

## Learning Materials That Promote Inclusion for Preschoolers

Treshawn Anderson: Hi, everyone, and welcome to “Teacher Time.” I’m Treshawn Anderson.

Gail Joseph: And I’m Gail Joseph, and we are here from the National Center on Early Childhood Development, Teaching, and Learning, which we sometimes just shorten to DTL. And we are so excited to have you here with us today to talk about learning materials for all preschoolers.

Treshawn: Yes. Before we begin, Gail is going to give us a brief overview of our webinar series this season, if this is your first time joining us.

Gail: Absolutely. Treshawn, I’m so excited to tell everyone what we’ve been talking about this season.

Treshawn: Yeah.

Gail: If you’ve been with us for the previous “Teacher Time” episodes, you know that this season we are exploring the concepts of inclusion and belonging. Many of you may already be familiar with the term “inclusion,” but the idea of belonging and making sure that children and families feel like they are reflected in and a part of the learning environment is a big part of inclusion too. We’ll talk about both of these concepts as we go a little more further into this episode. Each month, we are talking about what inclusion and belonging looks like in the learning environment with the learning materials and ways to support families through inclusion. We have three episodes dedicated to infants and toddlers and three for preschoolers. We’ve already done two infant and toddler and one preschool episode on inclusion and belonging, so be sure to visit the “Teacher Time” community on MyPeers to see a replay of those episodes.

Treshawn: Mm-hmm.

Gail: And if you’ve been with us on “Teacher Time,” you know that we encourage you to download the Viewer’s Guide, like, more than once and use it to follow along with us during the episode. You can use the Viewer’s Guide to reflect on the content that we’re covering and to write down new strategies. Sometimes some things that you don’t want to forget, you want to write those down. And we also have a take-home activity in there that you can use in your learning environments today, so I love that part. If you want to dig deeper into today’s topic, we also include some resources to extend your learning.

Treshawn: When we think about inclusive early learning environments, they are places in which children with and without disabilities and their families experience this sense of belonging, positive social relationships, and support for development to reach their full potential. If you’ve been with us for our previous “Teacher Time” episodes, you’ve heard that inclusion is an act or it’s a teaching practice, you know, the things that we do, like individualizing learning opportunities for preschoolers and providing books that represent the children and families in

our learning spaces and making sure materials are accessible to all children. Then on the other hand, we have belonging. And belonging is that feeling. It's a feeling that your authentic self is welcomed and celebrated so that you can thrive and that you can be yourself and that you see yourself reflected in the learning environment. We create this feeling of belong through inclusive practices where individual differences are both recognized and accepted.

Gail: All children, regardless of ability, have the right to fully engage in learning opportunities and typical activities and routines across home, educational, and community environments. In quality inclusive environments, educators create spaces that bring people together and promote that sense of belonging for all children. They intentionally arrange the physical space so children and adults can access it in different ways. They adapt or modify materials so that all children can participate. They set schedules that are responsive to the needs of diverse children. They promote social engagement among all children. Everyone wants a buddy. Everyone wants a friend. And they select toys and materials that are highly engaging for all learners, which means they really need to know the all of their learners as well. Education staff also modify their interactions with children to be responsive to their needs. For example, a teacher might modify the amount or the pacing of the language that they use. They might allow a little bit more time for a child to respond. They use visual cues or assistive devices to help children communicate and to communicate with a preschooler. And they might spend more time talking with a child who may have difficulties with daily routines or expectations like keeping their mask on.

This act of being intentional and providing all children with access to learning environments, materials is rooted in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, or IDEA. IDEA is the federal law that makes a free and appropriate public education available to all eligible children with disabilities. We understand the challenges of individualizing when programs may be operating a little bit differently than before, so thank you for following the appropriate guidelines and meeting children's needs, even though it might feel a little bit more difficult in these challenging times. We feel it's important to know where we've come from as a field and providing inclusive learning environments for children. In our previous episode, we showed a really great video produced by Rooted in Rights that is outlining the various disability laws and gives you a really good sense of all those acronyms that we use – IEP, IFSP, IDEA – so be sure to check that out.

Treshawn: Yes, and that video is available on MyPeers. If you want to join us in the MyPeers community, you have access to that video, and then in the Viewer's Guide there's ideas and terms and acronyms and words that will probably help you follow along with us today. Be sure to look in your Viewer's Guide for some of those cues.

Now that we've covered a definition of inclusion and belonging and briefly discussed education laws related to children with disabilities, we'll now turn our attention to what inclusion and belonging look like using the learning materials in the preschool environment. The National Association for the Education of Young Children and the DEC – that's Division of Early Childhood – have written a joint position statement on early childhood inclusion and have stated that the

defining features of inclusion that can be used to identify high-quality early childhood programs and services are access, participation, and supports. If you want to see this full joint position statement, you know where to go. You can check your Viewer's Guide for that, but we'll explain a little bit as we go along in the episode.

When we think about access, educators really provide children with access to a wide range of learning opportunities, activities, settings, and environments. Then when we think about participation, this is where teachers and family child care providers have individualized supports in place that really allow children to fully participate in play and learning activities with their peers. Then lastly is supports, and this includes everyone involved in the learning environment. Teachers, family child care providers partner closely with families and work together within a broader system of community supports and specialized services. Supports also includes professional development and teacher trainings, like you're here today, to help support you in implementing these evidence-based practices. In our previous episode, we talked about access and how preschoolers are better able to learn and feel included in their environments when they have access to a wide range of learning opportunities and activities and settings. Then for this episode we're going to focus on participation, and then next month we'll dive into supports, so be sure to register for those webinars.

Gail: What do we mean by participation? Well, increasing a child's participation means using a range of teaching practices that are individualized to a child's learning, characteristics, needs, strengths to help all children engage in and learn from the learning activities. When children are able to engage and fully participate, this supports their opportunities to learn. But it is interesting to note that some children can appear to be engaged and participating in the learning activity but not necessarily learning important skills.

Treshawn: Yes, and I think we've all been there before. You know, we're doing a lot of webinars online now, which has been great and very convenient. But just think: Have you ever joined a webinar, and you were there. You know, your sound was on. Your camera was even on. You were dressed, you know, from the top up. You had your paper and pencil out to take notes, but everything the presenter was saying was kind of going in one ear or out the other, or maybe you were multitasking, as many of us do when we're in webinars. We are participating in that webinar. We're registered. We're signed up, but sometimes we're not really taking in that information. This is something we want to do with children, have them participate and learn at the same time. I know I've been there a few times.

Gail: I definitely have been there, Treshawn. I felt like you were talking about me.

Treshawn: No, no, not that!

Gail: But we don't. Never happens on "Teacher Time."

Treshawn: Never!

Gail: People are really participating.

Treshawn: It's so engaging.

Gail: It's so engaging. While it's important for children to participate in the learning activities, we also really want to make sure that children are learning, that they're thriving, that they're meeting developmental goals such as those outlined in the Early Learning Outcomes Framework, or ELOF, or specific goals for preschoolers that might be on their Individualized Education Program, or IEP. We do this through planful engagement, being planned, intentional with our interactions, providing multiple meaningful learning opportunities, and just the right amount of support or help during those learning opportunities so a child can really participate uniquely. I really think what we're trying to say is, it's more than just being there, right? Inclusion is not just that the child is there, and it's not just that the child is there and maybe appears to be participating. It's really about making sure that that child is learning as well. This is what we mean by individualized interaction.

Let's watch a video of preschoolers with and without disabilities participating in circle time. Use your Viewer's Guide to write down some ideas that you would like to try. After this video we'll take a deeper dive into the ways to promote preschoolers' participation.

[Video begins]

Teacher: Your knees and count to eight. Go! One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight. It's so good to see you. I almost couldn't wait. Can you roll and roll and count to eight? Go! One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight. It's so good to see you. I almost couldn't wait. Can you tap your feet and count to eight? Go! One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight. It's so good to see you. I almost couldn't wait. Can you stand up tall and count to eight? Go! One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight. It's so good to see you. I almost couldn't wait. Can you jump and jump and count to eight? Go! One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight. Ooh, what else should we do? Who has an idea? What's your idea, Galin?

Galin: Run.

Teacher: Run?, OK here we go, but we have to stay on our spots. We can do it! It's so good to see you. I almost couldn't wait. Can we run and run and count to eight? Go! One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight.

[Video ends]

Gail: Oh, my gosh. That's such a fun song for preschoolers. I have it in my mind, in my ears, little earworm there.

Treshawn: Yeah, it's going to be in my mind all day.

Gail: I loved everything that was happening there. They used their bodies in lots of different ways to count to the number eight, so you embedded counting. You embedded physical activity, and the whole song was about being glad to see you. There was one child that had access to circle time in a way that was comfortable to him where they had him kind of sitting on

a sturdy wooden box, and that was a way to provide some increased participation. Then he had a service provider. One of the teachers was behind him, helping him to participate in those movements. Children were given the opportunity to move freely about in this activity. I love that, some – a little bit more open-ended, some creativity in there. They were encouraged to think of all the different ways that they wanted to move their bodies. Now we want to take a little bit of a deeper dive into ways to promote preschoolers' participation.

Treshawn: Yes, I love the video. Makes the classroom feel so much – so fun and welcoming.

Gail: Believe me.

Treshawn: When we think about participation, participation happens when education staff provide children with individualized supports that allow them to fully participate in the play and learning activities with their peers. One of these individualized supports happens through modifying materials, which we're going to talk a lot about today. When we modify materials, we make them easier to use, or we make them easier to access for all children.

Modifications are described as small changes that make a really big impact on children. Modifications support children's independence and participation by ensuring that they can engage as fully as possible with lots of different learning materials. They're individualized to help children participate and learn in ways that really work best for them. They notice that the child needed a sturdy box or chair to sit on, and they provided that for him so that he could sit in circle time. When preschoolers are in an environment that is responsive to their needs and strengths, and where teachers and family child care providers ensure that children can participate and learn, this really builds that sense of belonging.

It's important to note that modifications are more than just a one-time fix, so they didn't just pull out that box one time. I'm sure he has it maybe every time that he wants to enjoy circle time with the group. Modifications are an ongoing process as we observe the preschoolers in our environment and we determine their needs, and then we collaborate with education managers, disability service coordinators, or even service providers. They can help us make those changes to accommodate the preschoolers to make sure that they're fully engaged as possible. When we modify materials to meet children's needs, we are providing access to the planned activities and interactions and routines. We are promoting higher levels of participation, and we provide these meaningful interactions and greater learning opportunities when children can participate in ways that work best for them.

Modifications are used when teachers and family child care providers first observe the preschoolers, observe that they're interested in the activity, but maybe they're not fully participating. As an example, if you look at this picture, maybe there's children in your learning environment that don't like messy play at the sensory table. I remember I had a preschooler that just didn't really like paint and soap and, you know, things that were wet. By the end of the year, you know, we'd made some modifications for her. By the end of the year, I mean, she had paint all up her arms, and it was just a really fun experience. In these cases, modifications can help. Like the sensory experience you see here, it still offers the feeling of different textures,

but it's in a more thoughtful way. The sensory things are kind of taped to the table there, so children can still explore it. It has the covering over it, so if they don't want to get messy, that they don't have to, but they can still feel and touch what those things feel like and get that sensory experience. The Head Start Center for Inclusion website offers a number of resources and planning worksheets that would be helpful in your observations and your implementation for modification. Look in your Viewer's Guide for a link to that website and their handouts.

Gail: Yes, I love that website. I love there's a kind of a schedule of a day you can go through, and you can imagine a child's experiences during the day. You can think about, is that child really learning from these different experiences, and if not, might a modification be the way that we can increase their participation and learning in that activity. That leads us to our section today: Small Changes – Big Impact, our kind of our modification moment of our "Teacher Time" segment today. It's always – you know, it's one thing for us to talk about modifying materials, but it's always more exciting when we can show you what it looks like. For today's modification moment, we have our friend Jennifer Fung from the Experimental Education Unit, which is a laboratory school here at the University of Washington. When I mean "here," it's here in Seattle. She's going to show you some ways to modify materials for preschoolers so that they feel included, independent, and represented.

[Video begins]

Jennifer Fung: OK, so here we are at another really common routine for early learning classrooms, the sink where kids will wash their hands. We know that this is really important, lots of licensing standards around handwashing, how often, and after what activities kids need to wash their hands. We know though for some kids, depending on the setup of the classroom, if there's only one classroom in the sink, and everyone is required to be washing their hands at the same time, that can cause a long line for waiting at the sink, which can be difficult for some kids, waiting period, but also waiting for an activity that might not be that preferred can be really challenging.

A really clever modification that I wanted to point out in this preschool classroom are what we call kind of waiting visual supports. Again, environmental modification, simple visual information added to the environment, but in the area where kids will need to use it. As kids are waiting at the counter here to wash their hands, there are some different prompts. This says, "Where have you been?" and it has some pictures of different Seattle landmarks like the Space Needle and the zoo and the aquarium. This here for kids who are interested in numbers and counting just has some colorful numbers that kids can count along with. Another, similar to the Snack Talk modification or the Snack Talk visual, "What's your favorite color?" with some simple pictures of different colored items, but the idea is that kids can make conversation with one another around a couple of these visuals or just count to themselves, depending on what their social and interaction skills are like. I've also seen classrooms have visuals that represent different favorite classroom songs, different characters. Again, if we're thinking about an environmental modification like this, this is also a great opportunity to incorporate children's preferences to help keep them engaged and interested in something while they're waiting.

One of the first things that I wanted to point out is the seating at the circle area. I think this is a really lovely, inviting circle area. I actually want to come take a seat on the carpet and listen to a story or sing a song. But you'll notice here that it isn't so much about how or where kids are sitting, just the fact that they're close to the story, they're close to the teacher, and they're ready to engage in some way. You'll see at this circle time soft, comfortable seating for kids who feel fine sitting on the floor. Some kids I've even seen in this classroom lay on their tummies and kind of prop themselves up on those soft pillows. Some kids are a bit more wiggly, and they might want to sit in a chair like this where they kind of sit. They're able to rock back, but the space is still defined for them, so they know where their body is expected to be.

This is an example of what we call a ball chair. Some kids we know, again, sitting still can be really challenging, and we know that sitting on a small exercise ball where kids are able to kind of bounce and move while they're sitting can actually increase kids' attention to the activities that are going on around them. Here we are in another free-choice area. This is the dramatic play area.

Dawn Williams: OK.

Jennifer: Again, thinking about open-ended play sometimes can be tricky for some of our kids to think about what steps they're going to take to act out a theme or how they're going to use the materials that again are presented in a really open and open-ended way.

Dawn: Yeah, lots of choices.

Jennifer: Yeah, a great example again of an environmental modification in the form of visual support are what we call kind of play plans or play choice boards. You can see that this clever teacher has used the corkboard or the pushpin board in her area to pin up a few visual supports, so these are really simple, again low resource.

Dawn: Mm-hmm.

Jennifer: These are folders, manila folders cut in half. On the front you'll see there are many different ones. This one is if they have a doctor's office.

Dawn: OK.

Jennifer: This is "playing doctor." Then if you open it up, there are choices for different play actions that a child can do in the doctor area.

Dawn: Nice.

Jennifer: So check the heartbeat, put on a Band-Aid, give a shot, check the blood pressure, give medicine. Just some simple suggestions that will kind of help kids come up with a plan.

Dawn: Yeah.

[Video ends]

Gail: OK, wow. We just can't thank Jennifer Fung and our colleague Dawn Williams enough for that great, great video. Just a little bit of "Teacher Time" trivia: That is the classroom I was a Head Start teacher in a long, long time ago.

Treshawn: Yay.

Gail: Been changed, but ...

Treshawn: Memories.

Gail: Brings back great memories. That was just such great information, and hopefully you can use some of these ideas in your learning environment soon.

Treshawn: Yeah, I really like the picture of, you know, your local landmarks. I think, and you can customize that for any learning environment. You know, children will have conversations on where they've gone or where they'd like to go or you know, just exploring the world around them. I think that's one thing that I would love to try. That was a really good idea, too.

Gail: I love that tip, that waiting in – you're right, something to do while you're waiting. That's really when a lot of children might start to express some behaviors that challenge us. Why not provide a modification so they have something to do?

Treshawn: Yes, exactly. Ensuring that learning environments are inclusive of all children can really be a lot to think about and remember, but luckily there's just five key aspects of quality inclusive learning environments that you can use as a checklist to get you started or to check off for your own environments. For this episode, we're going to highlight some strategies in providing interesting materials, inviting and interesting materials in the learning environment. We've included these in your Viewer's Guide along with some reflection questions for you to think about your own learning environment. Be sure to download it to follow it along.

Preschoolers learn, of course, but actively engaging with materials and the people in their environment, you know, from building with blocks to scooping and pouring sand to fill a bucket to participating in a family-style meal by requesting and even serving food for themselves. As children engage with materials and teachers and even their peers, they perform little science experiments of making predictions and then confirming their hypothesis like, "I think this block is going to balance on top of the other" or "I think this will complete the puzzle." You know, these rich, hands-on experiences really encourage children to keep learning through that joyous play.

Also, learning from families helps to create culturally responsive environments that are filled with children's home language, maybe some artwork, maybe some music that really represent the culture and create those meaningful learning experiences for children. When thinking about the materials in your learning environment, think about the setting from the perspective of each child in your class. In a moment, we're going to take a moment to answer some reflection



questions, and you can use your Viewer's Guide to write down your responses, but think about these questions from the eyes of the preschoolers in your learning environment. You can write your responses again in the Q&A box, or you can use your Viewer's Guide. So think: From the preschoolers' eyes, "Is there something I know how to use and that I can use independently in each of the different learning areas?" That's been really helping them take ownership and feel like they belong in their learning environments.

Then the next question is, "Are there objects and materials that reflect my interests and make me excited about learning?" You know, are we observing children, what they're coming and talking about and what they're excited about, and then maybe including some of that in the environment? If you answered "yes" to these questions, kudos to you, great work. Give yourself a pat on the back for that one. If you may have answered "no" to any of these questions, that's perfectly fine. We are so glad you're here and hopefully will have some strategies to help you with that. This is the time now where we're going to talk about how to modify materials in your learning environment so that every child can participate and engage with interesting materials as independently as possible.

Gail: I just love that idea of kind of looking at the classroom from a preschooler's perspective and vantage point, you know.

Treshawn: Yeah.

Gail: I even had a supervisor once that would come in my room, like, on her knees and go around and kind of look, like, almost like, "What would I look? What would I see if I was here? What would I see if I was there?" I love that idea and then thinking about independence, something I can do independently in each area. Such great content, Treshawn.

Here are four strategies to consider when adapting materials to increase a child's participation and their access. One is to have materials at the optimal position for the child, to stabilize materials, to modify the response, to lessen the physical demands, and lastly to make materials, you know, attractive to young children. First, let's think about materials at the optimal position. First, explore your learning environments as if you were the height of a preschooler, just like I said.

Treshawn: Mm-hmm.

Gail: Get – you know, maybe it's walking around on your knees. What can and can't you see? Can you lower materials or move them so that they are easier to see and reach – the materials you want children to access, that is. For some children, it's difficult to see when materials are just flat on a surface, flat on a table, so propping materials up on an easel can make it more accessible for children to see and manipulate. There's also the thought that if a child has some stability issues, that being able to kind of lean on a table allows, you know, the table can absorb more of their body weight, and that makes it easier, too. Talk with a physical therapist about the positioning of the furniture in your learning environment to ensure all children are able to

participate freely as well as talking to families during virtual meetings about the positioning of furniture in their home. That is one thing, is about optimal position.

The next thing is about stabilizing materials, stabilizing materials using tape, using Velcro. I feel like Velcro is always on my wish list of things for my education manager to purchase in my classroom, or any nonskid backings so objects don't slip or slide away if a child has difficulty holding them in place. In fact, you can even take some of those appliques that you can put in the bottom of a bath, those stickers to stop from slipping, and use those as well. Adding Velcro to trays for arts and crafts and to objects that go with the tray or to hand soap, like putting a little Velcro on the bottom of a hand soap dispenser so that it's stable when a child is trying to use it. You can even use or add Velcro to the bottom of a laptop or on the back of a tablet or a laptop to stabilize that for a child. That might just make it a lot easier for a child to hold during remote learning. An occupational therapist might suggest stabilizing bowls and plates, those types of materials with suction on the bottom of them so that a child who might have some compromised motor skills can eat more independently, right, because the bowl is not going to slip away with them when they're pushing on it.

Treshawn: Mm-hmm.

Gail: And make sure that shelves and water tables and other furniture in their learning environment and home are also secure so preschoolers who are unstable again as we said could kind of lean against the furniture as they play, and it won't slip out from under them or knock over.

Treshawn: Those are great suggestions. Here's a couple more. When we think about modifying the child's response, we can use adaptive squeeze scissors for children who have difficult, you know, doing that opening and closing movement, and this is just kind of squeezing to cut. We can use larger crayons for a child who has difficulty grasping writing materials or even eating utensils. You can use shorter crayons for their little hands so that it fits a little better and shorter pencils too to encourage a more sophisticated tripod grasp, you know, like, instead of gripping it, you know, as a fist but encouraging that. I always tell my son, "Squeeze it." I use his pincher fingers, and he squeezes it and then just wraps the rest of his fingers around, so he does that. If a child has difficulty kicking when you're outside playing with balls, make sure you use larger, big bright balls versus smaller ones to kind of build their confidence in kicking balls. You can build up the handles on the wagons or tricycles with tape or those little foam grippers, the swimming things, the noodles, pool noodles that you can use for easier grasping.

Make sure to send some resources home too with families since children are both at home and at school, and they're learning in lots of different spaces. You want them to have the materials so that families can make these adaptations at home so that children have access to them during remote or virtual learning. Then also consider how a child's response might be modified during communication to lessen frustration and increase access to social interactions. If a child has a speech therapist, you know, reach out to them and get some ideas. You're not in this alone. There's lots of people out there to help and assist with these modifications. A speech

therapist might have some good ideas on using picture symbols to make requests or even some sign language and gestures.

Then finally, making materials attractive: Of course your classrooms are bright and beautiful, but there's lots of things you can do to make materials attractive or to initiate or keep the children's attention or their interest. If a child has a visual impairment or maybe just shows little interest in exploring objects, you can make things more visible and interesting by adding pieces of Mylar or other shiny textures or even add colors to the sensory bin to attract children's attention. This one has some nice pink sand in there. I think that would be fun to explore in. You can use objects and books that have bold but very simple designs that feature kind of high-contrast colors like black and white or red and blue. You can also increase a child's attention by incorporating their preferences for certain topics. That's a modification too, really following a children's interest in their leads. For example, you might want to include some noisy books in the reading corner that might attract a child who loves to activate those toys but doesn't really care for reading so much. You can combine those two ideas and then bring them over to the reading corner. You can even add some wiggle pens, you know, something fun to write with in the writing center to attract children who might like toys that move or are fun to play with, or even putting some rocks. I know some children who fixate on rocks or shells or sticks and things like that in the sensory table to attract children to a place in the learning environment that they would not normally go into.

And really STEAM-related activities. STEAM is science, technology, engineering, and math. Those types of related activities have great opportunities for making materials attractive and keeping children's attention. Who doesn't love a good science experiment? You can encourage parents to do STEAM activities at home with children. It would be great to include these activities in your own learning environments. In your Viewer's Guide, there is a resource regarding STEAM learning in both remote and in-person learning environments. You can use some of these ideas to include STEM and STEAM learning in your environments.

Gail: Well, let's watch a video of how a teacher uses one of these adaptation strategies during a transition to increase a child's participation. As you watch, use your Viewer's Guide to write down some things that she says or does that you would like to try.

[Video begins]

Teacher: You got to hold it down. There you go.

Andy: Boing, boing.

Teacher: OK, Andy, in 1 more minute, we're going to make a new choice. Here is your timer.

Andy: I want to play doctor.

Teacher: How many people does he have in there?

Child 1: Lots of people.

Teacher: Let's count them! We can count the numbers. Ready?

Child: One, two, three, four, five, six, seven.

Teacher: Seven people! Did you take a picture of the seven people?

Andy: Teacher, yes, teacher, yes...

Child: I did.

Teacher: Cool. It's seven.

Andy: Teacher, yes ... Die!

Teacher: Aw, jeez. Uh-oh, look at the timer, it's almost up. Here we go! Let's put all the car – oh. Let's put all the people back in here. Oh, can I see that? Did you take a picture of the sensory table or friends outside doing art?

Andy: You're so funny. I like this.

Teacher: You like Legos? I know you do.

Andy: I like to play with the ...

Teacher: I know.

Andy: It's so funny.

Teacher: I know. Let's put all the Legos away.

Andy: I want to play doctors.

Teacher: OK, before we go doctor, let's go potty. First potty, then doctor.

Andy: No.

Teacher: Yeah, first potty. Then doctor.

Andy: No.

[Video ends]

Gail: All right. In this video, the teacher modified the child's response to the transition. She knew that this child needed a little bit more support during transitions and that turning off the lights to get his attention or singing a cleanup song might not provide the response that she was looking for. She gave a lot of support during that transition, and I bet our viewers saw a lot

of the other things that she was doing that really helped the child to understand when it was time to transition and independently move to the next activity.

Treshawn: Yes, so lastly, we love this segment – it’s our “Bookcase” segment – because books are just a great way to engage with children and provide meaningful learning experiences. You know, there’s books on just about every topic, so you can use a book during specific learning themes or activities or even building on children’s interests to provide that meaningful learning experience. Also, I said that, so choosing books based on your preschooler’s interest is another way to help children really feel included and that their interests are really important. This time on “Teacher Time,” this season we’re exploring “The Bookcase.” This is where we’ll talk about how books can support the content of the books, and this also supports children’s learning through the ELOF goals. You’re connecting that learning from the books kind of back to the ELOF goal to give it some foundation. We are, A, providing lots of advanced vocabulary when we choose books. Then the for the S, we’re learning here how teachers and family child care providers can support engagement during book reading. Then for the E, how you all can also extend children’s learning beyond the books, so what activities and things might you provide that are based on the book but kind of going beyond the book? Gail is going to give us a few books on her bookcase that are specifically for preschoolers.

Gail: Yes, absolutely. I’ve got two that I want to share. Because we’re talking about inclusion and belonging, both books have that theme to them around inclusion and belonging, even when we might be feeling a little bit different. The first one is “Just Ask!” by Sonia Sotomayor, who might have a familiar name for you, and illustrated by Raphael Lopez. “Just Ask!” celebrates the different abilities that children and adults have. It really is drawing on her own experience as a child who was diagnosed with diabetes. She writes about children with all sorts of challenges and looks at the special maybe powers that those children can have as well as their strengths. As the children work together to build a community garden, she’s asking questions of each – characters ask questions of each other along the way. The book really encourages readers to do the same. When we come across someone who is different from us, but we’re not sure why, all we have to do is just ask. Really just encouraging, “How do you politely ask about a difference?” I love that book. It’s colorful. It’s bright, and I just love it.

Then the next one is “Giraffes Can’t Dance,” and this of course comes in a preschool hardcover book, and then I also actually have it in a board book version as well. If you don’t know this one, it’s such a fun one because it’s got a nice kind of sing-songy rhythm to it. I love these books with those rhymes in them. “Giraffes Can’t Dance” is really the touching tale of Gerald the Giraffe who wants nothing more than to dance. He feels like he has some crooked knees and thin legs, and it’s harder for him to dance than you might think. Gerald is finally able to dance when his own tune is playing. He gets some encouraging words from an unlikely friend. This book is colorful. It’s rhyming. It’s fun for children to listen to. Then that idea of just needing a little bit of a different tune I think really explains how some children might need some modifications, some of the ones that we’ve talked about today, in order to participate, access, and thrive. It really is a great encouragement of friends and a lovely lesson of an inclusive community of learners here.

I want to explore this one just a little bit more using our acronym of the CASE and tell you a little bit deeper about the ways in which you could use this book. In terms of the C for “Connecting to learning goals,” the book “Giraffes Can’t Dance” can support several of the Head Start’s ELOF social and emotional goals, such as the goal that a child recognizes themselves as unique individual having their own abilities, characteristics, emotions, and interests. That’s definitely modeled. You can also at the same time that you’re reading books with young children, there’s always the opportunity to work on some of those language and literacy goals in the ELOF, such as the child demonstrating an understanding of a narrative structure through storytelling and retelling. Children will again just, like, love the rhyming structure of the book, and then maybe you can even pause and let them fill in the word, which I love doing as a teacher.

In terms of advanced vocabulary, the A in our case, there’s so much advanced vocabulary in this book from “crooked” to “buckled,” even measurement words like “slim,” “thin,” “tall,” and you can talk to preschoolers about the words in the book, find other objects in the learning environment that also match with that new vocabulary, right. What other things are thin? What other things might be slim in our learning environment? To support engagement, this book talks about the many styles of dance, like the cha-cha, the waltz, the tango, rock and roll, my favorite, so you can engage children in these different types of dances from all over the world or listen to the music of these different types of dances. While you’re reading, you could pause and listen to it. That might be a lot of fun.

Then in terms of our E for “extension,” you can encourage children to make up their own dance, right? We can see what their dance looks like and maybe bring in music from their homes to showcase children’s culture and language and background. I know when I was a preschool teacher, one of the classroom jobs we had was the class DJ, and that DJ got to play music during lunchtime. They would always bring in, you know, a CD from their home and play it. It was just such a great way to bring in their own home culture and their family’s culture and language. We can explain to children that the music might sound different, but it’s all fun to dance to, or in the case of my classroom, to eat to, so two great books.

Finally, we come to another one of our favorite segments on “Teacher Time,” which is “It’s All About You.” We do our best caregiving, our best teaching, just our best “human-ing” when we can feel calm and well ourselves. Engaging in self-care practices really can help all of us, and educators in particular, build greater social-emotional capacity to deal with some difficult times, which I know we’re all in. Those times when we need to move in and support a child or a family, we need to be doing well ourselves. Here is one quick strategy that you can use to get back in that calm space.

Research has actually demonstrated – there are so many studies about this that have demonstrated that having access to green spaces, that is natural spaces, improves your well-being. Going outdoors to connect with nature can lower levels of stress. It can increase feelings of happiness, feelings of connectedness. It can even increase your attention and creativity. We love all of those things. Our tip is to try safely going on a walk in a nearby park or a

neighborhood garden, anyplace where you can surround yourself with nature and being outdoors. Then just remember if you can't go outdoors, or if maybe there's not some natural green spaces around your home or your program yet, you can always bring the, you know, nature indoors. Here's our Spidey spider plant. We introduced this guy on our infant-toddler episode as well, and I'm just so proud of him because it's actually a houseplant I'm nurturing here. You can bring plants indoors, and indoor gardening actually of houseplants is actually demonstrated to have some of these same benefits of going outdoors in nature. Just be sure if you're introducing plants into your classroom or into your family child care, that you find plants that are nontoxic to people and pets. Just seeing that can have the same impact of taking a walk.

Treshawn: Nice. Those are such great tips. I've got one new book. I've got the "Giraffes Can't Dance." I got one new book to add to my bookshelf, and I've got to get a plant. I don't have a green thumb, but, you know, I think you've inspired me to start with a spider plant. We're going to give you – leave you with a resource. I know we gave you your Viewer's Guide. That has tons of resources in there too, but I just want to give you some more resources that'll support you as you create these quality inclusive learning environments for the preschoolers that you work with.

First we have MyPeers. We talked about that a little bit. MyPeers is really just a virtual informal social community to exchange ideas and share resource and even lend support to the early childhood community. Go ahead and join MyPeers. You can do so via the ECLKC. We'll also put a link in the Q&A box that you can join there. Come say hi to us in our "Teacher Time" community. We're going to post more videos, share more strategies related to inclusion and belonging. You might also be interested in the Head Start Disabilities and Inclusion Network, so just feel around on MyPeers and join the community that fits best for you.

Then when we think about the apps on our phones and our devices, we have a couple of programs. One is Text4Teachers, and this program sends you two free text messages per month with information, tips, and research and resources to help you strengthen and support your teaching practices. Then we have the ELOF2GO app, and this gives you access to the ELOF goals so you don't have to carry around the book all the time. You have it right there on your mobile device. Then we have our Ready DLL app. If you work with children who are dual language learners or maybe you just want to learn some words and key phrases yourself, go ahead and download this app, and then you can access resources, key words, and phrases and discover some implementation strategies. Then we have our Head Start Resources app. We talk about resources on the ECLKC. If you don't have time to go to the website, you can use this app right there, and everything that's on the website, your favorite resources are going to be in the Head Start Resources app. It's like having the ECLKC website in a mobile app. What's great about all of these is that they're free and they're available in both English and Spanish for you.

Gail: And we will see you soon! Bye, everyone!

Treshawn: Bye.