



TASH

Equity, Opportunity and Inclusion for People with Disabilities since 1975

TASH Resolution on Educating Young Children with Significant Disabilities

Statement of Purpose

All young children are entitled to high quality early childhood education and care. Educating young children with significant disabilities is built on the idea that all children need meaningful opportunities within natural settings and with typical developing peers. All children, therefore, deserve to have age appropriate and positive learning experiences.

Rationale

Young children, regardless of ability, need consistent and natural experiences to play, interact, explore, and learn in safe and creative environments with their same aged peers. The education for young children, particularly those who are labeled as having significant disabilities, is grounded in the value that the inclusion of all people in all aspects of society is the rule.

A spirit of community must exist Members Only to be truly valued. Teaching children to be socially responsible for their environment, each other, and all living things is a cornerstone to building community where all children and family are truly welcome. Other principles and assumptions that guide service delivery program development for young children with significant disabilities and their families are:

- A climate of community, which honors diversity and is responsive to individual priorities of all members, must exist.
- Because families are the primary caregivers and most important influence in a child's life, healthy partnerships between families and professionals across multiple disciplines are vital to ensuring excellence and integrity. Families must have meaningful choices so that their lifestyle and priorities are preserved.

- The effectiveness of a child's program must be viewed as a chief focus. Services and supports should be integrated, coordinated, and embedded into naturally occurring routines and activities. " The ability to exercise personal control over the environment and one's own life must be fostered to ensure that interdependence, choice and decision making, and problem solving are achieved. These outcomes must be cultivated early in a child's life so that they may be generalized across the lifespan.
- Fostering important outcomes such as membership, competence, peer relationships, self esteem, and joy are essential for creating a strong foundation which can be developed throughout a child's life.
- The role of technology is critical for ensuring that young children with significant disabilities are able to interact with the world through the use of individualized and useful systems.

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