

TATS & FIN *Talk*

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Resources and References for Teachers

1. Introduction to Early Childhood (Resources that emphasize strategies and accommodations)

- ▶ TATS [Curriculum and Instruction TATS website page](#)
- ▶ [Tips-Essentials for Supporting Young Children](#)

2. About Universal Design for Learning in Inclusive Early Childhood Environments

- ▶ CAST <http://udlguidelines.cast.org/>
- ▶ Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (ECTA) [Guides for Early Childhood Practitioners](#)
- ▶ [Developmentally Appropriate Activities for Young Children \(ECTA\)](#)

3. Applying Universal Design for Learning in Inclusive Early Childhood Environments

- ▶ Division of Early Learning <http://flbt5.floridaearlylearning.com/>
- ▶ Frank Porter Graham Center at UNC [Resources for Early Intervention](#)
- ▶ [Universal Design for Early Education](#)

4. Individualizing Supports in Inclusive Early Childhood Environments

- ▶ CUE Card – Specially Designed Instruction <https://www.floridainclusionnetwork.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/CueCard-SDI.pdf>
- ▶ [Head Start Center for Inclusion](#)
- ▶ [Emotional Development of Young Children](#)
- ▶ TATS [“Rock Your Classroom”–Evidence-based Practices for Early Childhood](#)

5. Using Progress Monitoring in the Early Childhood Setting

- ▶ General Developmental Sequence (Toddler through Preschool) <https://childdevelopmentinfo.com/child-development/devsequence/#.WdGsUFtSyJB>
- ▶ Addressing Unique Needs during Assessments – [Addressing Unique Needs during Assessments – TATS 2019](#)



VOLUME



A Focus on Early Childhood Learning

About Early Childhood Education

Research shows that children are more successful in school and beyond if they are given a strong foundation in the earliest years of their lives. Research on early learning programs in the 1960s and 1970s revealed that benefits for children lasted into adulthood (Meloy, 2019).

Recent scientific research describes early learning as the critical period from birth to about five years of age when the brain develops at a rapid rate and children are building a foundation for learning that will last for life. During the early childhood period the human brain undergoes rapid development; it's a period when a child builds cognitive skills—the foundation for reading, math, science, and academics—as well as character skills, social-emotional growth, gross-motor skills, and executive functioning, which includes everything from impulse control to problem solving (Dodge, 2017).

Early childhood education is a broad term used to describe an educational program that serves children in their preschool years, prior to entering kindergarten. Early childhood education may consist of any number of activities and experiences designed to aid in the cognitive and social development of preschoolers before they enter elementary school.

Diverse Opportunities

Florida's [Division of Early Learning \(DEL\)](#) reports that more than one million children under age five live in Florida and that nearly 600 babies are born each day. As many as 700,000 children in Florida attend some type of early learning program.

Options for early childhood programs in Florida are numerous and varied in focus. Most communities have pre-kindergarten programs; whether public or private (associated with religious facilities), they provide options for families. Several public programs, as well as district school systems, also provide classrooms and programs for young children.

Preschool education programs may be designed specifically for either three-, four-, or five-year olds, and they may be provided in childcare or nursery school settings, as well as more conventional preschool classrooms. These programs may be housed in center-based, home-based, or public-school settings; and they may be offered on a part-day or full-day basis, or even on a year-round schedule to include summers. Early childhood education programs also differ in terms of funding and sponsorship, and can be privately run, operated by a local school system, or operated through a federally funded program.

Preschool classrooms often serve children with a variety of learning characteristics, including students who meet eligibility criteria for special education under such programs as Developmental Delay, Speech Impaired, Language Impaired, or other identified disabilities. It is important to note that special education services are provided across various settings, as described under "Options for Early Childhood Education."

Options for Early Childhood Education

From birth to age 3, children are often enrolled in childcare settings in homes and other locations such as public and private preschools, including church and community programs. Young children who are identified as having special needs are often served by Florida's Early Steps program.

Early Learning
CHILD CARE

[Child Care in Home or Preschool](#)



Florida Head Start
State Collaboration Office

[Early Steps - Early Intervention](#)



[Early Head Start](#)

Young children and infants who exhibit delays, disabilities, and established conditions (for example, cerebral palsy, visual impairments, deafness, or medical conditions) are often provided with services in the Early Steps program as documented in an Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP). Service providers consult with and model strategies for family members in addition to working directly with the children. Before the children served with an IFSP reach their third birthday, a transition process occurs. This process includes collaboration with the family regarding services, review of progress and continued needs, and evaluation through the district school system. Children who continue to qualify for special education services then have an Individual Educational Plan (IEP) which is developed before their third birthday.



Children ages 3–Kindergarten are often served in public and private programs, including those that are federally, state, or district funded. Young children who are identified as eligible for special education services are served in a variety of settings and are often included in the programs listed below.



[DEL Resources](#)



[Head Start Migrant Programs](#)



[Voluntary Prekindergarten](#)



Florida Head Start
State Collaboration Office

[Head Start](#)



Early Learning
SCHOOL READINESS

[FL School Readiness](#)



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT
OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES
MYFLFAMILIES.COM

[Childcare, Private, and
Community Programs](#)

Additional Resources

[Special Needs - Division of Early Learning](#) | [Head Start Center for Inclusion](#) | [VPK Specialized Instructional Services](#)

The Early Childhood Classroom

Children in preschool classrooms are usually busy and active. Pre-kindergarten teachers are tasked with challenges such as providing a safe and secure environment, establishing relationships, balancing teacher-directed and student-directed learning, and helping children become socially and emotionally ready to learn. Teachers need to be aware of the impact of aspects of development such as children's prior experiences, culture and family dynamics, and socio-economic factors, as well as possible developmental delays and disabilities. Children bring their experiences and developmental characteristics into the classroom with them. Good teachers are observant of that and design activities and supports around the kinds of things that they know their students are experiencing. Because children arrive in early childhood programs from diverse backgrounds, cultures, experiences, and levels of development, they also have diverse learning styles, strengths, and needs. Most children will thrive when given general and universal supports within the classroom setting; however, some children may exhibit difficulties and will need more intensive and individualized supports.

Child Development

To understand the varying needs of young children, it is important to be familiar with child development sequences and milestones. When considering developmental stages and domain skills, it is important to remember that children develop at varying rates. Each child develops at their own rate, and delays, learning difficulties, and needs for supports at any stage or level of development are not necessarily indications that a child has a disability. Most children learn by doing and will practice new skills through play. Children must have their basic needs met and feel safe and valued in order for learning and development to be maximized.

Child development is generally described in domains or categories which include the following:

- ▶ Social (adult and peer interactions and relationships, emotions, and self-regulation)
- ▶ Adaptive (self-care, group participation, responsibility)
- ▶ Communication (language; emergent literacy; listening; expressing wants, needs, and ideas)
- ▶ Motor (gross muscle movements, fine motor, perceptual motor)
- ▶ Cognitive (memory, problem-solving, conceptual information, emergent literacy, pre-academic skills)



Supporting All Children

All children, regardless of their learning differences, should have opportunities to experience activities and receive supports that assist when needed but at the same time maximize independent functioning across a wide range of settings.

Key principles for providing supports for all children are included in the components of Developmentally Appropriate Practices (DAP) and Universal Design for Learning (UDL). These strategies focus on providing minimum supports and moving toward more intensive and individualized supports as progress monitoring data indicates the need for additional assistance. Essential guidelines for supporting young children's learning and participation are listed below.

- ▶ Provide a welcoming, safe, and nurturing environment.
- ▶ Embed teaching and facilitating practice of skills throughout the routines of the day.
- ▶ Schedule, encourage, and facilitate play and hands-on experiences.
- ▶ Use individual interests, examples of real-life situations, along with actual objects and photos to help children understand lessons and routines.

In order for all children, regardless of their learning differences, to have access to information related to early learning standards, it is important to use the [Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards](#) (FELDS). These standards describe what a child should know and be able to do as they progress developmentally from birth until age 5. There are eight domains of learning: Physical Development, Approaches to Learning, Social and Emotional Development, Language and Literacy, Mathematical Thinking, Scientific Inquiry, Social Studies, and Creative Expression. Information and resources in the developmental continuum of FELDS in combination with information about individual needs provides a framework for developing supports and strategies based on individual needs.

However, even with supports in place, there are various reasons that some children experience difficulties participating in and learning from the lessons and activities provided. These reasons include medical problems, lack of experiences, language or learning differences, along with developmental delays and disabilities. Children who have not had opportunities to attend preschool programs might not yet have experiences in school-related interactions and activities, while other children might have received early intervention or individualized supports in other programs. Some children who enter a specific early childhood setting might have already been evaluated and determined eligible for special education services.

For more information on early childhood programs, contact your TATS regional facilitator.

Technical Assistance and Training System (TATS)—<http://www.tats.ucf.edu>



This document was developed by the Technical Assistance and Training System (TATS), a project funded by the Florida Department of Education, Division of Public Schools, Bureau of Exceptional Student Education, through federal assistance under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part B.



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About Universal Design for Learning in Inclusive Early Childhood Environments

A ramp into a building, curb cuts, and lowered service counters: as a result of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, we have all come to expect and use universal designs that make environments accessible to everyone. When ramps are available, all of us use them — whether we use a wheelchair, a walker, or we simply prefer to walk up an incline rather than steps. Universal Design for Learning (UDL) applies the universal design concept to the classroom environment and curriculum so that children with diverse needs can access classroom materials to promote their growth and development.

Designing environments that are accessible to all also applies to learning. In the same way that it is unacceptable to wait until a person in a wheelchair arrives to think about designing and building a ramp for a restaurant, it is also unacceptable to design learning environments that are inaccessible to some students.

UDL is a framework for intentionally, proactively, and reflectively addressing the learning needs of diverse and exceptional learners in the classroom (CAST, 2018). It contains principles that guide the selection of curriculum materials and resources that all children can use, providing support for diverse abilities, learning preferences, languages, and cultural backgrounds.

Three Guidelines for a Universally Designed Early Childhood Learning Environment

Multiple means of **Engagement**

Affective Networks | The “WHY” of learning

<https://udlguidelines.cast.org/engagement>



How do you provide options for children to be engaged and motivated to learn?

Ms. Fernandez makes the most of all her students' preferences during literacy center activities.



Emily likes to look at books with Arturo, but she has difficulty turning the pages. With small pom-poms glued to each page, both children can easily turn the pages.



Cheri has a new baby sister at home. She plays with the stuffed animals, taking care of them, and naming them with the animal names from the story.



Samantha, who is working on mastering an IEP goal for fine motor skills, cuts animal shapes and glues them to a background.



While watching a story, Erik accesses the audio using a cochlear implant tailored to his needs.

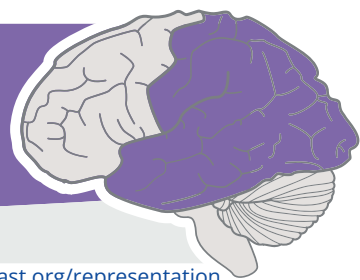


Paavai, Samantha, and Noah choose to hear and watch the recorded version of a story. They play the story using a tablet.

2 Multiple means of Representation

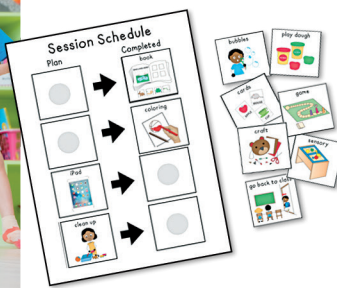
Recognition Networks | The “WHAT” of learning

<https://udlguidelines.cast.org/representation>



How do you present information so it can be perceived and understood by all children?

Mrs. Clark develops picture schedules to help all her children visualize their day and complete routines. She reviews the schedule during circle time.



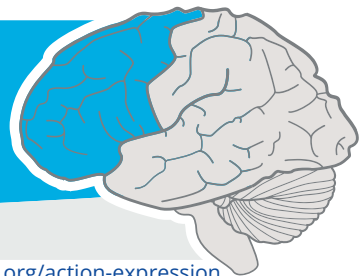
Since Arturo and Juan are just learning to speak English, the daily schedule and procedures at centers are labeled with Spanish and English words.

Items in the classroom are labeled using photographs and pictures, as well as by color, in English and Spanish. All pictures have Velcro on the back, allowing all the children to manipulate and place them on the wall schedule as they learn about each day's routine or activity.

3 Multiple means of Action & Expression

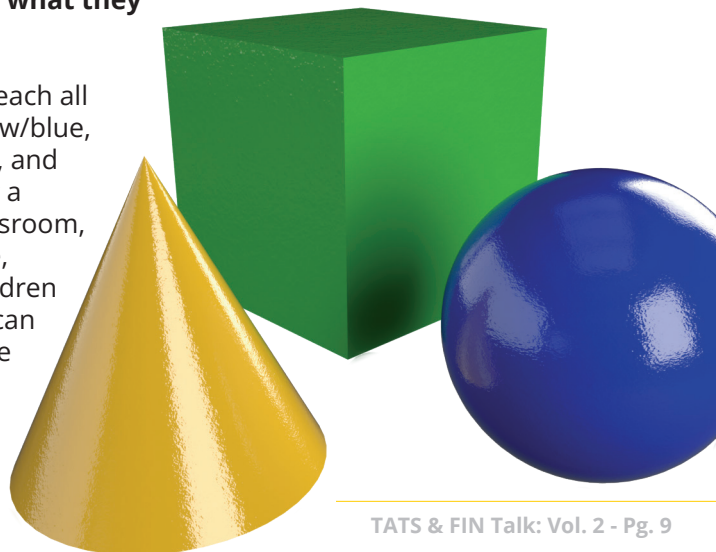
Strategic Networks | The “HOW” of learning

<https://udlguidelines.cast.org/action-expression>



How do you provide opportunities for all children to show what they have learned?

Ms. Wang uses materials in a variety of colors and shapes to teach all the children about patterns. She shows them patterns of yellow/blue, yellow/blue; then she shows them square/circle, square/circle, and flower/dog, flower/dog. She gives them pattern blocks to copy a model pattern with, she has them point to patterns in the classroom, and uses stuffed animals to show patterns. For every example, each step is done for the children except for the last step. Children do this step and gradually increase the number of steps they can perform independently. After the lesson, she provides multiple ways for her students to show what they know.

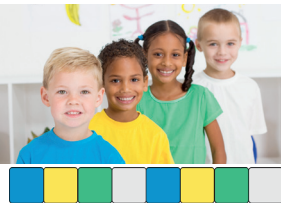




Items made of different materials or of different sizes are available so the children who can't distinguish color differences can feel texture or shape differences.



A student matches a pattern with 3D manipulatives and pegs, providing more support to guide the child in following a pattern.



Children are challenged to make a long pattern using their shirt colors, and then replicate it using tiles. This provides opportunity for children to move and use real life skills.



A child creates patterns using both shapes and colors in the pattern. This allows for an extension of the skill to reflect a child's developmental level.



A three-year-old creates patterns and listens to movement songs using an app on a tablet or device with the help of a friend.

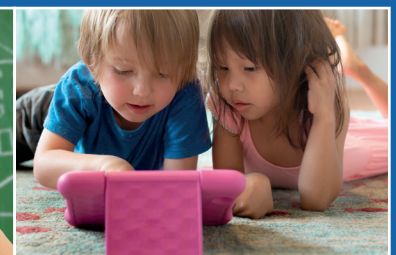
A Key Consideration: All Activities and Materials Should be Accessible for Every Child

There will always be children in your early childhood program with diverse learning needs, but UDL creates a classroom that is ready for every child. As you read the information below, think of additional ways UDL can support children, with and without disabilities, in your early childhood learning environment.

Examples of UDL supports in the **Independent Functioning** domain include accessible playground equipment, classrooms, and facilities; clearly labeled and accessible learning centers, and self-care checklists using visual cues.



UDL materials in the **Curriculum and Instruction** domain reflect student interests, choice, visual cues, and labels. Lessons include audio, visual, and tactile material. Curriculum supports might include visual schedules, peer supports, interactive technology and switches, manipulatives and toys with high contrast color and varied textures, engagement strategies, answer keys for self-checking, and problem-based learning.



In the **Communication** domain, multiple languages, visual labels on classroom materials, visual procedures and schedules, peer models, family communications, culturally sensitive characteristics, and various modes of communication (gestures, signs, word cards, verbal) can support students.



Allow student choice for completing **Assessment** activities, such as text to speech software, pictures and displays, learning logs, recordings of children's thoughts, ideas, and stories.



UDL in the **Social-Emotional** domain includes identifying feelings and emotions, self-regulation procedures and visuals, peer-to-peer support, relationship-building activities with adults and other children, and responsive to diversity.



See if you can identify the three UDL Guidelines in the scenario below!

Miss Suzie's preschool class is painting pictures for Mother's Day. Miss Suzie gives students the option to paint while standing at the easel or to paint while seated at the table. In addition, Miss Suzie provides a variety of paintbrushes and paint color choices. She also includes the option for finger painting, for children who are interested in exploring the tactile feeling of paint. One child in her class, Jin, loves to play with vehicles. Miss Suzie includes a small bin of cars and trucks from the block area and encourages Jin and his peers to run the wheels through the paint, as well. With the inclusion of several different painting tools (e.g., a variety of brushes, car and trucks, or the option of using their fingers), children are excited to begin the activity and remain engaged for some time.

Lohmann, Hovey, & Gauvreau (2018). *Using a universal design for learning framework to enhance engagement in the early childhood classroom*. The Journal of Special Education Apprenticeship, 7(2).

Although UDL may take extra time as you plan your early childhood learning environment, curriculum, and assessment, it can reduce the need for planning individualized accommodations or modifications for specific children. Inclusive early childhood environments designed with UDL in mind can help all children learn and grow together. For more information about Universal Design for Learning in inclusive early childhood programs, contact your local TATS or FIN representative.

Technical Assistance and Training System (TATS) — <http://www.tats.ucf.edu>
Florida Inclusion Network (FIN) — <http://www.FloridaInclusionNetwork.com>



Scan to
View Answers



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VOLUME

3

Applying Universal Design for Learning in Early Childhood Environments

Universal Design for Learning, or UDL, can increase participation and enhance learning outcomes by making curriculum and activities accessible to all children in the program. To increase access to curriculum content across learning domains it is vital to use a variety of materials and activities designed to address individual needs. A key component to implementing UDL is planning ahead.

How can UDL guidelines be embedded into the learning domains of young children? Consider skills across social-emotional, adaptive, communication, motor, and cognitive areas of development while planning lessons and activities.

How can UDL guidelines be embedded in planning?

- ✦ For multiple means of engagement, include various methods to increase participation. Recognize the impact of culture, language, disabilities, and delays, and provide ways for children to engage.
- ✦ For multiple means of representation, plan a variety of learning experiences to help children acquire content knowledge. Embed real-life objects and experiences to increase understanding.
- ✦ For multiple means of expression, provide numerous modes and opportunities to increase chances for children to demonstrate what they know.

Using a UDL framework for planning to support all children in the early childhood program is a deliberate activity. Teachers, in collaboration with the team, intentionally create plans based on childhood developmental milestones using data and information about individual student needs.

Teacher Actions	Developmental Milestones and Needs
Refer to the Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards (FELDS) for sequences of skill development and for ideas for planning lessons and supports.	Individual Educational Plans (IEPs) will include information regarding specific learning strengths, preferences, and supports for students with disabilities.
Begin with the universal and least intrusive strategies that focus on natural environmental supports.	Children learn skills in each domain throughout their daily schedule of routines and activities.
Collaborate with your team and with children’s family members.	Children need consistency, communication, and supports between school and home.
Incorporate frequent and specific praise and feedback related to participation.	Children need specific and positive feedback to encourage growth and development.
Provide choices related to response modes and favorite activities throughout daily lessons.	Most children learn by doing. Provide ample opportunities for hands-on activities.
Observe and collect data for progress monitoring during playtimes.	Children practice newly learned skills during play.

Planning and Team Collaboration Process

1. Identify members of the planning team – Team members include teachers, paraprofessionals, and service providers, such as speech and language pathologists, or occupational therapists. Family members are encouraged to share knowledge with the team.
2. Collaboratively plan for supports throughout daily routines – Each member brings different expertise to the planning process, shares data and observations, and contributes to planning supports, throughout the day.
3. Prepare materials for students, following the UDL guidelines for multiple means of engagement, representation, and expression.
4. Plan for data collection and progress monitoring of the targeted skills, including IEP goals for children with disabilities.

Meet the early childhood team as they collaborate to discuss their concerns and develop supports.



Ms. Dee
Early Childhood Teacher

I want to incorporate language skills into play.

Ms. Dee plans to read and guide a discussion in a shared reading circle. In a shared reading circle, the teacher and children will read aloud an engaging text that provides experience with print and promotes development of the reading process. It is interactive and can be tailored to meet the needs of children. Today’s book is *I Went Walking*, which is a picture book that introduces animals and focuses on sequence and positional words (e.g., first, last, middle).



Ms. Nan
Speech Pathologist

I want to make sure to offer a variety of materials for communicating.

Ms. Nan plans to create visual word cards for the story and find props for story re-telling. She will provide additional connections to the story for a few children, including adding two or three sequence words on a child’s communication device. She assists children in monitoring duration of time by providing visual reminders of the schedule for shared reading activities, and reinforces the concepts of sequence and position with a small group at the sand table after the lesson.



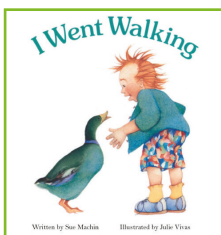
Mr. Will
Paraprofessional

I want to support students and help them learn.

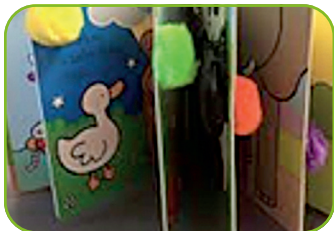
Mr. Will ensures that special seating is available for children who need it. He also gets visual supports and activity-related materials ready in order to remind children of the expectations for the lesson and the sequence of activities, and to increase their engagement. Mr. Will leads the class in the movement activities.

Example of Planning UDL Supports for Literacy Circles

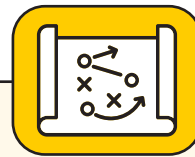
Examples of implementation of UDL strategies in daily routines and activities are described here using the examples of reading circles and play-based learning centers. It is important to keep in mind that developmentally appropriate activities for young children incorporate a variety of skill areas and domains during each activity or lesson.



During the lesson, Ms. Dee guides students in discussion in the shared reading circle. She uses picture cards and board books with easy-turn pages to provide various modes of engagement and representation.



Below, Ms. Dee provides an auditory version in Korean of *I Went Walking* to a student who is learning English, then works with another student who chose to create her own picture book.



Multiple Means of Engagement: Ms. Dee's lesson plans begin with activities that activate prior knowledge of animals. Ms. Dee engages children in the reading components of identifying the front and back of the book, the title, and the author, and ends with taking a "picture walk" through the book before reading. Ms. Dee incorporates various forms of engagement by using plastic animals from the play center, photos of actual animals, stuffed animals, and a brief video story of the book. The lesson includes the activity of naming the animals in the story and sequencing them by position in the walk. The lesson ends with Ms. Dee soliciting responses from the children about their feelings about the story. Allow time for children to express their favorite part of the story or to share personal information related to the story for example, sharing information about having a dog or cat or another pet.

Multiple Means of Representation: Ms. Dee and Ms. Nan plan for a variety of strategies for supporting student understanding. For this story, the materials used for multiple means of engagement are also useful for encouraging the children to participate in activities based on their needs. Ms. Dee, Ms. Nan, and Mr. Will provide visual representations, real objects, and photos that correspond with information in the lesson. They plan activities that involve children re-enacting the story, moving pictures of animals into the correct sequence, walking in a line like the animals did, and role-playing using puppets and stuffed animals.

Multiple Means of Expression: The team develops activities for soliciting responses. They encourage children to express their understanding of the story in different ways, for example through verbalizations, communication boards or assistive devices, signs, gestures, drawing or showing a picture, or creating their own book. Encourage children to express knowledge and demonstrate learning at varying levels of concept development. For example, some children might indicate understanding of text-to-picture by following along by pointing, naming some initial sounds, or memorizing and reciting the text. Provide opportunities for motor-related responses, such as acting out stories and games that include such actions as "hopping like a bunny." They will transition to the next activity by walking in a line in a similar method as the animals in the story.

Ms. Nan facilitates play at the sand and sensory table after the group lesson. Her focus for this activity is developing language concepts using sequence and positioning, as well as social communication using word boards and various communication devices. Then she moves to a play table and supports social communication between students in imaginative play.



Left and below, Mr. Will prepares a variety of choices of materials and adapted tools at the art center and helps children display their artwork related to the story. He engages children in conversation focused on sequence and positioning of items in their artwork.



He then incorporates opportunities for physical movement breaks and associating movements with story characters. He works to encourage each student's unique expression as they imitate animals and dance to a song about animals.



All staff members should collaborate to plan ways to support children in learning to recognize and regulate emotions through direct instruction and classroom visual supports. Plans should include pre-teaching social/emotional skills, guided practice, role-playing, specific and consistent feedback, and procedures that are used throughout classroom routines.

Various types of support are used to help children develop skills such as cooperation (sharing, taking turns) and self-regulation (calming down, coping). To support children's means of expression, teachers might have children role-play cooperative and coping situations, read stories or watch and discuss videos about sharing and about emotional regulation, depict social situations with drawings or photos and social scripts, or discuss social situations and self-regulation strategies prior to activities.

Staff should develop and consistently use a visual representation of rules, schedules, and procedures, as well as communication options for students, such as picture boards, communication devices, and ways to represent feelings and emotions. Strategies and choices for calming and regulating emotions (e.g., counting, accessing a favorite object or adult, sensory and motor activities, or going to a quiet space) should be taught and practiced before children need to use them so that there is clear understanding of when and how to use these strategies. Children can make choices for play activities as well as for self-regulation strategies related to their interests. Areas for choice could include materials that allow for engagement with peers or individual play scenarios, or materials that relate to their interests or that relate to their culture. It is important to recognize children's emotions and their need for calming techniques and to assist them in using their selected strategies for self-calming.



Take a Deep Breath

Smell the flower




Blow the pinwheel



Universal Design for Learning in Early Childhood Programs

Planning and Implementation Checklist

It is important to plan ahead to increase access to and participation in the curriculum for all children. This checklist provides considerations to use in planning for and applying UDL in the early childhood program.

Engagement	Representation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Ensure comfortable physical accessibility.<input type="checkbox"/> Incorporate prior knowledge into new content.<input type="checkbox"/> Provide a variety of learning activities.<input type="checkbox"/> Provide choices for different interests, needs, cultures, and preferences.<input type="checkbox"/> Facilitate social interactions.<input type="checkbox"/> Teach self-monitoring, coping skills and strategies.<input type="checkbox"/> Facilitate persistence and sustaining effort.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Give choices for play interactions.<input type="checkbox"/> Provide learning activities that use various types of materials.<input type="checkbox"/> Engage in variety of modalities (motor, verbal, hands-on, visual).<input type="checkbox"/> Maintain positive social interactions.<input type="checkbox"/> Provide adult guidance for children.<input type="checkbox"/> Give specific feedback and praise.
Expression	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Employ various methods of response.<input type="checkbox"/> Incorporate observation across various settings.<input type="checkbox"/> Collect data for progress monitoring.<input type="checkbox"/> Optimize access to tools and technology.<input type="checkbox"/> Support children with setting goals.<input type="checkbox"/> Guide children in planning and completing activities. 	

For more information on applying Universal Design for Learning in inclusive early childhood programs, contact your local TATS or FIN representative.

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Florida Inclusion Network (FIN) — <http://www.FloridaInclusionNetwork.com>



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VOLUME

4

Providing Individualized Services for Children with Disabilities

Identifying Children's Needs for Support

The keys to identifying and developing services and supports to address children's needs are observation and progress monitoring. Considering the busy and active nature of preschool classrooms, accomplishing meaningful observations might seem difficult, but developing a system for observing and noting the actions of children throughout the day will be helpful in progress monitoring so that adjustments can be made to meet student needs.

Noticing Delays and Taking Action

Teachers, along with family members, are often the first people to notice that developmental skills might not be progressing as anticipated in the young children they support and care for. Key factors include the following:

- ✦ While providing instruction and practice, it is important that teachers, caregivers, and family members maintain open and honest discussions about children's needs and that they seek reliable information to guide their next steps.
- ✦ It is important that the teachers and staff be aware of and follow district, agency, or school processes for screening when children enrolled in their specific programs experience continued difficulties even after supports and strategies are implemented.

If developmental concerns are caught early, the teacher or practitioner can help ensure that children receive the extra support they need while in care and that they are linked to the appropriate services.

Screening

Screening provides a quick snapshot of a child's health and developmental status and indicates whether further evaluation is needed to identify potential difficulties that might require interventions or special education services. Many programs have ongoing screening processes that make use of specific tools or checklists. Information gathered from these tools and checklists (along with information gained from observations and progress monitoring checklists) provides data that informs the staff and families about both successes and continued needs for certain supports.

School districts have the responsibility of ensuring that children ages 3 through 21 who are suspected of having a disability and are in need of special education and related services are identified, located and evaluated and that the evaluation process is at no cost to the parent or legal guardian ([Section 300.111](#) of Title 34, Code of Federal Regulations (C.F.R.) and [Rule 6A-6.0331](#), Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.)). This process is known as child find.

The Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System (FDLRS), in accordance with [section 1006.03](#), Florida Statutes, (F.S.), may coordinate with school districts to provide assistance with child find. Among the services provided are sensory (vision and hearing), speech/language, and developmental screenings at no cost to the family. Service coordination for training, and family support is also provided. When the Child Find process reveals that there is a child that is potentially eligible for services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Child Find refers to the school district, which may lead to placement and services.

Assessment and Evaluation

As a part of the referral process following screening, a child may be evaluated by the local public school district to determine if they are eligible for Exceptional Student Education (ESE) services. According to IDEA, the initial evaluation of a child must be "full and individual," ([34 C.F.R. § 300.301](#)) meaning that the evaluation includes assessments of all areas of suspected disability for an individual child. Written parental consent is required for evaluation.

Following the evaluation process, qualified professionals, along with the family, examine all results and determine if the child has a disability. Those children who are found eligible for ESE services will have an individual educational plan (IEP) written. The IEP describes the types of specially designed instruction, related services, accommodations, and supports that should be provided based on a child's strengths and needs. Written parental consent is required for IEP services to begin.



Individualizing Supports

In many cases, the strategies and accommodations detailed on a child's IEP are similar to the supports already implemented in the classroom. However, strategies and specialized instruction listed on a child's IEP must be implemented and the child's progress monitored as noted in the IEP. Children eligible for special education services frequently are also eligible for therapy (for example, speech and language therapy) or related services (such as occupational and physical therapy).

Individual supports, whether they are indicated on an IEP or incorporated into classroom activities for specific children, can be described in levels of intensity or individualization required for implementation. Best practice indicates use of supports and strategies needed to assist children in being successful and fully participating in activities with a goal of using the least intensive supports so that children develop independence.

The examples of levels and types of support below are listed from least intensive to most intensive.

- + Environmental Supports** include physical and visual cues for routines and activities, including arrangement of furniture into clearly defined areas.
 - ▶ Examples: use pictures, photographs, labels, schedules, and clearly labeled areas for reminders and to indicate personal space
- + Activities** are shortened, broken into smaller segments, or adapted for accessibility.
 - ▶ Examples: use visuals to indicate steps in activities, reduce the number of steps, help children get started, provide breaks
- + Materials** are chosen considering their placement, stability, ease of use, interest level, and correlation to lessons and activities.
 - ▶ Examples: provide larger or easier to grasp materials, stabilize materials, use multiple kinds of surfaces
- + Instructional supports** help children attend to lessons and recall information.
 - ▶ Examples: increase interest and attention with songs, rhymes, photos, or real-life objects; introduce multi-sensory activities such as movement, role-play, or puppets
- + Supports based on child preferences** address specific needs for transitioning and attending.
 - ▶ Examples: provide transition objects for children to carry or hold, allow favorite toys, books, give transition cues
- + Peer support** includes peer buddies.
 - ▶ Examples: allow help from peers, introduce items that require more than one person, teach peers how to be helpers, praise children for interaction
- + Adult support** includes increased interaction and modeling to increase participation. (This is not direct physical assistance.)
 - ▶ Examples: facilitate play, model activities, engage with children in play scenarios, make positive comments, use praise that is descriptive, implement redirection during lessons
- + Direct assistance** involves an adult helping the child do an activity or routine.
 - ▶ Examples: physically assist children who are unable to perform parts of certain tasks, help children during self-care routines, assist children with special equipment
- + Special equipment** is sometimes required to increase a child's access to activities and play areas.
 - ▶ Examples: provide devices for mobility, sitting, stability, sensory input, adapted art materials, and writing materials

Least
to
Most

Reflect on the types of supports listed above in relation to the three children introduced in the following sections. Consider the level and types of adaptations and support strategies each will need in their inclusive classroom settings.

Meet Three Children



Florence enjoys participating in play, art, and other classroom activities and watches peers when she does not understand directions; however, objects and photos should be used to teach vocabulary associated with activities. Specific praise and feedback will help Florence gain confidence in both her ability to participate and her understanding of the activity. Florence requires **visual and adult support** during instructional lessons, literacy, and social interactions to help her understand content, engage in play scenarios, and associate objects and photos with vocabulary. **Environmental supports** for Florence include visuals for schedules and routines and photos to guide her through the steps of new activities.

Damon is learning to use his cane for orientation and learning how to use classroom materials. After receiving services in Early Steps prior to this third birthday, he was determined eligible for special education services with an IEP. Damon's evaluation team, family, and Early Steps providers recommended that his services be provided in an inclusive setting. Damon receives Orientation and Mobility (O&M) services; and he is also served by an itinerant teacher of the Visually Impaired (VI) who collaborates with his classroom teacher to determine needed supports and interventions. Damon's IEP specifies that he have access to brailled materials and tactile prompts along with guided practice to assist him in locating and using classroom materials. His **environmental support** includes safe arrangement of furniture and materials so that he can safely navigate to areas of the room and safely access materials. The teacher should provide guided practice for navigation skills. **Supports for using materials** include tactile and auditory cues throughout the room and during all activities and lessons. **Peer support** can be helpful to Damon and his unique needs should be explained to his classmates. Damon is likely to require significant assistance while he is becoming familiar with the classroom and adults should plan strategies for fading their assistance and increasing his independence.



Mark is eligible for special education services as a child with developmental delay (DD). He has difficulty comprehending language concepts but uses single words and short phrases to express his wants and needs, make comments, and answer simple questions. Mark's IEP accommodations include **environmental supports** such as visual schedules and simple first-then **visual scripts** to show him two parts of a schedule or two actions in a sequence. Clearly marked areas and a **special cushion or seat** help Mark remain in a designated area of an activity. Mark is provided headphones during Music and Movement and other activities that include increased noise or activity levels. He does not require adapted materials but he does require **movement and sensory breaks** at intervals during lessons and activities. To address his difficulty with language concepts Mark should be **pre-taught vocabulary** used during literacy lessons and be provided additional practice with language concepts through simple communication boards, photographs, and real objects. Next, Mark should be monitored for his response to various strategies. How much time he spends in group activities before tiring should be observed. When he at least partially follows directions, he should get specific feedback and be rewarded as he gets closer to his goal.

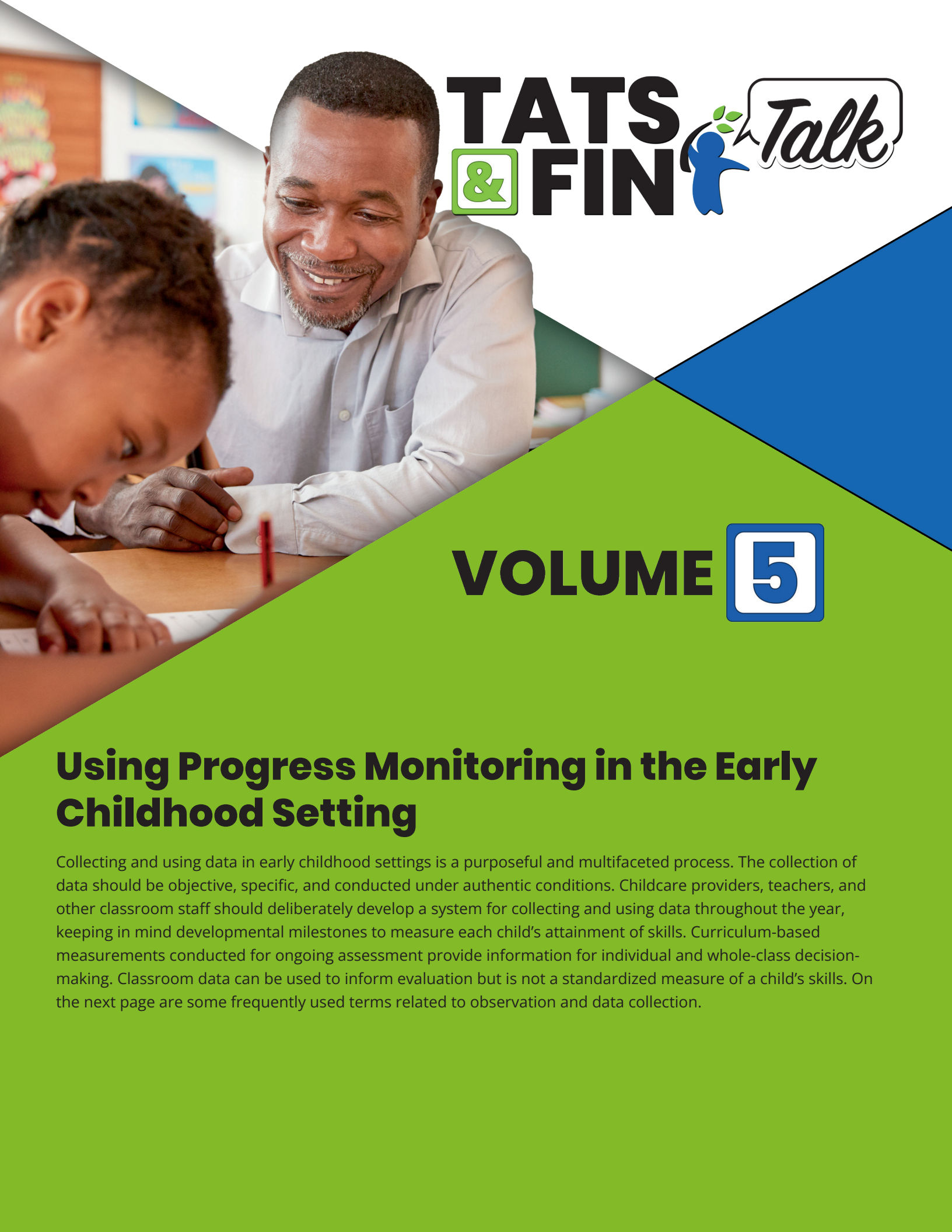
Using a UDL framework, each of the three children described above can be included in an early childhood setting with children without disabilities. Their needs can be met and their services can be provided using in-class supports. In fact, many of the services and supports will benefit other diverse learners who do not have disabilities.

For more information on providing individualized services in inclusive early childhood programs, contact your local TATS or FIN representative.

Technical Assistance and Training System (TATS) — <http://www.tats.ucf.edu>
Florida Inclusion Network (FIN) — <http://www.FloridaInclusionNetwork.com>



This document was developed by the Technical Assistance and Training System (TATS) and the Florida Inclusion Network (FIN), projects funded by the Florida Department of Education, Division of Public Schools, Bureau of Exceptional Student Education, through federal assistance under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part B.



Using Progress Monitoring in the Early Childhood Setting

Collecting and using data in early childhood settings is a purposeful and multifaceted process. The collection of data should be objective, specific, and conducted under authentic conditions. Childcare providers, teachers, and other classroom staff should deliberately develop a system for collecting and using data throughout the year, keeping in mind developmental milestones to measure each child's attainment of skills. Curriculum-based measurements conducted for ongoing assessment provide information for individual and whole-class decision-making. Classroom data can be used to inform evaluation but is not a standardized measure of a child's skills. On the next page are some frequently used terms related to observation and data collection.

Evaluation Is the process of collecting information in order to understand a child's competency and skills at a certain point in time. Evaluations are usually accomplished through the use of specific standardized instruments, as well as through family interviews and observations, and may be used to help determine a child's eligibility for exceptional student education.

Evaluations can serve a multitude of purposes, both formal and informal. Evaluations such as the Battelle Developmental Inventory-2NU or 3, DIAL, or the PLS-4, can only be administered by qualified personnel who have been trained to give evaluations with these standardized instruments. Families will also be involved in the evaluation process, in order to accurately represent the child's progress in achieving [developmental milestones](#).

Ongoing assessment is the process of periodically reviewing a child's progress towards reaching an identified goal. This periodic review should also include information regarding the child's current strengths and needs.

Ongoing assessment is an essential part of a high-quality early childhood program. Assessment results are used to create a record of growth and development, to design curriculum and instruction to meet individual needs, and to provide families with a way to understand their child's strengths and challenges so that they can provide supports at home. Assessment results for groups of students can also provide educators with a way to determine the effectiveness of the developed program.

Curriculum-based measurement a type of criterion-referenced assessment, is accomplished by tracking children's progress on goals related to classroom, district, or state expectations. Such progress monitoring ties directly to the skill criteria the children are expected to accomplish during the school year or school term.

Florida adopted the [Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards](#) in 2017. These standards and benchmarks reflect knowledge and skills that a child on a developmental progression should know and be able to do at the end of an age-related time frame. The FELDS domains include physical development, approaches to learning, social and emotional development, language and literacy, mathematical thinking, scientific inquiry, social studies, and creative expression through the arts.

Progress monitoring refers to gathering data related to a child's performance on specific skills that are being taught or related to the child's ability to understand essential skills and their success toward meeting IEP goals.

It is important to remember that progress monitoring is a foundation for planning and refining instruction. Progress monitoring is conducted with the long-term goal of creating an environment where each child grows and thrives in a Universally Designed classroom, with individualized supports provided for children who have IEPs.



Five Steps to Meaningful Progress Monitoring

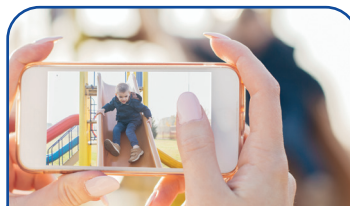


(TATS Tips: Opportunities for Observation and Data Collection)

Meaningful and targeted progress-monitoring data collection should be deliberate and conducted in collaboration with appropriate service providers for individual children. Different data collection methods that might be used include anecdotal records, checklists, photos, videos, or work samples. Some examples are provided below.



Observation



Video



Checklist



Work Sample

Here are some suggestions for addressing the developmental needs of children during progress monitoring activities.

- ✦ Have a variety of toys and activities available to gain the child's interest. These items can also be used between task items to re-engage or maintain the child's interest while different tasks are presented.
- ✦ Ask the child to help put away some of the materials or suggest a task they can perform to "be a helper."
- ✦ Allow for motor or sensory breaks as needed. Young children usually need to move around, and many children seek sensory input.
- ✦ Be aware of the child's energy level and physical comfort. Depending on the time of day, a child might become hungry, sleepy, or tired during the session. Attempt to accommodate their needs as much as possible. It might be necessary to offer a snack during the session if the child is hungry.
- ✦ If a child is reluctant to participate, bring some preferred toys out as supports for the child, or to be integrated into the task.
- ✦ Use age-appropriate language such as "toys" and "games" instead of "test." Encourage the child throughout the session. Set the tone as one of playful fun.
- ✦ Use appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities. Allow for variation in time, allow practice, reinforce attempts at a task, or allow for motor actions in responding, if appropriate.
- ✦ Use the child's most familiar way of communicating and allow variation in response modes – for example, accepting a nod instead of a verbal 'yes' response. If a child is a dual-language learner, be aware of cultural norms that might influence responses to tasks.

Adapted from [Addressing Unique Needs During Assessments – TATS 2019](#).

Planning for Progress Monitoring

Ms. Dee and her paraprofessional, Mr. Will, have set up mathematical thinking activities for groups of children to do with varying levels of adult support. There are activities that allow practice with matching diagonal, horizontal, and vertical pictures, and activities in which children use shapes to create pictures with patterns. Another set of activities, supported by the speech and language pathologist, Ms. Nan, involves identifying and completing patterns. The staff has developed this plan for gathering data and will use results to inform their planning process.

Below is a blank data collection form for your use in the classroom.

Data Collection Plan	
What skills are being assessed?	<i>Mathematical Thinking: completing patterns, directionality, constructing models.</i>
How are they being assessed?	<i>Mrs. Dee will use a teacher-made checklist, Mr. Will will photograph children's patterned pictures, and Ms. Nan will collect information specific to student IEP goals.</i>
When is a good time to collect data?	<i>Since adult support is needed for some children, data will be collected when the special educator is in the room, on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday mornings during group time.</i>
Who will be responsible?	<i>Each adult is responsible for gathering data for the group with whom they are working.</i>
How will the data be shared?	<i>Data is made available for review and is provided to families on a monthly basis or as needed. The team will meet every two weeks to discuss needed changes to instruction.</i>



Data Collection Plan	
What skills are being assessed?	
How are they being assessed?	
When is a good time to collect data?	
Who will be responsible?	
How will the data be shared?	

For individual children, the same elements are used for progress monitoring, but specific to the child's learning needs, so that instruction and supports can be adjusted. Read these examples of progress monitoring and subsequent recommendations as Florencia, Damon, and Mark (introduced in Volume 3) transition to kindergarten.



Florencia is learning English. She has used visual supports, and her teacher has been teaching vocabulary for meaning. She has needed less adult support over time and her confidence has increased.

Florencia's progress is monitored using the Ages and Stages screening tool. Through an interpreter, her teacher tells her family that she is making wonderful progress and explains how the family can continue to support her in becoming fluent in English as well as Spanish.

When transitioning to kindergarten, Florencia will take a Test for English Speakers of Other Languages to see if she will need continued supports.



Damon is making progress with using his cane for Orientation and Mobility (O&M). He receives services, supports, and accommodations through his IEP.

His teachers and paraprofessionals use checklists, observations, and structured tasks to measure his proficiency. The data indicate that Damon is continuing to make good progress toward meeting his IEP goals.

As Damon transitions to kindergarten, the IEP team recommends an inclusion setting with a support facilitator three times a week during English/Language Arts, continued instruction in O&M, brailled materials and tools (nametags, labels, books, slate and stylus), services from an itinerant teacher for the Visually Impaired, and ongoing collaboration between his school and his Division of Blind Services agency provider.



Mark still needs help to stay engaged in group activities and is making very slow progress in using expressive language. He follows a visual schedule and first-then prompts. He is experiencing some success using headphones during music and movement. He requires sensory activities and use of a balance board between pre-academic tasks. Progress monitoring data indicate that he has increased the amount of time engaged in large-group activities and that he is responding to reinforcing successive approximations for following directions.

His teacher and the paraprofessional monitor his progress toward his IEP goals closely and document this every two weeks on a chart.

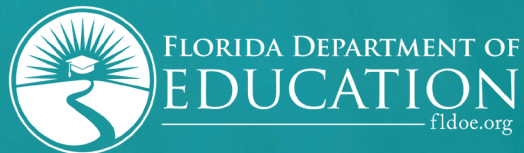
As Mark transitions to kindergarten, his IEP team recommends a full and individual reevaluation to consider the presence of an additional disability and the ongoing need for specially designed instruction. His current Developmental Delay eligibility ends at age 6, and his progress monitoring data indicates a need for ongoing services. The IEP team recommends an inclusive setting with a co-teacher, and additional intensive interventions in a therapy room to meet his sensory, communication, and behavioral needs.

The presence of data collection for ongoing progress monitoring is evidence of a quality early childhood classroom. Using a problem-solving model to adjust instruction designed in accordance with the principles of UDL allows effective inclusion to set the stage for a child's educational experience and future academic success. For more information on planning for progress monitoring in inclusive early childhood programs, contact your local TATS or FIN representative.

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