

Christine's Chronicles: Inclusion Starts at Home

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



by Christine Lindauer

My son has been enrolled in an inclusive child care setting for almost a year now. He is 3 years old and has a rare chromosomal abnormality. To be honest, I hadn't even heard of inclusion before I found out about this school. I figured he would attend some sort of a special school. And that's what I thought would be best for him. Surrounded by well trained staff who would work one on one with him, I couldn't think of a better way for my son to be educated. But then I learned about inclusion, and well, it just clicked. Of course that would be better for my son, better for everyone in fact. Ok, I'm sold.

So here I am a year later, reflecting. Access, Participation, and Support – My son was lucky that we walked right in to an inclusive setting on day one. The access and supports were there waiting for us. But guess what, it's not working. The participation isn't there. My son plays in a corner by himself; he stares off during circle time; the staff ignores his attempts to sign to them. Why? This is a NAEYC accredited facility that has been practicing inclusion for years. What is going on here? Then there is the ah ha moment. Inclusion doesn't start at school, it doesn't start in the halls of congress, and it doesn't start in some researcher's office. The very first moment a child is included is at home. It's at home. I need to show others how to include my son. I can't expect it to just happen. Sure there are laws in place, knowledgeable staff, specialist at my son's school, but it's his family, we are the only ones who really know how to make it work. We've been making it work since he was born.

So I get some push back that the home environment is different from the school setting. But I need to stay the course. I have so much to learn from the staff as well. They bring to the table years of experience with new ideas. If communication is difficult amongst the team, I have to get creative and try new ways of reaching them. Just because my son can't speak, doesn't mean I can't communicate

with him. I use every means possible. I need to do the same with this team. Participation isn't going to fall in our laps. Like most things in life, we need to work at it.

I was directed to a short video, CONNECT's "Foundations of Inclusion Birth to Five" that explained the concept of inclusion. My son's teachers watched it too, and all of us walked away feeling more directed and aligned in our goals. It's a start. A new start for our team and an attempt to work together to make inclusion a reality for my son.

Add Comment

Christine's Chronicles

What a wonderful forum for opening the eyes of others to children's issues. Beautifully written.

Reply

Christine's Chronicles

Lynn has kept us up-to-date on Luke's development - both the disappointments and the joys. Luke is one lucky fellow to have you as a family. It is a well written piece, one that I will check out periodically. Johanna

Reply

Inclusion Article

You are truly a wonderful Mother and this beautifully written article should be a testament to all families out there regarding raising children - Home is definitely the basis for growing sound and nourished children. You're such an inspiration Christine, Luke's a very lucky boy!

Reply

Inclusion Article

Christine's message reminds us that high quality inclusion doesn't start or end with a written statement. It's about real children and families and the real-world challenges they face every day in gaining access to a wide variety of learning and social opportunities, participating as full members of a community, and finding the supports they need to live and grow every day at home and in their communities. Professionals who advocate to improve early education programs and services need reminders from parents like Christine that our work in this regard has only begun.

Reply

Inclusion

Beautifully written, and so very true. You are so very smart, and Luke is too. You, as a family will be helping so many others that never got that "ah ha" moment. You are in my thoughts and prayers.

Joanie in NC

Reply