

Early Childhood Educators Partnering to Meet a Child's Special Needs

Itinerant Early Childhood Special Education Services



Local school divisions provide special education services for young children, ages two to five, who have developmental delays or disabilities. Depending on the learning needs of the child, these services may be provided in early childhood care and education (ECCE) settings such as Virginia Preschool Initiative, Head Start, Mixed Delivery, child care, and community-based preschool programs. When special education services are provided in ECCE settings, **Itinerant Early Childhood Special Education (IECSE)** teachers from the school division travel to the classroom to implement the child's Individualized Education Program (IEP). They partner with the child's classroom teacher to identify and implement strategies to support the child's learning and participation with nondisabled peers.

The teachers collaborate on ways to embed the child's IEP goals into the daily routine and activities. The IECSE teacher helps the classroom teacher develop any new skills needed. In addition, the IECSE teacher provides direct instruction, helps monitor progress, and communicates with families and other service providers such as speech therapists to ensure the smooth delivery of IEP services. The child's IEP specifies the amount of time an IECSE teacher spends in the classroom and with the classroom teacher.



SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIPS

Itinerant Early Childhood Special Education services are most successful when Early Childhood and IECSE teachers have routine, scheduled planning time outside of the classroom to:

- Discuss the child and his/her needs
- Identify strategies for supporting the child's learning and participation in the classroom
- Ask and answer questions
- Address any challenges that arise

When teachers are approachable, willing to learn, and treat one another with respect, their partnership will enable their student to fully participate, learn, and belong.

Including preschoolers with developmental delays or disabilities in early childhood classrooms:

- Provides opportunities to learn from same-age peers
- Offers multiple opportunities to practice skills across the day
- Leads to greater cognitive and communication development than services in self-contained special education classrooms
- Results in children who are more socially competent and have more friends than in self-contained classrooms
- Minimizes transitions between programs