

Navigating the Special Education Process

A Guide to Special Education in the District of Columbia Public Schools



1 Your child is identified as possibly having a disability

- You or a school professional notices that your child is struggling in school and may have a disability.

2 Meet with the Student Support Team (SST)

- Contact your school to inform them of your concerns and schedule a Student Support Team (SST) meeting.
- You are a part of this team and together you will discuss concerns and develop a plan for addressing your child's needs in a general education setting.

3 If your child is still struggling

- If you do not think that the SST plan is meeting your child's needs, or if the SST decides that its strategies have been exhausted, discuss this with the SST or contact your school's Special Education Coordinator (SEC).

4 Your child is evaluated

- If the team has determined that your child should be evaluated, you will be asked to sign a consent for evaluation. Once you sign the consent form, your child will be evaluated and may receive specific tests to inform the team.
- The evaluation will be specifically tailored to your child and may involve observations, interviews, reviewing report cards, and the administering of tests.

5 Eligibility is determined

- The same group meets to review the evaluations and assessments, if any were done, and determines if your child is eligible for Special Education services.

6 If your child is found eligible for services

- If your child is found to be a child with a disability *and* needs special education and related services as a result of that disability, then your child will be eligible for special education services. Once the child is found to be eligible for services, the team will meet within 30 days to write an Individualized Education Program (IEP) for your child. Your child's education and services will not change until you give consent for special education to start and the IEP is finalized.

7 IEP meeting is held and IEP is written

- A meeting is held to develop an IEP for your child. This is often done right after the eligibility meeting.
- The IEP team (which includes you as the parent) talks about the child's needs and writes the IEP.

8 Services begin

- The IEP will be implemented at your child's neighborhood school or the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) that can meet your child's needs as outlined in the IEP.

9 Progress is measured

- At least once a year, the IEP team meets to review your child's progress and update the goals and services laid out in the plan. Parents are part of this team and are invited to participate in these meetings and can make suggestions for changes to the IEP.

10 Your child is re-evaluated

- Every three years, your child is re-evaluated to determine if he or she still has a disability and continues to need special education and related services.