

Inclusion Toolkit

Supporting Inclusive Preschool Practices for All Children

A Preschool through 3rd Grade Alignment Toolkit

California Department of Education

This Toolkit is provided by the California Department of Education (CDE) as non-binding guidance to support inclusive preschool practices. It does not establish new legal obligations, rights, or entitlements and should be interpreted consistently with existing federal and state law, including the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (20 U.S.C. § 1400 et seq.), Section 504 of the *Rehabilitation Act of 1973*, the *Americans with Disabilities Act*, and *Education Code (EC)* Section 8208.

This Toolkit is intended as a resource for program improvement and technical assistance. It does not encompass all communications, documentation, or reporting necessary to meet statutory or regulatory requirements, including those required of California State Preschool Program (CSPP) contractors under the *EC* and *Title 5 of the California Code of Regulations*. Contractors remain responsible for fulfilling all legal and contractual reporting, documentation, and compliance obligations prescribed by law and by their funding terms and conditions.

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Introduction

In recent years, California has implemented investments to support inclusion and belonging, especially across early learning settings, including the Inclusive Early Education Expansion Program (IEEEP), Supporting Innovative Practices (SIP), and the Impact Inclusion Workgroup. Through these types of investments, local educational agencies (LEAs), and their mixed delivery community-based partners, have continued to make advancements in developing collaborative relationships and improved systems to support children with disabilities. Children with disabilities have a rightful presence, and there is progress being made towards greater inclusion in early education programs in California, as well as better inclusive practices in early elementary school. California continues to develop an educational system that meets the needs of all students in the least restrictive environment (LRE). The CDE seeks to actively support early education providers as they implement strategies that foster access, participation, and support for inclusive preschool and entry into elementary school for children with disabilities.

This toolkit aims to provide support to early education and elementary school educators, administrators, and district leaders seeking to advance their inclusive preschool and early elementary school practices and enhance outcomes for all children. The primary audience for this toolkit is preschool providers, including CSPPs, Head Start programs, and other preschool providers, as well as district special education staff who support access to services for young children with disabilities during their preschool years. As a result, the tools and templates provided are explicitly framed for a preschool audience. Nonetheless, many of the strategies, policies, and practices elevated in this toolkit are also applicable to early elementary school providers and providers of care for younger children.

What is Inclusion?

Inclusion refers to the intentional inclusion of all children in an environment that fosters belonging and in which children with disabilities are fully integrated into learning opportunities in early childhood and elementary programs, participating alongside their peers without disabilities. Inclusive learning environments emphasize the full humanity of children with disabilities¹ and enrich the learning experience of all children by exposing them to diverse perspectives, which fosters empathy and prepares them for a diverse world.² Children with and without disabilities show improved academic and

¹ See the UPK Mixed Delivery Quality and Access Report, March 2024 for more:
https://drive.google.com/file/d/15cZWN4kE4GwxoG_mDWqEnGm5Qrg8yTwK/view

² Singh, M. K. (2012). Analysis of Inclusive Practices in Preschool Education. *Preschool Education and An Integrated Preschool Curriculum*, 72.

social outcomes in inclusive settings.³ For children with disabilities, inclusive environments provide opportunities to interact with peers without disabilities, which can enhance social skills, increase academic achievement, and foster a sense of belonging and community.⁴

Meeting children's needs and maximizing inclusion for children with disabilities is encapsulated in the principle of LRE, which under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), requires that LEAs educate children with disabilities with their non-disabled peers to the maximum extent appropriate. The LRE provisions in the IDEA further require a continuum of placement options be available to best meet the diverse needs of children with disabilities and presumes that the first placement option considered for each child with a disability is the regular classroom the child would attend if they did not have a disability. The LRE is not about a specific setting. The LRE is whatever setting is best suited to support each individual students' needs.

Similarly, 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.⁵ It emphasizes belonging, equitable access to resources, and active participation in learning and social opportunities alongside peers without disabilities.⁶ At the end of 2024, the CDE released a letter, reaffirming its priority of supporting rightful presence and ensuring regular early education programs are considered as the first placement option for special education services and supports for young children with disabilities.⁷

However, inclusion has broader application across early childhood. While federal and state law set the minimum standards for inclusion (e.g., IDEA and *EC* § 8208), this Toolkit also reflects suggested best practices and aspirational

³ Sucuoglu, N. B., Bakkaloglu, H., & Demir, E. (2020). The Effects of Inclusive Preschools on the Development of Children with Disabilities: A Longitudinal Study. *International Journal of Early Childhood Special Education*, 12(1); Gupta, S. S., Henninger IV, W. R., & Vinh, M. E. (2014). How do children benefit from inclusion. *First steps to preschool inclusion: How to jumpstart your programwide plan*, 33-57.

⁴ For more on inclusive early education visit: <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/op/iee.asp>

⁵ To view the Rightful Presence and Inclusive Early Education Programs as the First Consideration for Children with Disabilities policy visit: <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/se/lr/om120424.asp>

⁶ For additional information on rightful presence visit: <https://swiftschools.org/TowardRightfulPresence/>

⁷To view the Rightful Presence and Inclusive Early Education Programs as the First Consideration for Children with Disabilities policy visit: <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/se/lr/om120424.asp>

goals. A central tenet of an inclusive early childhood system is the commitment to ensure that each child's individual needs are supported appropriately, that each family's goals for their children are considered, and that all have high expectations for each child.⁸ The goal for inclusive programs should be to enroll natural proportions of children with and without disabilities in each of their classrooms.

State Policies to Support Inclusion

California's vision for preschool through third grade (P-3) education is grounded in equity, inclusion, and a deep commitment to meeting the needs of every child. As a result, California has instituted several requirements to encourage greater inclusion and belonging during preschool and to support successful entry into elementary school for children with disabilities.

Most notably, CSPPs are now expected to welcome and support children with disabilities⁹, who are children with an active Individualized Education Program (IEP) or Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP).

To help programs meet this expectation, *EC* Section 8208 outlines updated guidance that ensures children with disabilities are not only eligible for CSPP, but also fully supported throughout their preschool experience. As part of this effort, the CDE collects annual data through the Children with Disabilities (CWD) Survey. This survey helps the CDE monitor compliance with *EC* sections 8208(c)(2)(A) and (d)(2)(B)(i), specifically regarding the required set aside of funded enrollment for children with disabilities. The data also informs technical assistance efforts and supports continuous improvement across programs.

With the funded enrollment requirement starting July 1, 2022, CSPP contractors should review their enrollment processes to ensure contract requirements are being met. Specifically:

⁸ The Policy Statement: Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs, issued in November 2023 is available at https://sites.ed.gov/idea/idea-files/policy-statement-inclusion-of-children-with-disabilities-in-early-childhood-programs/?utm_content=&utm_medium=email&utm_name=&utm_source=govdelivery&utm_term=

⁹ Note: In *EC* 8208, which outlines requirements for CSPPs, children with disabilities are referenced using the terminology "children with exceptional needs." However, in recognition that this terminology is outdated, we instead utilize the term "children with disabilities" throughout this toolkit. When this term is utilized in connection with *EC* requirements, it can be interchanged with "children with exceptional needs."

- Children with disabilities are now categorically eligible. If a child has an active IEP or IFSP, they can qualify for CSPP services—families should self-certify their income.
- Programs must reserve space. Five percent of funded enrollment should be set aside for children with disabilities, although programs may enroll children with disabilities beyond this requirement.
- Eligibility and priority enrollment procedures still apply. After the set-aside is filled, children with disabilities who meet income eligibility should be enrolled next—starting with those from families with the lowest incomes. Additional enrollment and eligibility information can be found in Management Bulletin 25-10.¹⁰
- Children must be served in the LRE. This means they should be educated with their typically developing peers to the maximum extent appropriate, with support tailored to their individual needs.
- Programs receive a 2.4 adjustment factor for each child enrolled with an IEP or IFSP.
- Documentation matters. To count a child toward the set aside and receive the adjustment factor, programs must provide evidence of the child’s IEP or IFSP in the family data file. It is recommended that programs obtain a complete copy of the IEP or IFSP to ensure educators can review the goals and support their generalization across settings, when appropriate.

CSPP contractors should review *EC* Section 8208 to ensure they are maintaining compliance regarding the enrollment of children with disabilities.

In addition to these compliance requirements, contractors can benefit from the IEEEP. This state initiative was designed to expand access to inclusive early childhood education for children with disabilities. Some CSPP contractors have successfully applied for and received one or both of the IEEEP grants: the first focused on expanding facilities, access, and professional development; the second on professional development to strengthen educators’ skills in creating inclusive, high-quality learning environments.

¹⁰ To view Management Bulletin 25-10 visit: <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/ci/mb2510.asp>

CSPP contractors are encouraged to explore whether there is an IEEEP grant recipient within their local planning area. These recipients can serve as valuable resources for support, collaboration, and networking opportunities.¹¹

Inclusive Practices

Educators play a critical role in ensuring that all children are afforded high-quality early learning experiences and nurturing care. Early childhood educators and providers should possess the competencies to meet the developmental and learning needs of all children, including their social-emotional development and mental health.¹² Many studies have demonstrated the importance of caregivers and educators who know how to provide sensitive, supportive learning environments. These individuals have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to support each child's well-being, learning, and development through culturally and linguistically responsive practices, including engaging and partnering with families and conducting observations that provide information to support and individualize learning experiences for every child.¹³

Supporting children with disabilities can be complex and multi-faceted. It is critical for all educators to **enter into their practice with an inclusive mindset**. The mindset of the educator is a core element to creating an environment that is conducive to learning and fosters a sense of belonging. An inclusive mindset is rooted in the belief that children with disabilities and children without disabilities benefit from learning together in an inclusive environment. To cultivate an inclusive environment, educators must embrace diversity of all kinds, including ability, as an asset to be celebrated and leveraged for the benefit of all students. Supporting educators to implement a social emotional learning curriculum can provide them with the tools, activities, and strategies to foster a sense of belonging for all children, especially children with disabilities. Supporting educators to adopt this mindset starts at the top, with agency and school district leadership and program or site-level administrators. When leaders embrace the benefits of inclusion and belonging, their staff follow.

¹¹ The list of IEEEP grant holders is available at <https://www.cde.ca.gov/fg/fo/r2/ieeepexpansionresult.asp>.

¹²The Policy Statement: Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs, issued in November 2023 is available at https://sites.ed.gov/idea/idea-files/policy-statement-inclusion-of-children-with-disabilities-in-early-childhood-programs/?utm_content=&utm_medium=email&utm_name=&utm_source=govdelivery&utm_term=

¹³ The 2020 [Master Plan for Early Learning and Care](https://cdn-west-prod-chhs-01.dsh.ca.gov/chhs/uploads/2020/12/01104743/Master-Plan-for-Early-Learning-and-Care-Making-California-For-All-Kids-FINAL.pdf) is available at: <https://cdn-west-prod-chhs-01.dsh.ca.gov/chhs/uploads/2020/12/01104743/Master-Plan-for-Early-Learning-and-Care-Making-California-For-All-Kids-FINAL.pdf>

Furthermore, there are best practices that, when implemented with appropriate support for educators in the classroom or program, can help ensure all children thrive. Specifically, when educators **embrace the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL)**¹⁴, they are better prepared to recognize the diverse needs of all children and to adapt their teaching strategies accordingly. By using a UDL framework, educators can create customized learning environments that remove learning barriers and make lessons more accessible to all students, regardless of their learning needs. To implement UDL, educators present the same concepts through multiple representations and offer options for engagement and expression, ensuring accessible pathways for every learner across different media.

When educators **build a sense of community and belonging**, children feel accepted for who they are. Educators can promote community at a school or program by providing opportunities for all children to build relationships with their peers, celebrate their unique qualities and talents, and nurture friendships. For example, children's sense of community may be fostered through opportunities to share their interests with each other, find commonalities, and celebrate differences.

Likewise, when educators **embrace collaboration with special educators, other specialists and children's families**, they can leverage necessary resources and expand their understanding of each child's strengths and needs to build an inclusive classroom or program. For example, special education teachers and specialists may be able to offer strategies for creating and adapting instruction for children with disabilities. Paraprofessionals—or paraeducators—can provide extra support and reinforce instruction to help meet a wide range of child needs. The supports and strategies that special educators provide are often effective in promoting learning and engagement for all children in a classroom. Together, special educators and general education teachers should plan, implement and evaluate the effectiveness of instructional strategies for all children, especially children with disabilities in the classroom. Furthermore, partnerships with families help educators to understand the whole child and have a school or program - home connection.

Finally, when educators are able to **maintain a positive classroom or program climate** by establishing clear expectations with goals, children of all abilities are better able to understand and respect those expectations, creating an environment that is more conducive for learning. Classroom or program organization strategies that support inclusive teaching and learning and create a positive classroom or program environment include discussing daily schedules and

¹⁴ For more information on the principles of UDL, See: <https://udlguidelines.cast.org/>

expectations; using signals to communicate routines and transitions; and employing specific, intentional positive reinforcement when a child meets a goal.

How to Develop and Implement Effective Local Inclusion Policies and Practices

A successful approach to inclusion requires programs and districts to focus on implementing policies and practices that enable leadership and educators to:

- Adopt a clear vision that values inclusion and belonging as an asset to the program/school community, as well as individual students, and communicate transparently about your vision and goals.
- Engage in self-reflective practices to identify and address implicit biases while acknowledging how systemic biases perpetuate the oppression of historically marginalized groups.
- Build collaborative relationships between early education program educators and staff and school district educators and staff and explore funding strategies to ensure all children have access to the best support in the LRE.
- Create the conditions for educator success by building leadership buy-in, committing to inclusion and belonging at every level, and providing educators with high-quality, research-based strategies and professional learning to support their implementation.
- Foster strong family and community partnerships.
- Support children's entry into elementary school.

As a district, school, or early education program, it is important to follow a series of steps to develop and implement inclusive policies and practices. Doing so leverages the deep knowledge of educators, staff, leadership, and families within your learning community, ensures acknowledgement of the barriers you face, and supports alignment of new and existing strategies with the needs of the children and families you serve. Processes like these are helpful across many policy and practice areas. Below, you will find suggested steps for establishing effective inclusive policies and practices.

Step 1: Assess Current Policies and Practices Related to Inclusion

In this step, you will assess your current policies and practices to identify bright spots or gaps. Compare your current policies and practices against the best practices outlined above for supporting all learners, including those with disabilities. You can use the self-assessment tool provided below.

During this step, it is critical to talk to and collect information from families, educators and staff (including your student services and special education staff), leaders, and community partners (or potential partners). This information gathering may take place during one-on-one conversations, focus groups, or through surveys that include staff and/or families. As part of this process, you should determine what your current policies and practices are and what impact they may be having on children, families, educators and staff. Consider how your policies and practices have worked well in supporting inclusion and belonging in the past and how they can be further improved. See the self-assessment tool located in the Inclusion Support Tools and Templates section.

Step 2: Identify Inclusion Improvement Goals

Ask yourself what your goals are, how you can best support your educators and staff to achieve those goals, and how you, as a program or school leader, can guide and empower your team in this process.

It is critical to consider how to collect information from across your community to inform your work. It may be helpful to reach out to community members, local Tribes, school district partners, families, and educators in this information gathering process. Think critically about your current policies and whether your perspective is influenced by biases related to ability, race, socio-economic status, or culture. It is important to challenge our biases in order to make decisions that benefit all children and families. Before moving to the next step make sure to follow up with those who provided the information to ensure you have accurately captured their input and insights.

Utilize the information you gather to prioritize improvement goals linked to changes you want to make to your policies and practices. Allocate time for collective reflection at your district, school, or program site. It is essential that you establish a shared vision with clear goals that all interest holders understand and feel invested in. Take care to ensure all educators and staff understand your vision for inclusion, how it is defined, and what role they play in supporting inclusion in their own

classrooms.

Consider utilizing a tool, such as a logic model, to support identification of goals and strategies for improvement.

Step 3: Identify Strategies to Support Improvement

Identify the strategies that will be most effective for your program, school, or district at this time, while acknowledging any challenges you face. See the self-assessment tool and other helpful resources included in the Inclusion Support Tools and Templates section below for ideas about strategies to consider.

Ensure your selection of strategies is supported by robust community engagement with attention to the needs of all children, including children with disabilities, multilingual learners, children from Tribal nations, newcomers¹⁵, and children who experience racial bias and discrimination and their families.

Once key strategies are determined, you may need to identify related funding needs, opportunities, and any gaps. In many cases, the activities may not require additional funding, though they may require a shift in how existing funding is leveraged.

Step 4: Seek Input from Interest Holders

This critical step will ensure all relevant parties are involved in the selection of strategies and development of policies that could affect them. Having all interest holders collaborate provides critical opportunities to create policies and practices that best support inclusion and belonging. Relevant parties might include:

- District administrators, union representatives, principals, and teachers,
- Community-based preschool directors, educators, and staff,

¹⁵ "Newcomer" is often used as an umbrella term for students born outside the United States who have recently arrived and are new to the U.S. school system. These students may include English learners, asylees, refugees, unaccompanied children, undocumented youth, migratory students, and those with interrupted or limited formal education. Newcomer students come from a wide range of countries, cultures, and educational backgrounds, and they speak many different languages. Visit <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/ml/newcomerstudnts.asp> for more information.

- Expanded learning directors and staff,
- Parents, caregivers, and students,
- Regional centers,
- Family empowerment centers,
- Family resource centers,
- Special Education Local Plan Area staff,
- Resource and referral agencies,
- Tribal leaders/Elders,
- Local religious institutions and faith-based leaders,
- Organizations supporting refugee and new immigrant populations, or other important groups in your community, such as community and cultural leaders.

Step 5: Identify Implementation Partners and Formal Collaborators and Co-construct a Timeline

Implementation partners should include the educators and staff who will be implementing the policies and practices (for example, principals, directors, teachers, staff, external consultants, and of course families). Consider whether county or regional organizations are positioned to support your implementation plan as facilitators or partners. Likewise, consider which partners should be formal collaborators.

For preschool programs, seeking a formal collaboration with your local school district may be wise. For schools or district staff, openness to formal collaborations with local preschool programs can help ensure all children have access to an inclusive education in the least restrictive environment early on. A timeline of activities can be developed with a small group of partners representing the various interest-holder groups. The timeline should be clear, attainable, and complementary of the work individuals are already conducting.

Step 6: Implement Policies and Procedures

Based on the timeline outlined in Step 5, your partners will need to formalize policies and procedures to support agreed upon strategies. This may include identifying funding strategies (such as utilizing flexible funding streams or using funds for auxiliary purposes, see the Flexible Funding Opportunity Checklist below) to support the policies and practices you wish to implement, establishing data sharing agreements, or enacting a memorandum of understanding (MOU). A clear vision and consistent communication about the agreed upon strategies, policies, and practices is critical.

Step 7: Evaluate and Improve

Using formal and informal feedback from families, educators and staff, and other interest holders, such as community organizations and union representatives, as well as assessment data and program information, as relevant is critical throughout the entire process. It is important to regularly collect and review this information to inform continuous improvement. This process may include:

- Conducting focus groups of parents and other family members, educators and staff, and community partners;
- Disseminating periodic surveys in their preferred language to families, educators and staff, and community partners and analyzing the results;
- Aggregating and analyzing data related to child progress from the California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data Systems (CALPADS), or individual assessments (such as the Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP) or the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ)), and enrollment and classroom assignment information; and,
- Developing, implementing, and evaluating an improvement plan annually.

Conclusion

Inclusion and belonging starts with a mindset that embraces the full strengths, assets, and humanity of all children and the responsibility of educators to maximize their learning opportunities. Intentionally created learning environments that foster belonging and fully integrate children with disabilities into early childhood and elementary programs, participating alongside their peers without disabilities, enrich the learning experience of all children. Inclusion exposes children to diverse perspectives, which fosters empathy and prepares them for a diverse world.

This toolkit was designed to provide the rationale and offer tips and strategies to support preschool program administrators and school district leaders as they work to advance inclusive preschool practices and enhance outcomes for all children.

Inclusion Support Tools and Templates

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Inclusive Policies and Practices Self Assessment Tool

This tool will help programs, especially CSPP programs, schools, and districts evaluate their current policies and practices and identify priority strategies to improve inclusion and belonging in their school or program. It is critical that the self-assessment process include perspectives of educators, staff, and families, in addition to school/program leaders. You should consider how to include these perspectives in your self-assessment. For example, this self-assessment could occur at an open meeting with leadership, educators, staff and families, or could be completed by multiple interest holders, separately, through a survey or other method, and then reconciled to support a plan of action.

- **Emerging** - In the first stages of learning about or implementing the policy or practice in your school or program
- **Progressing** - Continuing to build upon initial implementation of policies practices toward fully achieving your goal
- **Excelling** - Fully implementing the policy or practice at a high level of quality

Create the Conditions for an Inclusive School/Program Culture	Emerging	Progressing	Excelling
<i>Developing and implementing a school or program philosophy on inclusion and belonging, and sharing it in writing and verbally with educators, staff, families, and community partners at regular intervals (at least once per year).</i>			
<i>Using language that emphasizes the child over the disability, and respects individual preferences (e.g., autistic person or person with autism) in formal and informal communication between and with administration, educators and staff, and families.</i>			

<p><i>Using inclusive language that recognizes the benefits of all types of diversity, including diversity in ability, and ensuring opportunities for all families to contribute, participate, and feel invested in school policies and practices, especially those related to inclusion.</i></p>			
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<p>Create the Conditions for Family Partnerships</p>	<p>Emerging</p>	<p>Progressing</p>	<p>Excelling</p>
<p><i>Ensuring all administrators, educators, and staff are respectful and culturally responsive in their interactions with families of children with disabilities, including through the prioritization of family input to meet children’s needs.</i></p>			
<p><i>Ensuring intentional planning to support partnerships with families of children with disabilities.</i></p>			
<p><i>Ensuring educators and staff have the training and information necessary to connect families to the Parent Training and Information Centers (PTICs), Family Empowerment Centers, Family Resource Centers, and other family support programs (See the Additional Resources section).</i></p>			
<p><i>Ensuring educators and staff have ongoing conversations and bidirectional communication with families (in the family’s home language whenever possible) about their children’s learning and development, screening and assessment, and the family’s perspective of their children’s strengths and needs.</i></p>			

<p><i>Ensuring collaboration among early intervention, special education staff and school and program staff to communicate with families about their options and are flexible when making decisions about children’s early education opportunities and services.</i></p>			
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<p>Support Effective Communications and Information Sharing</p>	<p>Emerging</p>	<p>Progressing</p>	<p>Excelling</p>
<p><i>Supporting families’ awareness of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) referral process, how that process is utilized to determine if their child qualifies for early intervention or special education services, and their role in the process; and ensuring staff know where to direct families to find information about their children’s rights and how to be active participants in all decision-making processes.</i></p>			
<p><i>Providing learning opportunities for each family that support awareness of inclusive practices and the school or program’s philosophy on inclusion to ensure all families are knowledgeable about the benefits of inclusion for all children.</i></p>			

<p><i>Participating in the IEP process (at the families' request) and contributing to the development of goals that reflect the needs of each child.</i></p>			
<p><i>Using a system of communication that includes multiple modalities (such as email newsletters, text messages, mobile apps, or in-person communication) to ensure accessibility for all families that incorporate their communication preferences and includes messages in each family's preferred language, to the extent possible.</i></p>			
<p><i>Adhering to legal provisions of accommodations, supports and services in inclusive settings with IEPs.</i></p>			

Support Inclusive Learning Environment, Materials, and Instruction	Emerging	Progressing	Excelling
<i>Ensuring that facilities, equipment, and materials are accessible to all children including children with disabilities (such as providing adaptive learning tools and sensory areas, and ensuring physical spaces are free from barriers), in line with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) guidelines.</i>			
<i>Ensuring outdoor play spaces are accessible to all students and staff by providing as needed modified playground equipment and creating areas for differentiated activities such as structured games, groups seating, and quiet areas to ensure inclusive access to recess periods for children of diverse abilities and needs.</i>			
<i>Supporting access to qualified professionals who can provide specialized instruction and related services within the least restrictive environment.</i>			
<i>Ensuring thoughtful attention to incremental skill development and growth for all children—including those with higher support needs—recognizing that progress may be individualized and nonlinear and based upon the child's individual goals while ensuring that accommodations are being utilized in daily activities as well as assessments.</i>			
<i>Ensuring each child is encouraged and supported to engage with peers and all classroom materials and learning opportunities.</i>			

Support Educators	Emerging	Progressing	Excelling
<i>Ensuring educators and staff have the knowledge and the skills they need to foster the development of all children, including by providing continuous evidence based professional development to educators and staff on the benefits of inclusion and how to implement inclusive practices.</i>			
<i>Ensuring educators and staff have a strong understanding of the principles of universal design as a framework for flexible and accessible instructional practices, materials, and environments and how to implement those principles in their classrooms.</i>			
<i>Ensuring educators and staff have the time and support to engage in self-reflection to identify implicit and explicit biases and have access to professional learning, coaching, or mentoring to address their biases.</i>			
<i>Ensuring educators and staff have access to professional learning to support respectful and culturally responsive interactions with families.</i>			
<i>Providing infrastructure and support, such as coaching and mentoring, to enable continuous professional development and improvement of leaders, educators and staff, including through opportunities to participate in professional development about inclusive practices and curricular programming.</i>			

<i>Encouraging special education teachers and related service providers to partner with classroom general education educators and staff to observe, model and share strategies for supporting children with disabilities.</i>			
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Seek Continuous Improvement and Feedback	Emerging	Progressing	Excelling
<i>Developing a clearly communicated system for education partners (including community members and families) to provide ongoing, formal and informal feedback on programs, policies, and practices, including those related to inclusion. These can include surveys and focus groups.</i>			
<i>Using feedback mechanisms, including information on inclusive practices, to determine whether children with disabilities are able to participate fully in learning environments and ultimately reach their goals, and make changes to improve practice if needed.</i>			
<i>Using environmental assessment results to guide professional development efforts.</i>			
<i>Creating a plan to collect and analyze information about the children and families you serve and address the needs and experiences of historically marginalized groups, including children with disabilities.</i>			

For School District Leaders	Emerging	Progressing	Excelling
<i>Ensuring general education classroom and program educators and staff have access to professional resources to meet the needs of children and families.</i>			
<i>Ensuring your district requires the full continuum of placement options including inclusive settings be meaningfully discussed for each child as the first option to consider during the IEP decision-making process.</i>			
<i>Ensuring the district's vision for inclusion and belonging is shared with school and program educators and staff are supported to adopt an inclusive mindset.</i>			
<i>With parental permission, ensuring classroom and program educators staff, child development specialists, and related service providers, as appropriate, are included in IEP teams.</i>			
<i>Ensuring specialists are provided opportunities to work with classroom and program educators and staff to adapt the learning environment, activities, and instructional support to promote full participation of children with disabilities in the least restrictive environment.</i>			
<i>Providing specialists opportunities to assist programs by conducting classroom observations and developing strategies to meet the children's, programs and/or classroom needs.</i>			
<i>Ensuring that specialists and other school or program educators and staff are provided with opportunities and time to collaborate and coordinate so that personnel working with children are aware</i>			

<p><i>of goals, strategies, and child progress. This may be achieved by providing a substitute once a month for specialists or providing the specialist with additional prep time.</i></p>			
<p><i>Ensuring educators and staff understand the strategies needed to meet children's goals, and their role in helping children reach their goals as well as how to access specialized services and supports as needed.</i></p>			



Sample Communication to Local School District (From Community-Based Preschool Provider)

Dear _____[Name of School District Contact-- Recommend Director of Student Services or Similar Position]_____,

My name is _____[Your Name] _____ and I am _____[Your Position]_____ at _____[Program or School Name]_____. We serve three- and four-year-old children in _____[Name of School District]'s _____ catchment area. At _____[Program or School Name]_____, we are committed to building a welcoming, inclusive environment for all children. We welcome and support children with disabilities.

I am reaching out to you today to start a conversation about how to ensure our program is on your list of preschool options for children with an active Individualized Education Program (IEP) or Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP), as well as the referral process for students who may have disabilities and qualify for special education services.

I would be happy to chat with you, at your earliest convenience, about the best way for us to partner with you for the wellbeing of all of the children and families we jointly serve. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Best,

[Your Name]

[Your Position]

[School Name]

[Contact Information]

Considerations for Developing Collaborative Agreements to Support Services for Children with Disabilities (A Non-Exhaustive List)

This resource is provided for informational purposes only and does not constitute legal advice. Each organization should consult its own legal counsel before entering into any agreement.

Purpose of Collaborative Agreements

Collaborative agreements, such as memoranda of understanding (MOUs), can help partnering organizations clarify roles, responsibilities, and expectations when working together to support children with disabilities. These agreements promote effective communication, coordination, and shared accountability.

Key Questions to Consider Before Drafting an Agreement

Prior to entering into any binding agreement, consider the following questions to inform your planning:

1. Shared Goals and Purpose

- What is the primary purpose of the collaboration?
- What outcomes do both parties hope to achieve for children with disabilities?

2. Roles and Responsibilities

- How will responsibilities for screening, assessment, and service delivery be allocated?
- Who will provide training and resources for staff?
- How will changes in enrollment, attendance, or service availability be communicated?

3. Communication and Coordination

- What processes will ensure timely information sharing?
- How will disputes or complaints be addressed?

4. Financial Considerations

- How will costs for staffing, materials, and transportation be shared?
- Which party(ies) will handle billing for services?
- How will responsibility for third-party claims be allocated between the parties?

5. Confidentiality and Privacy

- How will compliance with federal and state confidentiality laws be ensured?
- Are additional privacy safeguards needed?

6. Duration, Review and Termination

- When does the agreement take effect and when does it expire?
- How will the agreement be reviewed or updated over time?
- Under what circumstances and by whom may the agreement be terminated?

A Few Best Practices to Consider for Collaboration

- **Engage Interest Holders Early:** Include program administrators, special education staff, and family representatives in planning.
- **Document Processes Clearly:** Use plain language to describe roles and expectations.
- **Review Regularly:** Schedule periodic reviews to ensure the agreement remains relevant and effective.
- **Seek Legal Counsel:** Each party should have the agreement reviewed by its own legal advisor before signing the agreement or amendment.



Sample Communication to All Families (Template)

Note: This communication is recommended for all families, including families of children with disabilities enrolled in your program.

Dear Families,

As we start this exciting new early learning experience for your child, I want to take a moment to share our sincere commitment to building a welcoming, inclusive environment for all children. At _____(Program or School Name)_____, we believe that inclusive classrooms enrich the learning experience of all children by ensuring all children get the support they need, and all children are exposed to diversity, fostering empathy, and preparing them for the world.

We recognize that belonging is best fostered through an intentional effort to ensure all children, especially children with disabilities, are fully included, valued, supported, and given the opportunity to actively participate in learning and social activities alongside their peers. Your role as primary parent or caregiver, and your child's first and most important teacher means that you are critical to your child's educational journey. The information you hold about your child(ren), culture, and community is critical for our educators and program staff to understand.

Your child's teacher should be reaching out to you to connect about your child's unique strengths and needs. Our hope is that, through a strong teacher-family partnership, we can support your child's individual needs.

We hope that you and your child will feel at home at _____(Program or School Name)_____ and we encourage you to share your thoughts and ideas with us at any time. We value your partnership and believe that you play a vital role in shaping your child's learning experience.

Thank you for your support and partnership. Together, we can create a nurturing, engaging, and inclusive learning environment where your child and all children feel they belong and are valued.

Best,

[Your Name]
[Your Position]

[School Name]
[Contact Information]



Sample Communication to Educators and Staff (Template)

Dear Educators and Staff,

As we continue our mission to provide the best educational experience for the children we care for, it is essential that we reaffirm our commitment to building a welcoming, inclusive environment for all children. We are fully committed to ensuring our children with disabilities are fully valued, supported, included, and given the opportunity to actively participate in learning and social activities alongside their peers.

I want to reiterate that _____(Program or School Name)_____ is dedicated to implementing initiatives and supporting strategies that encourage and support your role as an educator in creating a culture of inclusion and belonging in our program and in your classroom.

Specifically, we will focus on the following in the coming year [adjust to reflect your priorities]:

1. **Implementing Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and differentiated instruction.** By using a UDL framework, we can create customized learning environments that remove learning barriers and make lessons more accessible to all students, regardless of their learning needs.
2. **Building a sense of community and belonging.** We can promote community in our program and individual classrooms by providing opportunities for children to build relationships with their peers, celebrating each child's unique qualities and talents, and nurturing budding friendships.
3. **Collaborating with special educators and children's families.** Collaboration will help us leverage necessary resources and expand our understanding of each child's strengths and needs to build inclusive classrooms and an inclusive program.
4. **Maintaining a warm, structured program and classroom climate.** By using developmentally appropriate, evidence-based practices and clearly communicating consistent goals, routines, and support so children of all abilities know what to expect, feel a sense of belonging, and can fully engage in learning.

I invite you to share your ideas, strategies, and suggestions on how we can further enhance our inclusion efforts together. Your insights and experiences are crucial to creating a nurturing and collaborative educational environment. Thank you for your

continued dedication and passion. Together, we can make a lasting impact on our students' success and well-being.

In partnership,
Administration Team

Family Meeting Form (Tool)

Note: This form is meant to provide a guide for how to foster family partnership through conversations and to support educators to understand a child’s background, strengths, and growth areas from the family’s perspective, as well as listen and learn from families about their needs and priorities for their child. This form does not replace any aspect of the Special Education Individualized Education Program (IEP) process for children with disabilities. We recommend sharing the form with families in advance of any meetings to ensure their voices were captured and heard.

School or Program Site:	Educator:
Child Name:	Parent or Caregiver Name:

Educators will share information with families about how critical they deem partnerships with families to be for a child’s success and well-being. Although ongoing, reciprocal communication is recommended throughout the year, educators will meet formally with families at the start of the year in order to gather their input on a child’s background, strengths, and potential growth areas in the coming year.

Topic 1: Ask the parent or caregiver to share their child’s strengths. Encourage them to think beyond traditional academics and include thoughts about their children’s personalities, skills, and so forth. Ask the parent’s or caregiver’s family member to share what they hope their child will learn or experience in your classroom this year. Finally ask the parent or caregiver what needs to be done to help ensure their intended hopes come true (both by the school and by them).

Notes:

Topic 2: Ask the parent or caregiver about concerns they have or challenges their child might face this year. Ask the parent or caregiver what you can do to help address their concern and help their child overcome challenges. Discuss strategies that they use at home to support their child and share strategies you might implement in the classroom to get their thoughts and feedback.

Notes:

Topic 3: Ask the parent how you can best support their child to fully participate in the learning activities of your classroom. Discuss strategies that they use at home to support their child and share strategies you might implement in the classroom to get their thoughts and feedback.

Notes:

Topic 4: Ask the parent or caregiver about holidays they celebrate or cultural traditions that are important to them. Explore whether there are ways to incorporate one or more aspects of the family's culture into your curriculum.

Notes:

Topic 5: Ask the parent or caregiver how they would like to be involved in the school or program and the best ways to support their engagement. Share opportunities for the parent/caregiver to partner, both academically and socially, with the school or program and classroom in the coming year and solicit the family or caregiver’s feedback on whether those opportunities will work or if they have other ideas or suggestions to be involved Together, determine the best way to partner with families and ensure they feel welcome and are able to participate if they wish to.

Notes:

Topic 6: Ask the parent or caregiver what is the best way to communicate with them about their child’s progress. Share how you were considering communicating information about the child’s progress, activities, strengths, and needs throughout the year. Together, determine the best way to stay connected and revisit communication strategies as needed throughout the year.

- Newsletters
- Emails/text messages/messages via a school-wide platform
- Mobile applications (e.g., Parent Square, Class Dojo, and so on)
- Office hours __ In Person __ Virtual (Teams or Zoom)
- Parent-teacher conferences (share schedule in advance):
__ In Person __ Virtual (Teams or Zoom) __ Phone Only
- Other _____

Notes:

Language Needs or Preferences for Communications

- English
- Spanish
- Chinese _____(Dialect)
- Other _____

Additional Notes:

Preferred method of communication:

- Phone call or text (*circle one or both*) _____

- Email _____
- Parent communication application two-way chat (*for example, Parent Square, Learning Genie, Class Dojo, and so on*)
- Informally at arrival or dismissal
- Notes sent home



Family Connection Checklist

This checklist is intended to provide a guide for implementing strategies that will support strong family-program and family-educator connections as children, especially children with disabilities, begin their journey in your program and then prepare to exit your program and enter elementary school.

- **Family-Teacher Conferences Before School Starts.** Schedule one-on-one meetings with families to learn about the child's strengths, needs, and home environment. Use this time to build trust and set shared goals for the child's development. Use this opportunity to learn about and honor each family's cultural background, language, and values. See Family Meeting Form for a template.
- **Conduct Home Visits or Virtual Check-ins.** Based upon family preferences, conduct short visits or video calls with families before the school year begins to ease anxiety and personalize the experience.
- **Develop Family Engagement Plans.** Develop a plan with families outlining how they can stay involved throughout the year. Be sure to collect information about preferred participation and communication (for example, volunteering, attending workshops, participating in decision-making, phone calls, texts, and so on).
- **Form Collaborative Elementary School Entry Teams.** Reach out to transitional kindergarten or kindergarten teachers, administrators, and family liaisons at the elementary school(s) your program's children will matriculate to and work with them to share best practices.
- **Support Social-Emotional Readiness Activities.** Share resources with families to help children build skills like self-regulation, communication, and problem-solving before entering kindergarten.
- **Create and Share a Social Story for the School Day.** Ensure the story details the school day routine, including drop off and pick up and share it with the child and family before the start of school.

- **Create and Share Child Portfolios.** At the end of the preschool year, prepare a portfolio of the child's work for the family. The portfolio is intended to support family engagement and, if the family chooses, may also inform the child's transitional kindergarten or kindergarten teacher to promote continuity of learning. Portfolios may include photos, developmental milestones, and notes from preschool educators that highlight the child's growth and learning.

Characteristics of Classrooms that Utilize Universal Design for Learning Checklist

Classrooms that use Universal Design for Learning (UDL) are child-centered, flexible, and inclusive. UDL classrooms emphasize adapting educational practices to meet the diverse needs of all learners. They focus on creating flexible learning environments that accommodate various learning styles, abilities, and backgrounds. and expression, and engagement.¹⁶ These principles show up in early education and elementary school classrooms in multiple ways and can be fulfilled through the following strategies within this UDL Checklist.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) Checklist		
Representation: Addressing children’s diverse learning styles is foundational to creating inclusive learning environments. UDL suggests that representation requires:		
Flexibility: Inclusive classrooms feature flexible work areas to support different activities, including quiet individual work, small group collaboration, and whole-group instruction, and multi-modal lessons that feature a mix of text, audio, video, graphics and hands-on activities.	Does the classroom support flexibility and multi-modal lessons and activities?	
	Yes	No
Accessibility: All learning materials are accessible. Arrange furniture to allow ample room for children and adults to move freely, use shelves with varying heights and low-sided baskets to make learning materials and toys accessible to children of all sizes. Choose flooring that is easy to navigate and be aware of potential triggers related to different textures.	Are the learning materials accessible within the classroom?	
	Yes	No
Action and Expression: Children are offered varied ways to interact with the material and demonstrate their knowledge. UDL suggests specific strategies for supporting children’s action and expression:		
Scaffolding: Teachers provide graduated levels of support to help children develop their strategic thinking and executive functioning skills.	Are there graduated levels of support for children?	
	Yes	No

¹⁶ Brillante, Pamela, and Karen Nemeth. *Universal design for learning in the early childhood classroom: Teaching children of all languages, cultures, and abilities, birth–8 years*. Routledge, 2022.

<p>Frequent feedback: Children receive timely, specific, strengths-based feedback that emphasizes effort and progress.</p>	Do children receive strengths-based feedback?	
	Yes	No
<p>Flexible communication: Children are given multiple options and avenues for sharing their knowledge. Including through a variety of communication and creation tools, such as written words, physical manipulatives, or art.</p>	Does the classroom support flexibility and multi-modal lessons and activities?	
	Yes	No
<p>Engagement: Using multiple means of engagement helps educators motivate young children and sustain their interest. UDL suggests that engagement is best achieved through:</p>		
<p>Choice: Children are given meaningful options regarding the content to explore and meaningful options for exploration designed to support acquisition of key skills.</p>	Are children provided with meaningful options to explore key skills?	
	Yes	No
<p>Relevance: Learning activities are designed to be relevant and authentic to children's lives, interests, and cultures. This is best achieved through meaningful family and community partnership.</p>	Are learning activities relevant and authentic to all children?	
	Yes	No
<p>Collaboration: By fostering collaboration amongst peers, educators can support a sense of belonging. Collaboration can be fostered in early childhood through shared responsibilities and working as a group to achieve bigger goals (for example, through planting, tending, harvesting plants for a shared meal or snack).</p>	Are there opportunities for collaboration and shared responsibilities in the classroom?	
	Yes	No



Sample Prekindergarten to Elementary Educator Warm Hand-Off Worksheet

This sample preschool to Elementary Education Warm Hand-Off Worksheet is a helpful tool to support educators in PreK settings (including California State Preschool Programs, Head Start Programs, and private programs) to share information about all children, when they enter elementary school.

Note: This template is provided as a reference only. Please modify to meet the needs of your community. This may require coordination and collaboration between local preschools (for example, the California State Preschool Program or Head Start) and elementary schools or school districts.

Information	
Student Name	
What name does the child go by?	
Name of Current Preschool Program or Provider:	Name of Receiving School:
Will the child attend a summer program? (Name/location)	
Parent(s) or Guardian Names:	
Family Information	
What is the best language to communicate with the family?	
Who is the child's primary caregiver(s)?	

Please describe any recent changes in the child's life that might influence the child's transition:

Student Strengths

What is special about the child and what are some of their favorite activities?

Describe how this child interacts with other children (plays mostly alone, plays mostly with others, sometimes needs adult support):

How does this child work through big emotions? Are there strategies teachers can use to support this child's emotion-regulation?

Describe strategies or accommodations that work well to support the child's full participation. What can teachers do to help this child engage effectively in the classroom?

--

Additional Suggestions or notes

--

Submitted By: (PreK info)

Name	School:
Phone:	Email:

Documenting Developmental and Behavioral Concerns A Checklist for Preschool Teachers

This checklist is intended to support preschool educators in thoughtfully documenting developmental or behavioral concerns and support conversations with children's families. It emphasizes data collection, family collaboration, and the use of developmental resources to ensure decisions are well-informed and child-centered.

Collect Observational Data

Begin by documenting anecdotal notes during daily routines. Focus on specific behaviors and include:

- Time of day and location the behavior occurs
- What happened prior to the behavior
- Child's response and resolution strategies to identify patterns and provide context for the concern. Use consistent observation over time to build a meaningful data set.

Review Screening Tools and Assessment Data

Gather and review existing developmental data, as relevant, including:

- DRDP (Desired Results Developmental Profile)
- ASQ (Ages and Stages Questionnaire)
- Any other relevant assessments or progress monitoring tools to help validate concerns and ensure that decisions are based on both qualitative and quantitative information.

Plan for a Family Meeting

Prepare for a collaborative conversation with the child's family, framed as a partnership, with the goal of understanding the child's development across settings by:

- Organizing documentation (observations, screening results, work samples)
- Identifying specific areas of concern
- Preparing to share classroom strategies already implemented.

Meet with the Family

Hold a meeting to:

- Share collected data and observations
- Invite the family to share their own insights and concerns
- Use a Family Meeting Tool to document the discussion and add to the data set. This step ensures that if a referral to special education is warranted, the referral decision is informed by both educator and family perspectives. It also helps identify whether concerns are consistent across environments.

Determine Next Steps

After completing the steps above, reflect on the following with your leadership team:

- Have all classroom strategies and supports been exhausted?
- Are concerns consistent across settings and individuals (school and family)?
- Is there enough data to support any next steps?

Child's Name:
Date:
Observer:
Observation Entry
Time of Day:
Activity/Setting: (for example, circle time, free play, transition)
Preceding Conditions: (What happened right before the behavior? What were adults and peers doing prior to the behavior?)
Behavior Observed: (Describe what the child did or said. Be objective and specific.)
Response/Consequence: (How did adults or peers respond? What happened immediately after?)
Child's Reaction: (How did the child respond to the consequence or situation?)

Adult Response to Child's Reaction: (How did the adult respond to the child after sharing consequence/initial response?)

Duration: (How long did the behavior last?)

Frequency: (How often has this behavior occurred today/this week?)

Notes on Communication: (How did the child communicate during or after the behavior? Verbal, nonverbal, gestures, and so on)

Additional Notes/Context:(Any other relevant information, such as sleep, hunger, sensory input, and so on)

Additional Resources

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Resources to Support Inclusive Programs and Settings

The external resources provided in this section are intended solely for informational and technical assistance purposes. The California Department of Education (CDE) does not control or guarantee the accuracy, relevance, timeliness, or completeness of information contained in these resources. Inclusion of these links does not constitute endorsement by the CDE of the organizations, their views, or the content of their websites.

- [Blueprint for Inclusion](#) (Supporting Innovative Practices): A blueprint for how LEAs can increase the likelihood of achieving successful and sustainable models that support diverse and equitable learning environments. This blueprint can be used to employ a similar approach to other initiatives.
- [Inclusive Practice Resources](#) (CaliforniaMAP, California Department of Social Services [CDSS]): A list of resources with links to information, tools, websites and other resources that support the development, management and sustainability of inclusive practices in early care and education settings.
- [UDL Guidelines](#) (Center for Applied Special Technology [CAST] 2024): Guidelines to better understand the UDL framework to improve and optimize teaching and learning for all people, as developed by the CAST.
- [Open Access Network](#) (The CDE and California Collaborative for Educational Excellence, 2023): A network and list of resources to support leaders in building a statewide system of support in UDL, Assistive Technologies, and Augmentative Alternative Communication content areas.
- [Positive Environments, Network of Trainers \(PENT\)](#): A California Positive Behavior Initiative designed to provide information and resources for educators striving to achieve high educational outcomes using proactive positive strategies.

- [National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations \(NCPMI\)](#): A center that assists states and programs in developing sustainable systems for the implementation of the Pyramid Model for Promoting Social-Emotional Competence in Infants and Young Children (Pyramid Model) within early intervention and early education programs.
- [California Teaching Pyramid](#) (WestEd): The California Teaching Pyramid is a comprehensive, evidence-based framework designed to promote healthy social-emotional development and positive behavior in young children, particularly in early childhood education settings like preschools, infant/toddler programs, and family childcare homes.
- [TIES Center](#): A center that works with states, districts, and schools to support the movement of children with disabilities from less inclusive to more inclusive environments. TIES provides tools about inclusive education, inspiring others, and planning lessons that work for all students.
- [California Collaborative for Educational Excellence \(CCEE\) Statewide System of Support Resource Hub and Directory](#): Information about state-funded initiatives, resources, and contact information for System of Support partners to employ best practices, facilitate improvement plans, and improve student outcomes.
- [Early Start Neighborhood](#) (California Department of Developmental Services and California Early Intervention Technical Assistance Network [CEITAN]): Training, technical assistance, and resources on early intervention Part C requirements, implementation, and evidence-based practices for Early Start partners and professionals.
- [CalBloom | Early Learning Everyday](#) (Desired Results Access Project): CalBloom provides an evidence-based framework of instructional practices in inclusive preschool classrooms, linking DRDP results to learning opportunities during everyday activities.
- [California Early Childhood Online \(CECO\)](#) (CDSS): CECO is a professional development resource for early childhood educators, providing information through training modules with a focus on evidence-based practices. Topics include, but are not limited to, culturally responsive and trauma informed practices, implicit bias, inclusive environments and practices.
- [Developmentally Appropriate Toileting Practices Toolkit](#) (CDE): This resource offers information for LEAs and community-based organizations to consider as they review and potentially revise their toileting policies and practices to

accommodate the inclusion of younger learners, and learners with varied developmental needs, in their programs, including through intentional partnerships with families.

- [Head Start Resources to Support Children with Disabilities](#): This web page provides information about effective teaching for children with disabilities and other special needs across all the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework domains, as well as how to use children's IFSP and IEP goals is part of effective teaching, individualizing, and creating environments to support children's positive outcomes.

Resources to Support Families

- [Center for Parent Information and Resources \(CPIR\)](#) (CaliforniaMAP, CDSS, October 2014): A list of resources to support families of children with disabilities.
- [Regional Center Listings](#) (California Department of Developmental Services): A list of the 21 community-based, non-profit agencies known as regional centers that provide assessments, determine eligibility for services, and offer case management services for Californians with developmental disabilities.
- [Seeds of Partnership](#): Information, supports, and resources related to family engagement, early learning, and more. Supporting educators, parents, guardians, families of children with disabilities and the California Family Empowerment Centers. Part of the CDE, SED's Continuous Improvement System and the California Statewide System of Support.
- [California Family Empowerment Centers \(FEC\)](#) (Seeds of Partnership): Provide training and information to families of children and young adults with disabilities, between the ages of three and twenty-two in California. Access contact information and a tool to find the parent center in a specific county or region within the state.
- [DaSY For Families](#) (The Center for IDEA Early Childhood Data Systems): Resources to support families of young children who want to know more about early intervention and preschool special education data.
- [Family Resource Centers \(FRC\)](#) (California Department of Developmental Services[DDS]): A list of 21 FRC lead organizations contracted directly with the Family Resource Centers Network of California. FRC leads are the main point of contact for the Community Navigator Program in each regional center catchment area across California.

- [Information for Families on Children’s Early Development](#) (All About Young Children): Information for families on important child development skills and ways in which parents can encourage development in these areas, with their child. It includes information such as building language skills, learning about feelings and the importance of relationships, and play and body movement to build gross motor development.
- [Family and Community Partnership Toolkit](#) (CDE): A toolkit focused on supporting Universal PreKindergarten (UPK) programs and elementary schools to engage families in decision-making processes that impact their children.

Early Childhood Inclusion Checklists/Self-Assessments

- [Early Care and Education Environment Indicators and Elements of High-Quality Inclusion](#) (Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center [ECTA]): This ECTA Center outlines the Indicators of High-Quality Inclusion in early care and education environments, detailing 11 key elements.
- [Local District Preschool Inclusion Self-Assessment](#) (The ECTA and Center for IDEA Early Childhood Data Systems, February 2018): This self-assessment serves as a guide for local school districts in developing, implementing and supporting inclusive policies and practices.
- [I Belong! Checklist for Promoting Inclusive Practice for Children with Disabilities or Delays](#) (WestEd): A checklist for assessing your program’s inclusive practices for young children.
- [Indicators of Quality Inclusion in Early Childhood \(IQI-EC\)](#) (Colorado Department of Education, February 2017): IQI-EC was developed through a comprehensive review of early childhood inclusion research and the compilation of extant tools of early childhood quality inclusion.
- [Pennsylvania Preschool Inclusion Self-Evaluation Tool](#) (New Hampshire Department of Education/Bureau of Special Education and New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services/Child Development Bureau, July 2013): This self-evaluation tool provides a framework for discussion that promotes partnerships to benefit young children with special needs and their families in preschool. It is organized within the broad categories of access, participation, and support.

Resources Developed Based on Mixed Delivery Quality and Access Report Recommendations

- [Acceleration of Inclusive Pre-K Practices](#) (School Services of California, Inc.): This brief discusses how California's UPK expansion creates opportunities for LEAs and prekindergarten (Pre-K) program operators to enhance inclusive practices for children with disabilities. Key points include legal requirements, enrollment and compliance, partnership and collaboration, problem-solving, Flexible Funding, the IEEEP, the Early Intervention Preschool Grant (EIPG), the Educator Effectiveness Block Grant, the Expanded Learning Opportunities Program (ELO-P), Proposition 28 (Arts and Music in Schools); federal technical assistance. The document also highlights the importance of leveraging and braiding all available funding to expand inclusive opportunities and improve student outcomes, especially given that traditional special education revenues are often insufficient for the needs of preschoolers with disabilities.
- [Access to Inclusive Pre-K: Transportation Services](#) (School Services of California, Inc.): This brief discusses the importance of transportation services for access to inclusive UPK programs. Key points include barriers to access, mandates and requirements, the IDEA, home-to-school transportation reimbursement, expansion opportunities, benefits of early intervention, and funding and collaboration.
- [Inclusive Preschool Obligations, Options, and Considerations](#) (School Services of California, Inc.): This document discusses the expansion of UPK and the specific legal obligations, options, and considerations that should inform expansion of inclusive programs. Key points include legal obligations and the LRE, challenges and opportunities, access to services, shared obligations, high-leverage practices, funding considerations, and partnerships.

Desired Results Access Project Video Library

The Desired Results Access Project Video Library provides key practices for practicing observation and assessment skills to promote positive child and family outcomes by supporting early intervention and early childhood special education.

- [Back to the Classroom: It Takes a Team](#): An early child special educator illustrates how her inclusive classroom team collaborated to support all children and families during the pandemic through distance learning and the transition back to the classroom.

- [Using Portfolios in Inclusive Preschool Classrooms](#): An early childhood special educator uses portfolios to organize documentation, monitor children's progress, communicate with the team, and rate the DRDP.
- [Ryan's Story](#): An early childhood special educator describes how an inclusive classroom, the use of embedded instruction, and the DRDP (2015) contributed to positive outcomes for Ryan.
- [Getty's Window To Inclusion: The Chance To Be Just Like Any Other Kid](#): An illustration of how essential early childhood inclusion is for all children, including those who cannot be in close proximity to other children because of health concerns.
- [A Mother's Voice: Technology and Inclusion](#): A parent shares her experiences using technology to make inclusion possible for her daughter and discusses how embracing inclusion can help teachers become better at what they do.
- [Getty's Door to Inclusion](#): A parent and her teacher describe the importance of having consistent and high expectations for all children, sound communication strategies, and effective parent-teacher collaboration.
- [Using Video to Support Inclusion and Collaboration with Families](#): An educator illustrates ways that video can enhance collaboration with families and support inclusion.
- [Win-Win: Inclusive Preschool Settings](#): An illustration of an inclusive preschool program.
- [Inclusion and Joy](#): Two preschool teachers discuss and illustrate the importance of joy for children and teachers and its relationship to early childhood inclusion.

Other Resources

- [Making Dollars Count in Early Childhood Education](#) (WestEd): In this Question & Answer, Leslie Fox, WestEd's Director of Early Childhood Mental Health, Development, and Disabilities, explains how states can use strategic funding and cross-program coordination to expand access to high-quality early learning environments for children with disabilities and manage long-term special education costs.
- [SIP Logic Model 2021 to 2026](#) (SIP): A model showing SIP's short-term and long-term goals to increase inclusion.

- [SIP UPK Resources and CA Early Childhood Support Team](#) (SIP): Padlets with resources to support children with disabilities within UPK.
- [Universal Prekindergarten \(UPK\) Innovation](#) (SIP): A list of videos and resources highlighting inclusive early education and UPK.
- [CalECSE Resources by Leads](#) (CalECSE Network): A list of tools, trainings, and events to support families, educators, and California's youngest children with disabilities.
- [DaSy Resources](#) (The Center for IDEA Early Childhood Data Systems): Resources for Part C and Part B state staff, including toolkits, learning modules, and the DaSy Framework to support IDEA early intervention and early childhood special education state programs.
- [Family Resources](#) (ECTA Center): A list of resources to support families in helping their child develop and learn.
- [Indicators of High Quality Inclusion](#) (ECTA, February 2025): Inclusion indicators to help implement inclusive practices at all system levels: state, community, local program, and environments where children receive care.
- [Inclusion Works! Creating Child Care Programs That Promote Belonging for Children with Disabilities \(2nd ed.\)](#) (CDE, 2021): A guide for providers of childcare programs with resources and strategies that promote inclusion and belonging for all children.
- [Inclusion Works! Creating Child Care Programs That Promote Belonging for Children with Disabilities \(2nd ed.\)](#) (CDE, 2021): A resource for providers as they work to provide high-quality care and education to all California's children, including those with disabilities
- [Inclusion Works! Video Series](#) (CDE, June 2021): A six-video set providing practical tools and resources for use when implementing high-quality, inclusive practices and creating a culture of belonging.
- [I Belong! Checklist for Promoting Inclusive Practice for Children with Disabilities or Delays](#) (WestEd, March 2025): A checklist to assess a program's inclusive practices for young children.
- [Staff Beliefs Survey](#) (Maryland Coalition for Inclusive Education [MCIE]): A 25-item survey to assess staff attitudes and beliefs about including children with disabilities in general education classes.

- [English Learners with Disabilities Toolkit](#) (National Center on Educational Outcomes): Resources to support educators and administrators to ensure the needs of children with disabilities are met.
- [Learning Resources](#) (Seeds of Partnership): Learning resources to support educators, administrators, department of education staff, parent center directors/staff, technical assistance partners, families, and young adults with disabilities across California. Resources provide training, learning and support tools, as well as parent and professional resources in the areas of family engagement, alternative dispute resolution, early learning, youth leadership and self advocacy and compliance and improvement monitoring.
- [Early Choices](#): An inclusion initiative of the Illinois State Board of Education that promotes increasing high quality inclusive early care and education for each and every child birth to age five.
- [Head Start Center for Inclusion](#): Head Start provides a variety of resources that support early childhood educators to ensure that children with disabilities can participate as full members of their learning communities.
- [CalECSE Tools](#) (CalESCE): Tools to support families, educators, and California's youngest children with disabilities.
- [High Quality IEP Toolkits](#): Toolkits to support Special Education Providers, Administrative Designees, and General Education Teachers.
- [Key Considerations for Supporting English Proficiency in Dually Identified Students](#) (Santa Clara COE): A three-part professional learning series including the following topics: Systems and Teamwork, Instruction and Language Goals, and Assessment and Progress.