

## **SPECIAL EDUCATION**

Southwest Allen County School Corporation (SACS) operates a comprehensive special education program for students, age 3-22, with disabilities. Operating in accordance with Indiana Article 7, which governs the provision of special education, the Southwest Allen County Schools provides services that encompass a continuum of services. These services range from consultation in general education classrooms to learning center /resource rooms to self-contained classrooms, depending on the individual educational needs of the students identified as having a disability.

It is our goal to serve all students in their neighborhood school if at all possible. For students identified with speech and/or language impairment, for secondary students with disabilities and for elementary students with mild disabilities services are available in every building. Students with more intense needs may be assigned to a school other than the one they would normally attend, where more intensive services are available. In addition, some students who have significant vision or hearing disabilities may attend school in Indianapolis at the Indiana School of the Deaf or the Indiana School for the Blind. For students placed in these situations, transportation is provided.

Eligibility for special education is determined through the evaluation process. To access these programs students must meet state and local criteria. A Strategies for Student Success (SSS) meeting begins the process at the building level. The SSS team is typically comprised of the principal, general and special education teachers, the school counselor, the school psychologist, and the parent(s). The SSS team discusses the student's present levels of performance in area(s) of concern and reviews existing data of the educational interventions that have been used to support the student's learning. The team recommends additional interventions and educational strategies to respond to the student's identified learning needs. The SSS team may meet on any student multiple times. Intervention data is analyzed and progress is monitored in the area(s) of need. If expected progress is not realized, parent consent for an educational evaluation may be requested.

Following the review of data and evaluation information by a Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) which may include the school psychologist, therapists, guidance counselor and / or instructional strategists a recommendation for eligibility and special education services may be made. A case conference is held to review all information and recommendations. The actual determination of eligibility is made by a case conference committee (CCC) which is comprised of the parents and members of the multidisciplinary team. Initial eligibility and placement in any special education program is contingent on the parents' willingness to provide their consent.

If the student is identified as a student with a disability and found to be eligible for special education services, the case conference committee develops the Individual Education Program (IEP). Southwest Allen County is firmly committed to the philosophy of least restrictive environment (LRE). In every case, the decision regarding placement is made after the CCC reviews the student's strengths and needs. Based upon this review, a decision is made regarding the student's most appropriate and least restrictive placement. Placement options range from full-time general education to full-time special education services: the continuum of services is discussed by the case conference committee. At least once a year, the CCC is reconvened to review the plan and make necessary adjustments. This yearly meeting is referred to as the annual case review (ACR).

Most special education students participate in a combination of regular education and special education classes. In some cases, a special education teacher co-teaches with the general education

teacher or a special education teacher or trained instructional assistant attends the general education class to provide support to students with disabilities in the general education classroom. Such a commitment to inclusion requires careful and frequent communication and thoughtful planning to maximize the learning for the student. This may also result in the need for additional case conferences with the student's parent(s).

SACS also provides services to eligible students at non-public schools located within our district boundaries, and home schooled students whose parents reside within our district boundaries. Information regarding these services is available from the building principal or the special education office.

If you have concerns that your child may be eligible for special education services, contact the principal of the school your child attends to discuss whether or not a referral would be appropriate.