



California Early Childhood
Special Education Network



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

Expanding Inclusive Practices for Students with Extensive Support Needs

October 5, 2026



CALECSE
California Early Childhood
Special Education Network



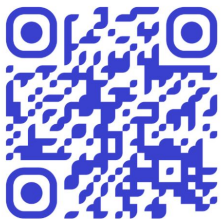
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trainings, Communities of Practice,
practical tools, and resources.**



California Early Childhood Special Education Network (CalECSE)

A CDE-funded technical assistance project supporting local education agencies (LEAs), Special Education Local Plan Areas (SELPA), county offices of education (COEs), and agency partners through:

- Professional learning
- Technical assistance
- Evidence-based resources
- Cross-agency collaboration

Our Mission:

Strengthen early childhood systems to improve outcomes for young children with disabilities and their families.

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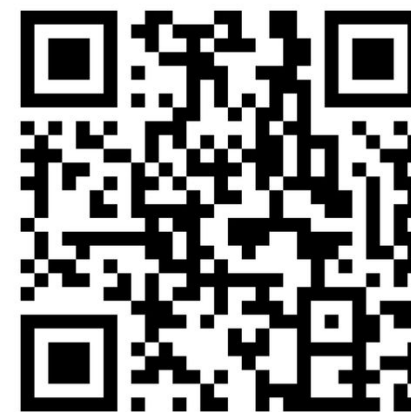


André Eng
Program Specialist,
Birth to Three



Tiny Steps to Golden Futures Symposium Registration Is Open

Join us October 20–21, 2026,
at the Hyatt Regency San
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Burlingame, California, for two
days of exceptional
professional learning,
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Learn more at the CalECSE website:
<https://www.calecse.org/symposium2026>

Today's Presenters

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Today's Agenda

- Definitions
- Models for Extensive Support Needs (ESNs)
Programming
- Inclusive Opportunities
- Evidence-Based Practices (EBPs)
- Recommended Practices
- Behavior
- Toolkit
- Additional Resources
- Questions

Learning Objectives



- Identify models of intentional and inclusive learning for students with ESNs.
- Describe evidence-based and recommended practices for students with extensive support needs.
- Review ready-to-use tools that support implementation.

Definitions

What Are Extensive Support Needs (ESNs)?

Students with extensive support needs require intensive, individualized special education supports and services to access, participate in, and make progress in their education. Students with these needs may be associated with autism, deaf-blindness, emotional disability, intellectual disability, multiple disabilities, or other disability-related needs.



Source: Adapted from California Commission on Teacher Credentialing. *Education Specialist Instruction Credential: Extensive Support Needs*.

<https://www.ctc.ca.gov/program-sponsors/prep-programs/sped/mild-to-moderate-and-extensive-needs/>

What Is Inclusion?

Inclusion is the practice of ensuring that all people, including people with disabilities and people from historically marginalized communities, have equitable access to opportunities, resources, participation, and belonging.



What Is Rightful Presence?



Rightful presence means creating equitable and just environments in which every child is valued, included, and able to participate fully in the same educational settings they would attend if they did not have a disability.

A graphic with the words "Rightful Presence" in a large, bold, dark blue serif font. The text is set against a light yellow background that has a horizontal orange stripe running behind the words.

Source: California Department of Education. "Rightful Presence and Inclusive Early Education Programs as the First Consideration for Children with Disabilities."
<https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/se/om120424.asp>

What Are Evidence-Based Practices (EBPs)?



EBPs are strategies or interventions that have shown to be effective through high-quality, peer-reviewed research and meet specific standards of rigor and reproducibility. In the classroom, evidence-based teaching practices guide decisions on instruction, behavior management, communication strategies, and curricular design for students with disabilities to ensure teachers are optimizing the learning environment and content to address students' individual learning and support needs.



Models for ESNs Programming

Special Education Law



Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Section 612(a)(5)

The provision of educational services with nondisabled peers to the maximum extent appropriate.

California Education Code, Section 56049

- (a) All pupils are general education pupils first, including pupils with disabilities.
- (c) Inclusion in general education classrooms and programs should be considered the first setting for all pupils, unless the individualized education program for a pupil with a disability determines that another setting is more suitable to guarantee a free appropriate public education (FAPE).

Sources: Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 20 United States Code Section 1412(a)(5), Least Restrictive Environment.

<https://sites.ed.gov/idea/statute-chapter-33/subchapter-ii/1412/a/5>

California Education Code Section 56049(a) and (c).

https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?lawCode=EDC§ionNum=56049

Special Day Class (SDC)



An SDC provides intensive, specialized instruction to pupils with similar educational needs.

Placement in a special class may be considered when the nature or severity of a pupil's disability is such that education in a general education class cannot be achieved satisfactorily with supplementary aids and services, including curriculum modifications and behavioral supports.

Special classes must:

- Address each pupil's individualized education program.
- Be taught by appropriately credentialed education specialists.
- Provide opportunities for pupils to interact with the general school population to the maximum extent appropriate.
- Support meaningful access, participation, and belonging with general education peers.

Source: California Education Code Section 56364.2, Special Classes.

https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?lawCode=EDC§ionNum=56364.2

Inclusive Placements



Under IDEA, inclusion in preschool means that young children with disabilities have access to and participate in regular early childhood programs with their peers without disabilities, while receiving the individualized supports and services needed to be successful in those settings.

Official Letter from U.S. Department of Education (Preschool)



In 2017, the U.S. Department of Education wrote that all young children with disabilities should have access to inclusive high-quality early childhood programs where they are provided with individualized and appropriate supports to enable them to meet high expectations. Read the 2017 Dear Colleague Letter on preschool LRE requirements:

https://sites.ed.gov/idea/files/policy_speced_guid_idea_memosdcltrs_preschool-lre-dcl-1-10-17.pdf

Source: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services. "Dear Colleague Letter on Preschool Least Restrictive Environment Requirements." 2017.

https://sites.ed.gov/idea/files/policy_speced_guid_idea_memosdcltrs_preschool-lre-dcl-1-10-17.pdf



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION AND REHABILITATIVE SERVICES

January 9, 2017

Dear Colleague:

We are writing to reaffirm the position of the U.S. Department of Education (ED or Department) that all young children with disabilities should have access to inclusive high-quality early childhood programs where they are provided with individualized and appropriate supports to enable them to meet high expectations. Over the last few years, States and communities have made progress in expanding early learning opportunities for young children, with all but four States investing in free public preschool programs.¹ The Federal government, while aligning with the movement of States, has led several efforts to increase access to and the quality of early childhood programs, such as the Preschool Development Grants and expansion of Head Start. States have focused on improving the quality of early learning programs, including the development of early learning program standards and incorporating these into Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS).²

In September 2015, ED and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) issued a [policy statement on promoting inclusion](#) in early childhood programs to set a vision on this issue and provide recommendations to States, local educational agencies (LEAs), schools, and public and private early childhood programs.³ Despite the expansion of early childhood programs, there has not yet been a proportionate expansion of inclusive early learning opportunities for young children with disabilities. Given this concern and the ED-HHS policy statement on early childhood inclusion, the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) is updating the February 29, 2012, Dear Colleague Letter (DCL) to reaffirm our commitment to inclusive preschool education programs for children with disabilities and to reiterate that the least restrictive environment (LRE) requirements in section 612(a)(5) of the Individuals with Disabilities

¹ Walter N. Ridley Lecture: Pre-Kindergarten Access and Quality are Essential for Children's Growth and Development (November 2, 2016), available at: <http://www.ed.gov/news/speeches/walter-n-ridley-lecture-pre-kindergarten-access-and-quality-are-essential-childrens-growth-and-development>. For more detailed but less recent information on State investments in public preschool see: Barnett, W.S., Friedman-Krauss, A., Gomez, R.E., Squires, J.H., Clarke Brown, K., Weisenfeld, G.G., & Horowitz, M. (2016). *The state of preschool 2015: State preschool yearbook*. New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research.

² QRIS statewide systems are implemented in over half of the States and others are developing such systems. ED and the of Department of Health and Human Services have supported States in further developing such systems under Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge and the Child Care Development Fund. For more information see: <https://qrsguide.acf.hhs.gov/index.cfm?do=qrsguide>.

³ See U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services Policy Letter on the Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs (September 14, 2015), available at: <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/speced/guid/earlylearning/joint-statement-full-text.pdf>.

Rightful Presence and Inclusive Early Education Programs



In 2024, the California Department of Education (CDE) wrote an official letter, Rightful Presence and Inclusive Early Education Programs as the First Consideration for Children with Disabilities, describing expectations for ensuring rightful presence and considering early education programs as the first placement option for special education services and supports for children with disabilities, including dual language learners with disabilities. Read the full letter on the CDE website: <https://www.cde.ca.gov/SP/se/om120424.asp>

Source: California Department of Education. "Rightful Presence and Inclusive Early Education Programs as the First Consideration for Children with Disabilities." 2024. <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/se/om120424.asp>



CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT
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TONY THURMOND
STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

December 4, 2024

Dear County and District Superintendents, Special Education Local Plan Area Directors, Special Education Administrators at County Offices, Charter School Administrators, Principals, California State Preschool Program Directors, and Nonpublic School Directors

Rightful Presence and Inclusive Early Education Programs as the First Consideration for Children with Disabilities

This letter reaffirms expectations and underscores the urgency of ensuring rightful presence and considering early education programs as the first placement option for special education services and supports for children with disabilities in California, inclusive of dual language learner students with disabilities. As California continues to develop an educational system that meets the needs of all students in the least restrictive environment (LRE), fostering access, participation, and support for inclusive preschool opportunities for children with disabilities is essential to laying a foundation for lifelong inclusion.

Rightful presence refers to the intentional effort to ensure children with disabilities are fully included, valued, and supported in the educational settings they would attend if they did not have a disability. It emphasizes belonging, equitable access to resources, and active participation in learning and social opportunities alongside peers without disabilities. For more information, visit the SWIFT National Center on Inclusion at <https://swiftschools.org/TowardRightfulPresence/>

Research demonstrates that including children with disabilities in high-quality preschool programs can have positive effects and that it can work as an early intervention strategy. For example, several rigorous studies have found that children with disabilities who participated in publicly funded preschool programs demonstrated learning gains that were on par with or surpassed those of their typically developing peers. This includes studies of children participating in the federal Head Start program, Tulsa's Preschool program, and Boston's Pre-K Program. Some of these findings are highlighted in an expert consensus report titled Investing in Our Future: The Evidence Base on Preschool Education (2013) (<https://www.fcd-us.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Evidence-Base-on-Preschool-Education-FINAL.pdf>). Additionally the RAND Corporation's report, *Proven Benefits of Early Childhood Intervention*, highlights how high-quality early childhood education programs significantly improve developmental and educational outcomes, including reduced

Inclusive Learning Opportunities



- Creating inclusive learning opportunities is the practice of integrating students with disabilities in general education classrooms or with nondisabled peers for specific parts of the school day.
- These intentional learning opportunities may occur during academic instruction and activities (e.g., math class or science experiments) or for non academic activities (e.g., recess or art activities).
- With preschoolers, these opportunities typically occur for select periods of time or for specific activities (outdoor and indoor play, morning circle, afternoon snack).
- These opportunities give students in separate special education classrooms access to general education environments, curriculum, activities, and peers while supporting participation in the LRE.

Inclusive Learning Opportunities: Push-in Model



Inclusive Learning Opportunities: Push-In Model In Action



Inclusive Learning Opportunities: Incorporating Music and Movement



Inclusive Learning Opportunities: Incorporating Communication Tools



Inclusive Learning Opportunities: Incorporating Communication Tools (continued)



Inclusive Learning Opportunities: Incorporating Sensory Strategies



Inclusive Learning Opportunities: Incorporating Sensory Strategies (continued)



Reverse Inclusion Model



A reverse inclusion model involves the integration of general education students into special education classrooms.

This type of integration can range from brief and/or unstructured activities to longer, scheduled daily interactions.

This practice can benefit students with and without disabilities and foster empathy among nondisabled students.

In early childhood settings, intentionally designed shared activities can build relationships, acceptance, and social skills among children with and without disabilities.

Big Buddies Club

- Students in upper grades pair with preschool children to practice play and friendship skills for a Big Buddies Club.
- Members of the Big Buddies Club meet monthly after school for training and collaborative activities.
- Club members participate during morning recess once each week.



Peer Models Provide Support

Peer models can demonstrate social, communication, play, and classroom participation skills. Examples may include:

- Job buddy
- Schedule buddy
- Cleanup buddy
- Paired-activity buddy



Evidence-Based Practices (EBPs)

Matrix of EBPs

Matrix of evidence-based practices, outcomes, age categories, and definitions.

Explore the Autism Focused Intervention Resources and Modules resources: <https://afirm.fpg.unc.edu/resource>

AFIRM Autism Focused Intervention Resources & Modules

Selecting an Evidence-Based Practice
For more information, please visit: <https://afirm.fpg.unc.edu/>

EBP

EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES FOR PRESCHOOL (3-5.9):

	ACADEMIC	ADAPTIVE	BEHAVIOR	COGNITIVE	COMMUNICATION	JOINT ATTENTION	MENTAL HEALTH	MOTOR	PLAY	SCHOOL-READINESS	SOCIAL
Antecedent-Based Interventions (ABI)	✓	✓	✓		✓				✓	✓	✓
Augmentative & Alternative Communication (AAC; includes PECS)	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
Ayres Sensory Integration (ASI)		✓	✓		✓				✓	✓	✓
Behavior Momentum Intervention (BMI)	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
Differential Reinforcement (DR)	✓				✓					✓	✓
Direct Instruction (DI)	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
Discrete Trial Training (DTT)	✓		✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
Exercise & Movement (EXM; includes ECE)		✓			✓					✓	✓
Extinction (EXT)	✓		✓							✓	✓
Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA)		✓	✓		✓				✓	✓	✓
Functional Communication Training (FCT)	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Modeling (MD)			✓		✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
Music-Mediated Interventions (MMI)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Naturalistic Interventions (NI; includes ImPACT, JASPER, Milieu, PRT)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Parent-Implemented Interventions (PII; includes Stepping Stones)					✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
Peer-Based Instruction & Intervention (PBII; includes SPG, PMII)	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Prompting (PP; includes prompt-based Scripting)	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Reinforcement (R)	✓	✓	✓		✓				✓	✓	✓
Response Interruption & Redirection (RIR)	✓	✓	✓							✓	✓
Self-Management (SM)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓			✓
Social Narratives (SN; includes Social Stories)	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓			✓		✓
Social Skills Training (SST; includes PEERS)			✓	✓	✓				✓		✓
Task Analysis (TA)		✓			✓	✓					✓
Technology-Aided Instruction & Intervention (TAII; includes MindReading, FaceSay)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Time Delay (TD)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Video Modeling (VM)	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Visual Supports (VS; includes visual-based Scripting)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓

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The National Professional Development Center on Autism

EBP
Sam et al., 2022
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Matrix of EBPs (continued)

Matrix of EBPs, outcomes, and age categories and definitions of EBPs.

Explore EBP matrix from the National Clearinghouse on Autism Evidence and Practice (NCAEP):

<https://ncaep.fpg.unc.edu/wp-content/uploads/NCAEP-Report-Table-3.7-Matrix.pdf>

Explore EBP list from the NCAEP:

<https://ncaep.fpg.unc.edu/wp-content/uploads/NCAEP-Report-Table-3.1-EBP-list.pdf>

Evidence-Based Practice	Definition
Antecedent-Based Interventions (ABI)	Arrangement of events or circumstances that precede an activity or demand in order to increase the occurrence of a behavior or lead to the reduction of the challenging/interfering behaviors.
Ayres Sensory Integration® (ASI®)	Interventions that target a person's ability to integrate sensory information (visual, auditory, tactile, proprioceptive, and vestibular) from their body and environment in order to respond using organized and adaptive behavior.
Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)	Interventions using and/or teaching the use of a system of communication that is not verbal/vocal which can be aided (e.g., device, communication book) or unaided (e.g., sign language)
Behavioral Momentum Intervention (BMI)	The organization of behavior expectations in a sequence in which low probability, or more difficult, responses are embedded in a series of high probability, or less effortful, responses to increase persistence and the occurrence of the low probability responses.
Cognitive Behavioral/ Instructional Strategies (CBIS)	Instruction on management or control of cognitive processes that lead to changes in behavioral, social, or academic behavior.
Differential Reinforcement of Alternative, Incompatible, or Other Behavior (DR)	A systematic process that increases desirable behavior or the absence of an undesirable behavior by providing positive consequences for demonstration/non-demonstration of such behavior. These consequences may be provided when the learner is: a) engaging in a specific desired behavior other than the undesirable behavior (DRA), b) engaging in a behavior that is physically impossible to do while exhibiting the undesirable behavior (DRI), or c) not engaging in the undesirable behavior (DRO).
Direct Instruction (DI)	A systematic approach to teaching using a sequenced instructional package with scripted protocols or lessons. It emphasizes teacher and student dialogue through choral and independent student responses and employs systematic and explicit error corrections to promote mastery and generalization.
Discrete Trial Training (DTT)	Instructional approach with massed or repeated trials with each trial consisting of the teacher's instruction/presentation, the child's response, a carefully planned consequence, and a pause prior to presenting the next instruction.
Exercise and Movement (EXM)	Interventions that use physical exertion, specific motor skills/ techniques, or mindful movement to target a variety of skills and behaviors.
Extinction (EXT)	The removal of reinforcing consequences of a challenging behavior in order to reduce the future occurrence of that behavior.
Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA)	A systematic way of determining the underlying function or purpose of a behavior so that an effective intervention plan can be developed.
Functional Communication Training (FCT)	A set of practices that replace a challenging behavior that has a communication function with more appropriate and effective communication behaviors or skills.
Modeling (MD)	Demonstration of a desired target behavior that results in use of the behavior by the learner and that leads to the acquisition of the target behavior.
Music-Mediated Intervention (MMI)	Intervention that incorporates songs, melodic intonation, and/or rhythm to support learning or performance of skills/behaviors. It includes music therapy, as well as other interventions that incorporate music to address target skills.

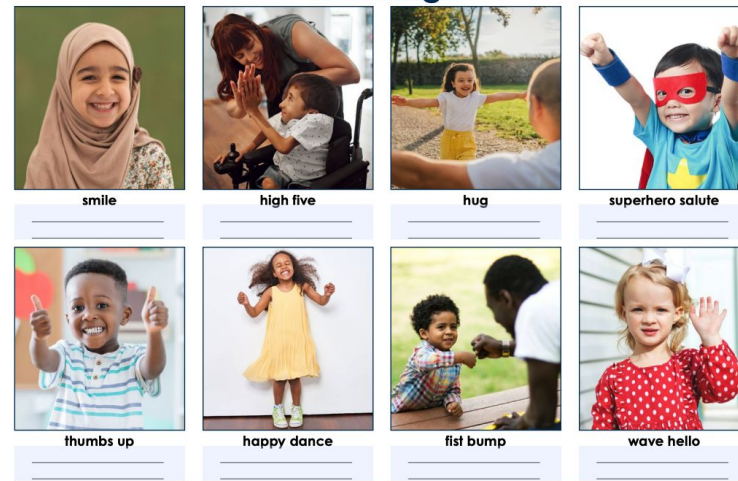
The Pyramid Model

The Pyramid Model is a framework of evidence-based practices for promoting young children's healthy social and emotional development.

It is not a curriculum, but rather a framework of effective practices to support the social, emotional, and behavioral outcomes of all young children, including those at risk for developmental delays or disabilities and those with extensive needs.



Greetings



National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations | [ChallengingBehavior.org](https://www.challengingbehavior.org)
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Pub: 10/02/23

Source: National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations. "The Pyramid Model: Basics." <https://www.challengingbehavior.org/pyramid-model/overview/basics>

The Pyramid Model (continued)

The Pyramid Model focuses on improving the social, emotional, and behavioral outcomes of young children from birth through age five; eliminating the use of inappropriate exclusionary discipline practices; promoting family engagement; using data-informed decision-making; increasing the use of trauma-informed and responsive practices; and fostering the inclusion of children with disabilities.

Explore resources from the National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations
<https://www.challengingbehavior.org/>



Building Routines

Directions

Looking at your daily schedule, choose an activity you for which want or need to build an effective routine. You may decide to do this exercise for more than one activity, but it's best to start with one. Write the name of the activity in the left column labeled "Activity." In the next column, "Routines within the Activity," list each routine during your focus activity. Record each routine in its own row. Then, think through the steps of each routine. Write those out in the "Steps of the Routine" column. Reflect on each routine and step. Are the steps of the routine clear to you as the teacher? Have you taught these steps to the children? Do you need to individualize a routine for a specific child? Use the "Notes" column to record your reflections and ideas for building more effective routines.

See below for an example, and see the second page for a blank template.

Example:

Activity	Routines within the Activity	Steps of the Routine	Notes
Opening Circle	Welcome Song	Adult selects helper Child passes out prop Group sings song Child collects prop	Need a system for choosing which child passes out props... sticks? Rotating job?
	Child Choice Song	Child picks song Child leads group	
	Choose Centers	Adult selects helper Peer calls up each child, hands "Play Pass" to peer and asks, "Where do you want to play?"	Visuals of center choices may be helpful for Laney



The Turtle Technique



Step 1. Recognize your feelings.



Step 2. Stop your body.



Step 3. Tuck inside your shell and take three deep breaths.



Step 4. Come out when you are calm and think of a solution.

Embedded Instruction

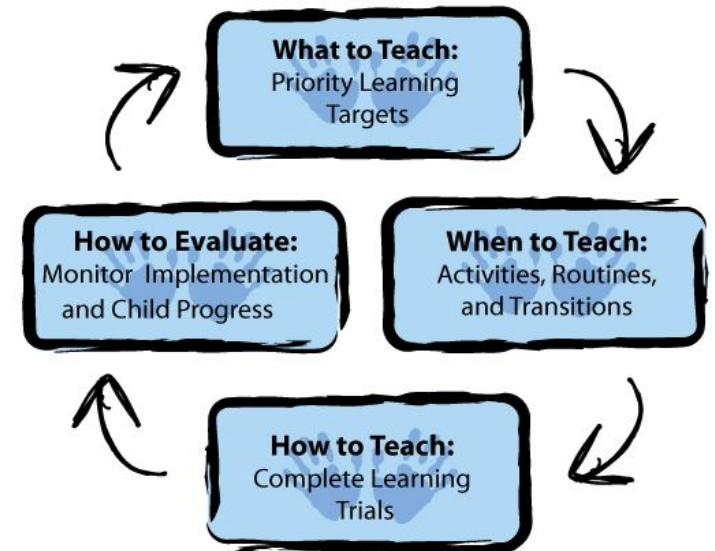
Embedded Instruction is an evidence-based, multicomponent approach for planning, implementing, and evaluating instruction for preschool children with disabilities in inclusive settings.

It is used to promote child engagement, learning, and independence in everyday activities, routines, and transitions.

This is accomplished by identifying times and activities when instructional procedures designed for teaching a child's priority learning targets are implemented in the context of ongoing and naturally occurring activities, routines, and transitions in the classroom.

Explore resources from Embedded Instruction for Early Learning:

<https://embeddedinstruction.net/>



EBP: Visual Supports

Visuals make the invisible visible. For example, visual supports:

- Help children understand what is happening, what is expected, what comes next, and when an activity will end.
- Help children communicate.

Why Use Visual Supports?

- Using visuals can increase understanding and provide predictability
- Supports communication and comprehension
- Increases independence and reduces dependence on adult prompting/cues
- Supports transitions and participation by allowing students to anticipate what comes next
- Increase engagement in routines and activities and provide choices for how a student participates
- Provides consistency across adult support and environments

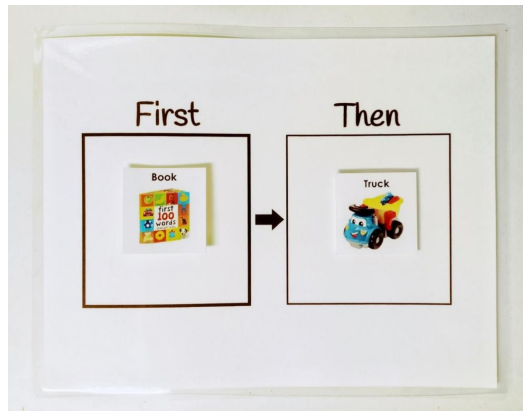
Source: Autism Focused Intervention Resources and Modules. "Visual Supports." Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. <https://afirm.fpg.unc.edu/module/visual-supports/>



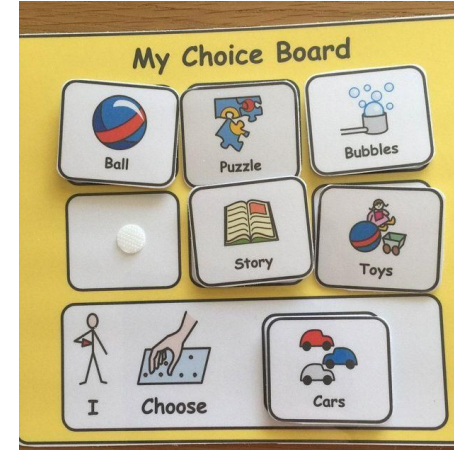
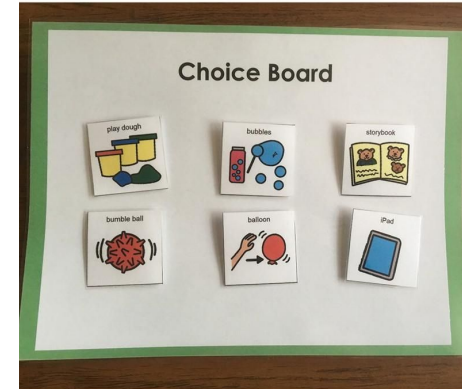
Examples of Visual Supports in the Classroom



Visual Schedules:
What is happening today?



First-Then Boards:
What is happening now, and what is coming next?



Choice Boards:
Provide structured choices from which students can select.



Communication Support:
Provide visuals to support students communicating wants and needs.

Additional Examples of Visual Supports in the Classroom



Timers:
Show how long an activity will last.



Model Expectations:
Provide examples of what students can do to engage in an expected way.



Understand the Environment:
Label the environment to provide predictability and consistency



Facilitate Social Interactions:
Visual cues to prompt social interactions.

EBP: Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)

AAC supports communication development. AAC includes a range of methods and systems that supplement or replace speech.

No-Tech:

Communication that relies on a person's body and does not require batteries, electronics, or external tools.

- Eye movements
- Gestures
- Signs
- Facial expressions
- Body movements



Low-Tech:

Tools that are not electronic nor require batteries.

- Objects and tangible symbols
- Pictures/symbols
- Communication boards/books
- Alphabet/spelling boards
- Writing/drawing tools
- Buttons



Mid-Tech:

Tools operated by battery or electricity with static audio messages and visual displays

- Buttons
- Switches
- Multi-message boards



High-Tech:

Devices that are electronic speech-generating systems with dynamic displays, synthetic or digitized voices, and customizable software.

- Tablets
- Other electronic devices

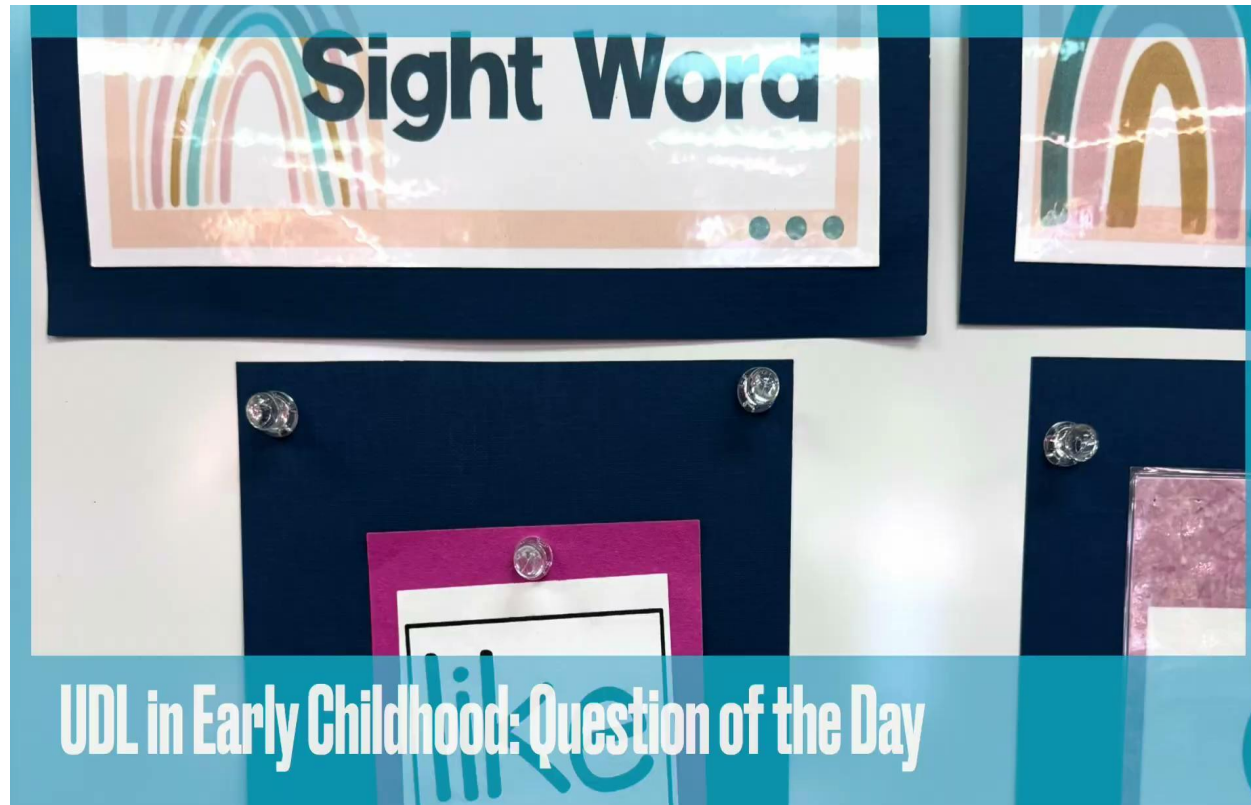


Using AAC in Natural Settings

AAC should be used in a naturalistic way and embedded within the environment such as in play, routines, transitions, snack times, and social opportunities. AAC can be made available to all students.



Video Example of AAC in the Classroom



Video link: [UDL in Early Childhood: Question of the Day.](#)

A short, individualized story that uses simple language and visuals to explain a social situation, expectation, or routine from the child's perspective. Should focus on what the child can do.

Benefits:

- Helps students understand what is coming next
- Provides concrete, simple ways to teach expectations
- Can reduce anxiety
- Can increase predictability in an unfamiliar setting or circumstance

Social Narrative Example

Asking for Help

My name is _____ and I am _____ years old. I go to preschool at _____.



There are so many fun things to do at school. We eat snacks, play outside, play with toys, and more! Some of my favorite things to

do are _____ and _____.



Most things at school I can do all by myself. Sometimes there are things at school that I am still learning to do on my own. All my friends at preschool are learning to do new things.

If I need help with something, I can ask a teacher or a friend. It is OK to ask for help. Some things I might ask for help with are _____ or _____.

I can ask for help by saying my teacher or friend's name to get their attention. When my teacher or friend is looking at me, I can say, "Can you help me, please?" Then we can work together to get the job done!



It makes my teachers and friends happy when I ask for the help that I need!



For more information on creating social, visit the Head Start website:

<https://headstart.gov/children-disabilities/article/social-stories>

Recommended Practices

Division for Early Childhood (DEC) Recommended Practices



The DEC Recommended Practices bridge research and practice by providing guidance to families and professionals who support young children with, or at risk for, developmental delays or disabilities.

- **Assessment:** Uses multiple sources of information to guide decisions about services, intervention, and instruction.
- **Environment:** Promotes safe and accessible physical, social, and temporal environments that support learning and participation.
- **Family:** Promotes family-centered practices, active participation, collaboration, and family capacity building.
- **Instruction:** Uses intentional and systematic strategies to plan instruction and evaluate practices and outcomes.
- **Interaction:** Supports children's social and emotional development, communication, cognitive development, and learning.
- **Teaming and collaboration:** Promotes partnerships and ongoing interactions among families and professionals to achieve desired outcomes.
- **Transition:** Addresses the activities and processes that support children and families as they move between programs, services, and environments.



Sample Environment Recommended Practices



The environment includes the physical, social, and temporal conditions that support each child's safety, access, participation, and learning.

The DEC recommends the following practices:

- E1.** Practitioners provide services and supports in natural and inclusive environments during daily routines and activities to promote each child's access to and participation in learning experiences.
- E2.** Practitioners consider Universal Design for Learning principles when creating accessible environments.
- E3.** Practitioners collaborate with families and other adults to modify and adapt physical, social, and temporal environments to promote each child's access to and participation in learning experiences.

Source: Division for Early Childhood. "DEC Recommended Practices: Environment." Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center.

<https://ectacenter.org/decrp/decrp.asp>

Sample Environment Recommended Practices (continued)



Additionally, the DEC recommends the following practices:

- E4.** Practitioners collaborate with families and other adults to identify each child's assistive technology needs and promote access to and participation in learning experiences.
- E5.** Practitioners collaborate with families and other adults to acquire or create appropriate assistive technology that promotes each child's access to and participation in learning experiences.
- E6.** Practitioners create environments that provide opportunities for movement and regular physical activity to support fitness, wellness, and development across domains.

Source: Division for Early Childhood. "DEC Recommended Practices." Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center.
<https://ectacenter.org/decrp/decrp.asp>

Establishing Routines

Consistent routines provide young children with predictability, comfort, and a sense of safety.

- Help children anticipate what will happen next.
- Support security, emotional stability, and self-control.
- Guide positive and responsible behavior.
- Make transitions easier for children and adults.
- Build children's confidence and sense of control.
- Create opportunities for learning and greater independence.



Source: ZERO TO THREE. "Creating Routines for Love and Learning."
<https://www.zerotothree.org/resource/creating-routines-for-love-and-learning>

Organized and Predictable Environment

Helps students and staff answer the following questions:

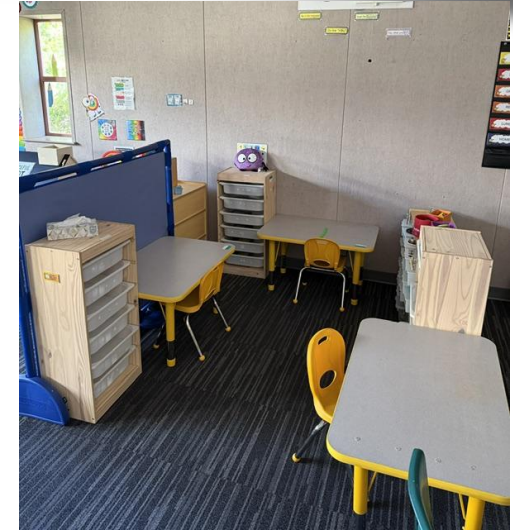
- Where do I go?
- What do I do when I get there?
- How many tasks will I complete?
- When am I finished?
- What comes next?



Organized and Predictable Environment (continued)

Setting Up Your Classroom

- Arrange physical space to segment the environment into meaningful parts to reduce stimulation and minimize distractions.
- Organize teaching materials to minimize distractions, wait time, and confusion.
- Add contextual cues to provide a general idea of what the student is expected to do there.
- Create a classroom schedule and staff information board.



Arranging Physical Space

- Develop areas based on the curriculum
 - Play and leisure
 - Learning environments
 - Transition areas
 - Organizational areas
- Use classroom furniture to create natural boundaries
- Use rugs to delineate classroom spaces
- Use tape to create boundaries



Creating an Accessible Classroom

- Ensure access for all students, including adaptive equipment.
- Create an accessible environment by ensuring enough space between furniture and equipment.
- Create clear paths for students to access various areas of the room.
- Ensure items are within reach for students who use wheelchairs.
- Provide flexible and adaptive seating options to allow for maximum participation.
- Consider rugs and other barriers that may pose tripping hazards.



Creating an Accessible Classroom (continued)

- Allow front-row seating so students can see speakers clearly.
- Provide a clear view during instruction.
- Consistently check, wear, and charge assistive devices before starting the instructional day.
- Model and honor each student's preferred forms of communication.



Building Positive Relationships



Build positive relationships with all of your students.

- You are the teacher, even for those students with extensive support needs.
- Maintain instructional responsibility for every student rather than assuming another staff member is responsible.
- You are an important model for the way in which all children should be treated.

Positive relationships with your students are fundamental to their success as students.

These positive relationships lead to improved outcomes in all educational areas (social, emotional, behavioral, academic, and communication outcomes).

It is our job to support our youngest learners in developing these fundamental skills in a positive manner, but also to help instill in them a life-long love of learning.

Set Reasonable Expectations

- Consider what is developmentally appropriate for the age group.
- Understand each student's strengths and support needs.
- Know each student's goals.
- Identify the accommodations and supports each student needs.
- Create conditions that support success.



Developmental Expectations



Preschool children grow and develop at different rates. Developmentally expected behavior should be considered as part of a comprehensive evaluation; a single behavior should not be used to infer that a child has a disability. Things we can expect from preschoolers:

- Running, jumping, climbing
- Playing with toys
- Speaking in three-word utterances
- Speech is generally intelligible
- Following simple directions
- Doing simple puzzles
- Noticing other children and playing alongside them
- Learning about sharing
- Showing affection towards others
- Showing concern when someone is crying
- Demonstrating big emotions and having trouble managing those emotions
- Taking up to 10 minutes to calm down

Behavior

Behavior is Communication



Reframing how to approach behavior:

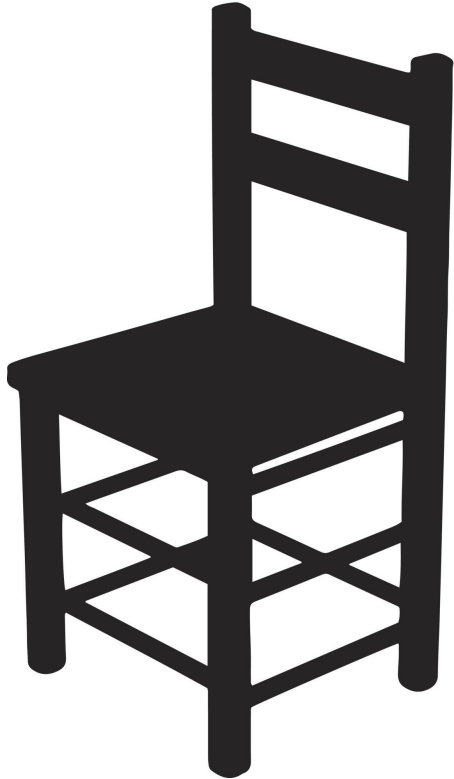
Instead of asking, "How can I stop this behavior?" ask:

- "What is this child communicating?"
- "What need might the behavior be meeting?"
- "What alternative or replacement communication skill can we teach?"

"Behavior is not inherently 'bad.' It provides information and may offer an opportunity to identify a need and teach a more effective way to communicate."

What could behavior be communicating?

Behavior is Communication



Behavior may be related to sensory input, escape or avoidance, attention, or access to a tangible item or activity.

S: Sensory

E: Escape

A: Attention

T: Tangible

Source: IRIS Center. "Behavioral Form and Function." Vanderbilt University.

<https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/fba-elem/cresource/q1/p01/>

Behavior is Communication: Sensory



The behavior is providing sensory input or an internal feeling that they find enjoyable, calming, regulating, or interesting. The sensory consequence produced by the behavior may be reinforcing.

Example:

A child repeatedly flaps their hands or spins when excited or overwhelmed because the movement helps them regulate. Because the behavior supports the child's regulation and does not cause harm, adults can respect it as a valid form of self-regulation.

Strategies:

- Provide movement throughout the day
- Support individualized sensory activities throughout the school day

Behavior is Communication: Escape or Avoidance



The behavior helps the child delay, avoid, or end something they find difficult, uncomfortable, overwhelming, or nonpreferred.

Example:

When presented with a challenging puzzle, a child pushes the materials away and drops to the floor. The activity is removed.

Strategies:

- Adjust task difficulty or length
- Use visual schedules and first-then supports
- Provide choices
- Teach and honor a functional way to request “break,” “help,” or “all done”
- Reinforce appropriate break/help requests
- Gradually build tolerance rather than forcing prolonged participation

Behavior is Communication: Attention



The behavior results in social interaction or attention from adults or peers. Attention can be positive or negative.

Example:

A child throws a toy and the teacher immediately comes over, talks to them, and helps them clean up.

Strategies:

- Provide frequent, specific positive feedback
- Teach appropriate ways to get attention
- Implement a token chart
- Build opportunities for adult/peer interaction into the structure of the day

Behavior is Communication: Tangible



The behavior helps the child gain access to a desired object, activity, food, or preferred experience.

Example:

A child cries and takes a toy from another child. An adult gives them a similar toy, and the crying stops.

Strategies:

- Teach functional requesting using speech, gestures, signs, or AAC
- Use visual choices
- Provide predictable access to preferred activities
- Reinforce appropriate requests by providing the item or activity when possible
- Teach waiting and turn-taking gradually with visual supports
- Do not unnecessarily withhold preferred items to provoke a request

Toolkit

Print and Go Tools



Toolkit assembly instructions:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/175ToVrF6yeZe4KUwONhNnJNtpG0IRiiTt5pM7_K1Qww/edit?usp=drive_link

Visual schedule toolkit:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1pXXGXkLd0htOHWgbh0hrgXN4bLvxHfbm/view?usp=drive_link

Classroom visual toolkit:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1HbzpKL25vduxPq76LoTOjrp5DkOupu_/view?usp=drive_link

Lanyard visual support toolkit:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/19uwTQiVOwqtOasCm6YBXhmJE_zTxQfLz/view?usp=drive_link

Positive behavior supports toolkit:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1PFXL3p4GcfSNGq4ho9TeykBsCwrWk4h9/view?usp=drive_link

Print and Go Tools (continued)



Break cards and calming strategies toolkit:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1T9jC9CNI9Ym7NmtGTbQpsl3TY0W9-Tza/view?usp=sharing>

Social-emotional check-in toolkit:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1KwmEsJPeflLbTgBX7-Otmu4Ul0TxCjDI/view?usp=drive_link

Greeting choices toolkit:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1DStekG9V2deIBaq2Z4ePCo9YrJrOahYP/view>

Make your own social narrative toolkit:

https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1nfvdRiOaTP2dapzl9fXSnm0JpL__muZiyR6Aya_-9sc/copy

Additional Resources

CaIECSE Resource



An Intentional Inclusive Practices Planning Tool can help plan for supports and is available on the CaIECSE website:

https://calecse.org/uploads/blogs/files/1790863162_Intentional%20Inclusive%20Practices%20Planning%20Tool%20Compliant.pdf

 **INTENTIONAL INCLUSIVE PRACTICES PLANNING TOOL**

Use this tool to intentionally plan for meaningful access, participation, engagement, and independence for all learners across general education activities and routines.

Example how to complete this form below:

Activity or Routine	Goal for the Whole Class	Individual Child Learning Priority Consider the child's strengths, present levels, interests, and Individualized Educational Program (IEP) goals.	Supports and Adaptations for Access and Participation What supports or adaptations will help the child access and participate in this activity?	Strategies to Support Engagement and Independence What strategies will support the child's engagement and independence?
Morning circle	Participate in songs and movement activities.	Child is working on imitating actions during familiar songs.	☐ Adapt the activity or materials ☐ Break the activity into manageable steps ☒ Provide an alternative way to respond ☐ Provide communication support / Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) ☒ Provide assistive technology ☐ Adapt seating, positioning, or physical access ☐ Other: _____	☒ Visual supports ☒ First-then support ☒ Visual schedule or activity sequence ☒ Peer or adult modeling ☒ Choice-making opportunities ☒ Regulation or sensory supports ☐ Positive reinforcement ☐ Other: _____

Local District Preschool Inclusion Self-Assessment



The tool can be found on the Early Childhood Technical Assistance (ECTA) Center website:

<https://ectacenter.org/~pdfs/topics/inclusion/local-inclusion-self-assessment.pdf>

This tool supports school districts in examining their inclusive preschool practices and identifying opportunities to improve services for young children.



Local District Preschool Inclusion Self-Assessment

February 1, 2018

Adapted by the ECTA and DaSy Centers from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Education's *Policy Statement on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs*

Debbie Cate, Penny Dell and Kathy Whaley

"With the support of States, leaders in LEAs, schools, early childhood programs, and family child care networks can strive toward providing high-quality early learning experiences for all young children. Leaders can adopt a culture of inclusion, set expectations for services to be provided in inclusive settings to the extent appropriate per child need, establish fair and appropriate policies, allocate existing resources in ways that facilitate increased access to inclusive early childhood programs, and prioritize workforce development. Early childhood leaders can serve as community-wide leaders for inclusion, by convening a diverse coalition of inclusion champions who can implement a culture of inclusion across the entire community."

U.S. Departments of HHS and ED Policy Statement on the Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs
<https://www2.ed.gov/policy/speced/guid/earlylearning/joint-statement-full-text.pdf>

This self-assessment tool provides a framework for discussion to promote partnerships among schools and early care and education providers to promote the inclusion of young children with disabilities and their families in early childhood programs. We recommend forming a cross-sector team to complete the self-assessment. As the team considers each item, reflect on your experience working together to provide services to young children and families. Once the tool is completed, decide which item(s) will be a priority for future action to improve the quality of services. Remember that all voices are important to moving a partnership forward. Early childhood programs are defined as Early Childhood Special Education, Early Intervention, Head Start, Early Headstart State Pre-Kindergarten, Child Care, Title I Preschool, and other programs.

Rating Scale: 1. Not yet 2. Planning but not implemented 3. In process and/or partially implemented 4. In place/fully implemented			
	Rating	Evidence What does it look like?	Comments (e.g., Next Steps, Status, Prioritization)
1. Partnering with Families			
1a. Do your schools and early childhood programs intentionally plan and assess how they are partnering with families?	☐		
1b. Do your schools and early childhood programs ensure all families are knowledgeable about the benefits of inclusion, understand their rights and how to navigate the systems that serve their children?	☒		

Questions



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Communities of Practice: Join the Conversation

Discuss and Discover.
Share and Strengthen.
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<https://www.calecse.org/news-resources/communities-of-practice>



Join a regional, job-alike, or statewide Community of Practice (CoP) to share ideas, solve problems of practice, exchange successful strategies and tools, and strengthen early childhood special education across California.

If you are interested in joining a CoP, please complete this form by scanning the QR code below or filling out this google form:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSf2mTRqNCNqmfQp_1UzwO7hQvJqJUrlgGkoG0-qqUBXMYqAwA/viewform?usp=preview



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