



MAKING INCLUSION POSSIBLE:

Seven Strategies for Early Childhood Leaders

— Angel Spann & Vera Stroup-Rentier —



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2026 KSDE SETS Leadership Conference
June 24; 10:30 – 11:30



Session Outcome:

- Participants will better understand their role in developing inclusive services for young children with disabilities.
- Participants will understand preschool environments and the requirements of the indicator 6 data collection
- Participants will have a better understanding of the purpose of Indicator 6 data
- Participants will have a better understanding of how to use Indicator 6 data to evaluate preschool programming and practices



Indicator 6A: Preschool Environments

Indicator 6A measures the percent of children ages 3 through 5 with IEPs attending a regular early childhood program and receiving the majority of special education and related services in the regular early childhood program.

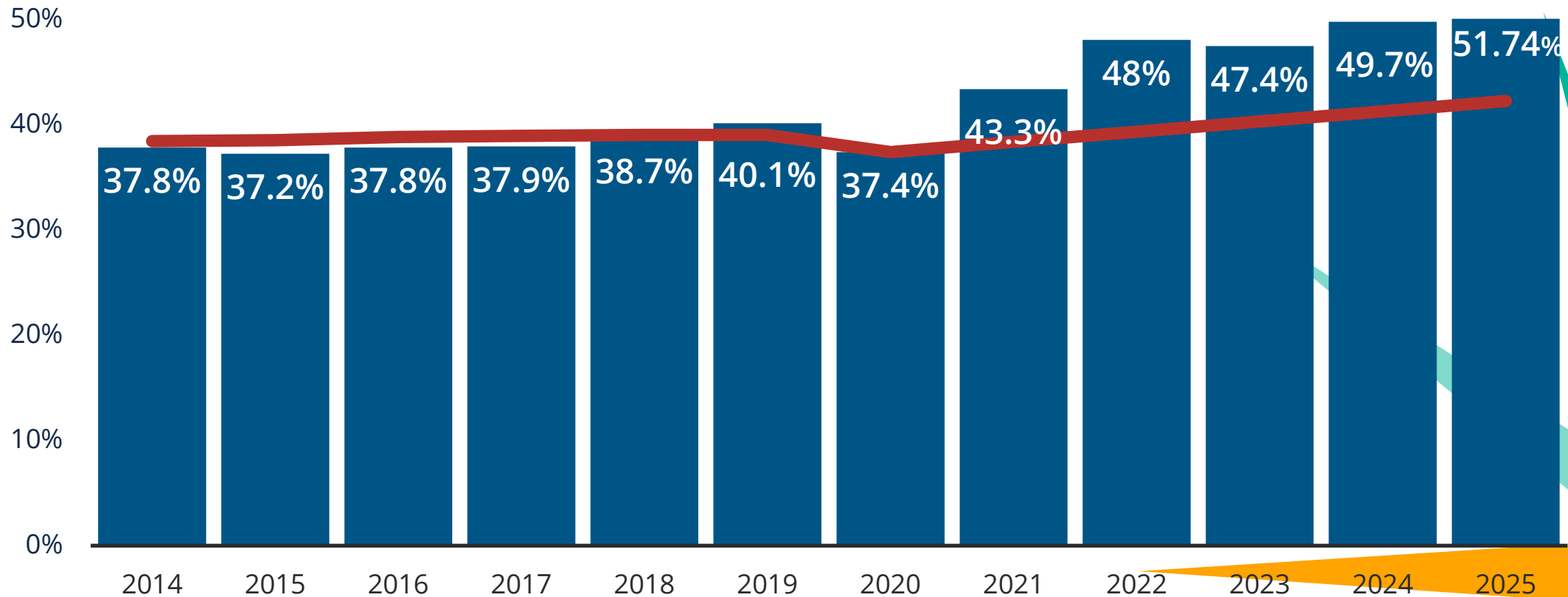


Indicator 6A: Kansas Preschool Environments Target and Results Over Time

2025-
2026
Target: at
least
42.21%



State Data Target



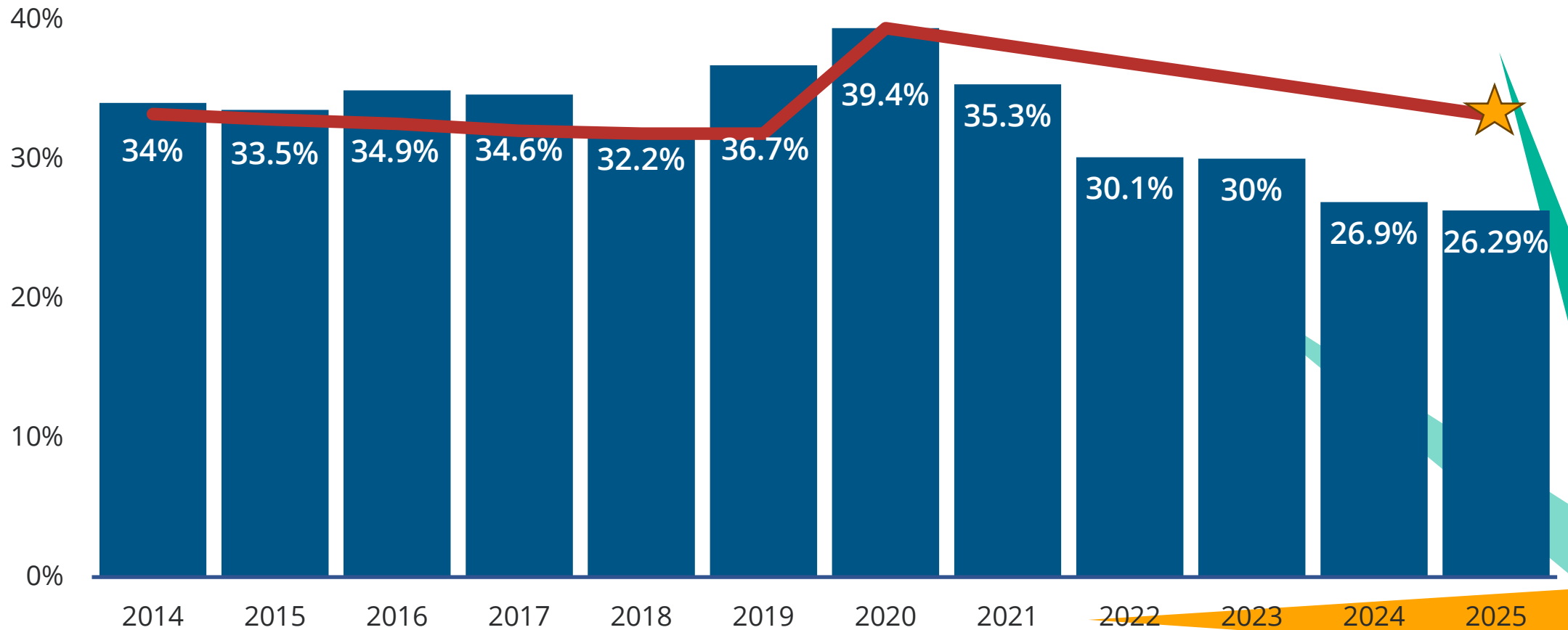
Indicator 6B: Preschool Environments



Indicator 6B measures the percent of children ages 3 through 5 with IEPs attending a separate special education class, separate school or residential facility.

Indicator 6B: Kansas Preschool Environments Target and Results Over Time

Actual Target



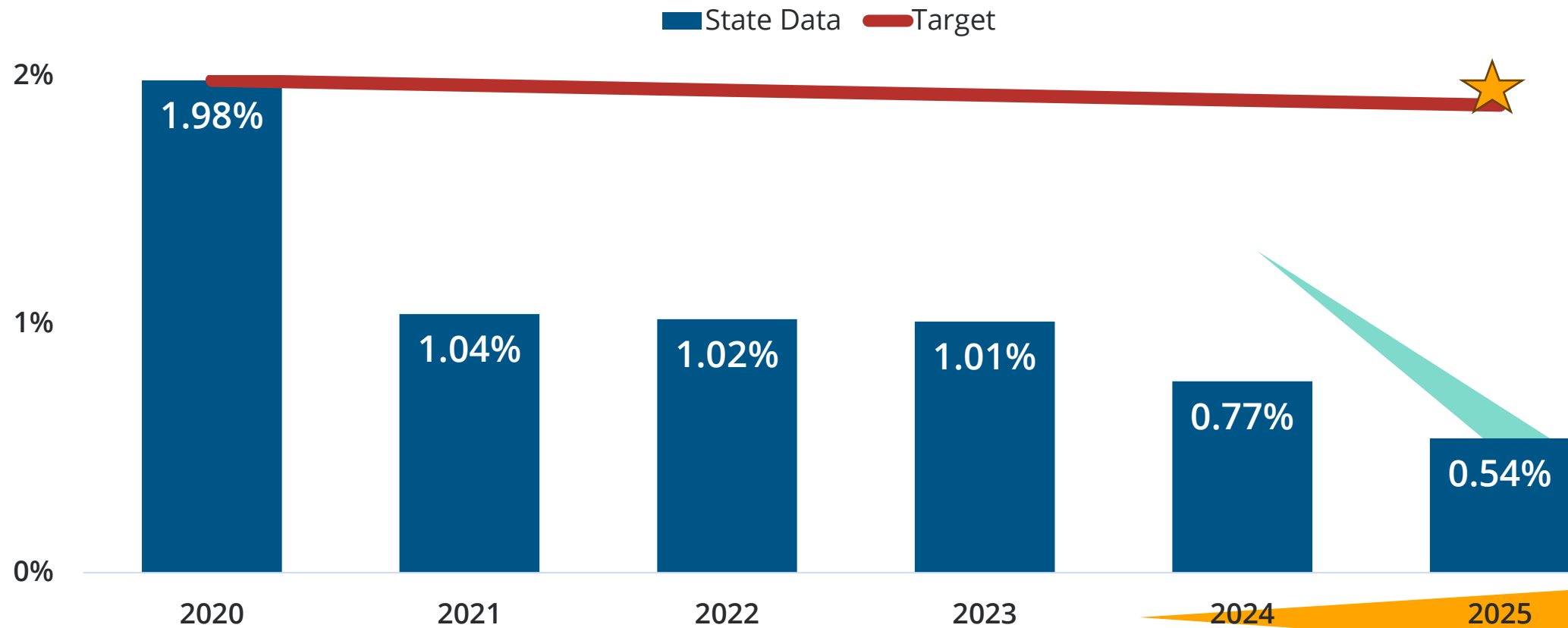
Indicator 6C: Preschool Environments

Starting in FFY 2020:

Indicator 6C measures the percent of children ages 3 through 5 with IEPs receiving special education and related services in the home setting.



Indicator 6C: Kansas Preschool Environments Target and Results Over Time



What Drives Inclusion?





Leadership

Strong leaders establish a vision for inclusion, set expectations, allocate resources, and model collaborative practices. Inclusion succeeds when leaders communicate that all children belong and can participate meaningfully.



Family Engagement

Families are essential decision-makers. Inclusive programs actively partner with families, value their perspectives, and ensure they participate in planning, goal setting, and problem-solving.



Professional Learning

Educators need knowledge, skills, and confidence to support diverse learners. Ongoing professional development helps staff implement evidence-based inclusive practices.



Coaching & Consultation

Training alone is not enough. Coaching and consultation provide job-embedded support that helps educators apply new strategies and improve child outcomes.



Transportation

Reliable transportation helps children access inclusive preschool opportunities. Transportation solutions can remove barriers that prevent participation.



Community Partnerships

Collaboration among schools, early childhood programs, agencies, and community organizations expands opportunities and resources for children and families.



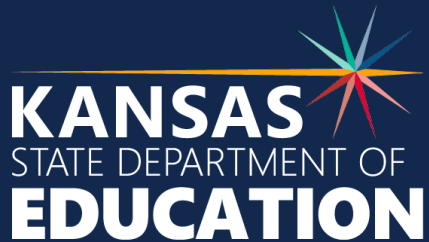
Staffing Models

Inclusive programs require staffing structures that support collaboration and specialized services. Effective staffing ensures children receive support in natural learning environments.

Key Takeaway



These drivers are system variables, not child variables. When programs strengthen leadership, family partnerships, professional learning, coaching, transportation, community partnerships, and staffing, they create the conditions that make preschool inclusion possible.



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Kansas leads the world in the success of each student.

EVERY DATA POINT REPRESENTS A CHILD



Different disabilities. Different services. Different environments.
Different systems. Leadership decisions influence opportunities.
Our goal: All Kansas children belong, participate, and learn. 🧡





HARPER NGUYEN

Age 4
Speech-Language
Impairment
Regular Preschool



TM

Services primarily
in classroom

Harper receives most services in
her preschool classroom while
learning alongside her peers.



ELIJAH BROOKS

Age 4
Autism



TL

Services primarily
outside classroom

Elijah attends the same type of
preschool as Harper but receives
most services outside
the classroom.



MAYA PATEL

Age 3
Developmental
Delay
Regular Preschool
(less than 10 hours/week)



UM

Services primarily
in classroom

Maya attends preschool fewer
than 10 hours each week and
receives services primarily in
the classroom.



SOPHIA MARTINEZ

Age 4
Hard of Hearing



SC

Specialized communication
supports

Sophia receives services in a
specialized classroom designed to
support her communication and
language development.



JACKSON REED

Age 3
Visual
Impairment



HO

Family coaching model

Jackson receives services in his
home through family coaching
and daily routines.

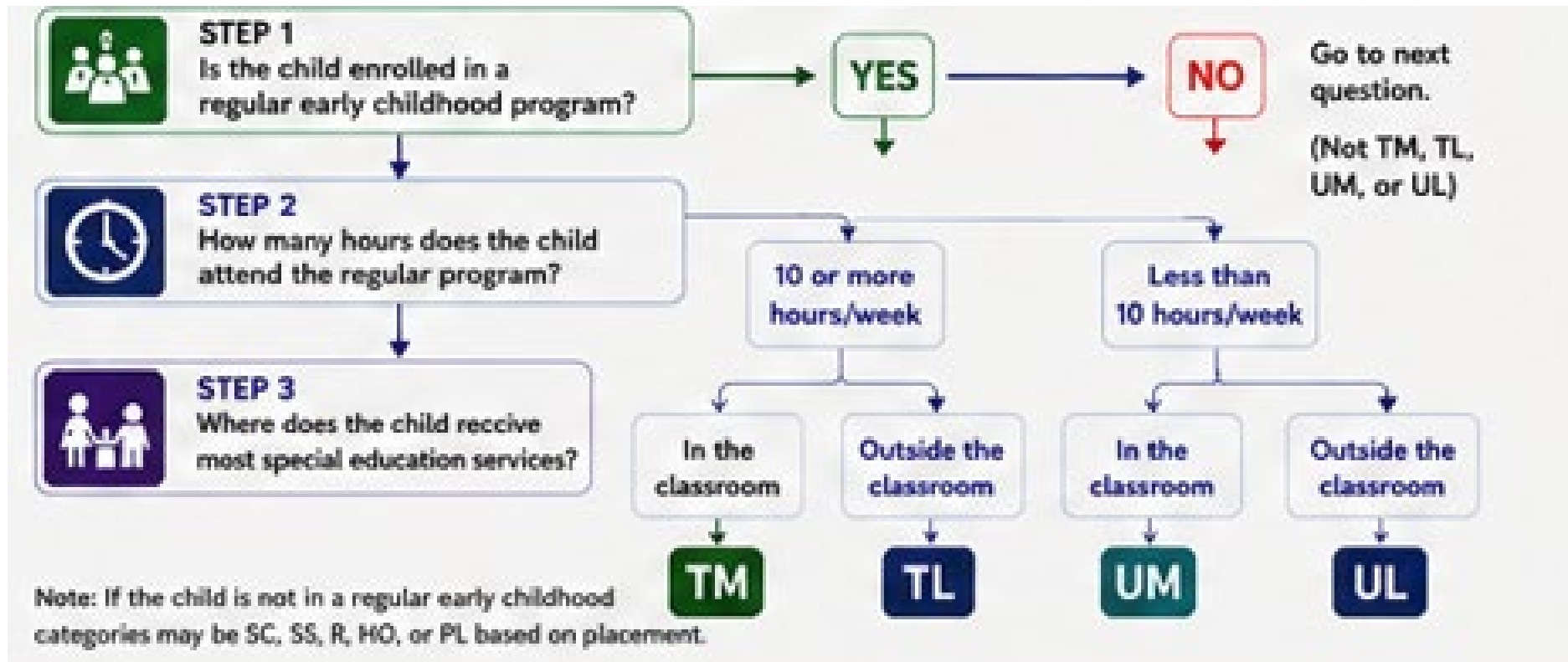
KANSAS INCLUSION CONTINUUM

From Most to Least Inclusive



The same child could appear in different categories based on how and where services are delivered. It depends on system decisions—preschool access, transportation, staffing, service delivery models, and community partnerships.





How Kansas Determines the Category: Based on IEP and Services



Leadership Why it Matters

- Leadership establishes the vision and expectations for inclusion.

What Leaders Do

- Set inclusion goals
- Allocate resources
- Monitor implementation

What the Data Might Show

- Increased TM/TL percentages
- Reduced SS placements
- Less variability across districts
- Repeat that format for each driver.

Looking Beyond the Numbers

When inclusion data improve, it is rarely because children changed.

Inclusion data improve because:

Systems improved

Adults changed
practices

Barriers were
removed

Supports were
strengthened

The question is not "Why aren't children included?"
The question is "What system conditions are helping or preventing inclusion?"

1 Leadership

Strong leaders establish a vision for inclusion, allocate resources, support collaboration, and communicate that all children belong.

Leadership Influences:

- ✓ Vision
- ✓ Expectations
- ✓ Resource Allocation
- ✓ Inclusive Practices



ELIJAH BROOKS

Age 4
Autism



Elijah's Story

Elijah attends a community preschool. Leadership decisions influence whether specialized supports are delivered primarily within the classroom or outside the classroom. Those decisions directly affect his preschool experience and Indicator 6 category.

2 Family Engagement

Families are essential decision-makers and experts on their child.

Family Engagement Influences:

- ✓ Decision Making
- ✓ Goal Development
- ✓ Service Planning
- ✓ Child Outcomes



JACKSON REED

Age 3
Visual Impairment

HO

Jackson's Story

Jackson receives home-based services through family coaching.

His family's priorities, routines, and participation are central to planning and implementing services.

3 Professional Learning

Educators need knowledge and skills to support diverse learners effectively.

Professional Learning Influences:

- ✓ Evidence-Based Practices
- ✓ Communication Supports
- ✓ Classroom Adaptations
- ✓ Student Participation



SOPHIA MARTINEZ

Age 4

Hard of Hearing

SC

Sophia's Story

Sophia benefits when teachers understand hearing technology, communication supports, language development, and inclusive instructional practices.

4 Coaching & Consultation

Training alone is not enough. Ongoing coaching helps staff apply strategies in real-world settings.

Coaching Influences:

- ✓ Embedded Supports
- ✓ Classroom Participation
- ✓ Teacher Confidence
- ✓ Generalization of Skills



HARPER NGUYEN

Age 4
Speech-Language
Impairment



Harper's Story

Harper receives speech-language support embedded in classroom activities. Consultation between her SLP and preschool teacher helps her practice communication skills throughout the day.

5 Transportation

Transportation can determine whether children can access community preschool opportunities.

Transportation Influences:

- ✓ Preschool Access
- ✓ Attendance
- ✓ Family Choice
- ✓ Community Participation



MAYA PATEL

Age 3
Developmental
Delay

UM

Maya's Story

Maya attends preschool fewer than 10 hours each week. Transportation availability can affect whether children like Maya are able to participate consistently in inclusive preschool settings.

6 Community Partnerships

Collaboration among schools, community preschools, Head Start programs, and early childhood providers expands opportunities.

Partnerships Influence:

- ✓ Inclusive Preschool Options
- ✓ Family Choice
- ✓ Community Access
- ✓ Resource Sharing



Their Story

Both Harper and Elijah attend community preschool programs. Without strong partnerships between schools and community providers, these opportunities may not exist.

7 Staffing Models

Staffing structures influence where and how services are delivered.

Staffing Influences:

- ✓ Service Delivery Models
- ✓ Inclusion Opportunities
- ✓ Consultation Capacity
- ✓ Child Outcomes



Their Story

Every child in this presentation is affected by staffing decisions. Staffing determines whether services are delivered:

- In classrooms
- Through consultation
- Through coaching
- In separate settings
- At home

How Data and Systems Work Together

System Drivers → Practices → Child Experiences → Data Outcomes

System Driver	What We See in Practice	Data That May Reflect Success
Leadership	Inclusion is prioritized and monitored	Higher TM/TL rates, lower SC/SS rates
Family Engagement	Families participate in IEP decisions	Parent survey results, placement patterns
Professional Learning	Staff understand inclusive practices	Increased regular early childhood placements
Coaching & Consultation	Teachers receive ongoing support	More successful inclusion across districts
Transportation	Children can access community settings	Fewer placement barriers documented
Community Partnerships	Schools and community programs collaborate	More placement options available
Staffing Models	Staff can support children in inclusive settings	Higher inclusion rates and improved outcomes

Looking Beyond the Numbers

- When we see changes in TM, TL, SS, or other placement data, we are not simply seeing where children receive services. We are seeing the results of:
 - Leadership decisions
 - Family partnerships
 - Professional learning
 - Coaching supports
 - Transportation solutions
 - Community collaboration
 - Staffing investments



Every data point tells a systems story

"What system conditions led us here, and what can we improve?"

What We've Done Today...

- We've explored how Kansas placement data reflect the systems that support young children and families.
- The goal isn't simply to improve the numbers.
- The goal is to build stronger systems so that every child has meaningful opportunities to learn, belong, and participate alongside their peers.

Every Data Point Represents A Child





Kansas leads the world in the success of each student.





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