Results Matter: Improving Preschool Outcomes for Children with Disabilities



Engaged Families

The purpose of this publication is to showcase preschool special education practices that support positive outcomes for children with disabilities and their families across Colorado's schools, districts, and Administrative Units. More than six decades of research demonstrate that children flourish in inclusive environments, particularly when they learn alongside non-disabled peers in general education preschool classrooms.

These practice profiles build on evidence-based approaches to enhance Preschool Outcomes, offering practical strategies and guidance for establishing a strong foundation of high-quality learning for children with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs).

Program Spotlight

Douglas County School District's Early Childhood Education program operates approximately 70 preschool classrooms across the district, serving more than 600 children with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). The district maintains a fully inclusive early learning model in which all children with IEPs receive their special education services in a regular education classroom alongside non-disabled peers, with the majority of services delivered within the classroom setting.

Family engagement in preschool outcomes begins at the very start of the IEP process. Multidisciplinary teams conduct play-based assessments, and families participate in interviews as they move through the initial evaluation. Once the Child Find team determines eligibility, the preschool service providers collaborate to develop the IEP. Family priorities are intentionally incorporated and addressed throughout the IEP meeting. When selecting program options, many families prioritize child-care needs or choose locations based on where their other children attend school.

The district's preschools implement the Creative Curriculum® for Preschool from Teaching Strategies®. This curriculum was selected for its alignment with the progress-monitoring tools used in Results Matter and its ability to support

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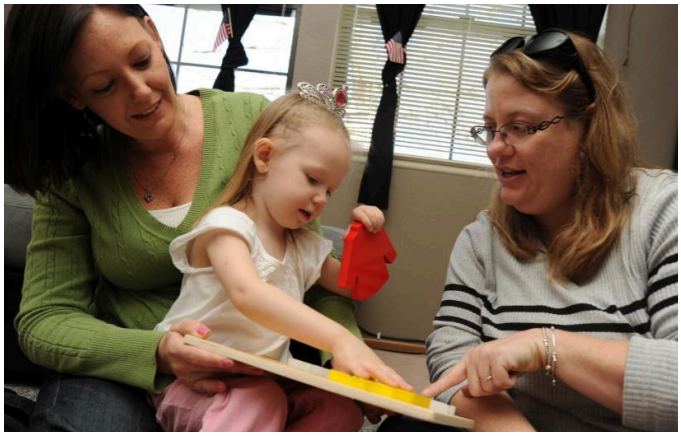
high-quality, developmentally appropriate instruction. The district has also recently adopted ReadyRosie®, a familycommunication platform that promotes strong home–school connections and provides families with accessible learning resources and parent education.

ReadyRosie® is mobile-friendly, and families are encouraged to use its communication features to connect with teachers, view videos that support at-home learning activities, and share observations from home by uploading images or other documentation to inform progress. Families receive training on the platform at the start of the school year.

Family–teacher conferences are brief and occur three times per year. While there is no standardized process across classrooms for what progress information is shared or how data is used in these conversations, the meetings provide valuable face-to-face opportunities for open dialogue with families.

During the IEP review process, families tend to be most engaged when discussing their child's progress toward individual goals. Many view special education services as a "separate, additional benefit" of preschool. Staff work to connect classroom activities with each child's special education needs, and leadership supports this work by providing resources aligned with the curriculum.

The District Special Education Advisory Council provides families with opportunities to engage at a systems level. An Early Childhood liaison supports this work, and two family events are held each year. These events primarily focus on connecting families with district support groups and informing them about benefits or waivers that they may be eligible for.



Preschool special education providers play a critical role in accurately reporting data collected during the initial evaluation process. Skilled professionals enter information into the appropriate tools, and all classroom staff—including the special education team—maintain Inter-Rater Reliability in *GOLD*®, the selected assessment tool for progress monitoring. Data entry responsibilities are shared among the classroom team, with final ratings completed by the individuals who have the most specific expertise within each developmental domain.

Practices that Contribute to Improving Outcomes

The leadership of the Douglas County School District (DCSD) Early Childhood Education program is emphasizing the importance of accurate baseline ratings by leveraging the initial evaluation process to gather high-quality data for entry into the *GOLD*® assessment platform.

The curriculum platform provides teachers with additional instructional tools and a standards-aligned framework for guiding children's learning.

ReadyRosie is utilized to enhance family engagement, answering these questions:

- What resources are available for families to support their child's learning at home?
- How can families contribute to the classroom activities?

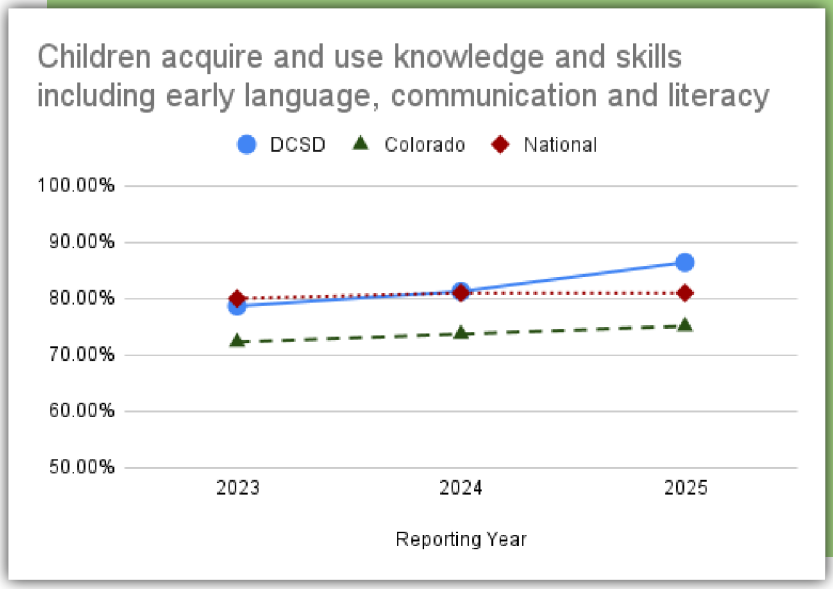
The family app supports:

- Classroom newsletters
- Families learning about development through video modeling
- Families letting teachers know what their children are learning at home by uploading their own videos, or using a chat feature for back-and-forth communication

Family conferences are held in person and center on each child's classroom progress, while IEP meetings focus specifically on progress toward IEP goals. Both settings offer valuable opportunities to share information about student growth, data literacy, and the quality of outcomes—helping families understand why preschool outcomes matter for their child and how they inform overall program improvement.

When responsibility for data collection and entry is distributed and shared, staff develop a stronger understanding of the assessment process and the importance of maintaining fidelity within the online assessment system. Inter-Rater Reliability is essential for ensuring that data are accurate and reliable. This makes the data far more useful for guiding instructional decisions and determining appropriate next steps. As teams collaborate on the use of assessment information, data-based decision-making cycles are more likely to become a consistent and embedded practice.

What do the Preschool Outcomes Data say?



Core Components: Expected Use in Practice

True partnerships are developed with families.

- Gather relevant developmental information that will inform the need for Specially Designed Instruction, as well as the initial data entry into the progress monitoring assessment.
- Encourage and support families when using a communication platform.
- Ensure that there is active feedback and multi-directional communication.

Help families connect the IEP to the classroom, curriculum, and progress in preschool.

- Use all available tools and include family input as to how they can best receive and give information.
- Provide information about Preschool Outcomes data and why authentic assessment matters at every opportunity.
- Leverage Family/Teacher Conferences to gather important information about progress seen at home.
- Create Advisory Committee activities as opportunities for families to connect their own child's outcomes to standards-aligned expectations across the educational system, supporting their understanding of outcomes data.
- Focus IEP meetings on goals that improve participation and specially designed instruction that accelerates learning.

Leadership creates opportunities for staff and families to work together.

- Connect learning experiences to what is relevant and important to families for a positive effect on developmental trajectories.
- Provide staff with the resources, tools, and training to implement a high-quality preschool experience for every child.
- Help staff and families know what to look for during interventions and related formative assessment.
- Support data-based decision-making that is equitable, honors meaningful family participation, and promotes the health and well-being of every child.



Getting Started: Developmental Use in Practice

- Preschool special educators and general educators listen to families and record reported developmental information for use in decision-making.
- Preschool programs use a variety of strategies to keep families informed, sharing updates about classroom activities and responding to how children are doing at home.
- IEP teams ensure that families are meaningful participants during the IEP meetings.
- All providers ensure that families receive progress reports at conferences and understand the developmental trajectories of their children.
- Leadership reinforces the importance of inclusive practices and how special education supports access to and participation in the regular classroom.
- Leadership plans for family/school events to create an inclusive education community.

Common Barriers

- Primarily one-way communication from school to home.
- Dissemination of school events is in a limited format without substantive input from families.
- Families are not included in instructional decision-making, and priorities are not addressed at a district or school level.
- Classroom instruction is rarely differentiated with few opportunities for embedded instruction.

Measuring Progress

Improving child outcomes involves working with data relevant to children and families that promotes inclusion and shows progress in routines. Data culture is a part of the fabric of what we do, data helps us tell the story.

Critical Question

- What do families report help their child develop and learn?

Indicators:

- Data are collected from families on a regular basis, and program improvements are made in direct response to the information gathered.
- Staff intentionally plan for meaningful partnerships with families, ensuring that communication is multidirectional and grounded in shared understanding.
- Family leadership is actively nurtured, resulting in increased representation in decision-making groups at all levels of the school and district.

Resource Highlights

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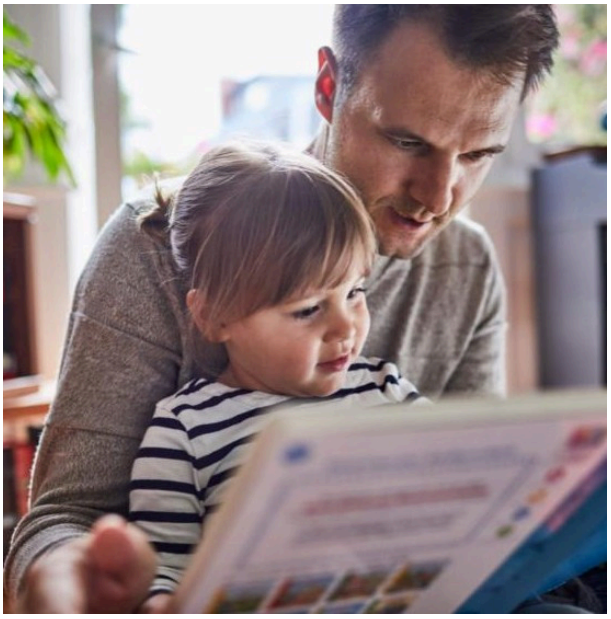
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Special appreciation goes to Douglas County School District Early Childhood leadership for engaging in a focused interview on family partnerships in their District's preschool programs.

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Department of Education

Results Matter improves outcomes for Colorado's preschool children who receive special education services by helping teachers, administrators, families, and other education partners use authentic assessment data to inform classroom instruction as well as program and policy decision-making.