

Extending the "Comfort Zone" to Include Every Child

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In this issue's feature article, the study conducted by Buysse, Wesley, Keyes, & Bailey (1996), presents some results that I suspect few people will find surprising, namely that the general early childhood teachers they stud-

within ourselves. This allows us to externalize our discomfort, rather than encouraging us to take personal responsibility for our own feelings and the decisions that flow from them. Alternatively, as teachers, we might attempt

we restrict educational access of young children with disabilities only to those settings where people are already comfortable serving students with the full range of characteristics, it would severely and artificially limit opportunities available to these students and their families. Additionally, it would perpetuate a double standard for people with disabilities that would likely not be tolerated based on a teacher's comfort with any other individual characteristic of children or youth.

ald Baer (1981) wrote, "Too often in my opinion, we teach children who are not only capable of teaching themselves but eager to do so; in their wisdom, they cheat us of learning completely how the trick is done because they do it for us and do it privately. It is when they cannot do much if any of it for us that we get to find out how to do it all ourselves, as teachers" (p.94). By accepting the challenge of including students with severe disabilities to learn, we change our own teaching

of adults in our community. Giving them a questionnaire about their comfort level interacting with people who have disabilities would be unnecessary, because to them it will be even more ordinary than it is already – that's extraordinary!

Buysse, V., Wesley, P., Keyes, L., & Bailey, D. B. (1996). Comfort zone of child care teachers in serving young children with disabilities. *Journal of Early Intervention* (this issue).

Giangreco, M.F., Dennis, R., Cloninger, C., Edelman, S., & Schattman, R. (1993). "I've counted Jon": Transformational experiences