ISSAQUAH
SCHOOL DISTRICT 411

PARENT & CAREGIVER GUIDEBOOK

2026-2027

Navigating Special Education Services

Parental Rights include: Consent and notification, participate in the development of the IEP, participate in meetings, resolution of disagreements and interpretation services.

Co-Developed in partnership with the Special Education PTSA, ISD Special Services Parent Advisory Group & the Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC)

ISSAQUAH PTSA SPECIAL EDUCATION

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This guidebook reflects input from Issaquah School District parents, staff and community members gathered over multiple years. The purpose of this guidebook is to support families and students who are eligible for special education services and help them navigate the evaluation and IEP process.

WHAT IS SPECIAL EDUCATION?

Special education is instruction that is specially designed to meet the unique learning needs of students with disabilities who qualify for services. These supports are provided at no cost to families and may include specialized instruction, related services, and additional supports that help students access and participate in their education.

Special education services are available for children from birth through age 22. For children ages 0–2, services are typically provided through Early Intervention programs, which are often coordinated through community organizations. Beginning at age 3, children who qualify may receive special education services through the school district.

Students ages 3–22 who are eligible for special education are entitled to a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) under federal law. This means schools must provide the services and supports students need to make meaningful progress in school.

For school-aged students, services are provided through an Individualized Education Program (IEP). The IEP is a written plan developed by a team that includes the student's family and school staff. It outlines the student's goals, the services and supports they will receive, and how those supports will help them succeed in school.

Parent involvement in the development of the individualized education program is a cornerstone of special education services. Parental rights and special education procedures can be reviewed at Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction's (OSPI) website. *(Scan QR code).*

Important Contact Information

Website
isd411.org/special-services

General Questions
425-837-7085

Early Learning (ECE/ECEAP)
425-837-5170

Elementary Special Education
425-837-7143

Secondary Special Education
425-837-7031

Special Services Email:
specialservices@issaquah.wednet.edu

ISSAQUAH SCHOOL DISTRICT 411

SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES **VISION** & **MISSION**

Vision

The Issaquah School District Special Services Department **will narrow the opportunity and equity gap**, as measured by district and state assessments, district data, and community feedback through the provision of inclusive, innovative, and equitable learning opportunities.

Mission

The Issaquah School District Special Services Department exists to serve all students' diverse needs, we use data and strengths-based approaches in collaboration with family and community partners to ensure continuous progress with the expectation that all students have the opportunity to achieve **their identified post-secondary goals.**

Inclusionary Practices

Inclusionary Practices are an educational approach that prioritizes the general education environment as the location of service delivery for all students. Inclusionary instructional practices are instructional and environmental methods, inclusionary practices encourage lesson design and environmental supports that allow all students to access the general education curriculum, to the extent possible, by differentiating instruction, curriculum, and the environment to meet a wider breadth of student needs. Most classrooms naturally serve students with a variety of needs, due to natural variability. Inclusive practices help to focus educators to intentionally design their instruction to meet the varied needs of all students. Additionally, rather than developing a classroom environment that meets only the needs of some students, inclusion ensures that teachers will instructionally to meet the needs of each learner. In an inclusive model, resources (special education teachers, specialists, paraprofessional support) are allocated to support the teacher in designing and implementing the curriculum and instruction. Inclusion also promotes community and belonging for all students.

PARENT, CAREGIVER GUIDEBOOK

STUDENT:	
School:	
Grade:	
Case Manager Contact Information:	
IEP Review Date:	
Reevaluation Date:	

The Individualized education plan (IEP) documents the special education instruction, supports, and services a student needs to meet agreed upon learning goals in areas of specially designed instruction. It is reviewed and revised annually.

Monitoring progress on goals is determined by the IEP team, and included in the IEP document. Information is shared out based on progress monitoring decided upon by the IEP team, and at the very least, in alignment with reporting periods or as outlined.

IEP Goals are written to be SMART: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound.

- *Example:* READING: When given a passage at his instructional level, STUDENT will accurately read the passage from 65% accuracy on a 4th grade passage to 90% accuracy on a 5th grade level passage as measured by curriculum-based measures on 3 consecutive data days.

Tips for navigating Special Education Services:

1. Know your rights: Read and reference the **OSPI Procedural Safeguards**
2. Plan questions for the team about your student's skills and progress
3. Request documentation of evaluation or IEP discussions and decision through a prior written notice
4. Share information about your student with the school team, as well as your goals and hopes for your student
5. Review evaluation reports, IEPs, progress reports and school data - follow up with your case manager if you have questions
6. Know the names of your child's school administrators, case manager, and related service providers

504 PLAN vs IEP

Both 504 Plans and IEPs support students with a disability. A 504 Plan provides accommodations and supports to ensure equal access to education. An IEP, developed under IDEA, provides specifically designed instruction and related services for students who meet IDEA eligibility criteria.

504 Plan

- Civil rights law
- No separate funding
- No "categories" of qualification
- Requires substantial limitation of a major life activity
- Parent participation recommended

*More at **isd411.org/504***

IEP

- Federal grant program
- State and federal funding
- 13 disability categories for qualification
- Requires adverse educational impact and need for specially designed instruction
- Parent is required team member

*More at **isd411.org/iep***

When can I call an IEP Meeting?

If you have concerns about your child's progress, start by reaching out to your child's case manager or teacher to discuss them.

If your concerns continue, you may request an IEP team meeting at any time to review your child's IEP and progress. We recommend making the request in writing so the team can schedule a time to meet.

Under Washington State special education rules, parents are members of the IEP team and may request a meeting whenever needed. The IEP team also meets at least once each year to review the student's program.

The special education evaluation/reevaluation determines whether or not your child is eligible for special education services. If your child is eligible for services, the evaluation will determine how they are eligible (eligibility categories) and what services they are eligible for: specially designed instruction, related services, supplementary aids and services, and supports for school personnel. After eligibility is determined, the school district has 30-calendar days to hold an IEP meeting.

IMPORTANT **DATES** AND **TIMELINES:**

PROCEDURE	DAYS TO RESPOND	
Referral to Special Education Services	**20 School Days**	The school district has 20 school days to respond to a request for evaluation.
Evaluate	**40 School Days**	Once parent consent has been received, the district has 40 school days to comply and evaluate.
Hold an IEP Meeting after an Evaluation	**30 Calendar Days**	Once the district determines a student is eligible, an IEP must be developed within 30 days.
Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE)	**15 Calendar Days**	If an IEE is requested by the parent at public expense, the district is required to respond within 15 days by either filing for due process or agreeing to the IEE at public expense.
IEP Review	**12 Months**	Individual Education Programs must be reviewed every 12 months.
Reevaluations	**3 Years**	IEP reevaluations must occur every 3 years, and when requested by parent or district up to one time per year.

Knowing when the clock starts ticking in the special education evaluation and IEP process is essential.

All school districts in Washington State are required to follow Washington Administrative Code for Special Education Process and Timelines. These timelines can be found in the **OSPI Procedural Safeguards**

Our **goal:**

Our goal as a district and Special Services Department is to partner with families on developing and delivering IEP services. We believe that the IEP process is a collaborative method for teams to come together to develop plans for how to best support our students.

Sometimes, parents and teams may have different ideas about how services are designed and implemented. Many of these differences can be resolved through the IEP process. When differences have not been resolved, the district or parents can seek support to the difference through facilitated IEP meetings, mediation, formal complaint process or due process. Our goal is always to solve the difference closest to the child and through the IEP process.

Additional information about parents' rights and methods for seeking support with differences can be found here: the **OSPI Special Education Dispute Resolution page**.

If you are experiencing difficulty navigating the IEP process or have questions about the IEP process, please reach out to your case manager, then building principal, and then the Issaquah School District Special Services Department at **specialservices@issaquah.wednet.edu**.

PLANNING FOR AN IEP/EVALUATION/ REEVALUATION MEETING: PARENT FORM

You are the expert when it comes to your child! The school-based IEP team members truly want to hear from you about your child's strengths, preferences, and needs. Your input is so important. Together, with the insights from teachers and service providers, we can create an IEP that is designed to support your child's growth and success.

Parent Feedback Survey

As you fill out this information, think about:

- Reviewing your child's past IEP, their progress toward current goals, and any examples of their schoolwork.
- Reflecting on your goals and dreams for your child's future.
- Talking with your child about any concerns they may have or encouraging them to fill out the Student Form for Preparing for the IEP Team Meeting.

Please document your responses below and share them with the IEP team a couple of weeks before the meeting. Don't forget to bring a copy of your responses to the meeting to refer to as needed.

Main goals and priorities for your child:

What do you want your child to accomplish this year? What are your goals?

What are your child's strengths and preferences?

Strengths	Preferences

What are your child's strengths and preferences?

What services and supports have helped your child?	What services or supports have not helped your child? Or you are unsure of?	What services or support do you think might help your child or you'd like to learn more about?

What else do you want us to know about your child and family?

What is the best way to communicate with you?

PLANNING FOR THE IEP MEETING:
STUDENT FORM

What do you want the team to know about you?

This is your personalized education plan (IEP), and your voice plays a key role in creating an IEP that truly supports you. The insights you provide are incredibly important. Please take a moment to document your thoughts below and share them with the IEP team a couple of weeks before the meeting. This will help them design an IEP that's tailored to your needs. If you're planning to attend the meeting, it's a great idea to bring a copy of your responses with you, so you can refer to them as needed during the discussion.

What are your goals for the future? What do you want to accomplish this year?

What are your strengths and needs?

What do you do well?	What do you struggle with?

How can your teachers help you?

What services and supports have worked for you?	What services and supports have not worked for you?	Are there any services and supports you think might help you in the future?

Anything else you'd like the team to know?

IEP Team: Contact Information

Your child has a school-based IEP team to support their development. Please use the following worksheet to identify the names and contact information for your student's IEP team members. If you have concerns about your child's development, progress or services, please reach out to your school team. If your concerns are not resolved at your school, please reach out to the Special Services Department.

Always on an IEP Team

Student

General Ed Teacher(s)

Special Ed Teacher

Principal

Assistant Principal

Sometimes on an IEP Team

School Psychologist

Occupational Therapist

Speech Language Pathologist

Other Related Service Providers

Physical Therapist

Discipline and Special Education:

Issaquah School District is required to follow state and local policy on discipline decisions and processes for students with an IEP. If a student is removed from their special education program for 10 or more days due to a disciplinary decision, a manifestation determine review meeting is required to be held to determine if the behavior that resulted in the disciplinary action was due to the student's disability. OSPI has many resources to support district decision making and parent understanding of the process, and can be found here:

OSPI Guidance

Additional Online **Resources:**

ISD Special Services Website:
isd411.org/special-services

Issaquah Special Education PTSA:
issaquahspecialeducationptsa.org/

Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, Special Education:
ospi.k12.wa.us/student-success/special-education

Council for Exceptional Children:
exceptionalchildren.org

Partnerships for Action Voices for Empowerment (PAVE):
wapave.org

Open Doors for Multicultural Families:
multiculturalfamilies.org

Office of the Education Ombuds:
oeo.wa.gov/en

The Arc of King County:
arcofkingcounty.org

Disability Rights Washington:
disabilityrightswa.org

Progress Center:
promotingprogress.org/resources/iep-tip-sheet-series

Additional Information and **Resources:**

Important Terms

Accommodation: An accommodation provides support that helps the student access the curriculum and demonstrate their knowledge without changing the content or expectations.

Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP): A plan developed following an FBA that promotes positive behavior interventions and strategies to reduce the target behavior and to teach replacement behaviors

Case Manager: In the context of an Individualized Education Program (IEP), a case manager is a designated school professional responsible for overseeing and coordinating the development and implementation of the student's IEP.

Evaluation: An evaluation for special education is a formal process used to determine whether a student has a disability and is eligible for special education services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Once parent consent has been received, the district has 40 school days to comply and evaluate.

Extended School Year (ESY): This is a service delivered during summer break that is designed specifically to address students who need support in maintaining academic or behavioral skills. Determination for eligibility is based on documentation of regression and recoupment as well as input of the IEP team regarding the severity of the student's disability, emerging skills, and rate of progress.

Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE): Eligible students with disabilities have the right to receive special education and related services at no cost to families. These services are designed to meet the student's individual needs and help them make meaningful progress in school. The services, supports, and goals a student will receive are outlined in their Individualized Education Program (IEP), which is developed by a team that includes the student's family and school staff.

Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA): An evaluation used to understand the function of a student's behavior and is the basis for developing positive intervention supports.

IDEA Disability Categories: The 13 federally recognized eligibility categories that guide the identification and support of students with disabilities in the educational system. The categories include: Autism, Deaf-Blindness, Deafness, Emotional Disturbance, Hearing Impairment, Intellectual Disability, Multiple Disabilities, Orthopedic Impairment, Other Health Impairment, Specific Learning Disability, Speech or Language Impairment, Traumatic Brain Injury, Visual Impairment (including blindness). Washington also includes the category of Developmental Delay.

Individual Education Program (IEP): A document that describes the services, accommodations, and modifications that your child is legally bound to receive. Once the district determines a student is eligible, an IEP must be developed within 30 days.

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE): Students eligible for special education are educated with students who are not disabled to the maximum extent appropriate, and special classes, separate schooling, or other removal from the regular educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily.

Manifestation Determination Review Meeting (MDR): A Manifestation Determination is a process used to determine whether a student's behavior that led to disciplinary action (such as suspension or expulsion) is related to their disability.

Modification: A modification involves changing the content or expectations of what the student is required to learn or do.

Modified Grading: Modified grading in an IEP (Individualized Education Program) refers to changes in how a student's academic performance is evaluated and assessed. This modification is typically used when a student with a disability is unable to meet the same grading standards or expectations as their peers, even with accommodations and specially designed instruction.

Prior Written Notice (PWN): A notice and summary of decisions that have been made regarding your student's educational program provided to parents BEFORE IT IS IMPLEMENTED. It needs to be provided to parents every time a decision and change has been made AND when something proposed was rejected.

Progress Report: An Educational Progress Report for an IEP (Individualized Education Program) is a document that provides updates on a student's progress toward the goals and objectives outlined in their IEP.

Referral: A referral for special education is the formal process by which a child is considered for special education services due to suspected disabilities or learning challenges. A referral for a special education evaluation should be made in written form. The school district has 20 school days to respond.

Related Services: Related services in an Individualized Education Program (IEP) are support services that are provided to help students with disabilities benefit from their special education program.

Release of Information (ROI): Authorization from you as a parent to share information about your child between the school district and non-school district community providers.

Specially Designed Instruction (SDI): Specially Designed Instruction refers to customized teaching strategies, techniques, or modifications used to address the unique needs of students with disabilities.

Supplementary aids and services (SAS) in an IEP (Individualized Education Program) are supports and resources provided to students with disabilities to help them access and participate in the education-related setting, enabling students eligible for special education to be educated with their peers. These services and aids are designed to enhance the student's ability to succeed in the classroom and meet the goals outlined in their IEP.

Supports for school personnel (SSP): In an IEP (Individualized Education Program), supports for school personnel refer to the resources, training, and assistance provided to educators and other school staff to help them effectively support a student with disabilities.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL): Universal Design for Learning is an educational framework aimed at making learning more accessible and inclusive for all students, regardless of their abilities or learning styles. UDL is based on the idea that there is no "one-size-fits-all" approach to teaching, and that education should be flexible enough to cater to a diverse range of learners.

Language Access and **Caregiver Accommodations:**

The law states that we must present IEP documents in your native language. If you need written materials in your native language, you may request them from your case manager and school.

The law requires that the district provide translators or interpreters at no cost to you. Put your request for interpretation and translation in writing prior to the IEP meeting.

To receive language support, please contact your school principal or special education case manager.

NOTES **PAGE:**

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