



# **Federal Policy Statement on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs**

***[www.ed.gov/early-learning/inclusion](http://www.ed.gov/early-learning/inclusion)***

# Policy Statement on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs

- It is the Departments' position that all young children with disabilities should have access to inclusive high-quality early childhood programs where they are provided with appropriate support in meeting high expectations



# Policy Statement on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs

- ***The importance of early childhood inclusion:***

- Being meaningfully included is the first step to equal opportunity, and is every person's right
- Research indicates that meaningful inclusion is beneficial to children with and without disabilities
- Meaningful inclusion in high-quality early childhood programs can support children with disabilities in reaching their full potential resulting in broad societal benefits
- Inclusion in early childhood programs can set a trajectory for inclusion across the course of an individual's life



# Policy Statement on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs

- ***The need to focus on inclusion in early childhood:***
  - Children with disabilities continue to face significant barriers to accessing inclusive early childhood programs
  - Too many preschool children with disabilities receive special education services in settings separate from their peers without disabilities
  - While States have worked to expand access to high-quality early learning programs, there has not been a proportionate expansion of inclusive early learning opportunities for young children with disabilities



# The Facts

- Inclusion benefits all children
  - Children can be effectively educated in inclusive programs using specialized instruction
  - Families of all children generally have positive views of inclusion
- Inclusion is not more expensive
- Children do not need to be “ready” for inclusion

# The Facts

## And Yet...

- In **27 years**, inclusion has **increased only 5.7%**
- And **many children** continue to be educated in separate settings

# Policy Statement on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs

- A “high-quality” early childhood program is one that is inclusive of children with disabilities and their families and ensures that policies, funding, and practices enable their full participation and success



# Policy Statement on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs

## •*The Policy Statement:*

- Sets an expectation for high-quality inclusion in early childhood programs;
- Highlights the legal and research base for inclusion;
- Provides recommendations to [States](#) and [local programs and providers](#) for increasing inclusive early learning opportunities for all children; and
- Links to free resources for [States](#), [local programs and providers](#), and [families](#) that have been developed to support inclusion of children with disabilities in high-quality early education programs





# Policy Statement on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs

## *Inclusion in early childhood programs:*

- including children with disabilities in general early childhood programs together with their peers without disabilities;
- holding high expectations and intentionally promoting participation in all learning and social activities, facilitated by individualized accommodations; and
- using evidence-based services and supports to foster their development, friendships with peers, and sense of belonging.

This applies to all young children with disabilities, from those with the mildest disabilities, to those with the most significant disabilities.



# Parent Centers: Implementing the Policy Statement

- State Recommendations
- Local Recommendations

# Policy Statement on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs

- Recommendations for State Action
  1. Create a State-Level Interagency Task Force and Plan for Inclusion
  2. Ensure State Policies are Consistent with High-Quality Inclusion
  3. Track Data on Goals on Inclusion
  4. Review and Modify Resource Allocations
  5. Ensure Quality Rating Frameworks are Inclusive



# Policy Statement on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs

- Recommendations for State Action
  6. Strengthen Accountability and Build Incentive Structures
  7. Build a Coordinated Early Childhood Professional Development System
  8. Implement Statewide Supports for Children's Social Emotional and Behavioral Health
  9. Raise Public Awareness



# Policy Statement on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs

- Recommendations for Local Action
  1. Partner with Families
  2. Adhere to Legal Provision of Supports and Services in Inclusive Settings
  3. Assess and Improve the Quality of Inclusion
  4. Review and Modify Resource Allocations



# Policy Statement on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs

- Recommendations for Local Action
  5. Enhance Professional Development
  6. Establish an Appropriate Staffing Structure and Strengthen Staff Collaboration
  7. Ensure Access to Specialized Supports
  8. Develop Formal Collaborations with Community Partners



# Resources

## **Initiatives and Opportunities to Support Inclusion**

- Federal Public Awareness Campaign with a Joint Policy Statement on Inclusion
- DEC Recommended Practices and Special Initiative on Inclusion
- DEC Recommended Practices
- CONNECT Modules
- <http://www2.ed.gov/earlylearning>
- OSEP
- ECTA Center

# DEC Recommended Practices

<http://www.dec-sped.org/#!/dec-recommended-practices/t8p3w>



DEC Recommended Practices

Updating the Practices Panel of Excellence Videos

For access, click on a resource below

DEC Recommended Practices

DEC RP Glossary

DEC RPs with Embedded Examples

#### What are the DEC Recommended Practices?

DEC Recommended Practices are a DEC initiative that bridges the gap between research and practice, offering guidance to parents and professionals who work with young children who have or are at risk for developmental delays or disabilities. The Recommended Practices were first developed by DEC in 1991 to provide guidance to the relatively new field of early intervention/early childhood special education. In the late 1990s, work was undertaken to revise the initial set of practices and establish the evidence base for the practices through an extensive review of the literature. Through recent collaborative work with the Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (ECTA), the practices have been revised and updated, and a new set of DEC Recommended Practices is now available.

#### What is the purpose of the DEC Recommended Practices?

The DEC Recommended Practices were developed to provide guidance to practitioners and families about the most effective ways to improve the learning outcomes and promote the development of young children, birth through age 5, who have or are at-risk for developmental delays or disabilities. The purpose is to help bridge the gap between research and practice by highlighting those practices that have been shown to result in better outcomes for young children with disabilities, their families, and the personnel who serve them.

#### Who uses the DEC Recommended Practices?

The Recommended Practices are intended to be used by individuals working across a variety of early childhood settings providing services to young children who have or at-risk for developmental delays or disabilities. The updated set of practices consists of eight domains: leadership, assessment, environment, family, instruction, interaction, teaming and collaboration, and transition. It is anticipated that the practices also will be helpful for those engaged in both preservice and in-service professional development.

#### To reference the DEC Recommended Practices, please use the following citation:


Division for Early Childhood. (2014). DEC recommended practices in early intervention/early childhood special education 2014. Retrieved from <http://www.dec-sped.org/recommendedpractices>



# CONNECT Modules

<http://connect.fpg.unc.edu/>

Frank Porter Graham  
Child Development Institute



THE UNIVERSITY  
of NORTH CAROLINA  
at CHAPEL HILL

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## CONNECT

The Center to Mobilize Early Childhood Knowledge

Modules and courses to build early childhood practitioners' ability to make evidence-based practice decisions




CONNECT Courses are self-paced and self-guided and designed for professionals who work with or support young children and their families in a variety of learning environments and inclusive settings. Each course (except for the **FREE** Foundations of Inclusion) is priced at \$30 / participant.

### Available Courses

[Go To: CONNECT COURSES](#)

1. Foundations of Inclusion (FREE)
2. Adaptations that Work (5 clock hours / .5 CEUs)
3. All, Some, and A Few: Tiered Instruction (4 clock hours / .4 CEUs)
4. Better Together: Powerful Family Partnerships (2.5 clock hours / .25 CEUs)
5. Communication for Professional Collaboration (2.5 clock hours / .25 CEUs)
6. Smooth Moves: Program Transitions (5 clock hours / .5 CEUs)
7. Storybook Conversations (4 clock hours / .4 CEUs)
8. Weaving Inclusion into Everyday Activities (5 clock hours / .5 CEUs)

CONNECT Modules are **FREE** practice-focused instructional resources for faculty and other professional development providers. CONNECT modules are designed using a 5-Step Learning Cycle™, an approach for making evidence-based decisions about practice dilemmas, based on the integration of multiple sources of evidence. 

[Read Factsheet \[pdf\]](#)

### Available Modules (in English and Spanish)


### News and Announcements

[CONNECT Presents at the 2015 DEC Conference in Atlanta, GA](#)  
Posted 10/08/2015

[CONNECT Provides New Courses on Inclusion for CEUs](#)  
Posted 06/19/2015

[CONNECT Offers New Self-Paced, Self-Guided Online Courses on Inclusion for CEUs](#)  
Posted 05/28/2015

[more](#)

 Find us on Facebook

# OSEP Early Learning

<http://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/earlylearning/inclusion/index.html>

## INCLUSION

[Home](#) [About](#) [Partnerships](#) [Initiatives](#) **[Inclusion](#)** [Families](#) [TA](#) [Research](#)

[Recommendations and Resources](#) [ED-HHS Statement](#)

### Recommendations and Resources For:

[States](#) [Local Programs and Providers](#) [Families](#)

### View the April 14th Inclusion Webinar

The Department of Education's Office of Early Learning hosted a webinar: "**Early Childhood Inclusion: Implementation of the State Recommendations.**" The webinar included representatives from Maryland, Vermont and Massachusetts who discussed the implementation of high-quality inclusion programs in their states and how they are supporting local programs.

[Early Learning...](#)

[Newsletter](#)

[Connect](#)

### Watch the Feb. 18th National Inclusion Webinar

**Preschool Inclusion: What's the Evidence, What Gets in the Way, and What do High-Quality Programs Look Like?**  
Phil Strain from the University of Colorado, Denver, shared an overview of the research supporting early childhood inclusion. [Watch here.](#)

### OSERS Michael Yudin Visits an Inclusive Early Learning Program in Houston, Texas

*"How do we make sure that kids with disabilities get the same kinds of opportunities that kids without disabilities get? The opportunity to learn and develop and thrive alongside their peers in the general curriculum gives them the best foot forward in life."*

— OSERS Assistant Secretary [Michael Yudin](#) speaking at the Bertha Alyce Early Childhood School.

Read an article about OSERS Assistant Secretary Michael Yudin's visit to the [Bertha Alyce Early Childhood School](#) in Houston, Tex., where he met with teachers, administrators and, of course, students to discuss the importance of early learning, particularly those with high needs.

### Inclusion in Early Childhood Programs—Watch the Webinar Series Kickoff

The U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services hosted a February 11th [Google Hangout](#) for a discussion about [inclusion in early childhood programs](#) and why it matters to states, early childhood programs, families, and young children with and without disabilities. Speakers included leadership from federal early childhood programs, a local program director, and the parent of a child with a disability.

- College accreditation
- Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)
- FERPA
- FAFSA

[More >](#)

### Information About...

- Transforming Teaching
- Family and Community Engagement
- Early Learning
- K-12 Reforms

[More >](#)

### Related Topics

- [Mission](#)

# ECTA Center

<http://ectacenter.org/topics/inclusion/default.asp>

## ECTA Center

The Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center

Improving Systems, Practices and Outcomes

Part C | Section 619 | Contacts | Topics | Events | Research & Reference | Publications | eNotes | For Families/Para Families

System Framework | DEC Recommended Practices | Implementing & Scaling Up EBP | Implementation Process | Outcomes Measurement

## Inclusion in Least Restrictive Environments

### Inclusion in Least Restrictive Environments

#### Inclusion: Overview

#### Federal Laws and Guidance

- IDEA - Law, Regulations, Data Tables
  - Federal Policy Letters and Guidance
  - Reporting Requirements
- Section 504, ADA, Head Start Act

#### Tools for Understanding LRE

#### State Resources for Inclusion

#### Position Statements on Inclusion from National Organizations

#### Research and Studies on Inclusion

#### Financing Strategies and Collaborative Funding

#### Personnel Development for Inclusion

#### Webinars on Inclusion

#### ECTA Topic Team on Inclusion

Kathy Whaley | Katy McCullough | Mary Peters |  
Megan Vinh | Debbie Cate | Barbara Smith |  
Judy Swett | Katrina Martin


#### Most recent additions to this topic:


 [Preschool Inclusion: Key Findings from Research and Implications for Policy NCCP \(April 2016\)](#)

#### National Early Childhood Inclusion Institute:

-  [2016 National Early Childhood Inclusion Institute \(May 10-12, 2016\)](#)

[2016 National Inclusion Webinar Series \(February-April, 2016\)](#)

 [Policy Statement on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs \(September 14, 2015\)](#): The U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services released guidance setting a vision for action that recommends states, districts, schools and public and private early childhood programs prioritize and implement policies that support inclusion, improve their infrastructure and offer professional development to strengthen and increase the number of inclusive high-quality early childhood programs nationwide. The Departments crafted the guidance with the input of early learning professionals, families and early learning stakeholders. The policy statement also includes free resources for states, local districts, early childhood personnel and families.

 [OSEP Policy Letter on Preschool LRE \(February 29, 2012\)](#) U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs - Reiterates that the least restrictive environment requirements of IDEA Section 612(a)(5) apply to the placement of preschool children with disabilities.

Related page: [IEP \(Individualized Education Program\)](#)



# NAEYC/DEC Joint Policy Statement

[http://www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/positions/DEC\\_NAEYC\\_EC\\_updatedKS.pdf](http://www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/positions/DEC_NAEYC_EC_updatedKS.pdf)



April 2009

## Early Childhood Inclusion

A Joint Position Statement of the Division for Early Childhood (DEC) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)

**T**oday an ever-increasing number of infants and young children with and without disabilities play, develop, and learn together in a variety of places – homes, early childhood programs, neighborhoods, and other community-based settings. The notion that young children with disabilities<sup>1</sup> and their families are full members of the community reflects societal values about promoting opportunities for development and learning, and a sense of belonging for every child. It also reflects a reaction against previous educational practices of separating and isolating children with disabilities. Over time, in combination with certain regulations and protections under the law, these values and societal views regarding children birth to 8 with disabilities and their families have come to be known as early childhood inclusion.<sup>2</sup> The most far-reaching effect of federal legislation on inclusion enacted over the past three decades has been to fundamentally change the way in which early childhood services ideally can be organized and delivered.<sup>3</sup> However, because inclusion takes many different forms and implementation is influenced by a

wide variety of factors, questions persist about the precise meaning of inclusion and its implications for policy, practice, and potential outcomes for children and families.

The lack of a shared national definition has contributed to misunderstandings about inclusion. DEC and NAEYC recognize that having a common understanding of what inclusion means is fundamentally important for determining what types of practices and supports are necessary to achieve high quality inclusion. This DEC/NAEYC joint position statement offers a definition of early childhood inclusion. The definition was designed not as a litmus test for determining whether a program can be considered inclusive, but rather, as a blueprint for identifying the key components of high quality inclusive programs. In addition, this document offers recommendations for how the position statement should be used by families, practitioners, administrators, policy makers, and others to improve early childhood services.



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# Highly Individualized Teaching and Learning

HHS/ACF/OHS resources on the ECLKC website include:

- 15 Minute In-Service Suites to support professional development through training materials
- Curriculum modifications
- Embedded learning
- Intensive individualized teaching practices





# Early Childhood Development, Teaching, and Learning

- T/TA System
- Early Head Start
- Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness
- Program Management and Fiscal Operations
- Early Childhood Development, Teaching, and Learning
  - Effective Practice
    - Engaging Interactions and Environments
    - Research-Based Curricula and Teaching Practices
    - Ongoing Child Assessment
    - Highly Individualized Teaching and Learning
  - Transition to Kindergarten
  - Practice-Based Coaching
  - Frequently Asked Questions
  - Disabilities
    - Early Childhood Development
    - Head Start on Picturing America
  - Early Childhood Health and Wellness
  - Parent, Family, and Community Engagement
  - Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships
  - Professional Development

ECLKC Home > T/TA Resources > Early Childhood Development, Teaching, and Learning > Effective Practice > Engaging Interactions and Environments > Classroom Visuals and Supports



## Classroom Visuals & Supports

The Head Start Center for Inclusion offers a library of visual supports for teachers to use with children in the classroom. Look for illustrations of toys, art materials, daily schedule pictures, problem solving cue cards, and classroom certificates, to name just a few. Each one can be downloaded and printed out for immediate use.

### How to Use the Documents

Pictures can increase a child's understanding and engagement in the classroom. Visual supports can be especially helpful for children with special needs by giving them another way to communicate, instead of relying on verbal communication.

Select the links below to open a list of pictures for Activities, Block Building Ideas, etc. Download and print out the pictures as you would any Word document, in color or black and white.

### Tips for Using the Pictures

- Cut out and laminate for durability
- Punch a hole in the corner and keep together on a metal ring for portability
- Put a strip of hook-and-loop tape on the back and keep organized in a binder or folder



[Activities \[DOC, 1.0MB\]](#)



[Block Building Ideas \[DOC, 578KB\]](#)



[Build Social Skills \[DOC, 530KB\]](#)



[Circle Time \[DOC, 794KB\]](#)









Share








# Policy Statement on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs

- Families, early childhood programs, schools, communities, and government at all levels must develop a robust partnership to build a culture of inclusion to ensure that all children have an equal opportunity to thrive





We want to partner to build a nationwide culture of inclusion

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[www.ed.gov/early-learning/inclusion](http://www.ed.gov/early-learning/inclusion)





# **HHS and ED Policy Statement on Family Engagement**

*From the Early Years to the Early Grades*

[www.ed.gov/early-learning](http://www.ed.gov/early-learning)

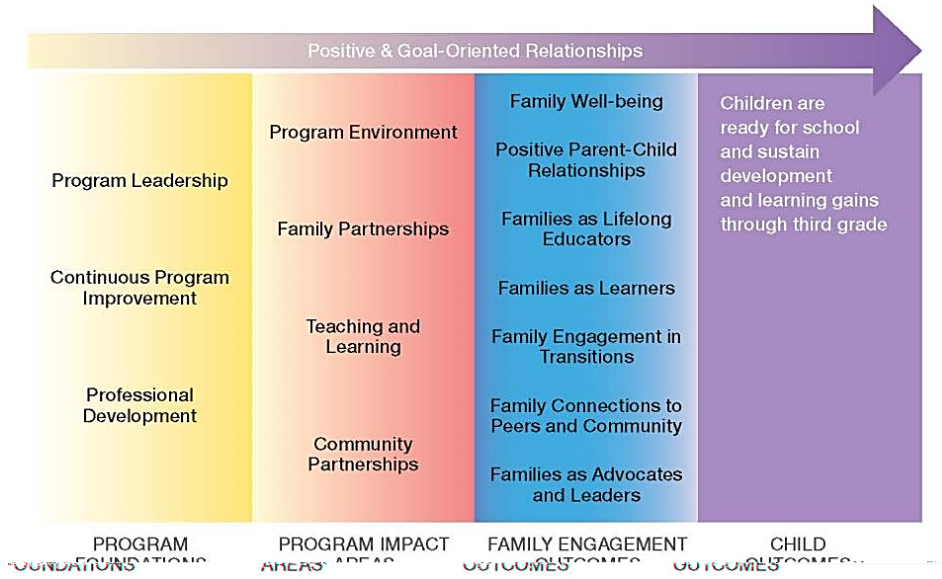
[www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ecd](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ecd)

# Policy Statement Purpose

- Align the Frameworks

## PARENT, FAMILY, AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

When parent and family engagement activities are systemic and integrated across program foundations and program impact areas, family engagement outcomes are achieved, resulting in children who are healthy and ready for school. Parent and family engagement activities are grounded in positive, ongoing, and goal-oriented relationships with families.



# Policy Statement Purpose

- Building a common language
- Prioritizing family engagement as an early childhood and educational strategy.
- Providing guidance to the field for implementing high-impact family engagement practices.



# Definition of Family Engagement

Family engagement refers to the systematic inclusion of families in activities and programs that promote children's development, learning, and wellness, including in the planning, development, and evaluation of such activities, programs, and systems.



# Policy Statement Research Highlights

- **Parenting and Parent Engagement**

- Early parent-child relationships have powerful effects on children's emotional well-being
- With parents' sensitive, responsive, and predictable care, young children develop the skills they need to succeed in life.
- Supportive and extensive social networks for parents help them create more stimulating home environments for their children, communicate better with their children, and feel more confident in their role as parents



# Policy Statement Research Highlights

## Parent-School/Provider/Program Relationships



- Strong, positive relationships between families and providers reinforce learning at home and in the community
- Two-way communication and cultural and linguistic responsiveness enable strong, positive relationships

# Policy Statement Research Highlights

## •Home-School Connections

- Promoting enriching learning activities in the classroom and in the home contributes to children’s learning and development.
- Family activities such as reading and talking to young children lead to positive outcomes.

### Research to Practice Series

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/family/rtp-series.html>



# Policy Statement Research Highlights

- **Family Well-Being Matters**

- Family well-being is a strong predictor of children's school readiness
- Promoting families' strengths and resilience through comprehensive services and promising practices (such as two-generation approaches) support young children

## Research to Practice Series

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/family/rtp-series.html>





# Principles of Effective Family Engagement

1. Create **continuity and consistency** for children and families.
2. Value **respectful and trusting relationships** between families and professionals.
3. Develop **goal-oriented relationships** with families that are linked to children's development and learning.
4. Engage families around **children's health, mental health and social and emotional well-being**.
5. Ensure that all family engagement opportunities are **culturally and linguistically responsive**.

# Principles of Effective Family Engagement

6. Build **staff capacity** to implement family engagement practice principles.
7. Support **families' connections and capabilities**.
8. Systemically **embed effective family engagement** strategies within early childhood systems and programs.
9. Develop **strong relationships with community** partners that support families.
10. Continuously **learn and improve**.

# Recommendations to Promote Family Engagement

1. **Plan** for and **prioritize** family engagement.
2. Communicate **consistent messages** that support strong family engagement.
3. **Invest and allocate** resources.
4. Establish **policies, procedures, and practices** that support family engagement.
5. Establish **workforce capacity building** that supports family engagement.
6. Develop and integrate **family engagement data** for continuous improvement in systems and programs.

# Early Intervention & Special Education

1. Additional support needs of families with children with disabilities.
2. Intersection of IDEA and family engagement practices
3. Role of parent leadership







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**[www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ecd](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ecd)**

**[www.ed.gov/early-learning](http://www.ed.gov/early-learning)**

**<http://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/earlylearning/families.html>  
[#family-engagement-policy-statement](#)**