

Georgetown Independent School District

Special Education
Parent Handbook

Welcome Letter

Dear Parents,

Welcome to Georgetown ISD Special Education! We are excited to serve your child and to help grow them into future leaders and community members. The energy and excitement on the campuses can be felt as soon as you step onto them, our staff has a passion for serving students. While navigating special education services may not be the journey you expected, please know that our teachers, staff, specialists, related service providers, etc. are committed to serving your student and are eager to work with you to provide a quality, individualized experience for your child. To that end, we encourage you to collaborate with your student's educational team and provide feedback. Our teachers and staff are seasoned professionals and creative problem solvers. If there is anything in your child's educational experience that is not working well, let us know. We all want to see your child succeed!

Additionally, Georgetown ISD offers multiple ways for students and families to be engaged in community and school experiences. We offer monthly parent learning community meetings, unified Special Olympics activities, and many other opportunities. This parent handbook is a wealth of information including useful resources, checklists, and important contact information for you as your student goes through their Georgetown ISD educational career. We hope that you find the information helpful in understanding and planning your student's path to learning. Our staff looks forward to meeting and working with you. Please reach out if you have any questions.

All the best,
Dana Johnson
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Parent To-Do Checklist

Looking at the future can be overwhelming now that your family has new information about your student's learning abilities and challenges. We have created this checklist to help guide you in the process. These are very important items that often get overlooked as we think and plan for a student's current educational needs. All of the items listed on this checklist may not apply to every student, but we wanted you to have a comprehensive list to guide you and your child into the future.

- ☐ As soon as possible: Sign up for Texas Medicaid Waivers (if needed). Texas Medicaid Waiver Program interest List
- ☐ If needed, consult a financial advisor, or other specialist for items like a special needs trust or will.
- ☐ Consider creating a Letter of Intent (LOI) to communicate information about your child's needs and vision for the future. The LOI is the instruction manual for future caregivers
- ☐ Early childhood and beyond: Help your child develop self-determination skills by giving them offers of choices, situations to problem solve, and opportunities to self-advocate.
- ☐ Late elementary school: Talk with your child about careers they are interested in.
- ☐ Middle school: Start researching Career and Technology Education courses offered.
- ☐ 8th grade: Decide on a graduation plan for high school and endorsement track that meets your child's long-term goals.
- ☐ Age 14 to 16: Work with school staff to plan for life after graduation, called Transition.
- ☐ Age 14 to 18: Start medical transition, encourage your child to take an active role at doctor's visits and move any savings of more than $2,000 out of your child's name.
- ☐ High School: Sign up with the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) for job training programs and services after high school
- ☐ The year your child turns 17 years old: Get ready to apply for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Medicaid (if needed). Know that once your child turns 18, they become a legal adult in the state of Texas. Seek information on Supported Decision Making Agreements and Guardianship (if needed).
- ☐ In the 3 months before your child's 18th birthday: Put your legal tools in place and apply for SSI or Medicaid (if needed).
- ☐ Age 18: Your child is an adult and makes their own educational decisions. Have Supported Decision Making Agreements and Guardianship in place (if needed).

If you have question, or need help with items on the checklist, please contact:
Sidra Glass - Georgetown ISD Special Education Transition Specialist
Dawn Jennings - Georgetown ISD Special Education Parent Liaison

How This Handbook is Organized

This handbook follows the Child-Centered Special Education Process — from general education intervention and referral to exit from special education services.



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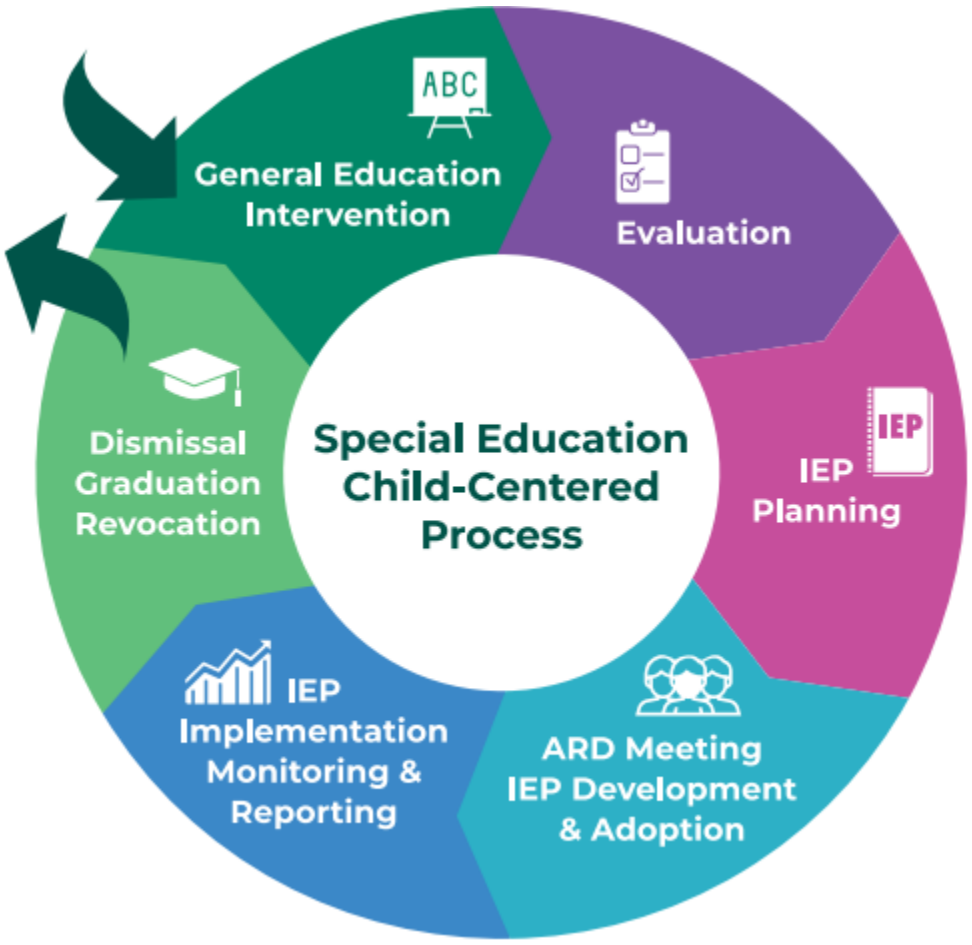
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How Special Education Works





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Overview of the ARD/IEP Process

Each student who receives special education services has an Individualized Education Program or IEP. The IEP Team or, in Texas, the Admission, Review and Dismissal (ARD) Committee, develops and adopts an IEP at least annually. Parents, the student (when appropriate), school professionals, and others (when needed) serve on the committee.

Each year, you and the ARD Committee, **evaluate, plan, develop, implement, monitor and re-evaluate** the IEP. The special education process repeats each year until your child exits special education services. Over time, the broad goal is for your child to close gaps in their performance related to grade-level standards and to work toward post-school goals and, ultimately, independence.

Schools must ensure parents have an opportunity to participate in the planning, discussions and decisions. According to federal special education law, the term “parent” means:

- A biological or adoptive parent of the child
- A foster parent who meets certain criteria
- A guardian, but not the state, if the child is a ward of the state
- A person acting in place of a parent (such as a grandparent or stepparent with whom the child lives, or a person who is legally responsible for the child’s welfare)
- A surrogate parent when no parent can be identified or found after reasonable efforts, or the child is a ward of the state

What is Parent Participation?

The law requires parents to have an opportunity to participate in the IEP Process. This means that, from referral to exit, you’re a valuable member of the team who actively participates in discussions, solutions, and decisions. Some of the ways schools involve parents include:

1. Seeking information and ideas from parents when setting up the meeting date/time and meeting agenda.
2. Considering parent information and ideas when developing the IEP.
3. Sharing drafts of the IEP and new evaluation reports prior to discussion at a meeting.
4. Making someone available to explain your rights as a parent of a child with a disability within the Child-Centered Special Education Process.



123 BASICS

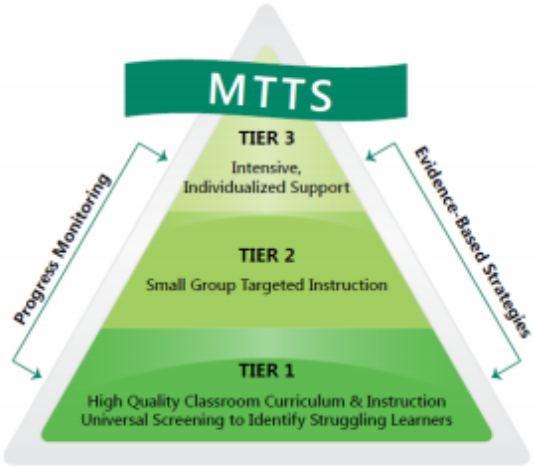
Help Available to All Struggling Learners

Students may struggle in school for a variety of reasons. Most schools use multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) to assist them. MTSS is a framework that focuses on the "whole child." It supports academic growth and achievement as well as behavior, social and emotional needs, and absenteeism.

Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) is an "umbrella" term that includes other multi-tiered systems of support you may know already.

Response to intervention (RtI) focuses on academics and provides increasing levels of support to struggling students.

Positive Behavior Interventions and Support (PBIS) is similar to RtI but focuses on providing tiered supports to students who are struggling at school due to behavioral and social-emotional needs.



Tier 1 is classroom-wide support for all students. Teachers use evidence-based practices to instruct all students. Teachers monitor and assess student performance frequently to gage growth in all academic areas.

Tier 2 is small group instruction on identified or targeted skills. Teaching may focus only on one area such as reading or math.

Tier 3 is intensive, individualized support. Break-out sessions may last longer and are more narrowly focused.

MTSS vary. The framework your school uses may have 4 Tiers instead of 3. Tiers 1-3 may all be general education supports or Tier 3 may be special education.

MTSS is a proactive approach, not a particular curriculum or program.

MTSS and Special Education

The goal of MTSS is to screen all students early and to deliver evidence-based support quickly. It can also help schools and parents identify students who need special education support.

Q: I'm pretty sure my child has a learning disability. How long must my child receive MTSS or other general education intervention before we can consider special education?

A: You may request an evaluation for special education services while your child is receiving general education interventions. Your child does not have to receive tiers of support before a referral for a special education evaluation can be made. Your child can continue to receive general education supports while the evaluation is being conducted. MTSS or other general education supports may not be used to delay or deny a request for a special education evaluation. You do not have to wait. Your child does not have to 'finish the tiers' before a referral.

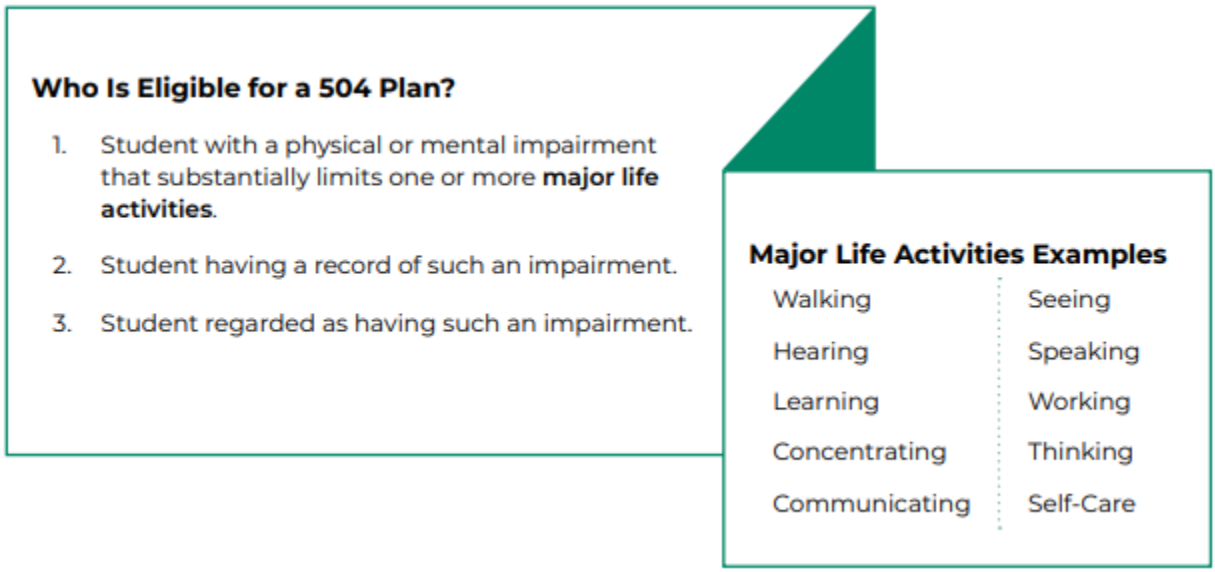
What is a 504 Plan?

The term "504" is shorthand for Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which outlines requirements for public elementary and secondary education. The federal law protects the rights of individuals with disabilities in programs and activities that receive federal funds from the U.S. Department of Education.

Section 504's main emphasis is equal educational opportunity, which is usually accomplished by providing classroom accommodations and equal opportunity to participate in school extracurricular and nonacademic activities.

504 plans are not part of special education so they don't provide individualized instruction like IEPs. They support students in accessing instruction and school activities.

School teams usually create written 504 plans. There are no set rules for what a 504 plan should look like or what it should include.



Referral to Special Education: What Happens If More Is Needed?

Sometimes a student continues to struggle despite interventions in the general education classroom or in spite of Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) and/or Section 504 supports.

Parents or the school may refer for a special education evaluation. With parent input and consent, the school evaluates the student to determine if they have a disability under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Q: Does a referral mean that my child is now in special education?

A: No. A referral is only to gain more information about your child as a learner and to determine whether special education is needed. Special educators must obtain your informed, written consent before beginning an assessment. Similarly, parents may request a child be evaluated for special education, and the school may deny the request. If this happens, the school must provide its reasons for the denial and explain the next steps that are available. This written notice of refusal to test must be given to you 15 school days from receipt of your written request.

Q: How long will a referral take?

A: The school has up to 45 school days from the date it receives your signed, written consent to test and write the evaluation report. After the report has been completed, the team is allowed up to 30 calendar days to schedule the ARD meeting. The ARD committee determines eligibility under IDEA. The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is adopted during the meeting. Services begin within 5 school days after the meeting, unless you waive your 5 days notice and agree for the IEP to start immediately.

Q: What if I change my mind and don't want testing?

A: Consent for initial evaluation is voluntary, and you can revoke consent at any time before the testing is completed. However, if you revoke consent, it is not retroactive. If you refuse consent for testing, the school may want to talk with you about their reasons for testing and its importance for your child’s education.

Q: If my child qualifies for special education, does he or she have to receive those services?

A: No. As a parent, you have the right to decline special education services even after you consent to evaluation and your child is found eligible. Similarly, if your child is receiving special education services, you can revoke your consent at any time, and those services will no longer be provided. If you decide to revoke consent for services, be sure to discuss the consequences with your team beforehand (e.g., removing special education services can have an impact on discipline actions, statewide assessment decisions and graduation plans).



Components of Every Evaluation

The initial evaluation answers three questions: (1) Does my child have a disability? (2) What are my child's strengths and weaknesses? (3) What specially-designed instruction and supports are needed? This information is the foundation upon which the IEP is built.

Evaluations often begin with a planning meeting or what is called a Review of Existing Evaluation Data (REED) meeting. These meetings are often held for initial evaluations and are required for re-evaluations. Your school evaluator will lead this planning meeting with you and the team. The purpose is to review previous evaluations (school and/or clinical), current classroom-based, local, or state assessments, as well as observations and information provided by the team members. The goal of the evaluation plan is to determine the initial scope of, and who might be involved in, the evaluation.

Evaluations by Outside/Nonschool Professionals

If you have evaluation information from other professionals such as a doctor or therapist when your child is referred to special education, the school may start by conducting a REED with you to determine the scope of evaluation needed. Sometimes schools accept outside evaluations to avoid duplicating data. At other times, the school will want its own evaluation. To request confidential information from others, the school must obtain your signed, written consent. All evaluation information is confidential; only people directly involved with your child will see it.

Notice and Consent for Evaluation

Your child's school will provide you with a Notice of Evaluation form, outlining the reasons for testing, areas to be tested, and the tests or evaluation instruments to be used. This helps you understand the information before testing. Then you will be asked to sign a Consent for Evaluation.

Information That Goes into the Evaluation

A team collects evaluation information and writes an evaluation report. The evaluation may include the following:

- Standardized tests and checklists
- Classroom observations and other general education/MTSS data
- Information from parents, teachers, and the student
- Report cards and other assessment data

The Evaluation Team and the Parent's Role

The evaluation plan or referral concern(s) determines which and how many professionals test. Your child's evaluators might be a licensed specialist in school psychology (LSSP), an educational diagnostician, a speech and language pathologist, a physical or occupational therapist, a teacher certified in visual or auditory impairment, or any number of other related service providers.

As a parent, your job will be contributing important information about your child through interviews, checklists, or family/medical history. If prior or outside evaluations have been completed, it is usually very helpful for the parent to provide these, as well.

Requirements

All evaluations must:

- Use more than one measure or assessment.
- Be given in your child's native language or other mode of communication.
- Be technically sound assessment instruments.
- Select and administer tests so as not to be discriminatory on a racial or cultural basis.
- Yield accurate information on what your child knows and can do academically, developmentally, functionally, unless it is not feasible to do so.
- Test in all areas of suspected disability.
- Be used for the purposes for which the measures are valid and reliable.
- Be sufficiently comprehensive to identify all of your child's special education and related service needs.
- Be administered by trained and knowledgeable evaluators.
- Provide relevant information to assist persons in determining the education needs.
- Be given in accordance with any instructions from the provider of the assessment.
- Differentiate between language proficiency and disability.
- Ensure that if an assessment is administered to a child with impaired sensory, manual, or speaking skills, the assessment results accurately reflect the child's aptitude or achievement level or whatever other factors the test purports to measure, rather than reflecting the child's impaired sensory, manual, or speaking skills (unless those are the skills the test purports to measure).

Ways to help with the process:

- Share previous or private evaluation results so tests are not repeated too soon or unnecessarily
- Ask for clarification rather than leaving checklists or questionnaires blank
- Sign a release of information so the school can obtain information from doctors and any private therapists

The Evaluation Report

The professionals on your child's evaluation team will collaborate to create a written report. The report describes your child's strengths and needs, how your child's skills compare with others of the same age or grade level, whether your child demonstrates a disability under IDEA, and what instructional or related services are recommended to help your child. You will receive a copy of the report, and your team will schedule an ARD meeting to formally review the new evaluation data.

It takes time to complete a quality evaluation. Evaluation professionals often spend some time at first getting to know your child and building rapport before beginning the testing. If your child is already in school, the evaluator will work with the classroom teacher to choose testing times that minimize disruption in your child's day. The testing often takes hours to complete. Evaluators frequently break tests into smaller chunks and spread them out over a few days to help your child do his or her best.

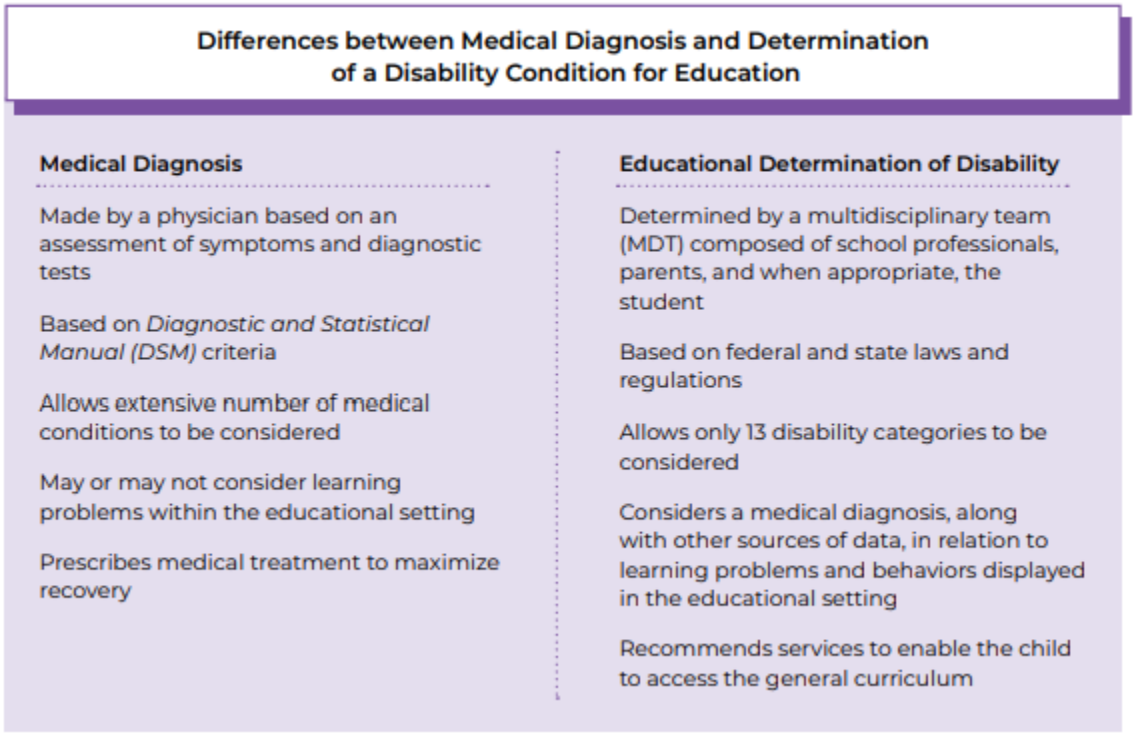
After testing is complete, the evaluator scores and interprets the tests, and writes a report. The report summarizes results and makes recommendations about whether your child demonstrates a disability and what supports might help.

The timetable for the evaluation depends on many things, including the complexity of your child's testing needs, the number of other children in the referral process at the same time, the time of year, and more.

Eligibility for Special Education After the initial evaluation has been completed, the ARD committee will meet formally to decide whether your child is eligible for special education services. To be eligible, the student must (1) have a qualifying disability, and (2) as a result of this disability, require special education services to make progress in the general education curriculum.	
Deaf/Hard of Hearing (DHH)	Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)
Orthopedic Impairment (OI)	Intellectual Disability (ID)
Autism (AU)	Visual Impairment (VI)
Specific Learning Disability (SLD)	Multiple Disabilities (MD)
Deaf/Blindness (DB)	Other Health Impaired (OHI) Includes Attention Deficit Disorders, Epilepsy, Diabetes, etc...
Speech Impairment (SI)	For students ages 3-5: Noncategorical Early Childhood (NCEC)
Emotional Disturbance (ED)	-NCEC: Autism, Intellectual Disability, Specific Learning Disability

Q: My doctor has already diagnosed my child. Is this enough to be eligible for special education services?

A: No. The disability categories recognized by special education law are not the same as specific medical, psychiatric, or psychological diagnoses. Although most conditions or diagnoses fit into one of the special education eligibility categories, a school evaluation has to confirm the presence of a disability under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the impact on your child's school progress. For this reason, a doctor's or other professional's diagnosis does not automatically qualify a student for special education services, even if it is in writing or in the form of a report or prescription.



Private Evaluations

A private evaluation sometimes differs from a school-based evaluation. School evaluations focus on how your child's disability affects progress in the general education curriculum and other educational needs. This does not negate other needs that might be revealed by an outside professional, but the recommendations in the school-based evaluation will be tailored closely to the purposes of furthering the student's education.

Different Evaluations for Different Stages of the Child-Centered Process

Evaluation is a repeating step in the special education process. Each evaluation must meet the requirements listed earlier in this handbook. Each evaluation report must identify a disability qualifying under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

The Full Individual and Initial Evaluation (FIIE)

The first evaluation that takes place as a result of referral to special education is called the "initial evaluation." This evaluation assesses your child in all areas of suspected disability and lays the groundwork for the ARD committee to determine your child's eligibility for services. The initial evaluation also sets the first baseline for goals and monitoring of progress moving forward.

The "Three-Year Re-eval"

Under the law, your child must be re-evaluated at least every three years. The purpose of the re-evaluation is (1) to determine whether your child continues to be eligible for special education, and (2) to take a fresh look at your child's educational needs. The team, including the parent, conducts a Review of Existing Evaluation Data (REED) to study existing records and data and decide whether additional evaluations are needed.

The committee may decide no new evaluation data is needed and your child continues to qualify for special education services. Or, the team may decide a re-evaluation is needed, in which case the planning team will determine which specific assessments are needed. The plan or REED may recommend: (1) evaluation in all current areas; (2) updated evaluation only in specific areas; (3) testing in new areas; or (4) no new formal evaluation. If formal testing is not recommended, the school must notify parents in writing of their right to request testing even though the school did not determine it necessary.

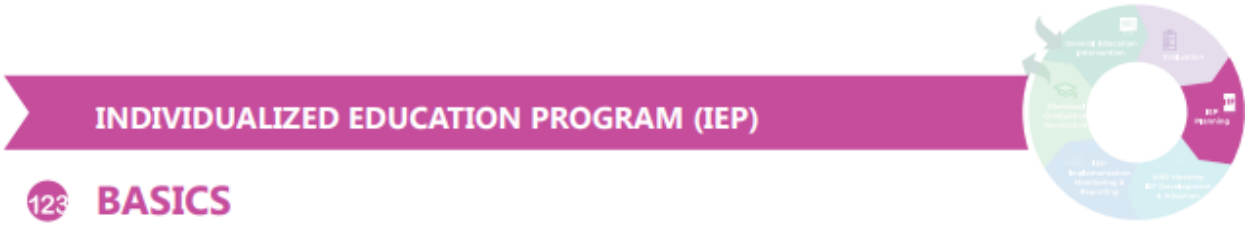
The evaluation team must obtain your written consent to re-evaluate (unless the school can show that it took reasonable measures to get your consent and you did not respond).

Other Situations When Evaluation Might Be Warranted

Evaluation is required at times outside the "3-Year Re-eval:" (1) when your child is considered for dismissal from special education or a specific service (e.g., speech therapy, counseling, other related services) and (2) when the student is graduating under certain graduation options.

In addition, you or the school may request evaluation when additional information may shed light on new or changed circumstances or needs. For example, your child's behavior has become unpredictable and you need answers and ways to help them. You and the team may decide a Functional Behavior Assessment is needed to help develop a behavior plan.

Or, your child is now in 4th grade and struggles with writing. Writing had not previously been an area of concern, but now testing might be helpful in that specific academic area.



What is the IEP?

Once your child is eligible for special education services, the ARD committee decides which services are needed and develops an Individualized Education Program (IEP). The IEP describes the specific services and supports your child needs. It is a written plan that guides all the specialized aspects of your child's instructional day and school experience, and it functions like a contract.

The IEP is a complex document. There are many components, and every IEP is customized to the child and the situation. Therefore, most IEPs require substantial preparation. Even experienced parents and educators can struggle with the details of the IEP. In Texas, the IEP is woven throughout a larger document, the ARD Committee Report.

The IEP answers two main questions:

- What does your child need to learn or do academically?
- What does your child need to learn to function in school? in life?

Q: How long does an IEP last?

A: At the longest, 12 months. The IDEA states: "The committee must review the IEP periodically, but not less frequently than annually, to determine whether the annual goals are being achieved."

Basic Components of Every IEP

Eligibility/Evaluation

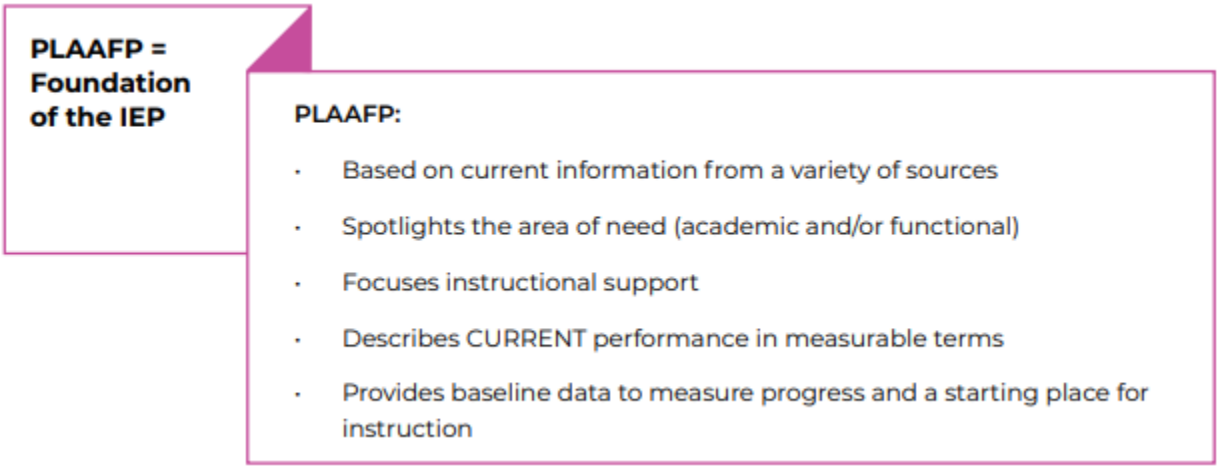
The IEP contains a statement of the student's eligibility for special education (the category of your child's disability and the need for special education), as well as sections detailing the evaluations completed and when the next re-evaluation is due. Eligibility information is usually near the beginning of the document. Information from the Full and Individual Evaluation (FIE) and other data are the basis for recommendations throughout the ARD/IEP report.

Present Level of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP)

PLAAFPs describe what your child can do now or at what level your child is performing in a particular area (e.g., math, social skills, career exploration). PLAAFP statements can be located in various places in the IEP. Often, you will find specific PLAAFPs just before the goal meant to strengthen that particular academic or functional skill.

PLAAFP data become the baseline of where to start when implementing an IEP goal. PLAAFPs describe current performance and behaviors in measurable ways. PLAAFPs should be more than grades, age levels, or standard scores. They should not be subjective or written too general (e.g., the student is "good/bad" at something, "has difficulty," "is a pleasure").

The PLAAFP also describes how your child's disability impacts his or her progress in the general education curriculum.



Annual Goals and Objectives

Annual goals and objectives are the heart of the IEP, as this is where specially designed instruction is found. A goal is designed for a specific skill or competency and is meant to develop the skill from where it is today (the baseline PLAAFP) to where one would like to see it in a year. Goals may address many skills, such as functioning within a grade-level curriculum, engaging in socially appropriate play, developing independent living skills, self-advocating, managing emotions, and more. Objectives, or benchmarks, are smaller steps leading up to reaching an IEP goal. Objectives are required when students take an alternate assessment aligned to alternate achievement standards. They can also be included in any student's IEP to help monitor progress.

Annual Measurable Goal

- The goal connects back to the critical needs identified in the present level of academic or funtional performance (PLAAFP).
- The goal projects expected progress over the next 12 months, or less if short-term objectives or benchmarks are included.

Components of a Standards-Based IEP

TIMEFRAME	CONDITIONS	BEHAVIOR (Performance or Skill)	CRITERION
Amount of Time:	**Resources or Supports:**	**Action that Can Be Measured:**	**Amount of Growth Expected:**
Number of weeks or completion date	With graphic organizer, physical prompts	Point to, comprehends, writes, completes a task	How much, how often, or what standard to demonstrate progress:

Q: If my child is in general education all day, do they still have goals?

A: Yes. All students who receive special education services must have at least one measurable annual goal. The committee must develop the goals from an area of need described in your child's PLAAFP.

Example: In 36 instructional weeks, given a 4th grade story prompt and 30 minutes to write, Sara will write a 3 paragraph essay using transition words in sentences and between paragraphs with 5 or fewer errors in usage.

Note: Your child will learn and be exposed to more than what appears in the IEP. Teachers still teach the course curriculum in addition to IEP goals. The goal is to prioritize the content of your child's IEP so it allows access to the larger school curriculum and experience.

Schedule of Services

The schedule of services lists special education instructional services/support and related services your child receives. The schedule of services shows the start and end dates, frequency, and duration of a service, as well as location (general or special education).

Special education services are provided in a variety of instructional settings. Instructional settings are based on the percentage of time or number of periods that the student receives direct, regularly scheduled special education services as required by the Individual Educational Plan (IEP), and not on the student's disability. Instructional settings include the following options:

- No Instructional Setting
    - When a special education instructional setting is not appropriate, but special services are required, such as speech therapy or special transportation.
- Mainstream
    - This instructional arrangement/setting is for providing special education and related services to a student in the general education classroom. Examples:
        - Accommodations only
        - Consult/Indirect
        - Inclusion
- Resource
    - This instructional arrangement/setting is for providing special education and related services to a student in a special education setting less than 50% of the day.
- Self-Contained
    - This instructional arrangement/setting is for providing special education and related services to a student who is in a self-contained program for 50% or more of the school day. Examples:
        - Early Childhood Special Education/ECSE
        - Integrated Learning Classroom/ILC
        - Behavior Communication Support/BCS
        - Bridges 18+ Transition Program
- Homebound
    - For eligible students who are served at home or hospital bedside. Students served on a homebound or hospital bedside basis are expected to be confined for a minimum of four weeks as documented by a physician.
- Hospital Class
    - For students in a classroom in a hospital facility or an approved residential care and treatment facility not operated by the school district. This includes residential students at the C.O.R.E. Detention Center and the Williamson County Academy.
- State School for Persons with Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities (IDD)
    - For students who currently reside at a state school.
- Residential Care and Treatment Facility
    - For non-school district students who reside in approved care and treatment facilities within school district boundaries, but whose parents do not reside within the school district. This includes students living in licensed foster homes.

Related Services

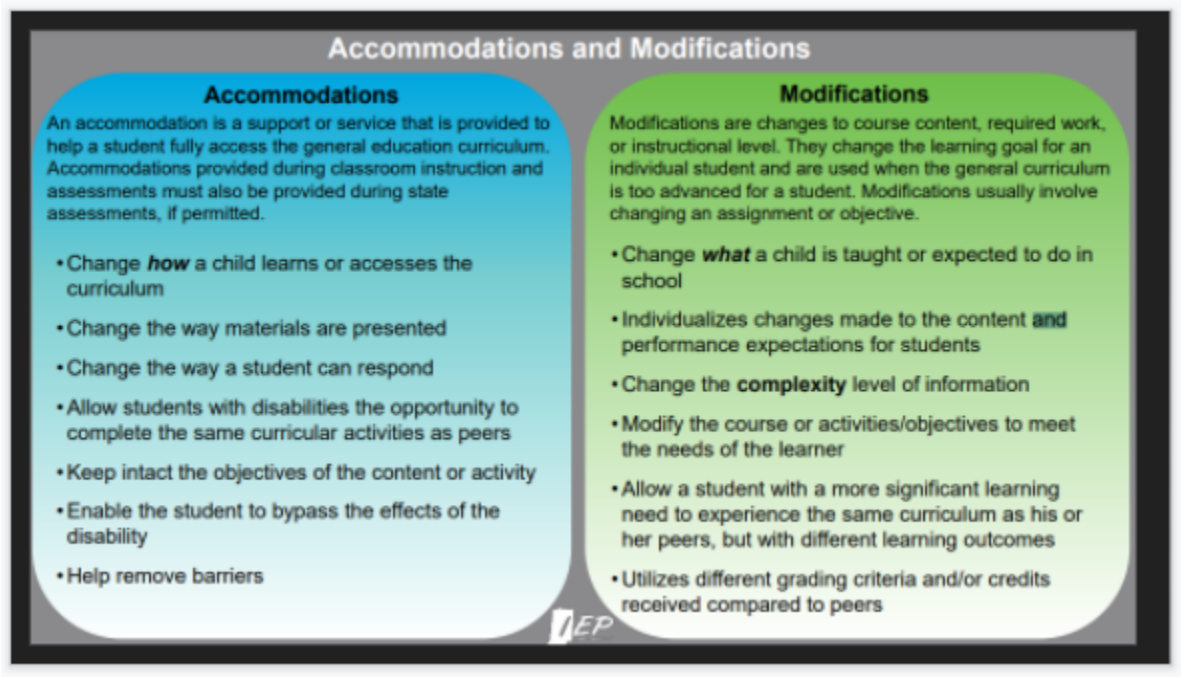
Related services are developmental, corrective and other supportive services a student needs to benefit from special education. Common related services include assistive technology, occupational therapy, counseling, physical therapy, and special transportation. Related services cannot stand alone as the only special education service provided.

Accommodations and Modifications

Know the difference between accommodations and modifications. Though many experienced parents and educators use these terms interchangeably, accommodations and modifications are different from one another.

An **accommodation** is a tool that provides equal access to grade level curriculum to students. It is intended to remove barriers to learning or to help the student work around the effects of his or her disability, but does not reduce learning expectations. Accommodations often indicate **HOW** something is taught.
Example: Large print might be used to accommodate a student's visual impairment while his or her learning expectation does not differ from that of other students.

A **modification** changes the nature of the task or target skill by changing or reducing the concept to be learned. Modifications often indicate **WHAT** is being taught.
Example: In a science class where the grade-level curriculum requires students to describe the function of the parts of a plant, a modification might set the learning expectation for a student with an IEP at identifying the parts without describing the function.



Placement in the Student's LRE (Least Restrictive Environment)

A statement is included in the ARD report about your child's placement in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). "Least restrictive" means to the extent appropriate, children with disabilities are educated with children who are not disabled. To determine a student's LRE, the IEP team first looks at where the student accesses curriculum, the goals, and what supports are needed for progress. The ARD committee is required to consider general education with necessary supports first before justifying something more restrictive.

LRE also includes the campus that would be the typical placement for your child. Schools must provide your child's education as close to your home as possible and, if possible, at the school your child would attend if he or she did not have a disability.

State Assessment

The IEP describes which state assessment your child will take if his or her grade level has required subjects for testing as well as what accommodations or designated supports are needed to access the assessment. All students must participate in state assessment, but in some situations, the ARD committee has the discretion to waive passing as a requirement. Depending on the student's graduation plan and other factors, some students must both participate and pass.







Prior Written Notice (PWN)

After the ARD meeting, the school will give you a summary of proposals and decisions made in the meeting. This is called Prior Written Notice (PWN), because it gives you written notice of actions to be taken before they actually go into effect. The new IEP may not be implemented for five school days after you receive the PWN. This is to ensure parents have time to understand and think about the decisions made in the ARD meeting. You have the right to waive this five-day waiting period, and your team can begin implementing your child's new program the next school day after the ARD meeting. The IEP will document the waiver of the five days if you agree to it.

Other Mandatory IEP Components

When certain special factors are present, other components of the IEP become mandatory. Examples include planning for visual or deaf/hard of hearing services or for a student with autism, specific assistive technology or communication needs.

Transition Planning

Transition planning is preparing for your child's next steps **AFTER** high school as part of the ARD process. Transition planning takes into account your child's:

- Strengths
- Preferences
- Interests
- Needs

Transition planning helps you and your child develop post-secondary goals (what your child wants to do **AFTER** high school) in the areas of:

- Education or training (4 year university, 2 year community college, technical institute or vocational/trade school, military, on-the-job training)
- Employment (competitive employment, supported employment, self-employment, volunteer work)
- Independent living (on their own/with roommates, with parents or other family members, in group home/supportive housing, assisted living facility, etc…)

Your child's post-secondary goals (what they want to do after high school) shape their IEP goals and services to help your child attain their after high school goals.Transition services include:

- Instruction (what is taught in school)
- Related services (occupational therapy, physical therapy, counseling, and transportation, if needed)
- Community experiences
- Employment or post-school adult living objectives
- Learning independent living skills
- Having a functional vocational evaluation
- Courses of study (what classes and pathway they will take in high school)

Transition planning includes support and needs from:

- School
- Family
- Community
- Agencies

Transition planning must also address:

- appropriate opportunities to assist the student in developing decision-making skills
- supports and services that foster the student's independence and self-determination

Think Long-Term

In Texas, transition planning is a mandatory component of the annual ARD/IEP beginning in the school year in which your child turns 14 (nationally, 16).

Although formal documentation of transition planning is not required for students under age 14, it is never too early for parents and educators to think about and discuss the relationship between the student's current IEP and goals for life as an adult.

Planning for your child's transition from high school is really a life-long process. Every ARD meeting you attend should have an eye to the future, to the possibilities for your child, and to what the adult world has to offer and will require.

The ARD committee should begin to think about what skills a student will need for future success, for some students, even as early as kindergarten.

Looking at self-determination skills early can also help to pave the way to a more successful transition when the student is ready to graduate from high school. These skills include:

- Choice-making
- Decision-making
- Problem-solving
- Self-regulation
- Self-awareness

Self-determination skills should be viewed as critical components to a student's well-rounded educational program.

You and your child have very important roles during their transition process. When you have a good understanding of transition, you are better able to support your child in developing and implementing a plan to achieve their goals in adulthood.

Transfer of Rights

When a student who is eligible for special education in Texas turns 18 years old, all rights given to parents under federal and state special education law transfer to the child. Just like any other student the age of 18, this transfer of rights means that your child may:

- Access his/her education records
- Make his/her own educational decisions
- Sign consent for evaluations and placement

While you will continue to receive notices of his/her Admission, Review, and Dismissal Committee (ARDC) meetings, you may only attend the meeting with your child's permission.

In some situations, your child may need additional support in making educational and life decisions. In that case, there are options your child and you, as parent/guardian, may explore. The options range from guardianship to Supported Decision Making Agreements.

Guardianship can be very restrictive regarding your child's ability to make decisions and will take away all of his/her rights to make his/her own decisions.

Supported-decision making agreements are another option. Supported-decision agreements allow your child to make his/her educational and life decisions, while still maintaining your involvement in the educational decisions.

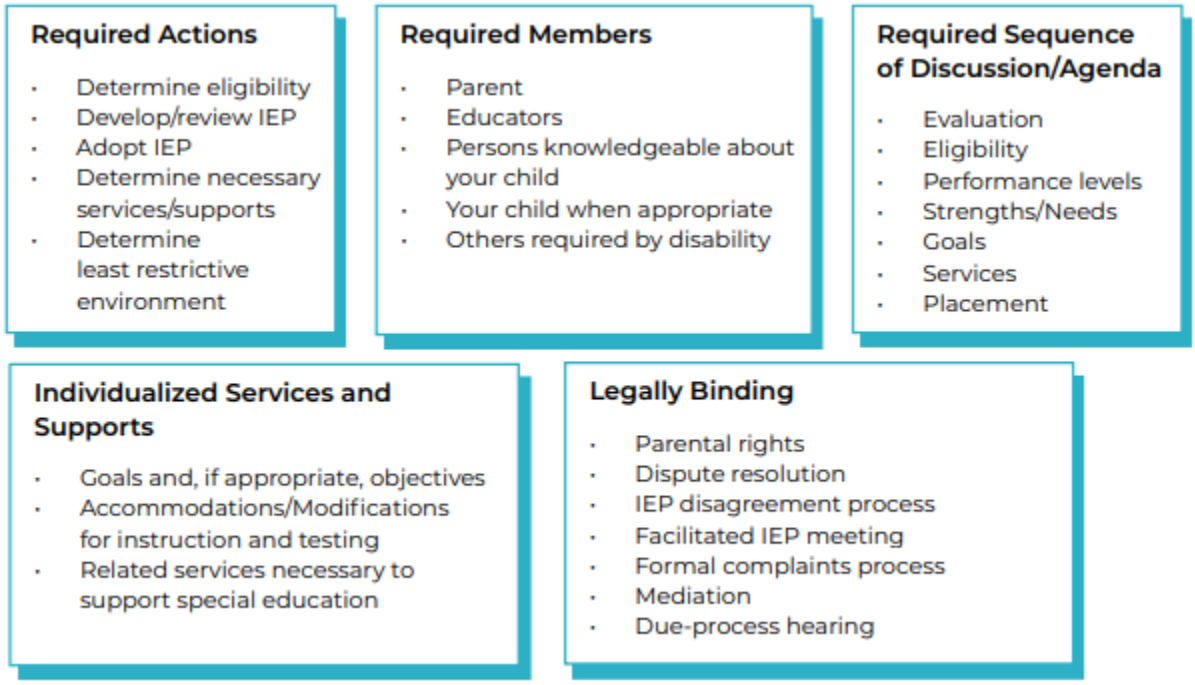
The ARD committee may discuss the transfer of rights at any time, but is required to:

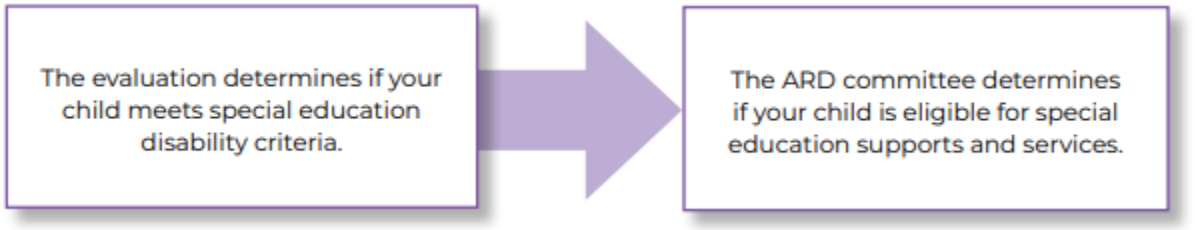
- Explain in your child's individualized education program (IEP) by the time he/she turns 17, that your control over educational decisions will transfer to your child when he/she turns 18
- Notify you and your child, when he/she turns 18, in writing, about the transfer of rights to your child unless someone has been granted guardianship for him/her



What is an ARD meeting? How is it different from other meetings?

Special education services cannot begin until the IEP Team formally adopts the plan. In Texas, this team is referred to as the Admission, Review & Dismissal (ARD) Committee. IEP team or ARD Committee meetings differ from other conferences and meetings you may have with educators. The meeting has a formality due to the required functions or actions set forth in law:





Types of ARD Meetings

Annual ARD

Committee annually reviews and develops ALL components of the IEP. Schools keep track of the annual ‘due date’ and hold the meeting on or before that deadline.

Review ARD

Committee meets within the 12-month period to review and/or revise less-than-the full IEP.

IEP Amendment

After the annual ARD meeting, parents and the school can agree to make certain changes to the IEP without a meeting.

Q: What happens before the meeting?

A: A lot of good planning happens before the meeting. You have an opportunity to give input as the IEP is drafted. Look over the previous IEP and decide what's worked well and what has not. Look for where progress has been made and where not. Talk with teachers and your child about the accommodations-what's helpful and what's not. Decide if the proposed goals address the needs identified in the Present Levels statements. Offer suggestions from your viewpoint-what you've seen at home.

Q: How often do we have to meet?

A: The ARD committee meets at least once a year to develop, review, and revise your child's IEP. If needs or circumstances change, any member of the team, including you or adult student, may request an ARD meeting sooner.

Q: Should my child attend?

A: Whenever appropriate, yes. Your child's age, developmental level, and individual needs dictate the answer to this question. Ideally, as students grow older, parents and school encourage them to become participants, and eventually decision makers in their own planning.

For students aged 14 and older, Texas law requires the team to incorporate the student's input into goal setting and planning. Many students attend or even run their own ARD meetings.

Q: What if I can't be there?

A: The school is required to attempt to find a way for you to participate. Your team will work with you on scheduling the meeting at a time that works. This could also mean arranging for you to participate by phone or video conference. If the school has made a good faith effort to try to make the meeting time work for you, the law allows the school to move forward and hold the ARD meeting in your absence. In this event, you still will receive a copy of the ARD/IEP for your review.

During the Meeting

Who will be there?

REQUIRED MEMBERS	AS NEEDED MEMBERS
Parent/Adult Student/Surrogate Parent	Related Services Providers (OT, PT, Assistive Technology, Counseling)
General Education Teacher who must, to the extent practicable, be an IEP Implementer	LPAC Representative for students with limited English proficiency
Special Education Teacher/Provider (Speech Therapists for students only receiving speech therapy)	CTE Representative for students being considered for or taking Career and Technology Education
School Representative	Teacher of Visual Impairment
Professional who can Interpret the Instructional Implications of evaluation results	Teacher of Auditory Impairment
Student, especially when discussing transition services and postsecondary goals	Agency Representatives likely responsible for transition services

Case Managers

Schools often use a case manager. The case manager, or point person, coordinates different classes and supports and oversees the implementation of special education services. This person is your “go-to” for planning, questions, and concerns. Because, in most cases, all of your child’s teachers cannot be available to attend an ARD meeting, the case manager will gather input or reports to consider during the pre-ARD process and to present at the ARD meeting.

What the Meeting Covers

Special Education law dictates the sequence and topics to be addressed in ARD meetings.



The agenda for an ARD Meeting follows this required sequence:



Concluding the Meeting

How Can I Check "Agree" If I'm Not 100% Sure?

As the last step, parents and the school representative indicate whether they have reached agreement about the school's proposed IEP.

This mutual agreement is called consensus. Consensus is not always 100% agreement, and it is not voting 'yes' or 'no.' Instead, agreement by consensus is reached when you can support the plan, even though you have varying degrees of enthusiasm.

The team can implement the supports about which you feel confident, while simultaneously working on unresolved items.

If you formally disagree with elements of the IEP, this triggers a number of procedures designed to allow for new information to be gathered and another ARD meeting to be scheduled. Your child's old plan remains in place during the interim.

Q: When do services begin?

A: You may agree with the IEP, but want the five-day wait period before the services start to think about the recommendations. In most situations, parents agree with the proposed IEP, sign right away, and waive the five-day waiting period, so the child may begin receiving the new services as soon as possible.

Q: Can the ARD/IEP report be changed after the meeting?

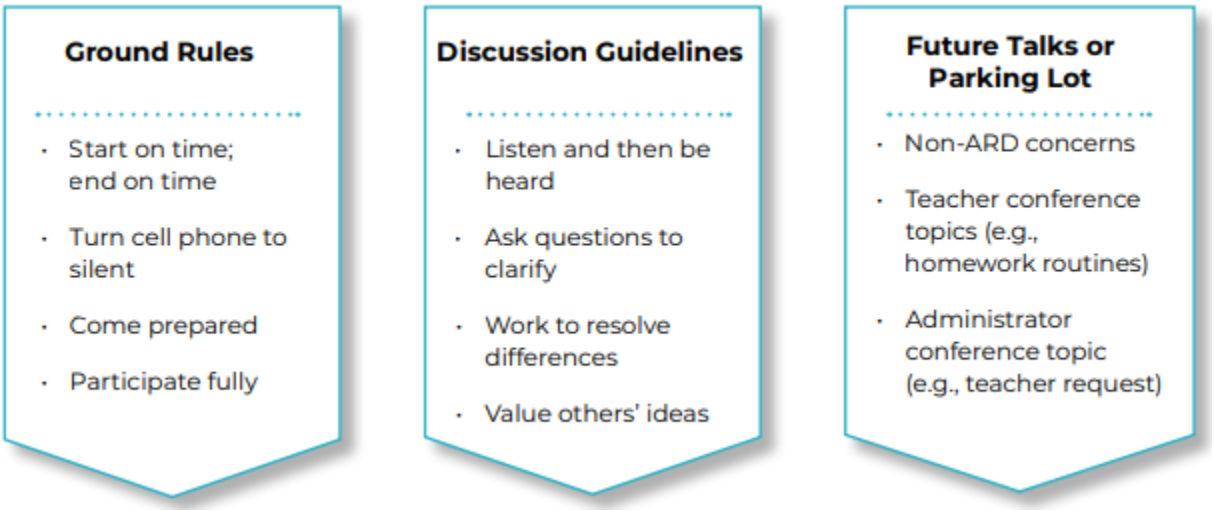
A: No. Changes must be made by holding another ARD meeting or through an IEP Amendment.

TIPS for ARD Meetings

- Share what you see your child doing at home or when completing homework.
- Be open to listening to other ideas you may not have thought of. The best decisions come when all ideas and information are on the table.
- Don't surprise your team with brand-new issues. The school wants to act on information you contribute, and in some instances, may not be able to complete the meeting or implement new plans for your child without time to prepare.
- If you want to record an ARD meeting, notify the school of your plans in advance as a courtesy. Schools usually record the meeting as well when the parent is recording.
- If you plan to invite an attorney, inform the team as the school may wish to invite legal counsel as well. Giving notice prevents a meeting from being canceled or rescheduled.

Time Constraints for ARD Meetings

- Scheduling a meeting with multiple professionals is usually challenging for the school. Administrators may be limited in meeting space or finding times that overlap with teachers' conference periods. Sometimes service providers work on more than one campus. Each member of your child's team serves multiple students (sometimes dozens), so their instructional or student service demands might also create some inflexibility in the school's ability to schedule a meeting entirely based on a parent's needs or preferences.
- Because of the ARD meeting's unique features, this is not the meeting for a lot of extraneous information. Bear in mind (1) the ARD meeting has to accomplish a set agenda, (2) find common time for your instructional team to be away from students, and (3) the ARD documentation has to satisfy many technical requirements.
- Because of these constraints, straying too far off topic is usually discouraged. Redirection to the agenda or the use of Discussion Guidelines or Future Talks chart is not meant to convey a non-child-centered attitude or lack of caring for your child.





At this point, the plan is complete and has been adopted by the team. The specifics of the IEP are playing out. Your child is learning skills and curriculum with the supports needed in the environments conducive to success.

Monitoring Your Child's Progress

In addition to the general report cards all students receive, you receive IEP progress reports showing how your child is performing on each goal. Tracking your child's progress along the way is an essential part of the IEP process. Goals are designed as a target for mastery that will come after a year's worth of work. However, no matter how well thought out, the time a student needs to reach a goal is usually an educated guess. In reality, all students experience plateaus and growth spurts, and run into roadblocks. The IEP process takes all of this into account and accommodates the natural unpredictability of student growth by building in a monitoring system connected to your child's IEP goals.

Progress must be reported in the same manner as the goal is measured. For example, if the goal is for the student to accomplish a task with only one prompt, then the progress report should indicate how many prompts the student currently requires from the teachers and other staff. Saying progress is "being made" or "continuing" is not enough.

Q: How can I know how my child is doing between report cards and progress reports?

A: There are many less formal ways to monitor progress. You can get a feel for how your child is doing in school by paying attention to grades on assignments or tests, listening to what your child talks about in his or her day or classes, and by observing his or her demeanor. And, of course, you can contact your child's teacher(s) and discuss your child's progress in meeting goals.

Homework can serve as a progress monitoring tool. You can observe how your child interacts with it:

- Is it too easy or too difficult?
- Is there a struggle with one concept, skill, or type of task?
- Is your child able to complete it in the expected amount of time?
- Is homework a battle? If yes, why? How could it improve?

The answers to these questions can reveal a lot about your child's instructional level, organizational skills, and emotional maturity. Give feedback to teachers if homework issues seem unusual. Use homework as a communication tool between home and school.

What If Progress Isn't What We Expect?

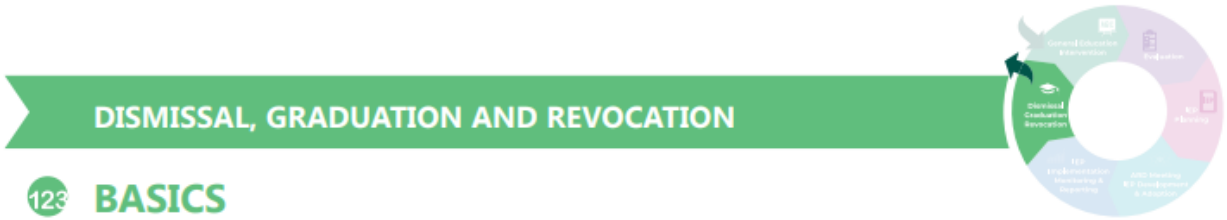
Student progress on IEP goals may go faster or slower than anticipated. Unexpected progress in either direction usually warrants a team conversation to determine next steps.

Clear progress on IEP goals probably means the supports in place are working. As soon as your child masters a goal, the team should discuss where to go next. The team could increase the difficulty or rigor, move on to next steps in a sequence, or add goals to the IEP.

If your child's progress isn't proceeding as expected, the team should discuss whether different, or additional, strategies and supports might be appropriate.

If progress isn't as you expect...		
Find Out What the IEP Implementation Looks Like:	**Check on Accommodations, Modifications, and Goals:**	**Consider Evaluation (Formal or Informal)**
Ask to see how teachers document the provision of IEP services (e.g., in-class support). Ask to see examples of modified tests, graphic organizers, and other accommodations. Ask to see service logs, such as for speech therapy, to make sure your child is receiving the amount of services outlined in the IEP.	Ask whether accommodations are working and whether some need to be deleted or added at the next meeting. Talk with teachers about how they are modifying the curriculum. Talk with teachers about how IEP goals addressing skill deficits are provided. Who is working on the goal? When? Ask for evidence the IEP has been implemented.	Consider any new behaviors. Inform teachers of changes at home impacting performance or behavior. Ask whether a Functional Behavior Assessment and/or or Behavior Intervention Plan might help. Consider testing. Talk with teachers or evaluation specialist about whether new evaluation data might be informative.

If you believe your child has mastered or is approaching mastery of the goals, ask your team for a conversation about the next round of planning. If you see mastery at home but your team does not see mastery at school, ask questions about what's being measured. The teacher may be waiting for a higher frequency of success on assignments, responses in classes, or assessment. Or team members are measuring success by completion of more steps than you observed at home. The reverse can happen as well, where your school team reports your child is ready to move on, but you don't see the same level of mastery at home. Either way, a clarifying discussion to be sure you and the teachers are using the same standards is important.



Because special education is designed individually for each child, the length of time your child receives services is also based on his or her unique needs. At each ARD meeting, the team reconsiders whether the student is a “child with a disability” as defined by IDEA and as a result of the disability, the child continues to need special education and related services.

This means, your child may qualify for services through high school graduation. It could also mean that after intervention, support and growth, your child no longer has the same need for special education and does not qualify for services. The ongoing presence of a disability alone may not be enough for a child to continue qualifying for services. The presence of a disability must be accompanied by a need for special education and/or related services.

Special education “ends” in one of three ways:

1. Your child may be dismissed from special education if the need for specially designed instruction is no longer present.
2. Your child meets the requirements for graduation.
3. You or your adult child revokes consent for the school to provide special education.

Dismissal

Over time, some children gain the skills and competencies they need to close the gaps between their performance and grade-level standards.

If your child is successfully accessing the general curriculum with less and less special education support, dismissal may be an option. Your team will convene an ARD meeting with the purpose of considering dismissal from special education.

Because your child may still have a disability, but no longer needs specially designed instruction, he or she may be eligible for general education interventions or supports, such as Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) or 504 supports and accommodations.

Q: What if my child is not successful after dismissal?

A: Dismissal from special education does not rule out the opportunity to receive special education services again if your child needs them. If your child is struggling and general education supports are not enough, you or staff can refer your child back to special education. If the time between dismissal and a new referral is short, your child’s original eligibility or evaluation information may be used, thus avoiding the need to start from scratch and go through the entire evaluation process.

If you don't think your child should be dismissed from special education or a related service, such as occupational therapy:

- Ask what has led the team to consider dismissal.
- Ask questions to understand the data behind the team's confidence that your child is ready to navigate school without special education instruction, accommodations, modifications, or related services.
- Compare your observations of how your child is doing with those of your school team.
- Share your perceptions or data, or private provider data, that suggests your child still needs support.
- Ask your team (and your child) about the extent to which your child is actually relying on the supports in place.
- Ask your child what is needed to make progress in school.
- Ask what general education supports might be available, such as accommodations under a 504 Plan once special education supports are removed.

Graduation

All students are eligible to earn a diploma after completing graduation requirements. These requirements include credits and assessments.

- Credits can be earned by taking classes and/or showing mastery of the curriculum.
- Assessments must be completed through End of Course exams, called EOCs.

Texas offers a number of different pathways to graduate, depending on student goals and career interests, but the basic requirements of credits and assessments apply to all. Each high school offers a variety of classes aligned to these pathways. Your child's ARD committee can make decisions about supports such as accommodations or modifications in their classes, and whether your child is eligible to take an alternate assessment. Your child's ARD committee can also determine if she or he will be required to pass the assessment in order to graduate.

What can parents do?

- Participate in transition service discussions with your team(s) long before high school. ARD meetings in eighth grade usually begin the formal documentation of such discussions. But, you may need to plan your child's education, with his or her interests and abilities in mind, beginning much earlier. You may need to get your child placed on wait lists for adult agency services at a very early age to receive services as an adult.
- Ask how decisions made in early grades impact graduation and adult life options.
- Use your aspirations for your child and your child's career assessments and interest inventories to help develop an IEP with quality goals and activities for transition planning.
- Be familiar with your child's personal graduation plan (PGP) when talking with your team about IEP development, course selection, and other high school curriculum options.

18+ Services

Most students with disabilities complete their graduation requirements in 4 years and are no longer eligible for special education beyond high school. However, if your child received modified curriculum in any classes for graduation credit, he or she may be eligible for continued special education services after completing credits and assessments. Services for this population of adult students (often referred to as "18+" services) are geared toward the student's transition from high school to adult life. Instead of focusing on grade level curriculum, which the student has already completed, these services focus on the domains of adult life: employment, lifelong learning, community access, and independent living.

The ARD/IEP process is the same for students receiving 18+ services as it is during the K-12 years; however the emphasis of 18+ programming is on preparing students and their families to put the adult schedule in place, with supports that will be sustainable after the student leaves the school setting. While a student may be eligible for services through age 22, it can be helpful to exit before eligibility ends to be sure their schedule and supports are working. Students who are eligible to continue for services beyond meeting graduation requirements are also eligible to return for services after receiving a diploma and exiting.

Q: If my child goes on to receive special education services after completing the 12th grade, will he or she still get to graduate with classmates?

A: Yes and No. Students continuing to receive special education services after completing course requirements, or 4 years in high school, do not officially graduate with their class, but they may participate in graduation activities and ceremonies with their class. They will receive a certificate of attendance instead of a diploma at the graduation ceremony. These students will really graduate and receive their diplomas when IEP requirements have been completed.

Revocation of Consent

Parents have the right to revoke consent for special education services at any point. In this way, you have the power to unilaterally "end" special education for your child. Before taking this route, be sure to have a good understanding of all possible consequences.

Eligibility for special education provides supports for instructional and behavioral needs, protection in disciplinary situations, flexibility for passing standards, statewide assessment, graduation, and more. Be aware your revocation of consent for services will remove any special program design and will hold your child accountable for all requirements of general ed students.

If you are thinking about removing your child from special education:

1. Request a conference to discuss the consequences of your decision.
2. Discuss the idea with your child; talk about what school would look like without an IEP.
3. Put your request in writing.
4. Expect to receive a written explanation or notice of the consequences of a revocation of consent for special education.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



ACRONYMS

504	Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act	**LRE**	Least Restrictive Environment
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act	**LSSP**	Licensed Specialist in School Psychology
AI	Auditory Impairment	**MD**	Multiple Disabilities
ARD	Admission, Review and Dismissal	**MTTS**	Multi-Tiered Systems of Support
ARDC	Admission, Review and Dismissal Committee	**OHI**	Other Health Impairment
AU	Autism	**OH**	Orthopedic Impairment
BIL	Bilingual Education	**OSEP**	Office of Special Programs, U.S. Department of Education
BIP	Behavior Intervention Plan	**OT**	Occupational Therapy/Therapist
CTE	Career and Technology Education	**PBIS**	Positive Behavior Intervention & Supports
DB	Deaf Blindness	**PGP**	Personal Graduation Plan
DPH	Due Process Hearing	**PLAAFP**	Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance
ECI	Early Childhood Intervention	**PT**	Physical Therapy/Therapist
ED	Emotional Disturbance	**PWN**	Prior Written Notice
Ed Diag	Educational Diagnostician	**REED**	Review of Existing Evaluation Data
ESC	Education Service Centers	**RTI**	Response to Intervention
ESL	English as a Second Language	**SI**	Speech Impairment
FAPE	Free Appropriate Public Education	**SLD**	Specific Learning Disability
FBA	Functional Behavior Assessment	**SLP**	Speech Language Pathologist
FIE	Full and Individual Evaluation	**SOP**	Summary of Performance
FIIE	Full and Individual Initial Evaluation	**STAAR**	State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness
FIEP	Facilitated Individualized Education Program	**TAC**	Texas Administrative Code (State Board of Education and Commissioner's Rules)
ID	Intellectual Disability	**TBI**	Traumatic Brain Injury
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act	**TEA**	Texas Education Agency
IEE	Individual Educational Evaluation	**TEC**	Texas Education Code (State Laws)
IEP	Individualized Education Program	**TEKS**	Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills
LEA	Local Education Agency (Districts and Charters)	**TSBVI**	Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired
LF	Legal Framework	**TSD**	Texas School for the Deaf
LPAC	Limited Proficiency Assessment Committee	**USDE**	United States Department of Education

Home and School Communication

Between ARD meetings or planning sessions, the goal for the adults is to settle into a communication system that works to keep parents and teachers updated on progress and alert to issues that might come up along the way.

Why teacher communication sometimes seems short

There are some natural constraints in teachers' abilities to initiate or respond to parent communications. Both the quantity and level of detail in parent–teacher communication vary significantly, depending on the student's age, needs, and ability to participate in (or take over) communication with professionals. Teachers use different communication systems, ranging from a daily notebook to an occasional e-mail, phone call or class website. Most teachers balance three communication priorities:

1. Helping important information get home so parents are informed
2. Encouraging students to learn to manage their own communication needs as growing self-advocates
3. Attending to the communication needs of all students and families

Ways to make communication easier

Find out your child's teachers' preferred mode of communication and conference time. Most teachers do not have the ability to check email during the day when working with students. Likewise, their ability to make phone calls or meet for a conference is usually limited to a conference period or before/after school. You can make it easier for your teacher to respond by:

- Trying to accommodate her or his conference time for meetings or phone calls
- Email ahead, when possible (sometimes it's not), so as to not require a response immediately
- Call ahead to schedule longer meetings

Use the chain of command

If you need additional information or support, or you are uncomfortable bringing an issue to your child's team, consider reaching out to the next level of administration. Students receiving special education services have access to two different chains of command, as a parent, you can call:

- A campus administrator (such as a principal/ assistant principal)
- A special education administrator (such as a coordinator or other central office administrator).

Special Education's Legal Model

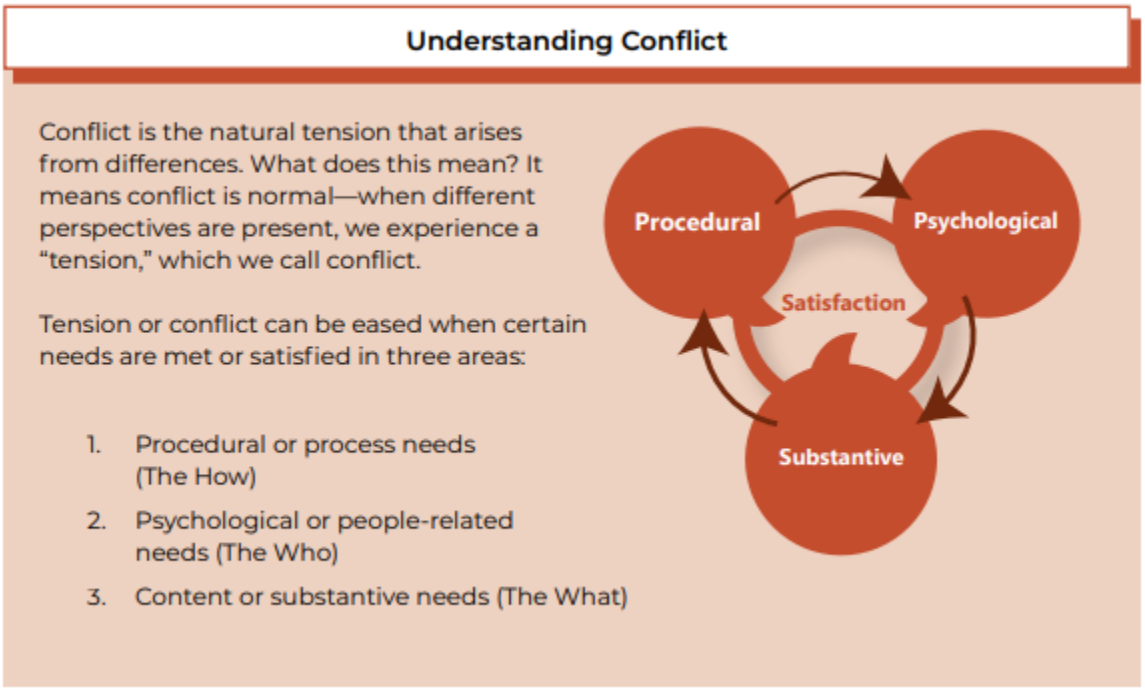
Special education was created originally by federal legislation in the 1970s. Since then, it has continued to develop with our understanding of disability, equal opportunity, and best practices in education. Today, special education is governed by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), as well as by the many federal regulations, state laws, and court cases that expand on the details in the federal statute.

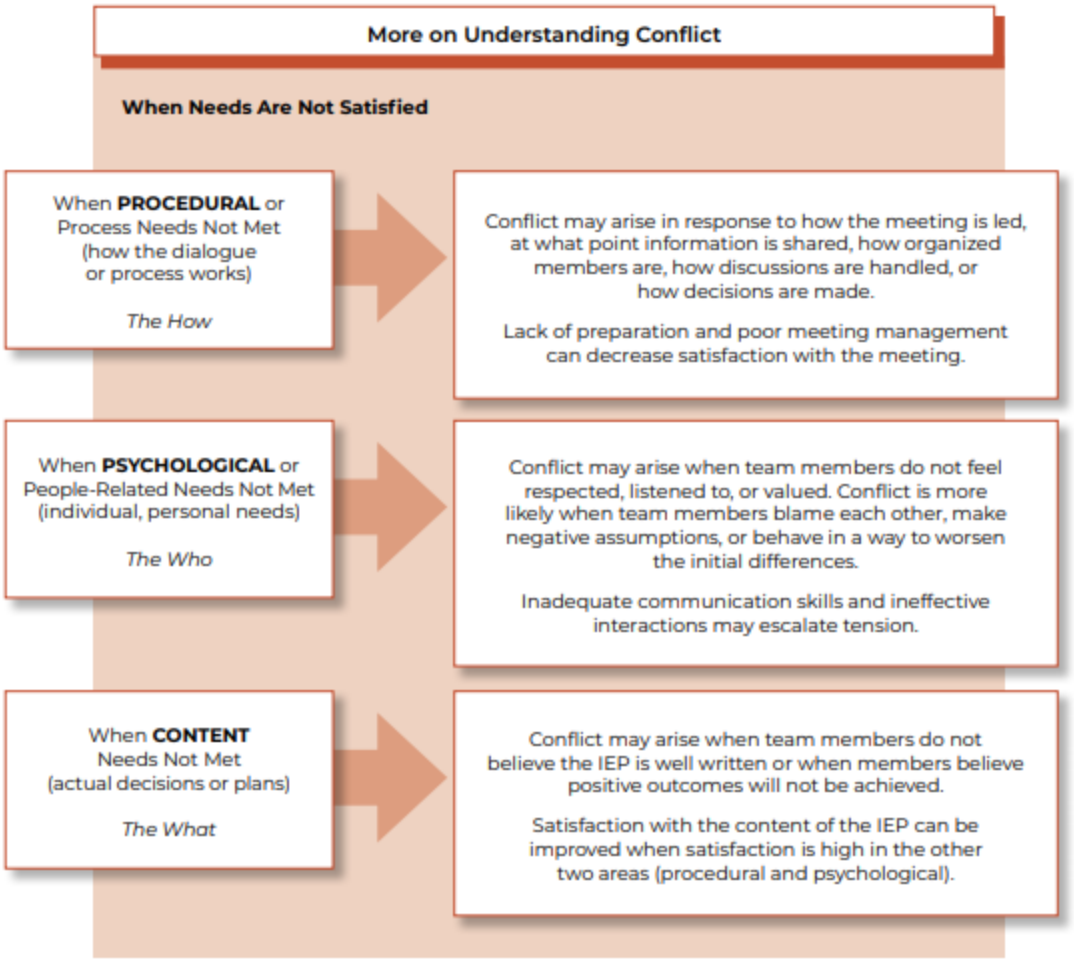
IDEA provides for many parent and student rights, including the right to lodge complaints and to file lawsuits with state education agencies and in court. Sometimes the dispute resolution mechanisms found in IDEA, including litigation, provide the only way to resolve special education disagreements.

Pitfalls of Special Education's Legal Model

Litigation (or threatened litigation) is expensive and time intensive. Central office administrators, attorneys, and advocates, who are not involved in the day-to-day activities of the school, may come in to speak for the school or families. Decisions are made by education agency staff members, hearing officers, and judges who are even farther removed from the school and the child.

Many special education conflicts can be resolved using less formal and less legal approaches. First, parents and educators need to understand conflict.





Conflict Reduction and Prevention

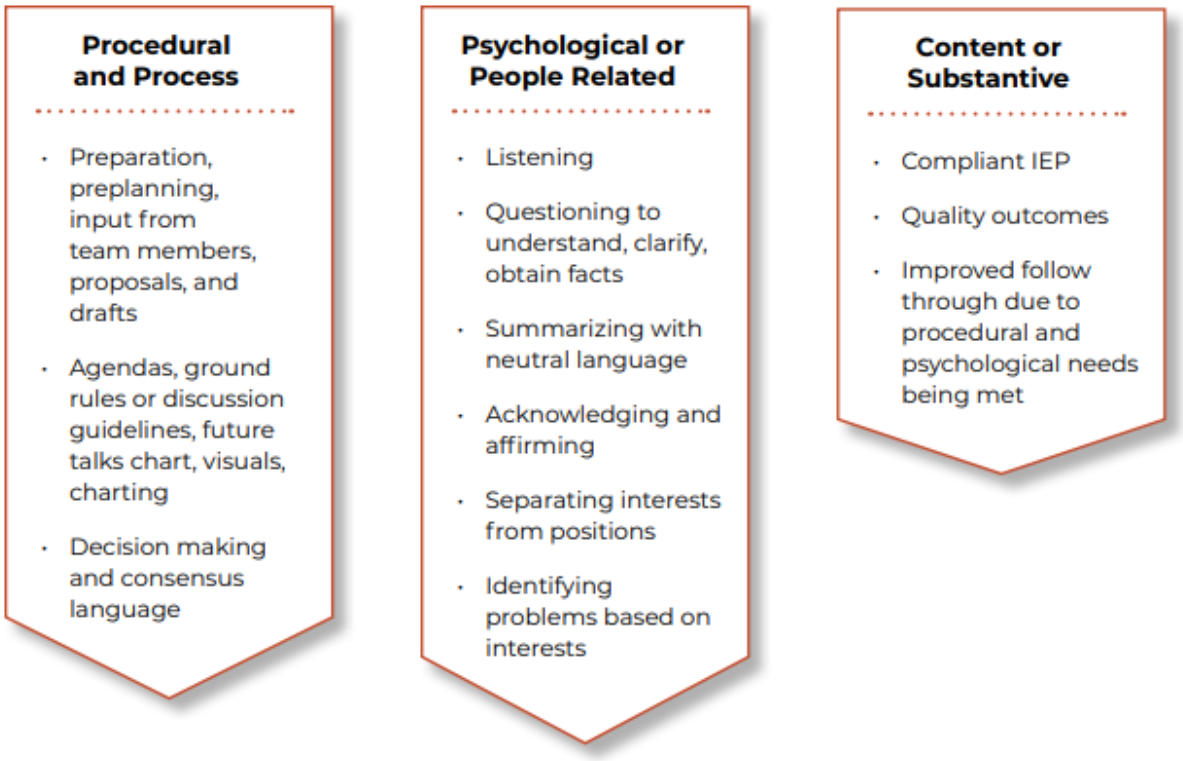
There are many options for “soft” dispute resolution (non-legal approaches). These soft options include:

- the routine use of IEP facilitation and skills before, during, and after the ARD/IEP meeting at the campus level;
- facilitated meetings with a more neutral facilitator if agreed to by parent and school; and
- facilitated ARD meetings with an independent facilitator as offered by the Texas Education Agency (TEA).

What is facilitation?

Facilitation means to make things easier. Facilitation skills and techniques help teams work better together. Sometimes, all members of the team are trained in meeting management, communication, problem solving, and decision making. Any team member can use these strategies to move the group toward collaboration. Other times, a facilitator outside the team joins the meeting to help increase the team’s effectiveness.

Using facilitation techniques in meetings and conversations enriches the dialogue around differences, solutions, and implementation AND can serve as a powerful preventive against escalating conflict.



Know whether you're advocating for something that is a legal right, a best practice, or something else. Different problems call for different types of parental advocacy.

If you are advocating for something compliance-oriented

If you have concerns about a compliance-oriented issue, advocating from a legal perspective may be helpful (e.g., holding your team to a timeline, maintaining decisions be based on data, questioning changes of placement without full ARD committee discussion, etc.).

If you are advocating for something that is not required by law

If your child's special education program is already legally compliant, and you are advocating for something different, additional, or more individualized, consider using an interest-based approach. Help the team understand the "why" (or interest) behind your request (the "what" or position) why you are advocating for a particular thing, service or placement. Ask questions to try to understand the "why" behind the ideas presented by other team members. Brainstorm ways to meet the interests of the group. This type of problem solving opens up options and solutions that possibly neither you, nor the other team members, had previously considered.

Problem Solving: Legal Approach vs. Interests-Based Approach	
Legal-Based Approach to Problem Solving	**Interests-Based Approach to Problem Solving**
• Express disagreement with ARD/IEP meeting recommendations in writing. • Accept the offer to recess and reconvene the meeting when disagreeing with the IEP. • Request an independent facilitator. • Request mediation. • File a complaint. • Request a due process hearing.	• Listen with intent to understand. • Ask questions to open up the discussion or solicit facts, feelings, thoughts, wants, and needs. • Identify the reason(s) behind a request. • Combine the interests into a problem statement. • Brainstorm possible solutions. • Compare possible solutions against a criteria. • Accept that consensus allows a range of agreement, from being fully, totally in agreement to "can live with the idea; can support with reservations."

COLLABORATIVE STRATEGIES

- If you sense dissatisfaction (your own or someone else's) in a conversation or a meeting, try to identify where it is coming from.
    - Is it dissatisfaction with the process?
    - Are you or a teammate feeling unheard?
    - Is someone not contributing?
    - Does the team seem to be talking about the wrong issue or only part of the problem?

Pinpointing where your uneasiness comes from allows you to address it.

To improve the process, talk openly with your team about things that will help the process be more effective for you.

While special educators certainly accept sticking to technical requirements as part of their job, this is generally not the aspect of their profession that excites them the most. Most educators prefer working with your child, planning lessons, and taking advantage of teachable moments.

When a school team senses a legal dispute brewing, often the response is to begin to pay extra attention to technical compliance and to take fewer opportunities to think outside the box, take risks, or approach a situation creatively or without layers of approval. Sometimes, depending on the personalities involved, educators may yield to pressure from adversarial parents-even if it is against their better professional judgment.

School teams strive to keep conflict with parents from impacting how they serve students. Parents and other team members should be mindful of when their team seems to shift focus. If the shift is primarily to avoid conflict or escalating conflict, the team is no longer making decisions based on the student's needs.

Resources

Parent

Texas Partners Resource Network
prntexas.org

Texas Project FIRST
texasprojectfirst.org
Toll Free: (800) 866-4726

Parent Companion — First Five Year
parentcompanion.org
A guide for Texas parents and caregivers of children with diagnosed or suspected disabilities from birth through 5 years of age. You are not alone. We can help.

Texas Parent to Parent
txp2p.org
Toll Free: (866) 896-6001

National Parent Center on Transition and Employment (PACER)
pacer.org/transition

Centers for Independent Living
txsilc.org

The Arc Capital Area
thearc.org
For people with intellectual and developmental disabilities

State

IDEA 2004 Legal Framework
framework.esc18.net
A website with ALL laws, regulations, rules and resources for special education

Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS)
tea.texas.gov
State standards for what Texas students should know and be able to do

SPEDTex, the Texas Special Education Information Center
spedtex.org
(855) 773-3839
Resource to inform and support parents, teachers and anyone committed to the success of children with disabilities

Texas Statewide Leadership for Autism Training (TSLAT) at Education Service Center, Region 13
txautism.net

Autism Society of Texas
texasautismsociety.org

Texas Association of the Deaf
txad.org

Behavior/Social Emotional at Education Service Center, Region 13
www4.esc13.net/behavior

Texas Transition
transitionintexas.org
Texas Transition & Employment Guide

Texas Education Agency (TEA)
tea.texas.gov
Various webpages on Special Education and Special Education Dispute Resolution Processes

Response to Intervention (RtI)
tea.texas.gov
Multi-tiered approach for struggling learners

Special Education, Facilitating IEPs (FIEP) at Education Service Center, Region 13
www4.esc13.net/fiep
IEP Facilitation or FIEP website in Livebinder.com
tinyurl.com/IEP-Facilitation

Progress in the General Curriculum (PGC)
https://projects.esc20.net/page/pgc.
Parents
Region 20 in collaboration with Region 4
Parents: Featured Resources

Learning Disabilities Association of Texas
Ldatx.org

Texas Association for Parents of Children with Visual Impairments
afb.org

Texas Workforce Solutions-Vocational Rehabilitation
Twc.state.tx.us/partners/programs-peopledisabilities

Texas Health & Human Services Commission (HHSC)
hhs.texas.gov

Navigate Life Texas
navigatelifetexas.org

Texas Workforce Commission (TWC)
Vocational Rehabilitation Services supports people with disabilities to prepare for, obtain, maintain employment by providing a range of services based on an individual's employment goals.
https://twc.texas.gov

Bluebonnet Trails Community Services (BTCS)
Provides services to adults with serious mental illness, to children and adolescents with serious mental illness or emotional disorders, autism or pervasive developmental disorders, to persons with developmental disabilities, and to infancy and toddlers with developmental delays. http://bbtrails.org

Easterseals
Changes the way the world defines and views disabilities by making profound, positive differences in people's lives every day. www.easterseals.com/centraltx/

Social Security Administration (SSA)
Provides monthly payments to adults with a disability who have income and resources below specific financial limits. www.ssa.gov

A Resource Center for Independent Living (ARCIL)
Dedicated to the empowerment of persons with disabilities to achieve maximum independence and equal community access. http://arcilinc.org

Texas Guardianship Association
The Texas Guardianship Association gives training in the basics and practices of guardianship. It provides information about guardianship in Texas. http://texasguardianship.org/about/

2-1-1 Texas Information and Referral Network
This site has information about local services, programs, and agencies.
https://www.211texas.org/

Disability Rights Texas
Disability Rights Texas is the federally designated legal protection and advocacy agency (P&A) for people with disabilities in Texas. You can contact the local office for help.
http://www.disabilityrightstx.org/

Directory of Community Resources in Texas
http://disabilityresources.tamu.edu/

Special Olympics Texas
www.sotx.org/get-involved/families/adult-transition/

Legal Hotline for Texans
The Legal Hotline for Texans answers questions in many areas of law. It includes but is not limited to consumer matters, housing and public benefits, wills and probate, guardianship, taxes, and personal injury. The hotline is free of charge.
http://texaslawhelp.org/resource/alternatives-to-guardianship?ref=DLLlx

Transition Planning

What is included in transition planning?	What does it mean for me and for my child?	Parent and Student Checklist
Student and Parent Involvement - *You and your child should be involved in the transition planning process. Your child must be invited to any ARD meeting where transition will be discussed.*	Helps your child learn self-advocacy skills. What role will your child play in their ARD meeting? If your child does not attend the ARD, how will they contribute to planning?	***Transition to Adulthood*** ❑ Obtain a copy of the Texas Transition & Employment Guide from www.texastransition.org ❑ Share information about your child's strengths, needs, and interests with school (possibly by completing a survey) ❑ Talk with your child about attending and/or leading the ARD meeting ❑ Get on waiting lists for services from other agencies as soon as your child's disability has been identified ❑ Understand the difference in legal protections and required services under IDEA and ADA ❑ Review a draft of the transition section of the IEP to make sure your ideas are included ❑ Give consent for agency representatives to attend ARDs ❑ Complete activities in the Coordinated Set of Activities/Transition Services section of IEP and share results with school team ❑ Explore options for legal decision-making (guardianship and alternatives), if needed, before age 18 ❑ Review information in the middle and high school Student Handbook about: ▪ Courses offered at the middle school ▪ Courses offered at the high school ▪ Graduation programs ❑ Ask how different graduation programs affect educational choices after high school ❑ Understand when eligibility for FAPE will end for your child
Transfer of Rights - *At age 18, all legal rights transfer to the individual. Your child's IEP will include appropriate notices about this transfer (one year before turning 18 and upon turning 18)*	Helps you plan for decision-making in adulthood, including ARD decisions. You will receive notice of ARDs after your child turns 18, but this is not the same as an invitation to attend the meeting. Your school will share resources related to guardianship/alternatives to help you determine what is appropriate for your child and family.	
Age-Appropriate Transition Assessments - *Tools to help your child discover her or his strengths, preferences, interests, and needs.*	Helps you and your child think about life as an adult in the areas of employment, higher education and continued learning, independent living, and community participation.	
Measurable Postsecondary Goals - *Descriptions of what the student will be doing upon graduation, in the areas of education/training, employment, and (where appropriate) independent living.*	Shows what your child will be doing when they exit public school and are no longer eligible for special education services.	
Annual IEP Goal(s) related to transition needs *Skills your child will work on this year and will need to use in adulthood (in the areas of postsecondary education, employment, or independent living)*	Identifies the skills your child can learn now in order to be successful in adulthood.	
Coordinated Set of Activities - *List of what needs to be done by student/family/school/ agency/other to connect with supports in adulthood*	Identifies what needs to be done, both in and outside of school, to make the postsecondary goals a reality. This is your "to do" list to help you and your child plan for the future.	
Course of Study - *Classes, your child will take each year that are aligned to her or his postsecondary goals*	Gives clear picture of how your child will earn a diploma.	
Agency Linkage - *School, with your consent, will invite other agencies to the ARD meeting*	Involves agencies that may assist with or pay for services after high school	
Summary of Performance - *Shared when your child exits school, this document has information about your child's disability, supports that worked during high school, and recommendations to meet postsecondary goals*	Helps you or your child to share information about their disability, needs, and skills with future employers, agencies, schools, and others	
Self-Determination - *Resources to foster independence and decision-making skills, as appropriate for each student*	Helps your child learn and practice the skills they will need to become as independent as possible.	


General Education Intervention
Evaluation
IEP Planning
ARD Meeting IEP Development & Adoption
IEP Implementation Monitoring & Reporting
Dismissal Graduation Revocation
Special Education Child-Centered Process