



## VDOE Region 4 Training and Technical Assistance Center George Mason University

### Resource Menu: Supporting Early Childhood Educators in Inclusive Environments

A body of research demonstrates that high-quality inclusion benefits children, families, and professionals. Research also shows that many early childhood educators do not feel adequately prepared to adapt their teaching to meet the needs of children with IEPs in their care. In an effort to support teachers like you who serve young children with and without disabilities, this document offers resources that promote inclusive practices in several identified high-needs areas. Click to jump to the desired topic:

- Routines and Transitions
- Physical Environment
- Responding to Behaviors that Challenge Us
- Recognizing and Responding to Children's Needs and Preferences
- Instructional Practices
- Self- and Co-Regulation

#### HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE MENU

This resource menu is intended for self-guided exploration. We encourage you to choose the topic(s) that are most relevant, given your classroom needs and learning preferences. We do NOT suggest you review all of the resources at one time. Resources in the **READ** and **WATCH OR LISTEN** columns provide introductory information about the topic. In the **IMPLEMENT** column, you will find printable resources, planning forms, and tools that help put strategies into practice. Finally, **EVALUATE & REFLECT** resources encourage you to reflect on your practice and to identify next steps. You may review resources from any column in any order.

We do NOT suggest you review all of the resources at one time. **After reviewing three resources from one topic area, complete the [Reflection Form](http://www.bit.ly/ECEResourceMenu) ([www.bit.ly/ECEResourceMenu](http://www.bit.ly/ECEResourceMenu)) or scan the QR code on each resource page to receive a professional development certificate for 1.5 hours per topic.**





## Helpful Resources

Virginia's Early Learning and Development Standards, Birth-Five Learning Guidelines ([ELDS](#)) is an important tool to remember as you review these resources and think about your classroom. The ELDS can be used to improve your understanding of child development in the context of skill acquisition and learning in order to differentiate instruction using effective feedback strategies.

Throughout this document, you will find alignment to the Division for Early Childhood Recommended Practices ([DEC RP](#)). These practices, developed at the national level, "provide guidance to practitioners and families about the most effective ways to improve the learning outcomes and promote the development of young children, birth through five years of age, who have or are at-risk for developmental delays or disabilities...support[ing] children's access and participation in inclusive settings and natural environments."

Each of the topics in this document corresponds to one or more dimensions of the Classroom Assessment Scoring System ([CLASS](#)). The CLASS is used in early childhood classrooms in the Commonwealth of Virginia to measure the quality of interactions that correlate to children's outcomes. You may choose to focus your efforts based on the CLASS summary report you received after your most recent observation.

## ROUTINES & TRANSITIONS



## READ



## WATCH OR LISTEN



## IMPLEMENT



## EVALUATE & REFLECT



These resources outline universal practices that support the emotional and temporal environments of a preschool classroom, specifically related to routines and transitions. While some of the resources use the terminology "challenging behaviors," we encourage educators to think of all behaviors as communication. In many cases, the need for established, predictable routines and smooth transitions can proactively support children's need for consistency, therefore reducing the occurrence of "challenging" behaviors.

**DEC RP:** These strategies support professionals in the area of *Environment*, which not only refers to the space and materials, but also the routines and activities educators may modify to support children's learning.

**CLASS:** Many of these strategies support success in the *Behavior Management* and *Productivity* domains.

[Moving Right along...Planning Transitions to Prevent Challenging Behavior:](#) This article from NAEYC helps the educator to evaluate the daily schedule, including the number and length of transitions, and then modify as necessary in order to better support children.

[Reducing Challenging Behaviors during Transitions: Strategies for Early Childhood Educators to Share with Parents:](#) While geared towards parents, this article from NAEYC provides concrete preventative strategies for transitions that can be generalized to the classroom as well.

[Adapting Children's Learning Opportunities:](#) This one-pager invites educators to consider the use of adaptations to increase children's participation in activities.

[ECLCK: Schedules and Routines:](#) This 5-minute video depicts how schedules and routines help to promote children's learning.

[ECLCK: Transitions:](#) This 4-minute video helps educators promote positive behaviors during classroom transitions.

[ECLCK: Stating Behavioral Expectations:](#) This 5-minute video shows how to create and state expectations for classroom behavior that preschool children can understand.



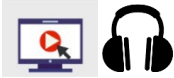


[Transition Tips:](#) This one-pager from the National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations (NCPMI) provides strategies that support transition. Check out [Visual Supports for Routines, Schedules, and Transitions](#) embedded in this document for printable visuals.

[Planning for Transitions:](#) This fillable chart, corresponding to the "ECLCK: Transitions" video, allows teaching teams to discuss and plan for strategies that be used to support smooth transitions.

[Classroom Visuals and Supports:](#) Here you'll find a collection of high-quality visuals and supports that can be printed and used immediately to support young children's development and learning. This resource comes from the Head Start Center for Inclusion.

[Visual Supports Checklist:](#) This checklist helps educators recognize current visual supports in their classrooms and identify areas that could benefit from adding visual supports.

[Practice Implementation Checklist: High Quality Environments:](#) This one-page checklist from NCPMI acts as self-assessment to help educators determine their success in specific strategies related to features of the preschool environment.

<b>PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT</b> 	<b>READ</b> 	<b>WATCH OR LISTEN</b> 	<b>IMPLEMENT</b> 	<b>EVALUATE &amp; REFLECT</b> 
<p>Many educators take care in planning and setting up their classroom each year. This physical space, including furniture arrangement and equipment, can impact children’s ability to access the materials successfully, most especially for students with disabilities. Furthermore, a well-crafted physical environment can help transitions and routines run smoothly (see <b>Routines &amp; Transitions</b> for related resources). Through evaluation of the classroom environment and modifications to the physical space, educators can create learning environments that can foster development and improve the overall efficiency of the classroom.</p> <p>This module from the IRIS Center, “<a href="#">Early Childhood Environments: Designing Effective Classrooms</a>” is highly recommended for improving knowledge of the physical, social, and temporal environments. By signing in and taking a pre- and post-test, participants may receive a professional development certificate for 2 hours from the IRIS Center directly.</p> <p><u>DEC RP:</u> These strategies support professionals in the area of <i>Environment</i>.</p> <p><u>CLASS:</u> Many of these strategies support success in the CLASS dimensions of <i>Behavior Management</i>, <i>Productivity</i>, and <i>Instructional Learning Formats</i>.</p>	<p><a href="#">Fostering Engagement Within Inclusive Settings: The Role of the Physical-Social-Temporal Environment in Early Childhood Settings</a>: This NAEYC article provides three student scenarios, followed by corresponding modifications to the physical-social-temporal environment. The modifications illustrate how educators can encourage more engagement and inclusivity across many settings.</p> <p><a href="#">Early Childhood Environments: Designing Effective Classrooms</a>: This IRIS Module offers information on how to set up an effective inclusive early childhood classroom environment. While it provides information on the social and temporal environment as well, “Page 2: Physical Environment” under “Perspectives &amp; Resources” provide foundational knowledge in creating a successful physical space.</p>	<p><a href="#">VCU ACE: Physical Structure</a>: This 8-minute video provides examples of ways to use physical structure in the preschool environment. While provided by the Autism Center for Education, the examples depict strategies and teaching practices that can be beneficial for all students.</p> <p><a href="#">ECLCK: Designing Environments</a>: This 5-minute video from ECLCK provides features of the physical and social classroom environment that maximize young children's engagement and learning.</p>	<p>The following two activities corresponding to the IRIS Module: <a href="#">Early Childhood Environments: Designing Effective Classrooms</a>, found in the READ column.</p> <p><a href="#">Early Childhood Environments: Designing Effective Classrooms Activity</a>: This activity invites educators to consider the current classroom environment and brainstorm changes that could be made to support the full participation of all children in the classroom.</p> <p><a href="#">Early Childhood Environments: Adapting for a Child with a Disability</a>: This activity encourages educators to identify the strengths and needs of a child with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) in the classroom and then list possible issues with the environment that might impede the child’s learning and development. Furthermore, professionals should generate possible adaptations that could be made to address the issues.</p>	<p><a href="#">Assessing Your Physical Space and Strategizing Changes</a>: From the National Center on Quality Teaching and Learning (NCQTL). After drawing out the classroom, educators can examine the classroom’s physical spaces to assess strengths and limitations, and brainstorm possible changes to improve the environment.</p> <p><a href="#">Environmental Arrangements Checklist</a>: This ECTA checklist invited educators to reflect on their space’s environmental arrangements, both the indoor and outdoor spaces, and determine how well they encourage fitness, wellness, gross motor development, as well as development in other areas.</p> <p><a href="#">Environmental Adaptations Checklist</a>: This ECTA checklist encourages educators to observe children in the physical environment and determine the need for adaptations (physical, social, temporal, etc.) that can be used to promote child participation in learning activities.</p>



## RESPONDING TO BEHAVIORS THAT CHALLENGE US



Responding to behaviors that are challenging is commonly ranked as one of the most difficult parts of teaching in an early childhood setting. DEC reminds us that young children's behaviors are influenced by development, temperament, environment, and culture. The resources on this page invite teachers to understand children's behaviors as communication, and to respond in ways that honor children's underlying needs. Further, research shows that adults' interpretations of children's behavior play an important role in determining which behaviors will be viewed as challenging. See resources in the Co-Regulation section of this document to help adults reflect on their own needs, beliefs, and ideas about behaviors.

This module from the IRIS Center, "[Early Childhood Behavior Management: Developing and Teaching Rules](#)" is an excellent supplemental resource that provides proactive behavior strategies. By signing in and taking a pre- and post-test, participants may receive a professional development certificate for 1.5 hours from the IRIS Center directly.

**DEC RP:** These strategies align with the *Interactions* topic area, which lays the groundwork for learning across all domains.

**CLASS:** These resources support the *Behavior Management* dimension of the CLASS tool, along with *Positive Climate*, *Negative Climate* (scores reversed; low score indicates high quality), *Teacher Sensitivity*, and *Productivity*.

## READ



[DEC Position Statement on Challenging Behavior:](#) DEC defines "challenging behavior" and prepares adults to respond in positive and instructive ways.

[Preventing Challenging Behavior in Young Children: Effective Practices:](#) This article from the National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations (NCPMI) outlines research-based, proactive strategies that can be implemented to support children's needs and prevent some challenging behaviors before they begin.

## WATCH OR LISTEN



[ECLKC: Behavior Has Meaning:](#) This 4-minute video outlines how young children communicate through their behaviors and invites adults to get curious about children's needs.

[ECLCK: Redirecting Behavior:](#) This 5-minute video teaches ways that adults can redirect challenging behaviors before they escalate. Note that redirecting is not an appropriate strategy for every behavior; it is vital that adults understand and respond to children's underlying needs.

[Teaching with CLASS: Reframing "Challenging" Behaviors:](#) In this 25-minute podcast episode, Early Education Specialist Michelle Galindo discusses the importance of reframing "challenging" behaviors and shares strategies for guiding positive behaviors in early childhood classrooms.

## IMPLEMENT



[Toolkit Tips:](#) Strategies from this toolkit can be used both during tricky moments and in reflecting with colleagues and families.

[Tip Sheet: Seek to Understand a Child's Behavior:](#) This Tip Sheet from the Connecticut State Department of Education provides questions to ask to understand an unsafe or challenging behavior. Once you understand the need behind a behavior, consider reviewing the corresponding [Tip Sheet: De-Escalation Strategies](#) to learn about the cycle of behavior and strategies to implement when a child is dysregulated. Note that some of the resources are state-specific. Note that some of the resources are state-specific.

## EVALUATE & REFLECT



[Pyramid Model Practices for Family Day Homes:](#) While the title mentions family day home centers, this tool from NCPMI encourages all educators to reflect on a variety of classroom practices that relate to understanding and responding to children's behaviors.

[Building Environments that Encourage Positive Behavior: The Preschool Behavior Support Self-Assessment:](#) Complete the attached self-assessment with your teaching team to reflect on how your environment supports children's positive behaviors.

[Embedded Instructional Practices Checklist \(ECTA\):](#) This brief checklist invites educators to reflect on how they use instructional practices to promote a child's use of targeted, functional behavior across contexts.

## RECOGNIZING AND RESPONDING TO CHILDREN'S NEEDS AND PREFERENCES



Master early childhood teachers are skilled at relinquishing control, changing their plans, and following children's leads. This kind of willingness to let children lead the way is not easy! The resources on this page unpack why it is so important for young children to have plenty of opportunities to participate authentically in their own learning. Teachers will also find practical tips and tools to use when planning for these opportunities in their classrooms.

**DEC RP:** These strategies align with the *Instruction and Interaction* practices.

**CLASS:** These resources support *Regard for Student Perspectives*.

## READ



**Practitioner Practice Guide: Following the Child's Lead:** This guide from ECTA introduces the importance of recognizing and responding to children's needs and preferences.

**The Complete Guide to Incorporating Regard for Student Perspectives at Circle Time:** Learn how Mrs. Jones incorporates children's ideas into her circle time. This short article provides concrete examples of how to improvise based on children's responses.

**Crisscross-Applesauce: It's Time to Move on From This Tradition:** This blog post by Rae Pica shows why we must not restrict children's movement or dictate how children sit.

## WATCH OR LISTEN



**ECLKC: Following Children's Lead:** Watch teachers leverage children's curiosities and interests to promote engagement and authentic learning in this 5-minute video.

**ECLKC: Giving Children Responsibilities:** In this 6-minute video, learn about why engaging children meaningfully in the classroom contributes to their social emotional development.

**"Teaching with CLASS" Podcast: Regard for Student Perspective:** In this 36-minute podcast episode, learn about what Regard for Student Perspectives looks like in an inclusive classroom, and practical strategies for incorporating children's ideas and interests into your day.

## IMPLEMENT



**Learning Activity: Planning in Your Classroom:** This planning guide, aligned to the Giving Children Responsibilities video, helps teachers select strategies for promoting children's autonomy.

**Tools of Autonomy in a Pre-K for All Classroom:** This document contains criteria for effective tools of autonomy, along with high-quality photos from real classrooms and best practices for implementation.

**Learning Activity: Integrating Child Preferences:** This planning template helps practitioners plan for specific children's needs and preferences.

**Learning Activity: Planning for Child Preferences:** This planning template encourages teachers to consider how to incorporate children's interests and preferences across the day to support engagement.

## EVALUATE & REFLECT



**Naturalistic Instructional Practices Checklist:** While this checklist from ECTA refers to naturalistic instruction, the prompts encourage practitioners to reflect on how they respond to children's initiations of learning. For more information on Naturalistic Instruction, see the [Learning Guide: Using Responsive, Naturalistic Learning Opportunities](#)

**Responsive Caregiving Practice Implementation Checklist:** This checklist from NCPMI encourages early childhood teachers to think about ways that they individualize care for children and families by responding to and celebrating unique needs and preferences.

**What does Regard for Student Perspectives Look Like in a Teacher-Directed Activity?:** Teachers may use the scenarios outlined in this blog post to reflect on how they incorporate opportunities for children to lead throughout the day.

## INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES



These resources support instructional practices and specifically provide information regarding embedded instruction and scaffolding. In embedded instruction, the educator identifies times and activities in which a child's developmental skill can be taught in the context of naturally-occurring activities and routines in the classroom. When a teacher provides assistance at the right level of support, he/she is scaffolding to fit the needs of the individual child's development. In general, observing and recognizing children's needs and skills provides opportunities for educators to adjust their teaching strategies appropriately.

**DECP RP:** These strategies support professionals in the area of *Instruction*, including what and when to teach, as well as how to evaluate the student's learning.

**CLASS:** Many of these strategies support success in the areas of *Instructional Learning Formats*, *Concept Development*, and *Quality of Feedback*.

## READ



### [Learning Guide: Planning and Using Embedded Instruction Practices:](#)

This one-page article from DEC provides a brief overview of how to plan for and embed instruction, including identifying behaviors and skills, making accommodations to the environment or activity, scaffolding during instruction, and finally providing feedback to the student.

### [Learning Guide: Using Responsive, Naturalistic Learning Opportunities:](#)

This guide from ECTA provides information about supporting child-initiated activities and outlines ways for teachers to interact that encourage children to expand their current abilities. This method of instruction is aligned to behavior markers in the Regard for Student Perspective dimension.

[Sample Completed Embedded Instruction Matrix:](#) This document is a brief example of embedding basic skills into the classroom routine. Skills can be based on IEP goals or the Virginia ELDS.

## WATCH OR LISTEN



### [ECLKC: Activity Matrix: Organizing Learning Throughout the Day:](#)

This 4-minute video introduces the activity matrix as an effective tool for teachers to organize learning opportunities for children who need additional support during daily classroom activities and routines.

[ECLKC: The Teaching Loop:](#) This 5-minute video demonstrates how to use a teaching practice called The Teaching Loop to provide individualized instruction to children.

## IMPLEMENT



[Learning Activity: Building an Activity Matrix:](#) This activity, aligned to the Activity Matrix video, is designed to help the educator build a matrix by identifying the schedule, students, and goals, as well as the materials needed to match the learning objectives.

[A Guide to Adaptations:](#) This resource provides concrete examples of adaptations to Environment, Materials, and Instruction. Pages 9-13 specifically relate to adapting the Instruction.

[Instructional Strategies Manual:](#) This resource from Early Childhood Research and Development Initiative provides strategies related to a variety of developmentally appropriate skills and correlates them to a student's disability, so that teachers can implement the suitable adaptation to instruction.

[Fillable Embedded Instruction Matrix:](#) This blank matrix is provided for educators to implement with their students.

## EVALUATE & REFLECT



[Embedded Instructional Practices Checklist \(ECTA\):](#) This brief checklist includes the characteristics of embedded instructional practices that can be used by an educator to assess the frequency that they embed learning opportunities.

[Learning Activity: Role Play: Effective Teaching Loop Checklist:](#) This resource that correlates to the "ECLKC: Teaching Loop" video provides the educator with the opportunity to assess their use of scaffolding and feedback during instruction.

## SELF- & CO-REGULATION



These resources provide guidance for educators as they practice wellness and mindfulness in their lives, foster children's self-regulation, and support co-regulatory processes in the classroom. Self-regulation (the ability to manage behaviors, thoughts, and emotions) plays an important role in early childhood classrooms and contributes to the wellbeing of adults and children alike. To support children's development of self-regulatory skills, educators must be attuned to their own needs and be able to manage their strong emotions. These resources offer practical tips for teachers of young children in caring for themselves while under the stress that comes with leading a classroom. Teachers will also learn about the importance of co-regulation, including ways to support children in managing their big feelings.

**DEC RP:** These strategies align with the area of *Interaction*. When educators are responsive and sensitive to children's needs, they promote development in cognition, language, and emotional competence.

**CLASS:** These resources correspond to the areas of *Positive Climate*, *Teacher Sensitivity*, *Regard for Student Perspective*, and *Behavior Management*.

### READ



#### [How to Help Kids Understand and Manage their Emotions:](#)

Emotional regulation is a complex process that can be challenging for children. While geared towards parents, this article from the American Psychological Association (APA) can be generalized to provide evidence-based approaches for adults as they support children in the classroom.

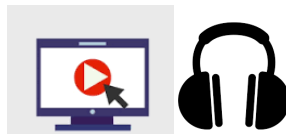
#### [Rocking and Rolling—It Takes Two: The Role of Co-Regulation in Building Self-Regulation Skills:](#)

This brief article from NAEYC provides tips for how educators can nurture self-regulation in young children through co-regulation.

#### [Self-Regulation Snap Shot #2: A Focus on Preschool-Aged Children:](#)

This two-page infographic report from the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE) summarizes fundamental concepts relating to self- and co-regulation for preschool-aged children.

### WATCH OR LISTEN



#### [Self-Regulation Before Co-Regulation - Supporting the Children in your Classroom:](#)

Provided by Teaching with CLASS, this 34-minute podcast with Dr. Angela Searcy discusses challenging behaviors in preschool classrooms and how educators can support their own self-regulation during these moments through co-regulating with their students.

**[What is Self-Regulation?:](#)** This 3-minute video from Empowered to Connect walks viewers through the journey of regulation from infancy to adulthood by showing the constant cycle of self- and co-regulation between children and adults.

**[Nurturing the Nurturer:](#)** In this recorded 21-minute presentation from ECLKC, Neal Horren addresses the importance of educator wellness. In order to provide for and nurture the children you serve, you must begin by nurturing yourself.

### IMPLEMENT



**[Mindfulness-for-Early-Childhood-Professionals:](#)** From ZERO to THREE, this short resource walks early childhood professionals through the practice of mindfulness in their work environment.

#### [Supporting the Development of Self-Regulation in Young Children:](#)

From the OPRE, this comprehensive packet is filled with tips for practitioners on providing support for self- and co-regulation within the preschool classroom setting.

**[How to Keep Your Cool When Your Students Lose Theirs:](#)** From the Inclusive Schooling, explore the 7 steps to help manage your big emotions as your students experience their own big emotions.

**[10 Day Mindfulness Challenge:](#)** Using evidence-based practices, this 10-day mindfulness challenge from Dartmouth College can support individuals as they reflect and build a toolbox of everyday practices to promote well-being.

### EVALUATE & REFLECT



#### [The Infant Toddler Temperament Tool \(IT3\): Supporting A "Goodness of Fit":](#)

From the ECLKC, the Infant Toddler Temperament Tool allows individuals to evaluate their own temperaments in relation to the children in the classroom. Based on the results, the tool also provides tips and support for individuals moving forward.

#### [Co-Regulating Cues](#)

**[Workbook:](#)** From Turnaround Children, this workbook takes educators through the journey of evaluating and reflecting on their co-regulation practices in the classroom, along with activities to help identify and unpack their co-regulation cues.