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BPIECE for Practitioners

Best Practices in Inclusive Early Childhood Education

Best Practices in Inclusive Early Childhood Education for Practitioners (BPIECE)

This self-assessment tool has been developed for early learning practitioners. This includes early childhood education teachers and caregivers who work directly with young children birth to 5. The purpose is to provide a framework that builds a bridge between research on inclusion and practices in early childhood education settings. All of these practices build on a foundation of a high quality settings that can be individualized for child needs. The indicators in this document support diverse learners and build upon the practices found in a high quality early learning environment. This tool can be used for ongoing self-reflection to identify strengths regarding inclusive practices and specific areas for growth over time. It can be utilized along with other program evaluation tools being used. The results will assist practitioners in self-identifying areas of strength and priorities regarding inclusive practices and assist in developing a plan to improve the quality of services, instruction, and supports to all young children and their families.

Rating Instructions

Read and rate the indicators based on your implementation of the inclusive practice listed. There are four levels of implementation for each indicator: Not Yet, Occasionally, Usually, or Always. You should select one rating per indicator. There are a few examples given for each indicator but they are not comprehensive and you may implement the indicator in a different way in your classroom. If you are not sure about terms used to describe the practice indicator, refer to the Glossary on page 15. At the end of each area, summarize your ratings by adding the total in each column. At the end of the assessment, you will count the ratings for each area to review areas of strength and priorities regarding inclusive practices.

Rating Definitions:

- Always:** I use this practice all the time.
- Usually:** I use this practice most of the time.
- Occasionally:** I use this practice some of the time, as I need it.
- Not yet:** I have not used this practice, and/or I don't know what this is.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Program: _____

Best Practices in Inclusive Early Childhood Education (BPIECE) for Practitioners

Indicator	Rating				How I do this/ My notes	Examples, such as
	Always	Usually	Occasionally	Not Yet		
Area: Environment						
Do you...						
1. Arrange learning environments to support all children's needs for all daily transitions ¹ and increase active participation?						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Arrange the layout of the classroom: setting up shelving to provide visual boundaries, ensure table heights and aisles are appropriately spaced, remove rugs for children to move easily and independently, and provide a quiet area. ▪ For a child with high activity level or low impulse control, set up center shelving to provide a visual boundary and decrease open pathways. ▪ For a child with a wheelchair, ensure that table height allows child to join with peers.
2. Identify barriers to participation and develop adaptations ² to support children's needs?						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Furniture and materials are in a consistent location for children with low vision. ▪ Provide alternate seating, such as a bean bag chair to a child who may need support to sit during group activities.
3. Provide predictable routines in daily/weekly schedule but remain flexible to meet the needs of individual children?						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Allow a break from circle time if child seems overstimulated. ▪ Plan and allow a child extra time to complete an activity before transitioning to next activity.
4. Design a flexible learning environment ³ to promote interactive activities and to support the learning of all children?						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Arrange flexible learning materials and activities that incorporate all the senses. ▪ Provide small objects or fidget toys for children who may have difficulty sitting still.
5. Use adaptations which are most similar to what other same-age children are using while meeting individual needs?						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Use adaptive materials such as spring scissors for children who may assistance opening scissors when snipping paper. ▪ Modify toys and equipment using pegs or adaptive handles.

¹ **Daily Transitions** – Children moving from one activity to another, such as children going from circle time to centers and going from indoors to outdoors.

² **Adaptations** – Changes or modifications to activities or materials which allow all children to participate.

³ **Learning Environment** – Any setting where children spend time, such as classrooms, playgrounds, eating areas and outside activity areas.

Best Practices in Inclusive Early Childhood Education (BPIECE) for Practitioners

Indicator	Rating				How I do this/My notes	Examples, such as
	Always	Usually	Occasionally	Not Yet		
6. Change adaptations as needed?						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ After success using adaptive materials such as a large crayon, provide child with more challenging tasks to increase their abilities, such as using a smaller crayon. ▪ After success with cutting playdough snakes, child begins to snip paper strips.
7. Change environment according to children's sensory needs ⁴ ?						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ For a child who is sensitive to loud noises, provide head phones or a quiet area. ▪ For a child who is sensitive to visual stimuli, reduce hanging items from the ceiling. <p>For children who have difficulty sitting still allow the child to sit on a ball.</p>
8. Ensure all planned supports ⁵ (scheduling, materials, and visual supports) are available and used across daily activities and environments?						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hold up a shovel and bucket to indicate transition from circle time to outdoor time. ▪ Child's communication board travels with him/her and is used consistently.
Environment Rating Summary					Total: 8	

⁴ **Sensory Needs** - Difficulty in organizing and responding to information from the senses that interferes with learning. (i.e., easily distracted by sounds or activity, fidgety or trouble staying in a chair, difficulty with transitions or new experiences, etc.).

⁵ **Supports** - Materials, scheduling, visual directions, visual schedule, communication board, or other special equipment to help children be successful in the classroom.

Best Practices in Inclusive Early Childhood Education (BPIECE) for Practitioners

Indicator	Rating				How I do this/My notes	Examples, such as
	Always	Usually	Occasionally	Not Yet		
Area: Family						
Do you...						
9. Design effective two-way communication with families to share successful supports and revise plans as needed?						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Frequently scheduled/impromptu meetings are used throughout the year. ▪ Schedule meetings at a convenient time for all participants. ▪ Set convenient methods of communication (i.e. email, face-to-face, or written communication). ▪ Provide regular office hours or open door hours for parents to talk, call or email.
10. Engage families in conversations about child's strengths and needs?						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ask family members about child's routine, sensory needs⁶, preferred activities and materials. ▪ Family is given multiple opportunities to share changes in routines and/or upcoming events (trips, moving houses, illnesses, etc.).
11. Support and encourage family participation and decision making while providing complete and unbiased information?						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ask family members about their concerns and priorities for the child's development. ▪ Share information on all local resources and programs that serve children with a specific disability.
12. Present child progress, reports and information in understandable language?						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide report in a written and/or visual (chart) format in parent's primary language. ▪ Use developmental checklist, anecdotal notes, iPad, photos, etc. ▪ Use interpreter/translator when needed to communicate with families in their home language.
13. Promptly problem solve with parents and administration, as concerns are identified, to develop strategies which address current priorities?						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Promptly identify concerns as they arise; actively and objectively problem solve as a team. ▪ Schedule a team meeting to develop strategies to address area of concern.

Best Practices in Inclusive Early Childhood Education (BPIECE) for Practitioners

Indicator	Rating				How I do this/My notes	Examples, such as
	Always	Usually	Occasionally	Not Yet		
14. Identify and use families' current strengths, needs, resources and priorities as the foundation for developing strategies and plans for the child?						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Use family questionnaire to gather information. ▪ If parent is concerned that their child does not know how to share toys, plan activities that provide opportunities to practice turn taking.
15. Identify multiple resources and services to provide information to parents to support and strengthen their knowledge and skills?						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Practitioner shares information on advocacy groups, community, state and national organizations, research, and training. ▪ Practitioner provides websites for federal and state laws which protect the rights of children with disabilities and their families. ▪ Encourage parent to network with other parents.
16. Share and demonstrate how to implement effective strategies in everyday family activities?						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Model a successful strategy for a parent through video emailed to parent. ▪ Provide written activities that can be done with the child in the home and in community setting.
Family Rating Summary					Total: 8	

Best Practices in Inclusive Early Childhood Education (BPIECE) for Practitioners

Indicator	Rating				How I do this/My notes	Examples, such as
	Always	Usually	Occasionally	Not Yet		
Area: Collaboration						
Do you...						
17. Identify all members of a specialized care team ⁷ and actively engage with members to review and modify plan?						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ask family if child is receiving additional services/therapies and, if so, request permission to collaborate with service providers. ▪ Communicate with team members regarding suggestions for revisions to plan. ▪ Collaborate with all members of the specialized care team to create classrooms plans for child success and provide updates on child progress.
18. Communicate environmental changes in plans/supports to all team members?						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify a team member who could share information with a member who could not attend the meeting. ▪ Email changes to updated plans to team members.
19. Use suggestions developed by specialized care team in the early learning setting?						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Request demonstration of therapy within the classroom environment when needed. ▪ Collect necessary information/data for development or revision of strategies.
20. Invite service providers ⁸ into the classroom for therapy sessions?						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Frequently scheduled/impromptu meetings are held throughout the year. ▪ Discuss how additional strategies can be implemented in the classroom. ▪ Set convenient method of communication (i.e., email, face-to-face, or written.)
21. Seek further knowledge of topics discussed by the specialized care team to enhance problem solving?						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Research topics relevant to successful strategies. ▪ Ask for clarification of unknown terminology.
Collaboration Rating Summary					Total: 5	

⁷ **Specialized Care Team** – Group of individuals who work together to plan for individual needs and goals of a child. This may include family, teachers, early intervention specialists (ITDS), early childhood special education specialist, directors, paraprofessionals, physical therapists (PT), occupational therapists (OT), speech/language therapists (SLP), social workers, mental health professionals, applied behavior analysts (ABA), nurse, Early Steps, FDLRS, ELC and any other professionals working with a child.

⁸ **Service Providers** – Any professional who provides supports and/or services to a child and/or caregiver in the **learning environment** such as physical therapists (PT), occupational therapists (OT), speech/language therapists (SLP), social workers, mental health professionals, applied behavior analysts (ABA), early intervention specialist, early childhood special education specialist, and nurse.

Best Practices in Inclusive Early Childhood Education (BPIECE) for Practitioners

Indicator	Rating				How I do this/My notes	Examples, such as
	Always	Usually	Occasionally	Not Yet		
Area: Interaction						
Do you...						
22. Foster a sense of classroom community by promoting acceptance, safety, and membership?						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All children take part in classroom jobs. ▪ All differences are accepted and celebrated. ▪ Teachers respond to peers' comments and behaviors regarding individual differences in supportive and constructive ways.
23. Use information about children's interests and behaviors to guide and inform meaningful interaction with other children?						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Know child's preferred playmates and provide opportunities for them to play together. ▪ Provide high interest activities and pair children that share same interests. ▪ Allow choices when selecting a table buddy.
24. Promote, sustain and extend positive social interactions between peers?						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Expand children's play by providing examples of how to extend the activity. ▪ Teacher encourages children to learn how to listen to each other and build on each other's ideas. ▪ Teach friendship skills by modeling how to ask a friend to play.
25. Promote positive self-expression?						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Teacher models respectful behavior to children and other adults. ▪ Teacher models how to ask to join a play group. ▪ Teacher models emotional expressions and solutions such as "I feel frustrated," or "Say, 'I need help.'"
26. Facilitate collaborative problem solving among peers?						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Model appropriate ways to communicate and express emotions such as "You wanted the toy. You may not hit. Next time say 'Toy, please.'" ▪ Teacher joins group outdoor play and facilitates problem solving and decision making among children. ▪ Model negotiation of sharing and trading toys.
Interaction Rating Summary					Total: 5	

Best Practices in Inclusive Early Childhood Education (BPIECE) for Practitioners

Indicator	Rating				How I do this/My notes	Examples, such as
	Always	Usually	Occasionally	Not Yet		
Area: Instruction						
Do you...						
27. Use a variety of instructional strategies to support participation and engagement of all children?						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Use multiple methods of instruction which engage hearing, sight, and touch. ▪ Break tasks into small steps to ensure success. ▪ Use prompts for transition warnings.
28. Provide children with multiple ways of demonstrating knowledge and skills?						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Centers are used in a variety of ways to demonstrate skills such as providing an art activity that shows a child knows quantities or incorporating fine motor skills into dramatic play area. ▪ Children act out a story that was just read to them to demonstrate comprehension. ▪ During morning sign-in, children can sign their name, choose their name from a list or find the first letter of their name.
29. Build and plan individual learning objectives into classroom concepts and reinforce them throughout the day?						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ If the child completes a non-preferred activity, then she/he can go to his/her highly preferred activity. ▪ Incorporate one-to-one correspondence counting when giving a crayon to each child in the art group.
30. Provide individual adaptations to support children's engagement and participation in all daily activities?						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Teacher/peer starts a puzzle and child puts in the last two pieces. ▪ Teach buttoning skills using hand over hand support and move to verbal support as child develops skill.
31. Adapt communication with individual children?						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Adjust the complexity of your language to match the child's understanding. ▪ Provide rich language and varied vocabulary (i.e. big, huge, large, enormous). ▪ Recognize that all behavior is a form of communication.
32. Model appropriate language and alternate forms of communication as needed?						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Use gestures, simplified language, and visual cues to support child's understanding. ▪ Use alternate forms of communication such as sign language and picture boards.

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Indicator	Rating				How I do this/My notes	Examples, such as
	Always	Usually	Occasionally	Not Yet		
33. Clearly display and use visual supports to clarify environmental expectations?						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Use picture schedule to identify the steps of routines, transitions or activities. ▪ Change visual schedules to correspond with daily activities and changes in routines.
34. Use specific feedback to increase child engagement, play and skills?						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Say “You cleaned up all the toys so that others can play with them again. That was helpful!” ▪ Be specific about what the child did, for example, “Look at the way you shared that toy with your friend.”
Instruction Rating Summary					Total: 8	

Best Practices in Inclusive Early Childhood Education (BPIECE) for Practitioners

Indicator	Rating				How I do this/ My notes	Examples, such as
	Always	Usually	Occasionally	Not Yet		
Area: Screening and Assessment						
Do you...						
35. Use a variety of methods to gather assessment ⁹ information from multiple sources to determine child's strengths and needs in all areas of development?						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Collect information from the child's family and other significant individuals in the child's life. ▪ Use video clips, portfolio, observations notes, developmental checklists, and behavior charts.
36. Communicate results of assessment with parents/caregivers?						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Meet with the family to objectively discuss assessment results using family-friendly language. ▪ Schedule a follow-up meeting with Specialized Care Team, if needed.
37. Continuously observe and document the child's progress to begin working on next learning goal?						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ As a child learns to follow one-step directions, document specific examples of progress and provide opportunities for two-step directions. ▪ A child who has successfully stayed with a non-preferred activity for 5 minutes is increased to 8 minutes, and child records reflect this progress.
Screening and Assessment Rating Summary					Total: 3	

⁹ **Assessment** – Collecting information about a child to make informed decisions on how to work with the child, what activities are appropriate for the child, and to measure learning gains.

Best Practices in Inclusive Early Childhood Education (BPIECE) for Practitioners

Indicator	Rating				How I do this/My notes	Examples, such as
	Always	Usually	Occasionally	Not Yet		
Area: Transition						
Do you...						
38. Exchange information about strategies to support the child's successful adjustment with programs/classrooms a child is transitioning to/from?						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Exchange information before, during and after transition¹⁰ through the use of questionnaires, child portfolio, etc. ▪ Share information with the receiving provider about the level of supports and strategies that the child needs.
39. Provide activities and resources for parents to learn about and/or visit the next program?						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Review child's current plan with the parent in preparation for the IFSP¹¹/IEP¹² meeting. ▪ Help set up parent visit to the next program. ▪ Provide parent with websites and recommended books to read to the child related to transition.
40. Provide children with opportunities to develop and practice skills they need to be successful in the next program/classroom?						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Opportunities are provided to learn self-help skills, independence, communication, and positive interaction with peers to prepare for success in the next program/classroom. ▪ Read stories/books about going to kindergarten. ▪ Schedule a visit to a VPK classroom.
Transition Rating Summary					Total: 3	

¹⁰ **Transition** – When a child moves from one classroom or a program to another, such as going from preschool to kindergarten, going from a child care center to a family home care setting. This includes planning, activities, and preparing the child and family.

¹¹ **Individual Family Support Plan (IFSP)** - A legal document for children birth to three years of age, who are found eligible for early intervention services. It is written by the family, Early Step service coordinator, and any other therapists and service providers and includes present level, goals, and services provided to the child and family.

¹² **Individual Educational Plan (IEP)** - A legal document for children ages 3-21, who are found eligible for special education services. It is written by the IEP team and includes present level, annual goals, supports and services provided to the child. It must be reviewed at least annually.

Rating Summary

Use this table to summarize your ratings for each area and review to determine areas of strength and priorities regarding inclusive practices. Based on this review, select indicators that need improvement to develop a plan to improve the quality of inclusive practices.

AREA	# OF ALWAYS	# OF USUALLY	# OF OCCASIONALLY	# OF NOT YET	# OF INDICATORS
ENVIRONMENT					8
FAMILY					8
COLLABORATION					5
INTERACTION					5
INSTRUCTION					8
SCREENING AND ASSESSMENT					3
TRANSITION					3
TOTAL					40

Based on my review, these are the area(s) and/or indicator(s) that I choose to target for improvement.

Your input will help guide our professional development efforts in Florida. Please send a copy of this page to your ELC Warm Line and Inclusion Specialist.

Resources

Inclusion

- Child Care Plus The Center on Inclusion in Early Childhood: <http://www.ccplus.org>
- DEC Recommended Practices in Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education 2014: http://dec.membershipsoftware.org/files/DEC_RPs_%205-1-14.pdf
- Division of Early Childhood: <http://www.dec-spced.org>
- Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute: <http://fpg.unc.edu>
- Early Steps State Office for Ages birth to three: http://www.floridahealth.gov/AlternateSites/CMS-Kids/families/early_steps/early_steps.html
- Head Start Center for Inclusion: <https://depts.washington.edu/hscenter/>
- Technical: Assistance and Training System (TATS) for Ages 3-5: <http://www.tats.ucf.edu>
- The Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center Improving Systems, Practices and Outcomes for Young Children with Disabilities and their Families: <http://www.ectacenter.org/topics/inclusion/default.asp>

Transition from Part C (birth to age three) to Part B (ages three to five)

- Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center: <http://ectacenter.org/topics/transition/transition.asp>
- Florida Department of Education Technical Assistance Paper: Transition from Early Steps to the School District Prekindergarten Program for Children with Disabilities or Other Programs: <http://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/7571/urlt/0086199-transitiontap910.pdf>

- Florida's Transition Project: <http://www.floridatransitionproject.ucf.edu/tats.html>
- Tools for Early Steps Teams TEST Toolkit: <http://www.cpeip.fsu.edu/earlysteps/testtoolkit/test/plan-for-transitions.html>

Transition to Kindergarten

- Early Childhood News: http://www.earlychildhoodnews.com/earlychildhood/article_view.aspx?ArticleID=477
- NAEYC: <http://families.naeyc.org/learning-and-development/child-development/transitioning-kindergarten>

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

- CAST about Universal Design for Learning: <http://www.cast.org/our-work/about-udl.html#VvGC-sc7pg0>
- National Center on Universal Design for Learning: <http://www.udlcenter.org>
- Technical Assistance and Training System, Products: <http://www.tats.ucf.edu/products.cfm>
- Universal Design for Learning: Recommendations for Teacher Preparation and Professional Development: http://ceedar.education.ufl.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/IC-7_FINAL_08-27-14.pdf

Glossary

- **Adaptations** – Changes or modifications to activities or materials which allow all children to participate.
- **Assessment** – Collecting information about a child to make informed decisions on how to work with the child, what activities are appropriate for the child, and to measure learning gains.
- **Daily Transitions** – Children moving from one activity to another, such as children going from circle time to centers and going from indoors to outdoors.
- **Individual Educational Plan (IEP)** - A legal document for children ages 3-21, who are found eligible for special education services. It is written by the IEP team and includes present level, annual goals, supports and services provided to the child. It must be reviewed at least annually.
- **IEP Team** - Includes the parent, ESE teacher, general education teacher, district representative, someone to interpret evaluations and educational implications, and any therapists, or other service providers.
- **Individual Family Support Plan (IFSP)** - A legal document for children birth to three years of age, who are found eligible for early intervention services. It is written by the family, Early Step service coordinator, and any other therapists and service providers and includes present level, goals, and services provided to the child and family.
- **Learning Environment** – Any setting where children spend time, such as classrooms, playgrounds, eating areas and outside activity areas.
- **Sensory Input** – Taking in and organizing information through the senses (auditory - hearing, visual- seeing, tactile - touching, olfactory - smelling, taste, proprioceptive-body awareness, vestibular-balance and movement).
- **Sensory Needs** - Difficulty in organizing and responding to information from the senses that interferes with learning. (i.e., easily distracted by sounds or activity, fidgety or trouble staying in a chair, difficulty with transitions or new experiences, etc.).
- **Service Providers** – Any professional who provides supports and/or services to a child and/or care giver in the **learning environment** such as physical therapists (PT), occupational therapists (OT), speech/language therapists (SLP), social workers, mental health professionals, applied behavior analysts (ABA), early intervention specialist, early childhood special education specialist, and nurse.
- **Specialized Care Team** – Group of individuals who work together to plan for individual needs and goals of a child. This may include family, teachers, early intervention specialists (ITDS), early childhood special education specialist, directors, paraprofessionals, physical therapists (PT), occupational therapists (OT), speech/language therapists (SLP), social workers, mental health professionals, applied behavior analysts (ABA), nurse, Early Steps, FDLRS, ELC and any other professionals working with a child.
- **Supports** - Materials, scheduling, visual directions, visual schedule, communication board, or other special equipment to help children be successful in the classroom.
- **Transition** – When a child moves from one classroom or a program to another, such as going from preschool to kindergarten, going from a child care center to a family home care setting. This includes planning, activities, and preparing the child and family.
- **Universal Design for Learning (UDL)** – Planning from the start to provide developmentally appropriate learning environments and interactions that are meaningful and intentional for all children.

References

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Acknowledgements

The BPIECE is based upon the school-age BPIE, which stands for *Best Practices in Inclusive Education*. The BPIE was originally developed by a team of experts in inclusive education in 2007, based on evidence-based practices, literature and research.

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- Sheryl Sandvoss, Executive Director, Florida Inclusion Network
- Vicki Barnitt, Director of Program Development, Florida Inclusion Network

