

Old Bridge Township
Department of Special Services

Parent Handbook of
Department Protocols and Procedures

John H. Glenn Jr. School

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INTRODUCTION

This booklet has been prepared to guide parents in understanding the special education procedure and parental rights. As the parent, you are a member of the team responsible for developing your child's educational program. Your input and participation is important in helping to develop an appropriate program for your child.

Federal Regulations in Special Education called the Education for All Handicapped Children Act were enacted in 1975. This law was amended in 2004 and is now called the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA-2004). This federal legislation, frequently called a "bill of rights" for children with disabilities, requires the provision of a free and appropriate public education, which includes special education and those related services necessary to help children benefit from special education. The New Jersey Administrative Code (N.J.A.C. 6A:14), incorporates the requirements of the IDEA.

In accordance with Board of Education Policy, all pupils with disabilities, who are in need of special education and related services, including pupils with disabilities attending nonpublic schools, and highly mobile pupils such as migrant workers' children and homeless pupils regardless of the severity of their disabilities, are located, identified, and evaluated according to N.J.A.C. 6A:14-3.3 (Child Find).

Old Bridge Public Schools identifies students in need of special education and related services through a number of methods including, but not limited to Response to Intervention (RTI), Intervention and Referral Services (I&RS), as well as, staff and parent referrals.

We hope this booklet will help parents become informed of the process and know that the district's goal is to work in partnership with parents to meet the needs of eligible students.

RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION

In order to better address the needs of our students, the Old Bridge Public School district utilizes a Response to Intervention (RTI) model. RTI is a framework designed to provide educational support to struggling students. It is most commonly used to address learning challenges in reading and mathematics but is also applicable to social and emotional/behavioral needs. Initial screening assessments are administered to all students and intervention plans are developed for any student not meeting grade-level expectations. Interventions may take place within the classroom or outside of the classroom depending on the level and nature of support required. Our teachers, interventionists, and paraprofessionals provide a variety of data-based/evidence informed interventions to ensure each student's success. Progress is regularly monitored to guide decision-making about instruction throughout the school year.

The Old Bridge Public School District's RTI model uses a three-tier model:

- Tier 1- Classroom teachers will use a variety of strategies within the core curriculum to address individual instructional needs within the classroom.
- Tier 2- Based on assessment data, students who continue to struggle in Tier 1 will be provided additional research-based interventions inside or outside of the classroom. Interventionist teachers will monitor student progress.
- Tier 3- Students who continue to struggle in Tier 2 will receive more intensive evidence-based interventions.

The primary role of the RTI committee is to help students with learning and/or behavior problems receive the assistance they need within the regular education program/setting. Additionally, if warranted, the RTI committee can request consultations from related service providers, including but not limited to OT/PT/Speech and/or CST (School Psychologist and LDTC). These consultations can usually address teacher and parent concerns through the tiered system of support. As a student progresses through the tiered level of support, their progress is monitored by their RTI instructor and through standardized measures. If it is determined that the interventions in the general education setting have not adequately addressed the student's educational difficulties, the committee may recommend a referral to the Child Study Team. The principal will notify you in writing if a referral is to be forwarded to the Child Study Team.

THE CHILD STUDY TEAM

The Old Bridge School District employs Child Study Teams (CST) in sufficient numbers to evaluate and determine eligibility for special education and related services for students between the ages of three and twenty-one. Child Study Teams consist of school psychologists, learning disabilities teacher-consultants, school social workers, and/or speech language specialist (when applicable). For students age three to five, the Child Study Team also includes a speech-language specialist. Child Study Teams develop, monitor, and evaluate the effectiveness of individualized education programs, and deliver appropriate related services to students with disabilities. They can also provide preventative and support services to general education students.

For students experiencing difficulty in learning, Child Study Teams will provide services to the general education staff that include techniques, materials, and programs. Services include, but are not limited to, consultation with school staff and parents as well as the design, implementation, and evaluation of interventions to prevent and/or address educational difficulties. Members of Child Study Teams will also serve as consultants to Administrators and staff who are engaged in the school-based Response to Intervention process.

REFERRAL PROCESS FOR CONSIDERATION OF ELIGIBILITY FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION AND RELATED SERVICES

A referral is a written request for an evaluation that is given to the school district when a child is suspected of having a disability. If your child has been identified for referral to the Child Study Team, this may have been initiated by:

- Parent(s)
- Teacher(s)
- Guidance Counselor(s)
- Administrator
- RTI Committee
- Early Intervention
- Speech Language Specialist

If you believe that your child may have a disability, you may refer your child for an evaluation by submitting a written request to your school district. **To refer your child for an evaluation for special education or related services, you must send an original, signed letter to the attention of the Director of Special Services at:**

John Glenn School
185 Cindy Street
Old Bridge, NJ 08857

A signed original letter is necessary to begin the evaluation process. E-mails or faxes are not accepted to begin the evaluation process.

What happens when a referral is made?

Within 20 calendar days of receiving a referral (excluding school holidays, but not summer vacation), the school district must hold an identification (ID) meeting to decide whether an evaluation will be conducted. If an evaluation will be conducted, another decision is made about the types of testing and other procedures that will be used to determine if your child has a disability and needs special education services. If an evaluation will not be conducted, recommendations may be made with respect to interventions or services to be provided to the student in general education.

EVALUATION PROCESS AND TIMELINES

Within twenty (20) calendar days (exclusive of school holidays) of the receipt of a written request to evaluate, a meeting will be held. The meeting is called an Identification Meeting because it will identify what information is needed to determine if your child may have a disability and needs special education. Participants at this meeting include the CST, the parent, and the regular teacher of the student who is knowledgeable about the student's educational performance or, if there is no teacher of the student, a teacher who is knowledgeable about the District's programs. Others who may be of benefit for this discussion may also be invited to participate, and you can bring people who have knowledge of your child that could be helpful in this decision-making process. If an evaluation is needed, then you will be informed of the evaluations that will be done and the procedures that will be used. You will receive a summary of the evaluation plan which is contained in the written notice.

Copies of the Special Education Code (N.J.A.C. 6A:14) and the Due Process Rules in N.J.A.C. 1:6A will be given to you.

Your written permission (consent) is required before the initial assessments by the Child Study Team can begin. After you sign consent to evaluate your child, the evaluations, the eligibility determination, and the initiation of the IEP (if eligible) shall be completed within ninety (90) calendar days.

Once your consent is given, the team will conduct the evaluations agreed upon, with the purpose of gathering relevant functional developmental and academic information to assess area(s) identified as potential disabilities. This will be done through observations, assessments, and interviews with your child's teachers and the parents, review of developmental/educational history including records, and informal measures. Anytime during the course of the evaluation process, a parent can rescind consent to evaluation. However, please contact your assigned case manager to discuss this action prior to submitting this request.

After the evaluations are completed, you will be invited to an eligibility meeting to have the evaluations explained and determine eligibility for services. You will receive copies of the reports at least ten (10) days prior to the eligibility meeting. The participants at this meeting will consist of the parents, teacher(s), Child Study Team member(s), and student where appropriate. Parents can bring other individuals with knowledge or special expertise to the meeting.

Independent Evaluations (IEEs)

The District recognizes a parent's right to request an independent evaluation if they are in disagreement with the evaluations conducted and completed by Board of Education employees. Please refer to the Old Bridge Board of Education Independent Evaluations Policy (#2468) and the Parental Rights in Special Educational Manual, which is on the Department of Special Services Website. To limit disruption to academic activities and classroom routines, observations and staff contact are limited to a total of 90 minutes to be completed in one session.

ALL requests for Independent Evaluations must be placed in writing and a copy mailed to the following address:

Attn: Old Bridge Public School, Executive Director of Special Services
John Glenn School
185 Cindy Street
Old Bridge, NJ 08857

The district will respond accordingly once the request for Independent Evaluations is received. Any requested observation from outside evaluators must align with Old Bridge District Policy # 9241, Request for Classroom Observations.

Any requests for Independent Evaluations received via e-mail will be considered received once the receiving district party confirms receipt of the e-mail via a returned e-mail correspondence. Automatic responses received by a parent should not be considered as a receipt of a request for Independent Evaluations by district personnel.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR CLASSIFICATION

The classification of students is described in the New Jersey Administrative Code for Special Education (N.J.A.C. 6A:14) and should be based on the evaluations of the Child Study Team, information from the parents, and other specialists. If your child meets the eligibility requirements to receive special education and related services, he/she will be classified as "Eligible for Special Education and Related Services."

A student shall be determined eligible if

- it is determined that he/she has one or more of the criteria in 6A:14-3.5,
- the disability affects the student's educational performance, and
- the student is in need of special education and related services.

Disabilities listed in N.J.A.C. 6A:14-3.5 are:

- Auditorily Impaired
- Autistic
- Emotionally Disturbed
- Intellectually Disabled
- Communication Impaired
- Emotionally Disturbed
- Multiply Disabled
- Orthopedically Impaired
- Deaf/blindness
- Other Health Impaired
- Preschool child with a disability
- Social Maladjustment
- Specific Learning Disability
- Traumatic Brain injury
- Visually Impaired
- Eligible Speech Language Services only (ESLS)

INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM

The Individualized Education Program is an individual written plan to meet your child's special education needs. The IEP is the primary mechanism for parental participation in the special education process, and serves as the agreement between the local school district and the parents to provide required services.

The IEP will describe your child's special education programs and the related services he/she will receive, and it will include:

- A description of your child's present levels of academic achievement and functional performance that summarizes abilities and weaknesses. Areas include: academic achievement, cognitive functioning, personal and social development, parental input, and physical *and* health status. Additionally, when applicable, a description of speech and language, fine motor, and/or gross motor will be included as well.
- A statement as to how the student's disability affects the student's involvement and progress in the general curriculum, or for preschool students, as appropriate, how the disability affects the student's participation in appropriate activities.
- Annual goals and objectives related to New Jersey's Core Curriculum Content Standards as well as any specific needs of your child will be written. These goals represent anticipated outcomes that your child can reasonably be expected to achieve in a year's time. The task of selecting appropriate goals and objectives involves parents, CST, teachers(s), and the student where appropriate.
- A statement of the special education and related services and supplementary aids and services that will be provided for your child and program modifications or supports that will be provided for school personnel on behalf of your child.
- An explanation of the extent, if any, to which your child will not participate with nondisabled students in the general education class and in extracurricular and nonacademic activities.
- A statement of individual modifications to the program which, if applicable, will also include a statement of why a particular Statewide or districtwide assessment of your child's achievement is not appropriate and a statement of how he/she will be assessed if this is the case.
- Projected date for the beginning of services including the anticipated frequency, location and duration of those services.

- Beginning at age 14, a statement of the State and local graduation requirements that your child with a disability is expected to meet.
- Transition Planning — part of the meeting will be spent developing a statement of transition service needs (14 years and older) and considering transition services to assist your child achieve goals for adult life after high school (16 years and older).
- A statement of how your child's progress toward the annual goals will be measured.
- A statement of how parents will be regularly informed of student progress.

Parents/guardians need to consent to the initial IEP before a student's initial program can be implemented. Thereafter, on an annual basis, parents are invited to participate in all revisions to the IEP.

PLACEMENT

The program or placement of your child should be determined after your child's needs have been identified and goals and objectives have been established. A full continuum of alternative placements shall be considered to meet the needs of student from the least restrictive to the most restrictive type of placements including instruction in a regular class with supplementary aids and services, pull-out resource programs, self-contained classes, out-of-district placements, hospital bound, or home instruction. To the maximum extent appropriate, students with disabilities are educated with children who are not disabled. Placement is provided in appropriate educational settings as close to home as possible.

RELATED SERVICES

Related services are a variety of educational services that are provided to students with disabilities to enable them to benefit from their special education program. Related services are provided according to the student's Individualized Education Program. Related services may include the following:

- Speech and language therapy
- Counseling services
- Occupational therapy
- Physical therapy
- Nursing services
- Transportation
- Additional Staff Support

Related service providers (such as speech-language specialists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, and counselors) will develop individualized goals and objectives to be included in each student's IEP.

Frequency and duration of services will also be reflected in the IEP.

If a question arises regarding the need for a paraprofessional as a related service, the District will reference and deem the appropriateness of that request using a Student Inventory of Behavioral Supports (SIBS) program. The SIBS is a paraprofessional protocol system which involves between 4-6 observations of a student in a variety of settings that is standardized to determine the need for a paraprofessional. If through the SIBS system, your student is identified as needing additional classroom support, that would be discussed with you at an IEP meeting and your student's IEP would be revised to reflect the changes.

PREPARING FOR & PARTICIPATING IN THE IEP MEETING

The following are suggestions that may be helpful in preparing for an IEP meeting:

- Become familiar with the New Jersey Administrative Code (N.J.A.C. 6A:14) pertaining to Special Education and the Parental Rights in Special Education, available from the Office of Special Services.
- Review your child's evaluations.
- Make a list of your child's interests, strengths, and weaknesses (learning style, motivators, work habits, social relationships, self-concept).
- Prepare a list of questions to ask at the meeting.
- Do not hesitate to ask participants to clarify any information, statements, or terms you do not understand.
- Read the recommendations carefully to see that they adequately describe the suggested programs and services.
- Ask how you can best help your child prepare for his/her new program/placement.
- If questions or concerns arise at the meeting or after, know that the CST and your child's teacher are available to help you.

The purpose of the IEP meeting is to develop an IEP collaboratively with the IEP team. While the IEP team includes your case manager, teacher, and related service providers, you (the parents) are members of that team. Therefore, since the district does not predetermine programming, the IEP draft is developed during the meeting with all IEP team members input and you will receive a draft at the conclusion of the meeting.

REEVALUTION

Within three years of the previous classification, a reevaluation shall be completed to determine whether the student continues to be a student with a disability. Reevaluation shall be conducted sooner if conditions warrant, or if the student's parents, case manager, or teacher requests the reevaluation. However, a reevaluation shall not be conducted prior to the expiration of the one year from the date the parent is provided written notice of the determination with respect to eligibility in the most recent evaluation or reevaluation, unless the parent and District both agree that a reevaluation is warranted.

By June 30th of a student's last year in program for preschoolers with disabilities, a reevaluation shall be conducted, and if the student continues to be a student with a disability, the student shall be classified according to N.J.A.C 6A: 14-3.5(c) or 3.6 (a).

The case manager will coordinate a reevaluation planning meeting which will include the case manager, parents(s), adult student, when applicable, a regular education teacher if the student is or may be participating in the regular program, a special education teacher, and specialists who have expertise regarding the student when possible. The parent(s), guardians, and adult student (when applicable), will be provided with Request for Participation in a Meeting Notice and PRISE.

At the meeting, the IEP team shall review existing evaluation data, including evaluations and information provided by the parents; current classroom-based assessments and observations; and observations by teachers and observations by teachers and related services providers; and decide if additional tests and procedures should be administered. When the IEP team determines that no additional data are needed, the parent will be provided with Written Notice. The IEP team may agree to proceed to determination of eligibility and/or development of an IEP.

The parent will be provided a copy of Written Notice and a copy of Parent Consent. The parent/guardian may consider the proposed reevaluation for up to 15 calendar days. If the parent does not consent to the proposed reevaluation, the Director may intercede to address the parent concerns. If the parent fails to respond to the request for consent for reevaluation in 15 days, the district can proceed with the reevaluation if it can demonstrate that it has taken responsible measures to obtain consent. Upon completion of the assessments, the case manager will conduct a meeting to review the results of the evaluations and determine if student continues to be eligible, and if so, propose a new IEP.

In accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:14, both the district and parents maintain all rights similar to an annual IEP meeting. Please refer to N.J.A.C. 6A:14 for additional information on those rights should questions or concerns about the re-evaluation process arise.

PARENTAL RIGHTS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION (PRISE)

In order to ensure the rights of children with disabilities, certain provisions have been established by law. As a parent you have the right to:

- Have your child evaluated by the school district at no cost to you;
- Have copies of the school's evaluations or outside evaluator's reports who have evaluated your child;
- Have a free appropriate public education provided for your child if special education is needed;
- Participate in any meetings where the IEP (Individualized Education Program) is written, reviewed or updated;
- Be notified in writing of the meeting to discuss your child's need for special education and receive all information necessary for making that decision;
- Bring another person to the initial IEP meeting and the annual review IEP meeting;
- Have a comprehensive re-evaluation for your child at least once every three years or earlier, if necessary;
- Initiate an appeals process if there is disagreement between you and the school district.
- Have the right to a classroom observation upon request, as outlined through Board of Education Policy

Observations

The district recognizes a parent's right to observe his/her child in their educational setting; however, to maintain the instructional integrity of their educational setting, any request should be linked to an inquiry about a student program, inclusive of a request to change program, a post IEP program observation and/or addressing a behavior plan.

Student Records

Parents may have access to student records at any time upon request. One time per calendar year a copy of the student's educational records may be requested. If a second copy of the student file is requested in less than one calendar year, the District will charge \$0.05 per page of the second copy. If a student is declassified and/or moved, the Department of Special Services does not maintain records past seven years.

Pursuant to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), State laws and regulations, student records cannot be shared with third parties, except in limited circumstances. Generally, requests for student records must be made by the parent/guardian or with their written consent.

If a parent has not obtained their rights over educational program through legal avenues prior to a student's birthdate over the age of 18, generally, only the student may request the records or provide written consent.

The Department of Special Services will provide you with a copy of the Procedural Safeguards Statement and a complete copy of Parental Rights in Special Education (PRISE) at any time upon request.

BOARD OF EDUCATION POLICIES RELEVANT TO SPECIAL EDUCATION

Please refer to the below Old Bridge Township Public Schools Board of Education policies regarding the following:

1. Special Education – Policy 2460
2. Independent Evaluations - Policy 2468
3. Restraint and Seclusion - Policy 2469
4. Live Animals in School – Policy 2560
5. Pupil Suicide Prevention – Policy 5350
6. Service Animals – Policy 5337
7. Request for Classroom Observations – Policy 9241

These can be accessed via the Old Bridge Township Public Schools website at www.oldbridgeadmin.org.

Any future Board of Education Policies approved by the Old Bridge Board of Education relevant to Special Education will be included in later versions of this Protocols and Procedures Handbook and will be posted on the district website immediately upon Board of Education approval.

A MESSAGE FROM THE SPECIAL EDUCATION PARENT TEACHER ASSOCIATION (SEPTA)

The Special Education PTA (SEPTA) of Old Bridge is a non-profit organization with three board members who do not collect a salary or receive benefits. SEPTA is committed to bringing parents and guardians current and vital information on issues that face children with special needs and their families.

There are over 1,000 children in Old Bridge who are classified with a wide variety of disabilities. Our students and their families are trying to address the impact of various disabilities such as Autism, ADHD, various learning disabilities, hearing impairment, visual impairment, health needs, and even children with behavioral and social disabilities. With so many children being diagnosed with Autism, SEPTA wants to make sure parents are aware of the options available to them that will help ensure their children get the education they deserve and know about local activities that may be of benefit and enjoyment for the children.

SEPTA does this by utilizing speakers, providing workshops (for parents) and providing pertinent information to parents and guardians. SEPTA buys books for the library on different topics in the realm of Special Education. SEPTA purchases things for the classrooms from preschool through high school that the teachers would not be able to obtain without our assistance. There is so much information and so many things going on in the State of New Jersey having to do with Special Education that it is imperative that parents know what is going on. It is SEPTA's mission to ensure that they do.

SEPTA does fundraising every year to raise money for scholarships for our graduating seniors as well as for many other programs for our students. Every cent SEPTA raises is used for the children; SEPTA has no administrative costs, salaries to pay, or anything of that nature on our books.

SEPTA meetings occur monthly. For more information or for a schedule of meetings, please visit the SEPTA website at:

<http://septaofoldbridgenj.weebly.com/index.html>

SPECIAL EDUCATION PARENT ADVISORY GROUP (SEPAG)

A Message from and a Glimpse into the Special Education Parent Advisory Group and Friends of Diverse Learners

All families have a shared and vested interest in our educational programs, especially families who have a child with an identified learning disability or a different learning style. Parent-led committees offer parents the opportunity to work together to make a difference.

The Special Education Parent Advisory Group and Old Bridge Friends of Diverse Learners welcome ALL parents who are interested in learning more about how to best support their child during their academic career.

Parents and Caregivers of students from Preschool through High School – and beyond – are welcome!

OBFODL is a Special Education Parent Advisory Group (SEPAG) established to:

- Collaborate with district administration to positively affect policies, practices, and programs for students with IEPs and 504s
- Promote inclusion and acceptance of students with special needs and learning challenges in school and extracurricular activities
- Service as a resource to parents through meetings, workshops, and social media presence

Parent Liaison

The Old Bridge SEPAG consists of a minimum of one parent liaison from each school including out of district schools. This volunteer must be a parent of a student who currently receives special education under IDEA or accommodations and modifications under Section 504 of the Americans with Disabilities Act. SEPAG parent liaisons will ensure their respective school is implementing SEPAG initiatives, attend SEPAG and PTA meetings, consult with fellow parent liaisons on issues pertaining to their schools and brainstorming ideas and solutions to present to key stakeholders.

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

Please feel free to contact us - Join our email distribution list to stay informed:
obsepag@gmail.com