J.O. Combs Unified School District #44
Continuum of Special Education Program Services

Preschool Program for Children with Developmental Delays

The special needs preschool program serves children having developmental delays who are between 2.9 and 5 years old (if not kindergarten eligible). As part of the process for attending special needs preschool, screenings are provided throughout the school year to identify young children who may require further evaluation. At a minimum, screenings will be held within 45 days of a referral to the district. If at the time of the screening children are found to be in need of more in-depth testing, they will be scheduled for an evaluation. The purpose of the evaluation is to determine if the child demonstrates a developmental delay that requires special education intervention. Preschool children may be referred by parents or agencies, such as: The Department of Developmental Disabilities (DDD), Arizona Early Intervention Program (AzEIP), and/or Head Start.

Preschool children may meet the state guidelines for developmentally delayed if they demonstrate delays in one of more areas of development. Those developmental areas are: speech and/or language, fine and/or gross motor, cognitive/academic, adaptive (self-help) and/or social-emotional. Children who have a hearing and/or vision delay may also be served within the special needs preschool.

Service delivery can occur in a variety of settings. The child’s Individual Education Program (IEP) team will make the decision regarding specific needs, times, allocations and locations of services. The special needs preschool classes are offered at Ranch Elementary on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from either 8:00-11:00 or 1:00-3:30. Typically developing peers are also enrolled in the special need preschool classes. These children are screened for their language and behavior and act as role models for the children with developmental needs.

In addition, Ranch Elementary has the following two community preschools: The Preschool Academy and Kindergarten Prep. These two programs are on tuition bases unless placed in the program for services. The Preschool Academy is for children who typically will be in preschool for two years. The Kindergarten Prep classes are for those children going into kindergarten the following school year. The Head Start program is located in District. Head Start enrolls preschool children having special needs. If the IEP team determines that a preschool child can best be served in one of these typical preschool settings with services on an itinerant (therapist come and go) basis, the child could be enrolled if there is an opening. Hours of these programs vary. Classrooms are staffed with a teacher, instructional aide and other support staff as determined by the student’s educational needs.