



What does Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) mean?

What does it look like for my child?

The LRE is the school setting, or place, that allows a child to be educated to the greatest extent possible with children who do not have disabilities. The Individual Educational Plan (IEP) team determines the best place for the child to be educated. Parents are members of these teams. The “range of possible placements” or options where children can receive their education includes programs where the child with the disability is in a classroom with other children, most of whom do not have disabilities (least restrictive); and, at the other end of the spectrum of programs where only children with disabilities are in a separate classroom (more restrictive).

What are preschool options for my child?

Preschool children with disabilities can be educated in a school district preschool program or in an early childhood setting in the community with their typically developing peers. Different school districts may provide different options, so it is important to discuss these with your school district before deciding where your child will be placed.

School District Prekindergarten Exceptional Student Education (ESE) Programs

There are Pre-K programs for children with disabilities in every school district in the state. A list of the contact person for each district is available by accessing the following link:

Website: <http://www.fldoe.org/ese/pdf/Pre-K%2007-08.pdf>

Community Child Care Centers/Preschools

Services for children with disabilities may occur at a community childcare center. A licensed childcare center must meet minimum health, safety, and staffing requirements set by the county and/or state. For more information regarding childcare options, access the following

Website: <https://www.floridaearlylearning.com/providers>

Head Start

Head Start is a federally funded program that serves children from birth to 5 years old. There are 4 program parts: Head Start (or Preschool Head Start), Migrant Head Start, American Indian Head Start, and Early Head Start. The goal of these programs is to increase school readiness of young children in low-income families. For more information, access the following link:

Website: <http://www.floridaheadstart.org/>

Voluntary Pre-kindergarten (VPK) Education Program VPK is a program for all children in Florida the year before kindergarten. The program allows all children who become 4 years old on or before September 1 and reside in Florida to be enrolled in a program provided by school districts or community-based providers. There is no cost to the family for their child to participate. School districts may offer a school year program and must offer a summer program. Families have the option of choosing either a school year or a summer VPK program. For more information, access the following link:

Website: <https://www.floridaearlylearning.com/vpk>



This TATS Talks gives you some highlights of preschool programming for children with disabilities in Florida, preschool options for children with disabilities, and what to look for in a quality preschool program. Other helpful resources and links for more information on topics are also included.

What should I look for in a high-quality preschool program?

- **Children are safe and the program promotes good nutrition and health.**
What this might look like – children are carefully supervised; teachers are trained in first aid; there are regular routines for hand washing and toileting; snacks and meals are nutritious.
- **Children are provided a safe, clean environment; equipment; and materials.**
What this might look like – furniture and equipment are child-sized; staff can see all children all the time, outdoor play areas are safe and contain adaptive equipment, if needed; first aid kits, fire extinguishers, etc. are available.
- **Children’s activities (curriculum) support learning and development of a child in the following areas: social, emotional, physical, language, and cognitive (thinking and awareness).**
What this might look like – children can explore and play with a variety of equipment, toys, books, and materials; learning centers and activities are designed to help children think, solve problems, get along with others, and use language and other skills; assistive technology is used to support and increase participation of children with disabilities, if necessary.
- **Classrooms reflect art, literature and activities that respect differences in cultures, languages and abilities.**
What this might look like – books are available in languages spoken at home by children. Books and other classroom materials (i.e., pictures, puzzles, toys, dolls and props) reflect people of different races, cultures, and ethnicities; and include people with disabilities.
- **Teachers promote positive communication, relationships, and interaction among children and staff.**
What this might look like – children are greeted and addressed by name; children are engaged in appropriate conversation with peers and/or teaching staff; children are encouraged to work and play cooperatively together.
- **Teachers establish and maintain good relationships with each family.**
What this might look like – families are welcome to visit their child’s classroom and are encouraged to be involved in school activities; the program communicates with families in many ways (parent handbook, newsletters, bulletin boards); families receive information about their child’s progress and their input is valued.



Be involved

A lot of research supports the fact that children whose parents participate in activities with them and are involved in their education do better in school. Starting this involvement when your child is young helps give them a good beginning. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) provides some good ways for families to be involved:

- Read together with your child to help him/her see the value of reading.
- Make sure your child has regular times for eating meals and going to bed.
- Decide what and how much and when television and other media (i.e., video games, computer programs and interactive media on phones) will be available to your child.
- Keep in touch regularly with your child's teacher and other staff to know what your child is doing in school.
- Praise and encourage your child often. Help them become a successful, confident learner.

Resource and link: Connecting with Your Child's School. Message in a Backpack, August 2016.

Website:

<https://www.naeyc.org/resources/pubs/tyc/aug2016/backpack/>



Working with teachers and other staff

To work together as a team, teachers and parents need to build strong relationships. Listed below are some things that professionals and families should think about to form strong partnerships.

These research-based strategies are from the Division for ***Early Childhood (DEC) Recommended Practices***. DEC is a division of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) (Sandall, Hemmeter, Smith, and McLean, 2005).

- Families are essential partners working with teachers and staff to help children succeed.
- Families are the experts with regard to their child—they have important information and perspectives that educators can use to help children succeed.
- All of us want what is best for the child. Understanding family perspectives will help us reach common goals.
- There is common ground from which we can all work together if we try to understand and respect each other's perspectives. Making judgments about others interferes with this process.

Link to online version of DEC Recommended Practices on Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (ECTA): <https://ectacenter.org/decrp/decrp.asp>



What is “People First Language”?

When we use people first language, we focus on the fact that someone with a disability is first a person, and the disability is what he or she *has*. Boys and girls with disabilities are *children first*. All adults who work with children with disabilities should be aware of this protocol.

Always put the person before the disability. For example, say “the child who has autism” not “the autistic child.” Say “the child who has a disability” not “the handicapped or disabled child.” For more information on people first language, please access the following Website:

<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/materials/factsheets/fs-communicating-with-people.html>

A person’s self-image is strongly tied to the words used to describe him or her. Describing people with disabilities in negative, stereotypical language can create harmful perceptions. We must believe children and adults with disabilities are unique individuals with unlimited potential to achieve their dreams.

Links to Additional Information

FL Division of Early Learning (DEL)

Includes information on Early Childhood programs.

<https://www.floridaearlylearning.com/>

Technical Assistance and Training System (TATS)

Includes parent involvement ideas and resources.

<https://tats.ucf.edu>

Florida Help Me Grow

Includes information about developmental milestones and resources for families.

<https://www.helpmegrowfl.org/about-hmg/>

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)

Focuses on the provision of educational and developmental services and resources for all children from birth through age 8.

<http://www.naeyc.org/>



Long before your child enters school, he or she learns many important things from you. You are your child’s first teacher. When your child goes to school, that learning continues and grows with another teacher. It is important that you share the knowledge you have about your child with this teacher. As your child progresses in school, you can become a valued partner with the teacher in school.



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