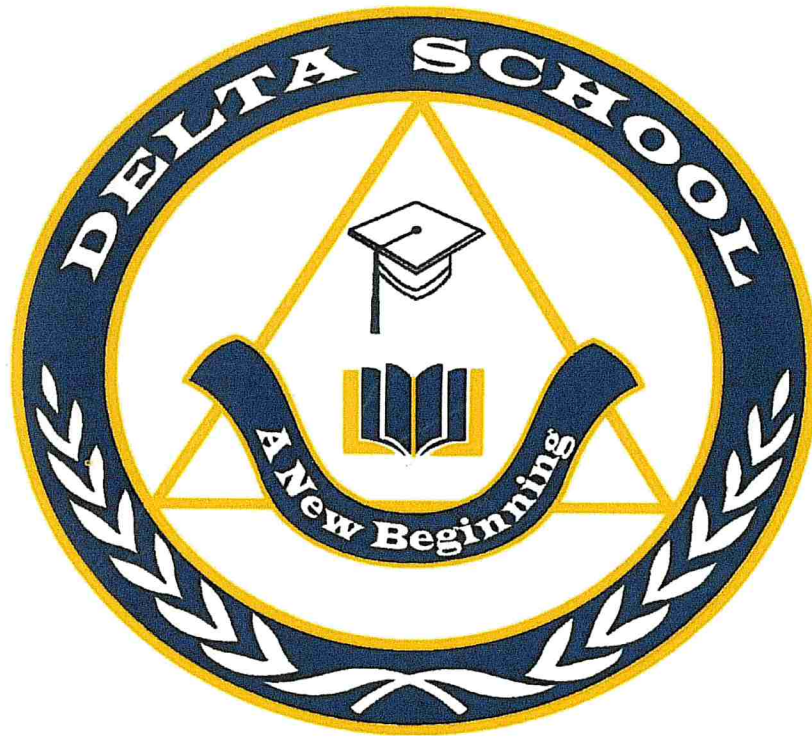


# **Delta School Special Education**



**Parent Handbook 2022-2023**

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## **How to Use This Parent Handbook**

Delta School would like to welcome you to our special education parent community. When your child was recommended for Special Education services, you may have been greatly relieved that your child would receive needed supports, or you might have been reluctant to agree with these services. Special Education is a new world filled with unfamiliar meetings and vocabulary that can seem daunting in the beginning.

Delta School wants to make this process easier for you by providing the information you need to understand the Special Education services available for your child. We also want to help you become familiar with the agencies to contact when your child needs support outside of the public school setting.

Much of the information in this handbook is also available on the Internet at specific websites listed throughout. Please note that if you do not have Internet access at home, your local library will be able to assist you.

As you journey through the maze of Special Education, we hope this book will serve as a map to empower you with the information and support your need to help your child.

This Parent Handbook is provided as a resource to parents and is not intended to serve as a legal document or to replace the *Special Education Procedural Safeguards* or *A Guide to the Admission, Review and Dismissal Process*.

**PARENT TRAININGS  
TEACHER CONFERENCES DATES**

**School Year: 2022-2023**

November 29, 2022 (9:45AM-11:45AM)

February 15, 2023 (9:45 AM-11:45AM)

April 19, 2023 (9:45AM-11:45AM)

# The Basics of Special Education

## Laws, Rules and Regulations for Providing Special Education Services

### Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

The Individuals with Disabilities Act guarantees every eligible student a “free appropriate public education,” sometimes called FAPE. The IDEA was most recently reauthorized by Congress in 2004. Though some provisions have changed, IDEA’s basic requirements remain the same. The law says public schools must:

- find and identify students who have a disability;
- involve parents in decision making;
- evaluate (test) students in a nondiscriminatory way;
- develop an individualized education program (IEP) for each student that will help him/her be involved in and progress in the general curriculum;
- decide what special instruction and related services the school district will provide;
- provide services in the least restrictive environment (a placement that allows a student with disabilities to be educated to the maximum extent appropriate with students who do not have disabilities);
- maintain education records/files; and
- provide processes for resolving parent complaints and grievances.

### Section 504

Under Section 504 (of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, 29 U.S.C.A. Section 794), no program or activity receiving federal money may discriminate against any qualified person with a disability. These regulations apply to all schools, including private schools that receive or benefit from federal funds. Each district is required to have a 504 officer. You can get more information on Section 504 from:

Some students who do not qualify for special education services under the IDEA may receive services under Section 504. Students with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder and some students with Dyslexia are good examples. Section 504 also requires that all students have an equal opportunity to participate in activities and services at school, including: school clubs, athletic programs, social activities, transportation, health and counseling services and vocational programs.

**Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)**

The ADA is a federal law passed in 1990 which gives people with disabilities, including students, protections like those provided to people on the basis of race, sex and national origin. All public schools must comply with the ADA. The ADA bans discrimination based on disability in the areas of public accommodations, state and local government services, employment, transportation and telecommunications.

**The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)**

FERPA, 20 U.S.C.A. § 1232(g), is the federal law which gives parents of students under age 18 the right to see, make copies of and request corrections of their child's records. If you have any questions or concerns send your complaints to:

FERPA Office  
U.S. Department of Education  
Switzer Building, Room 4074,  
400 Maryland Avenue.  
Washington, D.C. 20202-61 86.

File your complaint as soon as possible after the incident occurs and keep a copy of your letter. It is also appropriate and considerate to send a copy of the complaint to your child's school.

**Confidentiality of Records**

A student's records are private, and school districts, with some exceptions, must get parental consent before showing the records to anyone not involved in the student's education. The school should have a list of the names and positions of school employees who can see your child's records without your consent. At no time should other students have access to private records.

**Getting Records Changed**

If you think something written in the education records is wrong or misleading, or violates your child's rights, ask school officials to change it. Within a reasonable time, they must decide whether they will make the change. If school officials refuse to make the requested change, they must tell you they have refused and let you know about your right to a hearing. This hearing is different from the due process hearing mentioned elsewhere in this manual. If the hearing shows the records are wrong, school officials must change the records and let you know in writing what changes they made. If the hearing shows the school district does not have to change the records, they must allow you to add your own statement to the records explaining why you disagree or why you think the statements are unfair. The school district must keep your statement with the records. Whenever the school district shows the records to other people, they must show your statement also. If you have questions about getting information in your child's records changed, contact the Executive Director for Special Education, Counseling and Psychological Services.

## **Other Records**

You also have the right to see any education records kept by private schools which receive federal funds, state schools, state hospitals, state agencies and community Mental Health and Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (MM/DD). While there are exceptions, these records are private and usually cannot be shown to persons who are not employees without your consent.

## **Words to Know**

**Accommodations:** Adjustments made in how a student with a disability is taught or tested. Accommodations do not change what the student is taught or what they are expected to know. Common examples of accommodations are: highlighted textbooks, extensions of time for a student who writes slowly, or seating close to the teacher.

**ADA (American with Disabilities Act):** A federal law passed in 1990 that prohibits discrimination against persons with disabilities. Public schools are covered by the ADA.

**Adapted Physical Education (APE):** An appropriate physical education plan for students with special needs who are not able to participate in regular PE with modifications.

**Assistive Technology (AT):** An assistive technology device is any item, piece of equipment or product used to increase, maintain, or improve the functioning of a student with a disability. Assistive technology devices for students with disabilities include those used for seating and positioning, mobility, augmentative communication, computer access and instruction, environmental control, adaptive toys and games, visual and listening aids.

**Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP):** A written plan, based on a Functional Behavior Assessment, designed to identify and address, through specific supports and services; behaviors that prevent appropriate social interactions and learning.

**Case Manager:** A special education teacher assigned to a student. The case manager is responsible for monitoring a student's progress and is a liaison between the school and home.

**Code of Student Conduct:** The rights and responsibilities of each member of the school community in establishing and maintaining good discipline at district schools. A copy of the Code of Student Conduct is online and can be requested from the campus.

**Community Based Instruction (CBI):** A service beginning as early as elementary age when students go into the community to learn functional life skills.

**Consent:** Written permission given by a parent to have his or her child evaluated for Special Education services or for the initiation of special education services and testing.

**Diagnostic Specialist:** A person certified to assess students for special education eligibility. They are qualified to administer intelligence and academic testing used to formulate recommendations

for instruction. The Diagnostic Specialist maintains the ARD paperwork and records of the students.

**Developmental Delay:** A disability where milestones of motor, mental and/or social progress are not achieved at normal ages.

**Early Childhood Intervention (ECI):** A statewide program for children from birth to age three who have developmental delays. Services are available for eligible children in their natural environment (home, day care, preschool, etc.). An Individual Family Service Plan is developed for each child.

**Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE):** A continuum of services for eligible children 3 through 5 years of age. This program focuses on improving physical, language, cognitive, self-help, social and emotional skills.

**Eligibility:** The determination of whether or not a child has a disability and an educational need that qualifies him or her for special education services.

**Evaluation:** An initial Full and Individual Evaluation is completed to determine if a student has one of the thirteen disability conditions identified by state and federal guidelines and requires specially designed instruction. A reevaluation must occur at least once every three years unless the parent and the district agree that a reevaluation is unnecessary. A reevaluation cannot occur more than once a year unless the parent and the district agree to the reevaluation. The evaluation will include multiple sources of information: formal standardized measures, parent information, teacher information, and observations as well as informal data.

**Extended School Year (ESY):** Special education services offered beyond the regular school year to students who have difficulty retaining critical skills and require a significant amount of time to recoup the skills. The determination of ESY services is made by the IEP committee.

**Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA):** Federal law protecting the confidentiality of students and parents. FERPA requires written parent consent prior to releasing records (except to another district to which the student has moved), and allows parents the right to access and request changes to their child's records.

**Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE):** Special education and/or related services designed to meet the individual needs of each student at no cost to the parents, guaranteed to all students with disabilities by the Individual with Disabilities Education Act.

**Full Individual Evaluation (FIE):** A comprehensive evaluation that is conducted on individual students to determine the presence of a disability and need for special education services.



**Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA):** An assessment of why a student behaves as he/she does given the nature of the student's disability and considering environmental factors. The FBA is used by the ARD committee in developing a students' Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP).

**Homebound:** An in-home program established for students whose illness or injury prevents them from attending school for four or more weeks as determined by a physician and an IEP Committee.

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**IDEIA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act):** The federal law requiring school districts to provide students with disabilities a free appropriate public education. Formerly known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the Education of All Handicapped Children Act and P.L. 94-142

**Inclusion:** A service delivery option in which a student receives instruction in the general education classroom with the support of a teacher or paraprofessional from the special education department on a full time, part time or consult basis. Grades are given by the general education teacher or jointly by the special education and general education teacher as determined by the IEP Committee.

**Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE):** Educational evaluation of a student by an evaluator who does not regularly work for the school district. Parents who are not satisfied with the school's evaluation can request an IEE.

**Individual Education Program (IEP):** A written plan that details the specially designed instruction and related services that must be provided to each student who receives special education services. Parents and school personnel work together at the IEP meeting to write the IEP. It must be reviewed and revised every year.

**Initial Placement:** The initial educational setting or placement of a student needing special education services. An initial placement requires written consent by the parent.

**Least Restrictive Environment (LRE):** The right to an education, to the maximum extent appropriate, in a setting with non-disabled peers, with access to the general curriculum.

**Limited English Proficiency (LEP):** Through the student's Home Language Survey and assessment, if it is determined that a student has limited proficiency in the English language.

**Licensed Specialist in School Psychology (LSSP):** A person certified to assess students to determine eligibility for special education services. They are qualified to administer intelligence, academic and psychological assessments used to formulate recommendations for academic and behavior instruction and provide counseling as a related service.

**Manifestation Determination Review (MDR):** A review of the relationship between a student's disability and behavior that is subject to disciplinary action.

**Modifications:** Modifications, unlike accommodations, change the level of instruction provided or tested. Modifications create a different standard for the student receiving them. The most common modifications are those made to the general education curriculum for a student with a cognitive disability. Curriculum modifications should be in the student's IEP.

~~**Occupational Therapy (OT):** A related service for students with physical, emotional, developmental or cognitive disabilities in the area of fine motor skills, developmental independence, or daily living skills needed for their education.~~

**Positive Approach to Student Success (PASS):** A support designed to provide educational services within mainstream settings to students with emotional and/or behavior difficulties.

**Paraprofessional:** The term paraprofessional is assigned to a variety of campus support positions such as educational assistants, library assistants, office assistants and administrative assistants.

**Parent:** IDEA 2004 expands the definition of parent to include: natural, adoptive or foster parents; guardians (unless the child is a ward of the state); individuals acting in the place of natural or adoptive parents such as grandparents, stepparents, other relatives with whom the child lives; individuals responsible for the child's welfare; and assigned surrogates.

**Physical Therapy (PT):** A related service that serves students with physical disabilities or movement difficulties. The goal of physical therapy is to maximize physical independence and gross motor skills needed in the school setting.

**Positive Behavior Supports:** Activities and strategies that are positive in nature that support the student in learning appropriate behaviors

**Referral Process:** A formal notification that a student is experiencing difficulties which may require screening and evaluation to determine if the student needs Special Education services.

**Resource:** A service delivery option to instruct students with academic needs that cannot be addressed fully in the general education classroom because their instructional level is below grade level.

**Response to Intervention (RTI):** a model addressing the needs of all students through a continuum of services which provide: (1) high-quality instruction and scientific, researched-based, tiered intervention strategies aligned with individual student need; (2) frequent monitoring of student progress to make results-based academic or behavioral decisions; (3) data-based school improvement; and (4) the application of student response data to important educational decisions (such as those regarding placement, intervention, curriculum, and instructional goals and methodologies).

**Section 504 (Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973):** Federal law that protects people with disabilities to assure that they are not discriminated against because of their disability.

**Speech and Language Pathology (SLP):** An instructional service for students who have a communication disorder which affects educational performance. Speech or Language Impairment services can begin at 3 years of age. Services include therapy to improve fluency, articulation, or language.

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**Transition:** The process and planning for a student moving from elementary school to junior high, junior high to high school, then high school to adult life.

**Vocational Education:** Training and instruction designed to prepare students to work in a certain trade or profession. The programs that the district provides are the Work Based Learning (special education setting) and the VOC (the general education setting).

# Eligibility Categories for Special Education under IDEA

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If the full individual evaluation shows that a student meets one or more of the following, an IEP committee will meet to determine if he / she is eligible to receive special education services under IDEA. In PA, students are assigned to one of the following eligibility categories as defined by the Code of Federal Regulations, Section 300.7:

**Autism (AU):** a developmental disability significantly affecting verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction that adversely affects a child's educational performance. Other characteristics often associated with autism are engagement in repetitive activities and stereotyped movements, resistance to environmental change or change in daily routines, and unusual responses to sensory experiences.

**Deaf-Blindness (D-B):** visual and hearing impairments that occur or exist concurrently, the combination of which causes such severe communication and other developmental and educational needs that they cannot be accommodated in special education programs solely for children with deafness or children with blindness.

**Auditory Impairment (AI):** includes deafness which means a hearing impairment that is so severe that the child is impaired in processing linguistic information through hearing, with or without amplification that adversely affects a child's educational performance. This category also includes an impairment in hearing, whether permanent or fluctuating and that affects the student's educational performance but who is not included under the definition of deafness.

**Emotional Disturbance (ED):** A condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree that adversely affects a child's educational performance: an inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory or health factors; an inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers; inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances; a general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression; a tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems.

**Intellectual Disability (ID):** A student with an intellectual disability exhibits significantly sub-average general intellectual functioning existing concurrently with deficits in adaptive behaviors that manifested during the developmental period that

adversely affect the student's educational performance. In PA a student with an intellectual disability is one who is functioning at two or more standard deviations below the mean on individually administered scales of verbal ability and either performance or nonverbal ability and who concurrently exhibits deficits in adaptive behavior.

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**Multiple Disabilities (MD):** concomitant impairments (such as intellectual disability and visual impairment, intellectual disability and orthopedic impairment, etc.) the combination of which causes such severe educational needs that they cannot be accommodated in special education programs solely for one of the impairments. The term does not include students who have deaf-blindness.

**Orthopedic Impairment (OI):** a severe orthopedic impairment that adversely affects a child's educational performance. The term includes impairments due to the effects of congenital anomaly (e.g., clubfoot, absence of some member, etc.), impairments due to the effects of disease (e.g., poliomyelitis, bone tuberculosis, etc.), and impairments from other causes (e.g., cerebral palsy, amputations, and fractures or burns that cause contractures).

**Other Health Impairment (OHI):** A student with other health impairment exhibits limited strength, vitality or alertness, including a heightened alertness to environmental stimuli, that results in limited alertness with respect to the educational environment, that is due to chronic or acute health problems such as asthma, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, diabetes, epilepsy, a heart condition, hemophilia, lead poisoning, leukemia, nephritis, rheumatic fever or sickle cell anemia and that adversely affects the student's educational performance.

**Specific Learning Disability (SLD):** The term "specific learning disability" means a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell or do mathematical calculations, including conditions such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia and developmental aphasia. A student with SLD exhibits a pattern of strengths and weaknesses in performance and achievement relative to age, grade-level standards as indicated by significant variance among specific cognitive function.

**Speech Impairment (SI):** a communication disorder such as stuttering, impaired articulation, a language impairment, or a voice impairment that adversely affects the student's educational performance.

**Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI):** an acquired injury to the brain caused by an external physical force resulting in total or partial functional disability or psychosocial impairment or both that adversely affects the student's educational performance. The term includes open or closed head injuries resulting in impairments in one or more areas, such as cognition, language, memory, attention, reasoning, abstract thinking, judgment, problem-solving, sensory, perceptual and motor abilities; psychosocial behavior, physical functions, information processing, and speech. The term does not include brain injuries that are congenital or degenerative, or brain injuries induced by birth trauma.

**Visual Impairment (VI):** an impairment in vision that, even with correction, adversely affects the student's educational performance. The term includes both partial sight and blindness.

**Non-Categorical Early Childhood (NCEC):** for students ages 3 – 5 who may have an intellectual disability, emotional disturbance, a learning disability or autism. The child must be re-evaluated before their sixth (6<sup>th</sup>) birthday to determine eligibility under the previous categories

# Steps in the Special Education Process

## An Overview

### Step 1: Referral

Is the student suspected of having a disability and is suspected that specially designed instruction is required to address said disability? If so, a parent, legal guardian, teacher, or other professional involved in the care or education of the student may refer the student to special education. The school will gather information to decide if the student should be evaluated (tested) for special education eligibility.

### Step 2: Notice of Rights and Consent

During the referral process, and at other significant decision-making steps after the referral, the district must send you written information (called “notice”) telling you about the actions the school wants to take (or is refusing to take) regarding your child’s education and about your rights.

If the school does not think your child needs to be evaluated for special education, they must give you notice that tells you why they made that decision and what you can do if you disagree. If the school does want to evaluate your child, they must give you written notice of your rights and get your written consent. The evaluation process will not begin until you have consented in writing. If you do not consent to testing, the district may ask for a due process hearing and ask a hearing officer to allow them to evaluate your child without your consent.

### Step 3: Full and Individual Evaluation

If the referral process indicates that a student has a suspected disability may need special education and related services, the school must, after obtaining the parent’s consent, do a full and individual initial evaluation to determine if the student has a disability and needs special education services. The school must complete the evaluation process **within 45 school days** from the date the school receives written consent for testing signed by the parent or legal guardian.

When the evaluation is completed, the school will contact you to schedule a meeting. This meeting should be held within 30 calendar days of the completion of the evaluation.

Current rules say that the school must give you written notice of the meeting at least five (5) school days before the IEP meeting so you can prepare. At the first IEP meeting after the evaluation, the team will decide whether your child is eligible to receive special education services. You must be a part of that decision.

If the student is found eligible, the IEP committee will propose a plan to assist the student in making progress toward the IEP curriculum.

#### **Step 4: The IEP**

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a written plan designed specifically for your child. It is an agreement between the school and parents on how the student will be educated. The IEP must be reviewed at least annually. The most important function of the IEP committee is the development of the IEP. Your participation and input is important. As the parent, you may have additional information to share with the committee.

Note: There are eleven additional considerations for students with Autism. The IEP committee must consider Extended Year Service, Daily Schedules Reflecting Minimal Unstructured Time, In-Home Training or Viable Alternative, Positive Behavior Support Strategies, Futures Planning, Communication Interventions, Social Skills Supports and Strategies, Professional Educator / Staff Support, Teaching Strategies, Parent Training, and Suitable Staff to Student Ratio.



# Explanation of Procedural Safeguards

When your child has been referred for testing, you will receive a document that explains your rights regarding your child's education. This document is called "Notice Procedural of Safeguards: Rights of Parents of students with Disabilities" and they will be given to you whenever the following happens:

- Upon the initial referral to special education or your request for evaluation
- One time a year
- When a decision is made to take disciplinary action that constitutes a change of placement
- Upon receipt of the first due process hearing complaint in a school year
- Upon your request

Procedural Safeguards explain the following information:

- All information has to be in your native language or an interpreter must be available to help you understand the information.
- In order to evaluate your child, the school must have written consent for the assessment. The consent can be revoked at any time.
- Any time action is taken that would impact a child's education, the child is being evaluated for special education or the program changes, prior written notice has to be given. The school must provide information on what evaluation procedures will be followed and you will be given a contact person's name, phone number and address to contact with any questions about this process.
- During the evaluation time, a collection of information about your child's special learning needs, strengths and interests will occur. The evaluator will ensure that there is no bias to race, culture or native language. As a parent, you will receive a copy of the completed evaluation report.
- A parent is one of several members of the IEP committee. As a parent, you are to have a written notice of an IEP five (5) school days prior to the meeting. You can waive the five (5) school days if you would like to have the IEP sooner. If you cannot attend the IEP, you can request a phone IEP or have the committee proceed without you and mail home the results of the meeting. The school must have an IEP meeting once a year, but you can request a meeting anytime during that year.

# **Delta School Special Education Process**

## **A Parent Guide**

The following steps provide a detailed overview of the special education process:

### **Referral**

The process of requesting that a student be evaluated for eligibility to receive special education and related services.

#### **Parent/Guardian**

- Make a request, preferably written, to the principal, counselor, or special education designee at your child's campus if you suspect your child has a disability that is causing his/her learning problems

#### **School District:**

- Make a referral if student is suspected of having a disability that is causing his/her learning difficulties
- Contact parent, explain the referral process and provide the parent with a copy of "Notice of Procedural Safeguards"

### **Notice and Consent**

#### **Parent/Guardian**

- Receive a copy of "Notice of Procedural Safeguards"
- Receive notice of a Full and Individual Initial Evaluation

#### **School District**

- Provide the parent with the notice for a Full and Individual Initial Evaluation

### **Evaluation**

The collection of information about a student's special learning needs, strengths, and interests.

#### **Parent/Guardian**

- Provide information for the evaluation process (medical, family and educational history; perceptions of the student's strengths and needs at home, school, and in the community)
- Review evaluation data with school personnel
- Provide input in determining if additional data is needed to complete the evaluation
- Receive a copy of the evaluation report

#### **School District**

- Collect information from parent, teacher, and others who can provide pertinent information
- Review existing evaluation data and determine if additional data is needed
- Complete evaluation
- Summarize and interpret evaluation results
- Explain results to parent
- Provide a copy of the evaluation report to the parent

### **Initial IEP Eligibility**

The IEP committee determines if the student needs special education and/or related services

#### **Parent/Guardian**

- Receive “Notice of IEP Meeting” and “Notice of Procedural Safeguards” five (5) school days prior to meeting Ask questions about the evaluation results

#### **School District**

- Share information about your child’s strengths and educational needs Share information to help determine eligibility and appropriate services
- Provide the parent with “Notice of IEP Meeting” and “Notice of Procedural Safeguards”
- Review and explain evaluation results with members of IEP committee
- Determine eligibility for special education services

### **Annual IEP Review Meeting**

This IEP Committee Meeting is held annually to review the student’s educational status and special education placement

#### **Parent/Guardian**

- Receive “Notice of the IEP Meeting” five (5) school days prior to meeting
- Received a copy of the “Notice of Procedural Safeguards”
- Review current IEP goals and objectives
- Assist in development of new IEP annual goals and short-term objectives and benchmarks for the next school year
- Help determine appropriate special education and related services, accommodations or modifications
- Help determine an appropriate educational placement based on the identified EP goals and objectives

#### **School District**

- Notify parent & participants of the meeting
- Provide a copy of the “Notice of Procedural Safeguards” to the parent
- Gather information on the student’s progress, including involvement and progress in the general education curriculum
- Review current IEP Develop and review the present levels of Academic, Achievement, and Functional Performance (PLAAFP)
- Develop new IEP that will enable the student to be involved in and progress in the general curriculum
- Determine appropriate special education and related services, accommodations or modifications
- Determine an appropriate educational placement
- Advise parents of his/her right to agree or disagree with the IEP committee recommendation

# Individual Education Program (IEP)

## **What is an IEP?**

An IEP (Individualized Education Program) is a written plan that is designed to meet the specific needs of your child. Your child's special education needs are likely to be different from those of another student, even one with the same disability. The IEP should reflect those differences and not be exactly the same as that of any other student. The IEP should include:

- **A statement describing the student's present levels of academic achievement and functional performance.** This statement is based on a review of the most recent PLAAFP and a summary of the student's strengths and educational needs. The IEP committee must also review the student's present level of "functional" performance, which includes areas other than academics such as social or behavioral functions.
- **Measurable annual goals, both academic and functional:** Goals are statements about what your child will learn during the school year. Goals must be measurable, stating clearly and objectively how you and the school will know if he/she has reached that goal. Each goal must state how the child's progress will be measured, what type of support they will need to reach each goal and who will provide each service.
- **Short term objectives (benchmarks):** Objectives are small, measurable steps leading to reaching each IEP goal.
- **Instructional / Related Services:** Many students who receive special education also need related services in order to benefit from the educational program. Though there are others, the most common related services are: assistive technology; speech therapy; physical therapy; occupational therapy; psychological services; counseling; special transportation; audiological services; orientation and mobility training; school nursing services; and interpreter services.

The IEP committee decides whether a student is eligible for each related service. Except for transportation, the decision will be based on written reports from related service professionals. Every service the school district provides must be written into the IEP, including information about how often the services will be provided, how long each session will last, the title of the instructional/related service professional needed and when the services will begin and end.

**Considering other IEP Elements that May Apply to Your Child:** The IEP committee must also discuss the following special factors when applicable. The Diagnostic Specialist can further explain each element and the requirements upon request:

- Extracurricular activities
- Statewide Assessments
- Assistive Technology
- Autism Supplement
- Transition
- Extended School Year Services

- Termination of Services/Graduation
- Discipline/Behavior
- Braille
- Communication Needs
- Limited English Proficiency
- Transportation

**Transition:** Transition services are those services and activities provided to students that specifically help them to move successfully from public school to life after public school. Transition activities should help your child make a successful transition to post-secondary education, employment and/or independent living. These services should be very individualized for your child and his / her likely needs as an adult. Transition services must be based on your child's strengths, preferences and interests. The student himself / herself must be invited to participate in the IEP meeting when transition services are discussed.

Transition must be addressed in the IEP for the school year during which the student turns 14. For a transition-age student, the IEP must include: Measurable post- secondary goals that are based on assessments related to training, education, employment and, for some students, independent living skills. The IEP should also identify those courses a student should take in order to reach his transition goals. Transition goals should be reviewed and updated as needed at the annual review of the IEP.

**Deciding on Placement in the Least Restrictive Environment:** After the IEP committee members agree on the IEP, the next step is to determine placement or where the special education and related services will be provided. Parents must be a part of any decision on placement.

Laws and regulations require placement decisions to:

- Be made at least once every year;
- Be based on the student's individual needs;
- Take into consideration any harmful effects to the student; and
- Be made based on evaluation information and not on disability label or staff convenience.

In addition, first consideration should be given to placements that are:

- As close to home as possible;
- At the school the student would attend if he or she did not have a disability; and
- In regular classes with the supplementary aids and services the student needs.

**Coming to Mutual Agreement:** Once the IEP is written, all members of the IEP committee who are part of the decision-making team will sign it and indicate their agreement or disagreement. If any member disagrees, a statement of the disagreement and reasons for it should be attached to the

IEP. If a parent or the adult student disagrees with one or more required elements of the IEP, the district must offer a recess of no more than 10 school days (with some exceptions for disciplinary IEPs). The committee members must also agree on a date, time and place to finish the meeting. During the recess, both district and parent / student members of the IEP committee must think about other possible choices, gather more data, work on documentation and/or get other people involved.

*If, after the recess, parent or student members of the IEP committee still do not agree, school members can implement the IEP that best supports the students' needs based on the available data. When the district implements an IEP with which the parents or adult student disagrees, the district shall provide prior written notice to the parents or adult student.*

**Closing the Meeting:** At the close of the meeting, the minutes of the meeting will be read and necessary revisions made. All participants of the IEP committee will be requested to sign the IEP document and indicate their agreement or disagreement. You should be given a copy of the IEP either at the IEP meeting or within a reasonable time thereafter. Upon later review of the IEP document, should you discover a change that needs to be made, you may contact the Diagnostic Specialist to request the change to be made.

## **THE IEP PROCESS**

Use the following ideas and suggestions to help you better plan for and participate in the IEP process and IEP meetings for your child.

### Opening remarks and introductions

- Remember you are a member of the IEP committee. Make sure you know everyone at the meeting and why they are there. Introduce any friend, relative or advocate you have brought. It is appropriate to notify the school before the meeting if you plan to bring anyone other than your spouse.
- Read the agenda and add any items you want to discuss.

### Reviewing Present Level of Educational Performance

- Share your ideas about your child's progress; show pictures or other documentation about what he/she can do outside of school, including assistive technology solutions that are helpful. Remind the team you want your child's program to help the child use and build on his/her strengths and abilities.
- Share any reports you have from outside therapists, tutors, consultants or doctors.
- Make sure you understand whether your child has made progress on IEP objectives as a result of the services received.

- Ask questions if something is not clear. At this point, you should have a clear picture in your mind about how your child is doing.
- If your student attends the meeting, this is a good time for them to share their likes, dislikes, hopes and dreams. Their portfolio may also be presented at this time.

#### Developing Measurable Annual Goals and Short-term Objectives or Benchmarks

- Talk about what you want for your child when he/she leaves school. Make sure the goals and objectives you include will lead to the outcomes you want for him/her as an adult.
- Ask what students without disabilities his/her age will learn and how he/she might also learn that information.
- The school will develop a draft of goals and objectives prior to the meeting. This is a working draft. You and the school will work together to finalize goals and objectives. Talk about all the goals and objectives/benchmarks suggested by you and school staff. Working collaboratively, the IEP committee decides which ones should be included, keeping in mind the long-term outcomes for your child.
- As you review the draft of the goals and objectives/benchmarks, remember that the IEP must be designed to meet your child's educational needs and that you and the school staff make up the IEP committee. The IEP committee's responsibility is to revise, add or delete goals your child should achieve in the coming year and the benchmarks toward achieving those goals.
- Ask questions if you do not understand how your child's progress will be measured or what services he/she will receive during the school day or who will provide the services.
- Be as specific as possible when developing the goals.

#### Deciding on Related Services

- Make sure related services, supports, accommodations or modifications needed to implement the IEP goals are discussed before the placement is decided. Review all evaluation reports to see which related services are being considered for your child. Find out before the IEP meeting if you will need a doctor's letter or other medical referral before the school will provide a particular related service. Lack of money or personnel cannot be used as reasons to deny the student any related services he / she needs. If the district lacks the necessary personnel, they can contract with outside professionals to provide related services.

#### Deciding on Placement

- Discuss all supports, modifications or accommodations your child needs to reach his/ her IEP goals and be involved in and progress in the general curriculum. Examples include but are not limited to specific learning and teaching strategies, adapted expectations, curriculum or materials, o help from a paraprofessional aide, other related services provided in the typical classroom, adaptive equipment, and/or assistive technology devices ("low tech" or "high-tech").
- Ask questions like

What is needed to implement the IEP in general education classes?

What would the student's daily schedule look like?

Who will provide support, adaptations or modifications? Or

When would the student and/or teacher need these supports?

- If necessary, remind committee members that your child cannot be excluded from general education classrooms for the lack of related services, special equipment, modifications to the general education, more intensive services (smaller student / teacher ratio), support staff, and conveniences such as transportation, sufficient space and building/classroom accessibility.

### Coming to Mutual Agreement

- If all are in agreement with the IEP and the recommended placement, sign and indicate your agreement, then congratulate the team on a job well done!
- If you disagree with any required elements of the IEP, the school must offer you a recess of no more than 10 school days. You and other IEP members must agree on a time, date and place for the next meeting.
- During the recess, you may gather more information, think of new options, work on documentation or get other people involved.

Keep in mind that if you are not in agreement with the student's IEP or placement after the recess, the school can implement the IEP unless you file for a due process hearing within 5 days following the IEP.

### Closing the Meeting

Tell the IEP committee the ways you will be a supportive member of your team. You can provide support to your team by saying you want to be involved and are willing to help, giving positive feedback to teachers and administrators about things that work well for your child, becoming involved and visible by volunteering in the classroom, library, or other school programs; attending school functions; joining the P.T.A. and participating in site-based management teams and meetings and special events, or communicating regularly with teachers throughout the year (notebooks, phone calls, meetings) and/or sharing articles and other resources of interests. Ask your child's teachers the best way to communicate with them (email, notes, phone calls, etc.).



## A Parent Checklist for IEP Preparation

You are an important member of the IEP committee. You know your child better than any other member of the committee and can provide important information and insight about your child. Just as the other members will prepare for the IEP meeting, you must also take time to prepare.

Use this list as a guideline to prepare for the meeting.

- Read your notice to see what issues will be discussed and who will attend.
- Be sure enough time is allotted for the meeting. The school will typically allot 1-2 hours.
- Ask the school for copies of any relevant information you do not already have, including latest comprehensive individual assessments and any new testing the school has done, progress notes or updates on IEP objectives, teacher progress notes (if necessary, talk with the teacher(s) and others for information on the student's progress),
- Gather any reports you have from outside therapists, tutors, consultants or doctors, and provide a copy of these to the school to review prior to the IEP meeting.
- Make a list of your child's gifts and talents.
- Make a list of questions of things you don't understand about special education.
- Make a list of other things you would like your child to learn during the year. How is this going to help him / her? Will he / she be able to participate more fully in school life? Will he / she become more independent? How will his / her life change or improve?
- Review the lists and mark 4-5 things you think are most important for your child. These will be the basis for developing her/his IEP goals and objectives during the IEP meetings.
- Make a list of his / her areas of functioning which would increase with assistive technology (communication, mobility, etc.) or accommodations. Be prepared to make requests for assistive technology and / or accommodations if it is needed.
- Make copies of each list to bring to the meeting.
- Decide who you will bring to the IEP meeting. You must notify the school if you will be bringing an advocate or an attorney to your IEP. The school district will want to have their attorney present as well.
- Decide if you want to meet with the teacher(s) or Diagnostic Specialist before the IEP meeting.

If you want to audio record the IEP meeting, gather equipment including: recorder and new batteries. It would be a good idea to let the school know that you are going to record the IEP so they can have their recorder ready before the IEP.

## A Parent Checklist for the IEP Meeting

Be sure the IEP for your child includes:

- A statement of progress your child has made on previous IEP objectives.
- Information about current educational performance and how the disability affects the child's involvement and progress in the general curriculum.
- Specific and measurable annual goals.
- Short-term objectives or benchmarks for each annual goal, if appropriate
- Method for measuring progress toward goals and objectives and how progress will be reported to you.
- Special education and related services to be provided.
- Positive behavior strategies or a behavior intervention plan, if needed.
- Modifications of the curriculum your child needs to participate in the same learning activities as other students her/his age, if appropriate
- Supplementary aids or services your child needs to participate in regular education classes and activities.
- Supports to be provided for school personnel.
- Date when services will begin, including related services.
- Specifics about each instructional and related service, including date to begin, minutes per session, frequency of sessions, location and personnel title (e.g., "special education teacher" "physical therapist," rather than someone's name), responsible for each service in the IEP.
- Special accommodations, materials, equipment, resources and/or assistive technology needed, and when they will be made available, if appropriate
- Amount of time each day your child will be with typical students (including nonacademic and extracurricular activities).
- A statement of any academic or extracurricular activity in which your child will not participate with non-disabled students, and the reasons why.
- Any accommodations he / she needs to take the state assessment, if needed
- Discuss the best way to communicate with the teachers on a regular basis (phone calls, email, 6 weeks conference, etc.)
- Signatures of the IEP committee members and statements of your agreement or disagreement with any part of the IEP.

## **Understanding Statewide Assessments**

At each IEP meeting, the IEP committee discusses how the student accesses grade level curriculum for each subject tested and then the statewide assessment options for the student. It is expected that the IEP committee always considers the PSSA/Keystone/PASA as the first option when making assessment decisions.

## **PDE State Assessments**

At the elementary and middle school level, the following assessments will be provided to students:

- PSSA Math 3-8
- PSSA Math Spanish 3-5
- PSSA Reading 3-8
- PSSA Reading Spanish 3-5
- PSSA Writing 4 and 7
- PSSA Writing Spanish 4 · STAAR Science 5 and 8
- PSSA Science Spanish 5
- PSSA Social Studies 8

At high school, there will be 5 end-of-course (EOC) assessments: Algebra I, Biology, English I, English II and U.S. history.

## **Accommodations**

Accommodations are changes to materials or procedures that enable students with disabilities or English language learners (ELLs) to participate meaningfully in learning and testing. It is important to keep in mind that while some accommodations may be appropriate for instructional use, they may not be appropriate or allowable on a statewide assessment.

Accommodations for students with disabilities are intended to provide students effective and equitable access to grade-level or course curriculum and assessments. For the purposes of the statewide assessments, students needing accommodations due to a disability include:

- A student with an identified disability who receives special education services and meets established eligibility criteria for certain accommodations;
- A student with an identified disability who receives Section 504 services and meets established eligibility criteria for certain accommodations; and
- A student with a disabling condition who does not receive special education or Section 504 services but meets established eligibility criteria for certain accommodations.

For students who receive special education or Section 504 services, the decision for a student to use accommodations during the statewide assessments is made by the IEP committee or Section 504 placement committee. In those rare instances where a student does not receive services but meets the eligibility criteria because of a disabling condition, the decision about using accommodations on the statewide assessments is made by the appropriate team of people at the campus level, such as the Response to Intervention (RTI) team or student assistance team.

