



**NAETISL**

National Association of  
Educational Translators and  
Interpreters of Spoken Languages



**MODDC**

Missouri  
Developmental  
Disabilities Council

# UNDERSTANDING SPECIAL EDUCATION: *An Overview for Parents*

---

Funding for the Supporting Language Access in Schools Project in Missouri provided by the Missouri Developmental Disabilities Council, was supported by the Administration for Community Living (ACL), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of a financial assistance award totaling \$1,361,246 with 100 percent funding by ACL/HHS. The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by ACL/HHS, or the U.S. Government.



[naetisl@gmail.com](mailto:naetisl@gmail.com)



[www.naetisl.org](http://www.naetisl.org)

NAETISL



*Follow us*



MODDC



[moddc@moddcouncil.org](mailto:moddc@moddcouncil.org)



[www.moddcouncil.org](http://www.moddcouncil.org)





## Understanding Special Education: *An Overview for Parents*

---

### What is special education?

Special education is specially designed instruction to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability. It helps students learn in the way that works best for them, whether in general education classrooms, small groups, or through related services like speech or occupational therapy.

### Who qualifies for special education?

A child may qualify if they

- Have a disability (e.g., learning disability, autism, attention deficient hyperactivity disorder, speech/language delay, deafness)
- Need special instruction to succeed in school
- Are between 3 and 22 years old

Eligibility is determined through an evaluation process and guided by federal law under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Younger children with developmental delays or disabilities, from birth to 3 years, may also qualify for services.

### How do I know if my child needs special education?

You might notice your child:

- Struggles with reading, writing, or math
- Has trouble focusing, sitting still, or completing tasks
- Finds it hard to communicate or interact socially





- Isn't making progress even with help from the teacher

**If you are concerned, you can request an evaluation through your child's school.**

### **What is an evaluation?**

An evaluation is a comprehensive set of tests and observations that looks at how your child learns, behaves, and communicates. It is used to understand your child's strengths and challenges. Only qualified professionals, like a school psychologist or educator, administer these tests.

The school must get your written consent before evaluating.

### **What is an IEP?**

Children who are eligible for special education receive an Individualized Education Program (IEP). The IEP is a legal document that:

- Outlines your child's learning needs
- Lists the goals for the year
- Details the services and support the school will provide

The IEP is created by a team that includes you, teachers, specialists, and sometimes your child.

If you do not want your child to receive special education services or if you disagree with the IEP, you may refuse services.





## What services might my child receive?

Depending on their needs, your child may receive:

- Extra help in reading or math
- Speech or language therapy
- Occupational or physical therapy
- Social skills training
- Counseling or behavioral support
- Accommodations (e.g., more time on tests)

## Will my child be removed from the general classroom?

Not necessarily. Most children with IEPs spend all or most of the time in general education classrooms with support. The IEP team will decide the least restrictive environment (LRE) that is right for your child.

## What are my rights as a parent?

You have the right to:

- Participate in all meetings
- Review and request changes to the IEP
- Receive reports on your child's progress
- Disagree with decisions and request mediation or a hearing
- Access all educational records

## What can I do to support my child?

- Ask questions and stay informed
- Keep copies of all reports and IEPs
- Stay in contact with teachers and service providers
- Support learning at home with routines and encouragement
- Join local parent support groups or advocacy organizations





## Where can I find more information?

Talk to your school's special education coordinator or visit your state's special education website for more resources.

## How can I get help in my language?

Request interpreter services at your child's school or the school district's office. Request translated written information if needed. Information available to all parents in the school district should be available to you as well.

