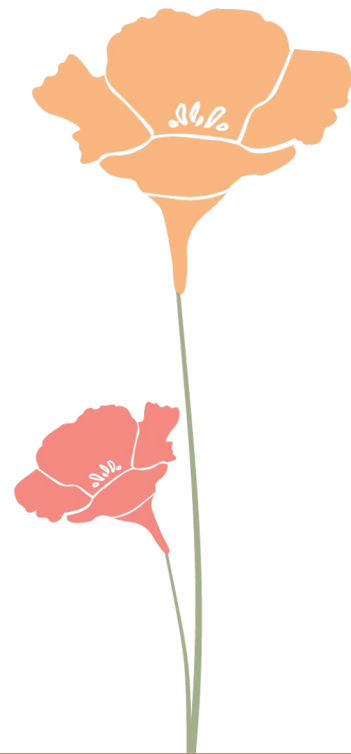# Inclusion in California Early Learning and Care

It Takes Two To Make a Thing Go Right: Cross-Sector Collaboration to Support Inclusion in Subsidized Care

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International Early Childhood Inclusion Institute
October 26, 2021

Welcome!!

California Context

- 58 counties
- 1,037 districts
- California State Preschool Program
  - District-run
  - Community-based
  - Half-day/full-day
- Transitional Kindergarten Expansion

California's Efforts to Support Inclusion

- Inclusive Early Learning and Care Coordination Program
- Inclusive Early Education Expansion Program
- Inclusive Practices: Embedded Instruction
- Supporting Inclusive Practices
- Inclusion of Young Children with Disabilities in California Early Learning and Care (this study)

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Inclusion is non-negotiable

- Participation of children with disabilities in early care and education alongside peers without disabilities

- Encouraged by federal legislation (e.g., IDEA, CCDBG), Federal agencies (HHS and Ed), and professional organizations (e.g., DEC and NAEYC)

- Benefits children with and without disabilities (Lawrence, Smith, & Banerjee, 2016; Odom, Buysse, & Soukakou, 2011)

- Barriers persist (Guralnick & Bruder, 2016; Henley & Adams, 2018)

Access

Supports

Participation

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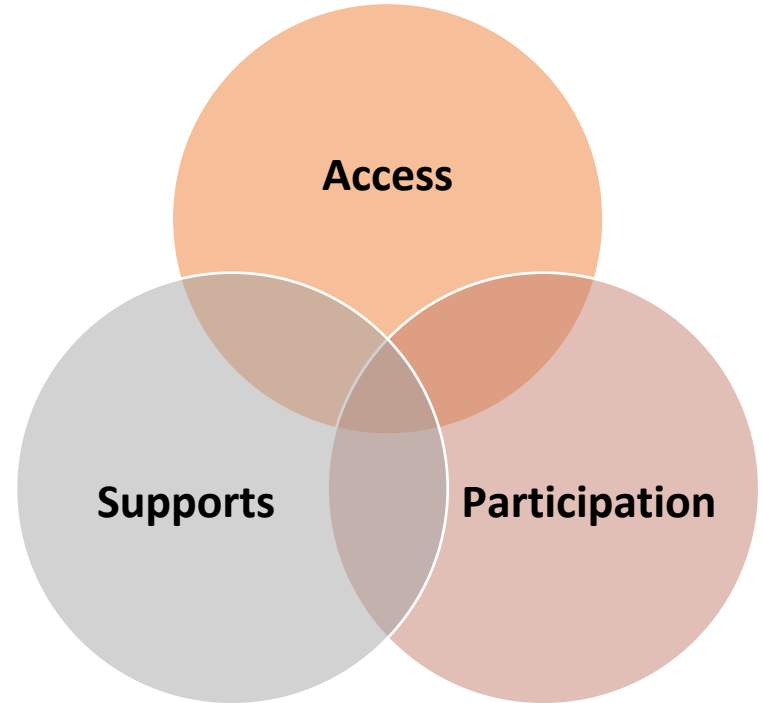
Study Overview

- Child Care Policy Research Partnership Grant
  - Collaboration between CCDF Lead Agencies and research entities
- Objectives
  - Describe the status of children with disabilities in subsidized early learning and care in California
  - Identify the facilitators and barriers to the inclusion of children with disabilities in subsidized early learning and care and strategies to increase facilitators and decrease barriers

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Study Design

Method	Data Collection	Sample
Administrative Data	Subsidized early learning and care Special Education DRDP (Assessment +) Fiscal Data	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 Studies (6 communities; 10 children and their families in each)	Interviews	60 families and their associated child care providers, directors, special education providers and administrators
	Observation	Each classroom associated with the 60 families
	Document Analysis	60 families' IEP/IFSP
Statewide Survey	Surveys	Child Care Local Preschool Special Education Administrators

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The IDEA data on inclusion have shown no change for years
## (National Educational Environments: Percentages Over Time)
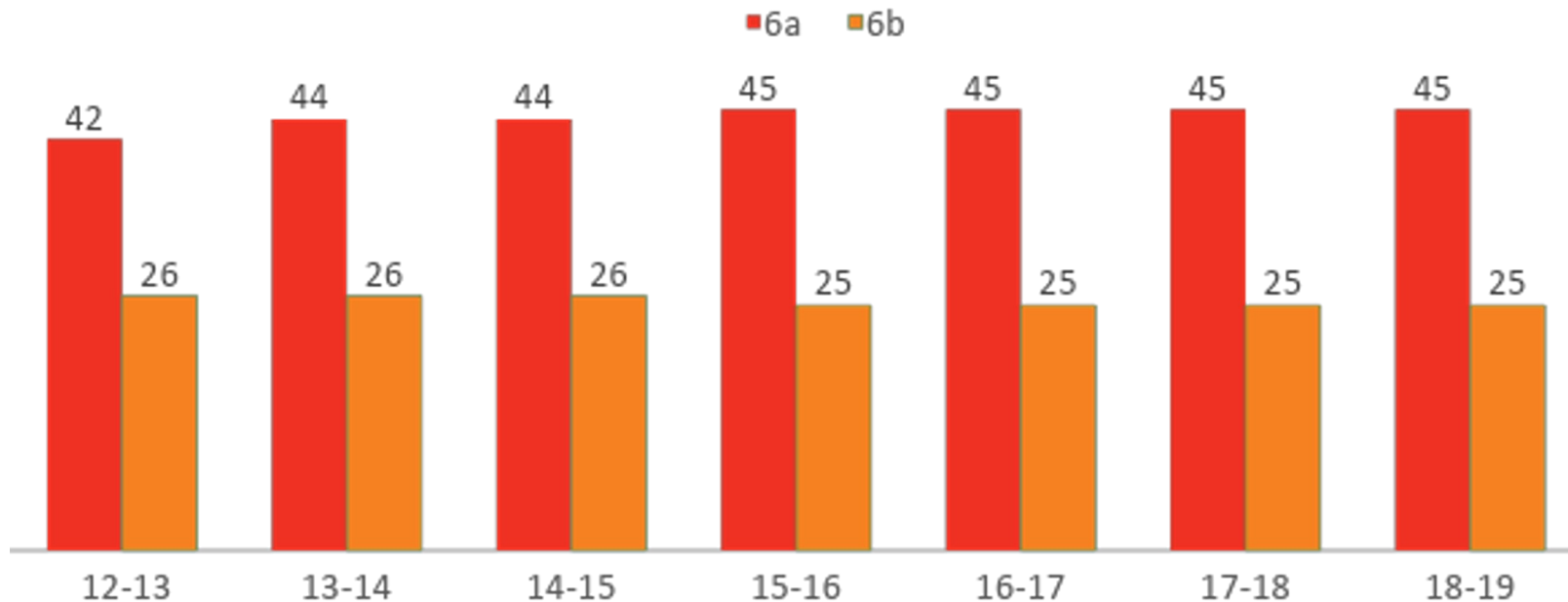
6a. Children who attend a regular early childhood program and receive majority of special education service in the program
6b. Children who attend a special education class, separate special ed school or residential facility

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The California data also has not changed – and shows far more preschoolers in special classes
(National Educational Environments: Percentages who attend a special education class, separate special education school or residential facility)

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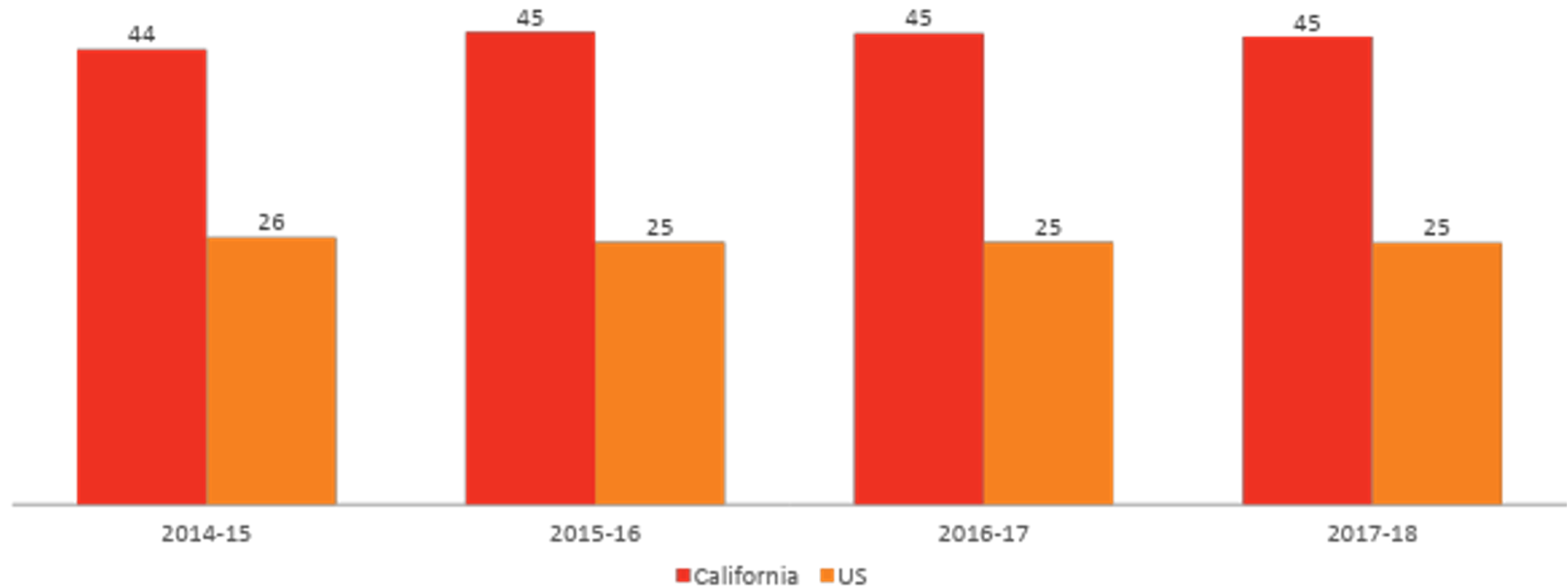
Collaboration across sectors

- What is a sector?
  - Childcare
  - Public prek
  - Private prek
  - Family child care
  - School system
    - Special education

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Why is collaboration important?

- Children with disabilities participate in multiple settings.
- Early childhood educators, early childhood special educators, and specialists all have a role in ensuring children with disabilities can access the general education curriculum and participate fully.

Which of these is inclusion?

Child with IEP attends preschool and specialists work with child and teachers to support child's access to learning opportunities and participation in all classroom activities.

Child with IEP attends preschool and specialists work only with child who is pulled from the classroom.

Child with IEP attends preschool and receives special education services in a different setting.

Family of child with IEP wants child in preschool but child does not attend. Child receives special education services in a special program.

Child with a disability is in preschool but does not have an IEP.

System is not operating as it should to meet the child's needs.

Child with a disability is in preschool but does not have an IEP.

Family of child with IEP wants child in preschool but child does not attend. Child receives special education services in a special program.

Child with IEP attends preschool and receives special education services in a different setting.

Child with IEP attends preschool and specialists work only with child who is pulled from the classroom.

Child with IEP attends preschool and specialists work with child and teachers to support child's access to learning opportunities and participation in all classroom activities.

There are many variations in what some call inclusion.

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How do you define inclusion?
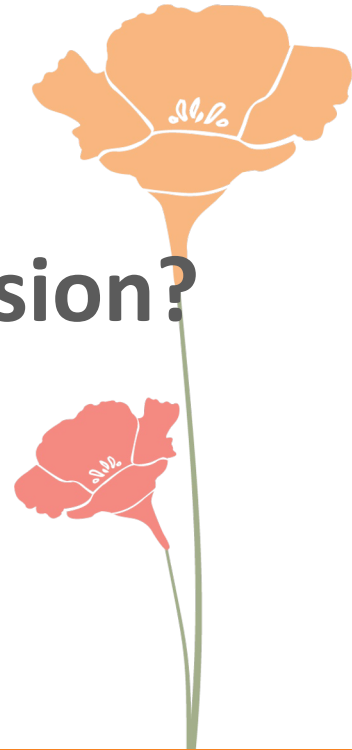
ⓘ Start presenting to display the poll results on this slide.

We have learned that people around the state use the word "inclusion" to mean different things
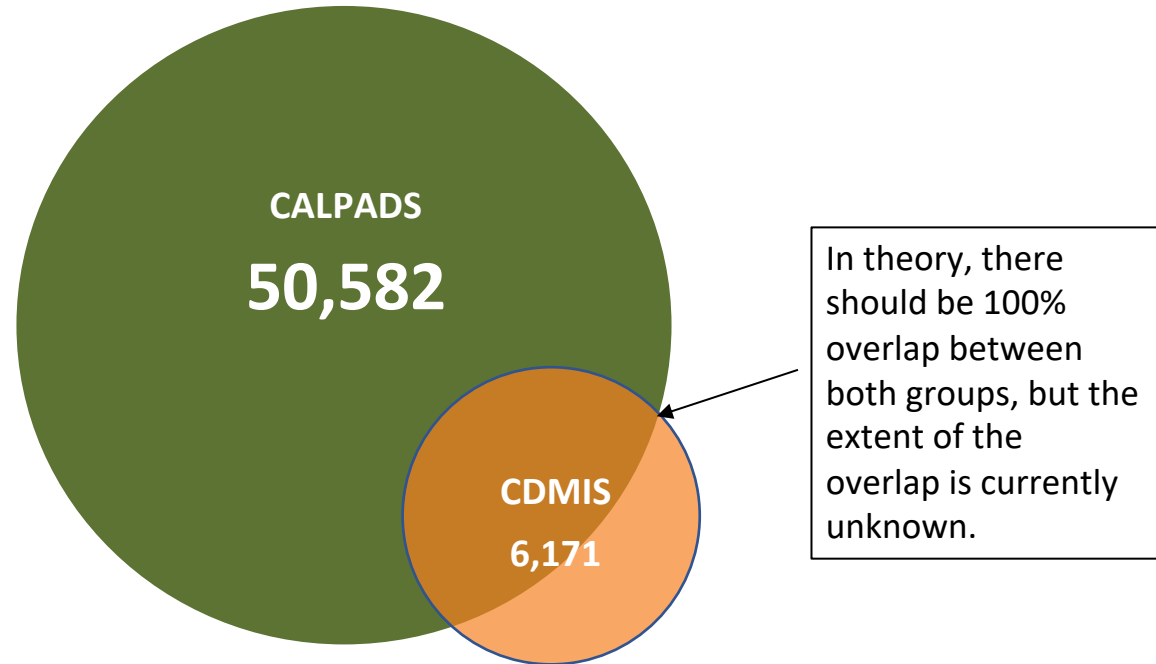
- Makes communication challenging
- Importance of a shared vision for inclusion (especially for school districts operating programs)
  - Why is it important for children to be included?
  - What are the goals of inclusion?

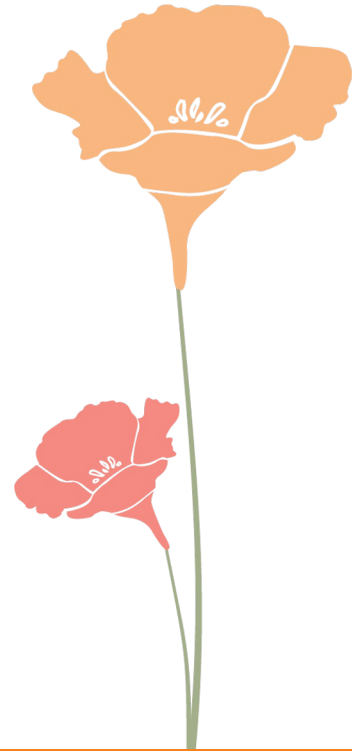Inclusion in California
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Administrative Data Analysis: Data Sets

- **CDMIS:** Child Development Management Information System
  - Subsidized child care ACF 801 reporting, Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF)
  - Includes some but not all children with IEPs
  - The present study's focus is on children ages 3-5 receiving subsidy
  - "Inclusion" = child with an IEP is in a subsidized program

- **CALPADS:** California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System
  - Special Education, P-12 in public school
  - Only includes preschoolers on IEPs; no other preschoolers
  - "Inclusion" = child with an IEP participates in a general education setting and receives the majority of their special education services in that location

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How many preschoolers with IEPs are captured in the subsidy data set (CDMIS) versus the special education data set (CALPADS)? (Fall 2019)

CALPADS

50,582

CDMIS

6,171

In theory, there should be 100% overlap between both groups, but the extent of the overlap is currently unknown.

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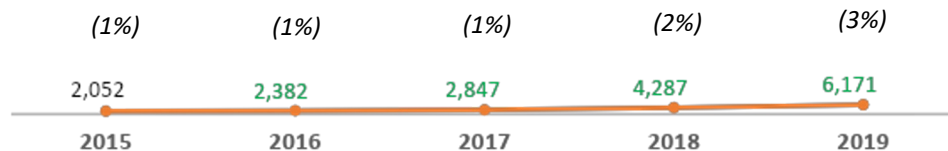# Preschoolers with Disabilities in Subsidized Early Learning and Care

Enrollment of preschoolers with IEPs in subsidized care has increased as had overall enrollment until 2019

Overall Enrollment, Ages 3-5 (CDMIS, October of Each Year)

206,099   213,126   215,895   224,288

192,561

Children with IEPs

(1%)   (1%)   (1%)   (2%)   (3%)

2,052   2,382   2,847   4,287   6,171

2015   2016   2017   2018   2019

Subsidy enrollment for preschoolers *without* IEPs had grown steadily from 2015-2018 but dropped in 2019.

Subsidy enrollment for preschoolers *with* IEPs had tripled over the last 5 years prior to the pandemic.

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

Preschoolers with IEPs were more likely to be:

Source: CDMIS, Oct 2019

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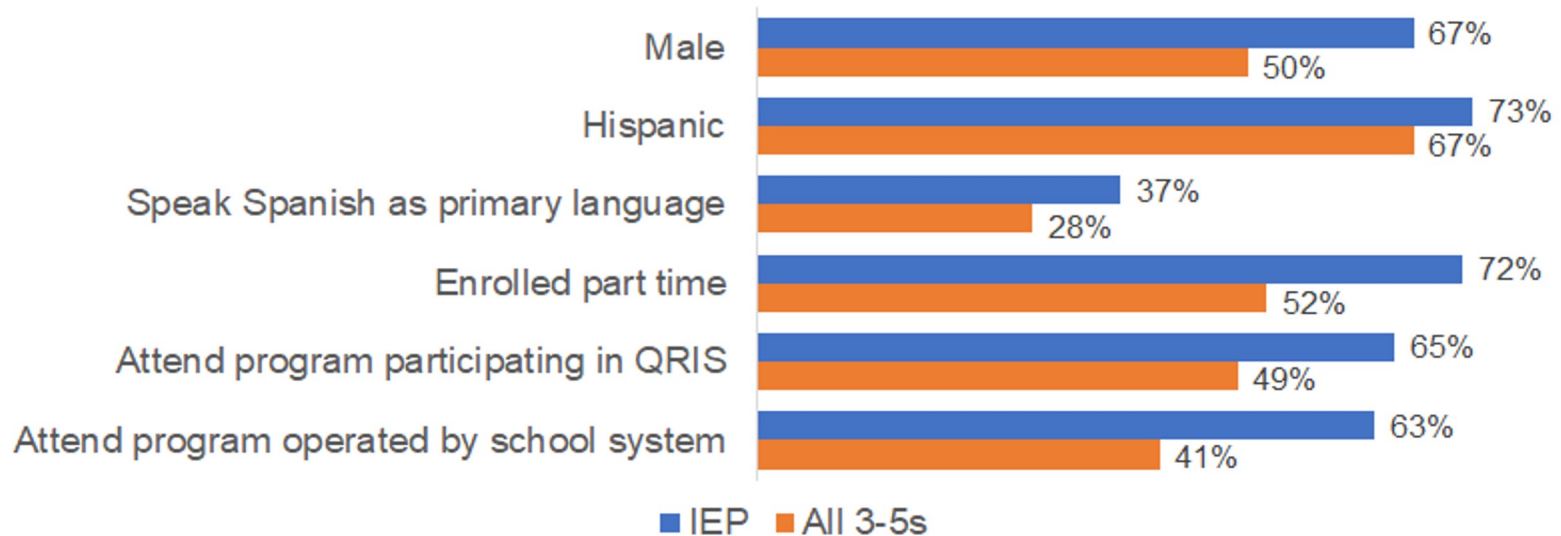
Preschoolers with Disabilities in Special Education
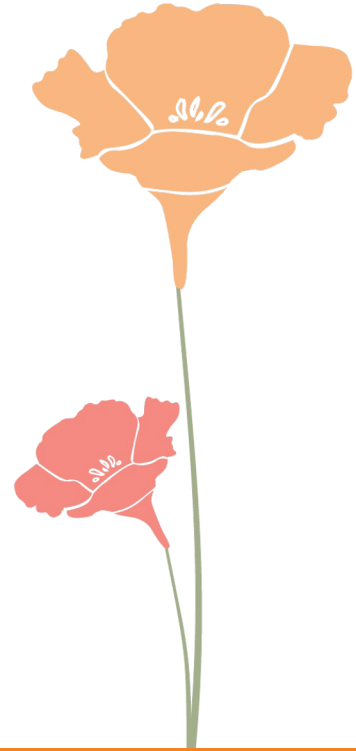
Preschool inclusion rates have been declining in CA while placement in special classes has been increasing.
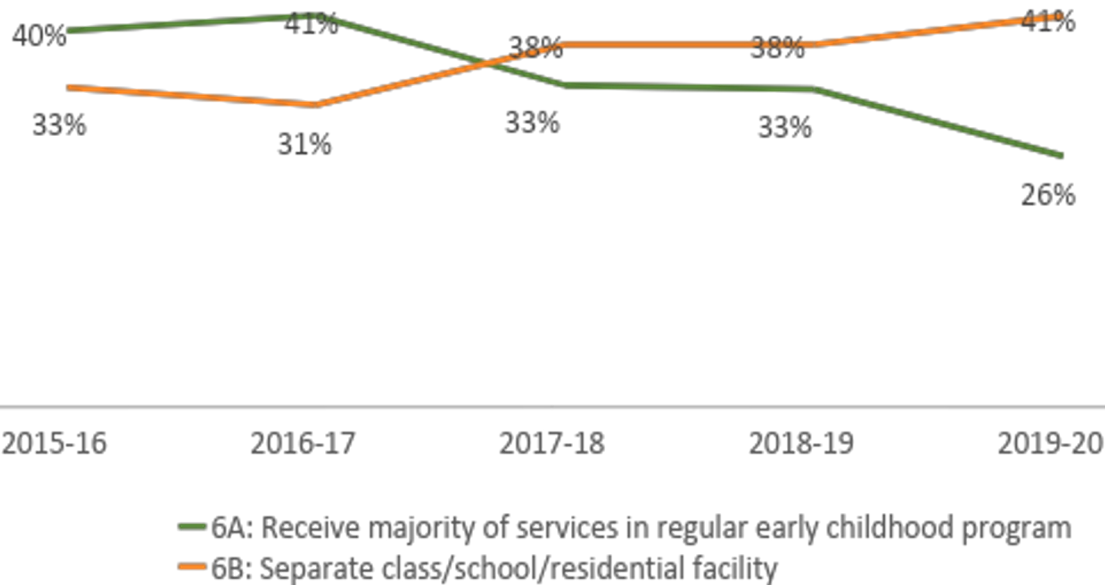
40% 41% 38% 38%
33% 31% 33% 33% 41%
26%

5-year-olds in kindergarten excluded from these data across all years

2015-16   2016-17   2017-18   2018-19   2019-20

— 6A: Receive majority of services in regular early childhood program
— 6B: Separate class/school/residential facility

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Source: CA Dept of Education

Preschool inclusion rates vary by disability type and have dropped across all types, for some types more so than others.
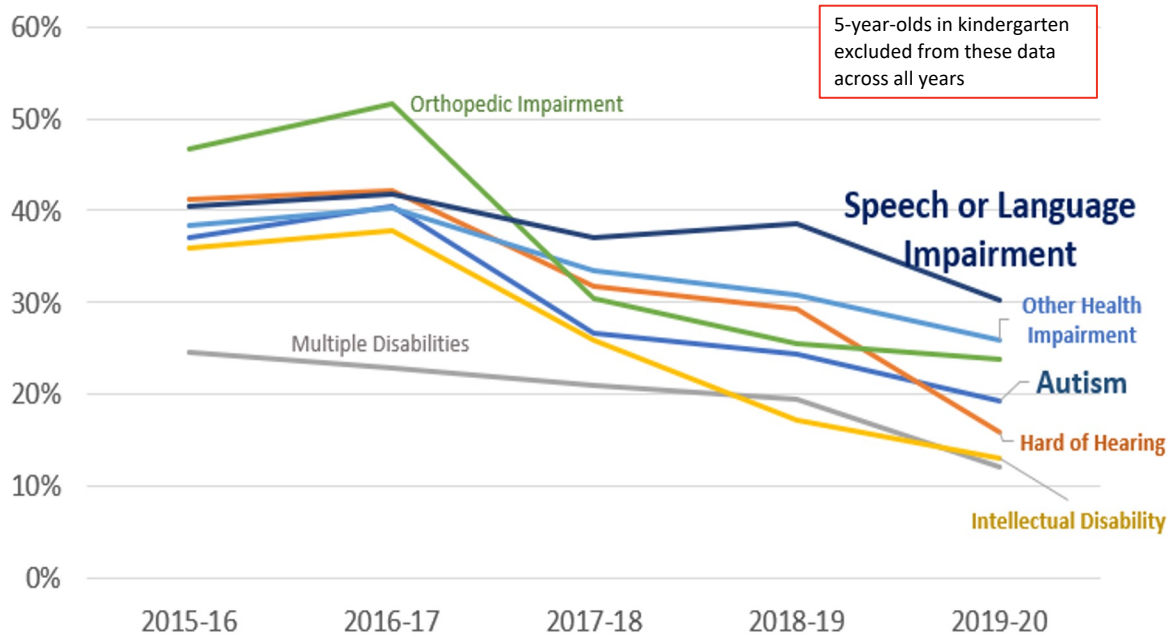
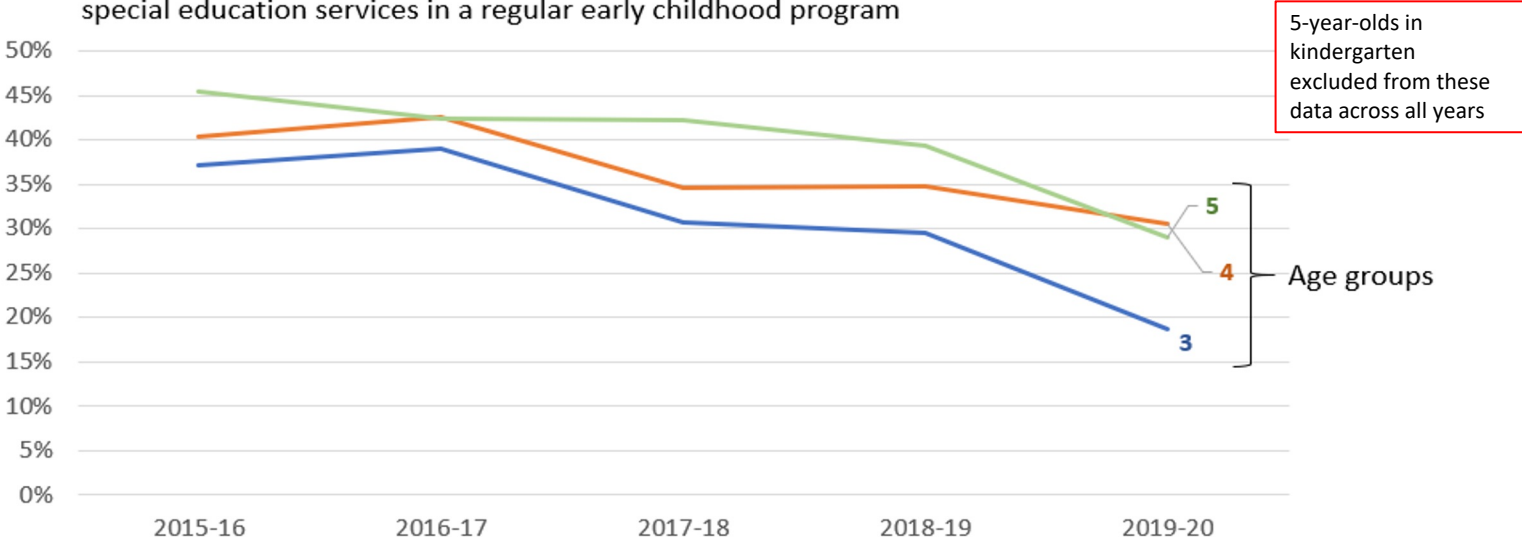| Disability Type	Total N of Preschoolers on IEP in CA (2019-20)
Speech or Language Impairment	29,016
Autism	14,995
Other Health Impairment	2,280
Intellectual Disability	1,743
Hard of Hearing	1,025
Orthopedic Impairment	664
Multiple Disabilities	581
Visual impairment*	145
Specific Learning Disability*	73
Traumatic Brain Injury*	48
Emotional Disturbance*	7
Deaf-Blindness*	5
Total	**50,582**

5-year-olds in kindergarten excluded from these data across all years

Percent Change in Number of Preschoolers in CA on an IEP by Disability Type (2015-16 to 2019-20)

*Insufficient data available for these groups in the line/bar charts due to small *N*

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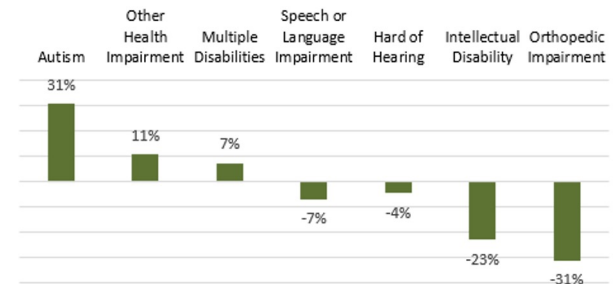
Preschool inclusion rates in CA vary by age and have been dropping across all age groups. Three-year-olds currently have lower rates of inclusion then four- and five-year-olds in preschool.

Indicator 6A: Percentage of preschoolers on an IEP who receive the majority of special education services in a regular early childhood program

5-year-olds in kindergarten excluded from these data across all years

Age groups

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Variation across counties in the percentage of preschoolers with subsidy who have an IEP

State overall = 3%

0%-0.9%	1%-1.9%	2%-2.9%	3%-4.9%	5%-9.9%	≥10%
7	8	14	18	8	3
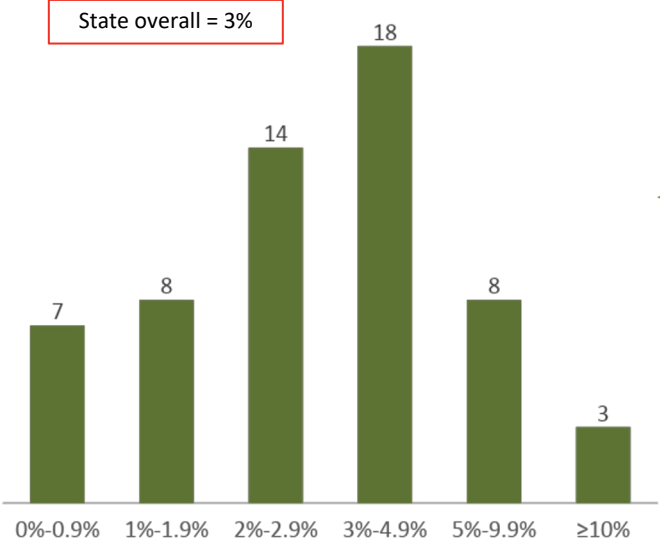
Source: CDMIS, Oct 2019

Source: CALPADS, Oct 2019

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Variation across counties in the percentage of preschoolers with an IEP attending regular early childhood programs and receiving the majority of their special education services in that location (Indicator 6A)

State overall = 26%

Range	Count
4%-20%	5
21%-40%	18
41%-60%	23
61%-83%	12

Source: CALPADS, Oct 2019

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Variation across counties in the percentage of preschoolers with subsidy who have an IEP

Variation across counties in the percentage of preschoolers with an IEP attending regular early childhood programs and receiving the majority of their special education services in that location (Indicator 6A)

State overall = 3%

18
14
8   8
7
3

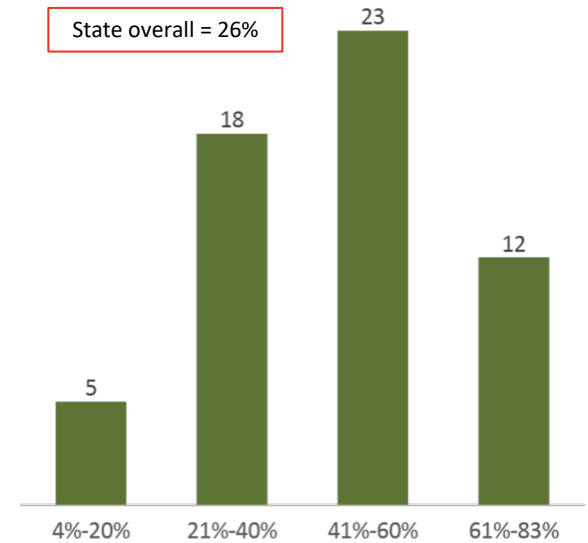0%-0.9% 1%-1.9% 2%-2.9% 3%-4.9% 5%-9.9% ≥10%
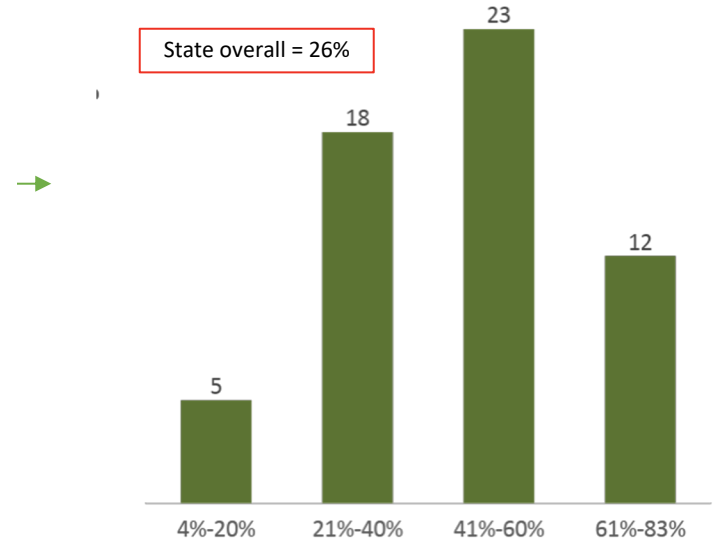
Source: CDMIS, Oct 2019

Is there any relationship?

No strong relationship. Counties with the highest percentages of children with disabilities receiving subsidies are typically not the same counties with high percentages of preschoolers with disabilities receiving services in inclusive settings. (r = .28)

State overall = 26%

23
18
12
5

4%-20% 21%-40% 41%-60% 61%-83%

Source: CALPADS, Oct 2019

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Takeaways from Administrative Data Analyses

- Subsidy data: The percentage of preschoolers with disabilities in subsidized care has increased consistently since 2015.

- Special education data: California's inclusion rates among all preschoolers with disabilities have been steadily declining.

- Special education data: Inclusion rates have declined for all disability types and age groups, steeper for certain types/groups.

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Data Challenges and Opportunities

Challenges

- Lack of common program and child identifiers across databases
- Little incentive to report IEP status in subsidized care database, leading to possible underreporting of children with disabilities
- Possible inconsistent understanding of federal inclusion data (Indicators 6A and 6B) among local special education and early care and education providers
- Limited verification of data quality

Opportunities

- Lay the groundwork for future data integration
- Raise awareness of data available on the inclusion of children with disabilities
- Visibility of the data deepens understanding of current data and data quality issues
- Commitment from state leaders to promoting inclusion
- Pinpoint areas of improvement in data collection

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Questions/Discussion

1. Has your state linked child care and special education data? What have you learned?
2. What kinds of data do you look at to examine the extent and/or quality of inclusion?
3. What kinds of data would be most helpful to have to examine progress regarding inclusion?

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Key Informant Interviews:
What are the facilitators of and barriers to inclusion for preschool children in CA?
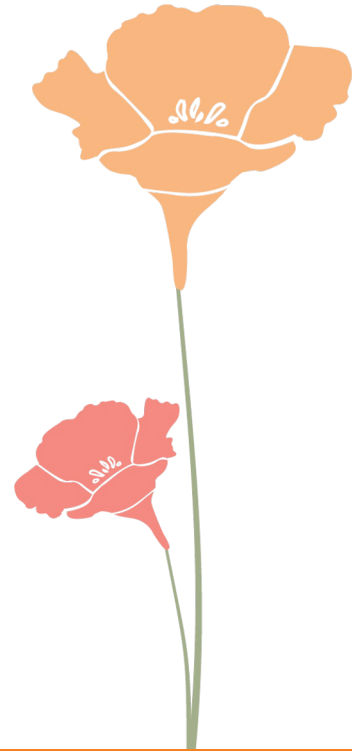
23 Key Informants

- Local & state-level Family Resource Center and Resource and Referral staff

- County Office of Education staff

- School district personnel

- Directors of statewide projects

- Community-based program administrators and teachers

- Tribal Child Care

- IHE/Researchers

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Initial Themes

- Variation in definitions of inclusion
- Mindset and attitudes
- Impacts on policy and practice
- Potential solutions for promoting inclusive placements and services

Wide variation in definition of "inclusion"

- Children with typically developing peers, co-teaching, services are pushed in
- Children with typically developing peers, co-teaching, children are pulled out for services
- Children in segregated classrooms with inclusion opportunities during playground time
- Classrooms where 50% of children have IEPs
- Private child care settings where children with IEPs are with typically developing peers, but with no teacher knowledge of/coordination re: IEP goals

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Mindset and Attitudes

- Child care as custodial vs. preschool as educational
- Teacher vs. specialist (capacity and role related to inclusion)
- Legal obligation to include children vs. resource availability for preschool inclusion
- Family priorities/needs (re: child's development and hours of care) vs. school resources and perceived imperative for kindergarten readiness
- Legal requirements of IDEA vs. tolerable consequences for segregating (e.g., fines)
- Collaboration with families from dominant groups vs. directive approach with families of color and families who do not speak English
- Unified or collaborative system vs. fragmented or multiple systems

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Impacts on Policy and Practice

- Staffing, staff scheduling, staff supports, and collaboration
- Communication and collaboration with families
- High-level cross-sector collaboration
- Funding related to staffing, collaboration, facilities, and transportation
- Data collection, sharing/reporting, and use

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Potential Solutions

- Quota system for state pre-K program
- Model demonstration sites
- Requirements or incentives for
    - Cross-sector collaboration around preschool inclusion
    - Universal Design for Learning approach
    - Internal teaming related to preschool inclusion
- Sustainable funding for full-time inclusive placement options
- Blended early childhood education/early childhood special education teacher training

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What other facilitators of inclusion have you experienced?

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How do these preliminary findings compare with your experience? (1 = not at all similar, 5 = very similar)

Emerging Issues

- Whose responsibility is it to ensure a preschooler with an IEP whose family needs more than a half or even full school day of care can function successfully for the entire time in non-school system general ed settings?

  - How do district programs wrap with their other program?

  - How is transportation provided and minimally disruptive?

How do your communities make this happen?

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Policy Considerations

- How to ensure strong communication and other connections between families of children with IEPs and district-run programs

- Need for ongoing professional development and other supports for staff for working with children with disabilities and the adults who work with them
  - Teachers in district-run programs
  - Special education teachers and specialists
  - Early childhood teachers/care providers in the community

Access

Supports   Participation

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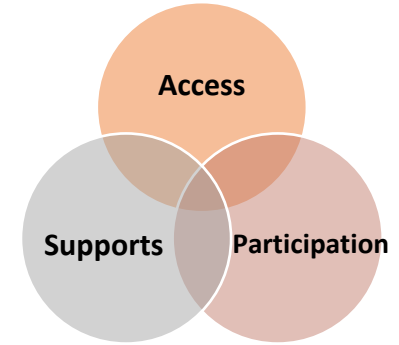
Discussion

- How can policy and infrastructure support inclusion so that programs, districts, or states don't need "rock stars" or "champions" to ensure inclusion happens?

- What strategies have been useful in your program, district, or state for promoting collaboration across sectors?
  - What needs to be in place to implement the strategy?

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Thank you

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