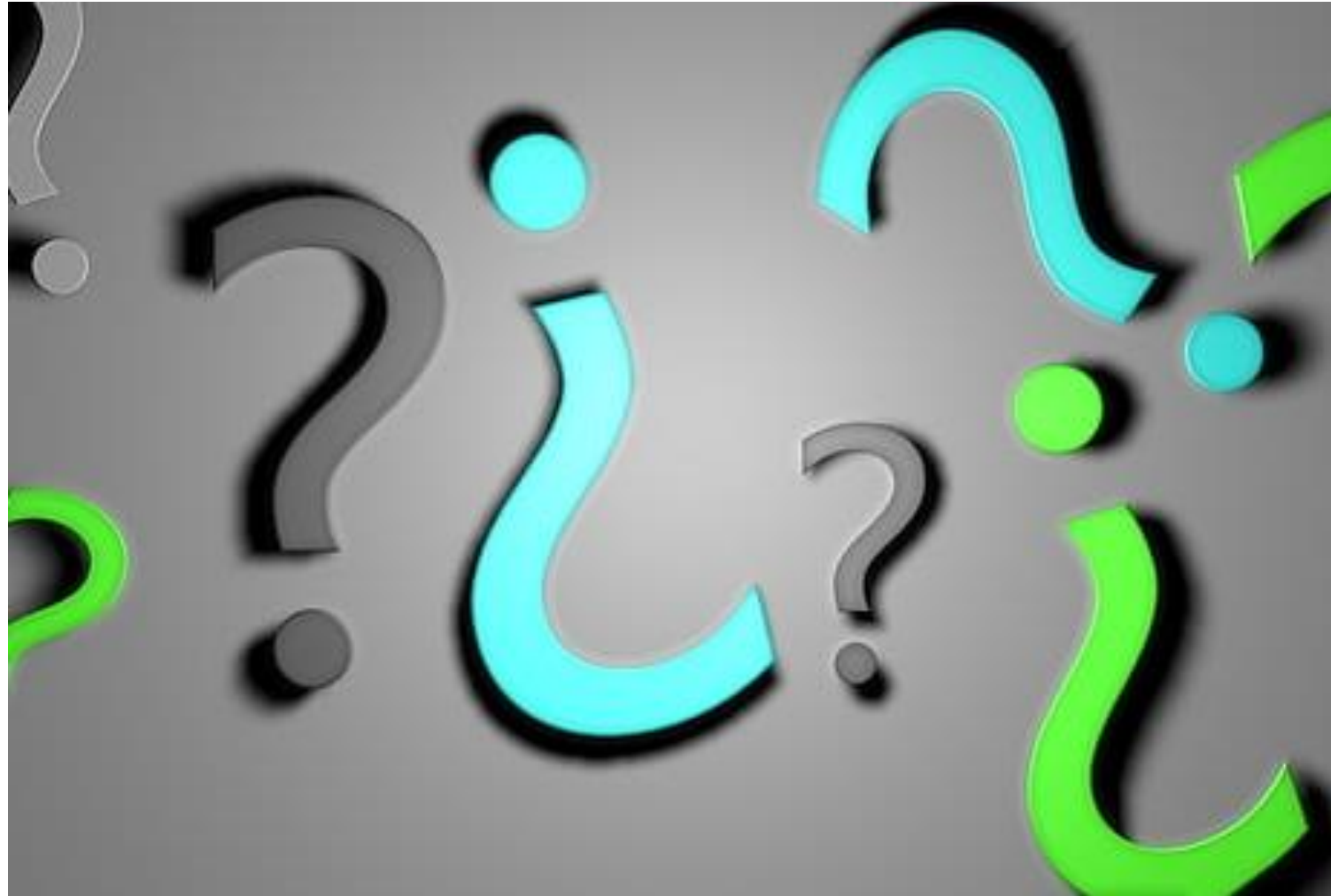


Preschool Special Education

Serving Children with Disabilities Ages 3-5

SELDA

December 7, 2023



**Why is Early
Intervention
Critical?**



The Developing Brain!



Brains are built over time, from the bottom up.

- The brain's architecture is constructed through an ongoing process that begins before birth and continues into adulthood.
- Early experiences affect the quality of that architecture by establishing either a sturdy or a fragile foundation for all of the learning, health and behavior that follow.
- In the first few years of life, more than 1 million new neural connections are formed every second.
- Sensory pathways like those for basic vision and hearing are the first to develop, followed by early language skills and higher cognitive functions.

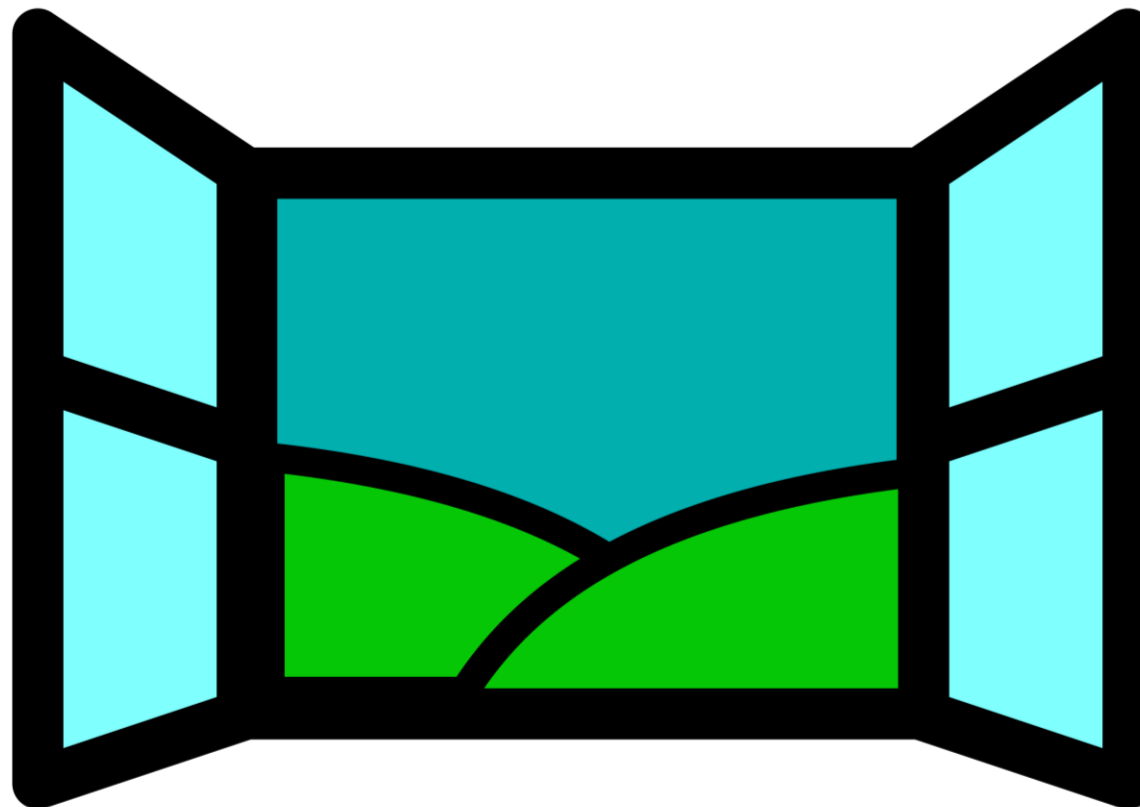
“What is Early Childhood
Development?”

Center on the Developing Child,
Harvard University



**Why is Early
Intervention
Urgent?**

The Window Of Opportunity

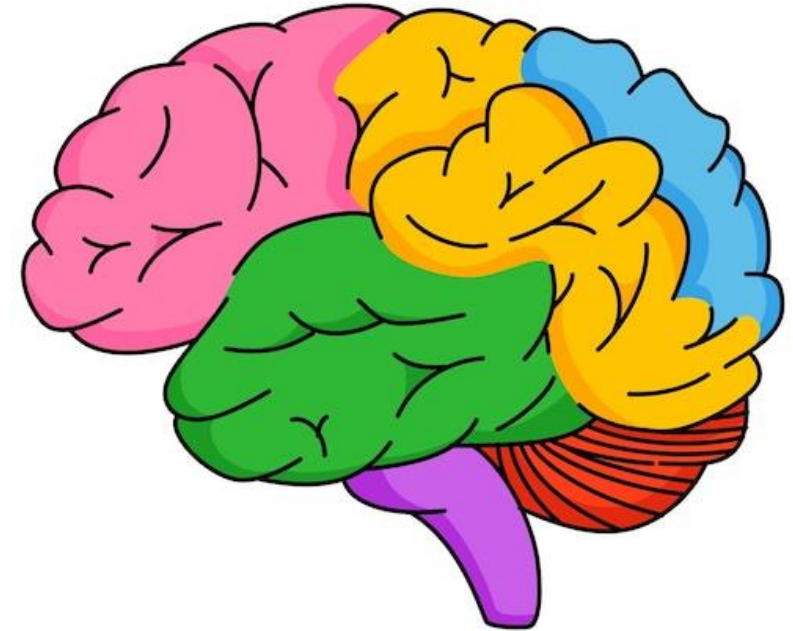


The brain's capacity for change decreases with age.

- The brain is most flexible, or “plastic,” early in life.
- Windows for language learning and other skills remain open throughout life, but brain circuits become increasingly difficult to alter over time.
- Early plasticity makes it easier and more effective to influence a baby's developing brain architecture.
- It is more difficult to rewire parts of its circuitry in the adult years.

The Positive Impact of Early Intervention on the Brain

The brain is strengthened by **positive early experiences, especially stable relationships with caring and responsive adults, safe and supportive environments, and appropriate nutrition.**



[Harvard University Center on the Developing Child](#)

Section 619 of IDEA Part B

The Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part B Section 619 is intended to help states ensure that all preschool-aged children (3 through 5 years of age) with disabilities receive special education and related services.

[Georgia Department of Education](http://www.gadoe.org)



State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Reports (SPP/APR)

Preschool Only

- Indicator B-6: Early Childhood Environments
- Indicator B-7: Early Childhood Outcomes
- Indicator B-12: Early Childhood Transition

Preschool Included

- Indicator B-4: Suspension and Expulsion
- Indicator B-8: Parent Involvement
- Indicator B-11: Evaluation Timelines
- Indicator B-15: Resolution Settlement Agreements
- Indicator B-16: Mediation Agreement

Preschool Environments

Regular Early Childhood Education Setting

Special Education Early Childhood Setting

Home

Service Provider Location

Separate School

Residential Setting



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Indicator 6: Environments

Preschool Environments

Where are services delivered?

Regular Early Childhood Program - majority (at least 50%) of nondisabled children and includes: Head Start, Pre-Kindergarten, Public and Private Preschools and group child development centers or childcare.

Special Education Program - Children attend a special education program in a class with less than 50% non-disabled children.

*Does not include children who attend a regular education early childhood program.



**Why is
Inclusion
Important in
Preschool?**

Least Restrictive Environment The Law

- Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) requirements apply to preschool children with disabilities.
- The Team must consider whether supplementary aids and services could enable the child to be educated in a general education environment.
- FAPE must be provided regardless of whether the Local Education Agency (LEA) operates public preschool programs for children without disabilities.
- States and districts should ensure that a full continuum of placements are available for preschool children with disabilities.

Inclusive Environments for Preschool Children

The Results

- Children with disabilities have similar levels of engagement as their peers.
- Children with disabilities are more likely to practice newly acquired skills.
- Desired outcomes achieved only noted when included several days per week in social and learning opportunities.
- High quality inclusion that begins early and continues into school likely produces the strongest outcomes.



[OSEP Policy Statement September, 2015](#)

Preschool Children in Inclusive Environments

When compared to their peers in separate special education settings...

- Children with disabilities demonstrated stronger interpersonal skills.
- Children with disabilities demonstrated more social interaction.
- Children with disabilities had larger networks of friends.
- Children with disabilities were more socially competent.
- Children with disabilities were absent fewer days.
- Children with disabilities had higher test scores in reading and math.



What Happens in Preschool....

- Sets the tone for discussions around inclusive environments moving forward
- Can have a positive or negative influence on future placement decisions
- Must focus on the neuroscience of brain development
- Holds a key to the developmental trajectory of each child



When Does Transition Begin?



Transition Begins at Preschool

December 5, 2023

Begin with the End in Mind: Placement Decisions for Preschool Children

Be intentional in your process

Discuss the impact that the decision has on the future of the child

Consider LRE – Inclusion should be the default

Plan for appropriate supplementary aids and services

Create collective efficacy for the team, school, and district

Prepare staff – professional development

Movement into inclusion may need to be gradual – think "transition plan"

Eligibility in Preschool

What is Significant Developmental Delay?

- A delay in a child's development in one of five areas:
 - Adaptive behavior
 - Cognition
 - Communication
 - Motor (fine and gross)
 - Emotional
- The delay must be evident to the extent that, if not provided with special intervention, the delay may adversely affect the child's educational performance in age-appropriate activities.

December 5, 2023

Eligibility in Preschool

What is Significant Developmental Delay?

- A delay in a child's development
 - adversely affect the child's educational performance in age-appropriate activities
- Not children with a slight or temporary lag
- Not if delay is PRIMARLY due to:
 - environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage or lack of experience in age-appropriate activities
- SDD allows eligibility teams to consider that the potential exists for closing the identified developmental gap. It creates a presumption of competence for a preschool child

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Reimagine the Future





Indicator 12: Transition

Preschool Transition from Part C to Part B The Law

Children participating in early intervention programs assisted under Part C, and who will participate in preschool programs assisted under this part, experience a, “smooth and effective transition” to those preschool programs in a manner consistent with [Section 20 U.S.C. §1437 \(a\)\(9\)](#).

By the time the child reaches age 3, an individualized education program (IEP) has been developed and is being implemented for the child. The local educational agency will participate in transition planning conferences arranged by the designated lead agency under [Section 20 U.S.C. §1435 \(a\)\(10\)](#).

Preschool Transition from Part C to Part B

The Partners

- Part C - In Georgia, Babies Can't Wait (also referred to as, "the Lead Agency" in the transition process)
- Part B – The Local School District (also referred to as Local Education Agency or LEA)
- Parents
- Service Providers
- Head Start
- Day Care Providers

What is Babies Can't Wait (BCW)?

Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) guarantees all eligible children ages birth to 36 months, regardless of their disability, have access to services that will enhance their development.

BCW is Georgia's Part C early intervention program for families of infants and toddlers with developmental delays and disabilities. BCW is housed at the Georgia Department of Community Health.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act states that services should be provided in Natural Environments-- settings that are natural or normal for the child's age peers who have no disabilities.



Timely Transition (Indicator 12)

Be sure that your district has procedures in place to monitor submission of Preschool Timelines.

Part C

- Notify LEA
- Develop Transition Plan
- Coordinate Transition Conference
- Provide necessary documentation to LEA to assist in the Part B referral process

Part B

- Attend Part C Transition Conference
- Conduct Part B Eligibility Evaluation
- If appropriate, develop and Implement IEP prior to child's 3rd birthday.

Referral Process Information

- Helpful:
 - Birth Certificate
 - Recent passed hearing and vision screening
 - Recent shot record
 - Proof of residence
 - ❖ **School districts, Head Start and BCW staff should work collaboratively to gather these documents prior to referral whenever possible to ensure a smooth transition. Referrals can be accepted if one or more of these items has not been obtained prior to the transition meeting.**
- **Required:**
 - BCW provider data
 - Current/recent evaluation information (BCW and Private Providers)



Preschool Transition from Part B to Part C The Process

Transition, by its very nature is an interagency process requiring collaboration and coordination.

Preschool Transition Part C to Part B Interagency Structure

Suggested Elements

- A well-defined interagency structure increases the likelihood that transition practices will remain stable even when there are key personnel changes.
 - Interagency group with specific personnel to focus on
 - Policy
 - Practice
 - Implementation



Preschool Transition Part C to Part B

Role of the Lead Agency

Babies Can't Wait

- Provide transition notification to LEA of residence at least 90 days prior to child's 3rd birthday for Part C toddlers with disabilities determined eligible under Part C and who are determined potentially eligible for Part B
- Plan Transition Conference - must occur, with parent approval, at least 90 days, and at the discretion of all parties 9 months, prior to 3rd birthday for all toddlers determined eligible for Part C & who are potentially eligible for Part B
- Must invite LEA to the conference
- Must obtain parent consent, if required, to disclose personally identifiable Information to LEA

The Transition Conference

Role of the Local Educational Agency (LEA)

- Participate in the transition planning conference
- Work with Part C to ensure that the appropriate representative of the LEA is invited to and participates in the transition conference
- Ensure that toddlers exiting Part C have a smooth and effective transition
- Provide the parent with information about Part B preschool services
- Start the process for consenting to an evaluation and conducting eligibility determinations under Part B
- At the parent's request, invite the Part C Service Coordinator or other Part C Representative to the IEP meeting

Transition from Part C to Part B Responsibilities of the LEA

- Receipt of Notification from Babies Can't Wait to LEA must be treated as a referral
- The following steps are legally required:
 - Notify parent of procedural safeguards ([34 C.F.R. §300.504](#))
 - If the LEA suspects the child has a disability under Part B, request parent consent and conduct the eligibility
 - If the LEA suspects that the child does not have a disability under Part B, provide Prior Written Notice consistent with ([34 C.F.R. §300.503](#))
 - Includes, among other things, the basis for the decision and information about procedural safeguards including requesting a Due Process Hearing or filing a State Complaint if the parent feels that the child should be evaluated.

Transition from Part C to Part B Responsibilities of the LEA

Upon completion of all assessments...

- A group of qualified individuals and the parents will make the eligibility determination 34 C.F.R. § [300.306\(a\)\(1\)](#)
- A copy of the evaluation report must be provided at no cost to the parent 34 C.F.R. § [300.306\(a\)\(2\)](#)

Keep in mind that these parents are new to the world of special education

- Limit the use of acronyms
- Take time to explain timelines, scores, unfamiliar terms, etc.

Transition from Part C to Part B Final Thoughts

Support parents and caregivers during the transition to preschool special education by

- listening to parents' concerns and preferences
- answering their questions
- coordinating cross-agency communication
- providing parents clear and accurate information



Let's work to ensure parents and family members are informed and prepared to participate as decision-makers in the transition process.

Things to Consider

Child Find

- Ask the question - **Who** is responsible for Child Find?

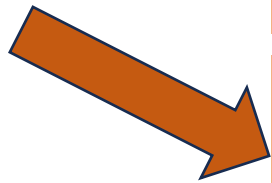
In Preschool, it is Always the LEA of Residence with one exception

Exception - the child attends a school in another district that meets the definition of a **private school**. In this case, the LEA where the school is located must conduct Child Find activities.

How do I know who should serve this preschool child?

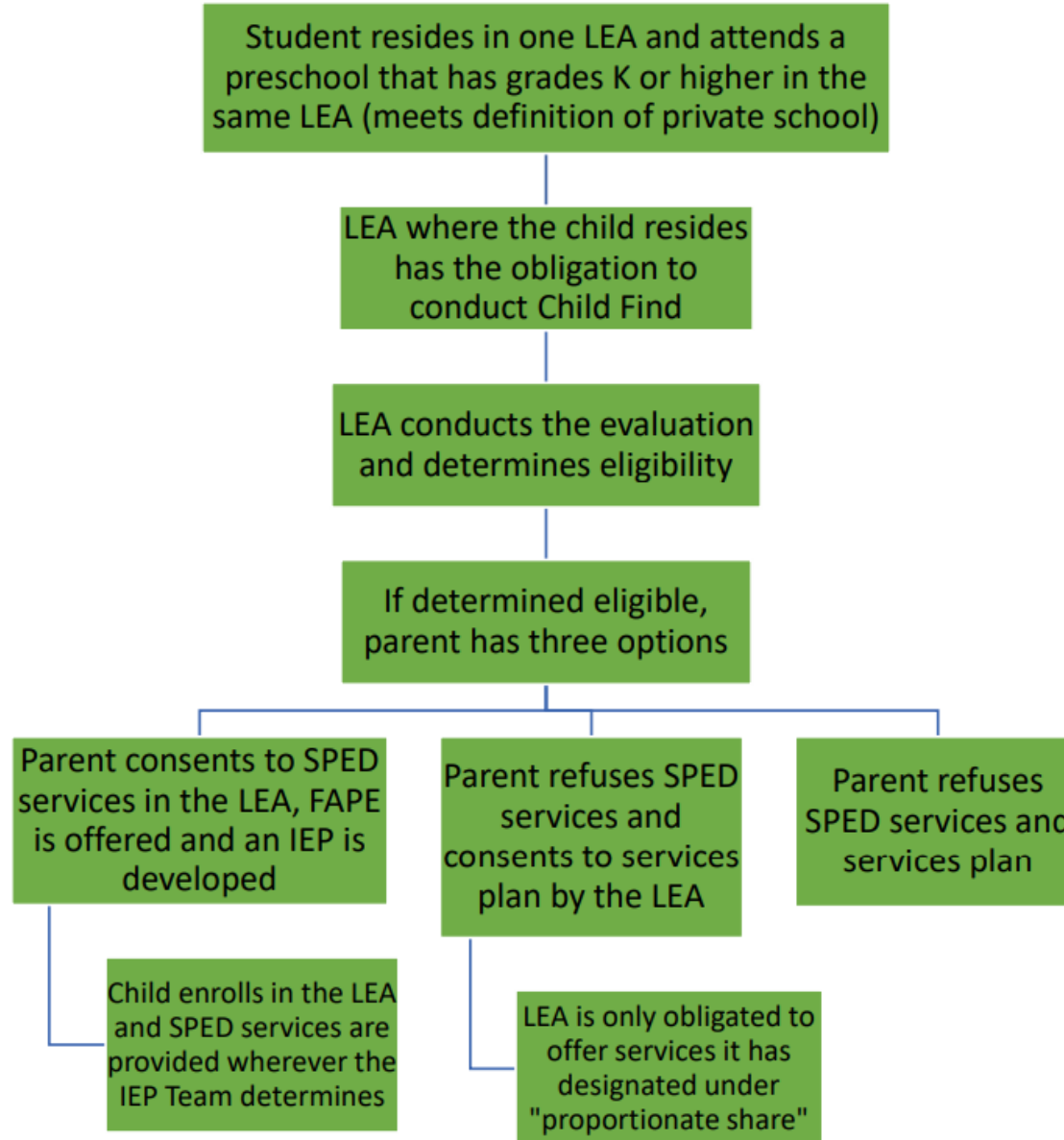
The Georgia Department of Education Special Education Implementation Manual Private Schools ([Georgia Rule 160-4-7-.13](#))

Flowcharts 1 and 2 relate to K-12

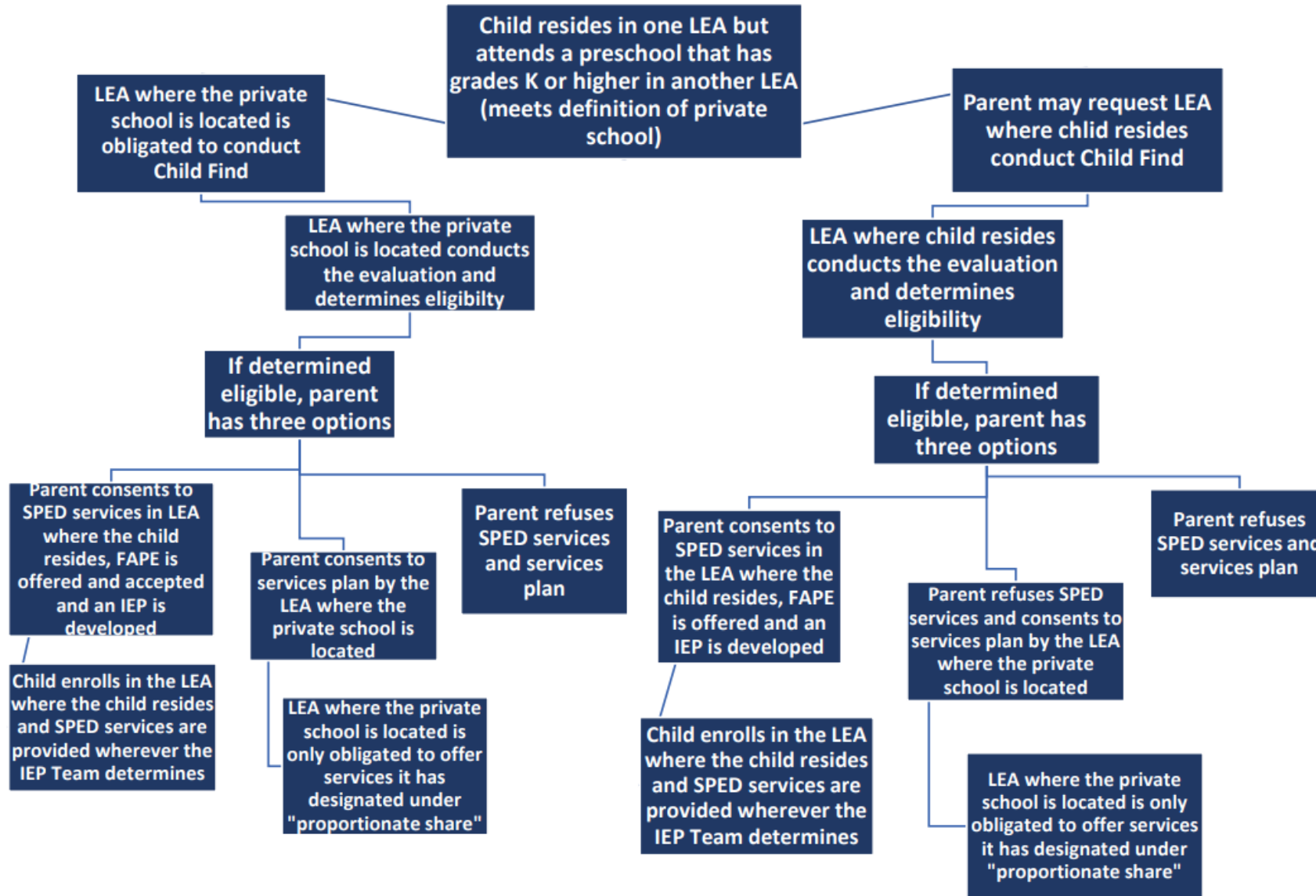


Flowcharts 3-6 relate to Preschool

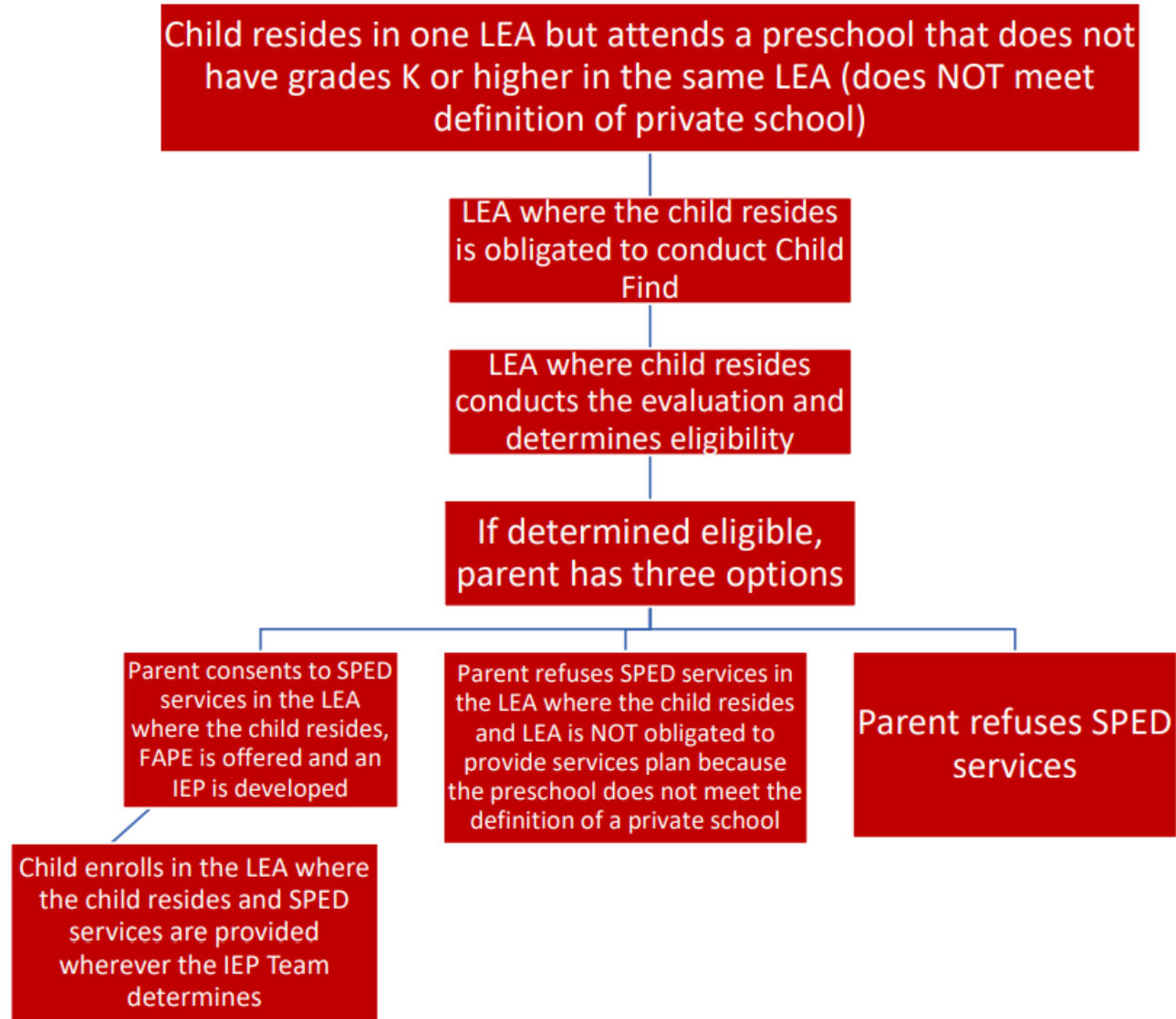
Flowchart 3: Preschool Child attending a Private School that is within the jurisdiction of the LEA of residence

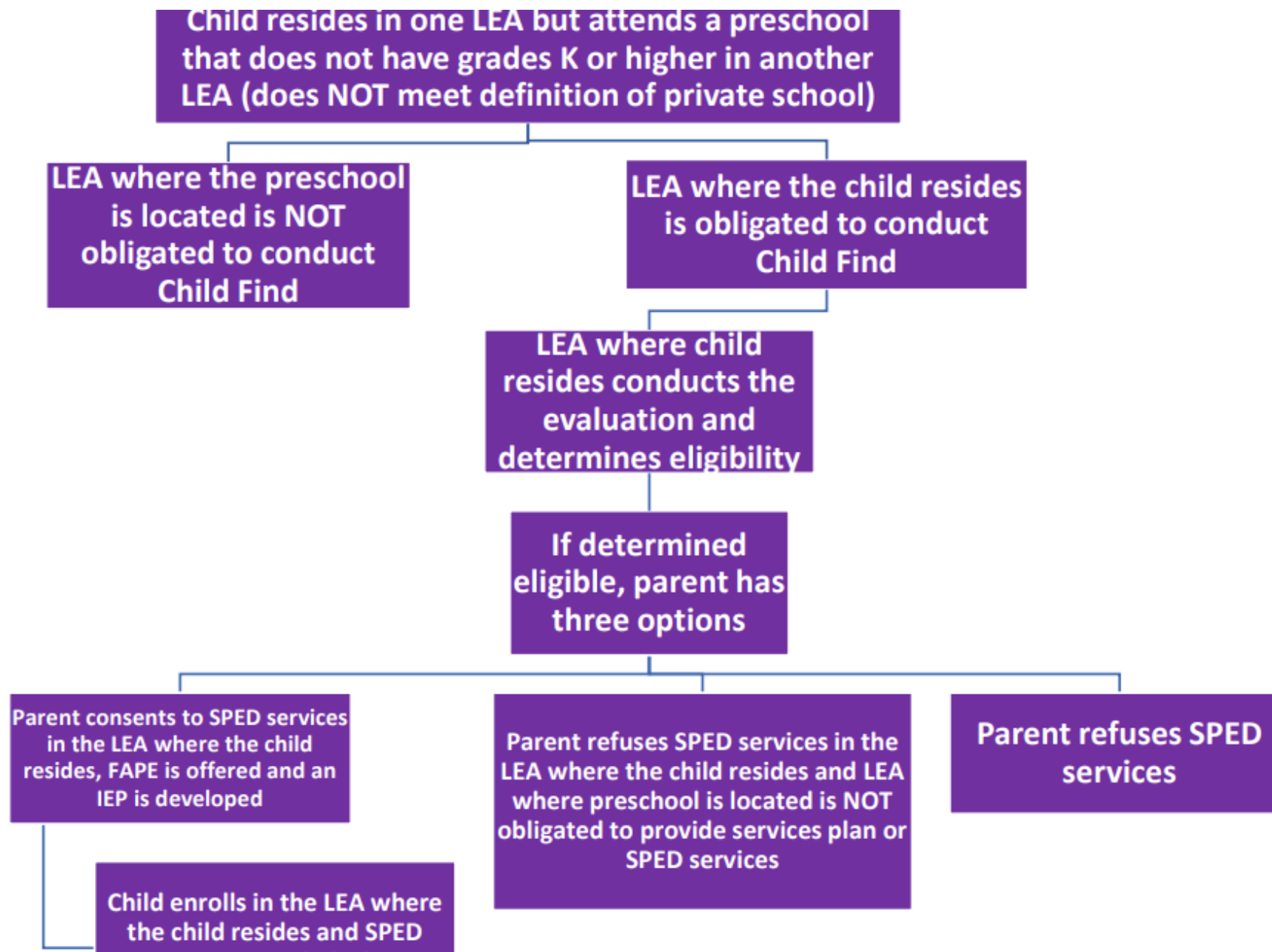


Flowchart 4: Preschool Child attending a Private School that is not within the jurisdiction of the LEA of residence



Flowchart 5: Preschool Child attending a Preschool that does not meet the definition of a private school that is within the jurisdiction of the LEA of residence





Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP)

Memo 16-07 (April 29, 2016)

- Once an LEA receives a referral from a preschool program, **the LEA must initiate the evaluation process to determine if the child is a child with a disability.** 34 CFR §300.301(b).
- **An LEA may not decline a child find referral from a preschool program until the program monitors the child's developmental progress using RTI procedures. OSEP guidance is clear that response to intervention strategies cannot be used to delay or deny a timely evaluation for a preschool child suspected of having a disability.**
- If the LEA proposes to conduct an initial evaluation to determine if the child qualifies as a child with a disability under 34 CFR §300.8, the LEA must provide notice under 34 CFR §§300.503 and 300.504 and obtain informed parental consent, consistent with 34 CFR §300.9, before conducting the evaluation.

Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP)

Memo 16-07 (April 29, 2016)

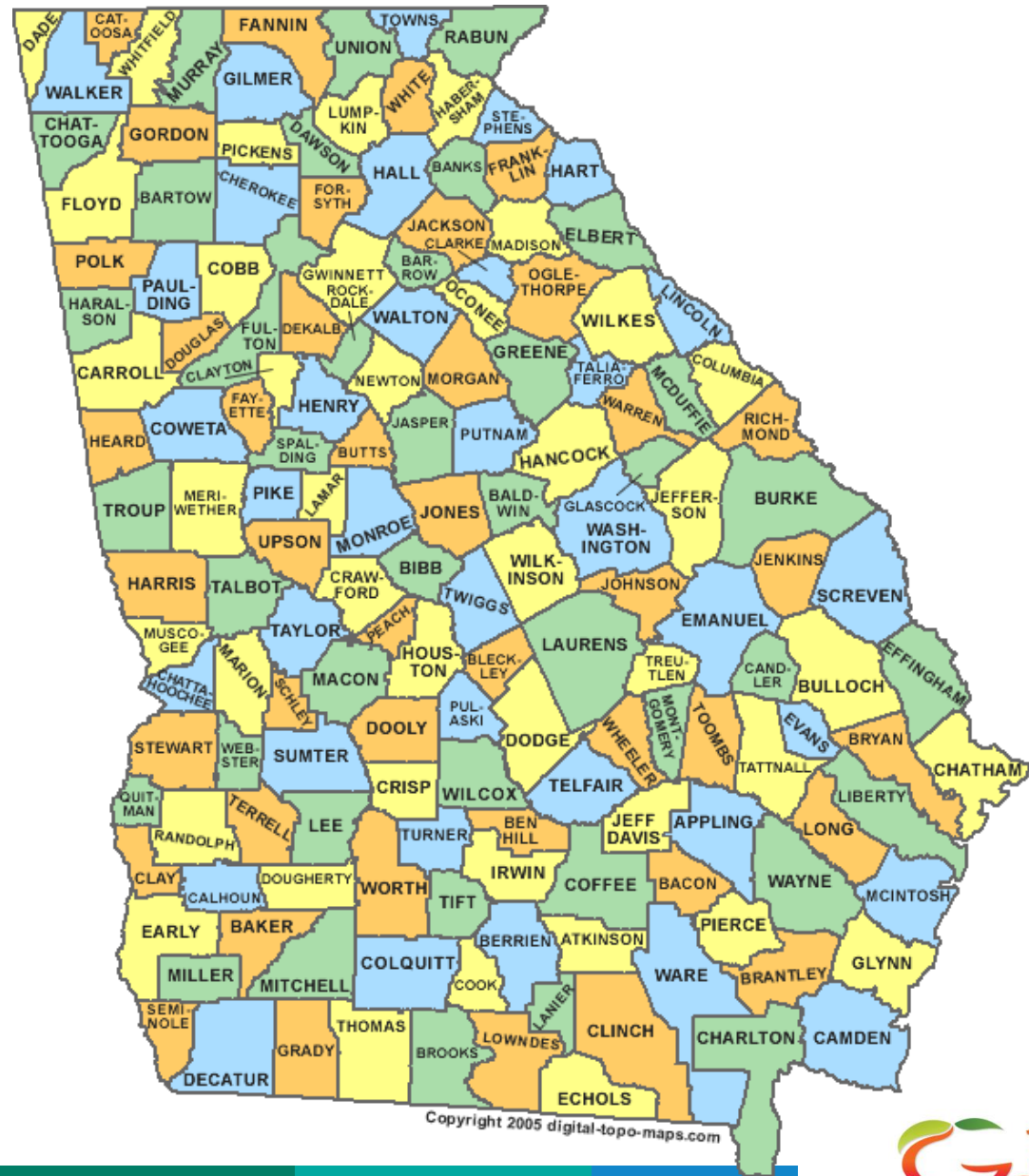
(continued from previous page)

- Although IDEA and its implementing regulations do not prescribe a specific timeframe from referral for evaluation to parental consent, it has been the Department's longstanding policy **that the LEA must seek parental consent within a reasonable period of time after the referral for evaluation, if the LEA agrees that an initial evaluation is needed.**
- An LEA must conduct the initial evaluation within **60 days** of receiving parental consent for the evaluation.
- The IDEA child find requirements permit referrals from any source, including private and public preschools (e.g., Head Start) and community-based childcare programs (hereinafter “preschool programs”), that suspects a child may be eligible for special education and related services. **It is critical that this identification occurs in a timely manner and that no procedures or practices result in delaying or denying this identification.** States and LEAs have an obligation to ensure that evaluations of all children suspected of having a disability, including evaluation of 3-, 4-, or 5- year-old children enrolled in preschool programs, are not delayed or denied because of implementation of an RTI strategy.

Preschool Collaboration



Did you know
that Georgia
has an MOU
for our early
intervention
system?



Memorandum of Understanding

The MOU is an agreement that defines the collaboration between five entities that provide services to children with disabilities age birth – five years old:

- Georgia Department of Education
- Georgia Department of Community Health- Part C Early Intervention Program (Babies Can't Wait)
- Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL)
- Georgia Head Start Association
- United States Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Region IV



Preschool Consortia

- GLRS Director and Consortia Leads determine schedule and plan activities to meet regional needs.
- GLRS Director and Consortia Leads determine consortia content.
- Georgia Department of Education provides support as needed.
- Georgia Department of Education provides updates on a quarterly basis with information to be shared with consortia.

Preschool Consortia Building Blocks

- Improving Outcomes
- Decreasing Disproportionality
- Increasing Parent Engagement
- Promoting Self-Determination



Preschool Training

Join us for an in-person, day-long workshop designed for teachers, paraprofessionals, and related service providers of preschool students with disabilities. This session will focus on Language & Literacy that incorporates instruction on phonological awareness, concepts of print, and alphabetic knowledge. The Information presented will be based on literacy research and how literacy instruction in the early years impacts reading in the elementary grades and beyond. Participants will learn to identify a variety of methods for differentiating instruction for all children with a focus on intervention for students with characteristics of dyslexia.

This Best Practices Training, led by staff from Georgia State University's Department of Early Childhood and Elementary Education, provides professional development tools needed to keep Georgia educators at the forefront of current research and field-tested classroom methodology. Each attendee will receive two preschool books with coordinating activities for use in the classroom.

Training will be from 8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at each location. Seating is limited so register early. Please refer to the Professional Learning Catalog for registration links.

January 19, 2024 – Warner Robins

January 25, 2024 – Albany

February 6, 2024 – Dublin

February 9, 2024 – Rome

February 22, 2024 – Black Creek

February 28, 2024 – Dearing

March 7, 2024 – Athens

March 21, 2024 - Atlanta

If you have questions, please contact Barbara Ross at Barbara.ross@doe.k12.ga.us or Lynn Holland at lholland@doe.k12.ga.us





National Resources

- Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (ECTA) = <http://ectacenter.org/decrp/>
- Division for Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children (DEC) = <https://www.dec-spced.org/>
- National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) = <https://www.naeyc.org/>
- National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations (NCPMI) = <https://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/>

Important Georgia Websites Related to Young Children

- Babies Can't Wait (BCW) = <https://dph.georgia.gov/Babies-Cant-Wait>
- Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) = <http://decalfga.gov/>
- Georgia Head Start Association = <https://georgiaheadstart.org/>

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