Characteristics of Effective Inclusive Schools

Characteristics of Effective Inclusive Schools- There seems to be considerable agreement that schools are most successful in promoting student achievement and valued post-school outcomes when they:

- Establish high expectations for learning that are linked with a clear and focused mission
- Establish strong instructional leadership with frequent monitoring of student progress
- Promote the values of diversity, acceptance, and belonging
- Ensure the availability of formal and natural supports within the general education setting
- Provide services and supports in age appropriate classrooms in neighborhood schools
- Ensure access to the general curriculum while meeting the individualized needs of each student
- Provide a school-wide support system to meet the needs of all students
The passage of Public Law 99–457, the amendments to the Education of the Handicapped Act (now IDEA), in 1986, opened a new era of services for young children with disabilities

a) This law assured a free and appropriate public education to every eligible child with a disability between the ages of 3 and 5.

b) For infants and toddlers (birth to 2 years), a new program, Part H (changed to part C in the 1997 Amendments to IDEA) was established to help states develop and implement early intervention services and had several purposes:
   i) Enhance the development of infants and toddlers with disabilities to minimize their potential for developmental delay
   ii) Reduce the educational cost to our society, including our nation’s schools, by minimizing the need for special education and related services after infants and toddlers with disabilities reach school age
   iii) Minimize the likelihood of institutionalization of individuals with disabilities and maximize the potential for their living independently in society
   iv) Enhance the capacity of families to meet the special needs of their infants and toddlers with a disability
   v) Enhance the capacity of state and local agencies and service providers to identify, evaluate, and meet the needs of historically underrepresented populations, particularly minority, low-income, inner city, and rural populations.
There are five critical factors that contribute to successfully serving young children with disabilities in inclusive settings:

i) a willingness on the part of the child care provider to make inclusion work
ii) a realistic balance between the resources available and the needs of the student
iii) continual problem solving with parents
iv) access to emotional support and technical assistance from special educators and early intervention therapists
v) access to other supports, such as other child care providers, respite care, and houses of worship
**Effective Practices in Inclusive Elementary School Programs**

**Multilevel Instruction**—Today’s classrooms include children with many different abilities. Students of the same age are clearly not alike in how they learn or their rate of learning so teachers must use multilevel instruction in which multiple teaching approaches within the same curriculum are adapted to individual functioning level.

**Universal Design for Learning**—goes one step beyond multilevel instruction, creating instructional programs and environments for all students without the need for adaptation or specialized design.

**Direct Instruction**—This requires the explicit teaching of basic, adaptive, and functional life-skills.

**Assistive Technology**—Is any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially off the shelf, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of a child with disabilities.

**Curriculum Based Assessment**—In this era of accountability, developing assessments that will reliably monitor student learning is an essential component of instruction.