



WHAT IS QUALITY INCLUSION?

The principle behind inclusion is that all children should be educated together, and the supports and services should follow the child into the setting they would attend if they didn't have a disability.

"In their report 'The Business of Early Care and Education in Illinois' (2008) the Illinois State Board of Education states:

"Inclusion of children with disabilities and their families in early care and education, as well as other community settings, is rooted in the concept of equity. Two central components of inclusion are access or enrollment in early care and education, and participation, which involves active engagement in activities in settings that promote learning and development. Young children with disabilities do not require different activities or experiences for learning to occur. However, they do need specific, individualized supports comprised of evidence-based instructional strategies (e.g. adaptations, individualized instructional strategies, modified curriculum and/or environment, and weaving interventions into routines) to benefit from learning opportunities. High-quality early care and education services for all children require coordinated efforts across the service delivery spectrum, including child care, general education, special education, health care, mental health, and social services. Collaboration is the key to achieving high-quality inclusive services!" <http://bit.ly/2wln2Zc>

Research indicates children with disabilities learn from their peers who are typically developing and that all children benefit when supports and services are pushed into a typical classroom setting.

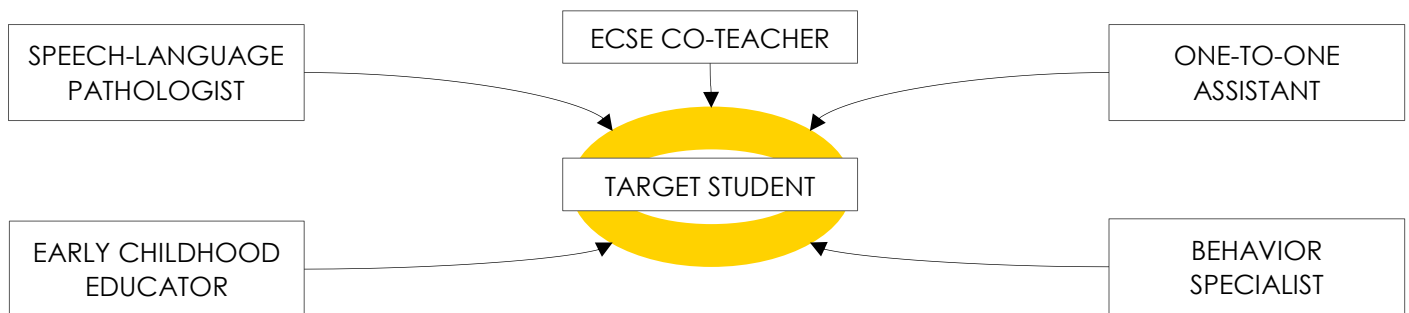
CONCEPTUALIZING INCLUSION SUPPORT SERVICE DELIVERY

According to Richardson-Gibbs and Kline in the book *Making Preschool Inclusion Work*, one way to differentiate various types of inclusion support is as either direct or indirect. *Direct* support involves direct contact and interaction with the child.

The following are examples of common direct support in Early Childhood Special Education inclusive settings:

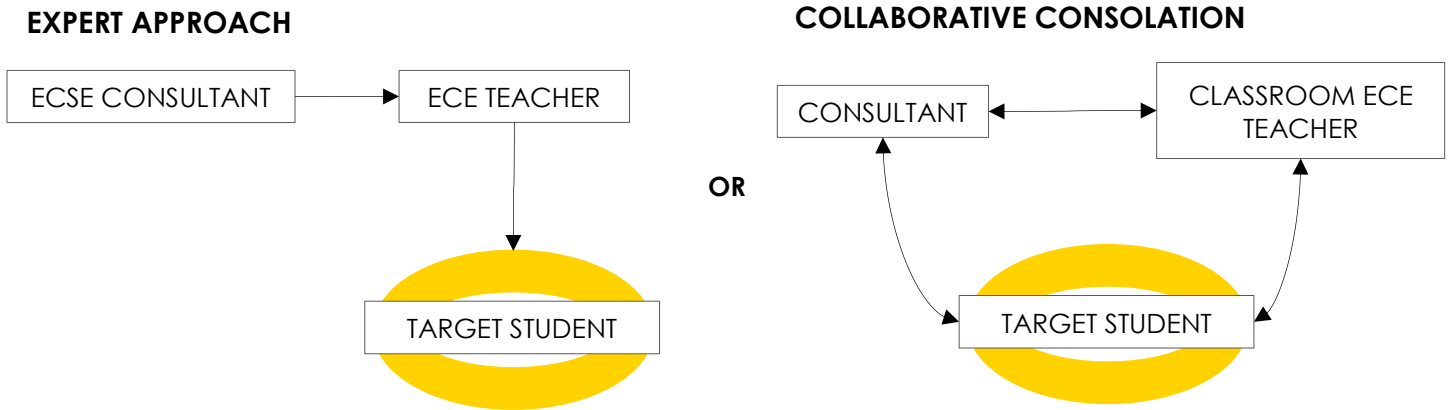
- Use of a one-to-one para educator assigned to the target child;
- Direct teaching by the classroom early childhood education teacher;
- A pull-out speech therapy session provided by the SLP;
- Daily discrete trail training provided by a behavior specialist or trained assistant;
- Implementation of sensory integration techniques by the occupational therapist within the classroom routine;
- Direct assessment of the target child by the ECSE co-teacher for progress monitoring and documentation.

In each of these examples, the adult is directly interacting with the child. Often an included child may have many individuals providing direct inclusion support as represented below.



Indirect supports are those provided by one individual for example, an ECSE consultant to a second individual, such as the early childhood teacher or parent, who then uses that information or skill to provide direct service to the target child.

A consultant is not permanently housed in the classroom but rather visits the classroom and impacts the target child primarily by providing information and modeling strategies to and engage in problem solving with classroom staff.



HOW DO CHILDREN BENEFIT FROM INCLUSION?

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the U.S. Department of Education developed a policy statement on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs, September 14th, 2015, <http://bit.ly/2MDZBEA>. This policy statement clearly identifies the benefits of inclusive practices for children both with and without disabilities.

CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES BENEFIT FROM INCLUSION

The Policy Statement on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Education "supports the benefits of inclusion for young children with and without disabilities. Some studies have shown that children with disabilities in inclusive settings experienced greater cognitive and communication development than children with disabilities who were in a separate setting."^{2, 3, 17}

"Studies have shown that children with disabilities who spend more time in general education classes tend to be absent fewer days from school and have higher test scores in reading and math than those who spend less time in general education classes."^{4, 5, 6, 17}

"In addition to making learning and achievement gains, children with disabilities in inclusive early childhood programs also demonstrate stronger social-emotional skills than their peers in separate settings.⁷ Children demonstrate more social interactions with peers with and without disabilities, had larger networks of friends, and were more socially competent compared to children in separate settings."^{8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 17}

INCLUSION BENEFITS FOR TYPICALLY DEVELOPING CHILDREN

"Children without disabilities can also benefit from inclusive early childhood programs. Studies indicate that typically developing children can show positive developmental, social, and attitudinal outcomes from inclusive experiences."¹⁷

- "They are capable of demonstrating greater compassion and empathy; and
- Can have a more positive perception of children with disabilities when peer interactions are adequately supported by classroom teachers."^{13, 14, 17}
- "They can also develop a better understanding of diversity and disability as concepts."^{15, 16, 17}

"When programs and teachers have an advanced understanding and capacity for individualized learning and can provide appropriate developmental supports for each child, all children can benefit, because all children learn best with individualized supports. Children without disabilities in high-quality inclusive early childhood settings also benefit from developmental specialists who can identify and address delays in development that might otherwise not be identified."¹⁷