



## 2Play together®

### Inclusion Best Practices

Inclusive Play Matters: A National Partnership  
Grounded in Research

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.

### Partnership:



### Comprehensive companion programs

- ▶ **Me2<sup>sm</sup>: 7 Principles of Inclusive Playground Design<sup>®</sup>**
  - 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<sup>®</sup>: 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

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

"Providing intergenerational, 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



# A Unique Inclusion Philosophy

## Planning for the Whole Child, Whole Environment, Whole Community



Fundamentally, inclusively designed play environments are a statement about a community's social values and every child's right to play. Our goal is to innovate play experiences and provide quality outdoor play for people of all ages and abilities that develop the whole child, the whole environment, and ultimately, benefit the whole community. We believe this broader approach to inclusive play will help community advocates and professionals in their planning, development, and revitalization efforts.

Respecting the developmental needs of the whole child and thoughtfully applying the 7 Principles of Inclusive Playground Design®, developed by PlayCore and Utah State University's Center for Persons with Disabilities, to outdoor play environments is a critical first step in offering high-quality spaces where both physical and social inclusion can occur. The Me2<sup>sm</sup> guidebook offers a unique design philosophy to help communities and professionals align evidence-based design considerations, intentionally select play activities that support inclusion, and advocate for outdoor play environments that move beyond the minimum accessibility standards to create truly meaningful universally designed play destinations.



## Inclusive Community:

Creating  
Awareness

Breaking  
Down  
Barriers

Fostering  
Friendships

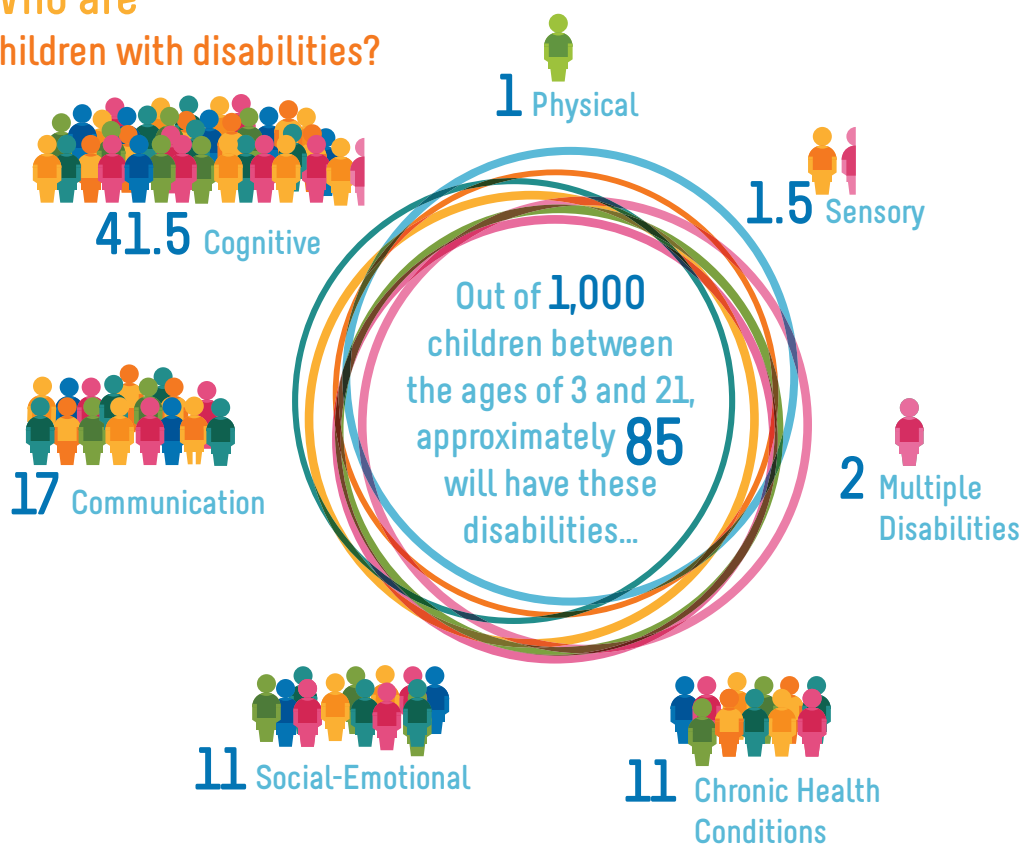
The best measure of an inclusive play destination's success is how the community actually uses it. An in-depth review of the literature indicates that social intervention strategies positively impact the inclusion of children with disabilities in play activities with peers and is cited as a key strategy 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

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.

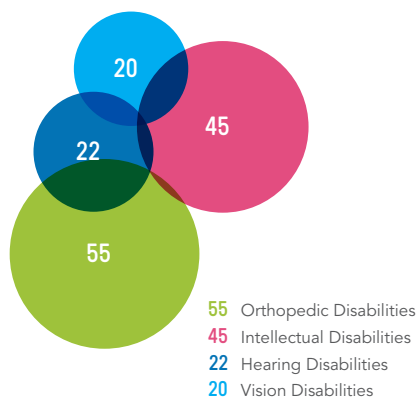
## Who are children with disabilities?



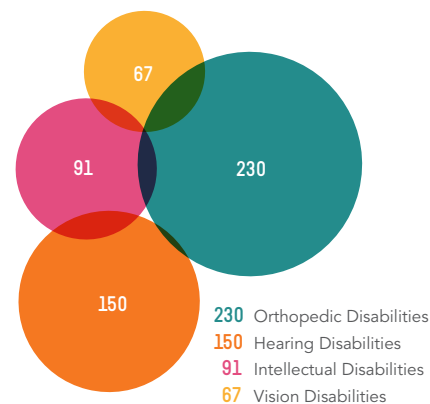
## Child Disability Diagnosis Ages 3-21



## Adult Disability Diagnosis Ages 21-64



## Senior Disability Diagnosis Ages 65+



### Sources:

1. U.S. Department of Education (2015). Washington D.C.: Dept of Ed. <https://ideadata.org>
2. Erickson, W., Lee, C., von Schrader, S. (2016). Disability Statistics from the 2014 American Community Survey (ACS). Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Yang Tan Institute (YTI). Retrieved May 09, 2016 from [www.disabilitystatistics.org](http://www.disabilitystatistics.org)

# PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

## Designing Research-Based Whole Environments

### 7 Principles of Inclusive Playground Design®

Best Practices for Creating Meaningful Play Environments  
for People of All Ages and Abilities



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 integrated throughout the play environment
- 1b Multigenerational play opportunities such as musical instruments, developmentally appropriate experiences
- 1c The play space was designed to provide learning opportunities to teach children how to successfully play together

### 5 be Safe

- 5a Age-appropriate play equipment that applies safety standards and addresses potential hazards
- 5b Cozy spots offer areas for rest, relief and jump-in points to observe and understand activities prior to participation
- 5c Seating and supervision areas with clear visibility of activities

# 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



## School and Research Site, Utah State University

### 2 be Included

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

### 6 be Active

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

### 3 be Smart

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

### 7 be Comfortable

- 7a Play activities, such as those found on balcony panels, offer comfortable reach and approach for individuals who are seated or standing
- 7b Ramps and decks provide adequate space for multiple users and encourage movement and gathering
- 7c Integrated shade and trees offer a balance of environmental conditions
- 7d Amenities and comfortable proximity to the school enhance the user experience

### 4 be Independent

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



# ADVOCACY

## Join the Movement!

## Become a National Demonstration Site

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](http://playcore.com/solutions/inclusion), or email us directly at [info@playcore.com](mailto: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