

SHALER AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

Child Identification Activities

Shaler Area School District provides a free appropriate public education to exceptional students. To be eligible, the student must be of school age, in need of specially designed instruction and meet eligibility criteria for mentally gifted and/or one or more of the following physical or mental disabilities as defined by Pennsylvania state standards: autism/pervasive developmental disorder, blindness/visual impairment, deafness/hearing impairment, physical disability, serious emotional disturbance, mental retardation, multi-handicap, specific learning disability, speech/language impairment, neurological impairment and other health impairment. The Shaler Area School District makes use of the following procedures for locating, identifying and evaluating needs of school-aged students requiring special programs or services. These procedures, as required by state regulations, are as follows:

As prescribed by Section 1402 of the School Code, the district routinely conducts screenings of a child's hearing acuity, visual acuity, and speech and language. Gross motor and fine motor skills, academic skills and social/emotional skills are assessed by classroom teachers on an on-going basis. Specified needs from all of these screening sources are noted within the student's personal record. These school records are open and available to parents. Information from the records is released to other persons or agencies only with appropriate authorization, which involves written, signed permission by parents. Parents with concerns regarding their child may contact the building principals at any time to request a screening or evaluation of their child. Communication with parents and exceptional students shall be in English or the native language of the parents.

Screening information will be used by the Student Assistance Team within the student's school to meet his/her specific needs or to document the need for further evaluation.

If it is determined that a child needs additional services, the Student Assistance Team will make adjustments relative to such things as the child's learning style, behavior, physical inabilities and speech problems to assist the student in reaching appropriate academic gains based on his or her rate of learning.

Multidisciplinary evaluations of students thought to be exceptional can be initiated by parents/guardians or school personnel. Parents/guardians are part of a multidisciplinary team (MDT). Permission of the parent/guardian is needed to conduct a multidisciplinary evaluation. The purpose of a multidisciplinary evaluation is to develop conclusions and recommendations regarding eligibility and programming appropriate for the student. Multidisciplinary evaluations use multiple sources of information in assessing a student, such as district-wide testing results, input from school personnel, Student Assistance Team intervention, classroom observation, parent input and formal psychological and educational testing.

After the evaluations are completed, an Evaluation Report will be compiled and will include specific recommendations for the types of intervention necessary to deal with the child's needs.

Parents are then invited to participate in a meeting where the results of the evaluation are discussed. If the child is determined to be exceptional and in need of specially designed instruction, an IEP is developed. The extent of special education services and the location of the delivery of these services are determined by the IEP team and are based on the student's identified needs and abilities, chronological age, and level of intensity of the specified intervention. The district also provides related services that are necessary for an exceptional student to benefit from special education.

Parents are then presented a Notice of Recommended Educational Placement (NOREP) with which they may agree or disagree. If parents disagree with the program being recommended, the issue may be taken to mediation or a due process hearing.

The district provides a continuum of options ranging from supportive intervention in the regular classroom to supplemental intervention in the regular class or in a resource room to a part time or full time special education class in or outside of the regular school. Students receive services in the least restrictive environment as determined by the IEP team. The school district provides Learning Support for students whose primary identified need is in academic learning.

Life Skills Support is provided for students whose focus should be on independent living skill. Additionally, the district provides Hearing Support, Speech/Language Support, Vision Support and Physical Support to meet students' individual needs. Students who are mentally gifted receive Gifted Support.

Based upon students' individual needs, the district provides extended school year services, adaptive physical education for students who cannot benefit from regular physical education with modifications, behavior management programs for students whose behavior interferes with learning, vocational assessment, assistive devices and enrichment/advancement.

Information about parental rights, mediation or due process procedures, specific special education services and programs offered by the district and the district's Educational Records policy is available upon request from the building principal in a child's school.