



Research Synthesis Points on Early Childhood Inclusion

This document is a summary of key conclusions or “synthesis points” drawn from a review of the literature or research syntheses on early childhood inclusion. We encourage you to reproduce it for distribution and use it in a variety of contexts including professional development, policy development, planning, advocacy, and grant writing.

1. Inclusion takes many different forms; a single definition of inclusion does not exist.

Division for Early Childhood. (1993). *Inclusion. Position statement*. Missoula, MT: Author.

*Guralnick, M. J. (2001). A framework for change in early childhood inclusion. In M. J. Guralnick (Ed.), *Early childhood inclusion: Focus on change* (pp. 3-35). Baltimore: Brookes.

*Odom, S. L., & Diamond, K. E. (1998). *Inclusion of young children with special needs in early childhood education: The research base*. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 13(1), 3-25.

Odom, S. L., Horn, E. M., Marquart, J., Hanson, M. J., Wolfberg, P., Beckman, P. J., et al. (1999). On the forms of inclusion: Organizational context and individualized service models. *Journal of Early Intervention*, 22, 185-199.

*Schwartz, I. S., Sandall, S. R., Odom, S. L., Horn, E., & Beckman, P. J. (2002). “I know it when I see it”: In search of a common definition of inclusion. In S. L. Odom (Ed.), *Widening the circle: Including children with disabilities in preschool programs* (pp. 10-24). New York: Teachers College Press.

NPDCI works with states to create a system of high quality, cross-agency professional development for early childhood personnel to support inclusion. NPDCI is a project of the FPG Child Development Institute at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and is funded by the US Office of Special Education Programs. Visit NPDCI at www.fpg.unc.edu/~npdci

2. Progress has been achieved in efforts to ensure access to inclusive programs, particularly for pre-kindergarten children (3-5 year-olds). However, in the U.S., universal access to inclusive programs for all children with disabilities is far from a reality.

- *Guralnick, M. J. (2001). A framework for change in early childhood inclusion. In M. J. Guralnick (Ed.), *Early childhood inclusion: Focus on change* (pp. 3-35). Baltimore: Brookes.
- McDonnell, A. P., Brownell, K. L., & Wolery, M. (1997). Teaching experience and specialist support: A survey of preschool teachers employed in programs accredited by NAEYC. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education, 17*(3), 263-285.
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3. Children in inclusive programs generally do at least as well as children in specialized programs. Inclusion can benefit children with and without disabilities, particularly with respect to their social development.

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- Buysse, V., Goldman, B. D., & Skinner, M. (2002). Setting effects on friendship formation among young children with and without disabilities. *Exceptional Children, 68*(4), 503-517.
- Cole, K. N., Mills, P. E., Dale, P. S., & Jenkins, J. R. (1991). Effects of preschool integration for children with disabilities. *Exceptional Children, 58*(1), 36-45.
- *Guralnick, M. J. (2001). A framework for change in early childhood inclusion. In M. J. Guralnick (Ed.), *Early childhood inclusion: Focus on change* (pp. 3-35). Baltimore: Brookes.
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- Holahan, A., & Costenbader, V. (2000). A comparison of developmental gains for preschool children with disabilities in inclusive and self-contained classrooms. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education, 20*(4), 224-235.
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- Jenkins, J. R., Odom, S. L., & Speltz, M. L. (1989). Effects of social integration on preschool children with handicaps. *Exceptional Children, 55*(5), 420-428.

- * Lamorey, S., & Bricker, D. D. (1993). Integrated programs: Effects on young children and their parents. In C. Peck, S. L. Odom, & D. D. Bricker (Eds.), *Integrating young children with disabilities into community programs: Ecological perspectives on research and implementation* (pp. 249-270). Baltimore: Brookes.
- Mills, P. E., Cole, K. N., Jenkins, J. R., & Dale, P. S. (1998). Effects of differing levels of inclusion on preschoolers with disabilities. *Exceptional Children*, 65(1), 79-90.
- * Odom, S. L., & Diamond, K. E. (1998). [Inclusion of young children with special needs in early childhood education: The research base](#). *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 13(1), 3-25.
- * Odom, S. L., Schwartz, I. S., & ECRRI Investigators. (2002). So what do we know from all this? Synthesis points of research on preschool inclusion. In S. L. Odom (Ed.), *Widening the circle: Including children with disabilities in preschool programs* (pp. 154-174). New York: Teachers College Press.
- * Odom, S. L., Vitzum, J., Wolery, R., Lieber, J., Sandall, S., Hanson, M., et al. (2004). [Preschool inclusion in the United States: A review of research from an ecological systems perspective](#). *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs*, 4(1), 17-49.
- Rafferty, Y., Piscitelli, V., & Boettcher, C. (2003). The impact of inclusion on language development and social competence among preschoolers with disabilities. *Exceptional Children*, 69(4), 467-479.

4. A variety of factors such as policies, resources, and beliefs influence the acceptance and implementation of inclusion.

- * Bailey, D. B., McWilliam, R. A., Buysse, V., & Wesley, P. W. (1998). [Inclusion in the context of competing values in early childhood education](#). *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 13(1), 27-47.
- Buell, M. J., Gamel-McCormick, M., & Hallam, R. A. (1999). Inclusion in a childcare context: Experiences and attitudes of family childcare providers. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education*, 19(4), 217-224.
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- Devore, S., & Hanley-Maxwell, C. (2000). "I wanted to see if we could make it work": Perspectives on inclusive childcare. *Exceptional Children*, 66(2), 241-255.
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- Purcell, M. L., Horn, E., & Palmer, S. (2007). A qualitative study of the initiation and continuation of preschool inclusion programs. *Exceptional Children*, 74(1), 85-99.
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- Stoiber, K. C., Gettinger, M., & Goetz, D. (1998). [Exploring factors influencing parents' and early childhood practitioners' beliefs about inclusion](#). *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 13(1), 107-124.
- *Stoneman, Z. (1993). The effects of attitude on preschool integration. In C. Peck, S. L. Odom, & D. D. Bricker (Eds.), *Integrating young children with disabilities into community programs: Ecological perspectives on research and implementation* (pp. 223-248). Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes.
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5. Specialized instruction is an important component of inclusion and a factor affecting child outcomes.

- Antia, S. D., Kreimeyer, K. H., & Eldredge, N. (1994). Promoting social interaction between young children with hearing impairments and their peers. *Exceptional Children*, 60, 262-275.
- D'Allura, T. (2002). Enhancing the social interaction skills of preschoolers with visual impairments. *Journal of Visual Impairment and Blindness*, 96, 576-584.
- DeKlyen, M., & Odom, S. L. (1989). Activity structure and social interactions with peers in developmentally integrated play groups. *Journal of Early Intervention*, 13, 342-352.
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Schwartz, I. S., & Carta, J. J. (1996). Examining use of recommended language intervention practices in early childhood special education classrooms. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education*, 16(2), 251-272.

6. Collaboration among parents, teachers, and specialists is a cornerstone of high quality inclusion.

Hunt, P., Soto, G., Maier, J., Liboiron, N., & Bae, S. (2004). Collaborative teaming to support preschoolers with severe disabilities who are placed in general education early childhood programs. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education*, 24(3), 123-142.

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7. Families of children with disabilities generally view inclusion favorably, although some families express concern about the quality of early childhood programs and services.

Bailey, D. B., & Winton, P. J. (1987). Stability and change in parents' expectations about mainstreaming. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education*, 7(1), 73-88.

Bailey, D. B., & Winton, P. J. (1989). Friendship and acquaintance among families in a mainstreamed day care center. *Education and Training of the Mentally Retarded*, 24, 107-113.

Bennett, T., Deluca, D., & Bruns, D. (1997). Putting inclusion into practice: Perspectives of teachers and parents. *Exceptional Children*, 64(1), 115-131.

Green, A. L., & Stoneman, Z. (1989). Attitudes of mothers and fathers of nonhandicapped children. *Journal of Early Intervention*, 13, 292-304.

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Peck, C., Carlson, P., & Helmstetter, E. (1992). Parent and teacher perceptions of outcomes for typically developing children enrolled in integrated early childhood programs: A statewide survey. *Journal of Early Intervention*, 16, 53-63.

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- Reichart, D. C., Lynch, E. C., Anderson, B. C., Svobodny, L. A., DiCola, J. M., & Mercury, M. G. (1989). Parental perspectives on integrated preschool opportunities for children with handicaps and children without handicaps. *Journal of Early Intervention, 13*, 6-13.

8. Limited research suggests that the quality of early childhood programs that enroll young children with disabilities is as good as, or slightly better, than the quality of programs that do not enroll these children; however, most studies have focused on general program quality as opposed to the quality of inclusion for individual children with disabilities and their families.

- Buyse, V., Skinner, D., & Grant, S. (2001). Toward a definition of quality inclusive child care: Perspectives of parents and practitioners. *Journal of Early Intervention, 24*(2), 146-161.
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- Knoche, L., Peterson, C. A., Edwards, C. P., & Jeon, H. (2006). [Child care for children with and without disabilities: The provider, observer, and parent perspectives.](#) *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 21*, 93-109.
- La Paro, K. M., Sexton, D., & Snyder, P. (1998). [Program quality characteristics in segregated and inclusive early childhood settings.](#) *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 13*, 151-168.

9. Some evidence suggests that early childhood professionals may not be adequately prepared to serve young children with disabilities enrolled in inclusive programs.

- Buyse, V., Wesley, P. W., Keyes, L., & Bailey, D. B. (1996). Assessing the comfort zone of child care teachers in serving young children with disabilities. *Journal of Early Intervention, 20*(3), 189-204.
- Chang, F., Early, D., & Winton, P. (2005). Early childhood teacher preparation in special education at 2- and 4-year institutions of higher education. *Journal of Early Intervention, 27*, 110-124.
- Dinnebeil, L. A., McInerney, W., Fox, C., & Juchartz-Pendry, K. (1998). An analysis of the perceptions and characteristics of childcare personnel regarding inclusion of young children with special needs in community-based programs. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education, 18*(2), 118-128.
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Definition of Terms

Inclusion

According to the Division for Early Childhood, "Inclusion, as a value, supports the right of all children, regardless of abilities, to participate actively in natural settings within their communities. Natural settings are those in which the child would spend time had he or she not had a disability. These settings include, but are not limited to: home, preschools, nursery schools, Head Start programs, kindergartens, neighborhood school classrooms, childcare, places of worship, recreational (such as community playgrounds and community events) and other settings that all children and families enjoy."

The entire DEC position statement on inclusion may be accessed online at:
http://www.dec-sped.org/pdf/positionpapers/PositionStatement_Inclusion.pdf

Primary source

A primary source is a publication reporting results of an original research study that typically appears in a peer-reviewed journal.

Research synthesis

A research synthesis provides a comprehensive, systematic review of research studies related to a particular subject. The synthesis typically includes a description, summary, and critical analysis of a specific line of research. A research synthesis may also include an appraisal of the research evidence and a description of the magnitude of the effects of an intervention under investigation.

Research synthesis points

Research synthesis points represent the key conclusions that can be drawn from a review of the literature or research synthesis. The synthesis points in this document derive primarily from two key sources:

- Odom, S. L. (Ed.). (2002). *Widening the circle: Including children with disabilities in preschool programs*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Guralnick, M. J. (Ed.). (2001). *Early childhood inclusion: Focus on change*. Baltimore: Brookes.

Specialized program

A specialized program is one that is designed for and serves primarily children with disabilities. In specialized programs, the majority of children enrolled are those with an identified disability who are eligible for special education or early intervention services.

Specialized instruction

Specialized instruction consists of any intervention or instructional approach that is designed to scaffold learning or development for an individual child. Specialized instruction includes embedded interventions (those that occur within the context of daily routines and activities and build on a child's interests and activities) and strategies that are more intensive and individualized (prompting, modeling, physical assistance, giving a directive and waiting for a response).

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