

## **Sto-Rox School District Annual Public Notice of Special Education Services and Programs**

Under the federal law, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), it is the responsibility of the Pennsylvania Department of Education to ensure that all children with disabilities, regardless of the severity of the disability residing in the Commonwealth who are suspected to be in need of special education and related services, are located, evaluate, and identified. To fulfill IDEA's requirement, Pennsylvania law requires each school district to provide notice to the community by publishing an annual public notice to parents, in newspapers or by other media, regarding the school district's identification and screening activities, the location and time of the activities, and also any evaluation activity which takes place in the school district. School districts are required to provide a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to children with disabilities who are determined, through the evaluation process, to need special education and related services under IDEA and 22 Pa. School Code §14. A school age child with a disability, who is determined in need of special education and related services, is identified as a child with a disability eligible for special education in need of specially designed instruction. The following are disability categories under IDEA: Autism, Deafness, Deaf / Blindness, Emotional Disturbance, Traumatic Brain Injury, Hearing Impairment, Specific Learning Disability, Mental Retardation, Multiple Disabilities, Other Health Impairment, Speech And Language Impairment, Orthopedic Impairment, and Visual Impairment including Blindness.

### **Gifted Education**

Parents who suspect that their child is in need of specially designed instruction beyond that required in 22 Pa. School Code §4 (relating to academic standards and assessments) may request in writing that their child be evaluated under the criteria of 22 Pa. School Code §16.22.

### **Early Intervention**

In Pennsylvania, a child between 3 years of age and the school district's age of beginners who has a developmental delay or one or more of the physical or mental conditions listed above is identified as an "eligible young child." Eligible young children are afforded the same rights under IDEA and 22 Pa. School Code §14 as school age children, in order to determine if they are eligible to receive special education services, through the screening and evaluation process. Once determined eligible to receive special education an individualized education program would be developed for the child.

The Pennsylvania Department of Education is responsible for providing programs and services to eligible young children under Act 212 of 1990, the Early Intervention System Act.

### **Screening**

Each school district must establish and implement procedures to locate, identify, and evaluate students suspected of being a child with a disability eligible for special education. Screening activities include but are not limited to: review of group-based data (cumulative records, enrollment records, health records, and report cards); hearing screening (at a minimum of kindergarten, special ungraded classes, first, second, third, seventh, and eleventh grades); vision screening (every grade level); motor screening; and speech and language screening.

Some school districts elect to have Instructional Support Teams (IST) or pre-referral teams. These teams include parents and members of the professional staff of the school district. They analyze information from the screening activities listed above as well as classroom behavior and performance and recommends strategies for the student in the classroom. If within 60 school days after initiation, screening activities have produced little or no improvement, the student is referred for an evaluation to determine eligibility for special education services.

Except as indicated above or otherwise announced publicly, screening activities are conducted on an on-going basis throughout the school year. Screening is conducted in the student's home school unless other arrangements are necessary. Parents can request screening in writing for their children by contacting the school that their child attends. When screening indicates that a student may be a child

with a disability eligible for special education, the school district will seek parental consent to conduct an evaluation.

Screening activities and/or IST activities cannot block the rights of a parent to request, at any time, including prior to or during the instructional support activities, an evaluation for the purpose of determining if the student is a child with a disability and eligible for special education services.

### **Evaluation**

“Evaluation” is the procedure used to determine whether a child has a disability and if the child’s disability is of the nature and extent that the child would be eligible for special education and related services. Evaluation procedures used are determined on an individual basis by an Evaluation team, which includes the parents. Parents are asked to provide permission to conduct the evaluation via a Permission to Evaluate form. The Evaluation team takes into consideration cultural issues as they determine the assessment tools that will be administered for the student. A single test or procedure cannot be the sole factor in determining that a child is eligible for special education services. The initial evaluation shall be completed and a copy of the evaluation report shall be presented to the parents no later than 60 days after the agency receives written parental consent. Evaluation for the purpose of determining if a child is a child with a disability eligible for special education does not include the procedures or basic tests that are administered to all children. Parents who think their child is a child with a disability may request, at any time, that the school district conduct an evaluation to determine if the child is eligible to receive special education and related services. This request must be made in writing to the Special Education Contact Person. If a parent makes an oral request for an evaluation, the school district shall provide the parent with a Permission to Evaluate form to complete.

### **Confidentiality**

Each school district protects the confidentiality of personally identifiable information regarding its students that are identified as children with disabilities and eligible for special education services and protected handicapped students, in accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974 and other applicable federal and state laws. Parents have the right to inspect and review their child’s educational record. The school district will comply with a request to inspect and review educational records without unnecessary delay and before any meeting regarding an IEP or any due process hearing, but no later than 30 days after the written request has been made. Parents have the right to a response from the school district to reasonable requests for explanations and interpretations of the records. Parents have the right to request copies of the records. While the district cannot charge a fee to search for or to retrieve information, it may charge a copying fee as long as it does not effectively prevent the parent from exercising their right to inspect and review the records. Parents have the right to appoint a representative to inspect and review their child’s records. If any educational record contains information on more than one child, parents have the right only to inspect and review the information relating to their child.

### **Educational Records**

“Educational records” mean those records that are directly related to the student which are maintained by an educational agency or by a party acting for the agency. “Education agency”, for purposes of this notice, means the local school district. For all students, the school district maintains educational records, which include but are not limited to personally identifiable and confidential information, as well as, directory information.

1. Personally Identifiable and Confidential Information includes, but are not limited to: the student’s name, name of parents and/or other family members; the address of the student and/or the student’s family; and personal information or personal characteristics which would make the student’s identity easily traceable.
2. Directory information is information contained in an educational record of a student which would not generally be considered harmful or an invasion of privacy if disclosed. Directory information includes,

but is not limited to: the student's name, address, telephone number, date and place of birth, major field of study; participation in officially recognized activities and sports; weight and height of members of athletic teams; dates of attendance; degrees and awards received; and previous educational agency or institution attended. Directory information may be released without parental consent to anyone who is entitled to see it under FERPA. Parents have the right to refuse to let an agency designate any or all of the above information including directory information. If a parent does not want directory information released about their child, the parent should contact the school contact listed for their district.

**For more information related to these and other Special Education related topics please contact the Office of Pupil Services at 412-771-3213 extension 5267.**