

Availability of Services for Students with Special Needs

Your local school district and all public schools in Kansas provide free special education services for eligible exceptional children ages 3 through 21 or high school graduation. Parents are encouraged to seek assistance from teachers, principals or other professionals if they have questions regarding their child's progress in school. Children with autism, emotional disturbance, giftedness, hearing impairments, specific learning disabilities, mental retardation, orthopedic impairments, other health impairments, speech or language impairments, traumatic brain injuries, or visual impairments may be found to be eligible and in need of special education or related services. In addition, children ages 3 through 9 who are experiencing developmental delays may also need these services. The related services, which is not an all-inclusive list includes: assistive technology devices and services, audiology, counseling services, early identification and assessment of disabilities, interpreting services, medical services for diagnostic or evaluation references, occupational therapy, orientation and mobility services, parent counseling and training, physical therapy, recreation including therapeutic recreation, rehabilitation counseling, school health services, school nurse services, school psychological services, school social work, speech and language, special education administration and supervision, transportation, vocational/transitional, and other developmental, corrective or support resources.

Special education is not meant for all children experiencing problems in development or trouble with school work. Some students who are experiencing difficulty benefit more from the individual attention of a general education classroom teacher, the guidance counselor, and, of course, concerned parents. Your school district makes an effort to screen students for possible disabilities by carefully monitoring their progress on daily work and on achievement tests. Special education professionals, as part of school student improvement teams, sometimes work with regular education teachers and students to help solve problems students experience in learning. When classroom interventions are not successful, a referral for an initial evaluation is made. In addition, free screening clinics for children ages birth to five are held on a monthly basis in the area, and any parent with a concern is welcome to bring their child to be screened. School counselors, psychologists, and social workers are available to visit with teachers and parents regarding any concerns they might have. Parents who are concerned that their child may have an undetected disability are asked to notify the principal of the child's school in writing regarding the concerns.

Parents and their exceptional children have a number of rights under the law with regard to special education. For each of these rights, there are certain responsibilities both for parents and for the school. The school system is responsible for safeguarding children's rights, including the right to benefit from the regular curriculum, to receive educational services in the least restrictive environment, and the right to participate in nonacademic and extracurricular activities. In addition, the school system is responsible for obtaining parental consent before evaluating a child or providing him/her special education services, for maintaining the confidentiality of all personal information regarding the child, and for making all educational records available to the parents. Parents should assist the school system by keeping them informed of things that affect the child's education, attending conferences concerning their child's educational program, and by keeping the lines of communication open. Together, parents and school personnel can help children grown and develop into capable adults.

Your school district is a member of the Northeast Kansas Education Service Center (NEKESC), also known as Keystone, an organization that enables seven school districts in Atchison and Jefferson counties to collaborate in the provision of special education services. Participating districts include the following: Valley Falls USD #338, Jefferson County North USD #339, Jefferson West USD #340, Oskaloosa USD #341, McLouth USD #342, Perry USD #343, and Atchison County USD #377. In addition, early intervention services for eligible children age birth to three in these districts are available through Keystone.

Official records for all students receiving special education services in the above school districts are maintained at the Keystone central office at 500 E. Sunflower Blvd., Ozawkie, KS 66070. Special education teachers maintain files in their classroom on students with whom they are working. Any parent of a student, or student who has reached age 18, has the right to review these records without unnecessary delay. This right includes having someone explain documents in the records, obtaining copies of the records at reasonable or no cost, and allowing a representative of the parent (with signed permission) to examine records. In cases where records might contain information on more than one student, the parts pertaining to other students will be deleted. Upon request, Keystone discloses educational records without consent to officials of another school district in which a student seeks or intends to enroll, as allowed by federal law.

Anyone who wishes further information concerning services for exceptional students may contact the Keystone office in Ozawkie at 785-876-2214. Information is available also through the Kansas State Department of Education at 785-296-3869, or the "Make a Difference" Hot Line at 1-800-332-6262.