



EARLY CHILDHOOD SPECIAL EDUCATION: GUIDANCE & BEST PRACTICES

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PURPOSE

The purpose of this document is to provide Special Education Leadership resources and information to best support their early childhood special education programming and services. We, at Wayne RESA , recognize the need for additional information around early childhood best practices and resources available in order for districts to feel equipped to make well informed decisions regarding implementing high-quality early childhood special education programming. As such, we have developed this guide to inform the implementation of robust early childhood special education programming, especially for those children receiving services through a categorical placement in Early Childhood Program (ECP)/ Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) classrooms.

NAEYC DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE PRACTICES STATEMENT

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) has published a position statement that details what research demonstrates are the developmentally appropriate practices (DAP) for young learners ages birth through eight along with a comprehensive guide for how to put these practices into place within early childhood classrooms.



The position statement reads:

“Each and every child, birth through age 8, has the right to equitable learning opportunities—in centers, family childcare homes, or schools—that fully support their optimal development and learning across all domains and content areas. Children are born eager to learn; they take delight exploring their world and making connections. The degree to which early learning programs support children’s delight and wonder in learning reflects the quality of that setting. Educators who engage in developmentally appropriate practice foster young children’s joyful learning and maximize the opportunities for each and every child to achieve their full potential.” Please see the whole [NAEYC statement](#) for full details.

Basic Overview of R340.1754 (ECP) and R340.1755 (ECSE)

MARSE R 340.1754 Early childhood special education programs; 2 years 6 months through 5 years of age. Rule 54.

- (1) Early childhood special education programs for students with disabilities may be provided to students with disabilities who are 2 years 6 months through 5 years of age.*
- (2) Early childhood special education programs for students with disabilities shall do all of the following:*
- (a) Be provided by an approved or endorsed early childhood special education teacher.*
 - (b) Be based upon the student's individual needs as determined through an age appropriate developmental assessment and specified in an individualized education program.*
 - (c) Be based on the approved state board of education early childhood standards.*
 - (d) Have a parent participation and education component.*
 - (e) Be available for a minimum of 360 clock hours and 144 days of instruction.*
 - (f) Have not more than 12 students for 1 teacher and 1 aide at any one time, and the teacher shall have responsibility for the educational programming for not more than 24 different students."*

A "1754" Early Childhood Preschool (ECP) program is a self-contained special education classroom for preschool-aged children between 2yrs 6mo through 5 years of age. Placement is based on the individual needs of the child and is determined through the IEP process. A young child should only be placed in an ECP setting when the IEP team determines that a less restrictive placement with supplementary aides and services would not be enough for the child to make progress. The IEP Team must document the less restrictive environment options considered and not selected on the notice of Free, Appropriate, Public Education (FAPE) page along with the rationale to explain why the options were not selected.

Hours, Days and FTE – An Early Childhood Special Education Program per MARSE rule must be provided for a minimum of 360 hours over at least 144 days per school year. To claim 1.0 Full Time Equivalent (FTE), the child must be provided 450 hours of instruction per school year.

Here is a link to the [Pupil Accounting Manual \(PAM\)](#) for full details.



MARSE R 340.1755 Early childhood special education services; 2 years 6 months through 5 years of age. Rule 55.

(1) Early childhood special education services for students with disabilities may be provided to students with disabilities who are 2 years 6 months through 5 years of age.

(2) Early childhood special education services for students with disabilities shall do all of the following:

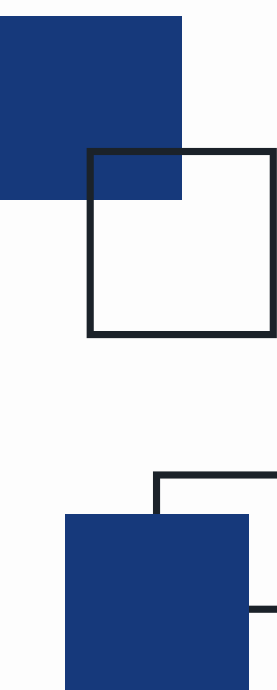
(a) Be provided by an approved or endorsed early childhood special education teacher or approved related service provider.

(b) Be provided by an approved related services staff working under the educational direction of an approved or endorsed early childhood special education teacher.

(c) Be provided for not less than 72 clock hours over 1 school year. Services may be provided in appropriate early childhood, school, community, or family settings.

(3) If a preschool-aged student with a disability is placed in a non-special education program, then the individualized education program team shall consider the need for consultation by an early childhood special education teacher.”

“1755” Special education services (ECS) are special education services delivered to children ages 2 years 6 months through 5 years based on the needs of the individual child as specified in the IEP. Administrative Rule 340.1755 is a delivery model rather than a special education program and the pupil’s services are delivered in a variety of regular early childhood settings or the child’s home.



Children are enrolled by families in early childhood educational programs such as:

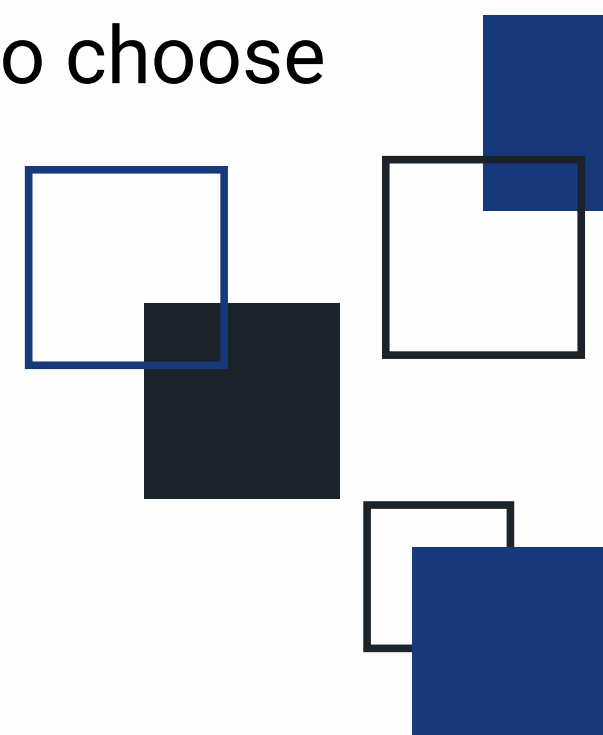
- Public school preschool/pre-kindergarten programs (Head Start, Great Start Readiness Program, Title I preschool programs, community education preschool programs).
- Private preschool programs (Head Start, Great Start Readiness Program, programs offered by private and faith-based providers).
- Programs offered in child-care facilities, including both centers and family child-care and group family child-care homes.



Hours and FTE: Each pupil's IEP must reflect a minimum of 72 hours of services within one school year. A school year for R 340.1755 is the number of weeks the district operates according to the program calendar.

Here is a link to [Full Instructions on Claiming FTE](#).

Indicator 6 Preschool Environments – Use [this worksheet](#) to choose the appropriate instructional setting on the IEP.



Early Childhood Evaluations

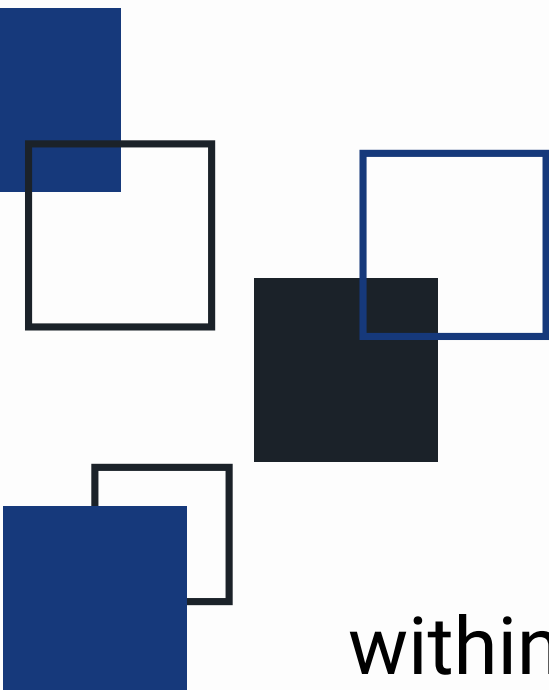


Early childhood evaluations are assessments conducted to determine the developmental needs and abilities of children from birth through five years. These evaluations are essential for identifying children who may have developmental delays, disabilities, or other special needs, allowing for early intervention and support to help them thrive. Enrollment cannot be a barrier to evaluation and offer of FAPE for a preschool child referred to the local district. Enrollment documents should be collected during the evaluation process. The information shared on a Build Up referral can be used to enter the child into your Student Information System (SIS). A staff member can call and confirm the names, addresses, and child's birthday to ensure accurate data entry. A non-reporting track can be used to house the child until enrollment, evaluation and offer of FAPE is complete. For example, your pupil accountant can set up an "EIS Referrals" track to capture this data until enrollment is complete.

The Michigan Department of Education has stated that evaluations for all students (including preschool students ages 3-5) potentially eligible under Part B of the IDEA must be conducted in compliance with all regulatory timelines. Districts may not wait until the enrollment process is complete or use district enrollment procedures and requirements in any way to delay their response of a parental request for an evaluation, completion of an evaluation, and/or an offer of FAPE.

[Guidance for Timeline for Initial Evaluations](#) (Indicator B11 Child Find)

The family should be highly engaged throughout the evaluation process. Parents and caregivers are experts on their child. Their input on how the child functions throughout daily routines and across settings should be gathered using an interview tool. The evaluation tool and family interview tool will help find out about the child's strengths, preferences, and support needed to help them engage in learning opportunities. Family members provide information that help IEP teams identify the priorities and next steps for the child. Evaluation teams can find assessment best practice tools at [ECTA Center: Practice Guides for Practitioners](#).

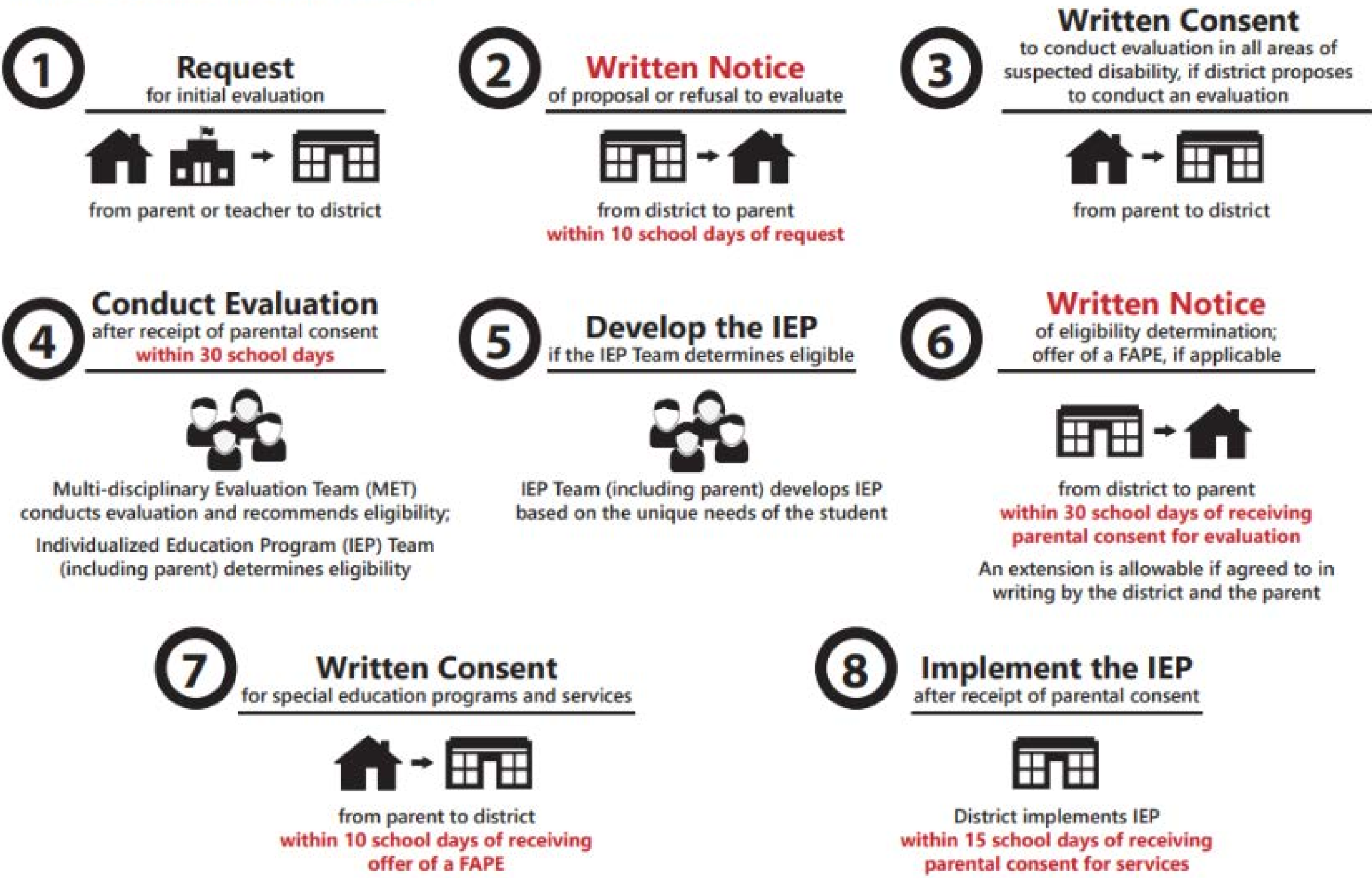


If a child is attending a preschool setting with general education peers, an observation at this setting should take place and the caregiver’s input should be collected to determine how the child functions and participates within that setting. In addition, observations with the parent/child or caregiver/child should take place and note the interaction looking for evidence of bonding and connection.

Multiple sources of information about the child’s functioning in everyday activities across settings should be used for eligibility determination. Health and developmental history should be gathered and considered as there are many health issues that could have a lasting impact on a child’s development.

Initial Evaluation Procedure for Special Education Programs and Services

Michigan Department of Education Office of Special Education Guidance Document:
[Guidance for Timeline for Initial Evaluations](#)

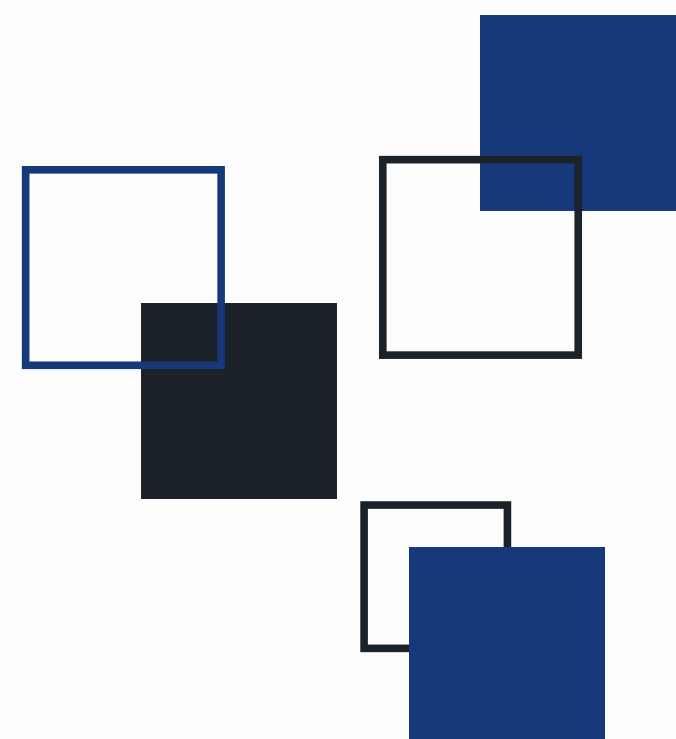


When Children Transition from Part C to Part B

Indicator B12 Early Childhood Transition – IDEA 300.124 requires children transitioning from Part C, Early On, to Part B Special Education, to have an IEP written and implemented on or before the child’s third birthday. The resident district can ensure a smooth transition by participating in the Transition Plan and Conference with Early On staff and the family during the ages of 2 years 3 months and 2 years 9 months. As the child reaches their third birthday the resident district must report the Initial IEP results in the Special Education Initial IEP/Child Find section of MiStar. For more information see the [Indicator B-12 Training Modules](#)

Also reference our [Wayne RESA Procedures for Birth to Three](#)

It is important to note that children should not necessarily go straight into ECP on their third birthday if previously enrolled in Early On Birth - Three programs. The evaluation team should consider goals and needs of the child, if the child is already in pre-school, the child’s ability to access services provided, and opportunities for inclusion within tuition programs, GSRP, etc. There are essential questions and considerations the evaluation team needs to ask (see LRE section in this guidance document.) The overall theme of these important decisions is to ensure the child receives what they need in their least restrictive environment (LRE).



IEP PRESENT LEVEL AND GOAL WRITING

When writing an ECP (Early Childhood Program) IEP goal, the team should focus on creating specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) objectives that address the child's developmental needs. IEP teams should determine areas based on data, which could include communication, gross and fine motor skills, social interaction, adaptive/self-help skills or cognitive development, while considering their unique abilities and challenges; always ensuring the goals are appropriate for their age and developmental stage.



Key Elements of a Student IEP Goal in ECP:

- Student information:
 - Clearly state the student's name and relevant details about their learning ability and any developmental delay.
- Present level of performance:
 - Describe the child's current abilities and areas where they need support, using observable behaviors.
- Goal statement:
 - Action verb: Use active verbs like "will identify," "will imitate," "will follow directions," "will point to," "will use gestures."
 - Target behavior: Specify the exact skill or behavior you want the child to develop (e.g., "colors," "shapes," "basic vocabulary words").
 - Measurable criteria: Define how you will measure progress (e.g., "with 80% accuracy," "in 3 out of 5 trials").
 - Timeframe: Set a clear deadline for achieving the goal (e.g., "by the end of the school year," "within 6 months").

Important Considerations when Writing Student IEP Goals in ECP:

- Individualized approach:
 - Tailor each goal to the specific needs of the child, considering their developmental profile and strengths.
- Collaboration:
 - Involve the child's family, therapists, teachers, and other relevant professionals in the goal-setting process.
- Functional goals:
 - Focus on goals that will enable the child to participate meaningfully in their everyday routines and environment.
- Regular review and adjustments:
 - Monitor progress and make necessary modifications to the IEP goals as needed.



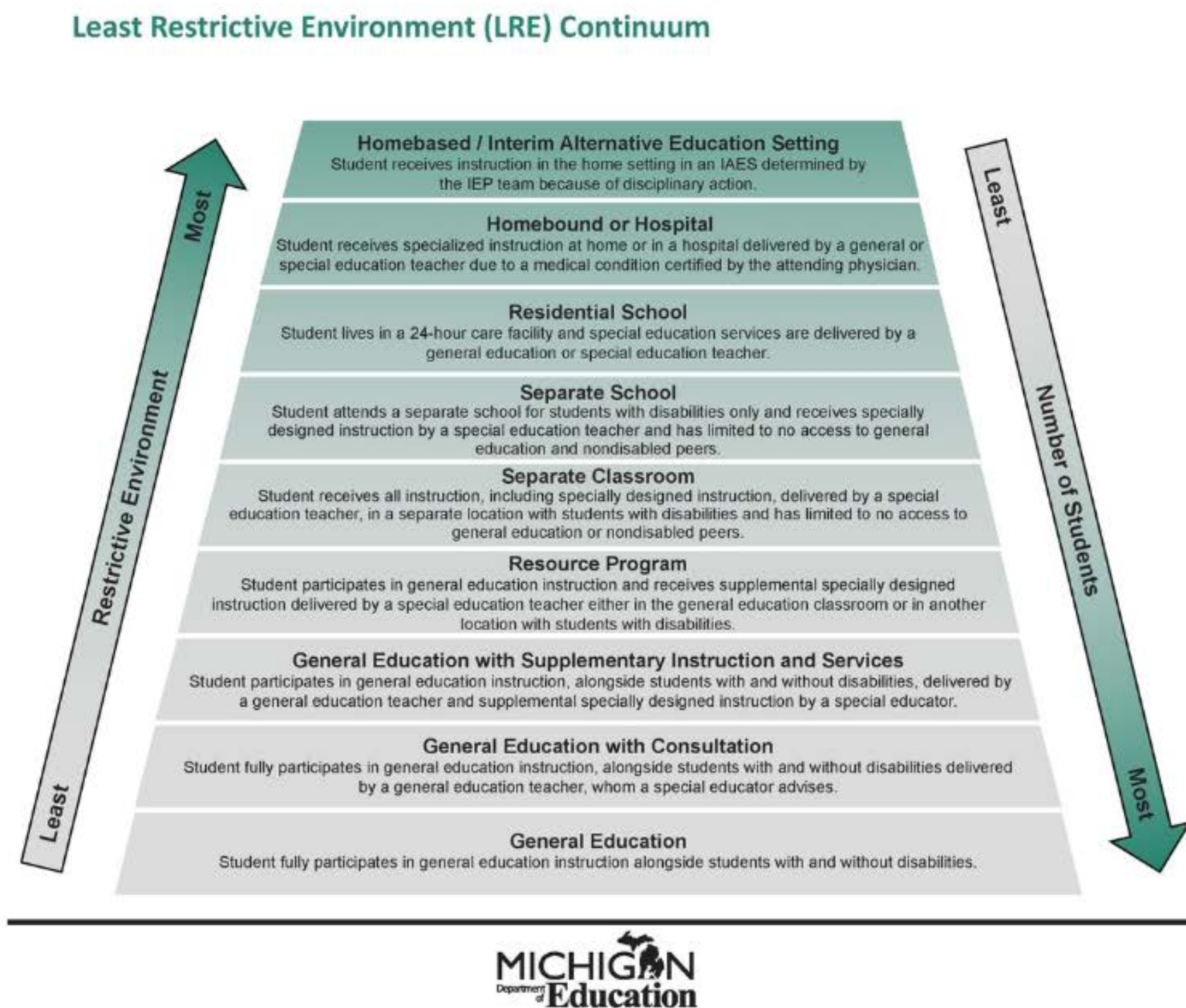
A note of caution when writing goals make sure the goals are developmentally appropriate for the age of the child by referencing the early childhood standards of quality. For example, typically developing children at age three are expected to be learning how to count using one to one correspondence from zero to five, so it would be inappropriate if a three-year-old child in an ECP setting with a documented developmental delay had a goal written to count objects up to ten.

Least Restrictive Environment

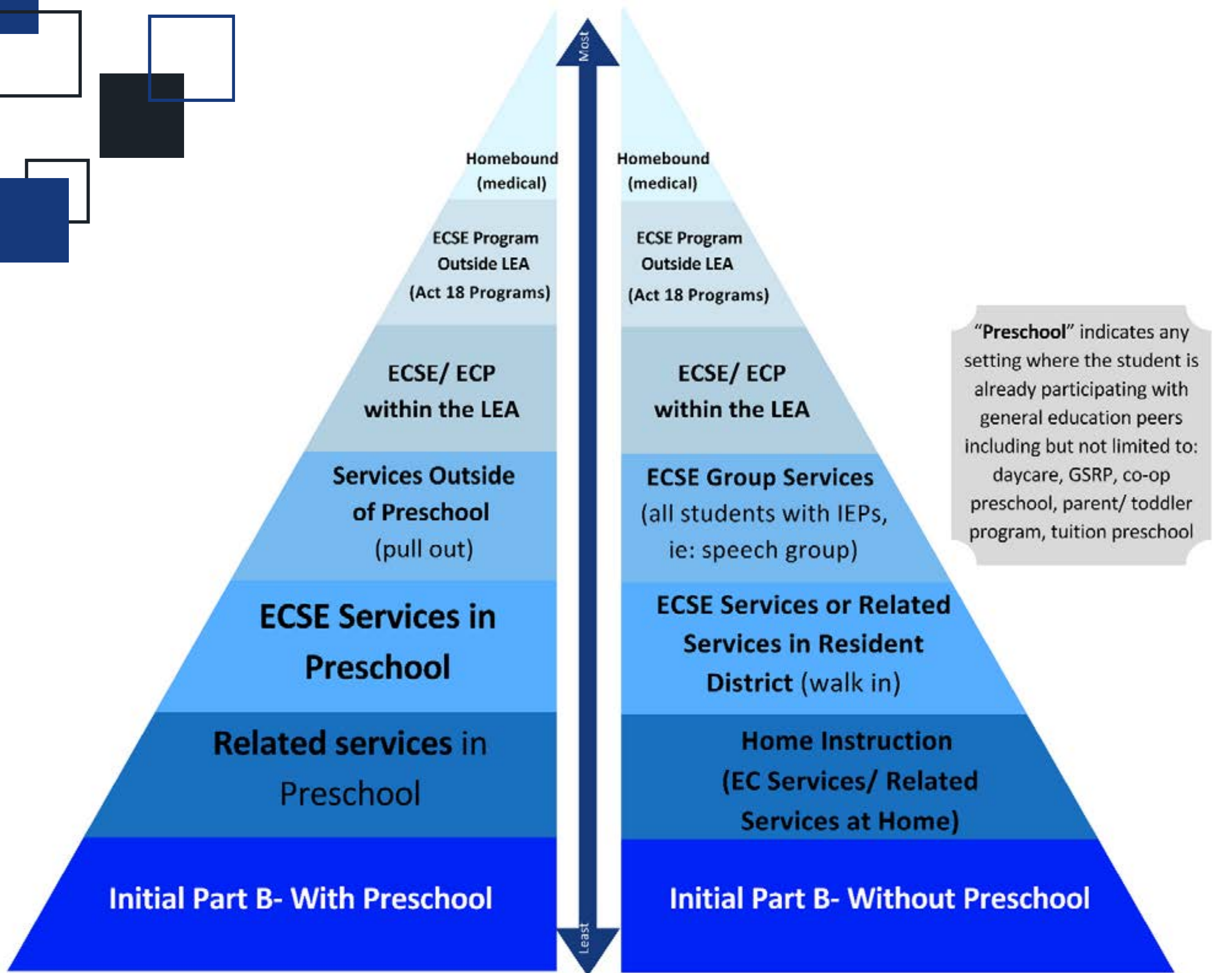
Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) is an important consideration for our preschool children and serves as a foundational principle in special education. Rooted in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), LRE emphasizes that children with disabilities should be educated alongside their typically developing peers to the maximum extent appropriate. For preschoolers, this means thoughtfully considering placement options that support inclusion while also meeting each child’s individual developmental and educational needs. Ensuring access to the LRE helps foster meaningful participation, early learning success, and a sense of belonging from the very beginning of a child’s educational journey.

IDEA Regulation §300.114(a)(2)

- General LRE requirements: Each public agency must ensure that—
1. to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are nondisabled; and
 2. special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the general educational environment occurs only if the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in general education classes with the use of supplementary aids cannot be achieved satisfactorily.



Wayne County Early Childhood LRE Continuum



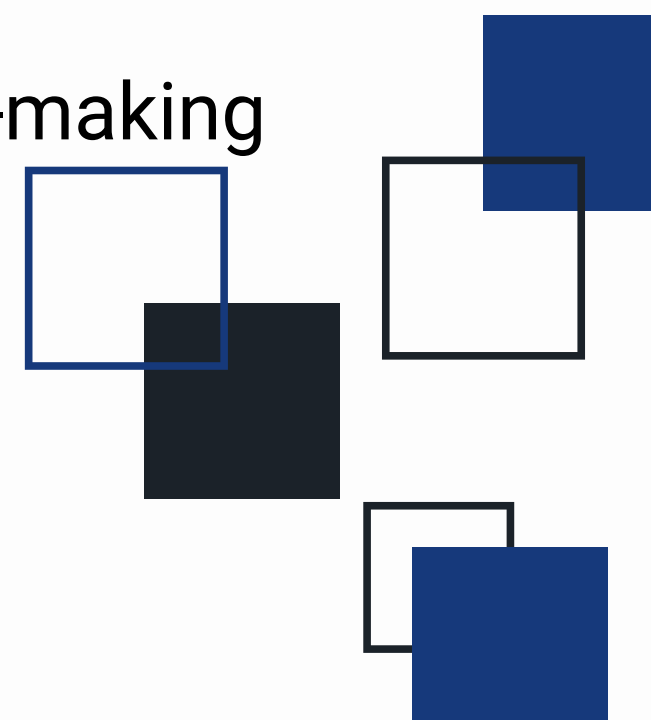
A key word here is appropriate: It means what is suitable based on data suitable for the child to make progress. Sometimes, a specific service or program cannot be provided in a general education classroom. IDEA requires placement in the least restrictive environment (LRE) for each child, a setting that is based on the child’s IEP. Children must be taught alongside their typically developing peers as much as possible.

Special education services and placement are not tied to an eligibility label. An IEP is individualized for each child. The IEP team must consider the child's social, emotional, and behavioral needs, as well as their academic needs and educational environment. This may require the provision of supplementary aids and services in nonacademic settings such as the lunchroom, playground and/or extracurricular activities. LRE is not a place — it is a principle that guides a child’s education program.

LRE Questions for Consideration

The [LRE Preschool Rubric](#) can support team discussions on service and placement options for preschool children. These questions help ensure that placement decisions for preschoolers are thoughtful, individualized, and legally compliant with IDEA's requirement that children with disabilities be educated with their nondisabled peers to the maximum extent possible.

1. What are the child's individual strengths and unique needs (what supports and services are necessary for the child to make progress and what areas of development are impacted?)
2. What are the placement options on the continuum of services? Are there general education preschool settings available, blended/inclusive programs? Where would the child be if they were not a child with a disability?
3. Can the child's needs be met in the home or in a general education preschool setting with supports? What supplementary aids and services/modifications/accommodations could be provided in a general education preschool where the child would make meaningful educational benefit?
4. What efforts have been made to support placement in the least restrictive environment? Have all options been explored and documented?
5. What is the educational benefit to the child from interacting with typically developing peers? What is the potential impact on the child's development from being in a segregated vs. inclusive setting?
6. Is parent input being considered as part of the decision-making process?



Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

Early Childhood Instructional Standards Documents

[State of Michigan Early Childhood Standards of Quality](#)

This document details the state standards for all early childhood programs in the state of Michigan including Head Start, GSRP, private child care, and Early Childhood Special Education settings. A unique feature of this document is that it provides early learning and development standards in all areas of development and program quality standards that support program administration.

[Division of Early Childhood Standards](#)

According to the Division of Early Childhood, “The Early Interventionist/Early Childhood Special Educator (EI/ECSE) Standards represent the first standards to focus specifically on the preparation of professionals who work with young children ages birth through 8 who have or are at-risk for developmental delays and disabilities and their families, across home, classroom and community settings.” This document supports administrators to evaluate the skills and competencies required by staff to provide high quality early childhood intervention to children with developmental delays.



Curriculum Guidance and Resources

An early childhood program should have a comprehensive curriculum which provides a framework for teachers and ensures children are exposed to a well-rounded education. It should cover a wide range of subjects and skills, promoting deeper understanding, critical thinking, and preparedness for real-world challenges. Quality curricula provide a structured progression of learning across different domains, while also allowing for flexibility to address individual children's needs and cater to diverse learning styles.

Below is a list of curricular options that may be appropriate for Early Childhood Special Education programming:

- **Connect 4 Learning**

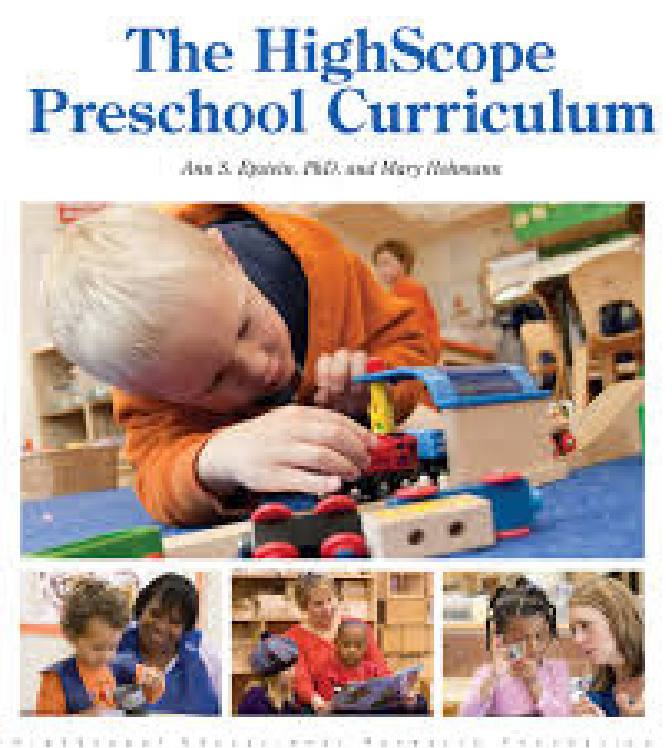
- Research-based, interdisciplinary curriculum comprised of six units and thirty-two weeks of learning centers and lessons, requires thoughtful planning and teacher training to fully utilize potential.
- Used in some GSRP Classrooms
- <https://www.connect4learning.com/why-c4l>



- **Creative Curriculum**

- Highly scripted, focuses on project-based, investigative learning, supports newer teachers, but activities are high level and may need additional adaptations.
- Used in GSRP and Head Start Classrooms
- <https://teachingstrategies.com/product/the-creative-curriculum-for-preschool/>





• High Scope

- Play-based approach curriculum focused on active learning, aligned with national and state early learning standards, requires a variety of materials and resources along with a large amount of training for teachers. Highly adaptable for all learning levels including infant levels of development.
- Used in GSRP and Head Start Classrooms
- <https://highscope.org/what-we-offer/the-highscope-curriculum/preschool-curriculum/>



• Read It Once Again

- Literacy focused curriculum providing concepts and skills necessary for young children to enter kindergarten. Promoted and used by educators and speech-language pathologists. Informal research results provided.
- <https://www.readitonceagain.com/benefits-of-read-it-once-again/>



• Second Step

- A social emotional curriculum that explicitly teaches skills like recognizing emotions and self-regulation. Easy to use platform and designed to keep children engaged. Weekly themes include short, daily activities with little or no preparation time needed.
- Used in Head Start Classrooms
- <https://www.secondstep.org/early-learning-curriculum>

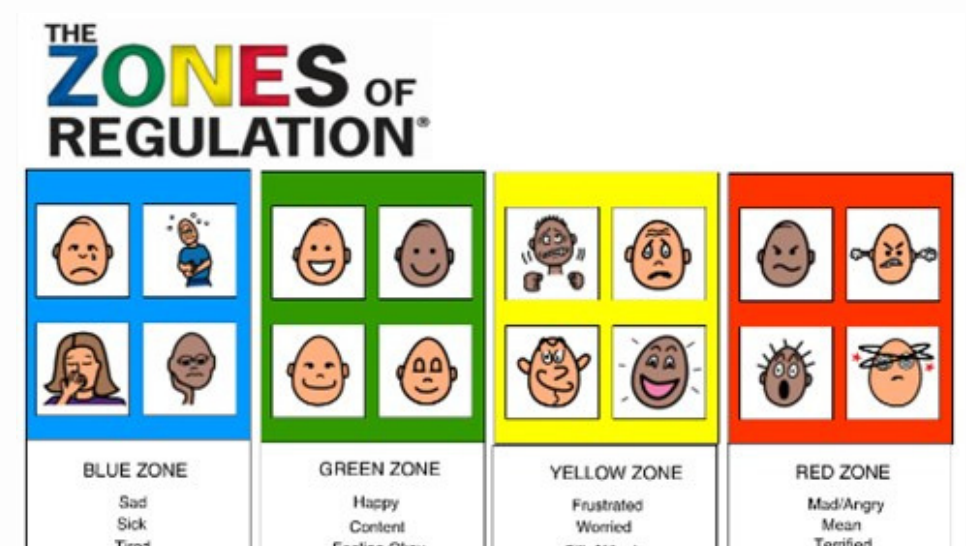
- **TeachTown**

- Two-year, grab and go, inclusive early childhood special education curriculum for children ages three to five. Includes 72 total themes with access to whole group and small group activity lesson plans with leveled differentiation. The program is brand new and can be deemed expensive.
- <https://web.teachtown.com/solutions/launch-for-prek/>



- **Zones of Regulation**

- A social emotional learning curriculum and regulation program focused on increasing self-awareness, emotional understanding and behavior management. Offered as a digital curriculum with training and additional free resources.
- <https://zonesofregulation.com/>



Progress Monitoring & Assessment Tools

- **AEPS**

- An assessment, evaluation and programming system for infants and young children ages birth to six. Collects assessment data, tracks and supports emerging skills, actively involves families and strengthens school readiness.
- <https://brookespublishing.com/product/aeps/?srsltid=AfmBOooO6wHBDh-RA2FQvMvntAa40IRrEoAzBLvsvAcyoYg7SH9VtJ7P>



- **Brigance**

- A publisher of screeners, assessment tools and instructional materials for early childhood and special education professionals. Standardized and criteria referenced, more useful for progress monitoring/broken down into detailed measures.
- <https://www.curriculumassociates.com/programs/brigance>



- **COR Advantage**

- A developmental scale that is built on thirty-four items across eight major areas of growth that uses anecdotal notes, photos and videos to track child growth through authentic assessment and create individuated lesson plans based on child and classroom progress that is aligned to the High Scope curriculum.
- <https://highscope.org/what-we-offer/assessment/child-assessment/>



- **TS Gold**

- An observation-based assessment system that measures children's growth and development across thirty-eight learning objectives for children from birth through kindergarten, using a ten-point scale to rate their knowledge, skills, and behaviors that is aligned to the Creative Curriculum.
- <https://teachingstrategies.com/product/gold/>



Child Outcome Summary (COS)

Indicator B7 Preschool Outcomes – Required by IDEA to measure the impact and benefit each child experiences from receipt of early childhood special education services. Preschool Outcomes measures the percent of children with IEP's, ages 3, 4, and 5 who are not yet enrolled in kindergarten and demonstrate improved:

- (A) Positive social-emotional skills
- (B) Acquisition and use of knowledge and skills
- (C) Use of appropriate behaviors to meet their needs.

Child Outcomes Summary Data is required to be reported within 30 school days of both entry and exit from Preschool Special Education Services. The Special Education Director and district Michigan Student Data System (MSDS) staff should work together to ensure the data is accurately submitted to MSDS at each of the count collections by using the MSDS report titled: Early Childhood Special Education Assessment Dates. COS data is reported by special education staff members completing the MiStar Qform titled: 3-5 Preschool Child Outcomes Summary (COS) or the PowerSchool form titled: 3-5 Special Education Outcomes Entry and 3-5 Special Education Child Outcomes Exit. A rating date, rating type (entry/exit) and ratings 1-7 are reported for each outcome. At exit the provider must also answer the yes/no question: has the child learned any new skills related to this outcome? Use this link to view the [manual for COS completion](#).

Classroom Environment

Interest Areas

Interest areas in a preschool classroom are important because they provide a structured environment that caters to children's natural curiosity and allows them to engage in self-directed play, explore different learning domains through activities that align with their specific interests, fosters a deeper understanding of early literacy and mathematics and promotes overall development across various areas like cognitive, social, and creative skills.

Interest areas should be well defined using furniture as partitions to visually and physically divide up the space. When possible, busy and loud areas like Blocks and Dramatic Play should be set up away from quieter areas like Library and the Calm Down Corner.

Examples of Interest Areas are:

- Blocks
- Dramatic Play/ House Area (Kitchen)
- Toys & Games
- Art
- Library/ Book Area
- Discovery
- Sand and Water
- Music and Movement
- Technology
- Calm Down Area

Sand and Water Table



Dramatic Play



Calm Down Area



Block Area

Consistent Daily Routine

A classroom schedule is important because it provides structure and predictability for children, helping children feel secure, know what to expect, and manage their time effectively. This ultimately leads to better focus and engagement in learning activities, while also reducing disruptive behaviors. Essentially, a well-planned schedule fosters a positive learning environment by minimizing uncertainty and maximizing learning time. The schedule should contain visuals/pictures so children can “read” it themselves. Schedules should be posted at their eye level. Children should be taught how to use visual schedules and track the progress they have made on the schedule throughout the day.

The daily routine should contain at a minimum: one large block of uninterrupted play/ exploration time where children direct their learning based on their interests, one small group direct instruction period where adults have planned an explicit skill to teach and practice, and one large group time when the class meets together as a whole to engage in adult supported learning opportunities.



Half Day Schedule Example:

- Preparation, Arrival and Choice- 30 minutes
- Group Meeting- 20 minutes
- Choice Time- 60 minutes
- Cleanup, Handwashing and Snack- 20 minutes
- Small Groups- 20 minutes
- Outdoor Choice Time- 30 minutes
- Read-Aloud- 15 minutes
- Music/Movement, Group Meeting and Departures- 15 minutes

Full Day Schedule Example:

- Preparation, Arrival and Choice- 30 minutes
- Group Meeting- 20 minutes
- Choice Time- 60 minutes
- Cleanup, Handwashing and Snack- 20 minutes
- Small Groups- 20 minutes
- Outdoor Choice Time- 30 minutes
- Lunch- 20 minutes
- Cleanup, Handwashing and Bathroom- 15 minutes
- Rest- 60 minutes
- Read-Aloud- 15 minutes
- Choice Time- 30 minutes
- Outdoor Choice Time- 30 minutes
- Music/Movement, Group Meeting and Departures- 15 minutes



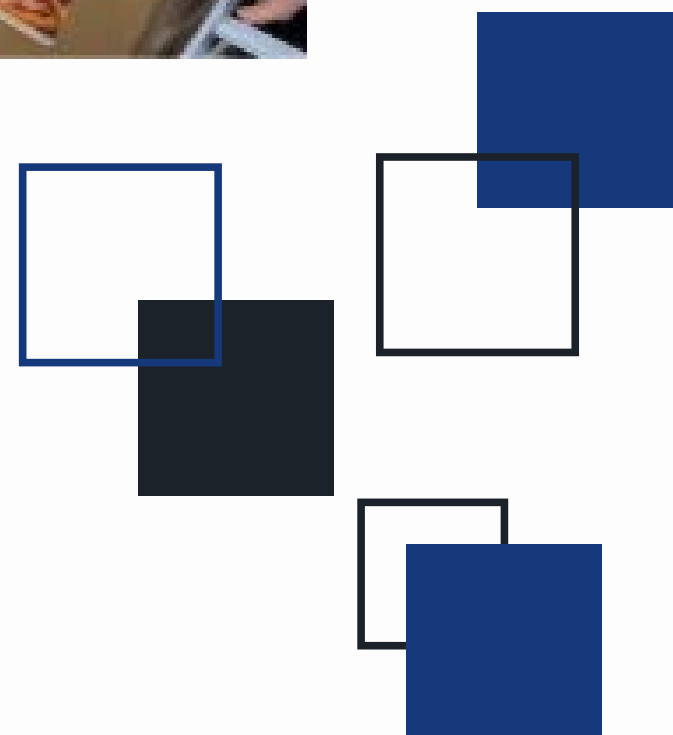
While calendar is a common practice amongst classrooms and offers numerous benefits, it is important to note that calendar routines and activities should be focused on math practices. Over emphasis on days of the week or tomorrow/yesterday are abstract and not developmentally appropriate for children at this age. Embedded activities like one-to-one counting, pattern recognition/creation and weather graphing are all authentic ways to embed standards across developmental domains.

High Quality Materials

High-quality materials in a classroom can significantly impact learning by providing a well-structured foundation for instruction when aligned with learning standards. High quality materials can support engagement with content, and aid teachers in delivering effective lessons, thus promoting equity by ensuring all children have access to rigorous and appropriate learning experiences.

Examples of High-Quality Materials are:

- Learning materials: Blocks, puzzles, books, magazines, manipulatives, board games, and age-appropriate toys
- Dramatic play area: Props for dramatic play; Play food and cooking utensils
- Music center: A variety of instruments
- Posters: A variety of brightly colored visuals for children to see, use and interact with
- Real materials: Wood, metal, and plastic to help children learn practical life skills
- Schedules: A variety of classroom schedules and individualized child schedules based on children's need. Schedules benefit predictability, engagement, improve behavior management and increase child independence.





While some plastic toys may be included, teachers should be aware of whether or not their classroom has age-appropriate toys available for three-to-five-year-old children or only a selection of infant and toddler toys. Ideally, the classroom should be filled with open-ended materials and not battery-operated toys.

All areas should be available during choice time or extended work time. When deciding on closing play areas, it is appropriate to have the area closed and/or covered when it is not a choice during that time, for example, during arrival or snack time.

Sensory Supports

Sensory supports can be important for children who have differences in how they process sensory information. Sensory supports can help children improve focus, balance and movement, motor skills, and overall daily functioning. They can also assist in the development of communication skills and relieve stress.

Examples of Sensory Supports are:

- Personal learning spaces
- Calm down area with supportive materials
- Multisensory toys/fidget toys
- Alternative seating
- Weighted lap pad
- Noise-canceling headphones
- Heavy work or gross motor break

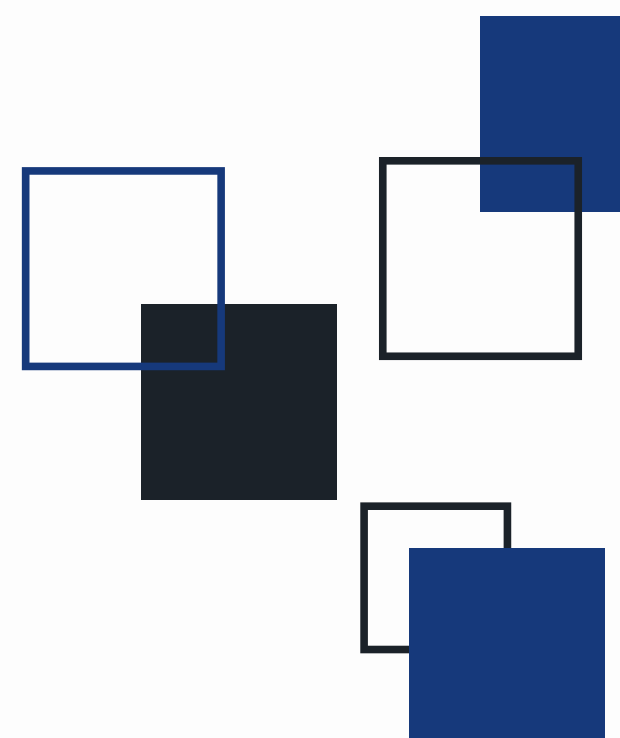


Technology

Technology should be used selectively and intentionally—only when it meaningfully enhances children’s learning or improves access. For example, interactive whiteboards can enrich instruction by displaying real-life images connected to a story being read or by offering hands-on activities that foster deeper engagement. One of the most critical uses of technology in early childhood settings is through assistive technology (AT) and augmentative and alternative communication (AAC). These tools are not optional enhancements—they are essential supports that enable children with diverse abilities to access language, express themselves, and participate fully in classroom activities. When used thoughtfully, AT and AAC promote equity, inclusion, and independence, ensuring that every child can engage in meaningful learning experiences.

However, educators should remain mindful of minimizing passive screen time that lacks interactive or developmental value. Excessive video viewing or activities that closely resemble television watching do not contribute meaningfully to children's language development, social interaction, or critical thinking. Check out [these resources](#) from NAEYC for more information on screentime with young children.

Many educators are tempted to play educational songs on their interactive boards, however, language development is better supported by teachers singing familiar songs because they can adjust the pace and intonation in order to support children to actually hear and process the language. Likewise, the “tv” should never be left on during choice time when children are encouraged to interact and talk with one another. The extra sound of background music, particularly those with lyrics, takes away from the language rich environment by making conversations harder to understand.



Examples of Technology Appropriately Used in ECP/ECSE Classrooms:

- **Interactive Whiteboards/Smartboards**

- Children can trace letters, solve math problems, or explore shapes on the screen. This can also be used to display and interact with your morning message or circle time.



- **Educational Apps and Games**

- There are various apps designed for early learners to practice literacy, numeracy, language and problem-solving skills. These apps provide individualized learning opportunities, allowing children to progress at their own pace while making learning engaging and interactive.



- **Digital Storytelling Tools**

- Children can create their own digital stories by recording their voices, adding images, and even creating animations using simple tools. This encourages creativity, language development, and communication skills.



- **Virtual Field Trips**

- Using virtual reality (VR) or videos, teachers can take children on virtual field trips to places they might not be able to visit in person.



- **Assistive Technology and AAC**

- From simple switches and adapted keyboards to speech-generating devices and AAC apps, these tools ensure that children with physical, cognitive, or communication challenges can actively participate in classroom routines, express themselves, and access learning on an equal footing with peers.



- **Interactive Books and E-Books**

- E-Books can come with interactive elements such as read-aloud features, animation, and clickable images. It encourages reading and comprehension by bringing stories to life in a multi-sensory approach.



- **Music and Audio Tools**

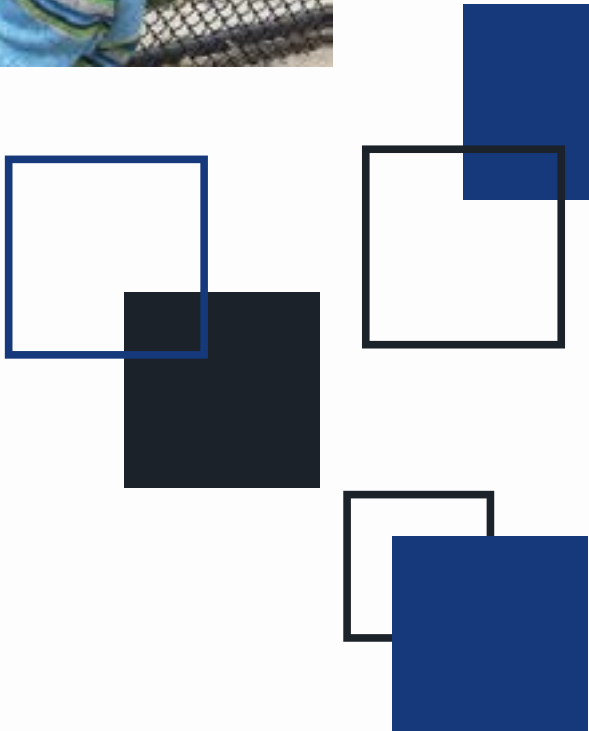
- Staff can use digital music apps or simple instruments to teach children about rhythm, melody, and sound or play educational songs. Music supports language development, memory, and emotional expression.



Communication

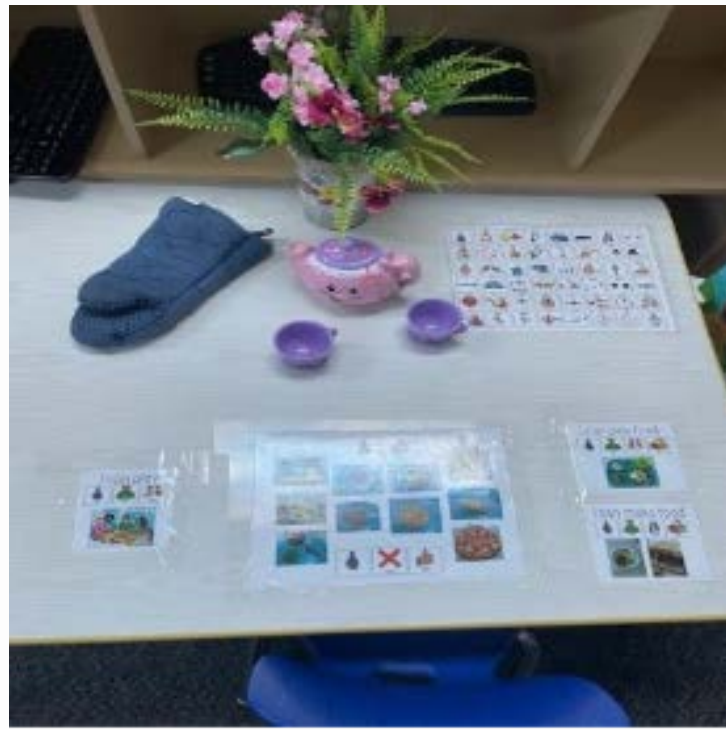
In early childhood, the development of functional communication must be prioritized above all else. Every aspect of the classroom environment should be designed to support and encourage children to independently express themselves in the ways that work best for them—whether through spoken language, gestures, signs, pictures, or communication devices. This includes consistent access to Core Vocabulary Communication Boards placed throughout the classroom, embedded visual supports within daily routines (such as conflict resolution books, choice boards, and planning/recall boards), and the intentional, frequent modeling of Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) systems.

Teachers should regularly reflect on the communication environment in their classrooms. Do the visuals and tools merely direct behavior, or do they provide children with meaningful opportunities to share their thoughts, preferences, needs, and ideas? Communication should be viewed not as compliance, but as a foundation for connection, autonomy, and learning. Adults should actively engage in play with children during choice times to model the use of complex language and give students patient and skilled language partners to converse with during play. Teachers can also provide scripts and sentence stems to help scaffold children with emergent communication.



Visuals and Micro-Routines

Early childhood classrooms should have visuals posted at the children's eye level throughout the classroom to support independence and learning of classrooms expectations. Visuals should reflect expectations, appropriate use of materials, and micro-routines. Some examples of highly supportive visuals for micro-routines include steps for using the toilet, washing hands, and unpacking backpacks. Other visuals might include spots on the floor for where to stand to line up at the door, a number 2 on the paper towel holder to indicate to only push it down twice to get towels, a picture of the toy that belongs in the basket tapped to the outside of the basket, and photographs of children sitting to indicate how to sit on the carpet.

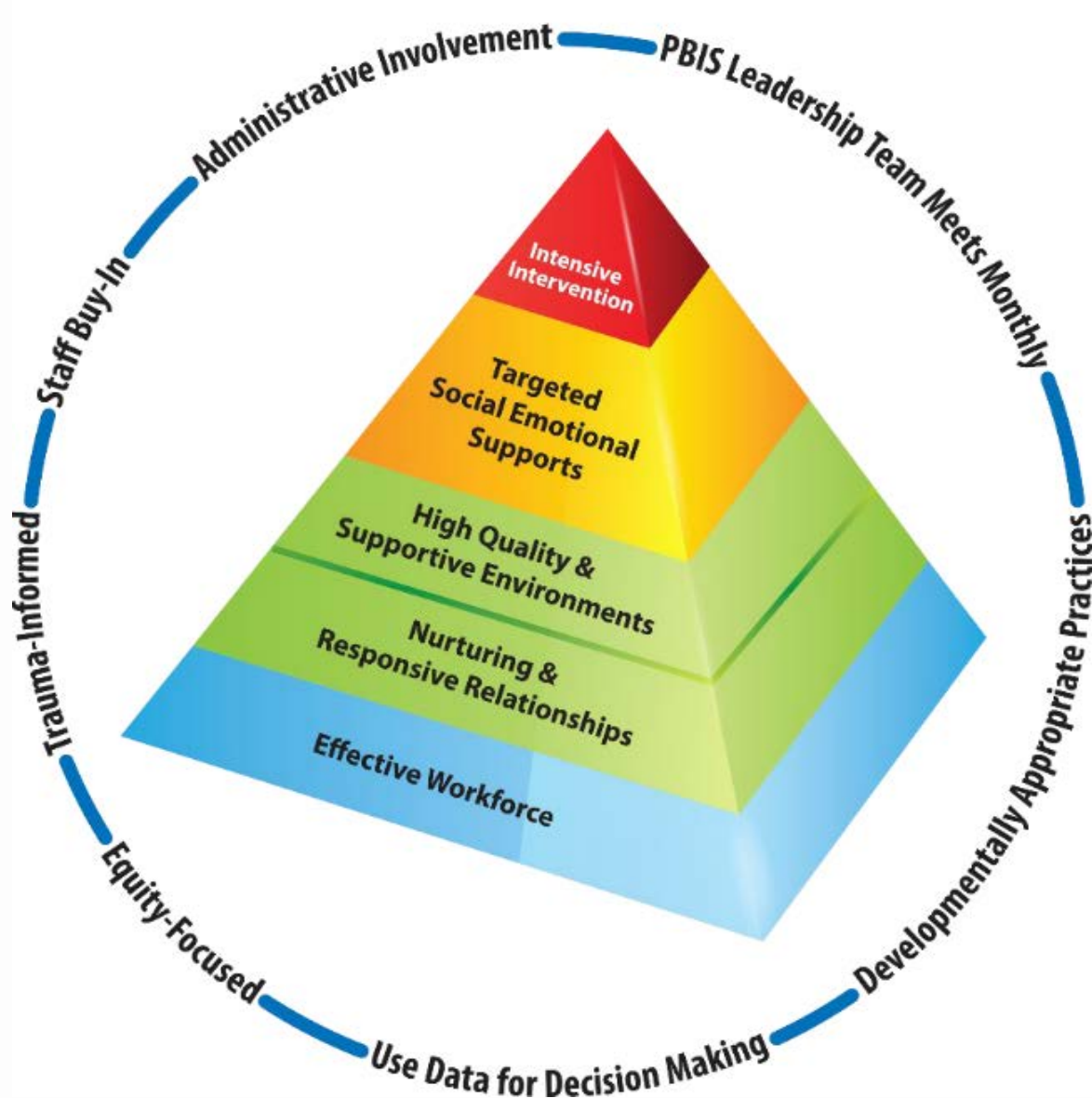


Intervention Strategies and Partnerships

We know that children with developmental delays who qualify for Early Childhood Special Education services frequently benefit from early intervention that supports their academic and social learning needs. This requires a specific skill set of developmentally appropriate practices that meet the unique learning needs of young children.

Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) versus Early Childhood Positive Behavior interventions and Supports (EC PBIS)

While the theoretical framework and overall structure are very similar for both of these systems, the strategies and practices supported by EC PBIS have been specifically studied and proven to be effective with children ages birth through five years old. Nationally referred to as [The Pyramid Model](#), EC PBIS training is available through the state [MiMTSS TA Center](#) and at [Wayne RESA](#). It is highly recommended that the early childhood staff and those in leadership that support them, across all programs, receive EC PBIS training and utilize the framework to support their early learners behavioral and developmental needs.





Role of the Parent and Community Partnership in Early Childhood Programming

In Early Childhood settings serving children under IDEA Part B, meaningful family involvement is required by law. Programs must discuss the family's goals for their child, their vision for what schooling will look like, and their individual circumstances. Because of this, IEP Team meetings may sound different in early childhood than they do in the later years of K-12 schooling. Parents have much more say in the setting in which they want to enroll their child. However, the local school district (LEA) or public school academy (PSA) does still ultimately determine the offer of FAPE as determined by the IEP Team.

Parent and community partnership in early childhood programming is also crucial for supporting the developmental needs of children, ensuring their success, and creating a holistic learning environment. Both parents and the community play vital roles in reinforcing what children learn in early childhood education settings. Here's a breakdown of how these partnerships positively impact early childhood programming:

1. Supporting Child Development:

- **Parents:** Parents are the first and most influential teachers in a child's life. Their involvement ensures continuity between home and educational settings and reinforces lessons and values learned at school. For instance, a parent can follow up on classroom activities at home providing a consistent environment for learning.
- **Community:** Community organizations (libraries, health clinics, local businesses, etc.) can offer resources and support services that enhance a child's growth. For example, access to community programs such as story time at the library can build a child's literacy skills.

2. Enhancing Social-Emotional Learning:

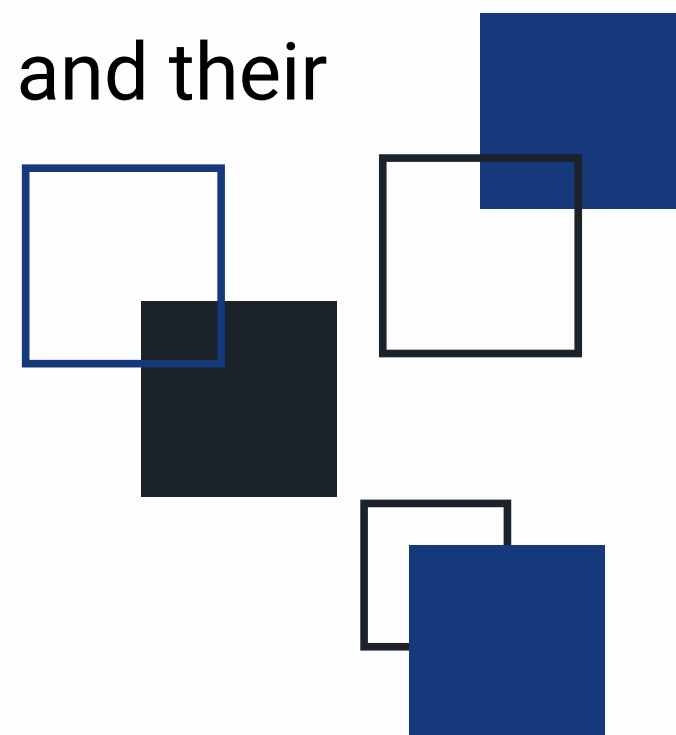
- **Parents:** Parents teach children how to manage emotions, resolve conflicts, and build relationships. Their active participation in school activities, such as volunteering, helps foster positive social-emotional development by showing children the importance of community involvement.
- **Community:** Community partnerships can offer a diverse range of social experiences. For example, partnerships with local cultural centers can expose children to different cultures, helping them develop empathy, respect, and a sense of belonging.

3. Providing Resources and Support:

- **Parents:** Parents bring essential knowledge about their child's individual needs, preferences, and developmental stages. When they are actively engaged in their child's education, they can share insights with teachers, allowing for more personalized and effective teaching.
- **Community:** Community partnerships can provide valuable resources, including access to specialists, funding for educational materials, and additional support programs. This helps ensure that children receive a well-rounded, well-supported education, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

4. Promoting Educational Success:

- **Parents:** Parents who participate in early childhood education programs tend to have a positive impact on their children's academic success. They help set expectations, reinforce positive habits, and show their children the importance of education.
- **Community:** Local businesses and organizations can contribute to educational success by offering mentorship programs, internships, and real-world experiences that extend learning beyond the classroom, giving children a broader view of the world and their potential.



5. Building a Strong Support Network:

- Parents: When parents are involved in early childhood programs, they build a network of support with other parents, teachers, and caregivers. This fosters a sense of community and shared responsibility for the children's development and well-being.
- Community: Community partnerships create a network of resources and support for children and families. Schools, non-profit organizations, and local governments can work together to offer wraparound services (e.g., food assistance, health screenings) that support the overall well-being of children and their families.

Field Trip Ideas:

- Apple Orchard
- Farm
- Gymnastics Center
- Hands-On Museum
- Local Library
- Outdoor Adventure Center
- The Friendship Circle
- Zoo



Parent Training Opportunities:

- Assistive Technology
- Behavior Best Practices
- Professional Learning Community (PLC)
- Potty Training



Community Organizations:

- [Autism Speaks](#)
- [Mimi's Mission](#)
- [MI Alliance For Families](#)
- [MiSide](#)
- [Starfish Family Services](#)
- [The Friendship Circle](#)
- [The Guidance Center](#)
- [Wayne Metropolitan CAA](#)



Instructional Coaching



Like all teachers within the district, ECP teaching staff should be eligible to receive specialized coaching (math, literacy, etc.) from available staff within the district. In addition, ECP staff are assigned an autism spectrum disorder (ASD) coach whose skill set specifically supports their integration of ASD friendly instructional practices and supports into their classroom. As with all coaching, the relationship between the ASD coach and teacher should be supportive and goal focused, not evaluative or supervisory in nature. Administration, who supports early childhood programming, should collaborate with the ASD coaches to better understand the needs and goals of the ECP staff and to support the day-to-day implementation of classroom practices that support their goals.

Typically, the ASD coaching staff focuses on supporting teaching teams to set up their learning environment in a way that is conducive to learning for young children with Autism. This could include, but is not limited to:

- developing functional communication systems
- facilitating classroom set up and arrangement of materials
- supporting difficult transitions within the day
- using visuals throughout the classroom to support independence
- utilizing ASD strategies to support specific student behaviors
- teaching data collection techniques to support behavior plans or IEP goals



Professional Learning

Whenever possible, ECP staff should be included in professional learning offered to other early childhood staff including topics like emergent literacy and early math practices. In addition, ECP staff would benefit from training designed to support the specific instructional modalities of early childhood classrooms.

ECP teachers should also be offered the same opportunities for peer-to-peer support as their general education colleagues. This could include instructional rounds, participation in PLCs with other early educators, and collaboration with other like programs throughout the county.

The following are some professional learning resources that would be beneficial for ECP program staff and/or supporting administrators:

[CCRESA Office of Innovative Projects | CCRESA Office of Innovative Projects: Training](#)

[ECTA Center: Improving Systems, Practices and Outcomes](#)

[AFIRM Modules](#)

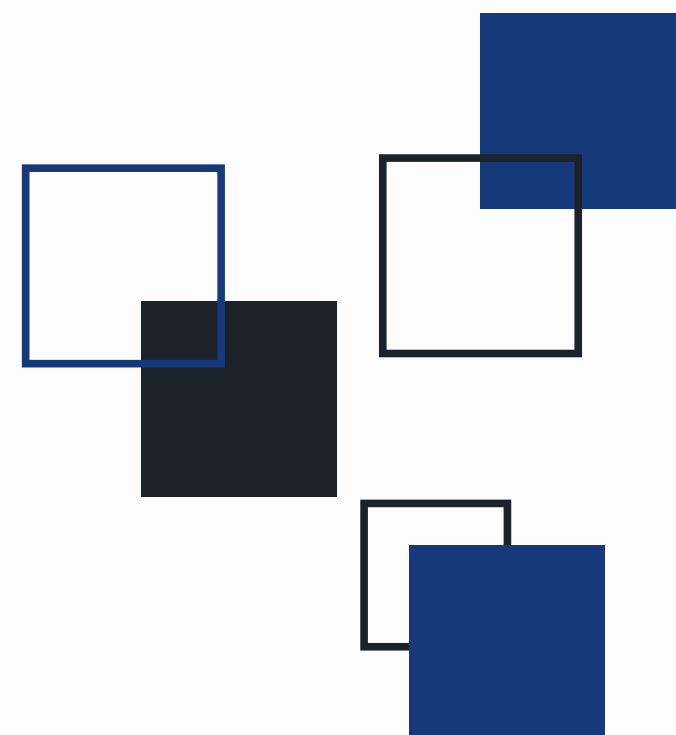
[HighScope Conference](#)

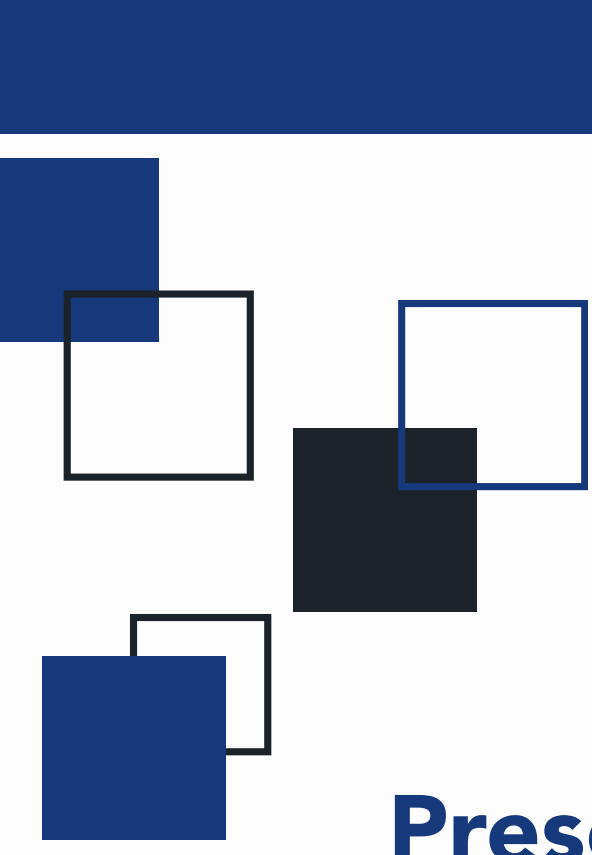
[MiAEYC Conference](#)

[Michigan Division of Early Childhood Conference](#)

[START Early Childhood Trainings](#)

[Wayne RESA Early Childhood Offerings](#)





Special Topics in Early Childhood

Preschool Seclusion and Restraint Law

In accordance with [MCL 380.1307 Use of Seclusion and Restraint in Public Schools Policy](#), “emergency seclusion is not permitted for the confinement of preschool children.” All requirements as described for K-12 settings, including for training and reporting for restraint are required by the MDE policy in preschool settings.

Programs should take special care to ensure that their use of specialty seating during instruction does not inadvertently constitute “mechanical restraint” which is described in the policy as “the use of any device, article, garment, or material attached to or adjacent to a pupil’s body to perform restraint.” and is a prohibited practice in all circumstances including emergency situations.

Additional Resources Regarding this Policy can be found at:

[Family Matters Summary](#)

[MDE Emergency Use of Seclusion and Physical Restraint FAQ](#)

Childcare Licensing (CCLB)

It is important to note that while ECP programs are not required to follow childcare licensing requirements, they are well established best practices for the care and instruction of young children and should be consulted and followed to the greatest extent possible. The following are some relevant excerpts from the licensing manual to consider:

R 400.8213 Staff; volunteer

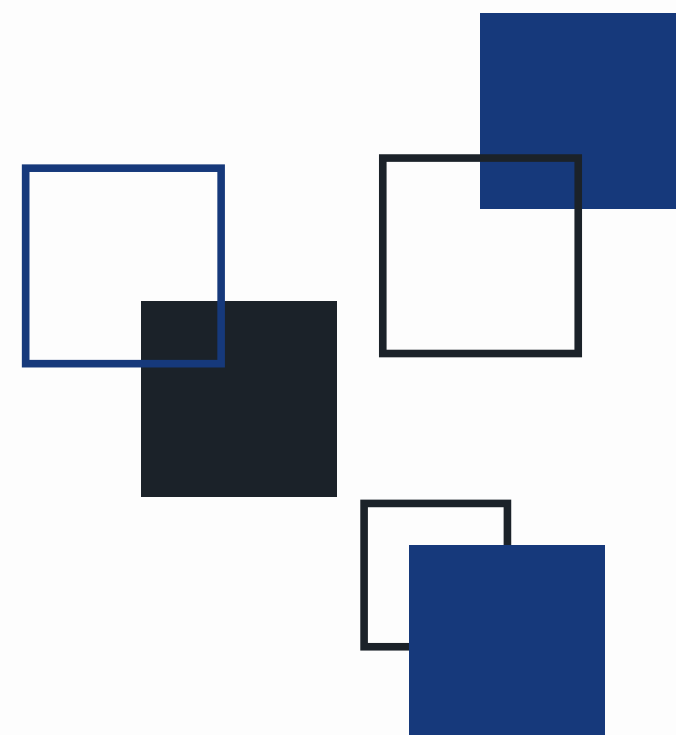
(1) All staff and volunteers present at the center shall:

- (a) Provide appropriate care and supervision of children at all times.
- (b) Act in a manner that is conducive to the welfare of children.

- (c) Make an immediate verbal report to the department of health and human services, children's protective services, by telephone at 1-855- 444-3911, on reasonable cause to suspect child abuse or child neglect. The verbal report must be followed by submission of a written report within 72 hours of the verbal report.
- (d) Sign and date a written statement at the time of hiring or before volunteering and indicate all of the following information:
 - (i) The individual is aware that abuse and neglect of children is against the law.
 - (ii) The individual is informed of the center's policies on child abuse and neglect.
 - (iii) The individual knows they are mandated reporters of child abuse and child neglect and are required by law to immediately report suspected abuse and neglect to the department of health and human services, children's protective services, as described in subdivision (c) of this subrule.

R 400.8254 Diapering; toileting.

- (1) Except as provided in subrule (2) of this rule, diapering must occur in a designated diapering area that complies with all of the following:
 - (a) Is physically separated from food preparation and food service.
 - (b) Is within close proximity to a sink that is used exclusively for hand washing.
 - (c) Has non-absorbent, smooth, easily cleanable surfaces in good repair.
 - (d) Is of sturdy construction with railings or barriers to prevent falls.
 - (e) Is an elevated diapering table or similar structure.
 - (f) Is washed, rinsed, and sanitized after each use.
- (2) Children 1 year of age and older may be changed in a bathroom standing up or on a nonabsorbent, easily sanitized surface, with a changing pad between the child and the surface.
- (3) Diapering supplies must be within easy reach of the designated diapering area.



(4) A plastic-lined, tightly covered container must be used exclusively for disposable diapers and training pants and diapering supplies. The container must be emptied and sanitized at the end of each day.

(5) Only single-use disposable wipes or other single-use cleaning cloths must be used to clean a child during the diapering or toileting process.

(6) Diapers and training pants must be checked frequently and changed when wet or soiled.

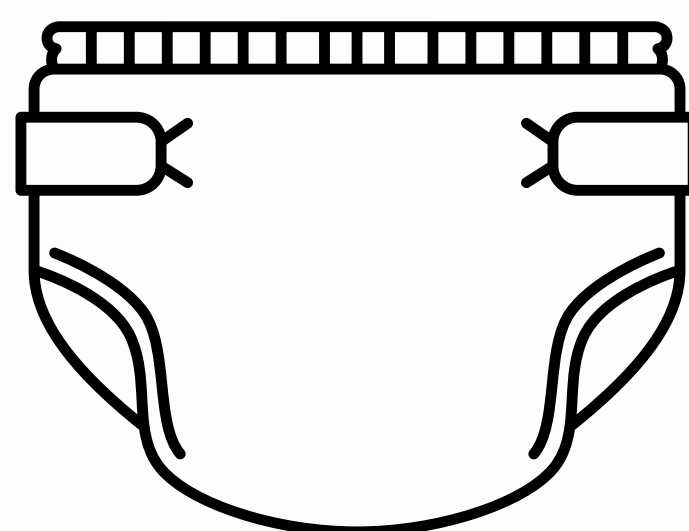
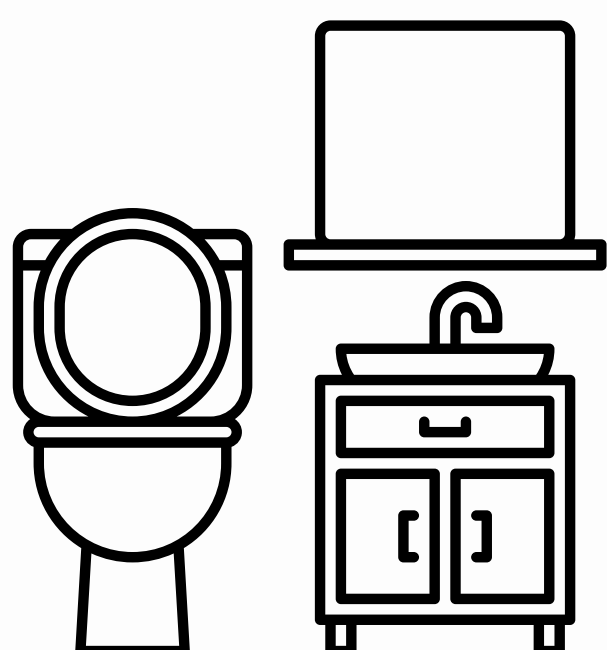
(7) Guidelines for diapering must be posted in diapering areas.

(8) Disposable gloves, if used for diapering, must only be used once for a specific child and be removed and disposed of in a safe and sanitary manner immediately after each diaper change.

(10) Toilet learning or training must be planned cooperatively between the child's regular teachers and the child's parent so the toilet routine established is consistent between the center and the child's home.

(11) Equipment used for toilet learning or training must be provided. All of the following equipment is acceptable for toilet learning or training:

- (a) Adult-sized toilets with safe and easily cleanable modified toilet seats and step aids.
- (b) Child-sized toilets.
- (c) Non-flushing toilets or potty chairs, if they are all of the following:
 - (i) Made of a material that is easily cleanable.
 - (ii) Used only in a bathroom area.
 - (iii) Used over a surface that is impervious to moisture.
 - (iv) Cleaned and disinfected after each use.



R 400.8280 Discipline.

(1) Positive methods of discipline that encourage self-control, self-direction, self-esteem, and cooperation must be used.

(2) All of the following means of punishment are prohibited:

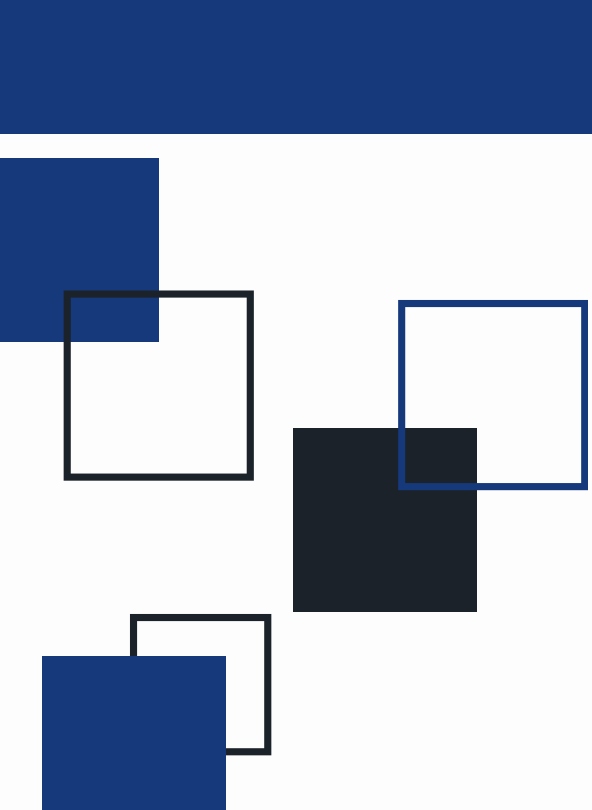
- (a) Hitting, spanking, shaking, biting, pinching, or inflicting other forms of corporal punishment.
- (b) Placing any substances in a child's mouth, including but not limited to, soap, hot sauce, or vinegar.
- (c) Restricting a child's movement by binding or tying him or her.
- (d) Inflicting mental or emotional punishment, such as humiliating, shaming, or threatening a child.
- (e) Depriving a child of meals, snacks, rest, or necessary toilet use.
- (f) Excluding a child from outdoor play or other gross motor activities.
- (g) Excluding a child from daily learning experiences.
- (h) Isolating a child in an adjacent room, closet, locked room, box, hallway, darkened area, play area, or another area where the child cannot be seen or supervised

(3) Time out must only be used in combination with instructional approaches that teach children what to do in place of the behavior problem.

- (a) Time out must not be used for children under 3 years of age.
- (b) The program staff or volunteer shall remain calm when placing the child in time out.

(4) A non-severe and developmentally appropriate restraint for an enrolled child with special behavioral or mental health issues may be used if reasonably necessary, based on a child's development, to prevent a child from harming themselves or to prevent a child from harming other individuals or property, excluding those forms of punishment prohibited by subrule (2) of this rule.... (see full language in link below)

(5) A written discipline policy must be developed and implemented regarding the age appropriate, non-severe discipline of children. The policy must be provided to program staff, volunteers, and parents.



R 400.8121 Indoor space.

(1) The required square footage of indoor space per child must be at least the following:

- (a) Forty two square feet for infants and toddlers.
- (b) Thirty-five square feet for preschoolers and school-agers.

R 400.8125 Outdoor play area.

(2) The outdoor play area is considered an outdoor classroom and an extension of the learning environment.

(3) A center operating with children in attendance for 3 or more continuous hours per day shall provide daily outdoor play, unless prevented by inclement weather or other weather conditions that could result in children becoming overheated or excessively chilled.

(4) A center operating with children in attendance for 3 or more continuous hours a day shall have an outdoor play area that has at least 1,200 square feet. More than 1,200 square feet of outdoor play area may be required when the minimum amount is not adequate for the number of children for which the center is licensed.

(6) There must be a shaded area to protect children from excessive sun exposure, when necessary.

(7) The outdoor play area must be in a safe location.

(8) The outdoor play area must be protected from hazards, when necessary, by a fence or natural barrier that is at least 48 inches in height.

(9) Children shall only use age-appropriate equipment.

(10) An outdoor play area and any equipment located on the center's premises must be maintained in a safe condition and inspected daily before use to ensure that no hazards are present.

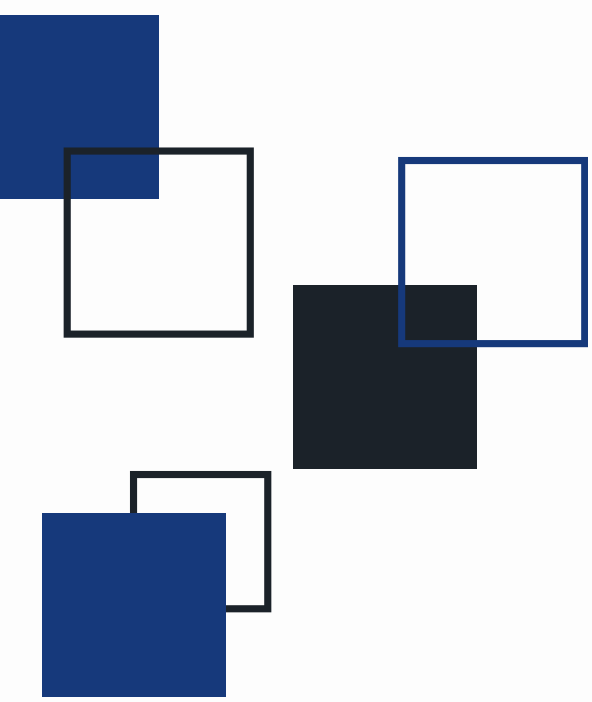


(11) The playground equipment, use zones, and surfacing in the outdoor play area must be inspected by a certified playground safety inspector and an approval granted for playground equipment and areas used before issuance of an original license, upon request of the department, and before using any newly added playground equipment. The center shall provide documentation of the inspection to the department upon request and shall keep it on file at the center.

(12) School-age centers operating in school buildings approved by the Michigan department of education are exempt from subrule (11) of this rule, provided the licensee informs parents, in writing at the time of enrollment, if the center plans to use a public school's outdoor play area and equipment that do not comply with subrule (11) of this rule.

(13) All pieces of playground equipment that have an elevated playing or climbing surface, regardless of the height of the playing or climbing surface, must be surrounded by a shock absorbing surface and meet the guidelines defined by the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) Handbook for Public Playground Safety, which is available at no cost at www.cpsc.gov.





R 400.8131 Equipment.

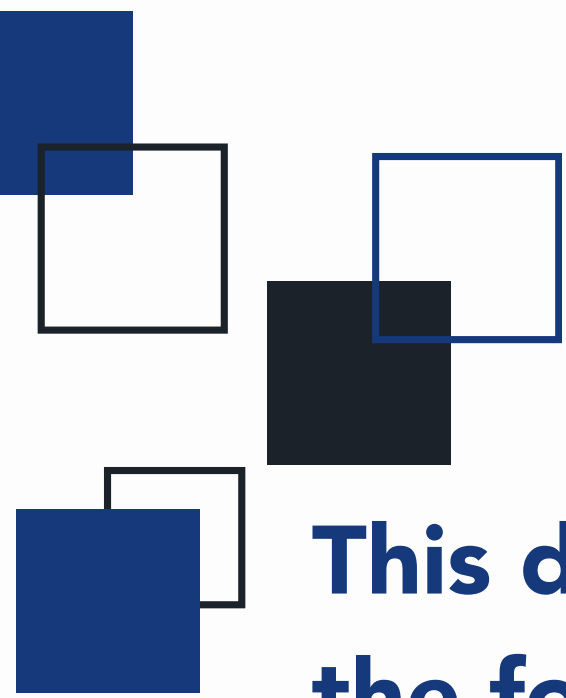
- (4) Play equipment, materials, and furniture, must be all of the following:
 - (a) Appropriate to the developmental needs and interests of children as required by R 400.8179(2).
 - (b) Safe, clean, and in good repair.
 - (c) Child-sized or appropriately adapted for a child's use.
 - (d) Easily accessible to the children.

- (5) A center shall provide a minimum of 3 play spaces per child multiplied by the number of children the center is licensed to serve.

- (6) A minimum of 2 play spaces must be accessible per child in attendance on any given day during child-initiated activity time.

- (7) Children shall have access to equipment and materials in the following areas on a daily basis:
 - (a) Large and small muscle activity.
 - (b) Sensory exploration.
 - (c) Social interaction and dramatic play.
 - (d) Discovery and exploration.
 - (e) Early math and science experiences.
 - (f) Creative experiences through art, music, and literature.

For full Licensing Rules and Regulations please see: [MiLeap Licensing Rules for Childcare Centers](#)



Acknowledgments & Contributions

This document was developed in consultation with the following committee:

Linda Lilly, Preschool ASD Coach.....	Dearborn
Kelly Martz, Preschool ASD Coach.....	Grosse Pointe
Dorothy Sabo, Preschool ASD Coach.....	Lincoln Park
Sandy Kester, Preschool ASD Coach.....	Lincoln Park
Anne Dout, Preschool ASD Coach.....	Livonia
Jackie McMillion, Preschool ASD Coach.....	Livonia
Katrina Moxham, Preschool ASD Coach.....	Livonia
Adrianne Kubicki, Director of SEEIS.....	WRESA
Beth Santer, Executive Director of SEEIS.....	WRESA
Dez’arae Adams, Director of Early Childhood.....	WRESA
Dr. Jennifer Taiariol, Assistant Superintendent of SEEIS.....	WRESA
Kate Pearson, Essential Elements Consultant.....	WRESA
Dr. Kelly Anderson, Early Childhood Social Emotional Dev. Consultant....	WRESA
Laura Begley, Assistive Technology Consultant.....	WRESA
Libby Rogowski, Executive Director of Early Childhood.....	WRESA
Lisa Perugi, Special Education Early On/ Early Intervention Consultant....	WRESA

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Lincoln Park Public Schools	Van Buren Public Schools
Livonia Public Schools	Wayne-Westland Community School District
Melvindale-Northern Allen Park Schools	Westwood Public Schools
Northville Public Schools	Wyandotte Public Schools
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