

# From Puzzled to Prepared: Present Level for Preschool

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Early Childhood and Youth Training Specialist



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## Agenda

- Define Our Terms:  
IDEA, FAPE, LRE, IEP, PLAAFP, and Section 619
- Elements of the PLAAFP  
Baseline Data and Data Sources, Description of Area and Subarea of Need, and Adverse Impact
- Parent Input
- Concluding Remarks



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## Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

The **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)** is a federal law that makes sure eligible students with disabilities have both rights and protections in school, including access to the services and supports they need to learn.



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## Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)

IDEA is a federal law that makes sure eligible students with disabilities have both rights and protections in school, including access to the services and supports they need to learn.

This includes the right to a **Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)**, which means public schools must provide an education at no cost to families that is tailored to meet each eligible student's unique needs.



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## Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

IDEA is a federal law that makes sure eligible students with disabilities have both rights and protections in school, including access to the services and supports they need to learn.

This includes the right to a **FAPE**, which means public schools must provide an education at no cost to families that is tailored to meet each eligible student's unique needs.

And the right to be educated in the **Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)**, meaning eligible students with disabilities should learn alongside their peers without disabilities to the maximum extent appropriate.



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## What do we mean by preschool?



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## IDEA Data Center's Preschool Environment Toolkit



Blended Classroom, Public Preschool or State Preschool, Home, Title 1 or Migrant Preschool Program, Early Childhood Special Education Class with peers, Early Childhood Special Education Class, Mother's Day Out, Church or Faith-Based Preschool, Community Preschool, Childcare, Family Childcare Home, Separate School, Play Group/Story Hour, Residential Facility

### Section 619 of Part B of IDEA

- Makes a free appropriate public education (FAPE) available to all eligible children with disabilities 3 to 5 years of age
- Supplement to IDEA to further assist states to educate preschool children (3 to 5 years) with identified developmental delays and disabilities by providing special education and related services in accordance with Part B requirements
- Provides an option to serve children, age 2, who will be turning 3 during the school year, allowing a more cohesive and less disruptive transition to a new setting



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## Individualized Education Program (IEP)

IDEA is a federal law that makes sure eligible students with disabilities have both rights and protections in school, including access to the services and supports they need to learn.

This includes the right to a **FAPE**, which means public schools must provide an education at no cost to families that is tailored to meet each eligible student's unique needs.

And the right to be educated in the **LRE**, meaning eligible students with disabilities should learn alongside their peers without disabilities to the maximum extent appropriate.

**IDEA requires schools to develop an Individualized Education Program (IEP)—the school's written offer of FAPE. In other words, IDEA is the law, and the IEP is how it's carried out for each eligible student.**



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## Slide 9

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**MK0** The IEP is constructed with the district using your input as a parent. This document once completed will reflect the district's offer of a free and appropriate public education or FAPE. The family cannot accept an offer of FAPE without an IEP documenting what that offer is. And what is in that IEP is the offer.

Kuipers, Mark (MiLEAP), 2025-10-09T19:32:14.700

## Present Level of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP)

IDEA is a federal law that makes sure eligible students with disabilities have both rights and protections in school, including access to the services and supports they need to learn.

This includes the right to a FAPE, which means public schools must provide an education at no cost to families that is tailored to meet each eligible student's unique needs.

It also includes the right to be educated in the LRE, meaning eligible students with disabilities should learn alongside their peers without disabilities to the maximum extent appropriate.

IDEA requires schools to develop an IEP—the school's written offer of FAPE. In other words, IDEA is the law, and the IEP is how it's carried out for each eligible student.

**The Present Level of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP) is one part of the IEP, and it describes the child's current abilities, needs, and impact on access.**



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## Present Level of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP)



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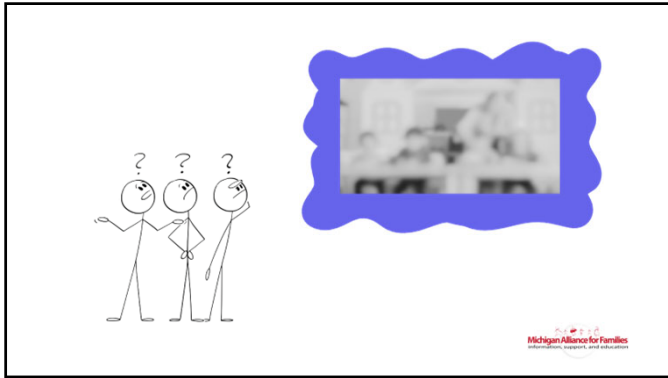
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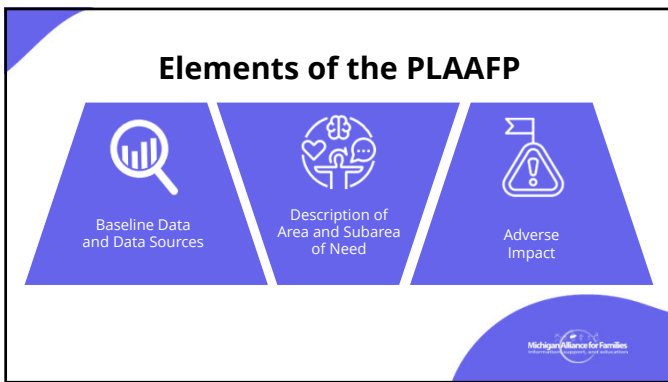
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## Baseline Data and Data Sources

The PLAAFP needs to be built on data that is:

- Clear, specific, and objective  
Should not be opinions like “doing better!”
- Taken from multiple sources  
These could be observations, developmental assessments, therapy notes, parent input, classroom work, etc.
- Reflective of how the child performs in different situations  
Preschoolers can act differently when working 1:1, in a group setting, on the playground, etc.

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Weak Statement	Strong Statement
Jensen is 3.7 and struggles to speak.	Jensen uses 20–25 single words consistently and is beginning to combine two words together. During his speech sessions, Jensen engages well and has correctly used two-word combinations in 6 out of 10 opportunities. By 36–48 months, children typically use two- to three-word phrases spontaneously across daily routines to share ideas, express needs, and participate in conversation. Jensen is developing these early expressive language skills and benefits from adult prompting to use multi-word combinations more consistently and independently.
Aria just turned 4 last month. Yay! Happy Birthday, Aria! She loves pink, pizza, Minnie Mouse, and does not listen.	By 3½–4 years of age, children are usually able to engage in structured tasks for periods of 10–15 minutes and follow one-step directions consistently across settings. Aria sustains attention for approximately 4 minutes during structured activities without support; with a visual schedule and timer, she sustains attention for up to 10 minutes. In the classroom, she follows one-step directions independently approximately 80% of the time. Aria benefits from visual supports and predictable routines to maintain attention and complete adult-directed activities.
Dallas is fifty months. He likes to sing and smile. He wants to drive a firetruck when he grows up and is behind in motor skills.	By 4–5 years of age, children are expected to use a mature or modified tripod grasp to copy a cross, and square, and draw a person with several body parts. They also begin forming letters or shapes with increasing control. Dallas is developing his fine motor and early writing skills and benefits from structured practice and targeted adult support to increase independence and precision. When provided with short, thick markers, he uses a fist grasp and can copy a vertical line and circle. During tracing activities, he follows a vertical path with 70% accuracy.

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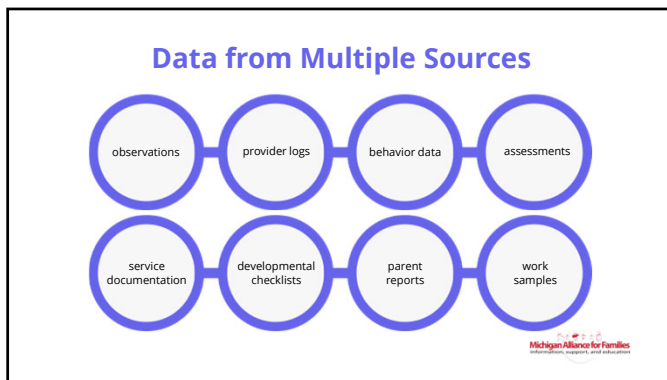
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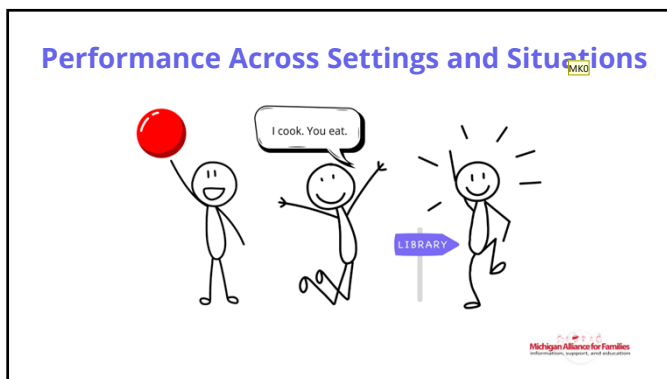
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**MK0** Would it be clearer to say across settings and situations since we do not want to just put a child in situations to see how they would do, but to make sure we are “knowing” the child from a full perspective of his or her experience. This information is certainly data.

Kuipers, Mark (MiLEAP), 2025-10-09T19:07:35.114



## Description of Area and Subarea of Need




Includes the Present Level on:

- Pre-Academic/Academic Data
- Functional Data
- Additional Areas of Need Data  
(motor functioning, vision, hearing, etc.)

Focuses on the Strengths

Describes Any Concerns

Includes Strategies that Do and Don't Work



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## Focus on the strengths!

1. Provide Balance
2. Guide Instruction
3. Reveal Motivations
4. Build Confidence
5. Foster Collaboration
6. Provides Vision



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Pre-Academic/ Academic	Social/Emotional	Communication	Motor Skills	Independence	Interests
Recognizes familiar letters or numbers.  Matches shapes, sorts objects, or names colors.  Sits for a short story and points to pictures when asked.	Greets peers with a smile.  Comforts another child when upset.  Takes turns with encouragement during games.	Uses gestures, pictures, or words to request a toy.  Sings along with songs.  Retells part of a story or shares a favorite memory.	Climbs playground equipment.  Balances on one foot.  Completes puzzles, strings beads, or holds a crayon correctly.	Washes hands with minimal reminders.  Puts away a backpack or coat.  Follows a daily routine, lines up for recess.	Curious about animal, machines.  Persistent when building with blocks or Legos.  Enjoys pretend play or acting out stories.



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**MK0** "When you walk into an IEP...." I know that this language reflects the feelings of most parent. I am wondering (because I am working on this same thing from the district side) can we say When you participate with others in the IEP Team meeting or something more to throughout the presentation build a sense of shared work?

Kuipers, Mark (MiLEAP), 2025-10-09T19:59:23.778

Academic/ Pre-Academic	Social/Emotional	Communication	Motor Skills	Independence	Sensory
Difficulty recognizing shapes, letters, or numbers. Difficulty answering questions from a story.	Difficulty joining in play with peers. Difficulty waiting for turn, sharing. Difficulty calming down when frustrated.	Difficulty forming sentences. Difficulty being understood by peers. Difficulty in asking for help when needed.	Difficulty holding a crayon or using scissors. Difficulty running, jumping, climbing, or throwing a ball.	Difficulty cleaning up after activities. Difficulty following a well-known routine. Difficulty using the bathroom independently.	Difficulty managing loud noises or bright lights. Difficulty navigating busy environments without being overwhelmed.

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## Adverse Impact



- Connects the disability to age-appropriate routines and activities
- Goes beyond test scores—shows how challenges show a need for support
- Helps the IEP team design goals and supports that align with the child's needs
- Focuses on participation in play, social interaction, and daily routines (not just academics)
- A strong adverse impact = a stronger, more accurate IEP



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## Disability Does Not Define

- Your child is a unique learner
- A disability does not define a child
- Two children with the same disability will present differently
- A medical diagnosis is not the same as special education eligibility
- Special education eligibility focuses on how the disability impacts education and participation with same age peers 
- Parent voice is essential in making this connection clear



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**MK0** Impacts education and participation with same age peers?

Kuipers, Mark (MiLEAP), 2025-10-09T19:23:54.421

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## Parent Input

- You spend the most time with your child—in school, at home, and in the community
- You see strengths that may not show up at school
- You know what strategies work best in daily life
- You notice challenges in everyday settings
- Your input makes the PLAAFP complete—it shows your child as a whole person, across all settings

Parent voice is **essential**, not optional, in shaping the IEP.



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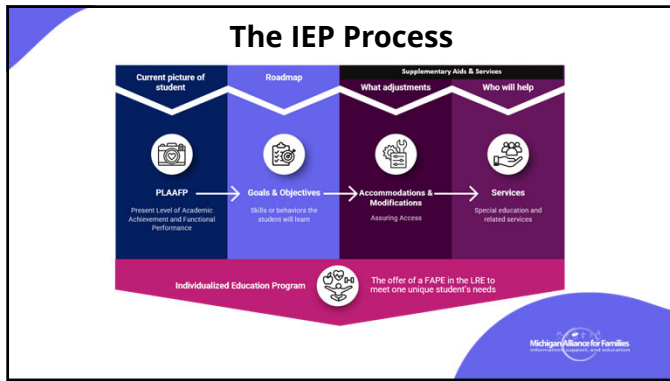
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Michigan Alliance for Families

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