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ECE 410

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Mini Ecological Study Part II

This report aims to analyze what the community of Sunset Park has to offer for children with disabilities to improve their lives, from early intervention to adulthood. As a community member and future teacher, advocating for a more inclusive society for children with special needs is essential.

It is crucial to start by identifying the early childhood education programs that offer early intervention for children with special needs in Sunset Park. Because as we learned in class, early intervention to improve or prevent the disability is essential. However, only two community-based daycare centers offer early intervention for children with disabilities. One is The Magical Years Early Childhood Center which serves children from three months to three years old and accepts about fifty children. Here they offer early intervention for children with special needs, but The waiting list is long, and getting into the daycare takes time.

The other is Catholic Charities for Brooklyn and Queens at Sunset Park Early Childhood Development Center. It is also an undersized center that only accepts a small number of children. The most affected community by the lack of early childhood centers is the Latinx community. Therefore, if these children have any issues, they will not receive the service they need until they are in elementary school, which will affect them significantly on their performance at school. And it will be more difficult for them to improve their condition.

To keep the community healthy, we have NYU Langone Health. This is the only hospital that serves the community, and it is very difficult to get an appointment for services. Especially after the Civic-19 Pandemic, the services are even more limited. As always, the most vulnerable people are most affected by adverse circumstances. Compared to the population in Sunset Park, the existing health services are not enough. People have to wait one or two months to see a general doctor, and the wait is even longer for special care.

The Public schools in Sunset Park are accessible for children with wheelchairs and offer services for students with other types of disabilities. However, many children with special needs have to wake up early every morning to take a bus that takes them to a public school for exceptional children far away from where they live. In January 2002, the federal government passed the law “No Child Left Behind,” which requires that all students participate in the standardized test to rate and rank a public school's performance. Public schools created self-contained classrooms to classify children with special needs and prevent them from counting for standardized tests.

Public education plays an essential role for exceptional children and is a complex situation. For example, I work in a public middle school in Sunset Park, and this MS has many children that do not speak English. Some of the students' first languages are Chinese, Arab, or native languages from indigenous communities in Latinx. These children are intelligent, but language is a considerable barrier to performing their best. And it will take years for them to become fluent in English. The “No Child Left Behind” law is inaccurate in New York City.

Religion has always significantly influenced society, and they do what they can to help the most vulnerable communities. However, religion and culture can often hinder exceptional children from receiving the necessary services. The family believes that if the child has any disability, God is

punishing them and refuses to acknowledge that the child needs help. Even when teachers tell parents to sign the forms to authorize the services for the child, they do not accept because they are afraid they will be excluded from their community.

In terms of outdoor activities for exceptional children, Sunset Park is central to the neighborhood, and on Summer weekends, this park gets very crowded. The playground is small and not designed for children with disabilities. However, the park possesses an outdoor GYM that is friendly to adults with disabilities. The swimming pool is another activity everyone can enjoy during the summer and is friendly to people with special needs. But, there is no place to go when the cold weather comes. Sunset Park has no free indoor activities for the community. Nevertheless, There is an afterschool program from 3 pm. to 6 pm.

The Public library in Sunset Park is temporarily closed for rebuilding, and the interim library is in a place that is not designed for children with disabilities. Hopefully, the new library will be more friendly for special needs children. And hopefully, it will open soon because, during the cold weather, the library is a resource for parents. And the debate is if the interim library should keep open permanently because the sunset park community is growing, and one library is not enough.

Public transportation has been a challenge for people with disabilities for a long time. But recently, The Metropolitan Transportation Authority finished installing elevators in the train stations in Sunset park. The R and N trains are the lines that run in this part of Brooklyn, and these elevators make it easier to use public transportation for those with special needs. The elevators in almost all train stations are a clear example that little by little, society is getting aware that we must include all people in every public project.

In Sunset Park, many buildings are not friendly for people with disabilities. Only a few have ramps to get into the building and elevators to the upper floors. The fact that most rent control

buildings are not accessible for people with special needs makes it more difficult for them to find a place to live. Also, many restaurants in the area lack to facilitate the entrance for people with wheelchairs and walkers. The lack of these services makes the lives of people with disabilities more complicated and with few choices.

The sunsetparkbid.org is a website to inform about the community events in Sunset Park. This website is friendly to people with disabilities. In the corner of the webpage is an accessibility icon that will give access to a menu that will enable people with different visual impairments to read the information. Using technology for people with disabilities is also a challenge, and the website mentioned above is an example of inclusion for people with special needs.

The Sunset Park community is only partly friendly to people with disabilities, and there is still a lot to improve to become a more inclusive community. Sunset Park is in the middle of developing changes that I hope will benefit all people in the neighborhood because people with special needs deserve to be treated with respect and dignity. And to make this happen, the whole community needs to get involved.

<https://www.publicschoolreview.com/blog/understanding-self-contained-classrooms-in-public-schools>

<https://www.reviewofreligions.org/38167/islam-and-people-with-special-educational-needs-disabilities-send/>

<https://www.sunsetparkbid.org/upcoming>