An Inclusive Before and After School Child Care Program

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Abstract

The purpose of the project was to create an inclusive before and after school childcare program in Clarksville, Tennessee. The purpose of inclusive before and after school program is to provide high quality inclusive before and after school care for school age children in grades K-8, and meet a need for the population of children with special needs as well as the population of typically developing children in Clarksville, Tennessee. A review of the literature, focus groups, observations of inclusive childcare settings, and thorough examination of state standards for childcare centers and programs led to creation of a Program Manual incorporating these standards as well as a Parent Handbook and Staff Handbook. Upon discussion from the focus groups, parents of children with special needs noted interest in a Parents’ Night Out Program, and a manual was created for that program. While the programs have not begun operating, all the groundwork was completed through the residency process. The materials created and ready to use were presented to Lana Broome, owner of Full Spectrum Pediatric Therapy, in order to open and operate an inclusive childcare center and pre-school in the future in Clarksville, Tennessee.
Mulvihill, Shearer, and Van Horn (2002) define inclusion as “full participation by children with disabilities in programs and activities for typically developing children.” Federal legislation affirms inclusion of children with and without special needs, specifically the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (IDEA), yet parents still experience challenges in finding childcare for their child with special needs (DeVore & Bowers, 2006; DeVore & Hanley-Maxwell, 2000). Essa, Benet, Burnham, Martin, Bingham, & Allred, (2008). Parents of children with special needs and entering the workforce is increasing, but high quality childcare is difficult to find (Essa et al., 2008 and Ceglowski, Logue, Ullrich, & Gilbert, 2009; Jinnah & Stoneman, 2009). When any parent is seeking out childcare for their child, they look for center-based vs. family-based care, safety, cleanliness, compassion of the provider, child-to-adult ratios, providers’ education and training, affordability, location, hours of care, availability, and individualized care (DeVore & Bowers, 2006). Despite federal mandates and an increasing presence of inclusive settings, barriers toward inclusive practices still exist for parents seeking childcare for their children with special needs including lack of disability-specific training for childcare workers, lack of knowledge, concern for safety of the child, fear of needing or using special equipment when caring for a child, high child-teacher ratios, higher tuition rates, and negative attitudes and perceptions of childcare providers toward inclusive practices (Baker-Ericzen, Garnand Mueggenborg, & Shea, 2009; Ceglowski et al., 2009; Essa et al., 2008; Glenn-Applegate, Pentimonti, & Justice, 2010; Grisham-Brown, Cox, Gravil, & Missall, 2010, 2010; Mulvihill et al., 2002). A further barrier is rejection of care due to behavior problems, significant health problems, and low functioning developmentally (DeVore and Russell, 2007). Inclusion is only possible when the provider is willing to accept and implement it in their facility linking providers’ attitudes to accepting or rejecting inclusive practices (Baker-Ericzen et al., 2009). Inclusion in the physical setting is not enough, it must be followed by participation and engagement in interactions between children who have special needs and children who are typically developing. When that occurs, there is pure inclusion. Evidence supports inclusion of children with and without special needs should occur at an early age, as it is beneficial to children who are typically developing as they begin to learn, understand, and exhibit altruism, acceptance, and diversity (Crawford, Stafford, Phillips, Scott, & Tucker, 2014; Jinnah & Stoneman, 2008; Jinnah-Ghelani & Stoneman, 2009). Inclusion encourages development of language, cognition, social skills, fine motor skills, and gross motor skills (Baker-Ericzen et al., 2009; Crawford, et al., 2014).

I spent time indentifying and exploring emerging pediatric occupational therapy practice areas and community settings in middle Tennessee counties to include Montgomery, Stewart, Houston, Dickson, Cheatham, Robertson, Davidson, and Williamson. During my observations in the field, I saw inclusive practices in two inclusive preschool programs, one inclusive before and after school care program at a
church, and two after school programs in the community. Overall, from my observation experiences I have learned what true inclusion is and is not. I have seen how an after school program functions and operates. I have learned how to implement and facilitate inclusion among all children. I have learned the importance of engaging all children in activities and playing together, rather than just promoting inclusion through the physical presence of children with special needs.
What is Inclusion?

inclusion  diversity
friendship  involvement
acceptance
Aspects of Inclusive Before and After School Program

lifeapplication
safe safety
affordable
socialskills
socialinteraction
clean
physicalactivity
Childcare Providers’ Perspectives on Inclusion

passion

inclusion  formal training

involvement
disability specifics
Inclusive Before and After School Program

**Program Description**
The inclusive before and after school program will be located in a childcare center in Clarksville, Tennessee. This program serves families of children with special needs and families of children who are typically developing. Developed by an occupational therapy student who attends Belmont University in conjunction with Full Spectrum Pediatric Occupational Therapy, this program will provide high quality inclusive before and after school care for school age children in grades K-8. By providing this program, families and children in Clarksville will have a choice of enrolling their child or children in a high quality inclusive setting. This program will meet a need for the population of children with special needs as well as the population of typically developing children in the Clarksville area.

**Before School AM Schedule**
- 6:00-6:40 Arrival/Free play in centers
- 6:40-6:45 Clean-up/Hand washing
- 6:45-7:00 Breakfast/reading time
- 7:00-7:30 Free play in centers/Middle school students prepare for departure/Departure for middle school students
- 7:30-8:30 Clean-up/Elementary school students prepare for departure/Read/Departure for elementary school students

**After School PM Schedule**
- 2:30-3:00 Arrival for middle school students/Hand washing/Homework or reading time/Free play in centers
- 3:00-4:00 Arrival of elementary school students/Hand washing/Homework or reading time/Free play in centers
- 4:00-4:15 Clean-up/Hand washing/Snack time
- 4:15-4:30 Group meeting/enrichment activity
- 4:30-5:00 Outside play
- 5:00-5:45 Free play in centers
- 5:45-6:00 Clean-up/Prepare for departure

**Schedule for Non-School Days**
- 6:00-6:40 Arrival/Free play in centers
- 6:40-6:45 Clean-up/Hand washing
- 6:45-7:00 Breakfast/reading time
- 7:00-9:00 Free play in centers
- 9:00-9:15 Clean-up/Hand washing
- 9:15-9:30 Morning snack
- 9:30-10:30 Group meeting/Enrichment activity
- 10:30-11:30 Outdoor play
- 11:30-12:00 Hand washing/Reading/Prepare for lunch/Hand washing
- 12:00-12:30 Lunch
- 12:30-1:00 Clean-up/Hand washing
- 1:00-3:00 Quiet time (movie, computer, electronics, reading, etc.)
- 3:00-3:15 Hand washing
- 3:15-3:30 Snack
- 3:30-4:00 Group meeting/enrichment activity
- 4:00-5:00 Outside play
- 5:00-5:45 Free play in centers
- 5:45-6:00 Clean-up/Prepare for departure

**Program Mission**
The inclusive before and after school care program provides high quality childcare catered to each child’s specific needs. The inclusive before and after school program provides all children with opportunities to engage in play and enrichment activities to promote physical, cognitive, social, and emotional development.
## Curriculum

The curriculum is designed to teach social skills and promote inclusive practices among children with special needs and children who are typically developing. A social skill will be explained and discussed with the children during group meetings each week. Children will also complete an accompanying activity. Each week, children will participate in enrichment activities.

## Enrichment Activity Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Skill and Activity</td>
<td>Art</td>
<td>Teambuilding</td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>Games and Recreation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Tennessee State Standards

- Tennessee Department of Human Services Licensure Rules for Child Care Centers
- Tennessee Department of Human Services Report Cards and Rated Licensing for Child Care Agencies
- Tennessee School-Age Developmental Standards
- School-Age Care Environment Rating Scale

## Play Centers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sensory Center</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Table Top Toys Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cars and Blocks Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>Game Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>Math and Science Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>Art Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>Library Center/Writing Center/Homework Center/Cozy Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playground/Gross Motor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Technology Center</td>
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On Wednesday, March 18, 2015 at 6pm, I lead an in-service training for childcare providers entitled “What Is Inclusion?” At the end of the presentation, participants applied the information by doing a case study in groups of four to six. Each group had a different question to answer related to the case study. After collaboration, the participants shared their answers with the group. Many participants asked questions regarding ways to help children improve their fine motor skills and social skills.
References


