



Arts Academy in the Woods
High School

PREPARE FOR POSSIBILITY



Arts Academy in the Woods

Parent Resource Guide for Special Education Support Services

32101 Caroline Fraser, MI 48026
586 294 0391 ArtsAcad.net

Dance, Vocal and Instrumental Music, Traditional and Digital Visual Art, Creative Writing, and Acting are a part of every student's schedule – ART EVERY DAY.
Our extensive arts program is integrated into our solid academic curriculum.

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Introduction

The purpose of this manual is to inform the Academy's families and employees about IDEA laws and the Academy's procedures and forms that have been developed to comply with the requirements of these laws. This manual reflects the Academy's commitment to address the educational needs of ALL children.

Arts Academy in The Woods expects employees to be knowledgeable about the School District procedures concerning IDEA laws, with a particular emphasis on parent and student rights.

Special education laws give children with disabilities and their parents' important rights. Specifically, the federal law commonly known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) gives families of special education children the right to:

- have their child assessed or tested to determine special education eligibility and needs
- inspect and review school records relating to their child
- attend an annual "individualized education program" (IEP) meeting and develop a written IEP plan with representatives of the local school district, and
- resolve disputes with the school district through an impartial administrative and legal process.

The Basic Special Education Process under IDEA

The writing of each student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP) takes place within the larger picture of the special education process under IDEA. Before taking a detailed look at the IEP, it may be helpful to look briefly at how a student is identified as having a disability and needing special education and related services and, thus, an IEP.

Step 1. Child is identified as possibly needing special education and related services.

A school professional may ask that a child be evaluated to see if he or she has a disability. Parents may also contact the child's teacher or other school professional to ask that their child be evaluated. This request may be verbal or in writing. Parental



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consent is needed before the child may be evaluated. Evaluation needs to be completed within a reasonable time after the parent gives consent.

If you know or suspect that your child has a disability, please contact Abigail Lang at 586-294-0391 or alang@artsacad.net

Step 2. Child is evaluated by the Multidisciplinary Evaluation Team (MET).

The evaluation must assess the child in all areas related to the child's suspected disability. The evaluation results will be used to decide the child's eligibility for special education and related services and to make decisions about an appropriate educational program for the child. If the parents disagree with the evaluation, they have the right to take their child for an Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE). They can ask that the school system pay for this IEE.

Step 3. Eligibility is determined.

A group of qualified professionals and the parents look at the child's evaluation results. Together, they decide if the child is a "child with a disability," as defined by IDEA. Parents may ask for a hearing to challenge the eligibility decision.

Step 4. Child is found eligible for services.

If the child is found to be a "child with a disability," as defined by IDEA, he or she is eligible for special education and related services. Within 30 calendar days after a child is determined eligible, the IEP team must meet to write an IEP for the child.

Step 5. IEP meeting is scheduled.

The school system schedules and conducts the IEP meeting. School staff must:

- contact the participants, including the parents;
- notify parents early enough to make sure they have an opportunity to attend;
- schedule the meeting at a time and place agreeable to parents and the school;
- inform the parents of the purpose, time, and location of the meeting;
- inform the parents who will be attending; and



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- inform the parents that they may invite people to the meeting who have knowledge or special expertise about the child.

Step 6. IEP meeting is held and the IEP is written.

The IEP team gathers to talk about the child's needs and write the student's IEP. Parents and the student (when appropriate) are part of the team. If the child's placement is decided by a different group, the parents must be part of that group as well. Before the school system may provide special education and related services to the child for the first time, the parents must give consent. The child begins to receive services as soon as possible after the meeting.

If the parents do not agree with the IEP and placement, they may discuss their concerns with other members of the IEP team and try to work out an agreement. If they still disagree, parents can ask for mediation, or the school may offer mediation. Parents may file a complaint with the state education agency and may request a due process hearing, at which time mediation must be available.

Step 7. Services are provided.

The school makes sure that the child's IEP is being carried out as it was written. Parents are given a copy of the IEP. Each of the child's teachers and service providers has access to the IEP and knows his or her specific responsibilities for carrying out the IEP. This includes the accommodations, modifications, and supports that must be provided to the child, in keeping with the IEP.

Step 8. Progress is measured and reported to parents.

The child's progress toward the annual goals is measured, as stated in the IEP. His or her parents are regularly informed of their child's progress and whether that progress is enough for the child to achieve the goals by the end of the year. These progress reports must be given to parents at least as often as parents are informed of their nondisabled children's progress.



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Step 9. IEP is reviewed.

The child's IEP is reviewed by the IEP team at least once a year, or more often if the parents or school ask for a review. If necessary, the IEP is revised. Parents, as team members, must be invited to attend these meetings. Parents can make suggestions for changes, can agree or disagree with the IEP goals, and agree or disagree with the placement.

If parents do not agree with the IEP and placement, they may discuss their concerns with other members of the IEP team and try to work out an agreement. There are several options, including additional testing, an independent evaluation, or asking for mediation (if available) or a due process hearing. They may also file a complaint with the state education agency.

Step 10. Child is reevaluated.

At least every three years the child must be reevaluated. This evaluation is often called a "triennial." Its purpose is to find out if the child continues to be a "child with a disability," as defined by IDEA, and what the child's educational needs are. However, the child must be reevaluated more often if conditions warrant or if the child's parent or teacher asks for a new evaluation.



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Categories of Disabilities

IDEA defines "children with disabilities" as individuals between the ages of three and 22 with one or more of the following conditions:

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

Students identified with Autism Spectrum Disorder have a neurological disorder that interferes with the development of reasoning, social interactions, and communication. It is a lifelong disability that makes learning difficult and can lead to serious behavior problems. Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder have substantial problems in the area of communication which may include immature speech, inability to understand complex speech patterns or words. It is not uncommon for students with Autism Spectrum Disorder to be nonverbal and use alternate means of communicating.

Cognitive Impairment (CI)

Students identified with a Cognitive Impairment have mild, moderate, or severe mental impairments as identified upon a comprehensive evaluation by a multidisciplinary team. Cognitive impairments shall be manifested during the developmental period and determined through the demonstration in several areas including; adaptive behavior, low developmental rates on intellectual measures, depressed scores on standardized tests of reading and arithmetic, and general lack of development in the cognitive domain. The impairment must adversely affect a student's educational performance.

Deaf/Blind

Students identified as Deaf/Blind have a combination of hearing loss and vision loss, such that the combination necessitates specialized interpretation of spoken and written information in a manner appropriate to that person's dual sensory loss.

Early Childhood Developmental Delay (ECDD)

Students identified with Early Childhood Developmental Delay must be between the ages of birth to seven years. The label implies that the primary handicap cannot be differentiated through the criteria of the other handicapping conditions. The child must manifest impairment in one or more areas of development equal to or greater than 1/2



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of the expected development for their chronological age, as measured by more than one developmental scale. The impairment must not be able to be resolved by medical or nutritional intervention. The students must be reclassified by the age of seven into one of the other disability categories.

Emotional Impairment (EI)

Students identified with Emotional Impairment exhibit behaviors, over an extended period of time that seriously interferes with the learning environment. Students often have trouble with self-control and are frequently disruptive. Their emotional problems negatively affect their academic performance.

Hearing Impairment (HI)

Students identified with a Hearing Impairment have a hearing loss, which interferes with development or adversely affects educational performance in a general education setting. Hearing problems range from a mild hearing loss that adversely affect education to total deafness which is evidenced through the students inability to process linguistic information through hearing, with or without amplification.

Learning Disabled (LD)

Students identified as Learning Disabled have a severe discrepancy between their intellectual ability and their academic achievement. Students have a significant learning problem in one or more of the basic processes involved in understanding or using spoken or written language. These problems adversely affect the student's writing, math, spelling, listening, and speaking skills. Students function below their intellectual level in one or more of these specific areas.

Physical Impairment (PI)

Students identified with a Physical Impairment have a severe orthopedic impairment that adversely affects their educational performance. They may have congenital anomalies such as the absence of a limb. Others may have cerebral palsy or muscular dystrophy.



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Otherwise Health Impairment (OHI)

Students with an Otherwise Health Impairment have a physical challenge which adversely affects their ability to learn. Some students have "health impairments" which limit strength, vitality or alertness, due to chronic or acute health problems such as a heart condition, tuberculosis, rheumatic fever, asthma, sickle cell anemia, hemophilia, lead poisoning, leukemia, or diabetes. If a student is identified as Otherwise Health Impaired, the conditions must adversely affect the student's educational performance.

Severe Multiple Impairment (SXI)

Students identified with Severe Multiple Impairments have more than one disability, for example, they may be both blind and have a cognitive impairment. Their combination of impairments causes such severe education problems that placement in a special education program for one of their disabilities is not sufficient.

Speech and Language Impairment (SLI)

Students identified with a Speech and Language Impairment have communication disorders that affect their educational performance. Communication disorders include stuttering, voice impairments, articulation, and language impairments. Slow vocabulary development, unclear speech and poor listening skills are a few of the symptoms that may be exhibited that may impact educational performance.

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)

Students identified with a Traumatic Brain Injury have had a brain injury that results in problems in learning, social function, and physical functioning. The students often have trouble in areas such as communication, memory, perception, reasoning, and judgment.

Visual Impairment (VI)

Students identified as Visually Impaired have a visual impairment which, even when corrected, negatively affects their learning. Visual problems range from partial sight to total blindness.



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The Multidisciplinary Evaluation Team (MET)

An evaluation of the student with a suspected disability is the next step after a referral to special education has been processed and parental consent has been obtained. The Multidisciplinary Evaluation Team (MET) consists of educational professionals with knowledge in the suspected area of disability. The team may include teachers, speech and language providers, psychologists, educational consultants, physical or occupational therapists, and social workers.

The MET will evaluate the strengths of your child. The team will review important information, including school records, assessment data, medical history, and information that you may provide about your child. If you have had an outside evaluation of your child, it would be appropriate to share the information with the MET.

Once the MET evaluation is complete, you will be invited to participate in a meeting to discuss eligibility. At the meeting, an eligibility recommendation will be presented to an Individual Educational Planning Team (IEPT). Using the evaluation information, the IEPT determines whether or not your child is eligible for special education programs and/or services.

The MET evaluation is very important. You can assist the team by providing as much information regarding your child as you can. The team will help your child feel comfortable about the testing situation. Be sure to assist the staff by talking to your child and helping him/her try to understand that the process is geared to help him/her meet success in the school setting.

The MET process in review:

- Parental consent must be received prior to the evaluation.
- A team of professionals will be involved in the assessment process, which must be completed within thirty (30) school days.



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- More than one assessment tool (test) will be used to recommend special education eligibility.
- The evaluation tools cannot discriminate on the basis of language or culture.
- Outside assessments and evaluation data will be considered during the process.
- Parent input is a component of each step of the MET process.

The Individualized Educational Planning Team (IEPT)

An IEPT is the team that meets to review the needs of your child. It is a required meeting, and parents are a very important member of the team. The IEPT determines the eligibility of a student and the appropriateness of programs and/or services to be provided. The IEPT reviews the information and recommendations provided by the Multidisciplinary Evaluation Team (MET).

An IEPT is held annually after the initial MET evaluation (or reevaluation) of your child. The IEPT is scheduled at a mutually agreeable time. If parents are unable to attend, they have the right to provide input in other ways. An IEPT may be scheduled more than once a year if deemed appropriate by staff or parents.

IEPT Members

The IEPT should include:

- A representative of the school district, other than the student's teacher.
- A special education teacher or service provider. If the student was not previously enrolled, a teacher who is appropriate for the student's age and ability should be invited.
- A general education teacher if the student is enrolled in general education or if general education placement will be considered.
- Parents are always invited and encouraged to participate. Meetings are scheduled with parents to ensure their availability.
- The student is invited to participate in all or part of the meetings, as appropriate. Students at age 14 must be invited for transition purposes.
- At initial IEPTs and three year re-evaluations, a member of the MET is required to participate.



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Parent Participation

Parents should participate in the meeting, sharing ideas and opinions. It is also important that parents ask for explanations whenever presented information is not clearly understood. Parents can also assist the IEPT in the following ways:

- Write down any information that you would like the school staff to know about your child.
- Come to the IEPT with any reports by outside consultants or therapists that the staff needs in order to have a complete picture of your child.
- Share information with staff regarding your child's strengths and/or weaknesses, particularly any of which the staff may not be aware.
- Help staff understand your child by describing your child's behavior at home.
- Complete the Parent Input forms and questionnaires
- Avoid pre-deciding which program you feel is best for your child until you have had an opportunity to hear programs discussed.
- Focus on the 'T' in IEPT. Remember that you are a member of the team will benefit your child.



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The Individualized Educational Plan (IEP)

An IEP is a plan, developed and written by the IEPT that outlines specific goals and objectives for a student on an individual basis. The IEP designates the instructional and support staff that will work with the student on specified goals during a specific period of time. IEPs are developed at least annually.

IEP Components

The IEP includes the following:

- The student's Present Level of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP).
 - This includes academic, behavioral, social, communication, and physical areas of development
- Student's eligibility
- Annual goals and short-term objectives
- A list of related services to be provided to the student
- The amount of time in general education and special education
- Least restrictive environment options
- Transition needs for students over the age of 14

Parents may sign the IEP at the end of the annual meeting. Parents also have the option of taking the IEP home to study and review prior to signing. Since an IEP must be developed through a team process, parents may not write on the document. If there are questions, parents should contact a member of the team for clarification.

Parents and staff should work together to develop the student's program. Parents and staff often need to hold further discussions to help determine appropriate goals, programs, or services for the student. However, if the disagreement cannot be resolved, parents have rights they can explore.



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Resolving Disputes

Most problems or concerns about a child's education are best resolved at the school. Staff members at the school are the most familiar with the child and the child's program/services and have the tools available to serve the child's best interest. When problems or questions arise, parents should first contact the child's teacher. The office staff is very helpful in helping you understand each teacher's schedule and their availability to meet. All Academy teachers and special education service providers have e-mail which can help with contacting them. If problems cannot be resolved after meeting with the teacher/service provider, a meeting can be scheduled with the building principal or a designee from the Student Support Services Department. Working together with parents, staff can resolve most concerns expediently.

Chain of Contact

- 1) Classroom Teacher
- 2) Special Education Caseload Manager
- 3) Special Education Coordinator
- 4) Principal
- 5) MISD Director of Special Education
- 6) Michigan Department of Education

After all attempts to resolve problems and issues at the building/district level has been exhausted, it may be appropriate to contact the Intermediate School District. In the case that a parent feels that the school district has been unresponsive and has not made appropriate progress in dealing with an issue, parents may contact the Macomb Intermediate School District (MISD). The concerns are first discussed at the County level which could lead to a resolution to the problem. If discussion does not offer to a solution to the concern, a formal complaint may be filed.

A formal complaint is a written allegation. The statement(s) must indicate that there has been an uncorrected violation, misinterpretation, or misapplication of specific special education laws. The statement could also indicate that a child's IEP is not being implemented as written.



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Arts Academy in the Woods special education personnel will explain parental rights regarding complaints and provides copies of related rules.

- The Intermediate School District must investigate the complaint within 21 calendar days.
- The complaint must be investigated by a member of the special education staff who has no authority over programs or services against which the complaint is filed.
- The ISD must give a copy of its findings to the parent and the district in writing.

Parents also have the right to request an independent educational evaluation at public expense if there is disagreement with the evaluation conducted by the school district. The request should be made at the IEPT that is convened following the MET to determine eligibility. Following your request, the school district will provide information as to where an evaluation can be obtained. The district has the option to honor your request for payment or to refuse payment. If the district refuses payment of an independent evaluation, an impartial due process hearing officer will determine if the district must pay for the evaluation.

Mediation

In addition, mediation is available for to settle disputes so that a due process hearing does not become necessary. The following regulations apply to mediation:

- The parent and district must agree on the mediator.
- The mediator must not impose a decision on the parent or the school district. The mediator can assist the parent and the district in coming to a resolution.
- If a resolution is reached, the mediator must provide a written description of the resolution.

The IEPT must meet to incorporate the mediated agreement into the IEP

Due Process

If you disagree with the IEPT regarding the identification, evaluation, or placement of your child, you have the right to a special education due process hearing. This hearing is designed to settle your dispute with the school district. You must request a hearing in writing.



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If you exercise your right to a hearing, you also have the right to:

- Have the hearing at a time and place reasonably convenient for you.
- Be told of any free or low cost legal and other relevant services available.
- Have access to your child's records so you may prepare for the hearing.
- Have a hearing officer who is agreeable to both you and the school district.
- Be accompanied, represented, and advised at the hearing by legal counsel or a parent advocate and present your own witnesses and evidence.
- Have your child present if you desire.
- Have a written or electronic transcript of the hearing upon request.
- Have a written decision within 45 days after the district receives the initial request for the hearing.
- Appeal to the State Department of Education for a state review of the local hearing decision.

NOTE

Parents can change their mind after a request for a hearing has been made. The request to cancel the meeting must be in writing. Once a hearing officer has been selected, the hearing officer must approve the cancellation.



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Programming Services

The programming options listed below are in order from the least to the most restrictive.

Teacher Consultant Services

Special Education students are enrolled in general education classes with the support of a certified Teacher Consultant. The Teacher Consultant works with the general education teacher to help make accommodations for the student. The Teacher Consultant provides direct support to instructional staff while providing indirect instructional and/or behavioral support to students functioning in the general education classroom. The Teacher Consultant serves as a resource for general education and special education teachers, other support staff, parents, and building administrators.

Educational Support Staff

Arts Academy in The Woods can provide ancillary and other related services for students. Some staff primarily serves as members of the diagnostic team while others may provide direct support to the student. Services that may be provided for students are determined through the IEPT. All support staff may be part of a student's MET and or IEPT. Services that the school can provide include:

Speech & Language Provider

The Speech and Language Provider evaluates students who may qualify for special education programs and services due to a disability in the areas of language development, articulation, voice, and fluency. Speech and Language Providers provide instructional support to students and are involved with helping students with augmentative communication. Speech and Language Providers also consult with educational staff, parents, and community agencies relating to speech and other communication disorders.

Occupational Therapist

The Occupational Therapist works with students who need individual exercises or adaptations for coordination of fine motor and perceptual motor problems. As well as direct support, the Occupational Therapist may help other professional or



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paraprofessional staff members support the student on a daily basis. The support provided by the Occupational Therapist must support the student to meet success in the educational environment.

Physical Therapist

The Physical Therapist evaluates and provides support for students who need treatment for gross motor control, basic mobility, and balance. The Physical Therapist helps the staff who works with the student on a daily basis to understand the student's physical capabilities and limitations. Support may include assisting a student with the use of adaptive equipment or instructing staff about the safe way to lift or transfer a student. Physical Therapist services are based on a prescription from a physician. Activities supported through physical therapy have educational relevance.

School Psychologist

The School Psychologist evaluates students' intelligence, personality, and perceptual-motor skills using tests, observations and other procedures. The School Psychologist may also administer achievement tests and is capable of overlaying the results of these evaluations with school curriculum.

School Social Worker

The School Social Worker may evaluate a student's social and emotional adjustment. School Social Workers provide direct support to all students in making behavioral and academic progress. Goals that are most often written on IEPs that require social work support are related to social, emotional, or school adjustment problems. School Social Workers serve as resource persons to educational staff, students, and parents in providing problem solving techniques; acting as a liaison between the school, home, and community while coordinating and developing community resources. School Social Workers also take a leadership role in the development of student behavior plans.

Special Education Teacher

The Special Education Teacher consults with general education teachers to develop and maintain academic programming for students with an Individual Educational Plan.



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Collects, analyzes, interprets data, and participates in the special education process. Provides direct and indirect support to students on their caseload and manages caseload ancillary services.

Resource Programs

Eligible students are enrolled in general education for the majority of their day. Direct instructional support is provided to the student in areas of identified need by a Special Education Teacher for the remainder of the school day. The Resource room teacher in the resource program will instruct students in the areas of weakness as well as provide consultation to the student's general education teacher. Resource Programs are available in all of the schools within the district.



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