

Office of Special Education
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The Special Education Process

Maritime Academy Charter School is committed to providing a continuum of services that offers students with disabilities the opportunity to access the general curriculum in the least restrictive environment. Services are designed in alignment with the Individuals with Disability Act (IDEA 97) and state law (Chapter 14) to meet the needs of Maritime Academy students with disabilities. These services are provided at no cost to students who qualify.

The Special Education Department is committed to supporting the delivery of specially designed instructional strategies and related services as prescribed on an identified students Individualized Education Plan (IEP) with an emphasis on increasing opportunities for students with disabilities to learn and grow with non-disabled peers.

Special education is instruction which is individually prescribed to meet the unique learning strengths and needs of an individual school-ages student with disabilities. The specially designed instruction and related services focus on academics as well as therapeutic needs to help a child overcome his or her difficulties in varied areas of development. These services may be offered in a variety of educational settings, but are required by the IDEA to be delivered in the least restrictive environment.

A student must be evaluated and identified as having a disability and in need of specially designed instructional strategies by a Comprehensive Student Review (CSR) committee to be eligible for special education programs and related services.

Eligibility for Special Education Services

Maritime Academy conducts ongoing Child-Find activities for the purpose of identifying students who may be in need of special education and related services. Additionally, parents and teachers who suspect a child may need services can make a referral to the Comprehensive Student Review (CSR) committee to explore regular education supports and classroom modifications. Multi-disciplinary evaluations follow for those not making sufficient progress with the support of the CSR committee.

Evaluation Process

A multi-disciplinary evaluation consists of information provided by parents and school personnel, classroom observations, a review of records from school or

outside agencies or providers, and assessments by specialists when appropriate (e.g. school psychologist, occupational therapist, physical therapist, speech and language therapist and etc.) The results are summarized in an Evaluation Report (ER) which discusses eligibility, need, and recommendations for specially designed instruction and related services. The report must be completed in 60 school days. An initial evaluation cannot begin without written parent consent.

Individualized Education Plan

If the student is found to be eligible and in need of specially designed instructional strategies through the evaluation process, an IEP meeting is held with team members (parents, school personnel, specialists) to develop the Individual Education Plan. The IEP team determines the instructional program, goals objectives, related services, supports for school personnel, and specially designed instruction to meet the needs of the student. The team must convene in no less than 10 school days and no more than 20 school days from the date of the ER.

Notice of Recommended Education Placement

The completed IEP will be given to the parents with a Notice of Recommended Educational Placement (NOREP). Once the parents have signed their approval of the IEP and returned the approved NOREP to the Special Education Department, the school may proceed with services.

Review Process

IEPs must be reviewed at least annually. This means that the team reconvenes to review the progress of the student on the IEP goals and objectives and makes necessary revisions. The Re-Evaluation occurs every three years, except for students with mental retardation, in which it is every two years. Teams can choose to conduct a review of records if no additional testing is deemed necessary.

Parents can request that an IEP be reviewed at any point during the life of the IEP if they feel changes are warranted. A parent can request a Re-Evaluation at any point in the 2 or 3 year cycle if they feel additional testing is necessary.

Transition Services

Transition services are defined by IDEA as a coordinated set of activities for a student, designated within an outcome-oriented process, to promote movement from school to post-school activities including: post-secondary education/training, employment, and community living (residential, participation, and recreation/leisure). These activities are based on the individual needs of each student, taking into consideration his/her preferences and interests. Students with disabilities have equal access to career education services, including a career

assessment which occurs by 9th grade. That data will assist the IEP team in appropriate transition planning.

Confidentiality of Information

Maritime Academy Charter School maintains records concerning all children enrolled in the school, including students with disabilities. All records are maintained in the strictest confidentiality. Your consent, or consent of an eligible child who has reached the age of majority under State law, must be obtained before personally identifiable information is released, except as permitted under the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). The age of majority in Pennsylvania is 21. Each participating agency must protect the confidentiality of personally identifiable information at collection, storage, disclosure, and destruction stages. One official at each participating agency must assume responsibility for ensuring the confidentiality of any personally identifiable information. Each participating agency must maintain, for public inspection, a current listing of the names and positions of those employees within the agency who have access to personally identifiable information.

For additional information related to student records, the parent can refer to the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).