



New York State  
EDUCATION DEPARTMENT  
Knowledge > Skill > Opportunity



# Office of State Comptroller Report Access to Preschool Special Education Services



March 2025  
Board of Regents

# Early Childhood: UPK at-a- Glance

 **1.2 Billion**



**659 School Districts**



**6,000 + Three-Year-Old  
Students Served**



**1,700 + Collaborating  
Partners**





**119,000 + Four-Year-Old  
Students Served**


# UPK Day: May 2024




Event included a panel presentation with school districts on inclusion best practices


# 2024-2025 Webinar Series

   
**2024-2025**  
**BEST PRACTICES IN PREKINDERGARTEN**  
**WEBINAR SERIES**  
Click or scan the QR code next to each webinar to register.





**SCIENCE EVERYWHERE**  
**November 6, 2024 3:00-4:00pm**

 Science Everywhere is an initiative designed specifically for PreK students that emphasizes Inquiry-Based Learning. Spearheaded by NYSED's Office of Early Learning and Office of Cultural Education, the initiative aims to cultivate a love of science and nature in young children through hands-on learning while fostering important critical thinking and problem-solving skills.





**FOSTERING POSITIVE BEHAVIOR IN PREK**  
**February 5, 2025 3:00-4:00pm**

 Fostering Positive Behaviors in the Prekindergarten Classroom. Participants will delve deeper into the implementation of strategies used to address current challenging behaviors and further their understanding of how to build a positive learning environment.





**SUPPORTING EMERGENT MULTILINGUAL LEARNERS IN PREK**  
**March 5, 2025 3:00-4:00pm**

 Participants will learn about the importance of cultivating a culturally and linguistically responsive learning environment for Emergent Multilingual Learners (EML), identify practices that nurture language development for EML students, and hear examples of practical applications for supporting EML students from New York State school districts.



**INCLUSION IN PREK: WHY IT MATTERS AND BEST PRACTICE**  
**May 14, 2025 3:00-4:00pm**

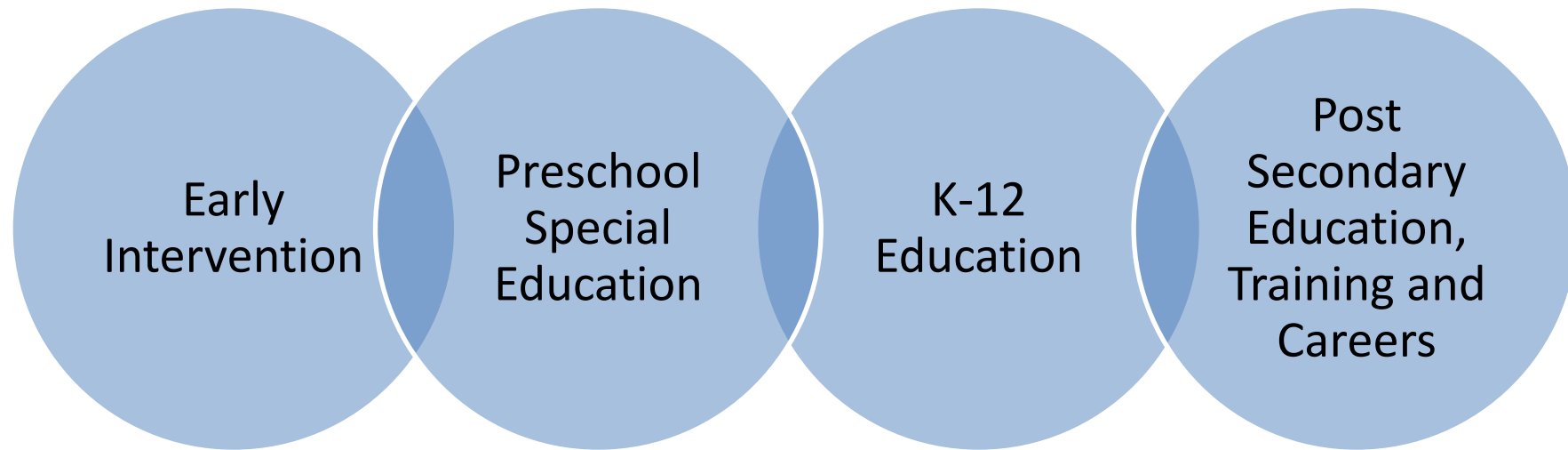
 Learn why creating inclusive PreK classrooms benefits all children, explore best practices, and gain practical strategies to foster a welcoming and supportive learning environment for every child.





<https://www.nysed.gov/early-learning/office-early-learning-webinar-series>

# Special Education Transitions



# Preschool Special Education Data Snapshot – Approximately:

45,000 children evaluated  
annually.

41,000 children served by October  
and 80,000 during the school year.



# NEW YORK STATE PRESCHOOL SPECIAL EDUCATION LANDSCAPE



159,000  
3 & 4-year-olds

- 80,000 Preschool Students with Disabilities (PSWD)
- 23,208 PSWDs enrolled in state-funded UPK programs.

## INCLUSION RATE

2023-2024: 47%

## SEPARATE SETTING RATE

2023-2024: 27%

# Continuum of Preschool Special Education Services

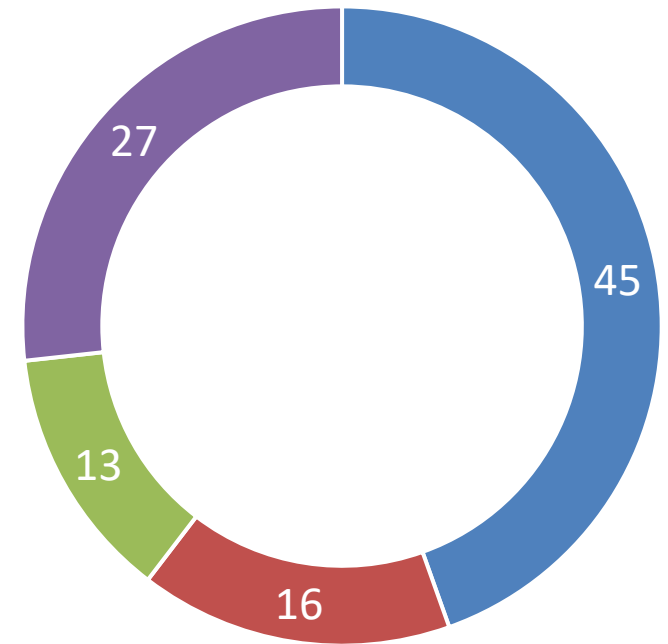
Proportion Provided by Program Type

**Related Services Only – 45%**

**Special Education Itinerant Services – 16%**

**Special Class Integrated Setting – 13%**

**Special Class – 27%**





# OSC Audit Overview

December 2024

Confirmed Office of Special Education Priorities

Creates Opportunities

# NYSED Action

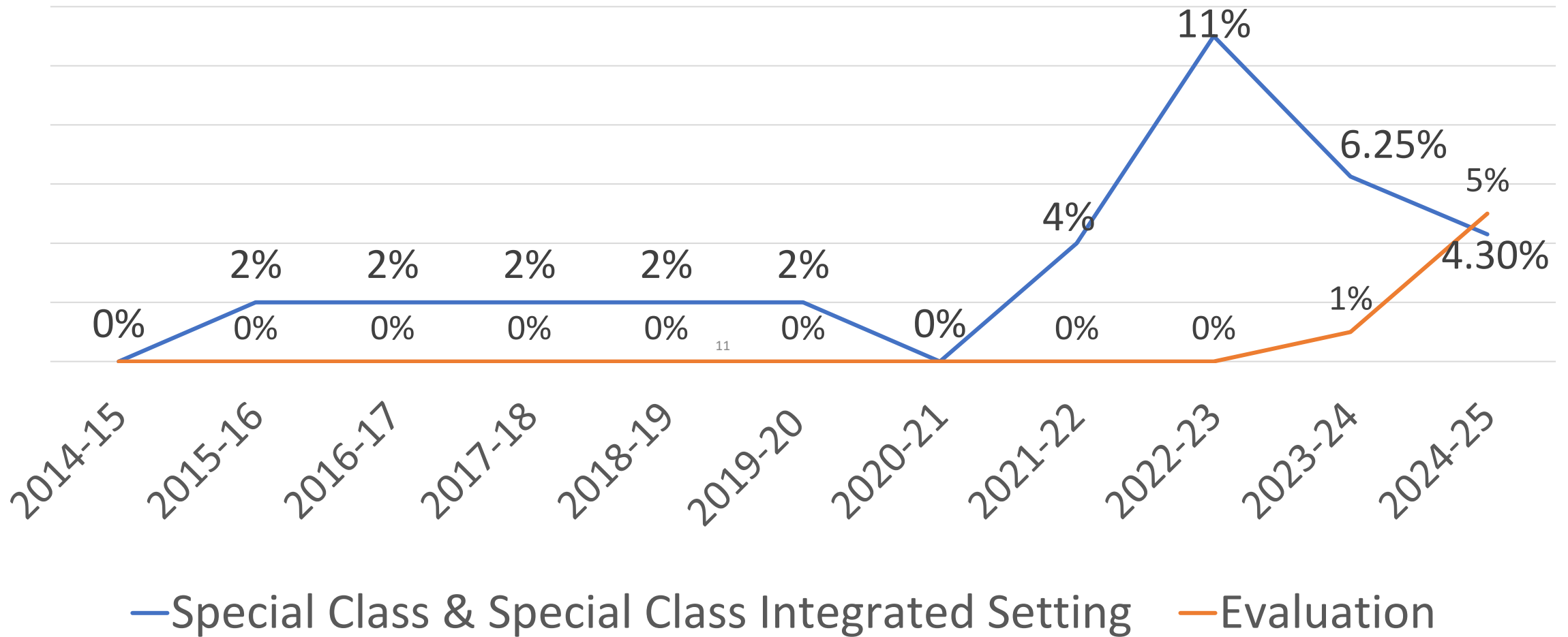
- A comprehensive study of alternative tuition rate-setting methodologies for preschool special class and special class in an integrated setting programs.
- Monitoring and technical assistance to assist school districts in opening programs in response to student needs.

*Develop a strategy to address the statewide shortage of preschool special education service providers and work with school districts to identify ways to obtain the necessary services.*

Recommendation 1

# Methodology Study Considerations

## Growth in Rates Over Time



# UPK Consolidation Study: 2024

- ✓ The Department will complete an analysis of funding requirements for both UPK and Special Education PreK funding, to provide guidance in the use of blending and braiding of funds
- ✓ The Offices of Special Education, Early Learning, and Rate Setting are working together to analyze current laws and prepare guidance for how to promote more inclusion in UPK programs



# NYSED Action

- Issuing a streamlined application for school district preschool programs.
- For private programs, reviewing application standards to reduce documentation requirements.
- Working on an online application for both public and private programs.

*Review and identify ways to improve the application review process for program approval.*

Recommendation 2

# NYSED Action

- Increased monitoring using a new methodology to identify school districts in need of assistance or in need of intervention.
- Investment in a new data infrastructure to support and evaluate the special education delivery system.
- Updating guidance to school districts on IDEA requirements related to the full implementation of IEPs.

***Increase monitoring of school districts, including but not limited to: Timeliness of preschool special education events; Resolutions of potential non-compliance; Determining regional need for providers on a real-time basis.***

## Recommendation 3

# NYSED Action

- Implementing a new accountability methodology to identify school districts determined to need assistance or need intervention in implementing IDEA.

*Develop and implement a risk-based method to identify school districts that warrant immediate review.*

Recommendation 4

# NYSED Action

- All districts are now required to submit Special Education Events Data four times a year.
- The new IDEA accountability methodology will also include a component to score school district's submission of timely and accurate data.

***Develop data integrity controls to provide greater assurance of the accuracy and completeness of data.***

Recommendation 5



# NYSED Action

- Field Memo issued December 2024, reminded school districts of April 1, 2022 guidance related to record retention.
- 6 year retention policy
- Special education records including but not limited to student progress reports, referral form, individual evaluations, IEP's (except most recent), behavior intervention plan (except most recent) and parent/agency communication regardless of whether or not student is declassified from special education.

***Remind school districts of the documentation retention requirements.***

Recommendation 6

# NYSED Action

- Developing a web-based posting of all program approval information.
- Conducting stakeholder engagement regarding school district data, the reporting mechanisms, and coordinated intervention as part of oversight and monitoring.

***Provide clarification on the available preschool special education programs and reporting mechanisms currently operating in the State.***

Recommendation 7

# Thank You



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