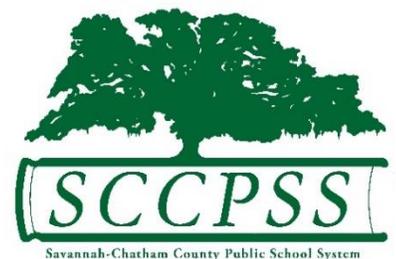




Special Education Parent Handbook

Savannah- Chatham County Public School System

Department of Specialized Instruction
402 Market St. Savannah, GA 31408





Savannah-Chatham County Public School System

402 Market Street / Savannah, Georgia 31401 / 912.395.5583 FAX: (912) 201-7692

Parent Handbook to Specialized Instruction

Welcome to the Department of Specialized Instruction. We have prepared this handbook to help you support your child's education. If you have questions or are unsure how to proceed, please call our department office at 912-395-5583. We will connect you with the appropriate person to help or answer your question.

For urgent concerns regarding specialized instruction, parents may call the Specialized Instruction Department Hotline at:

912-395-5509

The phone hotline will be available Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

You may also email the district special education leadership team at: SIS@sccpss.com

Dr. Kimberly Hancock
Associate Superintendent
Kimberly.Hancock@sccpss.com

Dr. Michelle Finch
Senior Director
Marion.Finch@sccpss.com

Dr. Vanessa Keener
Director
Vanessa.Keener@sccpss.com

Parent Mentors (Parents who support parents with information and resources to help their children succeed in school)

Juliette Hardiman
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What is Special Education?

Special education is a broad term used to identify educational services, including specialized instruction, delivered by staff trained in methods which are evidence-based to meet the needs of students with disabilities. They are provided at no cost to parents.

Child Find

The term "Child Find" refers to the obligation of the District, under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, to ensure that all children between the ages of 3 and 21 are identified, located, and evaluated.

Child Find extends to current students in our District as well as pre-school children in private preschools and day-care centers, private school and home school students, migrant and homeless children; and, any other children living residing in our district who are suspected of having disabilities.

We invite the parents of any home-schooled or privately schooled student between the ages of three and twenty-one and who is suspected of having a disability, to contact our department at (912) 395-5583 for further information on the Child Find initiative.

How do I have my child evaluated for special education?

Preschool Children Procedures

If you are aware of a preschooler from 3 to 5 years old who has or may have a disability and may require special education services, call the Preschool Assessment Center at 912-395-1294.

For more detailed information please visit the link or QR Code below to

access our District website: <https://spwww.sccpss.com/aa/si/Pages/Pre-school-intervention,-Assessment-Center.aspx>



If a child is already enrolled in SCCPSS schools, is suspected of having a disability and may be in need of special education services, please contact your home school and express your concerns to the child's teacher and/or school administrator. What to expect.

- The school will set up a meeting to discuss your concerns, review your parental rights, and discuss next steps.
- The school will need to screen your child's hearing and vision.
- Interventions should be developed, implemented, and monitored for progress
- Informed consent must be obtained prior to the District conducting any evaluations with your child.

Parent Rights

What are my parental rights and how do I get a copy of my rights?

A copy is available here: <https://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Special-Education-Services/Pages/Parent-Rights.aspx>



(When the window opens on your phone scroll down toward the bottom section to Parent Rights)

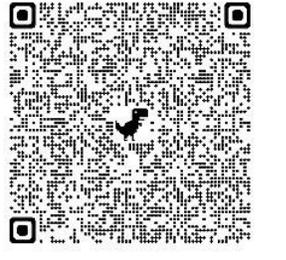
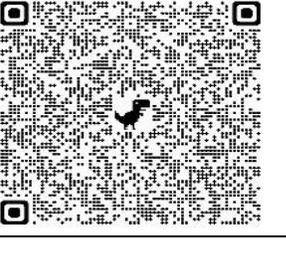
Parent Rights are also available in multiple languages and in a condensed version. Contact your student's school or district Specialized Instruction office at (912) 395-5583 to request a copy of the Parent Rights.

It is important for parents to understand their rights under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Please reach out to your Special Education case manager/teacher, Program Manager or Parent Mentor to learn more about your parent rights (also called procedural safeguards) under IDEA.

Parent Right Videos The Georgia Department of Education offers parents information about Parent Rights via videos.

<u>Parental Rights Chapter Link</u>	<u>QR Code Link</u>
<u>Introduction</u>	
<u>Chapter 1: Parent Notice and Parent Consent/Confidentiality</u>	
<u>Chapter 2: Evaluation for Eligibility/Independent Evaluations</u>	



Chapter 3: <u>Least Restrictive Environment</u>			
Chapter 4: <u>Private School Placement</u>			
Chapter 5: <u>Discipline Procedures and Rights</u>			
Chapter 6: <u>Dispute Resolution</u>			
Chapter 7: <u>The Surrogate Parent and the Transfer of Rights to the Student</u>			
<u>Conclusion</u>			



Categories of Eligibility

(1) DEFINITIONS. A child or youth from 3 through 21 years of age is considered to have a disability under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA 2004) if the child or youth meets the eligibility criteria in any of the following areas and is determined to require special education and related services.

1. Autism spectrum disorder
2. Deafblind
3. Deaf/hard of hearing
4. Emotional and behavioral disorder
5. Intellectual disability (mild, moderate, severe, profound)
6. Orthopedic impairment
7. Other health impairment
8. Significant developmental delay
9. Specific learning disability
10. Speech-language impairment
11. Traumatic brain injury
12. Visual impairment



For more information about categories of eligibility under IDEA, visit:

<https://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Special-Education-Services/Pages/Eligibility-Categories.aspx>



The Department of Specialized Instruction Services

[Adaptive Services and Unique Learning System](#)

Students with significant cognitive disabilities receive instruction through the Unique Learning System.

[Autism Services and Programs](#)

Autism services encompass a full range of services and supports for students and school staff including the provision of resources, training and specially designed services, such as targeted, autism specific interventions and programming.

[Building Resilience and Behavioral Services](#)

The Department of Specialized Instruction is committed to building on student strengths to provide students and families with a variety of supports and resources to help improve resilience and develop positive social skills and reduce challenging behaviors.

[Hospital Homebound Services](#)

When students are unable to attend school due to a diagnosed medical or psychiatric condition for a minimum of ten consecutive school days or for intermittent periods of time, they may be provided educational services in the hospital or in the child's home.

[MTSS/RTI](#)

A Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) is a framework implemented to aid students experiencing problems of an academic, communicative, or behavioral nature. In an MTSS framework, the Student Support Team (SST) meets as an interdisciplinary group to collaboratively plan and improve the delivery of instructional supports and services to students. Response to Intervention (RTI) is a process within MTSS that provides students with early and effective academic, behavioral, and/or communicative interventions. MTSS/RTI serves as a student-focused framework for the early identification of students who may be at risk of poor learning outcomes and the district's provision of academic, behavioral, and/or communicative instruction and interventions, matched to student needs.

[Parent Mentors and Advocacy Support](#)

The Georgia Parent Mentor Partnership is an alliance of parents and professionals working together to improve outcomes for students with disabilities by enhancing communication and collaboration between families, educators, and the community. The mission of the Georgia Parent Mentor Partnership is to build effective family, school, and community partnerships that lead to greater achievement for students, especially those with disabilities. Parent mentors are parents who support other parents by providing information and resources to help their children succeed in school and transition from school to adult life. The mentors work to increase parent participation in IEP meetings, provide information related to improving reading and math, and help parents locate needed services and supports. Parent mentors also work with teachers, staff, and administrators to integrate family engagement into school and district activities and to build a culture in which family engagement is expected and valued. Juliette Hardeman and Lastanya Cox are the parent mentors who serve SCCPSS.

[Pre-school intervention and Assessment Center](#)

The Preschool Intervention program is designed to provide individualized services to three to five-year-old children who have special education needs. Preschool Intervention provides learning experiences to improve communication, motor, cognition, social-emotional, behavioral, and self-help skills in young children.



[Psychological Services](#)

School psychologists work with students, educators, and families to support the academic achievement, positive behavior, social development and mental wellness of all students, especially diverse learners and those with barriers to learning, by promoting instructional strategies to close the achievement gap; creating safe, positive school climates; providing meaningful accountability and data-driven problem-solving; and strengthening family-school partnerships.

[Related Services and Therapy](#)

Physical and Occupational Therapy (PT/OT), Orientation and Mobility (O&M) and Assistive Technology (AT) are considered related services under the IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act). They are therefore support services for students with disabilities who are eligible for special education or have a 504 plan in place.

School-based therapies are designed to provide students educational benefit from the special education program. Therapy is indicated only when the student cannot meet special education objectives, or when needed to access to the general curriculum or physical school environment.

[Section 504](#)

Students who meet the eligibility guidelines will have a 504 Plan developed for use in school. The Plan specifies the nature of the impairment, the major life activity affected by the impairment, accommodations necessary to provide access based on the student's needs, and the person(s) responsible for implementing the accommodations. Parents are encouraged to participate in development of the plan.

[Speech Language Services](#)

Speech Language Pathologists' roles involve the prevention, assessment, diagnosis and treatment of communication disorders such as speech fluency (stuttering), speech sound production/articulation, and/or language or voice impairment that adversely affects a child's educational performance.

[Transition and Post-Secondary Support](#)

Transition planning as outlined under IDEA addresses post-secondary education opportunities, integrated employment, independent/community living and agency linkages. In Chatham County, when a student reaches the age of 14 families will begin the conversation about hopes and dreams for the future. These conversations are facilitated by our team of Transition Specialists assigned to each high school. Transition planning is unique to the individual strengths, preference, and needs of the student and their family. Post-secondary educational activities may include information about schools (4-year, 2-year or technical programs), campus tours (in person and/or virtual) or information on how to access the Disabilities Office on campus. Employment activities may start with community access experiences (CBI) in middle school and progress to community based vocational (CBVI) activities and internships in high school. We also support a job immersion program with two local business partners. Daily adult living activities can range from learning about budgeting, meal planning, voter registration, public transportation, or accessing leisure activities. For more specific information reach out your child's case manager to learn how to contact your Transition Specialist. We work with a variety of agencies depending on the needs of the individual.

[The Georgia Special Needs Scholarship \(GSNS\) Program](#)



GSNS is a parental choice program for special needs students attending Georgia public schools who are served under an Individualized Education Plan (or 504 accommodation plan). The following provides information regarding eligibility and the different choice options available under the GSNS Program.



Acronyms Used in Special Education

AAC: Augmentative Alternative Communication	GADOE: Georgia Department of Education
ADA: American Disabilities Act	HHB: Hospital Home Bound
ADD: Attention Deficit Disorder	ID: Intellectual Disability
ADHD: Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder	IDEA: Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
ADL: Activities Daily Living	IEE: Individual Educational Evaluation
AI: Autism Interventionist	IEP: Individualized Education Plan
AP: Auditory Processing	ISS/OSS: In School or Out of School Suspension
ASD: Autism Spectrum Disorder	LD: Learning Disability
AT: Assistive Technology	LEA: Local Educational Agency
AU/AUT: Autism	LRE: Least Restrictive Environment
BCW: Babies Can't Wait	MID: Mild Intellectual Disability
BI: Behavior Interventionist	MOID: Moderate Intellectual Disability
BIP: Behavior Intervention Plan	OHI: Other Health Impaired
BOE: Board of Education	OI: Orthopedically Impaired
CBA: Curriculum Based Assessment	O&M: Orientation and Mobility
CBI: Community Based Instruction	OT: Occupational Therapy
CCRPI: College and Career Readiness Performance Index	PSCE: Preparing Students with Autism for Classroom Education
CTE: Consent to Evaluate	PBIS: Positive Behavior Interventions and Support
D/B: Deaf and Blind	PDD: Pervasive Developmental Disorder
DOB: Date of Birth	PECS: Pictures Exchange Communication System
D/HOH: Deaf / Hard of Hearing	PID: Profoundly Intellectually Disabled
DSS: District Staffing Specialist	PLAAFP/PLOP: Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance
EBD: Emotional Behavioral Disorder	PM: Progress Monitoring
ECE: Early Childhood Education	PSI: Preschool Intervention
EOCT: End of Course Test	PT: Physical Therapy
ECST: Exceptional Child Support Teacher	PWN: Prior Written Notice
EI: Early Intervention	RNP: Referral to a New Program
ELL: English Language Learners	RTI: Response to Intervention
ESOL: English for Speaker of Other Languages	SDD: Significantly Developmentally Delayed
ESSA: Every Student Succeeds Act	SDI: Specially Designed Instruction
ESY: Extended School Year	SLD: Specific Learning Disability
FAPE: Free and Appropriate Public Education	SLI: Speech Language Impaired
FERPA: Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act	SLP: Speech Language Pathologist
FBA/FUBA: Functional Behavioral Assessment	SWD: Students with Disabilities
FTE: Full Time Equivalency	TBI: Traumatic Brain Injury
GAA: Georgia Alternative Assessment	VI: Visual Impairment

How to prepare for an IEP meeting

<u>What it is.</u>	A blueprint for a student’s special education experience in public school. The plan must ensure that the child received a free appropriate public education.
<u>What it does.</u>	An IEP spells out the services, supports and specialized instruction a child with a disability will receive in school.
<u>Who is eligible?</u>	To qualify for an IEP, a child must: be identified for one of the 13 eligibility areas under IDEA and need special education for his disability in order to successfully benefit.
<u>Who participates in the IEP?</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Parent or Legal Guardian (encouraged)• A general education teacher• A special education teacher• An LEA from the school who oversees special education services at the school or their designee.
<u>How often is it reviewed and revised?</u>	An IEP must be reviewed at least once per year. Revisions can be completed at any time the parents or school feel something needs to be addressed.
<u>From Understood.org</u>	Understood is a non-profit dedicated to serving the millions of families of kids who learn and think differently. Understood.org provides resources and information.

Keeping organized can help you support your child’s success in school. We have developed a few resources to help you create a notebook. There are many documents supporting students with disabilities, and this can help you stay organized. Our team can be available to help you with any questions, please call our office at 912-395-5583.

Questions to Ask Prior to the IEP Meeting

What is the goal of this IEP meeting?

Can we create an agenda for this meeting?

May I have a copy of my child's most recent IEP document to follow along as we talk in the meeting?

Questions to Ask During the IEP Meeting

Can you explain how what you are seeing from my child is different from other students in the classroom?

How is my child doing in making progress toward goals and objectives?

How is the goal measured and monitored?

What can I do to support the goals at home?

Can we make a plan for keeping in touch about how everything is going?

Binder Checklist

A binder checklist can help you ensure you have all important documents.

IEP Binder Checklist (Place most recent items on top in each section)					
Communication:			Date Updated:		
School Contact List	Yearly or as new members join team.				
Communication Log	Every time you have a meeting, phone call or other importation interaction with school staff.				
Letters and Emails to and From the School	As often as needed. (File after noting them in communication log.)				
Evaluations:					
Request/Referral for Evaluation	Initial, Reevaluation or Special Considerations (3-year intervals).				
Consent to Evaluate	(Permission to test.)				
School Evaluations	Completed by the School Staff.				
Private Evaluations	(Completed outside of school, if applicable.)				
Medical Reports	Any information provided by a doctor or specialist that may assist the team in helping your child.				
IEP:					
Copy of Parental Rights/ Procedural Safeguards	(Keep as a reference or to show school you do not need an additional copy.)				
IEP	Completed on a yearly basis.				
IEP Amendment	If additional changes are needed to the IEP.				

Prior Written Notice and Meeting Notes	Yearly or more often, if additional meetings are held.				
Report cards/Progress Reports:					
Report Cards	As often as they come from teacher or school.				
Goals and Objectives	As often as they come from teacher or school.				
Sample Work:					
Samples of schoolwork	As often as you see signs of progress or concerns.				
Standardized Tests	Whenever results are sent home from the school.				
Behavior:					
School Handbook/Code of Conduct	Yearly				
Behavior Intervention Plan	Yearly or as often as changes are made.				
Manifestation	(If child is suspended 5 or more days in a school year. Includes in school and out of school suspensions.) Held to determine whether behavior is a manifestation of the child's disability or not.				
Disciplinary Notices	Any time your child receives one.				
Miscellaneous:					

Contact List:

School:	Name:
	Phone:
	Email:
Principal:	Name:
	Phone:
	Email:
Assistant Principal:	Name:
	Phone:
	Email:
Case Manager:	Name:
	Phone:
	Email:
Teacher:	Name:
	Phone:
	Email:
Teacher:	Name:
	Phone:
	Email:
Teacher:	Name:
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Teacher:	Name:
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Teacher:	Name:
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Coach:	Name:
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	Email:
After School Program:	

Contact List:

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	Email:
	Name:

Parent-School Communication Log	
Date: <input type="checkbox"/> Phone <input type="checkbox"/> Email <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> In Person	
Who Initiated:	Who participated, received, or attended:
What prompted the communication:	
What was discussed:	
What was decided:	
Parent-School Communication Log	
Date: <input type="checkbox"/> Phone <input type="checkbox"/> Email <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> In Person	
Who Initiated:	Who participated, received, or attended:
What prompted the communication:	
What was discussed:	
What was decided:	
Parent-School Communication Log	
Date: <input type="checkbox"/> Phone <input type="checkbox"/> Email <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> In Person	
Who Initiated:	Who participated, received, or attended:
What prompted the communication:	
What was discussed:	
What was decided:	

NOTES: