



**COLORADO**

Department of Education

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# Monthly Meeting

## **Implementing Special Education for Preschoolers in UPK**

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Exceptional Students Services Unit, Office of Special Education

December 12, 2023

# Meeting Intentions



- Monthly virtual meeting - Second Tuesday of every month
- Audience: AU and LEA Special Education Directors, District level EC administrators Fiscal representatives
- Facilitated by CDE with field input in agenda planning, content and feedback loop, CDEC UPK staff invited
- Meant to be responsive, proactive, needs based & solution focused
- Meeting scope: Implementing Special Education for Preschoolers within the UPK landscape



# Today's Topics



- Policy Statement on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs, updated November 2023
- Universal Preschool Year 2 Planning (CDEC & OIT)

# Monthly Meeting Schedule for 23-24 School Year

**Second Tuesday of each month from 2 - 3 p.m.**

**[Zoom link \(register\)](#)**

**[Submit a request of a meeting topic or question](#)  
prior to each meeting date**

## **Remaining Dates:**

Jan 9, 2024

Feb 13, 2024

Mar 12, 2024

Apr 9, 2024

May 14, 2024

Jun 11, 2024



Slides from  
Division of  
Early  
Childhood  
2023  
Conference



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF  
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF  
EDUCATION

POLICY STATEMENT ON  
INCLUSION OF CHILDREN  
WITH DISABILITIES IN  
EARLY CHILDHOOD  
PROGRAMS

Updated November 2023

Division of Early childhood 39th Annual International Conference on Young Children with Disabilities & Their Families. (n.d.).  
*In Federal Planary - Policy Statement on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs*. Minneapolis, MN

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

All young children with disabilities should have access to high-quality inclusive early childhood programs that provide individualized and appropriate support so they can fully participate alongside their peers without disabilities, meet high expectations, and achieve their full potential.



# Why Is Inclusion in Early Childhood Programs Important?

- Research indicates that inclusion is beneficial to children with and without disabilities
- 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

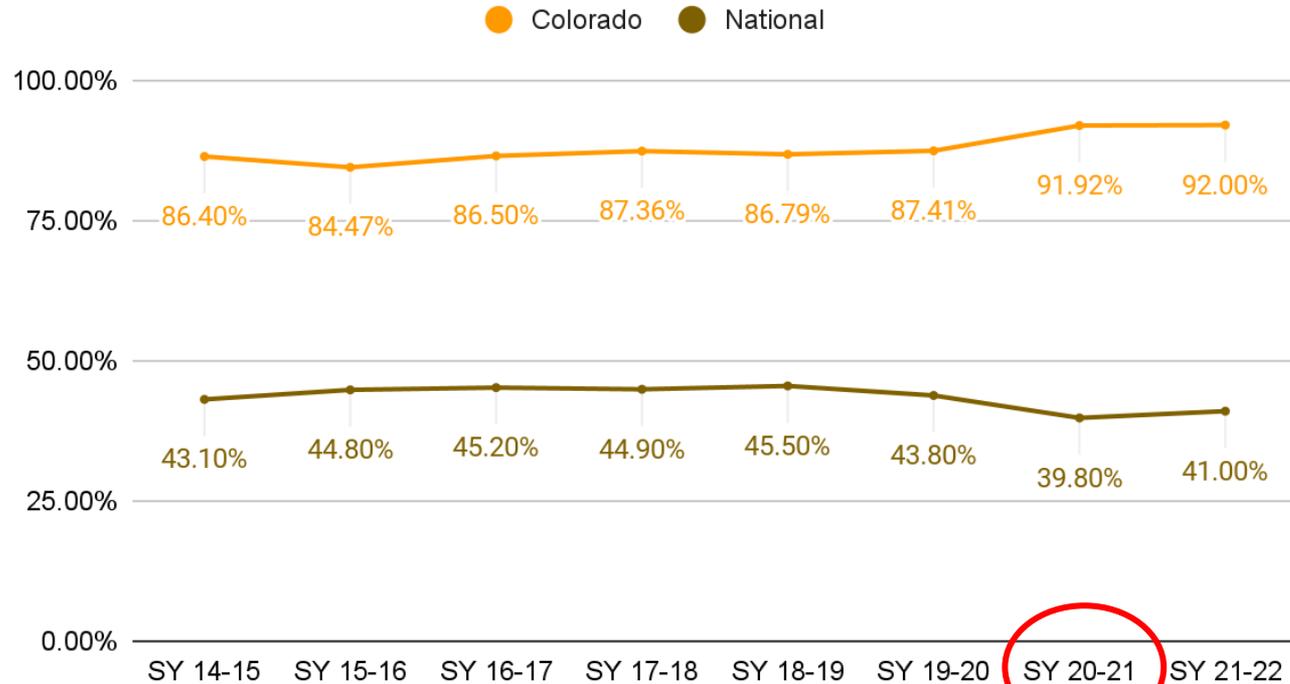
# Why Release a Policy Statement on Early Childhood Inclusion?

- Children with disabilities continue to face significant barriers to accessing and participating in inclusive early childhood programs
- Too many children with disabilities receive special education services in settings separate from their peers without disabilities
- There are disparities in children's access to inclusive early childhood programs
- The COVID-19 pandemic further limited access to inclusive early childhood programs



# Indicator 6 Data

## Colorado and National LRE data



2015  
Policy  
Statement



# How does the Policy Statement Advance the Departments' Position on Inclusion?

- Reiterates the expectation for inclusion in high-quality early childhood programs
- Sets the expectation that inclusion continues as children transition into elementary school
- Highlights the latest science that supports inclusion and reinforces the legal foundation for inclusion
- Reiterates and updates recommendations to States and local programs and providers for increasing inclusive early learning opportunities
- Updates resources and examples of inclusion



# What are the Departments' Expectations for Inclusion in Early Childhood Programs?

- Young children with disabilities **must be given access** to the early childhood programs, services, and experiences that children without disabilities have within a State or local community
- **All children with disabilities should have access** to high-quality inclusive early childhood programs regardless of type of disability, level of services and supports needed, race and ethnicity, language, and geographic and economic circumstances



# High-Quality Inclusive Early Childhood Programs Promote Preschool Outcomes

The use of high-quality, evidence-based services and supports that are developmentally appropriate, culturally and linguistically responsive, and that foster children's —

- acquisition and use of knowledge and skills
- use of appropriate behaviors to meet their needs
- positive social emotional skills, including friendships with peers
- sense of belonging



# What are High-Quality Inclusive Early Childhood Programs?

- Include children with disabilities in early childhood programs they would participate in if they did not have a disability, so they can learn together with their peers without disabilities
- Provide **high-quality teaching and learning environments** that support children's development and allow all children to meet high expectations
- Intentionally promote children's participation in all learning and social activities, facilitated by individualized accommodations and differentiated interventions and instruction



# How do High-Quality Inclusive Early Childhood Programs Support Children?

- Provide services and supports to children with disabilities in early childhood programs with peers without disabilities, and within daily routines and learning and social activities
- Ensure supports, such as screening and identification processes, early childhood program and school partnerships, access to and use of data, and professional development are in place to enable early childhood programs and providers to successfully include children with disabilities and their families

# High-Quality Inclusive Early Childhood Programs Partner with Families

Recognize families as collaborative partners, experts, and engaged decision-makers in their children's lives and value and treat children with disabilities and their families with respect.



# Who is Responsible for Ensuring Early Childhood Inclusion?



It is a shared responsibility to ensure that young children with disabilities and their families are included in high-quality early childhood programs.

# How Can Communities Increase Access to More Inclusive Early Childhood Programs?

A mixed delivery system of public and private ***high quality*** early childhood programs is vital.



# How Can Systems Support Participation in Early Childhood Programs?

The provision of services for children with disabilities should be in environments and activities in which all children would typically participate so that children with disabilities can remain in the early childhood program for the whole day and throughout the week with their peers without disabilities.



# How Can School Systems Support Early Childhood Inclusion?

- It is critical that LEAs and schools are engaged partners in inclusion leadership teams
- Systems should consider leveraging ESEA Title I funds to support inclusive early childhood programs
- Early childhood providers and early elementary school teachers should engage in joint professional development
- Systems should examine staffing structures to support the delivery of IDEA services in early childhood programs



# How Do We Set the Expectation That Inclusion Continues as Children Move into School?

A commitment to inclusion across all systems should serve as the foundation as children transition from early childhood programs to early elementary school grades.





# CDE Resource for Inclusion

ESSU Technical Assistance: [Making Least Restrictive Environment Placement Decisions for Preschool Children, Ages 3 through 5 \(PDF\)](#) - updated September 2021



# Considerations to guide IEP team conversations for determining the LRE

- Where has the child been spending time during the week prior to and during the special education identification process?
- If the child is enrolled in a regular early childhood program, what structures and accountability are (or could be) put in place to ensure the child makes progress in appropriate activities (general curriculum)?
- What are any challenges of the current setting?
- If the child is already attending a regular early childhood program, can the IEP be implemented in that setting?

*Placement options being considered must be made based on the unique needs of the child.*



