

Frequently Asked Questions

Special Education

1. Where do I begin if I believe my child has a disability and needs special education services?

The first step is to determine whether or not your child has a disability. Contact your child's school and ask them to evaluate your child to determine whether or not he/she may be eligible for special education services. The term "evaluation" refers to the total process of gathering and using information to determine whether a child has a disability and the nature and extent of the special education and related services that your child may need. The public schools are required to conduct this evaluation of your child at no cost to you.

2. What is included in an evaluation?

The school must evaluate your child in all areas of suspected disability. This may include looking at your child's health, vision, hearing, social and emotional well-being, general cognitive performance in school, and how well your child communicates. A multidisciplinary team is involved in performing the evaluation. The team conducting the evaluation MAY include, depending on your child's area of suspected disability, the following professionals as appropriate: psychologist, special education teacher, speech and language pathologist, adaptive P.E. teacher, and/or occupational therapist.

3. How is a decision made about my child's eligibility for special education?

The decision about whether or not a child qualifies for services is based on whether the child fits into one of IDEA's 13 disability categories **AND** whether that disability affects how your child does in school. This decision is made during an IEP meeting once the evaluation has been completed. The parents are an important part of the IEP meeting. The IEP team will look at all of the information gathered during the evaluation and decide if your child meets the definition of a "child with a disability." If your child is found eligible, you and the school will work together to design an educational program for your child.

4. What is an Individualized Education Program?

An Individualized Education Program or IEP is a written document outlining the educational program designed by the IEP team to meet your child's individual needs. The IEP will address the child's areas of need and present levels of performance. It will include reasonable, measurable annual learning goals. The IEP document will also include information about how your child will participate in the state testing program. How your child will participate in the regular education program will also be a component of the document. The IEP will also describe the type of services the District will provide to meet your child's needs.

5. Can my child's IEP be changed?

Yes. An annual review is held each year to determine a child's progress toward goals, determine new goals, and what changes may need to be made to the special education and related services. Additionally, if you have questions during the year, you may call the school principal and request an IEP meeting. The IEP meeting must be scheduled within 30 days of your request.

6. How can I support my child's learning at home?

- a. Let your child's teacher know that you want to be involved.
- b. Explain any special equipment or medication involving your child.
- c. Let the teacher know about any activities or big events that may influence your child's performance in school.
- d. Ask that samples of your child's work be sent home.
- e. Ask the teacher how you can build upon your child's learning at home.
- f. Give your child chores at home. Encourage behavior that leads to success in school such as accepting responsibility, being organized, and being on time.
- g. Remember that you and the school want success for your child. Working together can make this happen.

7. Do all special education students receive free transportation?

Not all special education students receive free transportation. Free transportation for special education students will be provided when the child's needs warrant it, or when it is necessary to transport a student to a school other than his/her home attendance school.

8. What should I do if I think my preschool child needs special education?

If you think your preschooler needs special educational services, you will first need to find out if he/she is eligible for a special education program. Establishing eligibility through an evaluation is the first step. If you think your preschooler may have a disability, please call the Special Education Department at 628-1201, extension 1400, and request an evaluation.

9. What is "child find"?

Child find is a systematic process through which the district locates, evaluates and identifies special education students. If you believe your child may have a disability, contact your child's school or the Special Education Department and request an evaluation.

10. If my child is in special education, are they still required to pass the CAHSEE to receive a high school diploma?

Yes. Students with disabilities must take the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE), but may take it with modifications as specified in their Individualized Education Program (IEP). A modification is a variation in the testing environment or

process that alters what the test measures or affects the comparability of scores. Students who meet certain criteria may be eligible for a CAHSEE waiver if they passed the exam with modifications. Please contact your child's school or the District Assessment Department for more information.

11. What is an Individual Transition Plan?

Individual Transition Plans are part of an IEP for special education students 16 and older. The IEP must contain measurable post secondary goals in the following areas:

- Employment goals
- Education goals
- Community goals
- Independence goals
- Daily living skills goals
- Self-advocacy goals

12. What is FAPE?

FAPE stands for a free and appropriate public education. The following defines FAPE:

Free

A free program is provided at "public expense" at no cost to the parents or literally, "at no additional cost than that which is expected from a parent of a non-disabled student."

Appropriate

A program that is considered appropriate must be individualized to meet the unique needs of the student. The child's program must address both academic and social or functional needs and must provide the student access to the general curriculum. It must meet standards "to the extent appropriate for the student."

Public

At public expense (see above).

Education

Demonstrate educational benefit with objective data and/or documentation. Include supports or services required for student progress.