NEVADA

Nevada Early Childhood Inclusion Guidance Manual

Nevada Department of Education

Nevada Ready!

CONTENT

I. Forward

The creation of this inclusion manual is a bold step to ensure that our youngest learners in Nevada are afforded meaningful educational benefit. As preschool aged children with disabilities develop their voices of self-advocacy and self-determination, it is incumbent on all of us to advocate on their behalf. Too often in Nevada these children are subject to well-intentioned decision making that frequently falls short when it comes to educational opportunities. Due to perceived limitations, seemingly insurmountable barriers, and paradigms developed under false pretense, our most vulnerable population is being discriminated against. This discrimination is not based on race, gender, age, or religion, but rather based solely on the fact that these children have unique learning needs. If you are a preschool child with disabilities in Nevada you will be placed in a segregated environment seventy percent of the time. These placement decisions are not being made with malice or discriminatory intent, but rather are the result of an under developed understanding of the full continuum of opportunities that are available to these precious learners.

However, there is hope! As I engage stakeholders across our great State none are content to continue as we have. We value our children too greatly to settle for anything less than the provision of full opportunity for them. The message of inclusive opportunities for our early childhood students is being received like water to a thirsty desert wanderer. Our small but mighty inclusion movement is growing in number, strength, and affect. Conditions for preschool aged children with disabilities are improving. Massive condoned discrimination is being stamped out. Barriers are being smashed, paradigms and expectations are being realigned to the needs of our children. In short, we are taking a stand, the ramifications of which will echo through time as our most fragile learners of today become the greatest achievers of tomorrow.

Nevada should take a minute and be proud. We should be proud of our Governor for building a strong educational platform, we should be proud of our legislature for taking a bold bi-partisan stance and investing heavily in our youngest learners. We should be proud of our Department of Education for challenging 30 plus years of funding paradigm. We should be proud of our Superintendents and School Boards for supporting inclusive practices and rising to the challenge to create something where nothing existed before. But most of all, we should be proud of our teachers and parents, for meeting these kids where they are at everyday, and working tirelessly to ensure that their student's very first school experience will be one that makes them want to come back for more.

We have accomplished much together, but we are not finished. We must continue to disrupt any part of our educational system that does not esteem children highly enough to place their needs above everything else. We must press on advocating for those incapable of advocating for themselves, and we must continue to work together. Our future as Nevadans, and moreover as Americans, is dependent on us taking action to ensure that our educational system is providing every available opportunity to our children. This is our moral purpose, without which no society can be great.

Will Jensen,
Director of Special Education

Use of the Nevada Inclusion Guidance Document

This guidance is for preschool teachers, administrators and service providers in all educational settings serving children 3-5. The intent of this manual is to fully inform early childhood service providers regarding inclusion and the impact of inclusive practices on both children with and without disabilities.

Acknowledgements

II. Importance of Inclusion

Inclusion in early childhood programs refers to including children with disabilities in early childhood programs, together with their peers without disabilities; holding high expectations and intentionally promoting participation in all learning and social activities, facilitated by individualized accommodations; and using evidence-based services and supports to foster their development (cognitive, language, communication, physical, behavioral, and social-emotional), friendships with peers, and sense of belonging. This applies to all young children with disabilities, from those with the mildest disabilities, to those with the most significant disabilities. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the U.S. Department of Education issued a Policy Statement on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs in September 14, 2015, stating:

> *The right to access inclusive early childhood programs is supported by a robust legal foundation. The IDEA supports equal educational opportunities for eligible children with disabilities birth through 21. Part C of the IDEA requires that appropriate early intervention services are made available to all eligible infants and toddlers with disabilities in natural environments, including the home, and community settings in which children without disabilities participate, to the maximum extent appropriate, factoring in each child's routines, needs, and outcomes. Similarly, under Part B of the IDEA, special education and related services are to be made available to all children with disabilities ages three through twenty-one to the maximum extent appropriate, in the least restrictive environment (LRE) factoring in an individual child's unique strengths and needs. LRE further requires 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 he or she did not have a disability. Thus, before a child with a disability can be placed outside of the regular educational environment, the full range of supplementary aids and services that could be provided to facilitate the child's placement in the regular classroom setting must be considered. Each LEA must ensure that a free appropriate public education (FAPE) is provided in the LRE to every child with a disability in its jurisdiction regardless of whether the LEA operates public general early childhood programs. This could include providing special education and related services in public or private general early childhood or preschool programs, Head Start and Early Head Start programs, and community-based child care programs."*

A 2009 joint position statement of the Division for Early Childhood (DEC) and NAEYC defined inclusion: "Early childhood inclusion embodies the values, policies, and practices that support the right of every infant and young child and his or her family, regardless of ability, to participate in a broad range of activities and contexts as full members of families, communities, and society." The desired results of inclusive experiences for children with and without disabilities and their families include a sense of belonging and membership, positive social relationships and friendships, and development and learning to reach their full potential. The defining features of inclusion that can be used to identify high quality early childhood programs and services are access, participation, and supports."

Brief Summary: Fact Sheet of Research on Preschool Inclusion

Erin E. Barton & Barbara J. Smith

June,2014

1 In 27 years, the practice of providing special education and related services in regular early childhood settings to preschoolers with disabilities has increased only 5.7% and many young children with disabilities continue to be educated in separate settings.[1,2]

2 Inclusion benefits children with and without disabilities. [3, 4, 5, 6, 7]

3 The quality of preschool programs including at least one student with a disability were as good as or better than preschool programs without children with disabilities. However, traditional measures of early childhood program quality might not be sufficient for assessing quality of programs that include children with disabilities. [8,9]

4 Children with disabilities can be effectively educated in inclusive programs using specialized instruction. [10, 11, 12, 13]

5 Parents and teachers influence children's values regarding disabilities. [14, 15, 16]

6 Individualized embedded instruction can be used to teach a variety of skills, including those related to early learning standards, and promote participation in inclusive preschool programs to children with and without disabilities. [17, 18, 19, 20, 21]

7 Families of children with and without disabilities generally have positive views of inclusion. [22, 23]

8 Inclusion is not more expensive than having separate programs for children with disabilities. [24, 25]

9 Successful inclusion requires intentional and effective collaboration and teaming.[26] *

10 The individual outcomes of preschool inclusion should include access, membership, participation, friendships, and support.[27] *

11 Children with disabilities do not need to be "ready" to be included. Programs need to be "ready" to support all children. [27] *

Please see the entire document including the research and resources to support these facts.

II.   Facilitating HQ Inclusion

Creating high-quality inclusive programs requires building understanding and trust with families, communities and teachers through collaborative teams/meetings, effective communication and joint professional development activities. Establishing and implementing effective interdisciplinary teams or committees that focus on supports for children provide opportunities to share and shape understandings and to strengthen all early childhood programs. These collaborative opportunities should be based on shared norms, incorporate a culture of respect, and be focused on problem solving. Awareness and support can be enhanced through development of collaborative agreements and informational materials that clearly outline philosophies as well inclusive policies and practices. These agreements should include the laws that protect the rights of children with disabilities and their families.

Children with and without disabilities can and should be educated in the same preschool classrooms, which can be accomplished by leveraging public and private resources to create a high-quality inclusive community that addresses the needs of all their young children.

- Whenever a child with an IEP meets program requirements for a public program such as Title I or state pre-k, the child should be considered for enrollment.
- And any child who is attending a regular early childhood program who has an IEP should have his or her special education and related service delivered in that program as the first option considered.

Best practice encourages Pre-K teachers to incorporate adaptations into their daily routine to create a quality inclusive environment, which benefits both the children with disabilities and the typically developing children in the classroom.

Researchers at the Early Childhood Research Institute on Inclusion identified eight categories of adaptations and supports for successful preschool inclusion. They included:

1. Environmental support: altering the physical environment to increase participation.
2. Materials adaptation: modifying materials to promote independence.
3. Activity simplification: breaking down a complicated task into smaller parts or steps.
4. Child preferences: capitalizing on a child's favorite activities.
5. Special equipment: using adaptive devices to facilitate participation.
6. Adult support: employing direct adult intervention to support the child's efforts.
7. Peer support: utilizing classmates to help children learn by modeling.
8. Invisible support: arranging naturally occurring events to assist inclusion.

The Nevada Pre-Kindergarten Standards 2010 (NPKs) are meant for all children including children with disabilities (not a separate set of standards) and may require adaptations, embedding instruction, and quality environment.

Our NPKs do address children with disabilities (page 16 & 17):

Inclusive Learning Environments in Pre-K Programs

Children develop compassionate attitudes and understand different abilities when they are in inclusive classrooms with a diverse array of children including those with disabilities. Inclusion teaches children

about differences and acceptance of others. Pre-K programs that include children with special needs in early childhood programs are seen as an example of best practice. Children need respectful teachers, and they need contact with children with different abilities (Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2009).

Resources and websites have been provided in the appendix to assist you in providing quality preschool education to all children and on adapting Nevada Pre-K Content Standards to include children of varying ability levels. If a child has an IEP, Pre-K teachers should always consult with parents and Early Childhood Special Education staff regarding specific goals and benchmarks, adaptations and modifications, and specially designed instruction to meet the individual needs of the child.

To be considered a regular early childhood program for IDEA reporting purposes a regular early childhood program should:

- Be comprised of at least 50% typically developing children to be considered a regular early childhood program for IDEA reporting.
- Meet the needs of every child. While a ratio of 50% or more children who are typically developing is the requirement for IDEA reporting a regular early childhood environment, the needs of each child must be considered.

A ratio of 75% typically developing children to 25% children with disabilities might be a more realistic class composition to ensure all children's needs are met. All decisions should be based on the individual program, classroom and the needs of all children and the unique needs of children with disabilities.

III. Aligning Early Childhood Programs

Preschool programs are supported by various initiatives, such as the State Pre-k or Head Start, each with its own requirements and funding. When different funding streams are braided together to create one program, the requirements for each of the programs must be met. Aligning programs means following the same standards or requirements across programs. Aligning early childhood programs helps provide culturally and linguistically responsive services across EC programs, including health, mental health, and other social services while also helping to improve quality across funding streams. Aligning programs includes attention to elements such as program standards, policies, transportation, data collection, assessments, and inclusion efforts which, when coordinated, improve services for all children. Nevada's investments in early childhood has increased significantly in recent years, and currently programs have been utilizing multiple funding streams to help increase access and quality across programs. Blended programs must align standards to meet each program's requirements.

When using funding from multiple sources, the highest, broadest standards from each funding source should be the baseline for the programs. This ensures that the highest quality is achieved in each program, regardless of the funding source. A blank Early Childhood Programs Comparison Worksheet, similar to the one below, may be found with the references. The tool may be printed and used to compare elements across program, or may be saved and filled in as a word document. The cells will expand as detail is added. Examples of 2017-18 funding streams that support braided funding and alignment opportunities are outlined in the following chart:

	State PreK	NV Ready! PreK (PDG)	SB390/Zoom-DLL	ECSE	Title I
Eligibility requirements	Children ages 3-5 not eligible for K	4-year olds; 200% poverty	Children ages 3-5 not eligible for K. Recommend minimum of 60% DLLs	Classrooms with children with IEPs ages 3-5 years of age	Program or Schoolwide identified as Title I eligible
Program Requirements	1) EC certified teacher 2) Class size and ratios: 20:2 3) Must use EC and Parenting Outcome Indicators to demonstrate effectiveness: a) Developmental Progress of Children; & b) Family Engagement 4) Curriculum must align to NV PreK standards 5) Minimum 10hrs/week	1) EC certified teacher 2) Class size and ratios: 20:2 3) Wrap-around services 4) Curriculum must align to NV PreK standards 5) Participation in QRIS 6) Family engagement 7) Minimum 25hrs/week	1. Conduct Home Language Survey to identify potential EL. 2. Zoom PreK services delivered by trained and effective PreK staff. 3. ZOOM funds are to be spent on evidence based programs and services.	Must be a child with a disability, eligible under IDEA and have an IEP.	Must meet federal definition of program wide or schoolwide
State Allocation	FY16-$3.3M FY 17- $3.3M	FY 16- $6M FY17- $11M FY18- $12.9M FY19- $13.4M	$100M is allocated to SB390/Zoom. LEAs may access Zoom funds for PreK services.		
How funding is allocated	Competitive grants every other year	Identified Subgrantees in high-need communities	Funding on formula based on EL counts.		
Districts available	Carson City; Clark; Churchill; Elko Great Basin College Humboldt; Lincoln Nye; Pershing Washoe; White Pine	Carson City; Churchill; Community Services Agency; Elko; Great Basin College; Humboldt, Lyon; Mineral; Nye; Pershing; United Way Southern Nevada; Washoe; White Pine; State Public Charter School Authority		All	*District decision:* Those currently using for PreK--- Carson City; Clark Churchill; Elko Nye; Washoe
Assessments and Evaluation Requirements	Brigance Screener EOWPVT/WIDA – currently optional ECERS-3, CLASS Formative Assessment	Brigance Screener EOWPVT/WIDA – currently optional ECERS-3, CLASS, Formative Assessment	Brigance Screener	Select from state approved assessments for OSEP required ECO data collection: Brigance IED DAYC, AEPS, TSG	Identified by district
Teacher certification	Licensed Teacher with ECE Endorsement	Licensed Teacher with ECE Endorsement OR min. of 5.2 NV Registry	Trained and effective early childhood staff.	Licensed Teacher with ECSE Endorsement	Licensed Teacher and "highly qualified"

IV. Inclusive Service Delivery Models

The following section focuses on inclusive environments and inclusive service delivery models. Considerations for staffing, classroom configurations and service delivery models include the needs of the children (individually and as a group), the guidelines for class size in a particular program, and the program models being used in a community or state.

Service Delivery

High quality inclusive settings are regular early childhood classrooms and programs where children with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) attend and receive their special education services within the regular program setting. As a reminder, the child's IEP team determines the placement. Regular programs aligning with state standards or guidelines, using evidence-based practices and grounded in accepted developmentally appropriate principles to meet the needs of all children are considered high quality.

There are other settings in which children may receive their special education services: home, separate classrooms, service provider settings, other locations, or separate schools.

Staffing and Classroom Configurations

Considerations for staffing and classroom configurations include the needs of the children (individually and as a group), the guidelines for class size in a particular program, and the program models being used in a community or state. Special education staff supporting children with IEPs in a program or classroom may also work with and provide incidental benefit to children without disabilities.

There are a number of classroom configurations and considerations for providing preschool special education services in inclusive settings. Here is a list of common strategies; there may be other ways of staffing.
  a. Co-teachers (regular and special education) in classroom
  b. Dually certified teacher who provides regular and special education
  c. Additional support in the classroom by regular or special education paraprofessionals or teacher assistants
  d. Consultation to the regular education classroom teacher
  e. Itinerant special education staff working with the child in classroom
  f. Related special education service providers (therapists) in classroom
  g. Paraprofessional or assistant providing support to an individual child

Co-teachers (regular and special education) in classrooms are when teachers with two or more certifications work together to plan, implement and assess the activities of all children. Costs for staff are dependent on the number of hours of co-teaching (from one period to the entire day, for example). The number of children in the classroom also influences the cost, as does the district, program or agency staffing costs for each teacher.

Some state certification includes teachers who are dually certified to provide regular and special education to one group of children, those with and without IEPs. Other special education and related services staff

may also be serving children with IEPs in that classroom. In this configuration, the cost for having a dually certified teacher is equal to one staff member providing services for both regular and special education services.

Consultation to the regular education classroom teacher occurs when special education and related services staff confer with regular education staff specific to children with IEPs. The costs of these special education services are provided by special education funds related to time, travel case load and other staff expenditures.

Additional support to all children and the classroom teacher by paraprofessionals or teacher assistants could be provided and funded by regular and/or special educational personnel. An important purpose of assistants is to ensure high quality engagement and participation of each child within the classroom.

Both itinerant special education teachers and related service providers deliver special education services in regular education classrooms in collaboration with the regular education teacher and other staff. An example might be a teacher who staffs an activity center within the classroom providing instruction to the child with an IEP, as well as other children who may gain incidental benefit from the lesson. Itinerant staff costs are covered by special education funds and are proportional to the time spent. Additional costs for itinerant services may include travel and consultation time, for example.

When the child's IEP specifies, paraprofessional or assistant may provide support to an individual child in the regular education setting, working under the direction of the special education and regular education teachers. Special education is responsible for funding this IEP service.

To ensure inclusive communities, it is important to create opportunities for on-going communication, shared vision, and action planning. Cross sector early childhood councils are one way to identify and coordinate opportunities, services and supports. Shared professional development opportunities for all early educators within a community contribute to a common understanding and commitment to inclusion.

V.   What Itinerant Services Look Like – District Examples

Itinerant Services in Clark County

Clark County School District (CCSD) and Acelero Learning Clark County, the Head Start grantee for Southern Nevada, partner together to provide inclusion services to children. Currently, this model exists in three schools, which are owned by Clark County School District. Each of these three schools has an Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) teacher that is a permanent CCSD staff member. The Head Start program provides a general education setting for all children in an inclusion model. Throughout the day, the ECSE teacher provides itinerant services, unless otherwise noted on the child's IEP. Thus   children have the benefit of receiving dual services in a single placement. Rather than being transported from one school to the next, the child spends their full day in the Head Start classroom. This is not only easier for children and families, but allows for greater coordination between the ECSE teacher and the general education teacher. At all Head Start programs, Early Learning Inclusion Specialists (ELIS) meet with classroom teachers, in order

to ensure that the teachers understand the goals on the student's IEP and are supporting students to reach these goals. With the inclusion partnership, Head Start teachers see specialized support being delivered to children with special needs. Not only does this provide valuable modeling for the teachers, but also allows ECSE teacher to take part in meetings with ELIS and teachers. This allows for a shared understanding of the child's needs and a coordinated effort in supporting the child outcomes. In addition to the inclusion model, at the various Head Start locations, speech pathologists and other related service providers deliver specialized services on site. This model provides convenient and supportive options for parents and children, and allows the Head Start program to better meet their goal of being an inclusive program.

Itinerant Services in Churchill County Schools

Churchill County School District provides early childhood services in one central location. Northside Early Learning Center has 8 inclusive classrooms in the 4-year old program. Funding is braided, so that children supported by different funding streams are enrolled in each classroom. Itinerant services are provided in seven classrooms, while one classroom is co-taught by a regular education and special education teacher. The itinerant teacher in this model does not travel between schools but merely between classrooms. The day is structured so that the itinerant teacher and paraprofessional spend about 20 minutes in each classroom every day. They are typically not in the classroom at the same time to provide opportunities to work with their children while they participate in different tasks and activities (i.e. The teacher may provide special education instruction to a child during center activities and the paraprofessional may work with them during whole group time). During the time special education staff are in the classroom they check in with their children. This may mean interacting with the child at a center, observing their play, engaging in an activity which involves direct instruction, reading to them, and talking with them. Special education teachers and therapists often work with the other children in the classroom. Since they are in the classroom every day all of the children get to know them. There is no "pull out" of children; they stay in the general classroom for all instruction. The children don't know which children special education staff are there to support because they work with everyone. If a teacher has a particular activity to do in a small group or individual setting they provide it in the classroom. Whenever special education staff direct small group activities, they always make sure more than 50 percent of the children they have in the group are typically developing peers. The special education itinerant teacher maintains a schedule and meets on a regular basis to collaborate and discuss concerns with the regular education teacher. The special education teacher is available to meet with teachers as necessary to address any immediate concerns that may come up. Scheduling a set date and time for collaboration with each teacher provides for consistent opportunities to meet individual children's needs, to develop quality instructional activities, and to monitor the implementation of IEPs.

VI.   Braided Funding

Braided funding involves multiple funding streams combined to create high-quality inclusive preschool programs, with careful accounting of how every dollar from each stream is spent and how requirements are met. The term braiding is used when multiple funding streams are brought together and then carefully pulled back apart to report to funders on how the money was spent. Requirements and restrictions on funding sources should be deployed in a way that promotes maximized service efficiencies. In a study of the costs of inclusive programs, lower costs were associated with more inclusive programs across public schools, community, and Head Start programs, and inclusive preschool models were less expensive for school districts than segregated models.

Where public early childhood programs exist, a child with an IEP who meets program requirements should be considered for enrollment. In this case, IDEA funds would only pay for special education and related services specified in a child's IEP. This does not prevent an LEA from using Part B funds to pay for all of the costs for a regular early childhood placement for a child with a disability if no local public program is available.

IDEA funds may be used for services and aids that also provide incidental benefit to children without disabilities. Special education and related services, supplementary aids and services, all provided in a regular early childhood setting to a child with an IEP may also benefit children without IEPs.

The following are strategies and examples of how two or more programs may braid funds. Funding requirements for specific programs in Nevada may or may not be allowed in the examples below. It is critical to know each program's funding rules, and to be able to track funds separately. States often provide policy guidance on how programs may braid funds from various sources. This guidance may prove helpful when program funding requirements are barriers to providing inclusive programs. Examples of funding strategies:

1. **Braided funding** is the use of funds from two or more programs or funding sources. An example is when children's classroom participation is supported by different funding streams, each source paying a portion of the total classroom cost. Braided funding allows the management of funds from two or more sources. The allocation and accounting of funds must match the intended purpose of the funding source without duplication. Funds must only be used for the allowable costs, as defined by the funding source at federal, state and/or local levels, as appropriate. The coordination of planning and operations requires the involvement of administrators, accounting staff, business managers or those knowledgeable of funding requirements and/or who are responsible for financial decisions. IDEA funds may not be comingled with other funds which means there must be specific bookkeeping and audit practices for the use of IDEA funds.

2. **Cost sharing – cost contribution** occurs when a funding source contributes money to the program. In this example, each funding source provides a specific dollar amount to the program. This might be the rate of funding equivalent to each program's cost per child, or other agreed upon amount. For example, the state Pre-K program may be a four-hour program which is supplemented to provide a full day program with the use of Title I funds. There is a worksheet at the end of this

section that can be used to determine contribution from each funding source, the cost of the classroom and any differences between revenue and cost.

3. **Specific cost funding** occurs when the commitment of funds is made for expenses or functions within a program by a specific fund source, according to guidelines of each source. An example of specific cost funding in this scenario would be the option of an additional assistant paid for with special education funds. This assistant is provided as a support to ensure the participation and engagement of the three children with IEPs in the classroom. In doing so opportunities for incidental benefit are enhanced. Decisions made about additional personnel in the classroom are driven by the unique needs of children with IEPs.

4. **In-kind sharing** of resources is another way to support a braided program. An example is a classroom in a school building may be provided to a regular early childhood program in exchange for slots saved specifically for a child with disabilities. In this example, a community preschool program with specific income requirements for the families it serves is recruited to locate and operate a preschool classroom in the LEA or school district. The school district provides the community program a classroom at no cost. In exchange for the classroom the community preschool program holds two slots for children with disabilities who did not meet enrollment requirements for the program.

5. **Holding slots (or enrollments for children)** is a mechanism programs may use to ensure there are seats for children with disabilities in regular early childhood programs as children with disabilities are identified throughout the year. Often when children receiving services in Part C of IDEA transition, or children are identified after the fall when classrooms are full, there are no regular programs available. Another strategy for this scenario is to prepare in advance to ensure there will be appropriate placements available throughout the year. To do this, compare enrollment counts of children with IEPs in the fall, with the number of children with IEPs receiving services in the spring. Percent growth is computed by states and districts to track these data over time to have a general idea of how many children to expect to be found eligible through Child Find.

6. **Funded enrollment** is the use of IDEA funds to pay for an individual child's placement including enrollment or tuition costs if a child's IEP specifies the child requires a regular early childhood program, and the district does not have a placement available. This often occurs in cases where a child does not meet entrance requirements or eligibility for a regular public or private early childhood program. In this example, if the regular preschool program cost is $5,000 per child per year, and two children with IEPs do not meet that program's eligibility requirements, IDEA funds may pay the enrollment cost, $10,000 for the two children.

7. **Professional competencies, certifications and licensure** that are common across early childhood programs and include an emphasis on inclusion could be developed and used to allow staff to support children in all settings. Quality programs work to ensure that personnel policies support the provisions of inclusive classrooms. Efforts to hire and retain appropriately endorsed and certified teachers, promote co-teaching options, provide on-going professional development, arrange for district level consultation are solutions that may help address personnel issues.

8. **Professional development** and shared opportunities for all early educators within a community contribute to a common understanding and commitment to inclusion. IDEA funds may be used to contribute to the cost of a statewide early childhood professional development system or could be used to include community partners in local trainings. Coordinated professional development opportunities help to build capacity of the entire community to provide high quality pre-K services. In addition, trust and respect among regular education teachers and teachers of children with disabilities as well as district teachers and teachers housed within community programs. Regular and frequent communication through emails, trainings and celebrations will keep all apprised of progress and potential set-backs.

Collaboration and a commitment to funding high-quality inclusive programs can leverage resources to create inclusive opportunities for children with disabilities. By creating collaborative funding agreements, programs clearly define the agreed upon costs each funding source is paying to support an early childhood program or classroom. These agreements may be defined in policy, informally understood, or structured as written agreements. Parties of the agreements determine and agree upon the commitment of funds.

Cost calculators have been developed to help determine the costs of preschool programs. They may be used to create a plan to serve more children, determine costs to raise standards in an existing program, calculate adequate per child allocations, and define costs to increase or maintain capacity over time. Available calculators can be found here:

9. CEELO – Cost of Preschool Quality (CPQ) Tool
    http://ceelo.org/cost-of-preschool-quality-tool/

VII. IEP Process

The IEP process for Early Childhood children is very similar to the IEP process for students aged 6-21. However, for preschool-age children, the general education curriculum is defined as "appropriate activities." Appropriate activities include activities children of the same chronological age would engage in as part of a regular preschool curriculum or other informal activities. Examples of such activities would include social interactions with peers and adults, pre-reading and math activities, sharing time, independent play, and listening skills. The Nevada Pre-Kindergarten Standards describe appropriate skills for children at the end of their preschool experiences.

The following information can be used to guide the process and provide a framework for both parents and educational professionals when developing a child's IEP.

The overarching goal statement below is intended to reflect the broad purpose of services provided under Part B, Section 619 of IDEA to support positive outcomes for children with disabilities, ages three through five, and their families. The principles are the foundation necessary to support the system of services and supports and are intended to reflect key values for the Individualized Education Program (IEP) process. (NECTAC, May 2012)

Key Principles
Underlying the IEP Process:

Supporting Family Participation, Inclusive Practices and Positive Outcomes for Preschool Children with Disabilities

**Developed by the NECTAC Workgroup
on Principles and Practices for the IEP Process**

May 2012

The overarching *goal* statement is intended to reflect the broad purpose of services provided under Part B, Section 619 of IDEA to support positive outcomes for children with disabilities, ages three through five, and their families. The *principles* are the foundation necessary to support the system of services and supports and are intended to reflect key values for the Individualized Education Program (IEP) process.

Goal	Preschool special education is to enable young children to be active and successful participants in home, school, and community settings resulting in positive outcomes for children and their families.
Principle **1**	Preschoolers learn best through meaningful everyday experiences and interactions within developmentally, linguistically and culturally appropriate routines, play, and activities in inclusive settings.
Principle **2**	All families, with appropriate supports and resources, promote their children's learning and development.
Principle **3**	The primary role of preschool special educators and related service providers is to provide and support high quality services in collaboration with families, teachers, and caregivers to promote positive outcomes for children and families.
Principle **4**	Throughout the preschool special education process, the child's individual strengths and needs, along with the family's culture, priorities, and preferences, are respected and reflected.
Principle **5**	IEP goals based on multiple sources of information, including family concerns and authentic assessment, support and promote access to and participation in the preschool curriculum.
Principle **6**	Professionals build partnerships with families and support them as the primary decision makers for their children.
Principle **7**	Preschool learning experiences are developmentally appropriate and based on recommended practices.

Background: NECTAC convened a workgroup of diverse stakeholders including researchers, higher education faculty, state policy makers, regional and local program administrators, family representatives, service providers, and technical assistance providers to develop through a consensus process an overarching goal statement and related principles for preschool special education services.

This document as well as a detailed list of preschool practices may be found on the ECTA website.

Developing the IEP

Required Participants:
- Parents of the child
- Child's teacher
- Special Education provider or educator
- Local Education Agency (LEA) Representative

Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP):

The PLAAFP statement is a brief and understandable narrative accurately describing the child's performance. IEP teams document present levels of the child's early learning and functional development across all domains focused on skills, strengths, and behaviors in the context of activities and routines. A PLAAFP statement must contain, at a minimum: information about the child's current functioning and information about the impact of the child's disability in relation to appropriate activities. In addition, the IEP must contain measurable baseline data, which may be reported in the PLAAFP or in another location on the IEP. By summarizing the data, and establishing a baseline, a solid framework is established from which measurable annual goals can be created.

The PLAAFP Should:

- Be stated in terms that are specific, measurable, and objective;
- Describe current performance, not past performance;
- Describe the effect of the disability on the child's progress in appropriate activities;
- Prioritize and identify needs that will be written as goals;
- Identify strengths as they relate to possible interventions;
- Provide baseline data for each need; and
- Set the measurement method for each goal.

Measurable Annual Goals:

Measurable annual goals are statements that describe what a child with a disability can reasonably be expected to accomplish within a 12-month period in the child's education program. There should be a direct relationship between the measurable annual goals and the needs identified in the PLAAFP. IEP teams develop goals that are developmentally appropriate and functional that could be implemented and met across settings, including inclusive settings. Needs identified in the PLAAFP must be addressed somewhere in the IEP. Most often, these needs will be addressed as annual goals. Meaningful and measurable goals can be easily monitored, and therefore are useful to teachers in making educational decisions.

Writing Meaningful Goals

A goal is meaningful when it describes a behavior/skill that will have a real impact on the success of a child in current, as well as future environments. Therefore, the IEP team should develop goals that are not likely

to develop without intervention. Goals are meaningful when they enhance and address multiple areas in a child's life, when they match a child's developmental level, and are based on the progress a child can reasonably be expected to achieve within 12 months.

Placement Decisions

Placement decisions are made by the IEP team with consideration of the child's individual goals.

The LRE requirements under Part B of the IDEA state a strong preference for educating children with disabilities in regular classes alongside their peers without disabilities. (Dear colleague letter) The IDEA presumes the first consideration for placement is the regular early childhood program, and that before a child with a disability can be placed outside the regular educational environment, the IEP team must consider whether supplementary aids and services could be provided that would enable the education of the child, including a preschool child with a disability, in the regular educational setting to be achieved satisfactorily.

When an Individual Education Program (IEP) team is determining placement options, it is important that the team consider the general education classroom and determine what accommodations and supplementary aids and services are needed for the child's success in the general education setting as a first priority. Children should be given the opportunity to attend the school they would ordinarily attend in their home area or neighborhood with their age and grade peers in the general education classrooms, whenever possible.

Placement for three year olds

IDEA Part C states that young children ages 0-3 are to be served in their "Natural Environment" while IDEA Part B states that children ages 3 through 5 are to be served in their "Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)." Transition from Part C to Part B can be confusing for both parents and school personnel. Since the transition takes place on the students third birthday, the child may not be developmentally ready for an extensive service delivery change.

While determining LRE for three-year old students, schools and families must consider what is natural for preschoolers who do not have a disability. The natural environment for three-year olds is often a family's home. Today, many children also spend a great deal of time outside of their family's home in various child-care environments, including center-based programs. All of these settings might be considered the child's least restrictive setting. When asking the IEP team to consider what the least restrictive environment is for a three-year old, the answer often is, "it depends."

It depends on more than what services are provided within the local schools because in many cases the only program provided to three year olds are for students with disabilities. It also depends on whether the placement would be a 'natural' fit for the student. A preschooler with a disability will find that the natural environment or least restrictive environment may be the home, an center-based program, and/or a combination of both.

IEP Team Decisions

If the IEP team agrees that the goals for a particular child with a disability cannot be achieved satisfactorily in the regular educational environment, even with the provision of appropriate supplementary aids and services, that child then could be placed in a setting other than the regular educational setting. The public agency responsible for providing a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to a preschool child with a disability must make available the full continuum of alternative placements, including instruction in regular classes, special classes, special schools, home instruction, and instruction in hospitals and institutions, to meet the needs of all preschool children with disabilities for special education and related services.

As stated in the 2017 U.S. [Office of Special Education Program's Dear Colleague Letter on early childhood Inclusion](#) (Dear colleague letter): "IDEA presumes that the first placement option considered for a preschool child with a disability is the regular public preschool program the child would attend if the child did not have a disability'. Therefore, in determining the placement for a child with a disability who already participates in a regular public preschool program, the placement team must consider whether the LEA, in collaboration with the regular public preschool program, can ensure that the child receives all of the special education and related services and supplementary aids and services included in the child's IEP in order to meet the needs of the particular child with a disability. Providing services to children in the regular early childhood environments they already attend can reduce unnecessary transitions that can burden families, disrupt service delivery, and interrupt child progress.

Important Considerations:

- Placement is a decision of the IEP team which includes the parents
- The IEP is completed sequentially – the child's present level of performance guides the IEP development and goals and should be completed before any placement decisions are made.
- IEP drives placement, not what placements are available
- IDEA requires that the first placement considered for a child is a regular early childhood placement
- Special Education is a service that should be brought to children in the typical environments in which they would be educated if they did not have a disability. IEP teams need to consider how services can be delivered in their current child care or preschool setting.

Early childhood outcomes (ECO) are the end results of what we want for children receiving early childhood special education services. The IEP process in early childhood should focus on the outcomes and drive the process of creating an appropriate IEP for each child.

The Three Early Childhood Outcomes are:

1. Positive social-emotional skills (including social relationships)
2. Acquisition and use of knowledge and skills (including early language/ communication, and literacy)
3. Use of appropriate behaviors to meet their needs

Each outcome is measured in terms of a child's functional use of skills across settings and situations, rather than isolated skills split by domains. There is no requirement in Nevada that teams consider the ECOs when

developing an IEP, however by integrating the IEP and ECO process, teams will find it easier to not only identify and prioritize functional IEP goals, but also complete the requirements for the ECO rating process. The discussion of early childhood outcomes should take place at the IEP meeting with the parents.

During the assessment process, the same type of information collected to document how a child's disability may impact their participation in appropriate activities can be used to document a child's functional use of skills as they relate to the ECO areas. By focusing on the three outcomes during the assessment process, teams can use a variety of formal and informal measures (e.g. curriculum-based assessments, criterion-referenced tests, structured observations, interviews) to document a child's functioning across the three ECO areas. This information will also be helpful to teams as they write PLAAFP statements.

The three outcome areas are comprehensive and represent abilities young children should accomplish as a result of their participation in our early childhood programs. Therefore, discussions during transition and IEP meetings can be structured around strengths and needs as they relate to the three outcome areas. PLAAFP statements written to include information regarding ECO will lead to goals that focus on building skills related to a child's functioning in the outcome areas.

The use of a curriculum-based assessment is a required component of completing the Child Outcome Summary Form (COSF), when a child initially enters preschool special education services and when they permanently exit the program. Teams are encouraged to use curriculum-based assessments at regular intervals (3 to 4 times each year) while a child is in their program to monitor the child's growth and development across developmental domains. This information will be helpful to teams writing annual IEPs by providing information related to a child's growth across the regular education curriculum, their functional use of skills, and the child's rate of learning.

Strategies for Integrating Outcomes into the IEP Process (NECTAC, 2011)

- Look for information related to the ECOs during the review of existing data.
- If the child is transitioning from a Part C Infant Toddler Program, organize the discussion at the Transition Meeting around the ECOs.
- During the evaluation, probe for information on caregiver concerns related to the ECOs.
  - *Encourage families to describe their child's typical day in the context of ECO areas, such as how he interacts with others, how he learns and solves problems, and how he gets his own needs met.*
  - *Compare the child's functional skills and behaviors with those expected for children his age.*
- Use functional authentic assessment during the evaluation to provide the team with information on all three ECO.
  - *Consider the child's functioning in the context of everyday activities and routines, in the three ECO areas.*
- Document supporting evidence for ECO ratings throughout the assessment and evaluation process
- During the IEP meeting, consider organizing the discussion of the child in relation to the ECO;
  - *Discuss how the child is functioning in the ECO areas and how the child's skill's and behaviors in the ECO areas compare with other children the same age.*
- In the PLAAFP, organize the description of strengths and need as they relate to the three outcome areas.

ECTA *Center*
The Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center
*Improving Systems, Practices and Outcomes for Young Children with Disabilities
and Their Families*

Team Guidance for Making Child Placement Decisions

These questions are intended to assist IEP team discussions, as appropriate. This is not a required form, nor is it necessary to document IEP discussions using this form, though teams may if they wish.

Child's Name: _____ Date: _____

Discussion Participants: _____

_____

_____

Child Considerations

- What are the child's developmental strengths and abilities?

- Where is the child now?

- Has the child experienced success in his/her current or previous placements?

- Has the child experienced challenges?

- Is the child in a location with children his or her age? With typically developing children?

- What behaviors/skills are considered developmentally appropriate for this child?

- Does the child have any specific behavioral concerns?

Family Considerations

- Does the family have some IEP goal areas that they want to include? What are some home routines and activities that the child needs assistance with that we could work on in the early care & education setting?

- Are there areas of concern in which the family might need technical assistance and training that is available in the community or through the schools?

- What opportunities has the child had to interact with typically developing peers that the family felt was important (e.g., church programs, community classes, etc).

Curricular Considerations

- Can the child experience success in the same activities as his/her peers?

- Can the child participate in the same activities with modifications?

- What are the identified IEP goals and objectives for this child?

- Can IEP goals and objectives be embedded in classroom activities?

Support Considerations

- What activities can the child participate in without extra support?

- In what activities does the child require extra support?

- What extra supports would be required?

Questions that IEP teams (parents, teachers and administrators) may want to ask are:

- How does the school promote inclusive early childhood practices?
- What supports are in place to provide Early Childhood teachers training on methods of differentiated instruction?
- What co-teaching and collaborative consulting strategies are in place to meet the needs of children with disabilities in the regular classroom?

Reporting Progress and Monitoring Strategies

After goals and objectives are written, the team must also identify the methods they will use to measure and report the progress the child is making toward attaining the goal. By writing the goal, the first step in this process has already been completed. The goal has spelled out the skills to be achieved and the criterion under which accomplishment of the goal will be established.
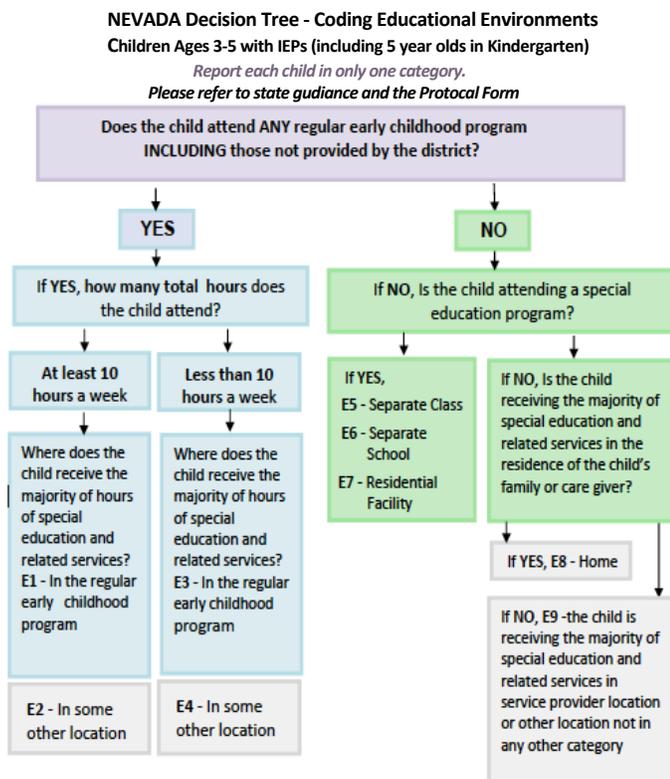
Now the team must establish a more specific strategy for monitoring progress throughout the year. They must decide:
- who will be responsible for data collection
- where data will be collected
- methods of data collection
- measurement conditions
- monitoring schedule for data collection
- strategies to determine when a child's performance warrants instructional change
- number of times per year parents will receive communication regarding child progress
- methods for informing the parents of the progress

The manner in which this requirement is implemented is left to the discretion of each IEP team. It is dependent on how and when reporting is provided within the district. The reporting may be carried out in writing or through a meeting with the parents (including documentation of information shared at the meeting). Whatever methods are decided upon, the IEP team must provide sufficient information to enable parents to be informed of (1) their child's progress toward the annual goals, and (2) the extent to which that progress is sufficient to enable the child to achieve the IEP goals by the end of the year.

VIII.   IDEA Placement Codes

Placement (Educational Environments) determined by the IEP team and the "E" code calculated by **using the decision tree working from the top down:**

NEVADA Decision Tree - Coding Educational Environments
Children Ages 3-5 with IEPs (including 5 year olds in Kindergarten)
Report each child in only one category.
Please refer to state gudiance and the Protocal Form

Does the child attend ANY regular early childhood program INCLUDING those not provided by the district?

YES → If YES, how many total hours does the child attend?
- At least 10 hours a week → Where does the child receive the majority of hours of special education and related services? E1 - In the regular early childhood program / E2 - In some other location
- Less than 10 hours a week → Where does the child receive the majority of hours of special education and related services? E3 - In the regular early childhood program / E4 - In some other location

NO → If NO, Is the child attending a special education program?
- If YES, E5 - Separate Class / E6 - Separate School / E7 - Residential Facility
- If NO, Is the child receiving the majority of special education and related services in the residence of the child's family or care giver?
  - If YES, E8 - Home
  - If NO, E9 - the child is receiving the majority of special education and related services in service provider location or other location not in any other category

IDC, ECTA Adapted by Sherry Bingham, NDE, August 2016

Ask the family if the child attends ANY regular education preschool program including those not provided by the district which includes:
- any regularly scheduled program that has a consistent schedule and curriculum such as child care, private preschool, etc. and must be at least 50% typically developing peers.

If YES, the child does attend a regular early childhood program:
1. Determine the total # of hours the child is in the regular education program. Is it 10 hours or more per week?
   - If yes, then determine where the child receives the majority (50% or more) of hours of special education and related services and choose [E1] or [E2].
2. If the total number of hours the child is in the regular education programs is less than 10 hours per week,
   - Determine where the child receives the majority (50% or more) of hours of special education and related services and choose [E3] or [E4].

If NO, the child does not attend a regular early childhood program, does the child attend a special education program?
1. If YES, the child does attend a special education program then determine if it is a
   - Separate Class such as self contained setting [E5]
   - Separate School [E6]
   - Residential Facility [E7]
2. If NO, the child does not attend a special education program,
   - Determine if the child is receiving the majority of special education and related services in the residence of the child's family or care giver? If YES, choose [E8]-Home.
   - If NO, the child does not attend a special education program and the child is receiving the majority of special education and related services in the service provider location (such as speech therapy) or other location not in any other category then choose [E9].

For an electronic version of the decision tree please go to: https://b6tools.ideadata.org/NV

IX.   Suspension and Expulsion

State of Nevada Policy Statement on Expulsion and Suspension in Early Childhood Settings

Nevada aims to prevent children from being expelled, suspended or excluded in all early childhood settings. The goal of this policy statement is to provide guidance to early childhood programs and families. This document is Nevada's stance on supporting children's social and emotional development and behavioral health.

The purpose of this policy statement is to:
- Provide guidelines for programs to create policies that prevent suspension and expulsion,
- Set the expectation that policies are carried out free of bias, and
- Raise awareness of the importance of social-emotional learning and behavioral health for all children regardless of ability or disability.

This statement follows recommendations from the U.S. Department of Education (ED) and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). Programs receiving Federal financial assistance must practice equitable student discipline and support healthy social-emotional and behavioral outcomes for young children of all backgrounds[1]. Public and charter programs are also required by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) to follow regulations governing child discipline when child misconduct is related to a disability[2]. Nevada policy echoes IDEA's emphasis on preschool inclusion and equitable access education and services.

X.   References

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