



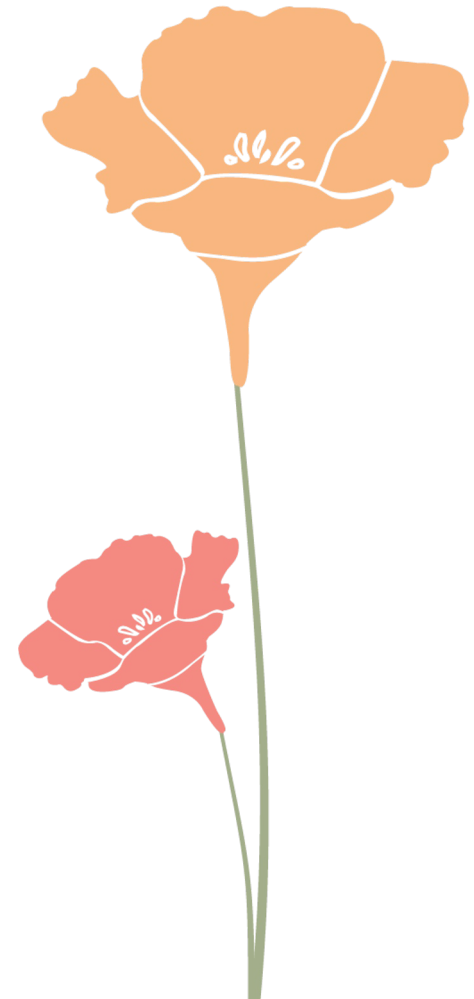
Inclusion in California  
Early Learning and Care

# Defining Equity in Access to Quality Care for Preschoolers with Disabilities

Margaret Gillis, Ph.D.

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# Study Overview



- Objectives
  - Describe the status of preschoolers with disabilities in subsidized early learning and care in California
  - Identify the **facilitators and barriers to the inclusion of preschoolers with disabilities** in subsidized early learning and care and strategies to increase facilitators and decrease barriers



# Study Design

Method	Data Collection	Sample
Administrative Data	Subsidized early learning and care Special Education	All children ages 3-5 with disabilities
Key Informant Interviews	Interviews	23 professionals in a variety of roles in early childhood and early childhood special education
Case Study	Interviews	Families, child care directors, teachers, special education providers, district administrators, R&R staff, family center staff, Regional Center staff
Statewide Survey	Surveys	Child Care Directors Local Preschool Special Education Administrators

# Defining Inclusion

- Subsidized Care Database
  - Child attends a subsidized program/receives subsidy and has an IEP on file
- Special Education Database
  - Child with an IEP attends an early childhood program and receives their special education services in that classroom

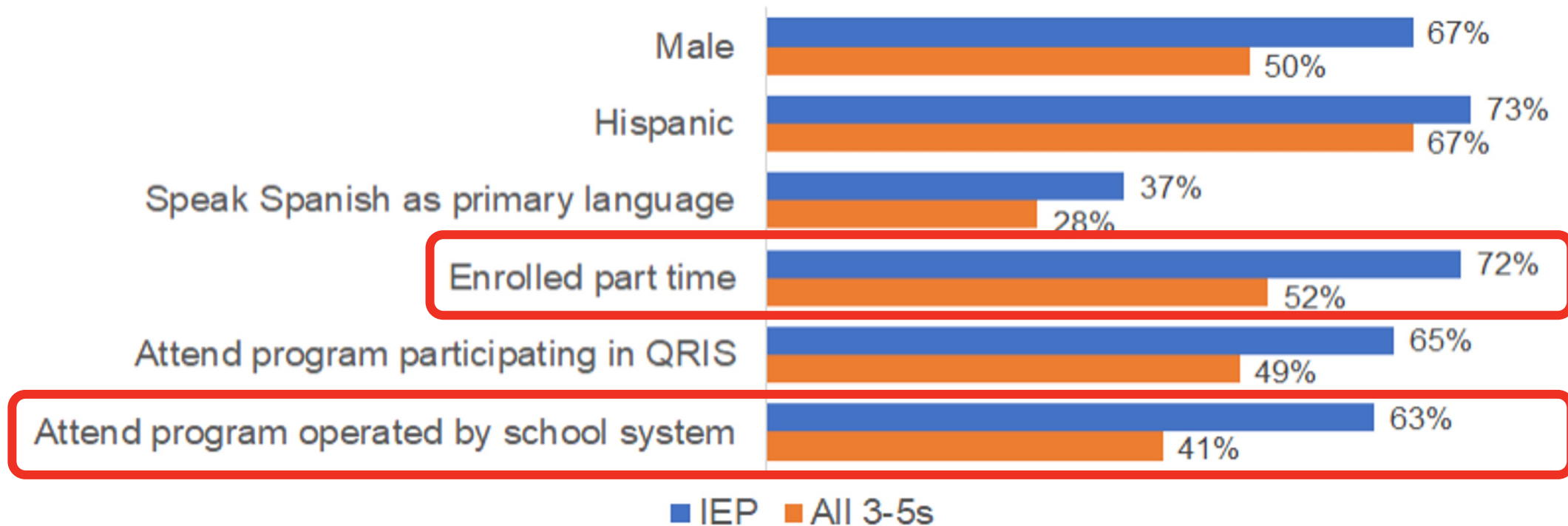


# Defining Inclusion: Gold Standard

- Child with an IEP has access to the general curriculum
- Proportion of children with IEPs in the classroom is similar to the proportion of children with disabilities in the general population
- Child with an IEP receives their special education services in the classroom
- Specialists support the teacher in working with the child to achieve their IEP goals
- Specialists include the child's peers in service delivery
- Child and family transitions during the day or week are minimalized

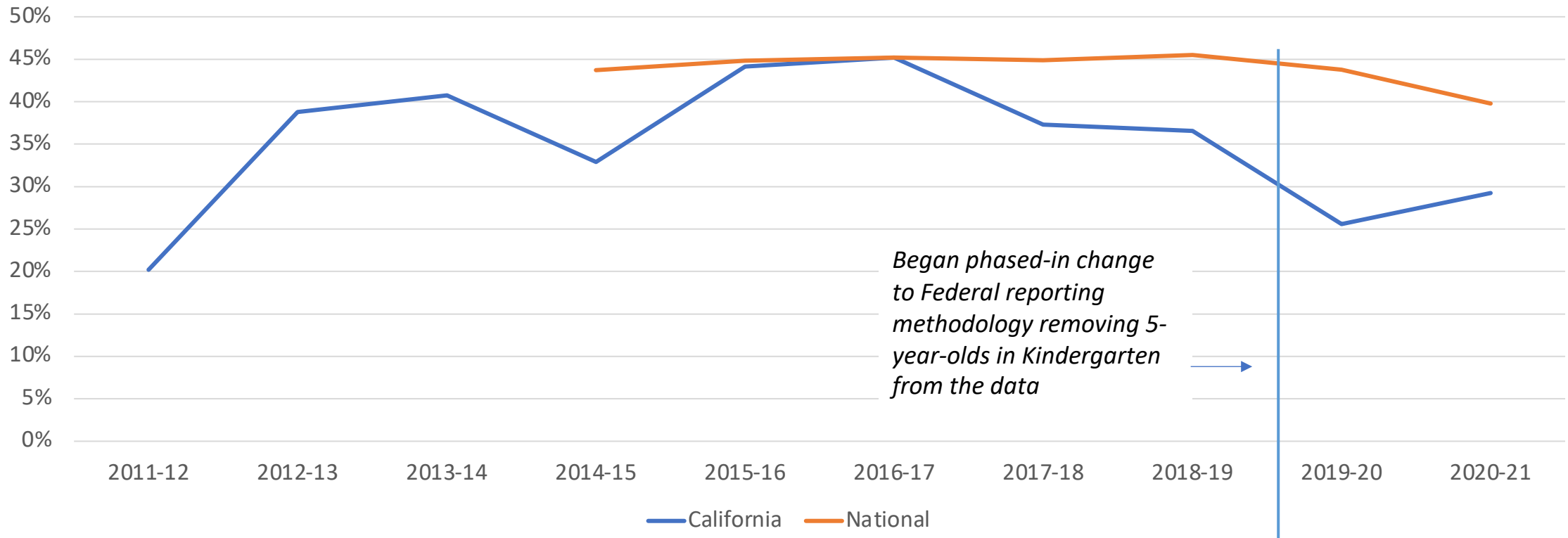
# Preschoolers with an IEP who received subsidized ELC differed from all preschoolers in subsidized ELC

## Preschoolers with IEPs were more likely to be:

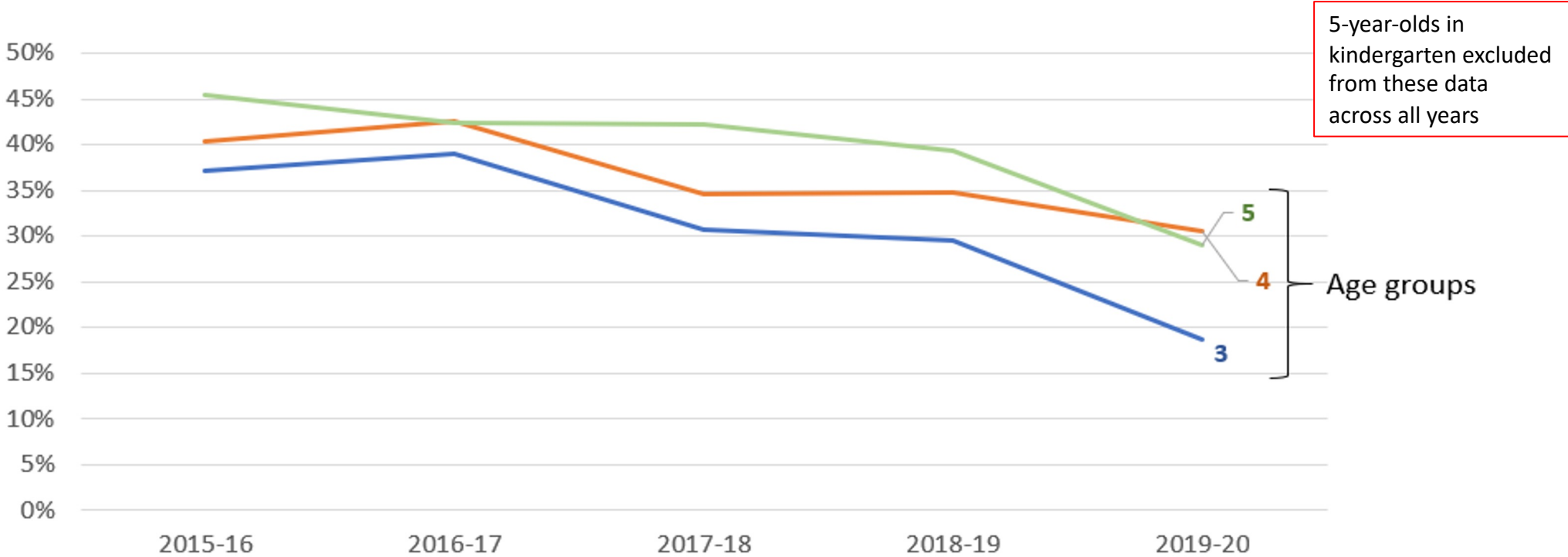


# Preschool inclusion rates have declined in California and nationally.

Percentage of Preschoolers with Disabilities Who Attend an Early Childhood Program and Receive a Majority of Their Special Education and Related Services in that Location



Preschool inclusion rates in CA vary by age and have been dropping across all age groups. Three-year-olds currently have lower rates of inclusion than four- and five-year-olds in preschool.





# Child care directors reported preschoolers attending their programs received their special education services through a variety of arrangements.



Child care program some days and district program others



District program in the morning, then bused to the child care program




Child care program in the morning, then bused to district self-contained class



Child care program in the morning, bused to school district for special education, then bused back to the child care program

# Directors discussed their relationships with districts

- Three discussed making referrals to school districts.
- Two discussed program staff attending IEP meetings.
- Only two reported special educators coming to the program to work with the child.
- Support from district staff was described as “perfunctory;” some reported receiving resources or support from the district, including information about what they are working on with the child and strategies to support the child.

A young boy with dark hair and black-rimmed glasses is seated in a black office chair, wearing a dark brown hoodie. He is looking towards the left. Next to him is a young girl with blonde, wavy hair, wearing a dark blue top. She is also looking towards the left. They appear to be in a classroom or office setting, with a wooden cabinet and a green object visible in the background. The text is overlaid on the lower-left portion of the image.

Directors expressed desires for district staff to come to their programs to observe the child and for more communication and collaboration to support children with disabilities.

# Inclusion Challenges

- Heavy reliance on self-contained classrooms
- What the district provides (e.g., half day programs) often does not meet the family's need for child care
- Families who need more care than the district offers may have to piece their child's day or week together, supplementing a school district program with another program in the community
- Attending multiple programs is not optimal for learning and development

# What does equity in access mean for children with disabilities?

- Normalization principle: People with disabilities should have lives that are as similar as possible as those without disabilities.
- For families accessing subsidized care this means their choices for child care should be the same as any other family in their community.
- If they experience disruptions or transitions that other families do not because they have a child with a disability, is that equitable?

# Inclusion Challenges and Opportunities

- Early learning and care “system” is made up several programs operated by and funded by different entities
- Special education for 3-to-5-year-olds is provided by local school districts.
  - Only some school districts provide general preschool programs and these tend not to be full day (7 am to 6 pm) or full year programs.
- Increasing collaboration and support between districts and other entities can help promote more equitable access to inclusion.
  - Includes districts providing ongoing support to community-based programs to build their capacity to serve children with disabilities well.
- To increase equitable access to high quality care and inclusion, districts need to see community-based child care programs as a viable special education service location.

# Thank you

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