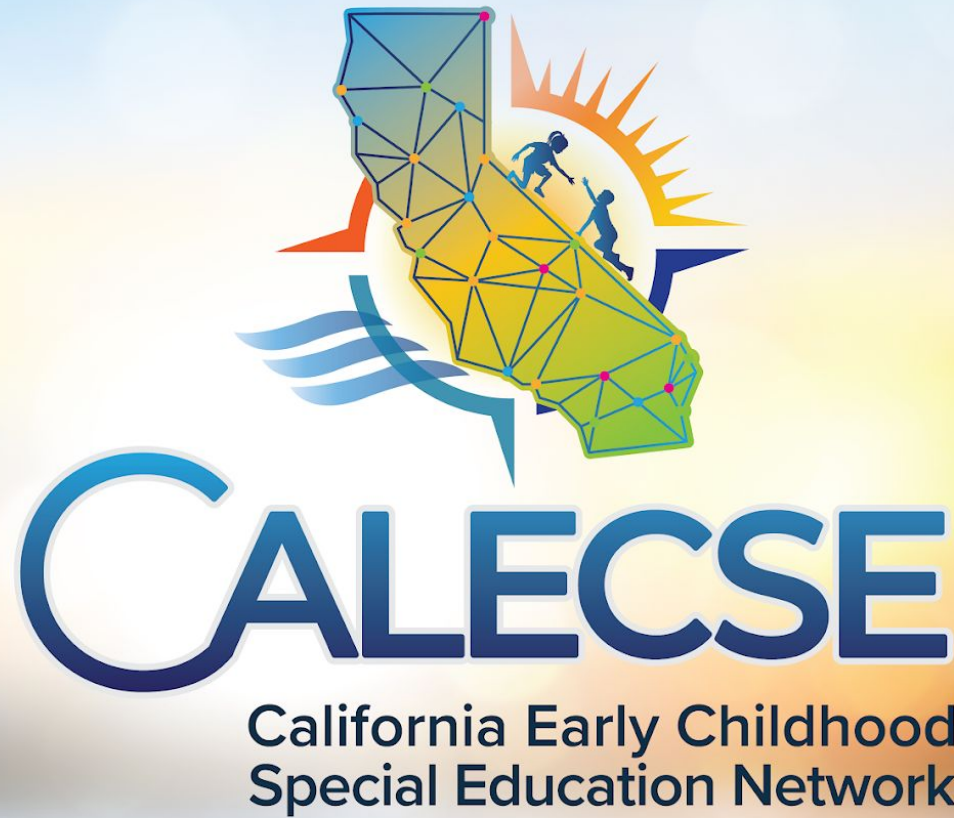
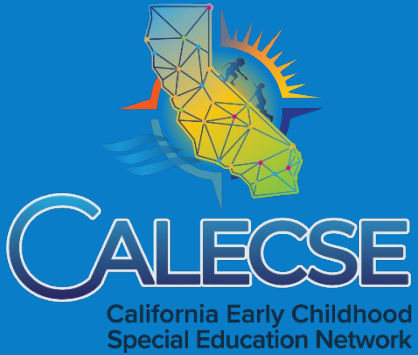




January 16, 2025

Innovative & Inclusive Preschool Practices Community of Practice



CaIECSE

California Early Childhood Special Education Network

Funded by the CDE



Implementation Leadership

Co-Executive Director- Dr. Scott Turner, East San Gabriel Valley
SELPA

Co-Executive Director-Melanie Hertig, Irvine Special Education/SELPA
Project Coordinator-Marion Springett, Saddleback Valley USD



CalECSE

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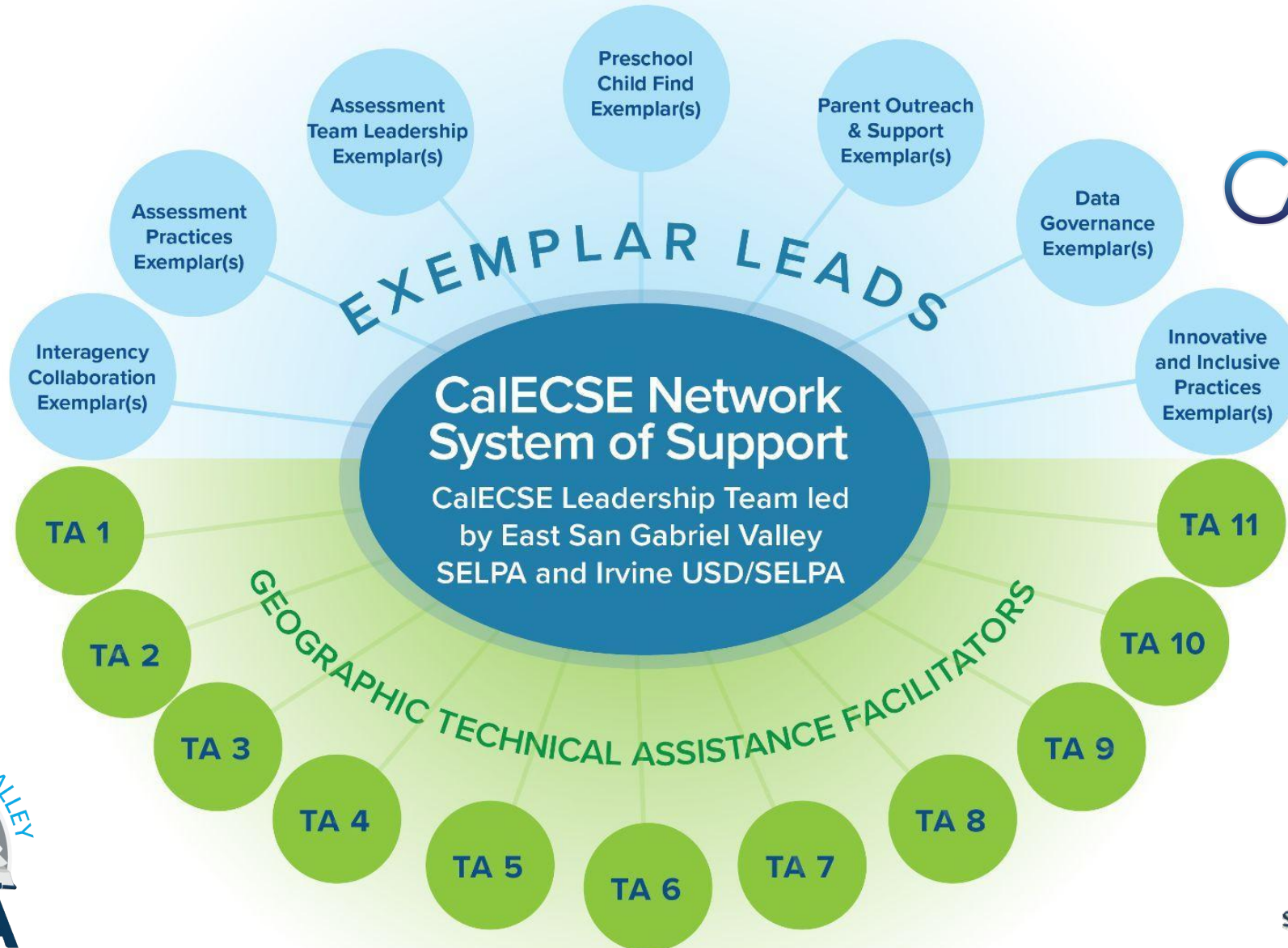
CalECSE.org



CalECSE is a technical assistance project funded under the California Department of Education (CDE) that supports Local Educational Agencies (LEAs), Special Education Local Plan Areas (SELPA), County Offices of Special Education (COEs), and other Agency Partners in the areas of 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 CalECSE 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 CalECSE Network is committed to *improving outcomes* for children and their families by *eliminating and addressing barriers* to successful transition for California's youngest children with disabilities.



CalECSE Network

Innovative & Inclusive Practices

Susan Langer

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Roseland School District and Charter**



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School Psychologist
Bonita Unified School District**



Innovative & Inclusive Preschool Practices

What We Will Cover Today:

- What Is Inclusion?
- Our Story: Bonita Unified School District's Inclusion Program.
- Building our program.
- Considerations for buy-in.
- Getting Ready to Launch.
- Potential barriers and ways to pivot.
- Steps toward meaningful inclusion.
- Other Models: Apples and Bananas Program



What is Inclusion?



Inclusion is the philosophy and practice that all students are fully accepted within their schools and/or communities. Students are General Education students first, thus begins the backward chaining towards Least Restrictive Environment (LRE).

What can that look like for Early Childhood?

BLAST

(Building Lifelong Academic Skills Together)



Program Overview

Bonita Unified School District BLAST Program

The Bonita Unified School District's BLAST program (Building Lifelong Academic Skills Together) is a preschool inclusion program for three-year-old students residing in our communities. This innovative program, which launched in 2015, allows students with special needs to attend school with their typically developing peers. Our BLAST classes promote inclusivity while teaching play and social skills, pre-academic skills, and adaptive skills. Since its inception, our BLAST program has grown from two to three classroom programs, further reaching and meeting the needs of our students.



How We Paved the Way for Preschool Inclusion in the Bonita Unified School District

- Parent Advocacy for Inclusive Opportunities resulted in partnering with a neighboring child development center and funding student enrollment
- In 2013, our District had corrective action requirements on the Special Education Self-Review (SESR) due to lack of opportunities for preschool students with Individual Education Plans (IEPs) to interact with typically developing peers.
- Created an Early Childhood Inclusion Task Force
 - Visited neighboring Early Childhood Inclusion classrooms
- Proposal for Inclusive preschool class drafted for 2015–2016 school year–BLAST Program.



Parent Advocacy

- Parents and community raised concern for the lack of peer models available in our Early Childhood programs.
- This concern led to the District contracting with a local child development center in order to provide enrollment opportunities with typically developing peers.
- The District funded a set number of slots annually.



Corrective Action

- In 2013, Bonita Unified School District had corrective action requirements on the SESR due to lack of opportunities for preschool students with IEPs to interact with typically developing peers.



Committee

- Created a committee of stakeholders including:
School Site Administrator
 - District Program Specialist
 - Preschool Education Specialists
 - School Psychologist
 - Speech Language Pathologist
 - Paraeducator
- Scheduled Monthly Collaboration Meetings with a Year Long Plan for opening.
- Visited three neighboring districts offering various types of Inclusive Settings.
- Created the philosophy/mission statement for the board proposal and associated press materials.
- Came up with a catchy name and acronym for the program, highlighting the program's goals.
- Gathered information from the Union regarding staff scheduling and needs.
- Collaborated with school sites to determine location and any site specific needs.



Going to the Board



- Our written Board Proposal included the following key points:
 - Current status of our preschool program.
 - Rationale for Inclusion.
 - Presentation of the Program Name and description of the proposed program.
 - Outline of the specific logistics of the program including space, scheduling, staffing, and funding.





Building the Program

- Phase One: One BLAST class, Three Special Day Class (SDC) classes, five-day schedule. General Education students on a two-day schedule and some on a three-day schedule. Students with IEPs on a five-day schedule.
- Phase Two: Two BLAST classes, two SDC classes, four-day program: Monday-Thursday. Student-Free on Fridays.
- Phase Three: Expanded to three BLAST classes and three SDC classes.

Where are we headed next?



Building the Program

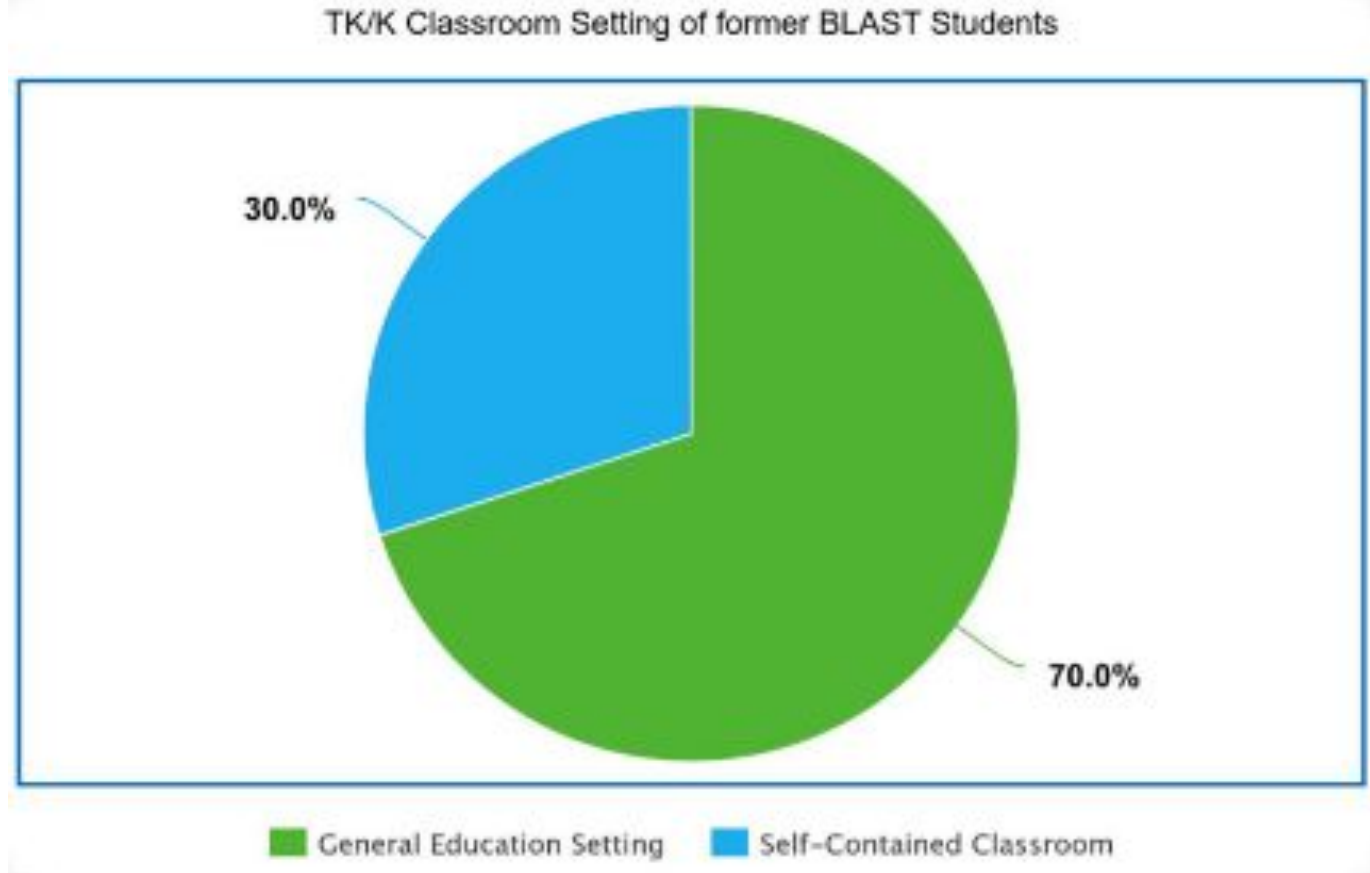
- We have now expanded to three BLAST classrooms and hope to expand even further to reduce our number of self-contained programs.
- Our Inclusion program expanded to a Co-Teach Transitional Kindergarten (TK) program.
- Students from our BLAST program are matriculating into General Education Settings, and we are continuing to look toward opening more Co-Teach TK and Kinder programs.



Sustainability and Long Term Outcomes

Data collected from the 2019–2020 school year to the 2024–2025 school year indicates that, on average, 70 percent of former BLAST preschool students with IEPs are matriculating into a General Education Kinder or TK setting.

2024–2025 data on those children placed in a General Education setting for the 2019–2020 school year reveals that 75 percent of students with IEPs have maintained a General Education setting by the 5th grade.



Considerations

Considerations for Buy-In

In order to prepare for opening, considerations for buy-in included:

- Space
- Funding
- Staff
- Licensing
- Community Outreach
- Creating a Quality Program
- Classroom Setup



Considerations for Buy-In

Space:

- Identified and utilized an existing preschool classroom.
- Existing teacher and staff.
- Schedule aligned with campus schedule.
- Alternate entry points for drop-off and pick-up locations.
- Consideration for adapted/age appropriate playground facilities.

Funding:

- Researched and applied for available grants.
- Created an affordable and competitive tuition schedule to offset cost for staffing.



Considerations for Buy-In

Staff:

Honored contractual times for teacher preparation time by structuring a four-day week for students.

- Class is three hours in duration.
- Fridays are reserved for teacher preparation time and IEP meetings.
- Additional Paraeducator support funded with tuition monies.



Considerations for Buy-In

Licensing:

- Exemption from Licensing-Regulation 101158
 - Program is provided to children under the age of four years and nine months with sessions that run 12 hours per week or less and are 12 weeks or less in duration. A program subject to this paragraph may permit children to be enrolled in consecutive sessions throughout the year. However, the program shall not permit children to be enrolled in a combination of sessions that total more than 12 hours per week for each child.

Classes run three hours per day.

Monday – Thursday

8:00 AM – 11:00 AM

Monthly payment varies dependent on days of instruction per month.

Range: \$80-\$360 per month

Considerations for Buy-In

- Inclusive Early Education Expansion Program (IEEEP) Grant LEA Programs do not require licensing.
 - District run Inclusive preschool programs do not need community child care licensing. Exemptions do not explicitly include a preschool special education program. The entirety of the code cites (Health and Safety Code section 1596.792), that the clear intent is to exclude any and all programs run by public schools. District program are “educational,” not “child care,” and any non-educational portions of that program are exempt under the “extended daycare” exemption.
 - Here's the full code section:
https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?lawCode=HSC§ionNum=1596.792



Considerations for Buy-In

Outreach:

- Printed Banners for all school sites.
- Program announcement and advertising through school newsletters/Aeries communication.
- Local Press Release- Tribune.
- Partnered with a local graphic artist for branding and logo.



**BLAST
PRESCHOOL**



CLASSES
Classes run three times per day.
Monday – Thursday
8:00 AM – 11:00 AM
Monthly payment varies dependent on days of instruction per month.
Range: \$80-\$360 per month

Classes are located at
Grace Miller Elementary School
1629 Holly Oak Street
La Verne, CA 91750
Anna J. Shull Elementary
825 N. Amelita Avenue
San Dimas, CA 91773

FEES
Fees pertain to general education preschool students only. There is a monthly fee due and payable to the Santa Unified School District on the first of each month starting August 1. Payment is due regardless of family vacation or absence. Registration is done at the district office.



**For More Information
Please Contact:**
Specialized Student Services
909 971-8330 ext. 5345



Link to BLAST Pamphlet:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1NVfTu4Ghc9ArbxZ44yoKKOCN9NmFDoAt/view?usp=sharing>

Considerations for Buy-In

Quality Programming:

- Program is run by a credentialed teacher, creating an appealing and trusted program for the community.
- Competitive tuition.
- Use of an engaging and rigorous curriculum that addresses all developmental domains.
- Fulfills Child Find obligations.
- Long-term outcomes.



Getting Ready to Launch

Getting Ready to Launch

- Determine the daily classroom schedule.
- Determine the curriculum.
- Embed inclusive practices into the daily structure.
- Ensure that the structure of the classroom is physically accessible.



Getting Ready to Launch

Classroom Set-Up:

- Curriculum
- Furniture (cube chairs/ alternative seating, child-size tables & chairs, rug, dividers, etc.)
- Technology
- Age appropriate playground equipment
- Sensory supports
- Toileting and hygiene supplies
- Calm down area with materials (e.g. fidgets, social stories, visuals, comfort tools, etc.)
- Age appropriate picture and story books.
- Visuals
- Toys! Include a variety of developmentally appropriate toys such as cause/effect toys, blocks, cars; imaginative toys such as dolls, animals, toy food/kitchen, sensory toys, etc.



Getting Ready to Launch

- While children are enrolled in BLAST for the duration of the program, Specialized Academic Instruction (SAI) minutes are described in the IEP as follows:
 - “The IEP Team discussed the recommended inclusion program including the structure and inclusive strategies embedded into the program to help facilitate social-emotional development and peer socialization. The team feels that the supports within this program are appropriate to meet the child’s needs at this time. The BLAST preschool program is offered four days per week, three hours per day with the child’s SAI and Related Services provided within the program setting.”



Getting Ready to Launch

- Related Services Model
 - Providers push-in for services.
 - Incorporate Community Friends into services as peer models.
 - Becomes a part of the classroom structure.
 - Collaborative activities among service providers.
 - Opportunities for co-treatments.
- SAI Minutes
 - SAI minutes are driven by goals.
 - Individualized by student needs.



What Else?



Potential Barriers

Potential Barriers

- Teacher caseloads can approach up to 20 students plus the General Education population.
- Scheduling of staff can be a challenge to ensure breaks and lunches for Paraeducators during the three hour class time.
- Paraeducators need to be cleared/trained to assist with toileting for any/all students.
- Classroom space should include a dedicated restroom.
- Additional training in crisis-intervention and de-escalation may be required for all staff.
- Determination of placement and services.



Potential Barriers



- Determining how a student qualifies for an inclusion program
 - Level of independence.
 - Foundational classroom readiness skills.
 - Emerging play skills.
 - Responsiveness to peer and adult modeling.



- Determining how a student qualifies for an inclusion program
 - Level of independence
 - Foundational classroom readiness skills
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 - Responsiveness to peer and adult modeling



Steps Toward Meaningful Inclusion

Steps toward meaningful inclusion

Mainstreaming:

Universal Transitional Kindergarten provides a great opportunity for mainstreaming and/or reverse mainstreaming.



Steps toward meaningful inclusion

- In our District, we developed the Big Buddies Program
 - Second Grade students, selected by their classroom teacher as models of exemplary kindness, compassion, & friendliness.
 - Big Buddies meet monthly with Preschool teachers to review the month's theme & weekly activities.
 - Big Buddies join our SDC classroom during circle time, recess, and/or craft activities.
 - Enhances the sense of belonging & community on campus!







Apples and Bananas Inclusive Preschool

Support Staff:

Special Education Teacher and Coach



Roseland School District:

Apples and Bananas Inclusive Preschool

- State funded
- Holds 10-15 slots
- Instructional Assistant funded by low incidence monies
- Inclusion Coach
- Preschool Assessment Team
- Building and Playground Funded by IEEEP (Inclusive Early Education Expansion Program) Grant





Mirian Sandoval
TEACHER/MAESTRA

What is a typical day like for Amirah?

Apples and Bananas Inclusive Preschool





Questions?



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