

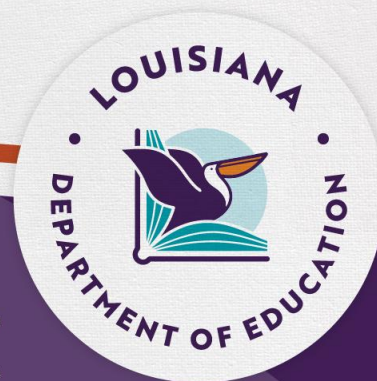
TEACHER LEADER SUMMIT 2025



A *New Story* for LOUISIANA EDUCATION

Supporting Young Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Settings

JUNE 10-12, 2025 | ERNEST N. MORIAL
CONVENTION CENTER | NEW ORLEANS, LA



Agenda

- I. Session Overview
- II. Objectives
- III. LDOE Educational Priorities and High-Quality Professional Learning Cycle
- IV. Using Best Practices to Support Young Children with Disabilities
- V. Creating Experiences for Young Children with Disabilities
- VI. Creating Environments for Young Children with Disabilities
- VII. Supporting Young Children with Disabilities through Intentional Efforts
- VIII. Closing

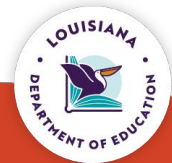


Session Overview

This session will provide early childhood educators with strategies for supporting young children with disabilities in early childhood settings.

Topics covered will include:

- Utilizing best practices for supporting young children with disabilities, such as
 - creating appropriate environments
 - providing appropriate materials
 - facilitating high-quality educator-child interactions



Objectives

Participants will:

- Identify and describe evidence-based practices that support the integration of young children with disabilities in early childhood settings.
- Evaluate and apply engagement strategies that can be used or adapted to meet the individual goals of young children with disabilities within their programs.



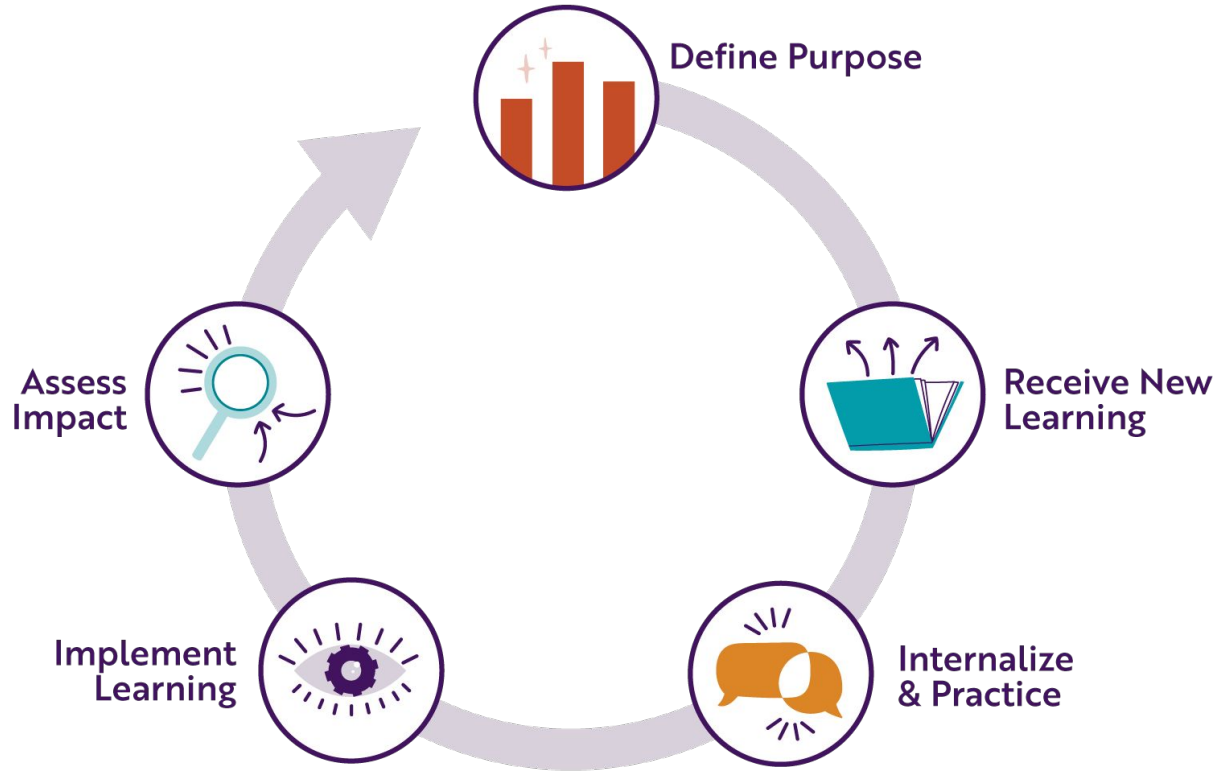


LDOE Education Priorities and High-Quality Professional Learning Cycle

Louisiana's Education Priorities

- ✓ **Early childhood** leading to kindergarten readiness
- ✓ **Literacy** instruction aligned to the Science of Reading
- ✓ **Math** instruction from foundational to advanced skills
- ✓ Opportunities ensuring a **meaningful high school experience**
- ✓ An effective **teacher for every student**
- ✓ Expand **educational choice** for students and families

High-Quality Professional Learning Cycle





Using Best Practices to Support Young Children with Disabilities

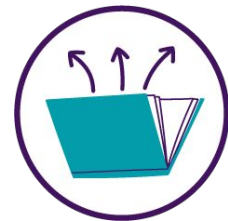
Best Practices that Support Young Children with Disabilities



Best practices provide opportunities for children with physical, behavioral, or learning disabilities to be supported and participate in early childhood settings and learning with their peers.

- Best practices include those that engage and bring together all children within the early learning setting to meet common learning goals through experiences and opportunities.
- Using best practices in early learning settings provides young children with disabilities the opportunities to
 - have their developmental needs supported to improve outcomes
 - participate in early learning experiences alongside their nondisabled peers
 - build friendships
- Best practice also help all children learn how to interact with one another despite differences in abilities.

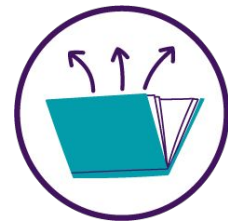
Best Practice: Infants and Young Toddlers



Practices that support all children are most impactful for *infants* when they do the following:

- Support the early development that allows children with disabilities to practice and generalize skills they are learning to meet their developmental milestones.
- Enhance interactions by providing supports needed to encourage appropriate receptive and expressive language and communication
 - Example: The child waves in response to a familiar adult saying "Bye-bye" and waving.

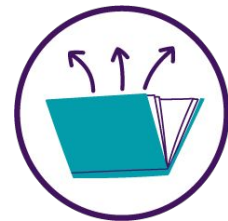
Best Practices: Older Toddlers and Preschoolers



Practices that support all children are most impactful for *toddlers and preschoolers* when they do the following:

- Promote the development of quality interactions among peers that allow children with disabilities to practice and generalize skills they are learning
- Enhance language and communication skills by providing peer models that have appropriate language and communication skills.
 - Example: A child says, "First I sorted the buttons into groups by color, and then I sorted then by size," after completing the sorting task.

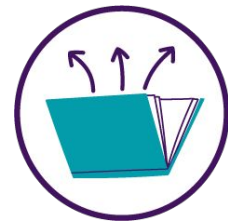
Best Practices: Older Toddlers and Preschoolers



Practices that support all children are most impactful for *toddlers and preschoolers* when they do the following:

- Promote the development of patience by helping children understand that everyone can play, learn, and grow together.
 - Example: During a math sorting game, children asked to take turns sorting objects provided to them by color. Each child picks an item, places it where it belongs, and waits for their 2 friends to do the same until all objects have been sorted.

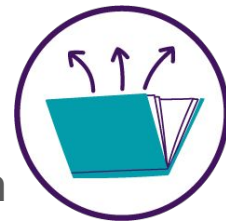
Best Practices: Early Educators



Practices that support all children are most impactful for *early educators* when they:

- Broaden the development of new instructional techniques and perspectives by opening new levels of understanding in child development
- Stretch educators to learn innovative ways to modify the environment and accommodate their lessons according to individual child needs
- Expand opportunities to discover and develop partnerships with other community resources and agencies
- Build stronger relationships through communication with parents and partners in education

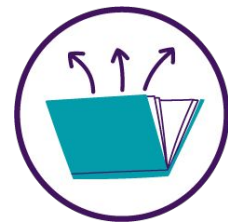
Best Practices: Families



Practices that support all children are most impactful for *families* when they:

- Connect families to resources within the community that assist the family with educational and social resources needed for their child to be successful
 - Examples include EarlySteps or other local community recreational programs, support groups, etc.

Best Practices: Communities



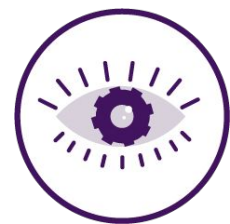
Practices that support all children are most impactful for *communities* when they:

- Allow the community to embrace a vision that all children are valued and welcome
- Help communities become more accepting and supportive of children and adults with different abilities
- Allow for the sharing of community resources, from various agencies, that can benefit all children
- Lead to more opportunities and possibilities for children with and without disabilities to interact



Creating Experiences for Young Children with Disabilities

Defining Practices in Settings that Include All Children

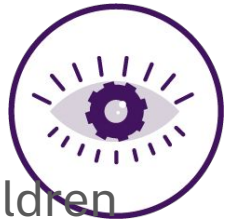


Defining practices provide an appropriate, non-restrictive, educational experience for young children with disabilities in the general education setting while using the general curriculum.

The ***defining practices*** used in settings that support all children include

- **meeting developmental milestones** by teaching and learning through the lens of the children with and without disabilities
- **providing management strategies** that meet the needs of all children
- **approaching the curriculum** with individuals in mind and thinking about how you will reach every individual child in the classroom
- understanding that **all children** bring value and are able to succeed

Curriculum Modifications



Curriculum modifications for young children with disabilities provide children with disabilities with the same experiences as their peers in the early learning setting.

- These modifications could include making small changes to an activity to meet the end goals while also meeting the individual child needs.

Examples include the following:

- Creating activities that are age-appropriate while also being sensitive to individual needs
- Breaking down tasks into smaller activities that include breaks
- Using markers instead of paint if a child struggles with the paint texture

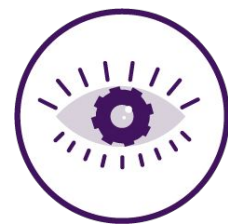
Classroom Management Strategies



Classroom management strategies are an important for children with disabilities. Strategies will change depending on the child's exceptional needs. Modifications that help all children be successful may include material, activity, environmental, and behavioral supports. These modifications may include strategies such as the following:

Material Supports	Activity Supports	Environmental Supports	Behavioral Supports
<ul style="list-style-type: none">*Providing age-appropriate materials*Placing all materials at accessible heights and locations*Providing visual boundaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none">*Giving choices*Taking breaks*Teaching to child interests through preferred activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">*Using picture supports*Clearing pathways*Minimizing distances traveled*Stabilizing materials using tape or velcro	<ul style="list-style-type: none">*Encouraging positive interactions*Rewarding positive behavior*Keeping rules simple and clear

Considering Child Preferences



Management strategies can be improved in classrooms when we consider child preferences. These preferences include children's preferred activities, preferred means of communication, or preferred ways of engagement. Allowing child preference into the classroom environment increases participation and sparks the interest in the activities for more children.

Examples include the following:

- **Making the environment less complicated** by placing materials at accessible locations for all children to reach them
- **Removing items** in the environment that cause over-stimulation
- **Using picture schedules** to help children know what is next
- Providing materials that are **organized and sorted**
- **Allowing** a child to play alone or with a buddy in order to participate in an activity

Providing Individualized Support

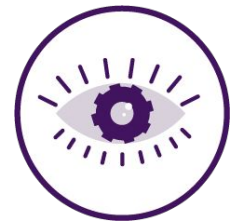


Environments can be adapted and materials can be modified to meet the of individual children. Teaching and learning through the lens of the individual child addresses individual needs of children who have different backgrounds and abilities. **Material modifications can sometimes be necessary due to developmental delays.**

Examples include the following:

- Replacing unacceptable materials with acceptable ones
- Using materials/toys in the room that are age-appropriate
 - Avoiding using small toys in where children put them in their mouths
- Using larger and brighter materials to attract child attention or interests

Intentional Efforts for Infants and Toddlers



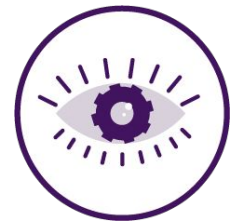
Children with disabilities need more intentional, systematic instruction to learn how to interact with others. **Teachers can provide opportunities through play for improve child connections.**

Examples include the following:

- Making faces during diaper changing time
- Greeting children as they enter the classroom
- Sitting with a group of children and giving the children the words to say, such as “your turn” and “my turn” to help the child interact appropriately



Intentional Efforts for Preschoolers



Children with disabilities need more intentional, systematic instruction to learn **how to interact with others**. Early educators can provide opportunities throughout the day to improve child connections.

Examples include the following:

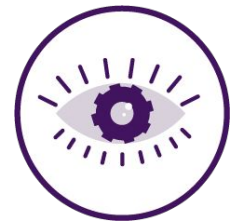
- Playing a game in which children take turns
- Greeting children as they enter the classroom
- Pairing children with peers who have strong language skills to nurture the development of language in others





Creating Environments for Young Children with Disabilities

Responsive Environments for Infants and Toddlers



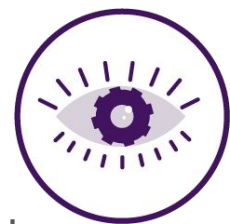
When creating a responsive learning environment for infants and toddlers, the key is to consider the interests and developmental needs and levels of the children in the classroom.

Some ways that you could adjust the classroom environment to be responsive to infant and toddler children include the following:

- Ensure children have access to toys that are safe for biting or chewing
- Set up a learning environment for more space if toddlers are beginning to walk and pull up so that there is plenty of room to move around

Daily routines allow for children to feel comfortable in the classroom and the children know what is expected and what is next in their day.

Responsive Environments for Preschool

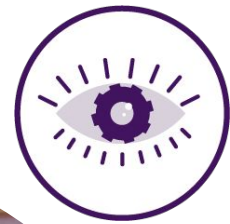


When creating a responsive learning environment for preschoolers/pre-K, the key is to consider the interests and developmental needs and levels of the children in the classroom.

Some additional ways that you could adjust the classroom environment to be responsive to preschoolers include the following:

- Adjust the classroom environment and materials to meet the needs and interests of children
- Use the environment to support learning and development, such as by
 - Using small furniture, chairs, and tables
 - Using interactive schedules and routines that promote predictability
 - Allowing children to take risks and engage with others
 - Providing accessibility for different needs and disabilities

Environmental Supports



Environments that include and support all children provide adaptations and supports that meet the needs of individual children.

- Environmental support may include labeling with photos and text to help the child better understand the classroom and navigate to where materials should be placed on shelves or where their materials should be placed.

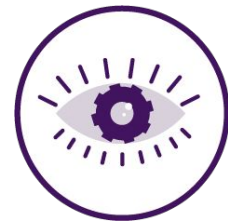


Peer Support

Peer supports may include peer models to help other children make appropriate choices or work on skills necessary to meet developmental milestones.

Examples include the following:

- Betty has an objective to use two hands together. The teacher pairs her with a peer and/or an adult to pass toys back and forth and hold toys with two hands.
- Layla has a behavior disorder and becomes overwhelmed when she walks into the classroom setting early in the morning. Her teacher uses social stories to teach her the expectations of entering the classroom and has a preferred friend greet her each morning.

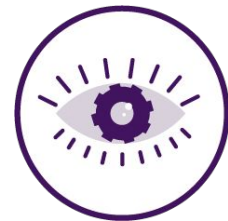


Adult Support

Adult support can be provided as needed to guide children in interactions and activities throughout the day.

Examples include the following:

- Sadie has an objective for increasing eye coordination. The teacher plays with Sadie and uses a rattle to facilitate eye coordination by using sound to increase her ability to follow the toy with her eyes.
- Max has a physical delay and uses a walker. His teacher ensures that the floor is open so that Max can move around the classroom safely and easily.





Supporting Young Children with Disabilities through Intentional Efforts

Daily Intentional Instruction



Individualized adaptations should be made to daily routines and activities, and intentional, specialized instruction should occur. Teachers can make adaptations to their routines and activities to allow the child(ren) to learn and grow.

Examples include the following:

- Allowing a child to enter with an item of comfort such as a lovie or toy
- Feeding a child at a different time due to medical or sensory needs
- Allowing a child to sit in a chair instead of on the floor with the group
- Providing music for transitions between routines

These types of adaptations help the teacher to support the individual needs of the child(ren).

Supporting Families



Children's development is best supported when adults who care for them as a team.

Collaboration

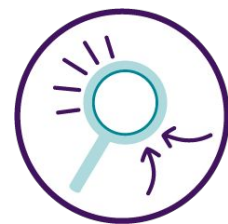
It is important that the lines of communication among all members of the team are open and ongoing in order to share information on how a child is progressing and collaborate on how to address concerns.

- *Educators and Providers* must develop a communication system for ongoing communication with families and caregivers and address concerns in a collaborative approach.
- *Families* must know about appropriate child development to ensure what is best for their child as they support their child's growth.
- *Community Entities* must work in partnerships to ensure support is provided to the field.



Closing

Next Steps



Ongoing program evaluation will help providers maintain high-quality opportunities for all children who participate in early childhood programs.

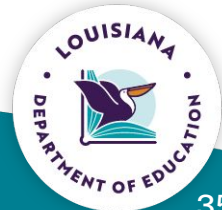
Write down a couple of ways that you can provide the following supports in your classroom(s), to positively impact young children with disabilities.

Curriculum Support	Activity Supports
<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Can the child experience success in the same activities as his/her peers?-Can the child participate in the same activities with modifications?-Can goals be embedded in classroom activities?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-What activities can the child participate in without extra support?-In what activities does the child require extra support?-What extra support would be required?

Closing

Key levers for change:

- Use observations to choose strategies to support individual children and drive decision-making within your site.
- Partner as a team member with the family in the decision-making process to support the child being part of your classroom.
- Support the family's understanding of their child being included in your early learning classroom and what's best for their child.



Monthly Young Children with Disabilities Community of Practice

The LDOE team conducts webinars on various topics related to early childhood.

This month's topic is "Developmental Disabilities in Young Children." This session will provide ECCE leaders and teachers with a basic understanding of child development that will assist educators and families to monitor the children in their care more closely to determine next steps concerning screening and referral.

Attendees can access the webinar using the information below:

- **Webinar Date/Time:** August 26, 2025 at 3:00 p.m.
- **Webinar Link:** <https://ldoe.zoom.us/j/91561982271>
- **Phone Number:** 1-312-626-6799
- **Meeting ID:** 915 6198 2271
- **Passcode:** 787411

Upcoming Events and Deadlines

Please contact Caitlyn.Robinson@la.gov with questions.



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