

TATS eUpdate  
Inclusion

## **Inclusion: Who Benefits? What Does the Research Say?**

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Inclusion of young children with disabilities in educational environments with their typically developing peers is not always met with a positive response. Comments and questions about including all children range from “*Why do inclusion?*” to “*Those children are best served in special education class with special education teachers!*” This update will give an overview of what the research says about inclusion for young children with disabilities.

### **Best Practice**

#### ***Outcomes for Children***

As early as 1980, research on the outcomes of preschool inclusion has indicated that children with disabilities enrolled in inclusive settings make at least as much progress on standardized measures of cognitive, language, motor, and social development as children in non-inclusive preschool special education classrooms (Odom, Vitztum, Wolery, Lieber, Sandall, Hanson, Beckman, Schwartz & Horn, 2004). Roper and Dunst (2003) suggest that providing a variety of frequent opportunities to interact with typically developing children, will promote and sustain language and social competence in a child with disabilities. Also, language development and classification/communication skills of children with disabilities made significant gains when instruction was delivered in an inclusive setting (Klein, Geiss, Kushner, & Hill, 2003).

Children with and without disabilities learn from each other in inclusive settings (National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, 2000). Positive outcomes accrue for typically developing children who are enrolled in inclusive settings. These outcomes are related to developing a greater understanding of disabilities and an increased sensitivity to individual differences (Odom et al., 2004). Two factors which appear to influence the performance of children with and without disabilities in inclusive settings on standardized developmental measures are the individual who provides the services to the child with disabilities (Childress, 2004) and the manner in which the curriculum is delivered to children with and without disabilities (Fuchs, Fuchs, Thompson, Al Otaiba, Yen, Yang, Braun, & O’Conner, 2002). In addition, inclusive preschool programs and child care settings receive comparable or higher ratings when evaluated on environmental ratings scales (e.g. ECERS) than regular special education (Gamel-McCormick, 2004; La Paro, Sexton, & Snyder, 1998).

***Building Relationships***

A review of the research (Odom et al., 2004) indicates that the level of interactions and play is more appropriate for children with disabilities when they are in settings with typically developing peers. It also does not appear that inclusive settings have a negative effect on typically developing children. A study by Guralnick and Hammond (1999) found that children with and without mild disabilities exhibited similar social patterns and the social interactions of typically developing children were not disrupted by participation in groups in inclusive settings with children with disabilities.

A primary goal of inclusive preschool programming is to promote the social integration of children with disabilities into peer groups with their socially competent, typically developing peers (Guralnick, 2001; Odom, 2000). These findings have led to the design of classroom procedures to support social integration, promote interactions, and increase social competence among all children.

***Perspectives of Families***

Families of children with and without disabilities enrolled in inclusion settings generally have positive attitudes toward inclusion. Generally, families express positive views of the benefits of inclusion, including promoting acceptance of their children in community settings (Guralnick, 2002). Two benefits reported by families include increased social contact between children with and without disabilities, and an increased sensitivity and acceptance of differences by the typically developing children toward their peers with disabilities.

Opportunities for inclusion maximize the potential for growth of individuals with disabilities, typically developing peers, families, and special and general educators. The answer to “Who benefits from inclusion?” may be “Society”.

**Reflections**

1. What is the position of the school district as it relates to inclusive services?
2. What is your personal philosophy as it relates to the inclusion of young children with special needs, with typically developing peers?
3. Is there a forum to discuss the benefits and barriers to inclusion?

*“Change your thoughts and you change your world.”* – Norman Vincent Peale

## References and Resources

The Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services (BEESS)

Florida Department of Education

Administers programs for students with disabilities and for gifted students. Additionally, the bureau coordinates student services throughout the state and participates in multiple inter-agency efforts designed to strengthen the quality and variety of services available to students with special needs. <http://www.firn.edu/doe/commhome/index.html>

Childress, D. (2004). Special Instruction and Natural Environments: Best practices in Early Intervention. *Infants and Young Children*, 17(2), 162-170.

Circle of Inclusion

For early childhood service providers and families of young children, which contains various resources related to inclusion for young children (to age 8). Spanish, Korean and Japanese in addition to English. Includes articles, adaptations and modification ideas, children's literature relating to disabilities, ideas for inclusive classrooms and links.

<http://www.circleofinclusion.org/>

Fuchs, D., Fuchs, L., Thompson, A., Al Otaiba, S., Yen, L., Yang, N., Braun, M., & O'Conner, R. E.(2002). Exploring the importance of reading program for kindergartners with disabilities in mainstream classrooms. *Exceptional Children*, 68(3), 295-311.

Gamel-McCormick, M. (2004). *Family Child Care Quality: Implications for children with disabilities*. Paper presented at 2004 Annual International Conference on Young Children with Special Needs and Their Families, Chicago, IL.

Guralnick, M. J. (2001). Social competence with peers and early childhood inclusion: Need for alternative approaches, in M. Guralnick (ed.), *Early childhood Inclusion: Focus on Change*, pp. 531-42. Baltimore: Brookes Publishing Co.

Guralnick, M. J. (2002). Involvement with peers: Comparisons between young children with and without Down syndrome. *Journal of Intellectual Disability Research*, 46, 379-94.

Guralnick, M. J. & Hammond, M. A. (1999). Sequential analysis of the social play of young children with mild developmental delays. *Journal of Early Intervention*, 22, 243-56.

Klein, E. R., Geiss, D., Kushner, R., Hill, D. (2003, April). *The early childhood support program: Incorporating discreet skills into comprehensive units for learning*. Paper presented at 2003 American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting, Chicago, IL.

La Paro, K. M., Sexton, D. & Snyder, P. (1998). Program quality characteristics in segregated and inclusive early childhood settings. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 13, 151-68.

National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, 2000 *From neurons to neighborhoods: The science of early childhood development*. Committee on Integrating the Science of Early Childhood Development. Jack Pl. Shonkoff and Deborah A Phillips, Eds. Board on Children Youth and Families, Commission on Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education, Washington, D. C.: Academy Press.

Odom, S. L. (2000). Preschool Inclusion: What we know and where we go from here. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education*, 20, 20-7.

Odom, S. L., Vitztum, J., Wolery, R., Lieber, J., Sandall, S., Hanson, M.J., Beckman, P., Schwartz, I. & Horn, E. (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.

Roper, N. & Dunst, C. J. (2003). Communication Intervention in Natural Learning Environments. *Infants and Young Children*, 10(3), 215-226.

#### Technical Assistance & Training System (TATS)

Statewide project providing technical assistance and training to programs in Florida serving prekindergarten children with disabilities. Website provides information and resources on curriculum and instruction, evaluation and assessment, family involvement, inclusion, program effectiveness/quality, and transition, as well as, linking early childhood partners. [www.tats.ucf.edu](http://www.tats.ucf.edu)



TATS eUpdates are a service of the Technical Assistance & Training System Communities of Practice. The TATS eUpdates are intended to provide current information related to best practices or trends in the education of young children with special needs in the areas of Transition, Program Effectiveness, Inclusion, Curriculum & Instruction, Evaluation & Assessment, and Family Involvement. For more information about the TATS Communities of Practice and the TATS eUpdates, please log on to [www.tats.ucf.edu](http://www.tats.ucf.edu).