

Using Data to Make Informed Decisions

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**International Early Childhood Inclusion
Institute**

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Session Objectives



As a result of this session, participants will:

- ❖ Increase their capacity to understand, collect, analyze, and use high-quality IDEA Educational Environments and related data to take action
- ❖ Increase their understanding of national and state resources and state experiences related to data collection, analysis, and use to increase inclusive opportunities for young children with disabilities

Who's In the Room?

Family Members

Spec. Educ. Teachers & Providers

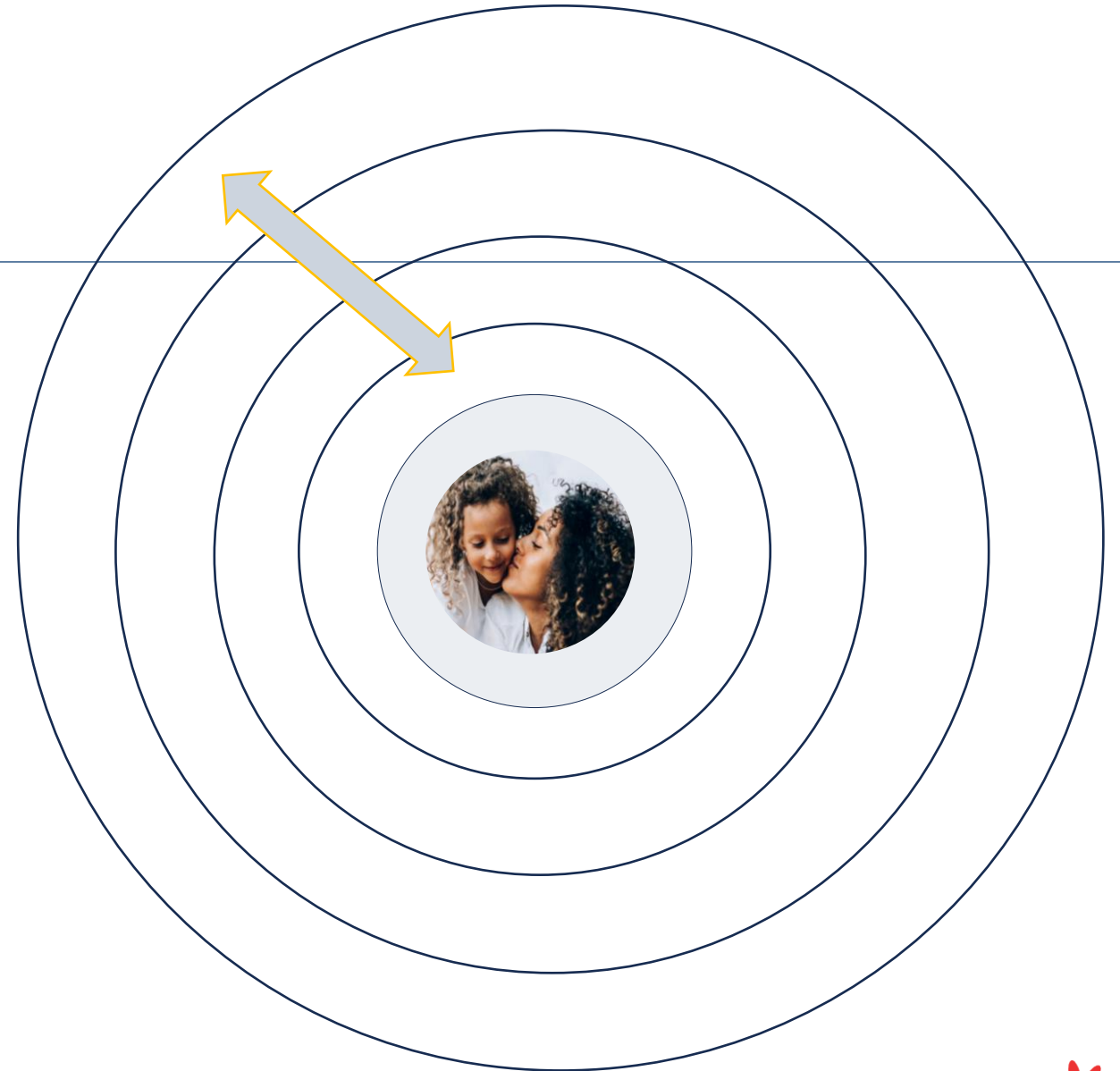
Spec. Educ Program Admin.

General EC Teachers

General EC Program Administrators

State Staff

IHE Personnel



Agenda

- Utilizing Data to Increase Participation in High Quality Inclusive Learning Environments
- Understanding SPP, APR Indicator 6
- Other Relevant Data
- Additional Data Considerations



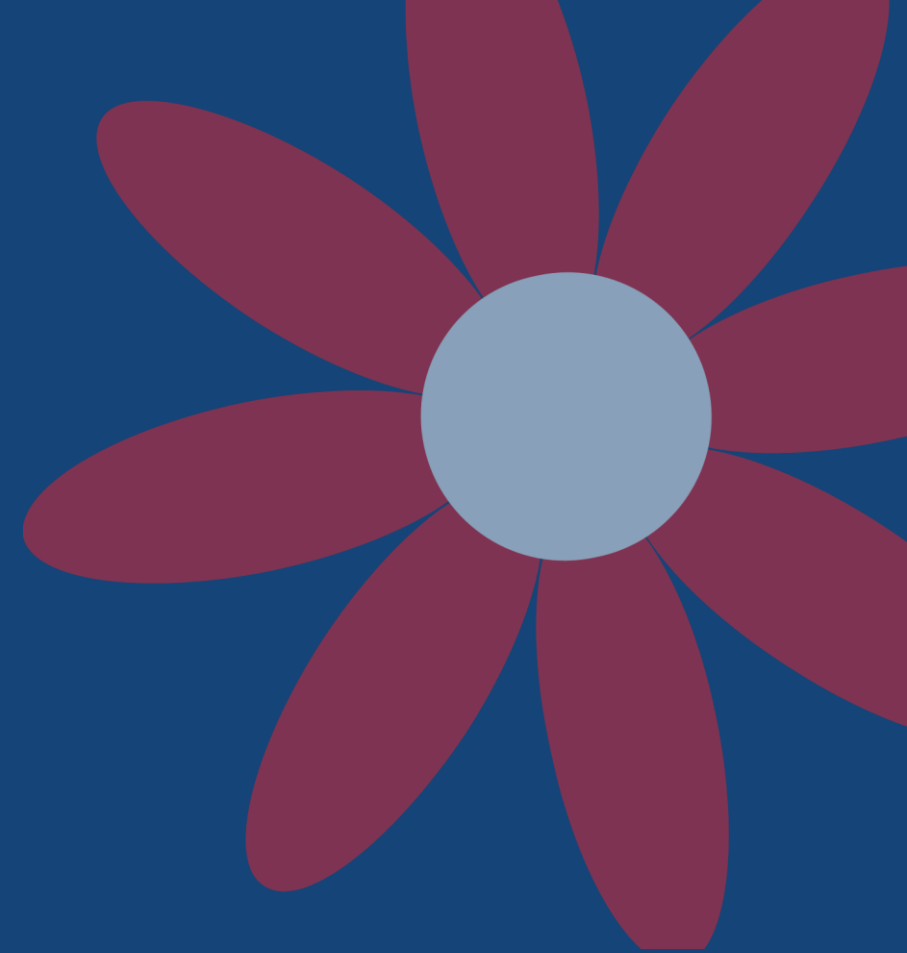
3 Types of Data

- 3 Types of Data
 - Child
 - Family
 - Program



- How do you currently use data in your states, districts or programs?

Utilizing Data to Increase Participation in High-Quality Inclusive Learning Environments for Young Children with Disabilities



What are the Expectations for Inclusion in Regular 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. The responsibility to ensure that young children with disabilities and their families are included in high-quality early childhood programs is shared by federal, State, and local governments, early childhood systems, early childhood programs and providers, local educational agencies (LEAs), and schools.

ED-HHS Policy Statement on Early Childhood Inclusion,
November 2023

Why Is Inclusion in Early Childhood Programs Important?



- ❖ Research indicates that inclusion is beneficial to children with and without disabilities
- ❖ Inclusion in high-quality early childhood programs can support children with disabilities in reaching their full potential resulting in broad societal benefits
- ❖ Inclusion in early childhood programs can set a trajectory for inclusion across the course of an individual's life

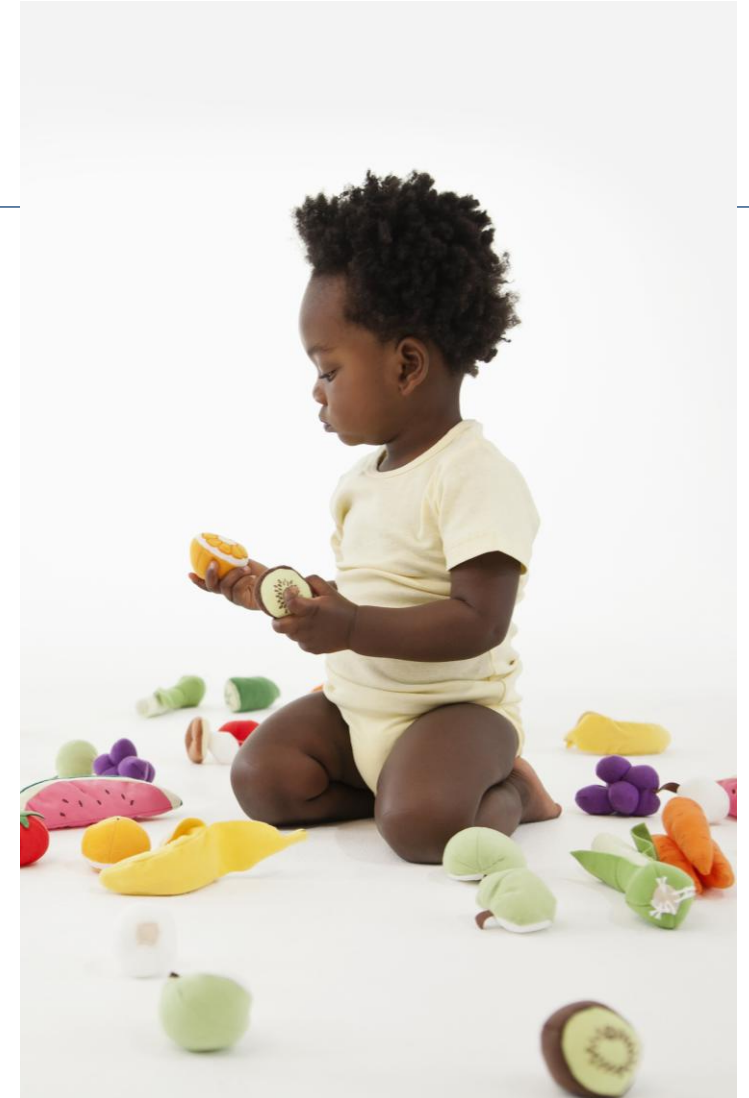
-Policy Statement on Early Childhood Inclusion

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

How is data used in meeting these requirements and expectations in your state or community?



High-Quality Data for Improving Inclusive Opportunities

WE USE CHILD, FAMILY, AND PROGRAM DATA TO:

- Identify child and family needs (programs and services)
- Evaluate child and family progress
- Inform decision-making about program operations and improvement
- Report on performance (accountability)

WHAT DATA DO YOU USE TO INFORM INCLUSIVE OPPORTUNITIES?

In small groups, share your role and the most important data you collect and use related to LRE/inclusion and placement decisions.



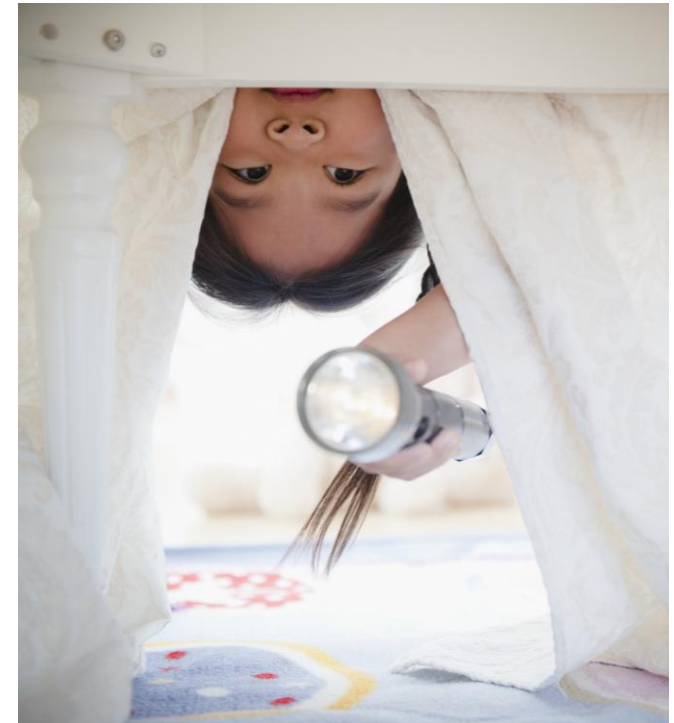
What do we do with all this data?

The Story of Early Childhood Data



Why Should I Use Data Daily?

- Data doesn't give every answer, but it helps us notice important patterns in how all children experience learning in inclusive settings.
- Asking clear, reflective questions helps us understand
 - where children are thriving,
 - where support is needed,
 - and how adults can build their capacity to create accessible, supportive learning environments for ALL children.
- To strengthen inclusion, we shift away from deficit-based questions and instead focus on
 - children's strengths,
 - the supports they deserve,
 - and how our environments can better welcome every learner.



Preschool Educational Environments in the SPP APR



SPP/APR Indicator B6: Preschool Environments

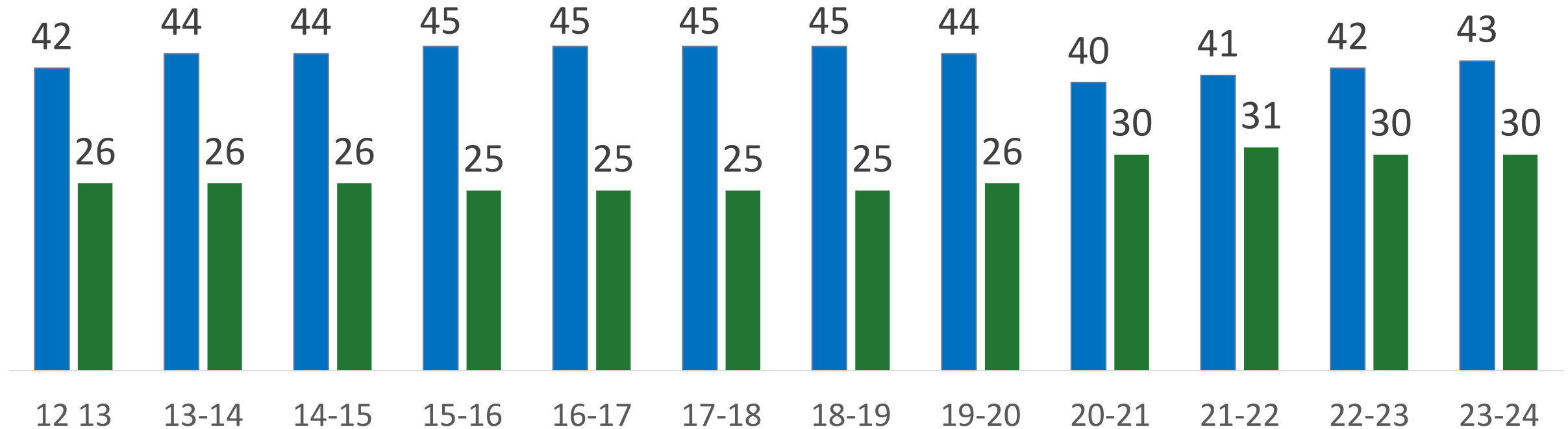


- ❖ All states collect data on each child with a disability 3-5 in the 618 data child count collection
- ❖ Data collected on a state-chosen date between Oct 1 and Dec 1
- ❖ Children 3-5 not in kindergarten
- ❖ Data shared publicly in SPP APR and US DOE Static Table12: <https://data.ed.gov/dataset/idea-section-618-data-products-static-tables-part-b-count-environmental-tables12/resources>

IDEA State Performance Plan, Annual Performance Report SPP/APR Indicator B6: Preschool Environments

- **B6a** Children enrolled in a Regular EC Program (RECP) and receive majority of special ed services in the program
- **B6b** Children who do not attend a Regular EC Program and receive services in special education class, special education school, residential facility
- **B6c** Children who do not attend a Regular EC Program or Special Ed Program, receive services in the home

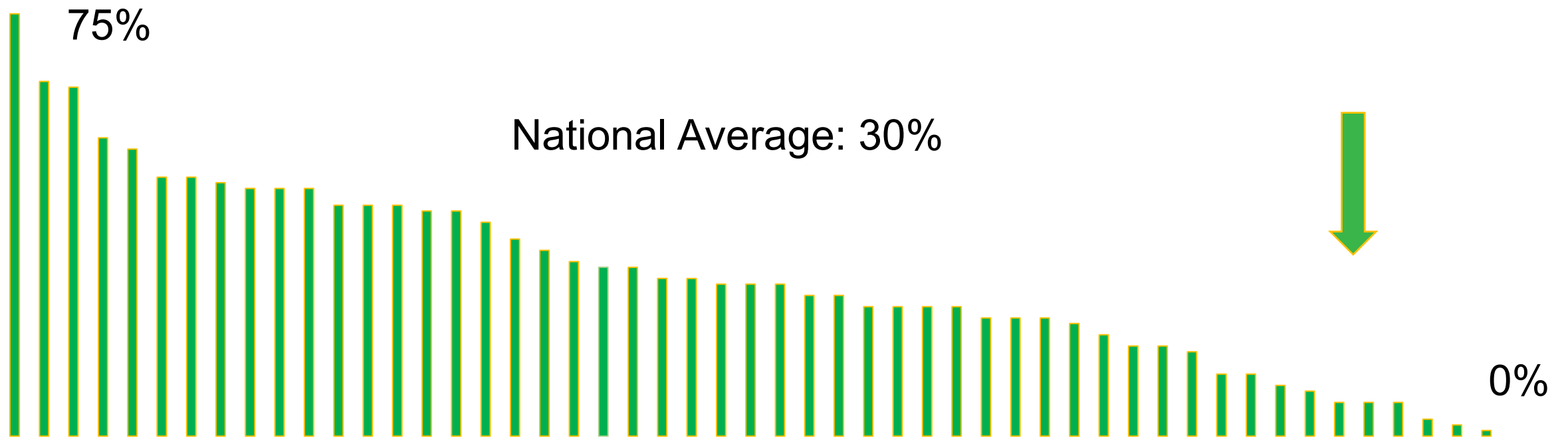
National Early Childhood Environments Data Over Time



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 Environments: Children Not Attending a Regular EC Program, Services in a Special Education Program, 23-24



Each bar represents a state or entity

US Percent of Preschool Children Served Under IDEA by Educational Environment: 2023-24

| RECP10 + services in program | RECP 10+ services other loc | RECP <10 services in program | RECP <10 services other loc | Sep class | Sep school | <u>Res</u> facility | Provider location | Home SPP/APR 6c | SPP/APR Indicator 6a | SPP/APR Indicator 6b |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------|------------|---------------------|-------------------|-----------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| 38 | 13 | 5 | 4 | 28 | 2 | 0 | 8 | 3 | 43 | 30 |

Source: U.S. Department of Education, ED*Facts* Data Warehouse (EDW): “IDEA Part B Child Count and Educational Environments Collection,” 2023-24. Data is rounded to whole numbers. <https://data.ed.gov/dataset/idea-section-618-data-products-static-tables-part-b-count-environmental-resources>. *Data suppressed due to cell size.

Access to a Regular EC Preschool Program



4 of every 10 preschool children with disabilities attend a regular early childhood program and receive the majority of their IDEA services there.

Another 2 preschool children with disabilities attend a regular program, but receive their IDEA services in other locations



Some Children with Disabilities... Do Not Spend Time with Children without Disabilities

3 of 10 preschool children with disabilities only attend a special education program



1 of every 10 children receive IDEA services in a provider location

Data in your State and Community



Do you know the numbers and percentage of children with disabilities attending regular early childhood programs, districts and/or in your state?

Purposes of Data Analysis and Use

- Informs what **you** want to know from your data
- Reveals what **you** can do to improve inclusion implementation
- Guides the type of changes **you** can make to normalize ongoing use of data





Discuss: Your Role in Ensuring Ongoing Data Use

- Where do you see yourself having an impact on data use?
- How can you begin to use data in your daily work overall?
- What is one thing you can change to specifically improve inclusive placement decisions and practices using data?

[BEGIN](#) [ENGAGE](#) [ENRICH](#) [APPLY](#) [REVIEW](#) [RESOURCES](#)

LOOK! THINK! ACT!

Using Data for Program Improvement



Follow the Steps...



Look

Examine data for trends, meaningful associations



Think

Ask questions related to the data that might help with interpretation



Act

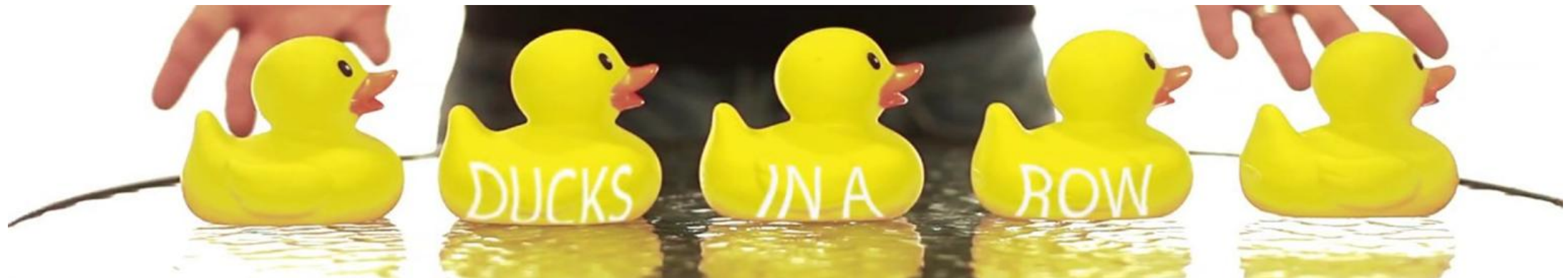
Make decisions as a team and identify the action plan needed to put the decision in place

Preparation is a Key to Success

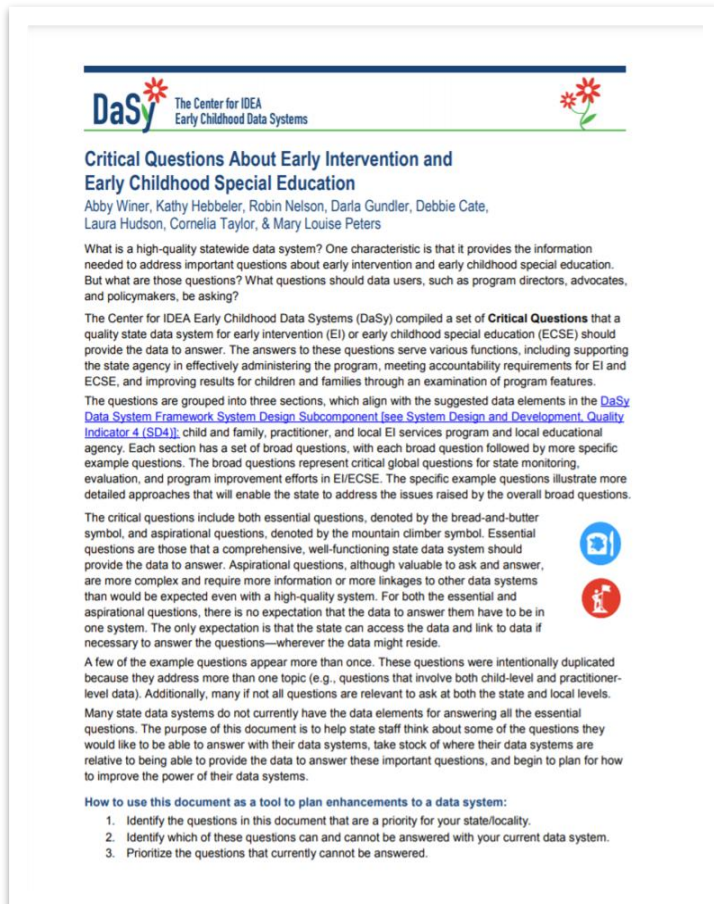
Careful planning helps you use the Look! Think! Act! (LTA) process efficiently.

Prepare before you look by following these important steps:

- clarify your purpose
- identify participants
- prepare your data



Clarify your Purpose



DaSy The Center for IDEA Early Childhood Data Systems

Critical Questions About Early Intervention and Early Childhood Special Education

Abby Winer, Kathy Hebbeler, Robin Nelson, Darla Gundler, Debbie Cate, Laura Hudson, Cornelia Taylor, & Mary Louise Peters

What is a high-quality statewide data system? One characteristic is that it provides the information needed to address important questions about early intervention and early childhood special education. But what are those questions? What questions should data users, such as program directors, advocates, and policymakers, be asking?

The Center for IDEA Early Childhood Data Systems (DaSy) compiled a set of **Critical Questions** that a quality state data system for early intervention (EI) or early childhood special education (ECSE) should provide the data to answer. The answers to these questions serve various functions, including supporting the state agency in effectively administering the program, meeting accountability requirements for EI and ECSE, and improving results for children and families through an examination of program features.

The questions are grouped into three sections, which align with the suggested data elements in the [DaSy Data System Framework System Design Subcomponent \(see System Design and Development, Quality Indicator 4 \(SD4\)\)](#): child and family, practitioner, and local EI services program and local educational agency. Each section has a set of broad questions, with each broad question followed by more specific example questions. The broad questions represent critical global questions for state monitoring, evaluation, and program improvement efforts in EI/ECSE. The specific example questions illustrate more detailed approaches that will enable the state to address the issues raised by the overall broad questions.

The critical questions include both essential questions, denoted by the bread-and-butter symbol, and aspirational questions, denoted by the mountain climber symbol. Essential questions are those that a comprehensive, well-functioning state data system should provide the data to answer. Aspirational questions, although valuable to ask and answer, are more complex and require more information or more linkages to other data systems than would be expected even with a high-quality system. For both the essential and aspirational questions, there is no expectation that the data to answer them have to be in one system. The only expectation is that the state can access the data and link to data if necessary to answer the questions—wherever the data might reside.

A few of the example questions appear more than once. These questions were intentionally duplicated because they address more than one topic (e.g., questions that involve both child-level and practitioner-level data). Additionally, many if not all questions are relevant to ask at both the state and local levels.

Many state data systems do not currently have the data elements for answering all the essential questions. The purpose of this document is to help state staff think about some of the questions they would like to be able to answer with their data systems, take stock of where their data systems are relative to being able to provide the data to answer these important questions, and begin to plan for how to improve the power of their data systems.

How to use this document as a tool to plan enhancements to a data system:

1. Identify the questions in this document that are a priority for your state/locality.
2. Identify which of these questions can and cannot be answered with your current data system.
3. Prioritize the questions that currently cannot be answered.

Before looking at data, determine what you are hoping to learn. Be clear about the specific populations, situations, or outcomes that concern you.

DaSy's Critical Questions about Early Intervention and Early Childhood Special Education might provide inspiration

https://dasycenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/DaSy_Critical_Questions_2020.pdf

Identify Data Team Participants

Successful use of data involves bringing people together to examine data, reflect on its meaning, and create solutions together. Identify the desired knowledge, expertise, and experience.

- recruit members with diverse perspectives
- include at least one person who has familiarity with the data

Your “team” may be

- A standing data team that meets regularly to examine data
- An ad hoc team brought together for the purpose of examining inclusion

the team could include:

- Service providers
- Staff members who train or coach the service providers inclusion indicators
- Program administrators responsible for adequacy of funding
- Families receiving the services
- Representatives of community-based programs where inclusion services are provided

Prepare your Data

Prepare your data so they are:

- accurate,
- easy to review and use,
- relevant, and meaningful to the questions being addressed

Inform participants of any data limitations

Summarize data to provide understandable and actionable information

Look!

During the Look stage data is objectively examined. Factual statements are made..

LTA participants work to:

- make comparisons,
- identify patterns, and
- point out data that doesn't fit any pattern.

Think!

Start with these questions:

- What surprises you or doesn't surprise you about the data?
- Is this what you expected? Why or why not?
- Do the data confirm or disconfirm your assumption?



Still thinking!

You and your team will work to identify factors that might explain the results.

For example, if you expected a higher percentage of inclusion in your data but did not see it, what might have happened?

- Changes in the budget that impacted inclusive practices?
- Staffing shortages?
- The influence of professional development?
- Changes in the way data were collected?

Dig Deep!



When you need to dig deeper, consider strategies like the “5 Whys” and the “Fishbone Diagram” to systematically focus on finding the root cause of a problem or issue.

This form of “root cause” analysis can help your team discover what is happening, why, and what actions might alleviate the issue.

The Think stage yields information to create hypotheses, your possible explanations or causes, for the results.

Act!

At this stage, you are asking, “Based on the data, what actions should we take to improve our program?”

Your actions may change:

- How your program delivers services
- Opportunities for families to engage
- Program policies and procedures
- Professional development provided to staff

Or you may identify the steps to improving the quality of your data if Look and Think lead you to conclude your data are not yet of adequate quality.

Other Promising Practices with Using Data For Decision Making

- Improvement planning and root cause analysis
- Increased strategic partner engagement
 - Practitioner advisory groups
 - Family and Community partners leaders
- Indicator 6 data analysis
- Incorporating data trend information into yearly program planning
- Monitoring data outliers over time



Questions/Comments?



Resources

- ❖ <https://dasycenter.org/resources/critical-questions/>
- ❖ <https://dasycenter.org/look-think-act/>
- ❖ <https://dasycenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/root-cause-analysis-5-whys.pdf>
- ❖ <https://dasycenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/root-cause-analysis-fishbone-diagram.pdf>
- ❖ https://dasycenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/DataLeadershipCompetencies_Acc.pdf

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Thank you

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