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**SPECIAL EDUCATION EVALUATION AND ELIGIBILITY**

**1. What is Special Education?**

Special education programs and services are designed for those students who are academically, mentally, physically, socially and/or emotionally delayed. These aspects of “delay,” broadly categorized as a developmental delay, signify an aspect of the child's overall development (physical, cognitive, scholastic skills) which places them behind their peers. Special Education programs and services adapt content, teaching methodology, and delivery of instruction to meet the appropriate needs of each child. These services are provided at no cost to the family through federal, state foundation grant, and county special education millage funds. Under federal law services are available to children until they reach 21 years of age. Michigan is the only state that continues to provide services to students to the age of 26 with no additional financial resources received from the federal government.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) defines Special Education as “specially designed instruction, at no cost to the parents, to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability.” The umbrella term of Special Education broadly identifies the academic, physical, cognitive, and social-emotional instruction offered to children who are faced with one or more disabilities.

**2. What is IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act)?**

IDEA is the federal law that requires school districts to provide students with disabilities with a free appropriate public education at public expense. The Act provides procedural safeguards, due process rights, as well as specific mandates regarding a free appropriate public education.

**3. What can parents do when they suspect their child has a disability?**

When a parent or guardian suspects that their child may have a disability, they can make a request for an evaluation. To make a request for an evaluation, the parent should contact the building principal or the special education department.

**4. What can parents do when they suspect their child who is not school age has a disability?**

Please contact the EGRPS Special Education Department at 616-235-3535 to schedule an appointment for the Early Childhood Assessment Center.

**5. How is special education eligibility determined?**

Special education eligibility is determined through the evaluation and IEP team process. Michigan has [administrative rules governing special education](#) that define the criteria to meet the 13 potential areas of eligibility.

**6. What are the special education eligibility disabilities?**

- |  |                                      |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)             | Physical Impairment (PI)             |
| Cognitive Impairment (CI)                  | Severe Multiple Impairment (SXI)     |
| Deaf-Blindness (DB)                        | Specific Learning Disability (SLD)   |
| Early Childhood Developmental Delay (ECDD) | Speech and Language Impairment (SLI) |
| Emotional Impairment (EI)                  | Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)         |
| Hearing Impairment (HI)                    | Visual Impairment (VI)               |
| Other Health Impairment (OHI)              |                                      |

**7. What is a Student Assistance Team/Child Study Team and how is this different from a Multidisciplinary Evaluation Team?**

East Grand Rapids Public Schools has a process through which students receive support. Each building has a Child Study or Student Assistance Team made up of general education and special education support staff. The Teams engage in a continuous process which involves:

- **Data gathering** – gathering information from teachers, parents, standardized test results and classroom/school observations;
- **Interventions** – implementing and trying a variety of strategies and interventions to support the student, documenting their effectiveness, and monitoring progress;
- **Recommendations** – based on the data collected from the interventions, the Child Study or Student Assistance Team can make recommendations for continued general education interventions. Where interventions are unsuccessful or the staff suspects a disability, the Child Study/Student Assistance Team can make a referral for a special education or a Section 504 evaluation.

The Multidisciplinary Evaluation Team (MET) is a specific term for the group of individuals who complete evaluations for special education eligibility. The MET can include a school psychologist, school social worker, speech and language pathologist, other special education staff and classroom teachers. The MET compiles data, completes assessments and observations, and makes a recommendation to the IEP Team, which determines whether the student is eligible or ineligible.

**8. *What is a Pattern of Strengths and Weaknesses (PSW) process?***

PWS is a process that is used to determine if a student meets the special education eligibility criteria of SLD. This process involves the collection of data to determine the following:

The student does not achieve adequately for the student's age or to meet state-approved grade-level standards in one or more of the areas identified at 34 CFR 300.309(a) (1) (i) when provided with learning experiences and instruction appropriate for the student's age or state-approved grade-level standards.

The student exhibits a pattern of strengths and weaknesses in performance, achievement, or both, relative to age, state-approved grade-level standards, or intellectual development, that is determined by the Multi-disciplinary Evaluation Team (MET) to be relevant to the identification of a SLD, using appropriate assessments, consistent with the [IDEA Evaluation Procedures and Additional Requirements for Evaluations and Reevaluations](#)

**9. *What is Response to Intervention (RTI), now referred to as Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS)?***

EGRPS uses RTI/MTSS as part of the child study/student assistance team process. The Michigan Department of Education (MDE) currently refers to RTI as a Multi-tiered System of Support (MTSS), which is defined as an integrated, multi-tiered system of instruction, assessment, and intervention designed to meet the achievement and behavioral health needs of ALL learners. In short, an MTSS framework is designed to ensure that each and every student will have their individual needs met through effective instruction.

MTSS is a systematic process that is used to determine if and how students respond to specific interventions in instruction. MTSS is a framework for our building student assistance teams that design, implement and evaluate student data and interventions.

The essential elements of an MTSS approach are: providing scientific, evidence-based instruction and interventions in general education. It also requires monitoring and measuring of student progress in response to the instruction and interventions; and then using these measures of student progress to guide instruction and make educational decisions.

**10. *What reading supports are provided for students?***

East Grand Rapids Public Schools provides a continuum of reading instruction and intervention for all students. Elementary school staff are trained in the Fountas and Pinnell Continuum and Leveled Literacy Interventions (LLI), which includes; Guided Reading; Shared Reading; Interactive Read Aloud; Writing about Reading; Writing and Oral; Visual; Technological; Phonics; Spelling; Word Study; and independent reading. Fountas and Pinnell LLI are implemented with students who require additional reading instruction, keeping with the MTSS framework. Additionally, elementary reading specialists provide small group and individualized instruction for students in need. Elementary staff are using The Benchmark Assessments by Fountas & Pinnell. Our assessments inform our instruction and help staff to make decisions about the level of instruction and support students need. For students with IEPs, special education teachers at the elementary level also use a variety of instructional strategies and supports as defined by the IEP team.

**11. *How are decisions made regarding the types of services a student receives?***

Educational program and service decisions are made through the IEP Team process, based on the student's present level of academic achievement and functional performance, always considering the least restrictive environment for the student. Parents are members of the IEP team and are encouraged to contribute to the discussion.

**12. *Are special education student programs/services predetermined based on disability?***

No; student programs and services are determined through the IEP Team process.

**13. *If a student has Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) are they eligible for special education?***

Possibly; students with ADHD may be eligible for special education programs and services provided they meet the criteria under OHI as determined by the evaluation and IEP process.

**14. Can a student be ineligible for special education services even if diagnosed by a doctor?**

Yes; a doctor (e.g., family physician, psychiatrist, psychologist or neurologist) can make a diagnosis identifying a medical condition. However, in order to be determined eligible, the condition must adversely affect the educational performance of the student to the degree that special education or related services are required. The parent can request that medical reports, private therapist reports or input from other agencies provided by the parent be taken into consideration through IEP Team process.

**15. Can a parent request an Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE) at district expense?**

Yes; when the district has completed an evaluation, the results are reported to the IEP Team. Parents may request an IEE when they disagree with an evaluation that has been completed by the district. If a parent wants to request an independent evaluation, they can consult the [Parent Handbook and Procedural Safeguards](#) and/or [IEE flowchart](#).

**16. What is the EGRPS Early Childhood Assessment Center?**

The Early Childhood Assessment Center of East Grand Rapids Public Schools will assist parents in determining if their child requires special help. The Assessment Center serves early childhood students beginning at age two years six months, with assessments based on the child's needs. Areas assessed may include one or more of the following areas:

- Cognitive skills
- Communication skills
- Motor skills
- Self-care skills
- Social/emotional skills

After the assessments are complete, special education staff meets with parents at an IEP team meeting to determine special education eligibility and programs and/or services for eligible students.

**17. How often is a special education student's eligibility redetermined?**

Eligibility must be redetermined at least once time every three years.

**18. Where would I find information on the 13 special education disabilities?**

See [MARSE](#) Rules 340.1702 through 340.1717.

**19. Is a child with dyslexia eligible for special education?**

Possibly. A student with dyslexia can be determined eligible as a student with a specific learning disability through the multidisciplinary evaluation and IEP Team process.

**20. How many students receive special education services in EGRPS?**

Based on the 2013 school year student count data collection, EGRPS had approximately 3000 Y5-12 students. Of the total students enrolled in EGRPS, 193 students received special education services, 182 of these students received their special education services within the district and 21 students received services in Kent County center based programs.

**IEP MEETING PROCESS**

**21. What is an IEP (Individualized Education Program)?**

An IEP is a written statement for each child with a disability that is developed, reviewed, and revised in a meeting in accordance with IDEA §§ 300.320 through 300.324, and must include:

- A statement of the child's present levels of academic achievement and functional performance, including:
  - How the child's disability affects the child's involvement and progress in the general education curriculum (i.e., the same curriculum as for nondisabled children); or
  - For preschool children, as appropriate, how the disability affects the child's participation in appropriate activities;
- A statement of measurable annual goals, including academic and functional goals designed to meet the child's needs that result from the child's disability to enable the child to be involved in and make progress in the general education curriculum; and
  - Meet each of the child's other educational needs that result from the child's disability;

- For children with disabilities who take alternate assessments aligned to alternate academic achievement standards, a description of benchmarks or short-term objectives; a description of how the child's progress toward meeting the annual goals will be measured; and
- When periodic reports on the progress the child is making toward meeting the annual goals (such as through the use of quarterly or other periodic reports, concurrent with the issuance of report cards) will be provided;
- A statement of the special education and related services and supplementary aids and services, based on peer-reviewed research to the extent practicable, to be provided to the child, or on behalf of the child, and a statement of the program modifications or supports for school personnel that will be provided to enable the child to advance appropriately toward attaining the annual goals;
- To be involved in and make progress in the general education curriculum and to participate in extracurricular and other nonacademic activities; and
- To be educated and participate with other children with disabilities and nondisabled children; an explanation of the extent, if any, to which the child will not participate with nondisabled children in the regular class;
- A statement of any individual appropriate accommodations that are necessary to measure the academic achievement and functional performance of the child on state and districtwide assessments consistent with section 612(a)(16) of the IDEA Act; and
- If the IEP Team determines that the child must take an alternate assessment instead of a regular state or districtwide assessment of student achievement, a statement of why the child cannot participate in the regular assessment; and the particular alternate assessment selected is appropriate for the child; and
- The IEP must project the date for the beginning of the services and modifications, the anticipated frequency, location, and duration of those special education services and modifications.

**22. *What is the Present Level of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP) and why is it important?***

The PLAAFP statement is very important as it establishes the starting point, or baseline, that will be used to develop the student's IEP. The IEP team develops the PLAAFP statement to give a snapshot of a student with a disability at that particular time and place. The PLAAFP describes the level at which the student is working academically and functionally. The PLAAFP statement includes a description of a student's strengths and needs and is developed using a variety of information and data. The PLAAFP must include information on how each child's disability affects his or her involvement and progress in the general education curriculum. Parents can provide information regarding the student to the IEP Team for consideration in the development of the PLAAFP.

**23. *What is an IEP Team?***

An IEP team may be comprised of the parent, the student, and a group of qualified professionals which can include special education staff, interpreter of test data, district representative, and general education teacher.

**24. *Can the district hold an IEP team meeting without the parent/guardian in attendance?***

Yes; the district is required to invite a team requirement is for the district to appoint (invite) a team of qualified individuals to attend the IEP team meeting including the parent/guardian. The district must arrange for this meeting at a mutually convenient time and place. An IEP team meeting may be conducted without the parent in attendance if reasonable efforts to include them have been documented. For parents/guardians who are unable to attend, alternative means of participation may be arranged.

**25. *Can the district implement an IEP that has not been signed by the parent/guardian?***

There are two different responses to this question depending on the purpose of the IEP team meeting. If it is an initial IEP, the answer is no. A district does not have the authority to implement an initial IEP without parent consent (signature). A parent signature is required for an initial IEP to be implemented.

If it is not an initial IEP (i.e., Review/Revise IEP, Reevaluation, Other), the answer is yes. Once a student is eligible for special education services and has an IEP, the district is required to offer a free appropriate public education (FAPE) which is done through the IEP. It is important to understand that a parent signature is not required once the initial IEP Report has been signed.

**26. *Can a parent bring someone to their child's IEP team meeting?***

Yes; for additional support, a parent/guardian may choose to invite other individuals who have knowledge or special expertise regarding the student to an IEP team meeting. It is recommended that all participants of an IEP team meeting be made known to both parents and the district prior to the meeting.

**27. *How are students' special education programs and services determined?***

Students' special education programs and services are determined through the IEP team and are based on individual student need and consideration of the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). A students' special education programs and services are not to be determined based solely upon their eligibility. Identifying the least restrictive environment and educational placement is made through discussion of the IEP team. Parents as IEP Team members contribute to the discussion. Factors that contribute to an educational placement decision include the academic, developmental, and functional needs of the student.

**28. *What are the responsibilities of the general education and special education staff to assist a student in making progress on their IEP goals and objectives?***

Special education staff has the responsibility to implement instruction and interventions that support student progress and goal attainment. Special education staff must also periodically report on the student's progress toward meeting each annual goal. General education staff may assist with instruction to support progress on a student's IEP goals and objectives. Goals should be developed through the IEP process based on student need and present level of performance. Each annual goal should be created to allow a student to achieve the goal within one year's time. Goal attainment is not guaranteed.

**29. *When should parents expect to receive necessary information prior to an IEP meeting?***

The district's goal is to provide parents with information to be considered at the IEP meeting no less than two school days prior to an IEP meeting.

**SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND SERVICES**

**30. *What special education programs and services does EGRPS provide?***

Special education programs and services start during early childhood at Woodcliff Early Childhood Center and include; early childhood special education classroom, early childhood home and community service, and speech and language services. The following special education programs and services are offered throughout the district at all educational levels, elementary, middle school and high school; autism spectrum disorder (ASD) classroom, resource programs, occupational therapy, physical therapy (through KISD), school social work, school psychology, speech and language, transition, and teacher consulting services. Both the middle school and high school also offer a co-teaching model or general education classes that are supported by a special education teacher. The high school also further differentiates programs for special education students:

High School Diploma Bound Program - Students pursue a high school diploma, take general education courses that are often supported by either a special education teacher or paraeducator, and may also participate in an Academic Support Class (ASC). Within the ASC students receive academic support for their general education classes and also work on their specific IEP goals.

Certificate of Completion – Some students at the high school pursue a certificate of completion versus a diploma. Those students enroll in general education elective courses and in a transition-based math and/or English course. These classes are very small with fewer than six students per class and are taught by a special education teacher. Curriculum is individualized for each student. Depending on grade level, some students in this program also attend the Kent Transition Center where they further develop their vocational skills.

Co-Taught and Co-Supported Classes - In addition to ASC our special education teachers co-teach in general education classes. They currently co-teach (2013-2014 school year) six general education classes - two sophomore English classes, a junior English class, a geometry class, and two advanced algebra courses. Two paraeducators also support six different general education classes including two world history classes, a geometry course, a physics class, a Spanish class, and a biology class. Within these co-taught/co-supported classes there are as few as four special education students and not more than seven total students enrolled, making the student-teacher ratio within these courses very small. Presently, there are 12 general education classes in which special education students receive co-teaching/co-support from a special education teacher or a paraeducator.

**31. *What is a Personal Curriculum (PC)?***

A Personal Curriculum (PC) is a process that is provided for in Michigan law 380.1278b that allows for specific modifications to be made to certain requirements of the Michigan Merit Curriculum (MMC) at the high school level in order to individualize the rigor and relevance of the educational experience. While the law specifies the areas in which modifications may be made for specific groups of students, the personal curriculum is intended to help make the MMC accessible to all students while maintaining the academic rigor required to preserve the integrity of the high school diploma. Information regarding modifications to the Michigan Merit Curriculum through the use of a personal curriculum can be found [here](#).

**32. Does an IEP supersede the Michigan Merit Curriculum?**

No; the MMC legislation establishes state requirements for a diploma. Modifications to the MMC must be made through the PC process defined by law and district policy. The IEP must be aligned to and be supportive of the PC, but the PC is developed outside of the IEP process.

The IEP is a separate document that provides specific supports to help the student make progress and achieve in the MMC.

**33. Are special education students required to take online classes?**

No. The IEP team determines the special education programs and services required for a student to progress in the general education curriculum. At the high school level, the student’s guidance counselor attends the annual IEP team meeting to provide input and suggestions on the student’s schedule, which is developed outside of the IEP process.

**34. What are Post-Secondary Transition Plans?**

A post-secondary transition plan is a part of the IEP. Any student who will turn 16 within the life of his or her IEP must have a transition plan and goal that outlines how the student will transition beyond high school (Post-Secondary Transition). In EGRPS, transition IEPs typically occur during a special education student’s 8<sup>th</sup> grade year, and at each annual IEP that follows, as long as a student remains eligible for special education.

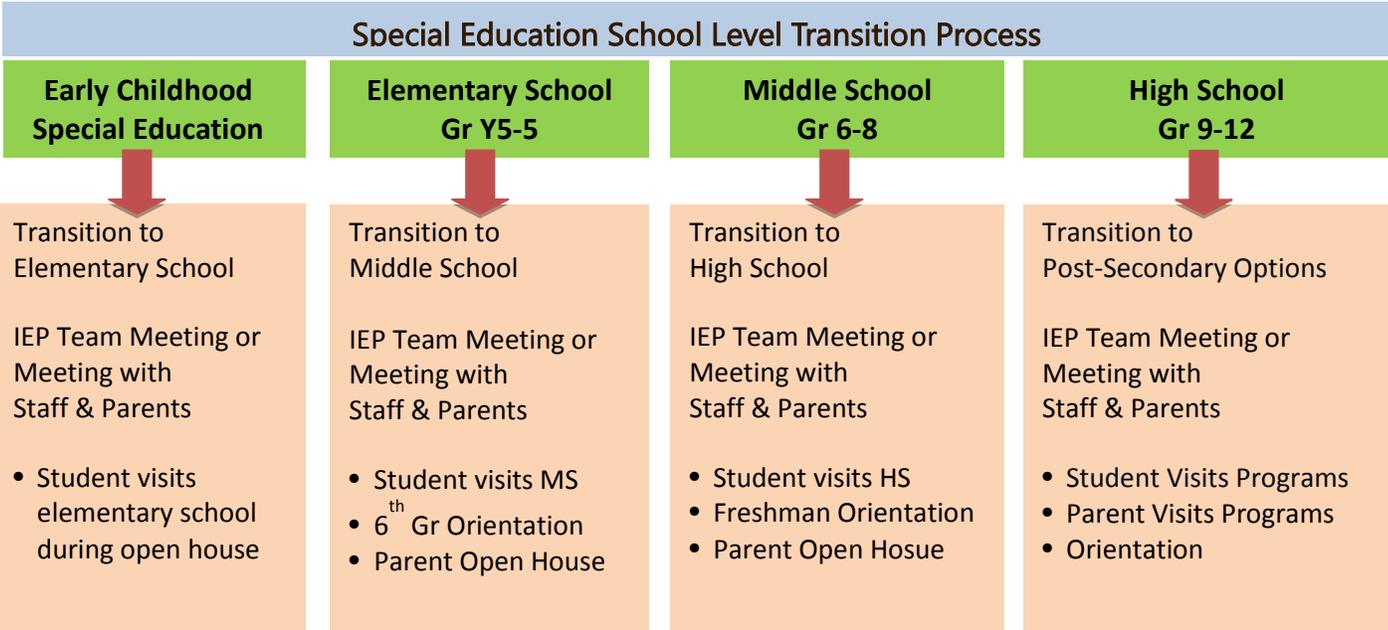
Transition services are a coordinated set of activities for a student with an IEP that are designed to support movement from school to post-secondary, including; vocational training, employment, continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, and community participation.

**35. What is Special Education Post-Secondary Transition?**

Post-secondary transition requires IEP teams to developed individualized transition plans for students with disabilities. Some students who have not graduated from high school continue to participate in transition learning experiences; including independent living skills, vocational training, and/or community preparation skills. The activities and services provided through a post-secondary program are based upon the student’s post high school goals as determined by the student’s IEP team.

**36. What is the transition process between educational levels?**

Transition is a general term used to describe a change in a student’s school from one educational level to another, (pre-k to elementary, elementary to middle school, etc.). In EGRPS, either an IEP meeting or a meeting with school staff and parents occurs when a student with disabilities moves from one educational level to the next. Students and parents typically visit their new school, which often occurs during an open house format. Middle school and high school students visit their new schools in small and/or large groups. In addition, a meeting is held for parents of incoming 6<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> grade students. Student orientation is held in August, prior to the start of the school year.



**37. *What is Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)?***

LRE is the portion of federal law which requires students with disabilities to be educated alongside general education peers to the maximum extent appropriate. Each IEP team is required to individually determine LRE through the IEP process.

**38. *What is Extended School Year (ESY)?***

The need for extended school year (ESY) services must be considered for every student with a disability at each IEP team meeting. ESY services must be provided if the IEP Team determines that such services are necessary for the provision of a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to the student. The need for ESY must be determined individually and may not be provided or denied based upon category of disability or program assignment. Additional information regarding ESY can be found [here](#).

**39. *Do special education services provided for students change over time?***

Special education services for each eligible student are determined annually on an individualized basis by the IEP team and may change to meet each student's needs. IEPs are held at least once per year for each eligible student and are updated based on current data and the student's progress on goals and objectives.

**40. *Who makes up the special education staff and what do they do?***

**Special Education Teacher** – Is a trained professional who provides specialized instruction and consultation according to each student's IEP.

**School Psychologist** – Is a trained professional who assists in the evaluation and identification of student needs regarding behavioral, social, emotional, education and vocational functioning.

**School Social Worker (SSW)** – Is a trained professional who supports the educational program of individuals by assisting in identification and assessment of the individual's educational needs including social, emotional, behavioral, and adaptive needs. The SSW also provides intervention services as determined by the student's IEP team.

**Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP)** – Is a trained professional who analyzes speech and language comprehension and production to determine communication competencies. The SLP also provides intervention strategies and services related to speech and language development as well as disorders of language, voice, articulation, and fluency as determined by the student's IEP.

**Occupational Therapist (OT)** – Is a trained professional in a related service which focuses on the development of a student's fine motor skills and/or the identification of adapted ways of accomplishing activities of daily living.

**41. *Do special education teachers have special teaching certificates?***

All special education teachers have teaching certificates with an endorsement in one or more areas of special education disability. In addition, all EGRPS teachers meet the highly qualified standards as defined under state and federal law.

**42. *What is the role of a high school guidance counselor versus a counselor in a clinical model?***

East Grand Rapids High School's Guidance Department is committed to developing healthy, meaningful relationships of strength, commitment, and involvement that make a difference in students' lives.

The role of a high school guidance counselor at East Grand Rapids High School is one of both guidance and counseling in the education environment. Counselors work within a comprehensive guidance model to assist with academic counseling, assessment coordination, post-secondary planning, support services, interventions and transitions services. Counselors help students in personal crisis, facilitate mediation between students, consult with students on problem solving, facilitate support groups, and provide information and referral to services outside the school. This is an educational model whereby counselors provide support for students in the academic setting. This support is in the form of short term interventions and strategies rather than a regular, on-going therapeutic intervention that you would see in a clinical model. When this form of intervention is warranted, counselors work directly with families on a referral for appropriate services to agencies and therapists outside the school setting. With appropriate consent, counselors communicate with outside therapists and in conjunction with the family and therapist, continue to support the student in the academic setting.

Like social workers and psychologists, counselors also are trained in social-emotional development of the student. Counselors are different from social workers and psychologists because they are teachers who receive specific training in academic support and development and career planning and exploration. It is often the case that the clinical setting and the academic setting intersect and in these cases, the guidance counselor collaborates and facilitates dialogue with all stake holders.

**43. What is the maximum number of students permitted per special education provider?**

The number of students a provider may be responsible for is defined by the Michigan Program Rules as adopted in the Kent Intermediate School District Plan for the delivery of special education programs and services. [Special Education Program and Services Limits](#)

**44. What is a “caseload” teacher?**

A caseload teacher serves as the teacher of record assigned to a student at the building level. The caseload teacher is responsible for overseeing the students’ instruction, progress on goals, and progress reporting.

**SPECIAL EDUCATION ACCOMMODATIONS**

**45. What factors does the IEP Team consider when deciding whether a student requires a one-to-one paraeducator?**

The IEP Team has the responsibility to identify specific and individualized student needs and generate multiple and workable options for meeting those needs, some of which may require paraeducator assistance.

Factors the IEP Team will consider include assistance needed to support learning for academics and functional skills, self-care needs, communication needs, health-related needs, behavior needs, and needs related to safety concerns. The goal of utilizing paraeducator staff is to support the student toward greater independence, while assisting the student with new routines and utilizing environmental supports.

**46. What process is used to determine what accommodations a special education student can receive?**

The IEP Team for the special education student determines what accommodations the student requires. Examples of accommodations include: use of calculators, digitally recorded books, notes, note-taking, tape recorders and other technology devices and services. These accommodations may be provided either in general education or special education classrooms. Student accommodations are individualized and based upon a student’s demonstrated need.

**47. What is the difference between an accommodation and a modification?**

Accommodations are supports to the student that assist learning the general education curriculum. Accommodations do not change the content of what is being taught. Accommodations change “how” something is taught to the student and how the student demonstrates understanding of what is taught.

Modifications are changes to the content of the general education curriculum.

**48. What is Assistive Technology?**

Assistive technology is *technology* used by individuals with disabilities in order to perform functions that might otherwise be difficult or impossible. Assistive technology device means any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially off the shelf, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of a child with a disability. Assistive technology devices can include hardware, software, and peripherals that assist students with disabilities in accessing computers or other information technologies. The IEP Team considers the unique needs of the student regarding assistive technology and then determines how to address those needs in order to a free and appropriate education (FAPE) for the student.

**49. Who provides assistive technology equipment and support?**

School districts may provide assistive technology service and equipment through district staff, contracted staff, or by collaborating with the ISD for support. In addition to district owned equipment, there are times when the assistive technology equipment is on loan from the ISD, and district staff is trained to work with the equipment, the family, and the student. It may be necessary to change equipment due to technological advances or due to changes in student skills. An ongoing collaborative relationship in the IEP process helps all staff, family members, and students stay current on the student’s needs for assistive technology.

**50. Does the district provide inclusion for special education students?**

Yes; inclusion is the practice where students receiving special education services receive opportunities to interact with their non-disabled peers in a general education environment. As required by LRE, the presumption is most students with an IEP will participate in general education for the majority of their school day. In making a decision regarding inclusion, the concept of LRE is carefully weighed by the entire IEP team.

**SPECIAL EDUCATION DISTRICT ACCOUNTABILITY**

**51. Are EGRPS Special Education programs monitored?**

Yes; all special education programs throughout the state are monitored through the Continuous Improvement and Monitoring System (CIMS). The Michigan Department of Education uses the CIMS system to promote positive outcomes and ensure compliance with the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)* of 2004 and the *Michigan Administrative Rules for Special Education*. CIMS reflects the priorities of the IDEA 2004 and the State Performance Plan (SPP) and is aligned with the State School Improvement Framework.

**52. What are EGRPS special education graduation rates?**

In the State of Michigan high school graduation rates are calculated based on the cohort of students entering high school in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade and graduating within four years at the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> grade. There are no exceptions to the four year completion rule; in other words, a student who takes longer to complete graduation requirements, receives a certificate of completion, or continues to receive special education services through post-secondary transition options will count against a district's graduation rate. The state's expectation of all students, whether general education or special education, is that they will graduate within four years regardless of significant impairments which might impact learning.

The EGRPS high school graduation rate for students with special education disabilities varies from year to year; 2011-12 (70%), 2010-11 (63.6%), and 2009-10 (85.7%). As the data shows, the majority of special education students at EGRPS graduate on schedule with a high school diploma.

**PARENT ADVISORS FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION (PASE)**

**53. What is the Kent Intermediate School District Parent Advisors for Special Education (PASE)?**

Kent ISD's PASE is made up of volunteer representatives from each school district within Kent County. A representative must first be appointed by their local district school board and then by the Kent ISD Board of Education.

**54. What are a PASE member's responsibilities?**

Participate in the development and review of the Kent ISD Plan for Delivery of Special Education Programs and Services; provide advisory input on matters regarding improvement of special education services within the Intermediate School District (ISD); attend and participate at scheduled meetings; disseminate information and share ideas with the members, the ISD and their local school districts; provide families opportunities to be informed of special education processes; encourage effective partnerships between families and schools. Access information on Kent ISD's PASE [here](#).

**55. How does a parent serve on the Kent ISD PASE committee?**

By Michigan Rule, parent representatives must have a child or children with an IEP who are currently receiving special education services. A representative must first be appointed by their local district school board and then by the Kent ISD Board of Education.

**56. Are the Kent ISD PASE meetings open to the public?**

Yes; the regular monthly meetings are held during the school year at Kent ISD and are open to the public. The standard meeting format includes the opportunity for public comment. *Kent ISD 2930 Knapp Street NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49525, 616-364-1333*

**OTHER**

**57. *What is a Section 504 Plan?***

There are two laws for K-12 students in public school that may offer supports and services: the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Schools that receive federal funding are obligated to serve students under Section 504; however, no federal funds are provided to directly support offering Section 504 services.

Section 504 plans are developed by school teams and parents to support the educational needs of a K-12 student with a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activity. More information regarding Section 504 can be found by contacting the building administrator or by visiting [Section 504](#) in EGRPS.

**58. *Is it permissible for a staff member or the district to retaliate against an individual if a complaint is filed regarding EGRPS special education programs and services?***

No; the administration is fundamentally opposed to retaliation by any staff member for any reason. A variety of claims have been made that parents are afraid to speak out for fear of retaliation by district personnel. The administration is not aware of any substantiated acts of retaliation and has not received any specific examples of how this is occurring currently or has occurred in the past in EGRPS. If a parent/guardian or student believes they have witnessed or have been the victim of retaliation, the individual is encouraged to contact the building administrator or Director of Special Education.

**59. *What is the process for resolving a parent and district dispute?***

There are several options a parent and a district have when facing disagreement. These options may be either informal or formal dispute resolution.

Informal dispute resolution includes options such as actively checking for common understanding of the issue; requesting an IEP meeting; adjourning a meeting; requesting additional information; inviting others who have special knowledge/expertise; or requesting an IEP facilitator.

Formal dispute resolution includes options such as Mediation, State Complaint, Due Process Hearing Complaint, and filing an action in a Court of Competent Jurisdiction.

For specific direction on how to access these options, refer to the [IDEA Procedural Safeguards](#) and the Section 504 Procedural Safeguards. The Procedural Safeguards explain dispute resolutions which are crucial to any process in maintaining open communication for student-centered outcomes.

**60. *Can a student with an IEP be suspended or expelled?***

Yes; special education students can be suspended or expelled when they are in violation of the student code of conduct.

Before a disciplinary change in placement occurs or when a decision to make a disciplinary change in placement has been made, a manifestation determination review must be completed and IDEA procedures must be followed.

For more information on special education discipline, please [check here](#).

**61. *Can resources from the recently approved bond be used for special education services?***

No. Resources from the recently approved bond cannot be used to pay for special education services. The use of funds from voter approved bond issues is limited to construction and repair of district facilities, equipment and technology. Technology can be purchased for the special education department, but funds raised from a voter approved bond issue cannot be utilized to fund programs and services or operational and maintenance cost like salaries, supplies, utilities, and other day-t-o day cost. Operational resources (General Fund) which funds the day-to-day operations of the district are provided through state, federal and local sources. The majority of the funding is allocated through the state per pupil foundation grant. Programs and services, personnel costs, utilities, supplies and maintenance costs are financed in this category.

**62. Do special education teachers receive professional development?**

East Grand Rapids Public Schools teachers participate in many professional development learning opportunities. Special education staff participates in building and district level professional development, along with specialized training in such areas as autism spectrum disorders, speech and language, early childhood assessment, positive behavior support, assistive technology, and many other special education topics. Following is an overview of professional development opportunities our special education staff have participated in over the past several years.

- Assistive Technology Assessment and Implementation Trainings
- Crisis Prevention Intervention
- Effective Supports for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Functional Behavior Assessment
- Guiding Principles and the Discovery Process (Autism Spectrum Disorder)
- More Than a Shared Classroom (Co-Teaching)
- Orton Gillingham Training
- START – Statewide Autism Resource and Training Conferences & Trainings
- Teaching Parents to be Communication Partners
- Teaching Sexuality to Students with Disabilities
- Writing Measurable Goals

**63. Where can I find more information about EGRPS special education programs and services?**

Additional information about EGRPS special education programs and services may be found in the EGRPS [Annual Special Education Report](#).

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