Parents' Rights and Responsibilities

October 2026

Special Education Department

Director of Student Services (Special Education Director): Jessica DeLorenzo

Team Chairs:

Marcia Ward: Bryantville Elementary
Kristen Sciulli: Hobomock Elementary
Valerie Charpentier: PK and North Pembroke Elementary
Erica Swift: PCMS
Meghan Collum: PHS and Out of District Coordinator

Liaisons:
Special Education Teachers, Service Providers

Goals of Presentation

- Educate parents/caregivers about their rights under special education laws and regulations
- Promote positive home/school partnerships to support student success
- Learn about the special education process, including evaluations, eligibility, IEP development, and placement
- Understand parents' roles and responsibilities in special education decision-making
- Build parents/caregivers' confidence and skills to advocate for a child's educational needs
- Learn effective ways to communicate and collaborate with school teams
- Understand options for resolving disagreements with the school district

What Supports exist outside of Special Education

Classroom differentiation

District Curriculum Accommodation Plan (DCAP)

Titan Time

Teacher before/after school extra help

Reading specialists

Mathematics specialists

Title I services

Academic Resource Center (ARC)

Guidance counselors

School social workers

School psychologists

Behaviorist

Titan Labs / Compass Rooms

What is Special Education?



- the practice of educating students with disabilities in a way that addresses their individual differences and needs
- specially designed instruction provided to a student in order to support the student in accessing curriculum/instruction

Guiding Laws and Regulations

- IDEA-Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
- General Law-71B-Massachusetts General Laws
- 603 CMR Section 28.00-Special Education Regulations
- FAPE-Free and Appropriate Education
- LRE-Least Restrictive Environment

Making a Referral

Special Education Testing

- Parents/caregivers can request an evaluation if they believe that their child is not making effective progress and they suspect their child may present with a disability
- Instructional Support Team
- Child Find

Process

- After referral, or parent request for testing is made, the district has 5 school days to issue a consent for testing
- Once consent is received signed and returned, the district has 30 school days to complete testing
- The district has 45 school days to meet and issue either an IEP or a letter of no eligibility
- Following the development of an IEP, the team must issue an IEP within 5 school days
- When an IEP is accepted, and received back by the school, an IEP is immediately implemented

Evaluations

Testing in the area of suspected disability

- Academic
- Psychological
- Behavioral
- Executive Functioning
- Occupational Therapy
- Physical Therapy
- Speech and Language
- Social Pragmatics
- Vision/Hearing
- Orientation and Mobility
- Educational Assessments
- Observations



The Team

The Team consists of a chairperson (someone who can commit to resources), special education teacher, related service providers, general education teacher, parent/caregiver (s) and student over the age of 14

Parents/caregivers have the right to participate in all special education planning and decision making

Student is the focus and the student's vision should guide the process

It is the obligation of the team to make strong efforts to ensure parental and student participation

Tips and Resources for You to Consider

Before the Meeting	During the Meeting	After the Meeting
• Consider talking with your child and others, such as family members, about your hopes for your child for this year, your vision for your child's future, and any concerns relating to your child. • Consider observing your child at home and in the community and note your child's strengths, interests, preferences, and needs. • If your child will be participating in the IEP Team meeting, talk with your child's teacher(s) and/or other trusted adults in your child's life about preparing your child to participate in the IEP team meeting. • Check out the Parent's Guide to Special Education and/or other resources on the Parent Information Page of the MA DESE website.	• Share your concerns about your child's development, progress, and needs, as well as your vision for your child. • Consider all of the information shared by other members of the IEP Team, such as their perceptions of your child's progress and needs. • Together with IEP Team professionals, support your child to participate in the meeting. • Throughout the meeting, please feel free to share what you know about your child and give examples. Your knowledge of your child's strengths, interests, preferences, and needs is important data that will contribute to the development of the IEP.	• Check in with your child's teacher(s), if you would like, and share any changes you are noticing, including your child's new skills and achievements or new areas of need. • As you deem appropriate, communicate with your child and other adults in your child's life, such as family members, about changing hopes and concerns over time. • Communicate with the IEP Team leader if you have any new concerns. Parent and Guardians DESE Resources

Special Education Eligibility



Eligibility Flowchart

A student is eligible if:

1.) The student has one or more disabilities
2.) The student is not making effective progress with the curriculum and instruction
3.) The lack of progress is a result of of the student's disability (s)
4.) The student requires specialized instruction or related services to make effective progress or to access the general education curriculum

Types of Disabilities

- Autism
- Developmental Delay
- Intellectual
- Sensory: Hearing, Vision, Deaf-Blind
- Emotional
- Neurological
- Communication
- Physical
- Specific Learning
- Health

Individualized Education Program (IEP)

An IEP is a road map that designs a plan to enable students to access the curriculum/instruction

Parent/caregiver concerns
Student and Team Vision Statements
Student Profile
Current Performance (academic, communication, social/emotional, other)
Transition Planning
Accommodations, Modifications
Participation in statewide assessments
Goals
Services
Related Services (transportation, extended school year)
Placement

Next Steps

IEPs are generally written for one year

They can be written for less time but cannot be written for more than one calendar year

The Team will meet at least annually to discuss progress and propose a new IEP

At least every three years the team must reevaluate the student for eligibility

Progress reports on student's progress towards their goals will be given each time a report card is issued to all students



Parents' Notice of Procedural Safeguards

- Provided to all parents once a year
- Provided each time an evaluation is proposed
- Provided if anything is rejected/denied

- Right to discuss proposed evaluations with evaluators
- Right to consent or refuse an evaluation (s)
- Right to request an independent evaluation if you feel that the evaluation (s) was not comprehensive or appropriate

- Right to reject an IEP (in whole/part)
- Right to appeal a decision of no finding
- Right to request mediation/hearing


Parent's Notice of Procedural Safeguards

Options for Disagreements

PRS (Problem Resolution System)

- Responsible for handling complaints about students' educational rights and the legal requirements for education
- **Assists if a publicly funded education provider is not implementing the requirements of any federal or state education related law or regulation**
- Decisions issued: "finding of compliance" or a "finding of non-compliance"

BSEA (Bureau of Special Education Appeals)

- **Mediations: Informal, voluntary and and confidential alternative for dispute resolution. Mediators are neutral and facilitate negotiation between the parties. Parties have an opportunity to craft their own agreement, with the help of the Mediator.**
- **Due Process Hearings: formal, evidentiary proceeding used to resolve a dispute regarding a student's special education eligibility, evaluation, appropriateness of IEP or placement**

Section 504 Plan

Section 504 is a part of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 that prohibits discrimination based upon disability

Section 504 is an anti-discrimination, civil rights statute that requires the needs of students with disabilities to be met as adequately as the needs of the non-disabled are met

Documented Disability

Disability significantly impacts a life function

504 Plan outlines the accommodations that are necessary for a student to access their day-to-day routines, learning and environment

Building based

Section 504 Plan Eligibility

Sources of Data (diagnosis/disability)

Does the student have a physical or mental impairment? (neurological, digestive, mental/psychological, physical, emotional, specific learning)

Does the impact substantially limit one or more major life activities? (walking, speaking, standing, thinking, concentrating, communicating, respiratory, digestive)

What accommodations (or supports) are necessary to support the student's access to the major life function

Section 504 Coordinators

Jessica DeLorenzo: District 504 Coordinator

Principals: Building Coordinators

Guidance at Secondary Level: Chairs



Questions?

