

Group Questions:

- What is Special Education?
- What is a disability?
- What is an Evaluation?

Special Education: services which help children who have special learning needs.

Disability: anything which interferes with a child's ability to learn in a regular classroom. Examples:

- If a child is in a wheel chair, he can't be in a classroom on the second floor if the school doesn't have an elevator.
- If a child always has trouble understanding what she reads, she won't be able to keep up with her class without individual attention.

Evaluation: In the Special Education context, it is a series of tests given to the child by different school staff to help decide whether the child is eligible for services.

Federal law guarantees every student the right to a free and appropriate public education regardless of handicap or disability. State law guarantees the right to an education in the "least restrictive environment." That means in typical classroom settings with students without disabilities.

If you believe that your child is having difficulty making progress in a regular classroom due to a disability, you have the right to an evaluation of your child to find out if he or she has a disability and is eligible for special education services. Ask the principal/headmaster or Evaluation Team Facilitator (ETF) for this evaluation.

If parents wonder if a Special Education Evaluation is needed, parents should request one. When a parent requests the evaluation instead of when a teacher requests it, it tends to happen much faster.

SPECIAL EDUCATION INFORMATION FOR SOMERVILLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The Special Education Department is responsible for ensuring all students who require special education services in order to maximize their learning are identified and their individualized learning needs are met in the least restrictive environment possible. Special Education Department staff work with teachers, administrators and families to ensure Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) for students are implemented with integrity.

In accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA 2004) and Massachusetts Special Education regulations 603 CMR 28.00, the Somerville Public Schools provides screenings and evaluations for all children residing in Somerville, MA between the ages of 3 and 21 to determine eligibility for special education services. Any parent, caregiver, or teacher may refer the student for evaluation if they suspect the presence of a disability that may preclude the child from progressing effectively in a regular education program. This notice applies to all children residing in Somerville, MA who attend either public or private schools. If you believe your child may be in need of special education services, please contact your child's Principal or a Special Education Department Head or Facilitator as listed below.

- Argenziano School: Barbara Kelley-Leahy, Facilitator - (617) 625-6600, x6836
- Brown School: Dorothy Scally, Facilitator - (617) 625-6688, x6835
- ECIP/Capuano Early Childhood Center: Krista Brother, Department Head - (617) 625-6600, x3624
- East Somerville Community School: Anne Casavant, Department Head - (617) 625-6600, x3781
- Healey School: Susan Maday, Department Head - (617) 625-6600, x6536
- Kennedy School: Victoria Vendola, Department Head - (617) 625-6600, x6619
- Next Wave/Full Circle Schools: Jack Haverty, Department Head - (617) 625-6600, x6820
- Somerville High School: Rachel Ziulkowski, Department Head - (617) 625-6600, x6188
- West Somerville Neighborhood School: Barbara Kelley-Leahy, Facilitator - (617) 625-6600, x6836
- Winter Hill Community Innovation School: Nancy Amin, Department Head - (617) 625-6600, x6751
- Out-of-District: Dorothy Scally, Facilitator - (617) 625-6600, x6835

Scenario 1

Mr. Garcia: Hello, I would like to ask that my son, Kevin, be tested for an IEP.

Principal: Hello, why do you think your son needs an IEP?

Mr. Garcia: His doctor says he may have autism.

Principal: Okay, I understand. The school will send you a letter to ask for your permission to get your son tested for an IEP in 5 days. There will also be an IEP meeting.

Mr. Garcia: Do I need to go to the meeting?

Principal: No, parents do not need to go. We will give you the information later in a letter.

Question:

Principal tells Mr. Garcia that he does not have to come to the IEP meeting. Did the principal give the right answer?

Scenario 2

Principal: This is the IEP plan that we have made for your child.

Mrs. Lucia: I do not agree with this plan.

Principal: I am sorry, Mrs. Lucia, but we cannot make any changes now.

Question:

The principal says that he cannot change the IEP plan. Do you agree? Did the principal give the right answer?

Scenario 3

Teacher: Hello, Mrs. Gonzalez. Your daughter, Lucy has been making a lot of trouble in school recently. She is also failing many classes. We think she needs to be tested for an IEP.

Mrs. Gonzalez: What is an IEP?

Teacher: It is an individualized education program. It is like special education. You will get a letter about it asking for your permission to get Lucy tested for an IEP in 5 days. There will also be a meeting that you need to go.

Mrs. Gonzalez: I understand. Can I get an interpreter at the meeting?

Teacher: I am not sure. We may not have anyone available that day. We will let you know.

Question:

Do you agree with the teacher's answer about interpretation services? Did the teacher give the right answer?