Special Education Programs & Resources Guide for Families

School Year 2018-2019
Dear DCPS Families,

We are committed to working with you as a valued partner in ensuring your child receives a rigorous and responsive special education program. This guide is an overview of special education programs in DCPS and we see it as an important part of our open communication with you. Here, you will find valuable information about our programs, processes and points of contact.

DCPS is among the fastest improving urban districts in the nation for special education. However, we know there is still a lot of room to grow in order to dramatically improve academic outcomes for all students. In 2016, we developed a new strategic plan to focus our work over the next three school years. This plan focuses on academic achievement, inclusion, and parent engagement - all to prepare student for success in college and careers. Our four strategic goals for school years 2016-2019 are as follows:

- **Goal 1:** Increase academic achievement - PARCC proficiency levels improve by 10 percentage points
- **Goal 2:** Include more students - 60% of students will receive instruction primarily in general education settings
- **Goal 3:** Involve families in their child's success - 85% of parents say they are satisfied with their child's educational program
- **Goal 4:** Prepare students for college or the workforce - Increase four-year graduation rates to 55%

We hope that this guide helps you learn more about our programs and we encourage you to reach out to us directly with questions and comments. Contact information for each of our programs and supports is included at the back of this guide.

We look forward to a productive and successful year with you and your child!

Sincerely,

Kerri A. Larkin
Senior Deputy Chief, Division of Specialized Instruction
District of Columbia Public Schools
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What is the Special Education Process?

A child is suspected of having a disability.

Referral is made by person familiar with child.

Parent reviews referral.

IEP team receives referral, reviews existing student data, and determines whether child requires additional evaluations.

IEP team determines that evaluation is not required at this time and notifies parent in writing with an explanation.

IEP team determines that evaluation is required, and notifies parent in writing.

IEP team requests parental consent to evaluate and conducts the evaluation. The evaluation will be specifically tailored to your child and may involve observations, interviews, reviews report cards, or assessments.

IEP team reviews data and evaluations and determines whether the child is a student with a disability.

Child does not qualify for services.

School maintains support and monitors progress.

Child has a qualifying disability and needs specialized instruction.

Parent signs for initial provision of services and IEP team creates IEP.

School staff implements IEP.

Parent reviews referral.

Child may be receiving response to intervention (RtI) throughout process.
The Special Education Process starts once a teacher, parent, psychologist, other school staff member, or third party (such as a day care center or physician) submits a referral or makes a verbal request to school staff. After the referral is reviewed by the parent or guardian, the IEP (Individualized Education Program) team meets to discuss the referral, analyze the existing data, including any previous assessments. If there is enough data, the team will determine whether the student is eligible for special education services. If not, they will recommend additional assessments and reconvene for the eligibility determination meeting. The IEP team includes special education teachers, general education teachers, related service providers, school administrators and/or other key members of the school staff, the student (if appropriate) and you (the parent/guardian).

Once a student is found eligible for special education services as a student with a disability, the IEP team discusses a plan of action and creates an IEP for the student. The IEP is a document that outlines the annual educational goals for the student, as well as the instructional and related services required to meet those goals. The IEP team determines the special education services a student needs and the appropriate setting in which these services should be delivered.

As the guardian of your child, you are a very important member of the IEP team. Accordingly, the Special Education Student Rights Act of 2014 requires your child’s school to send you any relevant documents that will be discussed at an IEP or eligibility meeting within 5 days of the meeting date. This is to ensure you have time to review and prepare for the meeting. Under the same law, you may expect that a copy of the IEP will be sent to you within 5 days after the meeting has taken place.

DCPS makes every effort to provide special education services in each student’s attending or neighborhood school. When this is not possible, DCPS assigns a student to a new location of service that is closest to the student’s home and is able to implement the IEP with fidelity.

The Special Education Student Rights Act of 2014 also allows parents or their designees to visit their child’s current or proposed classroom. If you would like to appoint a designee to observe your child, the school will provide you with an Observation Designee Form to do so.
Who should I contact if I think my child needs Special Education Services?

In DCPS, referrals for special education services are made to the following teams:

- Early Stages - handles referrals for children ages 3 through 5 in DC private or religious schools, as well as children who are not yet enrolled in school. (referral@earlystagesdc.org or info@earlystagesdc.org)

- DCPS Neighborhood Schools - students ages 3 through 21 enrolled in a DCPS are referred through their attending school. (profiles.dcps.dc.gov for school contact information)

- Centralized IEP Support - handles referrals for students ages 5 through 21 who are home-schooled or parentally placed and funded at a private or religious school. (dcps.childfind@dc.gov or (202) 442-5475)
Early Stages

Serving: Children ages 3 through 5 Grades: PK3, PK4 and kindergarten
Contact: referral@earlystagesdc.org or info@earlystagesdc.org

According to IDEA, a school district must identify, locate and evaluate all 3- to 5-year-old children who may have a disability. Early Stages works with children in private or religious schools, child care centers, and children who are not yet enrolled in school. In addition, Early Stages manages Part C Transition, the process that determines whether children receiving early intervention services before age three are eligible for special education services in school on or after age three.

Early Stages has two evaluation sites:

- Walker-Jones Education Campus, 1125 New Jersey Avenue, NW
- Department of Employment Services, 4058 Minnesota Avenue, NE

Main Activities

Early Stages offers developmental screenings, manages referrals, conducts evaluations, holds eligibility meetings, develops IEPs and identifies locations for eligible children to receive their services. Each student referred for a full evaluation is assigned an evaluation team. This team is made up of a family care coordinator, who supports the family through the process, and an evaluation coordinator, who organizes the evaluations and the development of an IEP. Together with other specialists, this team completes an evaluation and provides parents with a better understanding of their child’s needs. Together with the parent, the team determines whether the child is eligible for special education and related services. If so, the team develops an IEP.

Service Delivery

All IEP services are provided at DCPS schools by DCPS staff. Eligible children who are not already enrolled in a DCPS school are offered a seat either at their neighborhood school or through a lottery placement. If the neighborhood school is unavailable or does not have a program that meets the child needs, then a seat will be offered at the closest school that can meet his or her needs. Children already enrolled in a community-based Head Start program may also be eligible to have their IEPs implemented there. Children whose families prefer enrollment in private or religious schools will receive equitable services through an Individualized Services Plan (ISP) instead of an IEP.
DCPS Neighborhood Schools

Serving: Children ages 5 through 21 enrolled in a DCPS school
Contact: profiles.dcps.dc.gov for school contact information

If your child is between the ages of 3 and 21 years old and currently enrolled in DCPS, referrals for special education services are done through their attending school.
Centralized IEP Support

Serving: Children ages 3 years through 21 years old parentally placed in a private or religious school
Contact: dcps.childfind@dc.gov or (202) 442-5475
dcps.dc.gov/page/determining-if-private-and-religious-school-students-need-special-education

The Centralized IEP Support Unit handles referrals for children ages 5 years 10 months to 21 years old who are parentally placed and funded at a private or religious school and fall in one of the following categories:

- Are attending a private or religious school in DC, whether the family resides in DC or not;
- Are attending a private or religious school in another state and the family resides in DC; or
- Are being home schooled in DC.
Eligibility/Referral Process

In the process of evaluating students for special education services, DCPS requests the following information:

- Referral Form
- Universal Health Form
- Proof of enrollment at a private or religious school in DC (usually a letter from the school)
- DC residency verification (DC residents only, to be completed after other documents are received)

Additional Suggested Documents:

- Attendance records
- Report cards
- Standardized test scores
- Work samples
- Prior evaluations (if applicable)
What to expect in the eligibility process

If your child is suspected of having a disability, and your child’s IEP team determines that an evaluation is required, the team goes through the eligibility process. As of July 1st, 2018, DCPS is required to complete the eligibility process within 60 days of obtaining your consent to evaluate your child. This section describes important parts of the process, information you can use to be an informed member of the team, and supports are in place for your child.

What should I look for in an eligibility report?

Eligibility reports are large documents that can contain a lot of technical language. Start by reading the conclusion or summary of the document first to gain a general understanding of what will be discussed at the meeting, what the data is showing, and what resources are available to support your child.

How is eligibility for special education services determined?

Eligibility for special education services is determined by the IEP team, which includes you as the parent. The team will review a variety of resources that will include, but are not limited to: current work samples, student’s response to current/previous interventions, teacher and parent reports, evaluation reports (which include formal and informal assessment measures), review of the student’s record, and student’s current level of functioning in the educational environment. Once all of this information is collected and reviewed during the eligibility meeting, the team utilizes the Eligibility Determination Worksheet to determine if the student meets the requirements to receive special education services.

What assessments were used? Why those assessments? How do I interpret the scores?

Assessment measures can be formal or informal. Each assessment addresses an area of concern identified in the referral process, as well as look at your student’s overall ability in each area. Scores are interpreted by the provider/teacher based on the assessment manual instructions.

For each formal assessment, there is a rubric or score sheet that determines the range of your child’s scores. In the reports, the assessors will share this information and clearly state how your child did with each assessment. These can be standard or scaled scores, or descriptions of the student’s performance, depending on the assessment. The assessors will let the team know the ranges of these scores and how the scores compare to typical peers. If you are unsure how these scores connect to how your student performs in the classroom, please ask the assessor as well as the general education teacher and special education teacher for more information.
Were observations done? What were the results?

Classroom observations may be conducted as a part of the eligibility process. During the observations, the observer looks to see what strategies, accommodations, supports are already in the classroom; the student’s response in the classroom; any difficulties the student may be having; and any strengths the student may be demonstrating. The results of the evaluation can be included in the Analyzing Existing Data section or in individual evaluation reports.

When should I receive the eligibility determination documents?

Parents should receive any evaluations of your child at least 10 school days in advance of the eligibility meeting. This will allow you to meaningfully participate in the discussion regarding your child’s potential eligibility for special education services.

What happens if my child is not eligible for special education services?

At an eligibility determination meeting, the team decides whether your child qualifies for special education services. During the meeting, other strategies and supports addressing the reason for referral can be provided by individuals on the eligibility team. If your child does not qualify for special education services, the school can also provide information for other options to support your child. This could mean other supports such as a continuation of the Response to Intervention process, community resources, further intervention, tutoring, a 504 plan, or other supports to ensure your child is receiving what they need.
What to look for in an IEP:

An individualized education program (IEP) can be a very complex document. This section will help you understand more about the different sections of the IEP and key areas to examine to ensure your child’s needs are being met.

The key sections of the IEP are:

1. **Student and school information:**
   - When reviewing your child’s IEP, it is important to ensure that the information on the first page of the IEP that includes the student’s and school’s information is correct and up to date (address, phone number, date of birth, etc.). The school uses this information to contact you if there are any questions or concerns.

2. **Goals and present levels of performance**
   - When developing annual goals for your child, the IEP team will:
     - Use baseline data to support present levels of performance.
       - Baseline data is a way of measuring where your child is currently performing on a specific skill or standard. Baseline data can come from a variety of places: standardized tests, observations, classroom-based assessments, student work samples or statewide testing results.
     - Ensure that the IEP states measurable annual goals, including academic, related service and/or functional goals for your child.
       - Sometimes IEP goals may be carried over from a previous IEP but the level of difficulty will be increased. There also may be goals that your child continues to work on but is now working on doing them independently without adult support.
   - Each goal on your child’s IEP will:
     - List a baseline of your child’s current level of performance.
     - List the expected level of achievement within one IEP year.
     - Indicate how progress will be measured and how often data will be collected.
       - Progress can be measured informally or formally:
         - Informal measurements can include: analyzing your child’s work samples, documenting verbal responses, charting answers to a weekly reading comprehension quiz or using information from a daily behavior check sheet.
         - Formal measurements can include: standardized achievement tests, rating scales, intervention monitoring reports or state test results.
Special education and related services

On your child’s IEP, there is a section dedicated to special education and related services. Here, it lists out the various services that your child receives, the setting in which each service will be provided, as well as the time and frequency of each service. This lets the IEP team know what services are required in order to fully support your child while in school.

Accommodations and Modifications:

Identify accommodations and/or modifications required to support the student in the classroom. Types of accommodations and modifications may include:

- Preferential seating
- Extended time
- Frequent breaks
- Clarification/repetition of directions
- Enlarged print material
- Read aloud

Transition plans

Transition plans are developed for students ages 14 and older to prepare them for life after high school.

The transition plan includes:

- Age-appropriate and current assessment data
- Input from the student on what they have indicated as their preferences
- Strengths and needs
- Long term transition goals include what your child would like to do when they graduate from high school
- Annual transition goals reflect what the student will work on during the course of the school year

What special education services look like in the classroom:

A student’s services can look very different depending on a student’s level of need, as stated in their IEP. All services start with collaboration between a special education teacher and the rest of the team supporting the student. This can include co-planning and can also be co-teaching with a general education teacher. There are a variety of co-teaching models to ensure that your child is receiving the services they need to be successful while also providing access to the general education curriculum. If your child has hours outside the general education setting, they may be pulled out for some of the services. If your child has more complex needs, services may be in a full-time program. Related service providers can either pull students individually, pull a small group, or push into the classroom to provide services.
Where are special education services provided?

DCPS provides a continuum of services for students ages three through 22 with disabilities who have been found eligible to receive special education services. There are different settings along the continuum where these services can be provided, and students learn in the least restrictive environment possible.

IEP teams determine the appropriate level of services a student needs to access the curriculum. Most DCPS students can be served in the general education (regular) classroom, in a Learning Lab or in a full-time classroom. Separate school and home and hospital instruction are considered the most restrictive environments and are for students with the highest level of need.

“Inside of general education” means that the specialized instruction and related services for students with disabilities will be served while they are with their peers without disabilities in the general classroom. DCPS believes that all students will benefit from including students with disabilities in a general education setting to the greatest extent possible.

Sometimes, though, a student needs more support than can be provided in the general education setting. “Outside of general education” refers to all specialized instruction and services that are provided to a class or grouping made up entirely of students with disabilities. Students with less than 20 hours of specialized instruction outside of general education in their IEPs typically receive services in a Learning Lab, also referred to as a resource room or pull-out services.

DCPS’s full-time, districtwide classrooms provide specialized supports to students with 20 or more hours of specialized instruction outside of general education in their IEP. Our full-time classrooms are designed to give more support to students with disabilities who have a high level of need.

Students’ IEPs may have instruction hours provided only inside of general education, only outside of general education, or both inside and outside of general education.
How does inclusion work in DCPS?

Students with disabilities spend as much time with their peers without disabilities as possible, as determined by the IEP Team. Within each child’s IEP, accommodations and/or modifications are listed and provide clear ways to make the general education curriculum accessible for them. Accommodations change how a student learns the material. A modification changes what a student is taught or expected to learn. Teachers in the inclusive setting employ a variety of strategies to ensure students are able to access the general education content and practice. It is important to note that inclusion is not a type of classroom or a place but rather the philosophy of including students with disabilities in general education settings. The goal of inclusion is to provide students with high-quality instruction that is aligned to grade-level expectations, providing all students the opportunity to succeed in all areas. Meeting a student’s special education needs in the general education classroom is one inclusive practice.

Co-Teaching

Serving: Students with specialized instruction outlined in their IEP designated as “inside of general education”
Contact: sped.inclusion@dc.gov

Co-teaching is a service delivery option that provides specialized instruction to students with disabilities within the general education setting. Co-teaching occurs when two or more professionals share the responsibility for teaching some or all of the students in a classroom. This practice provides all students with an opportunity to learn from two educators in an integrated approach to the content. For students with IEPs, co-teaching may provide the least restrictive environment to receive specialized instruction. DCPS supports co-teaching at all DCPS schools.

Consultation

Some students may benefit from specialized instruction that is delivered by a general education teacher in a general education setting. In the consultation model, general education teachers consult with special education teachers on the development of lessons that are aligned to students IEP goals. This model offers the most independence and the least restriction for students.

Pull-Out Services

Some students have specific needs that require specialized instruction outside of the general education setting but do not require a full-time outside of general education setting. These students have fewer than 20 hours of specialized instruction outside of general education on their IEP. Often, pull out services are provided in a Learning Lab. Learning Labs are resource rooms that provide a small, structured setting for students. These classrooms implement evidence-based practices to address student IEP goals to bolster success in the general education setting. Students’ IEPs determine the quantity, scope and nature of the instruction to be provided in this setting.
Assistive Technology (AT)

Serving: Students requiring individualized technology supports to access their curriculum
Grades: PK3 through grade 12
Contact: dcps.assistivetech@dc.gov

Assistive Technology (AT) is a general term for all individualized supports that assist students with a disability access the school curriculum or educational environment. The IEP team considers the AT needs for a student and consults with the AT team to determine which student-specific supports are available to help the student access a free and appropriate public education. Examples range from single display devices, multiple display devices, and boardmaker.

The types of assistive technology are:

- **Access**: AT for access allows students to access their classroom and school environments. These seating and mobility solutions enable students to sit more closely with their peers and navigate their school with greater independence. Examples of AT for access includes activity chairs, corner and gait trainers. *Please note that wheelchairs and other medical supports are not included in the role of the school-based Assistive Technology Team, these items fall into the category of durable medical equipment (DME).*

- **Communication**: AT for communication, also known as augmentative and alternative communication, helps students communicate with staff and other students and participate in classes. Examples of AT for communication include communication applications and software, as well as picture-based communication supports.

- **Hearing**: AT for hearing includes a variety of assistive listening systems or hearing technology that can help students who are deaf or hard of hearing, as well as those with other auditory and learning problems. Auditory listening systems can reduce background noise and amplify the teacher’s voice. In DCPS, the educational audiologist collaborates with the team to determine the hearing assistive technology needs. *Please note that hearing aids are not included in the role of the school-based audiology team. The dispensing of hearing aids is completed by audiologists in medical settings.*

- **Learning**: AT for learning includes supports and equipment for various learning difficulties including math, reading, writing and organization.

- **Vision**: AT for vision includes supports and equipment for students who are blind or visually impaired that need some form of assistive technology in order access print on paper or electronic information. In DCPS, the vision specialist collaborates with the team to determine the vision assistive technology needs.

- **Instructional software**: used to teach specific academic skills (like reading and writing) or subject matter content (such as history and science). Instructional software differs from AT in that it includes curriculum and intervention software. Assistive Technology includes student specific features to assist students with disabilities to access curriculum and intervention.

- **Universal Design for Learning (UDL)**: is a philosophy that encompasses learning models, methods and products to enhance the educational experience of diverse learners (whether or not they have learning disabilities). In this approach, AT is often built into educational materials and can be customized to help students with disabilities be successful with the general curriculum. UDL is available for all students and is not student-specific AT.
Academic Programs

Serving: Students with full-time IEPs receiving services in self-contained programs
Grades: PK3 through grade 12 & including Opportunity Academies

DCPS offers a continuum of services for students with special needs. Instruction is individualized; research-based practices are matched with a student’s unique needs and skills when developing a student’s Individualized Education Program (IEP). Some students spend most of their school day in the general education classroom, while others receive their instruction in a full-time special education classroom.

Full-time special education classrooms are highly structured and supportive with low student to staff ratios. All classrooms are staffed with certified special education teachers and instructional paraprofessionals. Academic instruction is aligned to the Common Core State Standards and the DCPS Scope and Sequence. Some students access the general education curriculum, while others are provided with a modified curriculum. In all classes, interventions supplement the general education curriculum and the modified curriculum. Specially trained and certified related service providers support the needs of the students in accordance with their IEP. Some students participate in the standard state assessment with accommodations, while others participate in alternate state assessments.

High school students in full-time programs have the opportunity to either work toward a diploma or a certificate of IEP completion. They access transition services such as career education and also vocational training.

Full-Time Programs:

- **Behavior & Education Support (BES):** Supports students who have been identified with an emotional disability or who have challenging behaviors and require a more therapeutic environment. (dcps.bes@dc.gov)
- **Communication & Education Support (CES):** Supports students who have been identified with autism spectrum disorder or other learning needs and require an Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA) environment. (dcps.ces@dc.gov)
- **Early Learning Support (ELS):** Provides full-time, early intervention for students with developmental delays or other health impairments. Some students demonstrate delays in cognition, communication, and motor skills. (dcps.specialed@dc.gov)
- **Independence & Learning Support (ILS):** Supports students who have been identified as having a cognitive or intellectual disability. (dcps.specialed@dc.gov)
- **Medical & Education Support (MES):** Supports students who have been identified with complex medical needs and intellectual or cognitive delays. (dcps.specialed@dc.gov)
- **Vision Programs (Sensory Support):** Equips students with visual impairments with the supports and skills they need to successfully learn alongside their non-disabled peers. (dcps.sensorysupport@dc.gov)
- **Deaf or Hard of Hearing (DHOH) (Sensory Support):** Equips deaf or hard of hearing students with the supports and skills they need to successfully learn alongside their typically developing peers. (dcps.sensorysupport@dc.gov)
- **Specific Learning Support (SLS):** Supports students who have been identified with a specific learning disability or other disability where behavior is not the primary impediment to accessing the general education curriculum. (dcps.specialed@dc.gov)
- **Home and Hospital Instruction (HHIP):** Serves students who have medical or behavioral health conditions that keep them at home or a hospital and prevent them from attending school. (hip.dcps@dc.gov)
- **Extended School Year (ESY):** ESY refers to special education and/or related services provided to a student with a disability beyond the traditional school year. DCPS offers a summer program to help students retain skills that are essential to their progress, so they are ready to begin school in the fall. (dcps.esy@dc.gov)
Related Services

Serving: All students with disabilities who have Related Services outlined in their IEP
Grades: PK3 through grade 12
Contact: dcps.relatedservices@dc.gov

Often, children with disabilities need additional support and services to help them succeed in the classroom. Some students with disabilities only require specialized instruction by a teacher to adapt the curriculum to that child’s needs. Other times, students receive specific related services to support classroom instruction.

Types of Related Services:

- **Educational Audiology**: Educational Audiology focuses on the hearing, listening, and auditory processing challenges that may affect a student’s academic, communication, and/or social skills. Audiologists support students by evaluating their hearing and auditory processing ability, and selecting and fitting appropriate amplification technology. ([speech.audiology@dc.gov](mailto:speech.audiology@dc.gov))

- **Mental Health and Behavioral Support**: The Mental Health and Behavioral Support Services team consists of DCPS social workers who work with students on issues they face at school, at home, and in the community, that affect their ability to participate in and benefit from their education. These services can include group or individual counseling; home visits; and social, emotional and behavioral assessments. ([School.MentalHealth@dc.gov](mailto:School.MentalHealth@dc.gov))

- **Occupational Therapy**: Occupational therapy practitioners support a child’s participation in activities throughout the school day. School-based practitioners support academic achievement and social participation by promoting occupation within all school routines, including recess, classroom, and cafeteria time. ([Dcps.OTPTherapyprogram@dc.gov](mailto:Dcps.OTPTherapyprogram@dc.gov))

- **Physical Therapy**: Physical therapists are health care professionals who help individuals maintain, restore, and improve movement, activity, and functioning, thereby enabling optimal performance and enhancing health, well-being, and quality of life. The physical therapist performs therapeutic interventions, including compensation, remediation and prevention strategies and adaptations, focusing on functional mobility and safe, efficient access and participation in activities and routines in natural learning environments. ([Dcps.OTPTherapyprogram@dc.gov](mailto:Dcps.OTPTherapyprogram@dc.gov))

- **Psychology**: The psychologist supports students and educators by giving psychological and developmental tests, analyzing information about a child’s behavior and cognitive functioning, and interpreting these results with school staff and parents. ([School.MentalHealth@dc.gov](mailto:School.MentalHealth@dc.gov))

- **Speech-Language Pathology**: The speech-language pathologist identifies and supports children with specific disorders and delays related to oral language and communication. Speech-Language pathologists use current intervention techniques and strategies to help students become more independent. ([speech.audiology@dc.gov](mailto:speech.audiology@dc.gov))
Transition Programs

Serving: Students who have documented disabilities and are pursuing high school diplomas, and students who are pursuing certificates of IEP completion.
Grades: 9 – Opportunity Academies
Contact: osi.transition@dc.gov

Secondary Transition is the process of preparing students for life after they leave high school, including participation in post-secondary education or training, employment, and community living. Secondary transition training begins in pre-kindergarten, with the ultimate outcome of students living independently based on their preferences, abilities and limitations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Characteristics</th>
<th>River Terrace: Workforce Development Center</th>
<th>Project SEARCH</th>
<th>CEO – Pre-Employment Transition Services</th>
<th>CEO – Mentoring Academy</th>
<th>CEO – Experiences in Transition Academy</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Preparing participating students for competitive employment in the community. Provides specialized training in the areas of horticulture, health sciences, and hospitality</td>
<td>Preparing DCPS adult students with intellectual and other developmental disabilities for competitive employment. Interns receive daily instruction on employable skills.</td>
<td>9th/10th grade students engage in career awareness experiences in various fields to shape their field(s) of interest.</td>
<td>11th/12th grade students are paired with a mentor who works in the student’s career field of interest.</td>
<td>Students in their final year of high school are engaged in professional development sessions and exposed to real life workplace settings.</td>
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| Eligibility Criteria | -18-21 years old and have been identified with an intellectual or other developmental disability. -C4 and above and are entering their last year of high school with plans to graduate after completing this program. | -18-21 years old and have been identified with an intellectual or other developmental disability. -Be enrolled as a DCPS student and receiving Special Education services. -Be in their last year of high school and agree to graduate at the end of the Project SEARCH program. | -Enrolled as a DCPS high school student, up to age 22. -Have a documented disability. -Be pursuing a Diploma, as reflected in the IEP Diploma Decision Status. -Agree and adhere to the CEO student contract and code of conduct. | -Enrolled as a DCPS high school student, up to age 22. -Have a documented disability. -Be pursuing a Diploma, as reflected in the IEP Diploma Decision Status. -Agree and adhere to the CEO student contract and code of conduct. | -Enrolled as a DCPS high school student, up to age 22. -Have a documented disability. -Be pursuing a Diploma, as reflected in the IEP Diploma Decision Status. -Agree and adhere to the CEO student contract and code of conduct. |
Location of Services (LOS)

The purpose of the DSI Location of Service process facilitates changes in program location to ensure timely services for students with disabilities who have IEPs with 20 or more hours outside of the general education setting. DSI program managers monitor program capacity, determine appropriate service locations and help ensure special education services are implemented for students.

Frequently Asked Questions:

What if a family wants a different Location of Services?

Families may reach out to the Program Manager for the specific program in which a student receives services. Refer to the “Academic Programs” section of this guide for contact information. For general questions about LOS, please call the Office of Teaching and Learning (OTL) at (202) 442-9929 or email dcps.specialed@dc.gov.

What if a child requires transportation?

Transportation is a related service. Once it is determined that a student will require transportation services to access free and appropriate education, the current school LEA Representative will add the request in the transportation system managed by the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE). These services are intended to transport special education students who are not attending their neighborhood school.

What if a student receives a seat at a school through the My School DC Lottery?

DCPS Division of Specialized Instruction will make every effort to accommodate enrollment at the school selected through the lottery process. DSI reserves one seat in each program classroom throughout the district for students who elect to participate in the My School DC Lottery. However, it is important to note that not every school has every type of full-time program. Thus, a lottery outcome does not necessarily guarantee a seat for a student with a full-time IEP.

When will families hear about a Location of Services for the upcoming school year?

Families will hear about the following school year’s LOS in the April-May timeframe if a student is changing schools.

Can families tour the proposed school?

Yes! We encourage all families to tour their new school and participate in a transition meeting between their current school and the new school.

Who should families speak to if they have questions about a child’s new school?

The location of service letter contains specific contact information for the LEA representative’s designee of the child’s new LOS. Families should feel free to reach out to that individual with any questions or to schedule a tour.
Questions to ask your student’s IEP team:

What does parent engagement look like between IEP meetings?

Parents may consider connecting with the teachers throughout the school year through their preferred mode of contact (email, phone calls, conferences etc.) to check in on student progress. If you ever have any questions or concerns regarding your child’s services, present levels of performance, or goals, you can always contact a member of the IEP team to ask questions or to schedule a team meeting. Parents should receive an IEP progress report quarterly with their child’s report card and may request a meeting to discuss any concerns as well.

How should I support my child at home to work on his/her IEP goals and keep him/her on track?

There are a variety of ways to support your child at home with their IEP goals and keep them on track. You can reach out to your child’s teacher and/or related service provider regarding specific activities, strategies, or supports you can implement in the home. You can also support your child’s academic and transition goals by creating simple tasks related to your child’s goals, providing an opportunity for your child to practice skills at home.

Other ways you can support your child include:

- Talk to your child about their disability and how to advocate for their needs.
- Work on self-advocacy and self-direction skills by allowing your child to do things like order for themselves at restaurants, participate in coming up with a grocery list and shopping for items from the list, practice making purchases, complete household chores, do laundry, prepare simple meals or pack a lunch, set and follow alarms for themselves for waking up and bedtime, complete hygiene routines independently, plan local trips using Google Maps or the WMATA trip planner to practice using public transportation.
- Have open and honest discussions about what your child wants to do in the future (e.g., what are their career interest, where do they want to live? Do they want to go to college? If not, what else could they do to train for the job they want?) Encourage your child to participate in volunteer opportunities that are aligned with their career interest.
- Have your child participate in various activities within the community with same-aged peers for recreation and leisure to help them develop personal preferences.
- When your student reaches age 14, encourage them to get a part-time or summer job that matches their skills and interests.
- Speak with your child about different career options and take them to visit training facilities and universities.

How do the teachers who support my child work together?

Teachers and related service providers work collaboratively to support your student. These collaboration efforts include meeting to discuss strategies and supports for your child in the classroom. This can also mean sharing your child’s progress, accommodations, and modifications in between IEP/eligibility meetings ensuring overall progress in the classroom. Special education teachers, general education teachers, and related service providers can co-plan to ensure that your child is receiving instruction that aligns with their needs and supports them in their least restrictive environment.
How will I know my child is making progress?

How do you measure my child’s progress?

Student progress is measured in a variety of ways by teachers and related service providers. Progress can be measured using student work samples, using quizzes/tests, tracking student responses, and other formal and informal assessments. For students age 14 and above, secondary transition progress is measured by the level of independence the student demonstrates.

During every IEP meeting, there is a discussion regarding the progress your child has made. Your child’s annual goals are updated based on their progress and mastery of the previous year’s goals, as well as the current needs of your child as evidenced by assessment data. These goals provide focus for the next year and ensure your child is being challenged academically.

How do you measure high school students’ progress in career-based learning experiences?

An objective of Transition programming is to understand the impact of each career-based learning experience on students’ attitudes, skills and confidence in professional settings. In order to measure student progress, qualitative data is collected. Students are surveyed anonymously, so as to encourage student honesty in responses, and most importantly, to compare student’s pre-program results with their post-program results. Also, the Transition Team monitors the attendance and GPA data for students participating in career-based learning experiences to ensure adherence to graduation requirements.

How does the IEP progress report relate to my child’s report card?

IEP progress reports are documents written quarterly, like report cards, to provide you with updates on how your child is progressing toward the goals on their IEP. These goals are connected to specific standards, like report cards, but have a very different grading model. For each IEP goal, the progress report will indicate whether you child has mastered the goal, is progressing toward meeting the goal, has made no progress toward the goal, is regressing, or the goal has not yet been introduced.

Is there evidence that my child is progressing? Where is the quantifiable data?

You should request data related to your child’s progress from your child’s teachers and related service providers throughout the school year. If you suspect a problem or deficit, you should ask your child’s teacher to assess your child using classroom assessments to quantify how your student is progressing.

Also throughout the course of the school year, you should request to meet with the guidance counselor or social worker to go over your student’s behavior plan. The purpose of this is to see that their behavior supports are working and, if not, to modify those plans and interventions whenever there is a suspected issue or concern.

It is also a good idea to have your student use a planner to make sure assignments are being completed and turned in. The planner can be used to communicate between the parents and classroom teachers to determine if assignments are missing and to identify concerns with certain assignments or areas of curriculum.
If there is no progress what is the school team’s plan? What do we do next?

It can be concerning to hear that your child has not been making progress, or even regressing on their IEP goals. If this is occurring, it can be helpful to contact your child’s special education teacher and talk through some of the options. You can ask to have a meeting so that the IEP team can come together to re-evaluate the services, supports, and accommodations and modifications your child is receiving to ensure that they are getting the support they need to be successful.

What are the indicators that services need to be updated or changed?

There are several indicators that services need to be updated or changed. These indicators can include:

- student mastering skills;
- student generalizing skills into their classroom environment;
- plateau of skills with consistent intervention being provided over an extended period of time;
- limited or no progress observed; and
- formal and informal assessment results indicating growth in skills.

Any changes or updates to services are an IEP team decision and all data sources would need to be reviewed as a part of the process.
Section 504 Program

Serving: All eligible students with disabilities (see eligibility criteria below)
Grades: PK3 through grade STAY
Contact: 504@dc.gov

The Section 504 program is named for Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, a federal law that requires public schools to provide accommodations to students with disabilities so that these students can access the school’s general education curriculum and learning opportunities.

Unlike special education, Section 504 does not prescribe specialized instruction for eligible students. Instead, the Section 504 program ensures that eligible students with disabilities receive the accommodations and/or services they need to access the general education curriculum and other opportunities for learning at their DCPS schools.

Eligibility

A student is eligible under Section 504 if all three of the below are met:

The student has a physical or mental impairment → that substantially limits → a major life activity

Eligibility determinations are made by the 504 team at your student’s school.
Process for Section 504:

- Parents/guardians are invited to make a referral if they believe that their child has a physical or mental impairment that could make their child eligible for Section 504. Referrals may occur via the Section 504 Referral Form (available at your student’s school), in writing to the school, via email, or via a phone or in-person conversation.

- Once the referral form has been received by the school, the 504 team will ask the parent/guardian to provide any medical documentation or additional information and invite the parent/guardian to attend a 504 eligibility meeting.

- At the eligibility meeting, the team will review all available information and determine whether the student is eligible.

- If the student is determined to be eligible, the 504 team, which includes the parent/guardian, will then write a 504 Plan for the student, describing the specific accommodations or services that the student needs to access the general education curriculum at the school.

- The 504 team will meet annually to review the student’s 504 Plan and determine whether any changes are needed. The 504 team will also review the student’s eligibility for Section 504 every three years.
Division of Specialized Instruction Contact Information

Division of Specialized Instruction
1200 First Street, NE
Washington, DC 20002
202-442-4800
dcps.specialed@dc.gov

Behavior & Education Support Program
dcps.bes@dc.gov

Communication & Education Support Program
dcps.ces@dc.gov

Early Learning Support Program
dcps.specialed@dc.gov

Independence & Learning Support Program
dcps.specialed@dc.gov

Medical & Education Support Program
dcps.specialed@dc.gov

Sensory Support Program
dcps.sensorysupport@dc.gov

Specific Learning Support Program
dcps.specialed@dc.gov

Assistive Technology
dcps.assistivetech@dc.gov

Centralized IEP Support Unit
dcps.childfind@dc.gov

Early Childhood Inclusion
dcps.earlychildhood@dc.gov

Early Stages
info@earlystagesdc.gov

Extended School Year
dcps.esy@dc.gov

Home and Hospital Instruction Program
hip.dcps@dc.gov

Inclusion Models
sped.inclusion@dc.gov

Related Services
dcps.relatedservices@dc.gov

Section 504
504@dc.gov

Transition Programs
dcps.transition@dc.gov

OSSE Department of Transportation Parent Resource Center
202-576-5000