

Fact Sheet: Preschool Inclusion

For references, visit: <https://ectacenter.org/topics/inclusion/fact-sheet-barton.asp>



† — Denotes facts based on principles guiding early childhood special education field, recommended practices, and collective knowledge and experience.

Adapted with permission from:

Barton, E., Smith, B.S. & Locketta, B. (2025). *The preschool inclusion toolbox: How to build and lead a high-quality program (2nd ed.)*. Brookes Publishing.

Fact 1.

In 36 years, the practice of providing special education and related services in regular early childhood (EC) settings to preschoolers with disabilities has increased only 11.7%, and many young children with disabilities continue to be educated in separate settings.

Fact 2.

Inclusion benefits children with and without disabilities.

Fact 3.

The quality of preschool programs including at least one student with a disability was as good as or better than that of preschool programs without children with disabilities. However, traditional measures of EC program quality might not be sufficient for assessing the quality of programs that include children with disabilities.

Fact 4.

Children with disabilities can be effectively educated in inclusive programs using specialized instruction.

Fact 5.

Parents and teachers influence children's values regarding disabilities.

Fact 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.

Fact 7.

Families of children with and without disabilities generally have positive views of inclusion.

Fact 8.

Inclusion is not more expensive than having separate programs for children with disabilities.

Fact 9.

Successful inclusion requires intentional and effective collaboration and teaming.†

Fact 10.

The individual outcomes of preschool inclusion should include belonging, access, participation, and support. Children with disabilities do not need to be ready to be included; programs need to be ready to support all children.†