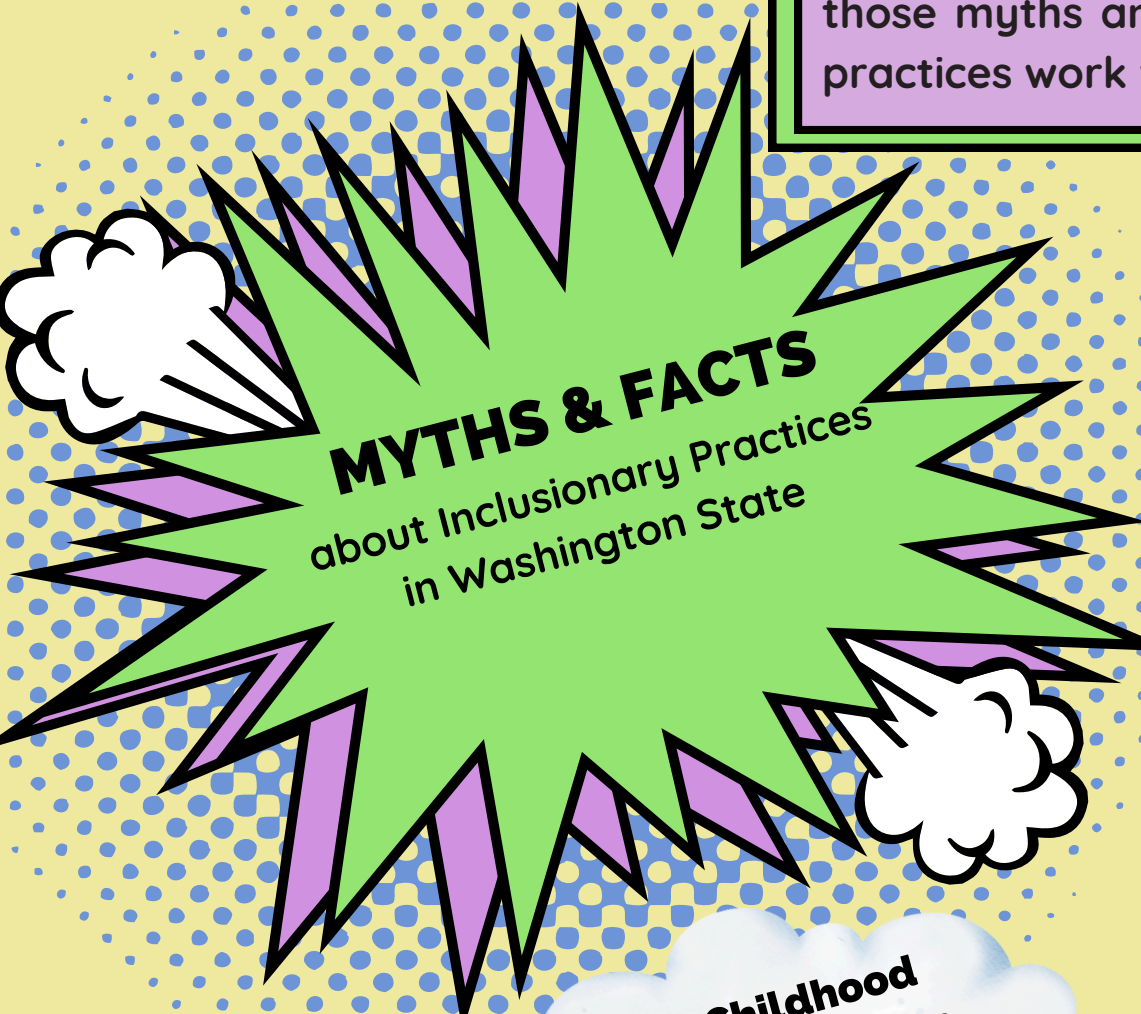


Special education has its fair share of myths and facts about inclusion for students with significant cognitive disabilities. This resource was developed to challenge those myths and highlight the facts of why inclusionary practices work for each and every student.



MYTHS & FACTS

about Inclusionary Practices
in Washington State



**Early Childhood
Special Education
Edition**

MYTH #1: COSTS OF INCLUSION

**MYTH #2: WHO CAN PROVIDE
SPECIALLY DESIGNED INSTRUCTION?**

MYTH #3: READINESS FOR INCLUSION

MYTH #4: CURRICULUM & STANDARDS

MYTH #5: PARENTS & INCLUSION

MYTH #6: DISABILITY & PLACEMENT

MYTH #7: ASSESSMENT & ACADEMICS



TO THE EARLY CHILDHOOD SPECIAL EDUCATION INCLUSION CHAMPION:



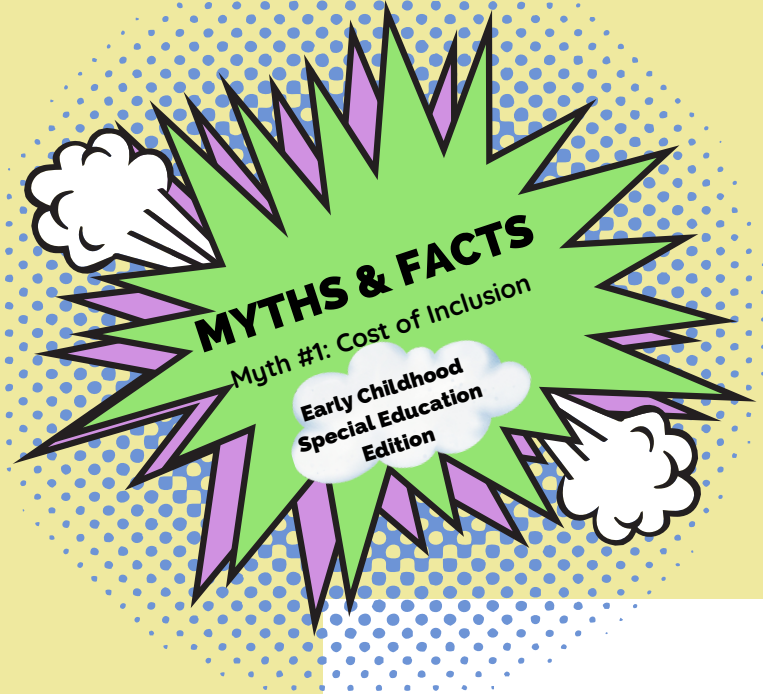
While there is no roadmap or “one size fits all” process to achieving inclusive education...

Use this document in its entirety or one myth at a time to better understand what implementation of inclusion looks and feels like.

There are multiple definitions for inclusion, for the purposes of this document we are aligning the definition of inclusion as follows:

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.



MYTH #1:

Placing students served with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) in a Regular Early Childhood Program (RECP) always costs more than serving those students in self-contained early childhood programs.

FACT:

Regular Early Childhood Programs (RECP) with a continuum of inclusive supports can be funded through multiple sources making them potentially less expensive than self-contained early childhood programs.

The Truth Is...

- There are [multiple options](#) for [braided funding](#) (ECEAP, HS, Title, Community, Federal IDEA, TK).
- Funding should not be tied to placement; [services in the Least Restrictive Environment \(LRE\) is a right](#) in preschool just as it is in K-12.
- There are [various options](#) to support all students in a RECP setting (ECEAP, HS, Title, itinerant, TK, dually certified teachers).
- Students with an IEP enrolled in preschool program [do not impact the 15%](#) special education apportionment cap.
- Students with disabilities do not always [need 1:1 support](#) to be included in RECP classrooms.

STRATEGIES FOR DISPELLING THE MYTH:

- [Braided funding](#) is possible! Identify funding streams and eligible populations then compare requirements, align requirements of funding streams, and organize your records.
- Develop shared goals and a plan for collaboration with fiscal managers and program leads, as well as messaging and prioritization of this shift with the program leadership.
- Explore documents that can help you better understand the options for your own program such as this [braided funding tip sheet](#) with a case study from a RECP with a continuum of inclusive supports in Washington State.



MYTH #2:

Special education teachers are the only professionals who can provide specially designed instruction (SDI).

FACT:

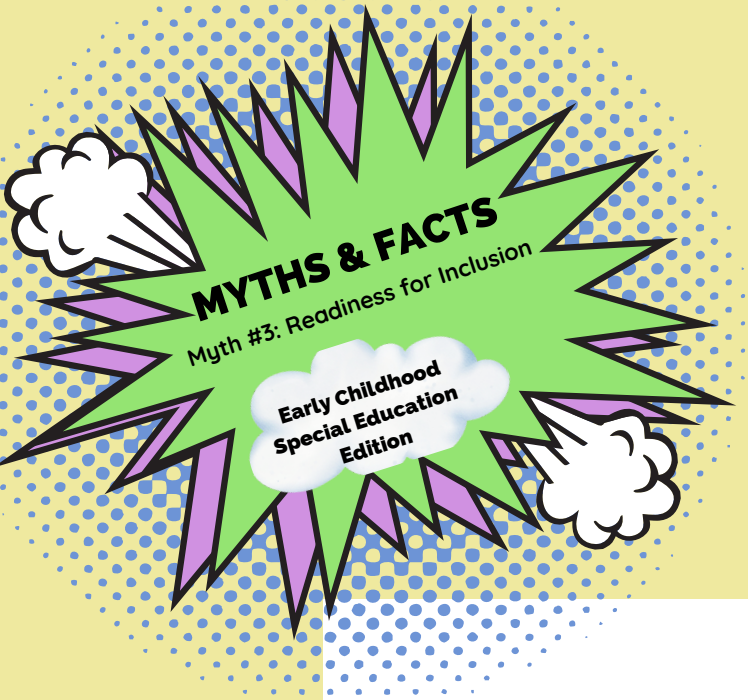
There are many trained staff can support the provision of specially designed instruction (SDI) within the student's high-quality early childhood setting.

The Truth Is...

- Specially designed instruction can be provided by general education teachers, para-educators, or other support staff as long as it is designed and monitored by a special education teacher.
- General education, special education and support staff should collaborate as part of the IEP team to develop goals, deliver instruction in the general education setting, and collect progress monitoring data.
- Both children with and without IEPs benefit from intentionally designed instruction based on student need and delivered in a universally designed learning environment.
- Including peers in small group work along with students who are receiving SDI creates opportunities for shared learning, enhanced social skills, and building friendship skills.

STRATEGIES FOR DISPELLING THE MYTH:

- Understand the law and training requirements with the help of OSPI. The [OSPI Technical Assistance Paper #6](#) provides “a general overview of special education requirements related to the district use of paraeducators to support the provision of specially designed instruction (SDI) on a student’s individualized education program (IEP)”.
- “Bridge the gap between research and practice” by familiarizing your program with the [DEC Recommended Practices](#). These practices are based on empirical evidence and highlight the practices that have been shown to result in better outcomes.
- [Work collaboratively](#) as a team to identify goals, develop the IEP plan in a way that supports the student, not just checks the boxes, and [partner with other educators](#) to determine how special educators can support SDI directly and indirectly.
- Develop effective collaboration by considering the program’s mission and vision, roles and responsibilities, plan for meaningful collaboration times using [Ties 5-15-45 Tool: Linking Available Time with Meaningful Collaboration](#), and consider what opportunities and protocols the team has created for reflection.



MYTH #3:

Students with disabilities must show they are ready for regular early childhood programs (RECP).

FACT:

All students are general education students. An IEP alone does not warrant the automatic placement of a child within a self-contained program.

The Truth Is...

- [Inclusion is a right, not a privilege](#). Students should not have to earn the right to be included.
- [LRE must be based on each student's needs](#) and not the student's perceived readiness, or absence of a disability.
- [Special education requirements](#) apply to ALL students including those with disabilities between the ages of 3-21.
- There is [limited evidence](#) that self-contained settings are effective for all students.
- RECP that use evidence-based practices such as the Pyramid Model within a MTSS framework, including accommodations and modifications, are [more likely to support all students](#) regardless of ability.
- High-quality RECPs with the implementation of inclusive practices [supports students with disabilities and without disabilities](#) in reaching their full potential into adulthood.

STRATEGIES FOR DISPELLING THE MYTH:

- Take the first step by developing an inclusive vision and mission that guides future work. Review [this inclusive mission and vision tip sheet](#) with a case study from an RECP with a continuum of inclusive supports in Washington State.
- Be intentional about creating opportunities for [membership and belonging](#) for all students.
- Engage with professional development to understand more about high quality RECP with a continuum of inclusive supports. The series [High Quality Inclusion Videos #1: Changing Attitudes and Belief](#) is a place to begin this journey.
- Implement programming with [Pyramid Model](#) as a framework of evidence-based practices that promotes young children's healthy social and emotional development.
- Use OSPI's [decision tree document](#) to help guide team decisions about student placement.



MYTH #4:

IEP goals determine the special education curriculum and assessment measures for students with disabilities; therefore, access to general education curricula is not needed.

FACT:

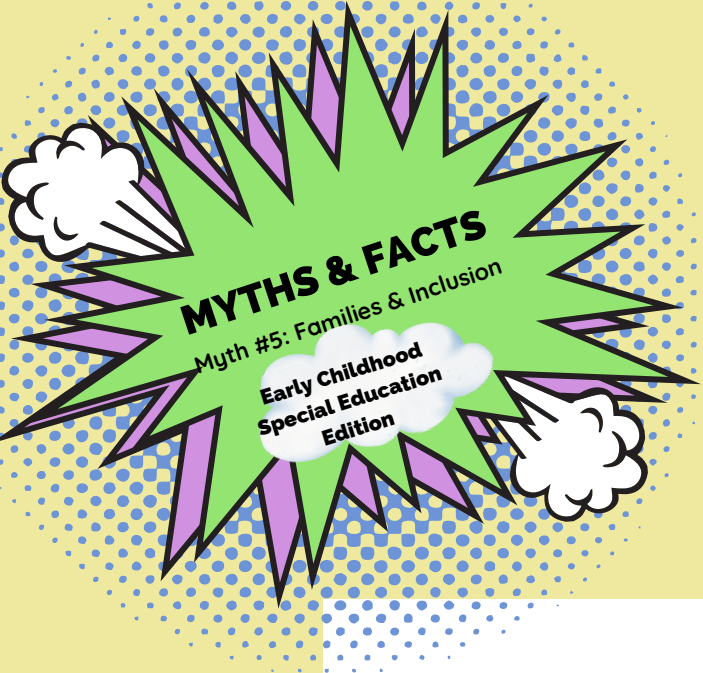
General education (or RECP) curriculum and assessments should be accessible to all students regardless of ability. Special education programming and services must be aligned and embedded within those systems.

The Truth Is...

- Students in all educational programs [should have access](#) to high quality, developmentally appropriate, evidence-based curriculum.
- [High quality curriculum](#) can be modified and adapted so all students have the opportunity to learn alongside each other.
- Students with access to general education curriculum with embedded SDI instruction [gain skills beyond their IEP goals](#).
- All children grow and learn in a similar way; [formative and observational assessment](#) provides the opportunity to understand all levels of learning and measures the full continuum of child development.

STRATEGIES FOR DISPELLING THE MYTH:

- [Universal design for learning \(UDL\)](#) educational framework is a set of principles that maximizes learning opportunities for all learners.
- Share this video on [Key Characteristics of High Quality Inclusive Education](#) video #2 with colleagues and staff to help everyone understand how IEP goals are individualized and developed by teams.
- This text is a model for inclusive teaching practices rooted in evidence: Sandall, S., & Schwartz, I. (2019). [Building blocks for teaching preschoolers with special needs](#) (3rd ed.). Brookes Publishing Company. [PreK-3rd Grade Transition Resources](#) is another resource that supports all students.
- Utilize academic and social-emotional curricula and assessments that support [IEP goal alignment](#) with standards such as Opening the World of Learning (OWL), Creative Curriculum, Teaching Strategies Gold (TSG), Second Step, and High Scope.
- The [Professional Development Unit](#) at the Haring Center has several webinars available for clock hours, including this [webinar](#) that discusses strategies to modify the Creative Curriculum lessons for neurodiverse learners.
- The [Child Outcomes Summary \(COS\)](#) affords a means by which providers can summarize information collected from multiple sources to address the three child outcomes.



MYTH #5:

Families of children with disabilities want their children educated in segregated programs or classrooms.

FACT:

Families have a variety of perspectives on best placement for their children, and it must not be assumed that they prefer a segregated educational setting.

The Truth Is...

- [Families serve a critical role](#) on the IEP team and may not be aware of their rights or the options when deciding their child's placement.
- [Child Find](#) is a federal mandate that supports families in connecting with their local school districts to explore options, if need is determined, in receiving special education services.
- Families may not be aware of the [benefits of inclusion](#) for students with and without disabilities.
- [By law](#), it's the responsibility of the school team to inform families of their rights and options.
- RECPs committed to the implementation of inclusionary practices to fidelity ensure that students with disabilities and their families feel a [sense of belonging](#) across the entire school community.

STRATEGIES FOR DISPELLING THE MYTH:

- Ensure the IEP team knows that they have an obligation to share [procedural safeguards](#) with parents in language that is understandable to them.
- Use [resources from the Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center](#) to build positive family-educator partnerships
- Share community organization resources such as those offered by [Family Engagement Collaborative](#) to help staff and families learn about positive family-educator partnerships.
- These [Advocacy Tips for Parents](#) can help support the parents to better understand their options throughout the IEP process.



MYTH #6:

Inclusion only benefits students with learning disabilities.

FACT:

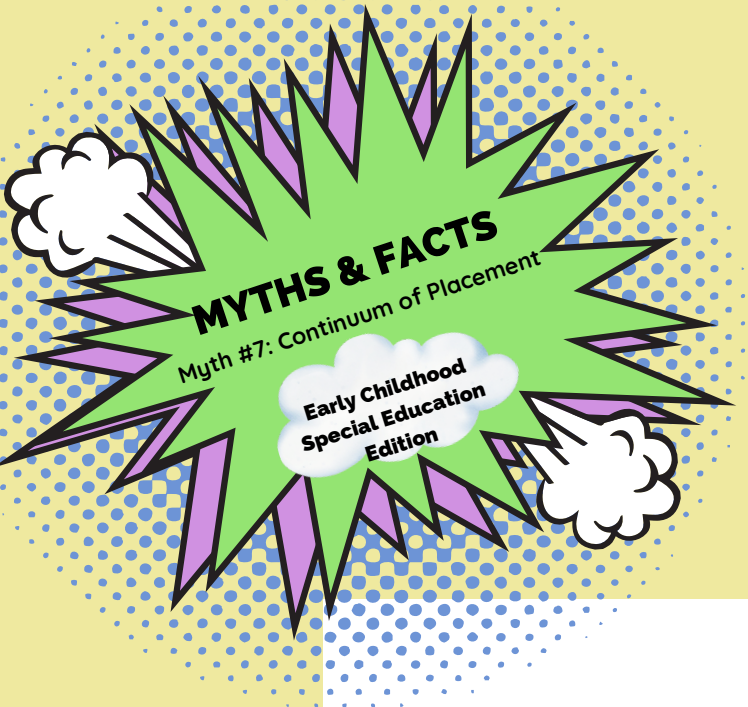
All students, regardless of ability, benefit from high quality, inclusive settings.

The Truth Is...

- [Students with disabilities](#) show higher academic scores, demonstrate sophisticated communication skills, have increased [opportunities for friendships](#), and are better prepared for postsecondary settings when being served alongside their typically developing peers in a general education setting. There are [no studies](#) that have shown segregation to be superior.
- Students with disabilities participating in RECP with a continuum of inclusive supports demonstrate [broad societal benefits](#) including higher productivity in adulthood and fewer resources spent on interventions and public assistance later in life.
- [Typically developing peers](#) in RECPs with a continuum of inclusive supports show higher academic and communication skills, fewer instances of challenging behavior, more empathy, and an increased appreciation for learner variability.

STRATEGIES FOR DISPELLING THE MYTH:

- Share this short video [High Quality Inclusion Video: Social Outcomes in Inclusion](#) that talks more about the importance of social outcomes in inclusion.
- Belonging is experienced when students are present, invited, welcomed, known, accepted, involved, supported, heard, befriended, and needed. Use this [framework of belonging](#) created by TIES as a helpful guide for schools to support all students.
- Share this article [Inclusion: Benefits for Peers Tool](#) by ORAEYC with staff and the community.



MYTH #7:

Students with IEPs are best served in their district's self-contained programs.

FACT:

There are often multiple placement opportunities for students with disabilities; special education is a service not a placement.

The Truth Is...

- [The continuum is a spectrum of placements](#) where an IEP can be implemented. It ranges from less restrictive (RECP with accommodations and modifications) to more restrictive (homebound).
- A [continuum of early childhood](#) placements could be HS, TK, ECEAP, developmental/self-contained preschool classroom, private preschool setting, and child care settings with or without itinerant services.
- Many districts build [successful partnerships with early childhood programs](#) in order to serve students with an IEP along with their non-disabled peers.
- It is best practice for districts to collaborate with existing [early childhood community-based programs](#) in order to help families make the best decision about placement for their child.

STRATEGIES FOR DISPELLING THE MYTH:

- Think outside the box and be creative. This [community partnership tipsheet](#) discusses how to collaborate with community partners to better support students and families.
- [Share all placement opportunities](#) with parents and families making sure they are fully aware of what programs will best meet their child's unique needs.
- Students must be placed in the least restrictive environment. [Preschool LRE Reference Points and Discussion Prompts](#) created by ECTA is a summary of the LRE provisions of the IDEA that are applicable to preschool aged children with disabilities.
- Watch and share this video, [The Role of Place](#), that challenges us all to think differently about place and belonging.



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