



WE CAN AND WE MUST: Practical Strategies

Advancing Inclusion and Belonging for Every Child

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Inclusion Institute 2026

Welcome, Outcomes and Agenda

OUTCOMES

Based on individual roles, participants will explore core principles and identify key practices and strategies that will:

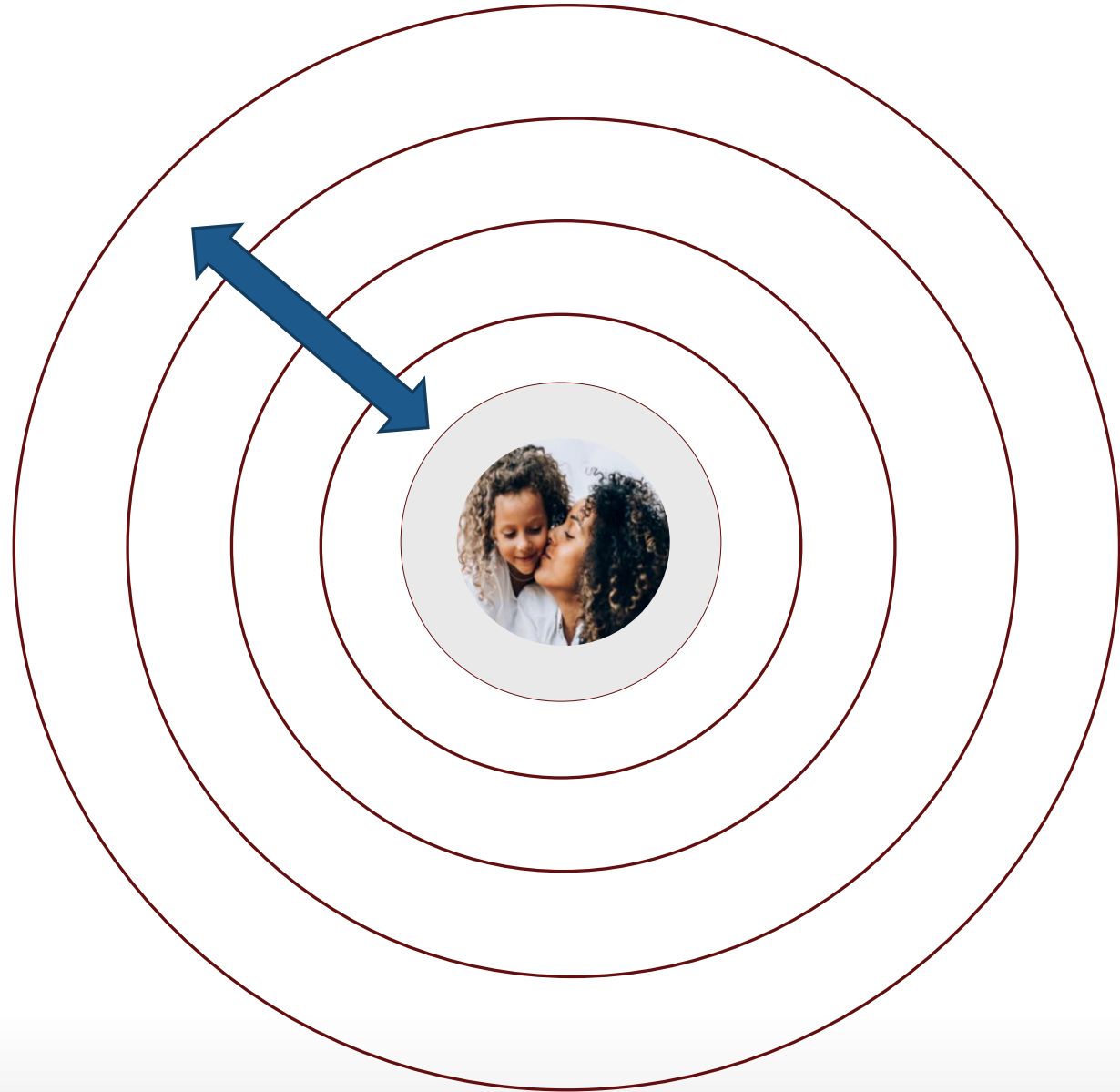
- advance meaningful inclusion and belonging
- build inclusive communities
- encourage collaboration across and within programs
- align with the unique context of the state, community, and program.

AGENDA

- Welcome
- Inclusion and Belonging
- Resources & Requirements
- The Sphere of Influence
- Strategies: Role-Alike Discussion
- Strategies for Getting Started
- In closing

Who's Here

- Family Members
- Teachers/Providers
- Program Administrators
- Community Partners
- State Leaders
- IHE
- Other



Video: Meaningful Inclusion in Early Childhood

As you watch the video, think about and be prepared to share:

- What was important to the families?
- Who (think of roles) played a part in ensuring belonging and inclusion in this video? What did it look like?



Video Reflection

As you watch the video, think about and be prepared to share:

- What was important to the families
- Who (think of roles) played a part in ensuring belonging and inclusion in this video? What did it look like?

Inclusion and Belonging

North Star

- When you think about **inclusion**, what is your North Star?
- Scan the QR code and enter a word or simple phrase.

<https://app.sli.do/event/3Y3iLp5e72hbKdLkBWfb1p>



Are we moving towards the North Star? Let's Look at the Data!

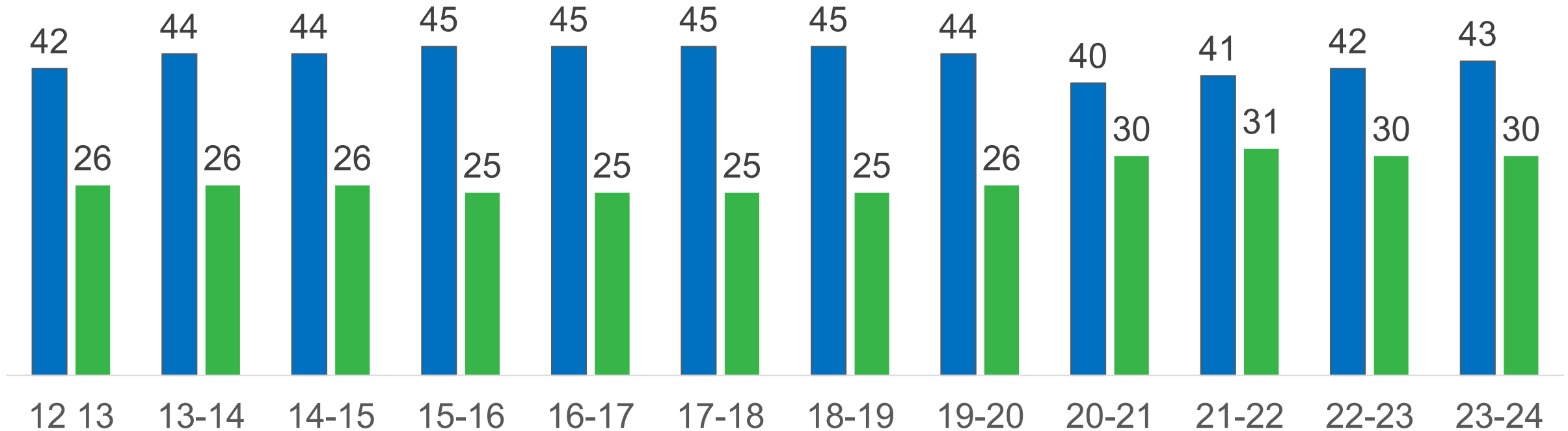


National Reporting: Preschool Environments (SPP/APR B6)

Indicator B6 – Percent of children with IEPs aged 3, 4, and aged 5 who are enrolled in a preschool program attending a:

- **B6a** Regular early childhood program and receiving the majority of special education and related services in that program.
- **B6b** Children who do not attend a Regular EC Program and receive services in a separate special education class, separate school, or residential facility

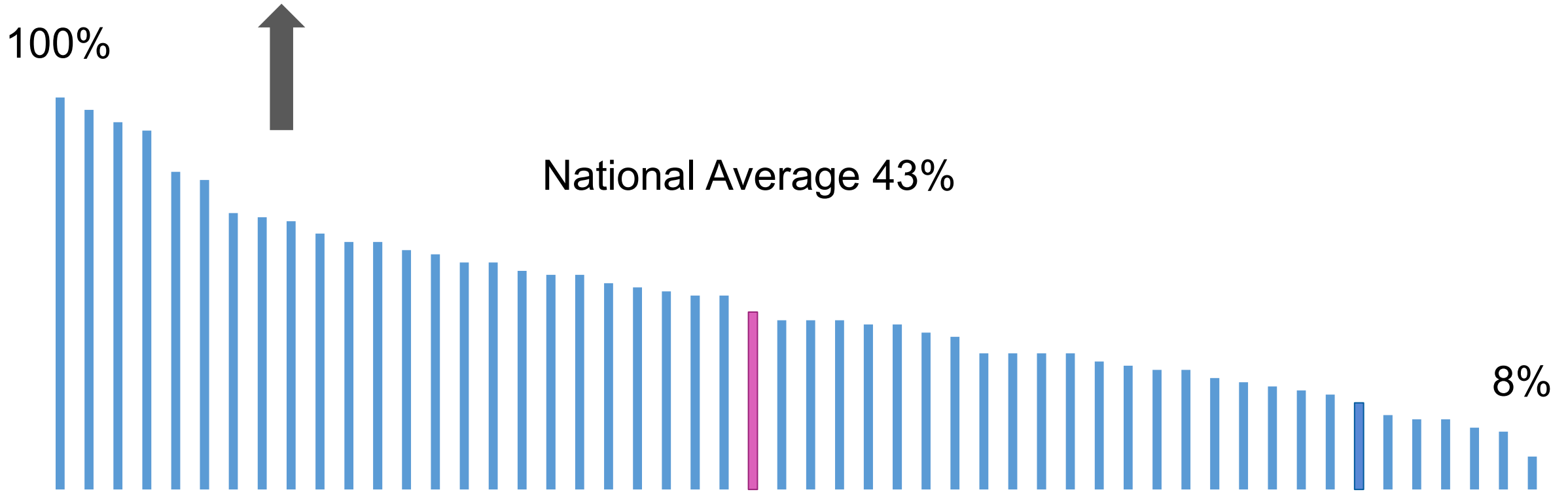
National Preschool Environments Data Over Time



SPP/APR Indicator 6a: Children attending a regular early childhood program (RECP) and receiving the majority of special education services in the program

SPP/APR Indicator 6b: Children who do not attend an RECP, who receive their special education services in a separate class, separate school or residential facility

State Preschool Environments- Children Attending a Regular EC Program and Receiving Majority of Services in the Program, 23-24



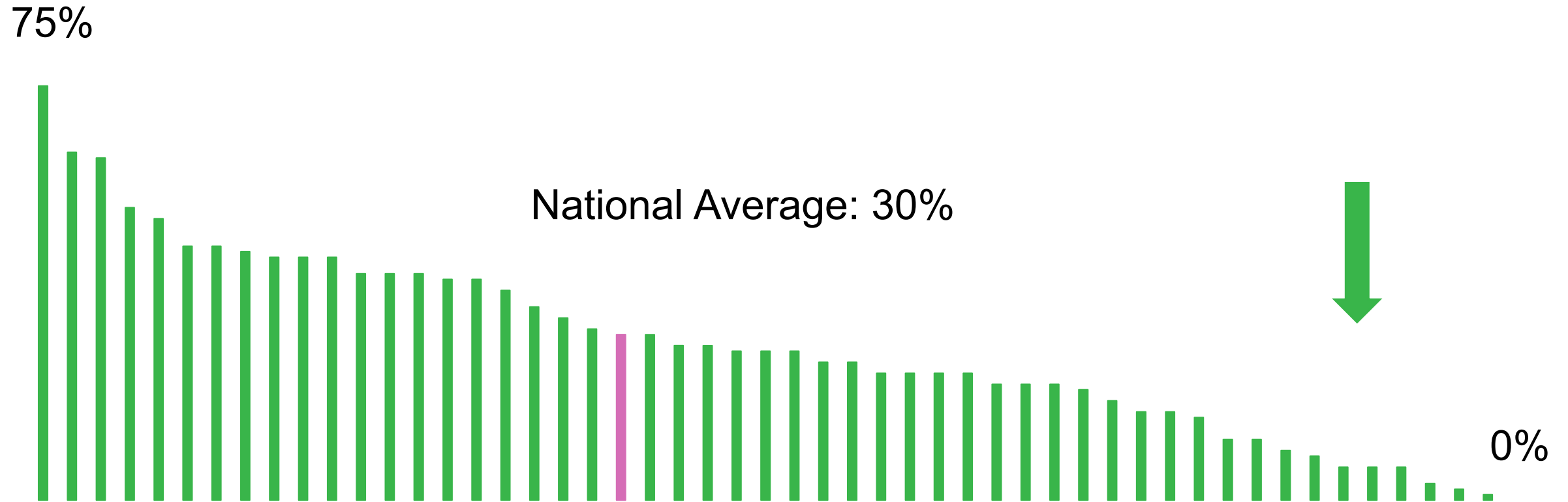
Each bar represents a state or entity

Only 4 of 10 preschool children with disabilities attend a regular early childhood program and receive services there



What are the numbers and percent of children with disabilities attending a regular early childhood program in your district?

State Preschool Environments- Children Not Attending a Reg. EC Program, Receiving Services in a **Special Education Program**, 23-24



Each bar represents a state or entity

Limitations of the Preschool Environments Data: What the Data Do Not Show

These data show a snapshot of where IDEA services are provided.

They do not show:

- the specific program type,
- the quality of the programs,
- or a child's level of participation and belonging.



LRE Placement Decisions

"In all cases, placement decisions must be **individually determined** on the basis of each child's abilities and needs and each child's IEP, and *not solely on factors* such as **category of disability, severity of disability, availability of special education and related services, configuration of the service delivery system, availability of space, or administrative convenience.**"

[Federal Register Vol. 71, No. 156, p.46588](#)



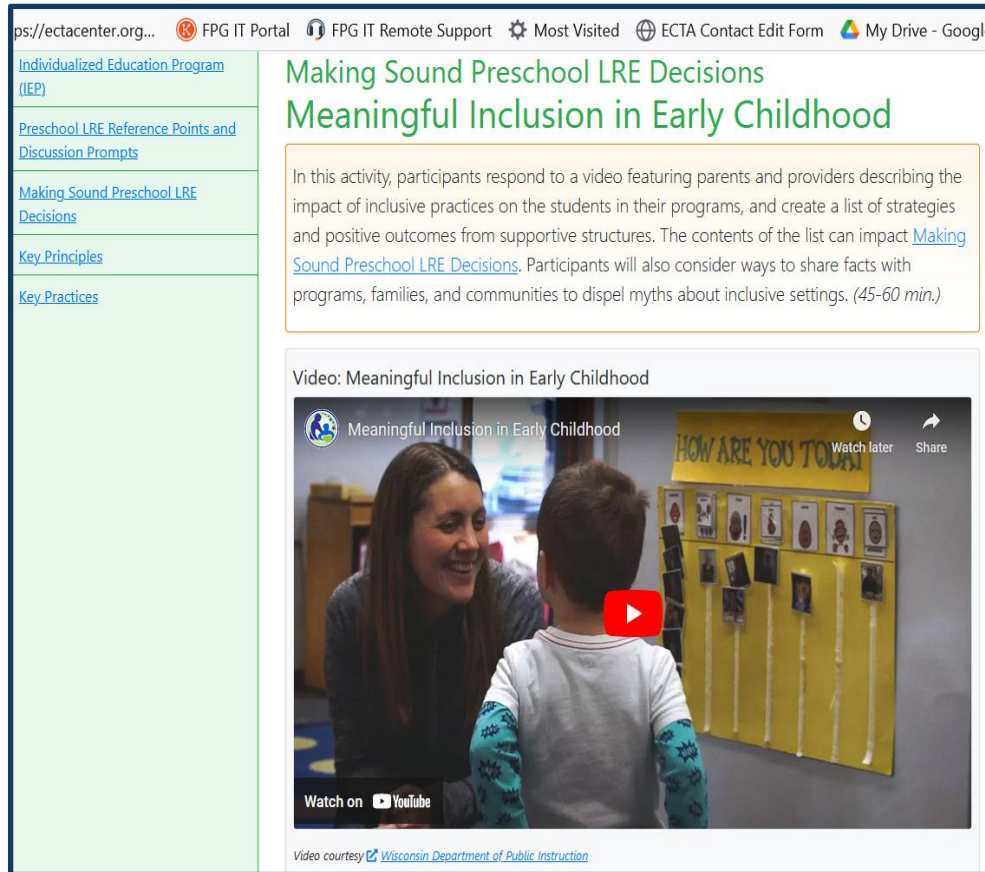
High Expectations and Opportunities for Each and Every Child



- Maintain high expectations for every child
- Discuss what a child can do, not what they can't do- talk about what's next.
- Start where children are- consider the regular program the child currently attends.
- Provide the supplementary aids and services to ensure success for every child.
- Administrators must ensure access to inclusive settings and meaningful supports.
- Consider front-loading IEPs – more services at the beginning.

Resources & Requirements

Making Sound Preschool LRE Decisions



The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL <https://ectacenter.org...>. The page title is "Making Sound Preschool LRE Decisions Meaningful Inclusion in Early Childhood". The left sidebar contains links for "Individualized Education Program (IEP)", "Preschool LRE Reference Points and Discussion Prompts", "Making Sound Preschool LRE Decisions", "Key Principles", and "Key Practices". The main content area features a text box describing an activity where participants respond to a video and create a list of strategies. Below the text is a video player titled "Video: Meaningful Inclusion in Early Childhood" showing a woman and a child in a classroom setting. The video player includes a "Watch later" button, a "Share" button, and a "Watch on YouTube" button. The video is credited to "Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction".

- Resources to support IEP team decisions
- Guidance, references, & training materials
- Activities with detailed instructions designed to be used in a variety of ways
- Discussion questions to promote deeper, collective understanding



[ECTA Center: Making Sound Preschool LRE Decisions](#)

Preschool LRE Reference Points and Discussion Prompts

Preschool LRE Reference Points and Discussion Prompts

 [Download PDF](#)

Updated October 7, 2025, 2:28 PM

This summary of the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) provisions of the IDEA as applicable to preschool aged children with disabilities is intended to be used as both a quick reference guide and training tool.

Reference Points are drawn from IDEA regulations, comments in the Federal Register, and guidance and clarification provided in letters from the U.S. Department of Education and other agencies.

Discussion Prompts are provided for state and local teams to supporting the inclusion of young children with disabilities by appropriately applying LRE provisions and placement decisions for individual children.

Supplementary Aids and Services

The screenshot shows the ECTA website interface. At the top left is the ECTA logo with the text 'Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center' and the tagline 'Improving Systems, Practices, and Outcomes'. A search bar with 'ENHANCED BY Google' is on the top right. A navigation menu below the header includes links for Home, About, IDEA, Systems, Practices, Outcomes, Events, Resources, and For Families. The main content area has a breadcrumb trail: Home > Resources > Topics > IEP > Making Sound Preschool LRE Decisions > Supplementary Aids and Services. The page title is 'Making Sound Preschool LRE Decisions: Supplementary Aids and Services'. The main text describes an activity where participants share and explore examples to increase understanding of the requirements for Supplementary Aids and Services, with a duration of 60 minutes. Below the text is a 'Materials' section with a list of links to various resources.

ecta Early Childhood
Technical Assistance Center
Improving **Systems**, **Practices**, and **Outcomes**

ENHANCED BY Google

Home About IDEA Systems Practices Outcomes Events Resources For Families

Home > Resources > Topics > IEP > Making Sound Preschool LRE Decisions > Supplementary Aids and Services

Making Sound Preschool LRE Decisions Supplementary Aids and Services

In this activity, participants share and explore examples to increase understanding of the requirements for Supplementary Aids and Services, and the categories as applied to preschool age children. *(60 min.)*

Materials

- [Presentation File: Supplementary Aids and Services](#)
- [Handout: Supplementary Aids and Services Component of the IEP](#)
- [Handout: Supplementary Aids and Services Example Scenarios](#)
- [Making Sound Preschool LRE Decisions, action 8. Consider supplementary aids](#)
- [Preschool LRE Reference Points and Discussion Prompts](#)
- [A Guide to Adaptations](#)

[ECTA Center: Supplementary Aids and Services](#)

Policy Statement on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs

All young children with disabilities should have access to high-quality inclusive early childhood programs that provide individualized and appropriate support so they can fully participate alongside their peers without disabilities, meet high expectations, and achieve their full potential.



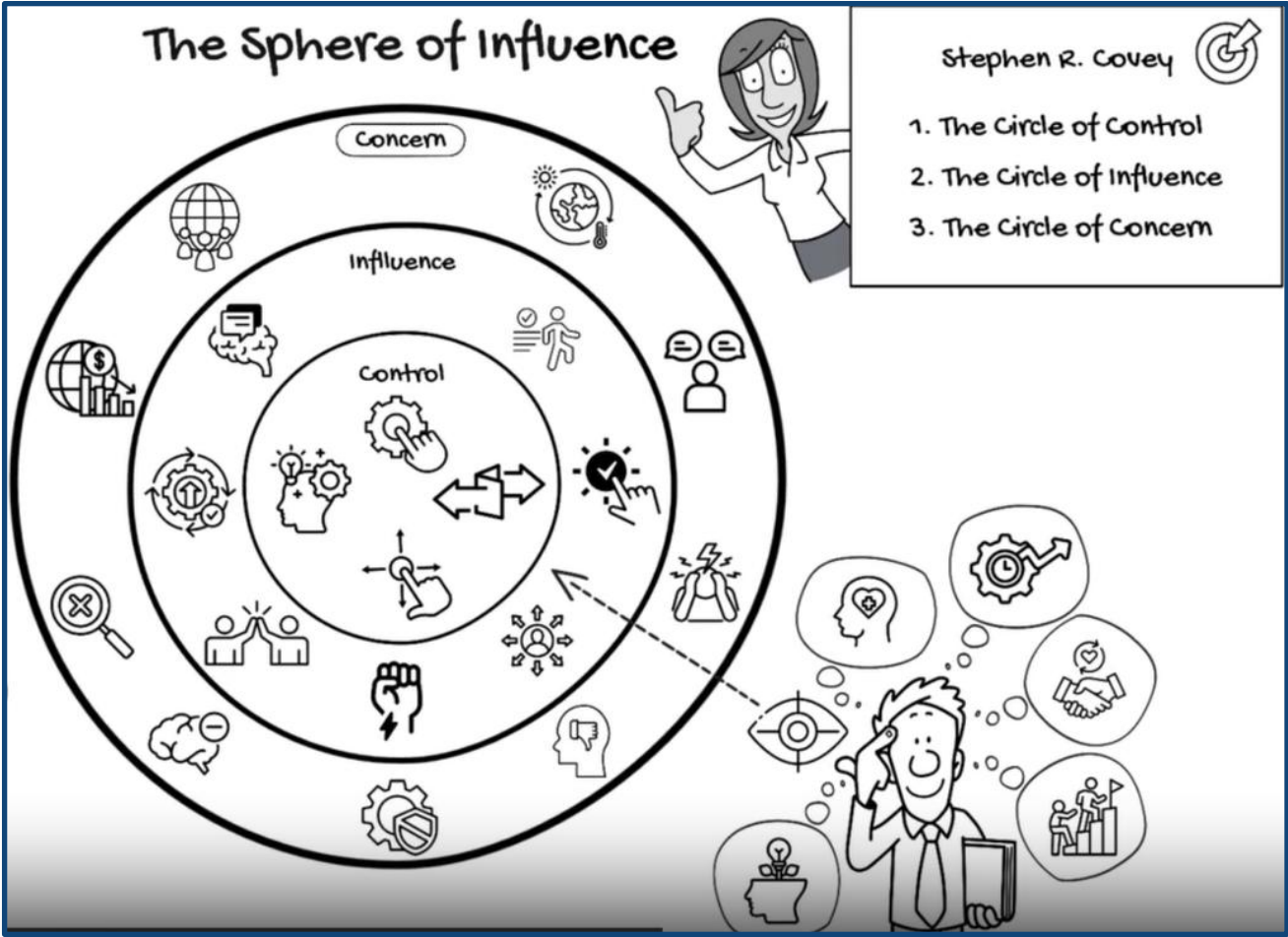
What are Our Expectations for Inclusion in Early Childhood Programs?



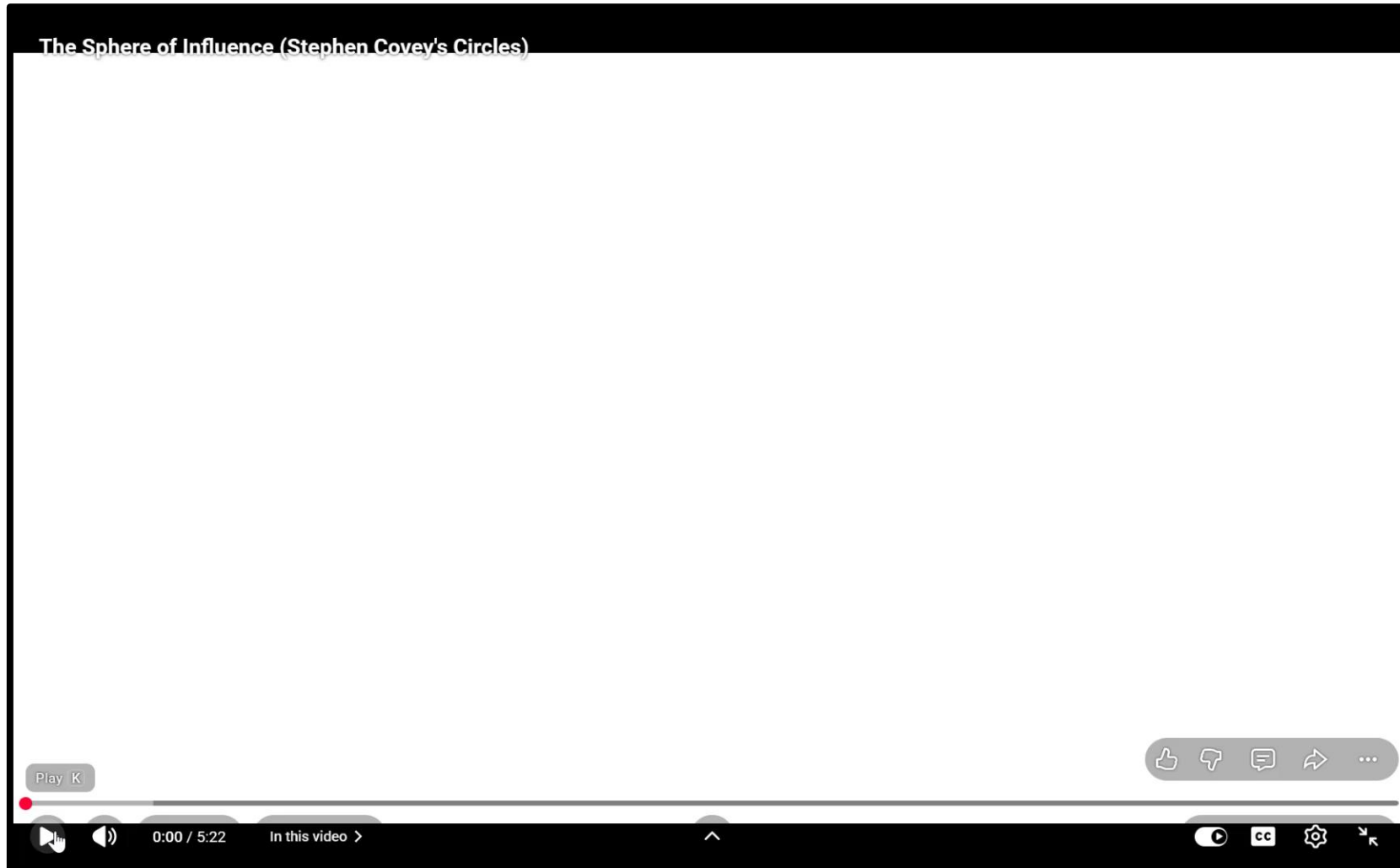
- Young children with disabilities must be given **access to the same EC programs, services, and experiences** as children without disabilities.
- **All children with disabilities should have access to high-quality inclusive EC programs** regardless of type of disability, level of services and supports needed, race and ethnicity, language, and geographic and economic circumstances
- Inclusion in early childhood programs can **set a trajectory for inclusion** across the course of an individual's life

The Sphere of Influence

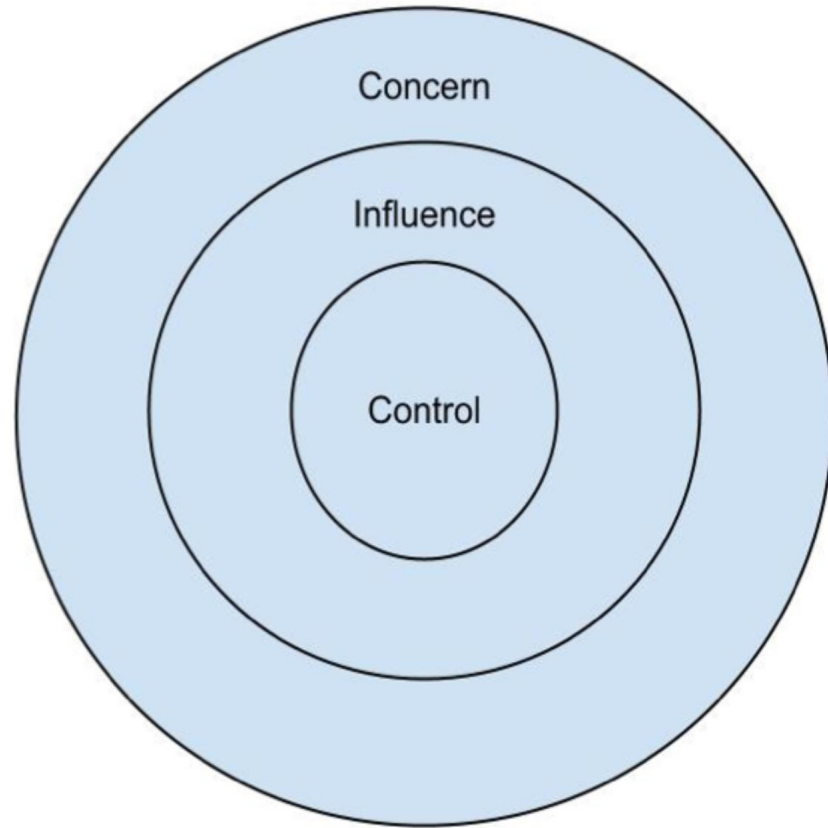
Stephen Covey's Sphere of Influence



Stephen Covey's Sphere of Influence- Video



Sphere of Influence



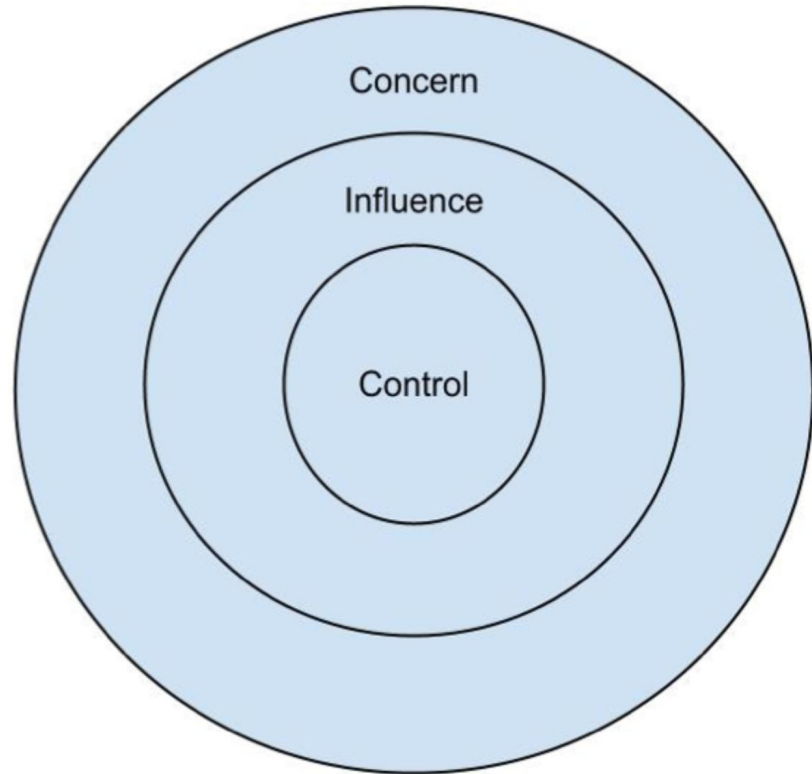
Concerns: Things that worry, bother, or frustrate you. Things you care about. Things that impact you. Things you have no control over or influence over.

Influence: Things you can do something about. Things you care about and can impact. Things you can act on to change.

Control: Things you can directly impact. Things you can decide or do.

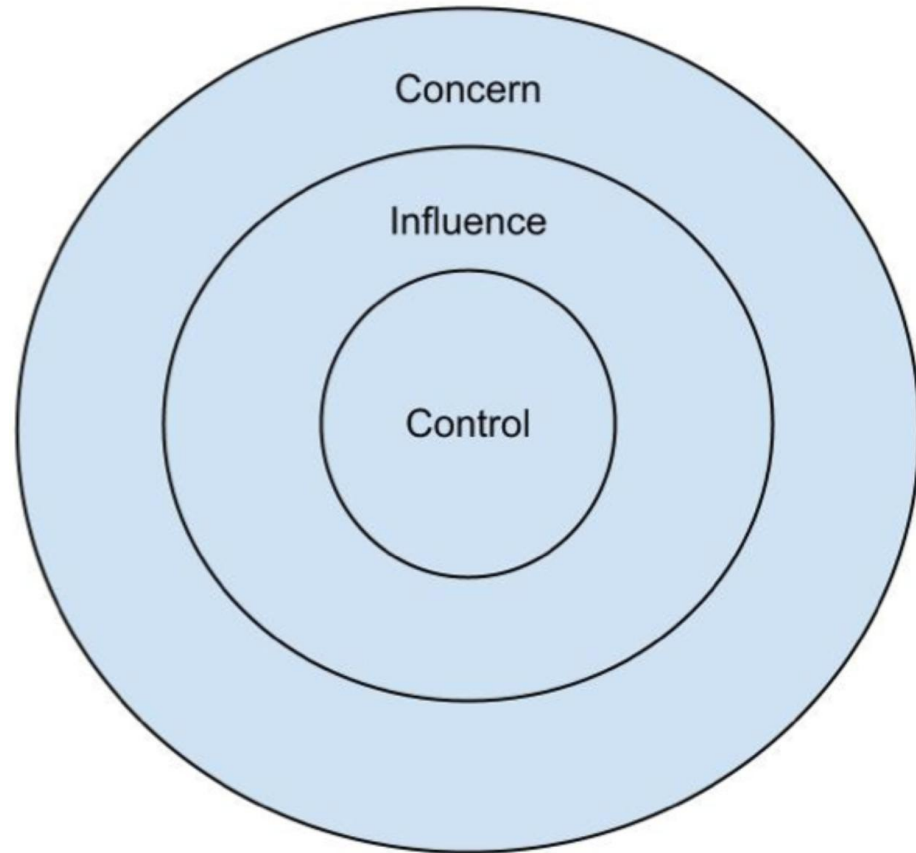
Where do you spend your
time and energy?

Supporting More Inclusive Opportunities for Each Child



- On a blank piece of paper, draw your circles
- Consider where each of your specific challenges or barriers belongs in your circles
 - Control
 - Influence
 - Concern
- Are there items in your area of concern?

Maximizing Time & Energy



Concerns: Things that worry, bother, frustrate you. Things you care about. Things that impact you. Things where you have no control or influence.

Influence: Things you can do something about. Things you care about and can impact. Things you can act on to change.

Control: Things you can directly impact. Things you can decide or do.

Where can you maximize your time and energy regarding inclusion?

Strategies: Role-Alike Discussion

Role-Alike Discussion



From wherever you sit and whatever your role, **what specific strategies can you implement in your sphere of influence to increase inclusive opportunities?**

Groups

Family

Regular EC Teachers

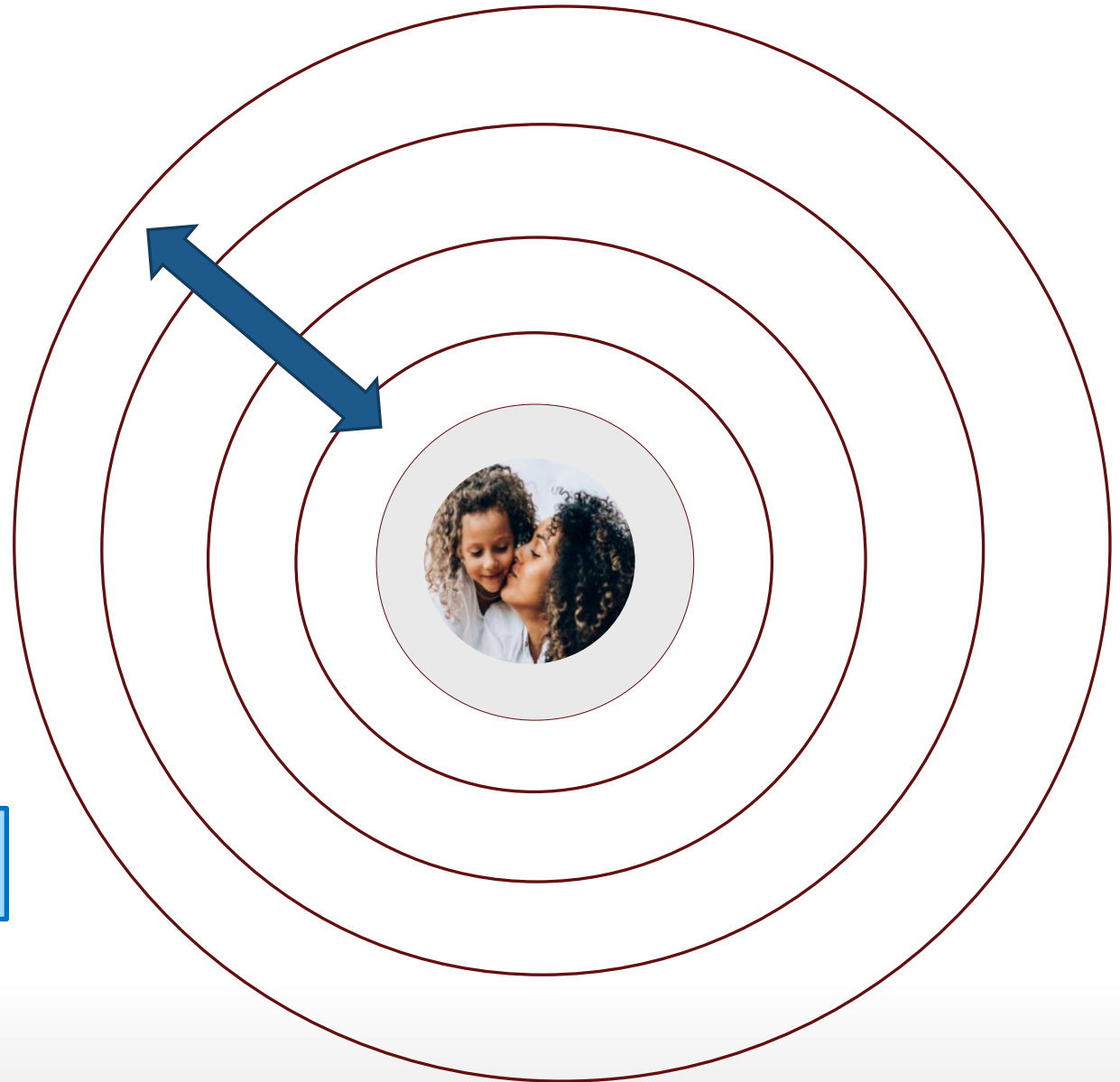
Regular EC Administrators

Special Ed Teachers

ECSE Administrators

State Leaders

Who has an example?



Strategies for Getting Started

If Children are in **Separate Classes**

STRATEGIES

- Start by identifying children already participating in regular EC environments
 - start with a small number
 - provide services there- reduce transitions
 - identify supplementary aids and services
 - bring in an hourly itinerant teacher or use an existing FTE

RESOURCES

- [ECTA Center: Making Sound Preschool LRE Decisions](#)
- [ECTA Center: Preschool LRE Reference Points and Discussion Prompts](#)
- [ECTA Center: Supplementary Aids and Services](#)

If Children are In Regular EC Settings but Receiving Services Elsewhere

STRATEGIES

- Embed instruction - Children learn best in everyday routines & activities
- Start with SOME services in RECP
- Bring in an hourly itinerant teacher or use an existing FTE
- Teacher and Related Service Providers– role reversal
- Time for collaboration

RESOURCES

- [Recommended Practices | DEC](#)
- [Embedded Instruction](#)
- [Community Inclusion Indicators](#)
- [EC Programs Inclusion Comparison worksheet](#)

If Not Enough Seats, No Programs for 3-year-olds

STRATEGIES

- Create Community Inclusion Teams and partnerships
- Start with one partner
- Make sure to have itinerant teachers available
- Provide joint PD and TA
- Create MOUs and guidance

RESOURCES

- [Community Inclusion Indicators](#)
- [EC Programs Inclusion Comparison worksheet](#)
- Itinerant teacher guidance

If Not Enough Seats – Community Collaboration in Place

STRATEGIES

- Intentionally braid programs, create MOUs, guidance
- Create Community Inclusion Teams
- Leverage Funds - Funding sources support seats and as appropriate, services
- Joint ownership of program
- Joint PD and TA

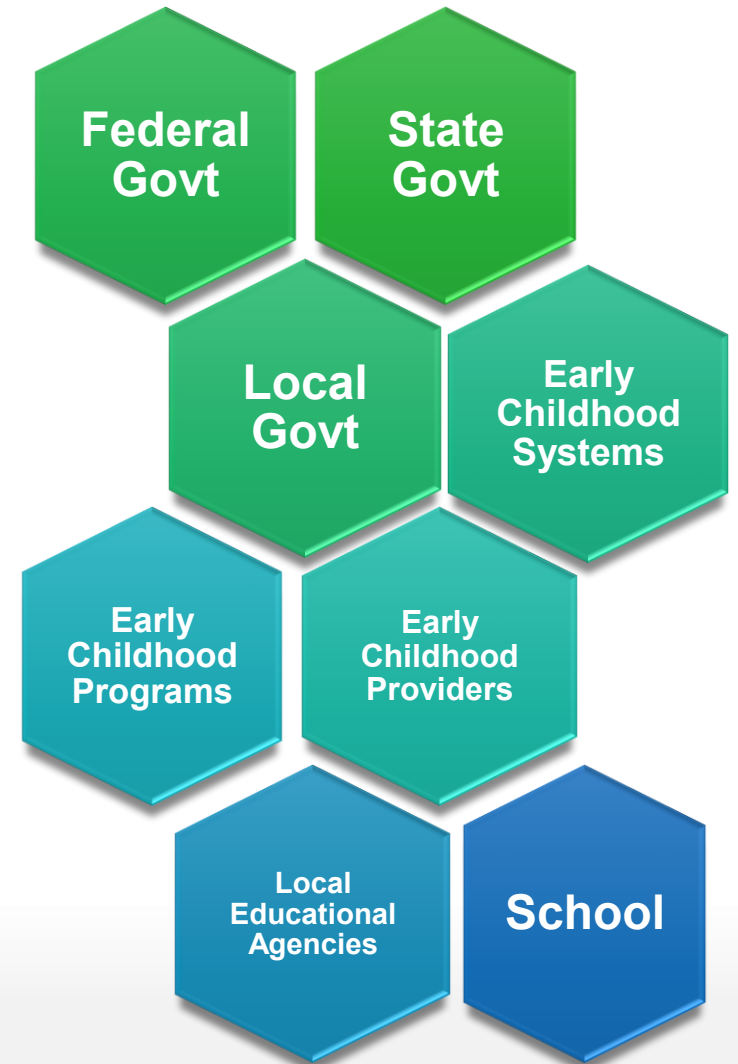
RESOURCES

- [Recommended Practices | DEC](#)
- [Embedded Instruction](#)
- [Policy Statement on Inclusion of Children With Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs \(PDF\)](#)
- [ECTA Center: Improving Systems, Practices and Outcomes](#)
- Itinerant guidance

In Closing

How do we set the expectation that inclusion begins in preschool & continues as children move into school?

A commitment to inclusion across all systems should serve as the foundation as children transition from early childhood programs to early elementary school grades.



Your Commitment



Think about your position, your data, and your context.

What personal commitment will you make to expand high-quality, inclusive opportunities for young children with disabilities?

Thank you for coming!

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General Resources

- [Dear Colleague Letter \(DCL\) related to Preschool Least Restrictive Environments \(LRE\) \(PDF\)](#)
- [Policy Statement on Inclusion of Children With Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs \(PDF\)](#)
- [ECTA Center: Inclusion](#)
 - [ECTA Center: Indicators of High-Quality Inclusion](#)
 - [Community Inclusion Indicators](#)
 - [ECTA Center: Financing Strategies and Collaborative Funding for Inclusive Programs](#)
- [ECTA Center: Individualized Education Program \(IEP\)](#)
 - [ECTA Center: Making Sound Preschool LRE Decisions](#)
 - [ECTA Center: Preschool LRE Reference Points and Discussion Prompts](#)
 - [ECTA Center: Supplementary Aids and Services](#)
- [Embedded Instruction](#)

ecta Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center

For more information, visit ectacenter.org

The ECTA Center is a program of the FPG Child Development Institute of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, funded through cooperative agreement number H326P220002 from the Office of Special Education Programs, U.S. Department of Education. Opinions expressed herein do not necessarily represent the Department of Education's position or policy.

Project Officer: Julia Martin Eile

