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## The Right Stuff

### Resources to Help Realize the Promise of Each Vermont Child



**Featured Topic: The Vermont Guiding Principles**

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**Supporting Each and Every Young Child and Family's Full and Equitable Participation**, also known as the Vermont Guiding Principles, *"describe what individuals, organizations, and communities understand and do to realize the promise of each and every young Vermont child."* A key concept behind the Vermont Guiding Principles is **equity**, and specifically *"providing each child and family with equitable access to opportunities, supports, and services."* One dictionary defines equity as *"fairness and impartiality towards all concerned, based on the principles of evenhanded dealing. Equity implies giving as much advantage, consideration, or latitude to one party as it is given to another."* This issue of The Right Stuff focuses on tools that families, early childhood professionals, and early childhood leaders can use to examine and possibly change the ways in which their work reflects equity.

**How Do the Vermont Guiding Principles Reflect an Emphasis on Equity?** A copy of the Vermont Guiding Principles is included on the next page for you to read, share, and use. Notice that instead of talking about **all** children the document emphasizes **each and every child and family**. Find the several places where the words equity or equitable appear in the document. After reading it, take a few minutes to consider how you think the Vermont Guiding Principles reflect an emphasis on equity.

**What Do Equitable Practices Look Like in a Classroom?** The **Equitable Classroom Practices Observation Checklist** ([http://www.signetwork.org/content\\_page\\_assets/content\\_page\\_250/Equitable%20Classroom%20Practices%20Observation%20Checklist%20part%202.pdf](http://www.signetwork.org/content_page_assets/content_page_250/Equitable%20Classroom%20Practices%20Observation%20Checklist%20part%202.pdf)) features 27-items for self-reflection or observation. While the examples relate to K-3 classrooms, teachers will easily be able to think of the equivalent example in settings serving infants, toddlers, and preschoolers.

**What Does Equitable Access Look Like to a Child with Disabilities?** Take a look at the questions on this Member of the Class **checklist** (<http://headstartinclusion.org/sites/default/files/teachers%20guide-MOC.pdf?q=hscenter/sites/default/files/teachers%20guide-MOC.pdf>) to find out.

**What Does Equitable Access Look Like in the Early Elementary Years?** This **toolkit** (<http://buildinitiative.org/Resources/FamilyEngagementToolkit.aspx>) includes resources targeted towards equitable family engagement and authentic family-school partnerships throughout the early elementary school years. Checklists can support families, teachers, and principals in achieving new understandings of equity.

**What Are Common Barriers to Equitable Access?** Race is a commonly cited factor in whether young children have access to quality early childhood experiences. **Equity Starts Early** ([https://communitychange.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/2017\\_EquityStartsEarly\\_0.pdf](https://communitychange.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/2017_EquityStartsEarly_0.pdf)) provides the demographic and historical context for creating racially equitable early childhood policies and practices, as well as strategies that can address inequities.

**The Right Stuff** is a free, one-way listserv that is distributed monthly. Each issue features resources for supporting the learning and development of young children who are culturally, linguistically, and individually diverse, birth to Grade 3, and their families. All resources are readily available and free. **The Right Stuff** may be freely shared or reproduced. Past issues are available at <http://fpg.unc.edu/presentations/right-stuff>

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# Supporting Each and Every Young Child and Family's Full and Equitable Participation

## VERMONT GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Each and every young child (birth through Grade 3) and family in Vermont has diverse strengths rooted in their unique culture, heritage, language, beliefs, and circumstances. They have gifts and abilities that should be celebrated and nurtured. Full participation means promoting a sense of belonging, supporting positive social relationships, and enabling families and early childhood professionals to gain the competence and confidence to positively impact the lives of each and every child and their family.

The Guiding Principles describe what individuals, organizations, and communities understand and do to realize the promise of each and every young Vermont child. They highlight explicit, intentional, and strengths-based practices that are respectful of and responsive to child, family, and community values, priorities, and beliefs. They are consistent with relevant state and national laws and policies. These principles articulate Vermont's commitment to fully include each and every child and their family in a continuum of meaningful experiences to ensure their health, mental health, safety, happiness, and success now and into the future.

### **We believe that each and every child . . .**

- Learns within the context of secure and authentic relationships, play, and interactions within their environments.
- Deserves equitable access to experiences that acknowledge and build on their uniqueness.
- Deserves opportunities to deeply learn and develop to their full potential through joyful interactions in safe, accepting environments.

### **For each and every family, we will...**

- Respect and support them as experts, partners, and decision makers in the learning and development of their children.
- Pledge to be open, genuine, reflective, and respectful listeners and communication partners.
- Build caring communities that are accepting of differences and foster a sense of belonging.

### **For each and every child and their family, we will...**

- Promote understanding of the importance of inclusive and effective early childhood experiences.
- Build equitable access to opportunities, supports, and services.
- Acknowledge and address biases in ourselves and others and the importance of differences such as race, class, gender, family structure, ability, and sexual orientation.
- Advance policies, procedures, programs, and practices that honor and are supportive of each family's culture, strengths, structure, expertise, and preferences.
- Provide options, flexibility, and continuity within each community by working collaboratively within and across agencies, programs, and funding sources.
- Expand the number of early childhood professionals who are well prepared, reflect the diversity of the community, and are appropriately compensated.
- Draw upon evidence and research for practices that are responsive and appropriate to the child's culture, language(s), abilities, developmental level, identities, and needs.

