



Parent Resource Guide

Special Education

Flagstaff Unified School District #1



“Diversity is being invited to the party.
Inclusion is being asked to dance.”

~ Vernā Myers, Diversity and Inclusion Expert

For information and assistance, contact
Exceptional Student Services
Flagstaff Unified School District
3285 E. Sparrow Avenue
Flagstaff, AZ 86004
928.527.6160

The purpose of special education is to provide equal access to general curriculum for students ages 3 through 22 with educational disabilities by providing specialized services and ensuring needed accommodations. If your child's health care provider, teacher, other interested party, or you suspect that your child may be eligible for special education services, it is helpful to know what to expect and where to begin. The following information provides details of the special education process and brief descriptions of its elements.

“It is the belief of this school district that students with disabilities should receive educational services in the general education environment in their neighborhood schools with chronological age peers to the greatest extent appropriate, consistent with federal and state regulations.”

Excerpt from FUSD's "Board-Adopted Position Statement on Educating Students with Disabilities in the Least Restrictive Environment"

SPECIAL EDUCATION PARENT ADVISORY COUNCIL (SEPAC)

SEPAC provides a partnership between Flagstaff Unified School District, parents or guardians of children with special needs, and the community. The purpose of the council will be to share ideas, problem solve, and brainstorm in a solution oriented manner to assist the District in providing quality special education services to our students.

If you would like additional information regarding SEPAC, please call 928.527.6182.

A copy of your Procedural Safeguards (special education parental rights) can be found at www.fusd1.org under Exceptional Student Services, Parent Resources, or by calling 928.527.6170.

GDM
Group Data Meeting

Data is discussed by grade level and class small group data.

Intervention is provided

Individual students in need of further problem solving

IDM
Individual Data Meeting

Collaborative problem solving to determine best explanation for student's difficulty

Develop individualized intervention plan to address hypothesis

Disabling condition is suspected

Follow Up to assess intervention effectiveness

IS & School Psych consult and refer for special education consideration

Refer to 504 team

Moving into Special Education

RED/MET
Multi-Disciplinary Evaluation Team

RED - Review of Existing Data
formulate evaluation plan, evaluate further as needed

MET
Determine eligibility

Student is eligible

Student is not eligible

IEP Team convenes & student is followed by sp. ed. case manager

Ongoing problem-solving for student success

If you are new to our district, and your child has an existing IEP...

- The following documents will be needed:
 - Current psychoeducational evaluation; and
 - Current Individual Education Plan
- Contact your school and ask to speak with the program specialist. You may also contact the Exceptional Student Services Department at 928.527.6160

If your child currently attends our district, and you have special education questions or concerns...

- Contact your school and ask to speak with the program specialist. You may also contact the Exceptional Student Services Department at 928.527.6160

Frequently Asked Questions

What should I do if I have a concern regarding my child's progress? Contact your child's general education teacher regarding your concerns. Discuss with your child's teacher the tiered interventions available (see flowchart). There are options available prior to referral to special education.

Who is eligible for special education services? The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) provides a definition of a "child with a disability." Under IDEA, the disability must affect the child's educational performance. This law lists 15 different disability categories under which a child may be found eligible for special education and related services.

<http://www.azed.gov/specialeducation/disability-categories/>

How can my student receive special education services? As a parent, you have the right to request a comprehensive evaluation of your child at any time. Please notify your child's teacher, school's program specialist, or principal should you feel that your child needs special education services. You should hear back from someone within 15 school days. The decision to move forward in an evaluation process can go two ways. The district can deny the request, giving reasons through a Prior Written Notice, or the team will accept the request and schedule a meeting to review existing information and, if needed, obtain consent to conduct additional testing.

If my child is found eligible, which special education related services are available? The special education IEP team, which includes the parent/guardian, will discuss which related services are required for the student to access the general education curriculum. These related services may include, but are not limited to, speech therapy, physical therapy, occupational therapy, and/or vision/hearing services.

What is a program specialist? The program specialist is the special education lead at each school. They help facilitate the special education process and function as the district representative in most IEP meetings.

Special Education Process

Evaluation

In order to determine whether a child is eligible to receive special education and related services, schools are required to conduct a full and individual evaluation to determine whether a child is or continues to be a child with a disability under the IDEA. The evaluation must be conducted by Multidisciplinary Evaluation Team (MET), which includes the IEP team members and other qualified professionals.

Several meetings may be held as part of the evaluation process:

- Review of Existing Data (RED) - During this meeting the team reviews data from a number of sources and determines whether or not to move forward with testing.
 - If the team decides to move forward with testing, the parent will give permission to evaluate, which starts the 60-day timeline to complete the evaluation.
 - If the team does not suspect the child has a disability, or does not believe an evaluation is warranted, the district will provide a Prior Written Notice stating there will be no testing.
- When testing is completed, a MET meeting is held to make a decision as to whether the child is or is not eligible to receive special education and related services.

If a parent disagrees with an evaluation conducted by the school, they have the right to an Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE), which is an evaluation conducted by a qualified examiner who is not employed by the school responsible for the child's education. It is asked that the parent provides an explanation to their school psychologist or Director of Exceptional Student Services as to why they object to FUSD's evaluation upon the request of an IEE.

Re-Evaluation

The school is required to consider re-evaluation every three years. A re-evaluation can occur more frequently, but not more than once a year, unless the parent and school agree otherwise. This does not mean that a school is required to conduct additional testing if the IEP team determines that no additional data are needed to determine whether the child continues to qualify and need special education and related services. Additional testing every three years is not necessarily required, but a re-evaluation every three years is required.

Individualized Education Program (IEP)

If your child is eligible for special education services, an IEP will be developed by the IEP team. The IEP will be revised on at least an annual basis. Parent may request an IEP meeting through the case manager at any time during the school year by phone, email, or in person.

The IEP is developed based on your child's individual strengths and needs. Special education and related services are specifically defined (e.g., what services, how services will be delivered, and how often).

- IDEA requires the following people to participate in the IEP meeting:
 - Parent/Guardian
 - General Education Teacher – Provides input on the grade level curriculum and expectations.
 - Special Education Teacher – Provides special education input and services to identified students, and serves as the case manager.
 - District Representative – Designated team member that can allocate district funds and has decision-making authority when team is not in agreement.
 - Individual to Interpret Results – Interprets the instructional impact of data. This role could be filled by the following people: general education teacher, special education teacher, related service provider, school psychologist, etc.
 - Students - Encouraged to attend and participate in the development of their IEP as is age appropriate.
 - Related services providers (OT, PT, Speech) are not required to attend the IEP meeting. Parent may request their attendance through the special education teacher/case manager.

Recommendations for Parent Participation

Your participation in the IEP process is vital. The following will help you as you prepare for participation.

1. Parent may invite anyone they wish to attend the IEP meeting to help them advocate for their child.
2. Come prepared to discuss your child's needs, including medical and behavioral needs.
 - Talk with your child regarding school (his/her perceptions of school and his/her needs.)
 - Strengths, needs and goals to be discussed.
 - Questions to be addressed at the IEP meetings.
3. Parent is welcome to give their input prior to the meeting to the special education teacher to be included in the draft document to be finalized at the IEP meeting.
4. Parent may request a draft to review prior to the IEP meeting, but this is not a legal requirement and can't always be accommodated.
5. Ask to slow down the process if you feel your concerns are not being met.
6. Ask questions if there is anything you do not understand (e.g., terminology, services provided, or just the process itself).
7. Create a home file. You will receive copies of all documents for your personal reference.

Continuum of Services

As required under IDEA, the district offers a continuum of services based on student eligibility. Our continuum is designed to ensure that there is an appropriate setting for each child with a

disability, based on the child's specific needs. These services range from providing services in the general education classroom to providing education services in a special education classroom for part or all of the school day, depending on the student's needs. Ensuring the availability of this continuum does not require the district to have every possible placement option at all campuses, but rather these options may be available through locating students at other schools within the district.

The majority of students are served in general education and resource programs. Specialized programs are available based on student need.

The most common types of service delivery are as follows:

General Education with Supplemental Aids and Services

This involves providing specially designed instruction in the general education classroom by a special education teacher. This may include accommodations and/or modifications of the instructional program or assistive technology.

Resource Program

Students who remain in general education may receive support from a special education teacher in a special education classroom. Time spent in the resource program will vary depending on the student's needs and detailed in his/her IEP.

Specialized Program

Students requiring a highly intensive and structured program for all or part of their school day may be served in a specialized program designed to meet their individual needs. This classroom is a special education classroom, where access to general education peers and curriculum may be limited. If this is not available in the neighborhood school, the district will provide transportation to the closest possible school where the program is available.

Other service delivery options are available depending on the needs of the student.

Where to Go for Help

As you participate in the IEP process, you may have concerns that need to be addressed. The following is suggested:

- First contact - Special Education Teacher/Case Manager
- Second contact - Program Specialist
- Third contact - Principal
- Fourth contact - Director of Exceptional Student Services (phone 928.527.6171)

If you do not know who these staff members are, please contact the school's front office staff for assistance.

Arizona Department of Education (ADE)

Exceptional Student Services

602.542.4013

<http://www.azed.gov/specialeducation/>

Raising Special Kids

928.444.8834

<http://www.raisingpecialkids.org/>

Link to Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

<https://sites.ed.gov/idea/>