



# Osceola School District ESE Enhancements and Updates for 2025-2026



## Q Why is the school district making these changes?

A The changes to our ESE program mark a significant shift from our past practices—a shift towards greater inclusion that many school districts in Central Florida and across the nation made many years ago. The state target is to have no more than 12.7% of students with disabilities in a separate class setting. As of January 2025, Osceola’s percentage was at 21.4%. It is critical that changes be made to place students in academic settings that best meet their individual needs while providing the least restrictive environment possible.

To ensure we are making the best decisions for our students, the district brought in an external consultant to take a close look at our ESE program. Based on research-driven best practices, they provided recommendations designed to improve ESE student outcomes and to best support our students’ individual needs and goals.

These recommendations were carefully reviewed and refined in collaboration with the district’s school-based ESE Advisory Group, which included representatives from the Osceola Classroom Teachers Association, and the ESE Parent Advisory Group.

## Q What does the district want to accomplish with the changes to the ESE program?

A The Osceola School District is committed to providing high-quality teaching and learning experiences for all students in the most inclusive environment possible. Our goal is to ensure that every student receives a free and appropriate public education in the least restrictive setting that best meets their needs so that they are best prepared for future education, careers, and independent living. We believe that, with the right support, many students with disabilities can thrive in general education classrooms. This belief is backed by years of research and has been embraced by other school districts in Florida and across the nation. It’s time we bring those same opportunities for students to Osceola.

## Q What changes are being made?

A Student outcome data and findings from the audit show us there’s more we can do to ensure students have access to inclusive environments that support their growth and success. That’s exactly what we’re committed to doing by:

- **Expanding Inclusion Opportunities:** Starting in the 2025–2026 school year, more students will have access to inclusive learning environments with the right supports in place. This means that we are expanding opportunities for many students with disabilities to learn alongside their peers in general education classrooms.
- **Creating Hub Schools:** In order to continue offering the right level of support for students who need a more specialized separate class setting, we’ve identified hub schools that will provide these services while ensuring a full range of supports remain within our district. By adjusting where specialized separate classes are offered, we can better support students and make the most of our resources for them.

## Q Will School Choice options still be available for my child?

A Yes. A parent of a student with a disability can request choice to another school, just as a parent or a student without a disability. Choice approvals are based on the capacity at the school and the ability of the school to fully implement the IEP. A separate class setting will not be created at a choice school for an IEP to be implemented at the requested location.



**Are all ESE students going to be placed in the general education setting?**

No. Ensuring that students with disabilities receive the right support in the most inclusive setting possible is a key part of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Whenever possible, students should learn in general education classrooms alongside their peers, with the necessary supports in place. However, for some students, their unique needs may require a more specialized learning environment, such as a separate class setting. Decisions about where a student learns are always based on what's best for them. These decisions are carefully made through the IEP process, ensuring each child gets the support they need. For students who continue to require a separate classroom setting based on research-based interventions, those programs will still be available.



**Will I be able to bring my child's sibling to the new hub school?**

Yes. Siblings of students with disabilities moving to a hub site will have an option to stay at their current school or choice to the hub school if the parent chooses.



**What if I don't want my child to be in the general education setting? What if I want my child to stay in a separate class setting?**

The school district has an obligation to provide students with every opportunity to be educated with their non-disabled peers. Data will be reviewed at the IEP team meeting, and unless there is data to support continued placement in this restrictive setting, the IEP team will make recommendations for increasing inclusive opportunities as required under IDEA.



**Will my child lose access to the specialized services they've been receiving?**

No, your child will not lose access to the specialized services they've been receiving. We are committed to ensuring that all students continue to receive the support they need, whether they are in regular general education or a separate class setting. While some specialized programs will be relocated to select schools within the district, the services themselves will remain in place.