

EI/ECSE Program Philosophy – Inclusion

In a Nutshell...

The importance of your early childhood program’s philosophy cannot be understated. A written commitment to well-articulated and shared beliefs directly influences everything your program says and does. Individual philosophies merge through discussion, education and a shared belief in a common cause. Program philosophies need to be revisited periodically as staff leave and new practitioners join the team.

Some important questions to begin with are: How does your program define inclusion? The evidence demonstrates a clear link between quality inclusive practices and desired child outcomes. What curricular approaches and outcomes does your program value? A common misperception about center based programs is that children and families need to “get ready” to be part of them. In fact, it is the **program** that needs to be ready for children and their families. This means supporting children with all types of learning styles while engaging their parents in a shared responsibility for children’s learning. Federal and state regulations like IDEA, ADA and Nebraska’s Rule 11 and Rule 51 intend for children with disabilities to be educated in activities and settings with their typically developing peers. Your EI/ECSE program philosophy should represent the ideal program status to which all your program staff aspire.

Key principles to consider...

1. **Access.** Multiple formats are used to offer multiple types of access in all learning opportunities, activities, and environments so that every child can participate, no matter the abilities. Access includes things like universal design for learning.
2. **Participation.** A range of instructional approaches support the opportunity for participation that ensures meaningful engagement in play and curricular activities. Many children will benefit from the high quality practices for the group, but some children need more individualized and embedded interventions.
3. **Supports.** Overall system-level supports provide an infrastructure of program practices for inclusive learning standards and professional competencies.
(Early Childhood Inclusion DEC/NAEYC April 2009)

[Team Assessment Center-Based Item #1](#)

Reference Documents/Materials

- DEC Recommended Practices Chapter 9 pg 189
- [DEC/NAEYC Inclusion](#)
- [Administrator’s Guide to Inclusion](#)

Samples

- Grand Island brochure [English](#)

Regulations

Tools

Why is inclusion so important?

Your program’s philosophy is the overarching theme that guides classroom practices, staff development, and interactions with families and the community. High quality center based programs engage everyone: administrators, teachers, itinerant professionals, classroom assistants, office staff, and even bus drivers in the process of developing the program’s philosophy statement. Developing a shared philosophy that reflects key principles amongst all who make the program run sets an expectation that everyone is aiming for the same outcomes within their individual role.