Research Synthesis Points on Early Childhood Inclusion

T HIS DOCUMENT IS A SUMMARY OF KEY CONCLUSIONS OR "SYNTHESIS POINTS" drawn from a review of the literature or research syntheses on early childhood inclusion. For each synthesis point, we provide supporting references. We encourage you to reproduce this document for distribution and use it in a variety of contexts, including professional development, policy development, planning, advocacy, and grant writing.

It should be noted that synthesis points 1-7 derive primarily from the following key sources, selected because these authors summarized what was known about inclusion:

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

Based on our own review of the literature, we added synthesis points 8 and 9 to reflect emerging knowledge about quality inclusive programs and professional development related to inclusion.

1. Inclusion takes many different forms.

> Lieber, J., Hanson, M. J., Beckman, P. J., Odom, S. L., Sandall, S. R., Schwartz, I. S., et al. (2000). Key influences on the initiation and implementation of inlusive preschool programs. *Exceptional Childen, 67*(1), 83–98.
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> *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.
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> 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.

*A research review or synthesis. All other references represent primary sources.

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.

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.

U. S. Department of Education. (2005). *Executive Summary — Twenty-fifth annual report to congress on the implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.* Retrieved June 22, 2007 from http://www.ed.gov/about/reports/annual/osep/2003/25th-exec-summ.pdf

Wolery, M., Holcombe-Ligon, A., Brookfield, J., Huffman, K., Schroeder, C., Martin, C. G., et al. (1993). The extent and ature of preschool mainstreaming: A survey of general early educators. *The Journal of Special Education, 27*(2), 222–234.

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.

*Buysse, V., & Bailey, D. B. (1993). Behavioral and developmental outcomes in young children with disabilities in integrated and segregated settings: A review of comparative studies. *The Journal of Special Education*, *26*(4), 434-461.

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.

Diamond, K. E., & Carpenter, E. S. (2000). Participation in inclusive preschool programs and sensitivity to the needs of others. *Journal of Early Intervention, 23*(2), 81–91.

Guralnick, M. J., Conner, R. T., Hammond, M. A., Gottman, J. M., & Kinnish, K. (1996). Immediate effects of mainstreamed settings on the social interactions and social integration of preschool children. *American Journal on Mental Retardation, 100,* 359-377.

Guralnick, M. J., & Groom, J. M. (1988). Peer interactions in mainstreamed and specialized classrooms: A comparative analysis. *Exceptional Children*, *54*, 415-425.

Harris, S. L., Handleman, J. S., Kristoff, B., Bass, L., & Gordon, R. (1990). Changes in language development among autistic and peer children in segregated and integrated preschool settings. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, *20*(1), 23-31.

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.

Hundert, J., Mahoney, B., Mundy, F., & Vernon, M. L. (1998). A descriptive analysis of develop-mental and social gains of children with severe disabilities in segregated and inclusive preschools in Southern Ontario. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, *13*(1), 49-65.

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.

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.

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.

Buysse, V., & Bailey, D. B. (1994). The relationship between child characteristics and placement in specialized versus inclusive early childhood programs. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education*, *14*(4), 419-436.

Buysse, V., Wesley, P. W., & Keyes, L. (1998). Implementing early childhood inclusion: Barrier and support factors. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, *13*(1), 169-184.

Buysse, 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,* 189-203.

Cross, A. F., Traub, E. K., Hutter-Pishgahi, L., & Shelton, G. (2004). Elements of successful inclusion for children with significant disabilities. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education*, *24*(3), 169-183.

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.

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.

Lieber, J., Hanson, M. J., Beckman, P. J., Odom, S. L., Sandall, S. R., Schwartz, I. S., et al. (2000). Key influences on the initiation and implementation of inclusive preschool programs. *Exceptional Children, 67*(1), 83-98.

Mulvihill, B. A., Shearer, D., & Van Horn, M. L. (2002). Training, experience and child care providers' perceptions of inclusion. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 17*(2), 197-215.

*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.

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.

*Scruggs, T. E., & Mastropieri, M. A. (1996). Teacher perceptions of mainstreaming/inclusion, 1958-1995: A research synthesis. *Exceptional Children*, *63*(1), 59-74.

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.

Wesley, P. W., Buysse, V., & Keyes, L. (2000). Comfort zone revisited: Child characteristics and professional comfort with consultation. *Journal of Early Intervention, 23*(2), 106-115.

Wesley, P. W., Buysse, V., & Skinner, D. (2001). Early interventionists' perspectives on professional comfort as consultants. *Journal of Early Intervention, 24*(2), 112–128.

5. Specialized instruction is an important component of inclusion and a factor affecting child outcomes.

Antia, S. D., Kreimeyer, K. H., & Eldredge, N. (1993). Promoting social interaction between young children with hearing impairments and their peers. *Exceptional Children, 60,* 262-275.

Cross, A. F., Traub, E. K., Hutter-Pishgahi, L., & Shelton, G. (2004). Elements for successful inclusion for children with significant disabilities. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education, 24*(3), 169–183.

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.

Lefebvre, D., & Strain, P. S. (1989). Effects of a group contingency on the frequency of social interactions among autistic and nonhandicapped preschool children: Making LRE efficacious. *Journal of Early Intervention, 13,* 329-341.

McEvoy, M. A., Nordquist, V. M., Twardosz, S., Heckaman, K., Wehby, J. H., & Denny, R. K. (1988). Promoting autistic children's peer interaction in an integrated early childhood setting using affection activities. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis, 21,* 193-200.

Schwartz, I. S., Carta, J. J., & Grant, S. (1996). Examining use of recommended language intervention practices in early childhood special education classrooms. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education, 16*(2), 251-272.

Stahmer, A. C., & Ingersoll, B. (2004). Inclusive programming for toddlers with autistic spectrum disorders: Outcomes from the Children's Toddler School. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions, 6*(2), 67–82.

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.

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.

*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, MD: Paul H. Brookes.

Miller, L. J., Strain, P. S., Boyd, K., Hunsicker, S., McKinley, J., & Wu, A. (1992). Parental attitudes toward integration. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education, 12,* 230–246.

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.

Rafferty, Y., Boettcher, C., & Griffin, K. W. (2001). Benefits and risks of reverse inclusion for preschoolers with and without disabilities: Parents' perspectives. *Journal of Early Intervention, 24*(4), 266-286.

Rafferty, Y., & Griffin, K. W. (2005). Benefits and risks of reverse inclusion for preschoolers with and without disabilities: Perspectives of parents and providers. *Journal of Early Intervention, 27*(3), 173-192.

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.

Bruder, M. B., & Brand, M. (1995). A comparison of two types of early intervention environments serving toddler-age children with disabilities. *Infant-Toddler Intervention: The Transdisciplinary Journal, 5*(3), 207-218.

Buysse, 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.

Buysse, V., Wesley, P. W., Bryant, D., & Gardner, D. (1999). Quality of early childhood programs in inclusive and noninclusive settings. *Exceptional Children, 6*5(3), 301-314.

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.

Buysse, 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.

Early, D., & Winton, P. (2001). Preparing the workforce: Early childhood teacher preparation at 2- and 4-year institutes of higher education. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 16,* 285-306.

Definitions

Inclusion

According to the DEC/NAEYC (2009) joint position statement on 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" (p. 2).

> DEC/NAEYC. (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)*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina, FPG Child Development Institute. Available at http://community.fpg.unc.edu/resources/articles/Early_Childhood_Inclusion

Primary source

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

Research review or synthesis

A research review or synthesis presents the key conclusions that can be drawn from a review of the literature.

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).

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.

The National Professional Development Center on Inclusion (NPDCI) works with states to help them achieve a system of high quality, cross-sector professional development to support inclusion of young children with disabilities in early childhood settings. NPDCI offers states an integrated, facilitated sequence of planning and technical assistance to develop, implement and monitor a plan for professional development and inclusion, along with tools and products to support state efforts. NPDCI is devoted to collective learning and system improvements in professional development for early childhood 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 Office of Special Education Programs at the US Department of Education.

Visit http://npdci.fpg.unc.edu for more information.

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