CALECSE

California Early Childhood Special Education Network

**Funded by the California Department of Education (CDE), Special Education Division**

# Universal Design for Learning In Early Childhood

## January 29, 2026

# About the California Early Childhood Special Education (CalECSE) Network

*Funded by the CDE*

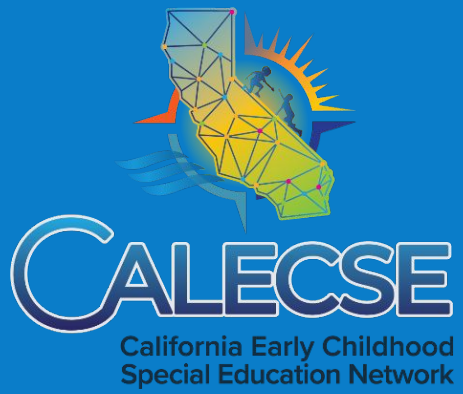
https://www.calecse.org

CalECSE is a technical assistance project funded under the CDE that supports Local Educational Agencies (LEAs), Special Education Local Plan Areas (SELPAs), County Offices of Educations (COEs), and other Agency Partners in the areas of Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part C to B Transitions, Preschool Assessment Practices, and Preschool Child Find by providing technical assistance, professional learning, and demonstration of tangible practices that have been proven successful.

CalECSE leverages collaboration amongst agencies, disseminates resources, highlights existing exemplar practices, and provides direct technical assistance to improve the capacity, knowledge, collaboration, and implementation of evidence-based practices across agencies throughout California.

The CalECSE Network is committed to improving outcomes for children and their families by eliminating and addressing barriers to successful transition for California's youngest children with disabilities.

# The CalECSE Network Leadership Team



Co-Executive Director, Dr. Scott Turner, East San Gabriel Valley SELPA
Co-Executive Director, Melanie Hertig, Irvine USD
Program Specialist (Exemplars), Carrie Rodrigues
Program Specialist (Northern Calif), Sara Castille
Program Specialist (Southern Calif), Laura Clarke

# Interested in joining a local Community of Practice (CoP) for practitioners who support children ages zero to five ?

Find our full schedule of regional CoPs at: https://www.calecse.org/news-resources/communities-of-practice

## Communities of Practice

California Early Childhood Special Education Network

# Today's Presenters:

**Daniel Mendoza**
CalECSE - GTAF Region 3
Program Manager, Placer County Office of Education

**Taylor Smith**
CalECSE Exemplar Lead
Program Specialist, Bonita Unified School District

**Ilah Feeney**
CalECSE-GTAF Region 4

**Graciela Guillén**
CalECSE GTAF Region 9
Coordinator of Student Services

**Susana Avila-Salgado**
CalECSE GTAF Region 9
Program Specialist, Imperial County SELPA

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# Universal Design for Learning (UDL) Operational Definition

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is an educational framework based on research in the learning sciences that guides the development of flexible methods, materials and environments that embrace variability, minimize barriers, and develop learner agency for all.

# Learner Agency

| | Provide multiple means of **Engagement** | Provide multiple means of **Representation** | Provide multiple means of **Action & Expression** |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Affective Networks<br>The "WHY" of Learning | Recognition Networks<br>The "WHAT" of Learning | Strategic Networks<br>The "HOW" of Learning |
| **Goal** | **Purposeful & Motivated** | **Resourceful & Knowledgeable** | **Strategic & Goal Driven** |

# Habits/Practices of Learning Agency

| Engagement<br>Purposeful & Motivated Learners... | Representation<br>Resourceful & Knowledgeable Learners... | Action and Expression<br>Strategic & Goal-Directed Learners... |
|---|---|---|
| • I am excited to explore and learn new skills because it grows my brain.<br>• I use classroom expectations to help me focus my learning.<br>• I can challenge myself to learn new things.<br>• I keep trying and ask for help when things are hard.<br>• I know how to take care of my feelings to help me focus on learning. | • I can connect what I'm learning to what I have learned before.<br>• I can remember what I already know and build on that when I'm learning something new.<br>• I can find the tools and materials to remember new ideas.<br>• I know how to take what I have learned and use it later inside and outside the classroom. | • I can make my own plan for learning something new.<br>• I know how all of my learning tools and materials can help me.<br>• I find what works and doesn't work for me.<br>• I am learning what I'm good at and what I need help with.<br>• When one way of learning isn't working, I can try something new. |

# Video: Early Childhood Education (ECE) Classroom

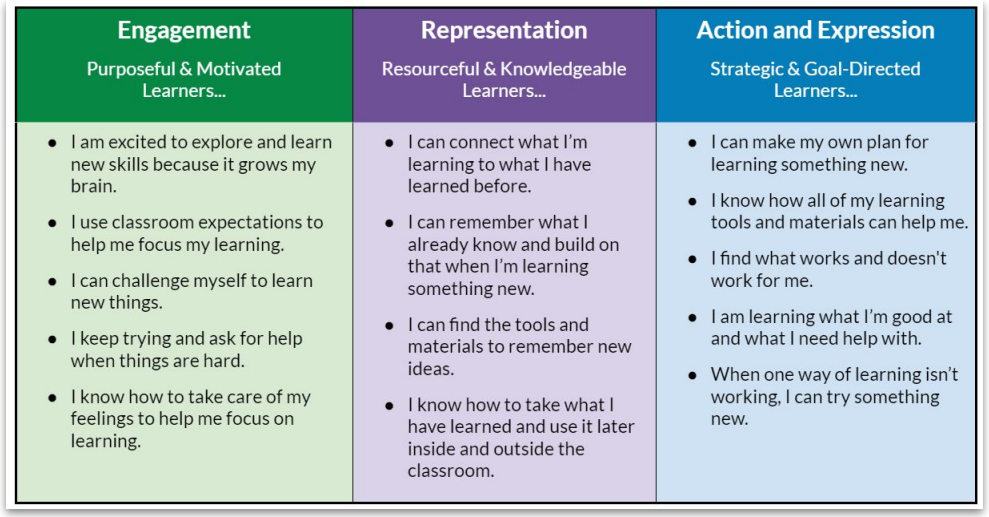
What evidence do you observe of the teacher supporting the development of learner agency?

What evidence do you observe of learners engaging in learner agency?

# Evidence of Expert Learning Sort

Individually or Collaboratively:

1. Review evidence of expert learning observed in video
2. Sort evidence on charts
   - Purposeful and Motivated
   - Resourceful and Knowledgeable
   - Strategic and Goal-Directed



| Engagement<br>Purposeful & Motivated Learners... | Representation<br>Resourceful & Knowledgeable Learners... | Action and Expression<br>Strategic & Goal-Directed Learners... |
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# Reflection: Learner Agency Sort

What patterns or trends are emerging from the sort?

What did you observe that might build on what you already do to support expert learning in your context?

What did you observe that you would like to try out to support expert learning in your context?

# How do we design to develop learner agency practices?

# Video: UDL & ECE Reflection

Consider how the learning environment and student experiences were designed to support expert learning.

# Design: Resourceful and Knowledgeable Learners

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## Engagement

Purposeful & Motivated Learners...

- I am excited to explore and learn new skills because it grows my brain.
- I use classroom expectations to help me focus my learning.
- I can challenge myself to learn new things.
- I keep trying and ask for help when things are hard.
- I know how to take care of my feelings to help me focus on learning.

Zones of Regulation

Visual Schedules

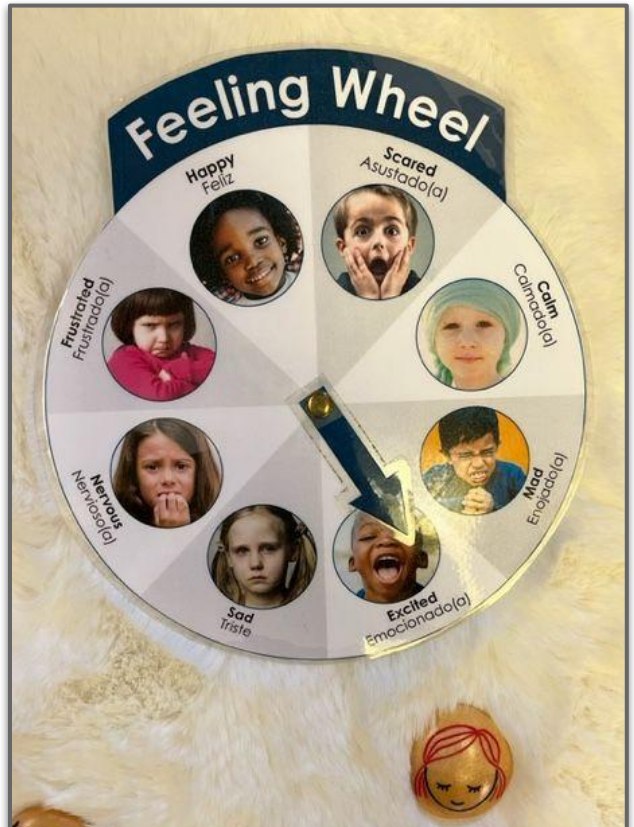
Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS)

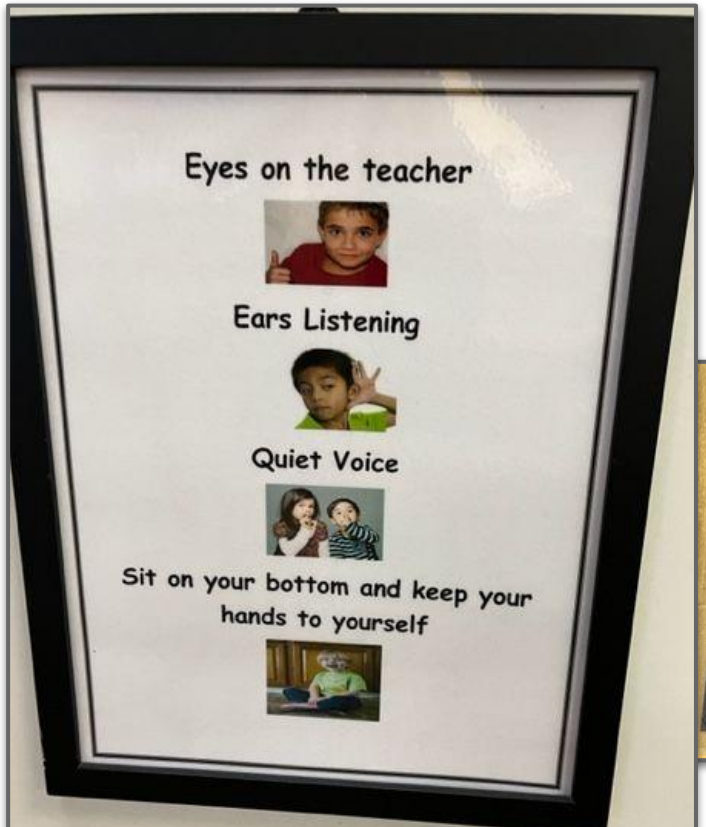
Center sign-in

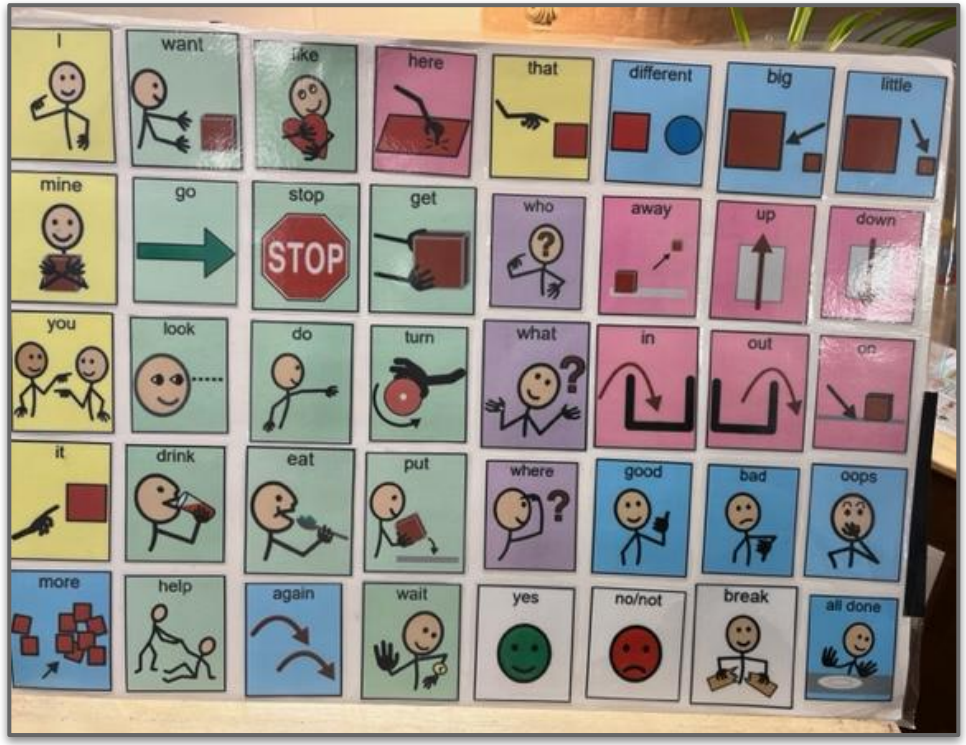
Visual expectations

Feelings chart

# Engagement


Feeling Wheel
Happy
Feliz
Scared
Asustado(a)
Calm
Calmado(a)
Mad
Enojado(a)
Excited
Emocionado(a)
Sad
Triste
Nervous
Nervioso(a)
Frustrated
Frustrado(a)


Eyes on the teacher
Ears Listening
Quiet Voice
Sit on your bottom and keep your hands to yourself


I
want
like
here
that
different
big
little
mine
go
stop
STOP
get
who
away
up
down
you
look
do
turn
what
in
out
on
it
drink
eat
put
where
good
bad
oops
more
help
again
wait
yes
no/not
break
all done

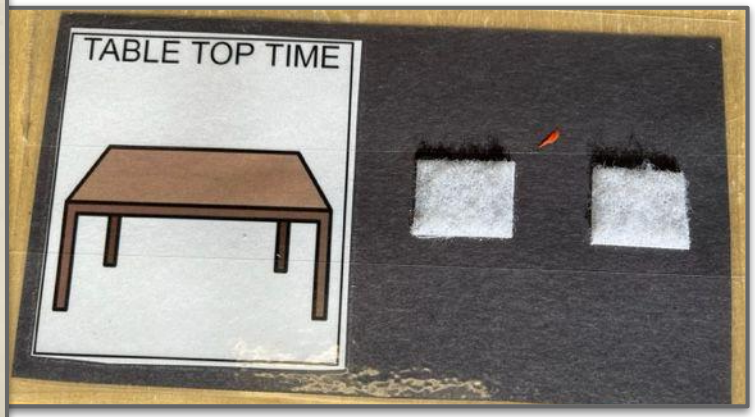
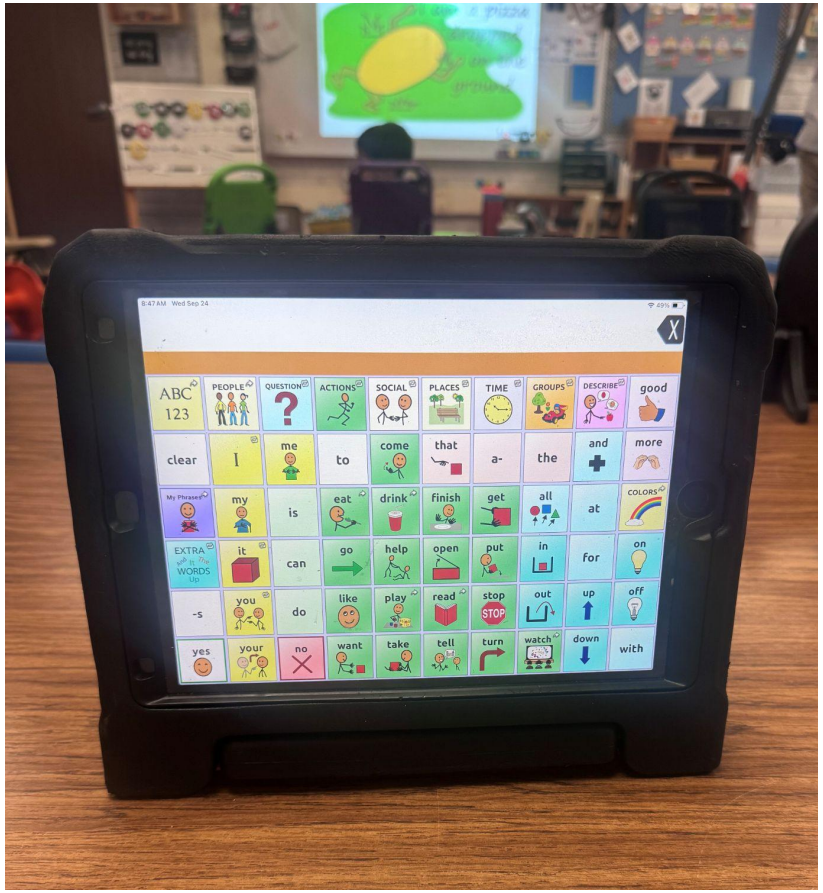


TABLE TOP TIME

# Visual and communication supports



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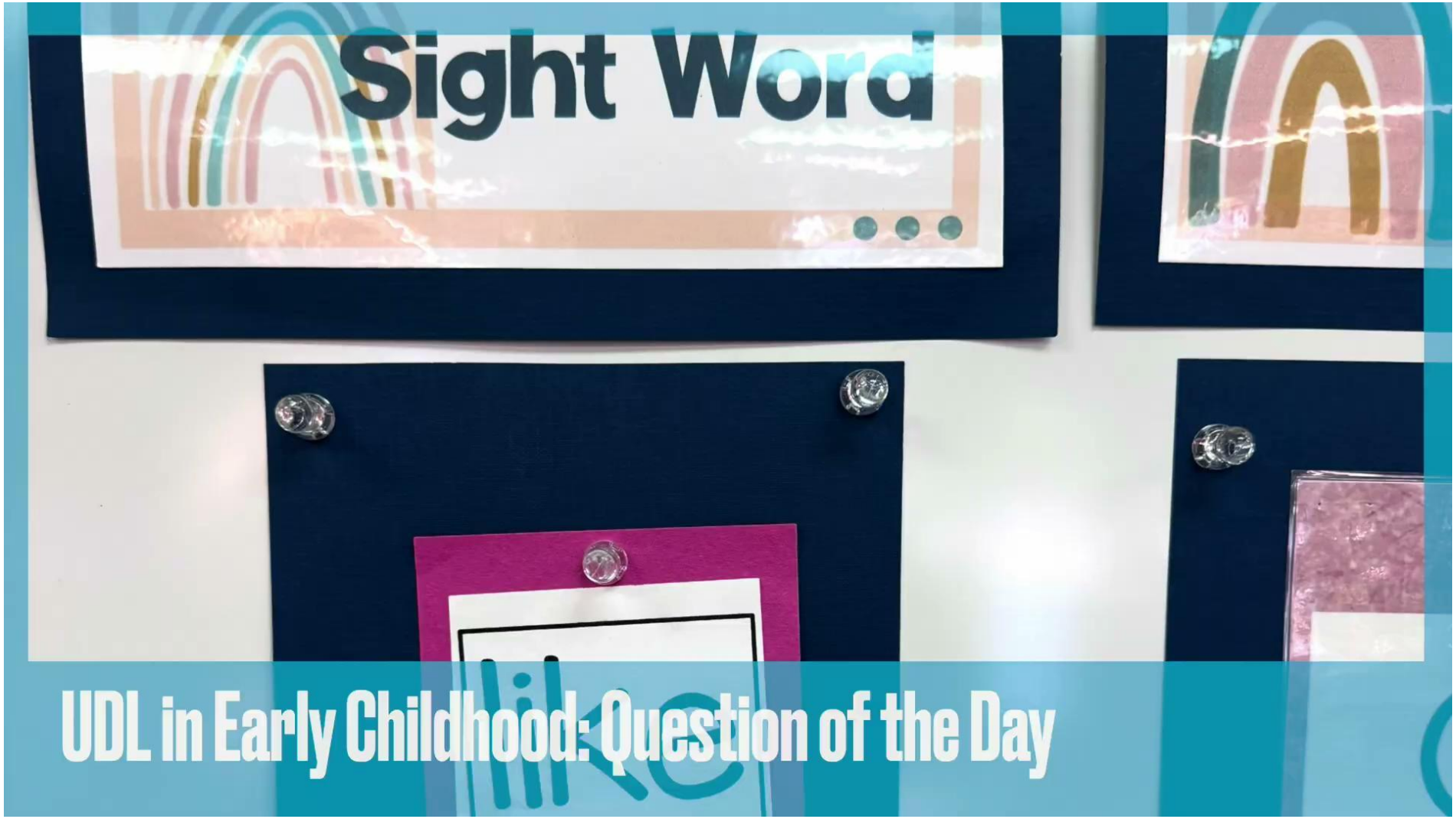

# Design: Resourceful and Knowledgeable Learners

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## Representation

Resourceful & Knowledgeable Learners...

- I can connect what I'm learning to what I have learned before.
- I can remember what I already know and build on that when I'm learning something new.
- I can find the tools and materials to remember new ideas.
- I know how to take what I have learned and use it later inside and outside the classroom.

Visual Anchor

Charts

Manipulatives

Thematic centers

# Resourceful and Knowledgeable Learners

# Resourceful and Knowledgeable Learners

# Design: Strategic and Goal-Directed Learners

## Action and Expression

Strategic & Goal-Directed Learners...

- I can make my own plan for learning something new.
- I know how all of my learning tools and materials can help me.
- I find what works and doesn't work for me.
- I am learning what I'm good at and what I need help with.
- When one way of learning isn't working, I can try something new.

Plan, Do, Review (PDR)
Reflection Conversation

# Action and Expression

# Action and Expression

# Reflection: Developing Young Expert Learners

| Engagement<br>Purposeful & Motivated Learners... | Representation<br>Resourceful & Knowledgeable Learners... | Action and Expression<br>Strategic & Goal-Directed Learners... |
|---|---|---|
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How might you build on what you already do to support the development of learner agency?

What would you like to try out to support the development of learner agency?

# Follow Us On Social Media

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Find our full line-up of no-cost trainings at:
https://www.calecse.org/news-resources/calecse-training-calendar

# Share Your Feedback for a Chance to Win CalECSE 2026 Symposium Registration

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Please help us improve our practice and complete the zoom survey following this session.

After doing so, you will be entered into a raffle to win a free registration to CalECSE's 4th Annual Symposium to be held in Northern California October 20–21, 2026. Valued at over $500.

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## Communities of Practice

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