



Special Education in Action

Engaging Stakeholders through Promising Practices and Program Development



Inclusive Preschools Start with Changing Mindset and Processes

At Mary Kay McMillin Early Childhood Center (MKM ECC) in Berkeley Heights, NJ, administration and staff focus on system change and processes for their youngest learners to bring into daily practice the saying, **"special education is a service, not a place."** All preschool classes are inclusive and integrated. Students with more complex needs have the opportunity to receive more intensive intervention (i.e. ABA) and services as more of a supplementary or ancillary support accessed outside of the preschool day.

Efforts are focused predominantly on routines, with educators making learning more personal by rethinking what teaching the whole child really means, shifting their own practice, and leveraging what they already know about how young children learn, rather than trying to make students fit into what has historically been. Students are provided real life experiences within the community to incorporate a variety of hands-on learning opportunities, practicing essential concepts and skills in the natural environment, preparing them for family outings and activities with peers such as birthday parties.

Monthly multi-disciplinary meetings are conducted for preschoolers with disabilities where administrators, case managers, teachers and related services providers gather to discuss, brainstorm and develop supports for targeted areas of development. The staff are also engaged in the NJIETA Systemic Change project where a preschool school-based leadership team meets monthly and participates in training together with an inclusion facilitator. This collaborative time is used to engage in a multi-tiered system of support to identify, plan and discuss students' academic, behavioral, and social-emotional strengths and challenges to make meaningful instructional changes for at-risk students.

The preschool programming at MKM ECC has become one of inclusivity, collaboration and accessibility on behalf of all children. The mindset and expectation is that all children belong and that it is the responsibility of the adults who are charged with their preschool education to meet them where they are and design, and redesign, classroom routines and practices that embrace all learners in developmentally appropriate ways.



Connect
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MKM ECC



Partnering with
NJIETA



Program Quality
Indicators (ECTA)



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New Jersey Partnership for Student Success (NJPSS)

Learning Opportunities: Summer Inclusion Leadership Conference, June 2, 2023 (Save the Date)



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Engagement Highlights: Community of Practice for Teachers and Professionals of Students with Autism (CoPA), October 2022



The Parent Corner

Special Education Parent Advisory Group (SEPA): A Guide for Best Practices in Developing and Implementing an Effective SEPA (English) (Spanish)

