**TIPSHEET #4: What is Inclusion?**

An Inclusion Resource Sponsored by: [CVS Charitable Caremark Trust]

**Inclusion is an approach, not a program.**

**Inclusion is...**
An attitude and approach that seeks to ensure that every person, regardless of ability or background, meaningfully participates in all aspects of life.

**An inclusive environment is a welcoming environment:**
- Disability is a natural part of the human experience, and an important part – but not the only part - of an individual’s identity. Get to know children with disabilities as people with their own interests and ideas.
- Inclusion is also about gender, class, ethnicity, language, and other characteristics.
- Research documents the benefits of inclusion for typically developing peers, as well as for children with disabilities.

<< Quick Tip >>
Many people are unsure about how to act when someone looks or acts very different from them. When you meet a person who looks like they have a disability, greet them the same way you would anyone else. If you would shake hands, put out your hand. If you would offer a fist bump or high five, offer that. They will respond however they are able.

SNIP is a program of:

[Support for Families of Children with Disabilities](www.supportforfamilies.org)
**Special Needs Inclusion Project (SNIP)**

**An inclusive program:**
- Has physically accessible and easy to use facilities and materials.
- Goes beyond accessibility to support involvement
  - Students are not just *there* next to their peers, but are actively involved.
- Has a consistent policy and strategy for determining accommodations that allow all children to participate.
  - An individualized assessment is used to understand the child’s needs.
  - This policy is communicated clearly to family members/guardians.

**Staff and leaders in inclusive programs:**
- Focus on strengths rather than limitations.
  - “What can the child do?” not just “what can’t the child do?”
- Focus on similarities first, then differences.
  - “What does Julia have in common with the other children?”
- Actively treat *everyone* – including each other - with dignity and respect.
  - Person-first language, “a child with a disability” rather than “disabled child” keeps our focus on the person.
  - Speaking directly to, rather than about or for, a child.
- Develop written plans for including children with disabilities.
  - Evaluate and monitor the effectiveness of those plans over time.
- Are responsive to requests for accommodations, but don’t assume children with disabilities need special treatment.
- Teach all students to value diversity and to respect and connect with others.

<< Quick Tip >>

Most children with disabilities can be successfully included with minimal accommodations and/or program-wide improvements that benefit all participants. SNIP is your first stop for detailed strategies, like visual supports or setting clear expectations.

Find additional Tip Sheets and more information about the Special Needs Inclusion Project (SNIP) at:
www.SNIPSF.org
SNIP is a program of:

[Support for Families of Children with Disabilities](http://www.supportfamilies.org)