of the bag.
- Staple bags together on left-hand side.
- Cut vinyl tape to fit like binding a book. Place over staples to reinforce holding pages together.
- Share your book with a child!



## Resource Room

In a high quality early childhood classroom, there should be a variety of books for children's selection. Typically books are organized into a reading center. Books, however, should not be limited to a reading center; they should be included in other learning centers as well.

Here are just a few things to remember when selecting books for your classroom:

**Age appropriateness:** Books should be an appropriate length for the age of the children in the room and the content should be appropriate. For young children, books should contain few words and the pictures should capture the children's attention. Young children enjoy books that are interactive and provide different textures to touch. If a teacher's goal is help a child associate a written word with a picture, then books with a single picture and word printed underneath are the most appropriate. Do not to judge a book by its cover. Read books before they are displayed to ensure they are appropriate.

**Math and Science:** Book collections should include a variety of math, science and nature books. It is important to include books that have pictures of real situations and objects.

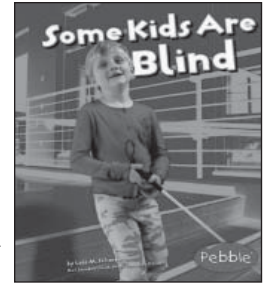
**Diversity:** A selection of books should include those that depict different races, genders, cultures, ages and unique abilities in a positive way.



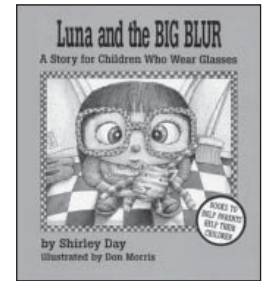
**Theme-related:** Books that relate to the classroom's current theme should be available to supplement theme-related activities and should be placed in various learning centers in the classroom.

Examples of books that promote acceptance of children with disabilities:

*Some Kids Are Blind* by Lola Schaefer - This book is an example of a disability-specific book that was written to promote acceptance of children who are blind. This author also has written *Some Kids Use Wheelchairs*, *Some Kids Wear Leg Braces* and *Some Kids are Deaf*.



*Luna and the BIG BLUR* by Shirley Day - This is a book about a young girl who wears glasses, but she does not like wearing them. This book encourages children to wear their glasses. It also encourages children who do not wear glasses to accept those that do.



## Web Site Spotlight

Project PREPARE's Web site is located online at [www.usm.edu/ids/prepare](http://www.usm.edu/ids/prepare). We encourage everyone to visit our Web site for information on inclusion. The Web site provides a wealth of information to help prepare providers for working with children with special needs in their classrooms. Archived copies of Possibilities newsletters are also available. Click on the "Inclusion Resources" link to find additional Web sites that offer disability-specific information.

We encourage all staff working at child care centers to sign-up for PREPARE's weekly listserv. There is a registration link available on the Web site. Listserv announcements are sent weekly by e-mail and contain the latest news and resources on inclusion and teaching tips for child care staff.

## Read, Question, Summarize, and Follow Up

Be sure to read books with the children everyday. Read to children in large groups, small groups and one-on-one. Read with varying facial and voice expression. For toddlers and preschoolers, make sure to relate the topic of the book to each child's background experience before beginning to read. Give children a specific reason to "listen" before beginning to read. Stop and ask questions along the way. Summarize with children immediately after the book has been read. Finally, follow up with activities that relate to the book's topic or theme.

# PREPARE Needs Survey

Please take a minute to answer the following questions. Your input will be very helpful in planning activities for the 2008-09 year. Your responses will be confidential. We thank you in advance for completing this short survey.

Complete the survey on the Web at [www.usm.edu/ids/prepare](http://www.usm.edu/ids/prepare)

Or complete on this page and mail to

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

Or fax to 601.266.5114 Attn: Becky

1. Have you or your staff participated in training activities sponsored by Project PREPARE? (Check all that apply).

- Workshops       Listserv  
 On-site technical assistance  
 Other, specify: \_\_\_\_\_

2. I would like training on the following topics: \_\_\_\_\_

3a. I would like to have workshops offered in my community or city:  Yes  No

3b. If yes, please indicate what city: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Do you find the information in *Possibilities* newsletters useful?  Yes  No

5. I would like to have the following information or topics included in future *Possibilities* newsletters: \_\_\_\_\_

6. What services would you like to see Project PREPARE provide? \_\_\_\_\_

7. My center has one or more children enrolled that have been diagnosed with a disability.  Yes  No

### Optional contact information (not required)

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Center Name: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: (     ) \_\_\_\_\_

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To subscribe or to submit materials (pictures, articles, etc.) for consideration, contact Kristie Bowlin at 662.397.1902 or [kristie.bowlin@usm.edu](mailto:kristie.bowlin@usm.edu).

Alternate formats available upon request.



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