

## FAQs about Special Education

| Question                                                                                                                                                                             | Explanation                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Resources for Parents/Guardians                                                                                                                                                                                  |
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| What is special education?                                                                                                                                                           | <p>Special Education (SPED) is a way that schools support students who have a disability that impacts their education.</p> <p>Schools have a responsibility under special education law, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), to ensure that every student gets access to a <b>free, appropriate, public education</b> in the <b>least restrictive environment (LRE)</b>.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                          | <p><a href="#">What is Special Education?</a></p> <p><a href="#">Myths about Special Education</a></p> <p><a href="#">IDEA explained</a></p> <p><a href="#">What is Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)?</a></p> |
| <p>Can parents/guardians request an evaluation for special education?</p> <p><i>*Only relevant for initial evaluations, not for students who are already eligible under SPED</i></p> | <p>Yes, parents/guardians can request an evaluation.</p> <p>While parents/guardians are able to request an evaluation, the school team does not always have to move forward with an evaluation. Sometimes a student's needs can be best met outside of special education (e.g., iMTSS, academic interventions, behavior support).</p> <p>The decision to move forward (or not move forward) with an evaluation is made based on multiple data points (e.g., attendance data, progress monitoring/benchmark data, teacher &amp; parent/guardian report, etc.)</p>                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <p>What is an individualized education plan (IEP)?</p> <p>Who is eligible for an IEP?</p>                                                                                            | <p>An IEP is an education plan developed for students who meet criteria for special education under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). This plan is based on evaluation data collected. An IEP outlines goals and services to be provided to the student.</p> <p>Individuals who are eligible for an IEP are students whose evaluation identifies <b>1) there is evidence of a disability, and 2) that disability impacts their education.</b></p> <p><b>IEPs are not designed for students to "maximize" their educational potential. They are designed to support students</b></p> | <p><a href="#">What is an IEP?</a></p> <p><a href="#">13 Disability Categories under IDEA</a></p>                                                                                                                |

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|                                                                                                                                       | <p><b>when there is evidence of a disability causing academic impact.</b></p> <p>There may be cases where a student does in fact have a disability (e.g., ADHD, Autism) <b>but there is no evidence that this disability is impacting their education/causing academic impact.</b> In these cases, a student would not be eligible for special education/IEP. (But other supports can be explored!)</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                      |
| <p>If my student qualifies for special education, does this mean that they don't get access to appropriately challenging classes?</p> | <p><b>No.</b> For students who qualify for special education, we need to consider a free, appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE). <b>It's not a one size fits all, the student's needs are taken into account.</b></p> <p>What this means is that the team needs to ensure that goals and instruction provided to a student with an IEP need to be appropriately challenging based on the student's needs. Some of these needs can be met in the general education classroom with push-in support, and sometimes these needs are best met in the special education classroom (pull-out support).</p> <p>Many students spend most of the day educated alongside their typically developing peers (students without an IEP).</p> | <p><a href="#">Myths about Special Education</a></p> |
| <p>What is a 504 Plan?</p>                                                                                                            | <p>A 504 plan is based on Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. This plan is to support students with a condition that impacts daily living to prevent discrimination.</p> <p><b>504 Plans are not special education!</b></p> <p>504 plans provide accommodations to help students better access their education (e.g., testing in a quiet environment, access to text-to-speech devices, etc). Accommodations are changes in <b>how</b> a student learns, not what they learn.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | <p><a href="#">What is a 504 Plan?</a></p>           |
| <p>What's the difference</p>                                                                                                          | <p>A 504 plan provides accommodations to</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | <p><a href="#">Difference between</a></p>            |

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| between a 504 plan and an IEP?                                                             | <p>students to remove barriers to a student's education or help them overcome them.</p> <p>An IEP is a plan that provides specially designed instruction to meet a student's unique needs. It includes goals and services. (Students on an IEP can get accommodations too).</p> <p><b>Simply put, a 504 is a plan, while an IEP comes with a person/service provider and goals.</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                              | <a href="#">504 Plans and an IEP</a> |
| What is an initial evaluation? What is a re-evaluation?                                    | <p>An initial evaluation is when either by parent request or through Child Find (process of identifying students through the school), the team decides to move forward to evaluate if <b>1) the student has a disability, and 2) that disability causes academic impact.</b></p> <p>For students who are currently eligible for special education, <b>every 3 years, a re-evaluation is conducted</b> to assess student growth and to see if the student is still eligible for services.</p>                                                                                         |                                      |
| What areas are assessed during an evaluation/ re-evaluation?                               | <p>Areas to be assessed are often based on referral concerns or existing services for the student.</p> <p>Potential areas for assessment include general intelligence, communication, academics, social-emotional, health, and motor.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                      |
| Who is on the IEP team?<br><br>Who conducts special education evaluations/ re-evaluations? | <p>Typically, this team can include a case manager/special education teacher, general education teacher, speech language pathologist, school psychologist, school social worker, school counselor, administrator, occupational therapist, English Language Development teacher, <b>and parents/guardians &amp; the student.</b></p> <p>For evaluations/re-evaluations, depending on the referral concerns or existing services, this team may consist of a school psychologist, speech language pathologist, occupational therapist, school social worker, and special education</p> |                                      |

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#### Additional Resources

- [Colorado Department of Education: Parent/Families Frequently Asked Questions about SPED](#)
- [Colorado Department of Education: Colorado Disability Categories](#)
- [Douglas County School District: Special Education Page](#)
- [Douglas County School District: Special Education FAQs](#)