

PUBLIC NOTICE ON SCREENING AND EVALUATION

The Mercer Area School District uses the following procedures for screening, identifying and evaluating specified needs of school-age students requiring special programs or service. Eligible students participating in the Midwestern Intermediate Unit IV Early Intervention program are transitioned into school age programs according to PDE Guidelines. The Mercer Area School District, as prescribed by Section 1402 of the School Code routinely conducts screening of a child's hearing acuity in the following grades: Kindergarten, 1, 2, 3, 7, 11 and all identified special needs students. Visual acuity is screened in every grade. Height and weight are checked yearly. Dental exams are conducted in Kindergarten, 3, and 7. Physical exams are conducted in Kindergarten, 6 and 11. Scoliosis screening is conducted in grades 6 and 7.

Speech and Language skills are screened in Kindergarten, 1, 2, and on a referral basis.

Gross and fine motor skills, academic skills and social-emotional development skills are assessed by classroom teachers on an on-going basis.

District wide screening takes place yearly to identify students in need of educational assistance. A Child Study Team within the student's school meets on a regular basis to determine if a student is in need of classroom modification, educational assistance, or a Multi-Disciplinary Evaluation (MDE). Specified needs from the screening sources are noted. School records are always open and available to parents and only to school officials who have a legitimate "need to know" information about the child. Information from the records is released to other persons or agencies only with appropriate authorization that involves written, signed permission by parents and age appropriate students.

The Mercer Area School District has a comprehensive testing program. The Pennsylvania Assessments in Mathematics, Reading, Science and Writing are all administered. The Pennsylvania Assessments in Mathematics and Reading are given to students in grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8. PSSA Science Assessments are given in grades 4 and 8. PSSA Writing Assessments are given in Grades 5 and 8. The Pennsylvania Alternate System of Assessment (PASA) is administered for a very small number of our students with severe disabilities in grades 3 thru 8 and 11, who meet the six criteria established and disseminated by the Bureau of Special Education, PA Department of Education. Individual I.E.P. Teams review these specific criteria and determine whether a student will take the standard PSSA or the PASA. Keystone Exams are end of course assessments designed to assess proficiency in various subjects during 2018 – 19 school year the following Keystone Exams will be available: Algebra 1, Literature and Biology. These tests will replace the 11th grade Pennsylvania System of School Assessments (PSSA)

tests in Mathematics, Reading, & Science for purposes of satisfying No Child Left Behind (NCLB) / adequate yearly progress (AYP) requirements. Therefore, all students in grade 11 will participate in the Algebra 1, Literature, & Biology Keystone Exams. Additionally students in any grade who are enrolled in a Keystone related course should participate. Mercer Area School District is required by federal law to assess each child's proficiency in reading and mathematics three times each year. These assessments are administered by our district's highly qualified teachers. The purpose of the assessments is to monitor each student's progress thru the district's curriculum. DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills) Next are a set of procedures and measures for assessing the acquisition of early literacy skills from kindergarten thru sixth grade. They are designed to be short (one minute fluency measures/readings) used to regularly monitor the development of literacy and reading skills. The educational staff monitors our students' progress throughout the year with ongoing assessments. Utilizing the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) is a set of individually administered criterion-referenced reading assessments for students in kindergarten thru grade 6. NWEA (Northwest Evaluation Association) will be administered at least three times during the school year for grades 1 - 11. This will be given in the fall, winter and spring. Stanford 10th Edition achievement test is given to students in grade 2 as part of our Child Find.

Parents with concerns regarding their student may contact Building Principals or the Special Education Coordinator at any time to request a screening or evaluation of their child in writing. Communication with parents and exceptional students shall be in English or the native language of parents.

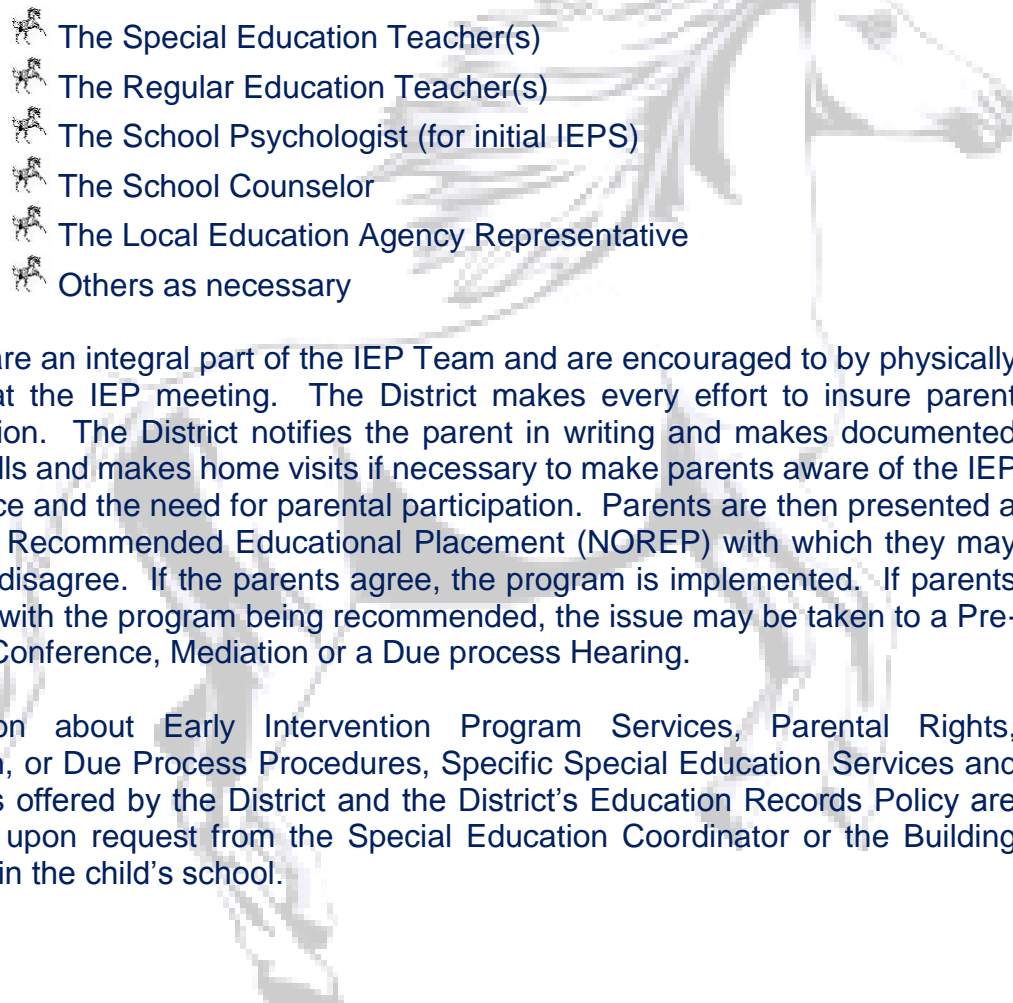






At both the elementary and secondary level screening information will be reviewed by the ESAP – Elementary Students Assistance Program (Elementary) and SAP—Students Assistance Program (Middle/High School), with the minimum of a School Counselor, Building Principal, Teacher, and any additional person deemed appropriate to attend in order to determine if a child needs additional services. If it is determined that a child needs additional services, the ESAP / SAP Team will make recommendations relative to the child's learning style, behavior, physical inabilities and speech concerns to be more in keeping with traditional classroom experiences. If the student does not make progress, parents will be asked to give written permission for further individual professional evaluations

If a MDE is conducted, an Evaluation Report will be compiled summarizing data collected with parent input and include specific recommendations for the types of intervention necessary to accommodate the child's specific needs. Parents are then invited to participate in a meeting where the results of the Multidisciplinary Team Evaluations are discussed.

Parents have the right to obtain an Independent Educational Evaluation of their child. An Independent Evaluation is an evaluation by a qualified professional who

is not an employee of the school district responsible for the child. The parents may request an independent evaluation at Mercer Area School District's expense if they disagree with an educational evaluation completed by the district. Mercer Area School District must respond to the request within a reasonable time. However, Mercer Area School District will initiate a due process hearing to show that its evaluation is appropriate. Parents may have an Independent Evaluation at their own expense and the results must be considered by Mercer Area School District.

An Individualized Education Program (IEP) will be developed for the student qualifying for special placement. The IEP Team, with the parent(s), will consists of at least three district staff members:

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-  The Special Education Teacher(s)
 -  The Regular Education Teacher(s)
 -  The School Psychologist (for initial IEPs)
 -  The School Counselor
 -  The Local Education Agency Representative
 -  Others as necessary

Parents are an integral part of the IEP Team and are encouraged to be physically present at the IEP meeting. The District makes every effort to insure parent participation. The District notifies the parent in writing and makes documented phone calls and makes home visits if necessary to make parents aware of the IEP conference and the need for parental participation. Parents are then presented a Notice of Recommended Educational Placement (NOREP) with which they may agree or disagree. If the parents agree, the program is implemented. If parents disagree with the program being recommended, the issue may be taken to a Pre-Hearing Conference, Mediation or a Due process Hearing.

Information about Early Intervention Program Services, Parental Rights, Mediation, or Due Process Procedures, Specific Special Education Services and Programs offered by the District and the District's Education Records Policy are available upon request from the Special Education Coordinator or the Building Principal in the child's school.