

FISCAL REPORT

PUBLIC EDUCATION'S POINT OF REFERENCE FOR MAKING EDUCATED DECISIONS

Early Intervention Preschool Grants FAQs



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The Early Intervention Preschool Grant (EIPG), Resource 6547, is an ongoing \$260 million per year for school districts serving preschool (Pre-K) students.

How are EIPG funds generated?

These supplemental funds are generated by counting first grade students served by school districts in special education. The total grant amount of \$260 million is distributed to school districts based on the current-year Census Day count of first graders with Individual Educational Programs (IEPs).

What are the guidelines for allowable use of EIPG funds?

To summarize, the funding has the following allowable uses:

1. Early intervention services for pupils that are not meeting age-appropriate developmental milestones and are at risk of being identified as eligible for special education and related services
2. Support for Pre-K children with exceptional needs which the district has determined will positively impact a young child
3. Supporting inclusive educational practices, strategies, and activities to ensure a pupil's right to placement in the least restrictive educational environment (LRE)
4. Wraparound services for Pre-K children with exceptional needs not required by federal or state law
5. Professional development for preschool staff on evidence-based practices to build capacity to provide education in more inclusive settings; on the development of physical, social, emotional, and academic skills; and on developing appropriate IEPs for Pre-K children in the LRE

Which pupils are included in the allowable use of EIPG funds?

The funds are intended to support infants, toddlers, and Pre-K pupils from birth to five years of age, inclusive, who are at risk of needing special education, were not eligible for special education, or who may benefit from support and services beyond what is required under law on their special education plan.

Can local educational agencies use EIPG for transitional kindergarten (TK) or kindergarten (K)?

No. Funds cannot be used to support students who are in TK or K. Although the age levels overlap, the grant is clear that programs serving students enrolled in TK or K are excluded from use of the EIPG funds. For the purposes of the EIPG, a Pre-K child with exceptional needs is a child between three and five years of age, inclusive, who has been identified as eligible for and is receiving IEP services, except those enrolled in a K or a TK program. It further clarifies TK includes the first year of a two-year K program using a modified K curriculum that is age and developmentally appropriate.

How does the district receive these funds?

Funds are paid through the Principal Apportionment. Principal Apportionment amounts are calculated three times for each fiscal year: the First Principal Apportionment (P-1) is certified by February 20, the Second Principal Apportionment (P-2) is certified by June 25, and the Annual calculation is certified by February 20 of the following year (with that year's P-1 certification).

Will use of EIPG impact the district's maintenance of effort (MOE) obligation?

As with all expenditures that could be coded to special education, the MOE obligation will be impacted if districts use Goal 5xxx when expending these funds. As there is specific supplement language in the legislative intent, districts should consider whether use of these funds is appropriately coded as a special education expenditure and could keep expenditures out of the MOE obligation by using general education coding even if some or many students with IEPs are impacted by the programmatic changes or improvements.

Can a district use these funds for existing special education Pre-K programs?

The grant language includes four specific allowable uses for eligible Pre-K students currently receiving services on an IEP:

1. One-time programs, services, or resources that may not be medically or educationally necessary or required by an IEP or in an individualized family support plan, which the district has determined will have a positive impact on a young child
2. Strategies to improve outcomes, including inclusive educational programming that ensures the right to placement in the LRE
3. Wraparound services, or integrated services and supports that address a child's holistic needs, including, but not limited to, academic, health, and social services not required by federal or state law
4. Expansion of inclusive practices to ensure pupils have access to learn in the LRE

The Education Code for the EIPG states, "The funds allocated pursuant to this section shall supplement existing special education resources currently required to be provided pursuant to federal and state law and promote a targeted focus on services and supports being offered in inclusive settings, to the extent practicable." Districts should consider this supplement language when determining which supports and activities will be provided that are not required in the IEPs of currently served students. It seems clear that using the EIPG funds to directly offset local General Fund contributions to existing special education Pre-K programs would not meet the grant's parameters.

Do the words "to the extent practicable" create enough wiggle room that these funds could be used for anything that does not supplant existing special education resources (i.e., unrestricted)?

The intent of the EIPG is for preventative, early intervention, and supplemental activities that could prevent the need for special education or improve the impact of special education services beyond what is required by law. Given the broad range of flexibility for activities under the grant, it would be unusual to not be able to use the funds in a way that would align with the grant's intent.

As with any legislative intent language, there are always potential loopholes, strategies, or procedures a district could choose to use locally, depending on the philosophy, risk tolerance, or concern about audits, ethics, or morals. If districts work with a focus on students, finding ways around the intended use of these funds is not needed, as the decisions districts make will benefit pupils and improve local programs.

How are other districts using these funds?

Many districts are using these funds to shore up the early intervention components of a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS). This could mean offering small group opportunities for Pre-K students who could benefit but are not yet in a program, or offering pre-IEP support to see if interventions have an impact making an IEP not necessary.

Some districts are offering MTSS Pre-K, which includes screening high-risk students and providing access to the full Pre-K program, without an IEP, and include them in all the services offered in those settings. These students could receive speech support for fluency or articulation, language development support, play and behavior support access, exposure to the academic setting, etc. Many of these Pre-K attendees are not formally assessed, and are not on an IEP, nor a 504 plan.

If three-year-old children are referred from early start, but do not qualify for school-age special education services, some districts are offering them enrollment in a program using the EIPG. The thinking is that the provision of continued early intervention (typically speech and some academic environment time) will reduce the need for special education in TK/K.

Another set of innovative practices is to use the funds to run a weeklong bootcamp for transitioning Pre-K children the week prior to TK/K starting, to offer an enrichment program for Pre-K students aligned with extended school year (ESY) or after school programs, or to offer Pre-K students with IEPs a summer program, even if they are not eligible for ESY.

A creative option is to offer speech and occupational therapy consultation services to the staff at local community Pre-K settings where districts have partnerships. The related services professionals can observe classroom environments, make recommendations for preventative activities to the staff at those programs, or those specialists could provide periodic hands-on support in those environments.

As noted in the professional development section of the grant uses, providing training and capacity building to every preschool aide, teacher, and administrator is a core allowable activity. Districts are then inviting others to these trainings, whether it is TK teachers or community practitioners, to build relationships, share knowledge, and reduce referrals. Behavior support training is a high value and high benefit training that can be offered on demand virtually or to small groups watching together and can benefit students placed in all Pre-K environments.

The EIPG funds can also be used for facilities improvements that ensure inclusive programming and practices. Remodeling, upgrading, and otherwise making preschool spaces accessible for all levels of ability, and ensuring appropriate materials and supplies are available are approved uses for these funds. Ideas include flexible seating options, obtaining copies of the TK curriculum for the Pre-K teachers to ensure smooth transition and alignment of curriculum, updating materials, and expanding inclusive options, including materials in a variety of languages.

Regional collaboratives, including Special Education Local Plan Areas, have pooled funds to get the results and outcomes they want at the regional level for early intervention for infants, toddlers, and Pre-K students. In a shared pool agreement, an individual district may transfer its funding to a regional provider, partner, or setting. In this manner, the district may not have a specific student to which the funds are connected, but the pooled expenditure gets district students access to more support and services at the regional level than they could have locally.

Many districts are spending these dollars directly on existing Pre-K special education programs and justify the decision by indicating that the funds are to support Pre-K students in inclusive settings and with inclusive practices. Districts will need to complete their own analysis and ensure appropriate documentation of how these activities are compliant with the goals of the EIPG.

Where can I find more information on the EIPG?

The Education Code for this funding source can be found on the following pages:

[Education Code Section \(EC §\) 56836.39](#)

EC § [56836.40](#)

The funding profile and exhibits for these funds can be found [here](#).