

Mt Blue Regional School District

227 Main St, Farmington, ME 04938



Special Education: A Guide for Parents

Letter to Families

Dear Parents/Guardians:

The purpose of this handbook is to help parents understand both the special education process and its associated services. When you first “think” your child might need special education services, you may experience great difficulty. For example, you may be so overwhelmed by the prospect of finding assistance for your child that you don’t know where to begin, or from whom you can seek advice. To help guide parents through the process of understanding and navigating special education services, Rockland School District created a handbook like this one in 2019. In our recognition of the value of such a resource to a District’s stakeholders, RSU 09’s Special Education Department used the Rockland model to create its own handbook, which reflects the most current federal and state developments in special education. If you have questions that remain unanswered after reviewing the information contained in this handbook, please don’t hesitate to contact the Department of Special Education (207-778-9517).

Sincerely,

RSU 09’s Special Education Department

Special Education Department

The Special Education Department is located at 227 Main Street, Farmington, ME 04938 in the central office building. The following personnel can be reached by calling 207-778-9517:

Director of Special Education: Cynthia Bernstein

Assistant Director of Special Education: Mike Hanson

District Special Ed Coordinator: Cheryl Webster

Special Services Administrative Assistant: Bette-Jo Tracy

****Parents and/or students who suspect they have a disability that may require special education and/or related services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and/or may require reasonable accommodations under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, should contact their school’s administrator regarding the special education referral process.**

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Common Terms in Special Education

Accommodation: A change in the manner in which instruction and assessment are delivered that does not alter the curriculum level or expectation of what is being measured or taught.

Adaptive Behavior Scale: A measure that provides information relating to the attainment of skills that will lead to independent functioning as an adult.

Advanced Written Notice: The notice the school must provide parents in writing at least 7 days prior to the date of an IEP meeting at which the school proposes to initiate or change, or refuses to initiate or change, the identification, evaluation, or educational placement of a child.

Age of Majority: All rights under IDEA part B and Maine's Unified Special Education Regulations transfer to the student at age 18. Students must be informed about their Age of Majority rights at or before the IEP meeting for the year the child will turn 17 years of age.

Alternate Assessment: An alternate assessment to Maine's required state assessments designed specifically for students with significant cognitive disabilities. The IEP team determines if this is appropriate for a particular student.

Amendment: A change to an existing IEP, such as increasing speech from 30 minutes to 45 minutes. An amendment is made to the plan after consultation with team members and begins upon an agreed upon date.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA): The 1990 Federal legislation enacted to prohibit discrimination on the basis of disability.

Annual Goal: A goal written in a student's IEP towards which the school personnel assists the student in striving to meet for the coming year. The goal must be measureable and relate to those areas in which the student has difficulty. Annual goals are reviewed once a year (at the student's annual review) and revised as needed.

Annual Review: A meeting conducted for every special education student each year. The IEP team convenes and reviews the student's progress on the IEP for the preceding year by reviewing the student's data, as well as revising the IEP to meet the student's needs for the upcoming school year. The meeting must be held no later than 364 days (one day less than a year) from either the last Annual Review or the original development of the IEP.

Assistive Technology: The special technology that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of a child with a physical, academic, or cognitive disability. Examples of assistive technology include things as simple as pencil grasps, computer programs such as those that assist with reading and typing, programs that magnify the screen, phonic ear devices, special communication switches, and special keyboards. This technology does not limit itself to items used with a computer. Assistive technology determinations begin with low technology and move to higher technology only if needed.

Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP): A document (also called a Positive Behavior Support Plan (PBSP)) created for students who are experiencing behavioral difficulties. The document details the behavior of concern and the steps the special education teacher and school staff will take to help the student acquire more appropriate behaviors. A BIP is often created following the results of a Functional Behavioral Assessment, but can be developed any time a need is identified.

Cognitive/intellectual Assessment: A test that measures a wide range of abilities, including attention, memory, problem solving, language skills and intellectual functioning. This test is part of the process of determining a student's cognitive strengths and weaknesses.

Confidentiality: A policy mandating that special education students' identifying information and educational information should be shared only with those school personnel who have an educational interest in that student for the current school year. Information about special education students or their parents will not be shared with those who are not educationally involved with the students.

Educational Assessment: A test that measures areas of knowledge or skills such as basic reading; reading comprehension; mathematics calculation, reasoning and application; written expression; oral expression; listening comprehension; and learning preference and style.

Extended School Year (ESY): A service required under IDEA for students who experience regression or limited recoupment of previously learned material. The school provides these services when it is likely that a child will lose skills during a break in school services and is not likely to recoup those skills in a reasonable amount of time. A child's performance data is used to show there are regression and recoupment problems and the decision to provide ESY services is made by the IEP Team.

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA): A federal law protecting the privacy of students and families in the collection, maintenance, use, and destruction of educational records.

Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE): Public education provided at no cost to the parent, and in accordance with an Individual Education Program.

Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA): A school-based process used by the IEP Team to hypothesize why a child engages in challenging behaviors and how the behaviors relate to the child's environment. In an FBA, a series of observations and questionnaires are compiled into a report, the purpose of which is to determine the function of a student's inappropriate behavior and to devise means to reduce/replace/eliminate the behavior.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA): A federal law requiring states to provide eligible children with disabilities a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment.

Individualized Education Program (IEP): A document required by law for every student who receives special education. The program outlines the child's needs, abilities, and goals, as well as

the special education services necessary to assist the child in meeting those goals. The IEP goals target the student's unique needs. No IEP is a guarantee of success; it is a good faith plan to improve performance.

Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP): A written document that describes the early intervention services for infants through toddlers (Birth-2 years of age) who have disabilities.

Individualized Service Plan (ISP): A plan similar to an IEP which outlines the services a district will make available to a student who is parentally placed in a private school or is home schooled (if requested).

Intervention: A method, strategy, material, or environmental change that is used by a regular education teacher to accommodate a struggling student in the general education program.

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE): A requirement that school districts educate students with disabilities in regular classrooms with their peers without disabilities and in the school they would attend if not disabled, to the maximum extent appropriate.

Manifestation Determination: An IEP Team directed process to determine if a student's specific behavior was or was not caused by the student's disability, and/or was or was not caused by the school's failure to implement the student's IEP.

Mediation: A process in which the parent(s) and guardian(s) of a student with a disability and a representative of the school district meet with a mediator, who is an independent person. By asking questions, and discussing all information with both parties, the mediator helps the parent(s) and the school district representative resolve disagreements, reach a more complete understanding of each other's concerns, and agree upon the special education program for the student in a cooperative and timely manner.

Modification: A change in the regular education curriculum and/or assessment that adjusts the standards of the curriculum (and the level of rigor) to meet the needs of the student. Modifications are made when the expectations are beyond the student's level of ability. Modifications may be minimal or very complex depending on the student's level of need. Example: Student may only be expected to learn ½ of the assigned spelling words.

Occupational Therapy (OT): A related service associated with the improvement of fine motor, sensory, and daily living skills that is provided to a student in order to allow him/her to benefit from his or her special education program.

Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP): The federal office responsible for administering programs and requirements under the IDEA.

Physical Therapy (PT): A related service associated with the improvement of gross motor skills and coordination that is provided to a student in order to allow him/her to benefit from his or her special education program.

Present Levels of Academic, Functional, and Developmental Performance: A statement on a child's IEP that summarizes the student's levels of academic achievement, functional performance, and, if appropriate, developmental performance. This information about the student can originate from: interaction with the student, teacher/parent anecdotal reports, classroom performance, and recent evaluations.

Prior Written Notice: A notice that must be provided to the parents in writing no more than 7 days after an IEP meeting. The written notice must, in understandable language, describe and explain school's proposed or refused action, describe the information used to make the decision, describe and explain other considered options, provide a summary of the parents' comments, include a statement about the parent's rights and available resources, and include a list of team members.

Procedural Safeguards: A summary of a parent's rights under special education law that must be offered to parents at least once every year by the School Department.

Rating Scale: A measure to provide information for comparing a student's targeted behavior(s) to other students. Developmental scales provide information related to areas of child growth and development and allow comparisons to be made between developmental levels of one student and others of the same age.

Re-evaluation: A process required by law to re-evaluate special education students in order to determine whether the student continues to be eligible for special education services and to determine the child's strengths and needs. The IEP team determines the components of the re-evaluation. A re-evaluation shall occur not more frequently than once a year, unless the parent and school agree otherwise, and at least once every three years, unless the parent and school agree that a re-evaluation is unnecessary.

Referral: The initial step of the special education process. A teacher, parent, or other individual or agency representative with knowledge of the child may refer any student who needs, or is believed to need, special education or related services in order to receive a free and appropriate public education. Referrals for special education testing should be submitted to the school in writing, and parents or teachers making referrals should keep a copy of the written request.

Related Service: A service designed to support the delivery of special education direct instruction that is necessary for a child to achieve his or her special education goals. Examples of related services include speech/language therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, and social work services.

Resource Room: A special education service location in which a student receives part-time special education instruction outside of the regular classroom. Resource room time can vary according to student need and is dependent on his/her individual needs.

Response to Intervention (RTI): A general education process designed to help all students at risk of academic and behavioral difficulties. It requires a multi-step process of providing intervention and supports to students who struggle to meet appropriate academic and behavioral benchmarks. RTI is

a preventative measure that provides assistance to students early when they begin to struggle. It is a required part of the pre-referral process for many disability criteria.

Short-term Objective: A smaller, measurable step that assists students in meeting an overall annual goal. These objectives are required only for those students who are participating in the alternate assessment. Short-term objectives should be written in such a way that accurate and consistent measurement can be taken of the student's progress on the objective. The objective should also document criteria for what is considered successful accomplishment of the objective.

Specially Designed Instruction (SDI): A process of adapting, as appropriate, the content, methodology, or delivery of instruction to address the unique needs of the child with a disability to ensure the child has access to the general curriculum.

Staffing: An informal meeting in which the child's team may discuss concerns about a child. If the team feels a change needs to be made to the IEP, the IEP may be amended. A parent, or the school, may request a staffing at any time.

State Educational Agency (SEA): An agency in the state responsible for overseeing public education (i.e., Maine Department of Education).

Supplementary Aid or Service: An aid, service, or support provided in regular education classes that enables children with disabilities to be educated with nondisabled children to the maximum extent possible.

Transition: A coordinated set of activities for a child with a disability that is designed within an outcome oriented process, promotes movement from school to post-school activities, and is based on the student's needs. A transition plan is required in Maine beginning when the child is in the 9th grade or reaches the age of 16.

Abbreviations in Special Education

Acronym	Explanation
ABA	Applied Behavior Analysis
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
ADD	Attention Deficit Disorder
ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorder
AT	Assistive Technology
AYP	Adequate Yearly Progress
BIP	Behavior Intervention Plan
CBM	Curriculum-Based Measurement
CCSS	Common Core State Standards
DHHS	Department of Health and Human Services
DTT	Discrete Trial Teaching
ED	Emotional Disturbance
ELL	English Language Learner
ESY	Extended School Year
FAPE	Free Appropriate Public Education
FBA	Functional Behavioral Assessment
FERPA	Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act
IAES	Interim Alternative Educational Setting
ID	Intellectual Disability
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
IEE	Independent Educational Evaluation
IEP	Individualized Education Program
IQ	Intelligence Quotient
LEP	Limited English Proficiency
LRE	Least Restrictive Environment
LREA	Least Restrictive Educational Alternative
MADSEC	Maine Administrators of Services for Children with Disabilities
MD	Multiple Disabilities

Acronym	Explanation
MDOE	Maine Department of Education
MEA	Maine Educational Assessment
MPF	Maine Parent Federation
MUSER	Maine Unified Special Education Regulations
NAEP	National Assessment of Educational Progress
NCLB	No Child Left Behind
OCD	Obsessive Compulsive Disorder
OCR	Office of Civil Rights
ODD	Oppositional Defiant Disorder
OHI	Other Health Impairment
OI	Orthopedic Impairment
OSEP	Office of Special Education Programs
OSERS	Office of Special Education & Rehabilitative Services
USDOE	U.S. Department of Education
OT	Occupational Therapy
PT	Physical Therapy
RSU	Regional School Unit
RTI	Response to Intervention
SAD	School Administrative District
SAT	Student Assistance Team
SATs	Scholastic Aptitude Tests
SEA	State Educational Agency
SLD	Specific Learning Disability
SNOW	Strengths, Needs, Opportunities, and Worries (assessment)
SSDI	Social Security Disability Income
TBI	Traumatic Brain Injury
TDD	Telecommunication Devices for the Deaf
VI	Visual Impairment
VR	Vocational Rehabilitation

The Basic Steps in Special Education

Children can have all sorts of difficulties growing up. Sometimes these difficulties are immediately obvious; and sometimes they don't appear until a child is in school. Some children have trouble learning to read and write. Others have a hard time remembering new information. Still others may have trouble with their speech, or behavior. For some children, growing up can be very hard to do!

When a child is having trouble in school, it is important to find out why. The child may have a disability. By law, schools must provide special help to eligible children with disabilities. This help is called **special education and related services**.

There's a lot to know about the process by which children are identified as having a disability and in need of special education and related services. This handbook is devoted to helping parents/guardians learn about this process.

This overview, entitled "The Basic Steps in Special Education", summarizes the complicated process leading to a child's receipt of special education and related services.

Step 1: A child is identified as possibly needing special education and related services.

There are two primary ways in which children are identified as possibly needing special education and related services: the system known as Child Find, or by a parent or school-based referral.

Child Find: Each state is required by the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) to identify, locate, and evaluate all children with disabilities in the state who need special education and related services. To do so, states conduct what are known as Child Find activities. Please review RSU #09's child find statement:

Child Find for Students with Disabilities

RSU #09 has the legal responsibility to locate, evaluate, and identify all children of school age (5-22 years), residing within Farmington, Wilton, Industry, New Sharon, Chesterville, Starks, Temple, Weld, Vienna, and New Vineyard who may be in need of special education services due to a disability. This includes students who are attending public or private schools, and those who are homeschooled. Children may be eligible for special education under the following disability categories:

· Autism	· Deaf-blindness	· Deafness
· Developmental Delay (3-5)	· Developmental Delay (K)	· Emotional Disturbance
· Hearing Impairment	· Intellectual Disability	· Visual Impairment, Including Blindness
· Other Health Impairment	· Orthopedic Impairment	· Speech/Language Impairment
· Specific Learning Disability	· Traumatic Brain Injury	· Multiple Disabilities

If you have a child, or know of a child, residing within Farmington, Wilton, Industry, New Sharon, Chesterville, Starks, Temple, Weld, Vienna, and New Vineyard who may have a disability and may need special education services, or if you would like additional information, please contact RSU #09's Office of Special Education at 207-778-9517.

Please note that children from birth to age 5 have the same rights through the Child Development Services (CDS) System. If you have a child, or know of a child, who is from birth to age 5, resides within the towns of RSU #09, and may have a disability, please contact CDS at 207-778-6262.

Referral or request for evaluation: A school professional may ask that a child be evaluated to see if he or she has a disability. Parents may also contact the child's teacher or other school professional to ask that their child be evaluated. Referrals must be in writing.

If you need help writing the referral:

- Refer to page **27** of this handbook for guidance or,
- Contact one of the following persons:
 - Classroom teacher
 - Principal
 - Special Education teacher
 - RSU #09's Special Education Department Personnel

Parent consent is needed before a child may be evaluated. The Maine Unified Special Education Regulations (MUSER) state that evaluations must be completed within 45 school days after RSU #09's Special Education Director documents receipt of the parent's written consent for evaluation.

Step 2: Child is evaluated.

Evaluation is an essential early step in the special education process for a child. It is intended to answer these questions:

- Does the child have a disability that requires the provision of special education and related services?
- What are the child's specific educational needs?
- What special education and related services are appropriate for addressing those needs?

By law, the initial evaluation of the child must be "full and individual" – which is to say, focused on that child and that child alone. The evaluation must assess the child in all areas related to the child's suspected disability. Parents must receive a copy of all evaluation reports at least 3 days prior to the IEP Team Meeting at which the evaluations will be discussed.

The IEP team, a group of qualified individuals that includes the parents and other professionals, will use the evaluation results to decide upon the child's eligibility for special education and related services and to make decisions about an appropriate educational program for the child.

If the parents disagree with the evaluation, they have the right to take their child for an Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE). They can ask the school district to pay for this IEE. The district must then either: file a due process hearing request to show its evaluation is appropriate or pay for the IEE.

Step 3: Eligibility is decided.

The IEP team reviews both the child's evaluation results and data about the child's school performance. Together, they decide if the child is a "child with a disability," as defined by IDEA. If the parents do not agree with the eligibility decision, they may ask for mediation or a hearing to challenge the decision.

If the IEP team determines the child meets the criteria of a disability category, he or she is eligible for special education and related services. Within 30 calendar days after a child is determined eligible, the IEP team must meet to write an **Individualized Education Program (IEP)** for the child.

The school system schedules and conducts the IEP team meeting. School staff must:

- Contact the participants, including the parents, to schedule the meeting;
- Notify, in writing, the parents at least 7 calendar days prior to the meeting;

- Schedule the meeting at a mutually agreed upon time and place;
- Inform the parents of the purpose, time, and location of the meeting;
- Inform the parents who will be attending; and
- Inform the parents that they may invite people to the meeting who have knowledge or special expertise about the child.

The IEP team gathers to talk about the child's needs and write the student's IEP. Parents and the student (when appropriate) are full participating members of the team and are involved in the joint decision making process. The IEP includes:

- Present Levels of Performance,
- Annual Goals,
- Special education and related services,
- Supplemental Aids, Services, Modifications, and/or Supports

Before the school system may provide special education and related services to the child for the first time, the parents must give their initial consent in writing. The child begins to receive services as soon as possible after the IEP is written and consent is given.

If the parents do not give consent for special education and related services, the child will not be able to receive special education services, even if the school disagrees with the parents' decision.

If the parents do not agree with the IEP and placement, they may discuss their concerns with other members of the IEP team and try to work out an agreement. If they still disagree, parents may meet with the Director of Special Education, ask for mediation, or the school district may offer mediation. Parents may file a complaint with the state education agency and may request a due process hearing, at which time mediation must be available. This process may occur at any time during the period in which a child is receiving special education and related services.

Step 4: Special education and related services are provided.

The school makes sure the child's IEP is implemented as soon as possible following the IEP team meeting, but no later than 30 days after the IEP team's initial identification of the child. Parents are provided with a copy of the IEP. Each of the child's teachers and service providers has access to the IEP and knows his or her specific responsibilities for carrying out the IEP. These responsibilities include not only the specified special education and related services, but also the accommodations, modifications, and supports required by the child to benefit from his or her education.

Step 5: Progress is measured and reported to parents.

The child's progress toward his or her annual goals is measured by means specified in the IEP. His or her parents are regularly informed of their child's progress and whether that progress is enough for the child to achieve his or her goals by the end date of the IEP. Progress reports usually are provided to parents on the same schedule as student report cards, but they sometimes are provided on a more frequent basis.

Step 6: IEP is annually reviewed.

The IEP team reviews the child's IEP at least once a year (within 364 days of the creation of the prior IEP), or more often if the parents or school ask for a review. The IEP is revised and updated at the child's annual review. Parents are team members and must be invited to participate in these meetings. Parents can make suggestions for changes, can agree or disagree with the IEP, and can agree or disagree with their child's placement. Concerns may also be discussed more informally through a staffing, after which an IEP may be amended.

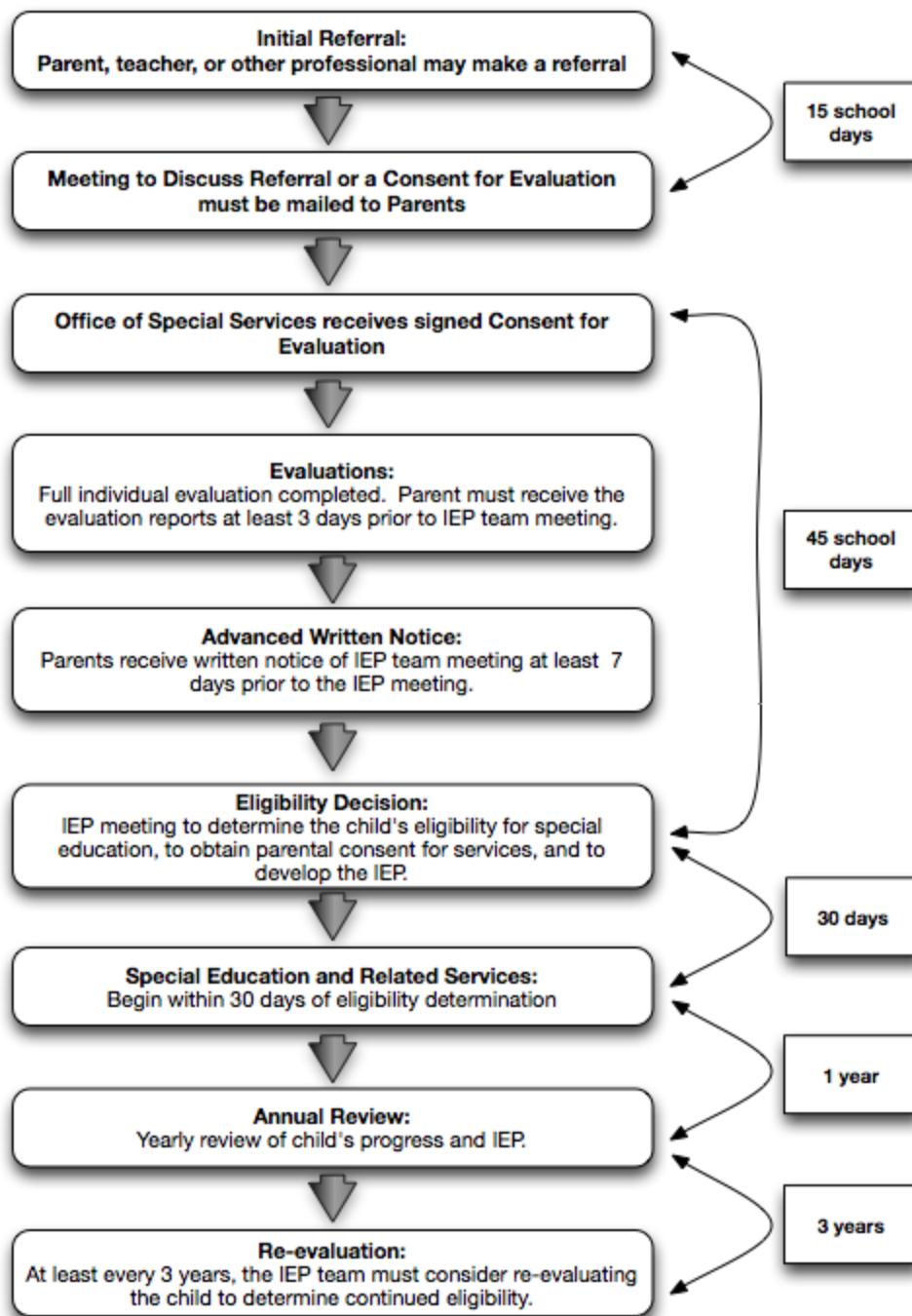
If parents do not agree with their child's IEP and placement, they may discuss their concerns with other members of the IEP team and try to work out an agreement. There are several options, including additional testing, an independent evaluation, meeting with RSU #09's Special Education Director, or asking for mediation or a due process hearing. Parents may also file a complaint with the state education agency if they believe a violation of the law has occurred.

Step 7: Child is reevaluated.

At least every three years, the IEP team must consider re-evaluating a child. This evaluation is often called a "triennial." Its purpose is to determine if the child continues to be a child with a disability, as defined by IDEA, and continues to require special education and related services. However, the child can be re-evaluated more often if conditions warrant, or if the child's parent or teacher asks for a new evaluation.

Adapted from: <http://www.nichcy.org/EducateChildren/Steps/Pages/default.aspx>

The Basic Steps in Special Education Timeline



Description of Evaluations

Evaluations are necessary to determine if your child is eligible for special education and related services. The evaluation process identifies your child's strengths, areas of need, and how he or she may learn. This information is used to decide if your child has a disability and is eligible for special education and related services. If the team decides your child is eligible for services, the information gained from the evaluation process will be used to help create your child's IEP. If the team decides your child is not eligible for services, the information gained from the evaluation process can be helpful for identifying appropriate general education accommodations.

Academic/Developmental Testing: is designed to determine what the child's academic/developmental progress is within specific academic areas; i.e., overall development, reading, math, and spelling. The child's learning and developmental achievement will be compared to the achievement of children in this school and children throughout the country. Examples include: *Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement, Wechsler Individual Achievement Test IV, Peabody Individual Achievement Test, Woodcock Johnson Test of Achievement IV*

Intellectual Testing: is designed to measure different types of abilities such as what the child can do and how he or she does it, and involves the individual administration of intelligence tests. Examples include: *Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children V, Comprehensive Test of Nonverbal Intelligence – 2, Differential Ability Scale -2, Woodcock Johnson Test of Cognitive Ability-III, Ray Complex Figure Test*

Observation: is completed in the child's learning environment (including the regular classroom setting) to document the child's academic performance and behavior in the areas of difficulty. Examples include: *Observation by the Special Education Teacher and/or Therapist, Student Observation System*

Learning Development Testing: is designed to determine what the child's strengths and weaknesses are in terms of processing information. Examples include: *Bayley Scales of Infant and Toddler Development, Sensory-motor tests, Speech and hearing tests*

Speech/language Testing: is designed to determine the student's communication skills in articulation, voice, fluency, expressive language, and receptive language. Examples include: *Test of Language Development, Receptive, Expressive Test of Language, Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, Clinical Evaluation of Language Fundamentals, Goldman Fristoe Test of Articulation*

Psychological Evaluation: is designed to assess personality and/or behavioral functioning. Commonly used evaluation methods include parent and child interviews, personality inventories, behavior rating scales and projective tests. Examples include: *Behavior Assessment Scales for Children, Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scales-2, Adaptive Behavior Assessment System-2, Multi-dimensional Anxiety Scale, Brown ADD Scales*

Physical Therapy Evaluation: is designed to assess a student's large motor development. Evaluations include, but are not limited to, range of motion, manual muscle assessment, functional skill performance, mobility in the environment, reflex integration development, muscle tone assessment, gross motor skills (e.g., balance, coordination, agility, skill refinement), and review of any equipment needs the student may have. Examples include: *Range of Motions Measure*

Occupational Therapy Evaluation: is designed to assess the functional needs of the student related, but not limited, to the performance of: self-help skills, adaptive behavior and play, sensory development and integration, motor development and integration, and posture. Examples include: *Developmental Test of Visual Motor Integration, Bruinicks-Oseretsky Test of Motor Proficiency*

Interest and Aptitude Assessment: is designed to assess strengths, weaknesses, and interests as they relate to vocational preparation and choice. Examples include: *Myers Briggs Type Indicator, Bridges Program*

Additional Assessments: are designed to collect essential information on health, social, or developmental history, behavior (may be completed by an interview with the parents, school staff, or child), or sensory assessment in vision or hearing. Examples include: *Functional Behavioral Assessment, Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scales-2, Adaptive Behavior Assessment System-2*

Other: There may be other types of assessments that would give valuable information about the student. Examples include: *Student Interview, Structured Developmental History*

Common Assessments* (used throughout the district for all students): An assessment created to evaluate all students from the same grade level or course. Examples include: *Developmental Reading Assessment, Observation Survey, Northwest Educational Assessment, Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills, Maine Education Assessment, Scholastic Aptitude Test, Diagnostic Accuplacer, Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test, Maine Educational Assessment*

*The IEP team may identify accommodations or modifications for common assessments. However, each test has a specific set of allowable accommodations and the support used for instruction may not be permitted for some tests.

Adapted from: <http://www.maine.gov/doe/specialed/forms/index.html>

Special Education Eligibility Categories

- Autism
- Deaf-Blindness
- Deafness
- Developmental Delay (3-5, K)
- Emotional Disturbance
- Hearing Impairment
- Intellectual Disability
- Multiple Disabilities
- Orthopedic Impairment
- Other Health Impairment
- Speech or Language Impairment
- Specific Learning Disability
- Traumatic Brain Injury
- Visual Impairment, Including Blindness

For more information on the eligibility categories in the Maine Unified Special Education Regulations, please visit <http://www.maine.gov/doe/specialed/laws/chapter101.pdf> or call the Maine Parent Federation at 1-800-870-7746 to request a paper copy.

Continuum of Service Options for Children Eligible for Special Education

Services for children with disabilities will vary between children depending upon their strengths and needs. In all cases, final determination of educational services for a student with disabilities will be dependent upon the identified needs of the student as determined by the IEP team.

Services for children with disabilities shall ensure the following:

In selecting the least restrictive environment, consideration is given to any potentially harmful effects of the suggested service on the student and the rights of the student to be educated with same aged peers.

A continuum of services is available to meet the individual needs of students including, but not limited to, the following:

General Education with consultation: The student is served in the general education classroom without any accommodations or modifications to the curriculum, instruction, testing, or grading. The special education teacher is responsible for consulting with the teacher(s) and monitoring the student's progress according to the IEP, or as determined by the IEP team. Example: *A student who fully participates in the 5th grade general education math class without modifications or accommodations. The special education teacher meets the general education teacher once a month to make sure the student continues to make progress in the general education curriculum.*

General Education with consultation/accommodations: The child is served in the general education classroom with consultation and support from the special education teacher. The general education teacher is responsible for direct instruction, testing, grading, and behavioral management as specified in the IEP. The special education teacher may assist the general education teacher by designing and making material adaptations and accommodations, etc. Example: *A student who participates in the 8th grade general education science program with accommodations, which allow for shortened assignments and tests/assignments read to the student orally.*

General Education with direct special education support in the classroom: The child receives special education support for the general education curriculum in the general education setting. The special education teacher, therapist, or trained educational technician will be in the general education classroom to provide direct instruction, instructional support, and other assistance to the child or a group of children. Example: *A 2nd grade student participates in the classroom with education technician support for positive behavioral support.*

General Education with direct special education support outside the classroom: The child receives special education support for the general education curriculum outside the general education setting. When the services cannot be appropriately provided in the general education setting, the child may receive selected services he or she needs in a separate education setting. Example: *An 11th grade student receives an*

English credit by participating in an English class in the Resource Room with a special education teacher.

Separate Special Education Services: The student is served in a separate special education setting outside of the general education classroom for the majority of the day. The student has significant special education needs that cannot be satisfactorily achieved in a less restrictive setting. Example: *A 4th grade student receives reading, writing, math, social studies, and science instruction in a special education setting and participates in physical education and recess with his peers without disabilities.*

Out of District Placement: The student is served in a specialized school specifically designed to address special learning or behavioral needs. The student has significant special education needs that cannot be satisfactorily achieved in their public school setting. Example: *A 7th grade student receives all of her education in a private day treatment school setting.*

A Parent Checklist for IEP Meeting Preparation

You are an important member of the IEP team. You know your child better than any other member of the team and can provide important information and insight about your child. Just as

the other members will prepare for the IEP meeting, you must also take time to prepare. Use this list as a guideline to prepare for the meeting.

- ☐ Read the advanced written notice to see what issues will be discussed and who will attend.
- ☐ Ensure enough time is allotted for the meeting. Recognize you can schedule a second meeting if needed.
- ☐ Ask the school for copies of any relevant information you do not have including:
 - Most recent comprehensive individual assessments and testing,
 - Progress notes or updates on IEP goals,
 - Student Code of Conduct.
- ☐ Gather any reports you have from outside therapists, tutors, consultants or doctors, and provide a copy of these to the school to review prior to the IEP meeting if you would like to share them.
- ☐ Make a list of your child's strengths.
- ☐ Make a list of your child's needs. Make a list of other things you would like your child to learn during the year. How will programming help your child? Will he or she be able to participate more fully in school life? Will he or she become more independent? How will his or her life change or improve? Answers to these questions will be the basis for developing your child's IEP goals during the creation of the IEP.
- ☐ Make a list of questions you may have about special education.
- ☐ Decide who you will bring to the IEP team meeting. You must notify the school if you will be bringing an attorney to your IEP. The school district will want to have their attorney present as well.
- ☐ If your child is attending the IEP team meeting, explain to him/her what the meeting is going to be like (who are the people, the purpose of the meeting, etc.). Discuss what your child can do if he or she becomes uncomfortable.
- ☐ Decide if you want to meet with the teacher(s) before the IEP meeting.
- ☐ If you want to tape record the IEP meeting, gather necessary equipment.
- ☐ Contact the special education teacher, school principal, or Director of Special Education if you have further questions.
- ☐ If you don't understand something during the meeting, ASK QUESTIONS!!!!

Key Contacts

Name:

Address:

Phone #:

Academy Hill School

585 Depot St

	Wilton, ME 04294	645-4488
Gerald D. Cushing School	21 Cushing Dr Wilton, ME 04294	645-2442
W. G. Mallett School	16 Middle St Farmington, ME 04938	778-3529
Mt Blue Middle School	169 Middle St Farmington, ME	778-3511
Cascade Brook School	162 Learning Ln Farmington, ME	778-4821
Cape Cod Hill School	516 Cape Cod Hill Rd New Sharon, ME	778-3031
Mt Blue Campus	129 Seamon Rd Farmington, ME	778-3561
Superintendent's Office	227 Main St Farmington, ME	778-6571
Special Education Office	227 Main St Farmington, ME	778-9517

Request for Independent Educational Evaluation:

Sometimes a family may feel that the results of the school's evaluation do not accurately describe their child. Some parents may want additional academic tests or medical exams. Or they may be interested in having evaluations done in skill areas the school staff did not test. Parents can choose to have their child tested outside the school system, for these or other reasons.

If you want the school to pay for an Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE), it is best practice to contact the school and make your request before any independent testing is done. Some reasons you may want to request an independent evaluation include:

- You believe the original evaluation was inaccurate.
- The original evaluation was not done in your child's native language.
- You believe that the original evaluation was incomplete and additional tests are needed.
- The evaluation was not done with the needed accommodations (for example, in Braille or administered by someone who knows sign language).

Before you proceed with an IEE, you may want to discuss your concerns with the Director of Special Services. It is possible that the school district has options that will address your concerns. The school system may agree to your request and pay for the IEE. On the other hand, the school system may deny your request and is then required to ask for a hearing to show that its own evaluation was appropriate. You will have a chance at this hearing to state your reasons why the school system should be required to pay for the IEE. A Hearing Officer, an impartial third person, listens to and reviews the evidence at a hearing. This individual then decides if the school system must pay for an independent evaluation. If the hearing officer decides in favor of the school system, you may still obtain an independent evaluation, but you must pay for it. The school in any decision made regarding your child's free appropriate public education must consider the results of the IEE.

RSU #09's Special Education Complaint Procedures:

RSU #09 believes that problems are best solved as close to the source as possible. Therefore, parents with concerns about their child's special education services are encouraged to take the following steps:

- First, meet your child's special education teacher. Talk honestly about your concerns and what you hope will happen. Seek ways in which you can work with the teacher to help your child.
- If you continue to have concerns, meet with the Principal of your child's school.
- If you continue to have concerns, meet with the Director of Special Education.
- If you continue to have concerns, meet with the Superintendent of Schools.
- If you continue to have concerns, and intend to request a due process hearing, you must first participate in a Resolution Meeting with Department personnel.
- If RSU #09 Personnel cannot help you solve the problem, you should seek mediation through the Maine Department of Education's Complaint Management System (207-624-6644). You may also request a complaint investigation or due processing hearing; both of these procedures are more complicated than mediation.

Sample Letters

Throughout your child's school years, there is always a need to communicate with the people at his or her school: teachers, administrators, and others concerned with your child's education. There are also times when the school needs to communicate with you. This is particularly true when your child has a disability and is receiving special education services. Some of this communication is informal, such as phone calls, comments in your child's notebook, a chat when picking your child up from school, or at a school function. Other forms of communication are more formal and need to be written down.

Letters provide both you and the school with a record of ideas, concerns, and suggestions. Putting your thoughts on paper gives you the opportunity to take as long as you need to:

- State your concerns,
- Think over what you have written,
- Make changes,
- Have someone else read over the letter and make suggestions.

Letters also give people the opportunity to review what has been suggested or discussed. A lot of confusion and misunderstanding can be avoided by writing down thoughts and ideas.

Note: When you communicate your thoughts, ideas, and concerns, you define your child's needs. When you emphasize the positive aspects of your child's education, you develop a working relationship with the professionals in your child's life. When you convey "what works" rather than spending time and energy on what doesn't work, you become a stronger advocate for your child. When you need to state concerns or problems in writing, do so in a factual, non-emotional, and business-like way; this will ultimately help you get the results you want for your child. When you and the school work as partners, your child benefits!

Adapted from: <http://www.nichcy.org/EducateChildren/Steps/Pages/default.aspx>

Sample Letter 1:

Discussing a Problem

Your Name

Street Address
City, State, Zip Code
Daytime Telephone Number

Name of Principal
Name of School
Street Address
City, State, Zip Code

Today's Date (Month, Day, Year)

Dear (Principal's Name),

In this paragraph, say who you are, give your child's full name, and his or her current class placement. Say something positive about your child's situation at this school.

In this paragraph, briefly explain why you are writing. Give relevant history and facts that support your concerns. (For example, your 3rd grader is struggling in school and you want to ask for help. You might say that your child's schoolwork has been getting worse throughout the year. This comment is relevant to the situation; a comment about something from your child's infancy probably is not relevant.)

In this paragraph, state what you would like to have happen or what you would like to see changed. You could also briefly state what you would not like, or what has been tried and not worked. However, spend most of this paragraph writing about what you want.

In this paragraph, describe what type of response you would prefer. For example, do you want to arrange a meeting, to receive a return letter, or to receive a phone call? Give your daytime telephone number and state that you look forward to hearing from the person soon or by a reasonable date ("Please respond by the 15th.") End with the statement, "Thank you for your attention to this matter."

Sincerely,
Your name

cc: your child's teacher

Note: The "cc:" at the bottom of the letter means you are sending a copy of your letter to the people listed after the cc. If you write to the Director of Special Education about a problem at your child's school, you should copy the principal. If you write to the principal about a problem, you should copy your child's teacher or other involved staff. This follows the "chain of command" and lets involved persons know your concerns, and that you are taking action to resolve these concerns

Sample Letter 2:

Requesting an Initial Evaluation/Referral for Special Education

Your Name
Street Address
City, State, Zip Code
Daytime Telephone Number

Name of Principal or Special Education Administrator
Name of School
Street Address
City, State, Zip Code

Today's Date (Month, Day, Year)

Dear (Principal's or Administrator's Name),

I am writing to request that my son/daughter, (child's name), be evaluated for special education services. I am worried that (child's name) is not doing well in school and believe he/she may need special education services in order to learn. (Child's name) is in the () grade at (name of school). (Teacher's name) is his/her teacher.

Specifically, I am worried because (child's name) does/does not (give a few specific examples of your child's problems at school).

We have tried the following to help (child's name): (If you or the school have done anything extra to help your child, briefly state it here).

I understand that I have to give written permission in order for (child's name) to be evaluated. Before the evaluation begins, I have some questions about the process: (list any questions you may have). I would be happy to talk with you about (child's name). You can send me information or call me during the day at (daytime telephone number). Thank you for your prompt attention to my request.

Sincerely,

Your Name

cc: your child's principal (if letter is addressed to an administrator)
your child's teacher(s)

Note: If professionals outside the school system have identified your child as an individual with a disability, add the following sentence to the end of the first paragraph above:

(Child's name) has been identified as having (name of disability) by (name of professional). Enclosed is a copy of the report(s) I have received that explains (child's name) condition.

Sample Letter 3:

Requesting an Independent Educational Evaluation (at public expense)

Your Name
Street Address
City, State, Zip Code
Daytime Telephone Number

Name of Person
Title
Street Address
City, State, Zip Code

Today's Date (Month, Day, Year)

Dear (Name),

My son/daughter, (child's name), is in the () grade, at (name of school), in (teacher's name) class. He/She was evaluated for special education services in (month/year). I am writing to request an Independent Educational Evaluation at public expense, for the following reasons: Briefly list your reason(s). Be very specific. For example:

"I disagree with the school's evaluation results because..."

"The evaluation should have included..."

"Evaluation should have been done in the area of ..."

I would like this Independent Educational Evaluation to be done as quickly as possible so that we can fully address (child's name) needs. Please respond as soon as possible and send me copies of the school's guidelines for this. My daytime telephone number is (your phone number). Thank you.

Sincerely,

Your Name

cc: your child's principal
your child's teacher

Sample Letter 4: Requesting Your Child's Records

Your Name
Street Address
City, State, Zip Code
Daytime Telephone Number

Name of Person
Title
Street Address
City, State, Zip Code

Today's Date (Month, Day, Year)

Dear (Name),

I am writing to schedule a time to come and review all of my child's records. My son/daughter, (child's name), is in the () grade at (name of school), in (teacher's name) class. I will also need to make copies of some or all of these records.

Please let me know where and when I can come and see the records. I need these records by (date). You can reach me during the day at (daytime phone number).

I look forward to hearing from you soon. Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Your Name

Sample Letter 5: Requesting an IEP Team Meeting

Your Name
Street Address
City, State, Zip Code
Daytime Telephone Number

Name of Your Child's Special Education Teacher
Name of School
Street Address
City, State, Zip Code

Today's Date (Month, Day, Year)

Dear (Teacher's Name),

I am writing to request an IEP review meeting. I would like to discuss making some possible changes in (child's name) IEP. I am concerned about (state your reasons, but don't go into detail about the specific changes you want to make – save those for the meeting).

I would also like to have (names of specialists or other staff) attend. I think his/her/their ideas about the changes we may need to make will be valuable.

I can arrange to meet with you and other members of the IEP team on (days) between (give a range of time, such as between 2:00 and 4:00). Please let me know what time would be best for you.

I look forward to hearing from you soon. My daytime telephone number is (your daytime telephone number). Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Your Name

cc: specialists or other staff

Sample Letter 6: Writing a Positive Feedback Letter

Your Name
Street Address
City, State, Zip Code
Daytime Telephone Number

Name of Person
Title
Street Address
City, State, Zip Code

Today's Date (Month, Day, Year)

Dear (Name),

I am writing to let you know how very pleased I am with the education of my son/daughter, (child's name) is receiving at (name of school).

(Child's name) has had great success with (briefly say what is going right). In particular, (name the professionals working with your child and how they have made a difference).

I look forward to (child's name) continuing progress. Thank you for all your efforts, and those of your staff.

Sincerely,

Your Name

cc: If you write to the school district's Superintendent or Director of Special Services, make sure to copy the people who directly deserve recognition for your child's success – the principal, teachers, and other staff.

Resources

If you have further questions about Special Education, please contact:

- **RSU #09's Special Education Department**
 - Phone: 207-778-9517
 - Web Address: <http://www.mtbluersd.org/su/special-education>
- **Maine Parent Federation**
 - Phone: 800-870-7746 (statewide)
 - Web Address: www.mpf.org

*For a more in-depth list of resources, contact the Maine Parent Federation for a list of State and National Resources