

The Project Approach: Including Every Child

The Project Approach can benefit all children, including those with special needs. Simple adaptations enable a child with disabilities to join in the work on projects.

Notice what interests each child.

- Does Jake's attention deficit disorder sometimes send him off-task? Find out if something in particular attracts him. Maybe the things that catch his attention can be included in the project.
- Does Sophie tend to withdraw or avoid participating in what the class is doing? Help her get involved in studying a topic of her own choice. Then see if other children are interested in it, too.

Give children chances to have a range of learning experiences.

- Do the individualized goals for Ty include using verbal responses and requests? He can work on those goals when he helps to plan a project or makes up a question to ask a guest expert or someone at home.
- Does Malik rely on touch because he has a visual impairment? Include him in a small group studying textures of objects related to the project. Encourage the other group members to try Malik's ways of studying and describing things.
- Are some children unsure how to communicate with a classmate who has a hearing impairment? Teach them some basic signs and show them other ways to interact.

Adapt project tasks to children's special needs.

- When you plan a site visit or field trip, find out how accessible the place is for children with physical disabilities. Ask for parent volunteers who can help children on ramps, stairs, or elevators.
- If Marta's wheelchair can't get around easily during a site visit, invite her to photograph classmates from where she sits. Later, Marta can talk with the other children about what they were doing in the pictures she took.
- Does Winona have speech or language delays? She can make drawings or models to show what she observes. Have her use signs or a picture system, or let her dictate a few words about her work each day.
- Does José have trouble holding a paintbrush? Add foam to the handle to help him grip it. Give him a sponge or roller for painting large areas of a class mural.

Arrange active roles for children with disabilities.

- Set up the room so that a child in a wheelchair is at eye level with peers during discussions.
- Schedule activities so that children who work more slowly than others can take part. Does Leah need extra time to tell others what she has learned? Let her be the first in the group to talk while her classmates' attention is still fresh. Or help her practice what she wants to say ahead of time.
- Make sure that children with disabilities have opportunities to be in leadership roles. Take hints from the positive ways in which the other children include a classmate with special needs.

For other Project Approach Tip Sheets and related Web resources, visit <http://illinoisearlylearning.org/tips.htm>.

Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this tip sheet are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Illinois State Board of Education.



29 Children's Research Center
51 Gerty Dr. • Champaign, IL 61820-7469
Telephone: 217-333-1386 • Fax: 217-244-7732
Toll-free: 877-275-3227 (Voice/TTY)
Email: iel@uiuc.edu
Internet: <http://illinoisearlylearning.org>

Illinois State Board of Education