

Early Childhood Indicators of Progress

Using the ECIPs to Support the Learning of All Children



Introduction

High quality early childhood education supports the optimal development of each and every child regardless of income, ability, race, culture, home language or high needs. Minnesota's Early Childhood Indicators of Progress (ECIPs): Minnesota's Early Learning Standards are designed to promote equity and excellence so that every child has access to teachers and providers who are knowledgeable about best practices that support the individual needs of children.

Teachers and providers engage in inclusive practices to meet the needs of many kinds of learners. They make adaptations for individual differences as they implement the standards in their programs. The ECIPs were designed to be used with ALL young children including typically developing children, dual language learners, children with disabilities, and children with high needs. This brief will focus on children with disabilities and those with high needs. For more on dual language learners, please see Brief #3.

Using the ECIPs with Children with Disabilities

The ECIPs support early childhood practices that benefit young children with disabilities. Such practices focus on inclusion so that every child has the same access and opportunities to participate in high quality early childhood programs. In a joint position statement titled Early Childhood Inclusion: A Summary, the Division for Early Childhood of the

Council for Exceptional Children and the National Association for the Education of Young Children define inclusion as follows:

“Early childhood inclusion embodies the values, policies, and practices that support the right of every infant and young child and his or her family, regardless of ability, to participate in a broad range of activities and contexts as full members of families, communities, and society. The desired results of inclusive experiences for children with and without disabilities and their families include a sense of belonging and membership, positive social relationships and friendships, and development and learning to reach their full potential. The defining features of inclusion that can be used to identify high quality early childhood programs and services are access, participation, and supports.” (DEC and NAEYC 2009, 1)

In addition to access and full participation, young children with identified special needs have the right to receive the supports and accommodations necessary for their success. As teachers and providers implement the ECIPs, they consider the ways to provide access, participation, and supports for all children with particular attention to the needs of young children with disabilities.

Another recommendation from the position statement cited above addresses expectations for young children with disabilities: that early childhood professionals... “Create high expectations for every child regardless of ability, to reach his or

her full potential” (DEC and NAEYC 2009, 2). This recommendation has particular importance when considering effective ways to implement the ECIPs because it reminds teachers and providers that even as they make adaptations and accommodations for children with disabilities, they also recognize where children match chronological expectations and in what areas of learning they are strong. The focus is not limited to the child’s developmental challenges, but rather considers the whole child. The ECIPs are formatted in such a way to help in this endeavor.

Minnesota’s Early Indicators of Child Progress (ECIPs) provide developmental information across a continuum from birth to kindergarten entry. The format allows teachers and providers to look across this continuum at multiple age groups and developmental expectations. In this way, they can identify each child’s strengths and determine areas for future development. The ECIPs can help with IFSP outcomes and IEP goal development as well as curricular planning for young children with identified special needs. They can also serve as a reference for assessment of students in special education. However, they are not intended to be used to determine children’s eligibility for various programs or services, or to deny children access to programs or services. When teachers and providers use the ECIPs for both typically developing children and those with special needs, they are establishing consistent expectations and providing universal experiences.

Using the ECIPs with Children with High Needs

Not all children qualify for special education services. Yet, some children encounter socioeconomic challenges or chronic stress which may affect their ability to be successful learners in early childhood programs. Using the ECIPs with children with high needs or challenging behaviors may also require adaptations and considerations on the part of teachers and providers. Again, the formatting of the developmental information in the ECIPs across a continuum from birth to kindergarten entry can be helpful. The format allows teachers and providers to identify children’s strengths and determine areas for future development. The ECIPs can help teachers and

providers identify goals as well as curricular planning for young children with high needs.

Teachers and practitioners take a whole child approach when creating appropriate assessment and intervention plans. Addressing the whole child means looking at children through the lenses of every domain. When teachers and providers use the ECIPs for both typically developing children and those with high needs, they are setting forth consistent expectations and providing universal experiences.

Conclusion

Supporting the learning of all children in early childhood programs can be challenging. Early childhood professionals can take steps to address these challenges so that each and every child benefits. The U.S. Department of Education (2015) offers the following recommendations for educators as they implement inclusive practices:

1. Partner with families as children’s advocates and educators’ teammates
2. Engage in ongoing staff development and support around inclusion practices and implementation of individualized curricular approaches
3. Make use of expert resources as needed
4. Conduct ongoing evaluation to assess and improve the quality of inclusive practices

The ECIPs can be a helpful resource to early educators as they implement inclusive practices and work toward meeting the needs of ALL children.

Resources

DEC/NAEYC. 2009. Early childhood inclusion: A summary. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina, FPG Child Development Institute.

U.S. Department of Education. 2015. Recommendations for Local Early Learning Programs and Providers. <http://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/earlylearning/inclusion/recs-and-resources-local.html#recommendations>