Inclusion for All Through
Universal Design for Learning
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Introduction: Who, What, Why

Every educator's goal should include inclusion and full participation for all infants, toddlers, preschoolers, kindergarten, and school-age children in childcare centres, home childcare, and school programs. The OHRC, CCEYA, HDLH, and CECE Code of Ethics all mandate our responsibility to create inclusive environments. Universal Design for Learning plans for all learners and allows for meaningful participation and learning for all children. All ages, developmental stages, and abilities will thrive in an environment and program using UDL principles.

Inclusion for All: How

Relationships
Knowing the children well is the best way to meet their needs. Attachment theory tells us that children who feel cared for and safe are better able to learn. Trusting, positive relationships help educators deal with challenging behaviour. Connect before you correct or direct (Clinton, 2020).

W.A.G.E.R.
Warm, Accepting, Genuine, Empathetic, and Respectful educators create an atmosphere of safety and inclusivity. We accept each child where they are in their growth. We empathize with their challenges. We are respectful when we have appropriate expectations (Kostelnick et al., 2015).

SELF-REG
The concept of Self-Reg as managing arousal levels so that children are calm, alert, and learning has been shared in the materials by Stuart Shanker. When we are stress detectives, asking why a child is behaving the way they are, we can meet needs effectively. This prevents the children from being either too aroused or not enough and keeps them calm, alert, and learning (Shanker, 2017). Children with disabilities often have challenges in the areas of executive function, social skills, communication, and hyper- or hyposensitivity. Understanding Self-Reg and coaching them in understanding it goes a long way to support learning and development.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)
UDL was built on Universal Design. The idea was to make architectural structures accessible to everyone. Consider curb cuts and ramps. These make goods and services accessible to those with mobility devices but also to strollers, the elderly, etc. The Center for Applied Special Technology, CAST, developed Universal Design for Learning in 1984 and has been researching and developing the work ever since (CAST, 2024). Universal design for learning of the environment, schedule, pedagogy, materials, educator communication, instructional practices are all planned to meet the needs of all, rather than making accommodations for individuals. "UDL aims to change the design of the environment rather than to change the learner. When environments are intentionally designed to reduce barriers, all learners can engage in rigorous, meaningful learning" (CAST, 2018a).

Physical Environment
The classroom should be physically accessible with wide pathways, ease of mobility, taped down rugs, materials at reachable heights, flexible seating, appropriate visual stimulation, sound dampening, appropriate lighting, fragrance/chemical free, comfortable, defined spaces, and furniture that allows children to be independent (Center on Technology and Disability, 2017, Kostelnik et al., 2015). Adapted writing tools or toys, communication devices, amplified sound, etc. should be added as needed for individuals but implementing before you need them supports young learners and normalises diversity.

Lesson Planning and Teaching Strategies
Using developmentally appropriate curriculum means planning for a variety of domains and skill areas for each activity. Using UDL means also planning for a wide variety of abilities, strengths, and needs within your group.

Multiple Means of Engagement: The 'Why' of Learning
Gain and maintain learner interest
Observe children at play and work, comfortable physical accessibility, choices, level of perceived challenge, timing for completing, learners participate in design of classroom activities and tasks, incorporate prior knowledge into new content, zone of proximal development, not too difficult, not too easy, personally and culturally relevant age and ability appropriate, invitations to active exploration and experimentation, vary the novelty or risk, routines, warnings of transitions, offer novelty and surprises within routine activities, vary sensory stimulation, safe space, minimize threats and distractions, vary social demands, set them up for success, support persistence and respect attention spans, teach Self-Reg, facilitate social interactions and teach social skills (Brookes, 2018).

Multiple Means of Representation: The 'What' of Learning
Give learners a variety of ways to gain access to information and content

Give choices for play, vary materials, vary modalities (verbal, visual, motor), give feedback and praise, offer alternatives for auditory and visual info, visual schedules, pictures and words as labels, visual cue for sound alert (flashing light for fire alarm, lights dim for clean-up), teach vocabulary, language-rich environment, incidental language, use of home languages and first languages, link to past knowledge, concept maps, supply background knowledge, break tasks or activities into smaller steps with explicit prompts, remove unnecessary distractions, example: when providing instructions: "Verbally stating the information, Providing a picture or other visual model of the steps in the task, Presenting the actual tools/materials students will use to complete the task" (Brookes, 2018).

Multiple Means of Action and Expression: The 'How' of Learning
Give learners a variety of ways for demonstrating what they know

Allow different methods of response, provide alternatives for timing, access to tools and tech, guide children in completing activities, support children setting goals, children use multiple media (text, speech, drawing, video, music, dance, art, sculpture), children may communicate through picture boards; communication devices; infographics to show feelings, physical manipulatives, differentiated educators with different approaches, variety of tools with which to draw and write, varying thicknesses and ease of use (Brookes, 2018).

Application Activities

1. Read the examples of literacy circles and sand table activities in th eTATS booklet (p 3-4). Imagine creating your own circle or sensory activity. How would you incorporate multiple means of engagement? representation? expression?
2. Use the ADA-UDL Checklist to evaluate your current environment and program. Choose two or three elements to incorporate first. Give yourself a timeline in which to reevaluate and choose other elements to incorporate.

Conclusion

With close relationships, WAGER, intentional environments, Self-Reg principles, and UDL, we can support any child at any developmental stage. If we are flexible, open-minded, and view them as capable of learning we will set them up for success.

Evaluation

Your feedback is greatly appreciated and anonymous. Evaluation is for only this webinar and package and goes to Cheri, not ELQI. Thank you!
https://forms.gle/1EGuSVBBjL1LP7FAA

Contact

https://elqi.ca/about/

Research and Resources

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