

The Early Learning Center (ELC) A Special Education Preschool Program



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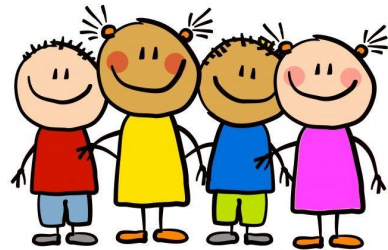
INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT (IDEA)

- The IDEA supports equal educational opportunities for eligible children with disabilities birth through 21.
- Part C of the IDEA requires that appropriate early intervention services are made available to all eligible infants and toddlers with disabilities in natural environments
- **Services are to be made available to all children with disabilities ages three through 21**, to the maximum extent appropriate, in the least restrictive environment (LRE) factoring in an individual child's unique strengths and needs.



Individuals with
Disabilities Act

WHAT IS THE EARLY LEARNING CENTER (ELC)?



- ELC is a special education preschool program made up of **children with IEPs** (Individualized Education Plans) who have been identified with a disability and **Typical/Role Model children**.
- A **play and language based approach to learning**, designed to provide developmentally appropriate experiences for children ages three to four years old in the areas of cognitive, communication, social/emotional, motor and daily life skills development.
- To be considered an “integrated” and “**inclusive**” setting, the ratio of special education students to “typical” students must not exceed 1:1 (no more than 50% students with IEPs).
- The classrooms use the **CT ELDS Framework**, Preschool Curricular Goals, and Benchmarks.
- For students who receive special education services, program recommendations are made specific to the needs of each individual child and are determined by the **Planning and Placement Team (PPT)**.

WHAT IS INCLUSION?

- Including children with disabilities in classrooms, together with their peers without disabilities
- Holding high expectations and intentionally promoting participation in all learning and social activities, facilitated by individualized accommodations; and using evidence-based services and supports to foster their development (cognitive, language, communication, physical, behavioral, and social-emotional) , friendships with peers, and sense of belonging.
- Applies to all young children with disabilities, from those with the mildest disabilities, to those with the most significant disabilities
- **“Time With Non-Disabled Peers”** is a term in CT that describes the amount of time during the school day that a student spends in an inclusive setting (no more than 50% special education students).



LEAST RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENT (LRE)

- Provide a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) to children with disabilities including children aged 3-5 in the LRE. Presumes that the first placement option considered for each child with a disability is the general classroom that the child would attend if he or she did not have a disability.
- Before a child with a disability can be placed outside of the regular educational environment, the full range of supplementary aids and services that could be provided to facilitate the child's placement in the regular classroom setting must be considered.
- The district must ensure that a free appropriate public education (FAPE) is provided in the LRE to every child with a disability in its jurisdiction regardless of whether the LEA operates public general early childhood programs.
- The district must make available the opportunity for placements in regular early childhood programs for preschool children if necessary to meet a preschool child's needs with disabilities.

SCIENTIFIC BENEFITS OF INCLUSION FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

- Children with disabilities, including those with the **most significant disabilities** and **the highest needs**, can make significant developmental and learning progress in inclusive settings.
- Children with disabilities in inclusive settings experienced **greater cognitive and communication development** than children with disabilities who were in separate settings, with this being particularly apparent among children with more significant 3 disabilities.
- High quality inclusion that begins early and continues into school likely produces the strongest outcomes.
- Children with disabilities in inclusive early childhood programs also demonstrate **stronger social-emotional skills** than their peers in separate settings.
- Children with disabilities who spend **more time in general education classes** tend to be **absent fewer days** from school and **have higher test scores** in reading and math than those who spend less time in general education classes, and spending **more time in general education** classes was related to a **higher probability of employment and higher earnings**.



SCIENTIFIC BENEFITS OF INCLUSION FOR CHILDREN WITHOUT DISABILITIES

- Typically developing children can **show positive developmental, social, and attitudinal outcomes** from inclusive experiences.
- Typically developing children are capable of demonstrating **greater compassion and empathy** and can have a **more positive perception of children with disabilities**.
- Typically developing children can also develop a **better understanding of diversity and disability**.
- Children without disabilities in high-quality inclusive early childhood settings also benefit from developmental specialists who can identify and address delays in development that might otherwise not be identified.



ELC STAFF

- Special Education Teachers (1 teacher assigned to one morning and one afternoon session)
- Paraprofessionals (2 in each classroom)
- Speech and Language Pathologist
- School Psychologist
- Occupational Therapist
- Physical Therapist
- Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA)



CURRENT ENROLLMENT (2020-21)

- 22 Children with IEPs (2 are full day for a total of 24 "seats")
- 51 Children without IEPs
- 73 Total children, 75 total "seats"

= 32% of students have IEPs

Currently running 6 half-day sessions, capped at 14 students = 84 seats



PROJECTED ENROLLMENT (2021-2022)



Children with IEPs:

14 students will re-enroll

7* referrals from Birth-to-Three

6** seats held for parent referrals who become eligible

27 total projected special education students for the year

*Two of the Birth-to-Three students will start in May 2022

**In a typical year we have between 3-4 parent referrals who are eligible

PROJECTED SECTIONING FOR INCLUSION 2021-2022

(AT LEAST 50% NON-DISABLED PEERS)

Our ELC program currently caps each section at **14 students**, well within state guidelines for class size and square footage (more on this later).

Assuming 27 students with IEPs:

Section 1: **7 students w/IEPs** + 7 non-disabled peers

Section 2: **7 students w/IEPs** + 7 non-disabled peers

Section 3: **7 students w/IEPs** + 7 non-disabled peers

Section 4: **6 students w/IEPs** + 8 non-disabled peers

STAFFING FOR INCLUSION

Teacher A & Two paraprofessionals	Teacher B & Two paraprofessionals
Section 1 (a.m.) 7 students w/IEPs + 7 non-disabled peers	Section 3 (a.m.) 7 students w/IEPs + 7 non-disabled peers
Section 2 (p.m.) 7 students w/IEPs + 7 non-disabled peers	Section 4 (p.m.) 6 students w/IEPs + 8 non-disabled peers

Required staffing for 27 students with IEPs:
2 Special Education Teachers (1.0 FTE each)
4 Paraprofessionals (0.8 FTE each)

SPACE NEEDS (SQUARE FOOTAGE)

Office of Early Childhood (OEC)
guideline:
minimum of
35 square feet per child
in a classroom, and a
maximum of 18 students
in a preschool class

School Construction Standards and
Guidelines:
minimum of
35 square feet per child
in a classroom, and a
maximum of 20 students
in a preschool class



ELC Classrooms are 760 square feet
14 students
= **54.3 sq ft/child**



ELC Classrooms are
currently capped at
14 students

FY22 SUPERINTENDENT'S RECOMMENDED + BOE-APPROVED BUDGETED SECTIONING, STAFFING, AND LOTTERY STATUS

6 sections of ELC, each section capped at 14 students = **84 total seats**

3 Special Education Teachers (1.0 FTE each) + 6 Paraprofessionals (0.8 FTE each)

Available Seats for FY22: 84

- 14 Returning Special Education
- 7 Birth to Three Special Education
- 6 Anticipated Special Education Eligible
- 16 Returning Tuition-Based
- 41 Open Tuition-Based seats**

Lottery/Waitlist: 60 Submitted for Lottery
 17 Waitlisted (Submitted for ELC after the lottery deadline)

77* students interested - 41 open seats = **36 more students interested than available seats**

*5-10 Students typically drop out after receiving their class placements due to scheduling conflicts