

A Guide for Parents as They Consider Special Education Placement

Parents are an important part of the IEP team and are entitled to visit proposed placements. This guide is designed to help you assess and compare placements so that you can make informed decisions about the appropriateness of a program for your son or daughter with disabilities.

ASAH

Lexington Square, 2125 Route 33 Hamilton Square, NJ 08690 1-877-287-ASAH (2724) www.asah.org





View and save this Placement Guide on your device

Partnerships for Promising Futures

Notes:	GETTING STARTED		
	Before your visit Ask for copies of the school's handbook and brochure to familiarize yourself with the program.		
	If the school has a website, visit it to learn as much as you can.		
	On the day of your visit Use this guide to help structure your visit. Highlight questions or areas that are particularly important to you. Bear in mind that some of the services listed will be more or less relevant to your child's needs. For example, if your child does not use a wheelchair, mobility and positioning services may not be important to your child's program.		
	Ask to observe instructional time in the classroom where your child might be placed.		
	Keep an open mind throughout your visit and ask questions about anything that you do not understand.		
	Ask for a contact phone number before you leave in case you have questions after your visit.		
	SCHOOL FACILITY		
	One of the first things most parents notice about a school is the facility:		
	Classrooms Do classrooms reflect the needs of the students who learn there? Are they conducive to the ways in which your child learns? Are they		
	part of the school building, or set off, either in a basement, trailer or remote part of the building? If they are set off, is it for instructional reasons, such as limiting noise and distractions?		
	Therapy Areas & Adaptive Equipment Are therapy services offered at the program? If yes, are they offered in the classroom, or in separate rooms? Does equipment appear to be		
	clean and well-maintained? Outdoor Areas Are outdoor areas secure? Do they offer ago appropriate activities?		
	Are outdoor areas secure? Do they offer age-appropriate activities? Are they safe and well-maintained? Are they accessible?		
	Computers & Technology Are computers and other technology appropriate and readily		
	available to students? Is it current? How is it being used as part of the curriculum?		

Restrooms Are restrooms in or near the class: there a place for privacy if support	room? Are they clean and safe? Is twith personal care is needed?	Notes:
Security		
_	t safe at all times? Does the school ace to deal with emergencies? Are safe and well-supervised? How	
parking, pick-up, and drop-off are		
are visitors handled?		•••••
Recreation		
Is there space for physical education	on? Is it clean, safe, and well-lit?	
Daily Living Skills If the students are learning activities of daily living, is there a kitchen,		
bedroom, and/or laundry area?	ies of daily living, is there a kitchen,	
PROGRAM SPECIFICS		
It is important that program characteristics be <i>observed</i> , as well as described to you by staff or administration.		
Mission & Philosophy What is the mission of the program? Can you see elements of the mission or philosophy in action?		
History		
How long has the program been in operation? Does the program have a proven and positive "track record?"		
Curriculum		•••••
Curriculum refers to <i>what</i> is being taught. All programs are required to align their curricula to the Common Core State Standards.		
Do you see evidence of this? In what ways is the curriculum adapted		•••••
±	at subjects are offered at each grade	
level? Are other areas of instruction	on offered, such as:	
■ Behavior & Social Skills	Career Training & AwarenessCommunity-Based InstructionRecreation	
 Transition to Adult Life Life Skills Self Advocacy Self-Direction Art/Music 		
	■ Travel Training	
	■ Job Coaching, Job Sampling	
Instructional Strategies	•••••	
Instructional strategies refer to ho		
Does the school use evidenced-based 'best practices' for the students they serve? Does the school use specific methods of instruction		

(i.e., Applied Behavior Analysis for students with autism; Orton-Gillingham-based reading instruction; or American Sign Language) if appropriate? Are staff appropriately supervised and credentialed?	Notes:
Does the school offer one-to-one or small group instruction? How	
does the program individualize instruction to meet the unique needs of each student?	
Assessment	
How is student progress monitored and assessed? In which State assessments do students participate? Where is the assessment	
administered? How are testing modifications and accommodations provided?	
Class types How many classes are in the program? What is the student male to	
female ratio? Does the school serve a wide range of special needs, or a	
specific population? Is there more than one class per grade level? How are class assignments made? What is the age range in the class?	
Class Size & Configuration What is the student to teacher ratio? What is the role of	
paraprofessionals? Do students work with several teachers, or just	
one? Who has primary responsibility for each student's instruction?	
Schoolwide Programs Does the program offer schoolwide programs such as a prom, sports,	
leadership opportunities, student government, performing arts	
programs, community service, after school clubs, or overnight trips? How are all students meaningfully included as participants in school	
wide programs? What supports are available to allow students to	
actively participate?	
Homework What is the school policy toward homework? How much should the	
student expect? What is the role of parents in homework?	
DEL ATED SERVICES	
RELATED SERVICES	
Related services are an important part of the special education	
program for many students.	
Does the program offer the related services your child needs in	
order to benefit from special education? Are the services offered in the classroom, or in a separate room? Are the services offered at	
the school, or do students leave the school? Are the related services professionals members of the school staff or are they consultants?	
How often and when are they at the program? Below is a checklist to	
help you organize information on related services provision.	

Related Services On-site or Consultative?	Individual	Group	Notes:
Speech/Language Services			
Occupational Therapy			•••••
Physical Therapy			
Audiology			
Social Work			•••••
Counseling			
Psychological			
Positioning & Mobility			•••••
School Health Services			
Personal Care			
Behavior Specialist			
Assistive Technology			
Nursing Services			
Transition			
Psychiatric Services			
Other			
there a school nurse? Can he/s have nursing experience that r are other health issues (seizure Ask about the specific health so BEHAVIOR MANAGI			
For many students with disabil needed to reduce challenging bappropriate behaviors.			
	1 1 11	. 11 . 01	
How does the program plan for the behavior system utilized or particular students and/or class			
rewards and privileges for appr			
and used to make decisions? A worker, school psychologist)?			
grounded in research? Do they			
Does the school use specific procedures to reduce inappropriate behavior? Does the school use restraint procedures or time-out procedures? How is the use of these procedures monitored and			
reported to parents? How are s			
certifications maintained? How making about behavior manage			
making about behavior management? What is the program's policy for suspension and expulsion?			

ROLE OF PARENTS

Parent participation can be an important part of a special education program.

Formal Role for Parents: Is there a PTO or PTA? What is its role?

Parent Involvement: What supports are available to parents? Are parent volunteers welcome at school? In the classroom? What is the school's policy on parental visits and observations?

Home-School Communication: How is home-school communication handled?

Parent Support/Parent Education: Is there a support group for parents? Is parent training or parent education part of the program? Is there in-home support, if needed? Are parents encouraged to network with one another? Are there parent references you can call?

STAFF & ADMINISTRATION

All staff should be appropriately credentialed for the positions they hold, and should be certified and experienced.

What is the rate of staff turnover? What is the mix of new staff and experienced staff? Are program supervisors and clinical staff on-site and available to answer questions? Are consultants used to oversee the program? If so, how often are they on-site?

STUDENTS

What is the age range of students accepted at the program? At what age do students "age out?" Where do most students go when they leave? Are the students' disabilities similar to your child's? How far do most students travel to come to school? How long do most students remain at the program?

LICENSURE & ACCREDITATION

Is the school affiliated with, approved, or accredited by an independent source?

Approval □ New Jersey Department of Education	☐ Other State department
Affiliations/Accreditations	
☐ ASAH membership	☐ Nat. Assoc. of Private Special Education Centers (NAPSEC)
☐ Middle States Association	☐ Teaching Family Assoc. (TFA)
□ COA	☐ Comm. of Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF)
☐ Council for Exceptional Children	☐ Nat. Comm. for the Accred. of Spec. Ed. Servs. (NCASES)
□ Other	
After your visit	

What was your general feeling about the program and the people you met? Did you feel welcomed and were your questions answered? Are the people you met knowledgeable about your child's disability?

This guide was produced by ASAH to help parents as they make decisions about their child's special education program. It is available online in both English and Spanish at http://www.asah.org/, 2nd reprint with revisions, ©2013 ASAH.