

BEYOND COMPLIANCE: EARLY CHILDHOOD

HOW TO USE KEY IDEA REQUIREMENTS TO TURN MISSTEPS INTO OPPORTUNITIES FOR
IMPROVING OUTCOMES IN EARLY CHILDHOOD.

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LEARNING TARGETS

Identify Missteps

- Identify and avoid common missteps in serving young learners.

Deepen IDEA Knowledge

- Deepen practical knowledge of key IDEA requirements.

Improve Student Outcomes

- Improve functional and educational outcomes for young learners.

AGENDA



What are common missteps that occur in the early childhood setting?



What are key IDEA requirements and resources that can help prevent missteps?



How can these key requirements improve student outcomes?



WE ARE A MIGHTY, PROFESSIONAL
LEARNING COMMUNITY.

INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT FOR THE SESSION

PURPOSE OF IDEA

To ensure that all children with disabilities have available to them a free appropriate public education that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living.

~34 CFR § 300.1(a)

PARENTS ARE ESSENTIAL PARTNERS.

The development of a child's IEP is a collaborative process that places special emphasis on parental involvement.

~*Sytsema v. Academy School District No. 20*, 538 F.3d 1306, 1313 (10th Cir. 2008).

[IDEA procedural requirements] emphasize collaboration among parents and educators and require careful consideration of the child's individual circumstances.

~*Andrew F. v. Douglas Cty. Sch. Dist. REI*, 137 S. Ct. 988 (2017)

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IS ESSENTIAL TO IMPROVING POSTSECONDARY OUTCOMES.



- The benefits that children gain in preschool programs follow them throughout the rest of their life. Whether it's going to college or purchasing a home, many lifetime successes link to early access to educational programs.
- Youngsters who take part in high-quality childcare centers are most likely to start school with interpersonal, intellectual, and emotional abilities needed to support them in continuing their education. These advantages go much beyond elementary school.
- Average levels of engagement in high-quality early childhood programs have been all associated with a higher level of academic performance, employment achievement, and social competence.

Wyoming Department of Education



WHAT CHALLENGES OR BARRIERS COME TO MIND WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT COMPLIANCE IN SPECIAL EDUCATION?

REFRAMING MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT IDEA COMPLIANCE

- The IEP is not a compliance checklist or a form; it is an educational program designed by the IEP team to meet a child's disability-related needs. (Blueprint for FAPE)
- IDEA does not require perfection; it requires fidelity in implementing the IEP and responsiveness to a lack of expected progress or changing educational needs.
- IDEA does not promise a certain level of achievement; it promises access to and progress in the general education curriculum.



WHERE DO MISSTEPS
COMMONLY OCCUR
IN THE EARLY
CHILDHOOD
SETTING?





FAILING TO CONDUCT A COMPREHENSIVE SPECIAL EDUCATION EVALUATION

- Failing to use a variety of assessment tools
 - 34 C.F.R. 300.304(b)(2) explicitly prohibits the use of a single measure or assessment as the sole criterion for determining eligibility and programming
 - Use of observation alone to determine student was not eligible resulted in denial of FAPE. *Timothy O. v. Paso Robles Unified Sch. Dist.*, 67 IDELR 227 (9th Cir. 2016), *cert. denied*, 117 LRP 15003 , 137 S. Ct. 1578 (2017)
- Failing to assess in all areas related to the suspected disability
 - Including, health, vision, hearing, social and emotional status, general intelligence, academic performance, communicative status, and motor abilities—if appropriate. 34 C.F.R 300.304(c)(4)
- Failing to use the evaluation data to drive educational programming.

PURPOSE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION EVALUATIONS

Determine initial
or continuing
eligibility for an IEP

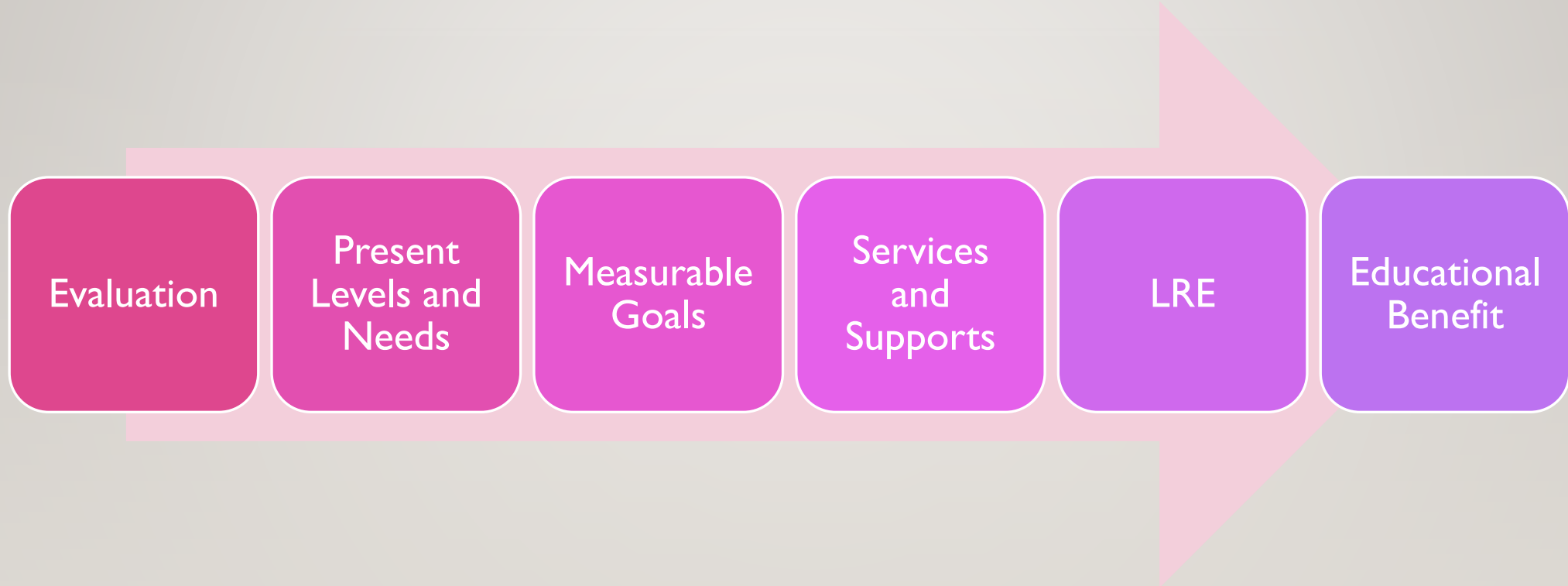
Inform educational
programming in
the least restrictive
environment



FAPE AND THE GOLDEN THREAD



FAPE CONTINUUM





SPECIAL EDUCATION EVALUATIONS MUST BE COMPREHENSIVE

Special education evaluations must:

- Be comprehensive to include assessment in all areas related to the suspected disability
- Use a variety of assessment and strategies to gather relevant information
- Use technically sound instruments selected and administered so as not to be discriminatory
- Be tailored to assess specific areas of educational need

34 C.F.R. § 300.304

COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION: RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE DIVISION OF EARLY CHILDHOOD

Practitioners should:

1. Work with the family to identify family preferences for assessment processes.
2. Work as a team with the family and other professionals to gather assessment information.
3. Use assessment materials and strategies that are appropriate for the child's age and level of development and accommodate the child's sensory, physical, communication, cultural, linguistic, social, and emotional characteristics.
4. Conduct assessments that include all areas of development and behavior to learn about the child's strengths, needs, preferences, and interests
5. Conduct assessments in the child's dominant language and in additional languages if the child is learning more than one language.

COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION: RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE DIVISION OF EARLY CHILDHOOD

Practitioners should:

6. Use a variety of methods, including observation and interviews, to gather assessment information from multiple sources, including the child's family and other significant individuals in the child's life.
7. Obtain information about the child's skills in daily activities, routines, and environments such as home, center, and community.
8. Use clinical reasoning in addition to assessment results to identify the child's current levels of functioning and to determine the child's eligibility and plan for instruction.
9. Implement systematic ongoing assessment to identify learning targets, plan activities, and monitor the child's progress to revise instruction as needed.
10. Use assessment tools with sufficient sensitivity to detect child progress, especially for the child with significant support needs.
11. Report assessment results so that they are understandable and useful to families.

EVALUATION MUST BE COMPREHENSIVE TO INFORM EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING

Wyoming Early Learning Standards



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graph TD; A[Wyoming Early Learning Standards] --> B[Relationships and Interactions]; B --> C[Communication]; C --> D[Cognition]; D --> E[Physical Health and Development]
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Relationships and Interactions

Communication

Cognition

Physical Health and Development

EARLY LEARNING STANDARD: RELATIONSHIPS AND INTERACTIONS

Emotional Development

Social Development

Culture, Family, and Community

Reflection: What kind of assessment data is necessary for ensuring a preschool student's access to and progress in this standard?

EARLY LEARNING STANDARD: COMMUNICATION

Communication

Literacy

Reflection: What kind of assessment data is necessary for ensuring a preschool student's access to and progress in this standard?

EARLY LEARNING STANDARD: COGNITION

Approaches to Learning

Mathematics

Scientific Reasoning

Reflection: What kind of assessment data is necessary for ensuring a preschool student's access to and progress in this standard?

**EARLY LEARNING
STANDARD:
PHYSICAL HEALTH
AND
DEVELOPMENT**

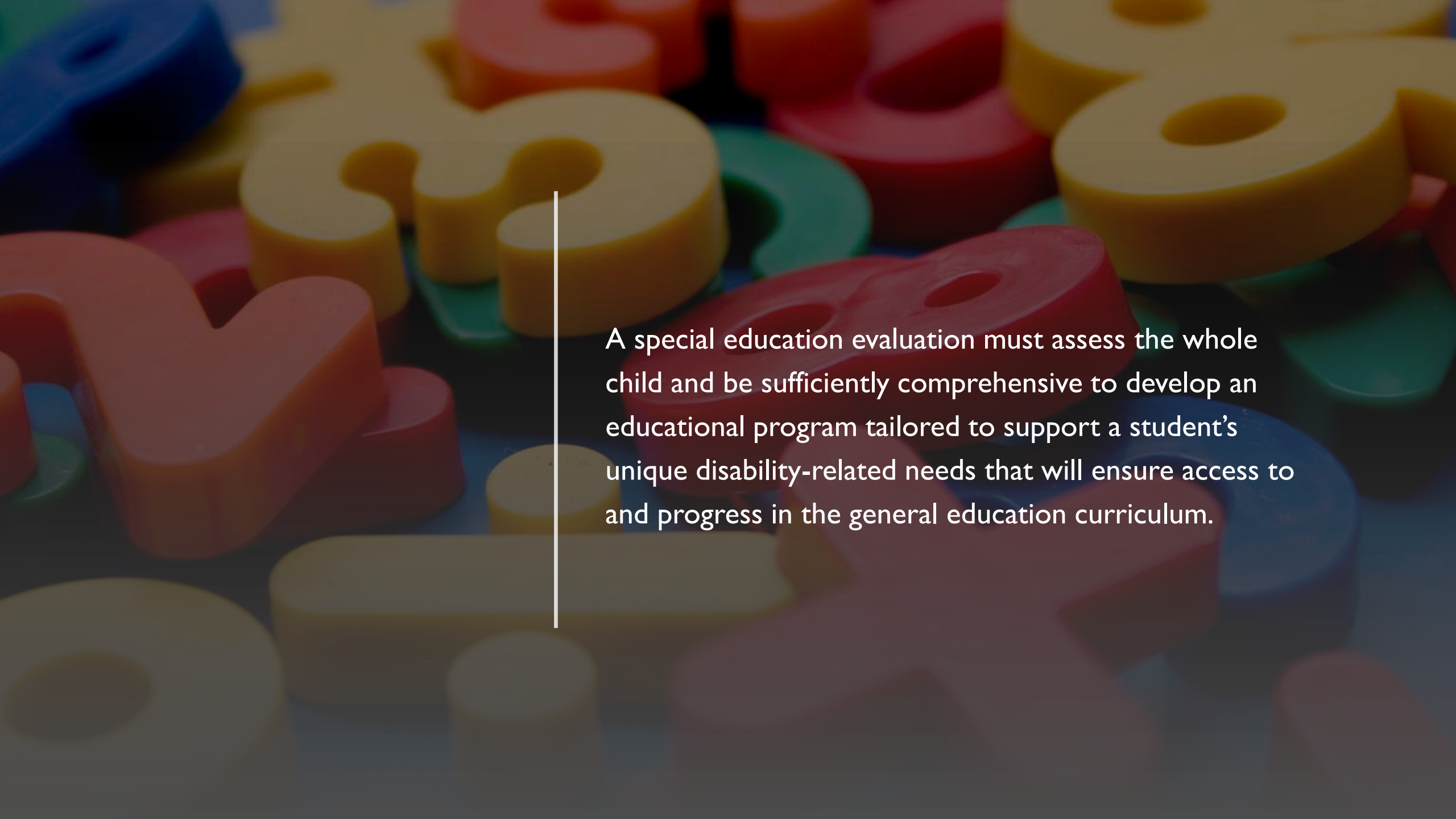
Physical Development

Daily Living Skills

Reflection: What kind of assessment data is necessary for ensuring a preschool student's access to and progress in this standard?

REFLECTION

HOW MIGHT ASSESSMENT DATA INFORM IEP GOALS BASED ON EARLY CHILDHOOD STANDARDS?

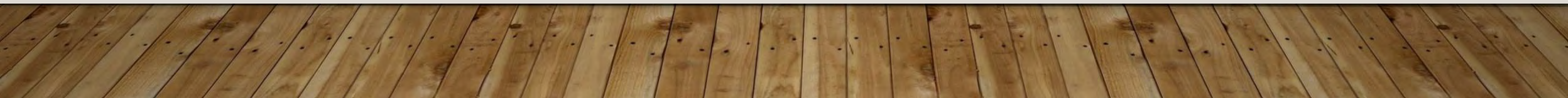
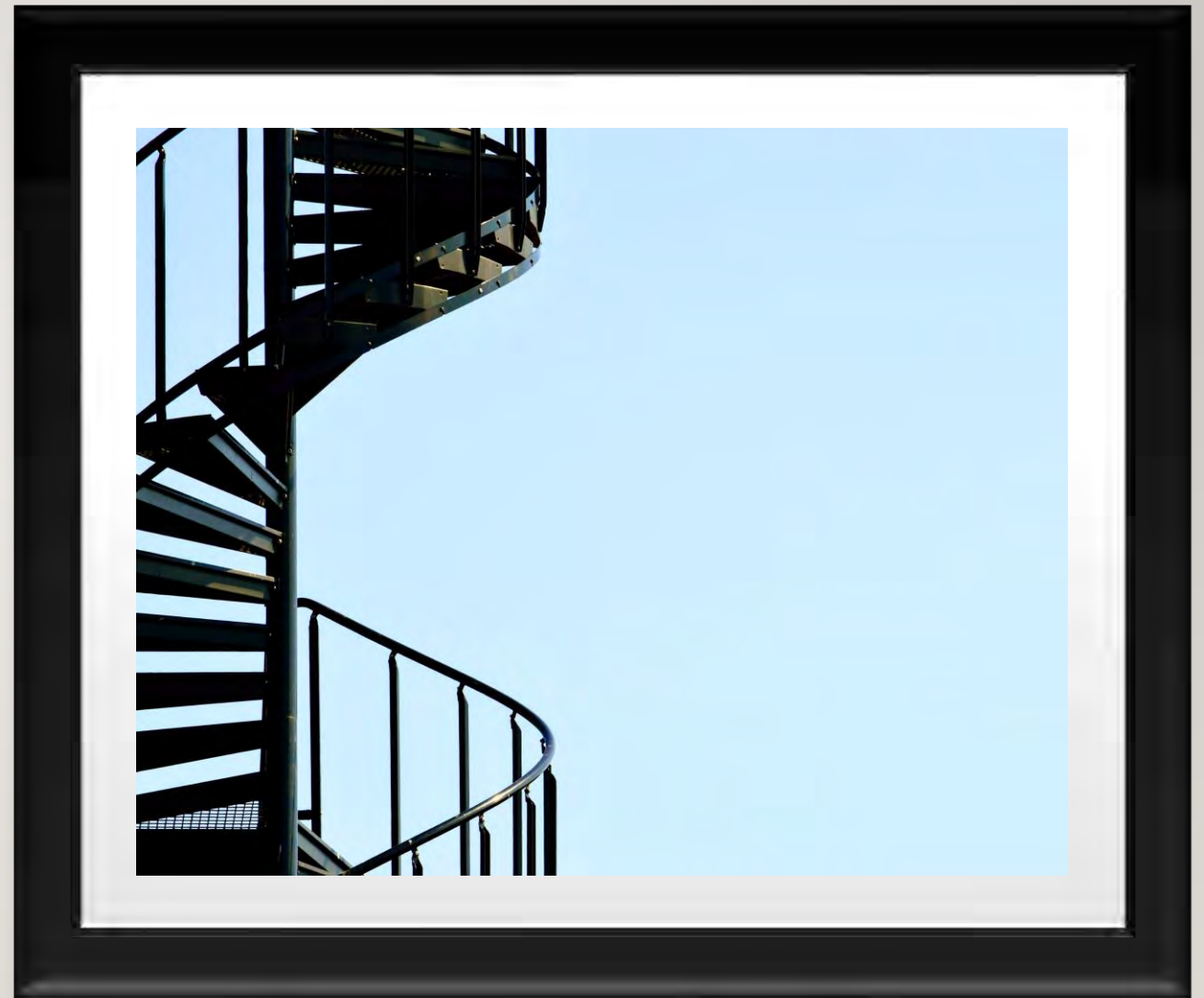


A special education evaluation must assess the whole child and be sufficiently comprehensive to develop an educational program tailored to support a student's unique disability-related needs that will ensure access to and progress in the general education curriculum.



EDUCATIONAL BENEFIT: ENDREW F. STANDARD

“A school must offer an IEP that is reasonably calculated to enable a child to make progress appropriate in light of the child’s circumstances.” *Endrew F. v. Douglas County School District RE-1*, 137 St. Ct. 988 (2017).





MISSTEP: USING EXCLUSIONARY DISCIPLINE TO ADDRESS BEHAVIORAL CHALLENGES

- Despite their young age, preschool children with disabilities are too often removed from their current educational placement for disciplinary reasons.
- IDEA's disciplinary protections are available to children with disabilities who attend public preschool programs operated by a school district, those who attend preschool programs operated by another public agency (such as Head Start or community-based childcare), and those who are placed in a private preschool program by the school district to ensure the provision of a free appropriate public education (FAPE).

Questions and Answers Addressing the Needs of Children with Disabilities and IDEA's Discipline Provisions (OSEP 2022)

USE OF EXCLUSIONARY DISCIPLINE DISPROPORTIONATELY IMPACTS PRESCHOOL CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

7% of the nation's 1.5 million preschoolers were children with disabilities served under Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and were expelled at rates 2.5 times greater than their share of the total preschool population.

Data from most recent [Civil Rights Data Collection](#) (2017–2018)



DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR
IS A WARNING SIGN
THAT EDUCATIONAL
PROGRAMING IS NOT
MEETING NEEDS.



BEHAVIOR IS A PERSUASIVE FORM OF COMMUNICATION

- Preschool teachers, practitioners and families can support children who have behavior that adults find challenging by working in partnership to understand the behavior and promote the development of children's social, emotional and behavioral skills.
- First, adults should view behavior as having a communicative message and determine if the child is seeking something (e.g., attention, safety, an object or activity) or avoiding something (e.g., non-preferred activity). Adults identify what triggers the behavior (e.g., the child is tired, a demand is placed on the child) and what follows or reinforces the behavior. Once there is a good understanding of the why and when of behavior, adults can work together to design prevention strategies to reduce the likelihood of challenging behavior while they teach the child new skills to replace the behavior. This positive behavior support approach has decades of research showing its effectiveness for children with and without disabilities.

Source, Blog by Valerie C. Williams, Director of OSEP, **Discipline Discussions: Suspension, Expulsion & Informal Removals: Unexpected Realities in Preschool**



WHEN A STUDENT'S BEHAVIOR IMPEDES LEARNING, THE IEP TEAM MUST CONSIDER PBIS.

The IEP Team must consider the use of “positive behavioral interventions and supports, and other strategies,” to address behavior that impedes the learning of the student themselves or the learning of others.

- ~34 C.F.R. § 300.324(a)(2)(i)



USE KEY IDEA REQUIREMENTS TO PROACTIVELY RESPOND TO CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR



Do you have sufficient and reliable information about the cause of the behavior? Review existing data and consider reevaluation.



Do you have the right experts gathered to problem solve and discuss behavior challenge? Convene the IEP team.



Is there a plan in place to address behavior? If so, is it being implemented with fidelity by all relevant staff? If so, is the plan adequate or have needs changed? Review/revise the IEP.



WHAT DOES
RESPONSIVENESS
LOOK LIKE? THE
FOUR “R”S

Review Existing Data

Reevaluate

Reconvene the IEP team

Review/Revise the IEP



FUNCTIONAL BEHAVIORAL ASSESSMENT



identification of the target behavior and its antecedents and consequences;



development of a hypothesis about the cause or function of the behavior;



development of interventions to test the hypothesis; and



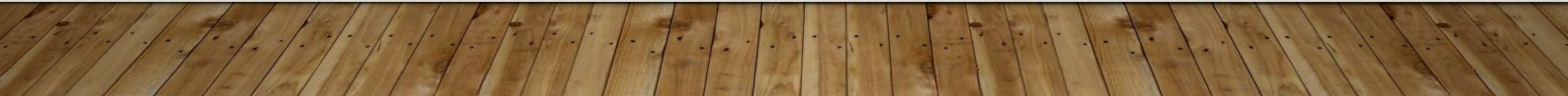
collection of data concerning the effectiveness of the interventions.



DO YOU NEED INPUT FROM OTHERS TO PROBLEM SOLVE? CONVENE THE IEP TEAM.

Student's Interdisciplinary Team of Experts

- Knowledgeable about Student's unique needs and way of learning
- Diverse expertise with varying perspectives, including Parents
- Student focused and invested
- Collaborative model of decision making
- Inclusive and expansive: consider who might be missing from the table and add them.





DOES STUDENT'S IEP ADEQUATELY ADDRESS BEHAVIOR?

Does the Student have an annual goal for behavior, supports and services to address behavior, BIP?

If so, is the IEP being implemented with fidelity?

What does existing data tell you about progress towards goals? Is the rate of progress as expected?



CONSIDER DEVELOPING A BEHAVIORAL INTERVENTION PLAN

Part of the IEP that describes the specific positive behavioral interventions, supports, and strategies that will be provided to address behavior. Typically, a BIP will identify the following:

- Setting Events
- Antecedent Strategies
- Behavior Teaching Strategies
- Reinforcement Strategies



EXAMPLES OF SUPPLEMENTARY AIDS AND SERVICES, SUPPORTS, AND PROGRAM MODIFICATIONS

counseling services for mental health needs (e.g., anxiety, depression, etc.);

social skill instruction; explicit reinforcement of positive behavior (such as through a classroom token economy);

explicit instruction in stress, anxiety, and depression management; consultation with a professional with expertise in behavioral interventions to create a positive behavioral support plan;

increased access to counselors;

access to targeted strategies based on peer-reviewed research to support social, emotional, behavioral, or mental health needs (e.g., anxiety scaling, mindfulness exercises);

changing the student's class schedule;

training staff on additional positive behavioral supports and universal design for learning; and,

access to consultation with related service providers and others with specialized expertise.



GUIDING PRINCIPALS FOR IDEA DISCIPLINARY PROTECTIONS

Students should not be penalized or punished for conduct that is the result of their disability.

Behavioral challenges and changes of placement are more appropriately addressed through the IEP process than through the student code of conduct to prevent interruption of educational services.

HOW CAN THESE KEY
IDEA REQUIREMENTS HELP
IMPROVE STUDENT
OUTCOMES?
THEY KEEP KIDS WHERE
THEY BELONG.
IN SCHOOL!





KEEPING STUDENTS IN CLASS IMPROVES EDUCATIONAL AND FUNCTIONAL OUTCOMES

Research demonstrates that implementation of PBIS:

- Improved outcomes, such as increased academic achievement and social and emotional competence for children with disabilities, and reduced bullying behaviors;
- Significant reductions in inappropriate behavior;
- Reduced use of exclusionary discipline, including reduced discipline referrals and suspensions; and
- Reduced use of restraint and seclusion.

Supporting and Responding to Student's Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Needs: Evidence-Based Practices for Educators (Version 2) (Center on PBIS, 2022, retrieved May 10, 2023, from <https://www.pbis.org/pbis/getting-started>).



WHAT DOES RESEARCH TELL US ABOUT THE LINK BETWEEN CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR AND ACHIEVEMENT?

“[S]chool-wide, small group, and individual behavioral supports that use proactive and preventative approaches, address the underlying cause of behavior, and reinforce positive behaviors are associated with increases in academic engagement, academic achievement, and fewer suspensions and dropouts.”

Dear Colleague Letter, 68 IDELR 76 (OSERS/OSEP 2016).



IMPROVING STUDENT OUTCOMES THROUGH PBIS

- To fully access and participate in the learning environment, all children should know the school- and program-wide behavioral expectations required to be successful, have opportunities to practice meeting those expectations, and receive support for and reinforcement of those behaviors by skilled adults trained in evidence-based practices.
- PBIS is an MTSS framework focused on improving behavior by integrating data, systems, and evidence-based practices within three tiers of support: universal, targeted, and individual. These tiers are fluid, and the amount of support and interventions should be differentiated over time and across settings based on the child's needs. Using this tiered system, all children would benefit from universal supports and services, while smaller groups that need more targeted and intensive supports and services would receive them.

Positive, Proactive Approaches to Supporting Children with Disabilities: A Guide for Stakeholders (OSERS 2022)

REFLECTION

How might a special education evaluation prevent or minimize the use of exclusionary discipline for our youngest learners?



LEAST RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENT





MISSTEP: FAILING TO ENSURE PLACEMENT IS CONSISTENT WITH A PRESCHOOL STUDENT'S LRE

- Failing to consider all available supplemental supports, services, and accommodations before removing a preschool child with a disability from the general education setting. *L.B. v. Nebo School District*, 41 IDELR 206 (10th Cir. 2004)(school district violated LRE by failing to provide one-to-one aid and supplemental home-based ABA therapy for preschool child with autism).
- Failing to fund a private preschool placement or consider other appropriate options when a preschool child with a disability requires more to receive FAPE than what is available in the district. *Dear Colleague Letter*, 69 IDELR 106 (OSEP 2017); *Letter to Anonymous*, 50 IDELR 229(OSEP 2008)



PLACEMENT IN THE LRE: OVERVIEW

IDEA requires that placement decisions for all children with disabilities be made:

1. by a group of people, including the child's parents, who are knowledgeable about the child, evaluation data, and placement options; and
2. consistent with the LRE requirement.

The child's placement must be:

- Determined annually
- Based on the IEP
- As close as possible to the child's home

~34 C.F.R § 300.116



LRE: THE THREE MAXIMUMS

1

To the **maximum** extent *appropriate*, children with disabilities are educated with children who are nondisabled. 34 C.F.R. §300.114.

2

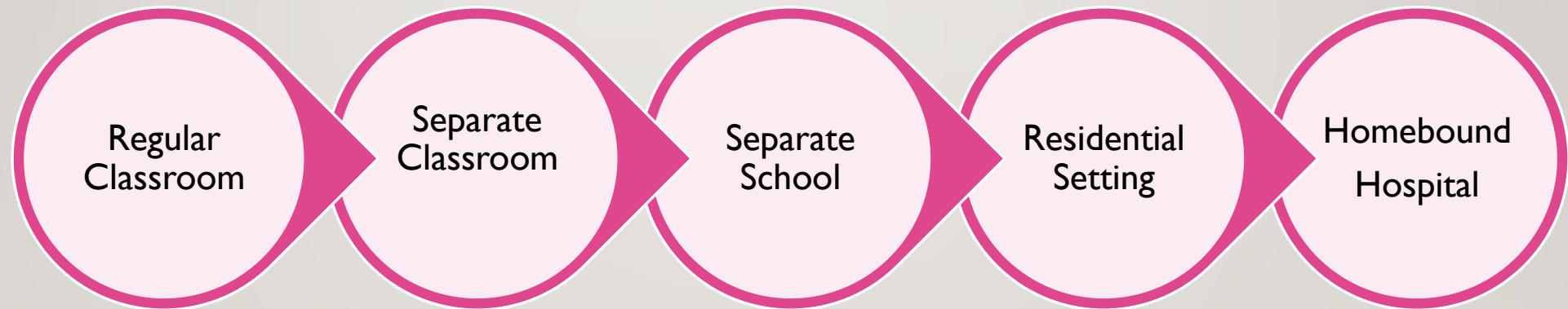
To the **maximum** extent *appropriate*, children with disabilities are able to participate in extracurricular activities with children who are nondisabled. 34 C.F.R. §300.117.

3

To the **maximum** extent *appropriate*, children with disabilities are provided supplementary aids and services to enable them to be educated with children who are nondisabled. 34 C.F.R. §300.42.



LRE: CONTINUUM OF PLACEMENTS





LRE PROGRESSION

Regular Classroom → to the MAXIMUM EXTENT APPROPRIATE

Special Classes → ONLY if regular classes with SUPPLEMENTARY AIDS and SERVICES cannot be achieved

Separate Schools → ONLY if NO lesser restrictive option will work

Residential Settings → ONLY if NO lesser restrictive option will work

Hospital/Homebound → ONLY if education with NO PEERS is the ONLY OPTION

LRE STANDARD FOR TENTH CIRCUIT



-
- 1) whether education in a regular classroom with the use of supplementary aids and services can be achieved satisfactorily, and if not,
 - 2) whether the school district has mainstreamed the student to the maximum extent appropriate.

L.B. v. Nebo School District, 41 IDELR 206 (10th Cir. 2004)



LRE STANDARD FOR TENTH CIRCUIT: CASE SUMMARY'S

In *L.B. v. Nebo School District*, 41 IDELR 206 (10th Cir. 2004), the school district considered mainstreaming opportunities for a preschooler with autism but offered the child a placement in its preschool populated mainly by students with disabilities. The parents declined the offer and kept their daughter in a mainstream private preschool where she was progressing successfully with the use of a supplementary aide and a more intensive at-home ABA program. The 10th Circuit determined the district's placement violated the LRE requirement. The other children at its preschool functioned at a considerably lower level than this child. The mainstream school provided the child with more appropriate role models, had a more balanced gender ratio, and was generally better suited to meet her behavioral and social needs. Case summary taken from *LRE Reference Guide*, WDE (2010)



LRE STANDARD FOR TENTH CIRCUIT

The following factors are used to answer question 1:

- the steps taken to accommodate the student in the regular classroom, including consideration of a continuum of placement and support services;
- the academic benefits the student will receive in the regular classroom compared with those he will receive in the special education classroom;
- the student's overall educational experience in the regular classroom, including non-academic benefits; and
- the effect the student's presence has in the regular classroom

L.B. v. Nebo School District, 41 IDELR 206 (10th Cir. 2004)



OSEP GUIDANCE ON PRESCHOOL PLACEMENT

The public agency responsible for providing FAPE to a preschool child with a disability must ensure that FAPE is provided in the LRE where the child's unique needs (as described in the child's IEP) can be met, regardless of whether the LEA operates public preschool programs for children without disabilities. An LEA may provide special education and related services to a preschool child with a disability in a variety of settings, including a regular kindergarten class, public or private preschool program, community-based child care facility, or in the child's home.

Dear Colleague Letter, 69 IDELR 106 (OSEP 2017)

WHAT IF THE LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICT DOESN'T OPERATE ITS OWN PRESCHOOL PROGRAM OR HAVE CONTINUUM OF OPTIONS AVAILABLE?



For those that don't have their own programs, there are four alternatives:

1. Providing opportunities for the participation (even part time) of preschool children with disabilities in other preschool programs operated by public agencies (such as Head Start);
2. Placing children with disabilities in a private school or other governmental or private agency program that integrates children with disabilities and nondisabled children;
3. Locating classes for preschool children with disabilities in regular elementary schools; and
4. Providing home-based services

~Dear Colleague Letter, 69 IDELR 106 (OSEP 2017)



WHAT IF THE CHILD IS ALREADY PARTICIPATING IN A PRESCHOOL PROGRAM WHEN THEY ARE IDENTIFIED AS IDEA-ELIGIBLE?

1. IDEA presumes that the first placement option considered for a preschool child with a disability is the regular public preschool program the child would attend if the child did not have a disability.
2. In determining the placement for a child with a disability who already participates in a regular public preschool program, the placement team must consider whether the LEA, in collaboration with the regular public preschool program, can ensure that the child receives all of the special education and related services and supplementary aids and services included in the child's IEP in order to meet the needs of the particular child with a disability.
3. The placement team, which includes the child's parent and may include the child's current teacher, must consider any potential harmful effect on the child and on the quality of services that he or she needs before removing the child from the current regular public preschool setting to another more restrictive setting.

34 CFR § 300.116; *Dear Colleague Letter*, 69 IDELR 106 (OSEP 2017)

GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR THE LRE DISCUSSION

- What aids and supports would the child need to be successful?
- Can the IEP be implemented in the regular early childhood program with needed aids and supports?
- Will the proposed placement allow the family to access child care, if needed?
- What regular early childhood programs are in the school district and community?
- Will the regular early childhood program support the collaboration and specialized instruction for the child?

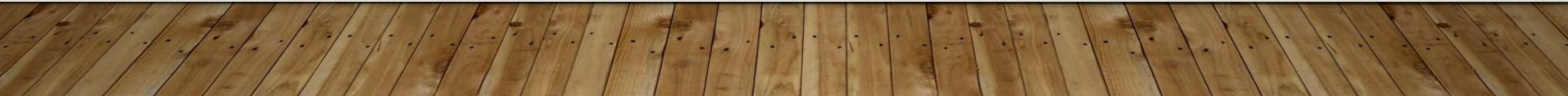
GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR THE LRE DISCUSSION

- Will transitions for the child be reduced or increased in this setting?
- Will time in transport to the setting be similar to transport time for children without disabilities?
- How would transit time impact the child's learning time and the length of their day?
- Will the parents have children in different elementary schools?
- What are the benefits for the child and family?

GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR THE LRE DISCUSSION

- Does the family prefer supports and services provided in the everyday activities and routines in the home? Is home an appropriate place to implement the IEP?
- Are there other placements that may be best for this child, and why?
- Will the family be able to visit the setting before agreeing to the proposed placement?
- Does the team agree on the early childhood placement that is the appropriate option?

Guiding Questions taken from Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center, available at <https://ectacenter.org/topics/iep/iep-placement.asp#guidingquestions>

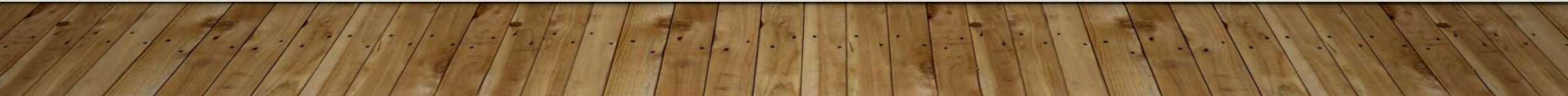


WHY INCLUSION MATTERS FOR OUR YOUNGEST LEARNERS



- Equal opportunity is one of America's most cherished ideals. Being meaningfully included as a member of society is the first step to equal opportunity and is every person's right – a right supported by our laws.
- Research indicates that early childhood inclusion is beneficial to children with and without disabilities.
- Meaningful inclusion can support children with disabilities in reaching their full potential resulting in broad societal benefits, including higher productivity in adulthood and fewer resources spent on interventions and public assistance later in life.

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

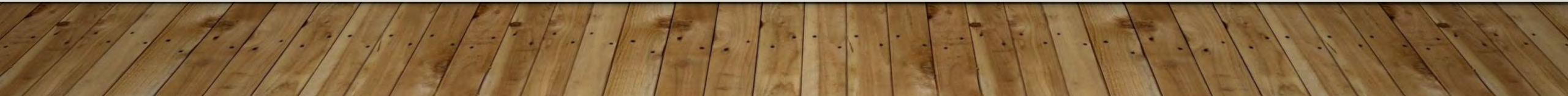


WHY INCLUSION MATTERS FOR OUR YOUNGEST LEARNERS



- It is well documented that the beginning years of all children's lives are critical for building the early foundations of learning and wellness needed for success in school and later in life.
- During these years, children's brains develop rapidly, influenced by the experiences they share with their families, teachers, peers, and in their communities.
- Like all children, it is critical for children with disabilities to be exposed to a variety of rich experiences where they can learn in the context of play and everyday interactions and engage with their peers with and without disabilities.
- In partnership with families, high-quality early childhood programs can facilitate the experiences that foster learning for all children.

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





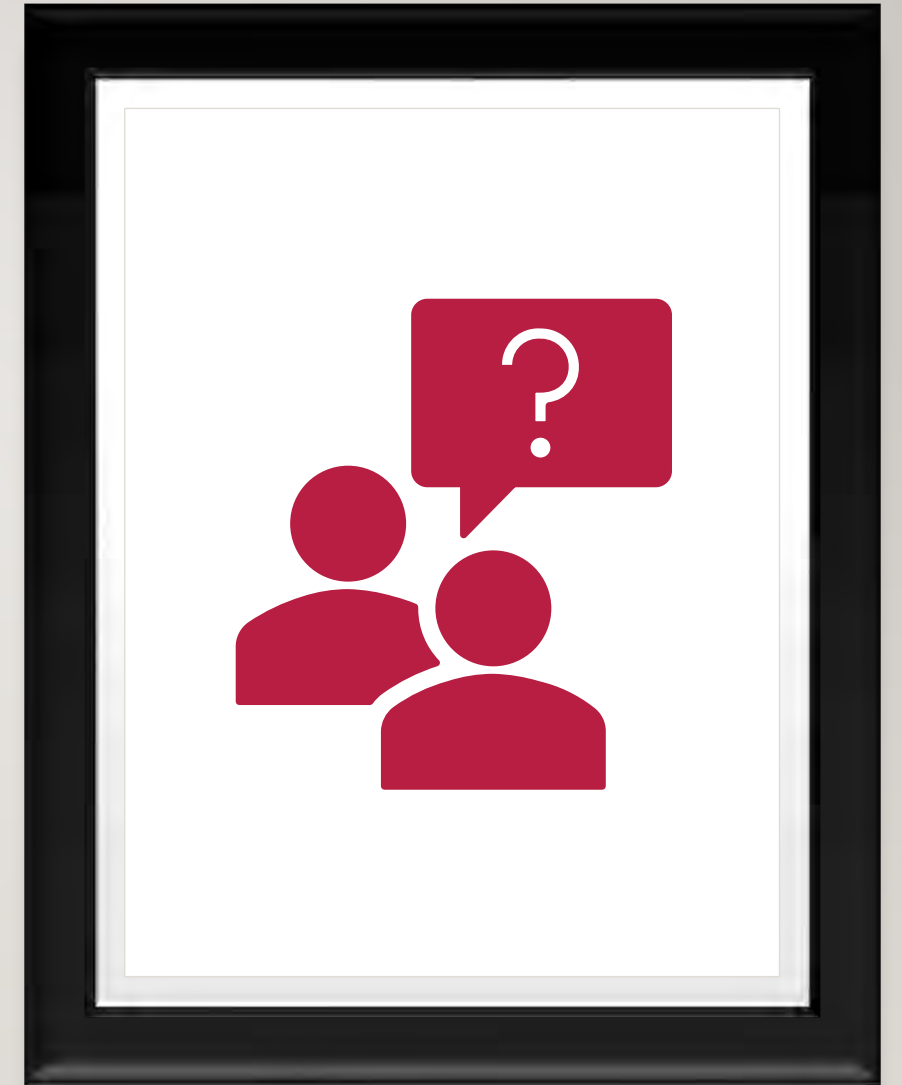
WHY INCLUSION MATTERS FOR OUR YOUNGEST LEARNERS

- Children with disabilities, including those with the most significant disabilities and the highest needs, can make significant developmental and learning progress in inclusive settings.
- Children with disabilities tend to have similar levels of engagement as their typically developing peers and are more likely to practice newly acquired skills in inclusive settings as compared to separate settings.
- Research suggests that children's growth and learning are related to their peers' skills and the effects are most pronounced for children with disabilities.

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

REFLECTION

HOW DOES EVALUATION DATA INFORM LRE?



**MISSTEP: FAILING TO HAVE A GRADE
APPROPRIATE IEP IN PLACE AT THE
BEGINNING OF THE SCHOOL YEAR FOR
CHILDREN TRANSITIONING TO
KINDERGARTEN**

The background of the entire page is a close-up, slightly blurred photograph of numerous colorful wooden blocks. The blocks are in various colors including red, yellow, blue, and green, and are scattered across the surface. Some blocks are in sharp focus, while others are blurred in the foreground and background, creating a sense of depth. The lighting is soft and even, highlighting the smooth texture of the wood.

THE TRANSITION TO KINDERGARTEN REQUIRES SPECIAL ATTENTION

“Transitions are a part of children’s lives every day. However, some transitions take on greater significance because they impact children and families in profound ways. Starting kindergarten is one of those transitions. Research shows a wide gap between the environment and expectations in kindergarten and children’s previous experiences, which places a significant burden on young children and families.” [Wyoming Early Learning Standards](#)

KINDERGARTEN PRESENTS NEW AND SIGNIFICANTLY DIFFERENT CHALLENGES FOR CHILDREN

- Different academic demands
- More complex social environment and significantly larger and more complex physical environment
- Changes in physical routines such as eating, toileting, and hygiene
- Different rules, discipline, and reward systems
- Increased responsibility for self-regulation and problem solving
- More transitions during the day and less supervision/contact with adults

*Understanding and Supporting Transitions in Early Childhood Education:
A Summary of Evidence and Recommendations for Wyoming by Nikki
Baldwin, PhD*

THE STAKES ARE HIGH FOR A SUCCESSFUL TRANSITION TO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

- Early school adjustment is linked to early school success.
- Delayed enrollment, retention, and alternative placements continue to be used for children deemed “not ready” for school, despite the lack of evidence to support these practices.
- The positive effects of intervention programs for “at risk” children, such as Head Start, fade or “washout” if those children do not receive increased support during the transition to elementary school.

Understanding and Supporting Transitions in Early Childhood Education: A Summary of Evidence and Recommendations for Wyoming by Nikki Baldwin, PhD

REQUIREMENTS FOR STUDENTS WITH IEPs ENTERING KINDERGARTEN

At the beginning of the school year, each IDEA-eligible child with a disability must have an IEP in place. 34 C.F.R. § 300.323(a).

The IEP in place when the child starts kindergarten must address the child's disability-related needs and be appropriate for ensuring progress in the general education curriculum and setting for kindergarten, 34 C.F.R. § 300.320(a).

Caution: An IEP developed for a four year old and designed to be implemented in a preschool setting would not be an age-appropriate IEP to start kindergarten.

Reminder: IDEA's transfer provisions only apply to transfers from one public agency (child development center) to another public agency (school) during the same school year. 34 C.F.R. § 300.323(e).

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A SUCCESSFUL TRANSITION TO KINDERGARTEN

- Convene the IEP team prior to the start of school to review and revise the IEP to be ready for implementation on the first day of school.
- Make sure the IEP team is built for the transition challenge. The IEP team should include preschool and kindergarten teachers and providers to ensure continuity.
- In developing the IEP, consider the following questions?
 - Does the PLAAFP adequately describe how the child's disability affects participation in the kindergarten classroom and curriculum?
 - Are the annual goals appropriate and aligned with kindergarten learning standards and classroom expectations?
 - Are the special education and related services and supplementary supports and services adequate to meet the child's disability related needs in the kindergarten setting. Remember, the transition from preschool to kindergarten is dramatic!



FINAL QUESTIONS