

Development and Evaluation of Tools/or Families (TFF): An Intervention to Promote Family Engagement in Embedded Instruction in Early Learning

Topic/Goal: Early Intervention/Early Learning in Special Education; Development/Innovation

Purpose: Develop and evaluate for promise an intervention for preschool teachers to enhance their knowledge and skills to use relational and participatory family-centered practices to engage families of young children with disabilities in planning, implementing, and evaluating embedded instruction for early learning (EIEL) at school and at home. *Tools for Families (TFF)* will be a new component of EIEL, which currently includes *Tools for Teachers*, an existing IES-funded PD intervention and toolkit for preschool teachers to use EIEL practices in the classroom.

Setting: Inclusive preschool classrooms in Florida and California

Population/Sample: Up to 24 stakeholders including content experts on EIEL and family-centered practices, preschool teachers, families of preschool-aged children with disabilities, and administrators of special education and preschool programs will participate in stakeholder panels to inform the development and refinement of TFF. Fifty teachers who have completed *Tools for Teachers* PD and 140 families and children will participate in a field test ($N = 10$ teachers; 20 families) and a randomized pilot study ($N = 40$ teachers; 120 families) of TFF in Years 2 and Year 3 of the project.

Research Design and Methods: An iterative design consisting of focus groups and a field trial followed by intervention refinement will be used to develop the TFF intervention. A small n randomized controlled trial (pilot study) will be conducted to examine the potential efficacy of TFF. A sample of 40 preschool teachers will be recruited from California and randomly assigned to conditions. Three children with a disability from each participating teacher's classroom and one of their family members will also be recruited to participate in the study.

Intervention: Preschool teachers who have demonstrated competence to implement EIEL with fidelity will receive the TFF intervention. The TFF intervention will include an operationalized set of relational and participatory family-centered practices, a framework and visual model for facilitating shared decision-making between teachers and families, and a multimedia toolkit. Teachers will learn to engage families in identifying (a) learning priorities for their children and identifying why these priorities are important, (b) logical times to teach priority skills at school and at home, (c) strategies for embedding learning opportunities within school and home activities and routines; and (d) strategies for evaluating the effects of EIEL.

Comparison Condition: Teachers will have completed *Tools for Teachers* PD and demonstrated competence to implement EIEL with fidelity, but will not receive TFF.

Key Measures: An observational measure and teacher and family reports will be used to assess teachers' use of family-centered relational and participatory practices to engage families in EIEL. Family outcome measures include an observational measures, family reports of their engagement in EIEL, and a family self-efficacy scale. Child outcomes will be assessed using the *Vineland-3* and the *Desired Results Developmental Profile (2015)*. Social validity measures and focus groups will be used to assess the usability, feasibility, and acceptability of TFF.

Data Analytic Strategy: Descriptive analyses of teacher and family surveys and thematic analyses of focus group data will be conducted. Pre-post descriptive analyses of teacher, family, and child outcomes will be examined in the field trial. Multilevel analysis of covariance and multilevel multivariate analysis of covariance supplemented by effect size estimates will be used to examine teacher, family, and child outcomes in the pilot study.