

Christine's Chronicles: A chance to hear both sides

Follow along with one parent on her journey to make inclusion a reality for her son.



by Christine Lindauer

The National Early Childhood Inclusion Institute is just a week away and I'm looking forward to attending. I'll be presenting Luke's story along with the CONNECT team in a session called "Embedded Learning Opportunities to Support Inclusion". I'll also have the chance to attend some of the other sessions. One I'm particularly excited to hear is "Inclusion: Illusive or Conclusive – Three Moms' Perspectives". Three moms will discuss their experiences with both inclusive and self-contained settings. Ever since I've jumped on the inclusion band wagon, all the information I've been presented with and people I have spoken to have continually praised the benefits of inclusion. But I do realize that it is not the only way.

I have an older sister with special needs, Stacy. She attended the same public schools that I did, but was always in the special education classroom with the other special needs kids. And though she was technically not in an inclusive setting in school, Stacy has always and will continue to be included in her community. My family has never made exceptions for her, and she participates right along with everyone else. When I was just ten and told that it was time for me to start helping out at the family restaurant, my sister was right there beside me, doing dishes in the back.

We want our children to grow up tolerant of people's differences and inclusion is the place to start. But kids always find someone or something to pick on. My sister was one of the lucky ones in her class that generally didn't get much of that. Or maybe they just knew better than to say anything in front of me. But either way, I know her personality got her far. She has a bubbly loving energy about her that can't help but to make you smile. Upon learning of my own son's disability, I was disappointed, and it was my younger sister, Leigh who reminded me "But look at all the joy that Stacy has brought to everyone around her." And isn't that what life is all about. Whether it's full

inclusion, self-contained, or somewhere in between, we all need to remember what the point of it all is – happiness.

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Inclusion

Yeah! I love this story and the message it sends. I am an early childhood consultant who works with preschool teachers to help them include EVERY child at their setting. All children can benefit from inclusion. The earlier children are introduced to individual differences in all people, the more tolerant they will be as they grow.

Reply

Inclusion

And it's people like you who are making inclusion a possibility! Thank you Karen. Working with young children, you realize that intolerance is actually a learned behavior. It is usually the adults who struggle to include others, not the children.

Reply

inclusion

Chrissy, your comments were lovely, brought tears to my eyes. You've always been such a good, kind and helpful sister to Stacy. mom

Reply

Christine's Chronicles

As a "determined parent", I pushed for my Deaf son to be included into all aspects of our community almost 40 years ago, educating folks and myself on disabilities along the way. During one period of time, my son felt the MOST restrictive environment was the regular classroom, as he wanted to be around others using ASL. I learned a great lesson, that the continuum of services must remain fluid to change as the child's needs change. He went to the State School for Deaf a while, then returned to High School with an interpreter, and then was "dually" enrolled between regular HS and the deaf school. We continue to learn from parents, professionals, and children themselves.

Reply