



**Pflugerville ISD**  
**Department of Special Education Services**  
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## **Preschool Programs for Children with Disabilities (PPCD)**

### ***Special Education services for Preschool age children:***

PISD offers a continuum of services for preschool age children with disabilities. These services are provided through the Department of Special Education. In order to qualify for these services children must meet specific eligibility criteria. Services are determined based on each child's individual needs. PISD strives to provide services for children in their least restrictive environment. Service options might include the following:

- *Speech and Language Services*
- *PALS (Preschoolers Acquiring Language Skills Program)*
- *School Based Programs: (Pegasus, Pre – Kindergarten and Kindergarten inclusion, Self – Contained)*
- *Homebound*
- *Community based in childcare facilities*

### ***Eligibility:***

To be eligible for the program, children must meet the following criteria:

1. Be at least 3 years old and live within the boundaries of P.I.S.D. A child may enter the program at any time during the school year once eligibility has been determined. Eligibility for services is established through the PISD Early Childhood Assessment process. Every attempt is made to provide continuity of services for children entering the program from Early Childhood Intervention programs serving children from birth to age three.
2. Children must meet an eligibility criteria according to the Texas Educational Agency (TEA) in one or more of the following disabilities: Autism (AU), Auditory Impairment (AI), Deaf Blindness (DB), Emotional Disturbance (ED), Mental Retardation (MR), Non – Categorical Early Childhood (NCEC), Orthopedic Impairment (OI), Other Health Impairment (OHI), Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), Specific Learning Disability (SLD), Speech Impairment (SI), Visual Impairment (VI). In order to qualify for services, an educational need for special education must also be established in addition to the presence of a disability.

***Referral Process:***

The child's parents or caregivers should call the Early Childhood Assessment team office at (512) 594 – 0169 in order to make a referral or "child find" approximately 90 days prior to the child's 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday. Children who are over the age of 3 or have not enrolled in Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) programs may be referred at any time that a concern exists. While referrals may be made by concerned professionals or family members, the child's parent(s) or legal guardian must be directly involved in the referral process. Parent consent is legally required before screening/evaluation may take place.

Once a child is referred to the Early Childhood Assessment team for a screening, an appointment time will be scheduled and forms will be mailed to the child's home for the parent(s) to complete prior to the screening. Bringing these forms to the screening/evaluation is very helpful in the assessment process.

***Screening/Evaluation:***

The parent(s) and child attend a screening appointment at the Early Childhood Assessment team (ECAT) office. This is located in Portable A room 2 which is by the Pflugerville High School tennis courts. The physical address for the ECAT is: 1401 B West Pecan.

Pflugerville ISD uses a play based approach to evaluate the following areas of development: communication (receptive and expressive communication), cognitive/play, social emotional, fine and gross motor, and self – help skills. At times a variety of tests may be used to provide additional information. The Early Childhood Assessment team is a collaborative effort between the school and home. The team is comprised of the child's parent(s), a Speech Language Pathologist, and an Educational Diagnostician or Licensed Specialist in School Psychology. Additional team members may include any of the following: Early Childhood teacher, Occupational and or Physical therapists, teachers of the Visually or Auditorally impaired, and Early Intervention program staff members.

While members of the team engage the child in play another member of the team will conduct an interview with the parents. PISD encourages parents to be active members throughout the process and we appreciate parent input regarding their child. The results of the evaluation focus on the current strengths and needs of the child. The information collected during the evaluation helps to plan for the child's Individual Educational Plan (IEP). The information is also used to plan for instructional strategies that will guide the child's plan of services.

During the screening if further concerns persist, the ECAT will recommend that the team conduct a full evaluation. At this time parents sign consent to test and arrangements are made to continue the evaluation or to schedule an appointment on another day. Typically, results of the screening and general impressions are shared with the parent (s) at the end of the session. A formal report is then written and sent to the parent (s) within 60 days of the date consent was obtained for the assessment.

***Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) Committee Meeting:***

Upon completion of the *Full Individual Evaluation* (FIE), the parent (s) will be contacted by school personnel. The parent (s) will be asked to visit the projected campus of attendance with their child. The purpose of this meeting is to spend some time in the classroom and to provide the classroom teacher with information and a “snap shot” of the child. Following this visit, an Admission, Review and Dismissal (ARD) meeting will be held at the school of attendance. This meeting will be held within 30 days of the completion of the *Full Individual Evaluation report*.

Members of the Admission, Review and Dismissal meeting include parents, teachers, evaluation staff and a campus administrator. If a child meets eligibility criteria, the ARD Committee will propose an Individual Educational Plan (IEP). The Individual Educational Plan is a comprehensive educational plan specific to the child. Services are based on the child’s Individual Educational Plan (IEP).

***School Enrollment:***

Parents must register their child at the assigned school before the child can begin receiving any special education services. This is done in the school office with the registrar who will provide parents with an enrollment packet. The parents must provide the school with the child’s official birth certificate, a current immunization record, documentation of residency (utility bill, apartment lease, etc.) and a copy of the child’s social security card. Teachers will provide a school supply list prior to the first day of services.

## **Questions and Answers about Early Childhood Special Education Services in Pflugerville ISD.**

### ***Do children who qualify from Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) all qualify for special education services in school?***

No, children must meet the eligibility criteria for at least one or more of the disability categories recognized and defined in Federal law and the Texas Education Agency. While ECI agencies operate under a more “medical” model of disability, public schools operate under an “educational” model. This means that the child’s disability must meet specific eligibility criteria to be considered educationally relevant in order to qualify for special education services.

### ***What is the difference between Pre – K and the Preschool Program for Children with Disabilities?***

The Pre – K program is a federally funded general education program for children who turn 4 years of age by September 1<sup>st</sup> of the year they are enrolling in (the current school year). Children enrolling in Pre – K programs must meet specific eligibility criteria such as; limited English proficiency, and/or economically disadvantaged (as determined by income guidelines for the Free and Reduced Lunch program), homeless, foster care, or a parent active military. Registration for this program takes place in late July and early August Please watch the PISD website for Pre – K registration information.

### ***If my child qualifies for special education, does that mean that he/she will be attending a class?***

No, Federal law requires that children be placed in the least restrictive environment possible in which their special needs can be met. For some children, this means receiving speech therapy services at a school campus, while others may receive services in a classroom environment. Pflugerville ISD offers a wide continuum of services for children between the ages of 3 – 5 years of age who meet the eligibility requirements for services from special education. Placement is always determined by the data collected through the evaluation process and final decisions are made during the Admission, Review, and Dismissal Committee meeting (held with the parents and PISD staff).

### ***Are there Pre-school Programs for children with Disabilities (PPCD) classrooms on every Pflugerville Elementary Campus?***

No, there are currently PPCD classes at 13 campuses throughout the district. Children in need of a classroom setting are assigned to a class as close to their home/neighborhood school as possible that is appropriate to meet their educational needs.

### ***What is a PPCD classroom like?***

Each Pre –School program for children with disabilities classroom is staffed by a certified special education teacher and at least 2 educational associates. Classes are smaller than general education classes and typically contain no more than 12 students with special needs at a time. Typically developing young children of PISD employees also attend many of the PPCD classrooms. The role models provide peer support in the areas of speech, language, socialization, self help skills, etc. for the children with special needs. Classrooms that include role models are staffed with an additional educational associate due to the larger class size.

Class size is usually smaller in the fall and increases during the school year as new students qualify for the program. Each classroom contains children with a variety of moderate to severe educational impairments.

Children in the PPCD classroom learn through developmentally appropriate activities and play. A literacy-rich environment and positive interactions with peers and adults facilitate language enrichment, social skills, emotional intelligence, self-help skills, pre-reading skills, and cognitive skills. The Program follows a district-adopted research based curriculum for Pre-K called “We Can”, this curriculum is based on thematic unit topics. We also supplement this Curriculum with the “Growing with Mathematics” curriculum. Science is an integral part of the Preschool day in PISD. The emphasis in Science has been made possible due to a Science collaboration with the University of Texas at Austin, Round Rock ISD and Austin Community College. Each classroom received Science materials and Science curriculum to support on going Science lessons in the class. One goal of our program is to introduce concepts and vocabulary; in

a culturally responsive manner. The classroom curriculum infuses literature into multisensory thematic instruction. In the PPCD classroom, teachers strive to differentiate the instruction so that all children achieve at their individual level. The classroom schedule reflects small group, large group and individualized instruction through out the class day. Children may also receive therapies (Speech, Occupational, or Physical ), as deemed required by the Admission, Review , Dismissal Committee meeting.

***How will my child get to and from school?***

Parents may provide transportation to and from school if they choose to do so. Each campus has a procedure for parent drop offs and pick ups. Please consult with your child's teacher for further information concerning this. Transportation is provided for students attending any PPCD program in PISD. This is considered to be a related service to the child's school programming. The students are provided with car seats on the buses. The buses have a monitor to sit with the children and to monitor behaviors and other related student needs. All bus personel undergo a criminal backround check to ensure the security of all of our charges while on the bus.

***Do all children who qualify for Special Education services receive the same services?***

No, placement is determined at the initial admission meeting. During this meeting the Full Individual Evaluation is reviewed and an Individual Education Plan that includes goals and objectives for the child is written and accepted by the committee. The Individual Education Plan for each child drives the services provided and the placement for the child.

***Will my child remain in the program once he/she is eligible for the program?***

No, placement is based on IDEA eligibility. Once a child has made significant progress which indicates that there is no longer an educational need the Admission, Review, Dismissal committee will meet again to recommend dismissal from the program. Unlike community childcare facilities, pre – school programs for children with disabilities is strictly provided for children who continue to meet the eligibility requirements set forth in Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

***Does my child have to be toilet trained to come to speech therapy or a PPCD Classroom?***

No, all PPCD classrooms have access to a bathroom, and many have bathrooms in the classroom. Parents are asked to send diapers/pull ups and toileting necessisities with their child (change of clothes, wipe refills etc.).

***What are the educationa optons whem my child reaches kindergarten age?***

At the annual Admission, Review and Dismissal Committee meeting held before a child turns 5 years of age, the committee will discuss the amount of support and the most appropriate placement for the student to be successful in kindergarten. Some PPCD graduates enter general education kindergarten requiring no additional support or only speech/language therapy support. Other students may remain in a PPCD classroom for an additional year after turning five if this is deemed the most appropriate by the committee. Lastly, depending the disability of the student some students may enroll in classrooms specific to their disability (an autism classroom , essential academics or a resource/content mastery type class).