



# Recommended Practices: Improving Practices for Young Children with Special Needs and their Families

The Division for Early Childhood (DEC) of the Council for Exceptional Children has developed *Recommended Practices* to bridge the gap between research and practice, offering much-needed guidance to parents and professionals who work with young children with disabilities. In creating this resource, DEC's primary goal was to identify practices that result in better outcomes for young children with disabilities, their families, and the personnel who serve them. The practices are derived from two key sources. One source is the scientific literature on effective practices for young children with disabilities, their families, and the personnel who work with them. The other source is the knowledge and experience of those who work with young children and their families.

*Recommended Practices* includes 240 practices which are divided into seven strands. The first five cover direct services for children and families:

- Assessment - John Neisworth & Stephen Bagnato (46)
- Child-Focused Interventions - Mark Wolery (27)
- Family-Based Practices - Carl Dunst & Carol Trivette (17)
- Interdisciplinary Models - Robin McWilliam (19)
- Technology Applications - Kathleen Stremel (22)

The last two strands focus on the indirect supports which provide a foundation for direct services:

- Personnel Preparation - Vicki Stayton & Patricia Miller (66)
- Policies, Procedures, and Systems Change - Gloria Harbin & Christine Salisbury (43)

The practices are to be used by individuals working in a variety of early childhood settings which provide services to young children with disabilities and other special needs from infancy through age five. These settings include early intervention programs (home and center based), preschool and preschool special education programs, child care programs, Head Start, public schools, hospital based programs, and other programs in which young children receive developmental, educational and related services.

DEC *Recommended Practices* do not include specific practices related to setting up developmentally appropriate classrooms and curricula nor do they include suggestions for high quality care and education. Instead, *Recommended Practices* identifies the specialized supports and teaching strategies that are required in order to meet the needs of children with extraordinary needs—those for whom teachers, families, caregivers, and other professionals need to design an individualized learning environment.

Ultimately the goal of the DEC Recommended Practices is to improve outcomes for young children with disabilities and their families by improving the quality of their services. It is our aim that teachers, therapists, early intervention specialists, family members, administrators, researchers, and those in personnel preparation will take these practices, learn about them, and put them into practice.

## References

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