

Mt. Lebanon School District Annual Notice Information, Student Records Policy – Annual Notification of Rights Under FERPA

CONFIDENTIALITY OF STUDENT RECORDS

The Mt. Lebanon School District believes that student files should contain only information which is necessary for the effective performance of designated educational functions or is required by law. All student files are maintained in a secure location in the building the student is attending. Each building's principal is responsible for protecting confidentiality of personally identifiable information for all students, including records of exceptional and protected handicapped students in accordance with state and federal law and the school district's student records policy.

Notice of destruction of records is provided annually via this publication. Student records are scheduled to be destroyed two years following graduation. After that time only the high school transcript and grades are maintained. Notification is sent informing students of the request procedure for obtaining records. Requests for records must be made in writing and submitted to the building principal.

The District is required to maintain special education documentation for a minimum of six years. Parents are provided copies of special education documents that pertain to their child. Parents may request additional copies of their child's special education documents by contacting the child's building principal. Duplication costs are set by the District at the rate of twenty-five cents (\$0.25) per page. Parents are reminded that copies of the records may be needed for the acquisition of Social Security or for other purposes.

SERVICES FOR PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

Act 212, the Early Intervention Systems Act, entitles all preschool children with disabilities access to appropriate early intervention services. The Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare is responsible for providing services to infants and toddlers, defined as children from birth through two years of age. For information, contact Alliance for Infants and Toddlers, 2801 Custer Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15227 or 412-885-6000.

The Pennsylvania Department of Education is responsible for providing services to preschool children from age three until eligible for kindergarten (the minimum age established by each school district for admission to kindergarten). For more information, contact Project DART, 475 East Waterfront Drive, Homestead, PA 15120 or 412-394-5816.

All students transitioning from early intervention programs to kindergarten or first grade programs within their school district of residence are to do so without interruption

in program. Early intervention programs are responsible for identifying all children, during the month of February of each school year, who are approaching the age for kindergarten or first grade in their district of residence, notifying families of children approaching kindergarten age their children may remain in early intervention for another year, informing families about the transition meeting (which must also be attended by the district of residence), and ascertain whether the family intends to register the child with their school district of residence for the next year. For additional information about early intervention programs, special education programs and parent/student rights, contact the Director of Special Education at 412-344-2012.

DEVELOPMENTAL AND OTHER RISK FACTORS

If your child is less than the age of beginners (age five before the eighth day of September or the first student day of the school year, whichever occurs later), and at least three years of age, your child may be considered to have a developmental delay when difficulties exist in the areas of cognitive, communicative, physical, social/emotional or self-help development where the delay is measured in comparison to typical development. Parents who have questions about their child's development or possible presence of a disability may want to discuss their child with their family physician or health care provider. If you have questions regarding difficulties your child may be experiencing, please contact the Director of Special Education at 412-344-2012.

SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES FOR SCHOOL-AGE SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS

The Mt. Lebanon School District provides a free appropriate public education to special education students. To qualify as a special education student, the child must be of school age, in need of specially designed instruction and meet eligibility criteria for mentally gifted and/or one or more of the following physical or mental disabilities as defined by Pennsylvania State Regulations: autism, deaf-blindness, hearing impairment (including deafness), emotional disturbance, intellectual disability, multiple-disabilities, orthopedic impairment, other health impairment, specific learning disability, speech or language impairment, traumatic brain injury or visual impairment (including blindness).

The school district utilizes identification procedures which include psycho-educational evaluations to ensure eligible students receive an appropriate education program consisting of special education and related services, individualized to meet student needs. At no cost to the parent, these services are provided in compliance with state and federal law and are reasonably calculated in yield meaningful educational benefit and student progress.

To identify a student who may be eligible for special education services, various screening activities are conducted on an ongoing basis. These screening activities may include review of group-based data (cumulative records, enrollment records, health records, report cards, ability and achievement test scores, state assessment results), hearing, vision, physical, speech/language screening, and review by building-level intervention teams. Gross motor and fine motor skills and social/emotional skills are

informally assessed by classroom teachers on an on-going basis. Results of all screening sources and information shared by parents are noted in the student's official file. Screening information is used by student focus teams to develop interventions to meet the needs of the student or to document the need for a referral for an evaluation. School district personnel and/or parents may refer a student for screening to the school principal. Communication with parents and students shall be in English or in the native language of the parents.

When screening results suggest that a student might be a student with a disability, the school district seeks parental consent to conduct an evaluation by issuing the Permission to Evaluate form which is accompanied by the Procedural Safeguards Notice. The Procedural Safeguards Notice describes the educational rights of the parent and the student. Facilitated by the school psychologist, the Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT), conducts the evaluation to determine the presence of a disability according to state and federal definitions, determines the need for special education services and generates recommendations for the student's program. Parents are members of the MDT. Information from student focused teams and/or a SAP team is included in the evaluation. The evaluation must be sufficient in scope and depth to provide information about the student's academic functioning, adaptive and social behavior, learning concerns, and strengths. There is no cost to the parent for the evaluation. Upon completion of the evaluation, an Evaluation Report (ER) is developed and explained to the parent by the school psychologist. The ER provides a comprehensive profile of the student as well as specific interventions necessary for the student to demonstrate progress in the educational environment. The evaluation process must be completed within sixty calendar days after the District receives written parental consent, except for the calendar days from the day after the last day of the spring school term up to and including the day before the first day of subsequent full school term, which will not be counted.

Parents who suspect their child may have a disability may request an evaluation at any time through a written request to the school principal. The reason for making the request should be stated in writing. A Permission to Evaluate form will be issued at that time. Questions regarding the evaluation of students for special education should be directed to the building principal or the Director of Special Education at 412-344-2012.

If the student meets criteria for the existence of a disability and demonstrates a need for specially designed instruction, the District issues the Invitation to Participate in the IEP or Other Team Meeting as a means of notifying and inviting parent and student to participate in the meeting. At this meeting, the ER is reviewed and an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) is developed. An IEP team must consist of the following members: the parent/guardians, school administrator, a special education teacher, and a general education teacher. Other members may be invited, as determined by the needs of the student. Students age 14 and older (or younger if a transition plan is discussed) are required to be invited to participate in the IEP team meeting. Parents may also invite participants to the team meeting who have knowledge or special expertise regarding their child. The IEP is developed within thirty calendar days of the completion of the ER and implemented within ten school days from the IEP meeting date. An IEP meeting is held annually, specifically one year minus one day of the previous IEP annual meeting.

Prior to the initiation of services, parent will be presented with a Notice of Recommended Educational Placement (NOREP) which explains the services and placement recommendations. Parental consent must be obtained before providing initial special education and related services. The Procedural Safeguards Notice is provided to the parent along with the IEP and NOREP. Opportunities to resolve disagreements are available through informal meetings, conferences, mediation, or a due process hearing. Services designed to meet the needs of students with disabilities are require a triennial evaluation, except students diagnosed with an intellectual disability who require a biannual report.

The Mt. Lebanon School District provides the following special education programs and services: autistic support, blind or visually impaired support, deaf or hard of hearing support, emotional support, learning support, life skills support, multiple-disabilities support, physical support, and speech and language support. Levels of intervention include: Itinerant, Supplemental and Full Time support. Special education programs and services may be provided within the school district or at a location outside the district. The extent of special education services and location for the delivery of such services are based on student's identified abilities, needs, chronological age, and level of intensity of the specific intervention. Related services required for a student to benefit from special education services may include transportation, physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech and language therapy, counseling, school health services, social work services, rehabilitation, counseling, and orientation and mobility services. All special education services and programs are offered to the child by Mt. Lebanon School District at no expense to the family.

SERVICES FOR STUDENTS IN NONPUBLIC SCHOOLS

Public special education is accessible to resident students attending nonpublic schools by affording the opportunity for the nonpublic student to enroll, on a dual enrollment basis, in a special education program operated within the District. Public special education services are accessible following a multi-disciplinary team evaluation, determination of eligibility, and development of an Individualized Education Program. Parents of nonpublic school students may obtain further information by contacting the Mt. Lebanon School District, Director of Special Education at 412-344-2012.

EQUITABLE PARTICIPATION

Equitable participation is available for students identified for special education who are unilaterally placed by their parents in nonpublic schools. In Pennsylvania, Intermediate Units are the agencies responsible for implementation of the requirements of equitable participation. Parents who suspect their child may have a disability and may need special education should contact the Allegheny Intermediate Unit, IDEA Equitable Participation office at 412-394-4978 or the Mt. Lebanon School District, Director of Special Education at 412-344-2012.

SURROGATE PARENTS

Federal law establishes the right to a free appropriate public education for all children with disabilities, including children with disabilities who are wards of the state, or whose parents are unknown, unavailable, or have had their parental rights legally terminated. The Allegheny Intermediate Unit, in collaboration with the Mt. Lebanon School District, is responsible for recruiting, training and assigning parents to children determined to need a surrogate parent. More information can be provided by contacting the Mt. Lebanon School District, Director of Special Education at 412-344-2012.

SUPPORT FOR HOMELESS FAMILIES

Families in temporary or inadequate living situations due to a loss of housing may have children who might be eligible for certain educational rights and services. For further assistance, contact the Mt. Lebanon School District Homeless Liaison, Dr. Ronald P. Davis, Assistant Superintendent of Secondary Education at rdavis@mtlsd.net or 412-344-2039. Additional information can be obtained from Sheldon Winnick, State Coordinator, Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homeless Program, Pennsylvania Department of Education, 333 Market Street, 5th Floor, Harrisburg, PA 17126 or 717-783-6468.

GIFTED EDUCATION SERVICES

When screening results suggests a student may be eligible for gifted education, the District seeks parental consent to conduct a multi-disciplinary evaluation by issuing the Permission to Evaluate form. An evaluation team comprised of school personnel (principal, teachers, psychologist) and the student's parents contribute data regarding the student's intellectual ability, academic achievement, and classroom performance. The initial evaluation is summarized in the Gifted Written Report (GWR) and used by the Gifted Individualized Education Program team to develop the Gifted Individualized Education Program (GIEP). The GIEP is developed to address the student's mental giftedness and is reviewed annually. After the initial evaluation, students identified as mentally gifted are reevaluated before a change in educational placement is recommended or under recommendation of the GIEP team. The Notice of Recommended Assignment (NORA), signed by the parent, gives the District permission to provide services.

The Mt. Lebanon School District provides for mentally gifted students using the conceptual framework of continuous progress and differentiation through the District's mainstream curriculum. This extensive curriculum includes options and alternatives which have been created and refined to provide opportunities for differing groups of students.

Additionally, enrichment, acceleration and specialized study activities are provided to students as part of their gifted education program to address their unique needs. Parents may request an evaluation to determine if their child meets the criteria of mental

giftedness and demonstrates a need for gifted education by contacting the building principal or the Director of Special Education at 412-344-2012.