

Annual Child Find Notice

Highlands School District

Notice of Special Education Services & Programs

Each school district, along with other public agencies in the commonwealth, must establish and implement procedures to identify, locate and evaluate all children who need special education programs and services because of the child's disability. This notice is to help find these children, offer assistance to parents, and describes the parents' rights with regard to confidentiality of information that will be obtained during this process. The content of this notice has been written in English but can be translated into other languages. If a person does not understand any of this notice, he or she should contact the school district (724-226-2400 ext. 5650) and request an explanation.

Annual Public Notice of Special Education Services and Programs, Services for Gifted Students, and Services for Protected Handicapped Students

Services for Pre-School Children

Act 212, the Early Intervention Services System Act, entitles all preschool children with disabilities to appropriate early intervention services. Young children experiencing developmental delays or physical or mental disabilities and their families are eligible for early intervention services including screening, evaluation, individualized education program planning and provision of appropriate programs and services. Potential signs of developmental delay and other risk factors that could indicate disabilities and the possibility that a child is an "eligible young child" could include:

- By the age of 3: not saying many words; not using 2 or 3-word phrases and sentences; not walking; awkward gait (walking); drooling; not answering "show" or "what" questions; and/or not using utensils to feed self;
- By age of 4 (all of the above included): not toilet trained; difficulty with directional words (in, on, under, out); not playing with other children, not able to draw a circle, cross or imitate a vertical line; not able to understand the child's speech most of the time; difficulty following simple two-step directions (e.g., pick up the paper and put it in the garbage);
- By the age of 5 (all of the above included): unable to answer "where" questions; unable to recall details from a story; not drawing a person with at least 6 parts;

immature speech patterns (me instead of I), not able to hop forward with one foot without support;

- Other warning signs at any age: little or no eye contact, over/under sensitivities to pain, light, noise; hand flapping; no awareness of space (always bumping into other people or things); awkward hand or foot positioning; won't touch or eat certain textures; child no longer can do things he/she used to do; developed normally, then stopped; echoes what is said; plays with toys inappropriately (e.g., watches wheels spin on the car, but does not play with the car).

Highlands School District ensures that all students transitioning from early intervention programs to kindergarten or first grade programs within the District are transitioned without disruption of services. Parents of children entering school age programs are notified of the District's Transition activities, which occur before kindergarten registration of each year. The District secures permission to re-evaluate, conducts an evaluation, and develops an Individualized Education Program (IEP) in accordance with the timelines required by state mandates.

The Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare is responsible for providing services to infants and toddlers, defined as children from birth through three years of age. For more information, contact:

Alliance for Infants
2801 Custer Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15227
412-885-6000

The Pennsylvania Department of Education is responsible for providing services to preschool children from ages three through five. For information, contact:

Allegheny Intermediate Unit
Project DART
475 E. Waterfront Drive
Homestead, PA 15120
412-394-5739

Information regarding the appropriate developmental milestone descriptors for infants and toddlers may be found at the Center for Disease Control (CDC) website at <https://www.cdc.gov/>

Services for School-Age Students with Disabilities

[22 Pa. Code Chapter 14](#)

The Highlands School District provides a free, appropriate, public education to eligible students. To qualify as an eligible student, the child must be of school age, in need of specially-designed instruction, and meet eligibility criteria for one or more of the following physical or mental disabilities, as set forth in Pennsylvania State Regulations:

- Autism
- Deafness
- Visual Impairment including Blindness
- Emotional Disturbance
- Hearing Impairment
- Intellectual Disability
- Multiple Disabilities
- Orthopedic Impairment
- Other Health Impairment
- Specific Learning Disability
- Speech or Language Impairment
- Traumatic Brain Injury

The District engages in identification procedures to ensure that eligible students receive an appropriate educational program consisting of special education and related services, individualized to meet student needs. At no cost to the parents, these services are provided in compliance with state and federal laws and are reasonably calculated to yield meaningful educational benefit and student progress.

To identify students who may be eligible for special education, various screening activities are conducted on an on-going basis. These screening activities include: review of group-based data (cumulative records, enrollment records, health records, report cards, ability, and achievement test scores); hearing, vision, physical, and speech/language screening; and review by a Child Study Team, MTSS Team, or (Elementary) Student Assistant Program ((E)SAP) Team. When screening results suggest that the student may be eligible for special education services, the District seeks parental consent to conduct a multidisciplinary evaluation.

Parents who suspect that their child is eligible for special education services may request a multidisciplinary evaluation at any time through a written request to the building principal.

Services designed to meet the needs of eligible students include the annual development of an Individualized Education Program (IEP), bi-annual or tri-annual multidisciplinary re-evaluation, and a full continuum of services, which include Itinerant, Supplemental, or Full-Time Levels of Support. The extent of special education services

and the location for the delivery of such services are determined by the IEP team and are based on the student's identified needs and abilities, chronological age, and the level of intensity of the specified intervention. The District also provides related services required for the student to benefit from the special education program.

Parents may obtain additional information regarding special education services and programs and parental due process rights by contacting the Director of Student Services 4724-226-2400 (5660), Highlands School District, 1500 Pacific Avenue, Natrona Heights PA 15065.

Annual Notice to Protected Handicapped Students

[22 Pa. Code Chapter 15](#)

In compliance with state and federal law, the Highlands School District will provide to each protected handicapped student without discrimination or cost to the student or family, those related aids, services or accommodations which are needed to provide equal opportunity to participate in and obtain the benefits of the school program and extracurricular activities to the maximum extent appropriate to the student's abilities.

In order to qualify as a protected handicapped student, the child must be of school age with a physical or mental disability which substantially limits or prohibits participation in or access to an aspect of the school program.

These services and protections for "protected handicapped students" are distinct from those applicable to all eligible or exceptional students enrolled (or seeking enrollment) in special education programs. Protected handicapped students fall under Pennsylvania Chapter 15 of Title 22 of the Regulations of the State Board of Education, sometimes known by its federal name Section 504 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act. In contrast, students with disabilities who qualify for special education services are covered by the regulations contained in Chapter 14.

For further information on the evaluation procedures and provisions of services to protected handicapped students, contact the Director of Student Services at 724-226-2400 (5660) or you may contact in writing: Highlands School District, 1500 Pacific Avenue, Natrona Heights PA 15065.

Services for Students who are Mentally Gifted

[22 Pa. Code Chapter 16](#)

The definition of giftedness comes from the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) Special Education Rules and Regulations under Chapter 16 and states that a student who is mentally gifted demonstrates outstanding intellectual and creative ability, the development of which requires specially designed programs or support services, or both, not ordinarily provided in the regular education program.

This term includes a person who has an IQ of 130 or higher *or* when multiple criteria, as set forth in Chapter 16 and in Department Guidelines, indicate gifted ability. Determination of gifted ability will not be based on IQ score alone. Deficits in memory or processing speed, as indicated by intellectual ability subtests, cannot be the sole basis upon which a student is determined to be ineligible for gifted special education. A person with an IQ lower than 130 may be admitted to gifted programs when other educational criteria in the profile of the person strongly indicate gifted ability. Determination of mentally gifted must include a full assessment by a certified school psychologist.

Once a student meets the screening requirements, a Gifted Multidisciplinary Evaluation (GMDE) is conducted. The GMDE must be sufficient in scope and depth to investigate information relevant to the student's suspected giftedness, including academic functioning, learning strengths and educational needs. The Gifted Written Report (GWR) brings together the findings from the evaluation or reevaluation concerning the student's educational needs and strengths. The GWR must make recommendations as to whether the student is gifted and in need of specially designed instruction, which are considered by the GMDE Team in the development of the Gifted Individualized Education Plan (GIEP). At the conclusion of the GIEP meeting, a Notice of Recommended Assignment (NORA) is issued.

Parents have the right to obtain an independent educational evaluation at their own expense to share with the District. The results of the independent evaluation must be considered by the District in any decision made with respect to the provision of a gifted education.

Parents of students who are mentally gifted have the right to request a special education due process hearing or to file a compliance complaint with the Pennsylvania Department of Education. Details concerning the procedures governing hearing requests may be found on the website of the Office for Dispute Resolution at odr-pa.org. For additional information, please contact the Director of Student Services Highlands School District, 1500 Pacific Avenue, Natrona Heights PA 15065.

Services for Students in Nonpublic Schools

[Equitable Participation](#)

Parents of nonpublic school students who suspect that their child has a disability and in need of special education may request a multidisciplinary evaluation through a written request to the Director of Student Services Highlands School District, 1500 Pacific Avenue, Natrona Heights PA 15065.

In order to receive special education services and programs through the Highlands School District, a student must (1) qualify through the two-pronged evaluation concerning the existence of an exceptionality and a consequent need for specially designed instruction and (2) be enrolled in the school district.

Those families who are not to enroll in the Highlands School District will be supported through a federal regulation referred to as *Equitable Participation*.

Certain services are available to students identified as eligible for special education who are unilaterally placed by their parents in private schools through a federal requirement *Equitable Participation*. In Pennsylvania the Intermediate Units are the agencies responsible for the implementation of the federal requirement for *Equitable Participation*.

The final regulations for the reauthorized *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)* became effective on October 13, 2006. IDEA and its implementing regulations contain a number of significant changes from the preexisting law and regulations for parentally-placed private school children with disabilities. IDEA now requires that the local educational agency (LEA, Intermediate Units in PA) after consultation with private school representatives, conduct a thorough child find process to determine the number of parentally-placed children with disabilities attending private schools located in the LEA. The LEAs are required to spend a proportionate amount of IDEA Part B funds to provide services to children with disabilities enrolled by their parents in private schools. The Intermediate Units are not required to offer the same services that would be offered as a *Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)* in the public school.

Confidentiality of Student Records

[Family Education Rights and Privacy Act \(FERPA\)](#)

Confidentially: All information gathered about your child is subject to the confidentiality provisions contained in federal and state law. The District has policies and procedures in effect governing the collection, maintenance, destruction, and disclosure to third parties of this information.

A signed permission to evaluate will begin the evaluation process. A written record of the results is called an education record, which is directly related to your child and is maintained by the school district. These records are personally identifiable to your child. Personally identifiable information includes the child's name, the name of the child's parents or other family member, the address of the child or their family, a personal identifier such as social security number, a list of characteristics that would make the child's identity easily traceable or other information that would make the child's identity easily traceable.

The school district will gather information regarding your child's physical, mental, emotional and health functioning through testing and assessment, observation of your child, as well as through review of any records made available to the school district through your physician and other providers of services such as day care agencies.

The school district protects the confidentiality of personally identifiable information by one school official being responsible for ensuring the confidentiality of the records;

training being provided to all persons using the information and; maintaining for public inspection a current list of employees' names and positions who may have access to the information. The school district will inform you when this information is no longer needed to provide educational services to your child and will destroy the information at the request of the parent, except general information such as your child's name, address, phone number, grades, attendance record and classes attended, grade level completed, may be maintained without time limitation.

As the parent of the child you have a number of rights regarding the confidentiality of your child's records. You have the right to inspect and review any education records related to your child with respect to the identification, evaluation, and educational placement of the child, the provision of a free appropriate public education to the child, which are collected, maintained, or used by the school district. The school district will comply with a request for you to review the records without unnecessary delay and before any meeting regarding planning for your child's special education program (called an IEP meeting), before a hearing should you and your school district disagree about how to educate your child who needs special education, and in no case, take more than 45 days to furnish you the opportunity to inspect and review your child's records.

You have the right to an explanation and interpretations of the records; to be provided copies of the records if failure to provide the copies would effectively prevent you from exercising your right to inspect and review the records and; the right to have a representative inspect and review the records.

Upon your request, the school district will provide you a list of the types and location of education records collected, maintained, or used by the agency. Additionally, the school district may charge a fee for copies of records made in response to your request for copies except it will not charge a fee if doing so will prevent you from inspecting and reviewing your child's records. The district will not charge a fee to search or retrieve information.

You have the right to request the amendment of your child's education records that you believe are inaccurate or misleading or violate the privacy or other rights of your child. The school district will decide whether to amend the records within a reasonable time of receipt of your request. If the school district refuses to amend the records you will be notified of the refusal and your right to a hearing. You will be given at that time, additional information regarding the hearing procedures and; upon request, the district will provide you a records hearing to challenge information in your child's education files.

Parent consent is required before personally identifiable information contained in your child's education records is disclosed to anyone other than officials of the school district collecting or using the information for purposes of identification of your child, locating your child and evaluating your child or for any other purpose of making available a free appropriate public education to your child. A school official has a legitimate educational

interest if the official needs to review an education record in order to fulfill his or her professional responsibility. Additionally, the school district, upon request, discloses records without consent to officials of another school district in which your child seeks or intends to enroll.

FERPA gives parents certain rights with respect to their children's education records. These rights transfer to the student when he or she reaches the age of 18 or attends a school beyond the high school level. Students to whom the rights have transferred are "eligible students."

A parent may file a written complaint alleging that the rights described in this notice were not provided: Pennsylvania Department of Education Bureau of Special Education Division of Compliance 333 Market Street Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333. The Department of Education will investigate the matter, issue a report of findings and necessary corrective action within 60 days. The Department will take necessary action to ensure compliance is achieved. Complaints alleging failures of the school district with regard to confidentiality of personally identifiable information may also be filed with: Family Policy Compliance Office U.S. Department of Education 400 Maryland Avenue, SW Washington, D.C. 20202-4605.

In accordance with 34 CFR § 300.624, please be advised of the following retention/destruction schedule for the Pennsylvania Alternate System of Assessment (PASA), Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA), and Keystone Exam related materials:

PSSA, Keystone Exam, and PASA test booklets will be destroyed one year after student reports are delivered for the administration associated with the test booklets.

PSSA and Keystone Exam answer booklets and PASA media recordings will be destroyed three years after completion of the assessment.

For information about this, as well as the rights of confidentiality and access to educational records, you may contact in writing the Director of Student Services Highlands School District, 1500 Pacific Avenue, Natrona Heights PA 15065.