

WHAT IS EXCEPTIONAL STUDENT EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN WHO ARE GIFTED?

Parents Are Part of the Team!

School staff can answer parents' questions about ESE, about how parents can participate, and about parents' rights and responsibilities. Other sources of information include the school principal and the ESE administrator in the local school district office.

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The rights of parents of students who are gifted are called their "procedural safeguards."

Parents receive a written summary of their procedural safeguards when they are asked to give their consent for their child to be individually evaluated.

*In Florida, children who have special learning needs are called exceptional students. Exceptional students include students who are gifted and students with disabilities. The special help these students are given at school is called **exceptional student education (ESE)**. The purpose of ESE is to help each child with an exceptionality to progress in school and prepare for life after school. Exceptional student education services may include special teaching methods and materials.*

Decisions about a child's ESE services are made by a team. The child's parents are part of this team. Below is a basic explanation of the ESE process for students who are gifted. This process is based on state requirements.

REFERRAL FOR INDIVIDUAL EVALUATION

A **referral** is a request for an individual evaluation of a child who is suspected of needing ESE services. Some children are referred because their needs are not being met in the general classroom or based on their scores on state or district assessments. However, several kinds of strategies are usually tried *before* a referral for evaluation is made. If the strategies are not effective, the parent or the school staff will then refer the child for an evaluation.

INDIVIDUAL EVALUATION

An **individual evaluation** is a way of collecting information about a child's learning needs, strengths, problems, and interests. The evaluation may include tests, observations, interviews, or other ways of gathering information. In order for a child to be individually evaluated, the parent or guardian must give written consent.

ELIGIBILITY DETERMINATION

After the evaluation, the school holds a meeting called an **eligibility staffing**. The team at the eligibility staffing discusses the information collected about the child. Then the team determines whether the child is eligible for ESE services. To receive ESE services, the child must meet the criteria listed in Florida's State Board of Education rules.

WHAT HAPPENS IF THE CHILD IS ELIGIBLE?

DEVELOPMENT OF THE FIRST EP

If the child is eligible for ESE services, the next step is to hold a meeting to write an **educational plan (EP) for the student**. The child's parents are invited to this meeting because they are members of the EP team. The EP team documents the child's present levels of performance, establishes goals for the child, and decides which special services and supports the child needs in order to make progress and achieve his or her goals.

The EP team also decides in what kind of classes or setting the child will receive services. Most children who are gifted spend most of their school day in general education classrooms. Some children leave the general education classroom for part of the day to receive services in an ESE resource class. A few children spend all day in a special class or in a special school.

CONSENT FOR PLACEMENT & SERVICES BEGIN

After the **first** EP has been written, the parent is asked to give written consent for the child to receive ESE services. A child cannot receive ESE services for the first time until the EP is written and the parent has given **consent for placement**.

DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW EP

At least once every three years, the EP team meets to talk about the child's progress and to develop a new EP. Of course, the child's needs may change at any time, so the parent, the teacher, or other team members may ask for an EP meeting at any time. The child's services can only be changed during an EP meeting.

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Note: Programs for students with disabilities are also part of ESE. However, the process for serving students with disabilities is not the same as the process described above. For more information, contact the school district's ESE administrator.

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Florida Department
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Charlie Crist, Commissioner

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