Englewood
SCHOOLS

Special Education Handbook For Parents 26-27



Parent Handbook Table of Contents

Englewood Schools 2
Mission: 2
Vision: 2
Core Values: 2
Englewood Schools Purpose Statement: 2
Handbook Purpose 2
School District Information 3
Board Of Education 3
Central Administration 3
School Building Administration 3
Child Find Coordinators 3
School Based Point of Contact 4
Special Education Laws and Regulations 5
1. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act 5
2. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) 5
3. The Exceptional Children's Educational Act (ECEA) 5
4. Child Find 5
Overview of the Special Education Process 6
Referral: 6
Consent: 6
Evaluation Process: 6
Individual Educational Program (I.E.P.): 7
The Core Parts of an IEP 7
Annual Review Meeting 8
Reevaluation 8
Procedural Safeguards 8
Disability Categories in Colorado 9
Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) 11
Description of District Services 14
Related Services 17
Parent Resources 18

Englewood Schools

Mission:

Preparing all students for future success through learning, leading, engagement and action.

Vision:

Graduating the leaders, thinkers and explorers of tomorrow.

Core Values:

- High Expectations
- Accountability
- Integrity
- Respect
- Community

Englewood Schools Purpose Statement:

Englewood Schools has a moral imperative and unwavering commitment to ensure extraordinary outcomes for each student. Diversity is an asset. We are committed to honoring students' identities, cultures, and abilities, while breaking down barriers to a safe and equitable learning experience. In service of this, we maintain high expectations and nurture all aspects of the whole child.

Handbook Purpose

The purpose of this booklet is to provide parents, guardians, and school personnel with information and to help them as they continue to work together in developing the best education for children.

The information will familiarize you with the following:

1. Terminology you will encounter.
2. Definitions of parent and student rights and responsibilities within special education and related services procedures.
3. An overview of the special education and related services process.
4. Programs and services available in this district.

School District Information

Board Of Education

Katie Wilberding Cross, President
Erica Elvove, First Vice President
Janée McConnell, Second Vice President
Anna Whistler, Secretary and Treasurer
Danielle "Dani" Herman, Board Member

Central Administration

Joanna Polzin, Superintendent of Schools
Ryan Cowell, Deputy Superintendent
Callan Ware, Executive Director of Student Services
Paul Whitaker, Executive Director of Technology and Innovation
Hyeson Sun, Chief Financial Officer
Dr. Rana Razzaque, Director of Opportunity, Access and Inclusion
Dr. Diana Zakhem, Director of Secondary Success
Mike Loitz, Director of Human Resources

School Building Administration

Principal	School	Phone (303)
Kara Blanchard	Maddox ECE	806-2521
Sheri' Spenhoff	Bishop Elementary	806-2462
Dr. Laura Harringa	Cherrelyn Elementary	806-2444
Matt Hoganson	Clayton Elementary	806-2481
Dr. Darik Williams	Charles Hay Elementary	761-2433
Brandon Masters	Englewood Middle School	806-2209
Nate Smith	Englewood High School	806-2203
Cindy Chick	Colorado's Finest High School of Choice	806-2501

Child Find Coordinators

Infants & Toddlers (Ages 0–3):
Screenings and evaluations are conducted by, Colorado Department of Early Childhood.
Preschool-Aged Children (Ages 3–5):
Contact Beth Davis at Beth_Davis@engschools.net.
Private School Students:
Contact Cheryl Cambra at Cheryl_cambra@engschools.net.

School Based Point of Contact

Special Education Director Designees

These individuals understand the special education process and are a resource for parents and professionals. They can help by answering questions, addressing concerns, and by providing information and support to parents and professionals around Special Education issues. Representatives from this team and the schools they represent are as follows:

Beth Davis (303) 806-2419	Early Childhood Education
Jennifer Cord (303)806-2490	Clayton Elementary
Cassie Neslin (303) 806-2451	Cherrelyn Elementary
Nicholas DeBellis (303) 806-2431	Charles Hay Elementary
Morgan Eremia (303) 806-2406	Bishop Elementary
Mikayla Malabanan (303)806-6805	Englewood Middle School
Emily Long (303) 806-2342	Englewood High School/ Colorado's Finest High School of Choice





Special Education Laws and Regulations

1. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act

Section 504 is a federal civil rights law designed to ensure that children with disabilities have equal access to an education. Unlike special education, which focuses on providing specialized instruction, Section 504 is all about removing barriers to learning through accommodations.

2. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA)

This is a sweeping federal law that applies to every state in the U.S. It ensures that eligible children with disabilities receive a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) tailored to their unique needs through an Individualized Education Program (IEP). It establishes the baseline and mandatory rules for special education nationwide, including things like parental rights, procedural safeguards, and the requirement to educate children in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE).

3. The Exceptional Children's Educational Act (ECEA)

Every state is required to follow IDEA, but they are allowed to create their own laws to outline how they will administer it. The ECEA is Colorado's instruction manual for implementing IDEA. A state law cannot provide less than what federal law requires, but it can provide more. Because of this, ECEA includes a few rules and protections that go beyond federal minimums (such as specific timelines for evaluations or strict definitions for eligibility). Colorado also mandates and funds education for gifted and talented students, requiring them to have Advanced Learning Plans (ALPs). Under the federal IDEA, gifted education is not mandated.

4. Child Find

Under IDEA and ECEA, school districts have a legal obligation known as Child Find. This requires districts to locate, identify, and evaluate all children with disabilities from birth through age 21 who may need special education and related services, regardless of the severity of their disability.



Overview of the Special Education Process

Referral:

If the child is in school, any person, association, or agency that believes a child may have a disability may initiate or request a referral. The first step is to contact your child's teacher or the school's Director Designee.

If your child is **not** in school and is between the ages of 3-21 please contact the closest school to your home that serves your child's age/grade for more information. Find your Englewood School here.

Consent:

Parents will meet with the Director Designee of their child's school to discuss the referral and the special education process. Parents must be informed and give written consent before the individual assessment or evaluation process can begin. Parents will be provided with a copy of the Procedural Safeguards, which outlines their rights as a parent whose child is being evaluated for Special Education.

Evaluation Process:

1. **Referral and Data Review (The "Why")**
   The team (including you) reviews existing data—such as classroom work, intervention data, and health records—to pinpoint the exact areas of suspected disability and decide what formal testing is necessary.
2. **Prior Written Notice and Consent (The "Green Light")**
   The district provides you with a legal document detailing exactly which tests they want to run and why. Testing cannot begin until you sign this informed consent form.
3. **Multi-Disciplinary Assessment (The "Testing")**
   Specialists (such as school psychologists, speech therapists, or occupational therapists) administer standardized, non-discriminatory tests. They evaluate your child across multiple domains, including cognitive ability, academic achievement, communication, and social-emotional functioning.

4. **Data Integration and Analysis (The "Puzzle")**
   The team synthesizes the test scores with qualitative data, including structured classroom observations and your input as a parent, to build a comprehensive profile of your child's learning and behavioral patterns.
5. **The Eligibility Meeting (The "Fork in the Road")**
   The team meets to look at the results and answer three legal questions:
   a. Does your child have a qualifying disability?
   b. Is it hurting their ability to learn at school? And
   c. Do they need specialized teaching to succeed?
      i. If the answer is **Yes**, your child qualifies, and we move forward to write an IEP.
      ii. If the answer is **No**, they do not get an IEP, but the team will discuss other ways to support them in the regular classroom.
6. **Consent for Services (The "Official Yes")**
   Even if the team agrees your child qualifies, the school cannot legally provide special education services or create an IEP without your final OK. You must sign a form called the “Consent for Initial Provision of Special Education and Related Services.” This gives the school official permission to switch gears from "testing" your child to actively "serving" them.

Individual Educational Program (I.E.P.):

Once you sign the consent form, the team will work with you to write your child's IEP. Think of it as a personalized, legally binding roadmap designed to give your child the exact support they need to succeed. You are an equal member of the IEP team. Your child's roadmap cannot be written or changed without your input and presence at the meeting.

The Core Parts of an IEP

1. **Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP):**
   A snapshot of where your child is right now, outlining their current strengths, challenges, and how their disability affects them in class.
2. **Annual Goals:**
   Set specific, measurable targets for your child to achieve over the next 12 months so everyone can track their progress.
3. **Services & Support:**
   The actual help your child will receive, specifying exactly how many minutes a week they will work with a special education teacher or specialists (like speech or occupational therapists).
4. **Accommodations & Modifications:**
   The tools that help them learn. *Accommodations* change how they learn (like extra time on tests), while *modifications* change what they learn (like simplified reading assignments).
5. **The Setting (LRE):**
   By law, your child must learn in the Least Restrictive Environment. This means keeping them in the regular classroom with their peers as much as possible, only

pulling them out for specialized help when necessary.

Annual Review Meeting

At least once every year, a review of annual goals and progress toward those goals will occur with the child's IEP team.

Reevaluation

At least every 3 years, a reevaluation will occur. This is to see if your child still qualifies for special education and to see if their underlying learning needs or disability categories have changed.

1. The team starts by deciding if new data is needed.
2. If it is, the school will ask for your permission to run new formal tests (similar to the very first evaluation your child ever had).
3. Specialists will re-test your child's skills, intelligence, speech, or behavior to see how their disability looks now compared to three years ago.
4. The team then uses that data to officially renew (or change) their eligibility.

Parent consent for re-evaluation must be obtained unless the district can demonstrate that it has taken reasonable measures to obtain such consent and the parent has failed to respond.

Procedural Safeguards

Parents have the right to meaningfully participate in the development of their child's special education program. The right to meaningful participation is protected by a group of IDEA requirements called the "Procedural Safeguards." Together, these safeguards ensure that parents have the right to make informed decisions about their child's educational programming and services and to challenge certain decisions with which they do not agree.



Disability Categories in Colorado

Students with disabilities shall mean those persons between the ages of three and twenty-one who are unable to receive reasonable benefit from regular education without additional supports in the public schools because of specific disabling conditions. It is important to remember that the disability categories below are descriptors of a child and do not define a child, as each individual is unique and has their own strengths and areas of need.

While public school services officially begin at age three, Colorado's ECEA and federal law still protect children from birth through age three under the "Infant/Toddler with a Disability" category. Instead of receiving an IEP from a school district, eligible infants and toddlers receive developmental support in their home or daycare setting through Early Intervention Colorado and will have an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP). Once a child approaches their third birthday, the early intervention team works with the family to transition the child into the public school system's preschool special education program if the child qualifies under any of the other disability categories defined in ECEA.

In Colorado, students who are going through the identification process, either initially or as a review, will be identified as having one of the following disabilities, as defined by the Exceptional Children's Educational Act (ECEA) -listed in alphabetical order.

Autism Spectrum Disorder:

A child with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a child with a developmental disability significantly affecting verbal and non-verbal social communication and social interaction, generally evidenced by the age of three. Other characteristics often associated with ASD are engagement in repetitive activities and stereotyped movements, resistance to environmental changes or changes in daily routines, and unusual responses to sensory experiences.

Deaf Blindness:

A child with deaf-blindness has concomitant hearing and visual impairments, the combination of which causes such severe communication and other developmental and educational needs that he or she cannot be accommodated in special education programs solely for children with deafness or children with blindness.

Hearing Impairment, including Deafness:

A child with a hearing impairment, including deafness, shall have a deficiency in hearing sensitivity as demonstrated by an elevated threshold of auditory sensitivity to pure tones or speech, where even with the help of amplification, the student is prevented from receiving reasonable educational benefit from general education.

Infant/Toddler with a disability:

A child from birth through two years old (up to their 3rd birthday) who has a significant developmental delay or an established medical condition. To qualify, they must show a measurable delay in physical, cognitive, communication, social-emotional, or adaptive development, or have a diagnosed condition (like a genetic or neurological disorder) with a high probability of causing a delay. These children receive services through Early Intervention (EI) Colorado until their third birthday, when they must re-qualify for preschool special education.

***Starting July 1, 2026**, children who are eligible for EI Colorado with a developmental delay must have their eligibility redetermined annually.

Intellectual Disability:

A child with an Intellectual Disability shall have reduced general intellectual functioning existing concurrently with deficits in adaptive behavior and manifested during the developmental period, which prevents the child from receiving reasonable educational benefit from general education.

Multiple Disability:

A child with Multiple Disabilities shall have two or more areas of significant impairment, one of which shall be an intellectual disability. The other areas of impairment include: Orthopedic Impairment, Visual Impairment including Blindness, Hearing Impairment including Deafness, Speech or Language Impairment, Serious Emotional Disability, Autism Spectrum Disorders, Traumatic Brain Injury, or Other Health Impairment. The combination of such impairments creates a unique condition that is evidenced through a multiplicity of severe educational needs, which prevent the child from receiving reasonable educational benefit from general education.

Orthopedic Impairment

A child with an Orthopedic Impairment has a severe neurological/skeletal abnormality that impedes mobility, which prevents the child from receiving reasonable educational benefit from general education.

Other Health Impairment:

Other Health Impaired (OHI) means having limited strength, vitality, or alertness, including a heightened alertness to environmental stimuli, that results in limited alertness with respect to the educational environment due to a chronic or acute health problem, including but not limited to asthma, attention deficit disorder or attention

deficit hyperactivity disorder, diabetes, epilepsy, a heart condition, hemophilia, leukemia, kidney disease, sickle cell anemia or Tourette syndrome.

Developmental Delay:

A child with a Developmental Delay shall be three through eight years of age and who is experiencing developmental delays in one or more of the following areas: physical development, cognitive development, communication development, social or emotional development, or adaptive development, and as a result is unable to receive reasonable educational benefit from general education and requires special education and related services.

Serious Emotional Disability:

A child with a Serious Emotional Disability shall have emotional or social functioning which prevents the child from receiving reasonable educational benefit from general education.

Specific Learning Disability:

Specific Learning Disability means a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell or do mathematical calculations, including conditions such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia.

Speech or Language Disability:

A child with a Speech or Language Impairment shall have a communicative disorder which prevents the child from receiving reasonable educational benefit from general education.

Traumatic Brain Injury:

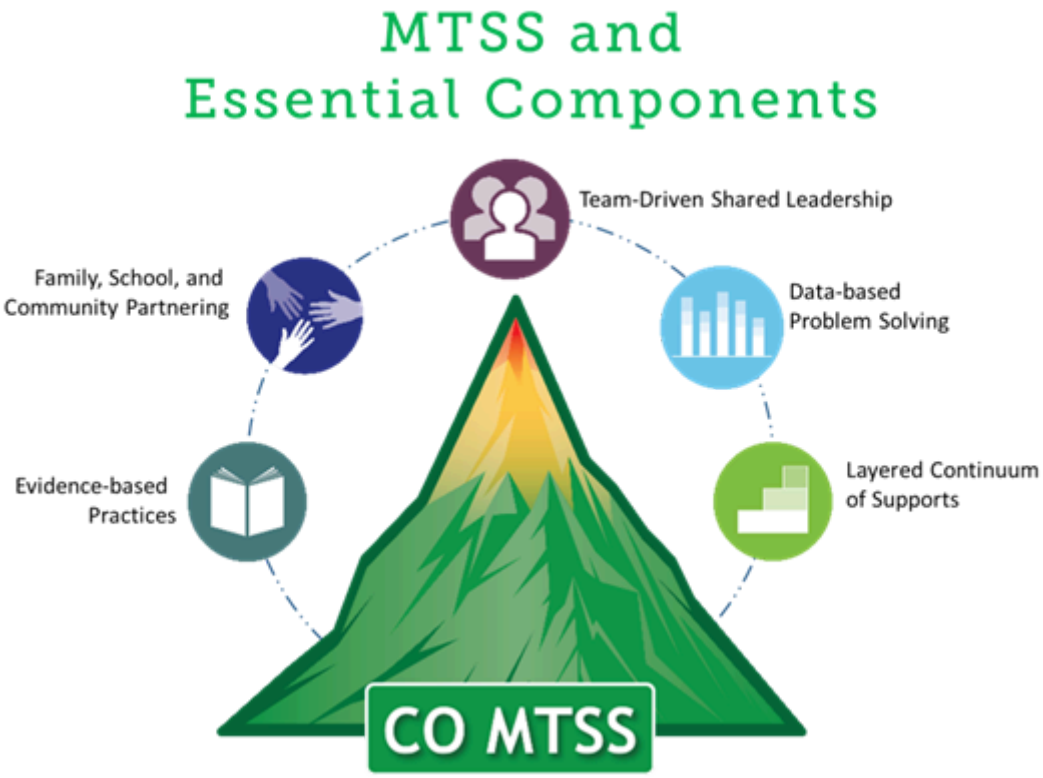
A child with Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) is a child with an acquired injury to the brain caused by an external physical force resulting in total or partial functional disability or psychosocial impairment, or both, which impairment adversely affects the child's ability to receive reasonable educational benefit from general education.

Visual Impairment, including Blindness:

A child with a Visual Impairment, including Blindness, shall have a deficiency in visual acuity and/or visual field and/or visual functioning where, even with the use of lenses or corrective devices, he/she is prevented from receiving reasonable educational benefit from general education.

Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)

MTSS, or Multi-Tiered System of Supports, is an approach that helps schools support students in different ways depending on their needs. It's like having different levels of support to help your child succeed in school. Teachers and specialists work together to provide various layers of support, such as personalized instruction, interventions, and resources. The goal is to make sure your child gets the right help at the right time to reach their full potential. MTSS helps create a supportive environment where every student can thrive and succeed academically and socially.



In Colorado, a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) is defined as: a prevention-based framework of team-driven, data-based problem solving for improving the outcomes of every student through family, school, and community partnering and a layered continuum of evidence-based practices applied at the classroom, school, district, region, and state level.

Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS):

Essential Components:

Team-Driven Shared Leadership



Teaming structures and expectations distribute responsibility and shared decision-making across school, district, and community members (e.g. students, families, generalists, specialists, district administrators, etc.) to organize coordinated systems of training, coaching, resources, implementation, and evaluation for adult activities.

Data-Based Problem Solving and Decision-Making



A consistent process is used by stakeholder teams and applied at multiple levels to analyze and evaluate relevant information to plan and implement strategies that support sustainable improved student and system outcomes.

Family, School, and Community Partnering



The collaboration of families, schools, and communities as active partners in improving learner, classroom, school, district, and state outcomes.

Layered Continuum of Supports



Ensuring that every student receives equitable academic and behavioral support that is culturally responsive, matched to need, and developmentally appropriate, through layers that increase in intensity from universal (every student) to targeted (some students) to intensive (few students).

Evidence-Based Practices



Approaches to instruction, intervention, and assessment that have been proven effective through research indicating improved outcomes for students.

Description of District Services

Individuals who have been identified as having a disability that requires specialized instruction and potentially related services require support along a continuum from consultative services to full-time support. An Individualized Education Plan (IEP) is written for each student to address the specific needs of that student. Englewood provides a range of services based on a student's needs and each team works to provide as much support within the general education setting as possible. The following are the programs provided within Englewood Schools:

Early Childhood Education:
The Englewood Early Childhood Program is licensed for both preschool and child care services. Our caring and professional staff is highly sensitive to the individual needs of students with disabilities. Each classroom features a mixed-age group of children with varying abilities, offering developmentally appropriate activities that emphasize school readiness and the joy of learning. Students with disabilities are fully integrated into these classrooms with the appropriate supports and accommodations outlined in their IEP.

Learning Support Program:
This program serves students with disabilities who experience mild to moderate academic delays (generally 1–2 years below grade level). Typically, students in this program navigate the school setting independently, and their academic support is provided through a mix of in-class assistance, team-taught classrooms, or small, skills-based pullout groups. Students in the Learning Support Program participate in district and state assessments, with or without accommodations, as determined by their IEP. Students in this program generally demonstrate strong foundational, adaptive and daily living skills.

Moderate Academic Support Program:
This program supports students who display moderate-to-severe academic delays (generally 3–4 years below grade level). Students in this program may require a modified curriculum or significant accommodations to access their education, and they often need targeted support across various school settings. A student's IEP for this program typically indicates that their academic needs are best met through a combination of specialized instruction in a smaller group setting and time spent within the general education classroom (with or without additional adult support). Students participate in district and state assessments with appropriate accommodations based on their IEP, and the program often includes some support for developing foundational adaptive skills (conceptual and social skills) but rarely requires support with daily living skills (ex. self-care, health and safety, etc.).

Significant Support Needs Program:
This program serves students with disabilities who display significant academic delays, generally measuring five or more years below grade level. Many students in this program require comprehensive support with their adaptive skills to navigate the school day and are developing foundational independence in essential life skills (such as task completion, toileting, feeding, or safely navigating the school environment). Core academic subjects are taught using

a highly modified curriculum outside of the general education classroom. Additionally, students in the SSN program typically qualify for alternate state and district assessments.

Speech and Language Program:
When a student with a Speech or Language Impairment (SLI) does not require the broader academic modifications of the Moderate or Significant Support programs, they may receive their targeted services through the Speech and Language Program. Students are typically independent within the school setting, and their specialized support is provided by a Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP) either inside the general education classroom, in a small, skills-based pullout group, or 1:1 if appropriate. Students may qualify for services in one or more specific areas: Language (understanding and speaking), Articulation (speech sounds), Voice, or Fluency (stuttering). Students in this program participate in standard district and state assessments, utilizing accommodations as outlined in their IEP.

Affective Needs Program:
Students who access the Affective Needs Program typically display behavioral and/or emotional characteristics that seriously interfere with their own learning or the learning of others. These students demonstrate one or more of the following characteristics to a marked degree: a lack of emotional regulation, an inability to utilize coping strategies, difficulty with interpersonal skills, aggression, an inability to identify feelings in themselves or others, a lack of stress tolerance, and/or extreme difficulty attending to tasks. Many students in this program meet the state criteria for a Serious Emotional Disability (SED) or have a diagnosed mental health disorder; however, this program is not intended for students whose sole challenges stem from social maladjustment. To access their education safely and effectively, students may receive individualized behavior support, small group pullout services, or core academic instruction in a separate, specialized environment. Students in this program participate in standard district and state assessments, utilizing accommodations as outlined in their IEP.

Autism Program:
Students in the Autism Program meet the state's educational criteria for Autism Spectrum Disorder and typically display low average to above-average cognitive abilities. They thrive in consistent, predictable environments and are better able to access the general education classroom with the support of professionals who understand their unique profiles. To learn effectively, students in this program may access individualized support, small-group pullout sessions, or academic instruction in a separate environment. They may benefit from targeted interventions, including sensory breaks, visual schedules, explicit instruction, and behavioral supports utilizing the principles of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) or similar structured frameworks.

Transition in Englewood Schools (TIES) 18-21 Transition Program:
The Transition in Englewood Schools (TIES) Program is designed for students who have met minimum high school graduation requirements but continue to require targeted skill-building to prepare for adulthood. Each student receives a customized schedule tailored to their individual interests, strengths, and long-term transition goals. TIES assists young adults in developing the necessary tools to successfully bridge the gap between high school and adult life by providing

explicit instruction and real-world experiences in postsecondary education, career exploration, job shadowing, community internships, mobility and public transportation training, and independent daily living skills.

Itinerant Services:
These specialized services are provided by district staff members who travel from school to school to support students with low-incidence needs. Itinerant staff provide direct instruction, specialized technology support, and teacher consultations for students with unique vision, hearing, motor, or complex health needs. Examples of itinerant providers include Teachers of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Teachers of the Visually Impaired, Audiologists, and Physical Therapists.

Assistive Technology & SWAAAC Assistive Technology (AT) includes any device, tool, or software that helps a student with a disability communicate, learn, and participate more fully in the classroom. This can range from "low-tech" tools like pencil grips and visual schedules to "high-tech" tools like speech-generating communication devices and specialized computer software.
In Colorado, these services are coordinated by our SWAAAC Coordinator (StateWide Assistive Activity Augmentative and Communicative). Englewood's SWAAAC Coordinator provides specialized consultations, conducts evaluations, and helps students access and learn how to use the appropriate technologies outlined in their IEP.

Related Services





If you have a child with a disability, they will likely receive support from both special education teachers and related service providers. Beyond your child's classroom teacher, school counselor, and principal, you and your child may interact with several of the following specialists, depending on your child's unique needs and how their disability impacts them in the school environment.

School Psychologist:
A specialist skilled in observing, evaluating, and understanding how a child learns. They support students' social, emotional, and behavioral needs as they relate to their education.

Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP):
A specialist who identifies and supports children with communication challenges, including speech (articulation, stuttering) and language (understanding and expressing ideas) difficulties.

Occupational Therapist (OT):
Skilled in helping a child with a disability develop the fine motor and sensory skills needed for daily school activities. This specialist facilitates development in self-care, handwriting, classroom tool use, and environmental adaptations.

Teacher for the Visually Impaired (TVI):
Modifies learning materials and provides instruction in pre-Braille and Braille.

Orientation Mobility Specialist:
Teaches students with visual impairments how to navigate the school environment safely and independently.

Teacher of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (TODHH):
Provides specialized assistance to students with hearing loss through direct instruction, consultation with classroom teachers, and ongoing tracking of hearing accommodations.

Nurse:
Identifies health barriers to learning, coordinates daily medical needs or medications at school, and develops individualized Health Care Action Plans for students with chronic medical conditions.

Parent Resources

Parent to Parent of Colorado / EMPOWER CO

Parent to Parent of Colorado (P2P-CO) is a network of families across Colorado who understand! We connect families to each other and to the resources they need. We offer encouragement to each other on the journey of parenting by providing emotional and informational support. In 2020, Empower Colorado joined our program to meet the needs of families with children & youth experiencing mental health challenges. Parent to Parent of Colorado is celebrating 20 years of supporting families.
Ability Connections Colorado

The Arc
Arapahoe, Douglas & Elbert Counties

For People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities
The Arc Arapahoe, Douglas & Elbert Counties uses advocacy and education to include all children and adults with disabilities in their communities.
The Arc Website

PEAK Parent Center
Helping Families Helping Children

PEAK Parent Center is a nonprofit that works every day to ensure that all people with disabilities are fully included in their neighborhood schools, communities, employment, and all walks of life.
PEAKPARENT.ORG

COLORADO
Department of Education

The Colorado Department of Education's guide for parents and family members of students on IEPs.