

Lowell Public Schools Special Education Department

Initial Evaluation Process Presentation



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Student Evaluation Guidelines

Eligibility determination must be based on all areas of suspected disability

Eligibility should not be based on lack of reading, math instruction and or limited English proficiency

Evaluations should be specific to the student and determine if there is a disability, that affects the students learning



Evaluation Timelines



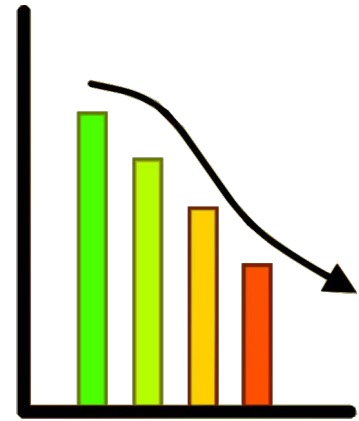
- Once referral is received, a request for written consent to evaluate is sent within 5 school days to the parent/guardian
- Once consent is returned, evaluations occur within 30 school days.
- Evaluations must be provided/administered in the language and form most likely to yield accurate information to assess what the student can do academically, developmentally and functionally, unless it is not feasible to provide and administer
- Parents can request evaluation reports 2 days prior to the meeting
- Meeting invitation and attendance sheet must be sent out at least 10-days prior to meeting date



When to refer a student for Special Education?

- A student demonstrates significant difficulty in school functioning - learning, speaking, behavioral regulation, attention, etc.
- The Teacher collaborates with other staff to develop and determine interventions that may assist the student (set goals) this is sometimes done through the TAT (Teacher Assistance Team) process
- After interventions have been in place, and data has been collected, the teachers review progress or lack thereof
- When a student does not respond to attempted interventions, the teachers may suspect the presence of a disability and wish to make a referral for a special education evaluation

Special Education Process



Elements of a Strong Referral

- **Data, data, data - Work samples over time, running records, Lexia/iReady progress printouts, standardized tests, benchmark assessments, behavioral records, etc.**
- **Should be related to the area(s) of suspected disability**
- **Should document what interventions and strategies were attempted to support the students needs**
- **Student should have passed both the hearing and vision screenings before testing begins in order to ensure the evaluations are valid**

Required Assessments for the Initial Evaluation

Educational assessments are conducted by a school district representative and include the following

1. Educational Assessment (Referred to as Ed A) is the students educational history
2. Teacher Assessment (Ed B) is the students current performance
3. History of the student's progress in the general curriculum





Disability Categories

- Autism
- Developmental Delay
- Intellectual
- Sensory (hearing, vision, deaf-blind)
- Neurological
- Emotional
- Communication
- Physical
- Specific Learning
- Health

Additional Assessments

The Team may recommend or parent may request one or more of the following assessments, however, the child should only be assessed in areas related to the suspected disability

- **Specialist Assessment(s)** Speech/Language, Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, Social Skills, Continuous Supervision, Functional Behavioral Assessment
- **Home Assessment** - The Team should request this if there are significant concerns related to the home or family environment as they affect a student's school performance
- **Health Assessment** - A comprehensive health assessment by the child's doctor may identify medical problems or constraints that may affect the student's education
- **Academic Assessment** – these are not the same as “educational evaluation” and must be consented to separately
- **Psychological Assessment** - It is the practice of the Lowell Public Schools to include a review of all areas that may include a psychological evaluation if appropriate when requesting an academic assessment



Special Education Team Meeting



- Introductions to IEP team
- Parents Notice of Procedural Safeguards <http://www.doe.mass.edu/sped/prb>
- Eligibility flowchart <https://fcsn.org/rtsc/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2013/11/Annotated-IEP.pdf>
- Development of IEP if student is eligible for services

Special Education Process if Eligible

- **IEP development**
 - Parent vision
 - Team vision
 - Student strengths/interest/attributes
 - Goals
 - Services
 - Transition planning (turning 14 or older)
 - Transportation
 - Extended school year
 - Placement
- **Additional information**
 - Parent Language
 - Bullying
 - Health care
 - Outside providers
- **Meeting Summary**
 - Includes student's disability category, proposed services and goals

When a Student is not Eligible

- Team is required to make a Finding of No Eligibility (N2). All Teams should discuss regular education interventions in order to help the student access all aspects of the curriculum and is meeting any areas of need.
- Student does not qualify under one of the disability categories
- Student does not show a lack of progress in school and if the student does not require specially designed instruction
- If the student does show lack of progress but it is not due to a disability and does not require special education the student may be eligible for other service programs
 - Accommodation(s) for disability(ies) under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act

What?
Happens?
Next?

- IEP is formalized and sent to parent/guardian within 10 school days
- Once signed and accepted (both the service and placement page), the student is assigned a case manager who distributes the IEP and ensures it is implemented
- General education teacher/specialist responsibilities include
 - Implementing accommodations
 - Collaborating with special education teachers and providers
 - Maintaining communication with parent/guardian
 - Advocating for the students needs

Testing Conditions During COVID-19

- 1:1 Testing will be conducted in a designated space and will meet all PPE requirements to ensure all safety requirements are met per Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) guidelines
 - Appropriate space requirements
 - Amount of persons in the room
 - Appropriate sanitization requirements
 - All participants follow required PPE guidelines

- Basic Screening Questions prior to testing
 - Have you been feeling sick and experiencing any of the following symptoms: Fever, cough, shortness of breath, headache, or any other flu like symptoms?
 - Have you been exposed to someone suspected or confirmed to COVID-19?
 - Have you traveled out of state within the last 14 days?
 - Have you been tested for COVID-19?
 - If any of the above items have been answered YES then testing will be rescheduled

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) Safety Guidelines for In-Person Assessments 2020/2021

- Consent will be mailed to parent/guardian
- School Psychologist/Related Service Providers will contact parent/guardian to schedule an appointment, provide date and time along with location of testing when signed consent is received
- School Psychologist/Related Service Providers will schedule a follow up call, if needed, to ask basic screening questions and will conduct testing interviews via zoom or phone conference
- All persons will need to check into designated testing area and wait to be escorted to the testing site. Parents will wait in designated area and cannot escort child to testing area, unless the school psychologist/related service provider determines it is needed
- Parent/child must follow the PPE requirements unless medical documentation is provided at the date of testing

- School psychologists/related service providers will maintain 6 feet of distance without interfering with standardized testing procedures
- Students may be required to remove their mask during portions of testing but at no time will PPE guidelines be violated
- Designated testing area will meet all PPE requirements, tables will be positioned to ensure safety along with a plexiglass divider
- All testing materials will be cleaned properly and sanitized
- Student will need to remain in designated testing area during break and continue to follow PPE guidelines
- Psychologist/related service provider will provide parent/guardian necessary information on next steps

Thank you for joining us!