

Inclusion in PreK: Why It Matters and Best Practices From the Field Webinar Questions and Answers

May 14, 2025

The following questions were submitted by attendees of the Inclusion in PreK: Why It Matters and Best Practices From the Field Webinar, which took place on May 14, 2025, at 3:00 PM. The following questions were answered collaboratively by representatives from the Office of Early Learning, the Office of Special Education, and staff from Tiegerman Schools and Brushton Moira CSD.

Q. The UPK teacher mentioned that she uses Brigance in both Fall and Spring. Could you share which specific version or tool you're using? The progress monitoring tool we're currently using is extremely time-consuming, and we're exploring more efficient options.

A. We're currently using the Brigance progress monitoring. While it's comprehensive, we also find it quite time-consuming.

Q. We are general education UPK teachers. This year, each classroom had a high needs student placed in our classroom with an aide. The students received no special education instruction, nor did we as regular education teachers have any support from a special education teacher for these students. Both students and staff have struggled tremendously. Is this the appropriate way to do this in a school that does not have an integrated Pre-K program?

A. Preschool students with disabilities, including those with mild, moderate, or intensive service needs, are eligible to attend a UPK program. However, to enable access to and full participation in inclusive early learning opportunities it is the responsibility of each school district to provide appropriate special education programs and services based on an individualized education program (IEP) responsive to the needs of the student. While aides can provide some level of assistance, they are not a substitute for specialized instruction or professional support.

If a student requires special education services as determined by their IEP, those services must be delivered as outlined, typically by certified special education staff. The IEP may also provide for consultation to be provided by a certified special education teacher to assist the child's UPK general education teacher in adjusting the learning environment and/or modifying their instructional methods to meet the individual needs of a preschool student with a disability who attends the program and ensure the student's needs are being met appropriately.

In cases where that support is missing, it's important to raise the issue with the school district or Committee on Preschool Special Education (CPSE) to ensure compliance with both state regulations and the student's educational rights.

Q. How is it decided which UPK high language learner models attend the integrated Pre-K program?

A. Children are accepted through a lottery process for the UPK program. Placement of incoming UPK children into integrated classes is based, at least in part, on initial information we obtain from the Emergent Multilingual Learner Language Profile for Prekindergarten Students during the initial application/intake, and from the Brigance Screens III screening assessment we administer prior to the start of the school year. The EML Language Profile is completed by families accepted into the program and provides information about a child's home or primary language, as well as parent information regarding their child's language proficiency and experiences. The Brigance screening assessment provides information related to children's functioning in key areas of development, including language.

The information gathered prior to the start of the school year helps us begin to learn about the strengths, needs, development, and cultural/family backgrounds of our incoming students. This is helpful for instructional purposes, but also for purposes of identifying children as models of language and behavior, and beginning to create classrooms that are inclusive of all children regardless of ability or background, reflect the diversity of the real world and in which all children are valued and supported in their language and overall development.

Our teachers, teaching assistants, and therapists are our children's first role models of speech and language skills. They are trained to use language development strategies to intentionally model, encourage, elicit and respond to each individual child's use of language. Classroom teachers also work early in the year to identify peer language and learning models, and provide the ongoing support needed to help models learn to interact and communicate effectively with their peers based on their individual language (and learning) needs.

Q. How is the special education portion of the Brushton program funded?

A. Special Education portion is funded through program code 9160.

If districts have specific funding questions regarding UPK, they can consult the [2024-2025 Fiscal Guidance Handbook](#) or reach out to the Office of Early Learning at OEL@NYSED.GOV. For funding questions specific to 4410 funds please contact the Rate Setting Unit at RATEWEB@NYSED.GOV.

Q. Is that language handout from the last screen available to share?

A. [The language strategies handout](#) may be shared. Please be advised that the language development strategies provided in the handout are those outlined in *The Language-Focused Curriculum (LFC)*. The *LFC* is a research-based preschool curriculum with a strong emphasis on language and literacy development.

*NYSED does not endorse the use of any particular curriculum linked within this document.

Q. I am a private school working with the districts UPK. Will the state provide us with specialized teachers to help in our classroom?

A. The state does not directly provide specialized teachers directly to private schools. However, private schools that partner with local school districts as collaborating agencies for UPK programming may receive funding from the district. This funding can be used to support teacher salaries, including hiring specialized teachers, within the private school classroom.