The LEAP classroom is designed to meet the needs of preschool students who have delays in the areas of speech and language, and who currently have an IEP with goals and services addressing their speech and language needs. The decision to place a child in LEAP is based on diagnostic information and the recommendation of a child’s IEP team based on specific criteria.

There are two components to this class: a Language Enriched Classroom experience and individualized speech and language therapy for those students who need it.

The LEAP class will meet from 8:50-11:05 & from 1:00-3:15 PM Monday-Thursday. Students may receive speech therapy immediately before or immediately after this class time if that is recommended by the student’s IEP team. Students will enroll in either the morning class session or the PM class session. The LEAP classroom is taught by Lisa Zartman and Andrea Heller, who are speech-language-pathologists with the ECSE program with the assistance of an instructional aide.

The classroom session is designed to focus on all areas of language development including phonology (speech patterns), semantics (word knowledge, word use, understanding and responding to questions), morphology (word structure, grammar), syntax (sentence structure, sentence length) and pragmatics (social language skills including following directions, communicating wants and needs, etc.). Classroom time is also spent focusing on pre-literacy skills (such as phonological awareness, rhyming, sound segmentation, etc.). In addition, teachers work diligently to carry over specific speech and language goals that have been targeted within a student’s speech therapy sessions.

Students who have significant speech needs (i.e. difficulty articulating specific speech sounds, exhibiting speech error patterns and/or those whose speech is difficult to understand) may receive additional small-group therapy sessions during the ½ hour before or the ½ hour after class times for up to 4 25-minute speech therapy sessions per week (to be determined by need).

The purpose of LEAP is to focus on communication skills, with opportunities for acquisition of new speech and language skills in a therapy setting and opportunities for generalization of these newly learned skills. The class does not focus on traditional preschool curriculum (i.e, play skills, motor skills, social-emotional-behavioral development, etc.), although many of these skills will be incorporated into speech and language activities. The curriculum is a literature-based approach that incorporates all areas of speech and language. For example, class time includes large group/circle time to introduce topics, book reading related to the topic (either in a small or large group), small group activities to address semantics (word knowledge, word use), morphology (word construction skills), syntax (sentence construction skills) and pragmatics (social language skills). In addition, specific speech sounds or sound classes are targeted (based on the needs of the students). Pre-literacy skills are also systematically taught, as many students with speech and language delays are at risk for later reading and spelling deficits if these skills are not in place during early school years. An unstructured work time is included as part of the day so that students have an opportunity to use the skills they learn in a more unstructured setting with their peers.