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 leading experts, Utah State University’s Center for Persons with Disabilities and Lekotek, to help champion inclusive play initiatives across the world.

Inclusion Best Practices

Inclusive Play Matters: A National Partnership Grounded in Research

Comprehensive companion programs

► Me²: 7 Principles of Inclusive Playground Design®
  - 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

► 2 Play Together®: Fostering Friendships Through Inclusive Play
  - 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

Partnership:

“Inclusive play ensures that all people experience the satisfaction of contributing to meaningful play and reap the lifelong developmental, physical, and social benefits of inclusion”.

- Keith Christensen, Ph.D.
  Faculty Fellow, Utah State University Center for Persons with Disabilities

Executive Summary

www.playcore.com | 877.762.7563 | info@playcore.com
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.

Together we can effectively promote inclusive play as a valid solution to enrich and enhance the quality of life for children, families, and communities across our nation. Join us as we share our passion for inclusive play and advocate for every child, every play environment, and every community across nations.
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?

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

Child Disability Diagnosis Ages 3-21

- 41.5 Cognitive
- 17 Communication
- 11 Social-Emotional
- 11 Chronic Health Conditions

Adult Disability Diagnosis Ages 21-64

- 67 Orthopedic Disabilities
- 55 Intellectual Disabilities
- 55 Hearing Disabilities
- 55 Vision Disabilities

Senior Disability Diagnosis Ages 65+

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

Sources:
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.

7 Principles in Action: Edith Bowen Laboratory School

1. be Fair
   1a Opportunities for physical, emotional, sensory, cognitive, and communication development are integrated throughout.
   1b Multigenerational play such as musical instruments offer developmentally meaningful experiences.
   1c The play space was designed to offer learning opportunities and programs to teach children how to play together successfully.

5. be Safe
   5a Age-appropriate play equipment applies safety standards and addresses potential hazards.
   5b Cozy spots offer areas for sensory relief and jump-in points for observing and understanding play activities prior to participation.
   5c Seating and supervision areas provide clear visibility of active play areas.
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. Developed in partnership with experts from the National Lekotek Center, 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**
   - Opportunities for physical, social-emotional, sensory, cognitive, and communication development are integrated throughout.
   - Multigenerational play activities such as musical instruments offer developmentally meaningful experiences.
   - The play space was designed to offer learning opportunities and programs to teach children how they can successfully play together.

2. **be Included**
   - Activities offer various types and forms of play such as dramatic play opportunities.
   - Physical play components such as climbers offer beginning, intermediate, and advanced levels of graduated challenge for healthy risk taking.
   - Provides choices in method of participation of both gross and fine motor activities.

3. **be Smart**
   - Activities that provide behavioral cues and sensory feedback reinforce understanding and expectations.
   - Intuitive play patterns, such as looping, offer repetitive, active play.
   - The well-organized play environment intentionally reinforces play and avoids user conflict.

4. **be Independent**
   - Universal signage with tailored messages and visual supports encourage participation and provide directional cues.
   - Accessible routes of travel and poured-in-place surfacing are used to and within the play environment.
   - Sensory rich experiences encourage discovery and exploration.
   - Universal design features such as slide transfers support independence and self-confidence.

5. **be Safe**
   - Age-appropriate play equipment applies safety standards and addresses potential hazards.
   - Cozy spots offer areas to seek sensory relief and jump-in points offer places to observe and understand play activities prior to participating.
   - Seating and supervision areas provide clear visibility of activity areas.

6. **be Active**
   - Accommodations such as high backs and molded seats help children maintain a neutral body position during movement experiences.
   - Equitable alternatives are found within play experiences, such as upper body activities.
   - Balanced play experiences that promote social inclusion through reciprocal interaction encourage cooperation.

7. **be Comfortable**
   - Play activities, such as those found on balcony panels, offer comfortable reach and approach for individuals who are seated or standing.
   - Ramps and decks provide adequate space for multiple users and encourage movement and gathering.
   - Integrated shade and trees offer a balance of environmental conditions.
   - Amenities and comfortable proximity to the school enhance the user experience.
Join us in our mission to build communities through the power of inclusive play. Together we can create inclusive play spaces that develop the whole child, the whole environment, and ultimately, whole communities.

**Take Action**
Mobilizing resources and aligning advocacy efforts can greatly impact inclusive play for every child, every play environment, and every community. Contact us to learn more about designing and programming inclusive play destinations in your community. To help you get started, request a full copy of our inclusive play programs, Me2 and 2 Play Together, or our Inclusive Play Toolkit filled with planning checklists, publicity and awareness templates, grant and funding resources, and more. Learn more about bringing your community stakeholders together with our continuing education inclusion training courses.

**Become a National Demonstration Site**
Want to join the movement, share your story with others, and gain national recognition? By thoughtfully aligning your outdoor play environment with the 7 Principles of Inclusive Playground Design, your project can be designated as a National Demonstration Site and serve in a network of leadership case examples that address local needs and goals of their community stakeholders, deploy research-based best practices throughout the environment, and focus on collecting meaningful outcomes.

To learn more, please visit playcore.com/solutions/inclusion, or email us directly at info@playcore.com.

- **Promote your leadership** through best practice principles that create outdoor play environments for people of all ages and abilities
- **Collaborate with program partners** and document the process for others to replicate
- **Create positive attention** and attract partners/funds that support inclusive initiatives
- **Gain national awareness** through various media outlets, press releases, collateral materials, and nationwide presentations
- **Receive recognition and signage** for serving as a model demonstration site

“The Me2 program is founded on the understanding that beyond disability, there are abilities; beyond accessibility, there is inclusion. We are proud to partner with PlayCore to promote inclusively designed play environments where all children find opportunities to participate in play to secure the health benefits of physical activity, the developmental benefits of play, and the social benefits of inclusion.”

- Keith Christensen, Ph.D.
  Faculty Fellow, Utah State University Center for Persons with Disabilities