

2460 - EXCEPTIONAL STUDENT EDUCATION

The School Board, as an expression of its commitment to provide a free, appropriate, public education for students with disabilities in accordance with State and Federal laws, rules, and regulations, shall develop and implement Special Programs and Procedures for Exceptional Students and the Plan for Exceptional Student Education. These documents shall include at least the components listed below, shall provide administrative procedures for Exceptional Student Education Programs, and shall be revised when required by the Florida Department of Education (FLDOE), readopted, and submitted to the FLDOE.

A. Child Identification

The District will make ongoing efforts to identify, locate, and evaluate students below twenty-two (22) years of age, who reside within the District and have a confirmed or suspected disability in accordance with all Federal regulations and State standards.

B. Procedural Safeguards

A child with a disability and his/her parent shall be provided with safeguards, as required by law, throughout the identification, evaluation, and placement process, and the provision of a free, appropriate, public education to the student.

C. Multifactorial Evaluation

A student may not be given special instruction or services as an exceptional student until after s/he has been properly evaluated and found eligible as an exceptional student in the manner prescribed by rules of the State Board of Education.

The District will provide a multifactorial evaluation for students with disabilities by ensuring that:

1. children are assessed in their native language or other mode of communication;
2. tests are used for their validated purposes;
3. children are evaluated in all areas related to their suspected disability;
4. testing is conducted by a multidisciplinary team;
5. testing materials and procedures are not racially or culturally biased;
6. tests are administered by trained personnel qualified in accordance with all Federal regulations and State standards;
7. tests are administered in conformance with the instructions provided by the producer;
8. medical evaluation, when required as part of the multifactorial evaluation, shall be provided at no cost to the parent by a licensed physician designated by the Superintendent or his/her designee, when other no-cost resources are not available.

The parent of an exceptional student evaluated and found eligible or ineligible shall be notified of each such evaluation and determination. Such notice shall contain a statement informing the parent that s/he is entitled to a due process hearing on the identification, evaluation, and eligibility determination or non-determination.

D. Individualized Education Program

The District will develop an Individualized Education Program (IEP) for each child with a disability who needs special education and related services. The IEP shall be designed to meet the unique

educational needs of the child and shall be developed in meetings with the child's designated IEP Team. At the initial meeting of a student's IEP team, the District will provide parents with information about the amount of funding the District receives for each of the five (5) exceptional student education support levels for a full-time student.

Parents of the child shall be strongly encouraged to participate in all planning conferences and IEP Team meetings. The school will provide written notice of an IEP meeting to the parent at least ten (10) days before the meeting, indicating the purpose, time and location of the meeting and who, by title or position, will attend the meeting. The IEP Team meeting requirement may be waived by informed consent of the parent after the parent receives the written notice.

The District will utilize FLDOE parental consent forms for the following actions in a student's IEP:

1. administer to the student an alternate assessment pursuant to F.S. 1008.22 and provide instruction in the State standards access points curriculum; and
2. place the student in an exceptional student education center.

Except for a disciplinary interim alternative placement for no more than forty-five (45) school days, if the District determines that there is a need to change a student's IEP as it relates to the actions described above in 1 and 2, the school must hold an IEP Team meeting that includes the parent to discuss the reason for the change.

The District will not implement the change without parental consent unless the District documents reasonable efforts to obtain the parent's consent and the child's parent has failed to respond, or the District obtains approval through a due process hearing.

The IEP will include the components listed in F.A.C. 6A-6.03028, *Provision of Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) and Development of Individual Educational Plans for Students with Disabilities*.

The child's IEP shall be reviewed and revised as often as necessary, but at least annually.

District personnel will collaborate with private instructional personnel who are hired or contracted by parents in compliance with F.S. 1003.572. "Private instructional personnel" include only the following:

1. individuals certified under F.S. 393.17 or licensed under Chapter 490 or Chapter 491 for applied behavior analysis services as defined in F.S. 627.6686 and 641.31098;
2. registered behavior technicians who have a nationally recognized paraprofessional certification in behavior analysis and who practice under the supervision of individuals licensed under F.S. 393.17 or licensed under F.S. Chapter 490 or Chapter 491 by assisting such individuals in the provision of applied behavior analysis services;

To provide services under this paragraph, a registered behavior technician must be employed by a provider described in Paragraph 1 above.

3. speech-language pathologists licensed under F.S. 468.1185;
4. occupational therapists licensed under part III of 379 Chapter 468;
5. physical therapists licensed under Chapter 486;
6. psychologists licensed under Chapter 490; and
7. clinical social workers licensed under Chapter 491.

Private instructional personnel who are hired or contracted by parents to collaborate with public instructional personnel will be permitted to observe the student in the educational setting, collaborate

with instructional personnel in the educational setting, and provide services in the educational setting only if the following requirements are met:

1. the student's public instructional personnel and principal consent to the time and place; and
2. the private instructional personnel satisfies the requirements of F.S. 1012.32 or 1012.321.

E. Least Restrictive Environment

The education of students with disabilities will occur in the least restrictive environment through appropriate special education programs and services designed to meet the unique needs of each disabled student. District personnel will use the regular school facilities and adapt them to the needs of exceptional students to the maximum extent appropriate. To the extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, shall be educated with children who are not disabled. Segregation of exceptional students will occur only when the nature or severity of the exceptionality is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily.

F. Confidentiality of Data

The confidentiality of personally-identifiable data relating to children with disabilities and their parents and families shall be protected at collection, storage, disclosure, and destruction; one official of this District shall be assigned the responsibility for protecting the confidentiality of personally-identifiable data. The District follows all Federal regulations and State standards related to the confidentiality of data. (See Policy 8330 - *Student Records*)

G. Due Process

The District will use procedures to allow differences of opinion between parents and this District or between agencies and this District, to be aired and resolved. The procedures shall provide for case conferences and impartial hearings on the District's proposal or refusal to initiate or change the identification, evaluation, eligibility, or educational placement of the child, or the provision of FAPE to the child.

The impartial hearings shall be conducted by an administrative law judge (ALJ) from the Florida Division of Administrative Hearings (DOAH) and shall be final. However, any party who does not agree with the findings and decision in the due process hearing, including a hearing relating to disciplinary procedures, has the right to bring a civil action with respect to the matter that was the subject of the due process hearing. The action may be brought in a State court of competent jurisdiction or in a district court of the United States without regard to the amount in dispute. In the alternative, in hearings conducted on behalf of a student who is identified as gifted, any party aggrieved by the decision of the ALJ has the right to request a review of the order by the District Court of Appeal as provided in F.S. 120.68.

During the pendency of a due process hearing or appellate proceeding regarding a due process complaint, the student shall remain in his/her current educational assignment, unless the parent and the Board otherwise agree.

H. Surrogate Parent

It shall be the policy of the District that whenever the parent or a person who acts in a parental role to a child with a disability or a child suspected of having a disability is determined to be legally unavailable, the child's rights shall be protected through the assignment of a surrogate parent. A surrogate parent means an individual appointed by the Superintendent and/or the court to act in place of a parent in educational decision-making and in safeguarding a child's rights under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. The surrogate parent shall not be an employee of the Department of Education, the School District, a community-based care provider, the Department of Children and Family Services, or any other public or private agency involved in the education or care of the child. The surrogate parent shall meet all statutory requirements and attend the required training to be appointed. The Superintendent shall appoint a surrogate not more than thirty (30)

days after the District determines a particular student is in need of a surrogate.

I. Testing Programs

Students with disabilities shall participate in local and State-wide testing programs to the maximum extent appropriate. Individual exemptions shall be determined only by the student's IEP Team. Exceptional students with disabilities shall have access to testing sites.

A student for whom the IEP Team determines that the State mandated testing cannot accurately measure the student's abilities, taking in to consideration all allowable accommodations, shall have the State mandated testing requirement waived for the purpose of receiving a standard high school diploma if the student completes the minimum number of credits and other requirements for graduation, but does not earn a passing score on the State mandated testing after one (1) opportunity in the 10th grade and one (1) opportunity in the 11th grade.

Further, pursuant to State law, the IEP team may determine that end-of-course assessment cannot accurately measure the abilities of the student and may, therefore, waive the use of the results of the end-of-course assessment for purposes of determining the student's course grade and middle school promotion or award of high school credits.

If the IEP Team determines that a student with a disability is prevented by a "circumstance" or "condition" as defined in F.S. 1008.212 from physically demonstrating the mastery of skills that have been acquired and are measured by the Statewide standardized assessment, a Statewide standardized end-of-course assessment, or an alternate assessment under F.S. 1008.22(3)(c), the IEP Team may submit to the superintendent a written request for an extraordinary exemption from the administration of the assessment, pursuant to F.S. 1008.212. The request may be made at any time during the school year, but not later than sixty (60) days before the assessment for which the request is made. The superintendent will recommend to the Commissioner of Education whether the request should be granted or denied, and the Commissioner will grant or deny the requested exemption within thirty (30) days. A copy of the District's procedural safeguards as required in F.A.C. 6A-6.03311 shall be provided to the parent. If the parent disagrees with the IEP Team's recommendation, the dispute resolution methods described in the procedural safeguards shall be made available to the parent.

A parent who disagrees with the Commissioner's denial of a requested extraordinary exemption may request an expedited hearing before DOAH pursuant to F.S. 1008.212.

J. Right to be Accompanied at Meetings Pertaining to Students with Disabilities

Parents of students with disabilities, or eligible students with disabilities, may be accompanied by another person of their choice at a meeting with District personnel. Such meetings include, but are not limited to, meetings related to the eligibility for exceptional student education or related services; the development of an individual family support plan (IFSP); the development of an individual education plan (IEP); the development of a 504 accommodation plan issued under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; the transition of a student from early intervention services to other services; the development of postsecondary goals for a student with a disability and the transition services needed to reach those goals; and other issues that may affect the student's educational environment, discipline, or placement of a student with a disability.

District personnel will not object to the attendance of such adult or discourage or attempt to discourage through any action, statement, or other means, parents or an eligible student, from inviting another person of their choice to attend a meeting. Parents, eligible students, or other individuals invited to attend such meetings by parents of students with disabilities or eligible students with disabilities on school grounds shall sign-in at the front office of such school as a guest.

Parents of students with disabilities, or eligible students with disabilities, and District personnel shall sign Form 5780 F1 at the meeting's conclusion which states whether or not any District personnel have prohibited, discouraged or attempted discourage the parents, or eligible student, from inviting a person of their choice to the meeting pertaining to their child's, or their own, educational environment, placement, or discipline.

K. Early Literacy Skills for Retained Prekindergarten Students

A parent of a student with a disability who is enrolled in prekindergarten at the age of 4 and is fully funded through the Florida Education Finance Program may retain their child in consultation with the student's IEP team. A student with an IEP who has been retained pursuant to this paragraph and has demonstrated a substantial deficiency in early literacy skills shall receive instruction from the District in early literacy skills.

L. Transfer of Parental Rights at Age of Majority

Unless an exception applies under the rules of the State Board of Education, when a student with a disability reaches the age of eighteen (18), the right of prior written notice is retained as a shared right of the parent and the student. All other parent rights under the IDEA then transfer to the student. At least one (1) year before the student reaches the age of eighteen (18), the Board will provide written notice of the information and instruction to the student and the student's parent(s) on self-determination and the legal rights and responsibilities regarding the educational decisions that transfer of parent rights and information about the ways in which the parent may continue to participate in educational decisions, including informed consent, power of attorney, guardian advocacy and guardianship to the student upon attaining the age of eighteen (18). The information and instruction will include written notice that the rights afforded to parents under Part B of the IDEA transfer to the student at age eighteen (18) except in specified circumstances referenced in F.A.C. 6A-6.03311, a description of the rights that transfer to the student, and the ways in which the parent may continue to participate in educational decisions, including:

- M. informed consent to grant permission to access confidential records protected under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) as provided in F.S. 1002.22;
- N. powers of attorney as provided in F.S. Chapter 709;
- O. guardian advocacy as provided in F.S. 393.12;
- P. guardianship as provided in F.S. Chapter 744; and,
- Q. supported decision-making agreements as provided in F.S. 709.2209.

Placement by the Department of Children and Family Services

After the Department of Children and Family Services provides written notification to the District that an exceptional student has been placed in a private residential care facility, the receiving school district shall, within ten (10) business days, review the student's IEP and shall:

- A. provide educational instruction to the student;
- B. contract with another provider to provide the educational instruction;
- C. contract with the private residential care facility in which the student resides to provide the educational instruction; or
- D. decline to provide or contract for educational instruction, in which case the school district in which the legal residence of the student is located shall provide or contract for the educational instruction of the student.

The Superintendent shall administer the local implementation of these State procedures, in accordance with State and Federal laws, rules, and regulations, which shall ensure fulfillment of this policy.