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GUIDANCE MEMORANDUM #18-14

TO: School District Superintendents

FROM: Steve Canavero, Ph.D. 
Superintendent of Public Instruction

SUBJECT: Licensed Per Report- Early Childhood Reverse Inclusion Classroom (ERIC)

This Guidance Memo is intended to provide guidance on a change to the Licensed Personnel Report that each Local Education Agency (LEA) completes annually. Effective immediately, assignment code 00650 - Early Childhood Reverse Inclusion is available for use.

Reverse Inclusion Classrooms enroll typically developing children into existing programs so all children can learn together in an inclusive environment. This option provides a mechanism for students with disabilities to benefit from least restrictive environments (LRE) by converting these existing self-contained programs into general educational settings.

The Early Childhood Reverse Inclusion Classroom (ERIC) is a longstanding best practice in educating young students with disabilities in the LRE. Early Childhood Reverse Inclusion Classrooms are a viable option for districts that currently are limited by space and staffing to traditionally self-contained, special education early childhood environments.

There are existing Early Childhood Reverse Inclusion programs being utilized across Nevada. Some of these classrooms include students' with disabilities at a rate of less than 50% with typically developing students at a rate greater than 50%. This practice is typically driven by the teacher of record's license. For those classrooms in which a teacher holds the early childhood license that is *solely* special education, districts typically limit enrollment in that room so that the majority (greater than 50%) of students have disabilities, which results in a special education environment. In those classrooms in which a teacher holds the *dual* regular and special early childhood education license, districts typically limit enrollment in that room so that the majority (greater than 50%) of students do *not* have disabilities, which results in a regular education environment.

The U.S. Department of Education (U.S. DOE), Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), has encouraged States to take action toward providing more inclusive opportunities for preschool students with disabilities that align with IDEA's regulation for a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE).

Currently, our youngest students with disabilities are being excluded from the general education environment at a rate of 66%. While there is wide spread agreement amongst stakeholders that these data represent an overuse of the most restrictive environments on the service continuum, Nevada educators have been hard pressed to find solutions that are fiscally viable.

Early Childhood Reverse Inclusion Classrooms are endorsed by both the U.S. DOE and the Nevada Department of Education (NDE). This means that both Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and state special education funding can be used to support these programs. This guidance seeks to make clear there are no state or federal legal barriers to fully and effectively utilizing reverse inclusion classrooms.

Whereas, the purpose of an Early Childhood Reverse Inclusion Classroom is to educate young students with disabilities, and typically developing peers are being added to the program for the benefit of students with disabilities, **a teacher licensed in early childhood special education may be the teacher of record in such classrooms.** This is the case even when there are more typically developing peers in an early childhood classroom than there are students with disabilities.

Assignment code 00650 should be used when two factors exist: first, reverse inclusion results in an early childhood special education classroom becoming a regular education early childhood classroom because there are more typically developing peers than there are early childhood students with disabilities; and second, the teacher of record holds a license to teach early childhood students with disabilities, but does not hold any other early childhood license. This guidance is limited to early childhood special education, and does not consider, alter, or change the requirements of any other educational program or grade level.

This guidance expires on August 15, 2021.