

WARREN TOWNSHIP SCHOOLS

Special Services

Dear Parents,

It can be very distressing to learn that your child is having difficulty in school. Parents want their child to be happy and successful, and when instead their child experiences frustration, it is indeed upsetting for all concerned. Furthermore, when a teacher's efforts to help the child have not resolved the problems and this child is referred to the Child Study Team (CST) for an evaluation, parents often feel scared, confused, and sometimes angry. All those feelings are understandable.

In order to better acquaint you with what the school can do to help assist children who are having problems, the CST has prepared a set of answers to questions commonly asked by parents. It is hoped that the information will be helpful and reassuring to you should your child be found to have an educational disability. We are also required to send a great deal of paperwork to you. Please try not to be put off by it; most of it may not even apply to your child.

The CST is concerned with the emotional as well as the educational well-being of your child. By working closely and cooperatively with parents, the CST hopes to help children feel good about themselves while striving to reach their academic potential.

Sincerely,

Director of Special Services
Child Study Team Members



WHAT IS A CHILD STUDY TEAM?

A Child Study Team consists of three members: A social worker, a psychologist, and a learning disabilities teacher consultant (LDTC). The primary role of the Team is to evaluate children who may have learning and/or emotional difficulty and to provide, when necessary, special education services. When it has been determined that a child needs special education support, the Child Study Team works along with parents and staff in developing individualized programs. The progress of each child is monitored generally by the Child Study Team and programs are reviewed and updated as needed.

WHAT MAY BE INCLUDED IN A CST EVALUATION?

The school psychologist generally meets with the student on two occasions. In a relaxed, supportive atmosphere, an assessment is made of the child's intellectual potential, cognitive strengths and weaknesses, memory functioning, and emotional and social development.

The LDT-C meets with the child to evaluate his/her achievement, learning styles, and perceptual development. Factors, which may be interfering with the learning and behavior, are assessed.

The school social worker observes the child and meets with the parents to obtain a developmental history and background information. Social, cultural, and family factors which could influence the child's learning and behavior are assessed.

WHAT ARE THE STEPS IN THE EVALUATION PROCESS?

STEP 1 – a student is referred for possible classification by a parent, teacher, IR&S (Intervention & Referral Services), or principal. The reasons for the referral are stated, along with any documentation of interventions.

STEP 2 – Determination is made by the CST, parents, and teachers as to whether an evaluation should take place and if so, what assessments should be made. Depending on the plan, the following evaluations may be completed:

1. The Social Worker reviews the student's family background and his/her development.
2. The Psychologist evaluates emotional, social, and intellectual functioning.
3. The Learning Disabilities/Teacher Consultant (LDTC) focuses on the student's academic profile.
4. Speech, occupational and physical therapists are also available for evaluation, if necessary.

STEP 3 – The findings are compiled and a meeting is held to determine eligibility. If the child is eligible, an Individual Educational Plan is developed. This is reviewed at least yearly.

WHAT IS A LEARNING DISABILITY?

A learning disability is an educational term, which may be applied when a child is not progressing as expected in school (and other causal factors have been ruled out such as hearing or vision impairments, intellectual deficits or emotional disturbance). A learning disability is diagnosed through a multi-disciplinary evaluation conducted by the Child Study Team. Within the school setting, a learning disability most often shows up as difficulty achieving in one or more academic areas and usually involves a deficit in perception.

Perception is the neurological process by which the brain receives, interprets, organizes, and remembers information taken in through the senses. A perceptual or neurological impairment can frustrate a child's attempt to understand and retain information, can interfere with a child's ability to pay attention, and often results in inconsistent patterns of learning; therefore, the child is said to have a learning disability.

WHAT IS AN INDIVIDUAL EDUCATION PROGRAM (IEP)?

An IEP is a plan which establishes the educational goals and objectives for the child. It is developed jointly by parents, teacher(s), and the CST, and is revised at least once a year. It is accompanied by an Instructional Guide which includes the child's academic schedule and instructional strategies.

CAN BEING CLASSIFIED AFFECT MY CHILD'S FUTURE IN A NEGATIVE WAY?

The classification records are kept in a file separate from the child's cumulative record. The classification records can only be released to a third party (other than another public school) by a signed request from the parent or student having reached the age of 18. Should a special education program be unnecessary for the student, the classification is formally removed and records can be destroyed. Even if a child remains classified through high school, classification records can be destroyed 5 years after graduation.



HOW WILL MY CHILD FEEL BEING TAKEN OUT OF CLASS FOR SPECIAL HELP?

Most children adjust very quickly to their new schedules and new class. Since the school district offers many 'pull-out' programs (such as speech/ language therapy, adaptive physical education, English as a second language, Resource Center, and gifted and talented programs, children are accustomed to seeing students enter and leave the general classroom.

WHO WILL GRADE MY CHILD?

In most cases, the general classroom teacher assigns all grades. However, if your child is in the Resource Center program that replaces rather than supplements the general classroom instruction the Resource Center teacher assigns the grades for the subject or subjects. This is the case even if a general classroom teacher also provides the student with some instruction in the subject(s) being taught in the Resource Center.



WHAT CAN BE DONE TO HELP A CHILD WITH A LEARNING DISABILITY?

Specialized instruction within a small group setting, provided by a teacher trained to work with children with learning problems, can be provided by the district. Alternative teaching techniques, specially designed instructional materials, and individualized educational programming (IEP) can help a child reach his/her potential. These services can be provided in the general education program, with in-class resource program (ICRP) support or outside the general program in the Resource Center.

CAN A LEARNING DISABILITY BE CURED OR FIXED?

A child with a learning disability who receives specialized instruction can be expected to progress academically and to learn a variety of strategies for maximizing learning. Of course, motivational and other personality factors also play a role in a child's development. Optimal academic growth, rather than a cure, is the objective.

WHAT CAUSES A LEARNING DISABILITY?

Learning disability is believed to be caused by some malfunction of the central nervous system which may be a result of pregnancy or labor complication, premature birth, an injury to the head, disease, nutritional deficits, drug reactions, hereditary factors, or other less identifiable circumstances.

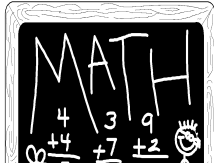
CAN IMPROVEMENT BE GUARANTEED IF A CHILD GETS SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL HELP?

A child can be assured of receiving a program designed specifically to address his or her special needs. Chances for improvement are maximized.

SINCE MY CHILD HAS SPECIAL NEEDS, WILL HE BE GRADED ON THE SAME CRITERIA AS OTHER STUDENTS OR IN A DIFFERENT WAY?

Children in general classes are generally graded on the same criteria as children without special needs, although teachers may make allowances in some cases. However, children in the Resource Center are graded with regard to progress made at their own level of ability and achievement.

WON'T MY CHILD BE MISSING A LOT OF CLASS-WORK WHEN HE IS OUT IN THE SPECIAL CLASS?



Every effort is made to schedule special classes so as to minimize missed instruction in the general class. Resource Center subjects are generally taught at the same time that the subject is being taught in the general class. General classroom teachers help students reintegrate into the classroom after their special instruction and also help them to obtain missed assignments or lessons. Whether or not a child is required to 'make-up' any missed work is up to each individual teacher based on the needs and abilities of the child.

HOW CAN I HELP MY CHILD AT HOME?

Whenever possible, provide encouragement, and avoid criticism. Foster good communication with your child's teacher(s). Go to the library with your youngster and select books on topics of interest to you and your child. Read aloud to each other and discuss the main ideas.

Provide a quiet place for home study. When reviewing basic facts with your child, try to do it in a 'game' or fun fashion, avoiding long review sessions. As a way of building skills in reading, vocabulary, concept development, spelling and language arts, encourage your child to write. You may suggest a diary, a journal, pen pal letters, or any other type of creative writing. Again, avoid focusing on mistakes.

WHY DOES A CHILD HAVE TO BE CLASSIFIED?

The state of New Jersey and the federal government provide some funding for special education programming in local school districts. In order to receive these funds and, therefore, to be able to provide the necessary services, school districts are required to evaluate students suspected of having an educational disability and to assign educational classifications should Resource Center or special class placements or other services be needed.

WHAT ARE THE EDUCATIONAL CLASSIFICATIONS USED IN THE STATE OF NEW JERSEY?

Classification:

Eligible for Speech & Language Services

Eligible for Special Education and related services:

Eligibility Criteria:

Auditorily Impaired

Autistic

Cognitively Impaired

- Mild
- Moderate
- Severe

Communication Impaired

Emotionally disturbed

Multiply Disabled

Deaf/Blindness

Orthopedically Impaired

Other Health Impaired

Preschool Child with a Disabled

Specific Learning Disability

Traumatic Brain Injury

Visually Impaired



WHAT PERCENTAGE OF WARREN STUDENTS ARE CLASSIFIED?

The number varies, but it averages between 12% - 16%.

HOW LONG DO MOST CHILDREN NEED TO REMAIN IN A SPECIAL PROGRAM?

There is no 'typical' or 'average' duration. Each child is different and each child's program is individualized. The goal for every student is to function successfully in the 'mainstream' without special assistance. Some children require only short-term help and others continue to receive some degree of

assistance until high school graduation. The feasibility of increased or total mainstreaming is assessed generally. Placement decisions are made jointly by the parents, teachers, and the CST at the Individualized Education Program (IEP) conference held each spring (or other times if necessary).

HOW CAN I HELP MYSELF AND MY FAMILY MEMBERS?

1. Become active in Warren's SEPAG group (Special Education Parent Advisory Group) to meet other parents and receive and give support.
2. Utilize our Student Services "Lending Library." We have videos, as well as books and articles that might be helpful.
3. Share information with family members and depending upon the age of your child, involve him/her in the process.
4. Seek out professional organizations that can offer information and support.

AVAILABLE PROGRAMS

RESOURCE CENTER PROGRAMS

The Resource Center Program is offered to classified students who spend half time or less in a special education setting. A variety of programs are available:

In-Class Resource Program (ICRP) – A special education teacher offers support to classified students in general education classes.

Pull-Out Replacement Resource (PRRP) – The curriculum is designed for the particular student's needs and is offered in place of one or more subjects taught in the general class. Resource Center faculty work closely with CST, the general education faculty, parents, and students in developing specialized program.

Out-of-Class Support – A child may be provided with additional instruction and/or reinforcement of the subject, outside of the general classroom. Because this occurs during the school day, this support is offered in lieu of another activity or subject.

Supplemental Aids & Services (SAS) – Rather than a teacher providing the service of support, a paraprofessional will provide such activities as refocusing the child, reinforcing material that was introduced by the teacher, helping the student with organization skills or helping the child with appropriate behavior. A special education teacher may also act as a resource person and overall the child's progress, contact parents and keep the 'child study' case manager informed.

SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Students who need more intensive instruction in a special education setting may qualify for special education classes. A teacher works with a small number of students on specified subjects, utilizing specially designed strategies to enhance learning. Opportunities are offered for integrating with mainstream classmates during academic subjects, physical education classes, and exploratory classes such as art, computer, home arts, and industrial arts. Lunch and other school-wide activities are also available to the students. In many classrooms, teacher paraprofessional are provided to assist the special education teacher in addressing students' needs.

OUT OF DISTRICT PLACEMENT

Although Warren offers many programming options for children with special needs, it may not have the right program for every classified student. If necessary, our CST and parents explore program options in neighboring public schools. If those programs are not available or appropriate, private settings are considered.

RELATED SERVICES

Speech and Language Therapy:

Therapy in the area of speech and language is offered to children who are experiencing difficulty in the articulation of sounds and/or in the reception or expression of language. The therapist provides instruction individually or in small groups up to several times a week, depending on the needs of the students. Close communication is maintained with parents and with the CST.

Occupational Therapy:

When children experience significant difficulty with their fine motor skills, the services of an occupational therapist are available. Using scissors, improving handwriting, and manipulating small tools are necessary for success in school. The OT will help the student learn these skills and develop motorically.

Physical Therapy:

For the student who has trouble running, skipping, standing, jumping, squatting, there is help available from our physical therapist. The PT will work with the student to develop his/her large motor skills so the child can function optimally in school.

Counseling:

When a student has difficulty with social and emotional issues, a guidance counselor, school social worker, substance awareness counselor, or psychologist may work with the student on a short-term basis. Through individual and/or group sessions, students have an opportunity to express their feelings and thoughts that may be blocking their school performance. All sessions are confidential and are 'school based,' not treatment based.

Adaptive Physical Education:

For the classified student whose disabilities preclude him/her from successfully completing the general physical education requirements, we offer adaptive physical education. Individual instruction either in or out of the general classroom is provided based on the needs of each student.

For additional information, we suggest you refer to:

- A Guide to the Special Education Process. This is a more detailed description and is available from the Department of Special Services.
- NJAC 6A:14 – Available from Special Services.
- Websites such as <http://www.nj.gov/nj> (Department of Education)

Welcome to Holland

I am often asked to describe the experience of raising a child with a disability – to try to help people who have not shared that unique experience to understand it, to imagine how it would feel. It's like this....

When you're going to have a baby, it's like planning a fabulous vacation trip – to Italy. You buy a bunch of guidebooks and make your wonderful plans. The Coliseum, the David of Michelangelo, and the gondolas in Venice. You may learn some phrases in Italian. It's all very exciting.

After months of eager anticipation, the day finally arrives. You pack your bags and off you go. Several hours later, the plane lands. The stewardess comes in and says, "Welcome to Holland."

"Holland???" You say. "What do you mean Holland? I signed up for Italy? I'm supposed to be in Italy. All my life I've dreamed of going to Italy."

But there's been a change in the flight plan. They've landed in Holland and there you must stay.

The important thing is that they haven't taken you to a horrible, disgusting, filthy place, full of pestilence, famine, and disease. It's just a different place.

So you must go out and buy new guidebooks. And you must learn a whole new language. And you will meet a whole new group of people you would never have met.

It's just a **different** place. It's slower-paced than Italy, less flashy than Italy. But after you've been there for a while and you catch your breath, you look around....and you begin to notice that Holland has windmills....and Holland has tulips. Holland even has Rembrandts.

But everyone you know is busy coming and going from Italy, and they're all bragging about what a wonderful time they had there. And for the rest of your life you will say, "Yes, that's where I was supposed to go. That's what I had planned." And the pain of that will never, ever, ever, ever go away....because the loss of that dream is a very significant loss.

But....if you spend your life mourning the fact that you didn't get to go to Italy, you may never be free to enjoy the very special, the very lovely things....about Holland.

Emily Perl Kingsley

