

Special Education: What Do Parents Need to Know?

Funded in part by the Minnesota Department of Education

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What Is Special Education?

Special education is:

- Specially designed instruction
- Available at no cost to parents
- Designed to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability
- Provided in the most typical setting appropriate for the child

Special education is not a place.

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Why Are Parents Included?

As a parent, you are included at every step because:

- The law gives you this right.
- Only you have an in-depth, long-term, daily relationship with your child.
- You are the only permanent member of the special education team.
- Research and experience show that special education is more effective when parents are involved.
- When parents are involved, children do better and schools become better.

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How Are Parents Involved?

As a parent, you have the right to:

- Participate at special education team meetings
- Read your child's school records
- Use dispute resolution methods to resolve disagreements
- Agree or disagree with services and decisions

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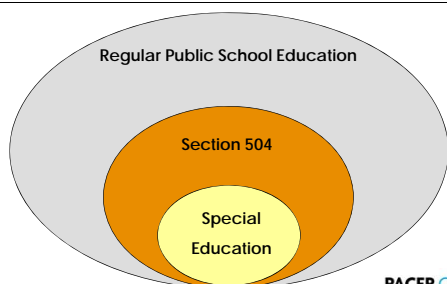
How Can I Participate Effectively?

- Understand your rights.
- Prepare for and attend meetings.
- Put things in writing.
- Recognize different roles you and school staff play.
- Exchange information in your native language

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How Do Special Education and Regular Education Fit Together?




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How Does the Special Education Process Work?

PLACEMENT
↑
SERVICES
↑
EDUCATIONAL NEEDS
↑
EVALUATION



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What Do I Need to Know about Evaluation?

Your child is evaluated for special education to:

- See if there's a disability and a need for special education and related services
- Understand your child's needs and strengths
- Make educational decisions, including eligibility for services

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What Is an Appropriate Evaluation?

An appropriate evaluation:

- Uses a variety of tools and strategies
- Does not discriminate
- Uses standardized tests valid for this purpose as much as possible
- Uses technically sound tests
- Is administered by trained professionals

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What Do I Need to Know about the IEP Team Meeting?

IEP team members include:

- Parents
- Special education teacher
- Regular education teacher
- District representative
- Person who can explain evaluation

The team also may include:

- The child
- Others

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What Do I Need to Know about Developing the IEP?

The IEP team must discuss:

- Your child's strengths and abilities
- Your concerns for your child
- Evaluation results
- What your child needs in order to learn
- School services
- Special factors

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What Do I Need to Know about Developing the IEP?

Measurable annual goals will:

- Name the skill or behavior that needs to change
- Report your child's current level in this skill or behavior
- State what your child can reasonably achieve in one year
- Tell how progress will be measured

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What Do I Need to Know about Developing the IEP?

The IEP will also describe:

- Progress measurement
- Accommodations
- Dates and places for services
- Transition
- Age of majority
- State and district tests

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What Do I Need to Know about the Placement Process?

Special education can be provided in lots of places.

FIRST: The team determines appropriate IEP goals and services based on your child's needs.

THEN: The team will discuss where the services will be provided in the least restrictive environment.

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IEP Summary

The purpose of special education is to prepare children to lead "productive and independent adult lives to the maximum extent appropriate." --IDEA

Ask yourself: "Is this IEP an appropriate step toward a productive and independent life for my child?"

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What If We Disagree?

Due process rights provide ways to resolve disagreements

- Meeting with school staff
- Conciliation
- Mediation
- Facilitated IEP
- Due process hearing and resolution session
- Complaint



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Resources

Learn more about special education or your rights:

PACER Center, 952-838-9000
www.PACER.org
Toll-free in Minnesota, 800-53PACER

Minnesota Department of Education
<http://education.state.mn.us>
<http://education.state.mn.us/ReportCard2005/>

U.S. Department of Education
<http://IDEA.ed.gov>

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