CLARK SCHOOL DISTRICT

Special Education

Frequently Asked Questions

GETTING STARTED

Special education can bring new questions and unfamiliar words. We want you to feel comfortable asking questions, sharing concerns, and working with us to support your child. You do not need to know special education terms to get started.

I am concerned about my child. Who should I contact?

For children **age 3 and older**, contact your child's building principal or the district's special education director. Share concerns about your child's learning, communication, development, or behavior.

For children **younger than age 3**, contact:
Hub Area Birth to Three Program: 605-622-5992
KKumpf@nemhc.org
Kelly Bradberry, Clark County Service Coordinator: 605-753-5450

You do not have to have all the answers before reaching out.

How do I request a special education evaluation?

Contact the building principal or special education director and explain your concerns. Put your request in writing; an email can help you clearly describe what you are noticing. The district will review the information and explain its decision and next steps in writing. Your permission is needed before an initial special education evaluation takes place.

What is an evaluation?

An evaluation helps us understand your child's strengths, areas of difficulty, and educational needs. It may include activities or tests, observations, schoolwork, and information from you and your child's teachers. It is more than one test or score. You are part of the process, and your observations matter.

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UNDERSTANDING RESULTS & PREPARING FOR MEETINGS

What do my child's test scores mean?

Scores provide information about particular skills. The team considers scores alongside other information to understand your child. You can ask:

- What does this score tell us?
- How does this connect to my child's experiences at school?
- What strengths did you notice?
- What support might help?

Ask the team to explain results in everyday language.

What is an IEP?

An **Individualized Education Program (IEP)** is a written plan for a child who qualifies for special education. It describes current skills, learning goals, services, and supports. It also explains how progress will be measured. The plan is developed with you and reviewed at least once a year.

What is my role in an IEP meeting?

You are an important member of your child's team. You know your child's interests, strengths, challenges, and experiences outside school. Share what is working, what concerns you, and what you hope your child will learn. Ask questions, suggest ideas, and request explanations whenever something is unclear.

How can I prepare for an IEP meeting?

Write down your child's strengths and interests, what is going well, your biggest concerns, questions about services or progress, and skills you would like your child to develop. Bring examples, such as schoolwork or notes about homework difficulties. Keep a copy of your questions to check that they were addressed.

Can someone attend the meeting with me?

Yes. You may invite someone who knows your child or has helpful expertise, such as a family member, support person, or service provider. Let the school know whom you plan to bring so the team can prepare.

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SUPPORTS, PROGRESS & QUESTIONS

What if I need an interpreter or cannot attend at the suggested time?

Let the school know. The school must take steps to support your participation and understanding, including arranging an interpreter when needed. Contact the school to discuss scheduling or participating by phone or video.

What is the difference between accommodations and modifications?

Accommodations change how a child learns or shows learning. Examples may include extra time, breaks, or a quieter workspace. The learning expectation stays the same.

Modifications change what a child is expected to learn. For example, a student may work on different learning expectations. The team decides which supports fit your child's needs.

How will I know whether my child is making progress?

Your child's IEP explains how progress toward each goal will be measured and when you will receive updates. An **IEP progress report** describes growth toward individual goals. A **report card** usually describes performance in classes or subjects. Ask your child's special education teacher where to find progress reports and how to read them.

What if I think my child needs a different kind of support?

Contact your child's special education teacher or the special education director. Explain what you are noticing and what you would like the team to discuss. You may request an IEP meeting at any time. You do not have to wait for the yearly meeting to raise a concern.

What if I have a concern or disagree with a decision?

Please share your concern with your child's teacher, building principal, or special education director. We want to understand and work toward solutions. You also have rights and options for resolving disagreements, including IEP facilitation, mediation, state complaints, and due process hearings. You may seek information about these options without first completing an informal district process. See the state resources on the next page.

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HELPFUL WORDS & RESOURCES

Evaluation
Gathering information to understand your child's needs and determine eligibility for special education.

Reevaluation
Taking another look at your child's needs and continued eligibility.

IEP
Your child's individual special education plan.

Related services
Services, such as occupational therapy or transportation, needed to help a child benefit from special education.

LRE - Least Restrictive Environment
Educating children with peers without disabilities as much as is appropriate for their individual needs, with needed supports.

ESY - Extended School Year
Special education services beyond the regular school year when the IEP team determines they are needed.

Where can I get more information or help?

Start with the resources on our district special education webpage: **What Is Special Education?**, **Parent Guide to the Special Education Process**, **Parent Rights and Procedural Safeguards**, and **Who Do I Contact?**

Additional support & source information

SD DOE: Parent guide and procedural safeguards

SD DOE: Resolving special education disagreements

South Dakota Parent Connection: Family support

U.S. Department of Education: IDEA family resources

Your questions are welcome. Your knowledge of your child matters.