

Special Education

& early intervention



Providing **leadership** and **support** to promote a **quality education** and a better life for students with disabilities and their families.



technical assistance

research

PRODUCTS

SERVICES

Our vision? Quality early intervention, special education, and related services provided to children according to their needs.

**What is WestEd's approach to improving
SPECIAL EDUCATION
programs and services?**

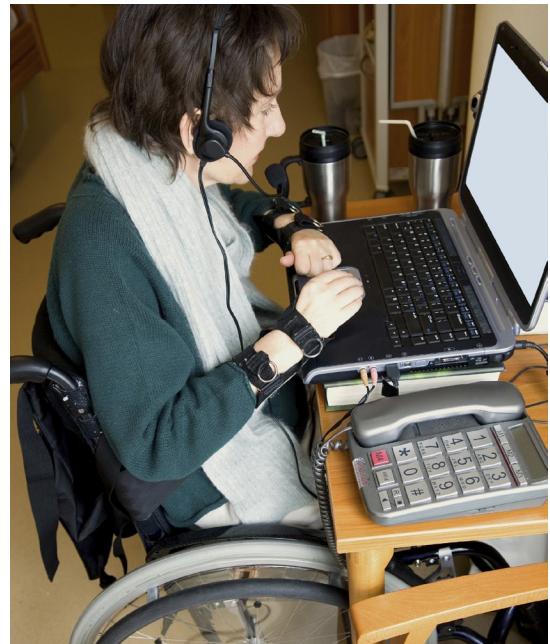
A national nonpartisan, nonprofit research and development organization for more than four decades, WestEd assists state, federal, and local education and social service agencies to meet the developmental and educational needs of young children, youth, and adults with disabilities and their families. We provide targeted technical assistance and professional development, carry out rigorous research, and develop high-quality products. Our clients include education, health, and human service policymakers at all levels and a range of educators and other professionals who deliver services from preschool and K–12 through postsecondary systems. Among our goals is to build the capacity of state and local systems to improve outcomes for individuals with disabilities and their families through high quality educational services and expanded community opportunities.

Throughout the nation, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) governs how states and public agencies provide early intervention, special education, and related services to more than 6.5 million eligible infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities and their families.

Our vision? Quality early intervention, special education, and related services available to children according to their needs. We are dedicated to **providing developmentally appropriate services** related to children, students, and young adults with disabilities through our technical assistance, professional development, research, program evaluation, products, and services.

Our work spans many stages of life.

- ✿ Infants and toddlers (ages birth–3)
- ✿ Preschool (ages 3–5)
- ✿ School-aged children and youth (grades K–12)
- ✿ Transition to independent living, employment, and higher education





**What WestEd can do for
OUR CLIENTS**

- ✿ **Provide technical assistance** to build the capacity of states, districts, and schools to support students with special needs.
- ✿ **Design inclusive assessment and accountability systems** that measure the performance of students with disabilities against state and local standards that apply to all students, increase participation, and increase access to the general education curriculum.
- ✿ **Review alternate assessment policies and practices** and their implementation and impact on students with disabilities.
- ✿ **Develop resources for and provide assistance** to local child care and preschool communities, as well as K-12 districts seeking to implement inclusive educational practices.
- ✿ **Provide external evaluation** of local school district special education programs and services.
- ✿ **Offer professional development opportunities** to build the capacity of educators working to meet the needs of children with disabilities.

What are WestEd's projects related to

EARLY INTERVENTION AND

Technical Assistance

TO STATE DEPARTMENTS OF EDUCATION

- ✿ In 1999, the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, selected WestEd to operate the **Northeast Regional Resource Center (NERRC)**, which works with state agencies to support implementation of IDEA and No Child Left Behind (NCLB). We recently assisted Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, and Vermont with the development of their State Performance Plans and Annual Performance Reports, required under IDEA 2004.
- ✿ WestEd's **Center for Prevention and Early Intervention (CPEI)** has been a comprehensive source of training, technical assistance, and resource development to promote positive outcomes for young children and youth with disabilities and other special needs and their families since 1986. CPEI also assists state agencies with capacity-building efforts leading to improved outcomes under IDEA and NCLB. Clients include the California Departments of Education and Developmental Services, the First 5 California Children and Families Commission, and local education agencies.
- ✿ In 2005, the U.S. Department of Education selected WestEd to operate the **Assessment and Accountability Comprehensive Center (AACC)**, which implements, evaluates, and improves assessment and accountability systems so that states and districts can reach the NCLB goal of academic proficiency for all students. Students with disabilities are a focus of the center's work.

- ✿ Through its **Beginning Together** and **Map to Inclusive Child Care** projects, WestEd's Center for Child and Family Studies focuses on children with special needs and inclusive practices. Beginning Together provides a training-of-trainers institute and support to its graduates, a seminar on inclusive practice for community colleges, regional technical assistance activities, and support of inclusive practices in other Program for Infant/Toddler Care (PITC) activities. The Map to Inclusive Child Care collaborates with key stakeholders who provide leadership in California for children with disabilities or other special needs enrolled in child care and development programs.
- ✿ WestEd's **California Comprehensive Center** and **Southwest Comprehensive Center**, under contract with the U.S. Department of Education, build state capacity to implement NCLB, improve student achievement, and close achievement gaps. Among their priority areas are to build the capacity of the state and districts to support students with special needs, including students in special education, English learners, and migrant education.

SPECIAL EDUCATION?



Assessment & Accountability

- ✿ WestEd researched and published *Guidelines for Ensuring the Technical Quality of Assessments Affecting English Language Learners and Students with Disabilities: Development and Implementation of Regulations*, based on one of many ongoing studies from WestEd's AACC.
- ✿ AACC researchers also are writing a guide to NCLB-compliant assessments for students with disabilities, *Assessments Based on Modified Academic Achievement Standards: Critical Considerations and Implications for Implementation*.
- ✿ WestEd **plans, develops, implements, validates, and evaluates** standards, assessments (including item development), and accountability systems at the local, state, and national levels, from pre-K–12 through higher education and career/technical education. We've developed systems to increase the access of students with disabilities to standards-based assessments in California, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Nevada, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Utah, and many other states.

more projects →

More WestEd projects related to

EARLY INTERVENTION

Inclusion AND RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION

- ✿ **All of Us Together...Moving to Inclusion (AOUT)**, funded by the California Department of Education, increases the capacities of child care and preschool communities to provide inclusive early care and education for children with disabilities and other special needs and their families. AOUT provides team building, problem-solving, and inclusion planning opportunities for communities, agencies, and program teams as they develop and implement local action plans.
- ✿ WestEd's **Least Restrictive Environment Resources** project, funded by the California Department of Education, develops resources to help K-12 districts and sites implement inclusive practices, and also provides teacher training, mentoring, facilitating, technical assistance, and specialized materials.



- ✿ WestEd has cross-agency expertise in **Response to Intervention (RtI)**, utilizing multi-tiered educational interventions as an approach to overall school improvement. We offer leadership academies for district staff, host national Webinars for state and district leaders, and work with state departments of education on plans for RtI implementation.
- ✿ **California Map to Inclusive Child Care**, funded by the California Department of Education, improves access to quality care for children with disabilities or other special needs and their families. The project includes support, education, and training for providers and the families they serve, and offers materials and information about inclusive practices.

AND SPECIAL EDUCATION

Program Evaluation

- ✿ Through **Collaborative Evaluation of Special Education Programs**, WestEd works with K–12 special education directors to plan manageable formative evaluations of their programs.
- ✿ WestEd recently conducted **Special Education Curriculum Reviews** in eight New York City school districts, evaluating curriculum, instruction, assessment, and planning practices and is currently conducting an external evaluation of Connecticut's Birth-to-Three Focused Monitoring System.
- ✿ Through a federal General Supervision Enhancement Grant to New Hampshire for its Continuous Assessment Monitoring System, WestEd led an **Interagency Joint Improvement Plan** process for the Department of Education and Department of Health and Human Services, targeting cultural competence, data-driven decision-making, family and parent involvement, transitions, and early literacy.
- ✿ WestEd's **Regional Educational Laboratory West** conducts long-term, rigorous evaluations of promising interventions and short-term, fast-response projects to inform immediate action, including a study of CPEI's Community College Personnel Preparation Project, which provides technical assistance to community colleges statewide that prepare early intervention assistants.

Professional Development

- ✿ WestEd conducts an annual **Early Start Institute** series for early intervention service providers, specialists representing 21 disciplines, service coordinators, administrators, and family support agencies as the IDEA Part C Comprehensive System of Personnel Development provider funded by the California Department of Developmental Services.
- ✿ WestEd conducts annual **Leadership Academies for Experienced Special Education Administrators** in K–12 districts, covering fiscal administration, data collection, and analysis; staffing issues; instructional design and improvement; legal requirements and regulations; conflict prevention and alternate dispute resolution; organizational and systems change; and research-based practices, tools, and resources for special education.
- ✿ WestEd's **DistrictsMovingUp** provides assistance to programs and services within districts in the area of special education as a component of an overall district improvement strategy.
- ✿ WestEd's **Beginning Together** provides inclusion support to the Program for Infant/Toddler Care (PITC), the nation's most widely used child care training system, ensuring that PITC training, program implementation, technical assistance, and certification promote appropriate inclusive practices for infants and toddlers with special needs.

Recent WestEd-developed

PRODUCTS AND RESOURCES

1. ***Keeping Quality Teachers: The Art of Retaining General and Special Education Teachers*** is a resource guide focused on strategies for retaining and supporting both general and special education teachers. It provides a planning framework with accompanying tools and resources for use by superintendents, curriculum coordinators, principals, special education coordinators, professional development leaders, and district human resources managers. School leaders at all levels can use the resources and strategies to strengthen their efforts to ensure that students have access to quality teachers.
2. ***The Inclusive Education Starter Kit*** is a two-volume manual for California teachers and administrators that includes case studies of inclusive classrooms from preschool to high school, explanations of regulations governing inclusive education, and strategies that illustrate the benefits inclusive education brings to teachers, students, and communities.
3. ***Project Relationship: Creating and Sustaining a Nurturing Community*** is a video and training manual for staff developers showing how to build and facilitate inter-agency teams.



4. ***Barriers to Inclusive Child Care: Research Study Findings and Recommendations*** is a comprehensive report for the First 5 California Children and Families Commission that assesses the current state of care for children with disabilities and includes recommendations for improving systems of care.
5. ***California's Infant, Preschool & Family Mental Health Initiative Report Series*** provides guidance on early mental health services and relationship-based early intervention for children from birth to 5 and their families.
6. ***Talking With Parents When You Have Concerns About a Child in Your Care*** is a training PowerPoint™ with accompanying article providing a framework for caregivers when they have concerns that a child might have a developmental delay, disability, or significant behavior problem; when preparing to share concerns with a child's parents or family members; or in understanding different ways family members will receive and act on an expressed concern.

CENTRAL CONTACT INFORMATION

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WestEd, a national nonpartisan, nonprofit research, development, and service agency, works with education and other communities to promote excellence, achieve equity, and improve learning for children, youth, and adults. WestEd has 16 offices nationwide, from Washington and Boston to Arizona and California. Its corporate headquarters are in San Francisco. More information about WestEd is available at WestEd.org.