

# Anoka-Hennepin Special Education Handbook



ANOKA-HENNEPIN  
SCHOOLS  
*A future without limit*

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Dear Parent/Guardian,

Congratulations on taking a giant step toward helping your child learn.

We know that every child learns differently. We also know that while asking for and receiving help is sometimes difficult; it is also very brave, and it will help your child as they go through school.

We know that everyone enters special education from a different starting place. Whether your child is in early childhood or high school, we hope this guide helps you understand the new staff and vocabulary that are part of special education.

We put this handbook together **for you**.

Through this journey, we encourage you to find ways to advocate for your child. Talk to teachers about what works and what could be better. You know your child the best, and you know their strengths and weaknesses. **You are a part of your child's special education team, and your voice and opinion matters.**

Do not be afraid to speak up and ask questions.

There will be hard times, but you are doing great. **Really. You are doing great.**

In it together,

*The Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC)*

The Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) is a partnership between the school district and parents/guardians of Anoka-Hennepin students with disabilities. The group meets four times throughout the school year and represents a wide variety of disabilities, and serves as an advocate for high-quality special education programming. You can learn more about the group at <https://www.ahschools.us/domain/173>.

You are always welcome at our meetings.

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### A few notes from SEAC parents:

"I have been a parent representative of the SEAC Advisory Committee for numerous years and have appreciated having my voice heard in sharing ideas to help improve classroom services, supports and accommodations for our children with special needs. I value the opinions and shared knowledge I have learned from the other parents who are also on the SEAC Advisory Committee and it's good to know we are not alone advocating for the education of our children. It has been valuable for me to also learn what the special education staff from Anoka-Hennepin implement each year to give the best learning environment and inclusion for our children. I would highly recommend getting involved with the SEAC committee to be among others who understand your journey in wanting the best education for children with unique learning requirements. - *Cindy, Special Education Parent*

"My child started school in Anoka-Hennepin in 1st grade. The school was wonderful with getting her the services and providing support so she would be successful. My daughter started on an IEP at the end of 2nd grade and she is now an 8th grader. I joined the Special Education Advisory Committee in 2019. I am grateful for the district and what we have accomplished on this committee. It has been wonderful getting to know other parents and learning how the district strives to meet every student on where they are at and help them to reach their goals." - *Sara, Special Education Parent*

"My children have been in Anoka-Hennepin Schools since 2013 and I have always felt that the leaders in the school had my children's best interest at heart. My youngest boys have an IEP, so I joined the Special Education Advisory Committee in 2019. I have been impressed by a community of parents and district staff who are working to create tools to give the students in our district the best chance to grow both academically and socially. I also enjoyed meeting other parents in our district and becoming friends with and making decisions that give all of our children every opportunity to succeed." - *Amanda, Special Education Parent*

# What is Special Education?

Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), special education means:

*“Specially designed instruction, at no cost to parents, to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability. Children who receive special education and related services are entitled to a free and appropriate public education (FAPE). This includes opportunities to participate in the school’s general curriculum and to make progress towards meeting annual goals. Children who receive special education must also have opportunities to take part in other typical school activities that are appropriate to their individual needs.”*

In Minnesota, schools are required to serve eligible children from birth until the age of 21, or graduation from high school, whichever comes first. Services are provided by licensed personnel and include special teaching, materials, and techniques.

**Anoka-Hennepin Schools provide students with special education needs access to appropriate services in the following disability areas, as defined by the Minnesota Department of Education:**

- **Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD):** A behaviorally defined group of disorders characterized by an uneven developmental profile and a pattern of qualitative impairments in social interaction, communication, and repetitive and stereotyped patterns of behavior, interests and activities, with onset in early childhood.
- **Blind-Visual Impairment (BVI):** A medically verified visual impairment accompanied by limitations in sight that interfere with acquiring information or interaction with the environment to the extent that special education instruction and related services are necessary.
- **Deaf-Blind (DB):** Includes both hearing and visual impairments, the combination of which causes communication and other developmental and educational needs.
- **Deaf-Hard of Hearing (DHH):** A diminished sensitivity to sound, or hearing loss that is expressed in terms of standard audiological measures.
- **Developmental Cognitive Disability (DCD):** Significantly below average general intellectual functioning resulting in or associated with deficits in adaptive behavior: either, Mild to Moderate or Severe-Profound.
- **Developmentally Delayed (Early Childhood Special Education, Birth-7 only):** A substantial delay or disorder in development or an identifiable sensory, physical, cognitive, social/emotional conditions, or other conditions known to hinder normal development.
- **Emotional/Behavioral Disorder (EBD):** An established pattern of interaction characterized by one or more of the following:
  - severely aggressive behaviors
  - impulsive behaviors
  - severely withdrawn behaviors
  - anxious behaviors
  - generally pervasive unhappiness
  - depression
  - severe mood swings
  - severely disordered thought processes manifested by unusual behavior patterns, atypical communication styles, or distorted interpersonal relationships

- **Other Health Disabilities (OHD):** A broad range of medically diagnosed chronic and associated acute health conditions that adversely affect educational performance to the extent special education and related services may be needed.
- **Physically Impaired (PI):** A medically diagnosed chronic physical impairment, either congenital or acquired, that adversely affects physical or academic functioning.
- **Severely Multiply Impaired (SMI):** Student has severe learning and developmental problems resulting from two or more disabling conditions.
- **Specific Learning Disability (SLD):** A condition in which a significant discrepancy between one's general intellectual ability and academic achievement in one or more of the following areas:
  - oral expression
  - listening comprehension
  - mathematical calculation
  - mathematical reasoning
  - basic reading skills
  - reading comprehension
  - written expression
- **Speech/Language Impairment (SLI):** A communication disorder in fluency, voice, articulation or language.
- **Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI):** An acquired injury to the brain caused by external physical force, resulting in total or partial functional disability or psychosocial impairment, or both, that adversely affects a child's educational performance.

## What are Related, Direct, and Indirect Services?

### How are Special Education Services Provided?

Direct services are provided directly to the student from a professional. Indirect services are provided from the professional to the teacher, parents, or others that work directly with the student. Indirect services may include consulting, progress reviews with the IEP team, observations and discussing strategies to help the student function better.

While the goal is to have students taught in their neighborhood school, it is not always appropriate based on the student's individual needs. Students may be placed in a program that can address their specific needs. Academic, functional, and behavioral needs in these program can vary, and can operate in conjunction with general education, with increased mainstreaming as the goal. Some students demonstrate needs that are more significant than what can be offered at a traditional school/site. These students may receive their services at River Trail Learning Center, which is a special education site.

### What are Related Services?

Related services are supportive services or activities necessary for some students with disabilities to maximize their educational outcomes. The IEP team determines if a related service is necessary to support the student's IEP goals and objectives. These related services may be direct or indirect. Related services may include but are not limited to:

- occupational therapy
- physical therapy
- psychological services
- school health services
- school nurse services
- speech-language pathology services
- transportation
- orientation and mobility services
- developmental adaptive physical education

Some related services cannot be provided as a stand-alone service. In order to receive the support of some related services, the student must be eligible for special education services under a primary disability other than speech-language.

# The ABCs of Special Education

<b>ADA</b>	American Disabilities Act	<b>IDEA</b>	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
<b>ASD</b>	Autism Spectrum Disorder	<b>IEP</b>	Individualized Educational Plan/Program
<b>ASL</b>	American Sign Language	<b>IHP</b>	Individual Health Plan
<b>AT</b>	Assistive Technology	<b>IFSP</b>	Individualized Family Service Plan
<b>BIP</b>	Behavioral Intervention Plan	<b>LAUNCH</b>	Learners with Autism Needs and Unique Challenges
<b>BIS</b>	Behavior Intervention Specialist	<b>LEA</b>	Local Education Agency
<b>BVI</b>	Blind-Visually Impaired	<b>LEP</b>	Limited English Proficiency
<b>CM</b>	Case Manager	<b>LRE</b>	Least Restrictive Environment
<b>CST</b>	Child Study Team	<b>OT</b>	Occupational Therapy
<b>DAPE</b>	Developmental Adapted Physical Education	<b>PCA</b>	Personal Care Assistant
<b>DB</b>	Deaf-Blind	<b>PI</b>	Physically Impaired
<b>DCD-MM</b>	Developmental Cognitive Disability Mild to Moderate	<b>PLAAFP</b>	Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance
<b>DCD-SP</b>	Developmental Cognitive Disability Severe/Profound	<b>PT</b>	Physical Therapy
<b>DD</b>	Developmental Delay	<b>SEAC</b>	Special Education Advisory Council
<b>DDH</b>	Deaf and Hard of Hearing	<b>SLD</b>	Specific Learning Disability
<b>EBD</b>	Emotional or Behavioral Disorders	<b>SLP</b>	Speech Language Pathologist
<b>ECSE</b>	Early Childhood Special Ed	<b>SMI</b>	Severely Multiply Impaired
<b>EIP</b>	Early Intervention Program	<b>TBI</b>	Traumatic Brain Injury
<b>EL</b>	English Learner	<b>TSES</b>	Total Special Education System
<b>ESY</b>	Extended School Year		
<b>FAPE</b>	Free Appropriate Public Ed.		
<b>FBA</b>	Functional Behavioral Assessment		
<b>FEDERAL SETTING</b>	Amount of time student spends in Special Education		
	I = 0-21%		
	II = 21-60%		
	III = 60% or more		
	IV = separate special education site		
	V = hospital, day treatment or facility		

# Anoka-Hennepin Special Education Process



The process of entering and exiting special education should be made clear to all parties to achieve the best solution for families.

Teachers or parents notice that their student is facing challenges in the classroom. A team made up of parents and professionals will come together and design suggestions for classroom-based interventions.

**1  
HELP  
NEEDED**

The evaluation will include assessment of the student's skills in all areas of concern. It may include work samples, testing, classroom observations, as well as parent and teacher interviews.

**2  
REFERRAL**

**3  
EVALUATION**

The team will review the results of the classroom-based interventions. If they are not making progress a referral for special education evaluation is made.

Within 30 days of eligibility, an Individualized Education Plan/Program (IEP) is written. The plan will propose goals/objectives and describe any extra supports the student needs to be successful. It will describe the least restrictive environment (LRE) for the student's and services.

**5  
IEP  
INDIVIDUALIZED  
EDUCATION PLAN**

**4  
ELIGIBILITY**

The team will meet and review the information gathered during the evaluation and determine whether the student qualifies for special education and is in need of specialized instruction.

The student will receive their services as described in their IEP.

**6  
SERVICES**

Their progress will be closely monitored and will be reported to the parent/guardians several times each year.

The IEP must be reviewed and updated by the team at least once a year. The student must be reevaluated at least once every 3 years.

**7  
REVIEW**

**8  
EXITING  
SPECIAL  
ED**

Students meeting their goals and no longer requiring specialized instruction are evaluated and exited from special education services.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a federal statute that provides guidelines and regulations for how states and public agencies provide early intervention, special education, and related services. The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) provides further guidance and regulations.

# Components of an Individualized Education Plan

<p><b>Formal Invite</b></p>	<p><b>Team Meeting Sign-in Sheet</b></p>	<p><b>Excusal of a Team Member</b></p>	<p><b>Present Level of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance</b></p>
<p>The school team will ask you about days and times that are convenient and send home a formal invitation to a meeting.</p>	<p>Everyone attending the meeting will introduce themselves and sign in.</p>	<p>If a team member cannot attend the meeting for any reason, the team will ask your permission to excuse the team member by providing a signature on the sign-in sheet.</p> <p>This gives consent for the meeting to take place without that person.</p>	<p>The team will ask for parent input about the student's strengths, weaknesses, and areas of concern.</p>
<p><b>Annual Goals</b></p>	<p><b>Accommodations &amp; Modifications</b></p>	<p><b>Extended School Year (ESY)</b></p>	<p><b>Programs and Services</b></p>
<p>The team members will discuss the goals and objectives they are proposing for the year.</p> <p>These are made with parent input.</p>	<p>The team will discuss what accommodations and modifications may be needed in the general classroom.</p>	<p>The team will discuss if extended school year services are warranted.</p>	<p>Various services will be discussed to determine which is the most appropriate and the least restrictive environment (LRE) for the student to make progress.</p>
<p><b>Assessments</b></p>	<p><b>Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP)</b></p>	<p><b>Transition Section of IEP</b></p>	
<p>If the student participates in any classroom, district, and/or state assessments, those will be discussed, along with any accommodations.</p>	<p>If the student's behavior impacts their learning, then the BIP will be discussed.</p>	<p>The transition section of the IEP will be discussed either before or during the student's 9th grade year.</p>	

IEPs are put together as a team effort. Always voice any concerns and opinions. These plans are good for one year, with the team meeting annually. Updates on goal progress will be sent home on a predetermined schedule (usually at the quarter or trimester mark). If changes need to be made before the team is due to meet annually, parents can request an IEP meeting to discuss amendments to the appropriate changes.



**Who are all of these people?  
Why are they all here?  
What do they all do?**

**At every IEP meeting you must have:**

- 1**  
Parents or legal guardians
- 2**  
General education teacher
- 3**  
Special education teacher
- 4**  
District representative
- 5**  
Person who can interpret evaluations
- 6**  
Student when appropriate

**Some people might wear more than one hat at your meeting and your meeting might have as few as 3 people. Make sure you know before you go!**

**In Anoka-Hennepin Schools, students will be invited beginning in Grade 9.**

## GENERAL EDUCATION TEACHER

This is the person on your team responsible for teaching your child in the classroom every day. This includes modifying classroom assignments so your student can participate with their peers.

Your Classroom Teacher is:

\_\_\_\_\_.

You can reach them at:

\_\_\_\_\_.

## SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER

This is the person on your team responsible for serving your child's individual learning needs. This might include working on math, reading, writing, and social skills with specialized instruction methods.

Your Special Ed Teacher is:

\_\_\_\_\_.

You can reach them at:

\_\_\_\_\_.

## SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGIST

This is the person on your team responsible for serving your child's communication needs. This might include working on the way your child speaks or understands and uses language.

Your SLP is:

\_\_\_\_\_.

You can reach them at:

\_\_\_\_\_.

## SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST

This is the person on your team responsible for assessing mental health, learning, and behavior; especially during evaluations. This might include administering cognitive or achievement tests, scoring and interpreting parent & teacher rating scales, or conducting interviews.

Your School Psychologist is:

\_\_\_\_\_.

You can reach them at:

\_\_\_\_\_.

## OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST

An OT is the person on your team responsible for serving your child's fine motor, daily living, and sensory needs.

This might include working on things like handwriting, buttoning, or self-regulation.

Your OT is:

\_\_\_\_\_.

You can reach them at:

\_\_\_\_\_.

## PHYSICAL THERAPIST

This is the person on your team responsible for serving your child's gross motor needs.

This might include arranging for adaptive PE and working on standing, walking, or other physical tasks.

Your Physical Therapist is:

\_\_\_\_\_.

You can reach them at:

\_\_\_\_\_.

## DISTRICT REPRESENTATIVE

This person is responsible for communicating the capacities and limitations of the school district.

This might include providing information on and answering questions about special education services, accommodations, and knowledge of available resources in the district.

Your administrator is:

\_\_\_\_\_.

You can reach them at:

\_\_\_\_\_.

## OTHER TEAM MEMBERS

Depending on your child's needs, you may have other people on your team. These might include people like a behavior intervention specialist, a deaf and hard of hearing specialist, or others.

Your \_\_\_\_\_ is:

\_\_\_\_\_.

You can reach them at:

\_\_\_\_\_.

Your \_\_\_\_\_ is:

\_\_\_\_\_.

You can reach them at:

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Your \_\_\_\_\_ is:

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Your \_\_\_\_\_ is:

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You can reach them at:

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