In this fact sheet:

What are the benefits of inclusive services for preschoolers with disabilities?

Why is inclusion appropriate for preschoolers with significant disabilities?

What type of supports and modifications should be considered?

Why is preschool inclusion so important?

{and more}

In the last two decades, evidence supporting the benefits of integrated special education services for young children with disabilities has grown. It is therefore vital that parents are able to identify the markers of a high-quality preschool inclusion program and understand their child’s rights.

INCLUSION AND PRESCHOOL

What are the benefits of inclusive services for preschoolers with disabilities?

Children with disabilities who are fully included in high-quality classrooms with typically developing peers have been shown to make positive gains across nearly every developmental domain. In addition to academic gains, they are more likely to show positive social and emotional behaviors; develop higher level social skills; engage in more advanced play; develop more advanced communication skills; and generalize skills across settings. There are also long-term benefits. Researchers have found that high expectations can lead children with disabilities to develop more confidence, independence, and a stronger sense of self.

What are the benefits for typically developing children?

Typical children in inclusive classrooms have shown positive developmental and attitudinal changes from integrated experiences. They may develop more realistic attitudes about children with disabilities, become sensitive to their needs, and learn to appreciate individual differences at an early age.

Is inclusion appropriate for preschoolers with significant disabilities?

There is no evidence that children with particular disabilities or “significant levels” of impairment are poor candidates for integrated programs, given appropriate planning, services, and support. In fact, research shows children with significant disabilities have improved social and academic outcomes when educated in inclusive settings. There have been “no studies conducted since the late 1970’s that have shown an academic advantage for students with intellectual and other developmental disabilities educated in separate settings.” (Falvey, 2014)

Does inclusion mean that a preschooler will not have access to individual supports or specialists?

Not at all. In fact, State rules require that each school district assure a student’s IEP can be implemented in an early childhood program with any supplementary aids and services that are specified in the student’s IEP, and that all special education and related services specified in the IEP are provided by appropriately certified and/or licensed personnel or by paraprofessionals.

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What type of supports and modifications should be considered?

Simply attending a program with typical peers does not mean the program is effective or appropriate. Special education services and supports must also be provided. These include, but are not limited to:

- Curricular or instructional modifications or specialized instructional strategies
- Assistive technology devices and services
- Teacher aides
- Related services
- Integrated therapies
- Consultation services
- In-class resource programs

Q: Why is preschool inclusion so important?

A child’s preschool education placement has a direct impact on future placement. Children who begin their educational services in segregated settings often remain in similar settings for their educational career. Similarly, students who start out receiving their services in inclusive settings are more likely to continue to be included in general education settings moving forward.

Learn More:

Federal rules regarding preschool special education can be found in Part B (CRF 300).

Regulations regarding LRE can be found at 300.114.

New Jersey regulations regarding services for students who are preschool disabled NJAC 6A:13-4.2, 4.3 (d).

Go on line for more information including:

How do I know if my child is truly included?
What are some common barriers and solutions to preschool inclusion?
What are the hallmarks of successful programs?