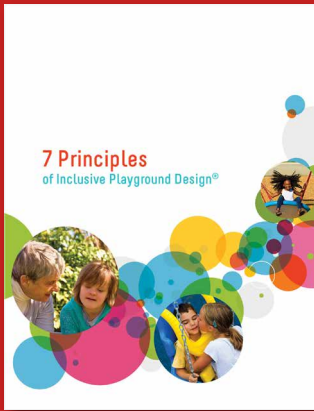# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

7 Principles
of Inclusive Playground Design®

Inclusive Play Matters: A National Partnership Grounded in Research

Explore the guide to learn:

- Design guidebook of best practices and considerations for upgrading existing or designing new outdoor inclusive play environments

- Supportive research, community engagement strategies, and advocacy resources

- Model inclusive play case examples

- Playground activities and programming tips designed to create awareness, break down barriers, and foster friendships between children of all abilities

- Supportive research and disability awareness tools

- Playground activities aligned to character education

Additional Resources include:

Professional development training module

7 Principles of Inclusive Playground Design guidebook of best practices and considerations for upgrading existing or designing new outdoor inclusive play environments, supportive research, and model inclusive play case examples

The purpose of **7 Principles of Inclusive Playground Design** is to provide evidence-based design and programming considerations for creating outdoor play environments and experiences that address the physical and social inclusion of people of all ages and abilities.

These educational resources are designed to help communities move playgrounds beyond minimum accessibility guidelines in an effort to provide inclusive, multigenerational play destinations that encourage active, independent, and meaningful play for everyone. Inclusive play is our passion and purpose.

PlayCore is proud to partner with the leading experts at the Institute for Disability, Research, Policy & Practice, Utah State University, to help champion inclusive play initiatives across the world.

Research & Programming in partnership with:

Emma Eccles Jones College of Education & Human Services
Institute for Disability Research, Policy & Practice
UtahStateUniversity.

CORE
Center for Outreach, Research & Education
Turning research into practice.

A Unique Inclusion Philosophy

PHYSICAL

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL

SENSORY

COGNITIVE

COMMUNICATION

Inclusive Community:

Creating **Awareness**

Breaking Down **Barriers**
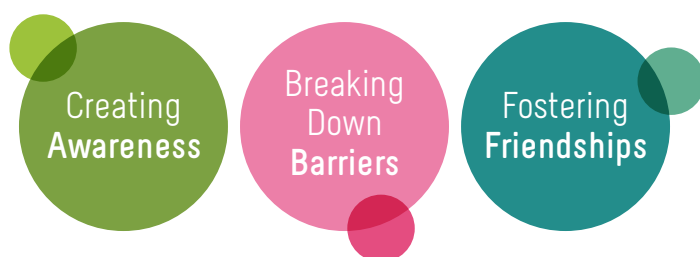
Fostering **Friendships**

The purpose of PlayCore's unique inclusive play programs is to provide evidence-based design and programming considerations for creating outdoor play environments and experiences that address the physical and social inclusion of people of all ages and abilities. These educational resources are designed to help communities move playgrounds beyond minimum accessibility guidelines in an effort to provide inclusive, multigenerational play destinations that encourage active, independent, and meaningful play for everyone. Inclusive play is our passion and purpose. PlayCore is proud to partner with the leading experts at the Institute for Disability, Research, Policy & Practice at Utah State University, to help champion inclusive play initiatives across the world

Respecting the developmental needs of the whole child and thoughtfully applying the 7 Principles of Inclusive Playground Design® to outdoor play environments is a critical first step in offering high-quality spaces where both physical and social inclusion can occur. The guidebook offers a unique design philosophy to help communities and professionals align evidence-based design considerations, intentionally select play activities that support inclusion, and advocate for outdoor play environments that move beyond the minimum accessibility standards to create truly meaningful universally designed play destinations.

The best measure of an inclusive play destination's success is how the community actually uses it. An in-depth review of the literature indicates that social intervention strategies positively impact the inclusion of children with disabilities in play activities with peers and is cited as a key strategy to promote social inclusion. Disability awareness activities provide children the tools to ask questions, get accurate information, explore their feelings, and learn how to positively interact with their peers. 2 Play Together®: Fostering Friendships Through Inclusive Play provides programmers with strategies, tips, and playground activities to create awareness, break down barriers, and foster friendship through inclusive play experiences.
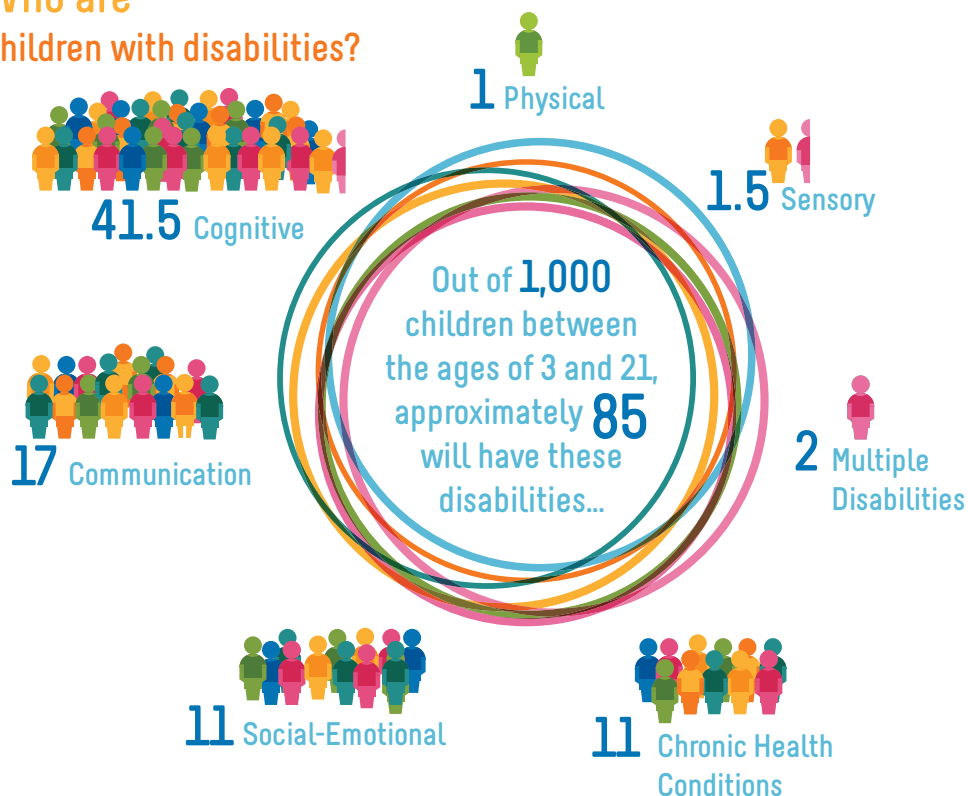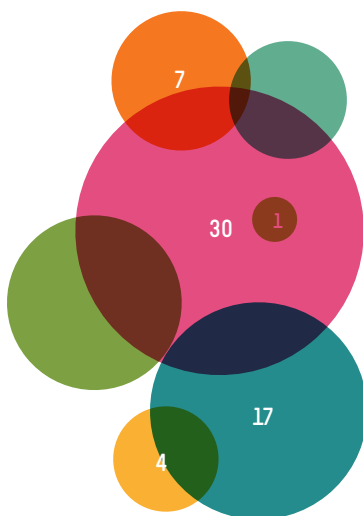
Research

Research supports the need for inclusive play environments and programming that bring more meaningful play experiences to more people, to the greatest extent possible. Addressing the developmental needs of the whole child to create inclusively designed whole environments support the diverse needs of the users across the whole community.
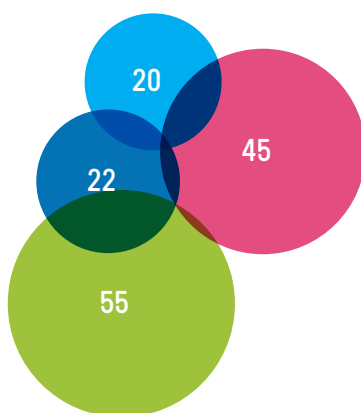
Who are children with disabilities?

1 Physical

1.5 Sensory

41.5 Cognitive

17 Communication

Out of **1,000** children between the ages of 3 and 21, approximately **85** will have these disabilities…

2 Multiple Disabilities

11 Social-Emotional

11 Chronic Health Conditions

Child Disability
Diagnosis Ages 3-21

7

30

1

17

4

30 Specific Learning Disabilities
17 Speech or Language Disabilities
11 Other Health Conditions
7 Autism
6 Intellectual Disabilities
5 Developmental Delay
4 Emotional Disabilities
2 Multiple Disabilities
1 Hearing Disabilities
1 Orthopedic Disabilities
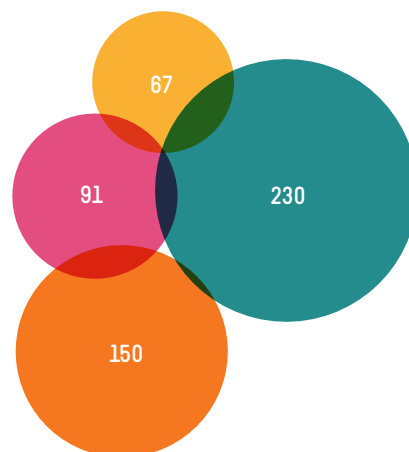.5 Traumatic Brain Injury
.5 Vision Disabilities

Adult Disability
Diagnosis Ages 21-64

20

45

22

55

55 Orthopedic Disabilities
45 Intellectual Disabilities
22 Hearing Disabilities
20 Vision Disabilities

Senior Disability
Diagnosis Ages 65+

67

91

230

150

230 Orthopedic Disabilities
150 Hearing Disabilities
91 Intellectual Disabilities
67 Vision Disabilities

Sources:
1. U.S. Department of Education (2015). Washington D.C.: Dept of Ed. https://ideadata.org
2. Erickson, W., Lee, C., von Schrader, S. (2016). Disability Statistics from the 2014 American Community Survey (ACS).
Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Yang Tan Institute (YTI). Retrieved May 09, 2016 from www.disabilitystatistics.org

Design & Programming

Playground Activities for Programming Inclusive Play

Whole communities start with inclusively designed whole environments which carefully meet the needs of the whole child. The 7 Principles of Inclusive Playground Design® are uniquely positioned to provide specific guidelines for creating inclusive play environments, and while based on the original 7 Principles of Inclusive Design, created by NC State University's Center for Universal Design, are tailored specifically to address childhood experiences in the outdoor play environment.

While no two universally designed play environments are alike, we know that children want to "Be" and feel fair, included, smart, independent, safe, active, and comfortable during play. The 7 Principles of Inclusive Playground Design focus on the usage of individual play activities as well as the context of the overall environmental design. By aligning these design principles and the specific guidelines and considerations, communities can create whole environments that support the active participation of all people, of all ages, and all abilities.

Playground Activities for Programming Inclusive Play

Thinking strategically about how your inclusive play environment will be programmed can greatly increase the usage of the space and further promote social equity in your community. 2 Play Together® strives to make a positive difference in inclusive play on the playground by creating communities that care through character education. 2 Play Together offers playground activities and tips for educators and programmers to foster social inclusion between children of all abilities outdoors, celebrate similarities and differences, and support character education initiatives.

Program Highlights:

- Disability Awareness Resources
- Character Education Tips
- Inclusive play activities for PreK-5th Grade
- Inclusion Resources for Educators, Programmers, & Advocates
- Supportive Research

7 Principles in Action:

Edith Bowen Laboratory School and Research Site, Utah State University

1 be Fair

1a Opportunities for physical, social-emotional, sensory, cognitive, and communication development are integrated throughout

1b Multigenerational play activities such as musical instruments offer developmentally meaningful experiences

1c The play space was designed to offer learning opportunities and programs to teach children how they can successfully play together

2 be Included

2a Activities offer various types and forms of play such as dramatic play opportunities

2b Physical play components such as climbers offer beginning, intermediate, and advanced levels of graduated challenge for healthy risk taking

2c Provides choices in method of participation of both gross and fine motor activities

3 be Smart

3a Activities that provide behavioral cues and sensory feedback reinforce understanding and expectations

3b Intuitive play patterns, such as looping, offer repetitive, active play

3c The well-organized play environment intentionally reinforces play and avoids user conflict

4 be Independent

4a Universal signage with tailored messages and visual supports encourage participation and provide directional cues

4b Accessible routes of travel and poured-in-place surfacing are used to and within the play environment

4c Sensory rich experiences encourage discovery and exploration

4d Universal design features such as slide transfers support independence and self-confidence

5 be Safe

5a Age-appropriate play equipment applies safety standards and addresses potential hazards

5b Cozy spots offer areas to seek sensory relief and jump-in points offer places to observe and understand play activities prior to participating

5c Seating and supervision areas provide clear visibility of activity areas

6 be Active

6a Accommodations such as high backs and molded seats help children maintain a neutral body position during movement experiences

6b Equitable alternatives are found within play experiences, such as upper body activities

6c Balanced play experiences that promote social inclusion through reciprocal interaction encourage cooperation

7 be Comfortable

7a Play activities, such as those found on balcony panels, offer comfortable reach and approach for individuals who are seated or standing

7b Ramps and decks provide adequate space for multiple users and encourage movement and gathering

7c Integrated shade and trees offer a balance of environmental conditions

7d Amenities and comfortable proximity to the school enhance the user experience

NATIONAL DEMONSTRATION SITE NETWORK

NATIONAL DEMONSTRATION SITE

ADVANCING RECREATION THROUGH RESEARCH BASED BEST PRACTICES

PLAYCORE

INCLUSION

NATIONAL DEMONSTRATION SITE

7 PRINCIPLES OF INCLUSIVE PLAYGROUND DESIGN®

PRESENTED BY

PLAYCORE

High-quality outdoor play and recreation environments are essential to community health and wellness. Research indicates that when stakeholders are engaged in the planning process, evidence-based design best practices are implemented with the built environment, and supplemental programming is offered to further enhance user experiences, then positive outcomes occur.

Intentionally aligning to National Demonstration Site design criteria ensures that your community can maximize the value of your investment by implementing scholarly best practice research to activate play and recreation destinations. With evidence-based best practices to design and implement high-quality play and recreation environments, National Demonstration Sites receive recognition, demonstrate impact through data services, and site-specific reports to share and showcase the impact on community health and wellnes benefits.

7 Principles of Inclusive Playground Design Best Practice Implementation:

- Address local priorities, create awareness, and enlist community partners that share your mission and goals.

- Provide a developmentally robust and balanced assortment of playground activities that meet the diverse physical, social-emotional, sensory, cognitive, and communicative needs of all children, including those with disabilities.

- Apply the 7 Principles of Inclusive Playground Design® to the overall environmental design.

- Offer programming, activities, special events, and/or other initiatives to further create awareness and foster friendships.

JOIN THE NETWORK: PLAYCORE.COM/NDS

PLAYCORE®
Building communities through play & recreation™