

Section 1

INTRODUCTION



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PURPOSE AND OVERVIEW OF PROCEDURES

The Special Education Department provides specially designed instruction and related services to benefit students with disabilities.

This manual is written as a resource to support district staff. The focus is on the provision of service by administrators, support staff, and teachers in the day-to-day implementation of programs. Organizational and management activities, including compliance, coordination, and fiscal management are also described. Yearly updates will be made as a result of WAC revisions and changes in legal interpretations of special education regulations.

The guide is also designed to:

1. Maintain continuity of practices and procedures across buildings
2. Insure compliance and accountability
3. Promote high quality programs and services
4. Train new staff

The District shall provide equal educational opportunity and treatment for all students in all aspects of the academic and activities program without regard to race, creed, color, national origin, gender, marital status, sexual orientation including gender identity, or non-program related physical, sensory, or mental disabilities (consistent with RCW 49.60). District programs shall be free from sexual and malicious harassment.

VISION & MISSION

OUR PROMISE: Every student in Highline Public Schools is known by name, strength, and need, and graduates ready for college, career, and citizenship.

Our Four Pillars support our instructional vision and guide our professional practices. For each pillar, we have articulated professional practices that guide what we must do well in every classroom, in every school, across our entire district to ensure success for all students, without exception.

Pillar One: EQUITABLE ACCESS to rigorous, standards-based instruction.

Pillar Two: RESULTS-FOCUSED professional learning and collaboration.

Pillar Three: STRONG PARTNERSHIPS with families and community.

Pillar Four: A CULTURALLY-RESPONSIVE organization.

SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES AND PROGRAMS

Birth to Three Programs are provided in coordination with the district by community birth to three agencies, for eligible children who may transition into the district's preschool program at age three.

Childfind Child Find is a process designed to locate children, birth through age 21, with a suspected disability to evaluate and identify a need for special education and related services

Community Based Services (CBS) is designed to teach vocational skills, personal management, functional academics and daily living skills to 18 to 21 year old students with intellectual disabilities. Students who qualify for DDA work with a vendor their exiting year to gain employment prior to turning 21.

Deaf/Hard of Hearing Program (DHH) is geared to providing comprehensive and appropriate special education services, in the least restrictive environment, to the district's children, age preschool through grade 12 (or age 21), who have a hearing impairment.

Early Childhood Special Education (Preschool) is provided to eligible children, ages three through five, with the support of district special education personnel, including teachers, paraeducators, speech-language pathologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, and other specialists.

Emotional Behavioral Center (EBC) is for students with identified disabilities who demonstrate primary learning needs in the social emotional skills domain. They may need specially designed instruction in academic skills or functional life skills; but the primary area of need is social emotional skills.

Integrated Kindergarten is an inclusion program for kindergarten students, with specially designed instruction integrated into the kindergarten setting.

Intensive Academic Center (IAC) is for students with identified disabilities who demonstrate primary learning needs in the academic domain or in adaptive skills. They may need intensive, specially designed instruction to learn how to read, write, and solve mathematical calculations and problems. They may have special needs in the social-emotional and/or functional life skills domains as well.

Integrated Learning Center (ILC) is for students with identified disabilities who demonstrate primary learning needs in the functional life skills domain. They may need intensive, specially designed instruction to learn how to independently manage self-care or to acquire basic academic and social-emotional skills. ILC is also for students with significant disabilities, including those who are medically fragile, who need to develop basic communication and skills for participating in daily support routines.

Learning Resource Center (LRC) is provided to students with identified disabilities who demonstrate an increased need in one or more domains. Students receiving learning resource center support, receive half or more of their daily instruction through general education, along with specially designed instruction in learning areas or other areas of identified need.

Realistic Transition Program (RTP) is designed to support students with specific learning disabilities to transition successfully into the community by focusing on their transition plans and post-secondary goals.

STAFF RESPONSIBILITIES

Director of Special Education

The director is responsible for overall leadership and management of special education services. The director collects and provides data to assure effective, ongoing program development and evaluation. This includes the management of budgets, personnel, programs, and monitoring for compliance with state and federal mandates. The director is responsible for the direct evaluation of special education staff as appropriate. The director works cooperatively with building and other administrators to coordinate special education services and professional development within the Inclusive Education and the Teaching and Learning departments. The director serves as district liaison to various community and agency committees.

Assistant Directors of Special Education

The assistant directors are responsible for leadership and support for teachers and administrators in their respective assignments. The assistant director provides support in decision making on student related issues, liaison between parents and IEP teams when necessary, placement of students, and monitoring compliance with state and federal mandates. The assistant director is responsible for working cooperatively with building administrators regarding student concerns, change of placement, and program placement decisions. The assistant directors are responsible for the direct evaluation of special education staff as appropriate.

Building Administrators (Principals)

The building administrator provides leadership and support to staff in the implementation of all educational programs. The principal is responsible for the full range of activities necessary to meet the needs of all students in the school. This includes being knowledgeable of rules and regulations that affect students with disabilities (e.g., discipline of special education students, accommodations for 504 students, etc.). In addition, the principal ensures that the building special education team functions to meet the needs of all students. The building administrator serves as the primary LEA representative (local educational agency) on IEP teams. The principal participates in the selection and assignment of special education staff and is responsible for the supervision and evaluation of special education staff. The building administrator also keeps the special services administrators apprised of building needs and issues and participates in planning, creating, and implementing the delivery of services to all students in the school.

Program Specialists

Special education program specialists provide technical support to teachers and schools in decision making on student-related issues, implementing a variety of instructional strategies, and designing quality Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). They also facilitate in-service opportunities for staff and the coordinators, sharing district policy as it relates to student needs.

Special Education Teachers

Special education teachers have the responsibility for supporting and monitoring all students with disabilities who are assigned to them. They provide direct instructional services to students and provide support to general education staff when the student is in the general education classroom. They plan, manage, and teach instructional content and are responsible for writing IEPs for students, as well as planning and managing their students' IEP meetings. In addition, the special education teacher is responsible for follow up and evaluating or monitoring the IEP goals and objectives, and providing progress reports in alignment with general education reporting periods. The special education teacher serves as a resource for other teachers in the building.

General Education Teachers

The general education teacher is responsible for the progress of all students placed in his or her classroom. A general education teacher **must** be a member of the IEP team. The general education provides instruction to all students in the general education setting. The teacher may also serve on building teams and collaborate with staff to develop and implement interventions designed to meet the special needs of individual students.

Para-educators

Para-educators are an integral aspect of all special education programs. They provide direct classroom and individual student support at the preschool, elementary, and secondary levels. They work as team members with certificated staff and provide direct instructional services under the supervision of special education teachers.

Occupational Therapists (OT)

School-based occupational therapists focus on facilitating students' abilities to access and participate in school-related occupations and activities including adaptive/self-help skills, play and leisure, academic participation, and transition/work skills. OT addresses the physical, cognitive, psychosocial, and sensory components of performance. OT may include services to increase student skills as well as services to support students and staff (e.g. adapting or modifying activities or recommending assistive technology). Occupational therapists primarily use their expertise to design and implement programs for children who qualify for special education. OTs may also support students and staff through participation in school-wide initiatives.

Physical Therapists (PT)

As members of IEP teams, physical therapists are responsible for evaluating, planning, organizing, and conducting physical therapy programs to facilitate the development of skills in their area of specialty. These specialists provide services to enable students to access, progress and participate in their educational curriculum. These services may include, but are not limited to, teachers and classroom staff, regarding equipment use, safe lifting and transfer techniques training for staff, staff coaching around carryover of motor skills to other aspects of the students' daily function at school.

Therapy Assistants

Certified Occupational Therapy Assistants (COTA) work as part of a team to provide occupational therapy services under the direction and supervision of the Occupational Therapist. They may also provide input in IEP meetings.

Physical Therapist Assistants (PTA) work as part of a team to provide physical therapy services under the direction and supervision of the Physical Therapist. They may also provide input in IEP meetings.

School Nurses

Nurses oversee health screening, wellness education, development of care plans, and compliance with all state laws pertaining to school health and immunization standards. They are providers of medical service, are members of the special education team, and serve as liaison among school, family, community, and medical practitioners.

School Psychologists

School psychologists provide support for teachers, support staff, administration, students, and parents. They are responsible for the evaluation of students who may have special needs. They also recommend research-based individual and classroom interventions.

Speech/Language Pathologists (SLPs)

These specialists work with students throughout the district to evaluate student needs and provide services in the areas of language, articulation, voice and fluency, and communication. They evaluate students, develop student programs, and implement interventions in their area of specialty.

Sign Language Interpreters

Sign language interpreters work individually with eligible students interpreting general education and special education classes. These specialists may also provide input at IEP meetings.

Vision Teacher/Braillist/Orientation and Mobility Specialists (O & M)

These professionals provide services for students with visual impairments. The vision teacher works directly with students and consults when appropriate with general education teachers. A braillist transcribes into Braille all necessary educational materials for students, and an O & M specialist works with students in moving about their environment safely.