

Questions and Answers about Early Childhood Educational Settings

1. **Question:** What is the continuum of alternative placements for preschool children?

- **Answer:** School system representatives should describe the full continuum of placement possibilities, and explain that the child's needs and goals on the IEP will lead the IEP team in determining the most appropriate placement. The continuum includes:
 - Regular early childhood program (a preschool or kindergarten class where no more than 50% of the children have an IEP),
 - Special education program provided in a separate class, separate school, residential facility;
 - Service provider location,
 - Home instruction

NC 1501-3.2(c)

2. **Question:** What considerations should IEP teams factor when making LRE decisions for young preschool children?

- **Answer:** IEP teams should consider factors based on the child, the family, the curricula, and the amount of support needed to provide FAPE.
 - Child considerations may include, but are not limited to:
 - Where is the child now?
 - Has the child experienced success in his/her current or previous placements?
 - Has the child experienced challenges?
 - What are the child's developmental strengths and abilities?
 - Does the child have any specific behavioral concerns?
 - Is the child in a location with children his or her age (typically developing peers?)
 - What behaviors/skills are considered developmentally appropriate for this child?
 - Family considerations may include, but are not limited to:
 - Does the family have some IEP goal areas that they want to include?
 - What are some home routines and activities that the child needs assistance with that we could work on in the early care & education setting?
 - Are there areas of concern in which the family might need technical assistance and training that is available in the community or through the schools?, and
 - What opportunities has the child had to interact with typically developing peers that the family felt was important (e.g., church programs, community classes, etc.).
 - Curricular considerations may include, but are not limited to:
 - Can the child experience success in the same activities as his/her peers?
 - Can the child participate in the same activities with modifications?
 - What are the identified IEP goals and objectives for this child?, and
 - Can IEP goals and objectives be embedded in classroom activities?
 - Support considerations may include, but are not limited to:
 - What activities can the child participate in without extra support?
 - In what activities does the child require extra support, and
 - What extra supports would be required?

3. **Question:** What is the definition of a “Regular Early Childhood Program” or classroom?
- **Answer:** A Regular Early Childhood Program (RECP) class is one in which at least 50% of the children enrolled in the class are nondisabled and do not have an IEP.
4. **Question:** Do we count children with “Speech Only” IEPs count in the total of disabled children when determining if a class qualifies as RECP?
- **Answer:** Yes. Children who qualify for special education under the category of Speech Impaired are counted as a child with a disability in a classroom makeup.
5. **Question:** When determining the setting on the IEP we have to identify if services are provided in the RECP setting or in another location. What is the distinction between these two settings?
- **Answer:** Services that are considered to be “in the regular early childhood program” are those that occur in the class the majority of the time. While occasional pull-out sessions may be necessary, the majority of specialized instruction is conducted in a collaborative manner with the teaching staff. In the event that a child receives some of the specialized services in the RECP class and some in another location, IEP teams must determine where the “majority” of special education and related services are provided.
6. **Question:** How do IEP teams determine the LRE placement for a preschool child who is not enrolled in a preschool or childcare program?
- **Answer:** In determining the educational placement of a child with a disability, including a preschool child with a disability, each public agency must ensure that-
 - (a) The placement decision-
 - (1) Is made by a group of persons, including the parents, and other persons knowledgeable about the child, the meaning of the evaluation data, and the placement options; and
 - (2) Is made in conformity with the LRE provisions under §300.114 through 300.118.
 - (b) The child placement-
 - (1) is determined at least annually;
 - (2) Is based on the child’s IEP; and
 - (3) Is as close as possible to the child’s home;
 - (c) Unless the IEP of a child with a disability requires some other arrangement, the child is educated in the school that he or she would attend if nondisabled;
 - (d) In selecting the LRE, consideration is given to any potential harmful effect on the child or on the quality of services that he or she needs; and
 - (e) A child with a disability is not removed from education in age appropriate regular classrooms solely because of needed modifications in the general education curriculum.

Authority: 20 U.S.C 1412(z)(5)); 34 CFR §300.116

7. **Question:** What are some possible programming options in North Carolina within the continuum of alternative placements in which the child could receive preschool services that may be considered by the IEP team?

- **Answer:** Some regular early childhood programming options include:
 - Kindergarten
 - State-funded NC PreK program,
 - Head Start,
 - Child care,
 - Community preschool programs,
 - Blended classrooms.

NC 1501-3.2(c)

8. **Question:** What if the school district says there is no room in the program for the child?

- **Answer:** State and federal regulations require school districts to serve children who are eligible for preschool services when they are deemed eligible for special education and related services. Placement decisions must be based on the needs of the child, not availability.

NC 1501-4.4(b)

9. **Question:** When would the LEA be responsible for paying tuition in a community program?

- **Answer:** If an LEA cannot provide the services necessary for a free appropriate public education (FAPE) in its program, it is required to provide another appropriate setting that will. This can be at a private school, child care or facility, or in another LEA, but the LEA of residence is responsible for the cost.

NC 1501-2.1

10. **Question:** If we serve a child in a small play group setting for short periods of time is that considered to be a “class” or a “service provider location” setting?

- **Answer:** If a child does not attend any other regular early childhood program and is transported to a specific location for short periods of time to receive his/her special education and related services in a small group that does not have a general education curriculum in place, then the setting would fit the description of a “service provider location”.