

LRE

Tips for Parents of Preschool Children with Disabilities

What is Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)?

LRE means that my child should be educated along with children without disabilities, to the greatest extent possible.

- ▶ The Individualized Education Program (IEP team, which includes me, considers my child's individual needs to determine how to provide the appropriate placement in the LRE.
- ▶ The team decides the appropriate LRE for my child during IEP meetings, after they determine necessary services. I am an equal member of the IEP team.
- ▶ As the parent, my role in determining LRE is to discuss with the IEP team where my child would be most successful.
- ▶ Whenever appropriate, a child with a disability should remain in the preschool or childcare setting that he or she is already attending and receive special education services there.

Where are special education services provided?

To meet your child's individual needs, the IEP determines the most appropriate LRE. The selection of settings is known as the continuum of service delivery options. The IEP team should discuss LRE placement in preschool special education classrooms or in other settings with itinerant services (which are given by a visiting teacher or related service personnel).

These LREs can be in a:

- ▶ Community preschool or childcare center;
- ▶ Head Start program;
- ▶ Public preschool program; or
- ▶ At home, in a clinic or a hospital.

Services may be provided through:

- ▶ Full-day services;
- ▶ Part-day services;
- ▶ In settings serving children with and without disabilities; and
- ▶ In settings that serve only children with disabilities.

Tips for Parents on LRE

School districts are responsible for:

- ▶ Ensuring parents understand what LRE means;
- ▶ Ensuring parents are involved in determining LRE;
- ▶ Discussing with parents whether services should be delivered in the regular classroom or in a more restrictive environment;
- ▶ Describing on the IEP the extent to which a child with a disability will not participate in activities with other children and why the child will need to be removed from a regular classroom;
- ▶ Obtaining the parents' written consent for the child's placement at least once a year.

Services cannot be denied because:

- ▶ A child's behavior is problematic;
- ▶ A child is not potty trained; or
- ▶ There is a waiting list.

LRE Facts

Schools are required to:

- ▶ Provide services to students with special needs, including preschool students;
- ▶ Provide occupational, physical or speech therapies if the child's IEP indicates that these services are needed to achieve desired outcomes. These services are offered in one-on-one settings, small groups or integrated within the regular classroom.
- ▶ Provide assistive technology (AT) for children of all ages when appropriate. AT is any item, piece of equipment, product or system that is used to increase, maintain or improve the functional capabilities of a child.

Schools are not required to:

- ▶ Operate public preschool programs;
- ▶ Provide transportation to all students with disabilities; and
- ▶ Provide the amount of services (occupational, physical or speech therapy that are recommended by private evaluations.

Public school also cannot charge parents for any preschool services for a child with a disability nor require them to use their insurance for these costs.

OUTCOMES

Tips for Parents of Preschool Children with Disabilities

What are outcomes?

- › Outcomes are results.
- › Being successful in kindergarten is an outcome parents and teachers want for preschoolers.
- › Successful outcomes result from participation in the classroom and will look different for each child.

Measuring progress toward outcomes.

- › A child's progress must be measured to be understood.
- › Measurement begins with a snapshot of a child's skills and abilities called "present levels of performance".
- › The Individualized Education Program (IEP) team uses present levels of performance to develop the academic and functional goals listed on the IEP.
- › The IEP's job is to list the supports, services or modifications needed for the child to succeed and make progress on his or her IEP goals.

Experts agree that the following three broad areas of growth and development are important to consider when creating IEP goals and are measured in conjunction with IEP goals:

- › Positive Social and Emotional Skills-Relationships with children and adults
- › Acquiring and using Knowledge and Skills-Problem solving and use of tools like scissors, spoons, and pencils
- › Taking Appropriate Action to Meet Needs-Everyday skills like dressing, toileting, eating and asking for help

How is progress measured?

- › Formal and informal assessment tools are used to collect information about a child's progress.

Formal tools include:

- › Ages and Stages Questionnaire: Social and Emotional (ASQ:SE)
- › Get It, Got It, Go! (GGG)

Informal tools include:

- › Teacher observation in the classroom
- › Collection of children's work samples
- › Sharing and receiving information from parents

What happens to the assessment information that is collected?

- › Each year, teachers complete the Early Childhood Outcomes Summary form using information that teachers and parents collect over the school year.
- › The child's progress in each of the three broad categories is rated using a seven-point scale.
- › Scores of 6 or 7 indicate skills comparable to those of non-disabled children.
- › Scores of 4 or 5 describe the child as "slightly younger".
- › Scores of 3 or less mean that a child is still working on the basics.
- › The score a child receives is less important than the answer to the question: "Did the child make progress?" Progress is not limited to IEP goals but includes how well the child participated in the early childhood curriculum. Any progress, any new skill or behavior results in a "yes".

While explanations of your child's progress, including progress on IEP goals, should be part of the parent-teacher conference required twice a year, you may discuss questions and concerns about your child's progress with the teacher or special education coordinator at any time.

Share concerns with any member of ODE's Preschool Special Education Team by calling (614) 466-0224. Also, some school districts have a parent mentor who can assist families with the requirements and relationship of outcomes to a child's IEP.

The Coalition for the Education of Children with Disabilities provides information and contacts on its website at www.ocecd.org or you may call (844) 382-5452.

For more information and support, call: Ohio Department of Education, Office of Early Learning and School Readiness at (877) 644-6338.