

A photograph of several young children sitting around a blue table in a classroom or playroom, engaged in an activity. One child in a red shirt is in the foreground, looking down. Another child in blue overalls is to the right, also looking down. The background shows a white chair and a wall with colorful decorations.

# PROJECT INCLUDE EVALUATION REPORT

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Center for Inclusive Design and Engineering (CIDE)  
Project Include  
Early Childhood Access through Adaptive Technology  
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**COLORADO**  
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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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We would like to extend our sincere gratitude to the Center for Inclusive Design and Engineering (CIDE) team for their thoughtful input and collaboration. Their guidance on evaluation strategies and data collection enriched the process and outcomes of this evaluation.

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We are profoundly thankful to child care providers. Your dedication to creating inclusive environments for young children is inspiring and vital to ensuring that all children in Colorado thrive. Thank you for your partnership and commitment to this important work.

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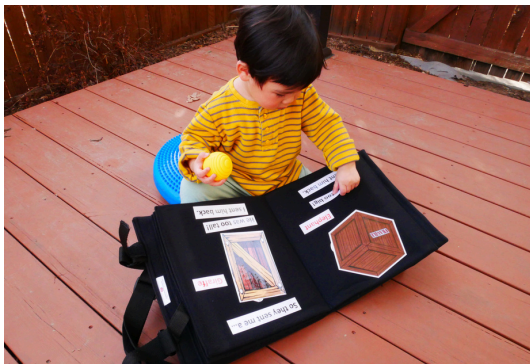
# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This evaluation report examines Project Include, a project led by the Center for Inclusive Design and Engineering (CIDE) at the University of Colorado Denver and funded by the Colorado Department of Early Childhood (CDEC).

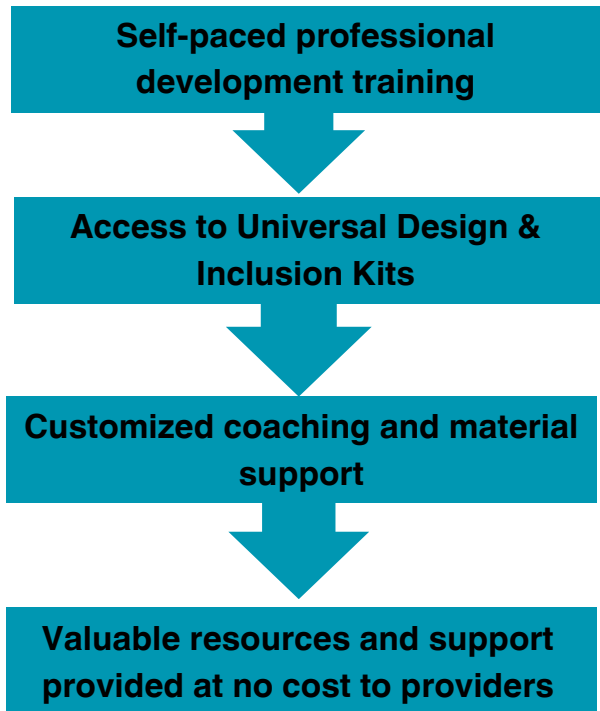
 **Project Impact**

The initiative aimed to **enhance the preparedness and confidence** of the child care workforce by equipping them with the tools and knowledge needed to create universally designed, inclusive environments for all children, including those with delays and disabilities.

The Rocky Mountain Prevention Research Center (RMPRC) conducted an end-of-project evaluation to assess the implementation and impact of Project Include on licensed Colorado child care programs, with the goal of informing future work.



Project Include was designed to meet a critical need within Colorado’s early childhood system, particularly in increasing inclusivity and accessibility for children with delays and disabilities. The project provided valuable resources to licensed child care providers across the state through a combination of:



To evaluate Project Include, a mixed-method evaluation framework was developed. Data collection included a survey and two focus groups of child care providers across Colorado. Descriptive statistics and thematic analysis aligned with evaluation dimensions were conducted to assess process and outcome measures.



## PROJECT INCLUDE EVALUATION REPORT

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The results showed that over the past two years Project Include has successfully reached a wide variety of providers from urban and rural community-based centers, school district based-centers and family child care homes.

- 1,192 interest forms were submitted across 55 out of 64 counties
- Providers served diverse early childhood ages ranging from infant to school-aged groups and special populations including children on the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP), and the Colorado Preschool Program

The project's "Introduction to Universal Design" online training course was completed by 690 providers, with high levels of satisfaction reported. Participants also valued the Universal Design and Inclusion Kits, which provided adaptive materials and instructional videos to enhance inclusive learning environments. A total of 338 providers submitted kit request forms with 319 kits borrowed and returned by providers. Customized coaching sessions further supported 100 providers in implementing inclusive strategies, particularly benefiting home-based providers. Overall, participants were satisfied with the resources and support provided by Project Include, with most willing to recommend the project to others, highlighting its significant impact on fostering inclusive early childhood education across the state.

Project Include significantly enhanced the ability and capacity of early child care providers to increase inclusivity by equipping them with the knowledge, tools, and confidence necessary to support all children, including those with delays or disabilities. Short-term outcomes show that most participants:

- Increased their understanding of universal design and inclusion principles
- Gained knowledge of low-tech adaptive equipment
- Boosted their confidence in supporting diverse abilities

Additionally, the project's impact on children's communication, behavior, and social-emotional development suggests that the strategies implemented through Project Include are likely to have lasting benefits, preparing children for continued success as they transition to kindergarten and beyond. These gains were reflected in improved learning environments, where child care providers applied inclusive practices and utilized adaptive materials effectively. Long-term outcomes reveal that the project not only reduced work-related stress among providers but also fostered a more inclusive educational environment, evidenced by increased enrollment of children with delays and disabilities.

By addressing key challenges such as limited resources, high turnover rates, and a lack of training on inclusion, Project Include played a significant role in supporting the development of inclusive learning environments. The comprehensive support offered by the project can create lasting improvements in the quality of early childhood education in Colorado, ultimately benefiting children of all ability levels.

# INTRODUCTION

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## Overview

This evaluation report assesses Project Include, an initiative administered by the Center for Inclusive Design and Engineering (CIDE) at the University of Colorado Denver and funded by the Colorado Department of Early Childhood (CDEC). The goal of Project Include was to create a more prepared and confident child care workforce with the ability to provide universally designed, inclusive, and supportive environments that meet the needs of all children, including those with delays and disabilities. All licensed Colorado family child care homes, child care centers, and preschools could participate in the project from spring 2022 to summer 2024.

The Rocky Mountain Prevention Research Center (RMPRC) conducted an end-of-project process and outcomes evaluation to assess how Project Include was implemented and how it met the needs of licensed Colorado child care centers who participated in it. This evaluation report provides a brief overview of the need for Project Include; it will detail the Project Include components and intended outcomes through a logic model, followed by an explanation of the evaluation methodology and results. The report will end by providing recommendations for the expansion and improvement of Project Include informed by the evaluation results.

This report is intended to be used by the CIDE team to present to stakeholders and funders to demonstrate the success and impact of Project Include. By showcasing the project's achievements and areas for growth, the report aims to secure continued funding and support to sustain and expand Project Include. Continued funding will ensure Project Include's ongoing contribution in supporting the growth of quality early childhood programs that promote inclusivity and accessibility for children of all ability levels.

## Purpose of the Evaluation

The purpose of this evaluation was two-fold:

- 1) to assess the implementation of Project Include
- 2) to understand its impact on licensed Colorado child care programs, providing a data-driven basis for understanding its strengths and areas for improvement.

The results are intended to inform project strengths, enhancements, guide strategic planning, and support funding applications. By presenting a thorough evaluation of Project Include, this report aims to provide compelling evidence of the project's value and potential, ensuring its continued growth and success in promoting inclusivity within early childhood settings.

# PROJECT DESCRIPTION

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## The Need for Project Include

Project Include was implemented by the CIDE at the University of Colorado Denver and funded by the CDEC from the spring of 2022 until the summer of 2024. It was administered by the CIDE team, including experts in universal design and inclusion and assistive technology, such as early childhood special educators, speech language pathologists, and occupational therapists. Project Include trained, supported, and provided adaptive equipment to licensed Colorado family child care homes, child care centers, and preschools to assist in developing inclusive learning environments and curriculums for all children, including those with delays and disabilities.



This project builds on the existing literature that states universally designed and inclusive environments promote development for all children. Inclusive environments are built on access to learning opportunities, accommodations for full participation with peers, and organization infrastructure for system-level support (DEC/NAEYC, 2009). Inclusive environments enhance academic and social outcomes for children with disabilities by providing access to the same learning opportunities as their peers (Kurth et al., 2015). Universal Design for Learning includes multiple means of representation, expression, and engagement to effectively address the varied learning styles and needs of all students, increasing engagement and achievement (Rao et al., 2024). These settings have also been found to support social integration and peer relationships between students of all ability levels (Kwon, Elicker & Kontos, 2011). Children in inclusive classrooms tend to develop more positive attitudes towards diversity and show greater empathy and understanding towards peers with disabilities (Salend & Garrick Duhaney, 1999). These settings accommodate diverse needs of learners and foster an inclusive culture.

Inclusive settings often include assistive technology, which describes any equipment or adaptations that help increase the independence and functioning of children with delays or disabilities so they can participate with their peers. These items can be everyday materials and tools, such as felt boards and pool noodles, or more advanced items, such as specialized software, communication devices, or modified equipment. While aiming to assist those with delays or disabilities, assistive technology can be beneficial for all children.

## PROJECT INCLUDE EVALUATION REPORT

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The Colorado Birth Through Five Needs Assessment completed in 2019 stated that increasing inclusivity and access for children with delays or disabilities was one of the twelve most pressing needs to improve the accessibility and quality of Colorado's early childhood system (Colorado Department of Human Services, 2019). Nationally, 7% of children aged 3 to 17 have developmental disabilities, and Colorado mirrors this trend with 8% of surveyed parents reporting a child with a developmental delay or disability related to language, learning, or physical impairments that may impact their day-to-day functioning. Locating, securing, and paying for a child care center that is safe and healthy is often a significant challenge for parents, especially for low-income parents with children with delays or disabilities. Of the parents surveyed, 34% indicated that their preferred child care was unable to adequately accommodate their child's delays or disabilities. child care providers' participation in inclusivity training is optional, and inclusive practices are not accounted for in program quality assessments, making it even more difficult for families to find needed and appropriate care.

Project Include expanded on an existing inclusion project (Colorado Early Learning) to meet the needs of the state's over 4,500 licensed child care providers. It was designed to meet this need by offering Colorado child care providers the necessary self-paced professional development training and support to use assistive technology to increase inclusion and universal design in their child care settings.

## THE PROJECT INCLUDE COMPONENTS

Project Include was available to licensed child care programs in Colorado at no cost. This project consists of three components: training on Universal Design and Inclusion principles and strategies, checking out Universal Design and Inclusion Kits, and individualized coaching and material support. Project Include was designed for child care providers to interact with the desired project components at their own pace through a 5-step process.





## ONLINE TRAINING COURSE

The “Introduction to Universal Design” online training course was available through the Colorado Shines Professional Development Information System (PDIS). This course provided an overview of universal design concepts including strategies that providers could implement immediately in their learning environments to promote inclusivity. Providers who completed the training received 1.5 hours of continuing education credit.

## UNIVERSAL DESIGN AND INCLUSION KITS

The “Universal Design and Inclusion Kits” were available for check out by licensed child care programs in the state of Colorado. Each Kit contained 20-30 pieces of adaptive equipment designed to aid various developmental areas. Each item came with a QR code linked to a short instructional YouTube video describing how to use it to promote inclusion in early childhood environments. Five different types of Kits were available, focusing on the following areas:



Infant



Communication & Literacy



Vision & Hearing



Fine & Gross Motor



Behavior & Cognition

Providers could borrow the kits for 6 weeks. They were distributed through public libraries across Colorado via the interlibrary loan courier service or through partnerships with Colorado’s Early Childhood Councils (ECCs). Providers were eligible to request another kit once they returned the previous one. There was no limit to how many kits they could explore.

# CUSTOMIZED COACHING & MATERIALS SUPPORT

Programs sought “Customized Coaching and Materials Support” from the experts at CIDE. Through one-on-one coaching, providers created individualized goals to help overcome challenges related to including all children in their learning environment. They then received virtual coaching sessions to discuss strategies and resources to help achieve their goal. The provider had time between coaching sessions to trial new strategies and request feedback. At the end of the coaching period, the coach recommended and purchased adaptive equipment for the program to retain. Coaching was available in English and Spanish.

## ADAPTATIONS

Over the two years of Project Include, the CIDE team made small adaptations to continually meet the needs of child care providers. These included developing procedures for replication such as training videos available on YouTube, resource guides, additional resources and adapted materials. CIDE has continued to establish collaborations with the ECCs across Colorado to support sustainable kit distribution with the Colorado State Library interlibrary loan courier system to reach more rural communities. An Infant Kit was also developed and added to the available kits to loan to providers.

To increase the reach of Project Include, the team at CIDE used several successful limited-time strategies to increase awareness of Project Include and the number of participants, including:

- Incentives of simple adaptive equipment for completing each step of Project Include to entice participants to continue to complete additional steps;
- A 1-hour live training on a specific type of adaptive equipment to give practical examples of how to use it in various early childhood activities;
- A mini 1-on-1 virtual training for any new kit requester to introduce the items in the kit and get the borrower started on exploring its contents. Participants who completed the mini training and later returned their borrowed kit were eligible to receive a truncated version of the kit to keep for their program.



# LOGIC MODEL DEVELOPMENT

To understand the relationship between the Project Include components described above and the intended impacts, a logic model was developed. A logic model is a structured tool that visually represents the components and relationships within a project, serving as a roadmap for achieving specific outcomes. It helps stakeholders understand how project inputs (resources) are transformed into outputs (activities), which in turn lead to desired short-term, medium-term, and long-term outcomes. The logic model facilitates planning, implementation, and evaluation by clearly articulating the theory of change behind the project and ensuring that all elements are aligned with the project's goals.

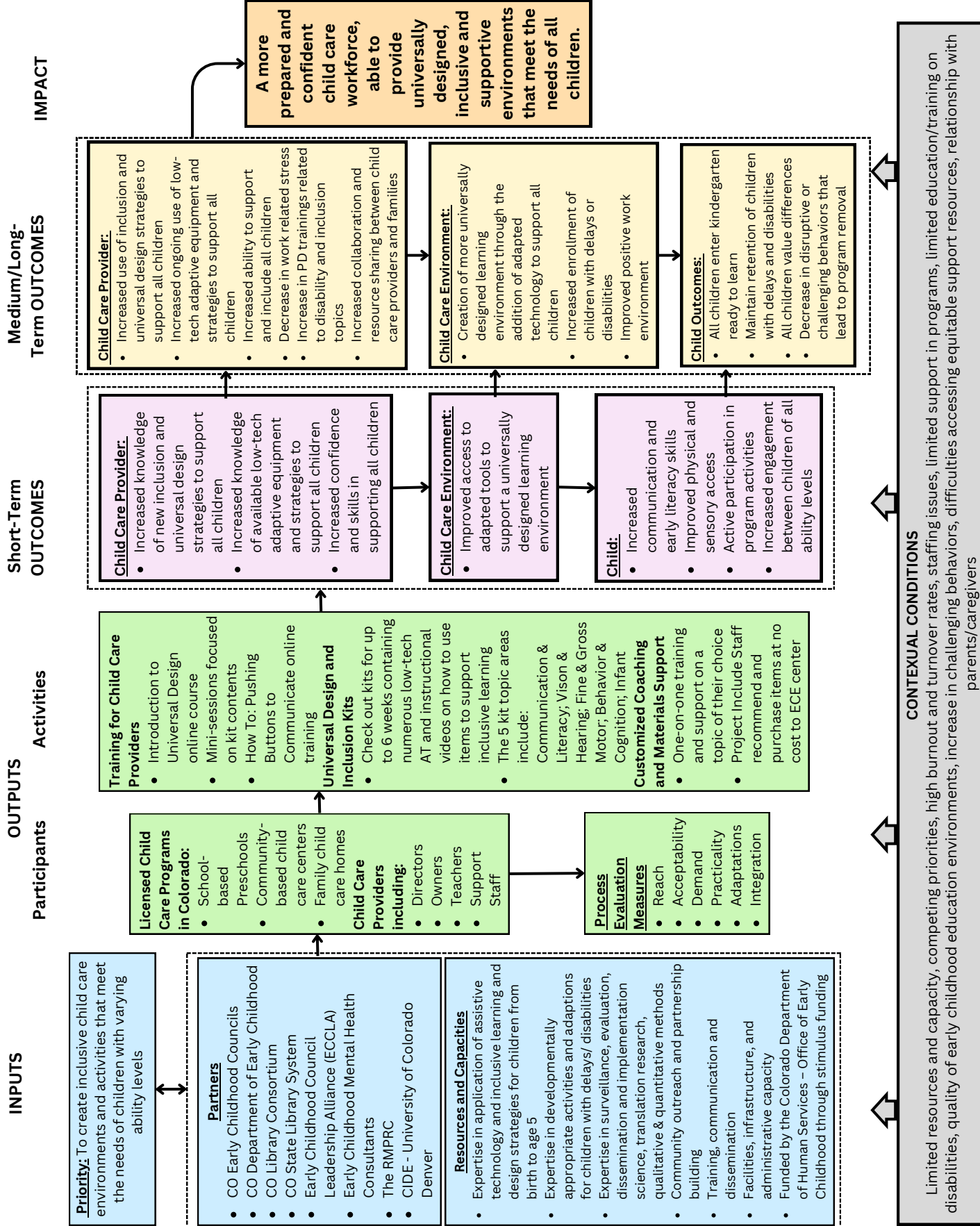
The Project Include logic model is shown in Figure 1 below. The components of the logic model consist of:

- **Inputs:** The partners, resources, and capacities necessary for the project. The CIDE team partnered closely with a variety of mission-related entities including Colorado Department of Early Childhood, Colorado Library Consortium, Colorado State Library System, Early Childhood Council Leadership Alliance, Early Childhood Mental Health Consultants, and the Rocky Mountain Prevention Research Center. These partners supported the development or implementation of the outputs section.
- **Outputs:** The specific actions or interventions (activities) participants in Project Include will receive. Detailed descriptions are provided in the Project Include components section above.
- **Outcomes:** The implementation of the activities leads to the outcomes, which describe the changes or benefits that result from the project. This can be short-term (e.g., increased knowledge or skills), medium-term (e.g., behavior change), and long-term (e.g., improved health or well-being). The short and medium/long-term outcomes in the logic model are split into three categories related to the population or setting Project Include intends to benefit, these include child care providers, child care environments and the children attending the child care center.
- **Impact:** The broader, long-term effects of the project on the Colorado early child care system, reflecting the ultimate goal of Project Include.

Project Include was influenced by multiple contextual factors within the early childhood system including limited resources and capacity of child care providers, competing priorities, high burnout and turnover rates, staffing issues, limited support in programs, limited education/training on inclusion and disabilities, quality of early childhood education environments, increase in challenging behaviors, difficulties accessing equitable support resources, and relationships with parents/caregivers. These factors impact child care providers' ability to provide quality inclusive care, especially for children with delays or disabilities. Project Include sought to address these factors by providing comprehensive training and support resources for child care providers.

# PROJECT INCLUDE EVALUATION REPORT

**Figure 1: Project Include Logic Model**





# EVALUATION BACKGROUND

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This report provides a comprehensive end-of-project assessment of the success, effectiveness and impact of Project Include over the last 2 years. Using a mixed methods evaluation design, the results will provide a detailed explanation of the reach, demand, quality of implementation and impacts of Project Include. These results are intended for use by CIDE to support their efforts to secure external funding to sustain and expand Project Include to ensure its ongoing contribution in supporting the growth of quality early childhood programs that promote inclusivity and accessibility for children of all ability levels.



## EVALUATION TEAM

Members of the RMPRC led the evaluation and sought guidance from the CIDE team. CIDE provided information on project history, prior data collection and evaluation, and connections to stakeholders for engagement. The RMPRC and CIDE collaboratively developed project logic models and evaluation questions. The RMPRC mapped the evaluation questions to the logic model to develop the associated data sources with feedback from CIDE. The RMPRC collected and managed the data and analyzed the results. The evaluation was conducted from May to July of 2024 and assessed all project components presented in the logic model (Figure 1).

## PRELIMINARY EVALUATION RESULTS

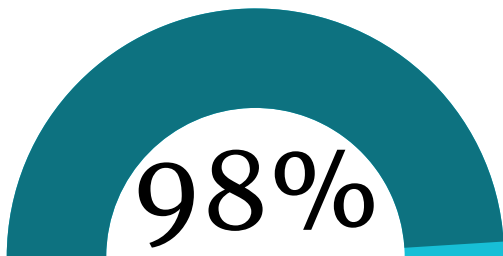
[A prior evaluation brief](#) conducted by the Colorado Evaluation and Action Lab provided early insights from the initial phases of implementation and evaluation from October 2023 to September 2023. These included the reach and engagement in Project Include across Colorado, the satisfaction of participants and the effectiveness in changing care providers understanding and comfort when including children with varying ability levels in their child care programs.



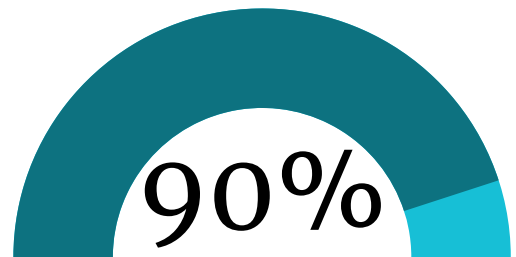
### Preliminary Evaluation Insight

- Over 590 licensed providers (17%) expressed interest; over 230 individuals completed training
- Engagement across 49 counties, reaching over 35,000 children
- More than 140 Universal Design and Inclusion Kits have been circulated for loan, reaching over 7,000 children
- Tutorial videos on implementing inclusive practices viewed nearly 1,700 times
- High satisfaction with materials and coaching (97%)

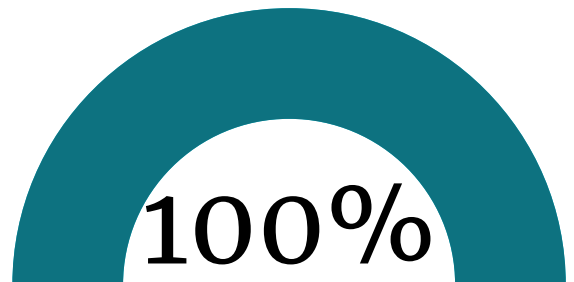
This preliminary report indicated that Project Include showed promising preliminary results in increasing provider confidence and engagement, but ongoing support and flexible resources were necessary for continued success. The current evaluation report builds upon these findings to provide a comprehensive evaluation of Project Include.



98% of providers felt more confident supporting children with disabilities



90% of providers said they used the knowledge gained from the training often or most days



100% of providers said the items in the kits were beneficial to the children they serve



### Key Partnerships

- Collaborations with local ECCs and the Colorado State Library are essential for kit distribution

# EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

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## EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

A logic model (Figure 1) was developed to illustrate the relationship between the project’s inputs and outputs (project components) and the intended outcomes. This was used to guide the evaluation by aligning the project’s components to evaluations questions with measurable indicators. The Bowen Feasibility Framework (Bowen et al., 2009) and the RE-AIM Framework (Glasgow et al., 2019) informed the evaluation dimensions and associated indicators. Using these two frameworks, we assessed whether the CIDE project was relevant and applicable to many early childhood settings in Colorado. This also includes recommendations for project refinement to increase its potential impact and sustainability. In addition to feasibility indicators, we also measured impact, examining if Project Include led to improved outcomes for child care providers, their learning environments and the children they serve.

## EVALUATION QUESTIONS AND INDICATORS

Table 1 displays the evaluation dimensions and indicators assessed for the process evaluation. The definitions and indicators assessed for each evaluation dimension were informed by the RE-AIM (Glasgow et al., 2019) and Bowen Feasibility (Bowen et al., 2009) frameworks. The indicators assess how the evaluation dimensions were measured based off the logic model (Figure 1) outputs.



**Table 1: Summary of Process Evaluation Dimensions**

Evaluation Dimension	Definition	Indicators
Reach	The absolute number, proportion, and representativeness of individuals who are willing to participate in a given initiative, intervention, or program, and reasons why or why not. (Glasgow et al., 2019)	Child care providers served <sup>^+</sup> Children served <sup>^+</sup>
Demand	To what extent is a new idea, program, process, or measure likely to be used (i.e., how much demand is likely to exist?) (Bowen et al., 2009)	Actual use <sup>^+*</sup> Expressed interest or intention to use <sup>^+</sup>
Acceptability	To what extent is a new idea, program, process or measure judged as suitable, satisfying, or attractive to program deliverers? To program recipients? (Bowen et al., 2009)	Satisfaction <sup>+*</sup> Perceived appropriateness <sup>+*</sup>
Practicality	To what extent can an idea, program, process, or measure be carried out with intended participants using existing means, resources, and circumstances and without outside intervention? (Bowen et al., 2009)	Quality of implementation <sup>+*</sup> Ability of participants to carry out intervention activities <sup>^+*</sup> Barriers and facilitators to implementation <sup>+*</sup>
Adaptations	To what extent does an existing idea, program, process, or measure perform when changes are made for a new format or with a different population? (Bowen et al., 2009)	Modifications with rational <sup>+*</sup> Identified needs for future adaptations <sup>*</sup>
Integration	To what extent can a new idea, program, process, or measure be integrated within an existing system? (Bowen et al., 2009)	Sustainability <sup>+*</sup>

Previously collected quantitative data by CIDE=<sup>^</sup>, Project Include Evaluation Survey=<sup>+</sup>, Focus Groups=<sup>\*</sup>



## PROJECT INCLUDE EVALUATION REPORT

Table 2 displays the outcome evaluation questions and indicators that were assessed. The indicators map to the logic model (Figure 1) short-term and medium/long-term outcomes the project sought to impact.

**Table 2: Summary of Outcome Evaluation Questions and Indicators**

Evaluation Question	Short-Term Indicators	Medium- and Long-Term Indicators
What impact did Project Include have on child care providers?	Knowledge+* Confidence and skills+*	Use of strategies and adaptive equipment+* Ability+* Work related stress+* Professional development trainings+* Collaboration and resource sharing*
What impact did Project Include have on the universal design of the child care environment?	Knowledge* Access*	Change in environment through addition of adaptive materials/ equipment+* Enrollment+* Work environment+
What impacts did Project Include have on children of all ability levels?	Communication and early literacy skills+* Physical and sensory access+* Active participation+* Engagement+*	Kindergarten readiness+ Retention+* Children value differences+* Disruptive or challenging behaviors+*

Project Include Evaluation Survey=+, Focus Groups=\*

## DATA SOURCES

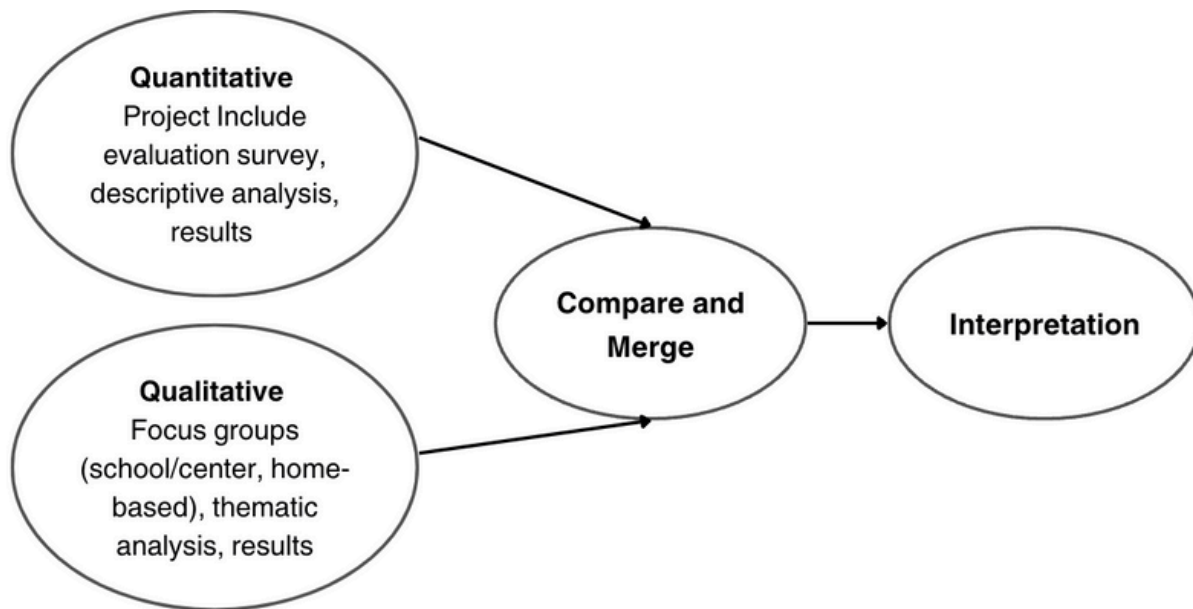
To comprehensively evaluate Project Include, we employed a mixed methods approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis techniques. This mixed methods approach aimed to capture a comprehensive understanding of the project's reach and impact. Using a convergent parallel design, shown in Figure 2, quantitative and qualitative data were collected and analyzed separately but concurrently, to then integrate and draw conclusions. This allows for a balanced consideration of trends and participants' personal experiences with Project Include.

## PROJECT INCLUDE EVALUATION REPORT

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To evaluate the indicators in Table 1, the quantitative data included the Project Include evaluation survey developed by the RMPRC, along with previously collected data during project implementation by the CIDE team to inform the overall reach and demand. The qualitative data included focus groups conducted by the RMPRC. To evaluate the short- and medium/long-term indicators in Table 2, the Project Include evaluation survey and focus groups data were used to draw conclusions.

**Figure 2: Mixed Methods Evaluation Design**



## QUANTITATIVE DATA COLLECTION

A Project Include evaluation survey was designed to gather quantitative data from all participants who either submitted an interest form or had participated in any part of the project. We utilized a convenience sampling technique to distribute the survey via email for participants to complete online through the REDCap platform. Study data were collected and managed using REDCap electronic data capture tools hosted at the University of Colorado Denver (Harris et al., 2009). REDCap (Research Electronic Data Capture) is a secure, web-based application designed to support data capture for research studies, providing: 1) an intuitive interface for validated data entry; 2) audit trails for tracking data manipulation and export procedures; 3) automated export procedures for seamless data downloads to common statistical packages; and 4) procedures for importing data from external sources. Three follow-up reminders were sent to participants who had not responded on different days of the week to enhance response rates.

## PROJECT INCLUDE EVALUATION REPORT

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The survey aimed to assess participants' demand of project components such as the use or intended use of available resources; the acceptability of the project by assessing the satisfaction level overall and of specific components; the practicality of the project by questions related to the barriers and facilitators of implementation, followed by recommendations for future improvements to assess adaptations and sustainability. See Table 1 for a complete list of indicators assessed by the survey. The perceived benefits and impacts were assessed by questions related to indicators such as the increase in knowledge gained, the use of universal design and inclusion teaching strategies and adaptive tools and the perceived impact on children's participation, engagement, and challenging behaviors. To see a complete list of short and medium/long-term outcomes addressed in the survey, refer to Table 2. Key components of the survey included Likert-scale questions, multiple choice questions and open-ended responses. The project participants had 3 weeks to complete the survey. In addition to the Project Include evaluation survey, we utilized previously collected data by CIDE over the 2-year project implementation period to report data on the total reach and demand of Project Include.

The Project Include 59-item evaluation survey was sent to 1,421 participants, we received 296 responses indicating a response rate of 21%. The low response rate was impacted by collecting the data at the end of the school year and provider turnover. See limitations section below for a further explanation on impacts affecting the response rate. The Project Include evaluation survey data was analyzed using descriptive statistics to summarize the responses and identify trends through presenting frequency distributions.

## QUALITATIVE DATA COLLECTION

To enhance the quantitative data, qualitative data were collected by conducting focus groups that sought to elicit deeper insights into participant's experiences and perceptions of the project. A convenience sampling technique was also used to invite participants who had completed all project components and had an established relationship with the project implementation team. This criterion ensured that the focus group discussion included project participants with comprehensive project experience who could provide detailed insights that the survey might not reveal.

The RMPRC team developed a flyer that the CIDE team emailed to potential participants asking if they wanted to take part in the online focus group. If they were interested, a Zoom invite was sent by the RMPRC evaluation team. Each focus group lasted 60 minutes and was moderated by two members of the RMPRC evaluation team.

## PROJECT INCLUDE EVALUATION REPORT

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The discussions were guided by a semi-structured interview guide that was mapped to the indicators in Table 1 and 2, covering topics such as overall satisfaction with the project, specific benefits or impacts gained in universal design and inclusion teaching strategies and examples of adaptive materials used, barriers faced during participation, and suggestions for improvement. Two focus groups were conducted; the first included five child care providers from school or center-based programs and the second included eight child care providers from family home-based programs. Focus group participants received a sensory toolkit of 6 adaptive items, valued at about \$200 as an incentive for completing the focus group.

The sessions were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim for analysis by the RMPRC evaluation team. The focus group transcripts were analyzed using principles from thematic analysis (Squires, 2023). This involved coding the data to identify recurring themes and patterns. The transcripts were first coded by one RMPRC evaluator, followed by a second RMPRC evaluation member reviewing and refining the codes. If there were disagreements around the codes, consensus was reached through a discussion between the two evaluators. Deductive, a priori codes were used based on the logic model indicators shown in Tables 1 and 2 to align analysis with the evaluation questions. This allowed us to triangulate the qualitative quotes with the quantitative survey results to provide a comprehensive evaluation of the project.





# EVALUATION RESULTS

## PROCESS EVALUATION

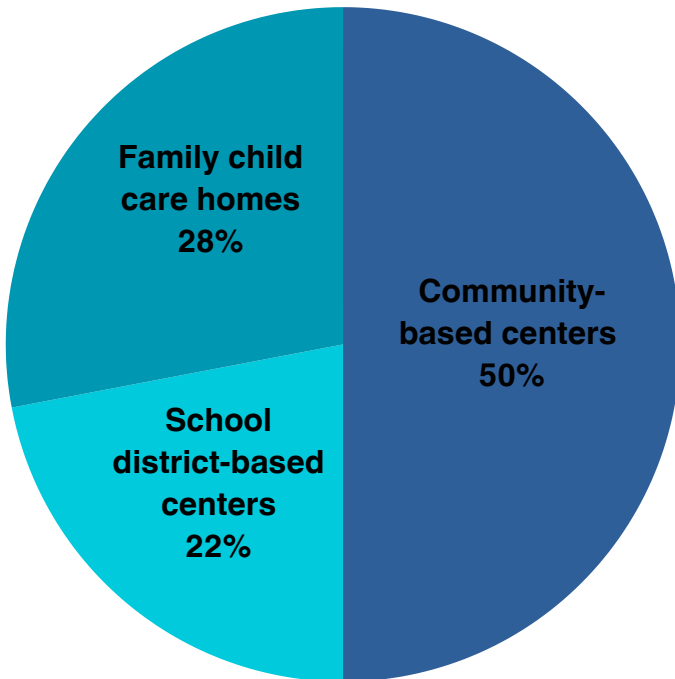
### REACH

To participate in Project Include, providers completed a general interest form to be contacted by a Project Include team member. Project Include was promoted through various channels that actively reach early childhood organizations. Over the 2 year period that Project Include was offered to licensed child care centers:

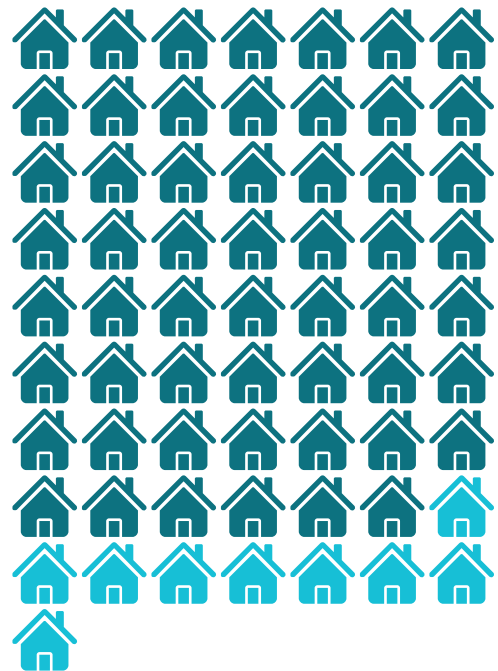
1,192

general interest forms were submitted

Interest covered a range of child care settings including:



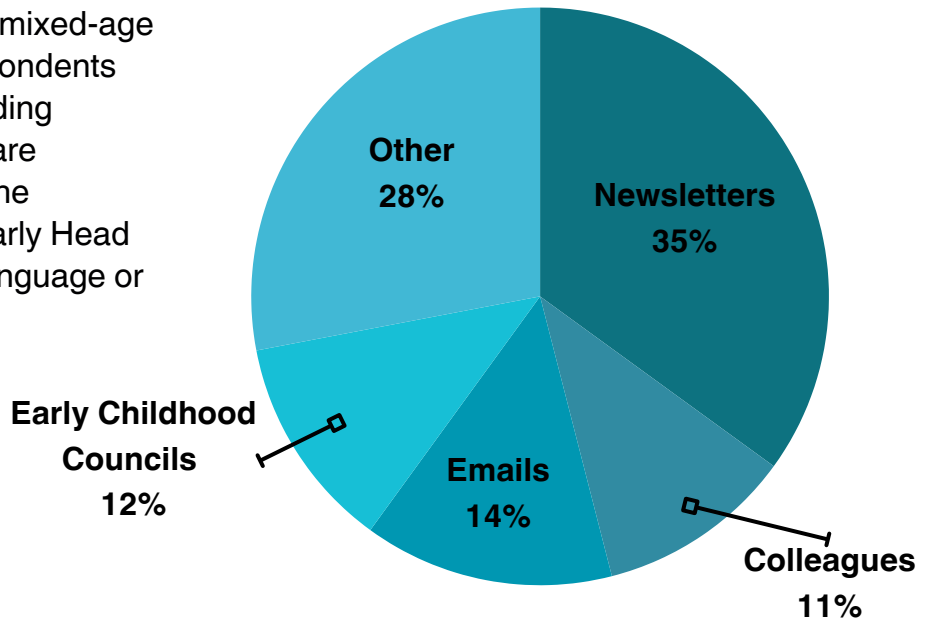
Interest spanned **55 out of 64** Colorado counties



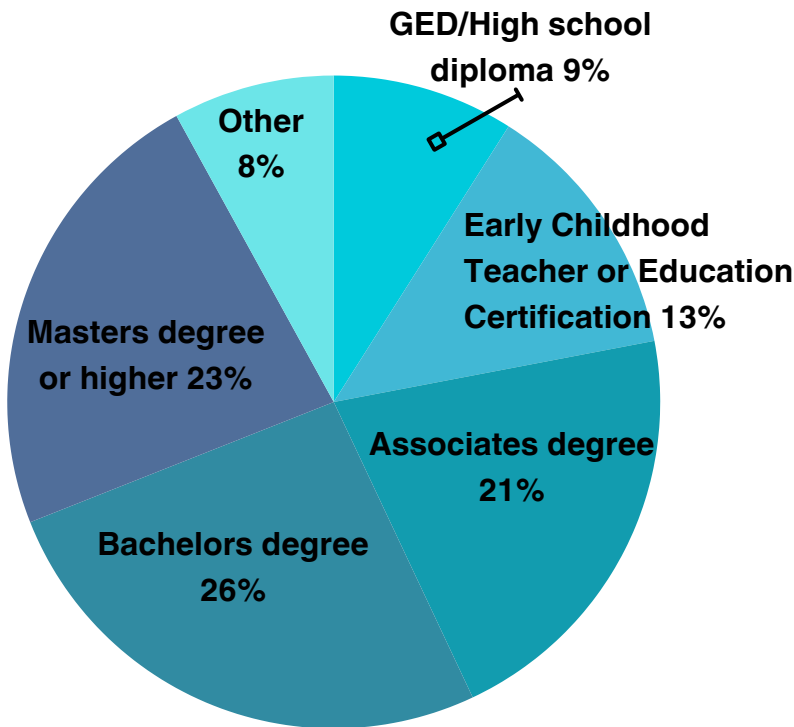
## PROJECT INCLUDE EVALUATION REPORT

Participants serve a variety of early childhood age groups, with significant representation across infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, particularly in mixed-age settings. Additionally, many respondents serve specific populations, including children in the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP), the Colorado Preschool Program, Early Head Start/Head Start, and English Language or dual-language Learners.

**Respondents heard about the project through various channels including:**



### Respondent's Educational Background



Participants who completed the Project Include evaluation survey represented a similar sample distribution as those who completed a PI general interest form, with 42% working in community-based centers, 29% in school district-based programs, and 30% in family child care homes. The majority of respondents held a director or assistant director role (53%). Participants had varying years of experience in early childhood education, ranging from 1-40 years with an average of 17 years. Their educational backgrounds in early childhood-related fields are also diverse. On average, 16% of the children in these programs are on the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP), and participants reported serving an average of 12 children with diagnosed disabilities in the past year.

## TRAINING

The first component of participating in Project Include was an online training course titled “Introduction to Universal Design” offered through the Colorado Professional Development Information System (PDIS).

The **demand** for the training course over the 2 years of the project included, 690 providers completed the course (86% of those who registered). Of those who completed the Project Include evaluation survey, 77% completed the PDIS course. Of those who did not complete the course, most mentioned not knowing how to complete the course and not having the time to complete the course as barriers (**practicality**). However, 86% would be interested in completing the course in the future (**integration**).

Those who completed the course had high levels of acceptability with the online training course. They found the course valuable, not overly lengthy, engaging, and easy to follow. There was high agreeability that it was a worthwhile course to prioritize taking, despite the busy schedules of child care providers



“ It's a great system. The boxes were bulky. It was hard to transport the boxes. Yes, the timing in getting things back and forth was a challenge sometimes, but it was nice to have the materials come to my library.

-Provider on the Universal Design and Inclusion Kit check-out process

”

“ My biggest challenge is the fact that by the time my littlest leave I'm like, semi brain dead. Then to turn around and to go through a class is hard. But it was definitely worth it in the fact that it was actually rejuvenating because it was so informative and it was explained well. If I had questions, it was fine to open up and ask. So yes, as child care providers, we have a million different trainings we have to do and inserting additional ones in can be a hardship. But this is definitely one I would not have missed.

-Provider on the benefits of Project Include training

”

### UNIVERSAL DESIGN AND INCLUSION KITS

The Universal Design and Inclusion Kits contained low-tech, adaptive materials for providers to test in their learning environments and contained items based on one of five developmental areas. The **demand** for the kits over the course of the project included 338 ECE providers in 44 of 64 Colorado counties that requested kits. A total of 319 kits were checked out by providers with the most requested being the Behavior & Cognition kit and the Communication & Literacy kit. Kits could be borrowed from various locations, including a library, an Early Childhood Council, and from Project Include’s office directly to borrow for up to 6 weeks.

Project Include provided instructional videos via a quick response (QR) code to learn how to use the materials provided in the kits. Participants' **acceptability** of the training videos showed that they largely found the instructional videos to be of appropriate length and highly useful, with many praising their effectiveness in guiding and teaching strategies for using the kit items. Participants appreciated that they could access the instructional videos through QR codes.



Personal assistance through meetings or video calls was beneficial, particularly for those who preferred direct guidance or struggled with some items. Trial and error was also a common approach to learning how to use the kits, though time constraints sometimes limited the ability to fully explore all resources (**practicality**). Additional training sessions and having access to videos and directions in advance were suggested improvements (**adaptations**). Despite some challenges with QR codes, the overall feedback highlighted the value of the instructional resources provided.



### UNIVERSAL DESIGN AND INCLUSION KITS

Participants used various items from the kits, with several items being frequently mentioned and highly valued. The most used and enjoyed items included **(demand/practicality)**:

**Storyboards and felt boards:** Participants frequently highlighted the use of felt storyboards, interactive storyboards, and additional felt boards. These tools were especially appreciated for engaging children in storytelling and helping non-verbal children participate by using buttons to communicate.

**TalkingBrix/ GO Talk device:** These items were crucial for helping non-verbal children communicate, reducing their frustration, and allowing them to start the program with a means of expression. They also helped in facilitating communication amongst children and increased engagement.



**Timers:** The use of timers in various program activities, particularly in helping children take turns and manage tasks, was found to be very beneficial.

**Adaptive tools for motor skills:** Items such as the slant board, nonstick paper holders, adaptive scissors, and grips were instrumental in aiding children with fine motor skill delays.



**Puppets:** The use of puppets to interact with children proved to be a successful and enjoyable strategy, making interactions more engaging.

**Interactive and noise-making books and puzzles:** Interactive books and noise-making puzzles such as those that count out loud, were popular among children and helped to enhance their speech and engagement.



Overall, the kits provided a wide range of tools that supported diverse needs, from motor skills development to communication and interactive learning, enhancing both child care provider and student experiences in the program **(practicality)**.

## COACHING AND MATERIALS SUPPORT

Project Include offered one-on-one Customized Coaching and Materials support. These coaching sessions allowed providers to meet with experts to discuss topics such as using materials from the kits, challenges to creating universally designed and inclusive environments, or strategies for program engagement for all children. From the Project Include evaluation survey, 30% utilized coaching sessions (**demand**).



“ I thought it was great. The Project Include staff were wonderful. They were very knowledgeable and encouraging. I really appreciate them. I'm hoping you guys continue to get funding...Because being a family provider, it's super isolating...and having that person you can reach out to that you know can give you that support or provide you with some resources is invaluable.  
-Provider on the benefits of coaching support ”

Project Include participants found the coaching session very valuable. Most (94%) were satisfied with the resources and support they received from the session (**acceptability**). The sessions gave providers specific strategies to support children with delays or disabilities or their families. Project Include staff walked providers through the materials in the kits, demonstrating specific strategies for inclusion and participation, and engagement. These sessions were particularly helpful for home-based providers, who may not have as many opportunities for collaboration or professional development (**practicality**).

For those who did not utilize the coaching session, reasons included difficulty scheduling a session due to busy schedules, did not need a session, and too many competing priorities (**practicality**). 78% of those who did not complete a coaching session would be interested in utilizing coaching sessions in the future (**integration**).

## OVERALL PROJECT COMPONENTS

Overall, Project Include provided the value and support that providers needed to create inclusive learning environments for children in their care (**practicality**). Participants were satisfied with the quality of resources, materials, and support provided by Project Include and believed the information from Project Include to be relevant to their needs (**acceptability**).



Most providers (86%) would recommend Project Include to another child care program (**integration**). This highlights the benefits to their program and the ECE community, which struggles with similar challenges and could benefit from this support.

“ \_\_\_\_\_  
It is a time commitment, but it is worth it.  
-Provider on participation in Project  
Include  
\_\_\_\_\_ ”

“ \_\_\_\_\_  
I've told many other programs about it and encouraged them to do that. And I moved from a different program from last year to this year, and I'm the assistant director here. So, I've been talking with my director now about, let's do this and let's start implementing it in a more active way in this program. So that's where we're headed towards now. So yeah, definitely, highly recommend.  
-Provider on the positive experience with Project Include  
\_\_\_\_\_ ”



## OUTCOME EVALUATION

### What impact did Project Include have on child care providers?

#### Short-Term Outcomes

Project Include has significantly enhanced child care providers **knowledge** and **confidence** in supporting all children, including those with delays or disabilities. Quantitative data shows that most participants agreed that the project increased their understanding of universal design and inclusion principles (93%), knowledge of low-tech adaptive equipment (89%), and confidence in supporting children of all abilities (86%). Qualitative data reinforce these findings, with participants praising the project for providing essential steps to work with children with delays or disabilities, offering creative and affordable ideas for low-tech adaptations, and boosting their confidence to handle various challenges. Overall, the convergence of both data types illustrates that Project Include effectively equips early child care providers with the necessary tools and confidence to enhance their programs and support every child in their care.



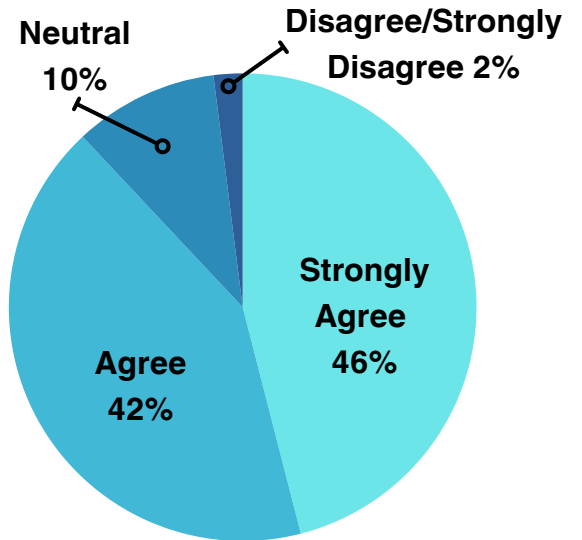


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I think that the coverage of the course in general gives a provider the steps that are needed to know that they'll be able to work with children with disabilities.  
- Provider on impact of online training course

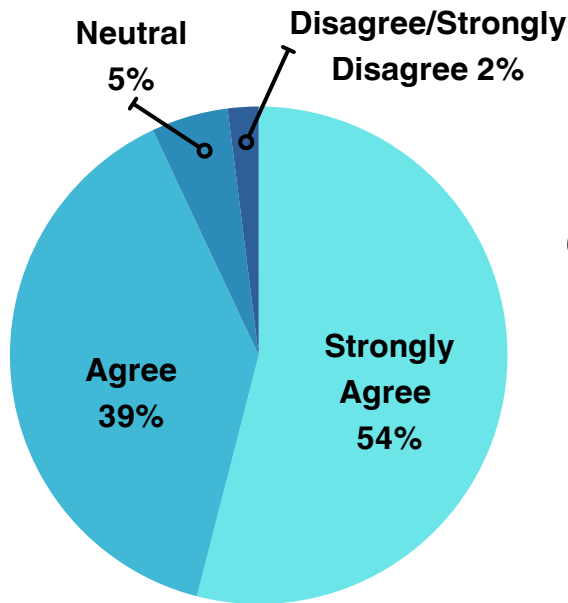
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**Increased knowledge of low-tech adaptive equipment**



”

**Increased knowledge of Universal Design and Inclusion principles**



“

I think it just gave really good ideas, even like the book for the little ones who don't have delays. I mean, it just is so much easier for them to turn pages, just cute little ideas that are inexpensive that you can use.  
- Provider on impact of UD&I Kits

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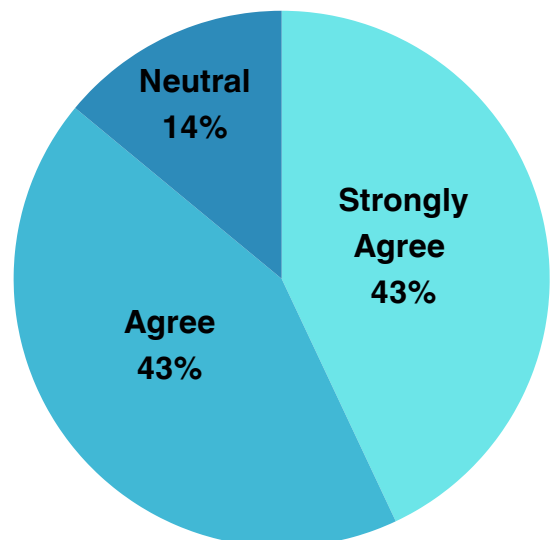
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“

What I learned in this program was extremely helpful. I was very borderline almost panic about what would I do. And going through this just totally boosted my confidence. I had 3 children with speech delays. And while those are the only ones that I currently have that have any delays, with what I have learned, I'm confident that I would be able to handle other situations if they were to occur.  
- Provider on boosted confidence from participation

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**Increased confidence in supporting children of all abilities**



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## Medium- and Long-Term Outcomes

The findings from the Project Include evaluation survey and focus groups demonstrate that the project significantly enhanced providers' **ability** and capacity, equipping them with the knowledge and tools necessary to support children's diverse learning needs.

Providers indicated they **maintained the use of strategies** (93%) and **low-tech adaptive materials** (90%) learned from participating in Project Include, which effectively expanded the repertoire of techniques providers can draw upon to create inclusive learning environments. Adapting methods to support and engage the individual needs of children is a crucial aspect to providing high-quality child care.

Moreover, Project Include's impact on reducing **work-related stress** (69%) is noteworthy. Child care providers often face high levels of stress due to the demands of supporting children with diverse needs. Participants communicated that a source of stress is not knowing how to help children or when their previous strategies weren't effective with particular children. Having various support from Project Include, such as new adaptation ideas for existing materials or consultation support, relieved stress. These successes likely led to participants' **desire to learn more** about universal design and inclusion strategies (84%) to continue adapting to children's needs.

“

It's stressful when you don't know how to support students and you've kind of used all your bag of tricks. And so, to have all of these supports and to know that there's a lot of options out there, I think that relieves a lot of stress.”

- Provider on decrease in work-related stress because of participation

”

“

I already know that if next year or the following year, I get a child who will be non-verbal, I know the adaptive equipment. I know where they can participate in a story or a song by pushing the button. Or pointing, 'can I play with you?' or 'I want snack'. Just so they can start out right away. So, I feel much more comfortable now having them enter kind of seamlessly into our community.”

- Provider on ability to support all children after participation

“

I could have used more classes to help me. I know there's more to learn.

- Provider on increased desire to learn more about disability topics

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# PROJECT INCLUDE EVALUATION REPORT

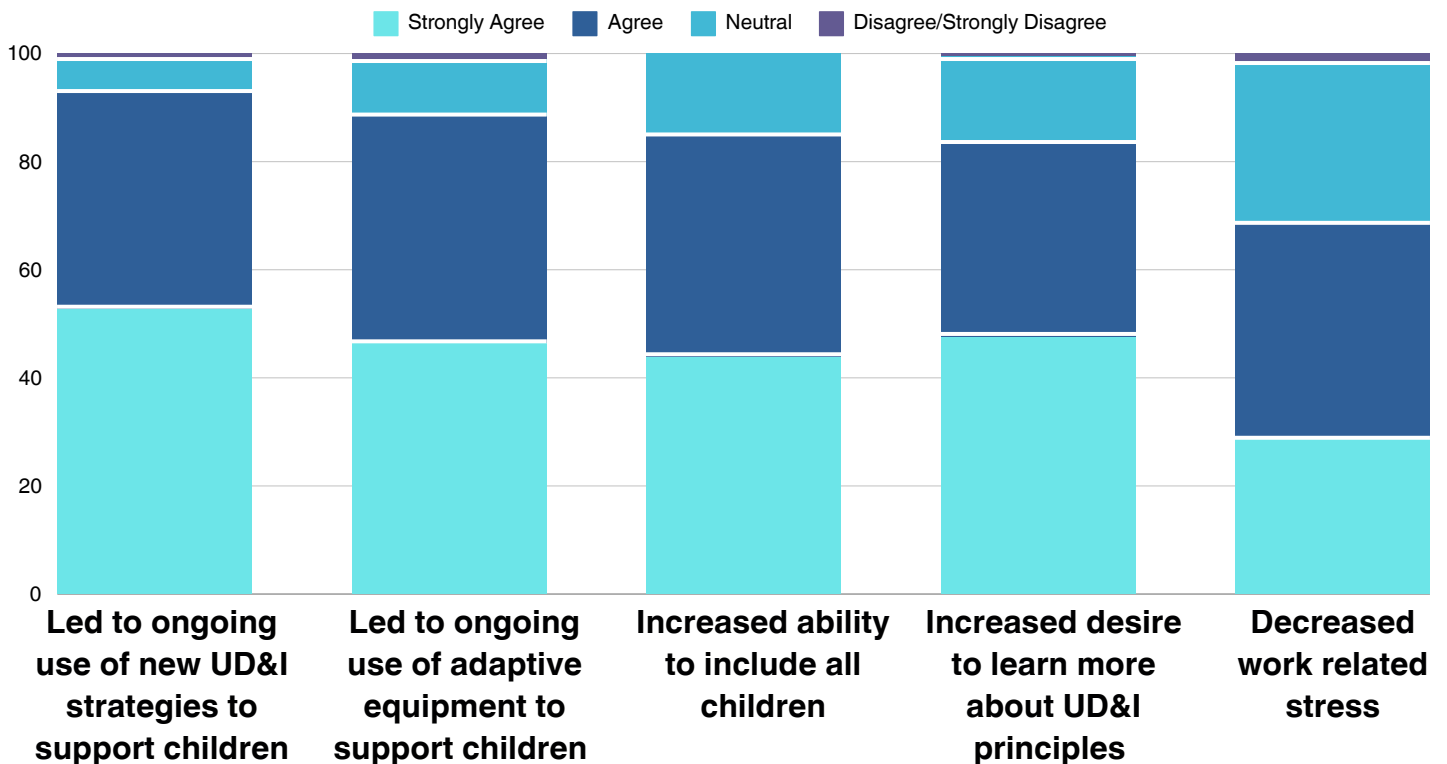


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“With the communication kit and working with Christa, it reiterated when you're reading stories and stuff, pointing to the words, asking the kiddos questions, having them think on it. All things that I was somewhat doing, but now I make sure I do.” - Provider on ongoing use of Universal Design and Inclusion strategies

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## Participating in Project Include...

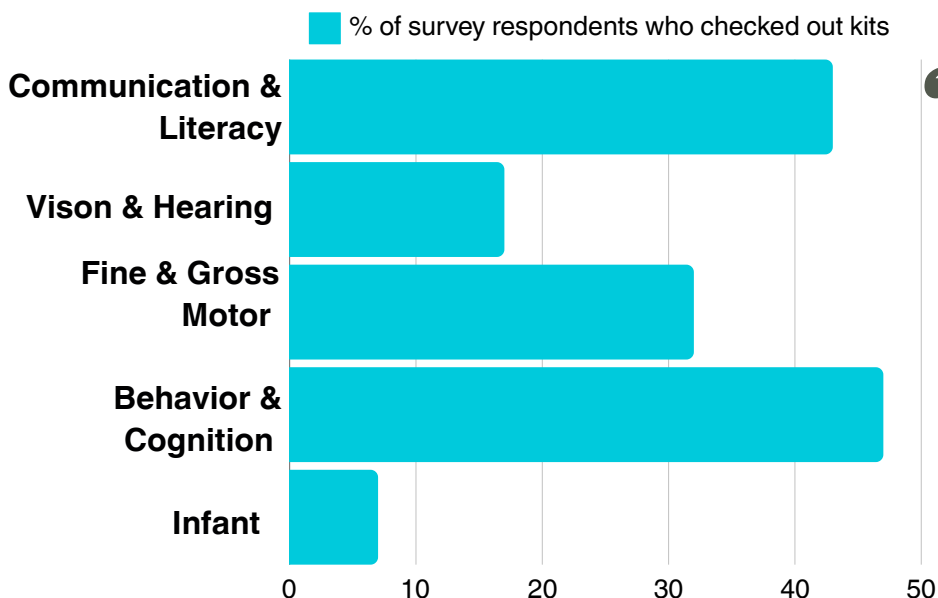


## What impact did Project Include have on the universal design of the child care environment?

### Short-Term Outcomes

In the short term, Project Include has fostered significant positive changes in early child care environments by enhancing child care providers awareness and practical skills related to creating inclusive, universally designed (UD) spaces. Providers have reported a heightened awareness of how to incorporate inclusive practices into their programs, going beyond simply addressing specific needs to thoughtfully designed environments that are accessible and welcoming for all children. This includes considerations as detailed as the height of shelves or the width of pathways, and demonstrating a deepened understanding of how physical space can impact a child’s ability to engage in learning. By embedding Project Include’s principles into their program’s culture, providers have consistent consideration of their child care environments to support all children.

Additionally, Project Include has provided valuable **access** to low-tech adaptive equipment through the Universal Design and Inclusion Kits, allowing child care providers to trial materials before committing their limited budgets. This hands-on experience has been crucial in making informed decisions about which tools and resources truly resonate with and benefit the children in their care. By enabling child care providers to see firsthand the progress and interest generated by these materials, Project Include has empowered them to make more effective and impactful investments in their learning environments. Together, these outcomes suggest that the project has successfully laid a foundation for more inclusive, resourceful, and well-designed early child care settings.



“ I think that comfort of trying the material before investing, it's a huge thing. We have limited budgets in the classroom.  
- Provider on access to adaptive low-tech equipment ”



### Medium- and Long-Term Outcomes

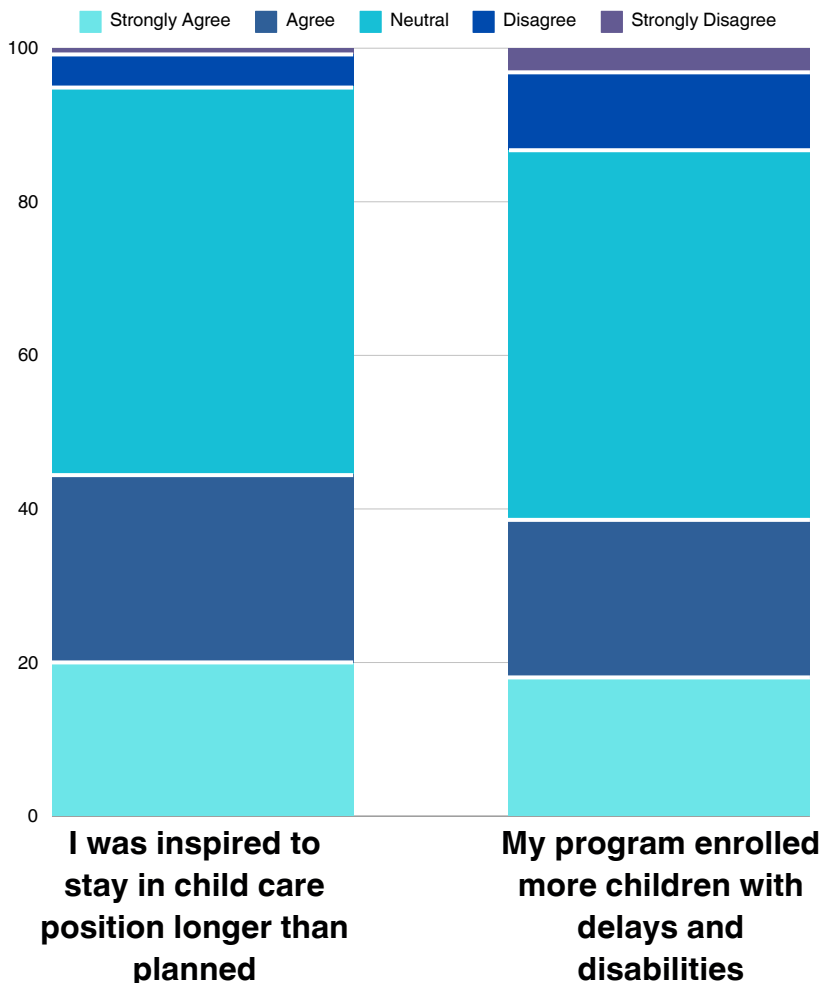
Project Include shows promising outcomes for both providers and early child care programs. Participants who completed the Project Include evaluation survey expressed positive sentiments about their continued engagement in the field (45%). Given that child care provider stress is linked to their turnover intention (Grant et al., 2019) and Project Includes impact on reducing provider stress, data suggests the project may play a role in supporting child care provider retention. This is likely due to equipping programs with tools that support providers by making them feel more successful and capable in their roles.

“

I think the materials will help in retention and helping teachers feel successful. When you feel like you're not getting anywhere with the student and then you have these materials that are helping and you start feeling like, 'oh, I can do this.' Because you have these tools to back you, but you're not also having to spend all that time making these tools that sometimes don't work and then you kind of give up. So, I think that will help retain teachers as well.”

-Provider on Project Includes’s influence on work environment

”



“

One of our families felt really supported by us bringing these kits and coaching in. It helped them know we were really doing everything we could to support their child.

-Provider on maintaining enrollment after Project Include

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## PROJECT INCLUDE EVALUATION REPORT

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Furthermore, creating universally designed environments has empowered children to independently use tools and strategies that help them navigate their emotional and social challenges, fostering greater self-regulation and independence. This shift in program dynamics, along with practical, ready-to-use materials, contributes to a more positive work environment for child care providers, reinforcing their commitment to their roles and the children they serve. Overall, these outcomes suggest that Project Include is not only enhancing the immediate educational experience for children but is also contributing to the sustainability and effectiveness of early child care programs by supporting both child care provider retention and the inclusive enrollment of children with diverse needs.



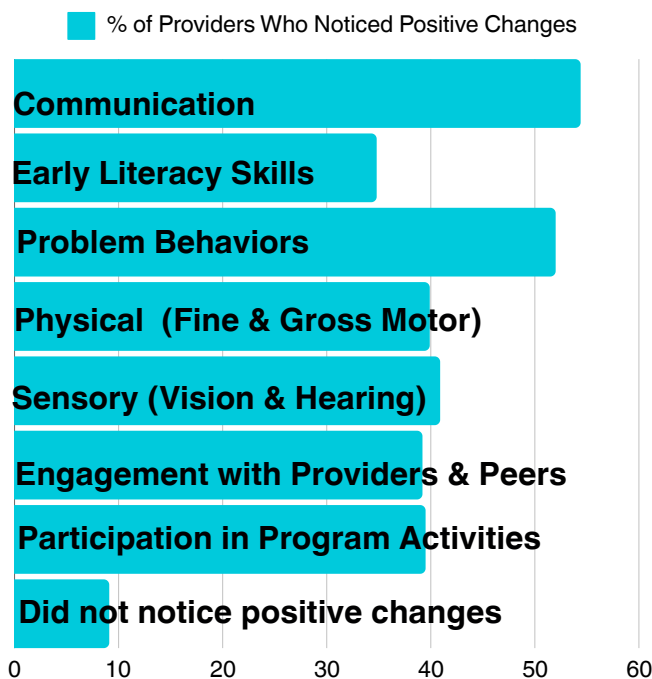
“We have our student roster for next year, and we already have in mind the first kit that we want to check out. So that way we can help some of those kids coming in. And we already know a lot of the adaptations that we need to make to get them kind of prepared and ready to go on day one.”

“It just made us more aware of our classroom, and maybe where there were gaps. Like we put in pictures with problem-solving steps in the areas where there were high social problems. So instead of just having them on one end of the room, they were everywhere that those could work. We had a sensory walk that we incorporated into our classroom, and we actually shared it with our kindergarten students because they were right next door. And so just being able to do that, and then every kid had that opportunity to just go and be like, ‘I need to calm myself down’ and do that. So, being able to think a little bit more out of the box, and then give them the tools to use on their own, and not have to wait for us to notice that they needed something, they knew what to do.”

## What impact did Project Include have on children of all ability levels?

### Short-Term Outcomes

Evaluation findings suggest that Project Include's implementation had a multifaceted impact on children's development and engagement in early childhood settings. Quantitative data reveals that the most significant positive changes were observed in **communication** (54%), addressing **problem behaviors** (52%), and **sensory access** (41%), with fewer participants reporting improvements in areas like **engagement** with providers or peers (39%) and **participation** in program activities (40%). Only 9% indicated they did not notice any positive changes. Reasons providers may not have noticed developmental changes in children include providers not fully participating in all project components, children with delays or disabilities leaving the program mid-year, providers may not have been actively working with a child with a delay or disabilities, or they were in a non-teaching role.



Qualitative insights complement these findings by providing concrete examples of how the project facilitated inclusivity, engagement, and communication. For instance, participants highlighted how the project's materials enabled all children, regardless of age, to **participate** together in activities, fostering a sense of inclusivity. **Engagement** with peers was enhanced through tools like social-emotional problem-solving materials, which helped children manage emotions independently and re-engage positively with their peers.

**Communication** improvements were particularly notable, as child care providers successfully implemented strategies to support non-verbal children and shared these strategies with families, leading to significant progress in verbal communication skills.

“

I would just like to say that everybody was included. And because I have a variety of younger age groups to older age groups, we could all do the activity together with the support of all the materials.

-Provider on Participation

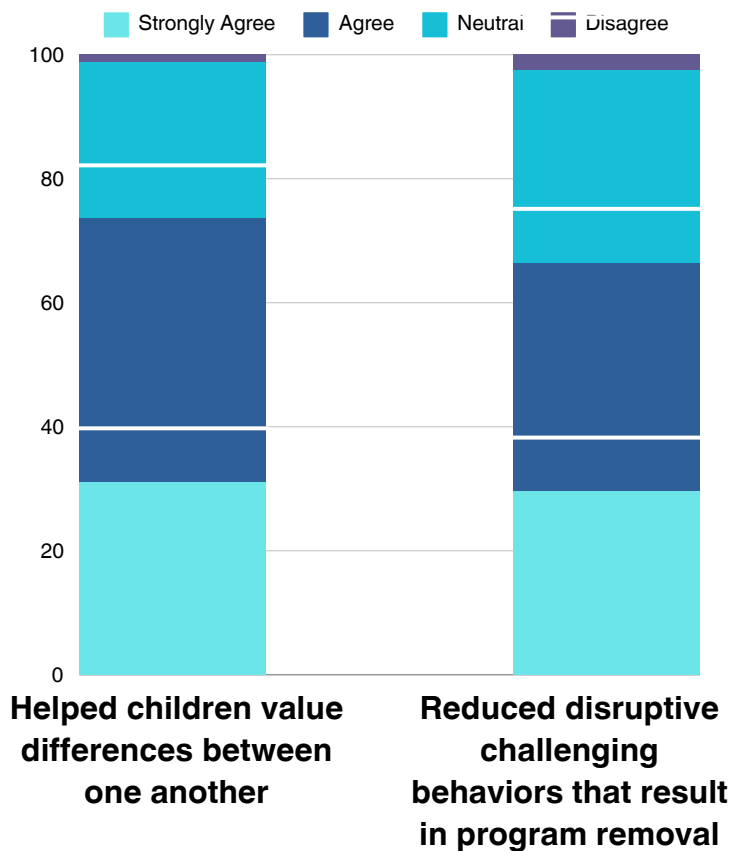
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## Medium- and Long-Term Outcomes

Data from the evaluation of Project Include highlights its significant impact on fostering inclusive, supportive early child care environments, with promising indications for child development. Most child care providers agreed that the project **helped children value differences** among peers (74%) and effectively **reduced disruptive behaviors** (66%). These results suggest that the tools and strategies provided by Project Include not only addressed immediate challenges but also equipped child care providers with skills that can be integrated into their long-term care practices.



We saw an overall increase in their awareness that everyone needs adjustments sometimes and that it's okay to ask for those for a friend.  
-Provider on valuing differences



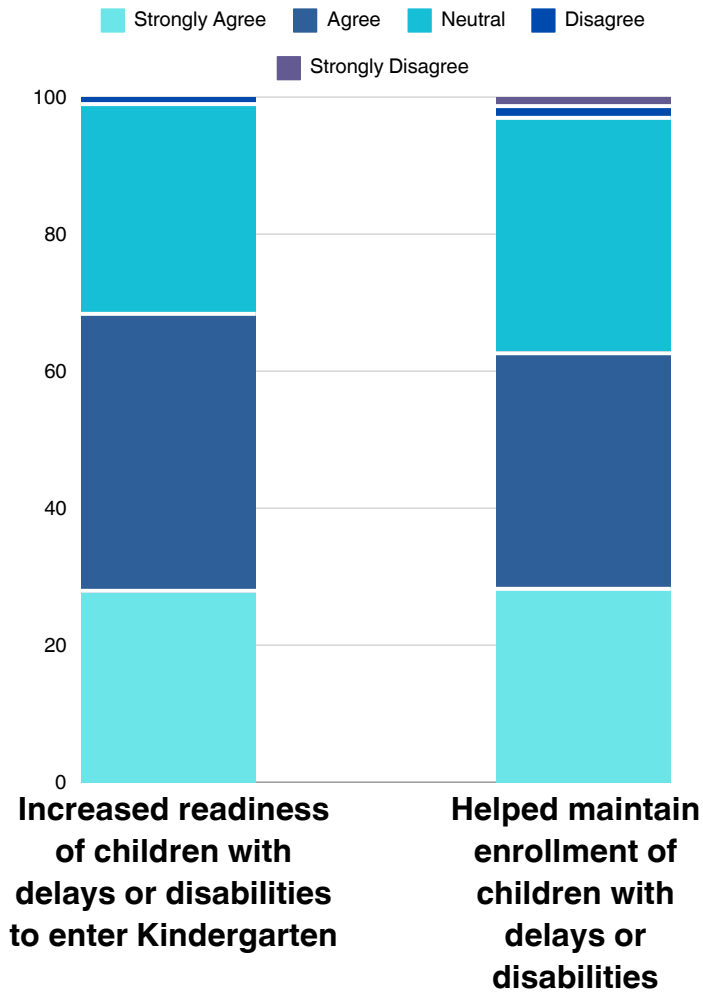
The improvement in social-emotional development and the reduction in challenging behaviors suggest that children are learning important skills that can benefit them long-term. As these children progress through their educational journey, the foundational skills in emotional regulation, understanding differences, and cooperative behavior fostered by Project Include can contribute to their overall success and well-being as they move to kindergarten and beyond. Child care providers' inclusion of Project Include strategies leads to children effectively having their needs met (through communication, adaptations, or engagement), ultimately reducing their disruptions.



## PROJECT INCLUDE EVALUATION REPORT

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Participants agreed that participating in Project Include helped children with delays and disabilities be **more prepared to enter Kindergarten** (65%), which is crucial for their long-term academic success. Ensuring that these children are better prepared to enter kindergarten lays the groundwork for smoother transitions and continued support throughout their schooling.



By maintaining enrollment of children with delays or disabilities, the project has also helped build trust and collaboration between child care providers and families. Project Include provided tools to better meet the needs of children with a variety of delays or disabilities, which in turn kept these children enrolled. Qualitative data highlights providers' ability to share these tools with families, creating a stronger home-to-school connection and ensuring families feel supported.



“

One of our families felt really supported by us bringing these kits and coaching in. It helped them know we were really doing everything we could to support their child.

-A Provider on supporting families and maintaining enrollment

”

### **LIMITATIONS**

Several limitations affected the response rate for the data collection and overall evaluation of Project Include. These challenges should be considered when interpreting the results. High turnover among child care providers led to inconsistencies in participation. New providers may not have been fully familiar with the project, potentially affecting their responses. Additionally, turnover may have resulted in the loss of potential respondents who could provide valuable insights due to inactive email addresses. The presence of duplicate or inactive email addresses in the contact list for the Project Include evaluation survey posed a challenge to response collection, reducing the overall response rate. The focus group and survey's timing coincided with the end of the school year, a period characterized by high activity and limited availability of respondents. This constraint significantly shortened the window for collecting responses, potentially leading to a lower response rate and less representative data for both the survey and focus groups. Additionally, the focus group participants included those who had used all project components. While this helped to elicit detailed answers to our questions, it also could have biased our sample and caused the results to be more positively skewed. Lastly, the absence of pre- and post-project data limited the evaluation's ability to measure long-term changes or improvements resulting from the project. Without baseline data, it was challenging to assess the project's impact comprehensively. These limitations highlight the need for cautious interpretation of the survey results and suggest areas for improvement in future evaluations, such as ensuring up-to-date contact information, allowing more time for response collection, and implementing pre/post data collection methods.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

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Based on the insights gathered from this Project Include evaluation, several key recommendations may enhance the project's overall effectiveness and user experience. These recommendations take into consideration the identified challenges and provide potential strategies for improvement:

## Enhanced Training and Support

- **Training Videos:** Introduce additional training videos demonstrating how various Universal Design and Inclusion Kit items can be utilized in different child care contexts. These videos should feature examples from different child care providers to showcase diverse applications of the materials.
- **Pre-Use Training:** Offer training sessions before the kits are delivered, allowing child care providers to familiarize themselves with the materials in advance. This could include instructional videos sent beforehand, enabling child care providers to plan their use of the materials more effectively.
- **Ongoing Training:** Continue providing one-on-one training sessions and consider adding more sessions focusing on using the more complex items in the kits.

## Improvement of Kit Delivery and Return Process

- **Logistics:** Consider alternative methods of kit delivery and pick-up, particularly for home-based providers who face challenges with time and transportation.
- **Library Coordination:** Improve coordination with libraries to ensure they are aware of the kits and the processes for pick-up and return. This could include training library staff or developing a clear protocol for them to follow.
- **Time Extensions:** Allow for easier extensions of the time that child care providers have with the kits, particularly if delivery is delayed.

## Adaptation and Customization of Kits:

- **Difficulty Levels:** Introduce kits with varying difficulty levels or separate them by age group to better cater to different developmental stages. This could ensure that the materials are challenging enough for older children while still accessible for younger ones.
- **Additional Kit Options:** Expand the variety of kits available to include options like sensory, music, art materials, and nature-based activities. These additional kits would provide more comprehensive resources for child care providers and align with different teaching needs.

## Operational Enhancements:

- **Battery Provision:** Ensure that all items requiring batteries are provided with back-up supplies. This would eliminate any disruptions caused by missing power sources.
- **Progress Tracking:** Develop a more precise system to help child care providers track their progress within the project components. This could include a checklist or digital tool that outlines the next steps in the process.

# CONCLUSION

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Without Project Include, child care providers would likely face challenges in effectively supporting children with delays or disabilities. Participants voiced a clear gap in professional development specifically tailored to these needs, highlighting how they have previously struggled to manage diverse child care program dynamics on their own. Child care providers have been left frustrated, prior to participating in Project Include, searching for resources and generating ideas to adapt materials in their learning environments. In this counterfactual scenario, providers have taken a trial-and-error approach, resulting in wasted financial resources and missed opportunities to support children effectively as they lacked guidance on the suitability of resources. Without structured support and guidance, child care providers would likely face heightened stress and diminished confidence, ultimately impacting their ability to create inclusive environments and support all children effectively.

The evaluation results demonstrate that Project Include has provided essential guidance and support, equipping providers with the knowledge and skills necessary to create inclusive child care programs. Moving forward, the sustainability of Project Include is critical for expanding this impact and establishing inclusive child care as the standard across Colorado. By continuing to support providers and addressing the needs of all children, Project Include will foster more equitable learning environments and help reduce disparities in early child care programs. By continuing to support providers and addressing the needs of all children, Project Include will ensure that every child has access to high-quality, inclusive care and support.





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