



Meaningful Inclusion in Early Childhood

Transcript with description of visual elements

[As music plays, Hollie Whitney speaks to an off-camera interviewer.]

Hollie Whitney: I felt nervous, very nervous. I was with him full-time, and then to hand him over is nerve-wracking.

[Young children play on the floor of an early childhood classroom. Next, Ramil and Vanessa Kilades are speaking to the off-camera interviewer.]

Ramil Kilades: It's mostly fear of the unknown. I didn't know how he would fare in a classroom setting with all those typically developing kids. And then how he would understand those instructions and those lessons that they're being taught by the teachers.

[Early childhood kids do activities in their classroom.]

Text on the screen says:

"In early childhood programs in the Sun Prairie Area School District, students with disabilities attend the same community and school based programs as their typically developing peers."

[Elizabeth Knudten speaks in the next interview.]

Elizabeth Knudten: In early childhood, every classroom is an inclusive classroom, whether you're talking about children with abilities or just children that have had different life experiences up until this point. You look at your environment differently, and how is the environment accessible to every child, and how is your environment set up so that every child is getting exactly what they need?

[Young children and an educator sit together on the floor of an early childhood classroom. One child has orange, chunky headphones. In another shot, a different group of children sit with an educator. Next, we see Jennifer Apodaca in an interview.]

Jennifer Apodaca: Our mission and vision statement are anchored in high expectations and outcomes for all students. So living that out at the early childhood level, that was the work.

[The next interviewee is Lydia Krueger.]

Lydia Krueger: I think it all starts with that IEP process. So really having that evaluation team and the current team writing those functional goals and objectives. My goal is that services such as speech, OT, PT all those could be embedded right within the classroom and the routines that we have.

[Lydia Krueger reads a book to a large group of young children in a classroom. In the next shot, she looks at a globe with a smaller group of kids from the class.]

Elizabeth Knudten: When you are an early childhood kid, between 3 and 5 years old, you want to do what your friends are doing. And to have children -- the expectation that they're going to sit and do one specific thing at any given time that you choose, doesn't always work out.

[Young children are doing various activities in groups in the classroom. One girl is wearing a fancy costume.]

But when it's an itinerant model, having those service providers coming into the environment, working with kids doing things that kids are naturally doing, is in the best interest of kids.

[A young child works with an educator on an activity that's mounted to the wall of the classroom. Both have big smiles. We then see an educator read a book to two children.]

Lydia Krueger: We used to have our kids that are the kids in childcare, and then our kids with IEPs that were joining that group.

[A large group of young children are near a table that is set up with coffee filters for a craft activity.]

So kind of starting out meeting those needs more individually, which has really turned into that -- all that joint ownership. All kids belong. Both reg ed and special ed teacher, and therapist too, that we all are a team for every child.

[A child enjoys talking and gesturing with a book. We see the pages of a book being turned. Moving back to the whole classroom, many children are doing different things in different places. Lydia Krueger is helping one girl put on a fancy costume skirt.]

Elizabeth Knudten: I think teachers learn from other teachers. And so when you have special education people in there, whether it's an OT or a PT or a speech person, or just a special education teacher, they are modeling different behaviors or using different words that, as the regular ed teacher, you can listen and go, oh, I may be able to use that with another child.

[Two educators are on the floor with two children. One child looks victorious as he gets up and grabs hold of a piece of furniture, and one of the educators jabs both arms into the air in a gesture of triumph.]

Hollie Whitney: He's learning in class. He's engaged in class. He has relationships.

Vanessa Kilades: Before, we were, like, thinking, maybe we're going to be there for the -- for the rest of our lives to support him with all the needs that he got.

[Young children are playing with an educator. In another shot, children are playing with magnetic blocks.]

But we are so happy to see that he can really do the things that he can do right now. Those skills has developed so much.

[A child is seen reading. Another child is counting buttons on a sheet of paper]

He can truly create something wonderful, and that really makes us very proud.

[We see children are playing with blocks. Then we see a wide shot of the early childhood classroom, where students in costumes seem to be preparing to play-perform using a curtain and a small stage.]

Elizabeth Knudten: I think what we know now is that there are more questions than there are answers. And to be open to every opportunity that you are given to learn and to develop always what's in the best interest of the child and to give them those opportunities to show you what they need and to listen to them.

Hollie Whitney: It makes me really optimistic for his future. You know, I used to worry a lot about, you know, would he fit in? Would he get picked on? You know, how would his classroom environment be? But has become quite the popular guy at school.

[Children in a line run, walk, or skip as the line moves forward.]

So he comes in the class, and I can't even tell you how many kids hug him. [laughs] He has true friendships true relationships in class. And he brings a special just energy to his class. And it's positive for his classmates too, to see that.

[The class does a circle activity on the rug, holding a large parachute. Next we see the children again at the play-performance area.]

Ramil Kilades: I hope inclusion promotes awareness to those typically developing kids that there are there are other kids like our son ...

Vanessa Kilades: Mm-hmm.

Ramil Kilades: ... that need support as they as they try to learn their way through life.

[Educators read to an energetic group of children. She quickly brings one child's attention back to the book. Next, we see children doing an art activity with an educator, and children laughing together during circle time on the classroom rug.]

Hollie Whitney: There's a softness there. There's an empathy there that I see in his peers. So we didn't expect that, but we love it.

[Children draw and read in the class.]

[The next speaker addresses the camera directly. Text identifies her as Barb Van Haren, director, special education team, Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. Visuals go back

and forth between Van Haren and footage of children playing and doing activities we saw earlier.]

Barb Van Haren: We know that young children need a variety of rich experiences with all of their peers. And we also know that, not only children with, but those without disabilities benefit from inclusive environments. Wisconsin's vision – every child a graduate, college and career ready – is not possible unless our children with disabilities have the opportunity for meaningful participation in their classrooms, in their schools, and in their communities. Now is the time to get past the hurdles. Whether you work in private or public school settings, in center or family-based childcare, Head Start or special education services, every one of us will be able to take great joy in making a difference for our kids and their families. As you move toward inclusive environments, if you are in need of assistance, feel free to contact the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. We'd be more than happy to help. Thank you.

[Music]

Text on the screen identifies those who were interviewed:

In Order of Appearance:

Hollie Whitney

Parent

Ramil and Vanessa Kilades

Parents

Elizabeth Knudten

SP4K Teacher and Program Director

Sun Prairie Nursery School

Jennifer Apodaca

Director of Student Services, Teaching, Learning & Equity

Sun Prairie Area School District

Lydia Krueger

Early Childhood Special Education Teacher

Gingerbread House Preschool

Barb Van Haren

Director, Special Education Team

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

[Logo of Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction]