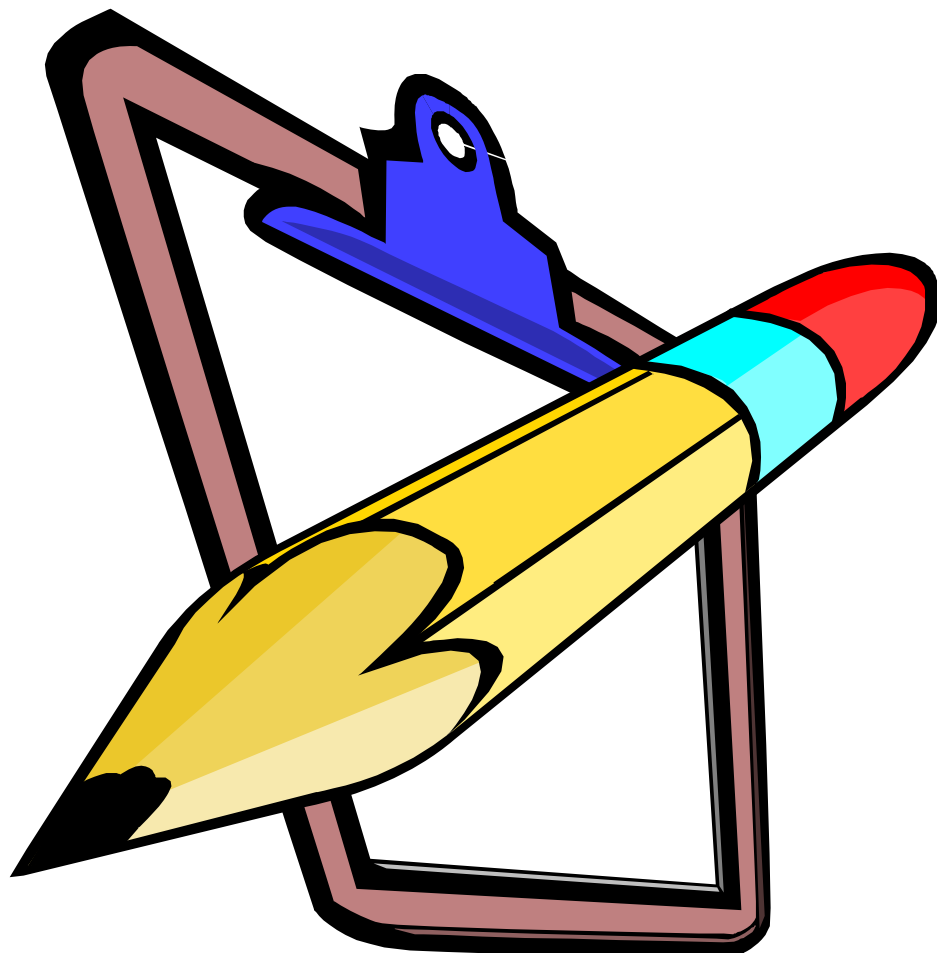


# Special Education for Parents 101

In plain English maybe?



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# Special Education for Parents 101

## Chapter 1

### What is This Identification Meeting?

You have just received a letter from your building principal which invites you to an identification meeting. We hope this is not the first time you are being made aware that your son/daughter has been having difficulty in school. Prior to this letter we hope you have been working with your child's teacher and other staff in the building to resolve the difficulties your child has been experiencing. An identification meeting is held when interventions have been implemented in your child's general education program and the data shows that the interventions have not resolved the problem and the school feels your child may be in need of special education.

The identification meeting is attended by the building Child Study Team (CST); a CST is composed of a school psychologist, a school social worker and a learning disability teacher consultant. The meeting is also attended by the building principal or his designee, your child's teacher(s) guidance counselor and anyone else who may be able to help clarify the problems your child is experiencing.

The purpose of the identification meeting is to discuss your child's strengths and weaknesses and interventions that have been implemented. Based on this discussion the CST makes a preliminary decision as to whether there is enough evidence to indicate your child may have a disability that is affecting his/her functioning in school. If the answer is yes the CST will develop, with you and those in attendance, an evaluation plan. The evaluation plan is a detailed plan which describes what evaluations will be conducted to determine if a disability that meets the requirements for special education exists (see Appendix B for discussion of testing needed for particular classifications). The CST will most likely do a psychological evaluation which will look at your child's intellectual ability, cognitive functioning, motivation and social and emotional functioning. The team will also often do a learning evaluation which looks at your child's academic functioning. These two evaluations are used to determine if your child has a learning disability. Other evaluations may be discussed based on what difficulties/problems are identified in the meeting.

After the development of the evaluation plan the meeting will end. In a few weeks you will receive, in the mail, a letter detailing the evaluation plan. The plan will have a consent form attached to it. The team cannot proceed with the evaluation until they receive signed consent from you.

If at the identification meeting there is no record of interventions tried or data which can be used to determine the success or failure of the interventions, then the meeting will change to a problem solving meeting and an intervention plan will be developed to

improve your child's functioning in school. If your child continues to have difficulty he/she can be re-referred to the CST at any time.

## Chapter 2

### What Happens Once I Give Consent?

When you send your permission for the CST to evaluate your child the date of signature is logged in and the CST clock begins. The CST has, from the time you give permission, 90 calendar days to complete the evaluation, hold an eligibility meeting, and if your child is found eligible, hold an Individual Educational Plan meeting (IEP), and have your child's special education program implemented.

Once the evaluations are completed the case manager will schedule an eligibility meeting, it is at this meeting that the determination of eligibility will be made. At least ten days prior to this meeting you will receive the evaluation reports in the mail. We strongly advise that you read them prior to coming to the meeting and write down any questions you may have.

The reports may have some terms that you are not familiar with. Please see Appendix A the Glossary of Key Terms used by the CST.

In order to determine if a student has a learning disability we use a significant discrepancy model using standardized individually administered norm referenced tests. A discrepancy model means that there has to be a large difference between a student's score on a test of cognitive ability, such as the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children – Fourth Edition (WISC-IV) and his or her score (s) on a test of academic skills, such as the Wechsler Individual Achievement Test – Second Edition (WIAT-II). A statistical formula is used to determine if the difference is large enough to meet the criteria of a learning disability.

The evaluations will be accompanied by a letter inviting you to attend the eligibility meeting it will have a particular time and date. If you cannot make this meeting it is important that you call your child's case manager to reschedule the meeting.

## Chapter 3

### What is an Eligibility Meeting?

You have just received the eligibility meeting letter; this letter tells you the time, date and location for the meeting. If you cannot make the meeting you are to call the CST case manager so that the meeting will be rescheduled. The participants at the meeting will be your child's teacher, one or more CST members, the building principal or his designee, you and depending upon your child's age, your child. Others may be invited depending upon what the evaluation plan was. You may also bring anyone you wish to the meeting. If you are bringing an attorney or advocate we ask that you let us know in advance.

At the eligibility meeting the teacher will give an update of your child's functioning in school. The CST will review the results of the evaluation and determine if your child is eligible for special education under any of the 14 categories of disability.

If the student meets the criteria for one of the 14 classification categories and functional assessment confirms that the identified area is the area the student is having difficulty with, the team will recommend the student to be classified. In order to be eligible a student needs to be in need of specialized instruction in their area of weakness.

The 14 categories are:

1. Auditory Impaired
2. Autistic
3. Cognitive Impairment
  - Mild
  - Moderate
  - Severe
4. Communication Impaired
5. Emotionally disturbed (ED)
6. Multiply Disabled (MD)
7. Deaf/blindness
8. Orthopedically impaired
9. Other Health Impaired (OHI)
10. Preschool child with disability
11. Socially Maladjusted
12. Specific Learning Disability (SLD)
13. Traumatic Brain Injury
14. Visually Impaired

Please see Appendix B for a detailed description of each category.

All members of the eligibility team need to indicate agreement or disagreement with the decision to classify. If you agree and wish to have your child classified, you have to agree to the classification. If you do not wish to have your child classified the process ends. If you agree to classification you can ask for a second meeting to develop an Individual Education Program (IEP) or give permission for the IEP to be developed at this meeting. If you give permission to develop an IEP and there is not a special education teacher present, then one must be brought into the meeting.

The IEP and placement must be completed within 90 days from date of permission to test.

# Chapter 4

## Individual Education Program (IEP)

### How is This Developed?

You have either agreed for the team to continue with the meeting or you are now coming back for a separate meeting the purpose of this meeting is to develop your child's individual education program (IEP). The IEP team by law is charged with developing a program that meets your child's needs and that has him/her in the general education program as much as possible.

The IEP meeting has at least the following staff members: a general education teacher, a special education teacher, a CST member, and you. Others may be invited to attend such as your child's guidance counselor, a building administrator, your child's guidance counselor and if your child is over fourteen your child. If your child is over 14 or is going to be turning 14 while the IEP that is being developed is in effect then your child must be invited.

The IEP is a contract between the school and you it outlines the program your child will be in and the goals and objectives of the program. The IEP is designed to be appropriate for one year however it can be changed if need be during the year. The IEP has a number of sections which will be reviewed below.

#### **Sections of the IEP:**

##### **Section 1 Data Sheet page 1**

This page has your child's biographical data as well as information regarding when and where the meeting took place. This page also documents all who attended. Signing this page does not mean you agree or disagree with what is written it is just a record of who attended the meeting.

##### **Section 2 Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP)**

This is one of the most important sections of an IEP this sections outlines your child's strengths and weaknesses in academic social and emotional areas. Information from your child's teacher and the CST evaluations will be summarized here.

##### **Section 3 Transition**

If your child is 14 or older the IEP team will begin discussing transitioning your child from school to college, work, vocational school, or the military. Your child's realistic future plans drive the IEP. Your child's program is developed to help him/her achieve his/her future goals.

Age 14



The IEP team will discuss your child's interests and preferences. They will look at goals related to post secondary education, employment/career, if needed community participation and independent living.

Age 16

The plan becomes much more detailed and more discussion is devoted to this part of the IEP.

#### **Section 4 Behavioral Interventions**

If your child is having difficulty adjusting to school, getting along with others etc. a plan is developed to help your child improve his/her functioning: the plan includes the development of

- A target behavior, the behavior you wish to change
- What has been tried in the past to improve this behavior with what success
- What is the new plan
- What data will be collected and when
- Who is to do what when and how

#### **Section 5 Goals and Objectives**

Your child's goals and objectives are based on the weakness identified in the PLAAFP and the transition plan.

The goal is where your child will be at the end of the school year or this IEP. The objectives are benchmarks at each marking period which allow us to determine if your child is on target for meeting the goal.

Example:

##### **Goal**

X will be able to read 50 words per minute with less than 3 errors

##### **Objectives**

By the end of the first marking period X will be able to read 25 words per minute with less than 5 errors

By the end of the second marking period X will be able to read 50 words per minute with 10 errors

By the end of the third marking period X will be able to read 50 words per minute with less than 6 errors

#### **Section 6 Evaluation Criteria, Procedure and Schedule**

We incorporate our criteria and schedule into the goal and objectives. This section tells you when and how we will inform you of your child's progress.

#### **Section 7 Placement in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)**

Research has shown over and over that students progress best when they are in general education classes. The IEP team by law is required to exhaust all possible methods to have a student in a general education class prior to placing in a special education class. If your child will be in special education for more than 20% of the day

the IEP team must justify their decision course by course answering three key questions.

1. What supplementary aides and services were considered and why were they rejected as not being appropriate?
2. Document the comparison of the benefits provided in general education class and the benefits provided in the special education class.
3. Document the potential beneficial or harmful effects that a placement may have on the student with disabilities or the other students in the class.

### **Section 8 Modification in Extracurricular and Nonacademic Activities**

The IEP team is charged with outlining what if any modifications are needed for your child to participate in extracurricular and nonacademic activities. If your child is not going to participate in nonacademic and extracurricular activities it needs to be stated here. If your child is placed out of district a plan needs to be developed which enables your child to participate in activities in their home school.

### **Section 9 Placement Decision**

The IEP team has developed a PLAAFP, made a transition plan if 14 or older, if need be developed a behavioral intervention plan, created goals and objectives, looked at all the course offerings to determine what services your child needs in order to benefit from education. It is now time to determine in what type of setting your child will receive instruction in each area.

### **Section 10 Transition Planning for Students in Separate Setting**

A separate setting is defined as a building without general education students. If your child is in such a setting or if the decision of the IEP team was to place your child in such a setting then the IEP team must by law develop a plan to return students to district or move them to a school that has general education students.

### **Section 11 Participation in General and Special Education Programs**

This section of the IEP is a grid (see example which follows). The first column is the subject; if the student is going to take the subject in a general education class then an X is put in the column labeled general. If your child is taking the subject in a special education class then the number of days the student is in the class(frequency), how long the class is each day(duration) and what building the class is in will be written in the column next to the class labeled special. If your child is in an in-class support program (a class that is a regular education class with a special education teacher assigned to it) then in the general column next to the class the amount of time the special education teacher will be in the class is listed e.g. a minimum of 2 periods a week. It is assumed unless otherwise noted that the class is neighborhood school your child attends.

**EXPLANATION OF PARTICIPATION  
IN GENERAL AND SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

**(For special education only include type of program option, frequency, duration, and location of programs.) (For in-class programs, state the amount of time the resource teacher is present in the class.)**

<b>SUBJECT</b>	<b>General</b>	<b>Special</b>	<b>Credit</b>	<b>SUBJECT</b>	<b>General</b>	<b>Special</b>	<b>Credit</b>
Language Arts	X			English	ICS teacher present a minimum of 2x p/wk., 30 min. p/day		
Reading	X			Math		RC replacement 5x p/wk, 43 min. p/day	
Social Studies	X			History	X		

**Section 12 Length of School Day/School Year**

The federal government requires this information to be put into an IEP because prior to the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) special education students were not always given the same length of day or school year as other students; often they had a shorter day or year. For the majority of special education students this will be the same as for general education students.

**Section 13 Extended School Year**

Some students, because they have an emerging skill that would be lost if they received no instruction during the summer or would regress over the summer so much that it would take an unreasonable amount of time for them to recoup, are given an extended school year. An extended school year is a program that begins in July.

**Section 14 Related Services**

This section of the IEP is in table form if your child receives a related service (occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech, counseling, transportation, nursing etc.) it is listed here. The chart tells you the service, frequency and location. If your child is receiving speech in a group that is less than five the size of the group will be listed.

**Section 15 Statement of Student's Transition From Elementary to Secondary Programs**

This statement describes whether your child is ready to transition and if not what needs to be done to get him/her ready.

## **Section 16    Modifications Needed so Your Child can Participate in General Education and Extracurricular Activities**

Modifications are changes in the general education program that are designed to allow your child to be successful in the general education setting. Modifications are related to your child's disability and are designed to even the playing field not to give your child an advantage.

Modifications can be made in

- How your child is instructed e.g., instruction is to be done orally
- What your child is expected to learn
- The amount of material your child is to learn
- How your child will demonstrate knowledge of what they learned e.g., will demonstrate knowledge by answering questions using a word bank
- The pacing of work presented and given to your child
- Where your child will demonstrate knowledge of what they learn

## **Section 17    Modifications Needed for Participation in Special Education**

This may seem confusing at first, given that one would think that special education classes are designed to meet the individual needs of the student. Special education classes use the same curriculum as the general education classes therefore a student in a special education class may need modifications to the curriculum in order to succeed.

A modification in the special education class, such as extended time, may need to be listed if there are none in the general education classes and your child will need modifications on state assessment. A student can only have modifications for state assessments if they have the same modifications in their IEP and the modifications are used in the classroom. The modifications listed must be related to the student's disability.

## **Section 18    Participation in District and State Assessment**

All students must participate in state assessment, 99% of the students will take the general state assessment exams New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJASK) and the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA). One percent or less will have an alternative proficiency assessment (APA). Students have an APA are those who have a severe cognitive disability and cannot answer one question or answer questions in the format of the test.

Special education students are entitled to the modifications they need in their classes for state assessments. They are not entitled to a modification that is not in their IEP and used.

Students may be exempt from passing the HSPA, the grade 11 test; however they must take the test or an alternative proficiency assessment. The reason students can be exempt from passing is because the HSPA is a requirement for graduation and the special education rules and regulations allow the CST to modify graduation requirements with alternative methods for showing proficiency. Students who are

exempt from passing will need to show proficiency in another way. The students HSPA score is used to determine if a school met the requirements of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) in terms of the percent of students passing the exam.

At the end of section 19 (High School Graduation Requirements) if your child is exempt from passing a section of the HSPA the explanation is written here.

### **Section 19 High School Graduation Requirements**

When your child turns 14 even if they are not in the high school this section is completed. The state has specific requirements for graduation some local districts add to these requirements. For example the state requires one year of a foreign language while Bergenfield requires two years.

This part of the IEP is divided into two sections the first is credit hour requirements Bergenfield requires students to obtain a minimum of 22 credits to graduate. Please check the curriculum guide located in the guidance section of Bergenfield High School web page to see how many credits a student must earn from each department.

The second section is curriculum proficiencies. Every curriculum requires a student to show a certain level of knowledge to pass the course if a student is not going to be held to that level it needs to be noted in this section with a rationale and what the alternative is.

### **Section 20 Notice requirements for IEP and Placement**

It was mentioned earlier that the IEP is a contract between you and the school. This section meets the legal definition of notice it states

- Why the IEP was developed i.e. annual review, parent request etc.
- If the parent made a request and the district rejected it the reason for the rejection is stated here.
- What information was used to develop this IEP?

At the end of the meeting the case manager will give you a copy of the IEP that was developed at the meeting. This copy serves as notice. If your child had been receiving special education services the IEP will go into effect 15 days from the date of the meeting, unless you start a due process proceeding. Due process ensures that your rights are protected. If you and the district cannot come to agreement you have the right to request a state mediator to help solve the issue or to ask for a hearing in front of an Administrative Law Judge. In the Parental Rights in Special Education booklet that was sent to you in the letter inviting you to the identification meeting provides an explanation of due process and the forms that you will need.

### **Section 21 Procedural Safeguards Statement.**

This section tells you where you can find your rights and who you can contact for an explanation of your rights.

## **Section 22 Consent for Initial IEP Implementation**

If your child was just classified this will be your first IEP. The IEP cannot be implemented without your signed permission. Your signed consent is only required five times

1. To do an initial evaluation
2. To implement the first IEP
3. To amend the IEP
4. To waive a re-evaluation
5. To do a re-evaluation

## **Section 23 Annual Review Notice and Signature for Implementation Prior to 15 Days.**

If this IEP is a result of an annual review your signature is not required for it to be implemented. By law you have 15 calendar days to consider the IEP that was given to you at the meeting. If you do not take any action the IEP will be implemented after the 15<sup>th</sup> day. By law the only way to stop the implementation of an IEP is by you requesting, in writing, mediation or a due process hearing from the department of education. The only time your signature is required except for the first IEP is when the IEP is to be implemented prior to 15 days from the time you received notice (your copy of the IEP).

## **Section 24 Transfer of Rights at the Age of Majority**

This is the last section of the IEP. Three years prior to your child turning 18 you and your child are to be informed that at age 18 your child becomes the decision maker unless you choose to obtain guardianship of your child. There are two ways to notify you and your child of this

1. is have it part of the IEP starting at age 14
2. send letter home to you and your child

## Chapter 5

### My Child is in his/her Special Education Program What Happens Now?

The first thing that happens is the IEP that was written is implemented and progress is monitored quarterly and at progress report time. It is important that you come to parent conferences because this is when teachers will review with you your child's progress as it relates to the goals and objectives in the IEP.

## Chapter 6

### What Happens if the IEP is Implemented and it Needs to be Changed?

By law every IEP needs to be reviewed at least once a year. This yearly review is known as an Annual Review. However, sometimes the IEP may need to be changed before a year is up in that case there are two options.

1. Is to hold a meeting to review the IEP. This meeting is attended by at least one CST member, a general education teacher, a special education teacher, guidance counselor if your child has one, yourself and your child if appropriate. Others may be invited as needed and you always have the right to bring anyone you wish to the meeting we however do ask you to notify us if you are bringing an attorney with you.
2. If there is only one area of the IEP that needs to be changed and you and the CST are in an agreement then an amendment to the IEP can be created. The amendment states
  - a. What section of the IEP is being amended
  - b. The reason for the amendment
  - c. The actual amendment
  - d. Any new goals and objectives

The amendment can only go into effect if you sign it and return it to the CST. Your child's annual review date does not change; it is still one year from the date of the last full IEP meeting.



## Chapter 7

### Re-evaluation What is it and What are the Options?

Every three years a student is due for a re-evaluation to determine if they remain eligible for special education. You and the CST have a number of options.

**Option number 1 Waive the re-evaluation** this is joint decision between you and the CST. If you choose to waive the evaluation you must give permission and the date of your signature is the new 3 year cycle date. If the decision is to waive the evaluation you may ask for an evaluation at a later time.

**Option number 2: The meeting serves as re-evaluation** you will be invited to a re-evaluation planning meeting at least 60 days prior to the re-evaluation anniversary date. The purpose of the meeting is to review the assessments and functioning of your child in school to determine if additional data is needed to decide if your child continues to be a student with disability. The participants are the IEP team. If the IEP team feels there is enough information to make a determination of eligibility and no further assessments are needed then this meeting serves as the re-evaluation. If there is not enough information then you will be using option 3.

**Option 3: Decision is to test** you and the IEP team have decided that there is not enough information to make a determination of eligibility. If this is the decision the team will develop an evaluation plan. This plan will be mailed to you following the meeting. The team can not start the evaluation until you return the permission slip to evaluate signed to the team. Upon receipt of your signature the team has 60 days to complete the evaluations. The process from this point on is similar to an initial evaluation chapter 2. The difference is to maintain or change classification your signature is not needed the same for implementing an IEP.

## Chapter 8

### Help Numbers and Resources

<b>CST Office</b>	<b>201-385-6956</b>
<b>County Office</b>	<b>201-336-6875</b>
<b>Statewide Parent Advocacy Network</b>	<b>1(800)-654-7726</b>
<b>Bergenfield Web Site</b>	<b><a href="http://www.Bergenfield.org">http://www.Bergenfield.org</a></b>
<b>New Jersey Department of Education</b>	<b><a href="http://www.nj.gov/education/specialed/">http://www.nj.gov/education/specialed/</a></b>

# Appendix A

## Key Terms

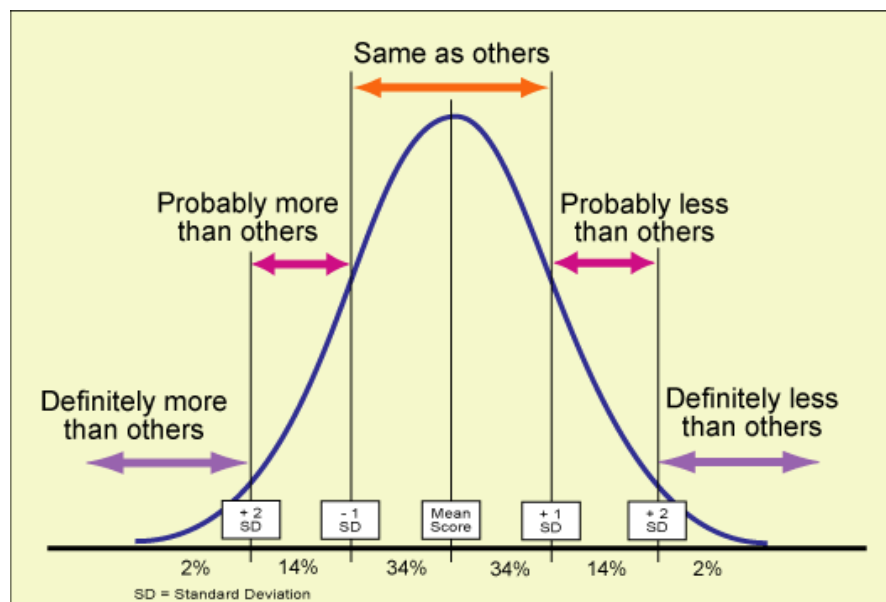
**Criterion Referenced:** This refers to tests that report on how your child performed in specific content areas. An example would be the specific kinds of math operations in a particular curriculum that your child has mastered.

**CST:** Child Study Team this team is made up of a school psychologist, social worker and learning disabilities teacher consultant (LDTTC).

**Grade Equivalent:** Grade equivalents convert the raw score to a grade level. The grade equivalent is based on the student obtaining the same number of correct answers as the average student in a particular grade. For example, if a fourth-grade student gets a grade equivalent of 7.5 in mathematics, it is not accurate to say that the fourth-grader is doing well in seventh-grade mathematics. It is more accurate to say that a grade-equivalent score of 7.5 is an estimate of how an average seventh-grader would score on the fourth-grade mathematics test.

**IEP:** Individual Educational Plan

**Normal Curve:** Tests that are norm referenced are developed using a statistical concept the normal curve. The belief is that skills and abilities are distributed in a bell shape curved and that 68.26% of those who take the test will fall within the average range. The normal curve model is used to determine scores such as percentile ranks and standard scores. These are two scores you will see in the reports however before we discuss these scores we need to discuss a few other concepts



**Norm Referenced:** This refers to tests, such as the Wechsler Individual Achievement Test – Second Edition (WIAT-II), that report scores as a comparison of how your child did compared to a sample of students who are the same chronological age or grade. Examples of scores from norm referenced tests are percentile ranks, standard scores, and grade equivalent scores.

**Percentile Ranks:** This score is expressed in terms of the percentage of people who fall below a given raw score. For example if 40% of the people who take a test obtain less than 20 problems correct the raw score of 20 corresponds to a percentile of 40<sup>th</sup> percentile. The drawback of percentile ranks is that while the score tells you a relative position but not the amount of difference.

**Significant discrepancy:** Significant discrepancy is a model using standardized individually administered norm referenced tests to determine if a student is eligible for special education as a learning disabled student. The significant discrepancy model means that there has to be a large difference between a student's score on a test of cognitive ability, such as the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children – Fourth Edition (WISC-IV) and his or her score (s) on a test of academic skills, such as the Wechsler Individual Achievement Test – Second Edition (WIAT-II). A statistical formula is used to determine if the difference is large enough to meet the criteria of a learning disability.

**Standard deviation:** Is a measure of the variability of a score from the mean (average). It tells you what the average distance from the mean is for each of the scores in a distribution and is based on the normal curve model which assumes that scores are distributed evenly over the whole range of skills being tested. Test makers know that 68.26% of the population will fall between +1 and -1 standard deviations from the mean. They know that another 27.18 will fall between +2 and -2 standard deviations and the 2.14% of the population will fall between +3 and -3 standard deviations.

You are probably saying this is much more than I ever wanted to know however it is important to understanding test development. Test developers use the normal curve model to calculate **standard scores** which allow the CST to be able to compare the results of one test to a different test. The standard score tells the examiner exactly where on the normal curve the student falls. For example, the Wechsler Intelligence tests have a mean (average) score of 100 and a standard deviation of 15. Of the people who take the test 68.26 will score between 85 and 115 (between -1 and +1 standard deviations from the mean). An achievement test may have mean score of 100 and a standard deviation of 16 these two scores can be compared using a statistical formula.

A test that has an average score of 100 and a standard deviation of 15 usually has the following distribution

	<b>Range of Scores</b>	<b>Percentage under the curve</b>
Average	90 -109	50% of those who take the test
Low Average	80-89	16.1% of those who take the test
Deficient	70 and lower	9.9% of those who take the test
High Average	110-119	16.1%
Superior	120 and higher	9.9%

If the test has a standard deviation that is higher or lower using a statistical formula the %under the curve for each area stays the same however the range of scores changes. Therefore just looking at the scores is not a straight a comparison. For example if 1 test has a standard deviation of 15 and another 20 and on the test that the standard deviation is 15 the person score a 90 and on the other an 85 they based on the % of the curve the scores fall under they may actually be the same.

**Standard Error of Measurement:** If a person was to take a test twice the odds of them obtaining the same score is low. Every test has a standard error of measurement this is the expected difference between taking the test once and then again. This score is usually expressed in a range. It is an important score when comparing test given more than once because what may seem to be a change in score may not.

**Standard Score:** A standard score tells you in standard deviation units where a student's score is with respect to the mean of the distribution.

**Restandardized Tests:** Tests are restandardized about every ten years. This is because it has been found that over time the average scores on standardized tests rise. For example, a WISC standardized in 1997 would have had an average score of 100 by 2007 the average score may actually be 105. The restandardization brings the score back to 100. A student who takes the new test may appear like to score lower than when they were previously tested however they actually may be scoring the same.

## Appendix B

### Classification Categories

#### 1. Auditory Impaired

- An inability to hear within normal limits due to
  - Physical Impairment or
  - Dysfunction of auditory mechanisms
  - Besides the two CST members evaluations the following are required
  - Audiological evaluation
  - Speech and language evaluation
- This category is further subdivided into two sub categories
  - Deafness
    - The student's auditory impairment is so severe that the processing of linguistic information through hearing with or without amplification, is adversely affected
  - Hearing impairment
    - An Impairment in hearing which adversely affects the students educational performance

#### 2. Autistic

- These students have a pervasive developmental disability which significantly impacts
  - Verbal Communication
  - Non Verbal Communication
  - Social interaction
  - Restricted repertoire of activity and interests
- This disability in order to be eligible has to adversely impact educational performance
- Students who are eligible under this category are severely impaired with regard to their ability to communicate with the world(not due to a communication impaired) and interact with others
- Students who have this disorder often demonstrate:
  - Engage in repetitive acts
  - Stereotyped movements
  - Resistance to environmental changes
  - Resistance to change in routines
  - Unusual response to sensory experiences
  - Lack of response to others
  - Self injurious behavior
  - Self stimulation behaviors
- Onset is usually before age 3
- To classify
  - Two CST evaluations,
  - Speech evaluation

- An assessment by a physician trained in neurodevelopment assessment

### **3. Cognitively impaired**

- This corresponds to “mentally retarded”
- To be considered a student must have
  - Significantly below average general cognitive functioning.
    - This is measured by an IQ test
  - Deficits in adaptive functioning in the home, school and community
    - This is usually determined by results of an adaptive scale completed by the parent, interview of parents and teachers, and observation
  - These deficits must adversely affect the students educational performance
- This classification has three sub categories
  - Mild Cognitive Impairment
    - Student’s intelligence scores must be within two to three standard deviations below the mean.
      - 100 is the average
      - A standard deviation is 15 points
      - therefore the students score must fall between a 70 and a 55
      - There also must be a deficit in adaptive functioning
  - Moderate cognitive Impairment
    - Three or more standard deviations below the mean on an IQ test
    - There also must be a deficit in adaptive functioning
  - Severe Cognitive Impairment
    - Functions severely below age expectations
    - Is incapable of responding to simple directions
    - Cannot express basic wants or needs
    - Is eligible for day training
    - IQ is at least 5 standard deviations below the mean

### **4. Communication Impaired**

- Language disorder in the area of morphology, syntax, semantics and/or pragmatics/discourse
- This has to adversely affect the students educational performance and not be due primarily to an auditory impairment
- The diagnosis is based on
  - Functional assessment of Language in other than a testing situation
  - Performance below 1.5 standard deviations  
Or the tenth percentile on at least two standardized language tests  
One of which shall be a comprehensive test of both receptive and expressive language

- Assessment by a speech-language specialist is required to determine the educational impact of the communication problems  
The speech language specialist for this classification is considered part of the CST and their evaluation counts as one of the two mandated child student team evaluations
- If it is found that the student meets the eligibility requirements for this classification but requires speech and language services only then the student shall be classified as eligible for speech and language services.

#### **5. Emotionally Disturbed (ED)**

- Characteristics of this classification are:
  - Inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers;
  - Inappropriate types of behaviors(acting out, crying for no reason etc.,) feelings under normal circumstances
  - A general mood of unhappiness or depression
  - A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems
- These characteristics must be exhibited over a long period of time and to a marked degree
- These problems must be adversely affecting the student's educational performance
- This classification use to require a psychiatric evaluation

#### **6. Multiply disabled**

- The presence of two or more disabling conditions, the combination of which causes
  - Severe educational needs
  - That cannot be accommodated in a program designed to address one of the impairments

#### **7. Deaf/blindness**

- Concomitant hearing and visual impairments
- The combination of which causes such severe communication and
- Other developmental and
- Educational problems which cannot be accommodated by programs solely for students with deafness or blindness

#### **8. Orthopedically impaired**

- Disability characterized by a severe orthopedic impairment  
Which adversely affects a student's educational performance
- Besides the minimum two CST evaluations a medical assessment is required that documents the orthopedic condition

#### **9. Other health impaired (OHI)**



- This is characterized by limited strength, vitality or alertness, including heightened alertness
- This could be due to:
  - Chronic health problems
  - Acute health problems
  - Attention deficit hyperactivity activity disorder (ADHD)
  - Heart condition
  - Tuberculosis
  - Rheumatic fever
  - Nephritis
  - Asthma
  - Sickle cell anemia
  - Hemophilia
  - Epilepsy
  - Lead poisoning
  - Leukemia
  - Diabetes
- Or any other medical conditions which adversely affects a student's educational performance
- A diagnosis of OHI requires at a minimum of two CST evaluations and a medical assessment
- The federal government considered making ADHD its own category but decided against it because they felt:
  - Most students with ADHD need only a 504 plan
  - Students with ADHD can be classified as either OHI or ED if the disability requires the student to receive specialized instruction

#### **10. Preschool child with disability**

- Students between the age of 3 and five who experience developmental delay are eligible for this classification
- Age of 3 means the attainment of third birthday
- Age 5 means attainment of age five by the month and day established as the kindergarten entrance cutoff date by the district board of education.
- Students who turn five prior to the cutoff are by age five re evaluated to determine if they meet the criteria for one of the other 13 categories
- Students who turn five after the cutoff are re evaluated by the end of the school year to determine if they meet the criteria of one of the 13 other categories
- Students to be eligible for preschool must need special education
- If a student needs only related services i.e. speech they are not eligible
- The state is moving to using standardized assessment to determine eligibility. They have a number pilot districts in this study
- If a speech and language assessment is one of the assessments used to determine eligibility then the speech language specialist assessment is considered to be one of the two mandated CST evaluations

#### **11. Social maladjustment**

- This classification is not used by any district in New Jersey

- There is no corresponding federal classification
- Therefore there is no reimbursement.
- Students who fall under this category are often classified under another one
- These students have severe behavioral problems

## 12. Specific learning disability (SLD)

- This classification is the one that most students are classified as.
- The state allows two different methods to be used to determine eligibility each district must determine which method it is going to use.
  - The method we use is called severe discrepancy model.
    - We use a statistical formula to determine if there is a severe discrepancy between a student's intellectual score and his academic scores as measured by norm referenced individually administered tests
    - The difference between the two test needs to be at the .05 level of significance
    - That means we are 95% sure the difference is a real difference and not due to statistical error.
    - Using this model one would expect 8% of the school population to be eligible for services
  - The other model that could be used is response to intervention
    - Response to intervention while in the special ed law is really a general ed initiative
    - It is based on the premise that if you use a scientifically based method of instruction one would expect at least 80% of the students to learn the material using a standard method of instruction
    - The 20% that is not learning would be placed in an alternative learning environment or taught in the same class using a more intensive scientifically proven method of instruction
    - Data would be kept and instruction is guided by results of the students progress at all levels
    - Students who are not achieving after tier two interventions are then either placed in a tier three intervention which is even more intensive or referred to the CST for evaluation
    - It appears that states are coming to the understanding that using this model will reduce referrals however there is still a need to determine criteria for entrance into special education
    -
  - Determination of eligibility must include:
    - What is the specific learning disability
    - Relevant behavior noted during observation that substantiates results of individualized standardized testing
    - A statement regarding can this severe discrepancy be Corrected without special education and related services
  - If the problem is due to
    - Environmental (lack of stimulation or experience)

- Cultural or
- Economic Disadvantage
- The student would not be considered eligible under this category
- A student would also not be considered eligible if their difficulty in learning is due to
  - Lack of instruction in reading
  - Lack of instruction in math
  - Limited English proficiency
- For students who score above average on the IQ score their academic test scores are compared to an average IQ (100) not the above average IQ (110 and above).
- To be eligible the discrepancy must be in one of the following areas:
  - Oral expression
  - Listening comprehension
  - Written expression
  - Basic reading skill (phonics)
  - Reading fluency (speed and smoothness)
  - Reading comprehension
  - Mathematics calculation
  - Mathematics problem solving

### **13. Traumatic brain injury**

- This is an acquired injury to the brain caused by
  - External force
  - Or insult to the brain
- Resulting in total or partial functional disability or psychosocial impairment or both
- Requires medical documentation and two CST evaluations

### **13. Visually Impairment**

- An impairment in vision that even with correction adversely affects a student's educational performance
- Besides the two CST evaluations an evaluation by a specialist is required  
Students with visual impairments must be reported to the Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired