Louisiana Believes

Improving Early and Accurate Identification of Early Childhood Students with Disabilities

DEPARTMENT of EDUCATION

Session Objectives

As a result of this presentation, participants will:

- Understand **their role** in improving Child Find activities and the early identification of students with disabilities;

- Identify ways to **improve coordination** of early childhood screening, intervention and referral; and

- Prioritize **key actions** to improve Child Find in their district.

Session Agenda

I. Overview: rationale and best practices for early identification

I. Deep dive and self-assessment: three key recommendations for improving early identification

I. Facilitated discussion: sharing successful strategies

I. District-level planning: next steps for improvement

Overview:
# Rationale and Best Practices for Early Identification

Vision for Students with Disabilities

Louisiana believes that all students, including those with the most significant cognitive disabilities, deserve an education that prepares them to be independent and successful in life after high school.

Through quality and clear alignment of standards, instructional resources, and assessments, our students can achieve academically and leave high school with the skills for lifelong success.

Current Reality

PERCENT OF STUDENTS WITH MASTERY (E,M,S) ON LEAP 2014-2016
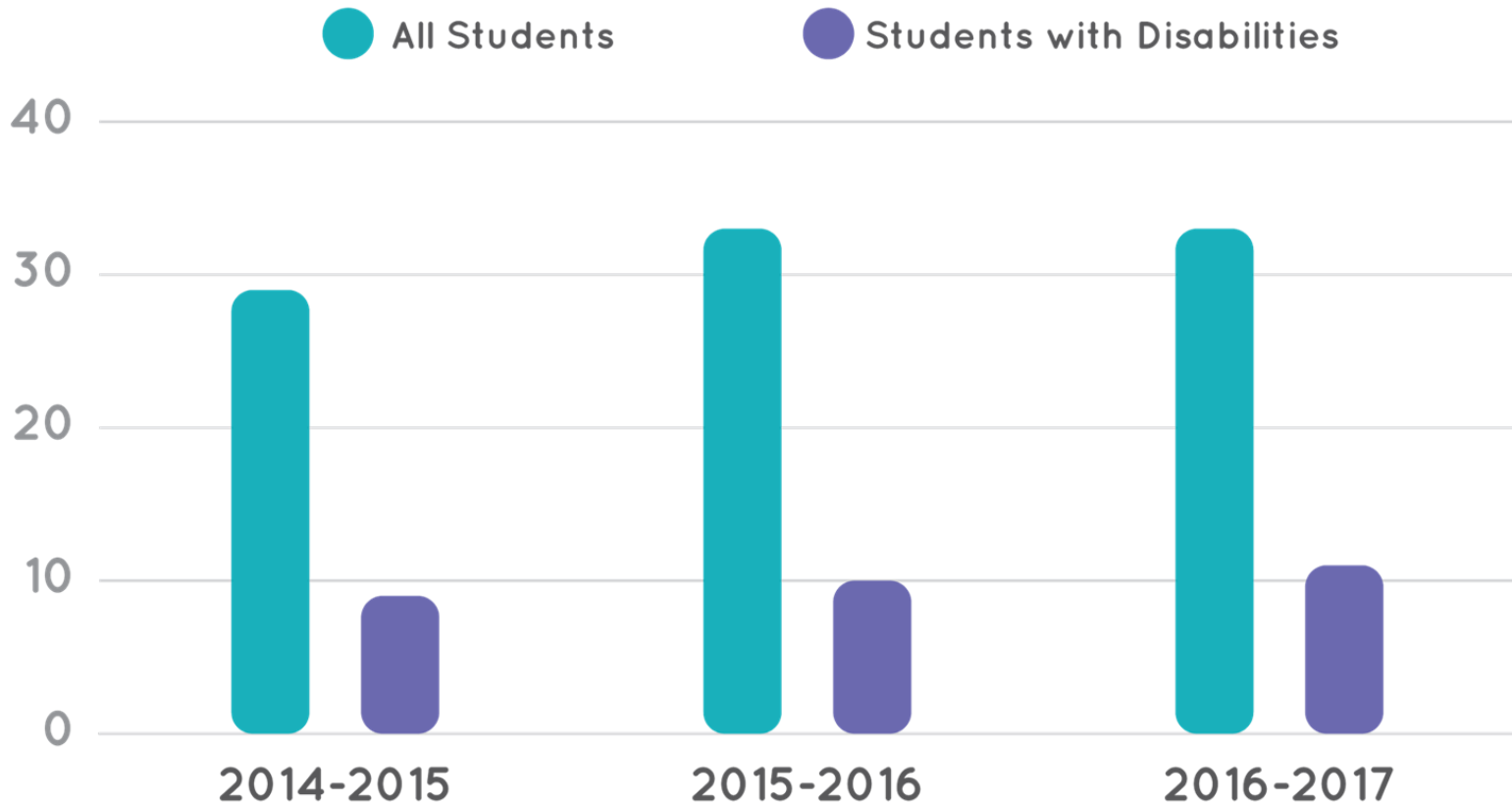
Call to Action

We must build a seamless support system for students with disabilities–one that prepares all students for the highest academic achievement and a lifetime of opportunity

Achieving this vision will require educators at all levels–from site and system leaders to classroom teachers–to embrace policies and practices that support high-quality educational experiences, ***beginning in early childhood***.

Strategies for Supporting Students with Disabilities

Research and best practice have pinpointed specific strategies essential for ensuring the achievement of students with disabilities:

- **Identify disabilities early and accurately**
- **Provide high-quality instruction to support students with disabilities in achieving ambitious IEP goals**
- **Strengthen instruction with specialized supports and related services**
- **Coordinate effective transition planning and implementation**

The Role of Early and Accurate Identification

Short-term goals of early and accurate identification:

- identify needs early to prevent gaps in learning and development
- provide high-quality interventions and services (i.e., provided by trained personnel and matched to specific needs and developmental goals)

The long-term effects of high-quality early intervention and services include:

- improved outcomes across developmental domains, including health, language and communication,cognitive development, and social/emotional development;

- decreased incidence of future problems in learning, behavior and health status; and,

- greater effectiveness and lower cost of interventions and services provided later in life

Early and Accurate Identification:
The Role of EarlySteps

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires states to identify, locate and evaluate all children with disabilities (Child Find).

For Children age 0 through 3 years (36 months):

- A referral is made to EarlySteps by contacting [System Point of Entry](), SPOE, in their region;

- Eligibility is determined based on current definition of developmental delay;

- EarlySteps provides early intervention services, EIS, to eligible students (Part C of IDEA);

- Services are driven by Individual Family Service Plan, IFSP, and provided in child's natural environment.

Early and Accurate Identification:
The Role of the LEA

For children age 3 years through their 22nd birthday:

- The LEA must have a comprehensive process to identify, locate and evaluate every child with a disability in the district, regardless of where, or if, the child attends school;

- There are thirteen (13) disability categories defined in Bulletin 1508 (chapter 7);

- The LEA must provide free and appropriate special education services to eligible students (Part B of IDEA);

- Services are driven by the Individual Education Plan, IEP, and provided in the least restrict environment, LRE.

Due to the difference in eligibility categories, a child may qualify for special education services even if s/he did not qualify for early intervention services through EarlySteps.
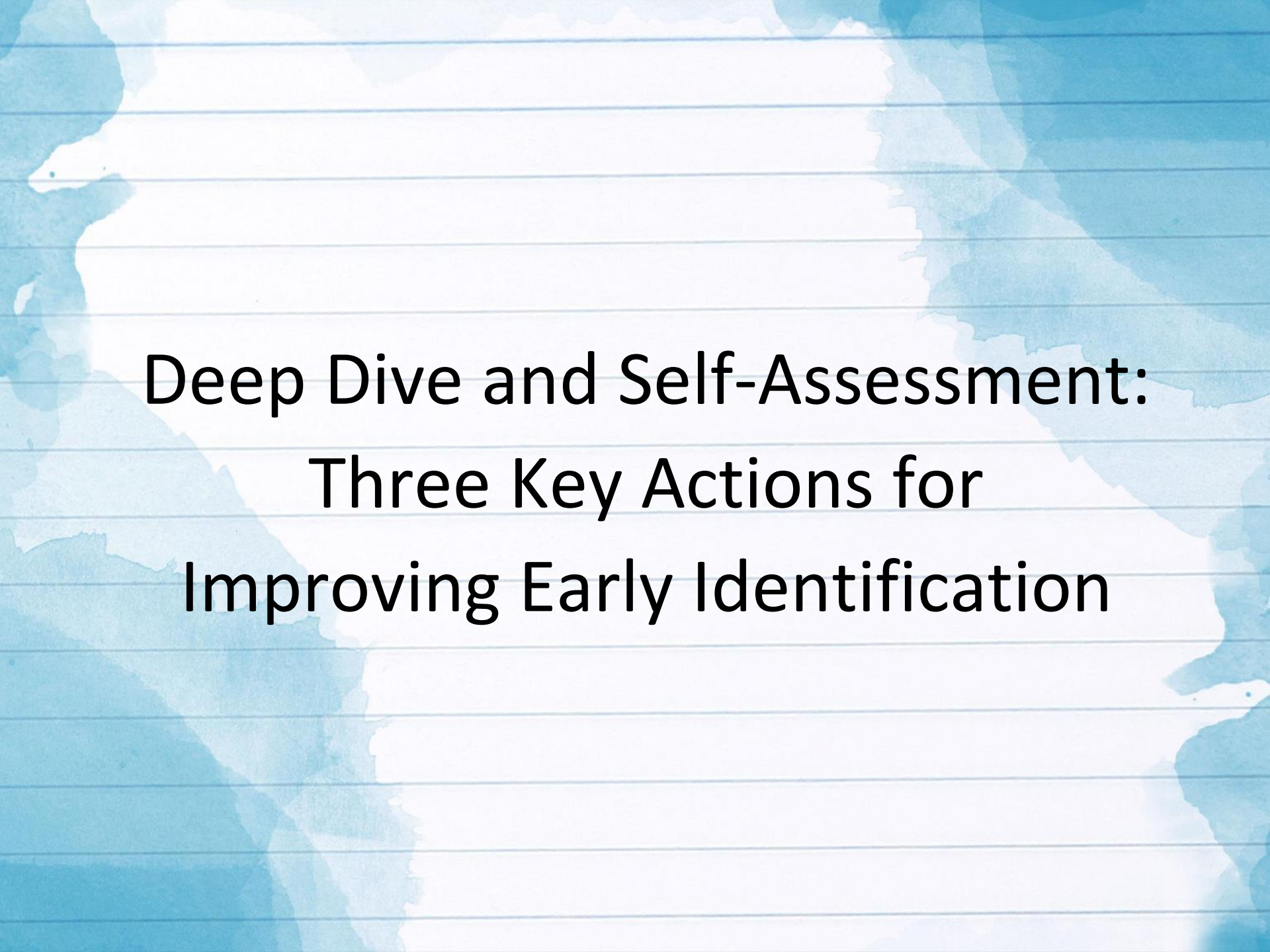
Improving Early and Accurate Identification

On your own, review the current guidance regarding early and accurate identification from the _PK-3 Guidebook_ and _Strategies for Success: A Guidebook for Supporting Students with Disabilities_ (relevant excerpts are provided).

As you read, use your interactive handout to take note of the recommended practices and your role in each of the following key areas:

- Improve your process for identifying young children with disabilities
- Improve your ability to find young children with disabilities
- Improve the alignment and delivery of early childhood instruction and services

Improving Early and Accurate Identification

Key Area To Improve	Recommended Action
Improve your process for **identifying** young children with disabilities	1. Implement a coordinated screening, intervention and referral process for all children age 3-5
Improve your ability to **find** young children with disabilities	2. Communicate details of the screening, intervention and referral process with families, community partners and early childhood stakeholders
Improve the delivery of early childhood **instruction, supports and services** matched to specific needs	3. Increase collaboration with community agencies to improve services

Deep Dive and Self-Assessment: Three Key Actions for Improving Early Identification

Three Key Actions for
Improving Early Identification

1. Implement a coordinated screening, intervention and referral process for all students age 3-5

2. Communicate details of the screening, intervention and referral process with families, community partners and early childhood stakeholders

3. Increase collaboration with community agencies to improve services

Coordinate Screening, Intervention and Referral: Who Should Be Screened?

→ **Publicly-funded children attending a publicly-funded early childhood program (ECP)**

→ **Privately-funded children attending a publicly-funded ECP**

→ **Children attending a privately-funded ECP or attending no program at all**

Coordinate Screening, Intervention and Referral: Key Components

- Universal screening process for all students attending publicly-funded ECP
- Developmental screening process for every child age 3-5 who is not making progress toward developmental benchmarks
  - following the universal screening process for students attending a publicly-funded ECP;
  - upon referral for students not attending a publicly-funded ECP (i.e., private daycare or at home);
- Formal evaluation process for children age 3-5 suspected of having a disability
  - following the developmental screening process for all students

Self-Assessment:
Universal Screening Process

Take 5 minutes to **review the recommendations for universal screening** of early childhood students in your interactive handout. Keep in mind that these recommendations are specific to:

- publicly-funded students attending a publicly-funded program; and,

- privately-funded students attending a publicly-funded program.

- Working independently, **consider the questions listed in your interactive handout** and assess your current practices in the area of early childhood universal screening:

- **Identify the most pressing need** for improvement in this area.

Self-Assessment:
Developmental Screening and
Referral for Formal Evaluation

Take 5 minutes to **review the recommendations for developmental screening and referral for formal evaluation** of children age 3-5 in your interactive handout. Keep in mind that these recommendations apply to any child age 3-5 in your jurisdiction who is not making progress toward developmental benchmarks.

- Working independently, **consider the questions listed in the interactive handout** to assess your current practices in the area of diagnostic screening and formal evaluation.

- **Identify the most pressing need** for improvement in this area.

- **Share one promising practice** that you have in place.

Three Key Actions for
Improving Early Identification

1. Implement a coordinated screening, intervention and referral process across all early childhood programs (ECP).

2. Communicate details of the screening, intervention and referral process with families, community partners and early childhood stakeholders.

3. Increase collaboration with community agencies to improve services.

Develop a Plan to Communicate With Families and Partners

In order to effectively locate *all* children with a disability, LEA's must develop a plan to communicate the screening and referral process to families and other important community partners.

This plan should include:

- Use of Coordinated Enrollment mechanisms to communicate screening and referral process to families
- Participation in district outreach campaigns to educate parents about how to recognize developmental milestones
- Use of district communication streams and social media tools to disseminate information about the screening and referral process
- Participation in community forums to educate community partners and families about developmental milestones in key domains
- Training for early education providers to talk with parents about developmental concerns.

Three Key Actions for
Improving Early Identification

1. Implement a coordinated screening, intervention and referral process across all early childhood programs (ECP).

2. Communicate details of the screening, intervention and referral process with families, community partners and early childhood stakeholders.

3. Increase collaboration with community agencies to improve services.

Improve Collaboration with Community Agencies

- Meet regularly as a coordinated early childhood team, including:
  - Head Start/Early Head Start,
  - early childhood coordinators,
  - Lead Agency representatives,
  - special education coordinators and, if possible,
  - early childhood pupil appraisal team members
- Use Community Network Meetings as an opportunity to provide professional development on the screening and intervention process and strategies to support identified student needs
- Collaborate with EarlySteps to share resources and identify outreach opportunities
- Partner with community agencies to cultivate referral sources and develop family supports
- Collaborate with early childhood programs and other community agencies so that the full continuum of placement options is available for students who qualify for services, including serving them in their current ECP or in their home

Self-Assessment:
Communication and Collaboration

- Working independently, **consider the self-assessment questions in your interactive handout** to assess your current practices in the areas of communication and collaboration:

- **Identify the most pressing need** for improvement in these areas.

- **Share one promising practice** that you have in place.

Facilitated Discussion:
Sharing Successful Strategies

Facilitated Discussion:
Sharing Best Practices

As your colleagues share their best practices in the following key areas, feel free to jot notes in your interactive handout in the 'Best Practices' section.

District-Level Planning:
Next steps for Improvement

Develop a Plan To Improve
Early and Accurate Identification

Working collaboratively as a district/LEA:

- Discuss your individual self-assessments and **come to consensus on a rating of your current state** in each of the three areas below (1 is lowest, 5 is highest):

    – Coordinated early childhood screening, intervention and referral process

    – Communication with families and partners

    – Collaboration with community agencies

- Collaboratively **identify a priority area to improve** early and accurate identification based on your ratings

- **Draft three next steps** that you will implement to improve in this area. **Specify the owner of each action step and a timeline for implementation.**

Thank You

- Resources:
  - [Guide to Early Childhood Curriculum, Assessments and Professional Development](#)
  - [Louisiana's Early Learning and Development Standards](#) (ELDS)
  - [ELDS Training](#)
  - [Developmental Screenings Guidebook](#) (Early Childhood)
  - [PreK Through 3 Guidebook](#)
  - [Alphabetical Table of Screening and Evaluation Tools](#)
  - [Strategies for Success: A Guidebook for Supporting Students With Disabilities](#)

- Email **specialeducation@la.gov** with questions