Seattle Special Education PTSA

Getting to Results:
A Guide to Special Education

Understanding IEPs, 504 Plans & Your Student's Path Forward

Special education is not a place or placement or a pre-packaged program. Special education is a service for children rather than a place where such children are sent.

Summarized from the IDEA

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Table of Contents

A Quick Reference to Topics

Seattle Special Education PTSA: Advocating for Inclusive Schools 1

Top 10 Tips: 2

Language Access and Caregiver Accommodations: 3

Advocacy Tips: 4

Staff Orginizational Chart: 5

Student Introduction: 6
Includes an editable PDF to create your own Student Introduction

Road Map: 7

Definitions: 8

Special Education Evaluation Process: 9

Important Dates and Timelines: 11

504 Plans: 12

Preschool: 14

Preparing for an IEP Meeting 16

Specially Designed Instruction-SDI 17

Progress Monitoring and Reporting 19

School Discipline: 21

Steps to Escalate: 23

Your Next Adventure: 24
A fun exercise to explore your students future

Secondary Transition Planning 25

Resources: 28

Glossary: 29

Disability History and Awarness: 30

Sources: 31

Seattle Special Education PTSA: Advocating for Inclusive Schools

Who we are:

The Seattle Special Education PTSA (SSEPTSA) is a school district-wide, all-volunteer nonprofit organization dedicated to advocating for every disabled student in Seattle Public Schools to equitably access inclusive education. We work to empower families, support educators, and advocate for systemic change.

Together, we create inclusive schools where every child can thrive.

What we do:

- Free Educational Events led by experts, open to all, ensuring equitable access to critical information.
- Family Support Groups (e.g., Sip & Chat: parent meet-ups) that provide community, connection, and peer learning.
- Needs-Based Membership Scholarships to remove barriers to participation.
- Interpretation & Translation Services, including American Sign Language (ASL) and multiple foreign languages.
- Resource Development: Updating and expanding SSEPTSA's Guide to Special Education, including translation equity review, community review, and outreach.
- Active State and Local Legislative Advocacy for just policies and education funding.

Our Impact:

- Families engage each year through workshops, events, and support groups.
- Broad community access to free, multilingual resources that strengthen family knowledge and advocacy.
- Advocacy that influences district and state policy, removing systemic barriers and improving services.

Why It Matters:

1 in 5 students has a disability. Too often, access to education and services depends on factors outside a family's control. SSEPTSA strives to bridge these gaps by providing information, empowering the community, and advocating for better outcomes for students with disabilities.

Contact:
hello@seattlespecialeducationptsa.org
Special Education PTSA PTA
http://seattlespecialeducationptsa.org
https://www.facebook.com/SeattleSpecialEducationPTSA/
https://www.linkedin.com/company/seattle-special-ed-ptsa/
30702515644https://www.instagram.com/seaspecialedptsa/
https://www.eventbrite.com/o/seattle-special-education-ptsa-

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Top 10 Tips:

A list of helpful tips for navigating Special Education Services

1. **Document:** Request a Prior Written Notice (PWN) any time a proposed change is made regarding your student's IEP.

2. **Follow up:** Always follow up any conversation, formal or informal, with an email to document the discussion and any decisions made.

3. **Bring a Friend:** Bring a note taker to your IEP meetings so that you can focus on the discussion. You can also bring private providers.

4. **Review the Data:** When a team is proposing a decision, ask to see and review the data with the team before making conclusions.

5. **Know Your rights:** Read and always reference the Procedural Safeguards which describe the parent and student rights:

6. **Stay organized:** Create a system to file and organize all of your student's IEP/504 records and bring them with you to meetings. Include work samples.

7. **Who is responsible?:** When a specific action is required, be sure to ask who is carrying out that task and when.

8. **Personalize your student:** Set up a short, informal meeting with your student's teachers at the beginning of the year and give them a copy of your student's introduction along with their IEP/504. This ensures they are aware of what is required in the plan and are prepared to support your student.

9. **Observe:** In-school observations can be requested by parent or caregiver in addition to private providers. Request must be made in writing and in advance. District staff will be present during observations.

10. **Communicate:** Keep the lines of communication open and collaborative between you and the school team. Some find it helpful to create an IEP/504 accommodation for home-school communication.
Communication (documents and meetings) must be provided in your language.

- We recognize that it can be difficult to navigate the education system, so please reach out to the organizations listed on Resource page of the guide if you need support or assistance.

Language Access and Caregiver Accommodations

Schools have to allow for full parent and student participation

You can request IEP translated versions of school materials in your home language.

The law states that the district must provide meeting notices in your native language and provide interpretation services when needed. Request translated materials in advance of the IEP meeting from the case manager and include the principal on the request. Procedural safeguards, prior written notices, and consent forms must also be provided in your native language. If you need language support to participate meaningfully in the meeting, communicate this with the district before the meeting.
Put your concerns in writing and contact the regional supervisor for support.

If IEP materials are poorly translated or don't make sense, you can ask the school for a clearer and more accurate translation.

The law requires that parents or guardians are fully informed in their native language of any and all information related to the provision of special education services for their student and requiring their consent.

Your child's language needs must be considered during the IEP process.

Language access is part of the special considerations that are required to be discussed during the development of the IEP.

You can request an interpreter for IEP meetings to ensure your full participation.

The law requires that the district provide translators or interpreters at no cost to you. Put your request for interpretation and translation in writing prior to the IEP meeting.

Students don't have to be evaluated and tested only in English.

No, all tests and evaluations must be administered in the student's native language including ASL, unless it is clearly not feasible to do so.

Language support is available, contact your school or district's language access coordinator to request help.

Contact your school principal and case manager. For ASL interpretation, contact the 504 coordinator at **504coordinator@seattleschools.org.**

If you need accommodations as a caregiver, you can ask the school to provide them.

Title II of the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) "prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in all services, programs, and activities provided to the public by State and local governments." Be sure to let staff know in advance of any accommodations that would help you to fully participate as a caregiver. Some examples of accommodations are: meetings held remotely, ASL interpretation, documents provided in electronic text-searchable format, closed captioning, extended time to review documents in advance, extended time to review and respond to decisions, visual aids to support discussion, prompt access to meeting transcript, documents in plain language and recorded meetings.

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Advocacy Tips

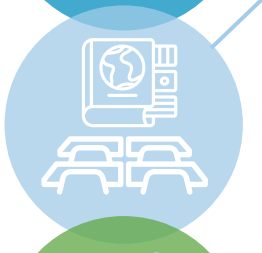
It is more than okay to speak up



Asking questions to teachers and administrators is not considered inappropriate. Don't be afraid to voice concerns about your student's education to teachers and school administrators. Reach out to external organizations that can help you express your concerns. Many of these organizations offer support and services in different languages. Build relationships with other parents to help you navigate the system.



Remember that you have the right to request translations and interpretation services to schools if needed. Even if you speak the language, you can request an interpreter to help you explain your child's strengths and challenges as well as understand what is being communicated by the school team and what the outcomes are of those decisions.



It's ok to say "I didn't understand," "Can you repeat that?," "Can you give me an example?," "How are you educating students about my culture and about disability?" It is important that you understand what is being said and what is happening in your child's classroom and school. Ask for an interpreter even if you speak English to help provide clarity, to understand what is being communicated and decided, and to help you share about your student's strengths and how their disability impacts their education.



Sharing your culture, values, and traditions with your child's class and school can help increase understanding and respect for one another.



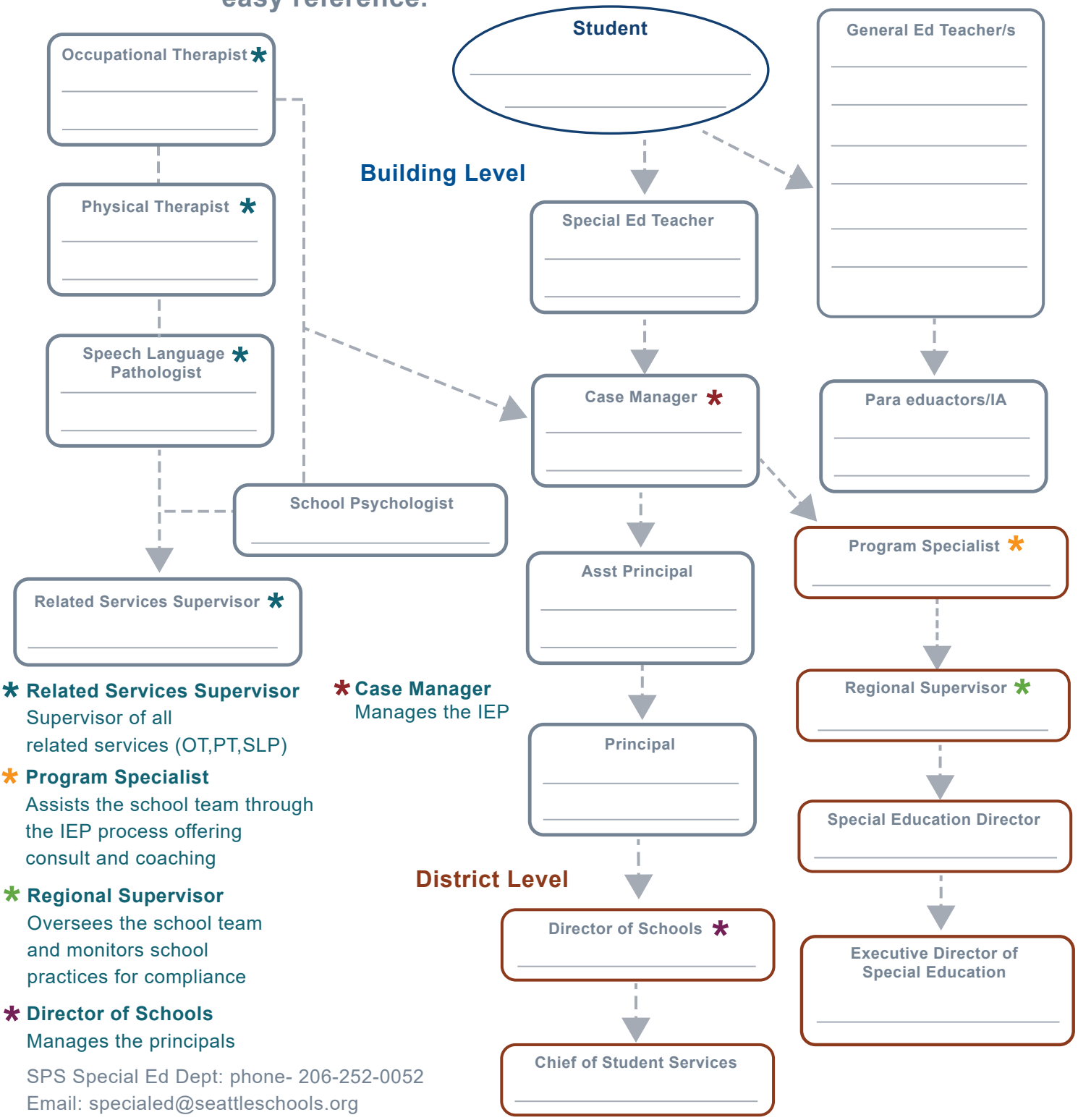
IEP meetings can be overwhelming and confusing. Bringing a friend or an advocate (some organizations offer this support) can help ensure you and your child are getting the support you need.



Building a partnership between teachers and parents can be beneficial for your student's progress and success. You can request to meet with your student's teachers at any time, and many will communicate with you via email or text if you ask. At the beginning of the year, talk with your student's teacher about creating a home-school information sharing plan with you and ask to adjust the plan throughout the year as needed.

Staff Organizational Chart:

Who is part of my child's team and what are their roles? Fill in the chart with the help of school staff for an easy reference.



*** Related Services Supervisor**
Supervisor of all related services (OT,PT,SLP)

*** Program Specialist**
Assists the school team through the IEP process offering consult and coaching

*** Regional Supervisor**
Oversees the school team and monitors school practices for compliance

*** Director of Schools**
Manages the principals

*** Case Manager**
Manages the IEP

SPS Special Ed Dept: phone- 206-252-0052
Email: specialed@seattleschools.org

Child Find, Services for ages 3-5, 206-252-0805

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Student Introduction

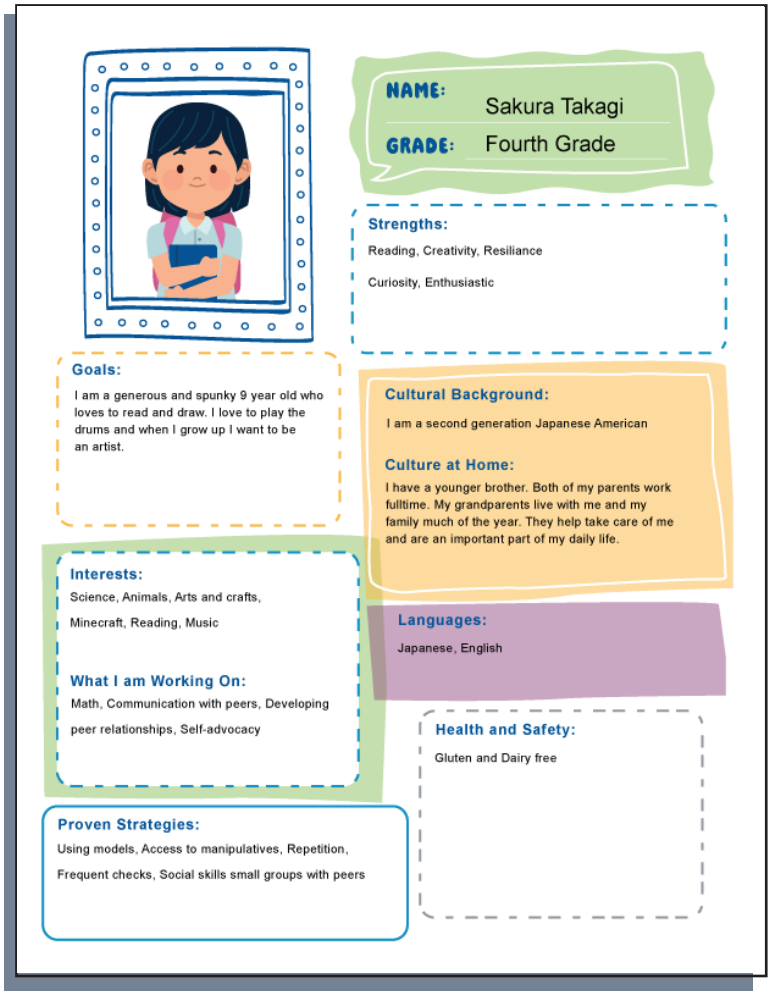
An informal way to introduce your student to the school team

A student introduction is a helpful tool that can be used but not required with the school team where you and your student can share their strengths and goals for the year ahead. This can be created in any format like a letter, resume, or poster. Get your student involved and participating in this crucial step.

Topics that you might include are the student's:

- Strengths
- Challenges
- Languages/Communication
- Strategies that work
- Interests
- Cultural background
- Health or safety concerns
- Goals
- Culture at home

Here is a student introduction example:



Provided a printable page to fill out for your student. ▶

YOUR SELFIE HERE

NAME:

GRADE:

Strengths:

Goals:

Cultural Background:

Culture at Home:

Interests:

What I am Working On:

Languages:

Health and Safety:

Proven Strategies:

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Road Map:

Your student is having challenges at school but does not have an IEP or 504 plan.

1. Learn about the differences between an IEP and 504, see page 9.
2. Document any challenges your student is having at school.
3. Reach out to the teacher and principal with your concerns and requests. Put them in writing, in your preferred language.
4. Schedule a meeting with your child's teacher to discuss your concerns and options available to support your student. Request an interpreter in advance of the meeting.
5. Document any decisions and the discussion from the meeting and send them in an email to the teacher and principal.
6. Make a written request to the principal to initiate a referral for special education services. **Evaluation Request**[1]
7. Review the district decision on whether or not to evaluate the student. This must be provided in writing to you and must describe their decision, including a refusal to evaluate.
8. Attend the evaluation meeting with the IEP team to review the results of the evaluation and determine eligibility for a 504 or IEP.
9. Attend an IEP meeting after the evaluation meeting. This may occur directly after an evaluation meeting or at a later date. The IEP team will determine the amount of program services and the placement at the IEP meeting.
10. Take your time through this process and ask any and all questions. If you need more time, request another IEP meeting to address your concerns.
11. Follow up the IEP meeting by sending your notes to the school team. The district must provide a PWN documenting decisions made during the IEP meeting. If you do not receive one, you can request the PWN.
12. Progress on IEP goals must be monitored and reported to parents at the frequency identified in the IEP. Review progress reports and communicate with the school team if you have questions about your student's progress.

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Definitions:

Making sense of the terms and acronyms in the special education IEP/504 process

Individual Education Program (IEP):

A document that describes the services, accommodations, and modifications that your child is legally bound to receive.

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE):

A legal requirement within IDEA that students receive education alongside their nondisabled peers to the greatest extent possible. It is a principle, not a place.

Prior Written Notice (PWN):

A notice and summary of decisions that have been made regarding your student's educational program provided to parents **BEFORE IT IS IMPLEMENTED.** It needs to be provided to parents every time a decision and change has been made AND when something proposed was rejected.

Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE):

An evaluation at the district's expense by a qualified examiner of the parent's choice, not limited to district-recommended evaluators. This can be requested if the parent or guardian disagrees with the district's evaluation.

Extended School Year (ESY):

This is a service delivered during school breaks (summer, winter break, etc.) that is designed specifically to address students who need support in maintaining academic or behavioral skills. Determination for eligibility is based on documentation of regression and recoupment as well as input of the IEP team regarding the severity of the student's disability, emerging skills, and rate of progress.

Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA):

An evaluation tool used to understand the function of a student's behavior and is the basis for developing positive intervention supports.

Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP):

A plan developed following an FBA that promotes positive behavior interventions and strategies to reduce the target behavior and to teach replacement behaviors.

Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE):

FAPE has two meanings, which can both apply to a student with an IEP. Section 504 holds that disabled students have access to the same educational opportunities as their non-disabled peers. Under IDEA, FAPE requires an individualized educational program that is designed to meet the child's unique needs and from which the child receives educational benefit.

Due process:

A formal way to resolve disputes with a school about your child's education. You can file a due process only for special education disputes. You have the right to an impartial hearing officer and to present evidence and witnesses at the due process hearing.

Special Education Acronyms Link:

https://www.parentcenterhub.org/acronyms/

Special Education Evaluation Process

Navigating the Evaluation Process:

Making a Special Education Evaluation Request or Referral:

If your child is having academic or functional struggles related to school, you may suspect that your child has a disability and requires special education services. The child's caregivers or other adults familiar with the child, like educators or healthcare providers, can request a special education evaluation. **This request should be made in writing.**

There are three types of Evaluations:

Initial Special Education Evaluation:

Occurs when there is a suspected disability but the child does not yet have an IEP. This evaluation determines if the child is eligible for special education services.

Reevaluation:

Occurs every three years (at minimum) to determine if a child receiving special education services continues to be eligible; reevaluations can also be used if concerns arise in service areas not initially covered by the student's IEP.

Independent Education Evaluation (IEE):

Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE): an evaluation at public expense that is administered by a qualified evaluator chosen by the parent or guardian. This may occur if you disagree with the evaluation results completed by the district. An IEE can be requested at public expense, but that requires a due process hearing unless the district agrees to your request. A private evaluation paid for by the parent is not an IEE. When a parent pays for a private evaluation, that is not an IEE. It does not have to be shared with the school district. See the section on dispute resolutions.

**All evaluations must consider language or cultural impact.*

Evaluation sections:

- Functional
- Adaptive
- Cognitive
- Academic
- Occupational Therapy
- Communication/Speech
- Social Emotional Learning
- Autism Spectrum

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Special Education Evaluation Process

The Evaluation Process, Step by Step:

Evaluation Process and Timeline

1 Referral:
Request for evaluation is made in writing. Referrals can be made by parents, teachers, healthcare providers or anyone with knowledge of the child.

2 Decision:
The school district will review the referral and decide whether or not to evaluate the student.

20 school days to decide whether to evaluate student

3 Evaluation:
The process involves collecting information and reports related to the student, reviewing data, and administering assessments.

Written parental consent for evaluation

4 Evaluation Meeting:
The team reviews the results of the evaluation and together determines eligibility for special education services.

35 school days: Draft evaluation provided to parents

5 IEP Meeting:
40 school days: IEP meeting held to determine eligibility and develop the IEP

5 School days before meeting evaluation report provided

6 Placement:
The team discusses what services and supports will be used to meet the IEP goals using the least restrictive environment. Often this involves assigning a program based on district guidelines, however, special education is not a place but a service. Decisions should be made at the individual level.

7 Monitoring:
Data is collected and reported at intervals determined by the IEP team and at least each grading period.

Parent Tips for the Evaluation Process

- Read the consent form carefully and ask questions if you do not understand
- Include private reports (doctors, therapists) during the referral and evaluation process and the amount and frequency of private intervention your child receives
- Share your parent concerns during the referral request and evaluation process with the psychologist
- For both initial evaluations and reevaluations, the district must provide a copy of the evaluation results at least five days before the meeting so you have time to review them in advance.
- Bring a friend and/or healthcare provider(s) to the evaluation and IEP meeting

Important Dates and Timelines:

Knowing when the clock starts ticking in the special education IEP/504 process is essential

Procedure	Days to Respond
Decide to Evaluate:	20 School Days
Evaluate:	35 School Days
Hold an IEP Meeting after an Evaluation:	30 Days
Independent Educational Evaluation:	15 Days
IEP Review:	12 Months
Reevaluations:	3 YEARS
Complaints:	1 YEAR
Due Process:	2 YEARS

Evaluations: 20 school days to decide whether an evaluation is needed after a request.

Evaluation Report: Must be provided at least 5 school days before the eligibility meeting; the meeting cannot occur sooner than 5 school days after the report is provided.

IEP: Once the district determines a student is eligible, an IEP must be developed, within 30 days.

Independent Educational Evaluation: If an IEE is requested by the parent at public expense, the district is required to respond within 15 days by either filing for due process or agreeing to the IEE at public expense.

IEP Review: Individual Education Programs must be reviewed every 12 months.

Reevaluations: IEP reevaluations must occur at least every 3 years or 12 months if needed due to changing needs or lack of expected progress.

Complaints: Special Education Community Complaints (SECC) must be submitted to both OSPI and the school district superintendent, addressing violations within the past year. OSPI must provide a decision within 60 calendar days.

Due Process: A due process complaint must be received both by the school superintendent and the Office of Administration Hearings (not OSPI). Once submitted, the school must hold a resolution session with parents/caregivers within 15 calendar days, unless both parties waive that right. There's a 30-day period to try to reach a resolution agreement. If there is not an agreement, the state department of education has 45 days for a due process hearing decision.

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504 Plans

What You Need to Know About 504 Plans

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 ensures students with disabilities recieve accommodations in the school that provide access to a free and appropriate public education.

504 Plans Cover a Broad Range of Disabilities

Unlike IEPs, which require a student to meet the criteria of at least one disability category with an adverse educational impact, 504 Plans are available to students with any disability that substantially limits one or more major life activities.This can include chronic illnesses, mental health conditions, ADHD, and temporary disabilities (e.g., a concussion).

Example: A student with diabetes may receive accommodations such as snack breaks and permission to carry glucose monitoring devices.

504 Plans Should be Developed as a Team

Teams are made up of individuals who know and understand the child's needs and can interpret the data and information from evaluations. Generally, the parent or guardian, general education teacher(s), 504 coordinator(s), and school administrator participate in the development of the 504 plan.

Parents Have the Right to Request a 504 Plan Evaluation

Schools are required to evaluate students for a 504 Plan if there is a suspected disability. Parents do not need a doctor's note, although medical documentation can support the request. Parents should submit requests for an evaluation in writing and always keep copies for documentation.

Schools Must Provide Accommodations, but Not Specialized Instruction

A 504 Plan ensures accommodations like extended test time, preferential seating, or note-taking assistance, but they do not require a school to modify the curriculum. The plan must also state who will provide and monitor these supports. If accommodations are not supporting your child's academic success, you may want to request an IEP evaluation.

504 Plans Can Include Behavioral and Mental Health Supports

Students with anxiety, depression, or other mental health conditions may qualify for a 504 Plan. Accommodations can include access to a counselor, modified workload, or test-taking in a quiet setting. If your child's mental health affects their academic performance, request accommodations that address their specific needs.

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504 Plans

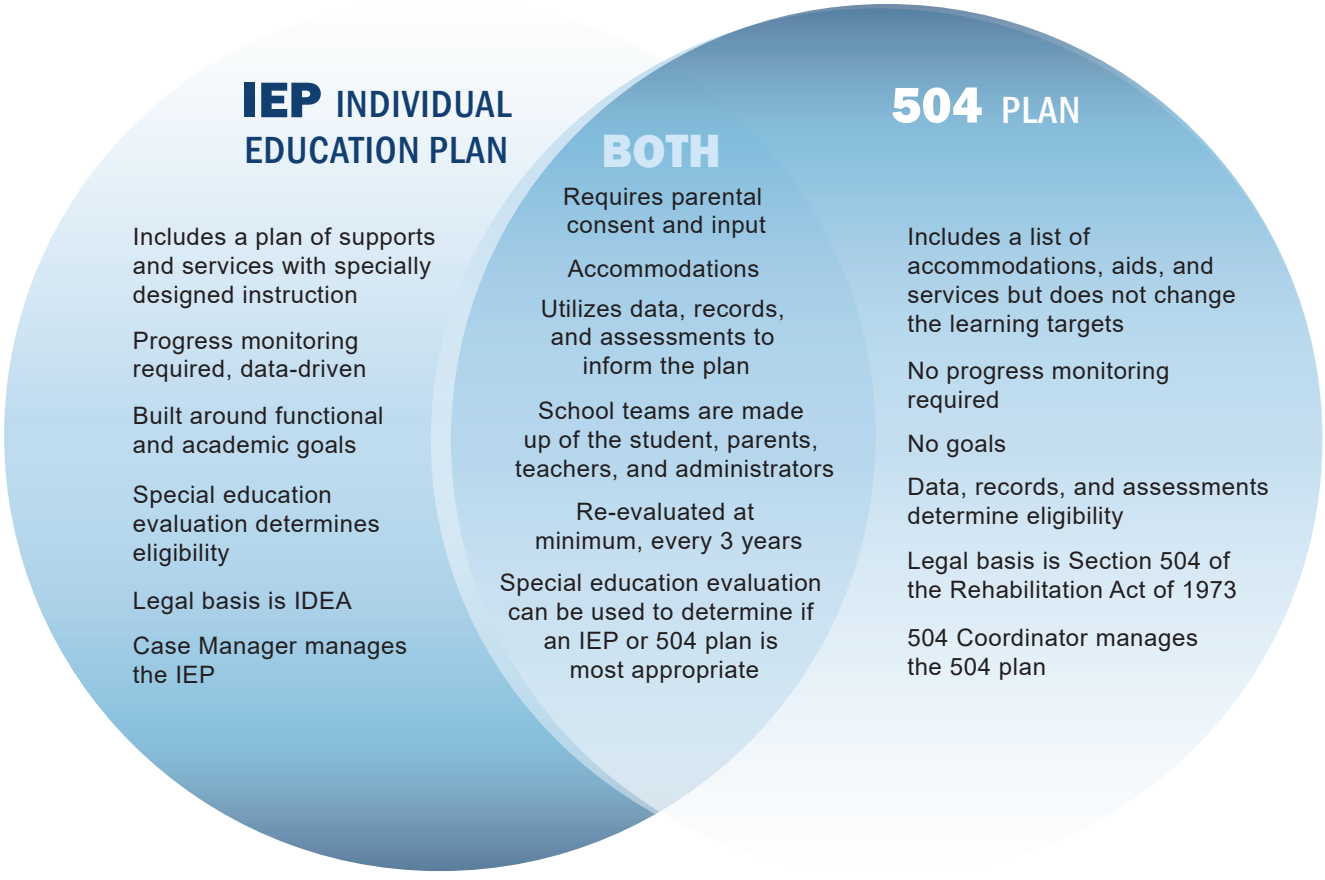
What You Need to Know About 504 Plans

Reviewing 504 Plans & Resolving Disagreements

While there is no federal requirement for yearly reviews, reviewing and updating the 504 Plan each year is best practice to ensure accommodations remain effective. Schedule a meeting before each school year starts and monitor your child's progress to determine if adjustments are needed. If a school refuses to provide necessary accommodations or enforces a weak plan, parents have the right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR) or pursue legal action.

Understanding these facts about 504 Plans can empower caregivers to advocate effectively for their child's education. By staying informed, keeping detailed records, and collaborating with school staff, caregivers can ensure their child receives the necessary support to succeed in school and to reach their full potential.

IEP and 504: What They Share, What's Unique



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Preschool

Navigating the Preschool Process, Step by Step

Is the child enrolled in Birth to 3?

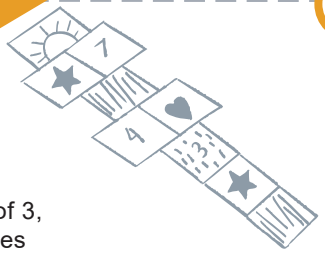
Yes →

No

Is the child age 3-6 years old?

Yes

- Referral: Parent(s), healthcare providers (with parent consent at the 3-year well-child visit), or other adults familiar with child must make a referral by completing the Child Find Intake Form by calling or completing the form online.
- Be comprehensive and include details. This helps in the review process.
- Reviewed: Form will be reviewed
- Screening: A brief phone interview with the caregiver will be used to decide if an evaluation is needed.



No

- If the child is under the age of 3, reach out to Birth-to-3 services
- If the child is over the age of 6 and already enrolled in kindergarten, send a parent concern email to the school teacher and request an IEP evaluation

Was the child recommended for an evaluation?

Yes

- An evaluation will be scheduled at a local school within your district
- The evaluation generally takes 3 hours to complete, if this needs to be broken into smaller segments, make a request in advance
- Based on the evaluation, the team will determine eligibility for IEP services

No

- Seek an independent evaluation
- Object to the findings and continue through the complaint process
- Request accommodations through a 504 plan

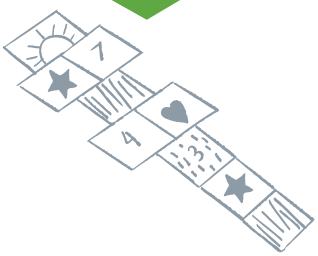
Was the child recommended for an IEP?

Yes

- A case manager is assigned to the child
- A meeting is scheduled with the family to develop the IEP
- The IEP is completed before the child's 3rd birthday
- The team makes a preschool program recommendation, see program types

No

- Seek an independent evaluation
- Object to the findings and continue through the complaint process
- Request accommodations through a 504 plan



Preschool

Navigating the Preschool Process, Step by Step

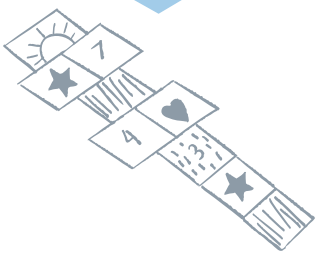
Yes

- Contact: Family Resource Coordinator who will schedule a transition conference
- Transition Conference: takes place 90 days prior to the child's 3rd birthday
- Evaluation: The child is automatically eligible for an evaluation to determine if they qualify for IEP services. The evaluation is scheduled at a school building in the district.
- Parents have a right to object to receiving an evaluation and can reject the findings of the evaluation.

Was the child recommended for an IEP?

No

- Seek an independent evaluation
- Object to the findings and continue through the complaint process
- Request accommodations through a 504 plan



Yes

- A case manager is assigned to the child
- A meeting is scheduled with the family to develop the IEP
- The IEP is completed before the child's 3rd birthday
- The team makes a preschool program recommendation, see program types

Preschool Program Types:

Therapy Services:	Child receives individual or small group therapy services at the local school 1-2 times each week
Itinerant Services:	Child is enrolled in an SPS preschool program where a Special Education Teacher provides support 1-2 times each week
Seattle Preschool Program Plus (SPP Plus):	Full-day preschool classrooms supported by a Special Education Teacher and Therapists (speech & language, occupational, and physical therapy)
Developmental Preschool:	Half-day preschool classrooms supported by a Special Education Teacher and Therapists
Medically Fragile Preschool:	Child is enrolled in a half-day preschool program offering SDI to support more intensive needs.
Experimental Education Unit at the University of Washington:	Offers limited slots in SPP Plus preschool and kindergarten special education services. The EEU is a research-based program that also provides training for students and professionals.

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Preparing for an IEP Meeting

IEP Meeting Checklist

Before the Meeting

- [ ] Ask for input from your child about their goals and challenges
- [ ] Request the draft IEP document in your preferred language be sent 1 week before the meeting
- [ ] Request data, progress reports, and work samples be sent 1 week before the meeting
- [ ] Invite private providers (SLP, OT, PT, BCBA, etc.) to the IEP meeting
- [ ] Ask a friend or trusted adult to attend the meeting and take notes
- [ ] Request in writing that an interpreter attend the IEP meeting (if needed)
- [ ] Gather private evaluations and medical documentation
- [ ] Review the current IEP, make notes, and highlight areas of concern
- [ ] Review the draft IEP focusing on:
  - Present Levels of Performance: Is this information an accurate reflection of your child?
  - Goals: Are the goals specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART)?
  - Service Matrix: Ask the team how services will be delivered and by whom
- [ ] Write a parent concerns letter and send it to the IEP team members
- [ ] Prepare a list of suggested goals or accommodations

During the Meeting

- [ ] Check that all IEP team members are in attendance
- [ ] Take notes to document discussion or request a trusted friend or staff member to take notes
- [ ] Share your child's feedback with the team
- [ ] Engage by making suggestions and asking questions
- [ ] Ask the team to state who is responsible for each action item and when to expect implementation
- [ ] Schedule a second meeting if you need more time to review the IEP

After the Meeting

- [ ] Email your meeting notes to the case manager to document decisions and ensure shared understanding.
- [ ] Review the prior written notice that is sent after the meeting and make sure that it reflects what was discussed and agreed upon during the IEP meeting
- [ ] The team will send a revised IEP. Review the updated IEP and make sure that it reflects what was discussed and agreed upon during the IEP meeting
- [ ] Follow up to make sure that proposed changes are being implemented as stated in the PWN, IEP, and meeting notes

Specially Designed Instruction-SDI

What It Is and Why It Matters:

Specially Designed Instruction:

SDI (Specially Designed Instruction) is individualized instruction. It supports academic, behavioral, communication, and functional skills, and is a core part of special education services. SDI adapts content, methodology, or instructional delivery to help students access and benefit from their education (IDEA).

How and Why SDI Works:

SDI is effective when it is rooted in data-based decision making. Educators collect and analyze data on a student's performance to inform instruction.

By continually monitoring progress and adjusting instruction based on data, educators can ensure that SDI effectively meets a students' individual needs. Parents and caregivers play an essential role in this process by sharing observations, advocating for necessary adjustments, and collaborating with the school team.

This process involves:

- Assessing student progress regularly: This can include tests, observations, and work samples.
- Scaffolding instruction: This means breaking learning into manageable steps and adjusting according to collected progress data. Each annual IEP goal should have many smaller steps/objectives should be appropriately ambitious guiding the student towards achieving successful completion.

Components That Inform SDI:

Initial and Triennial Educational Evaluations	SDI refers to individualized service minutes that address a student's unique learning needs as determined by a student's area(s) of qualification identified in their educational evaluation.
Annual IEP's	SDI is the instruction and actions that support IEP goals and help students access the general curriculum, developed by the IEP team.
Parent Input	Parents must be part of the decision-making process throughout the design and development of SDI. One way is by submitting a parent concerns letter.
Present Levels of Educational Performance (PLOP)	Describes the student's current academic achievement and functional performance, including how their disability affects progress based on baseline data.
Annual Goals:	Are specific measurable targets that guide SDI. They should be appropriately ambitious, reflect student strengths and needs, and support meaningful progress.
Special Education Services:	Specifies the type and frequency of services provided. It defines how SDI will be implemented in the classroom and by whom. This information is located in the IEP service matrix.

Specially Designed Instruction-SDI

Breaking SDI Down:

WHAT SDI IS

Specially Designed and Requires Supervision

SDI must be designed and supervised by a certified special education teacher or related services provider (OT, PT,SLP, vision, DHH services, etc.). Delivery of SDI may be provided by general education teachers, paraeducators, counselors, or assistants to related service providers. The assigned provider identified in the service matrix must serve the SDI minutes.

Intentional

It is planned, organized and meaningful and is delivered in an explicit, intentional and systematic manner.

Provided in all School Settings

It can be provided in any location, including multiple locations during the course of the school day, as long as the location is consistent with the student's IEP and the student's least restrictive environment.

Supports Skill Mastery and Academic Growth

SDI aligns with the student's IEP goals, ensuring they are ambitious and designed to support mastery of skills, lean strategies, and knowledge needed to meet grade-level standards and close learning gaps.

Addresses Individual Student Needs Across All Areas

Students can receive specially designed instruction (SDI) in any learning environment. There's no rule that says a student must spend a certain amount of time in a special education classroom or a general education classroom to get SDI support.

WHAT SDI IS NOT

Not Just General Education Supports

Support strategies or interventions used in general education for all students, without being adapted to meet an individual student's disability-related needs, are not considered Specially Designed Instruction (SDI). This includes help provided to students with learning challenges who do not qualify for special education services.

Not One-Size-Fits-All

Universal changes and supports that do not consider the student's specific needs are also not SDI, for example, school-wide interventions or curricular modifications.

Not Limited to Tutoring or Extra Help

SDI is not simply reteaching or providing extra practice. It involves intentionally planned instruction to address a student's unique learning needs, based on evaluative and progress monitoring data.

Progress Monitoring and Reporting

Track progress well for support that truly fits:

What it is

Progress monitoring is the collection, assessment, and evaluation of student performance on IEP goals. Progress reporting is the process of communicating student progress toward IEP goals and is completed separately from the general education progress reports.

Why it is important

Progress monitoring and reporting help IEP teams determine if the goals and interventions are effective. By continually monitoring progress and adjusting instruction based on the collected data, educators can ensure that specially designed instruction (SDI) provided to the student effectively meets the student's individual needs. The student's special education and related services should support ongoing progress toward their goals and be adjusted continuously.

If Progress Is Insufficient

If data shows that the student is not on track to meet their annual goal(s), the IEP team is expected to meet. The team should review and revise the IEP and consider changes to supports, services, or goals, but give careful consideration to dropping goals.

If Progress Is Faster Than Expected

If a student meets their annual goal early, the IEP team should consider developing a new, more ambitious goal to continue supporting the student's growth.

How Is Progress Monitoring Data Collected?

Educators collect data using the specific methods outlined in the student's IEP. Methods may include classroom observations, reviewing work samples, formal and informal assessments, and others.

When is Data Collected?

Progress reports must be provided to parents when general education report cards are issued, or more frequently as outlined in the IEP. The reports should clearly describe how much progress a student has made. The comment section under each goal in the progress report should always include specific information in comments, and the data collected as written in the IEP. The comments should be dated and include the teacher's name.

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Progress Monitoring and Reporting

Strong goals guide meaningful progress:

Components of a Well-Written IEP Goal and Progress Report



GOAL

- Individualized and appropriately ambitious
- How the goal will be delivered
- What the target skill is
- What mastery of the goal looks like
- When and how often progress is measured and by whom
- A description of when progress monitoring updates will be provided to caregivers (in the IEP)

IEP Goal Example:

GOAL

By 06/13/2026, during structured activities with peers, Student will generate 3 or more possible solutions to a given problem in 4 out of 5 opportunities, improving flexible thinking from 1 out of 5 opportunities to 4 out of 5 opportunities, as measured by observation and data collection.

PROGRESS REPORT

- Date and teacher name
- Description of progress made toward each goal
- Description of changes made to the delivery of services or supports, and notes any other relevant environmental factors
- Data points captured at the beginning and end of the reporting period
- Recommendations

Descriptive Progress Report Example:

January 9, 2025: Student now generates 2 possible solutions to a given problem in 2 out of 5 opportunities. -Teacher's Name

This level of detail in the narrative, with specific objectives, shows an accurate level of progress and helps the team determine next steps.

Insufficient Reporting Examples (to avoid):

"Progress made" or "Student often problem-solves well."-- Too vague.

"From 0 out of 5 opportunities to 4 out of 5" -- Suggests a baseline (starting point) was not taken prior to the implementation of the goal or may not be appropriate

School Discipline

The forms of discipline used by Seattle Public Schools

What is it?

In the school setting, "discipline" is enacted in response to behavioral violations of school district policy. The goal of discipline should be to teach rather than to punish.

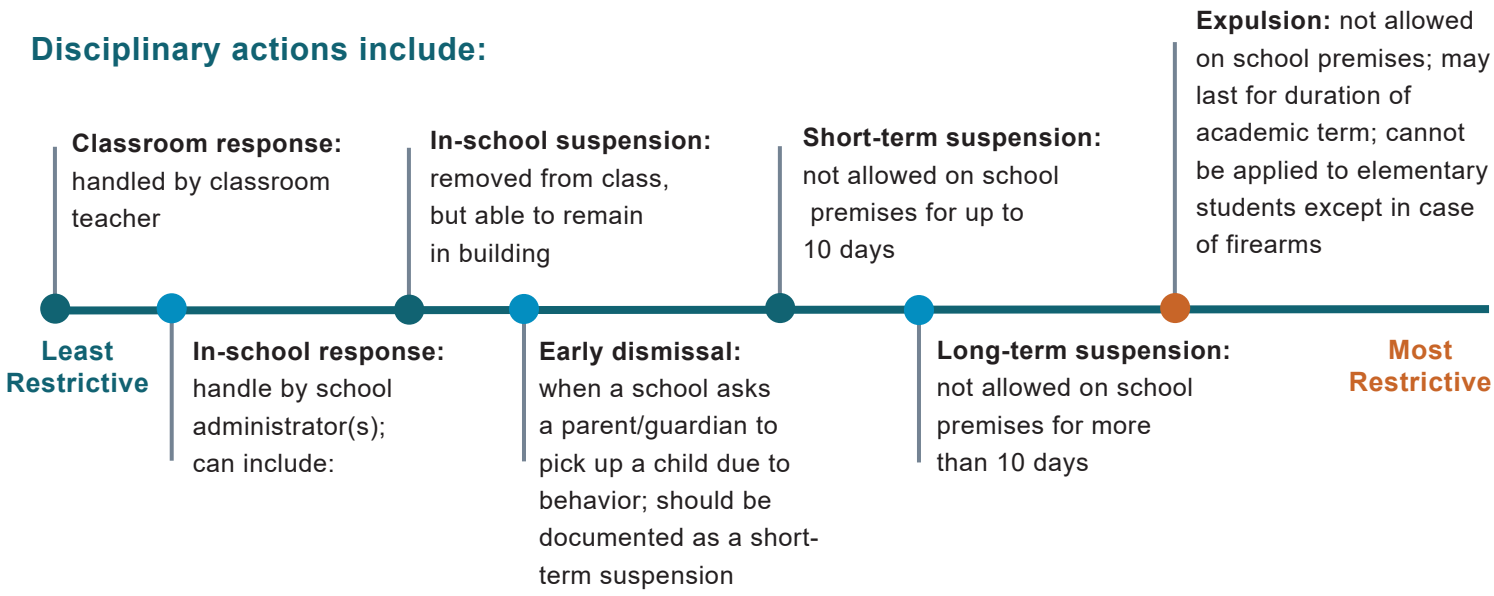
Disproportionality in discipline: It's important to note African American students and students with disabilities are disciplined at significantly higher rates than their white, neurotypical peers. Discipline is a practice that, while enacted upon individual students, ultimately needs to be addressed at a systemic level.

The best disciplinary actions are preventive, proactive, and center around engaging students in solving problems that lead to behavioral violations. The best student outcomes happen when students feel safe and seen, when they engage as active participants in their own learning, within supportive relationships, and with the understanding that "Kids do well if they can" **(Dr. Ross Greene)**[1]

Discipline at SPS

SPS follows a **Discipline Matrix**[2] to guide administrators in selecting appropriate disciplinary responses to behavioral violations. As outlined in the Seattle Public Schools **Student Rights and Responsibilities**[3] document, "students, parents, and guardians have a right to be active partners in providing input prior to the school engaging in the disciplinary decision-making process."

Disciplinary actions include:



- Additional Discipline Protections for IEP/504 Students (and those not yet identified as needing a 504): include functional behavioral assessments **(FBAs)**;[4] behavior intervention plans **(BIPs)**;[5] manifestation determination review **(MDRs)**;[6] interim alternative educational placements (for students who commit behavioral violations involving weapons, illegal drugs and/or serious bodily injury). Schools have many tools at their disposal that address problems upstream of behavioral violations that can help them avoid punitive or exclusionary discipline.
  - **Trauma-Informed practice**[7]
  - **Restorative justice**[8]
  - **Problem solving models**[9]
  - **OSPI's Behavior Menu of Best Practices**[10]

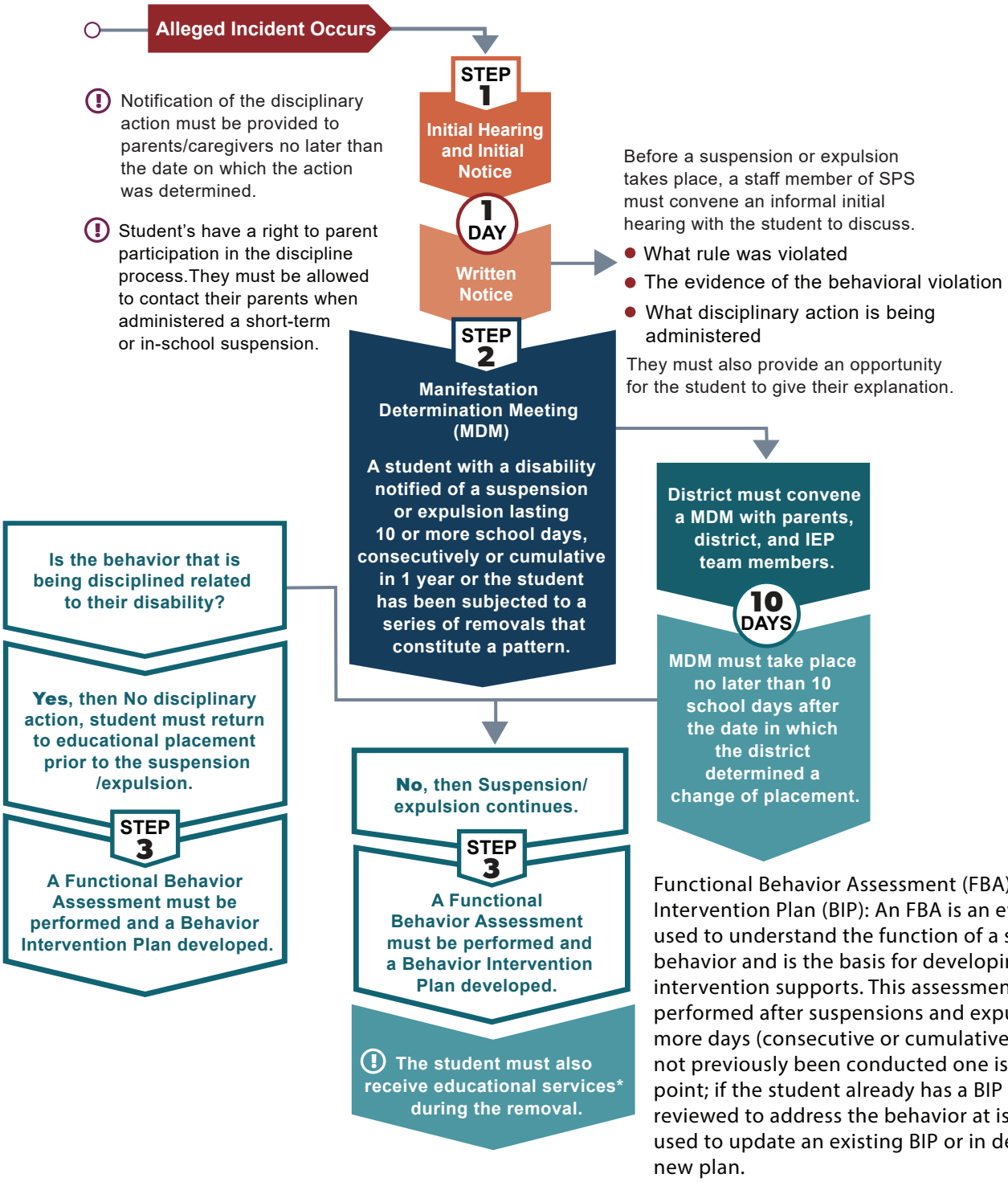
**Concerns about FBAs and BIPs:* while intended to be protections for the student, FBAs and BIPs often do not account for the underlying conditions such as sensory overload or trauma, that lead to behavior that results in disciplinary action.

*Footnote information is found on the Sources page.

School Discipline

The forms of discipline used by Seattle Public Schools

- Educational Services During Suspension*: students must be given educational services during any and all suspensions and expulsions regardless of the length of that disciplinary action. These services must allow the student to access the general education curriculum as well as supporting the student in making progress toward their IEP goals.



Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) & Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP): An FBA is an evaluation tool used to understand the function of a student's behavior and is the basis for developing positive intervention supports. This assessment must be performed after suspensions and expulsions of 10 or more days (consecutive or cumulative). If an FBA has not previously been conducted one is required at this point; if the student already has a BIP it must be reviewed to address the behavior at issue. The FBA is used to update an existing BIP or in developing a new plan.

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Steps to Escalate:

Not getting the support your student needs? Here are the steps to take for students already identified with an IEP/504

1. Document any challenges your child is having at school or at home as a result of school. Request interpretation and translation for all meetings and documents as needed.

2. Contact your student's teacher, case manager, and principal. Put your concerns and requests in writing. Include any data you have collected.

3. Schedule an IEP meeting with your student's team. Including the program specialist as appropriate.Email your parent concerns to all IEP team members ahead of the meeting.

4. Contact the Regional Supervisor if your student's needs are not being met after the IEP meeting.

5. Request a meeting with district and school staff to resolve the concerns. Make sure this plan is put in writing. Request interpretation and translation if needed.

6. Facilitated IEP meeting with Sounds Options Group by calling 800-692-2540.

If your student continues to have challenges despite your continued outreach to the district, the next step would be a more formal complaint process as follows:

7. **A Special Education Community Complaint through OSPI:** Through this process there are multiple outcomes:
   - A settlement between the complainant and the district may be reached without the need for continued support through the OSPI complaint process.
   - OSPI issues a corrective action plan detailing how the district will resolve the issues raised in the complaint.
   - OSPI does not find fault with the district and no action is taken.

8. **Mediation:** A voluntary process where parents and district staff meet to resolve concerns through the use of a neutral third-party mediator.
   - The discussion during the mediation is confidential.
   - If an agreement is reached, it must be put in writing and signed by both parties. This agreement is binding. If the district fails to implement the agreement, the parent or guardian may submit a community complaint or file a court action.

9. **Due Process Hearing Request**
   - A formal, legal proceeding conducted by an administrative law judge. Generally, this is the most complex of the options available. You may consider obtaining the assistance of an attorney.

Your Next Adventure

Game Plan

This is an exercise to connect your child's interests with their goals. It can help inform their IEP and transition plan, giving them voice by reflecting their values and aspirations.

Directions: Allow your child to lead. Work with them to choose materials that most align with their interest. Have them answer the questions below. Use encouragement and celebrate their efforts. Hang the finished plan in a visible place for them to see and refer back to it often, and share it with the school team.

MATERIALS:

Many different materials can be used to create the future plan. Let your child choose. For example, poster and magazines, pen and paper, paint and canvas, PowerPoint, colored pencilson paper, digital, etc.

QUESTIONS:

NAME _____

AGE _____

AFFIRMATION _____

What are your current hobbies and interests?

What interests have you not yet explored but are curious about?

What type of home or environment do you want to live in?

What type of education do you need to support your interests?

What type of career do you see yourself in?

Who do you want to be part of your community?

What impact do you want to make in your community?

Name your strengths

Name areas of growth

What character traits do you value in yourself?

Secondary Transition Planning

Connecting K-12 Education to Postsecondary Education and Employment

Transition planning involves preparation for life after high school. It is a multi-year process, that typically begins in 7th or 8th grade and should be updated annually and involves two components for students with an IEP:

High School and Beyond Plan:

A state-mandated graduation requirement for all students informed by career interest and skills inventory to inform high-school and post-high-school goals that begins in 7th or 8th grade.

IEP Secondary Transition Plan:

A federally mandated plan for students with an IEP that is developed in alignment to support the student's High School and Beyond Plan (HSBP) by age 16, but can begin as early as age 14.

Transition Planning should be:

Student-Centered:

It is a process driven by student interest and input that addresses education, employment, personal responsibility, and overall well-being of the student in preparation for life after high school.

Collaborative:

Special and general educators, counselors, principals, students, families, and other stakeholders work together to ensure effective transition services for the student through the High School and Beyond Plan (HSBP) and IEP Planning/Secondary Transition Plan.

Proactive:

The school is responsible for informing caregivers that secondary transition services must be incorporated into their student's IEP.

Accountable:

Student success depends on each team member following through on their responsibilities to support students in their transition to adulthood.

Supported Decision Making:

SDM allows an adult with a disability (over age 18) to authorize a chosen supporter to help them understand options, access relevant information, and communicate their decisions, without making decisions on their behalf. This chosen supporter is often a parent or caregiver. SDM is a simple form that can be obtained without the cost of attorney services either by notarized signatures or with signatures from two witnesses. The SDM Agreement should be accompanied by a release of information consent signed by the adult student/person with a disability.

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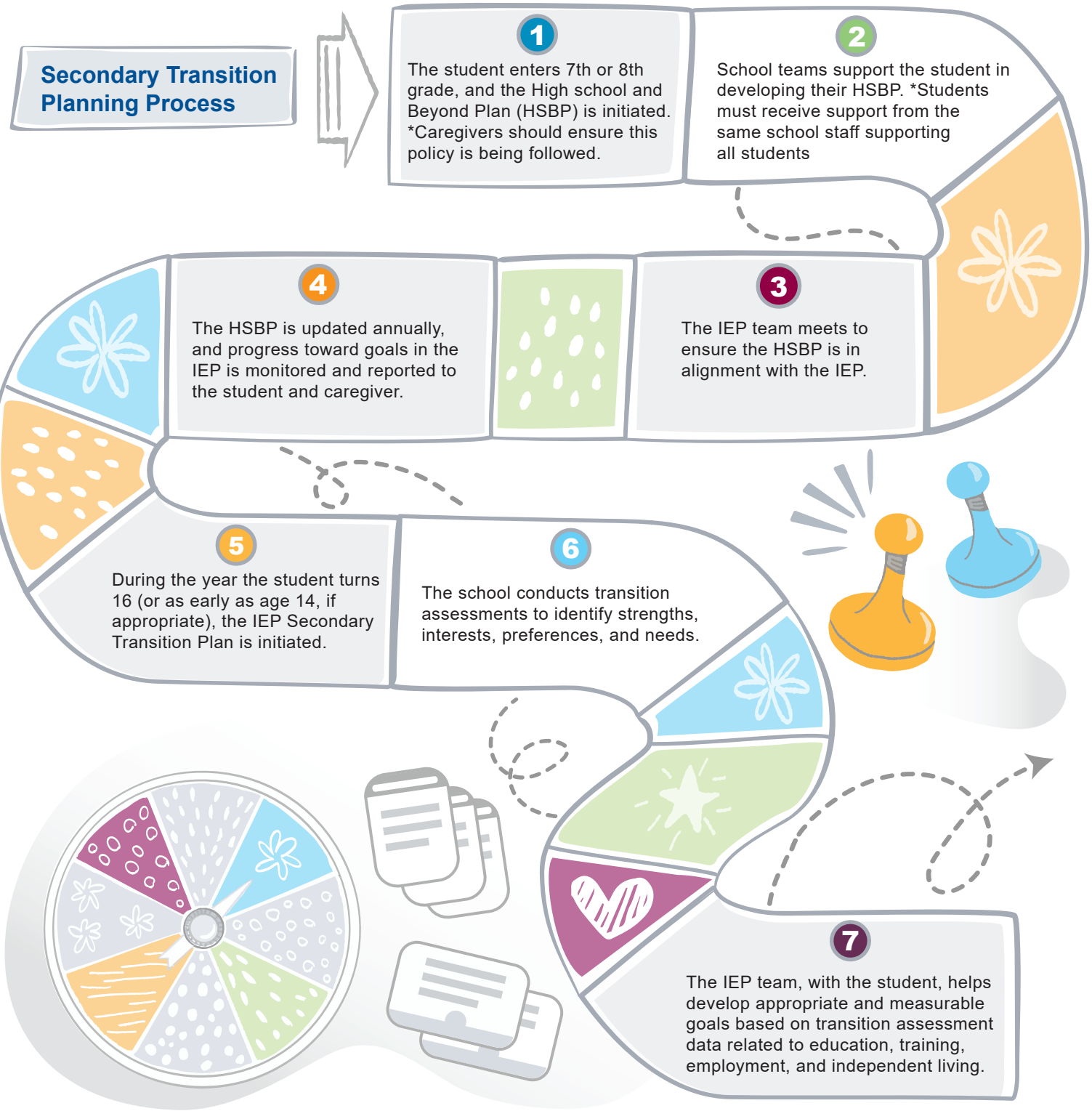
Secondary Transition Planning

Planning the path for life after high school

Secondary Transition Planning Process

1. The student enters 7th or 8th grade, and the High school and Beyond Plan (HSBP) is initiated. *Caregivers should ensure this policy is being followed.
2. School teams support the student in developing their HSBP. *Students must receive support from the same school staff supporting all students
3. The IEP team meets to ensure the HSBP is in alignment with the IEP.
4. The HSBP is updated annually, and progress toward goals in the IEP is monitored and reported to the student and caregiver.
5. During the year the student turns 16 (or as early as age 14, if appropriate), the IEP Secondary Transition Plan is initiated.
6. The school conducts transition assessments to identify strengths, interests, preferences, and needs.
7. The IEP team, with the student, helps develop appropriate and measurable goals based on transition assessment data related to education, training, employment, and independent living.



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Secondary Transition Planning

Planning the path for life after high school



Resources:

Here is a list of helpful resources.

Government Agencies:

OSPI/Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction: https://www.k12.wa.us/student-success/special-education
OEO/Office of the Education Ombuds: https://www.oeo.wa.gov/en

Community Organizations:

Decoding Dyslexia Washington: https://www.facebook.com/decodingdyslexia.wa/
Disability Rights Washington: https://www.disabilityrightswa.org/
Down Syndrome Community of Puget Sound: https://dscpugetsound.org/
International Dyslexia Assoc - WA branch: https://www.wabida.org/
Investing in Student Potential: https://studentpotential.org/
Open Doors For Multicultural Families Center: https://www.multiculturalfamilies.org/
Rooted in Rights: https://rootedinrights.org/
Roots of Inclusion: https://www.rootsofinclusion.org/
South King County Discipline Coalition: https://www.skcdisciplinecoalition.org/
Southeast Seattle Education Coalition: http://www.sesecwa.org/
The Arc of King County: https://arcofkingcounty.org/
Washington Autism and Advocacy Alliance: https://washingtonautismalliance.org/
Hands and Voices: https://wahandsandvoices.org/
Washington Multicultural Services Link: https://www.wmslink.org/
Disabilities, Opportunities, Internetworking, and Technology (DO-IT): https://www.washington.edu/doit
Northwest Justice Project: https://nwjustice.org/get-legal-help
Team Child: https://teamchild.org/

Race and Disability:

African American Support Group, The Arc of King County: arcofkingcounty.org/community-calendar.html/event/2022/01/31/1643666400/african-american-support-group/361823
Autism in Black: https://www.autisminblack.org/about/
Families of Color Seattle: https://www.focseattle.org/
Kienan Ellis Educational Project (KEEP): https://www.keep-wa.org/
The Intersection of Race and Disability: Conversations with Parents Across the Nation: https://adayinourshoes.com/the-intersection-of-race-and-disabilities-conversations-with-parents-across-the-nation/

Behavioral Health Providers:

Asian Counseling and Referral Service: https://acrs.org/
Atlantic Street Center: https://atlanticstreetcenter.org/
Consejo Counseling and Referral: https://consejocounseling.org/
Cowlitz Tribal Health Seattle:
https://www.cowlitz.org/health-services
Ingersoll Gender Center: https://ingersollgendercenter.org/
Muslim Health Professionals Seattle: https://namiseattle.org/project/muslim-health-professionals-of-seattle/
NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) Seattle: https://namiseattle.org/
Navos: https://www.navos.org/
Ryther: https://www.ryther.org/
You Grow Girl!: https://www.yougrowgirl.org/

Special Education Acronyms Link: https://www.parentcenterhub.org/acronyms/

Glossary

Terms and definitions to know

A

Accommodations: Are changes in how a student learns or demonstrates learning, and provide equal access to the general education curriculum without altering what the student is expected to learn.

Advocate: Someone who helps caregivers navigate special education services; can be hired privately or supported through public agencies and community organizations like The Arc, PAVE, etc.

C

Case Manager: A school staff member who oversees the development and implementation of an IEP.

Communication Plan: A locally developed agreement between caregivers and school staff outlining how and when they will share information about a student's progress or needs.

D

Data: Objective information used to measure progress toward IEP goals, such as results from progress monitoring tools, curriculum-based measures, or scored work samples directly linked to the goals.

E

Eligibility: Determining if the student meets the criteria for special education services and supports

Evaluation: The process for determining eligibility for special education, and includes parent input, formal and informal testing, observation, etc.

Expulsion: When a student is removed from the school as a disciplinary action for a determined period of time, typically for longer periods or permanently

I

IEP Review: Annual meeting to review and update the student's IEP, can be scheduled more often, as needed.

M

Modifications: A change to the curriculum or performance expectations for a student with a disability, used when they cannot meet grade-level standards even with accommodations and specially designed instruction.

P

Placement: Refers to the educational setting where a student receives special education services and supports and is determined by the IEP team. This can vary throughout the student's day.

Progress: Monitoring and measuring the student's performance toward their IEP goals

Progress Report: A document where the student's progress toward IEP goals is reported to the IEP team at intervals indicated in the IEP.

R

Referral: A request to evaluate a student with a suspected disability that may require special education services and supports to access a free and appropriate public education

S

Specially Designed Instruction (SDI): Explicit instruction adapted in content, methodology, and delivery to meet the unique needs of a student with a disability and help them access the general education curriculum.

Suspension: A temporary removal of a student from their regular classroom, either in-school or out-of-school. Written notice starts the count toward the 10 cumulative school days before the IEP team must review the student's placement and supports.

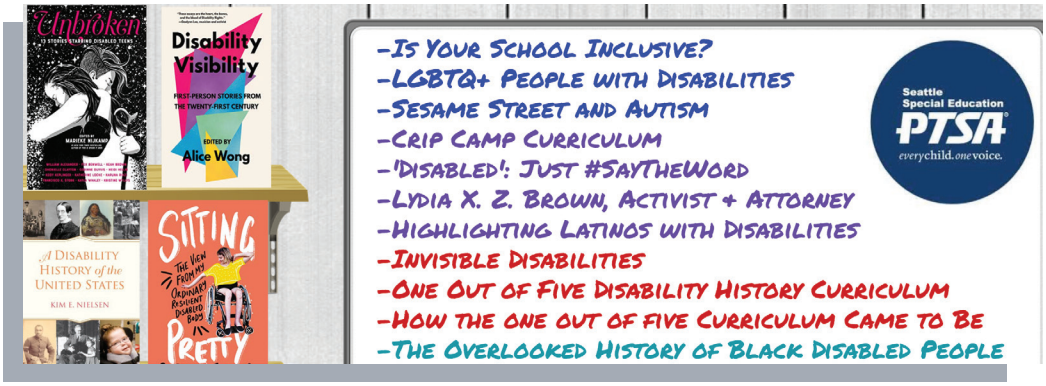
Disability History and Awareness

Content that highlights contributions and stories from the disability community



Reading room

https://seattlespecialeducationptsa.org/resources-for-families



Reading room / Teens and Adults

https://seattlespecialeducationptsa.org/resources-for-families

Sources

Links to sources referenced in developing this document

https://www.k12.wa.us/student-success/special-education

https://www.oeo.wa.gov/en

https://adayinourshoes.com/

https://www.seattleschools.org/

https://apps.leg.wa.gov/wac/default.aspx?cite=392-172a

https://www.parentcenterhub.org/

https://www.k12.wa.us/sites/default/files/public/specialed/pubdocs/ProceduralSafeguards.pdf

https://www.ada.gov/

https://www.seattleschools.org/about/school-board/policies/4200sp-a-visitors-to-schools/

Roadmap Sources

[1] https://www.parentcenterhub.org/evaluation-2/#model

Discipline Sources

[1] https://livesinthebalance.org/educators-schools/

[2] https://www.seattleschools.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/ADA-Discipline-Matrix-21-22.pdf

[3] https://www.seattleschools.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/SSR-21-22-november-2021.pdf

[4] https://www.understood.org/articles/en/functional-assessment-what-it-is-and-how-it-works

[5] https://www.understood.org/articles/en/behavior-intervention-plans-what-you-need-to-know

[6] https://www.wrightslaw.com/info/discipl.mdr.strategy.htm

[7] https://traumasensitiveschools.org

[8] https://www.nwjusticeforum.com

[9] https://livesinthebalance.org/our-solution/

[10] https://www.k12.wa.us/sites/default/files/public/2020%20Behavior%20Menu%20with%20ADA.pdf

Material presented in this guide is intended for information purposes only. It is not intended as professional advice and should not be construed as such. Seattle Special Education PTSA is not engaged in rendering legal or other professional services by posting said material. Professional services should be sought if legal or other specific expert assistance is required.

Contributors

Bringing together expertise, experience, and advocacy

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This guide reflects a collective effort to make special education information more accessible and community-informed. Any remaining errors or omissions are our own.

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