

SISKIN EARLY LEARNING CENTER: INCLUSION & ENGAGEMENT CLASSROOM MODEL

Inclusion benefits all children. Children with special needs benefit from having typically developing children as peer models. Children with special needs often model their behaviors based on typically developing children, helping them become more independent, social and engaged.

In addition to receiving a quality preschool education, typically developing children learn the important value of acceptance and diversity. They graduate Siskin Early Learning Centers with the understanding that each person is different with his or her own gifts and talents.

Why is inclusion important?

Often children with special needs will strive to be more independent and will do more for their friends. Meanwhile, typically developing children learn empathy. They learn that each person is different and has his or her own gifts and talents.

Inclusion is more than just children with disabilities playing and working alongside children without disabilities. Inclusion celebrates diversity - all colors, races, religions and talents.

Siskin Early Learning Center is funded through Siskin Children's Institute, and through contracts with the State of Tennessee and the Hamilton County Department of Education.

Siskin Children's Institute seeks to affirm the dignity and worth of every person. It is, therefore, the policy of the Institute to practice and ensure the fair and equitable treatment of all constituents with respect to race, religion, ethnicity, national origin, political belief, socio-economic status, age, gender, sexual orientation, or disability. The Institute promotes the full realization of this policy through all organizational practices including admission and participation in programs and services.

THE ENGAGEMENT CLASSROOM MODEL

The Siskin Early Learning Center implements the Engagement Classroom Model, incorporating the engagement classroom model, project approach, and is inspired by the philosophy of Reggio Emilia, a nationally recognized model that focuses on positive outcomes for children and their families. They also apply the Routines-based Early Intervention Model through the home visiting program.

Children cannot learn if they are not engaged, and environments with engaged children promote academic and social success.

BENEFITS OF THE MODEL:

- Improved thinking and reasoning
- Improved behavior
- Increased interaction with peers
- Increased independence
- Increased opportunities for skills to emerge
- Better rapport and support between teachers and therapists
- Teachers, staff, and therapists are held accountable
- All children benefit

STRATEGIES IN MEETING DEVELOPMENTAL GOALS:

- Incidental teaching
- Zone defense schedule
- Integrated therapy
- Behavior management

INCIDENTAL TEACHING

- Follow children's lead to elicit elaborations on their behaviors.

ZONE DEFENSE SCHEDULE

- Management of the schedule, room arrangement, adult responsibilities, and transitions to improve engagement and to empower classroom staff.

INTEGRATED THERAPY

- Professionals visiting classrooms to provide services to young children with disabilities do so by consulting with the teaching staff, rather than taking the child out of the classroom or working with the child in the classroom but isolated from the ongoing activity.
- The rationale is that very young children are highly unlikely to learn skills through short periodic (e.g., weekly) sessions but that they can learn from ongoing intervention from their teachers—and, of course, parents.