

MILLCREEK TOWNSHIP SCHOOL DISTRICT PROCEDURES FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION, GIFTED AND STUDENT SERVICES (CHILD FIND)

The Board of Education assures that a free and appropriate education is available to all eligible students residing within the District. Programs for students in need of specially designed instruction; accommodations to access instruction and extracurricular activities; and enrichment, and/or acceleration within the curriculum are available without cost to parents. The District welcomes and encourages parents to partner with school personnel in the development of educational programming for their children. Parents with questions or concerns should begin by speaking with the building administrator at their child's school, or by calling the Pupil Services Office of the Millcreek Education Center at 835-5334.

A. SCREENING

Every school in Millcreek Township School District has a screening team that includes a building level administrator, school psychologist, teacher, and counselor. This team routinely reviews individual student's status relative to social, emotional, behavioral, or instructional needs and may make a referral for interventions and supports. Referrals may be made to community service agencies. Parental input and permission is included in designing specific strategies to promote student success.

B. INSTRUCTIONAL INTERVENTION

Data regarding student response to research based instructional and behavioral strategies are routinely gathered and analyzed to determine efficacy of interventions as well as what other supports may be needed. A comprehensive profile is developed to track student progress. Analysis of student response to targeted interventions is a regular education initiative that utilizes Title I and District funded collaborative support. If adequate progress is not evident through the response to intervention process, a referral for formal testing may be considered to determine if the student is eligible for special education. Parents may accept or decline the district's request to evaluate their child for specialized services. Parents may also initiate the referral process at any time throughout the intervention process by contacting their building principal.

C. REFERRAL TO SPECIAL EDUCATION

1. Students who continue to demonstrate academic and/or behavioral difficulties may be recommended by their school team for testing to determine eligibility for special education. Parents of school-aged children concerned about their child's ability to learn or their social, emotional, or physical development may request an evaluation conducted by the District free of charge to determine if their child meets state criteria for special education services. To request an evaluation, please contact your building principal or Pupil Services at 835-5334.

2. The referral process begins by a "Permission to Evaluate" form being issued by the District to the parents listing the reasons for referral, the types of assessments that will be conducted, and the dates by which the evaluation will be concluded. Parent input and participation is an important component of this process. A school psychologist will lead and coordinate the evaluation by which data is examined and a recommendation is made to the school team, which includes parents. Written permission from parents is required before a formal evaluation may begin. An "Evaluation Report" will be provided within 60 calendar days of receipt of parent permission (excluding summer vacation) that will be the basis by which eligibility is determined. Parents may decline the District's request to conduct an initial evaluation or the District's offer of Special education for their child.

3. A two-part determination for eligibility is required in Pennsylvania. Students must first be identified according to the disability categories as listed in Chapter 14 of the School Code and must also demonstrate a need for specially designed instruction. Eligible students will have an Individualized Education Program (IEP) developed to address their specific needs. Students who have been diagnosed as having a disability but are not in need of Special education may be eligible for a Chapter 15 Plan (see section F regarding Chapter 15 Service Plans).

4. Notice of Recommended Educational Placement (NOREP) indicating parental approval is required before services may be provided. Parents who are not in agreement with the District's initial recommendation for the provision of Special education services may decline to accept them by marking 'no' on the NOREP. Procedural Safeguards Notice (PSN) of parental rights is provided at IEP meetings or when a change in identification or placement is being considered. Parents may access the PSN on the District website or may call the Pupil Services office to receive a copy of the Notice.

5. Parents may revoke their consent for the provision of Special education services to their children at any time by submitting a letter to their building principal or the Pupil Services office. The district will issue a Notice of Recommended Educational Placement acknowledging that the parent wishes to remove their child from Special education. Upon receipt of the revocation request, the District will cease services after ten (10) calendar days and the student will return to regular education.

D. LEAST RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENT (LRE)

1. Millcreek Township School District offers a continuum of services for students with disabilities that begins with the school and class that the student would otherwise attend through the availability of separate schools for students with disabilities.

2. Placement decisions are made by IEP teams consisting of parents, school staff, and others who have relevant information to contribute. The first consideration for placement always begins with the regular education classroom and an examination of what supplementary aids and supports could be reasonably calculated to facilitate student success. If the team determines that additional supports beyond the regular education classroom are required, consideration is given to incrementally more restrictive environments that will provide appropriate instruction. The District endeavors to support differently abled learners in the general education environment through the provision of differentiated and collaborative instruction in all classroom settings grades K-12, as well as for students up to 21 years of age who elect to continue their education after their typical year of completion with same-aged peers.

E. SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS

1. Millcreek Township School District provides a full continuum of services to meet the needs of individual students with disabilities. Instruction is aligned to state standards utilizing the general education curriculum. Services include:

a. **Autistic Support (AS)** Students identified along the Autism Spectrum and who need a specialized, highly structured instructional approach participate in these classes. Students may spend a minimal amount of time in this type of classroom or may spend a majority of their school day utilizing the intensive supports, depending on the needs of each individual child. Communication, academic, and behavioral skills are the focus of instruction in AS classes, which have a low student/teacher ratio and specially trained staff.

b. **Emotional Support (ES)** These classes assist students who demonstrate behavioral and/or mental health issues that interfere with learning in the general education setting. Pro-social and self-regulatory skill development is taught, in addition to meeting target goals identified through Functional Behavioral Assessments and supported by Positive Behavior Intervention plans.

c. **Hearing / Visual Support (HI, VI)** The District contracts with Intermediate Unit #5 for the provision of services to students with hearing or vision disabilities. The use of assistive devices, training for interpreters, and consultation for specific students are examples of how HI or VI students can be supported in special education and regular education classes.

d. **Learning Support (LS)** Students identified as needing Learning Support typically spend a majority of their school day in their regular grade level classes with non-disabled peers. Supplemental aids and supports are provided, as is differentiated instruction in the least restrictive environment. Some students may need more individualized services and may receive core content instruction in a special education classroom while continuing to participate in elective classes with typical peers.

e. **Life Skills Support (LSS)** An emphasis on functional daily living skills via a modified curriculum and community-based experiences are provided to students in this program. Job sampling and work exploration opportunities are available in community sites supported by job coaches. High School students may spend up to one semester per year at the Bundy Transition House. The Transition House has been renovated in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act to include a fully accessible kitchen, bathroom and living area. The Transition House is located on Sterrettania Road adjacent to the Asbury/Walnut Creek campus and may support students up through and including age 21.

f. **Multiple Disabilities Support (MD)** Students participating in this program may have intellectual disabilities in addition to difficulties with ambulation and communication that require specialized services with a low student/teacher ratio. Instruction is student-centered and focuses on daily living skills, functional behavior and communication skills, and community based experiences. Related service providers work in collaboration with teachers to incorporate physical, occupational, and speech therapy as a component of classroom instruction.

g. **Speech and Language Support (SL)** All buildings are served by qualified speech and language therapists who consult with teachers and provide individual instruction to students in special education and regular education class settings. Eligible

students typically have vocabulary and/or articulation needs that impact learning and classroom participation. Speech and language therapists collaborate with all kindergarten and some targeted first grade teachers to provide direct instruction and consultative services to students with communication delays. Speech and language pathologists may also provide therapy as a related service to students identified as having other disabilities. Therapy may be provided in a small group therapy session either in or outside of the classroom or as consultative support in the regular education setting.

2. TRANSITION SERVICES Students aged 14 and over who have IEPs must have Individual Transition Plans written as a component of their program. Transition services are facilitated by Special education teachers and administrators to develop post-secondary related goals to be included in the IEP. Vocational aptitude, surveys, and career interests are reviewed in the planning of transition related activities. A summary of academic, social, and behavioral performance is provided to parents upon graduation that may be shared with prospective employers.

3. PROCEDURAL SAFEGUARDS A copy of the Procedural Safeguards Notice is routinely provided to parents at initial evaluations or whenever a change in placement is being considered. Parents may request a copy at any time. The District's policies comply with state and federal regulations regarding educational rights and privacy.

4. CONFIDENTIALITY The Millcreek Township School District protects the confidentiality of personally identifiable information regarding students with disabilities. A Release of Information signed by parents is required before school district staff may speak with or share documents with anyone outside the district. Parents have the right to review their child's records and may do so by contacting the child's school. Please call the Pupil Services office if you have questions or need more information about this process.

F. CHAPTER 15 SERVICE PLANS

1. Federal regulations under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act call for the provision of services to students with disabilities who are not in need of Special education. These rights and support system are set forth under Chapter 15 of the Pennsylvania School Code.

2. Students who have a mental or physical impairment that "substantially limits a major life activity" are entitled to have written plans developed outlining specific accommodations they need to ensure equitable school access and participation. Parents or teachers may request a meeting with the student's building principal and school psychologist to document the student's diagnosis and need for accommodations in the regular education program. The plan is reviewed annually to determine continued eligibility and student need.

G. GIFTED SUPPORT (GS)

1. Gifted Support services are provided for students who meet eligibility criteria as listed in Chapter 16 of the Pennsylvania School Code. Identification is based upon exceptional cognitive ability, leadership skills, creativity, and other outstanding qualities. In addition to ability and achievement testing, a rubric is used to determine eligibility and to identify those students for whom a Gifted Individualized Educational Program (GIEP) will be developed. GIEP goals are linked to the state standards, and measurable progress monitoring will be reported to parents.

2. A continuum of service offers, but is not limited to, pull out sessions, cluster grouping, and collaborative instruction within the general education setting for the provision of enrichment and acceleration. Secondary students may participate in Advanced Placement courses and Honors College as well as Concurrent College enrollment.

3. Gifted Support teachers serve as case managers for eligible students, collaborate with general education teachers for the provision of acceleration and challenge in various settings, and disseminate written documentation of progress towards goals.

H. ENGLISH LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

The District provides (ELD) services and supports for students whose first language is one other than English, for the purpose of facilitating the student's achievement of English language proficiency. Services include instruction in English Language Development that is provided by both English as a second language teachers (ESL) and non-ESL teachers. ELD takes place in both specialized and general education classrooms at the elementary, middle, and high school levels along with consultative support within content areas.

I. EARLY INTERVENTION SERVICES

The District, in conjunction with Northwest Tri-County IU #5, provides an ongoing system to locate and evaluate children ages birth through kindergarten who may have special needs. A process similar to that of school aged children is followed to identify potential disabilities and provide supportive services.

J. HOMELESS SERVICES

As mandated by the McKinney-Vento Act, the District is responsible for uninterrupted enrollment to students whose families have become displaced, who have lost their homes or have inadequate/temporary living circumstances, are doubled up with other families, or students who are no longer living with parents or guardians. Services include transportation, counseling, assistance in obtaining clothing and personal care items, provision of free breakfast and lunch, and connection with community agencies. The homeless liaison can be contacted through the Pupil Services Office. Please call 835-5352 for the homeless liaison.

K. MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

The District contracts with a local provider for mental health counseling, student assistance, and other supports that may be beneficial for eligible students. Student Assistance Program (SAP) teams are located in all district buildings to screen, recommend and monitor students in need of academic or behavioral interventions. Additionally, the District partners with Sarah A. Reed Children's Center for the operation of outpatient clinics to offer seamless mental health services to students within district buildings. Outpatient services are available during and after the regularly scheduled school day.

MTSD works collaboratively with community agencies that may be providing behavioral health and rehabilitative services to students on an Individualized basis. Building based school psychologists or guidance counselors can be contacted by parents or providers to schedule necessary school visits. Some examples of community provided supports are therapeutic support staff (TSS), mobile therapy (MT), behavioral support counseling (BSC), and private duty nursing.

Please contact the Pupil Services office at 835-5334 (located in the Millcreek Education Center on West 26th Street) if you have any questions about the information listed above, or if you have a specific concern regarding your child's progress in school.