



BOULDER VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT Special Education

SEAC Welcome Packet

BVSD's **Special Education Advisory Committee** (SEAC) is a group of volunteer parents, educators, and community partners who work to improve educational outcomes in the district. A SEAC subcommittee worked to put together a packet of information we wished we had when we first began obtaining special education services for our kids. We wanted to give other parents in our district a "roadmap" to follow as they begin their families' journeys in special education.

We know every situation is different, and you will likely have questions and need resources that are not included here. Additionally, there may be items in this packet that do not apply to your circumstances. Please use what works for you and also feel free to modify the resources to meet your needs. Our hope is that this provides a good starting place for you, that you feel supported in the process, and most of all, that your child receives the best services possible.



Created by SEAC in 2018, Updated by SEAC 2022

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Special Education Things We Wish We Knew

Here are some “insider tips” -- things we wish someone would have told us when we first started with the IEP process. We hope this friendly advice from fellow

parents of children receiving special education support in Boulder Valley School District will help you navigate the system.

“Ask a lot of questions. *If you don’t understand something that’s written in the IEP, ask for clarity. IEPs are legal documents, and there is often jargon and acronyms. Make sure your child’s goals are written in a language that you understand. You should be able to tell your neighbor what your child’s goals aim for.”*

“Be the expert *you are about your child. Teachers also have expertise and ideally, you will collaborate and work as a team in the best interest of your child, but YOU know your child best and are their best advocate. You have to know what works best for your child, and ask for it. If you don’t even know what to ask for or what to expect, ask the team for ideas, join a parent group, or attend workshops or conferences.”*

“Get to know your child’s team. *This will help with communication and make meetings more productive. There are many more tools the school uses to help your child beyond the IEP. Ask what curriculum/academic tools they will be using to support the IEP goals, what data collection/progress monitoring methods they will be using to track progress and discuss goals to be used for tracking progress for ESY qualification.. It’s ok to bring outside experts and help to IEP meetings in order to best serve your child. Above all, be friendly, positive and open minded. Everyone wants your child to succeed.”*

“It’s ok to bring someone to support you in the IEP meeting. *It helps to have another set of ears and perspective from outside the school. Share pictures and stories from family time and extra-curricular activities your child participates in so the IEP team can see a more complete picture of who your child is.”*

Important Acronyms

Here's a guide to acronyms and jargon you're likely to come across if you have a child who receives special education services or supports.

ADA	American with Disabilities Act
ADHD	Attention Deficit (Hyperactivity) Disorder
ALP	Advanced Learning Plan
ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorder
BCBA	Board Certified Behavior Analyst
BSP	Behavior Support Plan
CCB	Community Centered Board
CDE	Colorado Department of Education
CP	Cerebral Palsy
CPP	Colorado Preschool Project
CSEAC	Colorado Special Education Advisory Committee
DAP	Developmentally Appropriate Practice
D/HOH	Deaf/Hard of Hearing
ECE	Early Childhood Education
ECSE	Early Childhood Special Education
EEO	Extended Evidence Outcomes
EI	Early Intervention
ELL	English Language Learner
ESL	English as a Second Language
ESY	Extended School Year
ESSA	Every Student Succeeds Act
ESSU	Exceptional Student Services Unit (CDE)
FAPE	Free Appropriate Public Education
FBA	Functional Behavior Assessment
ICAN	Intensive Center for Affective Needs
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
IDD	Intellectual and/or Developmental Disability

IEE	Independent Educational Evaluation
IEP	Individualized Education Program/Plan
ILC	Intensive Learning Center
ILP	Individual Literacy Plan
LLI	Leveled Literacy Intervention
LRE	Least Restrictive Environment
MTSS	Multi-Tiered System of Supports
OCD	Obsessive Compulsive Disorder
ODD	Oppositional Defiant Disorder
OSEP	Office of Special Education Programs
OT	Occupational Therapy
PCD	Perceptual or Communicative Disability
PT	Physical Therapy
SEAC	Special Education Advisory Council
SEL	Social Emotional Learning
SIED	Significant Identifiable Emotional Disability
SLD	Significant Learning Disability
SLP	Speech Language Pathologist
SPED	Special Education
TAG	Talented and Gifted
2E	Twice Exceptional - both gifted and has a disability
504 Plan	A student supports education plan under anti-discrimination law



Special Education- Where Do I Begin?

REFERRAL

- ☐ Start by discussing concerns with the classroom teacher and if needed, an administrator. If not in a BVSD school, [contact Child Find](#).
- ☐ A school based team can come together for a *Student Support Team* meeting to review students records and activities. The team can develop a plan to provide interventions to support the student while monitoring progress.
- ☐ Parents have the right to request a special education referral in writing, which may lead to special education testing to determine eligibility. A school team can deny the referral if they think there isn't enough evidence to indicate a referral is needed.
- ☐ *At any point, the team can suggest determining whether the student is eligible for special education.*

FIRST STEP

- ☐ The first step is to determine whether the team suspects the student needs special education services.
- ☐ Special education services, supports and aides are provided to students whose identified disability impacts their ability to access the general education curriculum and learning environment.

EVALUATION

This is a formal process and requires parent/guardian permission to assess the student. The team conducts evaluations/assessments based on the suspected area of disability to determine if the student meets the Colorado Department of Education criteria for a specific disability. The team has up to sixty days to complete all assessments.

INDIVIDUAL EDUCATION PLAN (IEP)

If a student qualifies for special education, an IEP is developed to address the identified areas of need. The team (which includes parents) will create SMART goals (Specific, Measurable, Appropriate, Relevant, Time-sensitive) and parents will receive progress reports for those goals at grading periods. All support services provided are determined by the students IEP team. Support ranges from specialized instruction to paraprofessional support to related service provided by therapists and other specialists.

PLACEMENT

BVSD students are general education students first. Special education services along with accommodation, are provided in an inclusive school setting, which in most cases is a general education classroom. Typically students who need fewer than three hours a day of special education support are supported at any focus, charter or neighborhood school at a 'resource' level.

If a student's needs cannot be met through a resource level of support, BVSD has center-based programs at some elementary and middle schools. These Intensive Learning Centers (ILC) have paraeducators and more resources to support students. If a student needs an ILC to access their education, the district will place a student in that center. Parents cannot enroll on their own.

WHAT IS NEXT?

- ☐ *Progress Reports*—In BVSD, parents can expect a progress report on their child's IEP goals at each grading period. Reports state whether goals have been met by providing measurable data.
- ☐ *Annual Review*—Every year, the IEP team convenes to review student progress and update and add goals as needed.
- ☐ *Triennial/Re-evaluation*— Every three years, by law, students are re-assessed to determine if they are still eligible for special education services. This can occur sooner if there is new information or an increase in needs

- ☐ *Exiting Special Education*— If a student's needs are remediated and the student no longer needs services, supports and aids to access general education, the student exits special education. Parents can also revoke special education services at any time.



Tips for Developing a Positive Relationship with Your Child's Special Education Team

*Parent Tip: “**Get organized!** Print a copy of your child’s IEP. Make sure you have a filing system and dedicated spot in your house for all your “SPED stuff.” Keep documentation of everything. Make a special email folder to put all messages between you and your child’s teachers and other school and district personnel at school.”*

- ❖ Make initial contact with the team leader (usually the ILC or resource teacher) and the general education teachers at the beginning of the school year to develop a positive relationship.
- ❖ Offer to share the *About Me* worksheet with the IEP team and classroom teacher.
- ❖ Ask the teachers preferred means and time of communication and how often they would like communication.
- ❖ Respect the team members' time: communicate as necessary but know exactly what you need to communicate before contacting them and be specific and concise.
- ❖ If appropriate, in addition to you working on the following, ask the team to work on having your child check their backpack every day upon arriving at school and give items to the appropriate person. This helps to foster independence, relay information, and to make sure your child’s bag is getting checked every day for important information/paperwork.
- ❖ Show gratitude for what they are doing with your child, even the small stuff, everyone likes to feel appreciated.
- ❖ Ask how you can help them and offer to volunteer (if you are able).
- ❖ Ask if they have suggestions as to how you can best support what they are doing with your child.
- ❖ Assume they have good intentions, you are on the same team, which is for the benefit of your child. Things can easily be misinterpreted or misunderstood.

- ❖ If possible, encourage your child to communicate with their teacher in a positive manner before intervening.
- ❖ Work with your child at home and be intentional about the example you are setting.
- ❖ Avoid offensive phrases when communicating like: Why do you assign so much work? Why did you give my child this grade? My child is not behaving because he is bored. If my child said he did the assignment, he did it. I talked to the principal first, but he said I should talk to you first? You never..., You always...
- ❖ Support school rules.



Improving Home-School Communication

*Parent Tip: “List what your child loves about school and what’s hard or frustrating. It’s important to get your kid’s input. Knowing how your child feels helps when advocating for his or her needs. Be sure to put any particular needs/concerns/strengths/wishes in the **Parent Input section of the IEP**. You can put anything in there you feel is important to your child’s success.”*

Typical Communication Systems

Each school has its own way of communicating events including:

- Weekly blog
- Emails to parents
- Signs hung up around the school
- PTA/PTO communications
- School website
- Other communication apps and web services
- Calendars

Each teacher or team of teachers also have their way of communicating including:

- Weekly blog
- Emails or newsletters to parents
- Items sent home weekly in a “Friday Folder”
- Class websites
- Apps such as Schoology, Seesaw, ClassDojo
- Google Classroom
- Report cards, parent-teacher conferences
- Progress reports - IEP progress reports are sent home at grading periods (usually the end of each semester) and detail how your student with special needs is doing in regard to their IEP goals.

Common ways of communicating IEP team members

- Back and Forth Notebook (aka Communication Notebooks) - This is a notebook or binder that is written in every day (or an increment of time that works best for the team) and goes home daily. For example, a parent might want to know when the child last used the bathroom, how he did on a spelling test, what book was read in class, etc. What things do you as a parent want to know? What things do the teachers and therapists want to share? There can be a section for the parent to write a note about things that have happened at home.
- A Google doc can be created that educators and parents can write in that the other can view. Again, this can be customized for what works for the student's and team's circumstances.
- Emails are usually best for sending a quick note or to document something discussed verbally.
- Try using Google Keep with your child's teacher or with your kid. It's an app that integrates with Google Calendar, which students may have access to at school. You can use Keep to collaborate with others on checklists, goal progress, and reminders. Listed goals can be labeled to categorize them. Keep has a microphone option to record voice notes, and it syncs across devices. You can set it up as a reflective tool for checking and tracking a child's emotional state or anxiety level and send your kid helpful messages, if you both use it.



Tips for Parent-Teacher Conferences

Use the three P's of **Praise, Prevent and Plan** to create a productive parent-teacher conference. It helps to lessen your anxiety and increase your confidence so the meeting with the teacher does what it's supposed to do: effectively address your child's needs.

Praise the Teacher

Everyone responds well to positive feedback, especially when what they often hear is criticism. This holds true for teachers as well as children. Finding something to authentically praise about your child's teacher will create a pathway between you and the teacher for seeing good, and sets the stage for creating a respectful relationship. It's also modeling what you want the teacher to do with your child: find the good and praise it.

Prevent Surprises

Finding a connection with your child's teacher through the use of authentic praise will help you feel more confident when bringing up concerns to them. The best time to bring up issues is prior to an official parent-teacher conference. Why? Because it prevents surprises. By reducing the risk that either side will be caught by surprise at a conference, you'll also reduce your anxiety about attending them. Being in touch beforehand can also prevent either party from dumping their frustrations on the other while at the conference.

Plan Ahead

The final step in making conferences constructive is to plan ahead. Organize and prioritize your concerns, and be prepared with your own data to bring to parent-teacher conferences.

For example, a common complaint is the challenge of getting homework done. It can take hours, include tears, and is frustrating for parents and students. If the stress of homework is negatively affecting your child, then keep a homework log and share it with the teacher. Log more than just the time; include the work, whether the child knew how to do it, the breakdowns experienced, the breaks taken, and everything else.

Don't surprise the teacher with the log at your conference. Do include a summary of it when you email the teacher prior to the conference. Conferences should never be the first time either teacher or parents hear about a concern.

One way to get details is to sit with your child and have a piece of paper with a line down the middle. On the left, list what is working and on the right, list what isn't working. Go through the entire day, from arriving at school to heading home. Explain to your child

that how he or she is experiencing school is important for you and the teacher to know in order to make it better.

While parent-teacher conferences can be hard to face, it can help to realize that the teacher may be just as nervous as you are when it comes to having uncomfortable conversations. By opening the door with praise, planning and prevention, you start on common ground, making it easier to focus on the reason you are there—to help your child find success at school.



About Me- Elementary

Picture

Name_____

Nick name_____

Parent's names_____

My pronouns are_____

My birthday is _____ & I am _____ years old

My hair is_____ My eyes are_____.

I am_____ handed

I live in a _____ with my_____

My pets are_____

My favorite foods are_____

My favorite color is _____

My favorite animal is_____

My favorite class/subject is_____

Allergies_____.

Current interests_____

.

Motivated by_____

Turned off or discouraged by _____

My friends are _____

When I get mad I _____

When I'm sad I _____

Fears _____

I get frustrated if/with _____
I calm down best when _____

Our long-range school goals are _____

Anything else? _____

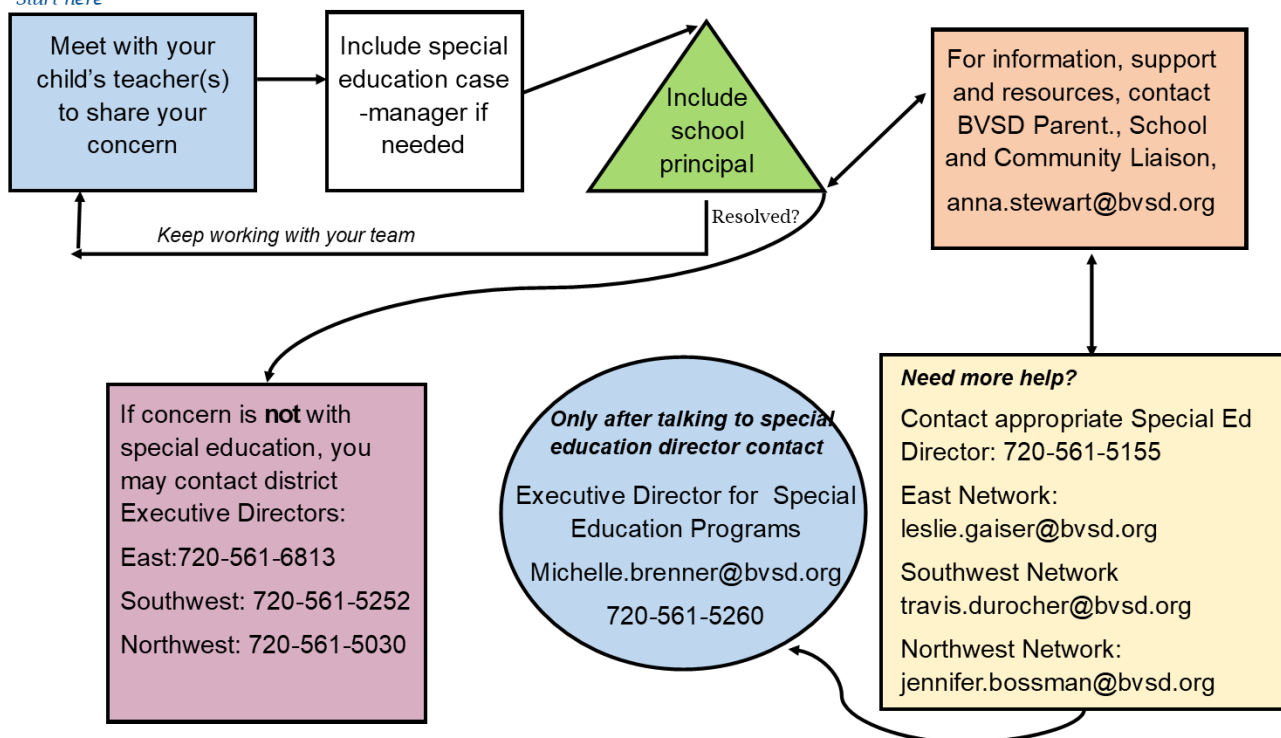
Getting Help in BVSD

Get [link for Google doc](#)

GETTING HELP IN BVSD

Communication between school and home is critical to student success. We encourage teachers and parents to share concerns and suggestions proactively. Always start with your child's classroom teacher or special education teacher/case-manager. Most issues can be resolved at that level. If it isn't, use this chart to follow the steps for resolution. If you jump to a director without talking to teachers and principals first, they will ask you to do that first.

Start here



Resources



*Parent Tip: “**Trust your intuition!** Practice staying calm when there is a conflict and see if you can find a solution with your IEP team. Be comfortable with a pause if you need a moment to maintain composure or find effective words. Buy time by rephrasing what others say. For example: “I hear you saying X. Is that right?” Then agree to what you can concur with and add “And, I suggest we Z.”*

Boulder Valley School District Links

- [Parent Resources Hub](#)
- [Parent Network Groups](#)
- [Special Education Advisory Council](#)
- [BVSD Book Kit \(PreK-2\)](#)
- [Assistive Technology at BVSD](#)
- [Open Enrollment](#)
- [Twice Exceptional Students](#)
- [Records Request](#)

Colorado Department of Education Links

- [Special Education Parent/Families](#)
- [Parent Rights Handbook](#)
- [IEP Procedural Guidance](#)
- [Extended School Year Services](#)
- [Conflict Resolution Options](#)

Articles and other resources

- [Achieving Inclusion: What Every Parent Should Know When Advocating](#)
- [Inclusive Education: Benefits, Common Misperceptions](#)

- [PEAK Parent Center](#)
- [El Grupa Vida](#)



For questions or comments, please contact the SEAC Coordinator, Anna Stewart at
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