Early Childhood Special Education

Entry to Kindergarten

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More than K-12, Pre-K too!

Every district in St. Louis and the surrounding areas provide preschool services.
- Early Childhood and Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) is provided for students 3-5 years old.
- We also work with our community partners to provide services for students in local daycares, private preschools and head start programs.

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More than K-12, Pre-K too!

Early childhood programs differ from K-12 programs in a variety of ways. Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) then makes additional modification and accommodations.

- Missouri Early Learning Standards
- Curriculum
- Assessment practices
- Role of family
- Locations where services are provided
- Class sizes

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ECSE in Partnership

The SSD ECSE Program serves students in the following 14 Partner Districts

Affton	Bayless	Brentwood
Hancock Place	Jennings	Ladue
Lindbergh	Maplewood-Richmond Heights	Normandy
Parkway	Ritenour	Riverview Gardens
Valley Park	Webster	

○ The YWCA and Urban League Head Start programs are community partners that we service at 5 different locations.

ECSE in Partnership

"Coalition Districts": St. Louis County School Districts that run their own EC and/or ECSE programs. Coalition Districts include:

Clayton	Ferguson-Florissant	Hazelwood	Kirkwood
Mehlville	Pattonville	Rockwood	University City

- "Service Agreements (SA)": reciprocal contractual agreements between SSD and Coalition Districts are utilized (if agreed to) to the meet the ECSE needs of students that access childcare locations outside of their home district.
  - SAs exist for ECSE only. Student will transition back to home district when they are kindergarten eligible.

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Coalition Services/Supports provided by SSD ECSE

ECSE Services/Supports for School Personnel that are provided for coalition districts:
- Teacher of the Visually Imparied
- Teacher of the Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing
- Student Support Facilitators
- Aug Com Facilitators

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Entry/Initial Evaluation

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Part C to Part B Transition Process

Transitions from First Steps (Part C) to ECSE (Part B) start as early as 2 years 6 months. ECSE is invited and participates in Transition Meetings for each student in an SSD serving district.

- Students found eligible for ECSE can begin receiving services on their third birthday. Due to this factor, we enroll throughout the entire school year.
  - Exceptions to this rule:
    - "Parents of children who are eligible for First Steps, eligible for Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) and who have summer third birthdays **April 1 through August 15** may choose to: (1) continue First Steps services until school starts in the fall after the child's third birthday; or (2) transition to ECSE on the child's third birthday."

Eligibility for ECSE Programming

SSD's ECSE program has seven evaluation teams that cover our various referral types:

- **Central**: Bayless, Brentwood, Ladue & Maplewood
- **Parkway** (1), **Parkway** (2): Parkway & Valley Park
- **North**: Jennings, Normandy & Riverview Gardens
- **South**: Affton, Hancock Place, Lindbergh & South County Head Start
- **Head Start**: Head Start & Webster
- **Ritenour**: Ritenour
- Additional evaluation support is provided by the following departments; Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA), Blind/Visually Impaired & Hearing Impaired.

Referral Sources & Processes for ECSE Evaluations

Referral Sources for ECSE:

- First Steps Referral (Parent referral)
- Parent Referral (Made to our Intake Secretary)
- Agency Referral (via PAT, Screening Departments)

ECSE Evaluation Teams receive referral information and upon team review determine if a suspicion of a disability exists. Parental consent is requested and obtained. Evaluation timelines are upheld.

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Eligibility for ECSE Programming

ECSE Evaluations can consider the majority of all of the educational eligibility categories as outlined by DESE for 3-5 year olds.

- The most prevalent educational eligibilities for ECSE students include:
  - YCDD (e.g., cognition, adaptive, social emotional, physical development, communication)
  - Sound System Disorder
  - Autism
- Dual educational eligibilities are increasingly common for ECSE students
  - Example: YCDD in SEB (primary); Sound System Disorder (secondary)

Placement & Programming

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Missouri ECSE Placement Options

- **Early Childhood Setting**
- **Early Childhood Special Education Setting**
- **Part-time Early Childhood/Part-time Early Childhood Special Education**
- **Home**
- Residential Facility
- Separate School
- **Itinerant Service Outside of the Home**

Early Childhood Setting

Children with disabilities who receive all of their special education and related services in programs designed for children without disabilities.

- Classrooms could be team taught. The ratio of children without IEPs is equal to or higher than that of children with IEPs.
  - 1-2 paraprofessional/instructional assistant provided by SSD or Partner District.
- All services provided at the Itinerant level could be provided inside a general education classroom/community site.

Early Childhood Special Education Setting

Children with disabilities who receive all of their services in programs designed primarily for students with disabilities.

Self-Contained ECSE Classrooms
- Special education teacher supporting all students with IEPs
  - 1-2 paraprofessionals supporting instruction
- Some Low-Incidence classrooms may have fewer students and more adults based on student needs.

Integrated Classrooms
- Integrated ECSE classroom where no more than 50% of the students do not have an IEP.
  - 1-2 paraprofessionals supporting instruction

Part-Time Early Childhood/Part-Time ECSE Setting

Children with disabilities who receive their services in multiple settings.

- Students receive some special education services inside of their general education classroom. Some of their services are provided outside of their general education setting as well.

- Early Childhood Setting **plus** Itinerant Service Outside the Home

Home Placement

Children with disabilities who receive all of their residence or extended family member's home.

Home

- For our medically fragile students who are not able to attend school per physician's orders.
- Physician orders would be needed to release student to return to school.
- Typically no more than 3 hours per week to address stamina.

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Itinerant Services Outside the Home

Children with disabilities who receive all of their services at a school or other location for a short period of time (i.e., no more than three hours per week).

- The service is provided at a location other than the child's home.
- The child comes to the service provider(s) for scheduled services.

Instruction

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ECSE Mission

Mission: To build independence in all preschool students with IEPs to enable them to reach their full potential in preparation for kindergarten.

In the past few years, even prior to the pandemic, our main focus more and more has been to support social-emotional development.

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ECSE Instructional Overview

"For children, school readiness is being prepared in key dimensions of early learning and development (social and emotional, language and literacy, cognitive, motor, health and physical well-being, and positive attitudes and behaviors toward learning).[3]

Self-Regulation	Sensory processing	Receptive Language
Expressive Language	Articulation/Speech	Executive Functioning
Emotional Development/Regulation	Social Skills	Planning and Sequencing

ECSE Instruction Overview

Missouri Early Learning Standards (MELS) were updated Feb 2021:*"a framework for communicating a shared set of expectations for children as they grow and develop".*

- The MELS Areas:
    - Approaches to Learning
    - Social-Emotional Development
    - Language & Literacy
    - Mathematics
    - Science
    - Physical Development
    - Expressive Arts
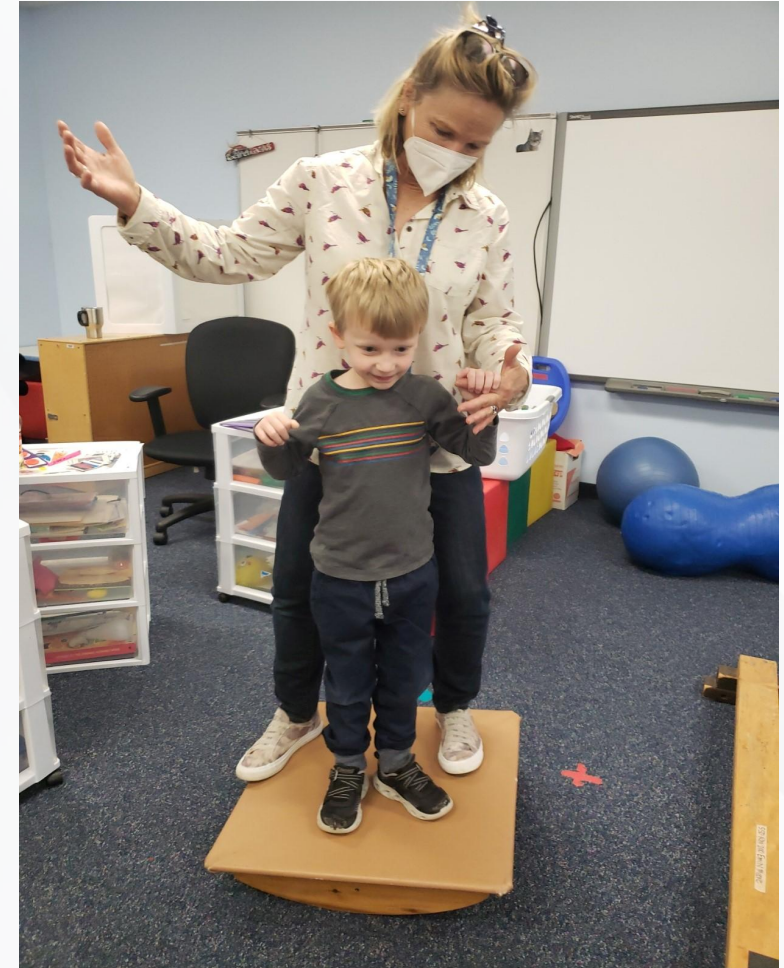
ECSE Play Based Learning

"Children learn best through first-hand experiences--play motiviates, stimulates and supports children in their development of skills, concepts, language acquisition, communication skills and concentration." [6]

Little ones at play

Make learning fun!

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Who is ready to learn? We are!

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ECSE Instructional Initiatives

- Family Engagement: Family as Expert Interview and PTC Placemat tool for discussion
- Conscious Discipline
- Common Assessment
- ECSE Curriculum
- Parkway Step Program
- Peer Model Opportunities

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Transition to Kindergarten

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ECSE to Kindergarten Transition

- Timelines, preparation, and procedures may vary slightly for ECSE students transitioning to KG across St. Louis County.
- "Student's Turning 5 List": an electronic tool used to collaborate between ECSE admin/staff and School Age Administration to ensure early and ongoing awareness of students that are transitioning.

ECSE to Kindergarten Transition-*continued*

- Transition meetings are established in the fall so that sending and receiving teams can meet to discuss students who will be transitioning.
- Based on various district practices transition IEPs may be scheduled to start late winter (after winter break) or early spring (around spring break).
- Students will enroll throughout the year as noted earlier so some spring IEPs are considered initial/transition meetings.

ECSE to Kindergarten Transition

Demographic information is captured as well as:
- Possible placement consideration
  - Consideration of the K-12 Placement continuum
  - SNAP consideration, if known
  - Review of Continuum of Services is noted (to facilitate observations)
  - What are the current total ECSE minutes per week
    - Time of attendance AM, PM, Full-day, or Itinerantly
    - Days of attendance

ECSE to Kindergarten Transition-*continued*

Additional documentation on the "Student's Turning 5 List":
- Is it possible that extra personnel may be needed to provide adult support?
- Is an observation by school-age administration recommended?
- Will accessibility need to be addressed?
- Is ABA a current service?
- Is Music Therapy a current service?

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ECSE to Kindergarten Transition Family Supports

- Transition IEPs can be overwhelming for families. Please consider:
  - Ensure collaboration between ECSE and SA staff prior to meeting (e.g. goals, service proposals) to support conversations and effective time management at the meeting.
- Families will be interested in meeting KG teams assigned for their student. When known, consider providing social stories with team pictures to build student awareness of new teachers.
- Offer families opportunities for school tours and/or times to play on the KG playgrounds to build familiarity and comfort.
- Be prepared to answer questions about kindergarten "jump start" programs that might be offered for ECSE students.

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Future Planning Ideas

Share some stories that the family might read. Provide a social story with pictures of the specific school. May not know specific staff–if do provide photos.

Visits between EC and Kindergarten staff so that they can see what school looks like on the other side of the "fence".

What information can be obtained from parents who transitioned the year prior? Could they come back and share as a panel of "experts?"

Parent's may need before/after-care. This is a big issue in early childhood. Is there any information that might be shared early on so that parents can begin to plan and prepare for that issue for their student with specialized needs.

Remember that family engagement is key. What we can do to support the family is key to supporting the student. Let's facilitate the ease of the transition as much as we can as the educational team.

What activities can we provide for the family/student to complete over the summer. Now that we have worked in a unique learning environment we have increased our tool-box. What can we communicate to facilitate this transition. For the student **and** the family too!

Is there a flyer or brochure with contact information for next year. Just very basic information that we can pass along before students leave for the summer? We'd like to pass something along to the family.

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Questions?

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Resources

1. https://study.com/academy/lesson/special-education-definition-types-philosophy.html
2. https://dese.mo.gov/childhood/quality-programs/preschool-programs/early-childhood-special-education/multi-tiered-systems-support
3. https://dese.mo.gov/special-education/first-steps/transition-first-steps-early-childhood-special
4. Missouri's Early Care and Education Connections: https://earlyconnections.mo.gov/media/pdf/what-school-readiness
5. Kid Sense https://childdevelopment.com.au/areas-of-concern/school-readiness/#:~:text=In%20addition%20to%20some%20academic,and%20play%20and%20social%20skills.
6. MELS on DESE:https://dese.mo.gov/childhood/quality-programs/preschool-programs/early-learning-standards
7. https://blog.edmentum.com/play-based-learning-what-it-and-why-it-should-be-part-every-classroom
8. Handout: https://www.printablee.com/post_printable-classroom-center-signs_230388/