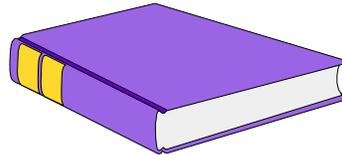

Garnet Valley School District

Parents' Handbook for Special Education Services



Special Education / Pupil Services Office
80 Station Road
Glen Mills, PA 19342
610-579-7301 - Special Education Office
610-579-7363 - Pupil Services Office

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Purpose

Garnet Valley School District provides a free, appropriate public education to all of its students, including students with disabilities who need special education and related services. State and federal statutes and regulations guide the district in locating, assessing and planning for the needs of its exceptional students. These rules are often complex and include terms that may be unfamiliar to parents. This manual is designed to guide parents through the screening, evaluation and placement process and to provide useful information regarding special education services in Garnet Valley School District.



Screening and Evaluation Process

Screening

Garnet Valley School District routinely conducts screening activities at each grade level, from kindergarten to graduation, to identify the educational needs of its students. The screening process has three levels. Level 1 screening includes a review of a student's health records, report cards, overall classroom performance and standardized testing. Level 2 involves screening in vision, hearing or motor development. Students who experience academic or other difficulties are referred for Level 3 screening through the Instructional Support Team (IST) or Child Study Team (CST) in their home school. Special screening procedures are in place for students thought to be gifted.

PARENT TIP: *You are an important resource and team member at all levels of the screening process.*

Screening Indicators

There are several indicators that may signal the need for a student to be screened when these problems persist over time. Some of these indicators are listed below. The student:

- ☞ is very active or lethargic
- ☞ has poor large muscle or fine motor control
- ☞ has difficulty expressing ideas or formulating words
- ☞ has unexplained difficulty in reading or speaking
- ☞ often breaks rules or is unable to follow directions
- ☞ has trouble learning new skills
- ☞ finds homework frustrating and too difficult
- ☞ demonstrates inappropriate behaviors at school
- ☞ has trouble making and keeping friends
- ☞ has a poor attendance record
- ☞ has talked about or indicated thoughts of suicide
- ☞ has exhibited self injurious behavior
- ☞ has a physical disability or medical condition
- ☞ appears to be advanced socially, emotionally and academically

If you feel that your child consistently exhibits several of the screening indicators, contact your child's teacher, principal or guidance counselor; they will assist you in starting the screening process.

PARENT TIP: *The screening process can be initiated by parents, school staff, doctors, court systems or other community professionals.*

Instructional Support Team / Child Study Team

As a result of the screening process, some students may be identified by their teacher, parents or other school professionals as needing supports in order to succeed in school. When this is the case, a request for assistance is brought to the Instructional Support Team (K-5) or Child Study Team (6-12). The Instructional Support Teams (IST) and Child Study Teams (CST) include the parents, principal, teachers, support staff and others who may assist in identifying the strengths and needs of the student.

When a student is referred to the IST, data is gathered regarding the student's performance in school. At the team meeting, measurable goals are established for the student. The team brainstorms possible interventions that will assist the student in reaching the identified goals. An action plan is developed and implemented by various team members. During the intervention period, the student is monitored and data is collected on the student's progress toward the identified goals. This information is shared with the team at the follow-up meeting.

When a student is referred to the CST, the team discusses the student's performance in school and plans interventions. A follow-up meeting is convened to assess the student's response to interventions.

PARENT TIP: *Parents are always informed if their child has been referred to the team and are invited to actively participate as team members.*

Multidisciplinary Evaluation

If at the end of the intervention period, the IST or CST determines that the student requires further evaluation, the parents will be asked to give written permission for a Multidisciplinary Evaluation (MDE). "Evaluation" means procedures used to determine whether a child has a disability. The permission form will explain the reason for the evaluation and the tests and procedures that will be used. When the permission is signed and returned, the evaluation of the student will begin.

PARENT TIP: *At any time, parents who think their child is exceptional may request a Multidisciplinary Evaluation. You may obtain a Permission to Evaluate Request Form from your child's principal (see sample on Page 12).*

The Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) members include the parents, a school psychologist, principal or designee, and teacher or guidance counselor. Other members such as the school nurse, reading specialist, speech therapist and special education teacher are present when needed.

The Multidisciplinary Team collects information about the student from a variety of sources. Parents are a very important source to the team in this evaluation process and are encouraged to offer their information in writing. The evaluation procedures used are determined by the needs

of the child. Most evaluations include tests of intellectual functioning and academic performance. Other areas that could be part of an evaluation include adaptive behavior, communication skills, social maturity, emotional development, vocational skills, and attentional abilities. All information is summarized in a document called the Evaluation Report.

Evaluation Report

The Evaluation Report (ER) summarizes the information and findings from the Multidisciplinary Evaluation. In this report, the MDT makes a determination as to whether the student is a student with a disability and in need of special education. The report also indicates the type of special education and related services the student requires. You will have an opportunity to review the report with the team. If there is disagreement as to the conclusions of the MDT, any team member may ask to include a written dissenting opinion.

Evaluation Timelines

The MDT evaluation process must be completed within sixty (60) calendar days after you sign and return the permission to evaluate. You will receive a copy of the ER within the sixty (60) calendar days time period.

Individualized Education Program (IEP)

Following the completion of the Multidisciplinary Evaluation, the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team will convene. The IEP team consists of the parents, the principal or designee, the regular education teacher, the special education teacher, and other teachers, specialists or administrative staff as needed. At age fourteen (14), the student will also be included as a member of the IEP team if the parent agrees. For eligible students who are also identified as gifted, a teacher of the gifted is a required member of the IEP team.

Parents are important members of the IEP team and are encouraged to be physically present at the IEP meeting. The district will make every effort to schedule the IEP meeting at a convenient time for the family. The district will notify the parents in writing and / or make documented phone calls to make parents aware of the IEP meeting and the need for the parental participation.

At the IEP meeting, the team develops a written education plan called an Individualized Education Program (IEP). An IEP describes the student's current educational levels, goals and objectives, and the individualized programs and services that the student will receive. The IEP team will make decisions about the type of services your child should receive. Types of services include:

- ☞ Learning Support
- ☞ Life Skills Support
- ☞ Emotional Support
- ☞ Deaf or hearing impaired Support
- ☞ Blind or visually impaired Support
- ☞ Speech and Language Support
- ☞ Physical Support
- ☞ Autistic Support
- ☞ Multiple Disabilities Support

For students who are fourteen (14) years of age or older, the IEP process includes Transition Planning. The transition from school to adult life is an outcome-oriented process that promotes movement from school to post-school activities, which include higher education, employment, independent living and community participation.

IEP Timelines

The IEP must be developed within 30 calendar days after the Evaluation Report is completed. The IEP will be implemented within 10 school days of its completion. The IEP will remain in effect for one calendar year. The IEP team must convene within one year to revise the plan.

PARENT TIP: *If you have concerns about your child's IEP, you can request an IEP review at any time.*

Education Placement

The IEP team determines the appropriate level of support that a student requires. Levels of support include:

- ☞ Itinerant
- ☞ Supplemental
- ☞ Full-time

Placement must be made in the least restrictive environment in which the student's needs can be met with special education and related services. All students with disabilities must be educated to the maximum extent appropriate with children who are not disabled.

When a student's needs cannot be met in the regular school, other placement options include Pennsylvania Approved Private Schools and Delaware County Intermediate Unit programs.

PARENT TIP: *You have the right to disagree with school officials regarding your child's education placement. You have the right to initiate due process proceedings. The Procedural Safeguards Notice provides a full explanation of these procedures.*

Notice of Recommended Educational Placement

The placement that is recommended for your child as determined by the IEP team is described on a form call a Notice of Recommended Educational Placement (NOREP). It also explains your rights as a parent.

For an initial placement, you must indicate your approval in writing on the NOREP in order for services to begin. State regulations permit ten days to return the NOREP if it is mailed and five days to return it if it is presented to you at the conference. Subsequent NOREPs will be issued when the district requests a program change.

PARENT TIP: *The Notice of Recommended Educational Placement is a very important document. It certifies that you agree with the plan and have been informed of all of your rights regarding this process.*

Reevaluations

Students who receive special education services are reevaluated every three years to determine if the program remains appropriate. For students with mental retardation, the reevaluation will take place every two years. Students may be reevaluated more frequently (but not more than once per year) if there is a need to make a significant change in their program or placement. The Reevaluation Report (RR) will recommend modifications needed to the student's program or related services.

The timeline for reevaluations is the same as for initial evaluations. The sixty (60) calendar day period begins when you give written permission for your child's reevaluation.

PARENT TIP: *If you are concerned about your child's program and placement, you can request a reevaluation at any time. You may ask your child's building principal for a Permission to Re-Evaluate Request Form. (See sample on page 14).*

Agreement to Waive Reevaluation

The parents and school district may agree to waive a reevaluation. This may occur if both the parents and school district agree that there is sufficient data presented to continue the student's current program. Parents must agree in writing on the Agreement to Waive Reevaluation form.

Independent Evaluations

Parents who have their child evaluated at private expense may share a copy of the evaluation with the school district. Results of the evaluation will be considered by the school district in planning the student's program.

Parents who do not agree with the district's evaluation may request an independent evaluation at public expense. Such requests must be put in writing and describe the reason why there is disagreement with the district's evaluation.

Procedural Safeguards

As a parent of a child who requires special education, you have certain rights. State and federal laws and regulations outline your rights and the safeguards that should be followed in providing a free, appropriate public education to your child. If you feel that your child's program is not appropriate, you may initiate due process procedures by forwarding a written statement to the school district. The due process rights include your right to request a pre-hearing conference, mediation or an impartial due process hearing. All parental procedural safeguard rights transfer to the student at age twenty-one (21).

PARENT TIP: *A copy of the Procedural Safeguards Notice is available from your child's special education teacher or can be found on the district website www.garnetvalleyschools.com.*

Surrogate Parents

A surrogate parent will be provided for a student when no parent can be identified or if the student is homeless. The district works through the Delaware County Intermediate Unit to identify surrogate parents. For further assistance regarding surrogate parents, contact the Garnet Valley Special Education/Pupil Services office.

Privacy Rights of Parents and Students

Garnet Valley School District and its employees are required by federal law, as well as state and federal rules and regulations, to protect the rights of students. The basic premise of these laws, rules and regulations is that information about students cannot be disclosed without written parental consent.

Disclosure of Information means to permit access to the release, transfer, or other communication of education records to the personally identifiable information contained in these records, to any party, by any means including oral, written, or electronic means.

Education Records consist of information directly related to a student that is maintained by an educational agency.

Personally Identifiable Information includes the student's name, the name of the parent or other family members, a personal identifier or a list of personal characteristics that would make the student's identity easily traceable.

PARENT TIP: *Education Records and Personally Identifiable Information cannot be disclosed or released without written parent consent.*

There is certain information that can be released without consent, which is called **Directory Information**. Directory Information means information contained in an education record of a student which would not generally be considered harmful or an invasion of privacy if disclosed.

More information regarding the collection, maintenance and release of information is available in Garnet Valley School District's Student Record Policy. Building principals may be contacted for a review of this policy.

Education Records

Garnet Valley School District respects the rights of parents to inspect and review any educational records relating to your child. Your rights to inspect and review education records are further defined in the Procedural Safeguards Notice. If you wish to review your child's education records, please contact your child's building principal for an appointment.

Annual Notice

In concert with other Delaware County school districts, Garnet Valley School District publishes an Annual Notice of Special Education Services in the Delaware County Daily Times. A copy of this Annual Notice is available from the Special Education / Pupil Services Office and in each school office.

Notices of special education services are also printed in the district's newsletter, *Voices of the Valley*, and posted on the district's website www.garnetvalleyschools.com

Hearing Officers

A list of persons who serve as hearing officers and their qualifications can be available upon request by contacting the Special Education / Pupil Services Office. Currently, there are five (5) full-time Hearing Officers employed by the Office for Dispute Resolution.

Protected Handicapped Students Chapter 15 Accommodation Plans (Service Agreements)

If your child is not in need of Special Education, but has a disability, he/she may receive related aids, services or accommodations as a protected handicapped student.

A protected handicapped student is defined as being of school age, having a physical or mental disability that substantially limits or prohibits participation in or access to an aspect of the student's school program, and **not being eligible for special education services**.

Chapter 15 of the Pennsylvania School Code provides for the evaluation and identification of protected handicapped students by school districts. It requires the school district to provide related aids, services or accommodations that are needed to afford protected handicapped students an equal opportunity to participate in and obtain the benefits of a school program and extracurricular activities.

If you believe that your child needs special accommodations as a protected handicapped student, contact your child's guidance counselor. The guidance counselor will assist you in obtaining a Chapter 15 Evaluation. If your child meets the criteria as a protected handicapped student, a Service Agreement will be developed. The service agreement will describe the specific accommodations and related aids or services that your child needs in order to benefit from his/her school program.

PARENT TIP: *A Service Agreement will be reviewed annually to determine if the accommodations, aids and services are appropriate.*

Preschool Services

Preschool programs for children with disabilities or developmental delays who are three to five years of age are provided by the Delaware County Intermediate Unit. If you feel that your child may be eligible for these services, call the Preschool Diagnostic Program - Early Intervention Services at 610-938-9000.

The evaluation process for preschoolers is similar to the process described earlier in this handbook for school age children. An evaluation must be done by a Multidisciplinary Team and you are an important member of that team. The same MDT evaluation timeline applies to preschoolers.

When evaluating preschoolers, the major focus is on the child's developmental levels and physical development. The purpose of the evaluation is to determine if the child has a disability or developmental delay. Reevaluations for eligible preschoolers are conducted every two (2) years.

Students in Non-Public Schools

Students enrolled in non-public schools may be eligible for special education programs and services. A parent who has a concern about their child's school performance should contact the school principal or call Garnet Valley School District Special Education / Pupil Services Office for assistance.

Special Education Graduation Guidelines

Students who are enrolled in special education programs can receive a Garnet Valley School District diploma. The IEP Team will determine how the student will graduate. There are three options for earning a diploma:

☞ Meeting graduation requirements outlined in Chapter 4 of the PA School Code, including a proficient level on the PSSA

OR

☞ Completing graduation requirements depicted in the Garnet Valley School District course selection guide and completing a portfolio of proficient work

OR

☞ Completing the special education program goals developed by the IEP Team.

Students with disabilities can remain in school through the school year in which they turn twenty-one (21) years old.

There are three (3) options for students with disabilities to participate in graduation:

- ☞ Participation in graduation and senior activities with age appropriate classmates and accept diploma

OR

- ☞ Participation in graduation and senior activities with age appropriate classmates, but defer acceptance of diploma. The student will remain eligible to participate in school, vocational, work experience or community based instruction until age twenty-one (21).

OR

- ☞ Defer participation in graduation and senior activities until age twenty-one (21).

Once a student graduates from high school and accepts a diploma, Special Education services are discontinued. The student may, however, be eligible for services as an adult through the Office of Mental Retardation (OMR) or the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR).

Additional Information

This handbook is intended to answer most of your general questions about special education programs and services in Garnet Valley School District. If additional information is needed, the best place to start is with your child's classroom teacher. For further help or information please contact:

- ☞ Elementary.....your child's principal
- ☞ Secondaryyour child's guidance counselor

**GARNET VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT
PERMISSION TO EVALUATE (PTE) - EVALUATION REQUEST FORM**

School Age

If a parent has asked any professional school employee or administrator for the school district or charter school (Local Education Agency - LEA) to evaluate his or her child for special education eligibility, the parent must be given this *PTE-Evaluation Request Form* within 10 calendar days of the date of the oral request.

Child's Name: _____

Date Sent _____

(mm/dd/yy): _____

Name and Address of Parent/Guardian/Surrogate:

For LEA Use Only:
Date of Receipt of Request Form

I am requesting an evaluation of my child for special education services. I have these concerns about my child's educational performance and progress:

Please send me the *PTE-Consent Form* as soon as possible so that I can provide my written consent for the proposed evaluation to begin. I understand that the 60 calendar day (excluding summers) timeline will not begin until the LEA receives the *PTE-Consent Form* with my signature.

Parent/Guardian/Surrogate Signature

Date (mm/dd/yy)

Please return this form to the person listed below or to your child's teacher.

Name: Beverly J. Smith

Address: Garnet Valley Education Center

: 80 Station Road

Glen Mills, PA 19342

Once the school receives this *PTE-Evaluation Request Form*, the school will either:

1. Send you within a reasonable amount of time the *PTE-Consent Form* that will describe the process and timeline that will be used for the evaluation, and ask for your consent for the evaluation to begin, OR

2. Send you a written notice, called a *Notice of Recommended Educational Placement/Prior Written Notice* that explains why the LEA is refusing to evaluate your child and a *Procedural Safeguards Notice* that explains how you can challenge the LEA's refusal to evaluate your child.

Keep a copy of this form for your records.

If you have any questions, if you need the services of an interpreter, or if you believe you have not received a prompt response to this request, please contact me.

Name: Beverly J. Smith Position: Director of Special Education
Phone: 610-579-7301 Email: smithb@garnetvalleyschools.com

Please read the enclosed *Procedural Safeguards Notice* that explains your rights, and includes state and local advocacy organizations that are available to help you understand your rights and how the special education process works.

For help in understanding this form, an annotated *Permission to Evaluate - Evaluation Request Form* is available on the PaTTAN website at www.pattan.net Type "Annotated Forms" in the Search feature on the website. If you do not have access to the Internet, you can request the annotated form by calling PaTTAN at 800-441-3215.

**GARNET VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT
PERMISSION TO REEVALUATE - REEVALUATION REQUEST FORM**

School Age

If a parent has asked any professional school employee or administrator for the school district or charter school (Local Education Agency - LEA) to reevaluate his or her child, the parent must be given this *Permission to Reevaluate - Reevaluation Request Form* within 10 calendar days of the date of the oral request.

Child's Name: _____

Date Sent _____

(mm/dd/yy): _____

Name and Address of Parent/Guardian/Surrogate:

For LEA Use Only:
Date of Receipt of Request Form

I am requesting a reevaluation of my child. I have these concerns about my child's educational performance and progress:

Please send me the *Permission to Reevaluate - Consent Form* as soon as possible so that I can provide my written consent for the proposed evaluation to begin. I understand that the 60 calendar day (excluding summers) timeline will not begin until the LEA receives the *Permission to Reevaluate - Consent Form* with my signature.

Parent/Guardian/Surrogate Signature

Date (mm/dd/yy)

Please return this form to the person listed below or to your child's teacher.

Name: Beverly J. Smith _____

Address: Garnet Valley Education Center _____

: 80 Station Road _____

Glen Mills, PA 19342 _____

Once the school receives this written *Permission to Reevaluate - Reevaluation Request Form*, the school will either:

- 1. Send you within a reasonable amount of time the *Permission to Reevaluation - Consent Form* that will describe the process and timeline that will be used for the reevaluation, and ask for your consent for the reevaluation to begin, OR

2. Send you a written notice, called a *Notice of Recommended Educational Placement/Prior Written Notice* that explains why the LEA is refusing to reevaluate your child and a *Procedural Safeguards Notice* that explains how you can challenge the LEA's refusal to reevaluate your child.

Keep a copy of this form for your records.

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