

# ***What is Special Education?***

*An IEP Bootcamp for Parents  
and Caregivers*

Lauren McArdle, Assistant Superintendent of Student Services

Carie Cohen, Director of Special Education

Lynn Owens, Director of Special Education

# Learning Objectives

*In this session, participants will:*

- Understand the domain & re-evaluation process
- Understand the IEP meeting process
- Identify the critical components of an IEP
- Understand the purpose of remote learning plans
- Develop an understanding of the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)
- Understand meaningful parent/guardian participation

# Background & Evaluation Process

# Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

IDEA is a law that ensures eligible children with disabilities receive special education and related services. IDEA governs how states and public agencies provide early intervention, special education and related services to more than 6.5 million eligible infants, toddlers, children and youth with disabilities.

# What is Special Education?

Special education is a broad term used to by the law (IDEA) to describe specially designed instruction that meets the unique needs of a child who has a disability. These services are provided by the public school system and are free of charge. Services can include instruction in the classroom, at home, in hospitals and institutions.

# Steps in the IEP Evaluation Process (Overview)

- **Identification** (*for initial evaluations*)
  - Child Find
  - Request for evaluation
- **Consent for Evaluation/Reevaluation**
  - Team determines whether or not the district will proceed with an evaluation
  - If an evaluation is indicated, determines which assessments will be administered and by whom
- **Evaluation**
  - Sometimes called “case study”
  - Multidisciplinary Conference (MDC)/Eligibility Determination Conference (EDC)

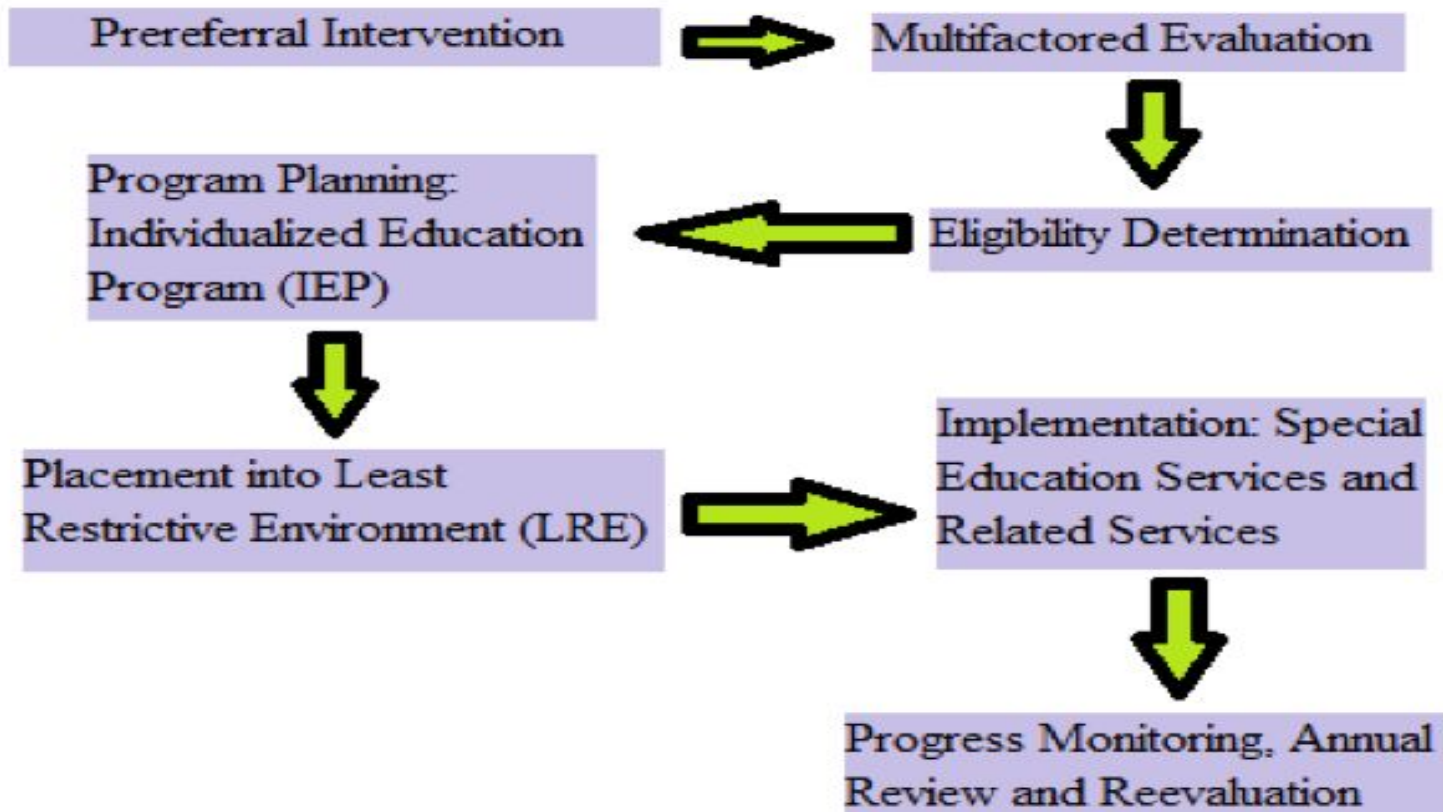
# Referral Process

The *referral* process for special education begins when a parent or staff member asks the school district to evaluate a student to determine if the student qualifies to receive special education services.

The *date of referral* is the date of written parental request for an evaluation. Screening procedures are NOT considered an evaluation.

*Within 14 school days* of receiving a written request, the school district will decide whether or not an evaluation is warranted, then provide parents with paperwork to provide formal written consent or with a letter describing why an evaluation is not warranted.

# Referral Process





# Consent for Evaluation/Reevaluation

- Prior to conducting an initial evaluation or a reevaluation, the team convenes to do the following:
  1. Consider available information for the child
  2. Determine whether additional information is needed in an area of functioning
  3. Obtain parental consent - if the team is in agreement that additional data is needed in order to make an eligibility determination for a student
- Areas discussed (\*also called **domains**) in the this process include the following: academic achievement; functional performance; cognitive/intellectual functioning; communication; health; vision/hearing; motor abilities; social and emotional status
- *NOTE: It is not necessary that additional information be collected in ALL areas on the domain; the team may determine that certain areas are not relevant, or that there is no additional data needed in a particular area*

# Consent for Evaluation/Reevaluation (cont.)

- The team must consider all suspected areas of eligibility in an evaluation process (there are 13 areas of eligibility, plus Developmental Delay)
- All testing must be completed by qualified professionals, using a variety of reliable and valid testing measures which may include standardized testing, interviews, observations and checklists
- Once an evaluation is deemed necessary and parents have signed consent, the educational team has 60 days to complete the evaluation and conduct an eligibility conference (more on this later)
- *NOTE: It is not necessary that additional evaluation data is collected in order to find a student eligible for services - the team may agree that no additional data is needed and still find the student eligible*

# Consent Paperwork (Example)



Community Unit School District 95  
 Office of Student Services  
 832 S. Rand Road  
 Lake Zurich, Illinois 60047-2459  
 Phone: 847-540-7060

## Parent/Guardian Consent for Evaluation Identification of Needed Assessments

Student's Name: Betsy \*Test

Date: 11/15/2019

| This form must be completed by the IEP Team  |                                     |                          |                                      |  |   |
|--|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|---|
| DOMAIN   | RELEVANT                            |                          | EXISTING INFORMATION ABOUT THE CHILD | ADDITIONAL EVALUATION DATA NEEDED  | SOURCES FROM WHICH DATA WILL BE OBTAINED  |
|  | YES                                 | NO                       |                                      |  |   |
| <b>Academic Achievement</b><br>Current or past academic achievement data pertinent to current educational performance.                                   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | What we know about the student       | What information we need to collect to answer questions about the student ability in this area | What assessments or documents will be gathered or reviewed to answer questions about students ability or progress |
| <b>Functional Performance</b><br>Current or past functional performance data pertinent to current functional performance.                                | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | What we know about the student       | What information we need to collect to answer questions about the student ability in this area | What assessments or documents will be gathered or reviewed to answer questions about students ability or progress |
| <b>Cognitive Functioning</b><br>Data regarding cognitive ability, how the child takes in information, understands information and expresses information. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | What we know about the student       | What information we need to collect to answer questions about the student ability in this area | What assessments or documents will be gathered or reviewed to answer questions about students ability or progress |

# Who's around the table?

## *At the Evaluation Meeting (EDC):*

- Parents (may bring others with knowledge or expertise about the child, or an advocate)
- Special Education Teacher
- General Education Teacher
- School Psychologist
- Any professional who conducted evaluations
- District Representative (LEA-Local Education Agency Representative)
- Student (if appropriate-must be invited if 14.5 years or older)

NOTE: Parents must agree in writing to dismiss a member of a team (this may also be documented in Additional Notes in a remote learning scenario)



# What to Expect at an Eligibility Determination Conference (EDC)

- Parents will receive draft copies of all evaluation reports at least 3 school days prior to the meeting
- Expect the meeting to last 1-1.5 hours
- Team reviews evaluation reports
- Areas of strength and needs are identified
- Team determines if the student is eligible for special education services (*team answers whether the student has identified needs that create an adverse impact on educational performance, and whether the student requires specialized instruction and supports in order to address said needs*)
- If child continues to be eligible, an IEP is developed

# Parental Involvement in the Evaluation Process

*Be an active participant in your child's education by:*

- Contacting your child's teacher if you are concerned about your child's progress in school
- Taking note of both your child's strengths and needs
- Sharing letters or reports from doctors or therapists that can help the school consider the needs of your child

# Parental Involvement in the Evaluation Process (cont.)

*Be an active participant in your child's education by:*

- Asking questions if you do not understand terms, language, or the evaluation process
- Reviewing shared reports in advance of the EDC meeting
- Attending Eligibility Determination Conference (EDC) and being prepared to actively participate in meetings

# Meaningful Parent Participation during the EDC Meeting

## Share your:

- child's strengths, interests and needs
  - vision for your child's future (transition planning)
  - perspective as the foremost "expert" on your child
- **Ask questions to understand others' perspectives and listen to their answers**
- **Ask teammates for input and insight based upon their areas of expertise**





# Initial Consent for Special Education

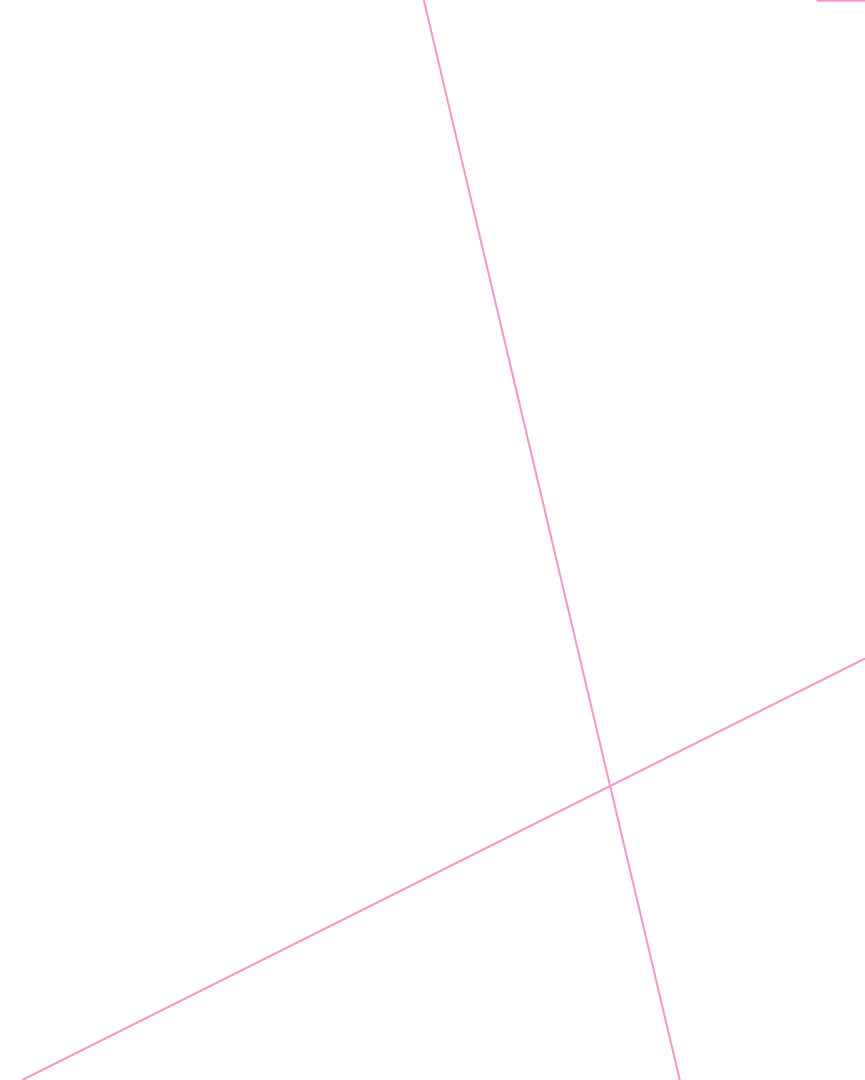
Initial consent is required to provide special education services. This is called the Initial Provision of Special Education Services.

After ***initial*** eligibility is determined, parents must provide written consent to allow the school district to provide special education supports and services to their child as determined by the team on the new IEP.

- Only one parent signature is required (depends on JPA)
- A lack of consent means that NO special education services are provided and the child is not eligible for special education
- This is ONLY time that a parent must agree and sign off on services
- At any other IEP meeting, parents have 10 days to either:
  - Call another IEP meeting
  - File for Due Process

When the sun sets on the 10th day (if no other action is taken) the IEP shall become law!

# IEP Components



# IEP Components (Sections)

- Parental input
- Present levels of academic and functional performance (including student STRENGTHS and areas for growth)
- Adverse effects of the student's disability (*how does the student's disability impact them in school?*)
- Measurable annual goals
- Accommodations
- Assessment Accommodations
- Educational Placement and Services (includes pertinent related services)
- Additional Notes

# Present Levels of Performance

- Expect to see DATA about student performance in academic areas
- Expect to see DATA about student performance in functional areas (work completion, interpersonal skills, navigation, etc.)
- Information listed in present levels (including adverse effects information) drives all student goals
- Present levels of performance should also include information about how the student performed on previous goals and/or should be discussed at this time

## **Additional Sections (if applicable)**

- Behavior Intervention Plan
- Secondary Transition Plan & Transition Services Pages (students 14 ½ and older)
- Autism Considerations

# Goals

- Present levels of performance and goal areas inform services and placement discussions for students
- Can include academic, functional or transition-based goals (if applicable)
- Goal areas should correlated to ISBE learning standards
- Goals should be written in SMART format and contain all SMART elements (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Results-Oriented, Iime-bound)

# Accommodations

- Discuss any additional supports a student may need in order to access the educational environment or curriculum
- Accommodations (including assessment accommodations) are driven by DATA to support the need for a student
- Accommodations are reviewed annually, and may change (for example, as students no longer demonstrate a need for a particular accommodation - that accommodation may be removed from their IEP)

# Transition Planning

The IEP must include a transition plan for all students ages 14 ½ and older; Secondary Transition and Transition Services sections include the following:

- Post-secondary goals in 3 main areas: ***employment, education/training, independent living***
- Transition-based assessments (employment, education/training, independent living)
- A course of study that aligns with students' stated goals and interests
- Coordinated Transition Services (instruction, related services, participation in the community, etc.)
- Referral to post-secondary agencies (if appropriate)



# Educational Placement & Services

- Based on student present levels of performance, adverse effects identified, goals and accommodations identified, the team has a discussion about the level (or type) of special education support required in order to meet the student's needs
- *NOTE: It is the legal responsibility of the team to implement the student IEP in the Least Restrictive Environment possible (meaning, with MAXIMUM access to non-disabled peers), and to discuss multiple placement options at the meeting*
- This section of the IEP lists any special education services required (including supports in the general education environment), as well as any related services required to meet the student's needs
- Extended school year and special transportation are also discussed in this section (if applicable)

# The Placement Continuum

**General Education with No Supplementary Aids or Services**

**General Education with Supplementary Aids or Services**

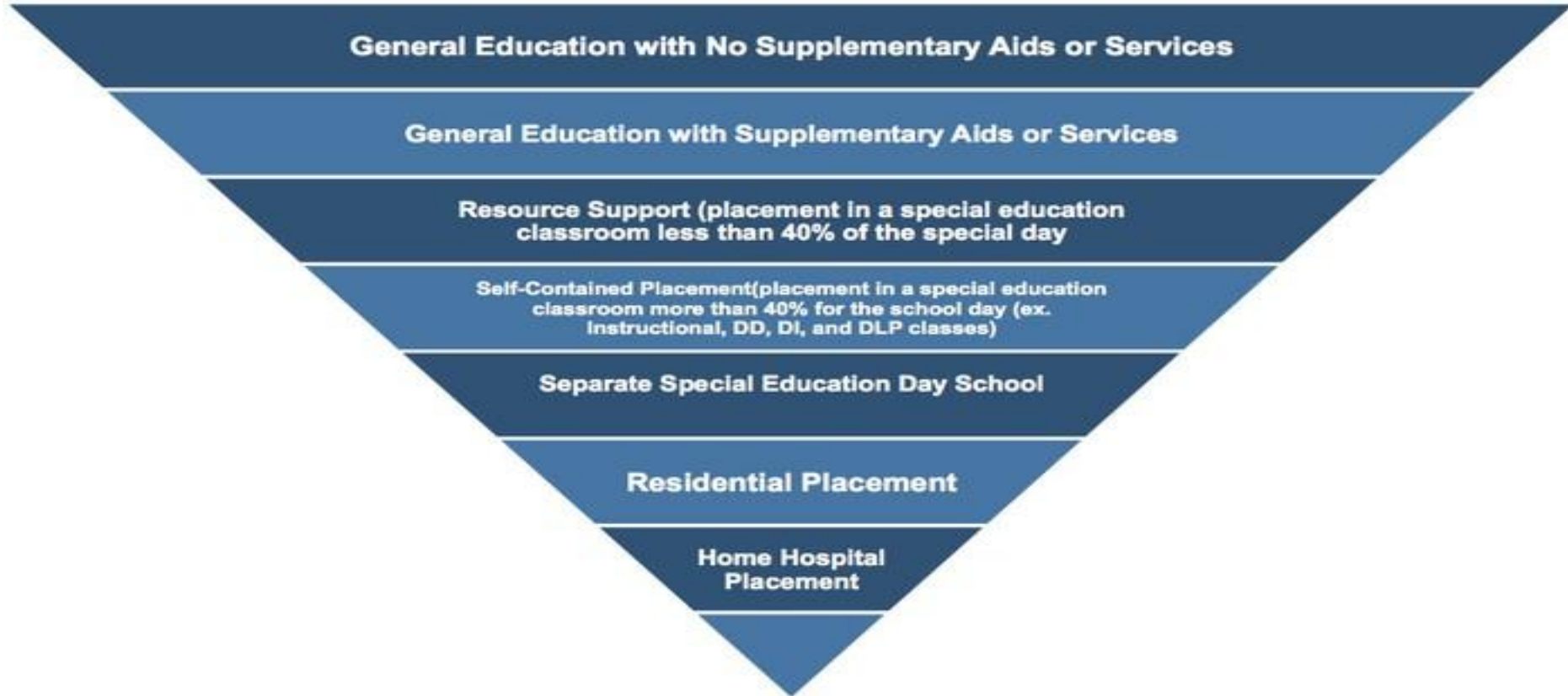
**Resource Support (placement in a special education classroom less than 40% of the special day)**

**Self-Contained Placement (placement in a special education classroom more than 40% for the school day (ex. Instructional, DD, DI, and DLP classes))**

**Separate Special Education Day School**

**Residential Placement**

**Home Hospital Placement**



# One more note about placement...

Special Education is NOT a place, classroom or school

Special education is the practice of educating students with qualifying disabilities with individualized instruction and related services in their **Least Restrictive Environment**.



# Related Services (*possible considerations*)

- ★ Social Work/Counseling
- ★ Speech and Language Services
- ★ Occupational Therapy
- ★ Physical Therapy
- ★ Adaptive PE
- ★ Nursing/Health Services
- ★ Others as determined by the team



# Meaningful Parent Participation: *Before & During the IEP Meeting*

- Review the most recent IEP, progress reports, work samples, and other school records
- Review drafted goals and present levels of functioning prior to the meeting
- Prepare to share ideas for drafted goals based on present levels of performance and your vision for your child
- Ask questions, share insights, and participate in all discussions during the IEP meeting
- Ask for clarification if you don't understand something or want more information!

# Meaningful Parent Participation: *After the IEP Meeting*

- Stay in communication with those persons who are responsible for providing services to your child
- Get to know the names and responsibilities of all those working with your child
- Open communication is key
  - Ask for positive information as well as areas for growth
  - Provide positive information as well as expresses any concerns

# Procedural Items & Resources

# Parental Rights

- Parents of students with disabilities have several rights, called Procedural Safeguards
- Some key rights include the following: advance notice of any IEP meeting; the right to provide written consent for evaluations and initial IEP services; the right to revoke consent for an evaluation and/or IEP services at any time; the right to meaningfully participate in the IEP process; the right to due process
- A complete copy of parent Procedural Safeguards can be found [HERE](#)



# Special Education Forms that Require Parent Signature & Purpose

| Form  | Purpose  |
|---|--|
| Notice of Conference Recommendation Form                                | Summarizes and notifies the parent/guardian of any recommendations made at the conference(s).  |
| Consent for Initial Provision of Special Education and Related Services | Used to obtain a parent/guardian's voluntary written consent when a student has been determined eligible for special education and related services, an IEP has been developed, and the student has been recommended for initial special education services. |
| Excusal of an Individualized Education Program Team Member              | Provides the written documentation for the excusal of one of the required team members.  |
| Notification of Transfer of Rights Due to Age of Majority               | Provides the parent/guardian and student notice of the transfer of rights when the student reaches the age of majority (18 years of age).  |
| Conference Summary Report (Sign-In)                                     | Provides purpose of meeting, summary of student information (i.e. name, grade, disability, etc), and serves as an attendance/sign-in for meeting participants  |
| Eligibility Determination Form (Specific Learning Disability)           | Provides the parent/guardian with criteria to determine that a student is eligible for special education under the specific learning disability category.  |

# Resources

**Illinois State Board of Education** (<http://www.isbe.net/spec-ed/html/parents.htm>)

**One Place for Special Needs** (<http://www.oneplaceforspecialneeds.com/>)

**Disability Scoop** (<https://www.disabilityscoop.com/>)

**Illinois Council for Exceptional Children** (<http://illinoiscec.org/>)

If you would have additional questions regarding this presentation, please feel free to reach out to a member of the Student Services Administrative Team!

Lynn Owens - Director of Student Services  
([lynn.owens@lz95.org](mailto:lynn.owens@lz95.org))

Carie Cohen - Director of Student Services  
([carie.cohen@lz95.org](mailto:carie.cohen@lz95.org))

Lauren McArdle - Assistant Superintendent of Student Services ([lauren.mcardle@lz95.org](mailto:lauren.mcardle@lz95.org))