ROSEN JCC LEARNING CENTER

A Higher Standard of Care

Understanding Our APPLE Accreditation — why Rosen JCC goes beyond Florida's minimum licensing requirements, and what that means for your child

Every licensed early learning program in Florida must meet the minimum health and safety standards set by the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF), found in Florida Administrative Code 65C-22. These standards exist to protect children, and we fully comply with every one of them.

But at Rosen JCC Learning Center, we believe minimum compliance is not the same as excellence. We are held to every Florida DCF standard, and we go further by also meeting the additional requirements of APPLE Accreditation (Accredited Professional Preschool Learning Environment) through the Florida Association for Child Care Management (FACCM) — a rigorous, independently verified accreditation that asks us to exceed the state's baseline in nearly every area that matters to your child's daily safety, health, and development.

This guide walks through the specific ways APPLE Accreditation standards raise the bar above Florida's minimum requirements, and why each of those differences matters for your family.

WHAT APPLE ACCREDITATION ACTUALLY REQUIRES

Unlike a state license — which is required simply to legally operate — APPLE Accreditation is optional, self-funded by the program, and independently verified. It requires our program to:

- Submit a detailed self-study portfolio documenting policies, staffing, curriculum, and facility practices across five major standards.
- Undergo an on-site verification visit by a certified APPLE Accreditation Verifier who observes classrooms directly.
- Accept unannounced follow-up visits at any point during the accreditation period to confirm we are still meeting every standard, not just on the day we were reviewed.
- Submit an Annual Report every year to maintain good standing, in addition to our regular Florida DCF licensing inspections.

In short: a license tells you we are legally allowed to operate. APPLE Accreditation tells you an independent, outside body has verified — in person, in our classrooms — that we are operating well above that floor.

SIDE-BY-SIDE: WHERE APPLE RAISES THE BAR

The comparisons below focus on the areas parents care about most. Florida DCF figures reflect the statewide minimums in Florida Administrative Code 65C-22; because regulations can be updated, families are always welcome to confirm current state minimums directly at myflfamilies.com. APPLE figures come directly from the 2024 APPLE Accreditation Standards Manual.

1. Educator-to-Child Ratios

Fewer children per adult means more individual attention, faster response in an emergency, and closer supervision throughout the day.

Age Group	Florida DCF Minimum	APPLE Accreditation Standard
Infants	1 : 4	1 : 3–4 (never more than 4)
1 Year (Toddlers)	1 : 6	1 : 3–5
2 Years	1 : 11	1 : 6–7
3 Years	1 : 15	1 : 7–9
4–5 Years	1 : 20	1 : 9–11
School-Age (5+)	1 : 25	1 : 9–11

In nearly every age group, APPLE requires close to half as many children per educator as the state minimum allows. A lower ratio means your child is more likely to be noticed, comforted, redirected, and kept safe in real time.

2. Classroom & Outdoor Space per Child

Category	Florida DCF Minimum	APPLE Accreditation Standard
Indoor space per child	35 sq. ft.	35 sq. ft. of usable space per child (same standard as Florida DCF)
Outdoor space per child	~45 sq. ft.	75 sq. ft. of usable space per child
Shaded outdoor area	Not specifically mandated	Shade required over at least 25% of the play area

Indoor space is one area where Florida's own requirement already matches APPLE's standard — both call for 35 sq. ft. of usable space per child. Outdoor space and shade coverage are where APPLE goes further.

More space per child reduces crowding and injury risk, supports calmer transitions, and gives children room to move, explore, and play without feeling overstimulated.

3. Educator Qualifications & Ongoing Training

Category	Florida DCF Minimum	APPLE Accreditation Standard
Initial training	40-hour Introductory Child Care Training course	Same DCF training required, plus a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential or college coursework in Early Childhood Education for Lead Educators, Directors, and Specialists
Annual professional development	10 hours per year	At least 24 hours per year — more than double the state minimum, for every role including volunteers
First Aid / CPR	At least one trained adult on-site per facility	Every educator, driver, and food specialist individually holds a current Infant/Child CPR and First Aid certification

Category	Florida DCF Minimum	APPLE Accreditation Standard
Background screening	Level 2 background screening required	Same Level 2 background screening required by Florida DCF — no additional screening beyond the state mandate
Director qualifications	Director credential per DCF requirements	Associate degree or higher with 12+ Early Childhood credits (or CDA), 2+ years of professional experience, and 24 annual PD hours, verified through the portfolio and on-site review

Your child's day-to-day experience is shaped by the adults in the room. APPLE's higher training, credentialing, and safety-certification requirements mean every educator — not just a designated staff member — is individually prepared to respond to a medical emergency and has significantly more ongoing professional development than the state requires.

4. Health, Safety & Emergency Preparedness

Florida DCF requires programs to maintain basic health and safety practices and an emergency plan. APPLE requires those plans to be more specific, more frequently tested, and independently verified on-site. For example, our Risk Management Plan must specifically address:

- Utility failure, severe weather, and medical emergencies
- Suspicious individuals, armed intruders, and lockdowns
- Custody disputes and abduction threats
- Attempts by unauthorized individuals to pick up a child
- Substance impairment of a caregiver on premises

APPLE also requires monthly evacuation, fire, and lockdown drills to be logged (not just conducted), routine access to a health consultant who reviews our program's physical, social-emotional, nutritional, and oral health practices, and specific, posted hand-washing and diapering protocols aligned to CDC guidance at every sink and changing station.

5. Nutrition

Category	Florida DCF Minimum	APPLE Accreditation Standard
Menu review	Compliance with USDA food program guidelines where applicable	A dietitian or nutrition consultant evaluates menus at least twice a year for nutritional content, portion sizes, and sugar/sodium/fat limits
Choking-hazard prevention	General food safety practices	Specific cutting-size rules for children under 4 (e.g., ¼-inch pieces for infants, ½-inch for toddlers) and a defined list of high-risk foods not served to children under 4

6. Family Communication & Partnership

Florida DCF licensing does not set specific requirements for how often a program communicates with families. APPLE does:

- Infant/toddler/two-year-old classrooms: at least 2 documented communications with families every single day.
- Preschool through school-age classrooms: at least 2 documented communications with families every week.
- A minimum of 2 formal family conferences per year to discuss your child's individual progress.
- A detailed Family Handbook covering everything from discipline policy to allergy protocols, reviewed with every family annually.

This means you're never left wondering how your child's day went. Consistent, documented communication is a built-in requirement of our accreditation — not an optional extra.

7. Curriculum, Learning & Classroom Practice

Florida DCF requires a developmentally appropriate curriculum but does not prescribe its content in detail. APPLE requires our curriculum and daily practice to be research-based and to specifically build:

- Language and early literacy (print-rich classrooms, daily read-alouds, writing materials appropriate to each age)
- Executive function and self-regulation skills (identifying feelings, resolving conflict, building relationships)
- Scaffolded learning tailored to each child's individual developmental level, not a one-size-fits-all lesson

APPLE also requires that program leadership formally review every educator's lesson plans weekly — an added layer of instructional accountability that goes beyond simply having a curriculum on file.

8. Ongoing, Independent Accountability

Florida DCF already holds us accountable year-round. Our program is subject to regular unannounced, on-site inspections — Florida requires at least three per year, among the most frequent inspection schedules of any state — and each one includes a thorough evaluation of our health, safety, staffing, and licensing compliance. APPLE Accreditation adds a second, separate layer of oversight on top of that already-rigorous state inspection process:

- An outside APPLE Verifier physically visits our classrooms to confirm our accreditation portfolio matches real, day-to-day practice.
- APPLE reserves the right to make its own unannounced visits at any time throughout our 3–5 year accreditation period, independent of DCF's inspections.
- Certain findings — such as a child left unsupervised, physical punishment, or falsified records — result in an automatic accreditation deferral, regardless of any other factor.
- We must submit an Annual Report and maintain good standing every single year to keep our accreditation.

In other words, we are monitored not just by the state, but by a second, independent accrediting body whose sole purpose is verifying early learning quality above and beyond legal compliance — giving your family two separate sets of eyes on our program instead of one.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOUR CHILD

Taken together, these differences show up in your child's everyday experience: fewer children competing for an educator's attention, more space to move and play, adults with deeper training and universal CPR/First Aid readiness, more frequent updates from your child's classroom, and a curriculum intentionally built around language, self-regulation, and individual growth.

We chose to pursue APPLE Accreditation because we believe your child deserves more than the legal minimum. We are proud to be held to a higher, independently verified standard — and we are glad to answer any questions about what that means for your family.

Questions about our accreditation or licensing? We're happy to walk through our APPLE Accreditation portfolio, our current Florida DCF license, or any of our program policies with you at any time.

Sources: 2024 APPLE Accreditation Standards Manual (Florida Association for Child Care Management); Florida Administrative Code 65C-22 (Florida Department of Children and Families child care licensing standards). Florida DCF minimums are summarized here for comparison and should be confirmed directly at myflfamilies.com, as state regulations are periodically updated.