



VIRGINIA ITINERANT EARLY CHILDHOOD SPECIAL EDUCATION TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE DOCUMENT



Virginia Itinerant Early Childhood Special Education Technical Assistance Document

Virginia Department of Education

Division of Early Childhood Care and Education

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Preface

The itinerant model is a service delivery approach where an early childhood special education teacher (itinerant teacher) travels to various school-based and/or community-based settings to provide services to young children with Individualized Education Programs (IEP). This model supports the child's inclusion by offering direct instruction, consultation with early childhood educators and families, and professional development to ensure all involved adults can effectively support the child's IEP goals. The itinerant model allows children with disabilities to be served in any early learning environment, including Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI), Head Start, community-based preschool, child care, or family-day home classrooms. The purpose of this technical assistance document is to provide a description of the Virginia Itinerant Early Childhood Special Education Model (IECSE) developed by the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) and to support Virginia's school divisions and Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programs in its implementation. This document provides the critical practices that support children's access and participation in inclusive settings and natural environments.



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Section I: Introduction

Purpose

The purpose of this technical assistance (TA) document is to provide guidance to Virginia's local school divisions and early childhood care and education (ECCE) programs on the implementation of the Virginia Itinerant Early Childhood Special Education (IECSE) Model. It provides the knowledge and practices itinerant teachers must implement to effectively support children's inclusion in ECCE programs.

This document builds upon and should be used alongside the [Virginia Guidelines for Early Childhood Inclusion](#). Whereas the Inclusion Guidelines provide information on identifying, developing, and sustaining inclusive early childhood programs for children with disabilities, this document focuses on the Virginia IECSE Model. The aim of this document is to answer the following questions:

- What is the Virginia IECSE Model?
- Who is responsible for implementation of the Virginia IECSE Model?
- What are the benefits of the Virginia IECSE Model?
- What are the necessary components for successful implementation?

Resources referenced in this document can be found in the appendices at the end of the document. Please visit the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) website, the [Leadership in Effective and Developmentally-appropriate Services in Early Childhood Special Education](#) website, and the regional [Training and Technical Assistance Centers \(TTAC\)](#) websites for additional information and support.

Intended Audience

This document is intended for use in ECCE programs where an itinerant teacher is working alongside a PreK teacher. The intended audience for this TA Document is:

- School division administrators who support collaborative itinerant service provision for children with IEPs;
- ECCE site administrators who enroll and serve children with IEPs;
- IEP team members;
- Itinerant Early Childhood Special Education teachers who implement special education services through an itinerant model in classrooms; and
- PreK teachers who teach children with IEPs.



Why Inclusion?

Full understanding of the benefits of itinerant services and how they can be used to advance inclusion requires an understanding of the legal and ethical imperative to provide equal access to ECCE programs to young children with disabilities. Years of research and legal precedent support the need for high-quality, inclusive classrooms to benefit children with and without disabilities alike. The VDOE, the United States Department of Health and Human Services (USDHHS), and the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) define inclusion in early childhood programs as:

- Including children with disabilities in early childhood programs together with their peers without disabilities;
- Holding high expectations and intentionally promoting participation in all learning and social activities, facilitated by individualized accommodations; and
- Using evidence-based services and supports to foster their development, friendships with peers, and sense of belonging.

A series of key laws and regulations govern placement for children with disabilities, requiring children with IEPs to be educated in the least restrictive environment (LRE). The Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA, 2004) outlines LRE and requires equal educational opportunities for children with and without disabilities from birth through age twenty-one. The LRE means:

Each public agency must ensure that to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities are educated with children who are not disabled, and that special classes, separate schooling or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily (34 CFR 300.114 through 34 CFR 300.120).

For children aged two to five, the LRE may be any high-quality ECCE program within the school division or the community. Itinerant ECSE services provide a strong model to support this inclusion by providing specialized education in settings where young children participate (Ascetta, Gooze, & Garrison, 2022; USDHHS & USDOE, 2023).

What is the Virginia IECSE Model?

The Virginia IECSE Model consists of an itinerant teacher collaborating with a PreK teacher to help the child with a disability achieve his or her IEP goals. The itinerant teacher's focus is on building the knowledge and skills of the PreK teacher so embedded instruction can be delivered across the school day, including when the itinerant is not there (Dinnebeil et al., 2019). Itinerant services are defined slightly differently across sources in policy, practice, and research (Ascetta, et al., 2022). In the *Inclusion Guidelines*, the Virginia IECSE Model is defined as:

A teacher certified in ECSE supports the inclusion of young children with IEPs by traveling between classrooms or programs to provide direct services to children with IEPs; consult with the PreK teacher, related service providers, teaching assistants, and other members of children's IEP team; provide professional development to school staff; and participate in IEP meetings or parent-teacher conferences.

The itinerant model includes both a direct approach, where the itinerant teacher provides instruction to the child in the early childhood classroom, and a consultative approach where they collaborate with the PreK teacher to embed learning within the activities and routines of the classroom. The definition and components of the Virginia IECSE Model come primarily from *A Guide to Itinerant Early Childhood Special Education Services* (Dinnebeil & McInerney, 2011), the [Rhode Island Department of Education](#), and [The Illinois State Board of Education \(2024\)](#).



The itinerant model may be implemented in any ECCE program, including the Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI), Head Start, and/or a community-based Mixed Delivery, child care, preschool, or family day home setting. Where children with IEPs are placed and receive services will differ across school divisions and will be based on resources available. For example, some smaller communities may not have child care settings readily available. School divisions with high VPI enrollment have more opportunities for children with IEPs to be placed in VPI classrooms.

Why Use the Virginia IECSE Model to Support Inclusion?

The Virginia IECSE Model provides critical practices that support children's access and participation in inclusive settings and natural environments. It is based on the most recent research on itinerant practices for preschool aged children. Use of this model will help individuals, school divisions, and ECCE programs understand and meet requirements, achieve goals, and improve services for our young children with IEPs.

Benefits to children with disabilities:

- Itinerant services allow children with disabilities to receive special education services within their natural learning environments.
- Itinerant services promote a sense of belonging and allow children to be educated alongside their typical peers.
- Targeted and appropriate instruction for children with disabilities can be embedded throughout their day, which maximizes their opportunities to practice and develop skills.

Benefits to the program and family:

- The itinerant teacher and PreK teacher both form relationships with children's families and work together to assess children, monitor progress, and develop and deliver instruction.
- Itinerant services help build a collaboration between PreK teachers, itinerant teachers, and families.
- The model provides PreK teachers with the necessary supports to teach children with disabilities and helps develop a workforce that is better equipped to serve all children.

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Section II: Individuals Responsible for Implementation of the Virginia IECSE Model

There are key individuals responsible for implementing the Virginia IECSE Model: the itinerant teacher, PreK teacher, ECCE program/site administrator, and school division administrator. The roles and necessary minimum requirements of these team members are listed below.

The Itinerant Teacher

The itinerant teacher implements special education services by working with and supporting PreK teachers, teaching assistants, and other team members of the child with an IEP. They do this through multiple roles. They provide direct services to the child by instructing, assessing, and progress monitoring. They collaborate with the PreK teacher and other team members to support delivery of effective teaching practices and embed specially designed instruction into daily activities. They communicate with families as needed and manage the child's IEP, ensuring all paperwork and evaluations are up to date.

Requirements:

- Must have an endorsement in Special Education Early Childhood.
- May have a caseload of up to twelve children. If the itinerant teacher also has a classroom of their own (e.g., ECSE self-contained classroom), the teacher may have up to 10 children.
 - The exact caseload size depends on the number of hours of direct and consultative services specified in the children's IEPs as well as travel time required between sites. The itinerant teacher must have enough time in their schedule to ensure each child's IEP requirements are met.
- Must comply with any standards established by the ECCE program (e.g., Standards for Licensed Child Day Centers, background checks).
- Will benefit from knowledge of operational and program standards of ECCE programs (e.g., VPI and Head Start).
- Will benefit from having experience as an ECSE teacher.
- Must have reliable transportation to travel between sites.
- Must be organized and flexible due to the nature of providing services in others' classrooms.
- Must have strong communication skills.
- Must be able to interact effectively with others, to be agents of change, to persuade others to take on new approaches, and to resolve conflicts when they arise (Dinnebeil & McInerney, 2011).
- Should have training in collaboration and coaching techniques (Dinnebeil & McInerney, 2023).

The PreK Teacher

The PreK teacher leads their own classroom, teaching and supporting children with and without IEPs through the delivery of high-quality learning experiences and a comprehensive curriculum. The teacher works closely with the itinerant teacher to support the child with an IEP. This involves providing critical information about the child's skills, needs, interests, and performance. This will also involve embedding instruction and incorporating new approaches into daily activities based on the itinerant teachers' observations and recommendations.

Requirements:

- Must meet licensure requirements of the ECCE program.
- Must not exceed class size requirements of the ECCE program while considering the proportionate amount or limits to the number of children with IEPs.
- Must be organized so children's IEP goals can be incorporated into the daily activities.
- Must have strong communication skills.
- Must be open to feedback and able to adapt teaching practices.
- Must be able to interact effectively with others, to be agents of change, to persuade others to take on new approaches, and to resolve conflicts when they arise (Dinnebeil & McInerney, 2011).



ECCE Program/Site Leader

An itinerant site leader leads a specific location while a program leader oversees and guides a specific program. In either context, program/site leaders have multiple roles. They are responsible for the daily operations, enrolling children, overseeing staff and ensuring a high-quality educational environment. They provide information about the site and classrooms available for inclusion. They work closely with school division administrators to identify and coordinate placement options. The ECCE program/site leader may support the PreK and itinerant teachers by facilitating a strong relationship between them.

Requirements:

- Must meet licensure requirements of the ECCE program.
- Must be knowledgeable of the classrooms at the site and the PreK teachers' knowledge, skills and dispositions.
- Must be knowledgeable of local, state, and federal regulations.
- Must have good collaboration skills to work with school division administrators on placing and serving children with IEPs and to solve problems.
- Must have strong communication skills to support staff in using the itinerant model.
- Must be able to interact effectively with others, to be agents of change, to persuade others to take on new approaches, and to resolve conflicts when they arise.

School Division Administrators

School division administrators have roles in caseload management, scheduling, communication, and collaboration with sites and programs. They identify and supervise itinerant teachers, develop and implement policies and procedures to arrange logistics (e.g., mileage, coaching log), ensure safety, and quality program implementation. They collaborate with site leaders to identify and coordinate placement options and work through logistical and regulatory considerations.

Requirements:

- Must be knowledgeable of the inclusive classroom sites.
- Must be knowledgeable of children's IEPs and placements.
- Must be knowledgeable of the ECSE teachers' knowledge, skills, and dispositions.
- Must be able to work effectively with various personnel and offices within the school division (e.g., Transportation, Human Resources).
- Must be knowledgeable of local, state, and federal regulations.
- Must have good collaboration skills to work with program/site administrators on placing and serving children with IEPs and to solve problems.
- Must have strong communication skills to support staff in using the itinerant model.
- Must be able to interact effectively with others, to be agents of change, to persuade others to take on new approaches, and to resolve conflicts when they arise.



A successful itinerant model relies on a shared understanding of each member's specific roles and responsibilities and is essential for effective collaboration among the itinerant, classroom teacher, and family. Appendices VII and VIII provide sample flyers that can be given to site staff or family members to help introduce the features of the Virginia IECSE Model. Appendices IX and X have sample introduction letters the itinerant teacher may send to the PreK teacher and child's family to introduce themselves at the beginning of the school year.

Section III: Implementing the Virginia IECSE Model

Transdisciplinary Teaming

The itinerant teacher is one part of a transdisciplinary team. This collaborative effort involves the family, both teachers, teaching assistants, and potentially related service providers. All work together to help the child achieve his or her IEP goals by exchanging information and jointly solving problems to implement services and supports. Each member brings valuable knowledge and skills to the situation which builds capacity within the team.

Family Engagement

Family engagement is a crucial aspect of the Virginia IECSE Model. Establishing strong, trusting relationships with the family of the child with an IEP is a shared responsibility between the PreK and itinerant teachers. The PreK teacher will have methods to communicate with families that may include digital apps, email, newsletters, and/or parent-teacher conferences. The teachers must work together to determine effective strategies for the itinerant teacher to provide information related to the IEP and delivery of special education services.

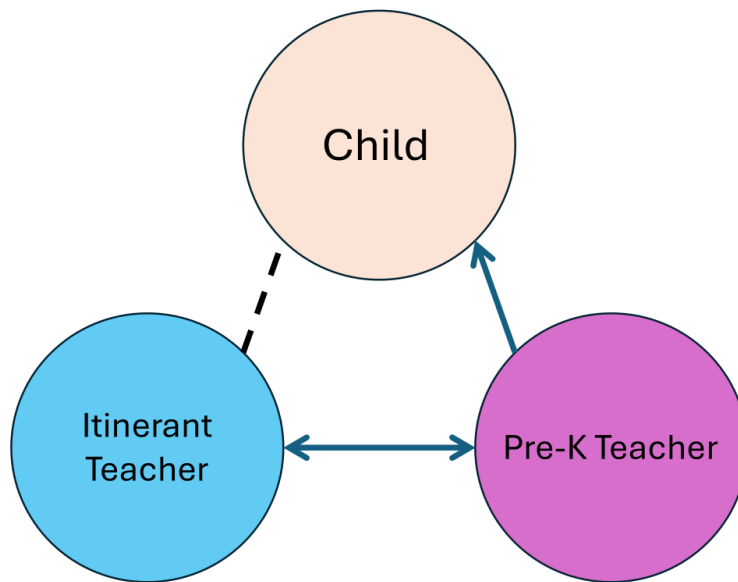
The Triadic Approach

The primary framework of the Virginia IECSE Model is a triadic approach, where the itinerant and PreK teacher work collaboratively to help a child with a disability reach their IEP goals (Buyse & Wesley, 2005; Dinnebeil & McInerney, 2011). The triadic approach, found in Figure One, consists of the following:

- The child with a disability is at the center of the triadic approach.
- The itinerant teacher's primary relationship is with the PreK teacher. The itinerant teacher focuses most of their time and effort consulting and coaching the PreK teacher. The goal is to build the general educator's skills and confidence in implementing specially designed instruction for the child with an IEP.
- The PreK teacher has the strongest relationship with the child. As the person who works with the child throughout the day, the PreK teacher is in the best position to provide instruction in the classroom setting.

A successful itinerant model relies on a shared understanding of each member's specific roles and responsibilities and is essential for effective collaboration among the itinerant, classroom teacher, and family.

Figure One: Triadic Approach

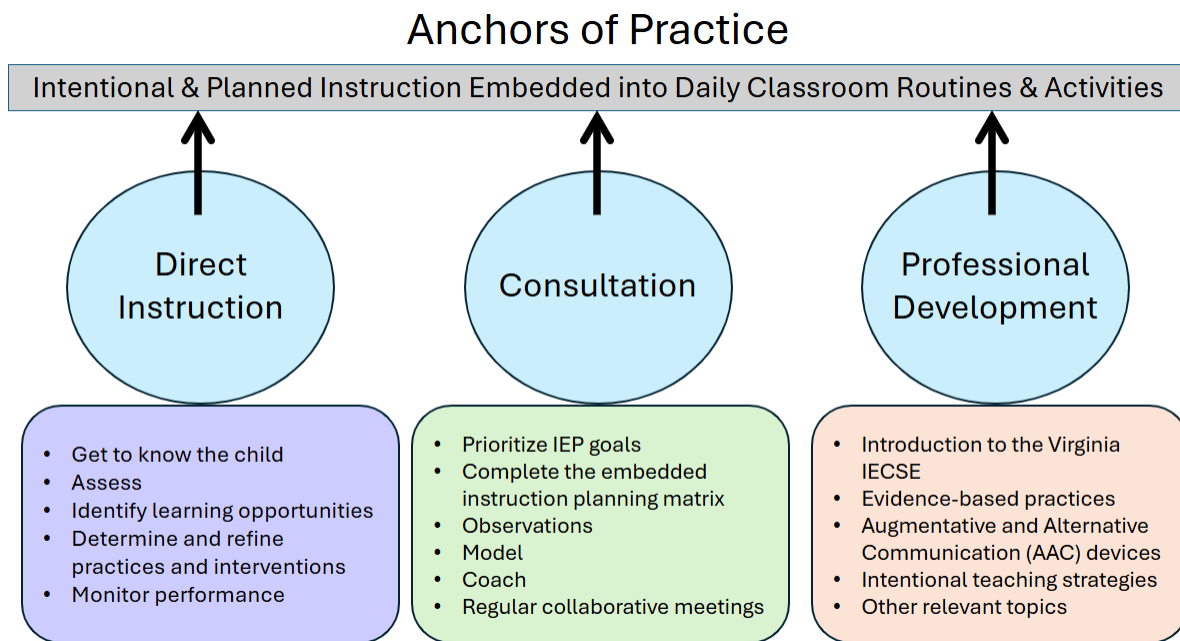


The triadic approach is where the itinerant teacher consults/coaches with the PreK teacher to enhance specific knowledge and skills, who then uses them to support the child with an IEP. Adapted from Buysse & Wesley, 2005.

Anchors of Practice

Successful implementation of the Virginia IECSE Model requires a paradigm shift from pulling children with disabilities out of their classrooms to receive direct services to embedding these services into their daily routines and activities. Three key Anchors of Practice help fulfill this vision. Below is a description of the Anchors of Practices and Figure Two provides a visual representation.

Figure Two: Anchors of Practice



The Anchors of Practice highlight the three areas of practice in the Virginia IECSE Model. The figure is adapted from [Rhode Island Department of Education Itinerant Early Childhood Special Education](#).

Direct Instruction

Direct instruction involves working with the child directly to help him or her learn a skill identified in the IEP. Direct instruction involves the itinerant teacher forming a personal relationship with the child, completing assessment and progress monitoring activities, and determining interventions. The itinerant teacher will likely provide direct instruction during initial visits and then move to doing so periodically. Direct instruction should always be provided in the classroom as opposed to pulling children out of their learning environment. In-class direct instruction allows the itinerant to refine interventions and model how to deliver them during classroom routines and activities for the PreK teacher.

Consultation

Consultation represents a professional discussion-based activity in which a person delivers specialized expertise (Jokimies et al., 2025). In this role, the itinerant teacher helps the PreK teacher plan activities, embed instruction, problem solve, and address challenges by offering guidance, sharing information, modeling, and observing. Some consultation will take place in the classroom during visits. Some will be during planned and regularly scheduled collaborative meetings that occur remotely or in person when both teachers are able to focus and contribute.

Consultation will often move beyond discussion and into coaching to allow the PreK teacher to actively practice and learn in real time. Though consultation and coaching differ in execution, the goal remains the same: building the knowledge and skills of the PreK teacher so embedded instruction can be delivered across the school day. Coaching moves the model from passive to active and helps the PreK teacher move from observer to implementer.

In the Virginia IECSE Model, itinerant teachers provide peer coaching to support the PreK teacher and teaching assistant. Peer coaching is a collaborative process where an individual supports a peer's learning, development, and progress through active listening, questioning, and feedback. It emphasizes mutual learning through guided conversations and constructive feedback (Dinnebeil & McInerney, 2023). While the process is collaborative and flexible, it typically follows a cycle that guides the interactions between the teachers:

- Jointly identifying opportunities for coaching to reach an intended outcome,
- Demonstrating and modeling the skill,
- Observing the teacher use the skill or strategy,
- Providing feedback about the teacher's performance,
- Continuing through the cycle of observation, demonstration, and feedback until the intended outcome is achieved, and
- Providing information and resources to support the intended outcome.

Consultation will often move beyond discussion and into coaching to allow the PreK teacher to actively practice and learn in real time.

While it is beyond the scope of this document to provide detailed information on coaching, it is recommended for itinerant teachers to receive training on coaching and how to effectively deliver constructive, non-judgmental feedback (Dinnebeil, Weber, & McInerney, 2019). To assist with coaching, teams are encouraged to use the Itinerant Early Childhood Special Education Planning and Documentation Form found in Appendix V.

Professional Development

The third anchor of practice includes providing targeted professional development to the PreK teacher and/or team. The idea of providing professional development to team members may at first seem unusual; however, the goal is to ensure the PreK teacher and team members have the appropriate foundational knowledge needed to support the child with an IEP. At the beginning, this professional development may be about the itinerant service delivery model itself as many PreK teachers will be unfamiliar and will benefit from learning more about the model and each team member's role. Professional development may also cover evidence-based practices for teaching the child. For example, professional development may be provided on implementing Assistive Technology or how to use an Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) device. For a child who uses sign language, the team may learn ten essential signs to use in the classroom. The itinerant teacher and team members will work

together to identify ongoing areas of need, team members who may benefit, as well as when and where to deliver the professional development.

Getting Started

It is imperative for there to be an action plan designed to support the child with an IEP. Steps to creating an action plan are listed below. While it might be tempting to begin with implementing strategies to address the child's IEP goals, there is much the itinerant teacher must first learn before being able to provide effective support.

Initial Steps to Creating an Action Plan:

1. Develop a relationship with the PreK teacher and learn about his or her background, strengths, and expectations.
2. Get to know the child with an IEP and how they are functioning in the classroom.
3. Learn about the learning environment, including the presence of teaching assistants and related services personnel, and any cultural factors that may impact the classroom.
4. Get to know any relevant policies, procedures, rules or regulations.

It is imperative for there to be an action plan designed to support the child with an IEP.

Dinnebeil and Mcinerney (2023) provide a list of data collection strategies effective for information gathering. They recommend using child observation checklists, rating scales, and environmental assessments. While these strategies are beneficial, the itinerant teacher may informally gather information from doing the following:

- Meet with the PreK teacher to have a conversation and share experiences, backgrounds, and goals with one another.
- Observe in the classroom and focus on
 - The PreK teacher's skills and strengths related to serving the child with an IEP,
 - The teaching assistant's skills and strengths related to serving the child with an IEP,
 - The schedule,
 - Classroom routines,
 - Transitions between activities,
 - Interactions with adults,
 - Interactions with peers, and
 - Times when the child may be likely to exhibit interfering behavior.
- Review the child's assessment information.
- Meet with the family.
- Meet with other team members.



Once the itinerant teacher has gathered information about the child, teacher, teaching assistant and classroom, both teachers contribute to the action plan by following these steps:

1. Prioritize IEP goals to focus on.
2. Identify and set up learning opportunities throughout the child's day.
3. Identify and implement selected intervention strategies.
4. Determine data collection strategies.

An important part of developing the action plan is triaging and prioritizing goals for improvement. One of the best tools the teachers can use to prioritize IEP goals and to develop an action plan is the Embedded Instruction Planning Matrix like the one found in Appendix I. The Embedded Instruction Planning Matrix is a tool for mapping the IEP goals to the curriculum and daily schedule, identifying interventions, and methods for progress monitoring. See the Example Completed Embedded Instruction Planning Matrix in Appendix II.

Classroom Visits

Delivery of the Virginia IECSE Model requires the itinerant teacher to complete classroom visits. The IEP will specify the service obligations of the itinerant teacher and dictate the frequency of visits (more on this topic can be found in the *Individualized Education Program* section). The objectives of the visit will vary depending on the needs of the child as well as specific goals identified by the teachers. Dinnebeil and McInerney (2011) provide a list of activities that will help the itinerant teacher plan for the classroom visit. A modified version of their list follows. The Consultation Session Planning Form in Appendix III may be used.

One of the best tools the teachers can use to prioritize IEP goals and to develop an action plan is the Embedded Instruction Planning Matrix.

- Identify priority IEP goals.
- Review the child's progress in meeting priority IEP objectives.
- Review any communications from the PreK teacher, family or other team members.
- Plan to receive information from the PreK teacher on the child's progress and the teacher's experience with implementing the instruction.
- Plan specific consultation activities, such as
 - Sharing the child's assessment results,
 - Modeling a specific practice,
 - Helping modify the curriculum, and/or
 - Coaching a specific practice.
- Secure resources needed for the PreK teacher.

Documentation of Classroom Visits and Other Activities

Keeping a record of visits will help plan for future visits, update families and site administrators on efforts implemented, inform child progress summaries, and enhance

communication between teachers. The Itinerant Early Childhood Special Education Planning and Documentation Form in Appendix V may be used. Other documentation, including conversations with families, related service providers, or site administrators, may be kept. In some cases, there may be documentation required by the specific site or child's IEP.

Section IV: Documenting Itinerant Services in the Individualized Education Program

Individualized Education Program

It is the IEP that guides the child's special education and related services. It requires input and support from multiple team members, including family members, the PreK teacher, school administrator, related service providers, and the itinerant teacher, who is often the case manager with primary responsibility for developing and overseeing the IEP.

The services section of the IEP will outline the itinerant and other services the child will receive. Figure Three provides an example of a Services page in an IEP. As with any service, itinerant services should be specified with clarity, focusing on the frequency, setting of service delivery, and duration.

Because the Virginia IECSE Model is made up of three anchors of practice, each must be documented on the IEP services page. Documenting only direct instruction is insufficient because the full itinerant model consists of direct instruction, consultation, and professional development. Tables One and Two provide an example of documenting these three services on a child's IEP.

- **Direct Instruction:** There is not a standard amount of time direct instruction is to be provided. Using the child's IEP goals and areas outlined in the [Virginia's Early Learning and Development Standards \(ELDS\)](#), Birth to Five Learning Guidelines, the team is to identify areas where the child requires support to make progress toward IEP goals.
- **Collaborative Meetings:** Collaborative meetings, a key component of the consultation practice, are to be held frequently to ensure ongoing communication. A minimum of twice a month is recommended.
- **Professional Development:** The amount of professional development should be based on ensuring the PreK teacher and team members have knowledge of foundational and evidence-based practices needed to support the child with an IEP.



Figure Three: IEP Services Page

<u>Services:</u> Identify the service(s), including frequency, duration, and location that will be provided to or on behalf of the student in order for the student to receive a free appropriate public education.			
Service(s)	Frequency	School/location Instructional Setting	Duration mm/dd/yy to mm/dd/yy

Table One: IEP Direct Services Example for the Virginia Itinerant IECSE Model

Area of Need as Indicated by IEP Goals	Frequency of ECSE Services
Social and emotional development	4 hours per month
Communication, language and literacy instruction	2 hours per month
Approaches to Play and Learning	2 hours per month
Total of ECSE Direct Services	8 hours per month

Table Two: IEP Indirect Services Example for the Virginia Itinerant IECSE Model

Indirect Services	Frequency of Indirect Services
Collaborative meetings	2 hours per month
Professional development provided by ECSE teacher	2 hours per year
Total of ECSE Indirect Services	4 hours per month

Section V: Administration and Oversight

School division administrators provide a crucial role in the administration and delivery of the itinerant model. They collaborate with program/site leaders to identify and coordinate placement options, supervise and support itinerant teachers, and work through logistical and regulatory considerations to ensure quality program implementation. Below is a list of key issues, adapted from the [Illinois State Board of Education \(2024\)](#), the school-division administrator will need to work out prior to implementation. The administrator may find the list of start-up steps found in Appendix VI beneficial as it provides a comprehensive checklist of activities to complete.

- 1) Caseload Distribution: When determining caseloads, administrators should consider the number of students, number of locations, and number of classrooms, as well as the frequency and duration of services based on IEPs and individual child needs. To help manage their caseloads, itinerant teachers may opt to use the Caseload Management Form found in Appendix IV.
- 2) Teacher Assignments: There are different factors to be considered when making teacher assignments. See the section below on *Teacher Assignments* for more information.
- 3) Travel: Travel will be required by the itinerant teachers and administrators must determine:
 - a. Will itinerant teachers use their own cars?
 - b. How are itinerant teachers reimbursed for travel?
 - c. How can travel be limited so providers have more time for services?
- 4) Office: The itinerant teacher will require a desk or office where they can work outside of classroom visits as well as securely store student files and materials.
- 5) Case Management Tasks: As a result of all the required documentation and planning for classroom visits, the itinerant teacher's schedule must include time set aside for case management responsibilities which include, documentation, planning, IEP writing, progress monitoring, and other tasks.
- 6) Communication: The itinerant and PreK teachers will need to communicate outside of classroom visits. For example, itinerant teachers will need to be notified if a child is absent. Similarly, the site will need to know if the itinerant teacher is out or needs to make a schedule change. Administrators must develop policies and procedures for communicating with the site.
- 7) Professional Development: Administrators must ensure comprehensive training for any new itinerant teacher on the itinerant model, including an overview of principles, practices, consultation and coaching, and procedures.

School division administrators provide a crucial role in the administration and delivery of the itinerant model.

- 8) Emergency Procedures: Administrators are to establish clear emergency procedures for the itinerant teacher that consider the various environments the teacher will be in, including when traveling between sites.

Teacher Assignments

There are different factors to consider when making itinerant teacher assignments. Decisions can be based simply on the settings and site locations, or they may be based on teachers' attributes, such as skills, experiences, language fluency, and/or cultural knowledge (Dinnebeil & McInerney, 2023). There are two broad organizational structures used to make teacher assignments: Zone and Program Type.

Zone

Under the zone model, an itinerant teacher's caseload is determined by the geographic area where they work, which could be a select number of programs within proximity, rather than the specific expertise of the itinerant teacher or the needs of a particular child. The goal is to minimize the distance between programs where an itinerant teacher must travel rather than match particular itinerant teachers to specific children. There is not a set number of programs or classrooms a teacher may serve in this model, but instead the teacher serves up to twelve children in classrooms located in the designated area.

The benefit of the zone model is minimizing travel time and lessening time constraints, allowing for more time in classrooms. The itinerant teacher may have an office or work desk within their zone. Related service providers who support these children are based in nearby schools. Below is an example of a teacher working in a zone model:

Ms. Degnan is the itinerant teacher in the West corridor for Smith County Public Schools. She serves three students in a VPI program at Chappell Elementary, five children in a Head Start program, and four children in community-based preschool programs. The maximum time Ms. Degnan drives is 10 minutes between sites. Her work desk is located at Chappell Elementary where the speech language pathologist and occupational therapist she often works with are based.

Program Type

When structuring the itinerant model by program type, an itinerant teacher is assigned to a specific program or program type. For example, an itinerant teacher is assigned to a child care setting that serves many children with IEPs. This approach works especially well for programs that routinely enroll children with disabilities, such as Head Start.



The benefit of this model is that programs can benefit from more stable and consistent relationships between itinerant and PreK teachers, which could lead to higher quality professional development and more effective collaboration. Additionally, the teacher may have specific knowledge, skills, or experiences that create a strong match to certain children or program characteristics. Below are examples of teachers assigned by program type:

Mr. Shader is the itinerant teacher for the VPI program at Ferrick Elementary. There are twelve students with IEPs placed in four different VPI classrooms.

Mrs. Fye is the itinerant at Little Wiggles Preschool Program in Ray County. She serves eleven children with IEPs, ranging in ages from two to five. The county has a large Hispanic population and Mrs. Fye's ability to speak fluent Spanish makes her an ideal itinerant teacher at this location.

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

When the itinerant model is implemented in an ECCE site outside of the school division, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is beneficial for helping the school division and program administrators know their roles and responsibilities in providing an education to children with disabilities. An MOU is an agreement that can help create a shared understanding of the plans and responsibilities of each party. It creates a written record of the agreement and fosters collaboration and can improve relationships across programs and staff. [The Office of Special Education Programs \(OSEP\)](#) provides information on components of an MOU designed to support high-quality inclusive early childhood education. OSEP suggests including details of how each component of the service delivery continuum outlined in IDEA will be addressed. This includes the following:

- Referral Process
- Evaluation, Assessment and Eligibility
- IEP Development
- Service Delivery
- IEP Reviews
- Transition

Under the zone model, an itinerant teacher's caseload is determined by the geographic area where they work, which could be a select number of programs within proximity, rather than the specific expertise of the itinerant teacher or the needs of a particular child.

When structuring the itinerant model by program type, the itinerant teacher is assigned to a specific program or program type.

Other information will be important to include in the MOU. This list is not exhaustive but provides recommendations on relevant topics to consider:

- Meeting staff licensure requirements
- [Complying with standards established by the ECCE program](#) (e.g., TB test)
- Establishing communication protocols
- Maintaining confidentiality
- Storing confidential information and records
- Communicating with families
- Collecting and using data
- Planning for a smooth transition to kindergarten
- Addressing family concerns
- Communicating staff absences
- Communicating child absences
- Providing use of office materials (e.g., copier)

The [Guidance on Creating an Effective Memorandum of Understanding to Support High Quality Inclusive Early Childhood Systems](#) developed by the Office of Special Education Programs and the Office of Head Start (2022) provides guidance when developing memoranda of understanding at a state level when coordinating the provision of services that improve the outcomes of young children under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

When the itinerant model is implemented in an ECCE site outside of the school division, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is beneficial for helping the school division and program administrators know their roles and responsibilities in providing an education to children with disabilities.

Section VI: Conclusion

This technical assistance document is intended to provide an overview of the Virginia IECSE Model. It is not fully comprehensive, so administrators and teachers are encouraged to use additional resources. Each school division is different, and the implementation of the itinerant model will vary depending on many factors including the school division, community-based settings, classrooms, children, and the teachers. While administrators ensure appropriate procedures and supports are in place, it is the teachers who are the key to the model. It is their knowledge, skills, and professional behavior that will lead to the successful implementation of the model, and thus children's learning.



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Appendix I: [Embedded Instruction Matrix Form](#)

Child Name _____

Teachers' Names _____

Date Completed _____

Daily Schedule	Targeted Skill	Targeted Skill	Targeted Skill	Targeted Skill

Appendix II: Example Completed Embedded Instruction Planning Matrix

Child Name _____Jeremy Jones_____ Date Completed _____October 5_____

Daily Schedule	Targeted Skill Make Choice	Targeted Skill Request	Targeted Skill Answer "Wh" Questions	Targeted Skill Independence
Breakfast	Select breakfast seat	Answer, "What do you want for breakfast?" (ex: "I want cereal")	Answer, "Who is sitting with you?" (ex: "Zach is sitting with me")	Throw away trash independently
Morning Meeting	Choose a song when presented with 2 options	Request more songs	Answer a question like "What do you see?" (ex: "I see boat")	Put away seat cushion
Centers	Choose a center activity when presented with 2 options	Request toy needed for center (ex: "I want blocks")	Answer, "Who are you playing with?" (ex: "Zach is playing with me")	Clean up area with no more than one prompt
Meals/Snack Time	Choose a drink when presented with milk and juice	Ask for help (ex: "Help me open")	Answer a question like, "What are you eating?" (ex: "I'm eating a hotdog")	Put lunch box in cubby independently Throw away trash independently

Transitions			<p>Answer, “Where are we going when going to recess or library.</p> <p>(ex: “We are going to recess.”)</p>	Follow one-step instructions (ex: get in line, go to carpet)
Small Group	Select writing tool	Request materials needed	Answer, What are you doing?” (ex: “I’m cutting}	Clean up area with no more than one prompt

Appendix III: Consultation Session Planning Form

Date of visit _____

Child name _____

IECSE teacher _____

ECE teacher _____

Location _____

Duration _____

Activity (check all that apply):

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> On-site meeting | <input type="checkbox"/> Consultation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Phone call/Web meeting | <input type="checkbox"/> Coaching |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Professional Development |

Session Focus (check all that apply):

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prioritization of IEP goals/objectives | <input type="checkbox"/> Family engagement |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Embedded Instruction Matrix planning | <input type="checkbox"/> Demonstrating/teaching a skill |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Modification of the environment | <input type="checkbox"/> Implementing AAC or AT |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Modification of materials | <input type="checkbox"/> Addressing interfering behavior |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Modification of curriculum | <input type="checkbox"/> Child assessment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Increasing Learning Opportunities | <input type="checkbox"/> Transition to kindergarten planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Peer pairing / Peer mediated strategies | <input type="checkbox"/> Transition to another program planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Progress monitoring | |

Supplies and Materials:

- ☐ Materials/visual supports _____
- ☐ Toy(s) _____
- ☐ AAC _____
- ☐ AT _____
- ☐ Journal article/reading _____
- ☐ Other _____

Other Information

Adapted from Dinnebeil & McInerney, 2011

Appendix IV: Itinerant Early Childhood Special Education Caseload Management Form

IECSE teacher _____ Date _____

	Child's Name	Early Childhood Teacher	Room Number	Early Childhood Program	Annual IEP Due Date	Frequency of ECSE Services in IEP	Frequency of Collaborative Meetings in IEP	Planning Matrix Completed & Updated (Check)	Frequency of Professional Development in IEP
1.									
2.									
3.									

4.									
5.									
6.									
7.									
8.									

9.									
10.									
11.									
12.									

Appendix V: Itinerant Early Childhood Special Education Planning and Documentation Form:

Child's name _____ Early childhood program _____

Early childhood teacher _____ Itinerant teacher _____

Date	Time Onsite	Summary of Activities and Discussion	Decisions Reached	Follow-Up Tasks/Plan for Next Visit

Adapted from the RI-Itinerant Early Childhood Special Education (RI-IECSE) Documentation Form

Appendix VI: [Itinerant Early Childhood Special Education Administrator Start-Up Steps for the New School Year](#)

Key: Direct Instruction (DI), Collaborative Meetings (CM), and Professional Development (PD)

✓	#	Practice
<input type="checkbox"/>	1	Coordinate school-based placements (e.g., VPI, Head Start) with general education early childhood administrators.
<input type="checkbox"/>	2	Identify EC program locations for community-based placements.
<input type="checkbox"/>	3	Establish IECSE teacher caseloads (maximum caseload = 12).
<input type="checkbox"/>	4	Set up meetings with administrators, itinerant teachers, and ECE teachers to share the child's IEP as well as an overview of the Virginia Itinerant Model.
<input type="checkbox"/>	5	Ensure ECE teachers know itinerant teachers will spend time in their classrooms during the first weeks of school to get to know the children and routines.
<input type="checkbox"/>	6	Work with administrators, itinerant teachers, and ECE teachers to identify days/blocks of time itinerant teachers and therapists will be in the ECE programs.
<input type="checkbox"/>	7	Meet with administrators to identify potential times, locations, and teacher coverage for collaborative meetings.
<input type="checkbox"/>	8	Meet with administrators to identify times for occasional staff professional development.
<input type="checkbox"/>	9	Meet with administrators to determine procedures and protocols for the IECSE teacher to follow when entering the site.
<input type="checkbox"/>	10	Identify a process for ongoing communication and problem-solving with ECE programs.
<input type="checkbox"/>	11	Develop a Memorandum of Understanding between the school division and community-based site.
<input type="checkbox"/>	12	Identify a process for ongoing communication and problem-solving between the itinerant teacher and special education administrator.
<input type="checkbox"/>	13	Work with administrators, itinerant teachers, ECE teachers, and family members to identify a time for family members to meet the teachers.
<input type="checkbox"/>	14	Identify a secure location (locked file) to maintain IEPs and other confidential paperwork.
<input type="checkbox"/>	15	Ensure IECSE schedules include DI and CM with ECE teacher(s), according to the child's IEP.
<input type="checkbox"/>	16	Provide administrators and ECE teachers with schedules, including the DI, CM, and PD for each child.
<input type="checkbox"/>	17	Identify a process for sharing documentation forms capturing site visits.

Adapted from RI-IECSE Start-Up Form

Appendix VII: "Early Childhood Educators Partnering to Meet a Child's Special Needs"

Itinerant Early Childhood Special Education Services



*Local school divisions provide special education services for young children, ages two to five, who have developmental delays or disabilities. Depending on the learning needs of the child, these services may be provided in early childhood care and education (ECCE) settings such as Virginia Preschool Initiative, Head Start, Mixed Delivery, child care, and community-based preschool programs. When special education services are provided in ECCE settings, **Itinerant Early Childhood Special Education (IECSE)** teachers from the school division travel to the classroom to implement the child's Individualized Education Program (IEP). They partner with the child's classroom teacher to identify and implement strategies to support the child's learning and participation with nondisabled peers.*

The teachers collaborate on ways to embed the child's IEP goals into the daily routine and activities. The IECSE teacher helps the classroom teacher develop any new skills needed through consultation and coaching. The itinerant may also provide direct instruction, help monitor progress, and communicate with families and other service providers to ensure delivery of IEP services. The child's IEP specifies the amount of time an IECSE teacher spends in the classroom and with the classroom teacher.



SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIPS

Itinerant Early Childhood Special Education services are most successful when Early Childhood and IECSE teachers have routine, scheduled planning time outside of the classroom to:

- Discuss the child and his/her needs
- Identify strategies for supporting the child's learning and participation in the classroom
- Ask and answer questions
- Address any challenges that arise

When teachers collaborate, their partnership will enable their students to fully participate, learn, and belong.

Including preschoolers with developmental delays or disabilities in early childhood classrooms:

- Provides opportunities to learn from same-age peers
- Offers multiple opportunities to practice skills across the day Leads to greater cognitive and communication development than services in self-contained special education classrooms
- Results in children who are more socially competent and have more friends than in self-contained classrooms
- Minimizes transitions between programs

Appendix VIII: "Meeting Your Child's Special Needs in an Early Childhood Program"

Itinerant Early Childhood Special Education Services



*Local school divisions provide special education services for young children, ages two to five, who have developmental delays or disabilities. Depending on the learning needs of the child, these services may be provided in high-quality early childhood care and education (ECCE) settings such as Virginia Preschool Initiative, Head Start, Mixed Delivery, child care, and community-based preschool programs. When special education services are provided in ECCE settings, **Itinerant Early Childhood Special Education (IECSE)** teachers from the school division travel to the classroom to implement the child's Individualized Education Program (IEP). They partner with the child's classroom teacher to support the child's learning and participation with nondisabled peers.*

Successful Partnerships

The child's IEP specifies the amount of time an IECSE teacher spends in the classroom and with the classroom teacher. The teachers collaborate on ways to embed the child's IEP goals into the typical daily routine and activities. They meet regularly to identify strategies to support the child. When a preschooler receives IECSE services, both IECSE and classroom teachers hold high expectations and intentionally promote participation in learning activities and with peers.



Role of the Itinerant IECSE Teacher

- Model effective instructional practices for the classroom teacher
- Provide direct instruction
- Assist in monitoring child progress
- Communicate with families and any other service providers such as speech therapists

Including preschoolers with developmental delays or disabilities in early childhood classrooms:

- Provides opportunities to learn from same-age peers
- Offers multiple opportunities to practice skills across the day Leads to greater cognitive and communication development than services in self-contained special education classrooms
- Results in children who are more socially competent and have more friends than in self-contained classrooms
- Minimizes transitions between programs

Appendix IX: Example Itinerant Early Childhood Special Education Teacher Introduction Letter to PreK Teacher

Hello Ms. McDonald,

My name is Natalie Harris. I am looking forward to working closely with you this school year as an early childhood special education itinerant teacher. In this role, I work with multiple PreK teachers, such as yourself, to help you better support the children in your classroom with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). Your student, Samantha Young, is on my caseload. This means I will be making regular visits to your classroom to work with you to support Samantha in meeting her IEP goals.

As an itinerant teacher, I work as a teacher, consultant, coach, and resource. My primary role is supporting you, the PreK teacher. While in the classroom, I will spend some time providing direct instruction to Samantha, but I will be focusing most of my time providing consultation and coaching. This means I will be offering guidance, sharing information, and modeling practices. I will be there to answer questions you have about Samantha's behavior or academic progress and problem-solve any obstacles you may be facing. Most importantly, together, we will identify ways to incorporate activities into your daily instruction that will help Samantha achieve her IEP goals.

The frequency of my visits to classrooms depends on the needs of each child on my caseload. For Samantha, I will be on site [*insert amount of time*]. I will be making my first visit to your classroom on [*insert date*], and I look forward to meeting you then. In our first meeting, we can discuss more about how the itinerant model works and make plans for continued collaboration throughout the year. I look forward to getting to know you and Samantha! Please always feel free to reach out with any questions or concerns you might have.

Sincerely,
Natalie Harris
Itinerant Teacher
Willow Lane School District
Telephone: 959-603-5566
Email: Samantha.harris@WLSchools.org

Appendix X: Example Itinerant Early Childhood Special Education Teacher Introduction Letter to Child's Family

Hello Mr. & Mrs. Young,

My name is Natalie Harris, and I will be serving as an itinerant early childhood special education teacher supporting Samantha and her PreK teacher this year. We met at Samantha's IEP meeting last year. I am looking forward to getting to know you and Samantha better this year.

In my role, I will be regularly visiting Samantha's classrooms and meeting with her PreK teacher to identify ways to support Samantha's learning and participation in the classroom. I work as a consultant, coach, and resource person. My main goal is to ensure Samantha's PreK teacher and other staff in the building are equipped to provide appropriate learning opportunities for her. We will work together to support Samantha as she makes progress towards her IEP goals and participates in classroom learning/routines. There will be times when I work with Samantha one-on-one to introduce new activities or assess progress, but my focus is collaborating with Samantha's teacher to make sure she has a positive educational experience.

I will be meeting Samantha's PreK teacher in the upcoming week and we will be establishing the time I will be in the classroom. I will let you know once it is determined.

Please never hesitate to reach out to me with any questions or concerns. My contact information is below. I look forward to seeing you and Samantha soon!

Sincerely,
Natalie Harris
Itinerant Teacher
Willow Lane School District
Telephone: 959-603-5566
Email: Samantha.harris@WLSchools.org