



# Inclusion

Early Childhood Development Department



Illinois  
State Board of  
Education



# Early Childhood Inclusion for Each and Every Child in Illinois

Inclusion is about each and every child.

Inclusion is about each and every child. Inclusion is the principle that supports the education of children with disabilities alongside their non-disabled peers rather than separately. Both the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (Sec. 504) require schools and agencies to provide equal education opportunities for children with disabilities. The primary source for the inclusion requirement is the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act or IDEA. For preschool and school age children (ages 3-21), IDEA requires that children with disabilities be educated in the “least restrictive environment” (§1412(a)(5) and §1413(a)(1)). For infants and toddlers (ages 0-3) with disabilities, IDEA promotes the use of “natural environments” for early intervention services (§1432(4)(G)).

Inclusion in early childhood programs refers to including children with 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 belonging. This applies to all young children with disabilities, from those with mildest disabilities, to those with the most significant disabilities.

*"Being included at age 3 laid the foundation for success when my son entered kindergarten."*

*~Parent*

## Definition of Early Childhood Inclusion

"Early childhood inclusion embodies the values, policies, and practices that support the right of every infant and young child and his or her family, regardless of ability to participate in a broad range of activities and contexts as full members of families, communities, and society. The desired results of inclusive experiences for children with and without disabilities and their families include a sense of belonging and membership, positive social relationships and friendships, and development and learning to reach their full potential. The defining features of inclusion that can be used to identify high quality early childhood programs and services are access, participation, and supports."

\* \* \*

**Definition from the Joint Position Statement of Inclusion from Division of Early Childhood (DEC) and National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)**

*"Inclusion for us means adults modeling to her classmates interactions that do not underestimate her abilities."*

*"Inclusion is a joy because kids are naturally inclined towards acceptance: just observe the playground, and watch kids independently modify a game to include everyone."*

## What Is an Early Childhood Program?

According to the federal government, an Early Childhood Program is a program that includes children with disabilities and the majority of the children in the program are non-disabled children.

**These programs may include, but are not limited to:**

- Head Start Programs;
- Preschool classes offered to an eligible pre-kindergarten population by the public school system;
- Private kindergartens or preschools; and
- Group child development centers or childcare.

## Early Childhood Programs Should:

- Promote learning that is child-centered and active
- Provide learning activities on the developmental levels of the children
- Have activities that are relevant to the children in the program
- Offer a variety of hands-on learning activities and materials in learning centers
- Provide learning experiences that correspond to the interest of the children
- Include conversations and interactions between the children and adults throughout the day



## Benefits of High Quality Inclusive Preschool for Each and Every Child

- ★ Research indicates that meaningful inclusion is beneficial to children with and without disabilities across a variety of developmental domains.
- ★ Children with disabilities, including those with the most significant disabilities and the highest needs, can make significant developmental and learning progress in inclusive settings.
- ★ Children with disabilities in inclusive early childhood programs also demonstrate stronger social-emotional skills than their peers in separate settings.
- ★ Meaningful inclusion in high quality early childhood programs can support children with disabilities in reaching their full potential resulting in broad societal benefits.

US Dept. of Health and Human Services and US Dept. of Education's Policy Statement on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs, Full Text, Sept. 14, 2015.



## Defining Features of Inclusion

### **Access:**

Providing a wide range of activities and environments for every child by removing physical barriers and offering multiple ways to promote learning and development.

### **Participation:**

Using a range of instructional approaches to promote engagement in play and learning activities, and a sense of belonging for every child.

### **Supports:**

Broader aspects of the system such as professional development, incentives for inclusion, and opportunities for communication and collaboration among families and professionals to assure high quality inclusion.

\* \* \*

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

# How Can My Child Receive Special Education Services in a High Quality Inclusive Environment?



## Dually Licensed Teacher Model

- Teachers who provide regular and special education to one group of children, those with and without Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)
- 1 Full time Equivalent (FTE) dually licensed
- 1 FTE assistant

Dually Licensed: Professional Educator Licensure (PEL) endorsed in early childhood with early childhood special education (ECSE) approval



## Team (Co-Teaching) Model

- Teachers with different certifications work together to plan, implement and assess the activities of all children.
- 1 FTE dually licensed\* or PEL endorsed in Learning Behavior Specialist 1 with ECSE approval
- 1 FTE teacher with PEL endorsed in early childhood
- 1 FTE assistant



## Itinerant Model

- Teachers and related service providers deliver special education in regular education classrooms in collaboration with the regular education teacher and other staff.
- 1 dually licensed or PEL endorsed in LBS1 with ECSE approval. FTE determined by Individualized Education Program needs.



## Collaborative

- Special education and related services staff confer with regular education staff specific to children with IEPs. Teachers who provide regular and special education to one group of children, those with and without IEPs
- Can occur as isolated model or as an addition to the other models

The above supports for inclusion could take place wherever young children are cared for and educated. Some common options are community childcares, Head Starts, Preschool For All classrooms, and early childhood classrooms in public schools.

With each support the goal is to provide special education services to children with disabilities in a high quality program that includes children with and without disabilities.

## Where Can Inclusion Happen for My Child?

Anywhere young children are together! Some common options are:





## References & Resources

**CONNECT:** The Center to Mobilize Early Childhood Knowledge. (2012). Policy advisory: The law on inclusive education (Rev. ed.). Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina, FPG Child Development Institute, Author.

DEC/NAEYC. (2009). Early childhood inclusion: A joint position statement of the Division of Early Childhood (DEC) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina, FPG Child Development Institute available as a free download from:  
[http://npdci.fpg.unc.edu/resources/articles/Early\\_Childhood\\_Inclusion](http://npdci.fpg.unc.edu/resources/articles/Early_Childhood_Inclusion)

Individual with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004, 20 U.S.C. § 1400 et seq.

US Dept. of Health and Human Services and US Dept. of Education's Policy Statement on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs, Full Text, Sept. 14, 2015.