



# CALECSE

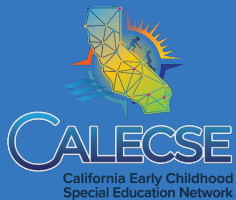
California Early Childhood  
Special Education Network



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

**Introducing the Language Equality and Acquisition for Deaf Kids (LEAD-K) Framework:  
Language Milestones, Assessment, and Resources to Support Deaf and Hard of  
Hearing (DHH) Children**

April 28, 2026



# CALECSE



California Early Childhood Special Education Network

Funded by the CDE

Implementation Leadership

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# CaIECSE

California Early Childhood Special Education Network

*Funded by the CDE*

<https://www.calecse.org>



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

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

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

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

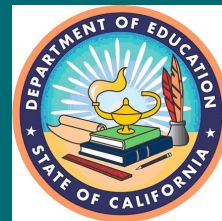
Find our full schedule of  
regional CoPs at:

<https://www.calecse.org/news-resources/communities-of-practice>



## Communities of Practice

California Early Childhood  
Special Education Network



# Introducing the Language Equality and Acquisition for Deaf Kids (LEAD-K) Framework

# Today's Presenters



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State Special Schools and Services Division



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Research Director  
Napa County Office of Education  
The Desired Results Access Project

# SB 210: California's LEAD-K Act

## What the Law Requires

- Assess language milestones every six months
- Share results with families
- Inform Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) and Individualized Education Program (IEP) goals
- Report data to state

## Two Required Tools California Education Code (EC) Section 56326.5 (SB 210, 2015)

### The CDE LEAD-K Language Milestones

Tool for educators to track expressive and receptive language acquisition and literacy.

### The Parent Profile

Resource for parents to monitor and track milestones.

# The CDE LEAD-K Language Milestones Assessment (LMA)

## CDE LEAD-K Language Milestones Assessment

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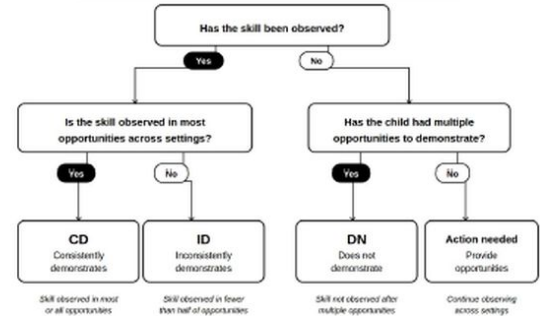
LMA Version 3.0, 2025

2

## LMA Assessment Steps (At-A-Glance)

1. Complete the Child Information Form
2. Select a form
  - 0–12 months → Form 1
  - 13–24 months → Form 2
  - 25–36 months → Form 3
  - 37–48 months → Form 4
  - 49–60 months → Form 5
3. Observe the child across everyday routines and activities
4. Score Each Item

### CDE LEAD-K LANGUAGE MILESTONES ASSESSMENT — SCORING DECISION TREE



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5. Complete the Assessment Summary
6. Record the highest age band on the Progress Tracking form

LMA Version 3.0, 2025

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# Your Deaf Child's Early Language Acquisition Journey

Check off the milestones your child has reached and share your child's progress at every IFSP & IEP meeting

This Parent Profile is designed to help you track your child's language growth. You and your Early Start or preschool teacher should discuss whether your child is meeting each of these milestones and is making age-appropriate language growth. Check off each milestone as your child meets it. Be an active observer of your child in the exciting journey towards being language ready for kindergarten at age 5.

Start here:

## Birth -1 year old

## 1-2 years old

## 2-3 Years old

## 3-4 Years old

## 4-5 Years old

# The Parent Profile

- Your baby smiles when they see you
- Your baby looks around and is attentive to people's faces.
- Your baby shows awareness of the environment.
- By 12 months, your baby has 1-3 signs and/or words.

- Your baby recognizes their own name when it is spoken or signed.
- Your baby uses signed or spoken names to refer to self and others.
- Your baby takes 1-2 turns in a conversation.
- Your baby uses exclamatory expressions.

- By 2½ years of age, your child answers questions with yes or no
- Your child uses intelligible words or signs about 80% of the time.
- Your child vocalizes or signs for all needs.

- Your child answers questions logically.
- Your child starts to understand different perspectives.
- Your child communicates fluently, clearly, and is easily understood by family and familiar adults.

- Your child begins to ask the meanings of words and signs.
- Your child uses 2,500+ words and/or signs
- Your child puts sequencing concepts together.



# Updates to the LMA

# LMA Development



**Built from  
research on  
Deaf and  
hearing  
children's  
language  
development**



**Tested and  
revised with  
730+ California  
Deaf children  
across three  
versions**



**Expanded  
specifically for  
Deaf children  
with disabilities**

# Quick to Complete

“I appreciate how quickly I can complete the assessment.”  
—DHH Teacher



## 15 Minutes or Less

to complete the assessment

## Easy and Useful

**70%**

Found scoring  
easy

**77%**

Used LMA in  
practice

“It’s concise, easy to read and score, and it helps us measure our student’s growth over time.”

—DHH Teacher

# Example Alignment to Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP)

## Foundations of Language and Literacy Development (FLD-1): Understanding Language (Receptive)

Exploring Earlier	Exploring Middle	Exploring Later
<p><b>DRDP</b> Shows understanding that communication with gestures, words, or signs carries meaning</p>	<p><b>DRDP</b> Shows understanding of a variety of single words in their environment</p>	<p><b>DRDP</b> Shows understanding of frequently used simple phrases or sentences, in the present</p>
<p><b>LMA</b> Identifies own name when spoken or signed (for example, looks up when a caregiver calls their name, or turns toward a familiar person who signs to get their attention)</p>	<p><b>LMA</b> Identifies several objects (at least three) when named in words and/or signs (for example, points to, touches, or gives the correct object to an adult)</p>	<p><b>LMA</b> Responds appropriately when told where to put or find something (for example, puts a toy in the box when a caregiver says or signs "put it in," or goes to get their shoes near the door when asked)</p>

# Importance of Identifying Language Delay Early

# “All language is communication, but not all communication is language”

## Language

Language is a shared system people use to communicate ideas, using agreed-upon spoken or signed symbols and rules to combine them.

Assess the child in their primary languages

## Communication

Communication is the process of sharing information, ideas, needs, and wants with others.

Become familiar with the child’s communication approaches.

**IFSP/IEP decisions should prioritize language development, not just communication approaches.**

# Early Start (Part C) Language Milestones

## EARLY START (PART C) LANGUAGE MILESTONES: 0 - 36 Months Old Infants and Toddlers



Early Start Services: Supporting Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children & Families in Natural Environments

# Parent Profile: Language Milestones, Birth to Three Years

Birth to One Year	One to Two Years	Two to Three Years
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Your baby smiles when they see you.</li><li>2. Your baby looks around and is attentive to people's faces.</li><li>3. Your baby shows awareness of the environment.</li><li>4. By 12 months, your baby has one to three signs and/or words.</li></ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Your baby recognizes their own name when it is spoken or signed.</li><li>2. Your baby uses signed or spoken names to refer to self and others.</li><li>3. Your baby takes one to two turns in a conversation.</li><li>4. Your baby uses exclamatory expressions.</li></ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. By 30 months of age, your child answers questions with yes or no.</li><li>2. Your child uses intelligible words or signs about 80 percent of the time.</li><li>3. Your child vocalizes or signs for all needs.</li></ol>

## Part C Video: Nine-Week-Old Infant



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E7IlnTG7wzk>

## Part C Video: Toddlers



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5-fwQpCylW4>

## EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION (PART B) LANGUAGE MILESTONES: 3 - 5 Year Old Preschoolers and Pre-Kindergarteners



Early Childhood Education: Supporting Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children's Language Development in Accessible Settings at Home and School.

# Parent Profile: Language Milestones, Three to Five Years

Three to Four Years	Four to Five Years	By Age Five
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Your child answers questions logically.</li><li>2. Your child starts to understand different perspectives.</li><li>3. Your child communicates fluently, clearly, and is easily understood by family and familiar adults.</li></ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Your child begins to ask the meanings of words and signs.</li><li>2. Your child uses 2,500+ words and/or signs.</li><li>3. Your child puts sequencing concepts together.</li></ol>	<p>Deaf and hard of hearing children can achieve age-level language development.</p>

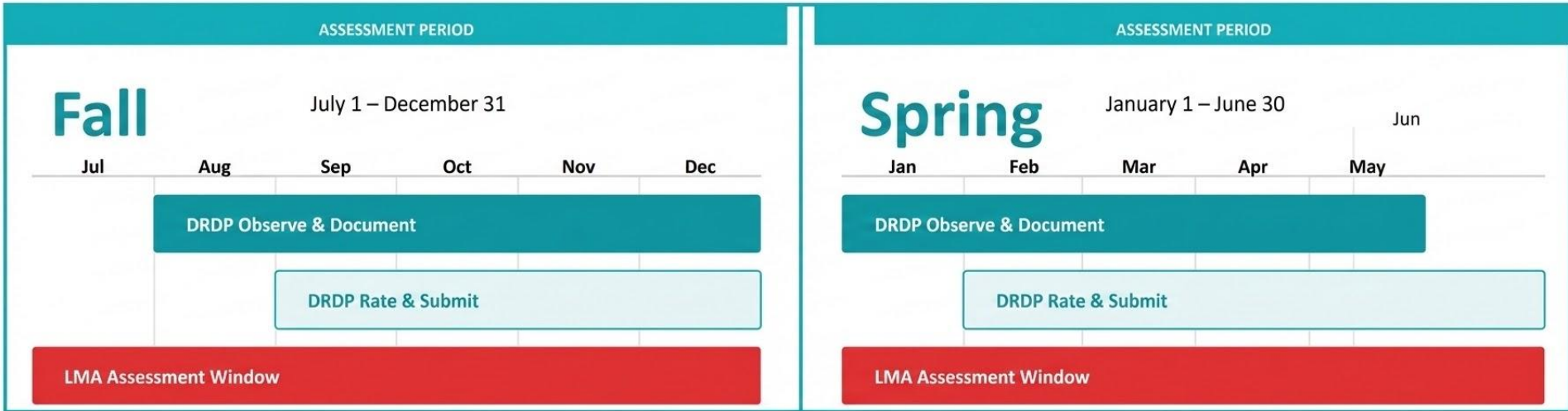
## Part B Video: PreKindergarten



[https://  
www.youtube.co  
m/watch?  
v=bDFxr6dMJUE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bDFxr6dMJUE)

# LMA Data Collection and Submission

# LMA Assessment Timeline



 DRDP Observe & Document

 DRDP Rate & Submit Data

 LMA Assessment Window

The LMA is completed approximately every six months, aligned with the DRDP assessment periods

# LMA Forms Ordered by Age



# The LMA's Four Assessment Domains

**R**

## Receptive Language

Understanding language input through signs, speech, or both

**V**

## Vocabulary

Breadth and depth of word and sign knowledge

**E**

## Expressive Language

Producing language output to communicate ideas and needs

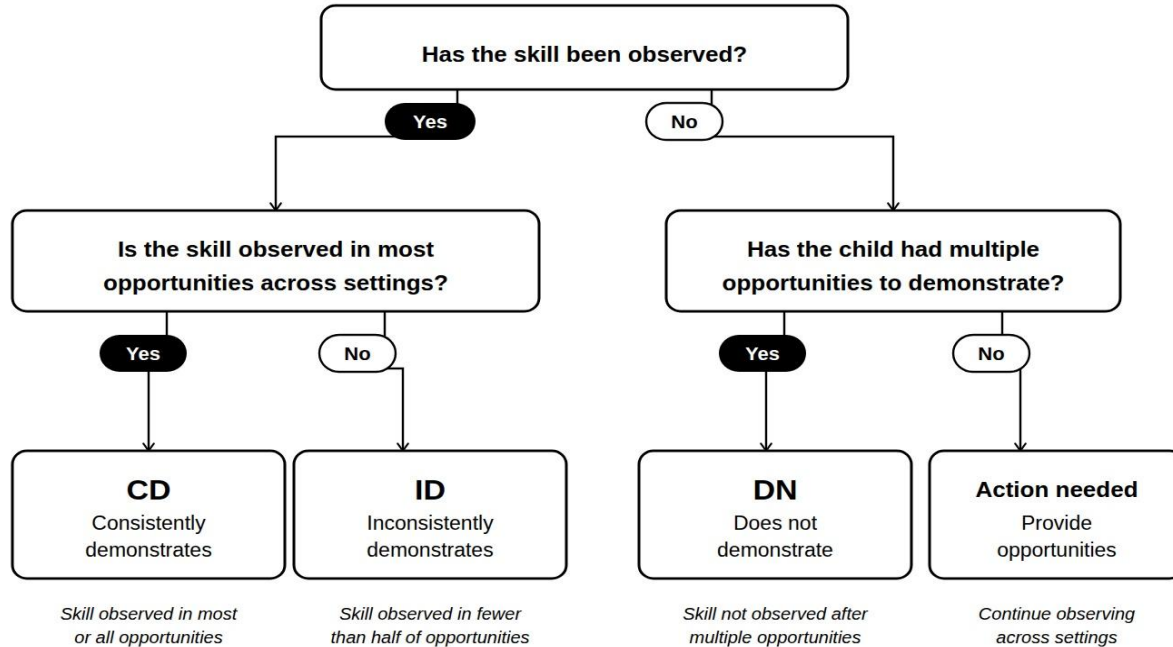
**L**

## Literacy

Early reading, writing, and print awareness foundations

# How to Use the Rating Scale

## CDE LEAD-K LANGUAGE MILESTONES ASSESSMENT — SCORING DECISION TREE



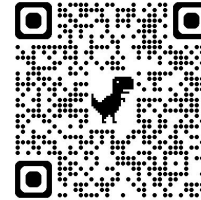
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# Steps to Complete and Submit

1. Download, print, and complete the form for the child's chronological age.
2. Complete the form by marking each item based on your observations and parent report.
3. Gather information about the child and service provider.
4. Access the appropriate online survey.
5. Submit the online survey.



**PDF forms**



**Online Survey**

# Using the LMA and the Parent Profile

# Identifying When a Child is Not Meeting Milestones

Example: Ava, 30 months old—Form 3

Age Band	CD Items	>50% CD?
Foundational Skills	7 / 8	Yes
25 to 30 months	5 / 12	No
30 to 36 months	1 / 12	No

→ **Highest band achieved: Foundational**

Ava is 30 months old but performing at the Foundational level.

## How to read the summary table

1. Count the Consistently Demonstrated (CD) items in each age band.
2. Check: are more than half of the items CD? If yes, that band is achieved.
3. The highest achieved band is where the child is performing. Compare that to the child's chronological age.

# When a Child is Not Meeting Milestones (California EC 56326.5(c)(2))

If a deaf or hard-of-hearing child does not demonstrate progress in expressive and receptive language skills, as measured by the LMA or the DRDP, the child's IFSP or IEP team shall:

1. Explain in detail the reasons why the child is not meeting the language developmental milestones or progressing toward them.
2. Recommend specific strategies, services, and programs that shall be provided to assist the child's success toward English literacy.

# When a Child is Not Meeting Milestones

## Explain

Document the specific areas where language progress is lacking.

## Recommend

Name specific strategies, such as increased language modeling, American Sign Language (ASL) instruction, family coaching.

## Implement and Check

Write or revise IFSP/IEP goals targeting identified gaps.

# Using Parent Profile with Families

1

## Strengths First

Share what the child can do first.

2

## Family Observation

Use the Parent Profile to support families in understanding what milestones look like and how to support their children.

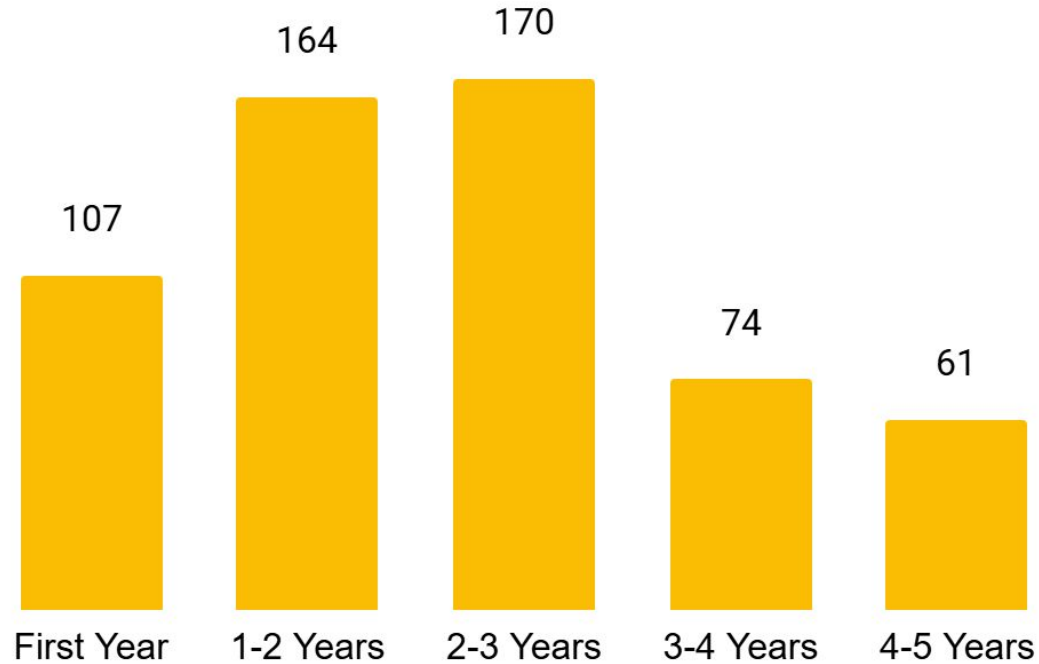
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## IFSP/IEP Goals

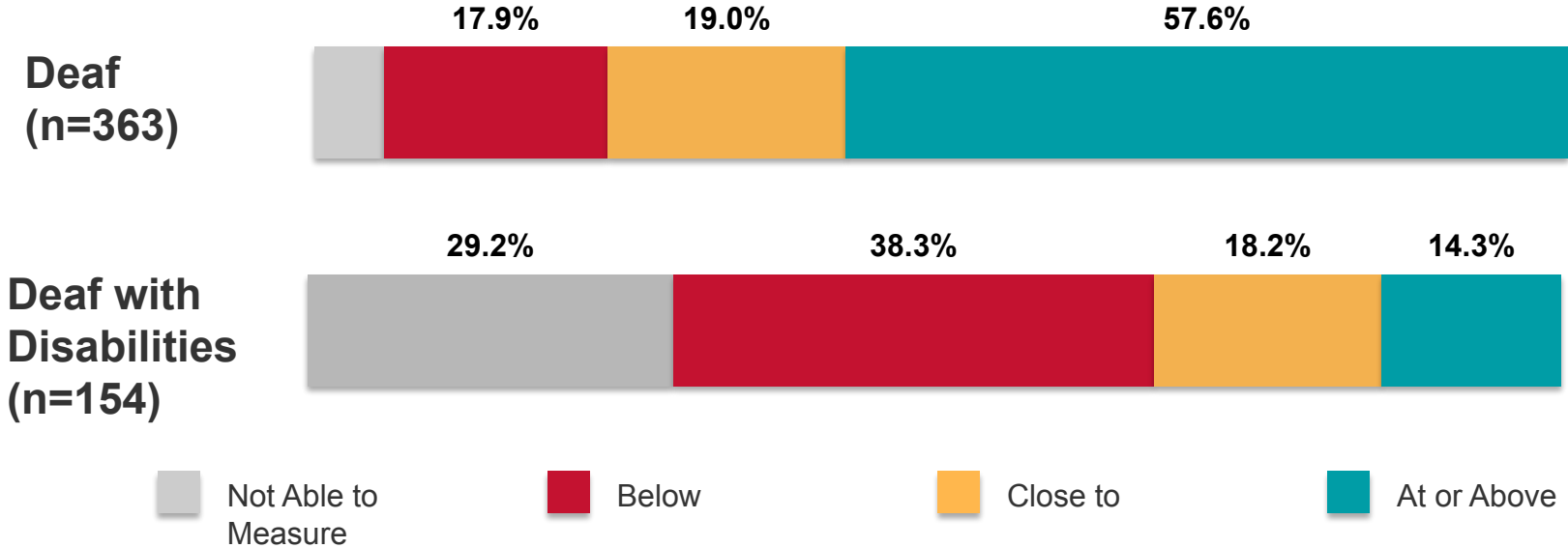
If the child is not meeting key milestones, work with the family to update the IFSP/IEP.

# Fall 2025 Preliminary Results

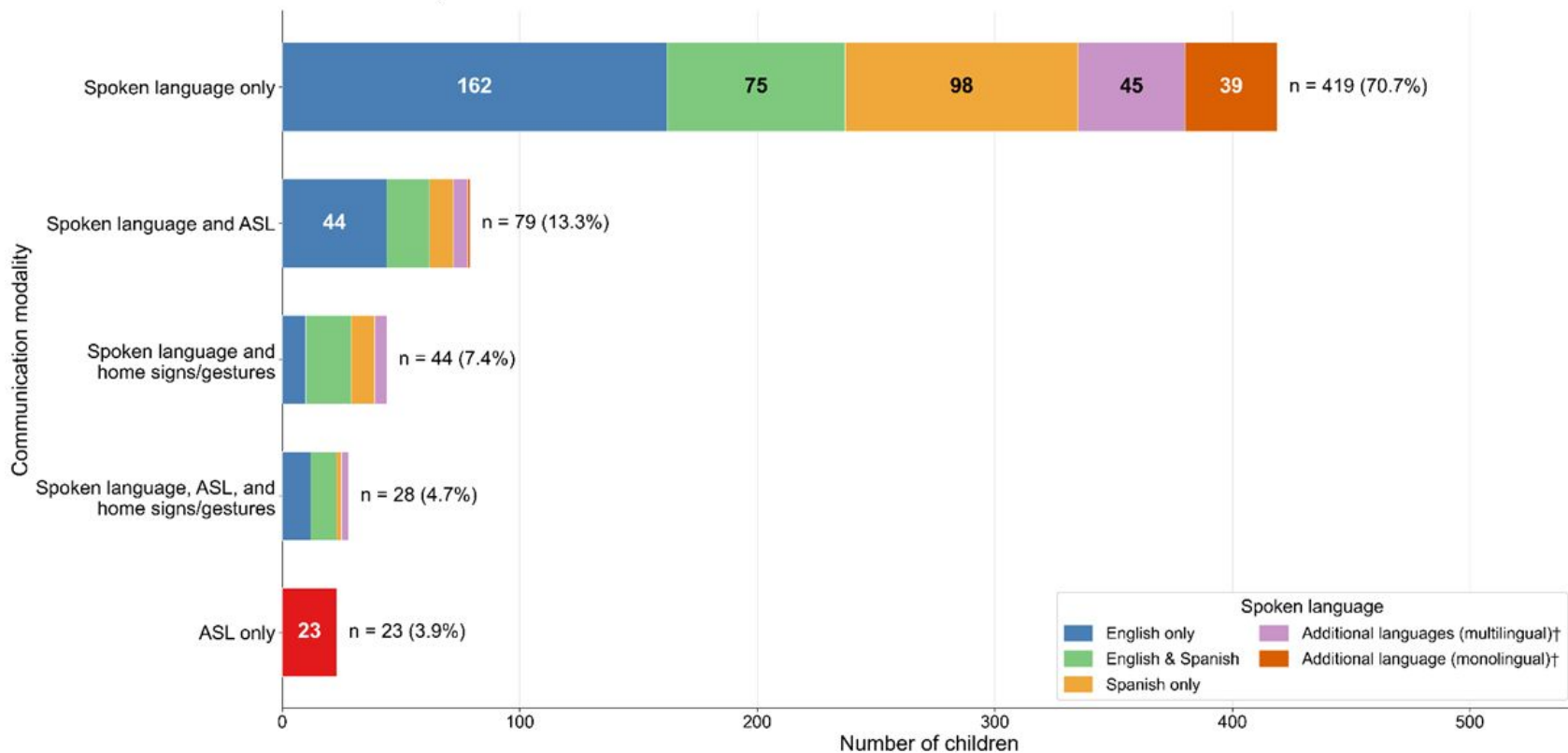
# Fall 2025, Number of Children Assessed by LMA Form



# LMA Proficiency Fall 2025 Relative to Age-Expected Milestones



# Home Language Diversity 2025



# New Features Currently Being Piloted



- Narrower age bands
- Alignment to DRDP 2025
- Alignment to Preschool/Transitional Kindergarten Learning Foundations (PTKLF) and Infant/Toddler Learning & Development Foundations (ITLDF)
- Assessment inclusive of additional signed and spoken languages
- Foundational Items for Deaf children with disabilities

# Thank You

**Julie Rems-Smario, Ed.D.**

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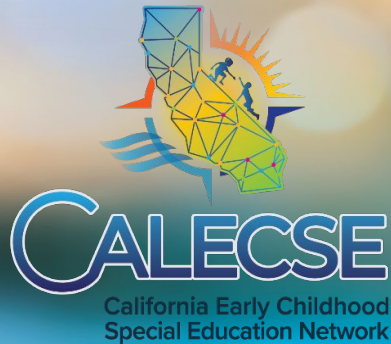
**Cornelia Taylor, Ph.D.**

Email: [ctaylor@napacoe.org](mailto:ctaylor@napacoe.org)

**Questions?**



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



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



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

**Interested in joining a local  
Community of Practice (CoP) for practitioners who  
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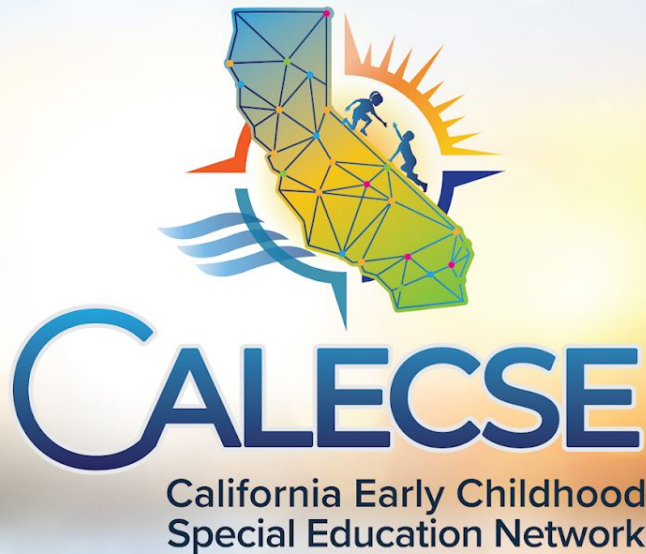
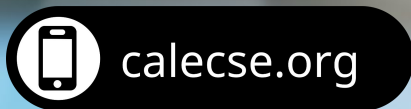
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**Communities  
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