

TATS TALKS ABOUT PRE-K FOR ADMINISTRATOR

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A Quick Guide to Programs for Pre-K Children with Disabilities
Answers to Basic Questions about Pre-Kindergarten (Pre-K) Programs for Young Children with Disabilities

Why are there programs for Pre-K children with disabilities?

In Florida, public schools provide services to prekindergarten (Pre-K) children with disabilities under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 2004 (IDEA). Children ages three to five years who have been determined eligible for special education and related services, receive these services. Four of the Indicators in the State Performance Plan, are related to Pre-K Exceptional Student Education (ESE).

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act is another piece of legislation that has implications for Pre-K. This legislation supports professional development initiatives and addresses preparing young children for school.

Resource Links



IDEA Website

Contains resources and information on the law and the regulations. Also cross-referenced content from other laws (e.g., the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), etc.).

<http://idea.ed.gov>

No Child Left Behind Act website

Contains resources and information about the law as well as the text of the law and regulations.

<http://www.NoChildLeftBehind.gov>

Florida's State Performance Plan, Annual Performance Report, and LEA Profiles

Links to Florida's SPP and APR data and reports and profiles of each of the school district with regard to implementation of IDEA.

SPP – <http://www.fldoe.org/ese/>

APR – <http://www.fldoe.org/ese/>

LEA profiles – <http://www.fldoe.org/ese/datapage.asp>

Purpose: The TATS Talks for Administrators is designed to provide basic information on early childhood programs and topics surrounding early childhood programs, and serve as a quick reference sheet to use for discussions with parents, teachers or district-related professionals.



What the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) standards say about pre-K.

NAESP has developed a set of standards about high quality early childhood programs
(*What Principals Should Know and be Able to Do*)

Standard 1: Embrace high-quality early childhood programs, principles and practices as the foundation for education throughout the community.

- Consider birth through eight as a continuum for early learning
- Engage the school community in understanding children's early development
- Incorporate early childhood programs into the school's culture and organizational structure
- Articulate the value of early intervention to prevent later difficulties.

Standard 2: Work with families and community organizations to support children at home, in the community and in pre-k and kindergarten programs.

- Acknowledge and support families as children's first and most influential teachers
- Provide educational experiences informed by the children's culture and community
- Facilitate schools and community-based supports for children and families
- Build coalitions with community organizations

Standard 3: Provide appropriate learning environments for young children.

- Promote developmentally, age appropriate environments; address individual ways of learning
- Foster relationships that provide the foundation for children's learning
- Cultivate children's social competencies

Standard 4: Ensure high quality curriculum and instructional practices that foster young children's learning and development in all areas.

- Foster young children's eagerness to learn
- Develop early literacy and numeracy skills
- Provide ongoing professional development for the school community

Standard 5: Use multiple assessments to create experiences that strengthen child learning.

- Support teachers in using observation, records and portfolios of children's work to demonstrate growth
- Use assessment to identify learning barriers, design strategies to overcome them, and plan new learning experiences.
- Support information sharing between school systems and other providers
- Educate and share children's development and individual progress with families

Standard 6: Advocate for universal opportunity for children to attend high-quality early childhood programs.

- Advocate for the needs of young children in their communities
- Become familiar with early childhood funding streams and policy issues
- Keep the public and policy makers focused on the importance of quality pre-K in the continuum of learning that helps children and schools succeed



What does programming for Pre-K children with disabilities look like?

5 Ways Early Child Classrooms Are Similar to the K-12 Environment

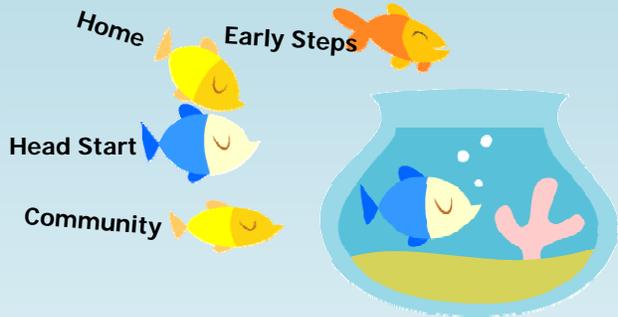
1. **Curriculum and lesson planning:** Evidence of a curriculum, and lesson plans related to the curriculum. For pre-K classes the curriculum is developmentally appropriate.
2. **Support for language, literacy and mathematics activities:** A rich assortment of books, writing materials, math tools. For pre-K classes materials support language, early literacy and numeracy development – age appropriate children's books, writing materials in all center areas, manipulatives, counters, sorting activities.
3. **Class room display:** Schedules, artwork, etc. prominently displayed. For pre-K classes picture schedules, artwork, etc. are at the child's eye level
4. **Diversity:** Reflected through the classroom environment and materials. For pre-K classes pictures, puzzles, toys, and props (such as dress-up clothing) reflect people of different races, cultures, and ethnicities, in addition to people of different professions, ages, abilities, and gender-neutral work activities
5. **Accommodations:** Accommodations are made for diverse learners. Literacy and writing materials are available at a variety of learning levels. There is assistive technology (AT) available. Materials are adjusted for different learning styles.



5 Ways Early Child Classrooms Differ from the K-12 Environment

1. **Scheduling:** Reflects a balance between teacher-planned and child-initiated activities.
2. **Hands-on learning activities:** Activities support, participation, creativity, and problem solving. Use of work sheets is discouraged
3. **Conversations:** Heard throughout the day for teaching concepts, vocabulary, and social skill acquisition or development, in the classroom, during outdoor play, and meal/snack times. Visual supports enhance communication.
4. **Classroom Materials/Equipment and Room Arrangement:** Toys and learning games are in good condition and used to promote learning and development. Furniture and outdoor play equipment are child-sized. Clearly defined activity areas include art, block, book/listening, dramatic play/housekeeping, fine motor, sand/water table, nature/science, and math areas.
5. **Readiness:** Teaching and learning of academic and social/emotional skills that children will need upon entry into kindergarten is emphasized.

When does transition happen?



Transition to Pre-K ESE Services or Classroom

What if a child turns three just before school ends for the year?

An IEP meeting must be conducted in advance of the child's third birthday or staffing practices in place that ensure sufficient staff to conduct IEP meetings during the summer. When a child turns three years old near the end of, or following the conclusion of the school year, the district has an obligation to have an IEP in effect and implemented by the child's third birthday.

Transition from Early Steps.... Why are very young children starting district Pre-K programs at all times of the year?

IDEA requires that eligible children must receive services during the regular school year starting when they turn three years old. Children who are found eligible for Part B must have an IEP developed and implemented by their third birthday.



Transition to Kindergarten



Transition to Elementary School

How can the school support a smooth transition onto Pre-K programs and from these programs into Kindergarten?

Each school district is required to participate in a transition conference arranged by the Local Early Steps (birth to 3) for those children who are potentially eligible for school district Pre-K programs for children with disabilities. There are many ways to support children and families through the transition process as they enter and exit the Pre-K ESE program. Some of these include:

- making sure that information is shared between the Local Early Steps and the district to ensure a smooth transition
- visits to schools or Kindergarten programs prior to transition
- sharing information between sending and receiving teachers and staff
- working and communicating with families
- preschool teachers addressing social skill development and teaching kindergarten readiness skills as well as academic readiness skills

Where are Pre-K children with disabilities placed?

What are the available service delivery options or models that can be used?



A variety of options are available for children and families. The IEP team should discuss the option that will best meet the child's needs in the least restrictive and most natural environment. These may include, but are not limited to:

- itinerant therapy in the home or daycare, or public school
- a VPK /General Education/ Head Start Classroom with itinerant services
- a VPK /General Education/ Head Start Classroom with specially designed instruction, co-teaching, or inclusion supports and services, and
- full or part-time separate special education classroom environment.



Who is involved?

Players Involved in Pre-K Programs for Children with Disabilities:

Children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children ages three to five years who have been determined eligible for special education and related services. 	
Parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents are partners in the process • Actively involved in the child's education 	
Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualification(s) • Training and certification(s) • Responsibilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◊ Quality instruction ◊ Evaluation and assessment ◊ IEP Implementation, documentation and monitoring 	
Paraprofessionals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualification(s) • Training and certification(s) • Responsibilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◊ Quality instruction ◊ Evaluation and assessment ◊ IEP Implementation, documentation and monitoring 	
Related Service Providers (OT, PT, SLP, H&V Specialists)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualification(s) • Training and certification(s) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◊ Quality service ◊ Provision of itinerant services 	
Administrators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher/student ratios • Program Quality 	

In Conversations with....

The following is a list of key players and community resources, and some guiding questions for conversations with district personnel, classroom teachers, and families.

Those Involved with Programs for Pre-K Children with Disabilities May Include:

- Pre-K ESE Program Specialists
- Staffing Specialists
- VPK Program Contact
- Classroom teacher
- Social Workers
- Early Intervention Diagnosticians
- ESE Director
- Director of Finance
- Transportation Director

Community Resources for Programs for Pre-K Children with Disabilities May Include:

- TATS Regional Facilitators
- FDLRS Child Find Specialist
- VPK Regional Facilitator
- Early Learning Coalitions
- Florida Inclusion Network
- Center for Autism & Related Disabilities
- Head Start
- FL DOE

Questions for Discussion at the District Level:



- How are programs funded? Where are the funds coming from?
- What curriculum is used in the classroom?
- How are teachers supported in working with Pre-K children with disabilities?
- How is child progress monitored? How is progress reported to parents?
- What are the disabilities of the children enrolled in the programs?
- Are nursing or other medical services required?
- How are children transported to and from school?
- Who is responsible for teacher assessments and monitoring?

Questions for Discussion with Classroom Teachers:

- What curriculum is being used?
- What types of developmentally appropriate early literacy and numeracy experiences are available in the classroom?
- What types of accommodations or modifications are in place for children with disabilities?
- What is being taught? How is child progress monitored?
- How families and professionals partnering? How can the administration support these efforts?

Questions for Discussion with Families:

- What is important for the school to know about your child?
- How do you want to be involved?
- What is the best way for communication to occur between you and the school?



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