

What happens when my child turns three?

Transition from Birth to Three (Part C) to Preschool-Aged (Part B) Early Intervention Services

TRANSITION CONFERENCE

1

A transition conference will be held at no more than 90 days from your child's third birthday. *Once your child turns three, they will no longer receive early intervention services through their IFSP.*

- ❖ Since your child is currently eligible for early intervention services, they are entitled to an evaluation with your neighborhood school district to determine if qualify for preschool aged special education services. You do have the option to decline this evaluation. Sometimes parents decline if they are no longer concerned with their child's development, if they are not interested in pursuing school-based services, or if they would like to hold off on testing to give their child time and then request a developmental screening later through the district Child Find Screening Process.
- ❖ At the transition conference, you will meet with a representative from your neighborhood school district to discuss the difference between your child's current services and preschool aged services for children three and up. Additionally, the district representative will ask questions to learn more about your child's individual developmental strengths and challenges in order to plan their school district evaluation.

PRESCHOOL EVALUATION

2

- ❖ Your child will be scheduled for an evaluation that typically involves two testing appointments (one appointment if child needs communication-only evaluation):
 - **Virtual Parent Interview** - You will be scheduled to meet virtually (Microsoft teams) with the school psychologist for a parent interview, where we will ask questions that help our team better understand your child's development. At this appointment, it is often helpful if we can meet your child and see them playing nearby during the interview. However, we understand that it is not possible for all families to have their child at the interview if they are in daycare during the day, etc. Regardless, the parent interview is an integral part of developing a holistic picture of your child's skills at the time of testing.
 - **In-Person Evaluation Appointment** - You and your child will attend an in-person evaluation session where we will assess your child in the areas recommended at the transition conference. If new concerns arise between the transition conference and testing, the team may request testing in additional areas to ensure we capture a comprehensive picture of your child. Our testing is child-led and play based, meaning that we follow your child's lead within the testing area and use play to evaluate their skills. Evaluators will ask parents questions to clarify skills or supplement skills that are not observed. During testing, examiners will also stand back and watch your child play at times, seeing what they are able to do at an independent level. Since they are two, it is expected that your child may have trouble listening or protest directions from evaluators and we want you to know that is perfectly okay!
- ❖ In addition to testing appointments, you will have paperwork to complete. The paperwork is a very important component of the evaluation, and we need it completed to be able to determine eligibility. It is helpful if you complete these items prior to your evaluation appointments. You will receive the following items to complete:
 - **Consent to Test** – You will receive a link in your email requesting you to sign a form that gives our school district to assess your child's development to determine their eligibility for special education services.
 - **Social, Health, & Developmental History** – You will receive a copy of this form via email, which you can type directly into, save, and email back to the school psychologist/speech pathologist.
 - **Rating Scales** – The evaluators will be sending you links to rating scales that will need to be completed as a part of your child's evaluation. The number of/type of rating scales is specific to each child. Your evaluator will let you know what links to expect.

ELIGIBILITY

3

IEP

- ❖ You will be invited to attend a virtual eligibility meeting where the results of your child's evaluation will be reviewed.
 - ❖ After reviewing all available data, the team will discuss if your child meets Washington State Eligibility Criteria for preschool special education services. The team will review potential eligibility categories, such as Developmental Delay, Communication Disorders, Autism, Health Impairments, etc. Categories are not designed to put kids into a box, but to help describe the root of your child's delays and help teachers identify educational modifications and supports that will maximize their growth over time.
 - ❖ To qualify for services, a child must meet criteria for at least one of the 14 disability categories, have a disability/delay that adversely impacts their educational performance, and required direct, individualized instruction in order to make progress.
 - ❖ If found eligible, the team may plan to draft an initial Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or they may schedule the IEP meeting at a later date. **All eligibility decisions and IEP's must be completed prior to your child's third birthday.**
 - ❖ If your child is found ineligible for preschool special education services and you have concerns about their development between the ages of 3 and 5, you are welcome to request a developmental screening through our NTSP Child Find Screening Process at any time. You may also wish to consider our tuition-based integrated preschool program, where you can pay for a spot in our AM or PM sessions of Developmental Preschool at the closest
- ❖ The team will walk you through your child's **Individualized Education Plan (IEP)**, which outlines your vision for your child's development, your child's present levels (current skills), goals, services (e.g., speech therapy, occupational therapy, special education teacher instruction, etc.) and accommodations. IEP's last for one year, and then the team will reconvene to review the plan, your child's progress, and if any changes need to be made.
 - ❖ As a part of the plan, the team will review all possible educational settings and determine which setting best fits your child's current needs (e.g., drive in speech therapy, communication preschool, developmental preschool, Head Start/ECEAP placement, highly supported preschool). **All services are free to students eligible for an IEP.**
 - ❖ All children receiving special education preschool services are eligible for special education transportation to and from their home or a daycare location.
 - ❖ If being placed in a preschool classroom, you will learn your child's teacher and their session (AM or PM) at this meeting. Classroom specifics, such as what to bring and other procedures are discussed outside of or at the end of the IEP meeting.
 - ❖ You will be provided with copies of your child's IEP and Eligibility paperwork that we recommend you save digitally in the event you relocate. Eligibilities and IEPs are federal documents, requiring all states to provide commensurate services.

Additional District Links for Families

- ❖ [NTSP Integrated Preschool Information](#)
- ❖ [NTSP Child Find - District Website](#)
- ❖ **Procedural Safeguards** – Parents and students have numerous rights under special education law. These rights are outlined in a document called Notice of Special Education Procedural Safeguards. School districts are required to give a copy of this document to the students and their families who are receiving special education services. Click this link to access [Procedural Safeguards in English](#). Let your examiner know if you need these safeguards in a different language.
- ❖ **14 Disability Categories** – This [SESC website](#) helps to outline the 14 disabilities categories that can be considered when determining eligibility for special education.

Frequently Asked Questions

How is an Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) different from an Individualized Education Plan (IEP)?

The major difference between an IFSP and an IEP is that an IFSP focuses on the child and family, identifying the services that a family needs to help enhance the development of their child. This can involve service coordination, support obtaining private therapy, contracted therapy services, and home visits with early interventionists. The IEP focuses on the educational needs of the child. An IEP is a legally binding, education document for children ages 3 to 21. The IEP identifies how a child's residing school district will provide direct and indirect services to ensure a child has equal access and opportunity to learn and progress toward general education and developmental expectations for a child their age and grade. An IEP covers a student for one year and is reviewed annually, just like an IFSP. Their progress toward individual goals is monitored throughout the school year.

What does preschool with North Thurston look like? What sessions are offered? Are meals served?

North Thurston Public Schools offers free preschool services for children who have IEPs that warrant a district preschool placement through early learning centers based at four elementary schools: Meadows Elementary, Seven Oaks Elementary, Mountain View Elementary, and Pleasant Glade Elementary. All preschool classrooms are taught by a special education teacher, with support from paraeducators. Special education teachers provide classroom-based, direct instruction in cognitive/pre-academic, social-emotional, and adaptive behavior skills for child requiring direct instruction in those areas. If your child requires direct instruction for communication, fine motor, or gross motor therapy, each center has a speech language pathologist, occupational therapist, and physical therapist to meet the needs to children across classrooms during their school days.

At each early learning center there are AM (9:20-11:50) and PM (1:10-3:40) preschool sessions, and preschool is held on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays (No preschool on Wednesdays). Although our team tries to place children in their preferred session (AM or PM), final session placement decisions are made depending on how full classes are and whether the dynamic of the classroom is the best fit for the child to learn. If there is a half day or early release for the school district, preschool is canceled for that day. Preschool yearly start/end dates, days off, and breaks can be found on our school district calendar.

Each classroom has a scheduled that is unique to their teaching style and classroom dynamic; however, all classrooms integrate whole group instruction (e.g., circle time), small group activities, free play, snack, and recess (each center has their own preschool playground that is separate from the main elementary building). Preschoolers have multiple opportunities throughout the day to practice self-care skills, such as handwashing, toileting, putting on coats, and cleaning up. Although our preschools do not serve lunch, they do offer snack. Snack procedures are specific to each individual teacher. Our classrooms have a variety of supports to help all learners succeed, such as visual supports, break spaces, classroom jobs, access to sensory tools, a variety toys to meet the varying ranges of student development, changing tables, and adaptive seating. At each early learning center, there are three different types of preschool classrooms, as well as students that receive itinerant services (drive in therapy) as needed. Your child's classroom placement depends on their individual needs, and placement determination is made by the IEP team at their initial IEP meeting. Each potential classroom placement is described below:

- **Developmental Preschool** – Developmental Preschool is comprised of approximately 8 children on IEPs and up to 8 typically developing peer models who pay tuition to attend the program. While modifying

instruction for the individual needs of students, these preschool classrooms teach general education preschool content, with an integrated social-emotional learning curriculum. This environment is language rich. The number of typically developing peers is based on enrollment.

- **Highly Supported Preschool** – Highly Supported Preschool has a smaller staff to student ration, with approximately 5 children on IEPs and up to 2 typically developing peer models (depending on enrollment). This classroom is designed to targeting foundational learning, communication, and social skills. Children who benefit from this classroom are typically working on engaging in functional play, using language to communicate with others, sustaining joint attention to tasks with others, and increasing their ability to imitate actions, play, and routines modeled by others. This classroom also provides a variety of supports for sensory seekers and avoiders, while providing a less stimulating environment than Developmental Preschool. This classroom is not designed to be a permanent placement, but a placement where a child can learn foundational skills and gradually integrated into Developmental Preschool at their own rate. Placement in this classroom is determined by the IEP team for each child, taking into consideration parent input and evaluation results to help determine where a child is able to make the best progress toward their goals and developmental expectations for their age.
- **Communication Preschool** – Communication Preschool is offered in either a two day a week or four day a week format (depending on the needs of your child). This classroom is designed to be a general education model, with an equal number of typical peers to children on IEPs. This classroom is considered when we have a child who has delays in primarily communication, such as language or speech articulation. Communication Preschool offers a language rich environment where children can receive their speech therapy, practice communication skills with peers and adults, and access general education preschool curriculum content.
- **Community-Based & Itinerant Placements** – Our district coordinates with some community-based programs, such as co-ops, Head Start, or ECEAP, to establish additional general education placement options for children who qualify for IEP services. Additionally, some students do not require preschool program services, and their individual needs can be met through drive-in speech services at their nearest preschool center.

How do you determine what preschool center my child attends? Does daycare affect what center my child attends?

If your child does not attend daycare, your child is assigned to a preschool center based on your neighborhood elementary school. Based on your home address:

- If your neighborhood elementary school is Meadows, Lydia Hawk, or Olympic View, your child will be routed to Meadows Early Learning Center
- If your neighborhood elementary school is Seven Oaks, Woodland, or Evergreen Forest, your child will be routed to Seven Oaks Early Learning Center
- If your neighborhood elementary school is Mountain View, Chambers Prairie, Horizons, Lacey, or Lakes, your child will be routed to Mountain View Early Learning Center
- If your neighborhood school is Pleasant Glade or South Bay, your child will be routed to Pleasant Glade Early Learning Center

If your child attends daycare that is not in the same elementary school boundary as your residence and they will need to be transported to/from their daycare to preschool each school day, your child will need to attend the Early Learning Center that is within the boundary of their daycare. Each daycare falls within an elementary

school boundary and that boundary is used to determine the Early Learning Center. For instance, Kiddie Academy on Galaxy Way falls within the Meadows Elementary boundary; therefore, children attending this daycare would need to attend Meadows Early Learning Center (even if their neighborhood elementary school is in the Mountain View Boundary). Our staff has developed a document reflecting the Early Learning Centers assigned to each daycare within the area which you can request from your evaluation case manager. If your child begins attending a new daycare during the school year and you need transportation, your child may need to change centers to ensure transportation can be provided.

Does my child receive preschool during the summer months?

Preschool services outlined within your child's IEP are designed to be provided during the typical school year. However, there are some students who qualify for extended school year. In order to qualify for extended school year, a child with a disability must lose two-thirds of the skills they learned during the school year (usually based upon progress toward IEP goals) and take between six and nine weeks of the next school year to regain those skills. If your child is being considered for extended school year, the IEP team will convene to make that determination together.

What if I am unable to transport my child to school because they are at daycare, or I do not have access to a vehicle?

Our district offers preschool bus transportation to all students on IEPs. You do not have to transport your child via bus, but you have that option. The bus is a smaller bus, with one bus driver (no additional paraeducators assigned to the whole bus). Bus transportation for preschoolers is door to door, meaning they will pull up in front of your residence. If needed, children can be provided safety buckles or harnesses as needed to ensure their safety on the bus. Children who are non-ambulatory (not walking) can be transported in car seats or adaptive strollers. If you are interested in bussing for your child, let the evaluation team know. When requesting transportation, it can take up to two weeks to get transportation set up. Once a teacher puts in the request, transportation will contact you directly to outline the initial date and regular time of pick-up and drop off. Bussing can also be provided to and from daycare as well. See the answer to question above that outlines how daycare transportation can change the early learning center they have to attend.

Does my child have to be potty trained to attend preschool?

No. Children do not have to be potty trained to attend preschool. If your child is not potty trained, each teacher has specific requests as to what needs to be provided to the classroom teacher to ensure that they can be changed at school. When your child is ready, our staff is prepared to help your child learn the adaptive skills of using the toilet at school. You will want to coordinate with your teacher to outline any details surrounding potty training. They can also answer any questions you might have about how to best begin and implement the process at home.

Do you offer meals through the preschool program?

No. Preschool is considered a half day program, but snack time is integrated into the program. Snack procedures are different for each teacher at each center. If your child has a restricted diet, you can provide snacks for your child that align with their restrictions for the teacher/staff to provide.

Can the school district assess my child for Autism as a part of this evaluation?

Although we cannot medically diagnose children with Autism Spectrum Disorder, our teams can evaluate for Autism spectrum characteristics and determine if they meet eligibility criteria under the educational

classification/category of Autism (regardless if they do or do not have a medical diagnosis). We understand that waitlists for Autism evaluations for community medical providers are long, but we can help you gain insight into your child's development while you wait. If evaluating a child for Autism characteristics, our team develops an in-depth report on your child's early development, social interaction, play, verbal and nonverbal communication, sensory differences, and patterns of behavior to help determine if they meet Washington State Eligibility Criteria under the category of Autism. You can share this report with medical providers at your discretion.

My child tends to be an escape artist, what supports exist in preschool to help ensure my child's safety?

Our preschools have a lot of adult support to help monitor behavior throughout the school day and across early learning center settings. All playgrounds are fenced in to help reduce the frequency of children eloping from the playground. It is helpful if we know in advance that your child tends to run or leave the environment, allowing our teachers to be more proactive in monitoring their behavior to prevent elopement. Each teacher has individual strategies to address elopement, which can be individualized to your child as needed. If a child exhibits reoccurring pattern of elopement, a plan can be developed and put in place to help address your child's safety needs. Our preschool staff is trained to use non-violent crisis intervention procedures to ensure student safety in the event that a restraint (e.g., pickup up your child or holding your child) is warranted due to them being in eminent danger. Our district has a restraint and isolation policy that will be shared with you and is available on OSPI's website.

What is Highly Supported Preschool?

Highly Supported Preschool is a preschool special education classroom located at each center that is designed to provide a lower adult to student ratio (1 teacher to 5 students, with two paraeducators) and intense, direct instruction to foster foundational early learning skills. Children who benefit the most from Highly Supported Preschool often need individualized instruction to increase functional communication, joint attention, imitation, functional play, social interaction, emotional and behavioral regulation, and basic self-care and transitioning skills needed to navigate classroom routines. Additionally, this classroom works to provide increased access to sensory supports that are needed to maximize learning and reduce overstimulation. A medical diagnosis or educational classification of Autism is not required for placement in this classroom, but this classroom provides instruction and support that is aligned with best practices for children with characteristics of Autism that have a substantial impact on their learning. Children in this classroom may have access to typically developing peers in the classroom depending on enrollment, but they will have opportunity to participate in recess with Developmental Preschool classrooms where they have access to typically developing peer models. As children placed in this classroom begin to make progress in foundational learning skills and are ready to access a Developmental Preschool classroom where they can engage with more peers and practice the skills they have learned, the teacher will work directly with the team to allocate time for them to attend Developmental Preschool during their preschool day. If children make substantial progress and no longer warrant the services of the Highly Supported Preschool Classroom, the IEP team can convene to determine if they have the data needed to substantiate a change in placement to Developmental Preschool.

If my child needs medication (e.g., EpiPen, Seizure Medication, etc.) or specific medical supports/services (e.g., Diet restriction, G-tube feeding, etc.) at school, how is that addressed through this process?

If your child needs medical services or support while they are at preschool, please let your child's evaluation team know. We will need to contact the school nurse assigned to your child's preschool center, and they will contact you directly to develop a medical plan that is separate from the IEP. Medical plans are developed

based on part input and doctor's orders and then followed by your child's preschool team. We often serve children with a wide variety of medical needs.

If my child qualifies for speech, occupational, or physical therapy at school, should we stop outside therapies? What do these services look like in schools?

Whether or not you continue your community therapy services is at your family's discretion. The criteria for a child to qualify for community-based therapy versus school-based therapy is different, suggesting that it is easier to qualify for community-based therapy than school-based because schools have to prove educational impact. In other words, just because a child receives outside therapy services does not mean that they will qualify for it at school. Evaluation results are used to determine their eligibility for school-based services. Our therapists often share with parents that additional therapy outside of school is only going to help your child, not hurt them. However, we recognize that juggling all those appointments can be challenging for some families and they opt to drop outside therapy. If your child has been determined eligible for speech, occupational, or physical therapy at school, details surrounding when and how those services will be provided is an IEP team decision. Services can be provided within their classroom setting, within a therapy room, or by consult with the teacher; however, your child's individual needs will drive the teams' decision on what model of service is the best for your child.

My child has a communication device, can they bring it to preschool?

Yes! If your family is comfortable with this device traveling between home and school, you are able to bring this device to preschool. If your family chooses to keep this device at home, your child's IEP team will coordinate the use of a district device.

What if my Child has weekly ABA therapy, Speech therapy, or occupational therapy to attend?

If your child attends weekly therapy outside of preschool that you want to continue, our team recommends that you let us know so we can try to place your child in a session that does not conflict with their outside therapies. Many families opt to switch therapies to Wednesdays, since there is no preschool. If a time conflict is unavoidable, your child will not be penalized for missing school during those days and times; however, that is instructional and potential therapy time that your child is missing.

If my student is found eligible for an IEP, do they have to start school on their birthday?

All IEPs for students transitioning from Birth to Three to Preschool-Aged services must have an IEP initiated by their third birthday if they are deemed eligible for special education services. However, you can opt to start your child later than their third birthday. Some children have third birthdays that fall in the middle of the week or on a Friday, and the family opts to start their child on the following Monday to ensure a full week of school. Additionally, we have delayed starts for students to start after a break (e.g., fall break, winter break) to ensure they do not start school and then have a prolonged period off. Additionally, some students turn three at the end of the school year and their families prefer that they do not attend school for a short period of time prior to the summer, opting to start them at the beginning of the next school year. You can work with your child's preschool teacher to set up their start date.

What if my child has a hard time separating from me when they start preschool?

For many children transitioning out of early intervention, preschool is their first experience where they are regularly separating from you and entering a novel environment with unfamiliar people. Anxiety is age appropriate. As hard as it is to leave a crying child, your child is in good hands. The more important thing is

that you reassure them that you will return, leave with a smile, and then return to pick them up at the expected time. For some children, it can be helpful to have a picture of you in their bookbag to reference if they are having a very hard time calming down and joining the group. You can work with your child's teacher to develop a plan if the anxiety persists.

What if my child is not walking yet? How does the school help my child access instruction?

Walking is not a requirement for our preschool program. Your child can bring their personal equipment, such as a walker or adaptive stroller, etc. Our physical therapist will work with your child's IEP team in order to determine when and if additional equipment is warranted for them to access instruction. We have served children who benefited from access to standers and other adaptive equipment to access their educational setting.

Do I need to register my child with the school district before they can receive preschool services outlined in their IEP?

Yes. All children need to be registered with the school district before they can come to school, even if their IEP has started. After your transition conference, you will receive information regarding the registration process for our district. This is a step that you can do right away after the transition conference (before the evaluation). It is a two-step process.