

## **Inclusive from the Start: Maximizing Belonging for Children and Family Members**

### **18<sup>th</sup> Annual Birth to Three Institute**

Linda Brault: Good afternoon or for those of you from the West Coast like I am, good morning. [Laugh] I'm Linda Brault, and this is Senta Greene, and we are going to be sharing some ideas with you and talking to you for the next hour and a half. We have a couple of announcements. The first announcement is that -- What does that one say? If you have CEUs, you are supposed to do something, but I didn't bring it over here. It said, "Return your CEU attendance form to the CEU desk, which is in the registration area down on the fourth level, Independence." Okay, so there is that.

The other thing is this session is being live-streamed, so welcome, anyone who's attending from across the country, and we have 24 people... 124 people. Awesome, welcome. And I do hope you all got your handouts or can download your handouts. Because it is being live-streamed, it's going to be very important that you use microphones, and we are going to have a couple of activities, which we are hoping that the people will do with people who are with them, and then we'll do some sharing back, and we have Mark. He is going to really kindly run back and forth with the microphone and we are going to need you to wait until the microphone gets there, because otherwise, they will be very frustrated. I don't know if you've ever been on the other end of something when you can't hear. It's a terrible feeling. So hopefully we'll all do that for them. And, of course, Senta and I could talk about this topic all day long, but we have a limited time, so we are going to move along, and both of us, I think, would be happy to talk to you afterwards. We'll move off the podium in case other people need to do things. Get set up for the next one.

So just in case you are wondering why we get to sit up here and you are out there, my background is in early childhood special education. I worked as an early interventionist, working specifically with a program that worked with children with special needs as a home visitor, an assessor, a manager, and a group, I ran groups. And along the way, I really became very passionate about supporting children in family child care homes, child care in other settings, so I've been doing inclusion all the way along. And then for the last — That was the first 20. The last 20 years, I've been really doing statewide training and technical assistance projects. So some of what we are sharing today comes from one of those called Beginning Together, and I'll share a couple of those ideas with you. So that's about me, and now I'm going to let Senta talk about her.

Senta Greene: Good afternoon, everyone. Hello. I want to just spend a couple of moments sharing a little bit about my background before we dive deep into where we are going with our experience today around inclusive practices. My background is very similar to Linda's. As I was listening to her, I was reflecting on where my journey has taken me. I've worn many different hats in the field, from being an early interventionist specialist, a home visitor, an inclusion specialist, an administrator, college faculty person, a practicum person, and then the beautiful part has been working directly with Early Head Start programs in the community on the floor with the families and the homes. So that's a little bit about my background. I've been doing it for a little over 30 years. I run an international consulting firm where I get to travel around the world and help people shape their ideas, practices, and experiences for including

children with disabilities, and my heart has been in birth to 5, particularly infants and toddlers. So that's a little bit about me.

I'm going to come down this way and join you, and I want to say a special hello to the people who are with us via broadcast. And as we position our time together, I would like for us to think about the following objectives. Linda and I are hoping when all is said and done and we say goodbye to you today and you walk out the doors, here is a few things we are hoping you are going to walk away with. One is identify the benefits of children with disabilities and how important it is for them to be part of the inclusive experience, but we are going to broaden that perspective, and not just talking about children with disabilities, but what are the benefits for Early Head Start teachers, what are the benefits for families, community partners? Also thinking about utilizing effective strategies. What are the things that we could do when we are with the children, when we are with the families? Thinking about sensitive methods for supporting children and inclusive classrooms, and inclusive homes and inclusive experiences.

But before we get started, I am curious to know who's in the audience with us, so we are going to ask, how many of you are home visitors? Okay, beautiful. How many of you are center-based teachers? Great. How many of you are training and technical assistance providers? Okay, wonderful, welcome. How many of you are specialists in the area of disability services, infant mental health? Okay, wonderful. Linda? Thank you. Administrators, coordinators? Okay. We have a breadth of knowledge and expertise in the room, which is beautiful, because we'll use that to build upon our time together.

Linda: Family advocate.

Senta: Family advocate. Okay. Okay, so how we plan to accomplish the objectives is through the following agenda. We are in that point of welcoming you to the experience. We are going set the stage, we are going to talk about what does it mean to actually belong, and we are going to look at it from multiple perspectives, thinking about our own life experiences around belonging, also thinking about how do we introduce this concept and experience to the infants and toddlers that we work with. We are going to move to a place of talking about the benefits and diving deep into what does that really mean, what does that look like, what does that sound like, and what does that feel like. Also spending some time on when concerns arise. So a lot of us probably have found ourselves in situations when there has been a particular experience that has arose for families where we've had to have some pretty deep conversations with the families about a screening result or an assessment result and thinking about how do we enter into that conversation with families, so that they can receive the information, we can be fully present with them, engage them, and help them get the services that they need. Sometimes those conversations are not always easy, so we are going to spend some time talking through those pieces.

The other thing is thinking about strategies to maximize inclusion, and then we'll spend some time doing some closing thoughts and reflections. That's a little bit about our time. Sound good? Yes. Okay. So this is probably one of the most powerful places we can begin in talking about inclusion. It's really thinking about mindset and our attitude when it comes to inclusion with young children. The right attitude can go a long way, so really it's thinking about our mindset and what we come into the experience with. A lot of times people think they have to have the skills, the knowledge, the practices, the tools, the

heartbeat of inclusion, and the real experiences about what we think, how we experience the children, what our attitudes are about children who come into our care. So as we begin our journey together, we would like to position our thinking around mindset and open heart, creating open doors and open experiences for children.

So there was a really great man by the name of Socrates that goes way, way back, and he talked about wisdom begins with the definition of terms, so we are going to spend a little bit of time talking about a few definitions with each other, and the first one is thinking about the term "disabilities" or "special needs." A lot of times we use those two terms interchangeably, and we want to spend a few moments talking about what each one means. So when we reference and use the term "children with disabilities," we are really talking about children who have been identified, that have formal diagnoses around disabilities. So we might use terms like "cerebral palsy," we might use terms like "Down syndrome," "autism," really looking at the formal diagnoses. Children who acquire or require additional help, support due to behavior, health, or developmental issues might be referred to as "special needs," and this is important to distinguish the difference between the two, because when we talk about identified disabilities, we are typically talking about who are — the children that are eligible for services? Right, and when we think about children with special needs, it may be a child that may not have a formal diagnosis but might require additional help or support due to behavior, due to health, due to developmental issues. Okay, and remember, not all children will be identified when they enter the infant/toddler center and how important that is.

And for many of our children and for many of our families, we are the first response, we are the first experience, and a lot of times we are the first ones that navigate that journey with the family, so when we think about our process and think about special needs, we are thinking about who are the children with disabilities, the ones that have the formal diagnosis, and then who are the ones, who are the children who have special health care needs and what does that look like. So, I should probably admit something really early and have a connecting point. I can admit something, Tamique, very early. Okay. So here is my admission, and a lot of people would say, "You never tell an audience this," but I'm going to tell an audience this, okay, so here is my first admission. Handheld mics are not my favorite. That's my first admission. But we are going to roll with it and we are going to work with it.

I would like to ask you to think about the term "belonging." I'm going to ask you to position your thinking for a moment and just think about that term, "belonging." And when you think about the word "belonging," what does that mean to you? When you think about your own life experiences and the people that are very special to you, the people that you love, the people that you spend time with, what is it about that experience that creates that connection or sense of belonging? So again we are asking you to think about, what is belonging? When you think about when you are at your highest point of belonging or having a sense of connection, belonging, who are you with? What are you experiencing? What are you doing? And what we are going to ask you to do is turn and cluster in a group of five, and we are just going to ask you to share a couple of highlights from your experiences about that whole term, what is belonging, what does belonging mean to you? Who are you with when you are at your highest height of belonging? What does it feel like? And when it's not there, what does it feel like?

Okay, so we are going ask you to take a few moments and cluster in groups of five, and when we return to our experience, we'll share out a couple of ideas or thoughts about our experiences. Okay, we are going go ahead and invite you to come back, and as we are reflecting and coming back to the group as a larger group, I'm hoping that the people, who are joining us through the live broadcast, will also share some of their reflections when they think about the notion "a sense of belonging," but what I would like to do is actually start from one part of the experience of the room and travel down to this part of the room, and I am just going to ask if there are people that are down this way that will be willing to share a reflection or two that came to mind for you when you think about the word "belonging."

Woman: When we thought about the word "belonging," we felt accepted, we felt comfortable, and, you know, we were free to just be who we are when we belong.

Senta: That's a powerful notion. So a sense of belonging, an opportunity to feel free.

Woman: And also we — we are being saved. How we feel about being accepted, feeling alone, discomfort. That's it.

Senta: Those are powerful words. So we are thinking about feeling accepted, feeling safe, and how important that is to not feel alone and to be comforted, so safety and a sense of belonging and thinking about acceptance. Okay, beautiful, and if we were to travel to this part of the room and just thinking about our own reflections when it comes to the term "sense of belonging," is this something you would be willing to share with us out loud about your own reflections?

Woman: The word that came to... The word that came to mind for me was "unconditional," and we had talked about that that unconditional feeling that makes you feel safe, so, you know, unconditional love, unconditional support, those are the kind of things that made us feel like we belonged.

Senta: Absolutely. Thank you. Other thoughts and reflections? Maybe not something that you shared personally, but someone shared with you when you were reflecting together in your group, when you think about the term "sense of belonging"?

Woman: I thought the word "connected." I felt the ability to be my authentic self. Whatever I'm feeling, I could do that, because I'm connected to them, and I won't be a — won't feel shut out.

Senta: So if we were to cast a net for a moment, our reflection starting from this part of the experience we talked about, a sense of belonging means acceptance and safety for us. We talked about the word "unconditional." Now we have been talking about the word of just being fully who we are and being free in that. Other thoughts or reflections as we move to this side of the room, that when you think about the term "sense of belonging" or what that word means for you?

Woman: For me I think about respect, mutual respect among the people that are belonging in the same group. I feel free to risk-take and I have the confidence to maybe fail at what I am trying to risk, but I know that they'll still support me in that.

Senta: Absolutely. Safe place, a really safe place to be. Other thoughts or reflections that are coming forward for you when you think about belonging?

Woman: — But I think boundaries, setting your limits, people set their limits, but when they are not there to... to just reach those limits, that they want to try when you are there to protect them and to keep, you know, to keep them safe, to give them, you know, that conviction.

Senta: Protection and safety, uh-huh.

Woman: I came in late so I hope I am not repeating anybody, but for me, it's very much the unconditional and, like not just accepting of someone's differences but really liking them for their differences. So that's really important to me.

Senta: And I hear there is something deeper about that, right? So there is acceptance and then that's really loving the person for the essence of who they are.

Woman: Right, I mean, it's one thing to love someone. It's a whole another thing to love them for who they are no matter what their choices are, even if you don't agree with them, but you still love them for choosing to make the choices that make them happy rather than trying to make them conform to your way of thinking.

Senta: Absolutely. Your reflections beautifully frame the next experience of what we are going into and really thinking about how certain information, experiences, and theories play out when we think about inclusion. So when we think about a sense of belonging, having protection, when we think about the essence of loving and caring for a person, when we think about a sense of belonging and having safety, when we think about — We have the opportunity and the capacity to be free because people are loving us for who we are and we feel connected to that cause and to that purpose, all of that links back to the power and importance of inclusion, and we are going to continue to thread our way through the process and thinking about inclusion for multiple levels and dimensions, and I want to invite Linda to begin a dialogue with us and start to talk about how does a sense of belonging play out in self-actualization and then thinking about how we optimally are at our best.

Linda: And before we do that, were there any comments that people were offering from afar? Were there... we can get you back a mic. So if there is one other — We want to pull people in, so if you want to pick maybe one or two of the comments. She needs the mic, thanks.

Woman: We had one that said belonging is also empowerment, because you are safe, welcome, accepted, supported, and encouraged, and another one that was very powerful was belonging as being you and it's okay. And there were many others...

Linda: Many others, well... And I'm glad and I know we didn't get all the way to the end, but belonging is a concept that I don't know that we've spent a lot of time talking about, but for me in the years I've been trying to support inclusion, that's the essence. If we can focus on belonging rather than inclusion or mainstreaming or any of the other words it's had over the years, I think we will do a better job of supporting children, all children, to be together, so the reason this comes up is Maslow's Hierarchy. So a

lot of you — Oh, I know, I'm looking at the other slide. See? I'm going to go over here now. It's okay. We have these two slides and it's confusing to the people in the audience... in the other audience.

So basically, most people are familiar with Maslow's Hierarchy, yes? And what I love about it is it's such an easy way to think about what supports all of us to be our very best. So it starts with physiological needs being met, you know, and that's why some of you are happy that you read the instructions and brought your jackets and your wraps for the rooms, because the rooms, even though it's hot outside, it's cold inside, and when you are cold or hot, it's hard to pay attention, isn't it? And when I think about that, the physiological needs, it's some of the very simplest things that can get in our way.

The second, as we go up the layer, is safety. You want to feel safe and that you are not under attack or under threat, and are for those of us who have been home visitors, there are some homes that you go into where you realize, "I want to know where the door is, I want to know what time of the day I would feel most comfortable coming into the neighborhood." There are things that we have to take into account. This is also true for children. If a child is not used to being in a setting with other children, that suddenly may feel a sense of threat, so when we think about safety, it's more than just the kind of, you know, this esoteric safety. It's really, "Do I feel like I can just be where I am?" Then comes belonging, and belonging is something that is about connection, it's about that deep, deep friendship connection, love, that happens. After that is when we can begin learning. Once we are safe, we have our physiological needs met, and we feel that comfort and connection with the group is when learning takes place, and from learning comes self-actualization. So that's Maslow's Hierarchy and it's a lovely thing.

Now, I want you to look at the one... What is that? To the right of it. One of my favorite people, Norman Kunc, who I will read a quote of his in a moment, but he wrote an article, and I referenced the article on the Power Point slide, and talked about... the focus on special education was his focus, that in many, many special education settings. We've flipped those two middle parts of the hierarchy, and what we say is we'll provide for your physiological and safety needs, but you have to earn your way into belonging. You can't belong until you can keep your hands to yourself. You can't be part of the group until you are potty trained. You can't be with us until you can talk. You can't be here until you can sit quietly in circle.

So think of all the barriers that are put in the way, and what happens is because of the way the hierarchy works, our energy as people goes to belonging. We are trying to figure out, how do we fit in, how do we connect, and if we are worried... Some of you talked about the unconditionalness. If I am worried that at any minute, I am going to be told I don't belong and I have to be somewhere else, it takes away my energy for learning. That make sense? This is huge when you really think about it. This is also true for a lot of children whose behavior is challenging. They see themselves as conditional members of the group, so it's difficult for them to be open to learning, and I think this is very profound, and that's why, for me, my focus is always on, "How do I commit to belonging, how do I help provide an opportunity in belonging in home visiting?" I'm sure you've all been in homes where a family says, "Well, he is only happy in this room," or "We can't go visit grandma because she isn't comfortable holding him." That's belonging at its most basic piece, so we have to work on that comfort and that belonging and know that that's the primary place to focus.

So here is my quote from Norman Kunc, and he is a great speaker if you ever have a chance to hear him, and I did make — His website is just normemma.com. His wife's name is Emma. He happens to have cerebral palsy, and he is really interesting... When you talked about accepting differences and loving people because of their differences, one of his points is difference is what makes us unique and that people will say to him, "If you could get rid of your cerebral palsy, would you do it?" And he is like, "No, because then I wouldn't be me. I would lose all those pieces of who I am." So what he has to say is, "When inclusion is fully embraced, we abandon the idea that children have to become normal in order to contribute to the world. Instead we search for and nourish the gifts that are inherit in all people. We begin to look beyond typical ways of becoming valued members of the community and in doing so begin to realize the achievable goal of providing all children with an authentic sense of belonging." Powerful words, and like I said, just really something to think about as you are kind of trying to make everybody fit in, and this goes for home visitors and everybody. People want to belong, you know? Families want a sense they belong to their communities.

Many of us have worked with women who are pregnant, right? We've worked in prenatal work, and you could have a group of mothers who have gone to some prenatal classes together and one of them has a baby at 30 weeks, and suddenly the other moms don't know what to say to her and she doesn't really want to be around them because they are still pregnant, and all of the sudden that whole belonging that they had because they had a shared experience is disconnected, and that happens all the time. Or somebody gives birth to a child who has difficulties in the hospital. Again, people don't know what to say. They may not get any celebration cards. You know, there are things that can really change the experience. So we want to keep thinking about belonging for families, how do we connect and support families? Also, children need to belong in order to learn and grow. That is a need from Maslow's Hierarchy. If you can understand that's the first and most important piece, then that will help us really ask the right questions. And finally, staff want to feel connected. Staff want to feel like they can contribute and that they have good things to be working on.

So, one of the things that we were going to do was a walk around the room, but since we have this live streaming thing, we are going to do it a little differently. So what we want you to do is — if you've downloaded the handouts, there is a grid on the back of the article on inclusion of belonging. There is a grid that has six categories, and I'm going to put them up right now. So these are the six categories that we want you to think about when it comes to who benefits from inclusion of children with disabilities or other special needs. So if you think about, we often focus on the child with the disability, what's the benefit to them? Really important, absolutely, go there, but I want you to also think about, what's the benefit for the children who are typically developing? What benefit might there be for parents and family members both of the children with disabilities and of the parents for all children? How do teachers and staff and home visitors benefit, how do specialists benefit, and how does the community benefit?

So in your same small groups, you are going to get a chance to talk about this, so maybe, you know, just brainstorm one of the areas, like say to somebody, "I'm going to think about community," you know, within your little groups, because I want you to come up with sort of a broader list of what are those benefits. So everybody take a different specialization and go.

[Train whistle] So... I know. A train came in. I want to just reiterate that these are small groups, so make sure other people get a chance to talk and sort of, if those of you came in didn't know, we were making groups of four or five people, just little clusters, so you can get a chance for other people to do some sharing, and we are going start our share-back from this side of the room, so just be on your toes over here. So you have another few minutes.

[Train whistle] Those are fun, but don't ever get them with a roomful of kids unless you are comfortable with germ sharing, because everybody wants to blow it. So we are going to ask, again, just, did you think of some... And maybe I'm wondering if you could share something that came up that you thought was a little unusual from the benefit's perspective. Particularly let's start with the children with special needs. Did anybody in any of these groups on this side of the room have some thoughts about...? Mark's going to run over with the microphone. He'll be — be over there. So somebody have something to share, what's a benefit for including a child with disabilities? She's got a — you have to raise your hand high so we can see you.

Woman: I was just talking about there is a girl that goes to the school where I come from, and she — her and her brother are both severely disabled. Well, I was telling these ladies that she just graduated from high school. Her class... and I don't want to get teary eyed. They nominated her for Homecoming Queen and Prom Queen, and she got both of those. I mean, and her mom and dad took her to have her senior pictures, and now she is gone to live in a home for severely disabled, but they treated it like — her parents treated it like it was her going to college, you know? They had graduation reception for her, they had a big moving day party where they all went and moved with her. I mean, they treated her — and the whole community has truly... like, everybody in there has treated her like she is just a normal child her whole life, so...

Linda: So she is been able to have some experiences that other children might not have access to simply because there were people that were thinking of her as part of their community.

Woman: Yeah, they just never kept them separate, so...

Linda: So thank you for sharing that. Somebody else on this side? Anything else as a benefit? Somebody in the back right there, behind you, Mark.

Woman: They don't feel left out or singled out because they are included in the culture. Lina: Right, so that they are taking part in things that other people are taking part in. I have to point out it's difficult to see this picture, I think, on the slide, but the little girl in the pink, and we have her in several pictures, was a child with multiple disabilities and she had significant delays in her ability to move and see and communicate, and the kids were just used to her being in everything, and so they were digging in the garden, and one of the kids said, "You know, her feet work better than her hands. Why don't you take her shoes off and let her dig around with her feet?" And they did! That came from a child.

And I think that sometimes the benefit is they have an opportunity that maybe meet other expectations as well. I've had children who were really, really good at communicating with their parents, you know, an eyebrow would raise and their parents knew they were hungry, and then they would make this little "enh" and their parents knew they wanted something. Then they get into school and nobody's paying

attention to them, and so in some ways, they have to learn to communicate beyond this small group, and that's belonging, when you can figure out how to communicate and how other people can help meet your needs, so it expands your circle, so it's really interesting. How about a benefit for children who are typically developing? Anybody... and we are kind of moving around again in this side. Okay, we have somebody here, who... What was a benefit for a child who's typically developed?

Woman: We had a long list, but one of the things that we thought of towards the end was that they are able to be exposed to the technology that the children with different needs might have, so they are able to learn a little bit about something totally different. We talked about acceptance and a lot of other great things and learning more patience, being able to move without stigmatism...

Linda: But yeah, I think that is interesting, yeah, that exposure to some other ways of doing things, that there is multiple ways to accomplish things, and technology can be a help for a lot of children. That is interesting, and certainly this is -- They do call them the natives, you know, technology natives, and so for them, this is just, "Of course they would speak with an iPad. Why wouldn't you?" Uh-huh.

Woman: One thing that we said was they begin to appreciate diversity, because it's an awkward thing to have a child out there who has not been exposed to that because they will put you on the spot and then they will begin to say, "Oh, look at that." You want them to know that we are all different, but we all deserve love, so I think that's...

Linda: And I think you are right. Sometimes you may have... Especially in family child care homes, everybody might be neighbors and they all come from the same community and there is not a lot of individual, you know, diversity and other ways, but you may have a child within that mix who has a disability that opens up all different ways, so there is some exposure that way. I always like to point out that these are the future employers of tomorrow, so the other thing is they know that this is a part of the community, that there are different individuals, and that's like her story of the person in the high school. Those people know, "Okay, we have value for people of differing abilities." One more and then we'll move to the next piece.

Woman: So this one's kind of important to me, because my mom was a Special Ed teacher, and so I used to go in her classroom and I was really good friends with a lot of her students, and so I always felt like the rest of my class were kind of missing out on that, you know what I mean? And so, recently I read my son "The Special Critter" or something like that, one of "The Little Critter" books, "The Special Critter," and we got done with the book, and if you don't know, the story was about a boy in a wheelchair, the special critter was in a wheelchair, and when we got done with it, I asked him, "So why do you think they called him the special critter? What made him special?" And he was like, "Well, because he could go really fast and because he had those really cool cars on his — or dinosaurs or whatever it was on his wheelchair," and, you know, all of this stuff. He never once said... I mean, he mentioned the wheelchair, but never once in a negative way, and my son is in public school now. He is five, but he is in a public school, and so it was really good to me... That's still... that's still the way he thinks, you know?

Linda: Well, and we didn't mention people-first language, but you'll notice us using it, even for children who are typically developing as opposed to saying "typically developing children." One of the things

you'll notice is using people-first language keeps our focus on the fact that a disability is only one part of who the person is. It is a part of who they are, though. We don't want to ignore that, either. And I will tell you one of the reasons we use both "disabilities" and "special needs" is years ago when I was first trying to come up with what's the acceptable terminology, and we had quite a group, we had a couple of adults with disabilities who said, "I don't want to be 'special.' I don't want that label, I'm not 'special,' I'm just like you, I just have different things." And then we had parents who said, "Oh, but my child has special needs, not disability, because disability is a specific thing," so we just went with both, so honestly, it's like anything. There are preferences individuals have and I think we have to honor and respect those and not make assumptions, so, just a little aside. So I'm going to move to parents and family members. What kind of benefits are there for parents and family members? Oh, good, somebody right back here.

Woman: We were discussing the idea that the parents and family members have support. They have support of each other as well as they could grow friendships because there might be a parent that you did not know, but then you are belonging in a group, that support for you, and you might become — very good friends. So you have an opportunity of making more friends.

Linda: Right. Right. Anybody else? Something for the parents?

Woman: On the parents and family, what we discussed was that even though you have typically... the children in the classroom might be typical and some atypical and the parents of these children, you really have the same struggles. They are different, they might look different, but we all have different struggles with typical children and atypical children, so we thought that they are basically the same. Some are harder than the others, but we all have struggles, and I think parents share those stories as children grow, whether they are typical or atypical. I still see it as the same... we still struggle.

Linda: Right. I'll never forget a child who was throwing tantrums and one of the parents said, "I know, my daughter, those two-year-old tantrums," and she went, "Wait, other kids throw tantrums? It's not because of his disability?" And it was like, "Oh, yeah, that's pretty typical." And I think sometimes for parents of kids with disabilities, they don't know what's part of the disability, what's part of typical development, what's made more complicated because of the disability, and what really would have happened anyway, and kind of knowing that in that milieu of being with parents of all types I think is a very big benefit. I will also say that it's a both-and, because I happen to be a parent, I didn't share that, but there are times that when you are a parent of a child whose needs are different, you need to talk to somebody who really understands what that difference is, because I don't want to talk to somebody whose kid's having a tantrum when it's very different than the reason behind my child's tantrum. So it's a both-and. You need to have that vast exposure and there are times that you need to talk to other parents who can connect at a very deep level.

I will also say disability is a club anybody can join at any time, so one of the benefits for parents is, you never know when they may have an opportunity to need the information they've learned by being around children with other special needs. Another child may be born who suddenly has some differences. A mother-in-law may have a stroke who suddenly has some differences. So it's just one of those interesting things, which is why it's so hard for people. It's part of why disability's hard, is because

it can happen to anybody any time. You aren't safe. Remember that safety hierarchy? So if you start realizing there is nothing to be safe from, it's just part of life, then that's something else to think about. Someone in the back had her hand up, and then I want to see if there is any that you want to pull out from the next — So, Mark, somebody in the back over there has a...

Woman: It kind of gives a parent the sense that she can let her child go because her child will be included in school and also gives them the — What do you call it? The belief that their child will be able to succeed in school, because I had a child who had Down syndrome, and everything was, "He won't be potty trained until later on in life, he won't be able to walk, he can't eat this, he can't..." But he is overcome everything before he was around two years old. He was potty trained, he was able to walk, and I told her to be careful because he is going to start running. And sure enough, that's what he was doing, so now she can let him go, and one of her fears was she didn't know who she could trust.

Linda: Yeah, it expands your circle. It expands your circle so that there is more people for whom this child is seen as part of belonging, as part of the community. Okay, yes, this gentleman here.

Man: This was from a workshop, I guess, I attended at the National Head Start Association conference where the inclusive term for the classroom or the program was "children of all abilities," which I thought was a nice way of putting it.

Linda: Really good, and I think some people have really played around with ways to make the description of their program very inclusive like that: "We welcome children of all abilities, you'll notice we have people working to support children at all different levels," and I think the truth is we all do have differing abilities, so that's a whole another workshop, but it's great. Anything for the teachers, specialists, staff, those two I'm kind of clumping together? Anybody come up with a benefit from that direction? I know, I'm not going in any order, so feel free to raise your hand.

Woman: We talked about — we had a child that was — had some profound diagnosed disabilities in our classroom this past year, and I think if you talk to the teacher of that classroom, the lead teacher, she would say she learned more this year than she has in her past probably ten years of teaching.

Linda: Thank you for sharing that. I make a joke that it'll be the best professional development experience of your lives. When I was always trying to talk people into having a, "Hey, you get me, I get to come regularly and look at all this," and it's kind of — I say it and people sort of laugh, but that's what you hear from people at the end. It's like, "I learned so many things that now I can use with all sorts of children," and that's the beauty. I think the real-life experience of doing differently and thinking about learning differently and understanding how to promote belonging does make you a better teacher. It gives you a whole different set of tools in your toolbox, so it's really powerful, and you had something that came in from the group.

Woman: This is from Phyllis, and she says that she connected with a family that had three children. The middle child was on the extreme end of disability and he was five years of — age, so she offered to babysit for the family. The mother sat and cried. No one had ever offered to babysit so that mom and dad... And they'd never been out for dinner alone. So she watched just the middle child so the family could do activities with the two others, and everybody benefited; her, the family, the children. I thought it was

really touching. And then there was one more, if you would allow me, that I — they were all very touching, but there was one that I thought really captured the children's segment. When children have not been exposed to the negative opinions and thoughts of people, they naturally accept all their peers. They are not afraid to ask questions like, "Why are you different? Why can't you walk?" Children educate each other by simply being themselves.

Linda: And we are going to talk more specifically about some ways to help support those respectful conversations, but you are absolutely right, it's great, so thank you, guys, for sharing. And we have one more.

Woman: Yeah, I wanted to share something. About two years ago, when I was a teacher in the classroom, I had this little boy who attended part-time in my classroom. He went to a special needs school, and he could walk and talk, he was just developmentally behind. But I used to always have poems in the classroom that I wrote out and they were all on poster board, and, you know, so they didn't miss transitions, "Find the T" or whatever, but this child walked up during a time I was being observed in the classroom and he just read it, and she went, "He just read that." And I said, "Well, now, he is one of the ones that can read in this classroom." And the other children were very, you know — I mean, they knew he went to that special school, and they are all like, "Well, how does he do that?" I said, "Why don't you go ask him?" He was able to get up there and, you know, just listening to us read it, pick out stuff, and he was able to read the poems that were put up, so just because they are special needs doesn't necessarily mean that they are weak in other areas, they may be strong in other areas, so it's interesting to, like I said, you come in there with one mind thought and then as a teacher I look at that and I think, "Okay, well, he is slowly developing in this area, but look at his literacy area, it's huge," you know? So...

Linda: And I think that's that other thing, that we can raise expectations. When children are together, we have a tendency to have higher expectations, and I'm sure that you've all experienced times that you might have been participating in IFSP, Individualized Family Service Plan, with somebody, and the specialist from the early intervention program says, "Well, we need to work on blah blah blah blah blah," and you say, "Well, he is been doing that for weeks. He does that all the... Really?" You know, because, again, we have an exposure to it, an expectation, and sometimes a deeper knowledge of development than maybe an occupational therapist who works with birth to 22 and didn't know what two-year-olds typically do, you know, and thinks they are supposed to be coloring inside the lines or something silly like that, which happens. And community we can't leave out, and I like to emphasize that we will be stronger communities for all the reasons that we said. So the reason I ask people to focus on benefits is because we could all sit here and make a list of barriers. That's easy. You can have all sorts of reasons. But the benefits are real. These benefits are concrete and they are important for us to know, because if we can't communicate the benefits, we won't want to overcome the barriers. So you have to know what the benefits are, and when they are firmly in mind, then you are more willing to work through the barriers because you know in the end there is a reason. You know in the end there is a reason. So when things get tough, it helps us.

In your handouts, if you got them, there was a kind of summary article, and in that article... I've done this activity for a long time in lots of different places, and I summarize some of the things that people

have shared. I have yet to do it where somebody doesn't come up with something different, though, so that is not an exhaustive list. It's just a starting list, and if you find yourself being discouraged, go to that and brainstorm. "Why are we doing this? What's the benefit? Why should we keep going?" And that's when, I think, you can really re-energize yourself. So I'm going to turn it over to Senta.

Senta: So based on the reflections that I heard, when we think about belonging, it is a really powerful experience and concept. When I was thinking about the information that I thought would be important to present to you, I was thinking about all kinds of stories from my work and working with children. And then my thoughts landed in a deeper place, because three years ago, my life shifted completely, where I was on the receiving end of the experience. And for me, that was incredibly powerful because now all of a sudden I was the parent that had the child with the special need and trying to learn how to navigate a system and create new opportunities for a sense of belonging. When my daughter was diagnosed, prior to that point, I had always felt really connected to my family, both immediate and extended. Prior to her diagnosis, I felt like the school that she was in, the child care facility she was in, was loving, responsive, supportive. Prior to her diagnosis, I felt like I knew everything about disabilities, inclusion, and things like that. But my life radically changed and my whole perception about a lot of things changed. And one of the biggest things that changed is that when she was first diagnosed, I got all these wonderful calls. People were there, phone was ringing off the hook, got lots of cards. Got a lot of encouragement, and then as time started to travel on, the phone didn't ring anymore, right? We weren't invited to the things that we used to be invited to. When I took my daughter to the park, she had no hair, no eyebrows. She was often called a boy. I was on the receiving end of facilitating experiences between children in the sandbox, but now I was on the other side.

I say all that to say that belonging is a really powerful concept and experience, and for some families... Linda gave the example that some families like to connect with other families to have that sense of belonging. Some families don't want to connect with other families because they are coping and they are moving through an experience. And everybody will find themselves in a different place, and for me, I remember thinking that I didn't want to talk to anybody. I stopped. I shut down. Because I didn't feel like I necessarily belonged because I had to redefine myself as a mother. I had to even redefine myself as a professional.

So when we talk about belonging, it's really, really, really powerful, and when I think about the notion of belonging in the life of a child, you know, as adults, there are certain things that we can work through because we've had life experiences, and then when you think about the life of a child, they are learning and they are growing into those experiences, so, inclusion means different things to different people. For some families, it's on multiple dimensions. So for some families, inclusion is, "I would love for my baby just to sit at the table and have dinner with us. I don't care if the mashed potatoes get all in the hair. It just doesn't matter as long as she is at the table with us," right? Some families may feel like inclusion is, "I'm trusting you to take care of my child. When I get in my car, I want to know that my child is safe and that you are going to provide all those powerful things that you guys talked about earlier that is critical to a sense of belonging. I want that for my baby, I want that for my child. I want belonging, I want inclusion."

Some administrators have a lot of power and they get to say, "We are going to include you but we are not going to include you. We might include you. Mmm, no, we are not going to include you." And inclusion, it's not something that should be positioned as a privilege. It's a right. Everybody has the right to be included, right? Everyone should have that sense of belonging, feeling like, "I'm at my highest height because someone loves me unconditionally." Right? A teacher cares enough for me to say, "Let me look at my environment for a moment. I've never done this before. I've never cared for a child with special needs, but my mindset is right, I think I can do it."

And then if I have someone like Linda who's going to join me hand in hand and we could look at the environment and try to figure this out together, have the opportunity to make this happen. So when we think about inclusion, inclusion means different things to different people, and you beautifully articulated all those different things in what inclusion means. So, when we talk about inclusion, we look at it from multiple perspectives. The full and active participation of children with disabilities. We also think about other special needs and community activities, services and programs designed specifically for typically developing children, so we are landing our thinking in the child care experiences is one example that we are thinking about. So when we talk about the child care experience, you know, Linda gave this example and she could probably tell this story better because it's her story, but the whole notion of, you are getting ready to get... what would you say, a toddler?

Linda: Oh, want me to do it?

Senta: Yeah.

Linda: So, I want you to just imagine that on Monday, when you get back to work, you are getting a new toddler in your program, and she is almost two, and she is a little clumsy, a little unsteady on her feet still. She talks but not in complete sentences, and she is very eager to be a part of your group. So everybody kind of has some ideas of what they might do based on what I just told you about her. Oh, and I forgot to say she has Down syndrome. And what happens is when I do this activity with people, everything they had just thought about leaves their brain, because they go, "Oh, my gosh, Down syndrome, I don't know anything about Down syndrome." But they knew tons of things about that little girl before I used the label. So sometimes we sort of forget all the good stuff we know when that happens, so...

Senta: So one of the things we are going to ask you to think about as you are positioning your mind around inclusion is what are the supports that are needed to really help children to actualize and be self-sufficient or supported in an environment? So supports might be human resources. Who are the key people that need to be part of this experience with the child? Is it someone that I might need to turn to like my disabilities coordinator and ask them during socializations, "Can you come out and just take an observation and walk with me and be with the family and help me to see from your lens some things that we could do to adapt the environment?" Thinking about accessibility, taking that same scenario of thinking about socialization, how do I arrange my environment so that the things that the children need that may have disabilities or special needs are naturally embedded into the environment? I don't have to roll anything out. I don't have to stop the middle of my morning circle or my greeting because I forgot to get one thing that is specific for a particular child, but it's just naturally embedded into the routine

and into the experiences of what we are providing, so thinking about supports, thinking about accessibility, and then thinking about, "How do we help the families — to feel fully participatory in the experience?" So how do we help that family that may have a diverse — their child might have a diverse ability to be fully included in the experiences that we are providing. And sometimes merely just asking a question and being with the family and being observant, it creates gateways for those opportunities and experiences.

So the full and active participation of children with disabilities, what are their special needs in the community activities, we are constantly thinking about how can we provide supports, how can we provide participation, how can we provide access for our children? And then if support or accommodations or modifications are needed to ensure full active participation, these are provided appropriately in the setting, and it's just revisiting what we just talked about as far as making sure that they are naturally included in part of the experience all the time. So, when we go back to what is inclusion, in your packet, many of you probably had the opportunity to download it, and if you didn't, it's okay. At a later date, when you come across this summary, it's a joint statement between the Division of Early Childhood and also the National Association for the Education of Young Children, and it's a reflection on "what is inclusion," it's a joint statement, and so this particular definition around "what is inclusion" comes directly from those two bodies, that have partnered together to create a joint statement to the community about inclusion. Thank you, Linda.

So, I think that when I was sitting up there reflecting on the conversations that you guys were having with Linda, I think you already touched upon this, but we are going to revisit it for a moment. When we talk about children, we are thinking about their interests, their unique strengths, their characteristics. We are thinking about the types of activities we are planning, the environments and the interactions. It almost looks like it comes directly from the Head Start Performance Standards, right? Does that look familiar to you? That looks like a 1304 statement or something.

But when you think about the interests and strengths, we are really thinking about, "How does that baby coo?" When we think about interests and strengths, preferences, "What's the best way for me to hold your baby? Does he like to be held like this? Does he like to be held like this? Does he like a rocking motion back and forth? What calms him, what soothes him? Does he like the... [Blowing] What sounds does he like? Because I want your baby to be comforted, I want him to be supported, I want him to have a sense of belonging. I want him to be part of the experience." You know, when I'm trying to promote language with your child, what types of words do you use at home and how can I mirror those things back in the center while I'm with your child? So really thinking about strengths, interests, unique characteristics. You know, what gets him excited? What gets him motivated to be part of the experience? And thinking about it in different ways is really important. And then also sometimes that may mean getting down on the floor and actually living in the environment and then they experience the way your infants and toddlers live in the environment and the experience. It's a different perception. Have you ever tried that?

Linda: Yeah, we are doing that tomorrow at 8:00.

Senta: All right. [Laugh] Family members, infant care teachers, and specialists talk together about how to promote each child's belonging in the setting, so the beautiful thing is I don't have to think on my own. I don't have to have all the answers. I can engage a colleague, I can engage a parent, I can engage a specialist to help me to figure out how to do this effectively. It's not a journey that I have to walk alone. So really thinking about the resources and supports. Also, appropriate adaptations and accommodations. I feel like this is a plug. "To get more hands-on ideas and strategies about accommodations, and adaptations, stay tuned and come tomorrow at 8:00 a.m." But really thinking about authentic belonging and making sure that what we are doing.

There is something called universal appeal and universal design, and then there are the pieces about the individualization and taking to heart each child that's in our care and how we are being responsive to them. So, here is one that is really powerful, and I say "one" meaning a real experience that's part of inclusion, and that is fear. The beauty about being able to present is that you get the panoramic view of everyone's faces, right? So just a moment ago when I said "fear," a lot of you kind of nodded your head and there was a moment of a smile and it looked like a point of relation, and I'll just talk about my own fears and processes. In doing inclusion, it's the whole idea of, "Am I going to get this right? What if the child gets hurt? What if the child is communicating and I don't understand the child's cries? And most of my children in my care, they are actually using one to two words, and the child here that I am wanting to connect and care with is using cries, and that's something I didn't get to ask the mom before she dropped him off for his first day and I am trying to figure it out."

So fear is really powerful, and a lot of times, we fear things that we don't know, right? We fear the unknown. So when we spend time thinking about this concept and this experience, it's not necessarily fear of the child that we are talking about, it's really fear for the child. Most people have a heart for this work and they have a desire and they want to make a difference. It's the part about, "Am I going to do this right and is this child going to be okay under my care?" And it's really the focus of caring for the child. So when we talk about the elements of inclusion, with knowledge this fear fades and competence blooms. So the... Yeah, you have a thought? Okay, please.

Woman: About three weeks ago, we received a child in intake that had brittle bone syndrome. Never before. The two teachers whose classroom that that child was being placed in were very fearful. They did not know, "Well, what's going to happen if she gets hurt?" That was the first statement. The first thing they needed to do, they didn't know what brittle bone syndrome was. So first thing I had them to do, I said, "Let's find out about it." So after we looked it up and the child came, the first day the little girl was there, she had a wonderful day. Her parents... Her mother said that she was just like any other child. She jumped around. They wanted to know if she could go on the playground. What can she do? But she played, we were directed how to hold her, how to lift her, because she could very easily... Her bones could be broken. And her mom said, "Well, I had an experience." And she said, "She had five of her ribs broken and she didn't even know it. So when it happened, it can be taken care of." After about two weeks, she is just like a normal little girl in that room. The teachers just treat her just the same. The children treat her just the same. She plays, she climbs, and it was just wonderful. I myself had never worked with a child with brittle bones. But she is just adorable. So, yes, fear does play a good, great part in that.

Senta: There is a lot of richness to what you just shared. You actually made the slide come to life. In thinking about the child with brittle bone, with that diagnosis, that there was an element of fear, right? And are you an administrator or a coordinator?

Woman: Education.

Senta: Education. That you had the wisdom to say, "Let's go look at it. Let's go look it up, let's go learn something about it," right? And that is really speaking to the part about, when we have some knowledge, then that fear starts to dissipate and then the competence starts to bloom, right? But there were a couple of things I heard in there. One is everyone needs somebody on this journey that's going to be reflective, encouraging, and supportive to them, and that's what you were for the teachers. The other piece is, when you have a fear, the more information you find out, you could shatter that fear and something else starts to take place, and in this case, it was competence because they learned more, right? And then the beauty of letting things naturally unfold and being there with the process, guiding the process, look what happened for the child, for the children, and then ultimately for the teachers. It almost comes full circle to what we have been talking about, especially when Linda started her part. It's really powerful. Thank you for sharing, because it really breathes life into the slide that we are looking at. Other thoughts or reflections or just thinking about maybe what the community, the broadcast community might be thinking about at this point?

Woman: The comment... the one comment that we've received is that they like the way the teachers in her story looked at the positives, asked what the child could do instead of what the child couldn't do.

Senta: Well, thank you, so looking at the unique interests, strengths of each child, and then there was another reflection. Is it Tamique? Okay. Tamique: From the parent. She — I'm a home visitor, and she had a family... I just inherited a child with autism, and I had my program, my little plan for the day, and we are going to make, you know, self-portraits and we are going to do everything and have a good time, and I had come... I didn't want to offend the mom because her previous family partner, you know, talked around everything and didn't acknowledge that the child does make a little bit of noise, and she does, you know, flop all over the floor when she doesn't want to do something. I didn't want to offend her and make her feel like, you know, "Well, that's your problem and you need to get control of your kid" or whatever like that, and so I came and I was speaking gently to the mom and I was trying to make sure that, you know, I didn't say anything that would offend her and I was trying to make sure that I didn't, you know, offend her in any way, because I wanted her to have a good time because I have good stuff to share with you and I want you to have a good time on this journey, because, yeah, it's going to be long and you are going to have a hard time of it, but if you can see that it's not so bad... Yeah, she does make a little bit of noise, yeah, she does flop all over the floor, but guess what? Guess what? It's okay.

And so I try and make sure that I'm constantly aware of what mom is feeling so that she doesn't shut me out, so that she doesn't say, "No, I don't want you in the program," because it is voluntary for her and she can say, "No, I don't want you anymore." So I've got to be aware that mom is aware of everything that's going on.

Senta: Absolutely, the family is a powerful part of the equation. We are talking about the child experience and also thinking about the inclusiveness of the family voice and experience as well. Yeah.

Woman: I have one thing to share.

Senta: Okay.

Woman: It's I started last school term, I was told about this child. She had not been diagnosed with anything, but her mother knows there is a problem and everybody has seen that there is a problem, and she dropped — her name was Jevon. She dropped Jevon off and Jevon was running from chair to chair and she was crying, and everybody thought mom left. Well, because of Facebook and multimedia, networking, next thing I know, I'm in the classroom and I get this thing on my phone, and what it said was, "Miss Shaniqua, I just want you to know that now I can go home and rest. I was sitting in my car crying and I seeing you walk out with Jevon — holding Jevon in your arms," and she said, "You just made my day better." And my whole school term was awesome with that mother. I had no idea her mother was sitting in her car crying, but I came out holding Jevon because Jevon needed that comfort, and it made my whole school term go so much better.

Senta: Wow, wow. Thank you for your reflections. I am just going ask you to take a moment and look at the slide and the last point. You can be successful at including children with disabilities or other special needs in your program, and that's what we are really echoing here and that's what we are sending out to you, is that we all have the capacity to do it, and the first part is thinking about our own sense of knowing when it comes to belonging, thinking about our mind set, and then believing that we have the ability to get the information and support each other on the journey and give what we need to help support the child, especially when we are reaching out to the families. Nothing in life is to be feared. It is only to be understood. That's a very powerful quote. We are going to continue with our process, and Linda is going to take us through thinking about how can we include and we have the capacity to do it.

Linda: So what I'm sharing right now... Actually, here, take this, because I'm going to stay here for a minute. Think this mic's on still. What I'm going to share right now is some information that comes from a book that is called "Inclusion Works," and there... This book is downloadable, it's written... I wrote it for the State of California Child Development Division and now the Early Education and Support Division, and they have it online so you can download it, and I'm going to show you where you can get good information, but basically the question is, "Can I include children?" Yes. That's just the answer, and most people already are. They just don't know it! And you don't have to make major modifications most of the time. There is sometimes assistance and support from other people around, and that is really rewarding.

So the next slide on here talks about inclusion works and gives you the link, and through the wonder and the magic of the Internet, I can show you right now. So I wanted to just point out that if you go to [cainclusion.org](http://cainclusion.org), which is [California Inclusion.org](http://CaliforniaInclusion.org), and it's in your Power Point several times, and you see this California Map to Inclusion and Belonging, if you click on this website, I just want you to first of all know when your teachers want to know more about disability, there is a whole section about resources and links, so there is disability-specific information over here on the left side.

So I'm just... If I click "Disability-Specific Information," you can select a disability and then go find more out about it. And it's kind of like we've done the searching for you and we've said, here is some places that are... We are not, you know, recommending, but we've vetted them, we've looked at them so that they are not trying to sell something. They really are usually nationally sponsored or professionally checked-out kind of resources. And, we sometimes have downloads already in the information so that you can, you know, like here, "Autism speaks." There is a visual glossary that you can download that shows different things, and, anyway, so I just want to point that out for you, and that is in the newsletter, but there is also a tab for "Inclusion Works." So I have the book, I brought along one copy, but you don't have to buy it, you can download along an electronic version. It's also not that expensive because it's a state publication, so it's like \$20, and there is also a Power Point that helps you introduce the book to people and talk about some of the possibilities of inclusion. So I just wanted you to know that this is a resource that's out there, it's available for you, and can really go into a little bit more specificity, and it's really written for birth through school age, but there are examples for all the different kinds of things.

And if it's okay with you, I am just going to keep going. So one of the reasons we are so passionate about this is because of identity formation, that really kids are trying to figure out who they are in the world, and — I'll take the mic back and not stand here slavishly, if I could. — I just want to keep our A.V. people on their toes. And really when we think about it, when a child comes into the world, they want to know, "Who am I to you?" And the way we respond and the messages we give to them communicate who they are. So when you are thinking about that little girl she was just describing who has osteogenesis imperfecta, which is the technical term for that syndrome, — the message she is giving is, "You are a capable little girl who we have to have some care with, but you are part of our group," and the message you were giving is, "I am here for you to support your transition, which is hard when mom drops you off," and that came through to mom, that you were there for them, so we are giving messages all the time, and so I think we need to be thinking about, "Can we emphasize the child's competence? Can we look at the strength that child has?" We all have strengths, we all have needs, but instead of making it all about the disability and the difference, that promotion of belonging is emphasizing the competence for the child, focusing on belonging, and then — Here is another resource on the website.

There is - It's the same resource, same Power Points. They have — we have "Talking with Parents When You Have Concerns About a Child in Your Care." Janet Gonzalez-Mena, who some of you may know from the program for infant/toddler care and a lot of the work on infant work. She and I wrote an article that's downloadable. It's in Spanish and Chinese as well as English. And there is a Power Point slide to use in training that's also in both Spanish and Chinese as well as English. So again, resources for you about those difficult conversations, which we can touch on but we don't have time to go too deeply into.

So for dialogue with children and families, one of the things I found is if we can be honest and respectful, that's going to be the best. So when you think about, for children, when they say, "Why can't he do this? Why is he doing this?" You can have an answer that's respectful. So one of the handouts that you download is called "Talking with Children," and one is called "Talking with Parents." So you have both of these, and I am just going to give you an example when you are talking with children. You know,

"I don't like our teacher. She talks funny." And your answer can say, "It's hard to understand her sometimes, isn't it? She really wants to talk you. Why don't you — When you don't understand her, maybe you could ask her to show you." So you see how that answer promotes belonging? It's like, "Don't say that in front of her. Come talk to me, whisper in my ear." No, that promotes difference. That's not about belonging. "He is a baby, right? He knows big boys don't wear diapers, do they?" Kids when they are potty training, they are very aware of who's wearing diapers and who's not. This may be a child who's going to wear diapers all their life. And so the message, again, back is, "You know, you are right." — Oh, where did it go? "Oh, he is four years old, just like you are. Some big boys do wear diapers. He wears diapers because he is learning how to use the potty. Remember when you learned how to use the potty? There are lots of things to learn, aren't there?" So it's kind of — really, for kids, it is matter-of-fact. You want to give answers. And I think that we want to be aware of that — information and the vision we are painting for this child. So when you — I'm going to have to ask for you for a second.

We — I think it's really important to have a conversation with parents if a child has a disability or a difference, how do we want to describe that in front of the child, because that's the message that's going to be given, and I had a little girl who had very poor vision. She really could only see about three inches in front of her face. And she was at the sandbox and she was about 2 1/2 and she was playing in the sandbox, and some Canadian geese went flying over, honking really loud, and there was another family there with their little child and the mom said, "Look, look, look at the geese!", you know, and her little boy looked up at the geese. And the other child just kept playing. And the mom said to the little girl, "Don't you want to look at the geese?" This 2 1/2-year-old said, "Oh, my eyes don't work like yours. I can't see things far away." Well, now the other mom was horrified, but Kara's mom was so excited. It was the first time she'd ever heard her describe. And she said, "Look at how she described it. 'Oh, my eyes work differently than yours. I don't see things far away.' Very matter of fact. That's what we've been telling people in front of her for all that time," so I think we need to give that power to children to be able to say, "No, I use a wheelchair, it makes me move faster — You know — I need to use the wheelchair." So you want to really think about the identity messages and the belonging.

For family members, you want to really be welcoming, and there is a whole other idea, and let them share information and assure respect for confidentiality. One of the best things to happen is when one of the family members of another child says, "Well, how come — What's the matter with him?" Right? Or, "I know he gets some special services. What's going on?" Instead of bumbling around because you know that confidentiality wise, you can't answer it, what I always say to start with is, "You know, if this were your child, I would not tell anybody you didn't want me to, so, I am not at liberty to talk with you about that because I wouldn't for your own child," because as soon as you remind them that you don't want them talking about your child, they are like, "Oh, yeah." So it helps quite a bit, but I always want to say we are making sure that all children's needs are getting met. That's part of what we do here. And listen to the questions and concerns, because sometimes they are coming from fear, right? So... You treat people as if they were what they ought to be and you help them become what they are capable of becoming.

And some of you know the Golden Rule, you know, you treat others as you want them to treat you. We love the Platinum Rule. Zero to Three often has talked about it, where you treat others the way you

want them to treat others. If we can pay it forward, if we can really respectfully welcome families and children, that will help them do the same with others. So I am going to see if Senta wants to say any closing thoughts, and then we'll see if there are some questions, because we have about four minutes, which is always so much fun.

Senta: The only thing that I would leave you with is the single most powerful thing you can do for children is to believe in them and wanted to leave it open so that if there are questions that are percolating in your mind or you want to engage a little bit more, that we have a little bit of space and time to be able to do that, and then to extend it out to the broader community and see if there are questions that are coming to mind for them.

Linda: While you are thinking, I'm going to tell you one — I forgot — one cool terminology twist that I learned from a person a long time ago. If we can get teachers from moving from "do we have to" to "how can we," that's huge, so instead of, "Do we have to include this child," to "How can we include this child," so just think how subtle that is and how different that is, and that's about belonging. So, I just had written that down when somebody was saying something else. Are there questions? Somebody there and there and then we have the broadcast questions.

Man: Another mic. I came in a little late, but I know a lot of — when in programs that I've worked in, a lot of what's made for success has been planning, and planning methodically in advance and also sort of continuous planning and revisiting as you sort of, you know, acclimate the child and the family into the program, so that it is successful, and, you know, invariably, you know, when some piece is missing, it does sort of impact, so, you know, there is a part of — it's one of the things we learned about infants. You know, you — we have to be persistent, and if this was the plan and we really think that this leads to success for this child and all the other children in the program, then we have to be persistent in saying, "Well, we'll let it go because someone got delayed that day or something happened that day." You know, we say, "No, it impacts the day for your child and for all the children in the program."

Linda: Yeah. Powerful.

Woman: Can you go back to the one that said for children and for...

Senta: Sure.

Woman: That one. Okay. So my biggest thing listening to this was we need to remember when you explain it to children that they are afraid, too. Like you were saying earlier, if you can eliminate, you know, if you can educate them, then that will help with the fear issue. And so you have to — I mean, I know we teach our kids and that's a big thing, that's what we do — but we have to remember that trying to sugarcoat things, trying to tell them the right way to do it, the right way to say it, you know, they don't need that political correctness so much as they need their fear alleviated.

Linda: And that's — and I think what I am hearing is sometimes people will say if a child, for example, is in a wheelchair, "Well, he has an owie on his legs." I think that's really scary to kids because they think, "Oh, when I get one, am I going to be like that?" So that's why it's like "his legs work differently than yours" is a better answer than "he's got an owie," and I think you are right, because, actually, one of the

funniest things is I had a family child care provider who said, "I had more questions about the redheaded child in my group than I did about the child with lots of disabilities," because for the kids, that's what stood out to them, so we — you know — it's the same about sex education. You answer to the level that they are asking. Was there anything from the...?

Woman: There were a lot of — an enormous number of thank yous for such a wonderful job. They just seem to be, "the awesome presentation."

Linda: Oh, that's lovely. I know that they are sending out the evaluations immediately after each presentation, so you'll have an opportunity, and I think that online people will also, and then if you go to the last slide, we do have our contact information, and I do, again, have the website up where we can find this information, so, we really invite you to ponder some of this. We are doing a presentation on environment and adaptation tomorrow morning that was easy. It really piggybacks and is related to what we do, but at the very least, I hope you just can think about belonging and how that can frame your future conversations, so thank you very, very much. [Applause]