

Steel Valley School District Annual Public Notices

SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES -ANNUAL PUBLIC NOTICE ON SCREENING AND EVALUATION

It is the policy of the Steel Valley School District that every child shall be provided with the opportunity for a free, appropriate, public education. The district is responsible for locating, identifying and educating children who are in need of special education programming. If anyone in the community is aware of a child with a disability such as an intellectual disability, blindness, deafness or with a physical disability that needs special education and is not receiving it, please notify the school district. Parents of students who suspect that their child has a disability and is in need of special education may request a Child Study, Student Assistance Team meeting or a multidisciplinary team evaluation of their child through a written request to the building principal or director of pupil personnel and special services.

Information regarding the appropriate developmental milestone descriptions for infants and toddlers at the Center for Disease Control (CDC) website at <http://www.cdc.gov> or The National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities (NICHY) website at <http://nichcy.org>. For additional information regarding the signs of developmental delays or other disabilities, please contact Mrs. Diana L. Borges, Director of Pupil Personnel and Special Services at 412-464-3600, ext. 1905.

Services for School-Age Students with Disabilities

The Steel Valley School District uses the following procedures for locating, identifying, and evaluating specified needs of school-aged students who may require special education programs or services. These procedures, as required by state regulations, are as follows:

The district, as prescribed by Section 1402 of the Pennsylvania School Code, routinely conducts screenings of a child's hearing acuity in the following grades: kindergarten, 1, 2, 3, 7, and 11. Visual acuity and growth is screened in every grade. Dental screenings are completed in grades 1, 3 and 7 and scoliosis screening is completed for students in grades 6 and 7. Speech and language skills are screened in kindergarten and on a referral basis. As assessed by classroom teachers on an on-going basis, gross motor and fine motor skills, academic skills, and social-emotional skills. Other screening activities include the review of cumulative group based achievement, health and attendance records, grades and information shared by parents or guardians. Specified needs from all of these screening sources are noted within the child's official file.

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. School records may be released to other schools, without written permission, in which the student would enroll. Information from student records is released to other persons or agencies only with appropriate authorization that involves written signed permission by parents.

Parents with concerns regarding their student may contact building principals at any time to request a screening or evaluation of their child. Communication with parents and eligible students shall be in English or the native language of the parents.

Screening information will be used within the student's school by the SAP Team or Child Study Team to work together to meet his or her specific needs or to document the need for further evaluation. If it is determined that a child needs additional services, the SAP/Child Study Team will make adjustments relative to such things as the child's learning style, behavior, physical inabilities, and speech problems to be more in keeping with traditional classroom expectancies. If, after continued monitoring, the child does not make progress, parents will be asked to give written permission for further individual professional evaluations by a Multidisciplinary Team.

The Multidisciplinary Team consists of parents, teachers, a certified public school psychologist, other related service personnel and persons familiar with the student's educational experience and cultural background. The evaluations conducted by the Team, must be sufficient in scope and depth to provide information about the student's academic functioning, adaptive and social behavior, learning problems, strengths and information obtained by the SAP or Child Study Team and information from the parents.

After all the evaluations are completed, an Evaluation Report (ER) will be compiled and include specific team recommendations as to whether the student is exceptional and is in need of specially designed instruction. The ER will also provide information as to the types of interventions that are appropriate to meet the child's specified needs. This evaluation will be completed and a report sent to the parents within 60 calendar days (not counting summer months). Parents are then invited to participate in a meeting where the report will be discussed.

If the student meets criteria for special education services, an Individualized Education Program (IEP) will be developed for specialized services for the student within 30 days. The Steel Valley School District IEP Team will consist of at least two of the following district staff: the building principal, the special education teacher, the regular education teacher, the psychologist, the director of pupil services, other teachers or specialists as needed and other administrative staff when appropriate. One person may fulfill two or more roles.

Parents are an integral part of the IEP team and need to be physically present at the IEP meeting. The district will make every effort to insure parent participation. The district will notify the parents in writing, make documented phone calls, and make home visits, if necessary, to make parents aware of the IEP conference and the need for parental participation. Prior to initiation of services, parents will be presented a Notice of Recommended Educational Placement (NOREP) that explains the services and program recommendations. Parental consent must be obtained before providing initial special education and related services. The Procedural Safeguards Notice describes the parents' rights and options if they disagree with the individualized program presented.

Services for Students Who are Mentally Gifted

When screening results suggest a student may be eligible for gifted education, the school district seeks a parental consent to conduct a multidisciplinary team evaluation. The initial

evaluation is summarized in the Gifted Written Report (GWR) and used by the Gifted Individualized Education Program (GIEP) team to develop to develop the GIEP. After the initial evaluation, students identified as mentally gifted are reevaluated before a change in educational placement recommended or under recommendation of the GIEP team. The Notice of Recommendation Assignment (NORA), signed by the parent, gives the school district permission to provide services.

Services for Eligible School-Age Students

The Steel Valley School District provides a full range of placement options and services to eligible students. Options in the district range from supportive intervention in the regular classroom to full time special education classes, depending on the student's individual needs. Inclusive intervention practices are the first step in the continuum of placement options. If a placement option is not available within the District to meet the student's needs, then services are secured from the Intermediate Unit, another school district, a licensed private academic day school, an approved private school or a community agency. Placement options provide for a free and appropriate public education for all eligible students. The District also provides such related services as speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, transportation, nursing services, psychological services, social worker services and special education aide support.

The following programs are provided within the District: Learning Support, Life Skills Support, Emotional Support, Autistic Support, Physical Support, Blind or Visually Impaired Support, Deaf or Hearing Impaired Support, Speech and Language Support and Gifted Support. Programs outside the District include, but are not limited to, Pressley Ridge School, Wesley Spectrum, PACE School, Friendship Academy, Holy Family Learning, Katherine D. Tillotson School, Mon Valley School, The Children's Institute, Western Pennsylvania School for Blind Children and Western Pennsylvania School for the Deaf.

Services for Students in Nonpublic Schools

Public school education may be accessible to resident students attending nonpublic schools by affording the opportunity for the nonpublic school student to enroll on a part-time dual enrollment basis in a special education program operated within a District school. These services are accessible following a Multidisciplinary Team evaluation, determination of eligibility and development of an Individualized Education Program. Parents of non-public school students can obtain further information by contacting their child's school principal or the Office of Pupil Services at 412-464-3600 x1905.

Services for Preschool Age Children

Act 212, the Early Intervention System Act, entitles all preschool age children with disabilities to appropriate early intervention services. Young children experiencing developmental delays or physical or mental disabilities are eligible for early intervention services. The Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare is responsible for providing services to infants and toddlers, defined as children from birth through two years of age. Contact the Alliance for Infants and Toddlers at 2801 Custer Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15227, (412) 885-6000. The Pennsylvania Department of Education is responsible for providing services to preschool age children from

three to five years of age contact Project DART at 475 E. Waterfront Drive, Homestead, PA 15120, (412) 394-5941.

PUPIL PERSONNEL SERVICES

Protected Handicapped Students - Chapter 15

The Steel Valley School District, in compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and Chapter 15 of the Pennsylvania Public School Code, will provide without discrimination or cost to the student or family, those related aides, services or accommodations which are needed to provide the student equal opportunity to participate in and obtain the benefits of the school program and extracurricular activities to the maximum extent appropriate to the student's abilities. To qualify as a protected handicapped student, the child must be of school age with a physical or mental handicap, which substantially limits or prohibits participation in or access to an aspect of the school program. These services and protections for protected handicapped students are distinct from those applicable to all eligible students in special education programs.

For further information on the evaluation procedures and provisions of services to protected handicapped students, please contact your child's school counselor or Mrs. Borges, Director of Pupil Personnel and Special Services at (412) 464-3600 x1905.

Education Rights and Privacy – Confidentiality of Student Records

The Steel Valley School District and its employees are required by Federal Law and State and Federal Rules and Regulations to protect the rights of students. The foundation of these rights comes from Federal legislation entitled, Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974 (also known as the Buckley Amendments). There are State Rules and Regulations dealing with regular and special education students' rights and privacy. All students are covered by the State Regulations contained in Chapter 12 known as Students' Rights and Responsibilities, which include regulations on the collection, maintenance, and dissemination of pupil records.

The basic premise of the above-mentioned laws, rules, and regulations is that information about students cannot be disclosed without written parental consent except in limited instances which include disclosure from one educational agency to another when the student transfers. There are different categories of information: Educational Records consist of information related to a student that is maintained by an educational agency. Personally Identifiable Information includes the student's name, the name of the parent or other family members, a personal identifier or a list of personal characteristics that would make the student's identity easily traceable.

Education Records and Personally Identifiable Information cannot be disclosed or related without written parent consent or if a student is over eighteen without student consent, except as permitted under Federal Regulations and State Guidelines with regard to the student's transfer to another educational agency.

There is certain information that can be released without consent, which is called Directory Information. Directory Information means information contained in an education record of a student which would not generally be considered harmful or an invasion of privacy if disclosed. The School District designates what information is labeled as Directory Information. It shall include the following: Student's name, address, phone number, date and place of birth, major field of study, participation in officially recognized activities and sports, weight and height of members of athletic teams, dates of attendance, degrees and awards received, and the most recent previous educational agency or institution attended by the student.

Disclosure of information means to permit access to or the release, transfer, or other communication of education records, or the personally identifiable information contained in these records, to any party, by any means, including oral, written, or electronic means. This means that information about a student cannot even be shared in conversation without permission. This also applies to other Steel Valley personnel who do not have an educationally relevant reason to possess knowledge of a student.

Written parental consent is necessary for disclosure of personally identifiable information and education records. The consent must: (1) specify the records that may be disclosed; (2) state the purpose of the disclosure; and (3) identify the party or class of parties to whom the disclosure may be made. Furthermore, Steel Valley must maintain a written record of disclosure for the parents to inspect in case information has been released.

In accordance with 34 CFR § 300.624, please be advised of the following retention/destruction schedule for the Pennsylvania Alternate System of Assessment (PASA), Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA), and Keystone Exam related materials:

- PSSA, Keystone Exam, and PASA test booklets will be destroyed one year after student reports are delivered for the administration associated with the test booklets.
- PSSA and Keystone Exam answer booklets and PASA media recordings will be destroyed three years after completion of the assessment.

Complaints asserting FERPA violations are filed with and reviewed and investigated by the U.S. Department of Education, Family Compliance Office, 400 Maryland Ave. SW, Washington, DC 20202-5901. Phone: 202-260-3882. Informal inquiries may be sent to: ferpa@ed.gov, or ppra@ed.gov. The web site address is: www.ed.gov/policy/gen/guide/fpcd.

Non-Discrimination Policy

It is the policy of the Steel Valley School District not to discriminate on the basis of sex, race, color, national origin, disability, or age in its educational and vocational programs, activities, or employment as required by Sections 503 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title VI, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 and state and federal laws. For information about your rights or grievance procedures, contact Title VI Coordinator, Ed Colebank (412) 464-3600 x1555, Title IX Coordinator, Bryan Macuga (412) 464-3600 x2515 or Chapters 14 and 15 Coordinator, Diana L. Borges, (412) 464-3600 x1905 at the Steel Valley School District, Munhall, Pennsylvania.

Employees and participants who have an inquiry or complaint of harassment or discrimination, or who need information about accommodations for persons with disabilities, should contact:

Edward Wehrer, Superintendent at (412) 464-3600 x1505 at the Steel Valley School District Administration Building in Munhall, Pennsylvania or the Director of the Office of Civil Rights, Department of Health, Education and Welfare, 400 Maryland Avenue, S.W. Washington, D.C. 20202-1100.