Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE)

Creating High-Quality Inclusive Environments

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Introduction

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Purpose

The purpose of this webinar is to assist LEAs, educators, special educators, service providers, and early childhood programs and community partners in identifying, developing, and sustaining high-quality inclusive opportunities and environments for each and every child with and without disabilities.

Vermont's Guiding Principles
Supporting Each and Every Young Child and Family's Full and Equitable Participation

We believe that each and every child...

- Learns within the context of secure and authentic relationships, play, and interactions within their environments.

- Deserves equitable access to experiences that acknowledge and build on their uniqueness.

- Deserves opportunities to deeply learn and develop to their full potential through joyful interactions in safe, accepting environments.

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Advancing Equity

All children have the right to equitable learning opportunities that help them achieve their full potential as engaged learners and valued members of society. Thus, all early childhood educators have a professional obligation to advance equity. They can do this best when they are effectively supported by the early learning settings in which they work and when they and their wider communities embrace diversity and full inclusion as strengths, uphold fundamental principles of fairness and justice, and work to eliminate structural inequities that limit equitable learning opportunities.

- National Association for the Education of Young Children
(NAEYC Position Statement on Equity, April 2019)

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Achieving Equity

1. High-quality early education programs that build upon each and every child's

- unique individual and family strengths
- cultural background, language(s)
- abilities
- experiences

2. Eliminating differences in educational outcomes as a result of

- who children are
- where they live
- what resources their families have
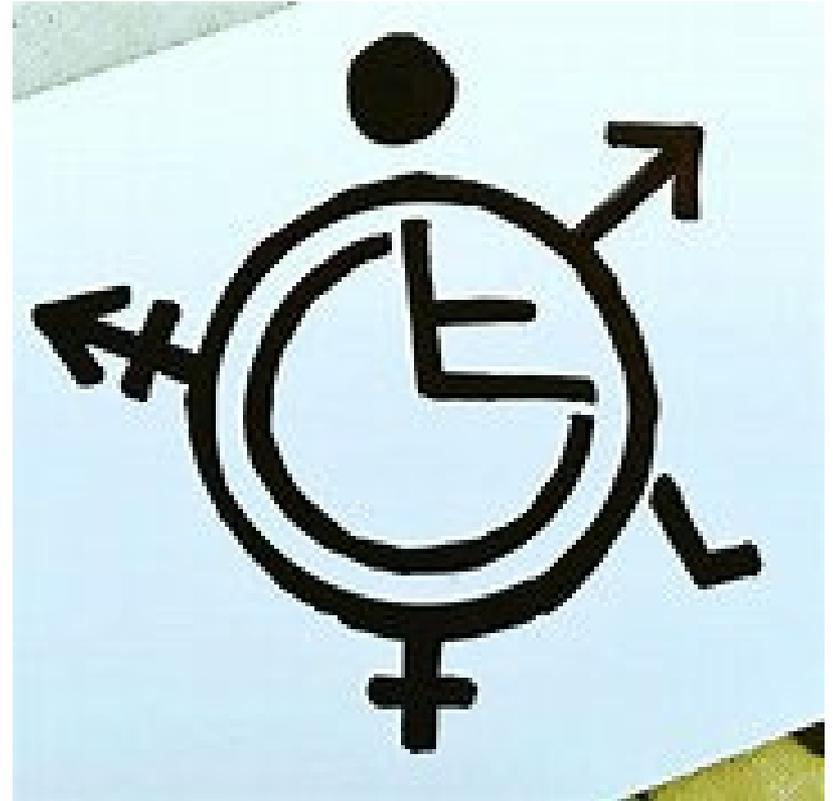
Vermont Early Learning Standards

DEC Recommended Practices

Leadership   Assessment   Environment

Family   Instruction   Interaction

Teaming and Collaboration   Transition

There is no longer a questions about whether or not to include children with disabilities. The question is how and where to begin.

(Devard, 2010)

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DEC Recommended Practice Area: Environment

Environmental practices refer to aspects of the:

- space

- materials

- equipment

- routines

- activities

Environmental practices encompass the:

- physical environment

- social environment

- temporal environment

Environment Practice 1: Breaking it Down

E1. Practitioners provide services and supports in natural and inclusive environments during daily routines and activities to promote the child's access to and participation in learning experiences.

- Universal PreK and preschool programs
- Home
- Playgrounds
- Grocery stores
- Other relevant community settings

Putting Practice 1 into Place

- Provide support and positive descriptive feedback throughout activities and across routines and environments

- Identify the activities and routines the child finds most enjoyable

- Embed learning opportunities into everyday activities and across routines and environments
    - Movement and music
    - Construction activities
    - Dramatic play
    - Science experiments
    - Story time
    - Care routines (toileting and meals)

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Environment Practice 2: Breaking it Down

E2. Practitioners consider UDL to create accessible environments.

- Provide multiple means of engagement and representation

- Make ALL environments accessible across people, routines, activities, and environments

- Utilize the VELS

Putting Practice 2 into Place

- **Physical environments**
    - Play equipment in different contexts allows same skill practices in various environments
    - Space for children to crawl, walk, climb, dance etc.
    - Play equipment needs based on development (tricycle, bicycle, harness swing, etc.)

- **Instructional environments**
    - Embed learning/skills across people, places, materials
    - Provide opportunities for individual choice and incorporate known preferences and interests
    - Teach self-regulation across contexts (coping skills and strategies)

- **Social situations**
    - Actively support and promote communication and interactions

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Additional Recommended Practices for Environment

- E3. Practitioners work with the family and other adults to modify and adapt the physical, social, and temporal environments to promote each child's access to and participation in learning experiences.

- E6. Practitioners create environments that provide opportunities for movement and regular physical activity to maintain or improve fitness, wellness, and development across domains.

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Early MTSS and Special Education

- Children receiving special education are general education learners first and always

- Highly effective special education services and outcomes are dependent on highly effective universal (Early MTSS) implementation of practices to fidelity.
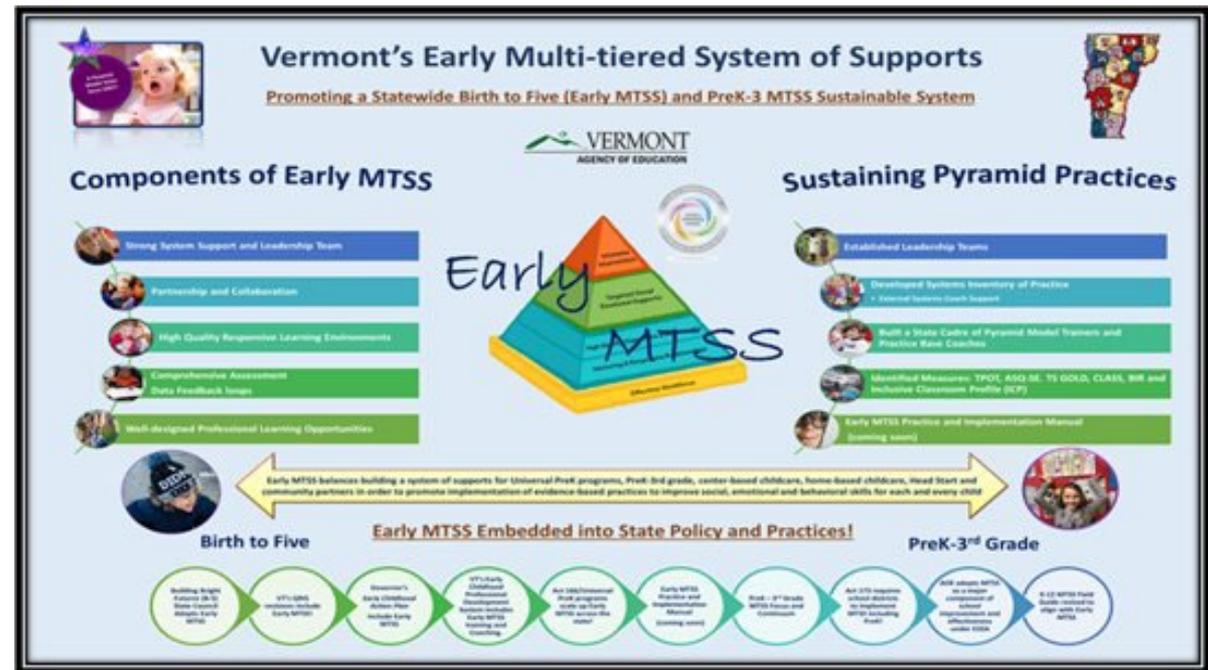
How Do We Define Early Childhood Inclusion?

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. (DEC and NAEYC Joint Position Statement 2009)

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

• The development and learning to reach their full potential.

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High-Quality Early Childhood Inclusion

Access + **Participation** + **Supports** = **High Quality Early Childhood Inclusion**
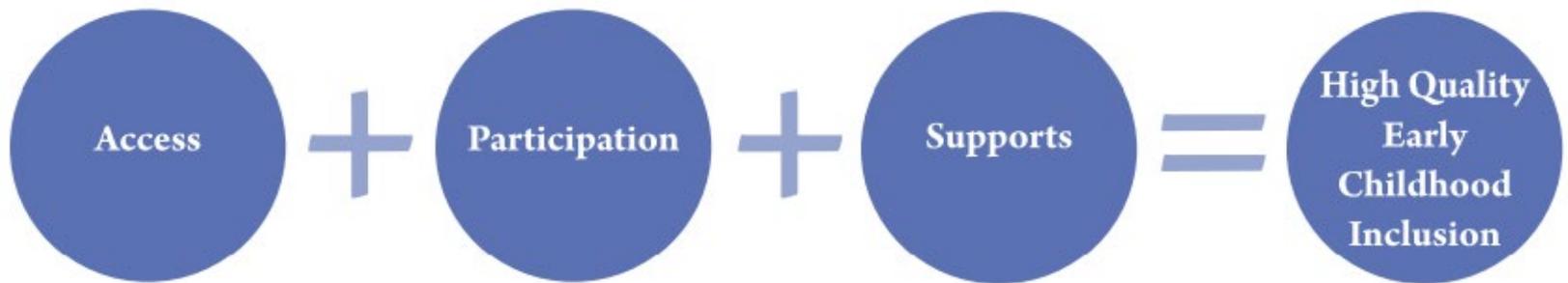
Access

Access means providing a wide range of activities and environments for every child by removing barriers (seen and unseen) and offering multiple ways to promote learning and development.

Example: Pictures of the toys taped to low, open shelves to assist children in clean up, visual schedules posted throughout the space to help with transitions.

Consider access:

- Visually

- Socially

- Environmentally

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Participation

Even when children with disabilities have physical access to learning environments, they likely will need additional individualized accommodations and supports to fully participate in play and other learning activities with peers and adults across all environments.

Example: For children with developmental delays or an orthopedic impairment this may look like using pegs to adapt handles on doors, shelving, coat racks, backpack areas, and puzzles.

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Supports

In addition to access and participation, research demonstrates that a strong foundation of systems-level supports is necessary to achieve high quality inclusion of children with disabilities.

Effective inclusion results from on-going professional development for staff members; well defined policies and procedures; and time for regular team meetings of teachers, assistants, therapists, and families.

Federal Support for Inclusion

Joint Policy Statement on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs (2015)

- Sets a vision and provides recommendations for increasing the inclusion of infants, toddlers, and preschool children with disabilities in high-quality early childhood programs.

Dear Colleague Letter on Preschool Least Restrictive Environment (2017)

- Reaffirms position that all young children with disabilities should have access to inclusive high-quality early childhood programs where they are provided with individualized and appropriate supports to enable them to meet high expectations.

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Why is Inclusion Important?

"PAROLE APPROACH" TO SCHOOL INCLUSION
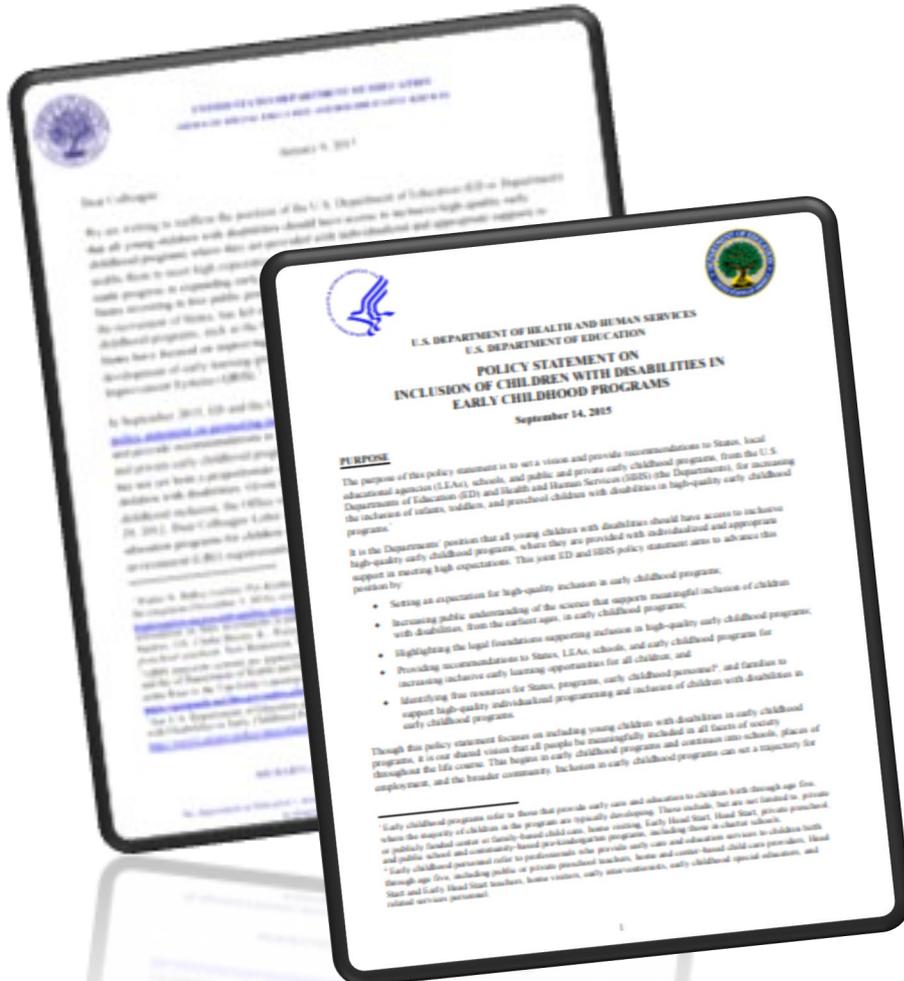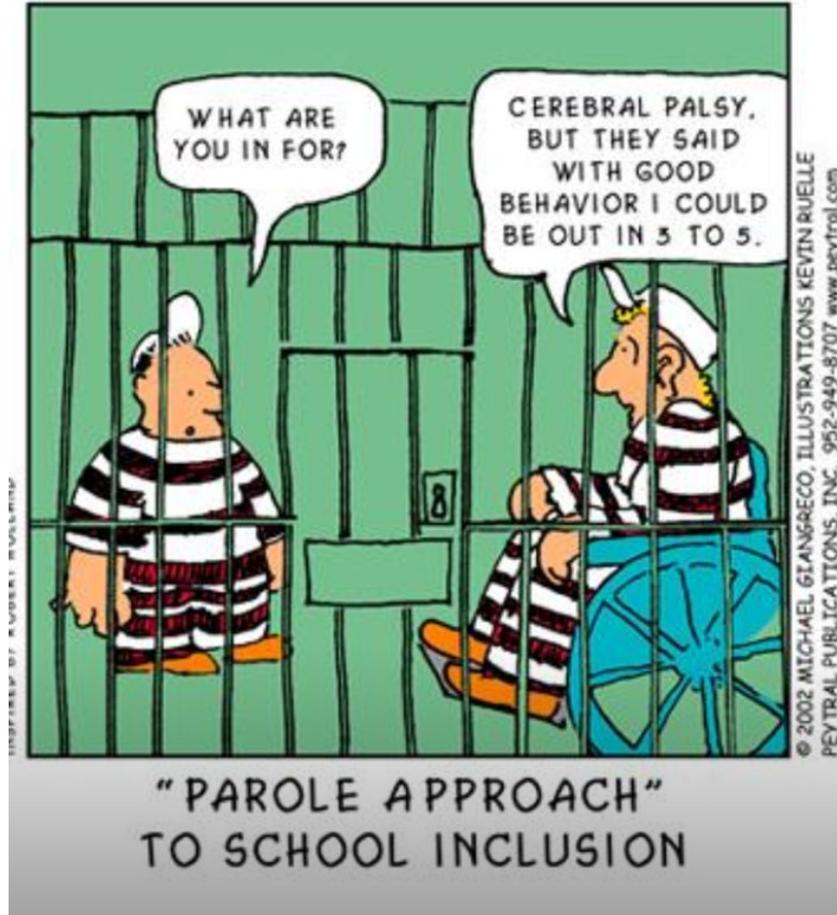
Inclusion in early childhood programs can set a trajectory for inclusion across the life course.

It is critical for Vermont administrators, educators, practitioners and families to work together to improve outcomes for children with disabilities by meeting their needs to the maximum extent possible in regular early childhood programs.

Why is Inclusion important for children?

Each and every child benefits by:

• Developing friendships and learning how to play with others;

• Learning acceptance, and to be sensitive to individual differences allowing each child to have a sense of membership and belonging;

• Being provided with opportunities to learn from others with differing abilities.

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Why is Inclusion important for educators, support staff and service providers?

Early Childhood educators, support staff and service providers benefit by:

• Building relationships with families;

• Learning about and developing partnerships with community resources;

• Gaining new information and skills to care for and teach every child.

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Why is Inclusion important for families?

Families benefit by:

• Having access to high-quality inclusive childcare and UPK public and private programs;

• Watching their children make friends with children from diverse groups;

• Being able to share hopes, needs, and concerns for their children with others.

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Research Based Facts on Inclusion

Brief Summary: Fact Sheet of Research on Preschool Inclusion

Erin E. Barton & Barbara J. Smith

June, 2014

1 In 27 years, the practice of providing special education and related services in regular early childhood settings to preschoolers with disabilities has increased only 5.7% and many young children with disabilities continue to be educated in separate settings.[1,2]

2 Inclusion benefits children with and without disabilities. [3, 4, 5, 6, 7]

3 The quality of preschool programs including at least one student with a disability were as good as or better than preschool programs without children with disabilities. However, traditional measures of early childhood program quality might not be sufficient for assessing quality of programs that include children with disabilities. [8,9]

4 Children with disabilities can be effectively educated in inclusive programs using specialized instruction. [10, 11, 12, 13]

5 Parents and teachers influence children's values regarding disabilities. [14, 15, 16]

6 Individualized embedded instruction can be used to teach a variety of skills, including those related to early learning standards, and promote participation in inclusive preschool programs to children with and without disabilities. [17, 18, 19, 20, 21]

7 Families of children with and without disabilities generally have positive views of inclusion. [22, 23]

8 Inclusion is not more expensive than having separate programs for children with disabilities. [24, 25]

9 Successful inclusion requires intentional and effective collaboration and teaming.[26] *

10 The individual outcomes of preschool inclusion should include access, membership, participation, friendships, and support.[27] *

11 Children with disabilities do not need to be "ready" to be included. Programs need to be "ready" to support all children. [27] *

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Legal Support for Inclusion

- The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act

- The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

- The Head Start Act

- Child Care Regulations and Child Care and Development Block Grant Act (CCDBG) provide support for inclusion

- State of Vermont Special Education Rules

IDEA and Inclusion

Least restrictive environment (LRE) means that to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are not disabled, and that special classes, separate schooling or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily.

(34 CFR 300.114 through 34 CFR 300.120).

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Indicator 6 - Least Restrictive Environment

A. Attends a **regular early childhood program** and receive the majority of special education and related services in the **regular early childhood program**; or

B. Attends and receive the majority of special education and related services in a **separate** special education class, separate school or residential facility; or

C. Receives services within their family's home.

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Designing High-Quality, Early Childhood Inclusive Classrooms
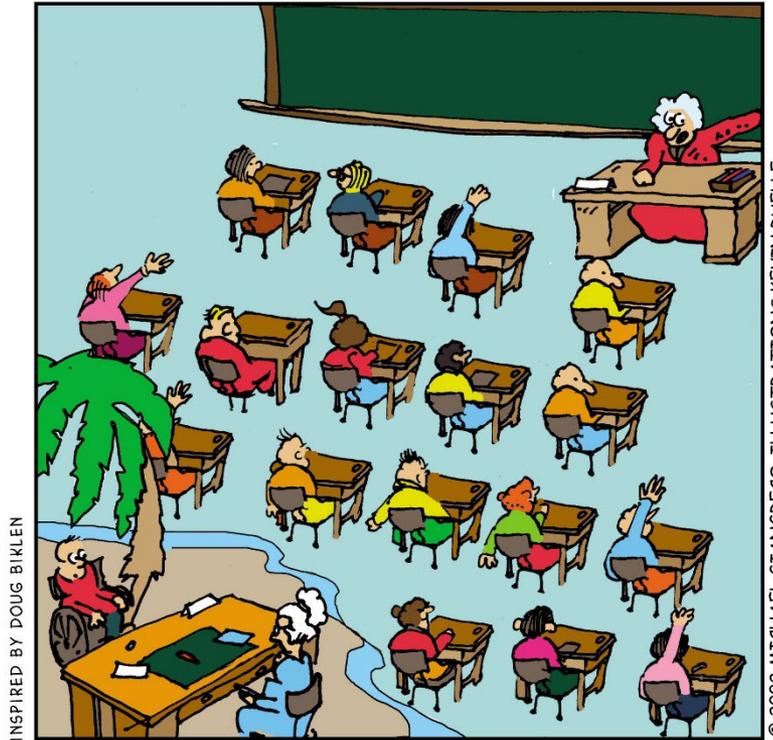
ISLAND IN THE MAINSTREAM
MRS. JONES AND MRS. COOPER ARE STILL TRYING TO FIGURE OUT WHY FRED DOESN'T FEEL LIKE PART OF THE CLASS.

INSPIRED BY DOUG BIKLEN

© 2002 MICHAEL GIANGRECO, ILLUSTRATIONS KEVIN RUELLE

Equal vs. Equitable

Same Treatment

Equitable Treatment

The systemic barrier has been removed.

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What is
Universal Design for Learning (UDL)?

- **Universal Design for Learning (UDL)** is a framework that guides the design of learning experiences to proactively meet the needs of each and every learner.

- When you use UDL, you assume that barriers to learning are in the design of the environment, not in the student.

- UDL is based on brain science and evidence-based educational practices. It also leverages the power of digital technology.

- UDL is a powerful approach because it helps you to anticipate and plan for all your learners so that the greatest range of students can access and engage in learning — not just certain students.

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The UDL Framework

Universal Design for Learning is a set of three principles which provide each and every child with the ability to learn.

Provide multiple means of:
- **Engagement**
- **Representation**
- **Action and Expression**
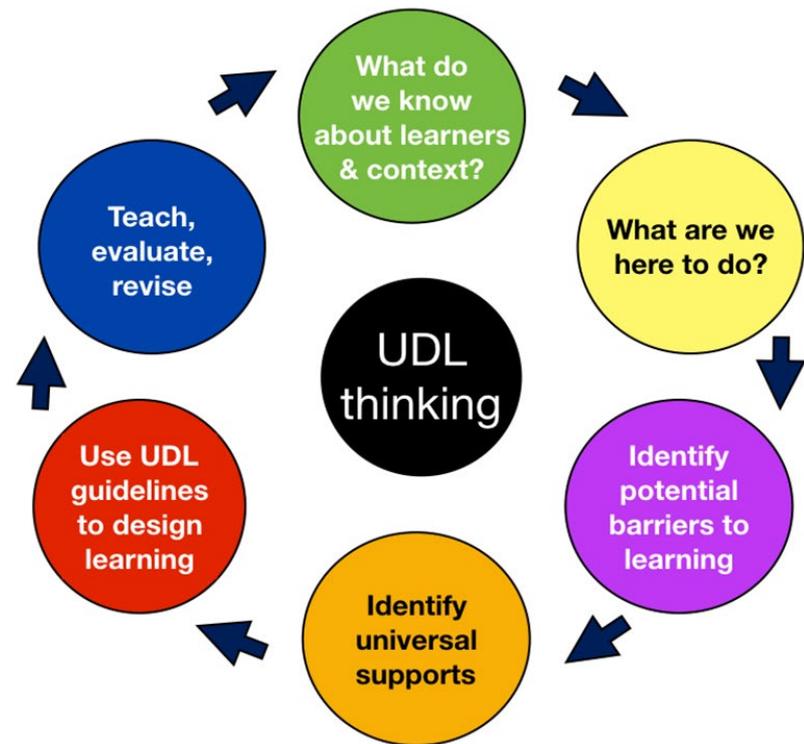
Chrissie Butler CORE Education CC attribution

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UDL Questions to Consider

Who are the children?

What is known about each child's developmental stage, interests and learning style?

What is known about the group's range of abilities (vision, hearing, communicating, moving, attending, interacting, and comprehending English)?

What is the physical environment? Can all children:

- Get in and out of the building and all learning centers?

- Help themselves to toys and materials?

- Use materials independently and appropriately?

- Participate in group activities with access to different seating options and varied levels of performance?

- See their family and culture reflected in the classroom decorations, books and materials?

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Using Inclusive Language

Its Universal!

Accommodations and Modifications Considerations

- Address challenging learning situations to promote participation EVERYDAY
    - Physical, social, and emotional

- Ask, what would you like to see and hear happening?
    - With children AND adults
    - In the environment
- What barriers are preventing full participation?

- What is the meaning behind an action?
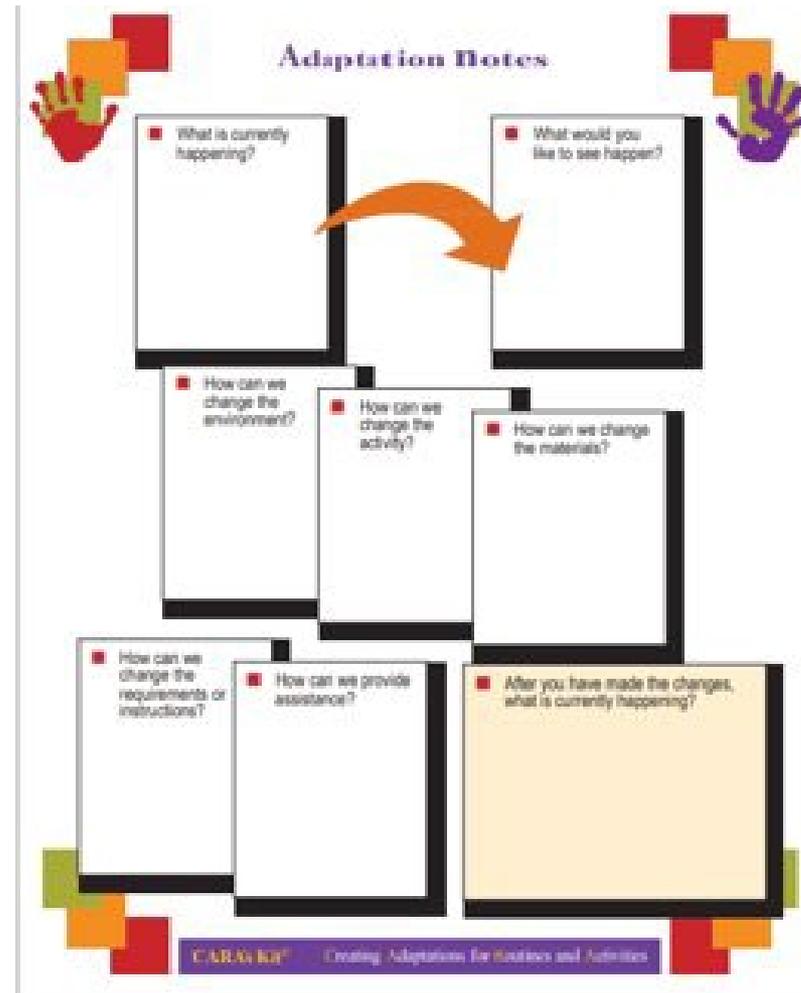
Promoting Positive and Active Participation

1 - Environment

2 - Materials

3 - Instruction
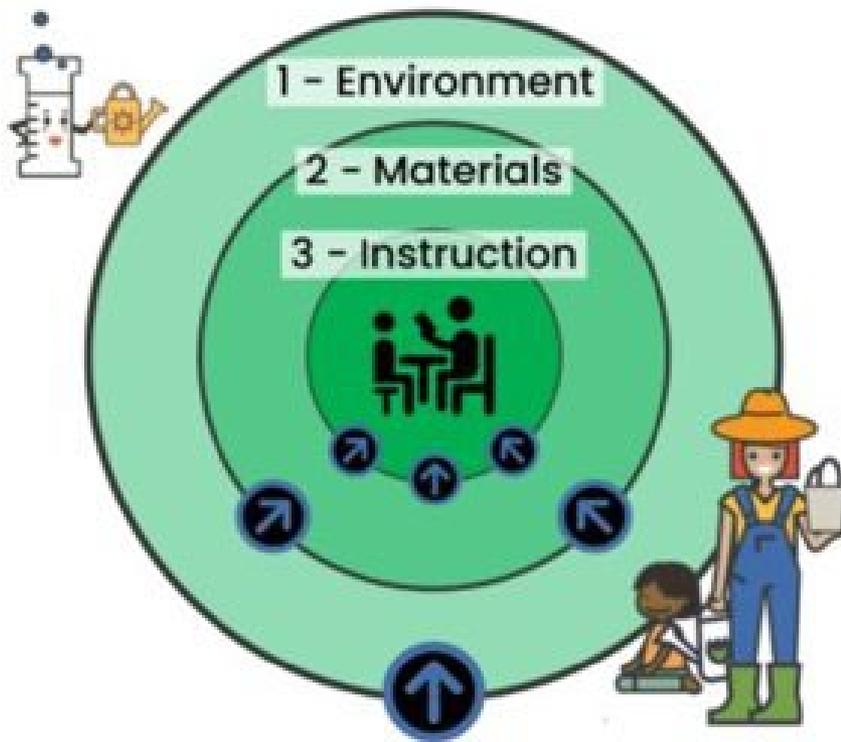
- Adaptations are not disability specific
- Adaptations can be used across all settings and be embedded in everyday routines and activities
- Start with children's interests and preferences and work to maximize children's strengths

STEMIE 2019
https://stemie.fpg.unc.edu/guide-adaptations

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Remote Service Delivery and Distance Learning

- Get to know children's interests

- Be intentional and have a plan BUT remember to follow children's lead

- Use accommodations and modifications to ensure children can fully participate

- Work with families to use everyday objects and materials and use all senses during the lesson

- Find different ways for children to share their knowledge.

- Incorporate and work on children's IEP goals

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The changes necessary to prepare for, implement, and sustain high quality inclusive practices in early childhood require systemic planning.

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National Early Childhood Inclusion Indicators

⭐ **State Indicators**

👥 **Community Indicators**

🏫 **Local Program Indicators**

♿ **Early Care and Education Environment Indicators**

📙 **Glossary**

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Local Program Indicators of High-Quality Inclusion

INDICATOR L1: Inclusion Leadership Teams

INDICATOR L2: Vision

INDICATOR L3: Family Engagement and Partnerships

INDICATOR L4: Awareness and Commitment

INDICATOR L5: Policies and Procedures

INDICATOR L6: Fiscal Resources

INDICATOR L7: Personnel Policies and Structure

INDICATOR L8: Collaborative Teaming

INDICATOR L9: Specialized Technical Assistance and Consultative Services

INDICATOR L10: Program Supports for Professional Development

INDICATOR L11: Curriculum

INDICATOR L12: Data Collection and Use

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Early Care and Education Environment Indicators of High-Quality Inclusion

INDICATOR E1: Promotion and Affirmation of Individual Differences

INDICATOR E2: Family Partnerships

INDICATOR E3: Social Emotional Learning and Development

INDICATOR E4: Meaningful Interactions with Peers

INDICATOR E5: Curriculum

INDICATOR E6: Instruction

INDICATOR E7: Collaborative Teaming

INDICATOR E8: Assessment

INDICATOR E9: Culturally Responsive and Identity Affirming Practices

Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center, & National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations (2020). *Indicators of High-Quality Inclusion*. Retrieved from https://ectacenter.org/topics/inclusion/indicators.asp

Inclusive Classroom Profile

- Assess the quality of daily classroom practices that support the needs of children with disabilities in early childhood settings.

- Measures the extent to which adult supports and adjusts the various elements of the classroom in order to accommodate individual needs while also encouraging children's active participation in the group.

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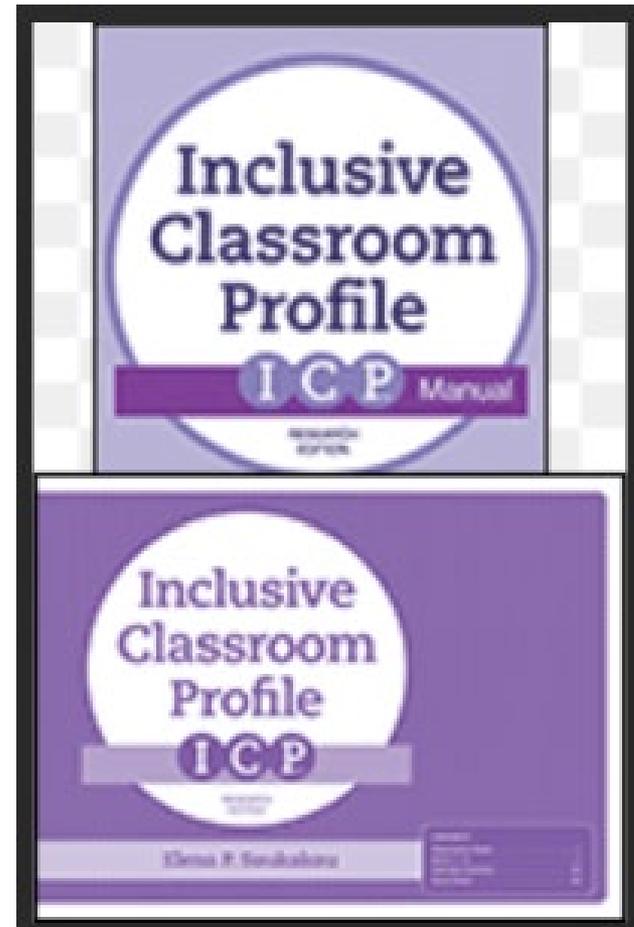
The 12 Inclusive Classroom Profile Practices

Assesses 12 key practices:

• Adaptations of Space, Materials, and Equipment

• Adult Involvement in Peer Interactions

• Adults' Guidance of Children's Free-Choice Activities and Play

• Conflict Resolution

• Membership

• Relationships between Adults and Children

• Support for Communication

• Adaptation of Group Activities

• Transitions between Activities

• Feedback

• Family-Professional Partnerships

• Monitoring Children's Learning

Inclusion, Dignity, and Building Ethical Communities

- Dignity refers to the inherent worth of family members, including the child.

- Dignity also refers to the respect and esteem that practitioners attribute to the family and child.

- To respect and esteem means to support the family's and child's strengths, needs, and priorities.

- Less able is not less worthy.

- High-quality inclusion in early childhood settings sets the stage for a life of dignity; an enviable life.

- High –quality early childhood inclusion sets the foundation for building ethical communities.

Adapted from Rud Turnbull

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Rud Turnbull's discussion on Inclusion, Dignity, and Building Ethical Communities

https://youtu.be/YDkhB6fyaPs