

MEMORANDUM

TO: Superintendents, Administrators, Early Childhood Special Educators and School Business Officials

FROM: Chris Case, Director, Student Support Services Division
Wendy Geller, Director, Data Management and Analysis Division

SUBJECT: Child Count Educational Environments for 5-Year-Olds in Kindergarten Reporting

DATE: November 5, 2020

Purpose

This memorandum serves to inform Supervisory Unions/ School Districts (SU/SDs) of revised school year 2020-2021 Child Count reporting requirements with a Dec. 1, 2020, collection date. The federal Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) and the EdFacts Initiative have determined that 5-year-olds who are attending kindergarten and receiving special education services must be reported in a school-aged educational environment beginning with the 2020-2021 school year. The shift to reporting 5-year-olds in kindergarten in a school-aged educational environment, rather than an Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) environment, will better align with student experiences.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Requirements on Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) Reporting for 5-Year-Olds in Kindergarten

Section 618 of the federal IDEA specifies that states must collect and report data on educational environments for children served through Part B programs. The Vermont Agency of Education (AOE) uses data gathered from the Child Count Collection each December and the Exiting Collection each June to report IDEA Part B data for ages 3 through 21 to the U.S. Department of Education. Through the EdFacts Initiative, OSEP sets the details of the required section 618 reporting.

Reporting Requirements for 5-Year-Olds in Kindergarten

Previously, the use of early childhood or school-aged educational environments in Vermont's Child Count collection were based on student age only. Children aged 3 through 5 were reported in an early childhood educational environment, and children aged 6 through 21 were reported in a school-aged educational environment. As of school year 2020-2021, educational environments for 5-year-olds must reflect whether the child is receiving ECSE services in a

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kindergarten educational environment. A child's possible educational environments are listed below. Please note that the language may vary slightly between Student Information System (SIS) providers. "Regular early childhood program" refers to a program that includes a majority (at least 50%) of non-disabled children (i.e., children not on IEPs).

Early Childhood Educational Environments

5-year-old children attending and receiving special education services in [early childhood educational environments](#) must be reported in one of the following environments¹:

- Child attending a regular early childhood program for 10 or more hours per week and
 - Receives at least 50% of their special education services in the regular early childhood program.
 - Receives at least 50% of their special education services in another location.

OR

- Child attending a regular early childhood education program for less than 10 hours per week and
 - Receives at least 50% of their special education services in the regular early childhood program.
 - Receives at least 50% of their special education services in another location.

OR

- Child not attending a regular early childhood education program and receives special education services in:
 - A separate special class
 - A separate school
 - A residential facility
 - Their home
 - The service provider's location or other location

School-Aged Educational Environments

5-year-old children attending and receiving services in kindergarten must be reported in one of the following school-aged (kindergarten through 21) environments:

- Child attending kindergarten and receives special education services:
 - Inside a regular classroom at least 80% of the time
 - Inside a regular classroom at least 40% to 79% of the time
 - Inside a regular classroom less than 40% of the time
 - Separate Day School (public or private)
 - Residential Facility (public or private)
 - Homebound/Hospital

¹ United States Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services; Dear Colleague Letter (DCL) related to Preschool Least Restrictive Environments (LRE), January 9, 2017.

Please note that the change in reporting requirements only applies to 5-year-olds in kindergarten. No change is requested at this time to the reporting of 5-year-olds in early childhood educational environments. When the SU/SDs report Child Count, the school-aged educational environment must be used for 5-year-old children attending kindergarten. Therefore, please be prepared to ensure that educational environment information is updated and accurate in any SIS used for Child Count reporting in the SU/SD ahead of the Dec. 1, 2020 reference date.