



INCLUSION, NOT JUST FOR THE CLASSROOM

Now that your son or daughter is enrolled in an autism inclusion preschool, you may be wondering how to best support your child as they navigate interactions with other children on the autism spectrum. We want to share some strategies that you can use to promote the acceptance of human diversity that we teach at Alexa's PLAYC.

Overall, we believe that it is best to teach children to be curious. We encourage them to ask questions about anything they may not understand, including another child's behavior. This allows us to shape children's understanding of others instead of coming to their own conclusions or learning to avoid certain children. If you are unsure how to answer a question or start a conversation with your child, ask us, we can help!

You can also talk with your child about their peers on the autism spectrum before a question comes up. Some ways to do this can include:

- Talking about similarities between your child and a peer with autism. This can include pointing out similar interests, and normalizing behaviors that your child might have observed at school.
 - ***"Marc loves cars, just like you do!"***
 - ***"I saw that Julie was upset about having to share a toy today, sometimes you also get upset when you don't get your way."***
- Talking about different aspects of the child's personality.
 - ***"I know that we usually talk about how Rodrigo has a hard time sharing, but did you know that he also loves to go to the zoo with his family?"***
- Explaining that there are many people in the world that are similar.
 - ***"Some children learn to talk a little later than others, just like Sean."***
- Correcting inaccurate ideas about another child in age-appropriate language.
 - ***"I heard you say that Richard is pushing people because he is mean. I don't think this is the reason that he is pushing. Let's ask your teacher about it tomorrow."***
 - ***"I know that you said that Jasmin is a baby because she is not talking yet. But she is not a baby, she is a kid who is learning to use words, just like you are learning to ride your bike."***
- Sending the message that being accepting and supportive of other children is important to your family, whether or not the person has a disability.
 - ***"Were you able to help anyone today?"***

We want to build relationships between all of the children without teaching them to pity those with disabilities. We believe that we can do this by normalizing their interactions instead of teaching them that they are doing something "special" by being friends with a child with autism.

Finally, remember that your child is most likely going to copy the behavior that you model. The more you ask questions and interact with other children, the more comfortable your child will be doing the same.

Thank you for your willingness to support our mission to foster an environment of respect and acceptance between all of our children!