

School Association for Special Education in DuPage County (SASED)

Dr. Kim Dryier Executive Director



SY25 End of Year Report

Funding provided by:

Illinois State Board of Education
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Early CHOICES

A Preschool LRE Initiative of the Illinois State Board of Education

Program Background and Description

Program Purpose

The purpose of Early CHOICES is to provide professional development (PD) and technical assistance (TA) to increase the number of high-quality, inclusive options for early childhood students with disabilities.

Program Description

Early CHOICES is one of three discretionary grants that assist school districts, special education cooperatives, and families to improve educational outcomes of young children with disabilities and meet the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part B State Performance Plan (SPP) by providing TA, materials, and/or special services.

Federal Description

Early CHOICES is supported by IDEA Part B, Section 619 discretionary funds. All the funding for this project is from federal sources and supports the Illinois State Board of Education's (ISBE) goals and the Illinois State Performance Plan for IDEA Part B.

Program Background & History

Early CHOICES is a statewide PD and TA grant that focuses on the least restrictive environment (LRE) for children ages 3-5, which includes supports for school districts/local education agencies (LEAs) to educate children with disabilities with their nondisabled peers in environments where they would be educated if they did not have disabilities. Early CHOICES assists the ISBE with SPP Indicator 6 (Preschool LRE). Early CHOICES began in 1990 and was part of the larger Project CHOICES. Project CHOICES was part of the Illinois Statewide Technical Assistance Collaborative (ISTAC) from 2009-2014. ISTAC included Illinois Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, Illinois Autism TA and Technical Assistance, the Parent Engagement Project, and Transition Outreach for Adult Living TA. Early CHOICES moved from ISTAC in SY14-15 and became a stand-alone grant to focus specifically on the LRE for children ages 3-5.

State Performance Plan Indicator 6 – Preschool Environments

Free Appropriate Public Education in the Least Restrictive Environment

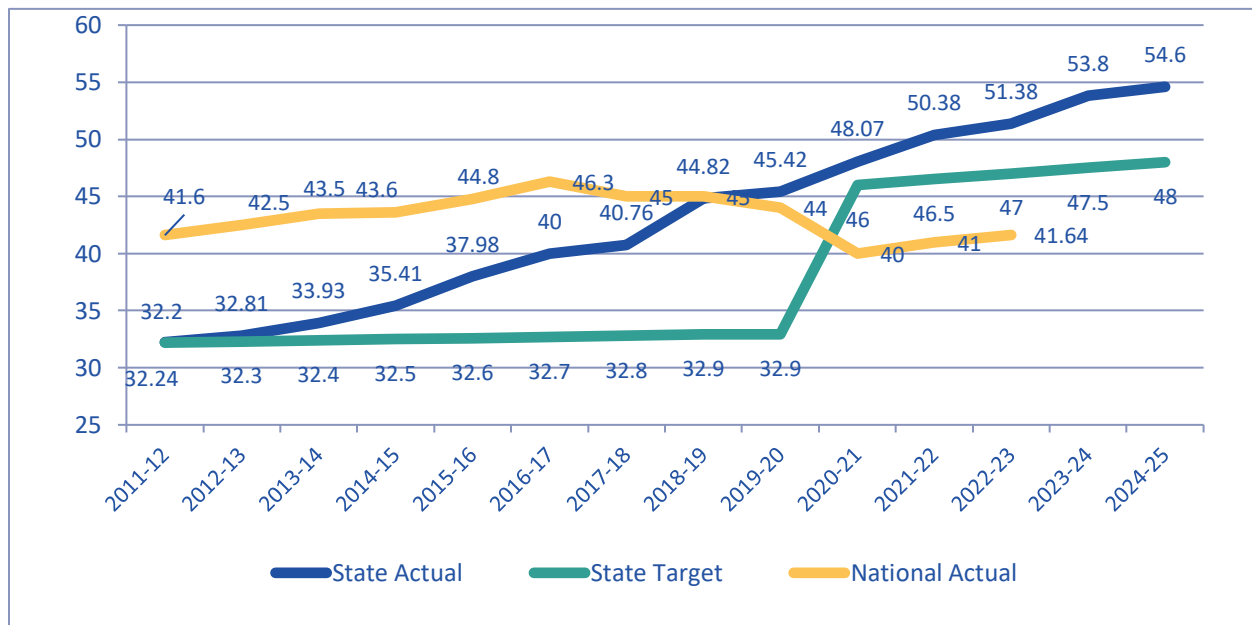
State Performance Plan (SPP) Indicator 6: Percent of children aged 3 through 5 with Individual Education Programs (IEPs) attending a:

- A. Regular early childhood program and receiving the majority of special education and related services in the Regular Early Childhood Program (RECP), and
- B. Separate special education class, separate school, or residential facility.

Charge from Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE)

Early CHOICES staff will collaborate with districts as they support and increase the percentage of children aged 3-5 with IEPs attending a RECP and receiving the majority of special education and related services in the RECP. The data below are the most recent SPP Indicator 6A and 6B data available from ISBE.

SPP Indicator 6A: ISBE Early Childhood Students Ages 3-5 in Regular Early Childhood Programs and Receiving the Majority of Special Education Related Services in that Location

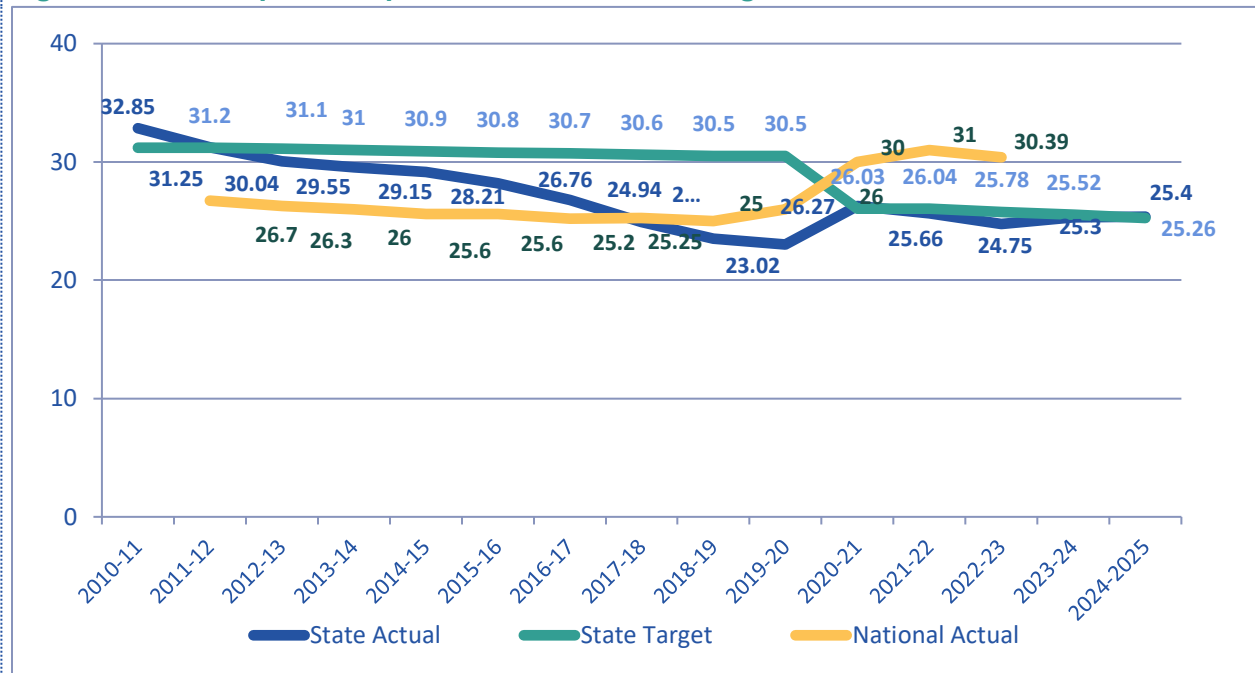


Timeframe	IL SY	FFY	# of students' w/ IEPs in Indicator 6a	Total # students w/ IEPs	Actual Value	State Target
2015-16	16	15	14386	37878	37.98	32.6
2016-17	17	16	14902	37255	40.0	32.7
2017-18	18	17	15135	37136	40.6	32.8
2018-19	19	18	17053	38046	44.82	32.9
2019-20	20	19	17235	37946	45.42	32.9
2020-21	21	20	11010	22904	46.08	46
2021-22	22	21	11464	22755	50.38	46.5
2022-23	23	22	13022	25346	51.38	47
2023-24	24	23	15321	28477	53.8	47.5
2024-2025	25	24	Not Available	Not available	54.6	48

SY25 marked the fourth year since the inception of the SPP indicator tracking that ISBE placed more students ages 3-5 (excluding those in kindergarten) (54.6%) in regular early childhood education programs, offering the majority supports and services in that location, a .8% increase over SY24. This figure represents a continued trend in the increase of students in 6A in regular early childhood programs for an overall increase of increase of 12% over the ISBE state target of 48%.

Since SY20, ISBE has exceeded the National Actual for Indicator 6A. In SY23, ISBE exceeded the national actual by demonstrating that ISBE placed 19% (4816 more children in Indicator 6A placements (4816) than the national actual for the same year. (Note: SY23 is the last year for which national actual data are available).

SPP Indicator 6B: Percent of ISBE Early Childhood Students Ages 3-5 in a Separate Special Education Setting for IL SY11-25



Timeframe	IL SY	FFY	# of students' w/ IEPs in Indicator 6b	Total # students w/ IEPs	Actual Value	State Target
2015-16	16	15	10685	37878	28.21	30.8
2016-17	17	16	9970	37255	26.76	30.70
2017-18	18	17	9262	37136	24.94	30.60
2018-19	19	18	8938	38046	23.49	30.5
2019-20	20	19	8736	37946	23.02	30.5
2020-21	21	20	6017	22904	26.27	26.30
2021-22	22	21	5838	22755	25.66	26.04
2022-23	23	22	6272	25346	24.75	25.78
2023-24	24	23	7205	28477	25.3	25.52
2024-25	25	24	Not available	Not available	25.4	25.26

SPP 6B Data Values for SY16–SY25

SPP Indicator 6B data represents those students 3-5 years of age, not in kindergarten, who attend separate special education classes, schools, or residential facilities. SY25 data indicates that just over one-quarter of all students ages 3-5 who are in need of special education services are placed in restrictive early childhood education placements. This figure represents a .14% percentage point increase in restrictive placements over the state target of 25.26%, and a .1 increase over SY24.

Through SY19, SPP Indicator 6B data were trending in line with the National Actual. However, in SY20 and SY21, Illinois improved upon the SPP Indicator 6B data beyond the national average. Specifically, Illinois placed 12.5% less children in SPP Indicator 6B placement than the national actual. In SY22, Illinois improved upon these data by placing 17% fewer students than the national average or 992 students. In SY23, ISBE again improved upon the SPP 6B data by an additional 2% for a total of 19% improvement over the national average SPP 6B placements. (Note: SY23 is the last year for which National Actual data are available).

State Performance Plan Indicator 7 – Preschool Outcomes

Percent of preschool children aged 3 through 5 with IEPs who demonstrate improved:

- A. Positive social-emotional skills (including social relationships);
- B. Acquisition and use of knowledge and skills (including early language/communication and early literacy); and
- C. Use of appropriate behaviors to meet their needs.

ISBE Charge

Early CHOICES staff will collaborate with districts as they support and increase the percent of preschool children aged 3-5 with IEPs who demonstrate improved:

- Positive social emotional skills (including social relationship)
- Acquisition and use of knowledge and skills (including early language/communication and early literacy);
- Use of appropriate behaviors to meet their needs.

Definitions for the data reflected in SPP Indicators 7A1, 7A2, 7B1, 7B2, 7C1 and 7C2:

Indicator 7A: Positive social-emotional skills (including social relationships)

Indicator 7B: Acquisition and use of knowledge and skills (including early language/communication and early literacy)

Indicator 7C: Use of appropriate behaviors to meet their needs

In SY24, Early CHOICES continued to work to support districts throughout Illinois to improve the Early Childhood Outcomes (ECO). Part B Indicator 7 requires states to report two summary statements for each of the three outcome areas, calculated based on the five progress categories defined above.

Summary 1. Of those preschool children who entered or exited the preschool program below age expectations in each outcome, the percent who substantially increased their rate of growth by the time they turned 6 years of age or exited the program.

Summary 2. The percentage of preschool children who were functioning within age expectations in each outcome, by the time they turned 6 years of age or exited the program.

SY24 Indicator 7 Data Summary

Data for SPP Indicator 7 is provided for the last four school years for which indicator 7 data were available (SY 21, 22, 24, 25). A new baseline and new targets were set in SY21 (FFY20) for SPP Indicator 7 since ISBE and its stakeholders determined that baseline data was no longer representative of the indicator. ISBE and its stakeholders determined that the updated TA module from Early CHOICES, along with the increase in people receiving TA on early childhood outcomes, has led to an increase in accurate reporting, resulting in baseline data that are no longer representative as well as lower percentage for each sub-indicator.

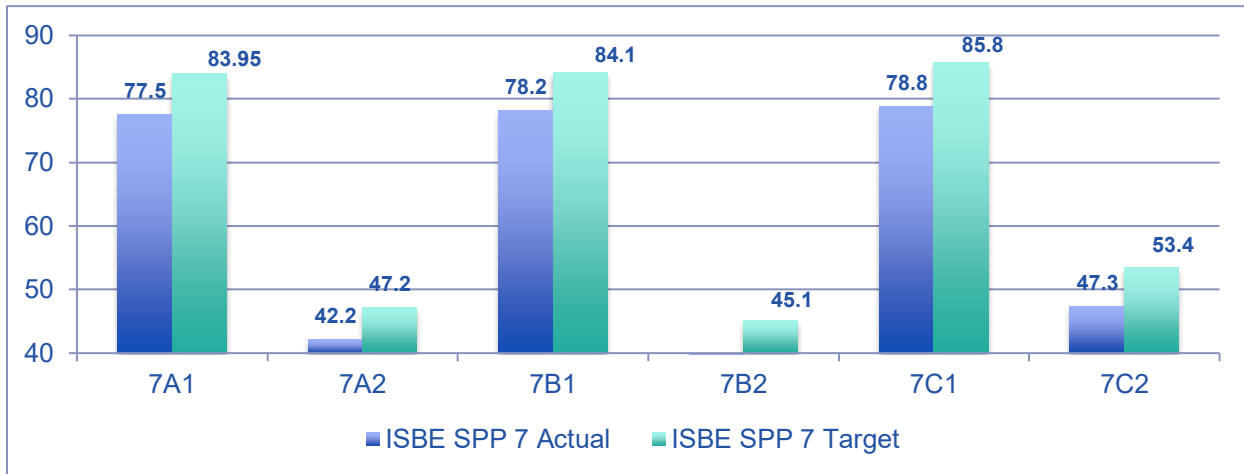
ISBE examined state and national trend data when setting targets for SPP Indicator 7. ISBE and its stakeholders also considered other factors that could have potentially impacted on the data. State trend data show that Illinois exceeds the national trend data percentages for SPP Indicators 7A1, 7B1, and 7C1. Conversely, Illinois has been consistently below the national trend data percentages for SPP Indicators 7A2, 7B2, and 7C2. However, it is important to note that national data declined 1% from 2017 to 2018 for SPP Indicators 7A2, 7B2, and 7C2.

In SY24, the SPP 7A1, 7B1 and 7C1 indicators remained relatively the same as SY22. These measures, while not substantially declining, were still well below the state targets. However, SPP 7A2, 7B2 and 7C2 decreased significantly in most cases from SY21 and in all cases these data reflect values well below the state targets.

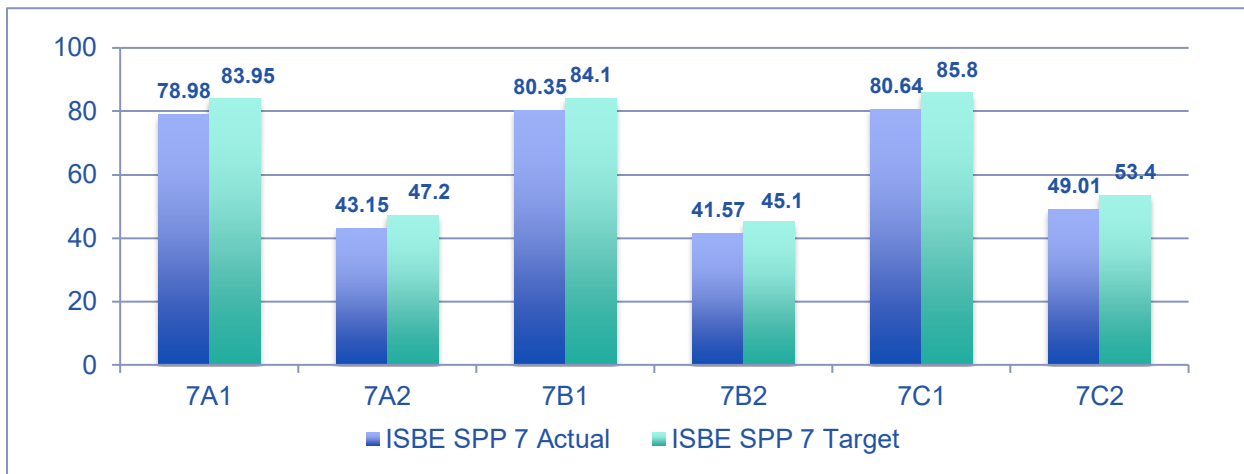
In SY25, the data showed statistically insignificant declines in all SPP7 areas of measure and remain below the state average. The greatest area of decrease from SY24 were in the areas of 7A2 (noting a 1.3 point and 2% decline over SY24) and 7C2 (demonstrating a 1.4 point and 2% decline over SY24).

With the continuous declines noted over the last three years for which SPP 7 data are available (SY 22, 24, 25), SY24 should be further analyzed for understanding and implications.

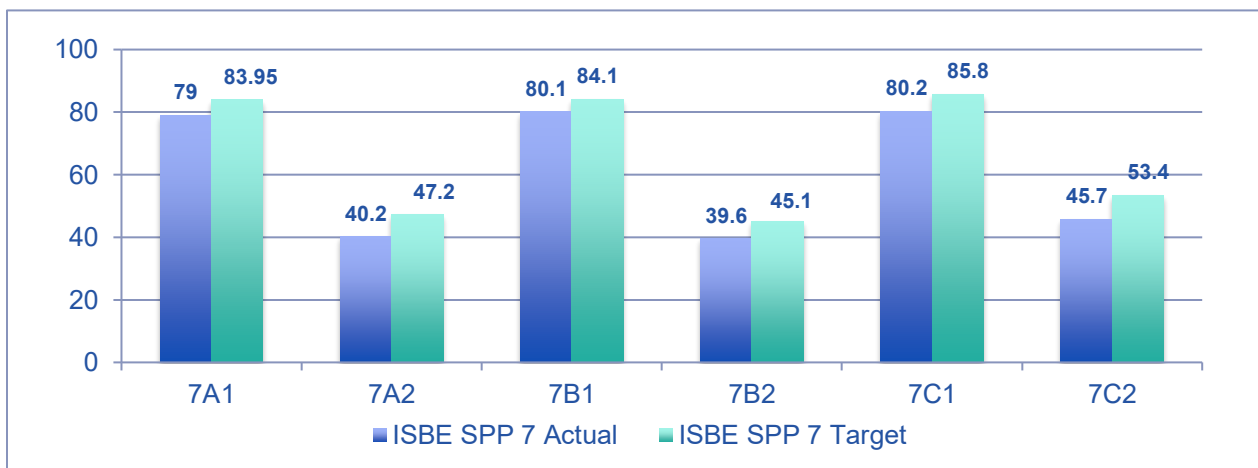
SY21 SPP 7 (FFY20) ISBE Target and Actual Data Values



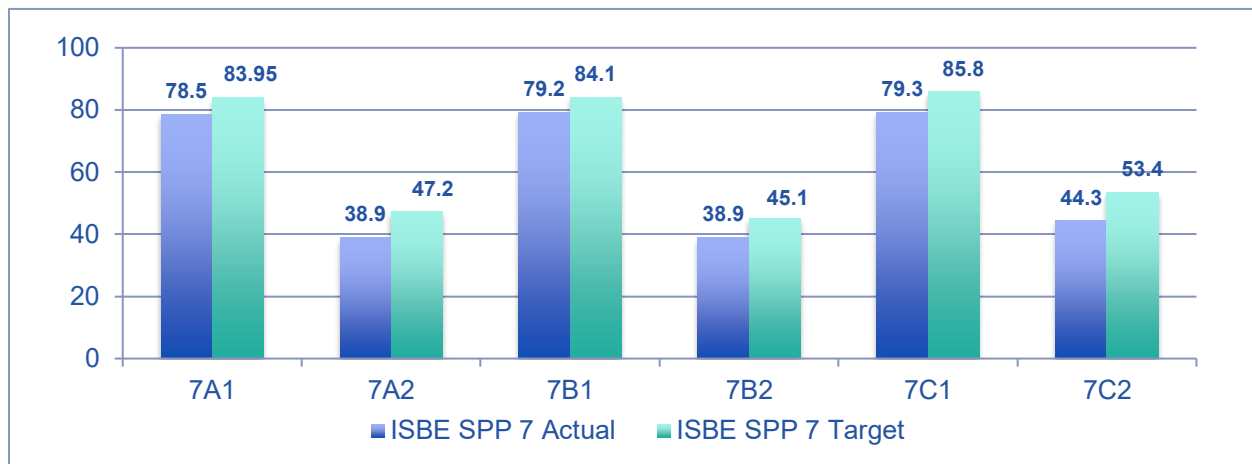
SY22 SPP 7 (FFY21) ISBE Target and Actual Data Values



SY24 SPP 7 (FFY23) ISBE Target and Actual Data Values



SY25 SPP 7 (FFY24) ISBE Target and Actual Data Values



Efforts to Impact Accuracy of SPP Indicators

Data Analyzer

To impact SPP Indicator 6A and 6B, Early CHOICES collaborated with ISBE and Accountability Solutions to create a process to calculate the preschool environments data for children ages 3-5 and sort the data to determine which districts/LEAs met the state target and which districts were far from the target.

In past years, this data process allowed identification of districts for ISBE to target for Indicator 6. Early CHOICES, along with ISBE and Illinois STARNET, created a plan for Technical Assistance to be implemented starting in SY14 and repeated in subsequent school years.

The preschool environment codes for children ages 3-5 are configured differently than the codes for those ages 6-21.. In order to assure accuracy of data reporting, ISBE and Early CHOICES collaborated to develop resources intended to simplify the coding process and support district leaders with decision-making around coding. These resources included a presentation, as well as a decision tree (*Decision Tree for Coding Educational Environments for Children Ages 3-5*). The decision tree was provided in print, as well as via an interactive online tool. In SY21, the online tool moved to an IOS and Android Application, making the analyzer more accessible to more school staff.

It is important to note that, in SY25, significant delays in attaining data sharing agreements resulted in ISBE not sending Early CHOICES an updated list of newly identified LEAs for targeted improvement. As such, Early CHOICES was unable to plan or implement

targeted TA for these sites. For the purposes of the SY25 Early CHOICES Annual report, TA targets and efforts will be analyzed using the following identifications:

- A. LEAs Signing a collaborative agreement with Early CHOICES for intensive TA
- B. ISBE LEAs in contact with Early CHOICES for data review, coaching and or TA with no signed collaborative agreement
- C. ISBE LEAs with no signed collaborative agreement with Early CHOICES but attended professional learning.

Educational Environment Code Generator Application

In SY14, to support with ensuring accuracy of SPP Indicator 6 data, Early CHOICES commissioned the development of an online application to assist districts in more accurately identifying and generating the appropriate Preschool Environments codes for early childhood students. The application, known as the *Preschool Environment Code Generator*, was made available to districts in SY15. The application follows the [Decision Tree for Coding Educational Environments for Children Ages 3-5](#) and allows the users to create a PDF as documentation that they used the application.

This application allows for aggregate data collection on which districts and schools are accessing the application and generating preschool environment codes, the types of early childhood placements where students currently reside, and the number of students receiving either a 6A or 6B codes based on application findings.

This information has allowed Early CHOICES to cross reference the data with other relevant datasets and make upgrades to the application to align with high-quality data collection practices. Additionally, ISBE and Early CHOICES use the data to better understand whether there is a correlation between accurate environments coding and high-quality early childhood practices that, in turn, result in a decrease in Indicator 6B data over time.

SY25 Preschool Environment Code Generator Application Use

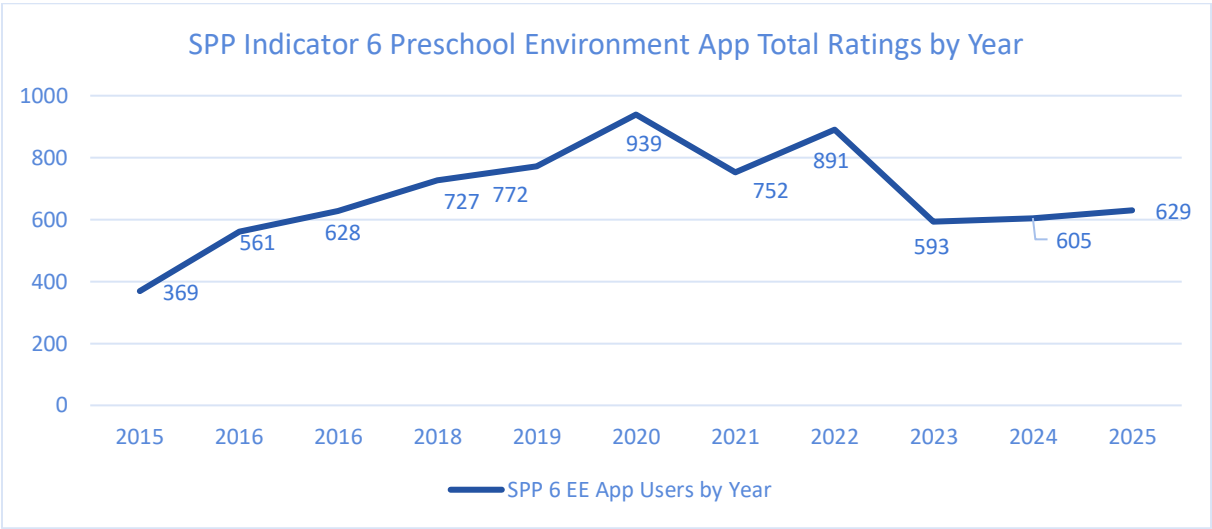
Since the introduction of the Preschool Environment Code Generator application for use by ISBE districts (SY16), the online application has been used by a cumulative total (non-mutually exclusive) of 6375 users to effectively determine the Preschool Environment code for ISBE students in early childhood education.

Since its inception, the app has been downloaded a total of 607 times by IOS users, a 6% increase over SY24. Users downloading on the Android system increased by 20% in SY25, with a total of 24 additional users downloading. Since its inception, the overall download total of the Android version of the app is totaled at 68 unique download users.

It should be noted that that app provides both the Preschool Environments Codes decision tree, as well as the Early Childhood Outcomes decision tree. As a result, it is not clear which of these specific tools that users are accessing when they download the app. There were on average 3.75 sessions per unique download device, suggesting that people who downloaded the app used it on average 3.75 times over the course of the year, an increase in use by .25 % over SY24.

The graph below reflects the SPP Indicator 6 Preschool Environments application use over the nine (9) school years the online application has been in operation. In SY24 user ratings demonstrated an increase of 24 ratings (4%) over SY23-24. The goal of the online and IOS/Android app is to help districts and personnel become more familiar with the preschool environment codes and in doing so it was expected that the online app would decrease in use over time. Over the last nine years of the applications utilization, it is clear the app continues to help school personnel achieve proficiency in determining preschool environments codes for students ages 3-5 in early childhood placements.

Indicator 6 Application: Number of Non-Mutually Exclusive Student Ratings by School Year SY 15-25



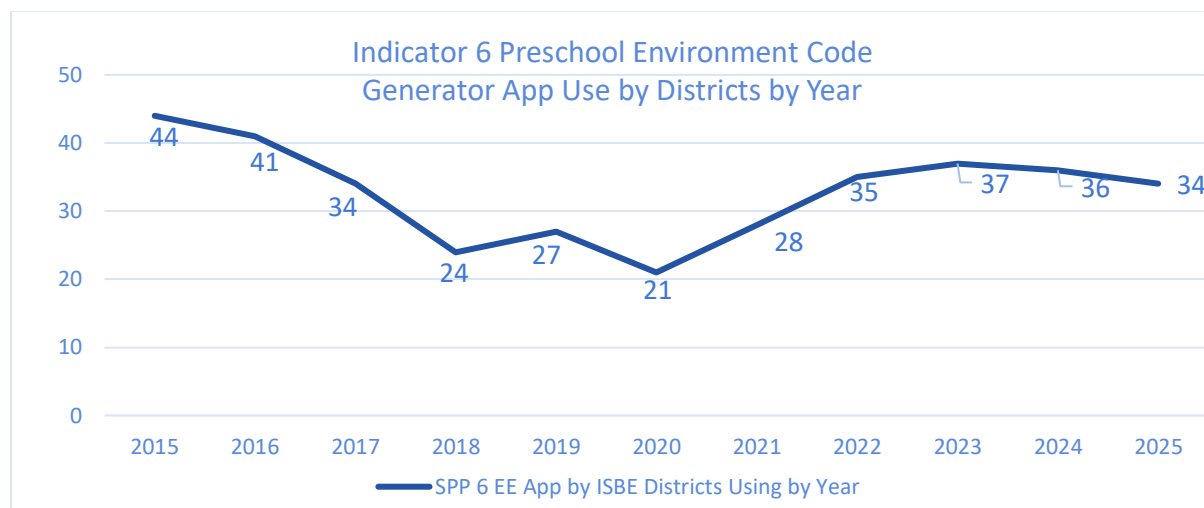
Unduplicated Number of Students Receiving Ratings

In SY25, the Indicator 6 Preschool Environment Code application was used to uniquely rate 110 students. As preschool environments coding users gain proficiency in preschool environments coding it is likely the applications use will hit a steady saturation point with application utilization leveling out over time.

The value of hitting a consistent saturation rating point in the preschool environments coding application use is that it indicates the possibility of higher rate of rating proficiency across the ISBE school districts.

Use of Preschool Environment Code Application by Districts

In SY25, 34 unique ISBE school districts used the SPP Indicator 6 preschool environment code generator application, representing a two (2) district decrease over unique district use in SY24. Like with unique application users, the number of unique ISBE districts using the SPP Indicator 6 preschool environment code generator application has also remained consistent over the last four (4) school years.



Preschool Environment Data Sorter

Since SY10, Early CHOICES has continued its efforts to monitor preschool environments data to assist districts in driving the decision-making process and change on the SPP Indicator 6A and 6B data. One data tool available for use by Early CHOICES is the SASSED-QWIZ database. This database includes an SPP data sorter that provides immediate and up to date SPP 6 and 7 data reports for all applicable districts. While Early CHOICES uses these data to progress monitor their own performance relative to TA efforts, the reports are also used to support districts with being better informed of their Indicator 6 and Indicator 7 data findings, how to progress monitor their efforts against longitudinal indicator data trends, and understand the relationships between the early childhood SPP Indicators 6 & 7.

Early Childhood Outcome Application (ECO App)

The ECO ratings data has been inconsistent across Illinois. Thus, the ECO Rating Tree was developed to assist early childhood professionals in determining ratings. Early CHOICES worked to develop an application in SY14 to assist school districts in the Early Childhood Outcomes (ECO) ratings and the creation of the Child Outcome Summary Form (COSF). The application was rolled out for initial use in SY16. It is suspected, however, that many programs have not been using the decision tree.

The ec-ecotool.com application requires the user to complete all the questions in the rating tree in order to generate the COSF. This allows districts to create a PDF of the COSF to save with the IEP. [Note: The ECO rating information still needs to be entered into the Student Information System (SIS).]

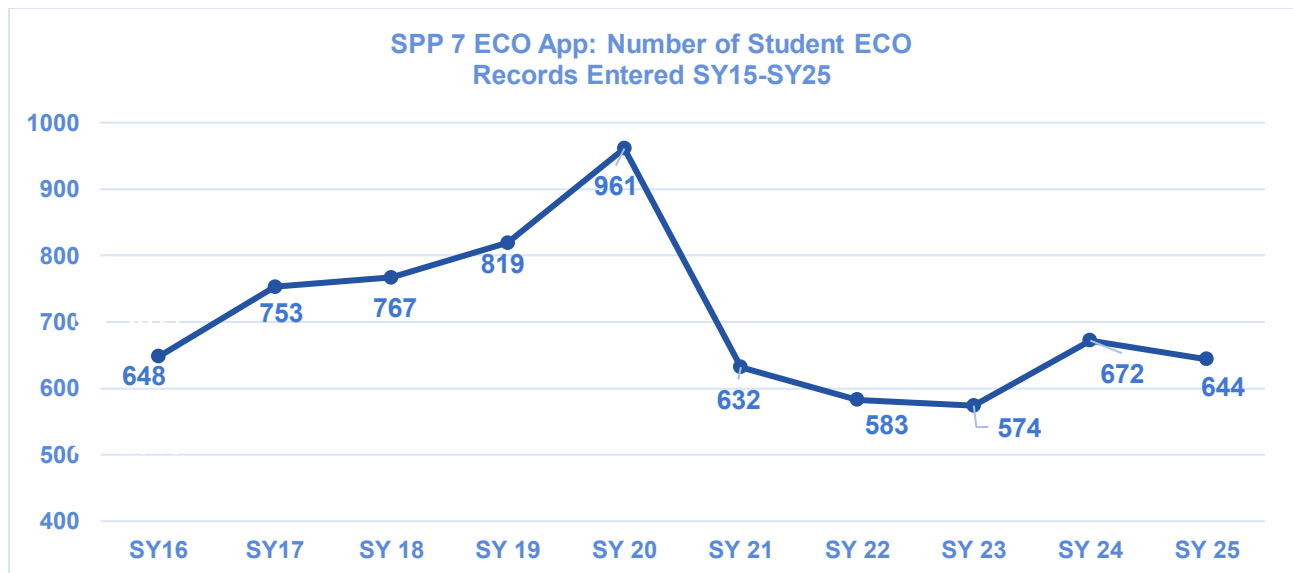
In SY24, a downloadable IOS and Android App were also made available for broader use in assisting districts in the rating of early childhood outcomes. The new app contains a decision tree only option with creating an entire COSF. This has assisted in providing more consistent and accurate ratings for users. The data provided below are relative to utilization from SY18 through the end of SY25 or June 30, 2025.

Total Unique SPP Indicator 7 ECO App Ratings

Since the introduction of the SPP Indicator 7 ECO application for use by ISBE districts in SY16, the application has been used a total of 5224 times to rate the initial and ongoing social emotional skills of students 3-5 years of age who have IEPs.

The graph below reflects the utilization rates in the ECO application use over the last ten (10) school years. Unique ratings slightly decreased by 4% (28 ratings) from 672 ratings in SY24, to 644 ratings in SY25.

Overall, the ECO App utilization has ranged from a high of 961 ratings in SY20 (Pandemic Year), to a low utilization of 574 ratings in SY23. The mean utilization rate across the ten-year period is 641 ratings and a median of 672 app ratings.



Indicator 7 ECO Application Ratings

In SY25, ECO was used to rate SPP Indicator 7 ECO for students a total of 644 times, a slight decrease of 4% (28 ratings) over SY24. Of those ECO ratings, 419 (65%) were initial ratings and 225 (35%) were progress ratings. In SY25, almost seven out of every 10 ratings were the ratio of initial ratings.

Reassessment ratings were likely to happen for approximately 1/3 of those students with baseline ratings. This suggests that districts are using the ECO app for baseline and in about 35% of the ratings for follow up or reassessment purposes, which was the original intent of the application.

Given the consistency of rating, this use pattern suggests high validity with follow up or reassessment scores that also have baseline scores added in the ECO App.

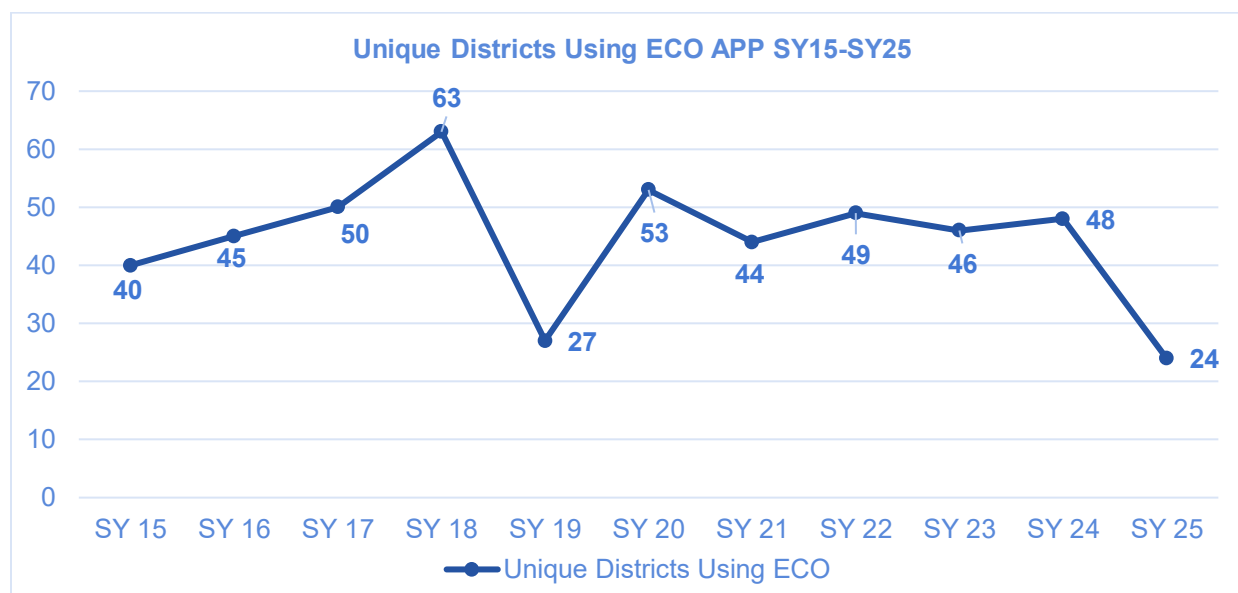
Use of ECO Ratings Application by Districts

In SY25, 24 unique ISBE school districts used the ECO Rating Application to assess early childhood outcomes, representing a decrease of 24 districts (50%) over SY24.

Reasons for the significant decrease in unique district use of the application are unclear. However, of the districts who did use the application in SY25, the rate of engagement with the app remained relatively the same. This suggests that the app remains a helpful tool for many districts and that the decrease in unique users may be due to other factors, such as: utilization of the decision tree in another form (e.g. PDF/printed material), changes in staffing, or a need to remind districts of the tool's availability.

Overall, the mean unique ISBE School District utilization rate is approximately 44 unique districts with the median rate of unique district use being 46 unique districts

(based on the ten (10) years of available rating data).



Training – Universal Foundations

The purpose of training (universal foundations) is to address core skills, common knowledge skills, and information dissemination. Early CHOICES develops and implements professional learning experiences that support the management and implementation of preschool least restrictive environment (LRE) and early childhood outcomes (ECOs) as they relate to environments. All training courses have a connection to either LRE or ECOs and are aligned to the Council for Exceptional Children Division for Early Childhood (DEC) Recommended Practices.

Training supports social justice and equity for all children, cultural responsiveness, and anti-bias strategies. Training and professional learning experiences are aligned to the Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards (IELDS) and the Standards for Professional Learning promulgated by Learning Forward: The Professional Learning Association. In addition, professional learning is aligned with the concepts and strategies of Adult Learning Theory.

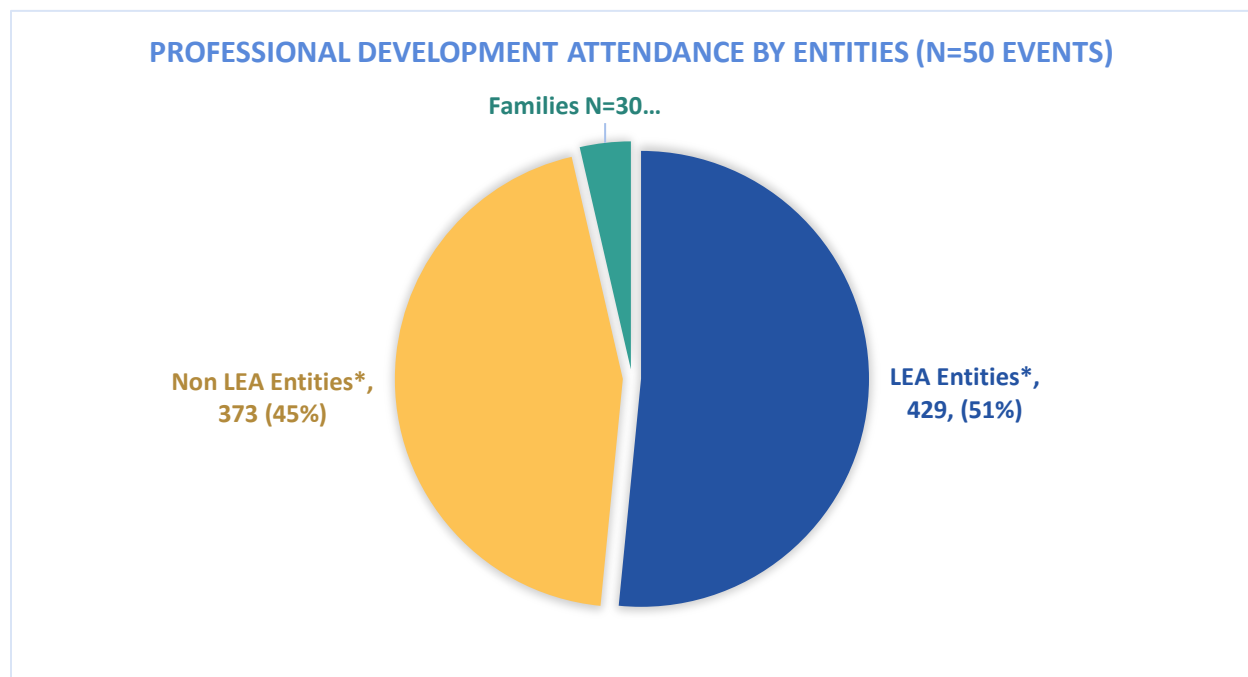
Early CHOICES Professional Development

In SY25, Early CHOICES provided a total of 50 Professional Development* (PD) training efforts to 2604 non-mutually exclusive attendees, a decrease of 23 (32%) Professional Development events and 1028 attendees (39%) over SY24.

*Professional development is defined as being either a specific calendar training, modules, or a community of practice activity.

Representatives from 429 districts/LEAs (non-mutually exclusive) and 373 non-districts/LEA entities attended the PD. A total of 30 families also attended one or more PD events. The figure below provides a visual representation of these data.

SY25 EC Professional Development: Entities in Attendance



The professional development efforts were provided to a total of 429 non-mutually exclusive districts/LEAs, reflecting an 32% (215) decrease in districts/LEAs in SY25.

Non-LEA entities (i.e. private schools, Head Starts, universities, child care and other early childhood organizations) also decreased attendance by 115 entities or by 24% over SY24.

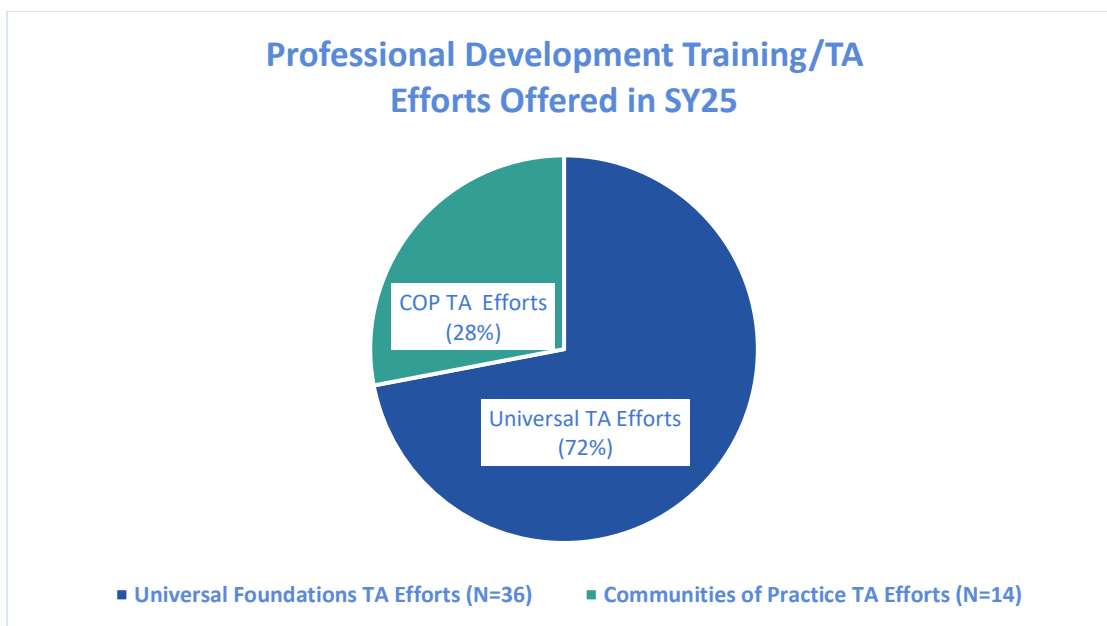
Family attendance also decreased to 30 families (47%/27 families) over SY24.

While it is unclear what prompted this decrease in attendance, it likely reflects a period of transition for the Early CHOICES project. In SY25, Early CHOICES navigated changes in grant administration across two entities, experienced reduced staffing capacity, and adjusted budget allocations, all of which contributed to limitations in the volume and type of PD offerings available.

The 50 professional development efforts are broken down into two categories: Universal Foundations and Communities of Practice. Universal Foundations are foundational and offered to any school district, community-based organization, and families.

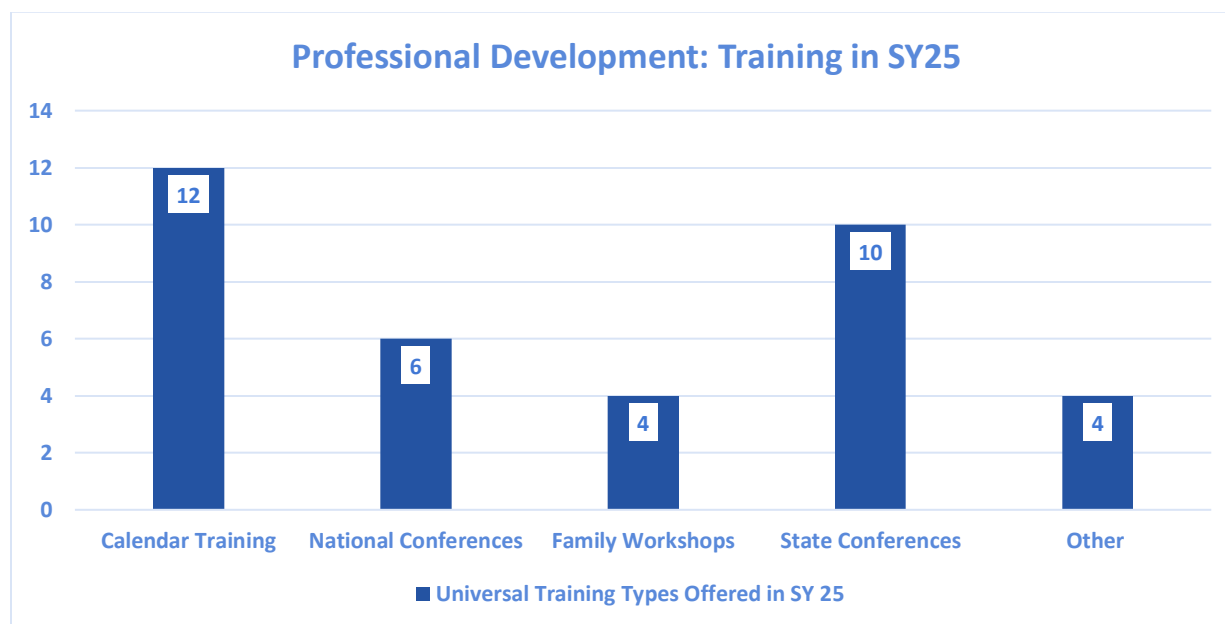
Early CHOICES offered 36 Universal Foundation Training activities in SY25.

Communities of Practice (COP) are more specifically targeted to districts/LEAs targeted by the state related to state performance indicator findings and/or districts/LEAs or community-based organizations desiring to improve their early childhood practices. There were 14 COP professional development activities offered in SY25.



Direct Professional Development: Universal Foundations

Of the 50 direct professional development offerings in SY25, 36 were defined as universal general calendar training activities, state and national conference presentations and family workshops. The figure below presents a breakout of the training types by number offered.



Overview: Early CHOICES Online Modules

Approximately 617 individuals viewed and or completed the four online modules. Of those, 49 (8%) individuals completed perception surveys providing feedback on the four modules. completed demographics across the four (4) offered Early CHOICES online modules in SY25.

The *Understanding Inclusion* modules are available without requiring users to login, allowing for increased access to families who are generally not seeking professional credit. As such, the data for reflects the number of users who accessed it by logging into the Early CHOICES site, as opposed to anyone who has viewed the module.

SY 2025 Online Learning Modules by Views, Feedback, Credit

Name of Modules	Number of Views	Number of Evaluations for Feedback	Number who Requested Credit
Understanding Inclusion	199 Views	6/3% completed evaluations	155 Credit Requests
Preschool Environment Codes	76 Views	8/11% of 76 completed evaluations	74 Credit Requests
Early Childhood Outcome (ECO)	193 Views	15/8% of 193 completed evaluations	101 Credit Requests
Federal Inclusion Policy	64 Views	22/34% of 64 completed evaluations	12 Credit Requests
Total	617 Views	49/8% Overall Evaluations Completed	342 Credit Requests

Understanding Inclusion EITP

The *Understanding Inclusion* module is also available on the Early Intervention Training Program (EITP) website for those who seek Early Intervention credit. EITP hosts the module and issues the credit, but the content is the same. In SY25, 235 users accessed the modules through EITP.

Role	# of Respondents	% of Total
I am a professional providing services within early intervention and/or early childhood education	210	89.36%
None of the above	20	8.51%
I am a parent, family member or guardian of a child receiving early childhood special education services	3	1.28%
I am a parent, family member or guardian participating in early intervention	2	0.85%

EITP collects evaluation data. Overall, the feedback is positive and many users comment that the modules are extremely helpful to them in their role as early intervention providers.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
7. Content was presented in an organized, easily understood manner.	64.87% 137	29.81% 82	1.92% 4	0.48% 1	1.92% 4
8. Content included explanation and illustration of specific content knowledge and practice to be learned.	65.87% 137	30.29% 63	1.92% 4	0.00% 0	1.92% 4
9. There were opportunities to practice and/or problem solve.	59.42% 123	33.82% 70	4.35% 9	0.00% 0	2.42% 5
10. There were opportunities to engage in reflection of the material and/or practices.	65.22% 135	30.92% 64	1.93% 4	0.00% 0	1.93% 4

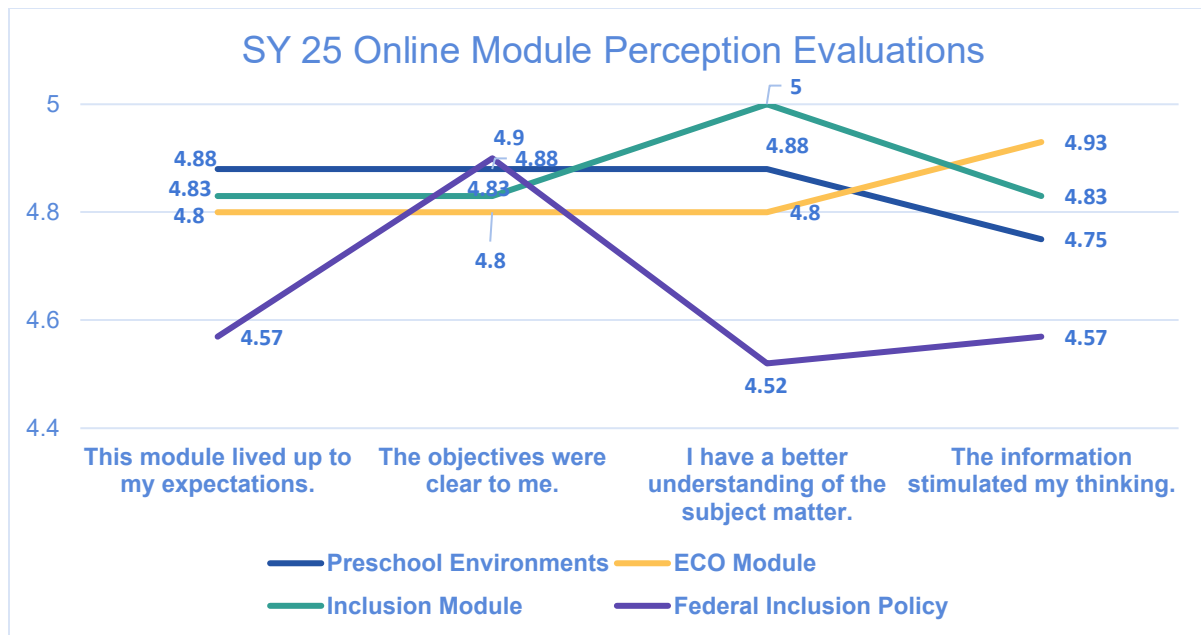
Module Evaluation Findings

The other three modules (*Determining Preschool Environment Codes*, *Early Childhood Outcomes (ECO)*, and *Federal Inclusion Policy*) were provided with the opportunity to complete a standard evaluation. Evaluation findings were collected for the *Determining Preschool Environment Codes* and *ECO* modules and are provided on the following page. The evaluation questions were based on a five-point scale with 1 equaling “strongly disagree” and 5 equaling “strongly agree.”

The online module *Determining Preschool Environment Codes* had 76 individuals engaged and, of those, 8% (11) completed the module evaluation. The *Early Childhood Outcomes (ECO)* module had 193 views and, of those, 15 (8%) viewers completed the module evaluation. The *Federal Inclusion Policy* online module had 64 views and of those, 22 individuals (34%) completed evaluations and the Understanding Federal Inclusion policy completed

While the perception data gleaned from the module evaluation are relatively positive, the findings are not statistically representative due to the limited sample size.

As in past years, the findings suggest that the four modules established scores on the standard perception survey evaluation questions ranging from somewhat agree (4) to strongly agree (5), with all scores falling above 4.56. These findings suggest that the curriculum presented in all four online modules was accurately targeted and of professional merit.



Communities of Practice

Communities of Practice (targeted supports) provide multiple learning points on a single topic area, which represents intensive PD offered to individuals or programs. Communities of Practice (COPs) are facilitated to engage providers in meeting regularly, sharing expertise, and working collaboratively to improve programming to better support inclusive environments. All content has a connection to special education and is aligned to the DEC Recommended Practices. COPs support social justice and equity for all children, cultural responsiveness, and anti-bias strategies. Early CHOICES utilizes the DEC Recommended Practices checklists, ECTA Center inclusion indicators, Inclusive Classroom Profile, as well as other evidence-based resources to identify core competencies and skills to support improvement in programs.

Practice Based Coaching COP

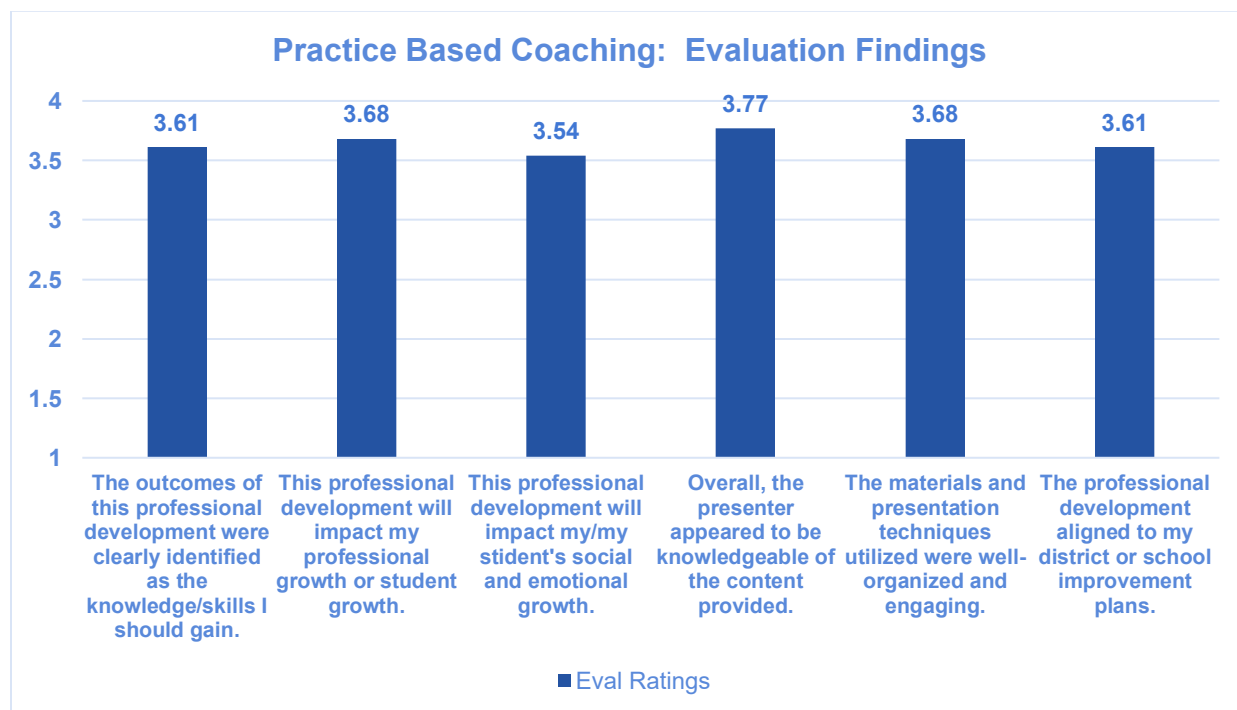
A total of four events were provided by invitation only to school districts and community-based organizations who formed the Practice Based Coaching Community of Practice COP for these events.

The intent of these events was to provide the participant with added professional development, reflection time, and connections with colleagues from other programs.

A total of 54 representatives from 14 school districts and representatives from other outside organizations (childcare organizations, Head Start, early intervention programs,

etc.) attended one or more of the four events. Those in attendance included teachers (9/16%), administrators (21/38%) and related professionals (5/9%). Approximately 19 individuals did not identify a role or identified as “Other”.

A summary of the evaluation findings from 31 participants across the four events is provided below. A rating of a 1 in the evaluation is equivalent to a finding of “strongly disagree” while a rating closer to 4 is equivalent to “always agree.” The findings suggest that the desired objectives and outcomes of the events were almost always clearly identified (3.68/4.0), while those ratings also felt that the presenter(s) were only somewhat well organized and engaging (3.86/4.0).



Inclusion Practices - Working Smarter Not Harder COP

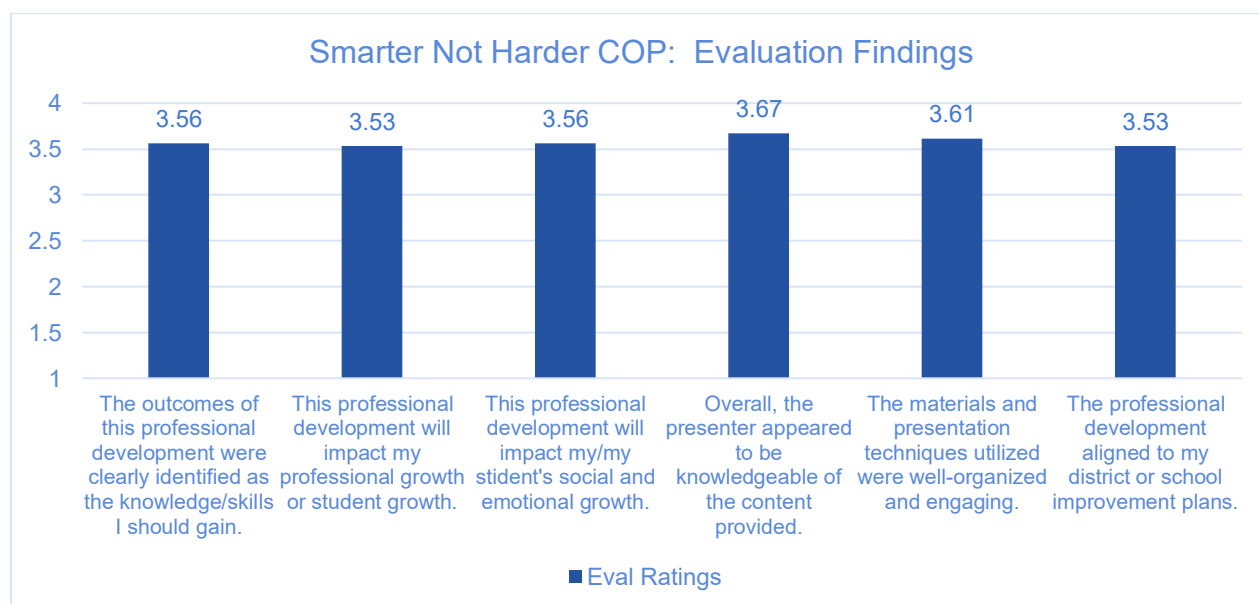
The Inclusion Practices - Working Smarter Not Harder COP included four events. The content was organized around What Makes Inclusion Work and there was a strong focus on integrating the itinerant model as a way to increase inclusive opportunities for young children.

September 24, 2024	Session 1 Vision & Attitude
October 08, 2024	Session 2 Evidence Based Practices & Transdisciplinary Practices
October 22, 2024	Session 3 Teaming & Collaboration, Professional Learning, and Family & Community Partnerships
November 14, 2024	Session 4 Adaptations & Support Systems and Administrative Support

Approximately 52 representatives from 38 early childhood entities (schools/districts/Head Start/Private Providers) attended one or more of the four COP events. The majority of those in attendance were EC Coaches/Specialists (40%/20) or teachers (40%/20). The others in attendance were administrators (17%/9) or “Other” (3%/2).

A summary of the evaluation findings from 36 of the 52 participants (69%) across the four events is provided on the following page. A rating of a 1 in the evaluation is equivalent to a finding of “strongly disagree” while a rating closer to 4 is equivalent to “strongly agree.”

The findings suggest that the presenters were knowledgeable of the material presented and also felt the material felt that the material and presentation techniques were well targeted, engaging and organized (3.67/4.0).



Leadership COP

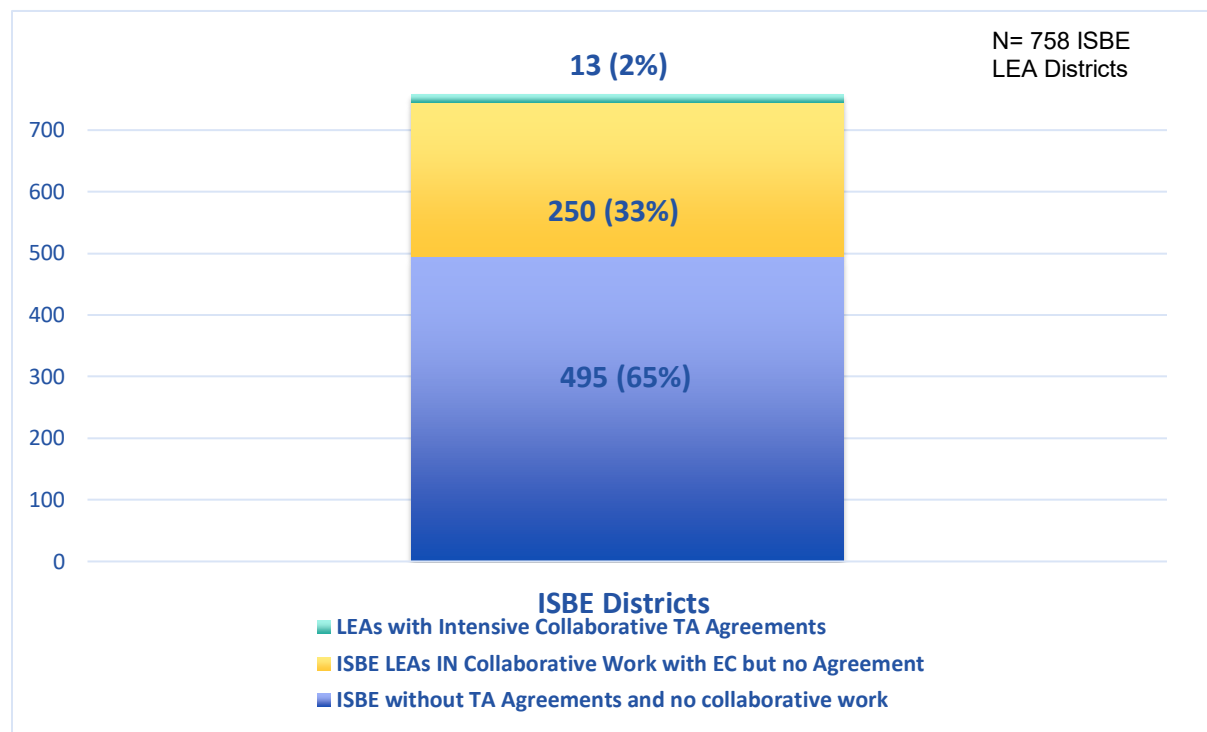
In SY25, Early CHOICES hosted a COP for leaders in inclusive programs. This COP was made available to leaders who were working to support inclusive practices in classrooms. Approximately 42 individuals from public schools, ROEs, Head Start, and Private providers were invited to join one or more of these seven monthly online meetings. Attendance ranged from 6 to 10 leaders each month. The focus of this COP was collegial support for the leaders as well as resource and strategy sharing. Early CHOICES did not give PEL or Gateways credit for this series.

Targeted Technical Assistance (TA) Efforts Offered by Early CHOICES in SY25

As noted earlier, in SY25, significant delays in attaining data sharing agreements resulted in ISBE not sending Early CHOICES an updated list of newly identified LEAs for targeted improvement. As such, Early CHOICES was unable to plan or implement targeted TA for these sites. Thus, for this report, the LEAs who signed collaborative agreements with Early CHOICES in SY25 will be deemed as the targeted group receiving TA.

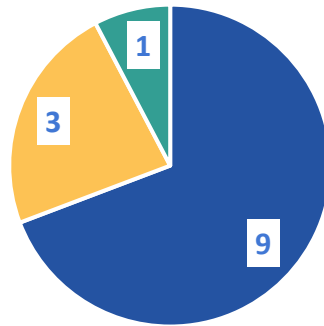
In SY25, 13 LEAs signed Collaborative TA Agreements (Group 1). An additional 250 LEAs were in contact with Early CHOICES for purposes of data review, technical assistance, or professional learning efforts with no signed collaborative agreement (Group 2). The remaining ISBE LEAs (495/Group 3) did not sign TA agreements, nor did they engage in collaboration with Early CHOICES. However, it is likely that many of these LEAs may have attended one or more professional development event in SY25.

ISBE LEAs by EC TA Agreement Status



The graph below represents SPP Indicator 6A and 6B data (from last available year (SY24) on the 13 LEA with signed collaborative agreements in SY25.

LEAs with Signed Collaborative Agreement: Indicator 6A and SPP 6B (N=13)



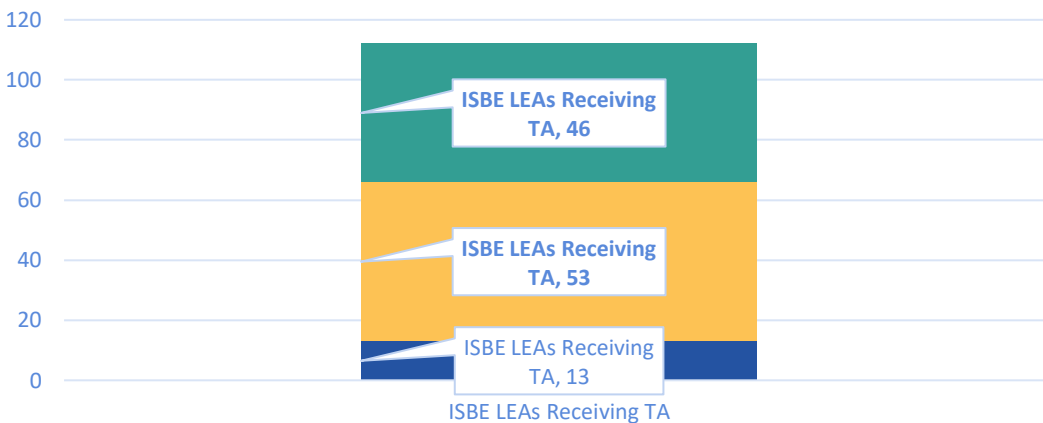
■ Meets/Exceeds SPP A and 6 B ■ Meets SPP 6A but not B ■ Meets SPP 6B but no 6A

Total Professional Development, Training, & Technical Assistance Provided in SY25

In SY25, Early CHOICES provided direct and indirect technical assistance (TA) efforts to 15% (112) of the 758 ISBE districts, providing TA for over one out of every 6-7 LEAS serving children ages 3-5 in the state of Illinois. Of the 112 districts receiving PD or TA, 12% (13) were districts who have signed intensive collaborative TA agreements with Early CHOICES, 47% (52) were LEAs in collaborative contact with Early CHOICES, and 41% (46) were LEAs without collaborative agreements nor in a collaborative relationship with Early CHOICES.

ISBE Districts Receiving Early CHOICES TA in SY25

ISBE Receiving PD or TA Efforts in SY25



■ LEAS with Signed Agreements with EC ■ LEAS with Collaboration with EC ■ Other LEAS

State and National Representation

Early Childhood LRE Stakeholders Consortium

As a leader in promoting inclusion, Early CHOICES leads a statewide stakeholder group to address access in early childhood, the Early Childhood LRE Stakeholders Consortium (EC LRE Consortium). Education for children ages 3-5 is not mandated, so access to typical environments varies. The consortium was created in 2010 to support SPP Indicator 6 efforts. The group has increased in number and diversity of early childhood entities represented and maintains family representatives.

The primary focus of the group is to increase awareness and opportunities for inclusion for children ages 3-5. The importance of access to a quality education in the preschool years cannot be overlooked or underestimated.

Early CHOICES held an in-person EC LRE Consortium meeting on September 12, 2024, as well as virtual meetings on November 12, 2024, February 6, 2025, and May 21, 2025.

Within these quarterly meetings, stakeholders share information regarding early childhood inclusion, including upcoming professional development events, opportunities for feedback on specific projects or efforts, and updates on laws and policies that impact young children with disabilities. Workgroups meet to further the work for public awareness, family engagement and implementation.

Early Childhood Outcomes (ECO) Stakeholders Committee

The ECO Committee, chaired by ISBE, meets quarterly. Two Early CHOICES team members serve on this committee. Several efforts are underway to improve awareness and accuracy of reporting the ECO. Digging into the data is key and we created questions and templates to look deeper at the data. The ECO modules, created by Early CHOICES, were promoted to LEAs for use with staff. Feedback on design and use of the new app was gathered from this committee as Early CHOICES developed the new app.

Outstanding Practices in Inclusion

Early CHOICES' EC LRE Stakeholders Consortium and ISBE created the *Outstanding Practices in Inclusion* (OPI) recognition and launched it in SY18. In the fall of 2024, Early CHOICES presented an informational webinar that provided an overview of initiate eligibility requirements, the overall process, and timeline. One district applied in 2024 and Early CHOICES facilitated the panel. The program did not meet the requirements following scores on required classroom observations using the *Inclusive Classroom Profile* that did not meet OPI requirements. As a result, the applying institution was not

awarded OPI recognition. Several programs indicated that they would initiate the work required to be eligible in the next few years. Early CHOICES continues efforts to recruit high quality programs to apply.

Previous sites recognized for Outstanding Practices in Inclusion are:

2022	Hillsboro CUSD #3
2019	Mannheim District 83
2018	Schaumburg District 54 Stock Elementary, Chicago Public Schools

Sharing a Vision Early Childhood Conference Planning for 2025

Early CHOICES is highly vested in supporting the preparation of the 18th Biennial Sharing a Vision Conference, with much in-kind time and effort by all staff. Early CHOICES co-chaired the planning committee in SY25 and serves as co-chair to the sub committees for Social Media, What's Happening in Illinois, and Technology. The conference was held on October 8-10, 2025. Early CHOICES presented, hosted, and exhibited at the event. The conference was a success with over 500 attendees from across Illinois learning about best practices in early childhood.

Illinois Division for Early Childhood

Early CHOICES staff have served on the Executive Board of the Illinois Division of Early Childhood (IDEC) of the Council of Exceptional Children for *several years*. An Early CHOICES staff member continued in her role on the Executive Board. Additionally, another team member was tapped to be the Communications Chair. In partnership with the EC LRE Stakeholders Consortium and Early CHOICES, IDEC hosted an online launch event for the [*Least Restrictive Environment: Family Resource Guide*](#). It was well-attended and the recording was viewed steadily after it was posted. This collaboration aligns with the shared mission of Early CHOICES and IDEC to empower families by sharing ready-to-use resources to support the high-quality inclusion of all children.

Additional Online Resource Offerings

Social Media

YouTube

Early CHOICES recognizes the need for real-life examples of high-quality practices, videos that explore the family voice and on-demand opportunities to learn more about inclusion. The Early CHOICES team creates and promotes videos that support professionals and families alike. The majority of the top five videos featured content

regarding inclusive practices. Our most viewed playlists are one for professionals and one for families. In SY 25, the YouTube channel's total views are 8,700 (a 16% increase) with over 329 hours of watch time and 54,641page impressions. We added thirty-six subscribers for a total of 259.

Total views by subscribers:

Subscription Status	Views	Watch time (hours)
Total	8671	329
Not subscribed	8431	320
Subscribed	240	9

Top videos:

Video	Views
What Makes Inclusion Work	1521
Embedded Occupational Therapy Supports	753
Inclusion Makes a Difference	545
Strategies to Support Transitions Preschools	425
Free Play and Clean Up in Inclusive Practices	314

Playlists:

Video	Views
Early CHOICES Playlist for Early Childhood programs	906
Early CHOICES Playlist for Families	234
Early Intervention Playlist	21
Using Federal Guidance to Promote High Quality Inclusion for All Children	10
Total Views	1171

Instagram

The Early CHOICES Instagram page has grown substantially in followers and accounts reached. The Early CHOICES Instagram page currently has 574 followers, gaining 57 followers in the last year. The posts with the most engagement included quotes about inclusion and the LRE Family Resource Guide, reaching up to 456 users per post.

Facebook

The Early CHOICES Facebook page has received over 140 new Page Likes, creating a total of 941 Page Likes. In terms of page followers, we have grown from 1149 in SY 23 to 1330 gaining 181 (14% increase) new followers. Our top performing posts received on average 3124 views. Facebook posts with the highest level of engagement were event posts, particularly our EC LRE Toolkit Kickoff and on-going event.

LinkedIn

Since adding LinkedIn to our social media efforts, the Early CHOICES LinkedIn account has gained 347 organic followers for an increase of 67 followers over SY 23. In the last year, the LinkedIn page has had 180 page visits with 85 unique visitors. The most popular posts on LinkedIn reached 288 users.

Constant Contact

Early CHOICES also utilized Constant Contact service to email a monthly newsletter, the *Inclusion Spotlight*. In SY25 a total of 11 monthly newsletters and six (6) email announcements were sent out to the Early CHOICES email list. Data regarding users' online engagement with the newsletters are provided below:

A total of 11 Early CHOICES *Inclusion Spotlights* were sent to an average of 3679 members of the Early CHOICES mailing list between July 2024 and June 2025. This represents a 4% increase in contacts receiving the Inclusion Spotlight over SY23 (156 more sent).

Engagement with the *Inclusion Spotlight* decreased by 3% over SY24. However, according to Constant Contact the *Inclusion Spotlight's* engagement remains 10% higher than the industry average. On average 47% (1729 subscribers) of the 3679 Early CHOICES email list members actively engaged with the material highlighted in the *Inclusion Spotlights*.

The highest engagement rate occurred in August 2024 with a record high 1633 (53%) of the total community engaged.

Website

Early CHOICES website www.eclre.org is a resource curated for districts, families, and community-based organizations in Illinois to learn more about inclusion in the early years. The website is connected to social media including Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIn, and Instagram to increase traffic. The ability to sign up for the email list is connected to our Constant Contact account. The website uses LiveBinders as a convenient, yet thorough, format for housing collections of resources. The website also contains Early CHOICES' on-demand modules, as well as links to many additional resources.

Google website analytics were not collected this year due to website update that impacted Early CHOICES' ability to maintain data collection during that time. The website requires users to register, and the site holds their evidence of completion certificates. The website has 1,431 registered users. The breakdown of users is as follows:

Role Identified by User	Number of Users
Advocacy	180
Childcare	162
Early Intervention Provider	69
Government Agency	20
Head Start	117
Higher Education	35
Private School	39
Public School	605
ROE	25
Special Education Cooperative	45
TA Providers	15
Other	119

LiveBinder:

Early CHOICES has organized online binders of resources that are easily accessible and updated on a regular basis. The data shows these LiveBinders are accessed frequently. Although LiveBinders have been in place for several years, Early CHOICES only began collecting data on engagement in December 2020. In SY25, there were 15 Binders available for online access, an increase of two (2) binders over SY24. Analytics revealed 87,580 total views across 15 LiveBinders through 6/30/25 which accounts for an increase of 23% (20,502 views) over SY24. The table below reflects the views per binder. The most viewed binder was the binder entitled, "What Makes Inclusion Work in EC", which had 19,912 additional views for a 24% increase over SY 24.

LiveBinder Name	Views (as of 7/1/23)	Views (as of 6/30/24)	Views (as of 6/30/2025)	Additional views in 12 months
What Makes Inclusion Work in EC	11162	15101	19912	4881
ICP Resources by Item	3764	7013	9968	2995
Transition to Inclusive Kindergarten	7779	9852	11226	1374
EE for Young Children 3-5 yrs	5519	6024	7312	1292
Inclusive Childcare	312	603	1024	421
Using the ICP for Self-Reflection	3309	5755	5263	1508
Resources for New Inclusion Teams	539	845	872	27
Understanding LRE for Young Children	2802	3091	3349	258
Administrator Academy 1610	11635	1858	2126	268
Community Inclusion Teams	NA	NA	603	603
Inclusion in Early Years 3-8 yrs	1850	2076	2281	205
Resources for Examining Explicit Bias	1868	6417	9040	2623
Inclusive Educational Materials for Families	NA	NA	290	290
The Preschool Inclusion Toolbox COP	2113	3773	5630	2857
II Early Childhood Inclusion Summit	1618	4670	6680	2010
Total Views:	44270	67078	87580	20502

National Recognition

Early CHOICES continues to focus our efforts on Illinois. However, Early CHOICES is also nationally recognized for its impact on inclusive early childhood education. Inclusion efforts unique to Illinois include our LRE Inclusion Toolbox for Families, building Community Inclusion Teams to support children with disabilities in all settings, and our Itinerant Guide jointly created with ISBE.

The Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (ECTA) features Early CHOICES on their website, as a state example of inclusion resources. Early CHOICES is also mentioned in the 2023 Joint Policy Statement from DOE and DHHS on Inclusion in Early Childhood.

In SY25 Early CHOICES presented at several national conferences on topics related to inclusion. (See the table below for conference and presentation titles.)

Date	Conference Session Title	Conference
07/11/24	Impact Statement and Federal Policy Statement Uses	OSEP
8/28/24	Illinois' Journey to Supporting Children in Community-Based Settings	Improving Data Improving Outcomes OSEP DaSY conference
3/11/25	East Moline Inclusion- Early CHOICES <i>supports</i>	ECTA COP Inclusion
4/25/25	Coaching for Inclusion	National Training Institute on Effective Practices: Addressing Challenging Behavior 2025
5/13/25	Plenary Panel - National Viewpoint	International Early Childhood Inclusion Institute 2025
5/14/25	Navigating Preschool Itinerant Services: Best Practices for Success	International Early Childhood Inclusion Institute 2025

State Conferences

Early CHOICES was also invited to present at multiple prestigious state conferences. (See the table below for conference and presentation titles.)

Date	Conference Session Title	Conference
10/24/24	Through the Eyes of the Child	Growing Futures IL AEYC
10/29/24	Preschool Community Inclusion Teams: Building Relationships to Create Change	IAASE Fall Conference 2024
11/23/24	Creating Inclusive Preschool Services through Community Implementation Teams	IASB/IASA/IASBO 2024 Conference
01/06/25	Putting It All Together: Practices and Tools for High Quality Inclusion	NSSEO Winter Conference
03/19/25	Putting It All Together: Practices and Tools for High Quality Inclusion	Early Childhood Today Conference
03/31/25	Implementing High Quality Inclusion: Evidence-Based Practices to Support Your Program	ECPL PFA Forum
04/01/25	LRE Toolkit For Families	ECPL PFA Forum
06/03/25	High Quality Inclusive Practices: Using the Inclusive Classroom Profile to Support Your Practice	Big Feelings, Little Minds