

Social interaction skills intervention for young children

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Bricker (1995) is of the view that the successful inclusion of a child in a classroom setting consists of three key factors. The first factor comprises of the attitude of the teacher. Throughout the school day, young children without disabilities are able to perform a number of tasks that a disabled child may not be able to carry out or may have difficulty in executing. Thus, it often falls upon the teacher to administer the situation in such a manner that the disabled child does not feel humiliated and/or self-conscious about his inability. In addition, the teacher also has to help the children without disabilities to understand and be sensitive towards his/her peer(s).

Research has also shown that children without disabilities do not readily accept children who are different from them in any manner (especially in the case of a disability). However, the encouragement and back up from a teacher can greatly help to alter the situation of unacceptability in the classroom (Free, Craig-Unkefer; Odom & Brown, 1993). The reason for this may be attributed to numerous studies that have shown that the social interaction of children without disabilities is not effortless.

Encouragement and support of an adult are required even in the case of children who do not have disabilities (Favazza & Odom, 1996, 1997; Odom, Zercher, Li, Marquart, & Sandall, 1997; Sale & Carey, 1995). Sigelman, Miller, & Whitworth, 1986 are of the view that girls are more accepting of peers with disabilities. However, Favazza and Odom (1997) believe that gender does not influence the social acceptance of children.

The second factor that helps to administer children with disabilities as mentioned by Bricker (1995) were the resources present in the school system to help students with disabilities to have as normal an academic life

as possible. The third feature that influences the administration of disabled children in the school curriculum. School children especially those with mental disabilities are often not able to function properly in a regular classroom. However, instead of removing them completely from a regular school setting, it is advisable to locate the children to another classroom only for instruction and teaching for a specific period of time.

According to a study conducted by, Favazza, Phillipson, and Kumar (2000), it has been stated that " kindergarten children who were identified as Empathic and Social were more responsive to programs designed to promote acceptance. In addition, children who were identified as Leaders were more interactive with typically developing peers than with peers with disabilities. Leaders may best relate to children who can follow their lead. Children with disabilities may be perceived as less able to follow their lead, and thus diminish the likelihood of their interactions and acceptance."

In conclusion, it is very important for teachers who look after the administration of disabled children to see that they receive as normal a childhood as possible. And this especially includes a proper social structure in which they can learn to live, grow, and learn with other children regardless of their mental or physical handicaps.