



Arc Guide to Special Education

Special education services and related services are provided to eligible students with disabilities who need specialized instruction. Generally speaking, if a student is struggling with school, is having trouble keeping up with his/her peers, having difficulty understanding what is happening, special education may be an option. This guide will provide information on what special education is, who is eligible and how it works.

Minnesota Department of Education (MDE)

- An organization that oversees all education in Minnesota, including special education
- The vision of MDE is “leading for education excellence and equality. Every day for every one.”

Some of MDE Special Education Division Foundation Statements include:

- All children get necessary support for healthy development and lifelong learning
- Provide leadership to ensure a high quality education for Minnesota’s children and youth with disabilities
- Education support is based on each child’s unique needs to prepare them for further education, employment, independent living, and community participation
- High learning standards
- The right service offered in the right way at the right time

What is special education?

- Provides a Free, Appropriate, Public Education (FAPE) to a student with a disability in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). LRE begins with a discussion of what it takes for the student to be successful in the general education classroom
- Individualized plan of instruction for students with disabilities
- A range of services that are provided in different ways and different settings depending on the needs of the student
- Focuses on the unique needs of the student
- Assists individuals with disabilities to learn and develop skills



- Requires a student with a disability to spend as much time with peers without disabilities as possible

What are related services?

- Services that may not be educational that students need to benefit from special education
- Some related services are: special transportation, speech-language therapy, social work, speech therapy, adapted physical education, and school health services

Who is eligible for special education? Students with disabilities:

- Ages birth through 21 who are determined to need special education based on a comprehensive evaluation done by the school district
- Who need special education to access the general education curriculum

What is a special education evaluation?

- It determines if a student is eligible for special education and related services
- Involves gathering information on areas in which the student may be having difficulties in school
- Is individualized based on the needs of the student

What is an Individualized Education Program (IEP)?

- A written plan that provides documentation for students with disabilities who are eligible for special education
- Developed by a team made up of the student's parents and school professionals
- Focuses on a student's unique needs
- Documents what special education will do - what the student will learn, who will be assisting the student, in what classroom the student will be learning, how many minutes the student will be receiving services
- An annual document - revised yearly

Parents who are concerned about their child's progress in school, should talk to the child's teacher or principal. It is suggested that you first review the Arc Guide to Requesting an Initial Special Education Evaluation at:

https://arcminnesota.org/content/uploads/sites/3/2018/08/Arc-Guide-Initial-Special-Education-Evaluation_August-2018.pdf



Additional Arc Guides on Special Education

- [Individualized Education Program \(IEPs\) - English](#)
- [Least Restrictive Environment in Special Education and Federal Setting](#)
- [Special Education Evaluations](#)
- [Transition Individualized Education Plan \(IEP\)](#)

Legal Information

- Federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

<https://sites.ed.gov/idea/>

- Minnesota Law on Special Education

<https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/125A>

- Minnesota Rules on Special Education

<https://www.revisor.mn.gov/rules/3525/>

For further information or advocacy services, contact The Arc Minnesota at 952-920-0855 or toll-free at 833.450.1494 or visit www.arcminnesota.org. (Please note: *This document is not legal advice, and should not be construed as such. Thus, no information herein should replace the sound advice of an attorney.*)

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