

How Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation and the TIKES Program Align with and Support Louisiana Early Learning Guidelines and Standards

Based on extensive research evidence, infant and early childhood mental health consultation (IECMHC), including Louisiana's TIKES program, demonstrates strong alignment and support across all five developmental domains of the Louisiana Early Learning and Development Standards (ELDS). Here is the evidence:

1. INTERPERSONAL SKILLS DOMAIN

Direct Alignment: The Interpersonal Skills domain is the most directly supported by IECMHC and TIKES, addressing Standards IS 1-4 (relationships with adults, relationships with children, self-esteem, and self-regulation).

Evidence from Research:

- IECMHC consultants work with early childhood professionals to enhance their skills in fostering interpersonal and behavioral competencies in young children, improving children's relational skills and executive functioning and promoting healthy relationships
- Studies demonstrate IECMHC is associated with reductions in child externalizing behaviors and improvements in children's capacities to build supportive relationships.
- Research shows improvements in children's initiative, attachment, and positive behaviors following consultation

TIKES-Specific Evidence:

- TIKES examined how teachers' perceptions of children's behavior changed after consultation, finding increases in child protective factors (e.g., relationship skills) and decreases in behavioral concerns (e.g., disruptive behaviors) including behaviors related to increased likelihood of expulsion

ELDS Connection:

- **IS 4.1-4.4** (expressing oneself): IECMHC directly supports children's self-regulation and self-expression
- **IS 2.1-2.5** (peer relationships, conflict resolution): Research shows improved relational behaviors and reduced challenging interactions after IECMHC
- **IS 1.1-1.5** (relationships with adults): IECMHC enhances relationship development through improved teacher-child interactions

2. APPROACHES TO LEARNING DOMAIN

Direct Alignment: IECMHC supports Standards AL 1-3 (engagement in play, attention and persistence, problem-solving).

Evidence from Research:

- IECMHC improves classroom quality and promotes environments where children can engage in varied play experiences that are foundational to learning
- Teacher self-efficacy increases following consultation, enabling teachers to better support children's initiative and curiosity
- Children with low protective factors and high behavioral concerns showed the greatest improvements from IECMHC

ELDS Connection:

- **AL 2.1-2.3** (attention, engagement, persistence): When behavioral challenges are addressed, children can better focus and persist
 - **AL 3.1-3.3** (problem-solving strategies): Consultants help teachers model and support problem-solving approaches
 - **AL 1.1-1.4** (exploration, independence): Reduced behavioral concerns allow children to engage more fully in exploratory play, foundational to academic skills acquisition
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3. COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT & GENERAL KNOWLEDGE DOMAIN

Alignment: IECMHC creates foundational conditions for cognitive development.

Evidence from Research:

- Improvements in classroom quality were documented using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System
- Research results indicated positive findings for children including improved interpersonal skills
- Developmental skills significantly improved post-intervention in one study, and this improvement was independently associated with improvement in behavior

ELDS Connection:

- When interpersonal and behavioral needs are met, children have greater capacity for learning in:
 - **Mathematics (CM 1-4):** Engaging in counting, patterns, measurement, and spatial awareness activities
 - **Science (CS 1):** Participating in scientific inquiry without behavioral disruptions
 - **Social Studies (CSS 1-2):** Understanding community and self-awareness
 - **Creative Arts (CCA 1-3):** Fully engaging in music, visual arts, and dramatic play
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4. LANGUAGE AND EARLY LITERACY DEVELOPMENT DOMAIN

Alignment: IECMHC creates classroom environments conducive to language development.

Evidence from Research:

- IECMHC was associated with more positive teacher-child interactions, which are critical for language development
- Teachers improved their sensitivity in interactions with children following consultation
- IECMHC improves classroom quality and promotes healthy relationships, which are foundational for language learning

ELDS Connection:

- **LD 1-3** (receptive communication, expressive communication, conversational rules): Positive teacher-child relationships and reduced behavioral disruptions create optimal conditions for language learning
 - **EL 1-5** (phonological awareness through emergent writing): When classrooms are well-managed and supportive, literacy instruction is more effective
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5. PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT & WELL-BEING DOMAIN

Alignment: IECMHC supports the overall well-being that enables physical development.

Evidence from Research:

- IECMHC was associated with decreased teacher job-related stress, which creates calmer, safer environments for active play
- IECMHC evaluation have found increases in reflective capacity predicted decreases in teachers' mental exhaustion, allowing them to focus on supporting children's academic skills
- Evaluation results indicated decreased work and school problems for parents and providers

ELDS Connection:

- **PD 3.1-3.4** (healthy and safe behaviors): When teachers are less stressed and more competent, they better supervise active play and enforce safety rules
 - **PD 1.1-1.4 & PD 2.1-2.2** (gross and fine motor skills): Calmer classroom environments allow for better motor skill development and practice
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CROSS-CUTTING SUPPORT: TEACHER AND PROGRAM OUTCOMES

Critical Evidence for All Domains: IECMHC research demonstrates that teachers improve in knowledge, self-efficacy, and positive interactions with children, with decreased job stress after working with a consultant

TIKES-Specific Teacher Support:

- After six months of participating in the TIKES model of consultation, teachers reported decreases in stress and hopelessness
- The TIKES program evaluation examines how teachers' beliefs and burnout impact their interpretation of children's behaviors, which supports their ability to better teach young children

Why This Matters for ELDS: When teachers are supported through IECMHC/TIKES, they are better equipped to:

- Implement developmentally appropriate practices across all ELDS domains
 - Observe and assess children's progress on ELDS indicators
 - Create environments that support academic growth in all five developmental areas
 - Reduce suspension and expulsion, ensuring continuity of learning
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PREVENTION OF EXPULSION AND ENSURING ACCESS TO STANDARDS

Critical Policy Connection: IECMHC is one of the only known ways to prevent early childhood expulsion and suspension

Why This Matters:

- Children who are expelled cannot access environments where ELDS are taught and practiced
 - IECMHC has been shown to reduce the number of suspensions and expulsions
 - Studies report overall reductions in rates of expulsions for centers that received consultation
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LOUISIANA-SPECIFIC EVIDENCE

TIKES Program Research: Published peer-reviewed research from Tulane's TIKES team includes studies examining implementation of mental health consultation and its impact on early childhood teachers' efficacy and competence in Louisiana settings

Statewide Reach: TIKES serves to increase the quality of child care and early learning initiatives for all children across the state and provides child care staff and parents with tools to understand and command higher quality child care

CONCLUSION

Infant and early childhood mental health consultation, including the TIKES program, provides **comprehensive support** for all five Louisiana ELDS domains by:

1. **Directly addressing** Interpersonal Skills (Domain 5) through improved relational development and skills enhancement
2. **Creating foundational conditions** for success in Approaches to Learning (Domain 1)
3. **Enabling cognitive engagement** in mathematics, science, social studies, and creative arts (Domain 2) through improving classroom environments
4. **Fostering language-rich environments** through improved teacher-child interactions (Domain 3)
5. **Supporting safe, healthy environments** for physical development (Domain 4) through supporting teacher capacity
6. **Preventing expulsion** to ensure children have continuous access to environments where ELDS are implemented
7. **Building teacher capacity** to effectively implement ELDS standards across all domains

The research evidence—including decade-long systematic reviews and Louisiana's own TIKES program evaluations—demonstrates that IECMHC is an essential support system that enables children to reach the developmental milestones outlined in the Louisiana Early Learning and Development Standards.