



TEXAS
SCHOOL
OF THE ARTS

**Special Programs
Handbook**

2025-2026

Texas School of the Arts Special Services

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Handbook Purpose

The purpose of the Special Populations handbook is to provide an overview of all Special Populations programs at Texas School of the Arts. Each program follows all policies required by the Texas Education Agency, and therefore, some sections of this handbook are directly quoted from the TEA website. Some of the information presented in this handbook may also be found in the Texas School of the Arts Student Handbook.

TeSA Mission

Our mission is to inspire a lifelong passion for learning and empower students to achieve academic excellence through an arts-based education.

Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

FERPA is a federal law that provides parents with the right to access their children's education records, the right to request that the records be amended, and the right to have some control over the disclosure of personally identifiable information. This means that teachers are to protect the privacy of a student's educational records, and ONLY share them with those who have an educational interest in the student (such as their other teachers, the principal, the curriculum instructional, etc). They are not to be shared simply because the teacher is asked.

Multi-Tiered Systems of Supports (MTSS)

MTSS is a framework that helps educators provide academic and behavioral strategies for students with various needs. Within this framework, several programs work together to best serve every student. Data-based problem solving is used to take a comprehensive approach to educating the whole child by making systematic improvements across the campus.

To best serve students through consistency of scheduling, services, providers, and resources, all General Education and Special Programs work closely with the MTSS framework at Texas School of the Arts:

- Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)
- Social Emotional Learning (SEL)
- Response to Intervention (RtI)
- Gifted and Talented Education (GT)
- English as a Second Language (ESL)
- Special Education (SPED)
- Section 504 (504)

MTSS is a proactive approach including the following elements:

- Beginning, middle, and end of year progress monitoring for all students
- Ongoing informal monitoring of students' progress
- Increasing levels of targeted support for struggling students
- Classroom extension opportunities for gifted students
- Integrated plans that address students' academic, behavioral, social, and emotional needs
- A schoolwide approach to student support, with teachers, counselors, administrators, and other specialists working as a team to assess students and plan interventions
- Professional development so staff can provide effective interventions

- The use of evidence-based strategies at every tier of support



Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)

PBIS is an evidence-based, positive approach used to improve school safety and promote positive behavior. Within its three-tiered framework, PBIS integrates all of the campus systems, data, and procedures for academic, social, and emotional growth. Tier 1 establishes a foundation of continuous, proactive support, with a focus of preventing unwanted behaviors. Tier 2 focuses more on students who are at risk for developing more serious issues. Lastly, Tier 3 provides students with more intense, individualized support to improve their behavior and/or academic performance.

As part of PBIS, TeSA uses the acronym STAR to define both student characteristics and behaviors.

TeSA Students Characteristics:

Self-Aware
Teachable
Artistic
Respectful

TeSA Behavior Categories:

Safety for All
TeSA Rules & Policies
Aggression toward Self or Others
Responsible for Learning Tools & Materials

Social Emotional Learning (SEL)

Texas Education Code (TEC) §29.906 requires schools to provide instruction in the following positive character traits and personal skills at least once during each of the following grade bands: kindergarten-grade 2, grades 3-5, grades 6-8, and grades 9-12:

- Courage
- Trustworthiness, including honesty, reliability, punctuality, and loyalty
- Integrity
- Respect and courtesy
- Responsibility, including accountability, diligence, perseverance, self-management skills, and self-control
- Fairness, including justice and freedom from prejudice
- Caring, including kindness, empathy, compassion, consideration, patience, generosity, charity, and interpersonal skills
- Good citizenship, including patriotism, concern for the common good and the community, responsible decision-making skills, and respect for authority and the law

- School pride
- Gratitude

Social Emotional Learning (SEL) is the process through which students learn and apply the social and emotional skills needed to develop a positive self-image, manage their emotions, show empathy and compassion for others, create and maintain healthy relationships with others, and make sound decisions. SEL lessons, including lessons focused on character traits, will be either led by the School Counselor or incorporated by teachers into classroom meetings and academic activities.

Per Texas Education Agency requirements, all Texas School of the Arts teachers and administrators will participate in the following trainings related to students' Social Emotional Learning:

- Bullying and Cyberbullying
- Building Skills Related to Managing Emotions
- Conflict Resolution
- Establishing and Maintaining Positive Relationships
- Grief Informed and Trauma Informed Training
- HB 3 Mental Health Training
- Positive Youth Development
- Responsible Decision-Making
- Strategies for Establishing and Maintaining Positive Relationships Among Students

Counseling Services

Texas School of the Arts provides a comprehensive counseling program in accordance with the Texas Education Agency (TEA). The services provided by the School Counselor assist all students to grow to their full potential academically, socially, and emotionally. The counselor's mission is to foster emotional awareness and growth in artistically talented students to nurture the "whole" child.

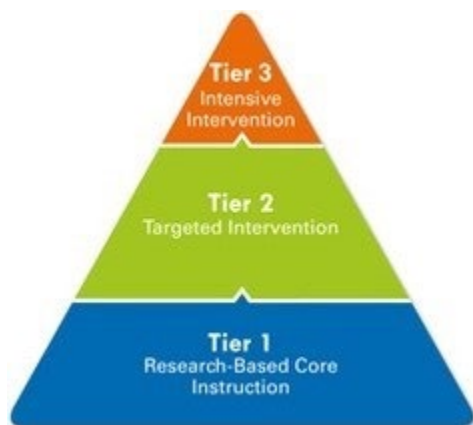
The School Counselor may work with the grade-level teacher(s) to develop a plan of success for students struggling to meet academic or behavioral expectations. The School Counselor will also meet with students and parents as they prepare for the transition from elementary to middle school.

The School Counselor may provide guidance lessons, teaching skills that develop self-confidence, responsible behavior, problem solving, decision making, interpersonal communication, goal setting, and motivation. A student wishing to speak to the School Counselor individually during the school day should notify their teacher. Guardians may also request an individual counseling service for their child by emailing the School Counselor or calling the front office.

Response to Intervention (RtI)

For students having difficulty in the regular classroom, all school districts and open enrollment charter schools must consider tutorial, compensatory, and other academic or behavior support services that are available to all students, including a process based on Response to Intervention (RtI) through a Student Support Team. The implementation of RtI has the potential to have a positive impact on the ability of districts and charter schools to meet the needs of all struggling students.

Response to Intervention (RTI) is a proactive approach to help all students. It is most often used for struggling learners, and may also be used to improve student behavior. Students are provided with interventions at increasing levels of intensity to meet their needs and progress is closely monitored by their classroom teacher(s) and the Student Support Team. The amount of time each student spends in RTI varies as each approach is personalized. The ultimate goal is student success and the Student Support Team will work with other educational professionals as needed to provide additional testing and/or support.



Gifted and Talented Education

Our Philosophy and Program

TeSA serves gifted and talented students in artistic, academic, and leadership areas.

Talented Students

Students who enter TeSA through the audition process are identified and served as artistically talented students. TeSA's slightly longer school day allows time for all four fine arts; Dance, Music, Theatre, and Visual Arts. Through the arts, students are able to explore creativity and performance, as well as have an opportunity to respond and connect to professional and student works.

Gifted Students

Academically gifted students are served in the general education classroom through the Gifted Academic Program (GAP). TeSA believes that students who show attributes of academic giftedness should receive a differentiated learning environment. All students in the GAP will have a GAP Agreement in order to address the unique individual learning needs of each gifted student in the classroom.

A GAP Agreement will be completed for each student at the beginning of the school year in order to outline what is expected of both teachers and students, and how parents can support their child in this program. Classroom teachers will use this document as a guideline in the classroom to differentiate the curriculum in order to meet the unique, individual learning needs of each gifted student in the classroom.

GAP students will be given opportunities throughout the year to work within the classroom both independently, as well as in small groups with other GAP students. GAP students will meet periodically as

a group to discuss progress and complete extension activities. Each GAP student will also complete two required projects, for which the culmination of their learning will be displayed. As opportunities arise throughout the year, students may attend field trips with other GAP students, listen to presentations from special guest speakers, and/or complete group labs and activities.

TeSA offers this program for students who are identified through the TeSA identification process, or who come to TeSA having been previously identified as an academically gifted student. The identification of GAP students is accomplished through a process consisting of nominations, assessments, and selection by committee.

Leadership- Student Ambassadors

5th grade students who have gone through the application and acceptance process during the first grading cycle have the opportunity to participate in the Student Ambassador program. Student Ambassadors complete service projects on campus throughout the year. Leadership characteristics are cultivated through activities such as leading morning announcements, mentoring kindergarten buddies, assisting with dismissal, and other duties as assigned by the 5th grade teachers and administration. Students selected to be Ambassadors are held accountable for meeting deadlines, maintaining academic integrity, and consistently displaying school-wide student characteristics.

Nominations, Assessments, and Selection by Committee

- All Kindergarten students who perform at a noticeably higher level of accomplishment relative to age peers are nominated for the GAP in the spring. Students are assessed in the area of overall intellectual ability.
- Parents whose children are enrolled at TeSA in Kindergarten-4th grade may nominate their child during the nomination period in April. To nominate a child, a parent nomination form and permission to test form must be completed by the posted deadline. Failure to submit nomination forms by the posted deadline will result in the child not being nominated for the program.
- Staff members at TeSA may nominate a student in April each year.
- Any student who enrolls at TeSA during the middle of the school year can be nominated by a parent within two weeks of enrollment.
- New students to TeSA will be screened within the first six weeks of enrollment during our fall universal screener. If official documentation is provided of being identified as academically gifted at a previous school, they will automatically be served through the GAP.
- Final determination of a student's need for gifted services is made by a placement committee, which consists of at least three local district or campus educators who have completed 30 hours of training and are current with their 6-hour required training update". All committee decisions will be approved by the Campus Principal.

The placement committee reviews all information gathered, as well as additional data as needed, on each nominated student to determine if criteria is met for entry into the program.

Entry Process

Step 1: Nominations

Teacher referral, documentation of previous services, parent nomination, or cognitive ability test scores may be used as a nominator.

Step 2: Information Gathering

After the committee has the completed forms by the posted deadlines, data from the following measures will be compiled.

1. Nomination/referral information
2. Cognitive ability test scores
3. Qualitative inventory or checklist completed by teacher(s)
4. State achievement and/or available school assessments
5. Review of Products/Portfolios and additional data as needed

Step 3: Testing

This step consists of cognitive ability testing administered for the sole purpose of entrance into the GAP.

Step 4: Selection

The Placement Committee will review the information gathered on each student who has been nominated for the GAP. Parents and staff will be informed of the committee's decision and given an opportunity to discuss this information, if requested.

Appeals

Parents can submit any appeals of GAP decisions to the following, in order, within 30 days of notification of assessment results.

1. Placement Committee
2. Principal
3. Superintendent/CEO - The parent presents the reasons for reconsideration. The decision of the Superintendent/CEO is final.

Transfers, Furloughs, Reassessment, & Exiting

When a student in the GAP transfers to another district, either in or out of Texas, that district is provided with the student's assessment data once request records have been received.

Students may have a furlough (a leave of absence from gifted program services) for specified reasons, with approval from the GAP committee, without being exited from the program.

Students may not be assessed for entry into the GAP more than one time per school year. A student who is admitted to the GAP through our nomination and placement process will remain in the GAP for the duration of their enrollment at TeSA, without the need for re-nomination or re-assessment each year.

A GAP student who does not complete one of the two required GAP projects during the year, or is not making adequate progress in response to services, may be placed on probation for the following semester. A student on probation will be monitored closely for adequate progress in response to services. If progress is satisfactory, the probation will be removed the following semester. If progress continues to be unsatisfactory, the student may be removed from the program by decision of the placement committee. Parents will be informed of probation status and any decisions made as a result of probation.

Students may be exited from gifted services at any time based on multiple criteria, including student performance in response to services, lack of progress after being placed on probation, or at the request of a parent. The exiting of a student is finalized by a placement committee decision after consultation with parent(s) and student regarding the student's educational needs.

English Learners

A student identified as an English Learner (EL), or Emergent Bilingual (EB), may have services provided through the school. Students will enter the program and continue to demonstrate eligibility through the Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS). The Language Proficiency Assessment Committee (LPAC) will meet multiple times each year to review and consider the classroom and testing needs of all English Learners.

Texas School of the Arts strives to foster the linguistic and academic development, along with personal and social growth of the English learners in our learning community by focusing on reading, writing, listening, and speaking.

Required Home Language Survey

The home language survey will be collected for each student new to TeSA, and students previously enrolled who were not surveyed in the past. If a response on the home language survey indicates that a language other than English is used, the student shall be tested to establish language proficiency.

State Identification Requirements

It is Texas policy that every student in the state who has a primary language other than English and who is identified as an English learner shall be provided a full opportunity to participate in a bilingual education or English as a Second Language (ESL) program, as required in the Texas Education Code (TEC), Chapter 29, Subchapter B.

Texas School of the Arts ESL Program

Statutory requirements

Texas Administrative Code §89.1205 and 89.1210 requires that any school district that is not required to offer a bilingual education program to be provided an ESL program, regardless of the students' grade levels and home language, and regardless of the number of students. This program must:

- Use second language methods throughout the curriculum.
- Provide instruction that includes TEKS based academic content, as well as language development.
- Differentiate instruction of content according to language proficiency levels.
- Provides academic instruction that is on grade level.

The goal of ESL programs shall be to enable English learners to become proficient in listening, speaking, reading, and writing in the English language through the integrated use of second language acquisition methods. The ESL program shall emphasize the mastery of English language skills, as well as mathematics, science, and social studies, as integral parts of the academic goals for all students to enable English learners to participate equitably in school.

The English as a Second Language program shall be implemented with consideration for each English Learners' unique readiness level through one of the following program models:

Content-Based Program Model

TeSA primarily utilizes an English program that serves students identified as students of limited English proficiency in English only by providing a full-time teacher certified under TEC §29.061(c) to provide supplementary instruction for all content area instruction. The program integrates English-as-a-second-language instruction with subject matter instruction which focuses not only on learning a second

language, but using that language as a medium to learn mathematics, science, social studies, or other academic subjects.

Pull-Out Program Model

When needed, TeSA utilizes an English program that serves students identified as students of limited English proficiency in English only by providing a certified teacher under TEC §29.061(c) to provide English language arts instruction exclusively, while the student remains in a mainstream instructional arrangement in the remaining content areas. Instruction may be provided by the ESL teacher in a pull-out or inclusionary delivery model.

Goals of the ESL program

- Enable ELs to become proficient in listening, speaking, reading, and writing of English.
- Emphasize mastery of English language skills, as well as Math, Science, and Social Studies.
- Use instructional approaches designed to meet the needs of ELs.
- Be an integral part of the total school program.
- Utilize the essential knowledge and skills required by the state as the curriculum.

The school district shall seek certified teachers to ensure ELs are afforded full opportunity to master essential knowledge and skills and provide professional development.

TELPAS

TELPAS is an assessment program for students in Texas public schools who are learning the English language. TeSA must annually assess the English language proficiency of students who have been identified as English learners (ELs) in four language domains—listening, speaking, reading, and writing. TELPAS evaluates the progress that each EL makes in becoming proficient in the use of academic English.

Students in grades K-12 that have been identified as an EL are required to take TELPAS. This includes ELs whose parents have declined English as a Second Language (ESL) program services. They will stop participating in TELPAS when their language proficiency assessment committee (LPAC) determines that they are proficient in the English language and have met exit criteria. This applies to all ELs, even those who are not in an ESL program. Once a student has met the state's exit criteria, they will no longer be identified as an EL and will not have to participate in TELPAS.

Language Proficiency Assessment Committee (LPAC)

The Language Proficiency Assessment Committees (LPAC) meets multiple times throughout the year to officially enter or exit students into the campus ESL program and to create classroom and assessment accommodations on an individual student basis. The LPAC committee must

- Designate the language proficiency level of each limited English proficient student in accordance with the state and federal guidelines
- Designate the level of academic achievement of each limited English proficient student
- Designate the initial instructional placement of each limited English proficient student in the campus program or note the parent/guardian denial of recommended services
- Facilitate the participation of limited English proficient students in other special programs for which they are eligible, such as Special Education, 504, GT, or RtI

- Classify students as English proficient in accordance with the state and federal criteria, and recommend their exit

Criteria to Exit

To exit from the TeSA ESL program, a student may be classified as English proficient at the end of the school year in which a student would be able to participate equally in a regular, all-English, instructional program. The determination shall be based upon all of the following:

- TEA-approved tests that measure the extent to which the student has developed oral and written language proficiency and specific language skills in English
- Satisfactory performance on the approved reading assessment, or a TEA-approved English Language Arts assessment instrument administered in English, or a score at or above the 40th percentile on both the English Reading and the English Language Arts section of a TEA-approved norm-referenced assessment instrument for a student who is enrolled in Grade 1 or 2
- TEA-approved criterion-referenced written tests when available and the results of a subjective teacher evaluation

The LPAC will reevaluate a student who is transferred out of the ESL program during the first two years after the student is exited. If the student earns a failing grade in a subject during any grading period, the LPAC may meet to determine whether the student should be entered back in the ESL program.

Section 504

Section 504 covers qualified students with disabilities who attend schools receiving Federal financial assistance. To be protected under Section 504, a student must be determined to:

- have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities; or
- have a record of such an impairment; or
- be regarded as having such an impairment.

Section 504 requires that school districts provide a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to qualified students in their jurisdictions who have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities.

Consent for Evaluation

In order to evaluate a child for eligibility under Section 504, a parent/guardian/adult student must provide consent. This consent only allows for examination of data to determine initial eligibility. Additional consent for re-evaluation is not necessary. Sometimes the parent is not present when Section 504 consideration is discussed and consent must be sent home for signatures.

Consent for Services

Following an initial eligibility determination, the campus coordinator will need to collect a Consent for Services form from the parent/guardian/adult student. This form will only be collected once.

Revoking Consent

There may be situations in which a parent wants to revoke consent for certain services while maintaining eligibility under Section 504 for accommodations. If this occurs, a Section 504 meeting should be held to discuss the parent request.

Initial Referrals

Referrals for Section 504 can be made by parents or staff. Examples of situations in which a student may meet eligibility as a student protected under Section 504:

- The student has a chronic health condition such as asthma, diabetes, epilepsy, etc.
- The student has a disability identified under IDEA, but does not qualify for special education
- The student has low vision, poor hearing, heart disease, or some other “hidden disability.”
- The student has been evaluated by an agency outside of school and the parents provide the report and recommendations.

The 504 Evaluation

The district must conduct an Evaluation before Section 504 services can be provided to the child with a disability. Consent from a parent/guardian must be obtained prior to an evaluation. Evaluation under Section 504 does not necessarily mean a test or assessment. Rather, the evaluation consists of reviewing data from multiple sources and asking questions to determine eligibility. This process occurs within the context of a Section 504 meeting.

Timelines

The Office of Civil Rights encourages school districts to follow the evaluation timelines similar to those of special education. Evaluations (the Initial Section 504 meeting) must be completed within 45 school days of the receipt of Consent for Evaluation. If a student has excessive absences, this timeline can be extended. Re-evaluations should be conducted every 3 years. Extensive data collection should occur at this time to determine continued eligibility. Section 504 review meetings should occur annually.

Data to Collect and Consider in a Section 504 Evaluation

The following is a list of data examples to be reviewed in a Section 504 evaluation. This is not an exhaustive list as each evaluation is specific to the needs of the student. The Section 504 committee should consider:

- Parent and Teacher input
- Medical information from campus nurse and/or outside providers
- Academic information, including grades, progress monitoring data, universal screening data, state assessment data, etc.
- Behavioral information, including discipline reports, behavioral observations
- Outside evaluations

When collecting information from outside providers, the campus coordinator will need to obtain additional consent for release of confidential information. If the information obtained is vague in nature, the coordinator is expected to call the provider and ask clarifying questions.

Eligibility

In order to be considered eligible for Section 504 protections and supports, these questions must be answered:

- Does the student have a physical or mental impairment?
- Does the physical or mental impairment substantially limit one or more major life activities?
- Does the physical or mental impairment substantially limit a major life activity?

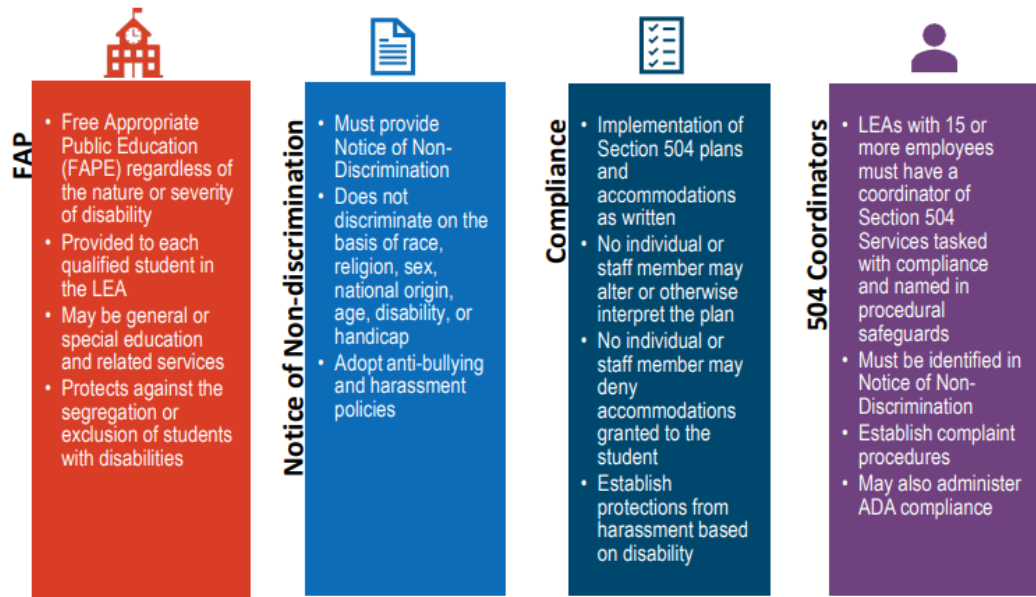
The Section 504 committee must answer “yes” to all of these questions and be able to explain the support necessary for the student to access all academic and extracurricular activities to the same extent as their

peers. Federal law explains that a person eligible under Section 504 must have a disability, have a history of a disability, or be regarded as having a disability.

Also, the regulations stipulate that the disability must “substantially limit” one or more major life activities such as breathing, walking, seeing, reading, hearing, eating, running, concentrating, and/or learning. For a disability to be considered “substantially” limiting, it must create such a limitation without the application of mitigating measures that requires intervention so that the student has equal opportunity to access school-related activities without discrimination. “Substantially limits” should be considered without regard to the helpful effects of mitigating measures (ADHD medications, hearing aids, behavioral therapy, etc.), with the exceptions of ordinary glasses or contact lenses. If a medical or mental health provider indicates that the disability is “mild” in nature, then the child would not require any intentional interventions to prohibit discrimination. The impact must be classified as “moderate” to “severe” to be considered “substantial.”

There is not an exhaustive list of impairments nor a list of every possible life activity. The decision of eligibility is up to the Section 504 committee. Diabetic or ADHD students are the only exceptions to the questions because they are always found eligible for Section 504. Some students, however, may be eligible for Section 504 protections, but not require a Student Service Plan due to mitigating measures (i.e., medication) and/or remission (i.e., cancer patients).

Local Education Agency (LEA) Responsibilities under Section 504



Section 504



What rights do parents or guardians have under Section 504?

- Request a hearing with respect to the school's actions regarding the identification, evaluation, or placement of their child
- File a grievance complaint with the school's Section 504 Coordinator or with the Office for Civil Rights online or by calling the regional office
- Receive notice about the identification, evaluation and/or placement of their child
- Examine their child's educational records
- A 504 plan that is periodically reviewed




What does a 504 plan include?

It includes the accommodations and services that the individual student needs and provides equal access to the same educational programs and activities available to non-disabled peers.

Office for Civil Rights (OCR)

In Texas, if you have a question or would like to file a complaint about Section 504, contact the Office for Civil Rights (OCR).

 OCR.Dallas@ed.gov

 214.661.9600

Section 504 Parent and Educator Resource Guide

 direct.to/dUKU

Fact Sheet for Families



What is Section 504?

Section 504 is part of a long-standing federal civil rights law that guarantees certain protections to people with disabilities.



Who does Section 504 protect?

Section 504 protects people with a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity, such as caring for one's self, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, working, performing manual tasks, and learning.



Section 504 and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) both...

- Provide protections for students with disabilities. However, while all students in special education are protected under Section 504, not all students covered by Section 504 are eligible for special education.
- Require schools to provide a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to students with disabilities. Section 504 and IDEA define FAPE differently.



TEA.Texas.gov/TexasSpEd



Special Education

When a child receives special education, it means that a public school provides custom services and instruction specific to the needs of that student. Special education is available because of a federal law called the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which provides students with disabilities and their parents special legal rights to receive these individualized learning opportunities.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

IDEA ensures that all students with disabilities receive a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) which will meet their needs and prepare them for their education, employment, and independent living.

IDEA defines 13 disability categories:

- Autism
- Deaf or Hard of Hearing
- Deaf-Blindness
- Emotional Disturbance
- Intellectual Disability
- Multiple Disabilities
- Noncategorical Early Childhood
- Orthopedic Impairment
- Other Health Impairment
- Specific Learning Disability
- Speech or Language Impairment
- Traumatic Brain Injury
- Visual Impairment Including Blindness

Referrals for a Special Education Full Individual and Initial Evaluation (FIE)

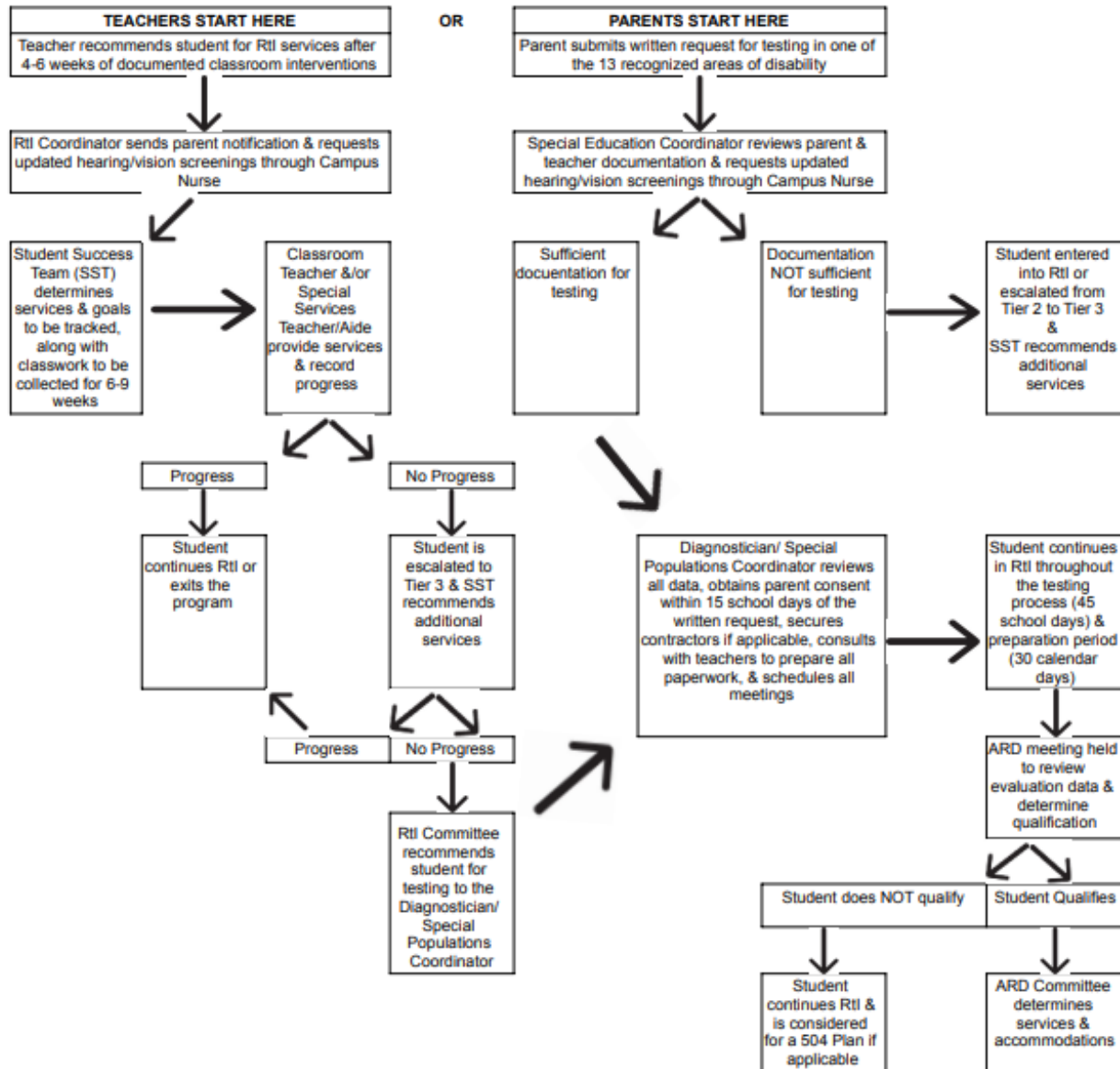
A parent may request an evaluation for Special Education services at any time. If a parent makes a written request for an initial evaluation for special education services, the school must respond no later than 15 school days after receiving the request. At that time, the school must give the parent a prior written notice of whether it agrees to or refuses to evaluate the student, along with a copy of the Notice of Procedural Safeguards. If the school agrees to evaluate the student, it must also obtain written consent for the evaluation.

Initial Evaluation Timeline

A copy of the written evaluation report must be provided to the student's parents as soon as possible after completion of the report but no later than five school days prior to the initial admission, review, and dismissal (ARD) committee meeting (see 19 TAC §89.1011(e)(1) for an exception to this timeline).

Initial ARD committee meeting must be held within 30 calendar days from the date of the completion of the evaluation report. If the 30th calendar day falls during the summer and school is not in session, the ARD committee must meet not later than the 15th school day of the following school year. If an evaluation report indicates that a student would need extended school year (ESY) services, however, the ARD committee must meet as expeditiously as possible. The flowchart below represents the specific process at Texas School of the Arts.

Texas School of the Arts Referral for Special Education Evaluation



- Parent(s) Name
- Parent Contact Information
- Campus Name
- District Name
- Other Information as Appropriate

Eligibility

To determine whether a student qualifies for special education services, the ARD committee must answer the following two questions:

1. Does the child meet the criteria for a qualifying disability? **AND**

2. As a result of the disability, does the child have a need for special education services?



Reevaluation

Review of Existing Evaluation Data Requirements (REED) is the process of looking at a student's existing data to determine if additional data is needed as part of an FIIE, if appropriate, or as part of a reevaluation. A REED helps schools decide whether current information about a child can be used to determine a child's eligibility for special education.

A REED may be a part of an initial evaluation (if appropriate). Examples of situations where a REED is appropriate: The parent of a child brings in an outside evaluation from a professional and the members of admission, review and dismissal (ARD) committee review this information to determine if additional evaluation by school or contracted personnel is needed.

The REED must be conducted by the members of the student's ARD committee, and others as appropriate. The members review the student's existing evaluation data to determine the scope of the evaluation. This review process does not have to take place in an ARD committee meeting. Prior to the REED, the school must issue to parents the Prior Written Notice (PWN) of its proposal to conduct an evaluation, a copy of the Notice of Procedural Safeguards (NPS), and the opportunity to consent to the evaluation or when the school issues to parents the PWN of its refusal to conduct an evaluation and a copy of the NPS.

An Individual Education Plan (IEP)

An Individual Education Plan (IEP) is the written, legal document that is completed by an Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) committee for every public-school child ages 3-21 receiving special education services in Texas. The IEP is the centerpiece of the federal legislation called the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The IDEA ensures "that all children with disabilities have available to them a free appropriate public education that emphasizes special education and related services

designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living.”

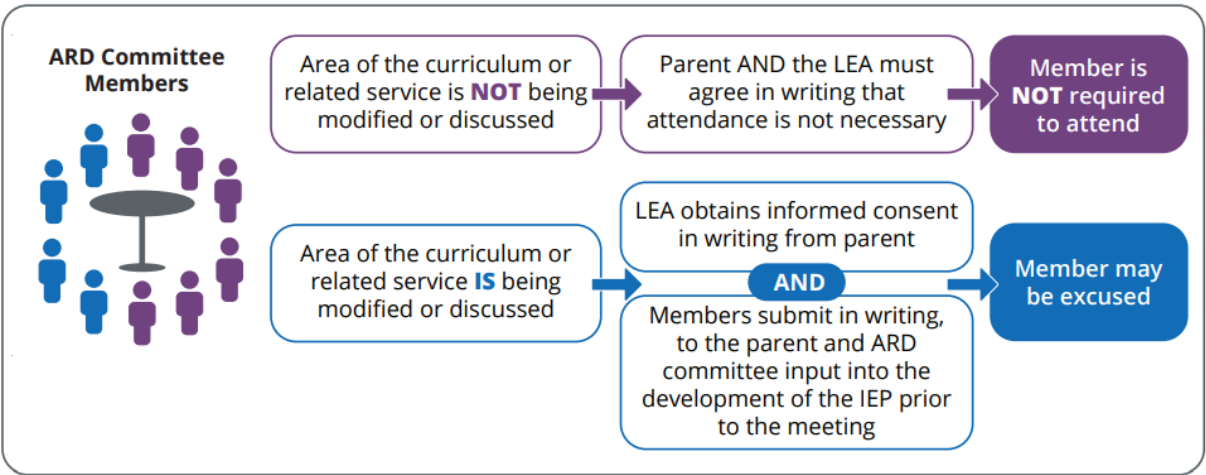
The ARD committee develops the IEP during an ARD committee meeting. The meeting must be held at a time and place that is mutually agreeable, and the school must take steps to ensure that one or both parents are present at every ARD committee meeting or are given the opportunity to participate. The school must keep a record of its attempts to arrange a meeting at a mutually agreed time and place. If a parent cannot attend an ARD committee meeting, the school must allow the parent to participate through other means, such as by telephone or video conference. Schools may draft components of the IEP before the ARD committee meeting but must make parents aware that these portions are a draft and can be modified by the ARD committee.

Admission, Review, Dismissal Meeting (ARD)

The Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) Committee is the team that meets to determine eligibility based on a full and individual evaluation report, and to develop an individualized education program (IEP) for the child. The ARD committee must meet annually, but may meet more often as needed. The ARD Committee must include the following members:

- Parent/Guardian
- Child (when appropriate)
- Regular Education Teacher
- Special Education Teacher
- School Administrator/Representative
- Someone who can interpret evaluation results (if applicable)

Excusal from ARD committee meetings



Present Levels of Academic and Functional Performance (PLAAFPs)

The Present Levels of Academic and Functional Performance (PLAAFPs) are a major component of a student’s Individualized Education Plan. They provide information on how the disability affects involvement and progress in the general curriculum.

Specially Designed Instruction

The core of special education is the specially designed instruction (SDI) a student receives. IDEA defines special education services as “specially designed instruction, at no cost to the parents, to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability.” In Texas, the Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) committee determines the specially designed instruction needed for each student as part of the Individualized Education Program (IEP).

Instruction that targets the unique needs of a child that result from a disability. The instruction must be designed in such a way that the student can access the general curriculum to the same extent as non-disabled peers and make progress toward grade level standards (Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS)).

Inclusion and Resource Services

During inclusion, a member of the special populations team will work with students in their general education classroom, using the work provided by the classroom teacher. During resource, the student goes to a different instructional area to work on the subject in which they need assistance. This work may be provided by the classroom teacher, special education teacher, dyslexia teacher, or combination.

Accommodations and Modifications

Accommodations are intended to reduce or even eliminate the effects of student's disability on academic tasks but do not change learning expectations. The objectives of the course or activity remain the same. Accommodations change how the student learns or demonstrates knowledge. ARD committees should consider whether changes in presentation, response, setting, or timing/scheduling are required for students to access the general curriculum.

Modifications change what the student is expected to master. ARD committees should keep in mind that using modifications may have adverse implications, as students accessing below grade-level content may not close achievement gaps. Modifications typically require a student to learn less material or learn material below grade level and/ or complete or be tested over easier or less complex problems. The decision to modify is a significant one, however some students will require modifications. Decisions to modify should be data driven and individualized for the student.

Least Restrictive Environment

IDEA requires students with disabilities, including students in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with students without disabilities to the maximum extent appropriate. Additionally, schools must ensure that a student with a disability is not removed from the general education environment (including removal to separate schools or special classes) unless the nature or severity of the student's disability is such that he or she cannot be educated in general education classes, even with the use of supplementary aids and services. A student's educational placement is determined at least annually.

Placement decisions must be based on the student's IEP. When making the placement decision, the first consideration should be whether the student can be educated in the general education classroom with or without supplementary aids and services. A student can only be placed in a more restrictive environment when the ARD committee concludes that education in a less restrictive setting, even with appropriate supports and services, cannot be achieved satisfactorily.

Behavior Improvement Plan (BIP)

A Behavior Improvement Plan (BIP) specifically addresses the behavioral plan for a student whose behavior interferes with their own learning or the learning of others. It is created along with the IEP and it must include positive behavioral intervention strategies. There must be a Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) completed prior to developing a BIP. This process may take several weeks, as multiple sources of data are required.

Special Education Progress Reports

Each student in Special Education will receive a progress report of their IEP goals at the end of each grading cycle. Notes are added to the online progress monitoring program weekly, and are based on the work students complete during inclusion or resource. The progress report gives specific data about the student's goals, and is to be used in conjunction with their regular report card.

Special Education Personnel

Special Education and/or Dyslexia Teachers provide individual and small group opportunities to students in need of additional instruction in specific areas through Special Education, 504, or Response to Intervention (RtI). Special Education and/or Dyslexia Teachers will create individualized lesson plans based on each student's current levels and goals. They will also work collaboratively with all students' classroom teachers to ensure alignment to the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) and classroom activities.

Special Education and/or Intervention Aides provide individual and small group attention to students in need of extra assistance and support through Special Education and Response to Intervention (RtI). Aides also provides support for teachers by helping with classroom activities and monitoring students. Aides work under the general supervision of the Principal and immediate direction of the certified teacher of the student(s) needing services.

A Diagnostician is a Texas-approved licensed evaluator of students with special needs. The diagnostician is the leader in identifying needs of students and serves on the ARD committee to develop an IEP.

A Speech Pathologist is a Texas-approved licensed professional trained in diagnosing speech deficits and remediating those areas of concerns. The Speech Pathologist may work with students individually, in small groups, or in the classroom.

An Occupational Therapist is a Texas-approved licensed professional providing support for improving the physical, cognitive, psychosocial, and sensory components of performing tasks needed for independent functioning in the academic setting. Educational occupational therapy primarily focuses on academics, play and leisure, social participation, self-care skills, and transition/work skills.

The Special Services Coordinator, also known as the Special Populations Coordinator, works closely with the administrators, teachers, and service providers to review referrals and diagnostic reports to determine appropriate interventions, provide training and support for special education and general education teachers, and ensure that all legal requirements are met. The Special Services Coordinator will also work with the Principal and other designated staff to conduct ARD and 504 meetings, ensuring compliance with Federal, State, and local requirements. S/he will also work with the Principal to schedule and document all student services with employed or contracted staff and providers.

Dyslexia

In the state of Texas, students who continue to struggle with reading, despite appropriate or intensified instruction, are provided organized systems of reading support. Some students struggle during early reading acquisition while others do not struggle until the later grades, even at the postsecondary level. For many struggling readers, the difficulty may be due to Dyslexia. Dyslexia is found in all student populations and languages. Some students with dyslexia may be English Learners (ELs) who struggle with reading not only in English, but also in their native language. In Texas, special education referrals for evaluation for a Specific Learning Disorder in Dyslexia may be conducted from kindergarten through grade 12.

The purpose of the TEA Dyslexia Handbook is to provide procedures for school districts, charter schools, campuses, teachers, students, and parents/guardians in early identification of, instruction for, and accommodations for students with dyslexia. This handbook will be used by school districts and charter schools as they develop their written procedures regarding students with dyslexia. It will also serve as a resource for educator preparation programs and other entities seeking guidance in serving students with dyslexia.

Dyslexia



Risk factors and signs of dyslexia:

- Family history of dyslexia or reading difficulty
- Early language difficulties such as delayed speech or trouble pronouncing words
- Difficulty identifying and manipulating individual sounds within words
- Challenges learning letter names
- Difficulty recalling the names of letters, numbers, and familiar objects
- Avoidance of reading and writing tasks
- Inaccurate or slow reading
- Difficulty with note taking and producing written work
- Over use of pictures to guess at words

Early intervention is critical, and parents or guardians should talk to their child's teacher if they have concerns.

Additional resources and information for parents can be found on the SPEDTex website.



[SpEdTex.org](https://www.spedtex.org)



1.855.773.3839

Fact Sheet for Families



What is dyslexia?

Dyslexia is a brain-based learning disability that makes learning to read, write, and/or spell difficult despite adequate instruction and intelligence.

Students with dysgraphia, a related learning disorder, demonstrate academic challenges in handwriting, spelling, and written expression.



Characteristics of dyslexia:

Primary characteristics include difficulties:

- Learning the sounds letters make
- Reading words in isolation or reading unknown words
- Reading smoothly with enough speed and accuracy to comprehend
- Spelling

Secondary characteristics may include difficulty:

- Expressing ideas or concepts in writing
- Understanding what is read

Students with dyslexia may also present with additional difficulties and/or disorders, including attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), speech and language disorders, and/or other academic needs.



Procedures for evaluation and identification:

Your children are legally entitled to receive individualized services and supports. State and federal law require schools to have specific procedures in place to identify, locate, and evaluate students with, or suspected of having, dyslexia. Dyslexia is a learning disability that may require special education services.

Parents may request a special education evaluation through their child's campus or district.



[TEA.Texas.gov/TexasSpEd](https://tea.texas.gov/TexasSpEd)



Overview of Special Education for Parents

WHAT IS SPECIAL EDUCATION?

When a child receives special education, it means that a public school provides custom services and instruction specific to the needs of that student. Special education is available because of a federal law called the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which provides students with disabilities and their parents special legal rights to receive these individualized learning opportunities.

Special education is a service, not a place.



How can special education services help your child?

- ▶ If your child is eligible for special education services, your child will have access to services and supports that are specially designed to meet your child's unique needs.
- ▶ Special education services provide individualized programming at NO cost to you and may include special education teachers and service providers such as occupational therapists, physical therapists, speech-language pathologists, and providers of dyslexia instruction.

SPECIAL EDUCATION PROCESS:

Parents have a right to request a special education evaluation at any time. Schools are required to refer a student for an evaluation when a disability is suspected that might require special education services. It's important to understand the steps of the **special education process**.

Steps to Begin Special Education:



Receiving Special Education Services:



Implement the IEP

More information about your rights as a parent can be found below:



spedtex.org
1-855-773-3839

SPEDTEX
Special Education Information Center

**Special Education
Help for Parents**



Parents Guide to the ARD Process
bit.ly/ParentsARD



Notice of Procedural Safeguards
bit.ly/ParentsNPS

While there are other federal laws that also offer certain protections for students with disabilities - such as Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 - IDEA has specific rights only available under that law. This document summarizes those rights.

Overview of Special Education for Parents

1 REFERRAL FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION EVALUATION IS MADE.



A referral is:

- ▶ Required by law when a public school feels that your child may have a disability that requires special education services to be successful.
- ▶ Called a *request* for a special education evaluation when a parent makes it. A request should be made in writing to the proper staff member. The school will respond with information on whether it will proceed with an evaluation.

The school must respond in writing within 15 school days.



2 YOU WILL BE ASKED WHETHER YOU **CONSENT** FOR THE SCHOOL TO EVALUATE YOUR CHILD.



Consent to evaluate is:

- ▶ Permission you choose to give for specially trained personnel to evaluate and assess your child in specific areas.
- ▶ Used by the school to start the timeline by which the school must complete your child's evaluation.

With some exceptions, an evaluation must be completed within 45 school days.



3 EVALUATION IS DONE BY A GROUP OF TRAINED PROFESSIONALS.



An evaluation is:

- ▶ Called a *Full Individual and Initial Evaluation* (FIIE), which includes a written report of education recommendations and information about your child's strengths, interests, and challenges. Professionals with training in the suspected disability must participate, e.g., someone like a licensed dyslexia therapist if dyslexia is suspected.
- ▶ Done at no cost to you. If you do not agree with the school's evaluation, you may ask for an *Independent Educational Evaluation* (IEE). This would be done by someone who is not employed by the school.



4 ADMISSION, REVIEW AND DISMISSAL (ARD) COMMITTEE MEETS TO DETERMINE IF YOUR CHILD IS ELIGIBLE FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES.

The ARD committee is:

- ▶ A team, including you, teachers, school administrators, those with special expertise about your child, and professionals with special training about the suspected disability.
- ▶ In this meeting, discussing your child's evaluation report, identifying your child's strengths and areas of need, and then determining whether your child has a disability and the need for special education services.



Once the evaluation report is done, an ARD committee typically has 30 calendar days to determine eligibility and develop the IEP.



Overview of Special Education for Parents

5

IF YOUR CHILD IS ELIGIBLE FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES, THEN THE ARD COMMITTEE WILL ALSO DEVELOP AN **INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM (IEP)**.



An IEP is:

- ▶ A collection of information that identifies your child's disability, shows your child's current strengths and areas of need, identifies goals to be worked on, and shows the special education and related services that are required for your child to be successful.
- ▶ A document that a school must follow once the process for developing it is complete, and you consent to your child receiving services. Services would begin as soon as possible.

You have the right to participate in the development of the IEP and agree or disagree to your child getting special education services.



MOVING FORWARD: RECEIVING SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

Once an IEP has been developed, it is the school's responsibility to implement the IEP. Schools must offer the services, accommodations, and supports described in the IEP, and school staff will monitor your child's progress toward the goals in the IEP.

- ▶ You will receive progress reports on your child's IEP goals at least once each grading period.
- ▶ The ARD committee will meet and review your child's IEP at least annually.
- ▶ As a member of the ARD committee, you will discuss the need for an updated evaluation at least every three years.
- ▶ You can ask for an ARD committee meeting at any time.
- ▶ You can revoke your consent to special education services. In other words, you can tell the school in writing that you want your child's special education services to stop being provided.
- ▶ Special rules are in place for school discipline. If your child's disability is found to be the reason why the misbehavior occurred, then the ARD committee may, in certain situations, change the disciplinary consequence.



IF DISAGREEMENT OCCURS:

During each ARD committee meeting, you will be an active participant, discussing your child's specific needs with school staff as you work to come to a consensus on the best path forward. But from time to time, you may disagree with school decisions. Under the federal law IDEA, you have formal rights to disagree with special education decisions made by the school, both in the *steps to begin special education* and while *receiving special education services*. Dispute resolution options include filing state complaints, requesting mediation, and requesting a due process hearing. State facilitators are also available to help ARD committees reach consensus on IEPs.

Overview of Special Education for Parents

WHAT IS IN AN IEP?:

The IEP must address certain elements for your child, including:

PLAAFP

- » *Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP)*: The ARD committee writes down your child's skills, abilities, and challenges based on the evaluation report and other data.

Goals

- » Measurable annual **goals**: Goals are developed to focus on your child's specific needs and to describe when your child is expected to make progress.
 - If your child has dyslexia, for example, a goal might focus on improvement in a specific area of reading development or fluency within a certain amount of time.

Instruction & Services

- » A description of the **specially designed instruction, related services, and supplementary aids and services** that will be provided. The instruction and services will vary based on the specific needs of your child. For example, if your child has been identified with dyslexia:
 - The specially designed instruction would likely include a regularly scheduled time for instruction by a highly trained provider using a program that has been shown to help students with dyslexia and in accordance with the [Dyslexia Handbook](#);
 - Related services might include support to improve your child's fine motor skills from an occupational therapist if he or she also struggles with handwriting; and
 - Supplementary aids and services might include documenting your child's need for speech to text options for writing assignments.

Assessments

- » Information on how your child will participate in state and districtwide **assessments**, including whether accommodations like extra time are necessary.

Transition

- » **Transition** services: When your child turns 14, the IEP must begin to document plans for your child after high school and how your child's special education services will be adjusted to work on those plans.

Placement

- » The IEP notes the educational **placement** of your child. Placement decisions are guided by a requirement to provide education in the least restrictive environment (LRE). The goal of LRE is to have your child included in classrooms and settings with children without disabilities as much as appropriate based on your child's unique needs.



Appendix Table of Contents

Appendix A: Section 504 Notice of Rights

Appendix B: Section 504

Appendix C: Child Find and Evaluation

Appendix D: Special Education Notice of Procedural Safeguards

Appendix E: Parent's Guide to the Admission, Review, and Dismissal Process

Appendix F: Texas State Board of Education Dyslexia Handbook