Inclusion Support Assurances for Strong Beginnings

According to the Michigan Department of Education Office of Special Education Guidance on Preschool in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE):

> *LRE refers to the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requirement that "children with disabilities not be placed in special classes or separate schools unless the nature and severity of their disability is such that education in regular classes with supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily." This means the child should be educated with their nondisabled peers to the maximum extent appropriate, including after school and extracurricular activities. 34 CFR §300.114*

and:

> *Under IDEA, districts have the obligation to apply LRE requirements to preschool aged students in the same manner as applied to school aged students.*

Therefore, in order to administer Strong Beginnings Preschool pilot program for three-year-old children, the undersigned intermediate school district personnel affirm that inclusion of children with disabilities is an expectation of Strong Beginnings and that the local administration of Strong Beginnings complies with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) least restrictive environment (LRE) requirements and Michigan-specific requirements (MARSE rules).

Intentional Collaboration between Strong Beginnings and Special Education

The intermediate school district assures that appropriate personnel from the intermediate school district, local education agency, and/or community-based organization will collaborate with special education personnel to provide preschool age children with disabilities a free and appropriate public education (FAPE)* in the LRE to the maximum extent appropriate. Collaboration activities may include but are not limited to:

- Developmental screening, appropriate referral, and timely evaluation for special education.
- Participation of Strong Beginnings teachers in IEP meetings.
- Collaboration between special education and Strong Beginnings teachers to develop, implement, monitor and adjust routines-based IEP goals.
- Ensuring students with IEPs in each Strong Beginnings classroom, regardless of location, have access to general education preschool routines, activities, and learning opportunities with appropriate supports and services, including aid time as appropriate.

The responsibility of FAPE remains with the resident district, however, the ISD personnel are expected to intentionally collaborate with special education personnel to meet the child's individual disability related needs.

Leadership and Systems Assurance

The intermediate school district assures that administrative leadership will actively support inclusive preschool implementation by:

- Viewing inclusion as a shared responsibility among general education, special education, related service providers, administrators, and families.
- Establishing staffing, scheduling, and service delivery structures that promote inclusion.
- Facilitating collaboration among early childhood, special education, and other education and community service personnel.
- Allocating time for collaboration, planning and professional learning related to inclusion.

Family Partnership Assurance

The intermediate school district affirms that families are essential partners in inclusive early childhood education and commits to:

- Communicating clearly with families that inclusion is the norm within Strong Beginnings.
- Engaging families, special educators and Strong Beginnings teachers as partners in continuous support and decision-making.
- Providing families with information about inclusive practices in accessible and culturally responsive ways.
- Valuing and incorporating family perspectives to strengthen inclusive programming.

Continuous Improvement and Data Use Assurance

- The intermediate school district agrees to engage in ongoing reflection and continuous improvement related to inclusion by:
- Participating in survey and focus group opportunities for continuous program improvement.
- Using child, classroom, and program-level data to inform instructional and systems-level improvements.
- Sending a team, with representation from program teachers, classroom staff (including the family liaison), and special education, to participate in CCRESA OIP-provided (or other approved) professional learning, and facilitated planning, related to inclusion (6 hours).

- Collaborating with CCRESA OIP to address identified needs through targeted supports, professional learning, or coaching.

Support and Partnership Statement

The program acknowledges that successful inclusion requires intentional systems, sustained professional learning, and ongoing support. By agreeing to these assurances, the program enters into a collaborative partnership with CCRESA/OIP to build and strengthen inclusive preschool practices over time.

Signatures:

Signature	**Name**	**Date**
Early Childhood Contact Signature	Early Childhood Contact Name Printed	Date
Special Education Director Signature	Special Education Director Name Printed	Date
Superintendent Signature	Superintendent Name Printed	Date

*A *Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)* for children ages 3–5 means any child who has been determined eligible for special education is entitled to receive necessary special education programs, related services, and supports at no cost to the family and that these entitlements are:

- Documented through an Individualized Education Program (IEP),
- Designed to support the child's meaningful progress toward measurable, individualized goals and objective, and
- Include the supports and accommodations necessary for the child to participate in and make progress the least restrictive environment (LRE), meaning in typical early childhood settings and alongside same age peers. (34 CFR 300.17)