Building Equitable, Inclusive Preschool Educational Environments

2023 OSEP Leadership and Project Directors' Conference

Presenters

- Tony Ruggiero, IDEA Data Center (IDC)
- Sarah Walters, IDEA Data Center (IDC)
- Cindy Brown, Delaware Department of Education

Participant Outcomes

- Participants will increase their understanding of
  - Potential barriers to ensuring all young children with disabilities have access to inclusive, high-quality early childhood programs
  - How to use a common language when reporting Indicator 6 preschool environments data
  - How reporting high-quality, accurate data affects a state's ability to get "credit" for providing services in the least restrictive environment (LRE)
  - How the Common Education Data Standards (CEDS), together with the IDC Preschool Environments Toolkit, can help provide clarity about terminology and a base for common language around Indicator 6 in the State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report (SPP/APR)

Agenda

- Conceptual model

- Background and context

- Indicator 6 trend data

- Vocabulary matters

- Tools and solutions

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Let's See Who's Here!

Raise your hand if...

- This is your first OSEP Leadership and Project Directors' Conference
- You are a Part B or 619 data manager
- You are a state special education director
- You are a parent or family member of a person with a disability
- You are from a local education agency (LEA)
- You are a Provider
- You thought this looked like a fun party and just decided to join in
- Others

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Conceptual Model

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The Big Picture

This is a systems issue!

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Delaware's Story

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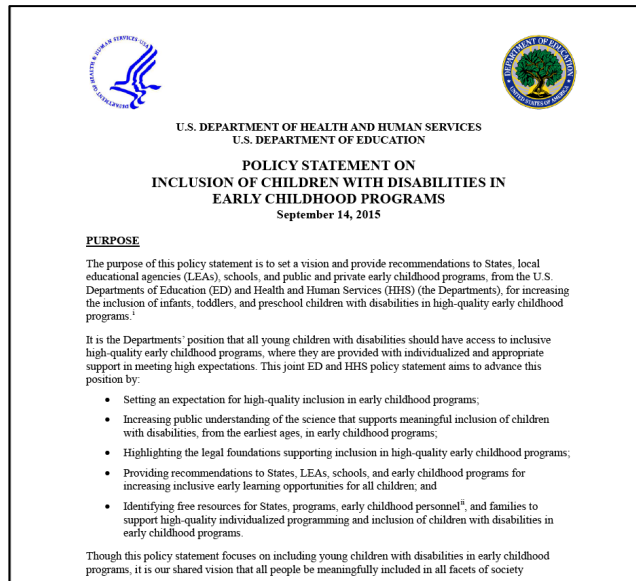
Background and Context

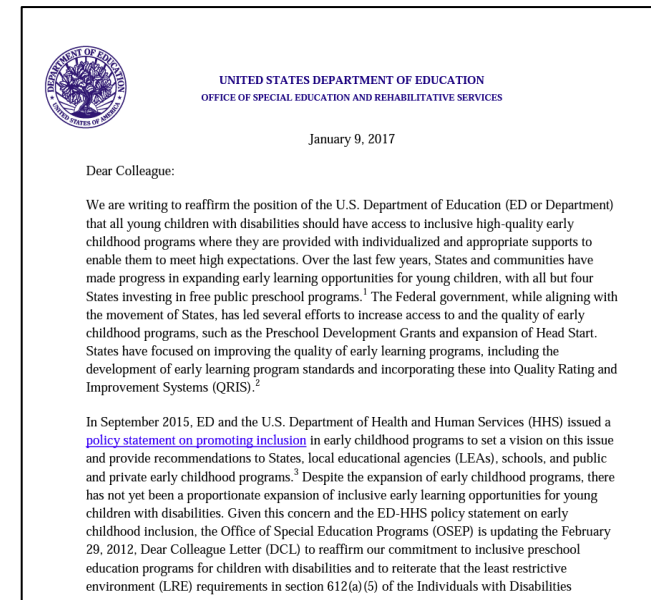**2023 OSEP LEADERSHIP AND PROJECT DIRECTORS' CONFERENCE**

National Inclusion Policy

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

Source for screenshot: U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services. (2015, September 14). Policy Statement on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs. Retrieved June 21, 2023, from https://www2.ed.gov/policy/speced/guid/earlylearning/joint-statement-full-text.pdf.

Updated Dear Colleague Letter on Preschool Least Restrictive Environments

Source for screenshot: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs. (2017, January 9). Updated Dear Colleague Letter on Preschool Least Restrictive Environments. Retrieved June 21, 2023, from https://sites.ed.gov/idea/files/idea/policy/speced/guid/idea/memosdcltrs/preschool-lre-dcl-1-10-17.pdf.

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National Inclusion Policy (cont.)

Policy Statement on Inclusion of Children With Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs: U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

POLICY STATEMENT ON
INCLUSION OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES IN
EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS
September 14, 2015

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy statement is to set a vision and provide recommendations to States, local educational agencies (LEAs), schools, and public and private early childhood programs, from the U.S. Departments of Education (ED) and Health and Human Services (HHS) (the Departments), for increasing the inclusion of infants, toddlers, and preschool children with disabilities in high-quality early childhood programs.[i]

It is the Departments' position that all young children with disabilities should have access to inclusive high-quality early childhood programs, where they are provided with individualized and appropriate support in meeting high expectations. This joint ED and HHS policy statement aims to advance this position by:

- Setting an expectation for high-quality inclusion in early childhood programs;

- Increasing public understanding of the science that supports meaningful inclusion of children with disabilities, from the earliest ages, in early childhood programs;

- Highlighting the legal foundations supporting inclusion in high-quality early childhood programs;

- Providing recommendations to States, LEAs, schools, and early childhood programs for increasing inclusive early learning opportunities for all children; and

- Identifying free resources for States, programs, early childhood personnel[ii], and families to support high-quality individualized programming and inclusion of children with disabilities in early childhood programs.

Though this policy statement focuses on including young children with disabilities in early childhood programs, it is our shared vision that all people be meaningfully included in all facets of society

Source for screenshot: U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services. (2015, September 14). Policy Statement on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs. Retrieved June 21, 2023, from https://www2.ed.gov/policy/speced/guid/earlylearning/joint-statement-full-text.pdf.

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National Inclusion Policy (cont.)

Updated Dear Colleague Letter on Preschool Least Restrictive Environments

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION AND REHABILITATIVE SERVICES

January 9, 2017

Dear Colleague:

We are writing to reaffirm the position of the U.S. Department of Education (ED or Department) that all young children with disabilities should have access to inclusive high-quality early childhood programs where they are provided with individualized and appropriate supports to enable them to meet high expectations. Over the last few years, States and communities have made progress in expanding early learning opportunities for young children, with all but four States investing in free public preschool programs.[1] The Federal government, while aligning with the movement of States, has led several efforts to increase access to and the quality of early childhood programs, such as the Preschool Development Grants and expansion of Head Start. States have focused on improving the quality of early learning programs, including the development of early learning program standards and incorporating these into Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS).[2]

In September 2015, ED and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) issued a policy statement on promoting inclusion in early childhood programs to set a vision on this issue and provide recommendations to States, local educational agencies (LEAs), schools, and public and private early childhood programs.[3] Despite the expansion of early childhood programs, there has not yet been a proportionate expansion of inclusive early learning opportunities for young children with disabilities. Given this concern and the ED-HHS policy statement on early childhood inclusion, the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) is updating the February 29, 2012, Dear Colleague Letter (DCL) to reaffirm our commitment to inclusive preschool education programs for children with disabilities and to reiterate that the least restrictive environment (LRE) requirements in section 612(a)(5) of the Individuals with Disabilities

Source for screenshot: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs. (2017, January 9). Updated Dear Colleague Letter on Preschool Least Restrictive Environments. Retrieved June 21, 2023, from https://sites.ed.gov/idea/files/idea/policy/speced/guid/idea/memosdcltrs/preschool-lre-dcl-1-10-17.pdf.

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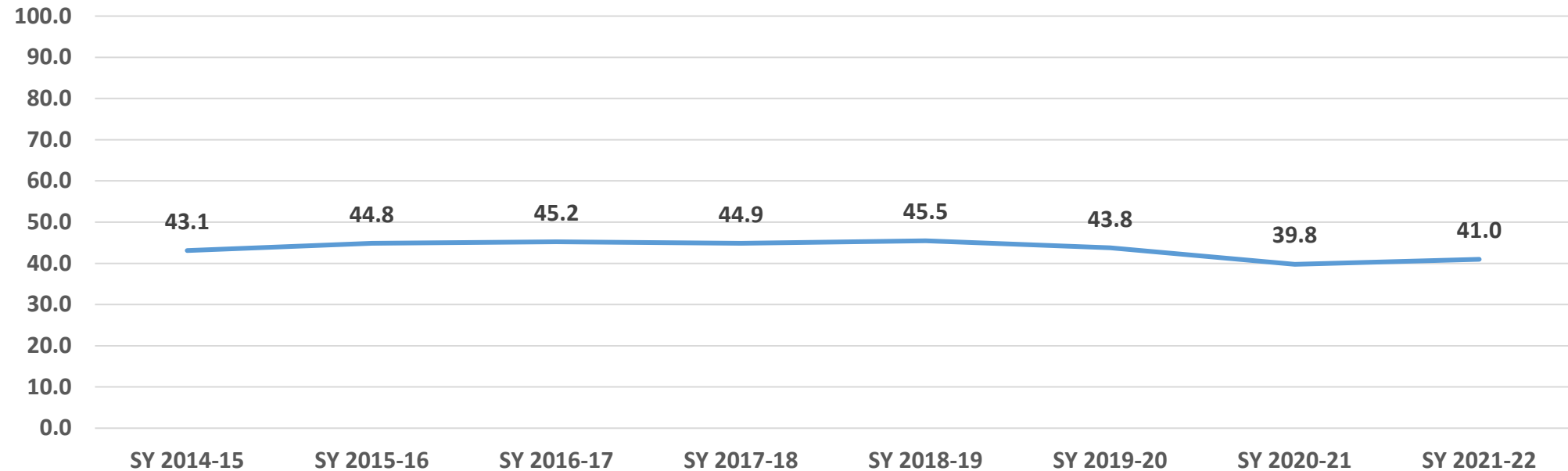
Indicator 6 Trend Data

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What Do You See?

Percent of Preschool Students Receiving Majority of Special Education and Related Services in Regular Early Childhood Program, U.S., Outlying Areas, and Freely Associated States, School Years 2014-15 to 2021-22

	SY 2014-15	SY 2015-16	SY 2016-17	SY 2017-18	SY 2018-19	SY 2019-20	SY 2020-21	SY 2021-22
Percent	43.1	44.8	45.2	44.9	45.5	43.8	39.8	41.0

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Are Bad Data Contributing to the Low Inclusion Rates?

To submit high-quality, accurate, and reliable data, state education agencies (SEAs) must work closely with local education agencies (LEAs) to understand and consider the following:

- That educational environments data originate as a result of the individualized education program (IEP) development process and the IEP teams' placement decisions
- The intervention practices that are occurring within the settings
- How data are reported to the SEA
- That the quality of the data hinges on educational environments data LEAs report and LEAs must align the data to the appropriate permitted value in the FS089 EDFacts file for submission

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Vocabulary Matters

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Components of Indicator 6

Indicator 6 is divided into three subindicators

- **Indicator 6A** measures the percent of children with individualized education programs (IEPs), ages 3 through 5 and not in kindergarten, attending a regular early childhood program, and receiving the majority of special education and related services in the regular early childhood program

- **Indicator 6B** measures the percent of children with IEPs, ages 3 through 5 and not in kindergarten, attending a separate special education class, separate school, or residential facility

- **Indicator 6C** measures the percent of children with IEPs, ages 3 through 5 and not in kindergarten, receiving special education and related services in the home

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Small Group Discussion

Do your states and LEAs use a common language to report these data?

Tools and Solutions

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Small Group Discussion

What tools have you used to help clarify and/or define the reported elements in Indicator 6?

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Common Education Data Standards (CEDS)

- A national collaborative effort to develop voluntary, common data standards for a key set of education data elements

- A vocabulary including standard definitions, option sets, and technical specifications to streamline sharing and comparing information

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Common Education Data Standards (CEDS) (cont.)

Align

Web-based tool that allows users to

- Import or input their data dictionaries
- Align their current data to CEDS
- Compare their data dictionaries
- Analyze their data in relation to various other CEDS-aligned efforts

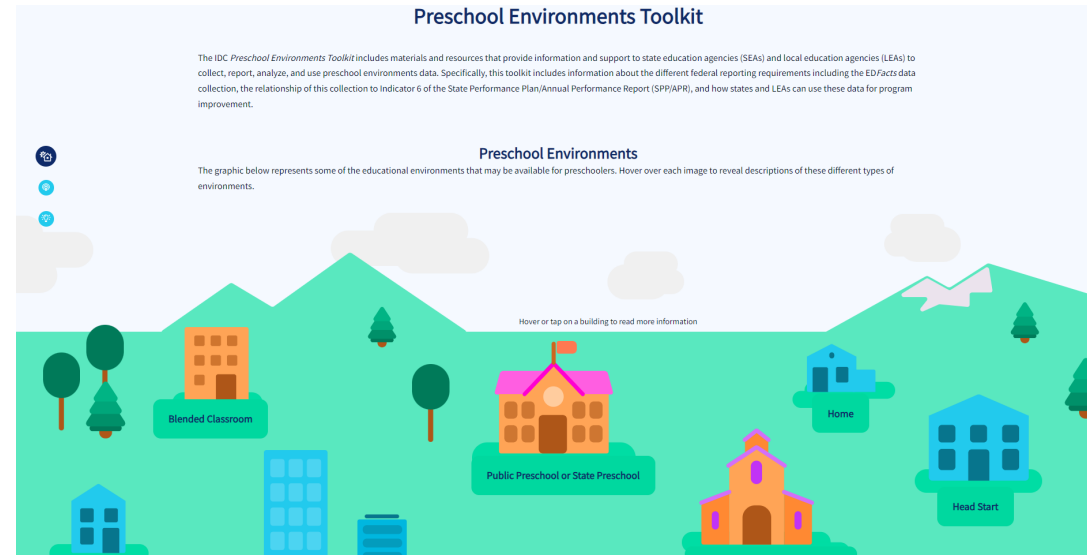# Common Education Data Standards (CEDS) (cont.)

Connect

Stakeholders from various types of educational organizations can use the tool to

- Answer program and policy questions
- Calculate metrics and indicators
- Address reporting requirements

IDC *Preschool Environments Toolkit*

- ED*Facts*—FS089

- Crosswalk

- Decision Tree

- Practice scenarios

Source for screenshot: O'Hara, N., Stroup-Rentier, V., Johnson, L., Edora, F., Walters, S., and Collins, T. (2023, January). *Preschool Environments Toolkit* (Revised). IDEA Data Center. Rockville, MD: Westat. (Original work published 2022). Accessed June 21, 2023, from https://ideadata.org/preschool-toolkit/.

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Decision Tree for Preschool Educational Environments

- Significance of the Tree

- How to use the Tree

- The Tree in practice

Decision Tree for Preschool Educational Environments

This decision tree is part of the IDC *Preschool Environments Toolkit*. States and local education agencies (LEAs) can use the tree to help them identify the correct federal permitted value abbreviations for reporting preschool educational environments data.
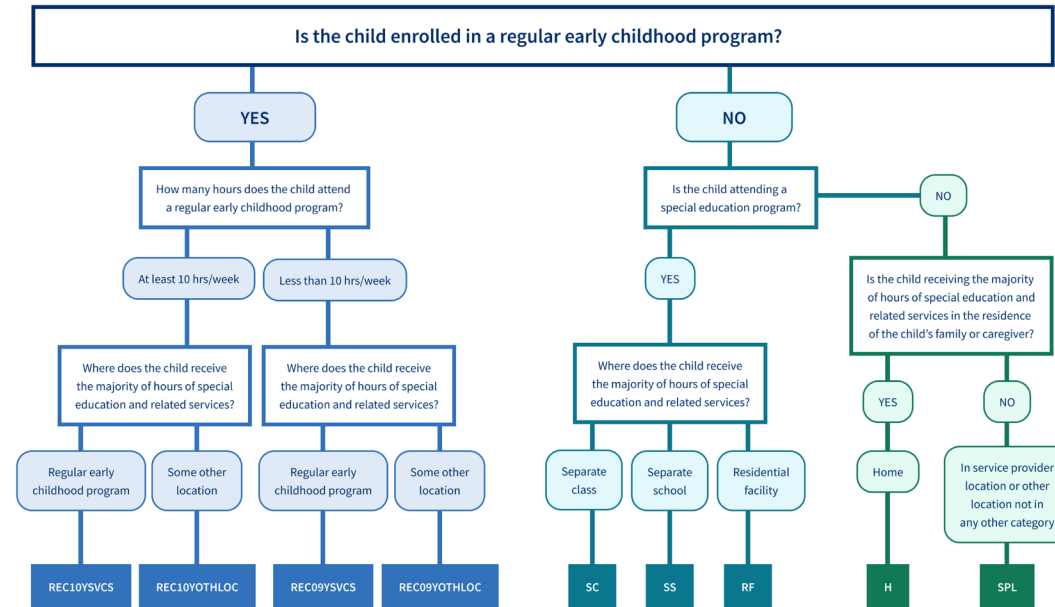
Source for screenshot: O'Hara, N., Stroup-Rentier, V., Johnson, L., Edora, F., Walters, S., and Collins, T. (2023, January). Decision Tree for Preschool Educational Environments. *Preschool Environments Toolkit* (Revised). IDEA Data Center. Rockville, MD: Westat. (Original work published 2022). Accessed June 21, 2023, from https://ideadata.org/preschool-toolkit/static/media/Decision%20Tree%20for%20Preschool%20Educational%20Environments_2.f3441dde.pdf.

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Delaware's Story

The Big Picture—Revisited

This is a systems issue!

Resources Mentioned in This Presentation

- [Joint Policy Statement on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs: U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services](#)

- [Dear Colleague Letter (DCL) related to Preschool Least Restrictive Environments (LRE) (PDF)](#)

- [Common Education Data Standards (CEDS)](#)

- [IDC *Preschool Environments Toolkit*](#)

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Resource Spotlight

- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) website
  - Brings together IDEA information and resources from the Department and its grantees.
  - https://sites.ed.gov/idea/
- IDEAs That Work
  - For information from research to practice initiatives funded by OSEP that address the provisions of IDEA and ESSA. This website includes resources, links, and other important information relevant to OSEP's research to practice efforts.
  - https://osepideasthatwork.org

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