

# **Student Services Parent Handbook**

**Wilmette Public Schools, District 39**

*Revised 9/2013*

# Student Services Parent Handbook

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## **Welcome**

This handbook, developed by parents and educators, is for parents of children who receive support services in District 39 schools. While this handbook is an overview of special support programs and services available, there is an emphasis with regards to special education. While this handbook is not exhaustive, parents can receive more information by speaking directly with the professionals who work with their child. Additionally, links providing more complete information are available on the District 39 website, the student and special services link.

<http://www.wilmette39.org/>

District 39's educational philosophy is one of inclusion. As much as possible, children are educated at the home school in a general education classroom. The district honors and supports parent collaboration. In this spirit, a parent group (PASS 39) was established in 2002 to promote communication and teamwork among parents and with district staff. More information about PASS 39 can be found on the district website. PASS 39 can also be reached by email at [pass39@wilmette39.org](mailto:pass39@wilmette39.org)

On behalf of our community of children, parents and teachers, we welcome you and look forward to working with you.

## Who to Contact

If you have questions about your child's special education program, calling her/his special education teacher is a good place to start. However, you are also welcome to contact the people who over-see the various programs and services:

### Student and Special Services Administration

*Dr. Denise Thrasher*, Administrator of Student and Special Services. Her responsibilities include oversight of all student services and special education programs. [thrashed@wilmette39.org](mailto:thrashed@wilmette39.org) or 847-256-2450

*Ms. Anne Bowers*, Assistant Director of Student and Special Services. Her responsibilities include oversight of district services for students with comprehensive needs. [bowersa@wilmette39.org](mailto:bowersa@wilmette39.org) or 847-256-2450

### Student and Special Services Coordinators

*Ms. Romy DeCristofaro*, Student Services Coordinator. Her responsibilities include Central Elementary School, McKenzie Elementary School, and Wilmette Junior High School.

[decristr@wilmette39.org](mailto:decristr@wilmette39.org) or 847-256-2450

*Ms. Tonya Martin*, Special Education Coordinator. Her responsibilities include Harper Elementary School, Romona Elementary School, and Highcrest Middle School. [martint@wilmette39.org](mailto:martint@wilmette39.org) or 847-256-2450

*Ms. Julie Pease*, Early Childhood Coordinator. Her responsibilities include Birth-to Three and Early Childhood at Romona.

[peasej@wilmette39.org](mailto:peasej@wilmette39.org) or 847-256-0211

### Student Services Department Chairs

*Ms. Kathy Brandeisky*, Chairperson for Social Work. Her responsibilities include coordinating Social Work services across the district.

[brandeik@wilmette39.org](mailto:brandeik@wilmette39.org) or 847-256-0211

*Ms. Cristina Chung*, Chairperson for Speech and Language. Her responsibilities include coordinating Speech and Language Therapy services across the district. [chungc@wilmette39.org](mailto:chungc@wilmette39.org) or 847-853-2900

*Ms. Paula Lundell*, Chairperson for Occupational and Physical Therapy. Her responsibilities include coordinating Occupational and Physical Therapy services across the district.

[lundellp@wilmette39.org](mailto:lundellp@wilmette39.org) or 847-251-2295

*Ms. Mary Norkett*, Chairperson for Health Services. Her responsibilities include coordinating nursing services across the district.

[norketm@wilmette39.org](mailto:norketm@wilmette39.org) or 847-853-2900

*Mr. Douglass Wilson*, Chairperson for English as a Second language. His responsibilities include coordinating ESL services across the district.

[wilsond@wilmette39.org](mailto:wilsond@wilmette39.org)

## **Handbook Overview**

Student and Special Services in Wilmette District 39 is a division of the school system that oversees a broad range of programs and services directly impacting every single child that enters our schools. There are two broad categories of programs. The first is Student Services and the second is Special Education.

The first section of this handbook outlines programs and services available to the general education population as a whole. These include Health Services, Social Work and Counseling Services, English as a Second Language Programming, Reading Intervention, Response to Intervention, and 504 Plans.

The second section of this handbook deals specifically with Special Education. The Special Education section directly deals with programs and services for children with disabilities. Much of what we do in special education programming, as well as with 504 plans, has to do with federal legislation. This handbook opens with a brief overview of the federal laws that govern our practice in schools.

### **Understanding Federal Law**

There are primarily three bodies of federal law that protect the rights of children with disabilities. The first, IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) governs "Special Education" as schools know it today. This law, while quite comprehensive, only provides direct programming for children with one of thirteen educational disability categories, when in fact there are literally hundreds of disabilities.

The second body of disability law is Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. The Federal Government developed Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act as a way to address the many disabilities not covered under IDEA. Section 504 is a far-reaching law that extends protections to individuals with disabilities in most aspects of their lives. The procedures outlined in this report address Section 504 as it applies to schools.

The third body of law, which protects the rights of children with disabilities, is the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The ADA primarily provides

for accessibility of the physical structure of a school. This includes washrooms, access to playgrounds, lift buses, etc.

# **Student Services in District 39**

## **Health Services**

Parents have the primary responsibility for the health of their children. The efforts of the school are directed to help parents recognize and assume their responsibility. A trained staff provides quality care to the children in the Wilmette schools. Each school in district 39 has one registered nurse, licensed practical nurse, or certified school nurse.

According to The School Code of Illinois, physical examinations are required of all students prior to initial entrance into the school district as well as upon entrance into preschool, kindergarten, and sixth grade. Physical and dental examination forms are available from the school health office or secretary. All health examination forms must be dated. Children are not permitted to enter school until this requirement is met.

### **Questions**

If you have questions about health services in WPS39, please visit our website at <http://wilmette39.org> or contact the health services provider at your school.

## **Reading Intervention**

District 39 has provided a comprehensive reading services program since the 1999-2000 school year. The main focus of the program is addressing the needs of young readers whose scores on reading screening devices indicate a need for early intervention. Reading screening tools are also administered at various times throughout the year to monitor student improvement. Students targeted for support will receive instruction in small groups, individually, or within the classroom setting.

### **The Reading Improvement Program**

The Reading Improvement Program involves two main intervention models. One model focuses on developing emergent reading skills, particularly phonemic awareness, and is an extension of the work of Roland Good from the University of Oregon. The second provides direct services to first and



second grade children and is adapted from the Project Prevent Model from National Louis University.

The emergent reader model includes implementing phonemic awareness instruction for Kindergarten and targeted first and second grade students in small group settings or through whole classroom presentations. To implement the second model, first grade children are pulled out of the classroom for a specific program of instruction. The session involves reading and rereading books, word study, and writing. Both of these intervention models have demonstrated that they are effective in helping young children who are struggling to improve their reading and writing. For children who need support beyond second grade, a special education referral may be indicated (see page 11).

### **Reading Intervention Teachers and Paraprofessionals**

The role of these teachers includes:

- Providing direct reading instruction to certain kindergarten through fourth grade students in an individual or small group setting. This instruction is in addition to, not in place of, classroom instruction from the classroom teacher
- Coteaching and collaborating with classroom teachers to support struggling readers. For example, Reading Intervention teachers or paraprofessionals may go into a general education classroom and work with a selected group of students to improve phonemic awareness, while the classroom teacher works with other students
- Conducting a parent night on reading
- Acting as a resource on reading methods and theory for parents, administrators, teachers

### **Questions**

If you have questions about the program, please contact the Reading Services Teacher at your child's school.

### **Social Work and Counseling Services**

In District 39, each school building has social work and counseling services. Social workers support and empower students within our educational

community by meeting with students individually, in small groups, and in the classroom. Various topics addressed with students include, but are not limited to: safety skills, social skills, school motivation, anxiety, depression, confidence, self-esteem, conflict resolution, anger management, problem solving skills, school phobia, stress management, and crisis intervention. Social Workers teach strategies and techniques that enable students to develop self-confidence, make good decisions, resolve conflicts peacefully and become effective problem solvers. Social Workers help students to develop a sense of understanding, individual uniqueness, and gain an ability to apply it to daily life. In addition to direct services, social workers also develop programs to address and meet the needs of students and the school at large.

Social Workers are also part of the Student Assistance Team (SAT). Social workers, along with administrators, school psychologists, teachers, and parents collaborate and develop interventions to meet individual student's educational needs.

Students are referred for social work services through various avenues when social/emotional concerns are impacting their educational performance. Referrals can be made through SAT, parent(s), teachers, and students themselves. When services are requested, the social worker completes an assessment to determine whether school social work services are appropriate. In addition, social workers can provide a list of community resources to parents.

Social Workers also support children with special education needs. When a special education case study evaluation is deemed necessary, social workers complete a social developmental study. This component includes a parent interview, a student interview, and an assessment of adaptive behavioral functioning.

## **Social Emotional Learning in District 39**

District 39 recognizes the importance of social emotional development in students. In order to provide students with the skills and strategies needed, the district utilizes the Second Step Curriculum as the core social emotional program in Early Childhood through eighth grade. Second Step is a

research-based program providing direct instruction in core social-emotional skills such as empathy, emotion management, and problem-solving. Other critical skills for 21<sup>st</sup> century learning are embedded into the program, including persistence, interpersonal skills, self-management, disability awareness, and diversity.

## **Response to Intervention in District 39**

District 39 teachers have always strived meet the unique educational and emotional needs presented by students. This tradition continues through the implementation of processes that take into account current research and ever-changing laws. New state and federal legislation mandate a new process called Response to Intervention (RtI) that goes hand in hand with our philosophy of meeting the needs of all students. Response to Intervention practices emphasize the importance of providing high-quality, scientifically-based instruction and interventions. Through RtI, District 39 continually monitors the progress of all students, providing supports and interventions to students who are at risk for academic or emotional problems.

### **What Is RtI?**

RtI is a process designed to help District 39 schools focus on high-quality instruction and interventions that are matched to student needs and monitored on a frequent basis. School personnel and parents work together to consider the child's progress, change instruction, and make educational program decisions for students.

### **What Are the Benefits of RtI?**

Perhaps the greatest benefit of an RtI approach is that it eliminates a “wait to fail” situation, as students receive help immediately within the general education setting. If screening data indicate a problem area for a student or group of students, interventions are put into place to address these concerns.

While interventions are taking place, school staff monitors student progress. In the RtI process, teachers regularly review this data and use it to evaluate student needs. They are then able to match instruction, resources, and interventions appropriately to best serve students.

Response to Intervention utilizes a problem-solving model in order to best understand students' needs, often through school-based data meetings or Intervention Team (I-Team) meetings. A **Problem-Solving Model** focuses on the development of educational environments that are receptive and responsive to all students. It is a system that blends the expertise of all staff, as well as the resources and services available in the school, into one system to effectively meet student needs. School-based teams use the problem-solving process to develop interventions tailored to the individuals' needs or a specific student or group of students sharing common needs.

A teacher or parent initiates the problem-solving process when she/he would like assistance figuring out strategies for helping a student to be more successful. The problem-solving team is not necessarily the first step in the problem-solving model. Most of the time, the teacher brings a case to the team after she/he has tried consulting with other teachers to develop and implement interventions but has not seen a positive response from the student to the interventions tried.

### Steps of the Problem-Solving Process

#### **Step One: Problem Identification**

- What is the discrepancy between what is expected and what is occurring?

#### **Step Two: Problem Analysis**

- Why is the problem occurring?

#### **Step Three: Plan Development**

- What is the goal?
- How will the progress be monitored?
- What is the intervention plan?
  - Levels of support may vary and will be matched with the educational need.
    1. Level One: Consultation
    2. Level Two: Modification

Develop interventions that modify the particular academic area or behavior to move the student toward meeting the desired outcomes.

3. Level Three: Grouping and Support

If Level Two interventions are not appropriate, the individual student may be grouped and supported with students who have similar challenges within their classroom (i.e. reading groups, in-class groups with Learning Behavior Specialists).

If a grouping does not exist in the individual's class but exists in another classroom (i.e. reading group with the class next door), the child may receive the specific intervention within the neighboring classroom for a period of the day). Verbal parent permission is required.

4. Level Four: Diagnostic Teaching

Diagnostic teaching (in-class service): If academic or behavior difficulties cannot be supported by modification or modified groupings, the student may receive individual support provided by the Learning Behavior Specialists or Speech and Language Pathologist who works within the classroom at that time.

Diagnostic Teaching (Pullout service): If in-class individual services do not meet the student's needs, pullout support may be implemented.

Written parental consent is required.

**Step Four: Plan Implementation**

- How will implementation integrity be ensured?

**Step Five: Plan Evaluation**

- Was the intervention plan successful?
- If not, consider a case study evaluation.
  - If a student does not respond positively to the interventions and support provided, the team may refer the student for an immediate case study evaluation. During the evaluation proves, interventions may continue if they are effective.
  - If the student responds to Option Four supports, the team may consider a Case Study Evaluation with the consultation of the

school psychologist, considering the current level of discrepancy and goal progress.

## **Special Education in District 39**

Wilmette Public Schools District 39 offers a full continuum of Special Education services. Special education is instruction and related services provided by special education personnel or by a general education program that has been modified through the use of special education support services, supplementary aids, or other special programming.

District 39 follows the state and federal laws that establish criteria for special education eligibility. The state of Illinois recognizes 13 categories under which children may qualify for special education. These disabilities include: autism, deaf-blindness, deafness, emotional disorder, hearing impairment, intellectual disability, multiple disabilities, orthopedic impairment, other health impairment, speech or language impairment, traumatic brain injury, and visual impairment.

The philosophy of services in District 39 recognizes students' unique and individual needs, as well as the goals and dreams of parents. As a result, we strive to support students through a wide continuum of services. Services are individualized and customized in order to meet the needs of each child, as opposed to fitting students into "programs."

District 39 programs are aligned K-8 to provide children similar program experiences as they move through our schools. However, the type of support is adjusted to be developmentally appropriate and individualized to meet students' unique goals. Below is a brief schematic overview of the continuum of services offered in kindergarten through eighth grade. Services are provided within general education classrooms and special education learning centers.

<b>Comprehensive Services and Supports</b>	<b>Supportive Services and Supports</b>	<b>Essential Services and Supports</b>	<b>Inclusion Services and Supports</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing, targeted instruction in a variety of domains</li> <li>• Individualized support for grade level learning goals</li> <li>• Meaningful opportunities to expand social repertoire</li> <li>• Comprehensive support to meet individual student needs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complex behavior support with consistent implementation</li> <li>• Strategies to assist with self management</li> <li>• Support for immediate crisis as well as a safe place for breaks</li> <li>• Grade-level instruction and supports in a variety of appropriate environments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Targeted support in essential academic areas</li> <li>• Consistent environment in order to meet multiple academic needs</li> <li>• Support for grade level learning goals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Academic instruction for groups of students as needed</li> <li>• Instruction utilizing a co-teaching model</li> </ul>



## **Birth-to-Three**

Certain children are identified at birth as having disabilities. For these children school funded services can begin soon after birth. District 39 coordinates funding for services to these young children. The state has established an Agency named Child and Family Connections, which assists families in securing itinerant services (e.g. speech therapy, occupational therapy) for children identified at this age. District 39's role is to provide partial financial support for services and service coordination.

The District is also responsible for transitioning children from 0-3 to the District 39 Early Childhood Program. At the age of 2 1/2, Child and Family Connections notifies District 39 of a child in need of transition. The District has up to 6 months to complete any additional evaluations the team recommends and then meet with parents to discuss whether continuing intervention is needed. A variety of options may be discussed with parents.

## **Early Childhood**

Wilmette District 39 offers a continuum of special education services to meet the unique educational needs of the three to five year old students with disabilities. The range of available services is designed in compliance with the federal and state guidelines supporting the least restrictive environment in which services can be provided. Least restrictive environment means providing services in settings similar to programs provided to typical preschool children.

Preschool children are found eligible to participate in district services through an identification and assessment process. The assessment of preschool children focuses on the expectations and growth of the preschool child, and the evaluation of developmental skills, which are the foundation for academic and social learning. The assessed skill areas relate to academic functioning and are divided into five developmental domains: cognitive skills, fine and gross motor skills, self-help skills, social skills, and speech and language skills.

## **Early Childhood Identification Procedures**

### Children of District 39 Residents

District 39 provides preschool screenings on a regular basis throughout the school year. Three, four and five-year-old children, who have not entered kindergarten, may participate in the district screening. The child must be registered for the screening through the District 39 Student Services office (847-256-2450, ext: 6044). Screenings are free of charge. The screening process provides basic information about the child in the areas of cognitive, motor, social, and speech and language development. A certified nurse also completes a vision and hearing screening. The preschool screening is designed to identify developmental lags or areas of concern and is not a tool to determine eligibility for advanced placement in school. Further assessment in one or all of the domains may be indicated from the results of the screening.

When further assessment is indicated, parents are contacted and a meeting is held to discuss concerns and determine appropriate components of the evaluation. After permission to evaluate is obtained, the district attempts to complete the assessment as soon as possible. However, the district has sixty school days to complete the assessment and meet with parents to discuss results. If the child qualifies for special education services as a result of the evaluation and team meeting, goals and objectives are written. An Individualized Education Plan (IEP) for providing services is developed, and program placement is determined. The Individualized Education Plan is reviewed on an annual basis, adjusted, and revised as necessary.

Finally, a preschool child may be brought to the attention of the Early Childhood Education team by parent referral. Parents may contact the District 39 Student Services Department (847-256-2450) to discuss concerns and determine an appropriate response.

### Children currently in Birth-to-Three Programs

District 39 is responsible for providing services to preschool children who have been identified and received support through a birth to three early intervention agency or program. A transition plan is established between the early intervention agency and District 39 in order to provide appropriate services without interruption when the child turns three.

### Children Transferring from Another District

The Early Childhood Education team reviews records and meets with the family of the preschool child who has participated in Early Childhood Education services in another district and is transferring to District 39. After the family establishes district residency, the existing IEP is reviewed and implemented as written by the previous district. Further assessment and changes may be recommended at the initial IEP meeting.

### **Early Childhood Education Service Options**

The District 39 Early Childhood Program offers a range of offerings. The program is based on each child's individual needs. These needs are determined after an extensive assessment. The possible programs are listed below.

### **Speech and Language Services**

When a child needs only speech and language services, the services are delivered at the Mikaelian Education Center. Criteria for Speech services are based on a severity rating scale index; mild-moderate disorder/delay in one or more areas of speech/language or moderate/severe disorder/delay in speech production (articulation, phonological processes, oral-motor functioning, voice fluency).

### **Inclusion Facilitator Services**

Inclusion facilitator consultation services are provided at all non-parochial Wilmette preschools. The inclusion facilitator works in a consultative model to support children with disabilities in community preschools. This consultation includes staff development and direct work with teachers.

### **Connecting Kids**

This is a District 39 integrated preschool class, located at Romona School. This class enrolls typically developing peers, as well as children with significant developmental needs in more than one area, or children presenting a severe to profound speech and language need. A special education classroom teacher, with assistance from a classroom paraprofessional, provides instruction in this classroom. Related services, including speech and occupational therapy, also are provided.

### **Full-Day Self-Contained**

Some early childhood children present with more severe and profound educational needs. The district provides a full-day program for children with

severe and profound needs, utilizing comprehensive services provided by a team of professionals.

**Resources**

- Additional questions or concerns about a child who is three, four or five years old and not in kindergarten may be directed to Julie Pease, 847- 256-0211.
- To register a child for a preschool screening contact Kathy Hughes at 847-256-2450.
- Concerns for a child under the age of three years should be directed to Julie Pease, 847- 256-0211.

## **Primary School (Grades K-4)**

Primary School children are provided special education services when they come to school with an existing IEP, as a result of a preschool program or because of a transfer in from another school district. However, children also can be identified to have a special education disability while they are at a District 39 school. Whenever a parent or a teacher has a concern about a child a referral is made directly to the team at school. The formal assessment of children is provided after a series of academic and/or emotional interventions have been implemented, following the RtI process. Once indicated, a team of professionals conducts a comprehensive evaluation. The assessed skill areas may include: cognitive, academic, functional, motor, health, social/emotional, and communication.

Students who qualify for one of 13 disability categories receive services in accordance with their Individualized Education Plan (IEP). The child's IEP is developed by her/his IEP team. There is a legal requirement for educating children in the least restrictive environment. This means that children with special education needs are programmed for, as much as possible, in their home school in a general education classroom. Services are provided in accordance with the IEPs of individual students.

Each IEP team considers the unique needs of students in developing an individualized program designed to address his or her needs. Services can include supports within general education, therapy offices, and/or learning centers.

## **Primary K-4 Programs**

### **1. Student Assistance Team (SAT)**

Each school is equipped with a Student Assistance Team. This team is comprised of a group of technical experts who can address a myriad of learning and emotional concerns. This team includes the psychologist, social worker, speech pathologist, special education teachers, occupational therapist, nurse, a special education coordinator and the school principal. This team meets weekly to address concerns from teachers and parents for children with and without disabilities. This team conducts special education evaluations, makes disability diagnoses, develops and implements individual education plans for children.

**2. Inclusion support**

The special needs staff in each of the primary buildings attempts to teach students within the general education environments. This is done utilizing a team-teaching approach. In collaboration with classroom teachers, the special educator may co-teach for a period of the day, where differentiated instruction is emphasized to address the needs of children with IEPs.

**3. Learning Center Support**

The Learning Centers in District 39 elementary schools are designed to address the learning, emotional, and behavioral needs of students. Certain children may need a specialized method of instruction for remediation of an identified deficit. When this is the case, the special education teacher will pull small groups of children with similar learning profiles from the classroom to receive highly specialized instruction in reading, writing or math. Other children may need more structured instruction, which can also be provided in a small-group or individual basis. Students with emotional support can receive direct instruction in coping skills and self-management, as well as a location for a break, in one of the school's learning centers. For children requiring specialized instruction or remedial support on a consistent basis, at the elementary level, district schools also offer a learning center to address the needs of children both with significant disabilities and with needs for life skill development (functional reading, writing and math).

**4. Therapeutic Intervention Program**

In order to provide a highly-structured, self-contained option for students with significant emotional and behavioral needs, the district offers the Therapeutic Intervention Program (TIP). The TIP class is supported by a Learning Behavior Specialist, Paraprofessionals, Behavior Intervention Specialist, and Psychologist. Direct instruction is provided in self-management using research-based programs while students are still exposed to a rigorous academic curriculum. A leveled-

system provides students with opportunities to gain more time with peers without disabilities.

**5. External Placements**

On a rare occasion, children have more severe and profound educational needs or mental health needs that require a therapeutic milieu. The district relies on private placement options for special education programming for children whose severe and profound needs cannot be addressed through existing district supports. District 39 has a host of private and public options for providing special education programs when a District 39 program does not meet a child's special educational needs. There are certain complex disabilities that require high levels of instructional support. These external programs are for children who have these intense needs that cannot be met through existing district services.

## **Middle and Junior High (Grades 5-8)**

Middle and junior high school children are provided special education services when they come to school with an existing IEP, as a result of a preschool program or because of a transfer in from another school district. However, children also can be identified to have a special education disability while they are at a District 39 school. Whenever a parent or a teacher has a concern about a child a referral is made directly to the team at school and the Response to Intervention process begins. The formal assessment of children is provided after a series of academic or emotional interventions have been implemented. Once indicated, a team of professionals conducts a comprehensive evaluation. The assessed skill areas may include cognitive skills, motor, health, social/emotional, communication status, and academic performance.

Students who are eligible for Special Education Services as a result of the assessment receive services in accordance with their Individualized Education Plan (IEP). The child's IEP is developed by her/his IEP team. There is a legal requirement for educating children in the least restrictive environment. This means that children with special education needs are programmed for, as much as possible, in their home school in a general education classroom. Services are provided in accordance with the IEPs of individual students.

Below is a brief description of the program options available at the middle school level.

### **1. Student Assistance Team (SAT)**

The Middle School has a team that is comprised of a group of technical experts who can address a myriad of learning and emotional concerns, known as the Student Assistance Team. This team may include a psychologist, social worker, speech pathologist, special education teachers, occupational therapist, nurse, a special education coordinator and the school principal. This team meets weekly to address concerns from teachers and parents for children with and without disabilities. This team conducts special education evaluations, makes disability diagnoses, develops and implements individual education plans for children.



**2. Inclusion Support**

The special education staff in the Middle School supports students within the general education classroom as much as possible. This is done utilizing a team-teaching approach. In collaboration with classroom teachers, the special educator may co-teach for a period of math, reading or writing each day. This co-teaching emphasizes differentiated instruction, in addressing the needs of children with IEPs. Having a team teaching model emphasizing differentiated instruction has the added benefit of promoting the learning of every child in the classroom, regardless of disability status.

**3. Academic Strategies**

As the challenges of the curriculum advance, many students with disabilities need extra support. Academic Strategies is a smaller sized class taught by a special education teacher, who can pre-teach, re-teach, organize schoolwork or provide direct instruction in any content areas a student may find difficult. Academic Strategies is offered as an academic class in place of foreign language.

**3. Instructional Classes**

Certain children may need a specialized method of instruction for the remediation of an identified deficit in reading, writing, and/or math. When this is the case, children are provided a separate special education class and grouped with children having similar learning profiles. These small classes are offered in the schools' Learning Centers and provide access to technology, instructional materials, and learning approaches that encourage the learner to move at his/her own pace in the curriculum.

**4. Learning Center Support**

In addition to the Instructional Classes, services at grades 5-8 also provide for individualized programming within the Learning Centers. As in K-4, the 5-8 Learning Centers in District 39 are designed to address the unique academic, emotional, and behavioral needs of students. Instruction and

services can include intensive academic support, emotional support, and/or life skills instruction.

Certain children may need a specialized method of instruction for remediation of an identified deficit. When this is the case, the special education teacher will pull small groups of children with similar learning profiles from the classroom to receive highly specialized instruction in reading, writing or math. Other children may need more structured instruction, which can also be provided in a small-group or individual basis.

Students with emotional support can receive direct instruction in coping skills and self-management, as well as a location for a break, in one of the school's learning centers. Students with behavioral and emotional needs are supported by a behavior specialist who will also conduct behavioral assessments and assist classroom teachers in developing behavior management plans.

For children requiring specialized instruction or remedial support on a consistent basis, at the elementary level, district schools also offer a learning center to address the needs of children both with significant disabilities and with needs for life skill development (functional reading, writing and math).

## **5. External Placements**

On a rare occasion, children have more severe and profound educational needs. The district relies on private placement options, for special education programming for children with severe and profound needs. District 39 has a host of private and public options for providing special education programs when a District 39 program does not meet a child's special educational needs. There are certain complex disabilities that require high levels of instructional support. These external programs are for children who have these intense needs that cannot be met through existing district services.



## **Frequently Asked Questions about Student and Special Services**

### **IDENTIFICATION:**

#### **1. How do I know if my child needs services? If so, what can I expect from District 39?**

*If parents are concerned about their children needing special services, they should contact their child's teacher. Parents can expect a meeting to review their concerns. The school will recommend additional follow-up if needed.*

#### **2. Are there any milestones I should be looking for to be sure my child is "on target" in his/her development?**

*Delayed attainment of developmental milestones is one early indicator of future learning problems. District 39 offers a developmental screening for preschool-aged children. For school-aged children, benchmark testing occurs three times per year. This process helps teachers and parents see students' growth rates and intervene quickly if the student is experiencing any learning challenges.*

#### **3. What preschool screenings are available? When are they available and what are they looking for?**

*Preschool screenings are available for children between the ages of 3-5. The screenings are available to parents who have concerns about their child's development. The screenings address speech, cognitive and motor development. The schedule of preschool screenings can be found in the school calendar.*

#### **4. What services are available from District 39 for children ages 0-3?**

*District 39 coordinates services children ages 0 to 3. Contact Julie Pease, Coordinator of Early Childhood at 847-256-0211.*

#### **5. What does the Student Assistance Team do?**

*This team of teachers and teacher specialists, including the school psychologist, social worker, and speech-language pathologist, meets at school weekly. (It is during these meetings that the team consults with parents when there is a school concern about their child.) The team may make recommendations to parents and classroom teachers, suggest some short-term interventions, or may even ask permission for further assessment. A follow-up meeting is scheduled when needed.*

## **6. When does a child need an evaluation for special education?**

*An evaluation for special education is needed when the parent or school suspects that a child has a disability. By using the Response to Intervention process, all district students are routinely screened for academic and emotional challenges. Interventions are available for all students at every grade level. When a student is not progressing at the rate expected despite intervention, if the child's discrepancy is greater than expected, or if the child's needs exceed general education resources, a special education evaluation is warranted and eligibility for an IEP will be considered.*

## **7. Does every child get an evaluation?**

*No, every child does not need an evaluation. The school has a Student Assistance Team, which reviews the needs and progress of children who struggle at school. The purpose of an evaluation is to identify a special education disability.*

## **8. What is an educational disability?**

*While there are hundreds of disabilities that can be diagnosed by doctors and other medical professionals, the state of Illinois recognizes thirteen disability categories that provide for access to special education services. When one of these disabilities impacts learning at school, then an educational disability is identified. These disabilities include: Autism, Learning Disability, Speech/Language Disorder, Emotional Disorder, Visual Impairment, Deaf, Blind, Deaf-Blind, Traumatic Brain Injury, Multiple Disabilities, Developmental Delay, Intellectual Disability and Other Health Impaired.*

## **PROGRAMS and SERVICES:**

### **1. What types of counseling does District 39 provide?**

*Each building offers Social Work services, which are provided in small groups, individually, and/or within the classroom. Some topics addressed include, but are not limited to, social skills, school motivation, anxiety, depression, stress management, and crisis intervention.*

### **2. What type of health care does District 39 provide?**

*The district provides nurses in each of our buildings. The nurses are available for a wide variety of health needs (e.g. injuries at school,*

*administration of medication, formulation of health plans). Parents should contact the school nurse if their child has special health needs.*

**3. How can I access the services that District 39 has to offer?**

*For a complete description of the services that District 39 provides, please visit our web site at <http://www.wilmette39.org>*

**4. Who are the contacts at each school and what services are available? How do I reach them?**

*A complete listing of school service providers can be found on the web site at <http://www.wilmette39.net>, or in the District 39 Calendar and Handbook.*

**5. What is the role of paraprofessionals in the school?**

*Paraprofessionals assist teachers in the implementation of Individual Education Plans. Teachers provide instruction and paraprofessionals reinforce teaching.*

**6. Are there different types of paraprofessionals?**

*Yes, most paraprofessionals are “classroom” assistants serving a small cluster of special education students in the classroom. There are also “individual” paraprofessionals assigned to a single student. Individual paraprofessionals are provided for students who require significant personal assistance (e.g. personal care, behavior monitoring).*

**7. What type of transition is provided for my child as they move from one school to the next?**

*Transition planning is provided for children as they change buildings. The level of planning is based on individual student needs. At a minimum, a staff member from the receiving school meets with teachers from the sending school to share important information. A few children have such extensive special education needs that an individual transition plan is developed.*

**8. Do parents need to ensure a continuum of services at every building or does the district oversee this?**

*The district must make a continuum of services available to all children with disabilities. However, a continuum cannot be provided at each building. The district endeavors to make as many programs, services and supports available at each school as possible. However, from time-to-time a child will need to travel to a different school to receive the services she/he needs.*

**9. Where can a parent get information concerning various disabilities and all of the physical, mental, and emotional factors that can be associated with them, so families can know what to expect now and in the years to come?**

*An exhaustive list of "all factors" is not possible. However, much information can be obtained by visiting our web site at <http://www.wilmette39.org> and talking with your school's staff and other Student Services professionals. Additionally, PASS 39 offers a variety supports and information (e.g. workshops, lectures and support groups). Their web sites can also be found at our website.*

**10. How can parents find out about state and local educational laws, especially from out of state?**

*Our web site, at <http://www.wilmette39.net> provides links to sites pertaining to Illinois educational laws.*

**11. Am I alone?**

*This is a common feeling parents have as they face a myriad of issues special needs present. As a support to you, there are an incredible amount of resources available and people ready to help. Please start at our web pages <http://www.wilmette39.org/specialservices/default.html> Next you may wish to contact parents directly at Pass 39 [pass39@wilmette39.org](mailto:pass39@wilmette39.org)*

## **Student Services Abbreviations**

### **504 PLAN - Section 504 Educational Plan**

Accommodation plan that supports the many disabilities not covered under IDEA

### **ADA - Americans with Disabilities Act**

This is a federal law prohibiting discrimination against individuals with disabilities.

### **ADHD - Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder**

The student with ADHD is one who seems to have average or better ability, health, vision, hearing, and intelligence, but is still unable to learn things as easily or quickly as most other students his age. The concern is due to a severe inability to stay on task or pay attention (distractibility) and/or inability to control behavioral impulses (hyperactivity). If the condition impacts the child's educational progress, he or she may be eligible for a 504 plan or Special Education services.

### **APE - Adapted Physical Education**

Physical Education adapted to meet the unique physical needs and challenges of students with identified disabilities and medical conditions that prohibit their ability to fully benefit from a general physical education curriculum.

### **AT - Assistive Technology**

A related service that provides a device or service that helps a student function in the educational setting. These services may include evaluating the student's needs, providing a device and/or service to match student needs, and training for the student, family, and school personnel in using the selected device. An Assistive Technology device can be provided as special education services, related services or as supplementary aids and services to the general education program. An example of an Assistive Technology device would be a "Touch Talker." This device displays an array of pictures which speaks words and phrases when touched, thus allowing a non-verbal student to communicate



**AUT - Autism**

Autism includes a spectrum of disorders, which may include PDD, Asperger Syndrome, Autism and Rett Syndrome. It is a developmental disability significantly affecting verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction, generally evident before age three that adversely affects a child's educational performance. Other characteristics often associated with autism are engagement in repetitive activities and stereotyped movements, daily routines, and unusual responses to sensory experiences. The term does not apply if a child's educational performance is adversely affected primarily because the child has an emotional disturbance.

**BIP - Behavior Intervention Plan**

A comprehensive plan designed to target and change specific inappropriate behaviors that interfere with a student's ability to benefit from his/her educational program or develop and maintain relationships.

**CAPD - Central Auditory Processing Disorder**

CAPD is an auditory processing disorder characterized by difficulty in attending to, discriminating, recognizing, and understanding what is heard, even though hearing and intelligence are normal. CAPD creates difficulty in developing speech and language skills. These children are often thought to have hearing problems. Treatment includes speech and language therapy, modifications in the environment, and computerized therapy.

**CP - Cerebral Palsy**

A general term for a group of permanently disabling symptoms caused by damage to the developing brain before, during, or after birth. People with cerebral palsy may have poor balance, difficulty in walking, movement, speech impairment, and/or cognitive limitations.

**CSE - Case Study Evaluation**

A CSE is method of collecting information about a student's individual learning needs, strengths, and interests, in order to assess whether or not a child has a disability. The assessment is an process by which qualified professionals, together with families, through standardized tests and observation, look at all areas of a child's development: motor, language, intellectual, academic achievement, social/emotional, and adaptive/self-help skills. An assessment may include giving individual tests, observing the student, looking at records, and talking with the student and/or his parents.

Eligibility for special education services is determined at the completion of the evaluation process. An individualized education plan is developed as appropriate.

**DD - Developmental Delay**

A term used to describe infants and toddlers who need early intervention services because they: (1) are experiencing developmental delays, such that the child has not achieved skills and abilities which are expected to be mastered by children of the same age. Delays can be in any of the following areas: physical, social, emotional, intellectual, speech and language, and/or adaptive development (self-help skills), *or* (2) have a diagnosed physical or mental condition that has a high probability of resulting in a developmental delay. Children may only be eligible for special education services under this criterion through the age of five years. (**Caution:** The term developmental delay may be used loosely and is occasionally used incorrectly, giving the false impression that the student will “catch-up.”)

**ECE - Early Childhood Education**

Educational programs and support services available to meet the needs of the young learner from three through five years of age. Students must be eligible to receive these supportive services, which are to be delivered in the least restrictive manner. Students become eligible for Early Childhood through the Case Study Evaluation process.

**ED - Emotional Disorder**

A condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over an extended period of time and to a marked degree that adversely affects a child’s educational performance:

- Learning difficulties that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors
- An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers
- Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances
- General pervasive mood of anxiety or depression
- A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems

**ELL - English Language Learners**

Includes instructional support for children who come to school speaking another language.

**ESY - Extended School Year**

Special education and related services that are provided to a child with a disability beyond the typical school year, in accordance with the child's Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Students are eligible for ESY services when the educational team determines that the child's educational skills will significantly regress over the summer months if no educational program is provided.

**FBA - Functional Behavior Assessment**

A Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) is a behavioral assessment that looks at targeted behaviors from an environmental perspective. FAB is conducted when a particular student behavior is either dangerous or interferes with student learning. The FBA collects data on targeted student behaviors with a focus toward the antecedents, consequences that reinforce the behavior as well as possible functional alternatives. The FBA may lead to the development of a Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP). A student's IEP may be changed to reflect the addition of a BIP.

**FAPE - Free Appropriate Public Education**

Federal law mandates that students have the right to a free, appropriate public education, including special education and related services. The public school provides these services at the preschool, elementary, and secondary levels at no cost to parents. Students with visual and hearing impairments may receive services from birth. The programs and services must follow goals and objectives stated in the student's IEP.

**HI - Hearing Impairment**

An impairment in hearing, whether permanent or fluctuating, that adversely affects a child's educational performance, but that is not included under the definition of deafness. (*Definition of deafness: A hearing impairment that is so severe that the child is impaired in processing linguistic information through hearing, with or without amplification, that adversely affects a child's educational performance.*)

**IAA - Illinois Alternate Assessment**

The Illinois Alternate Assessment is the state-developed portfolio assessment that must be used for any special education eligible student

whose Individualized Education Program (IEP) indicated that she/he is unable to participate in the Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT), even with accommodations

**IDEA - Individuals with Disabilities Education Act**

This federal law, enacted in 1990 and reauthorized in 1997, amends and renames the Education of the Handicapped Act (EHA). The law ensures a free appropriate public education to students with one of thirteen disabilities. A portion of special education funding to schools is dependent upon compliance with this law and its subsequent amendments.

**IEP - Individualized Education Plan**

The IEP team, including parents, general educators and special educators, develops the individualized education plan when a student qualifies for Special Education Services. The IEP includes the student's present level of school performance, educational goals and objectives for the student, and accommodations the student will receive. It documents the specific services the student needs, how where and how often services will be provided, and how progress will be measured. IEPs are reviewed annually with the IEP team.

**IntD - Intellectual Disability**

Significantly below average general intellectual functioning, existing concurrently with deficits in adaptive behavior and manifested during the developmental period, that adversely affects a child's educational performance. (Formerly Cognitive Disability).

**ISAT - Illinois Standards Achievement Test**

The Illinois Standards Achievement Test provides a view of student performance in relation to the state standards. Third, fifth and eighth grade students are administered reading, writing, and mathematics assessments. Fourth and seventh grade students are administered science and social study assessments. These assessments are written at the state level and are scored by the state. Individual student scores and school scores are returned to the district. Many students with IEPs receive accommodations for ISAT testing, which can include extended time or administration of the testing with a small group. Only students with significant learning difficulties may be exempt from taking the ISAT. The IEP team makes this decision.

**ISBE - Illinois State Board of Education**

ISBE is the State agency that oversees the implementation of public education, including special education, in the State of Illinois.

**LBS - Learning Behavior Specialist**

In District 39, teachers with special education certification are referred to as Learning Behavior Specialists. They are special education teachers charged with designing and implementing IEPs.

**LD - Learning Disability**

A disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, or do mathematics, including such conditions as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. The term does not include learning problems that are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities, of mental retardation, of emotional disturbance, or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage.

**LRE - Least Restrictive Environment**

The special educational setting or program that best meets the needs of the student with a disability. The intent is to provide as much access to the general education program as possible. The student's IEP team determines the Least Restrictive Environment.

**MD - Multiple Disabilities**

Concomitant impairments (such as mental retardation-blindness, mental retardation-orthopedic impairment, etc.), the combination of disabilities that causes severe educational needs (does not include deaf-blindness).

**OHI - Other Health Impairment**

Limited strength, vitality or alertness, including a heightened sensitivity to environmental stimuli, that results in limited alertness with respect to the educational environment, that: is due to chronic or acute health problems such as asthma, attention deficit disorder or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, diabetes, epilepsy, a heart condition, hemophilia, lead poisoning, leukemia, nephritis, rheumatic fever, and sickle cell anemia. Health problems need to adversely affect a child's educational performance and need to be diagnosed by a medical professional.

**OT - Occupational Therapy**

Facilitates the development of self-maintenance tasks including feeding, eating, dressing, and hygiene. Areas of assessment and intervention also include motor performance (manipulation of school related materials and educational tasks), neuromusculoskeletal components (movement and postural control), sensory awareness and attending skills. Intervention is integrated within the student's total educational experience and closely coordinated with other aspects of the student's program.

**PI - Physical Impairment**

A severe orthopedic impairment that adversely affects a child's educational performance; includes impairments caused by congenital anomaly (e.g., clubfoot, absence of some member, etc.), impairments caused by disease (e.g., poliomyelitis, bone tuberculosis), and impairments from other causes (e.g., cerebral palsy, amputations, and fractures or burns that cause contractures).

**PT - Physical Therapy**

Facilitates the development of functional movement skills including adapting equipment for mobility and positioning. Areas of assessment and intervention also include motor performance (safety and alternative positions), neuromusculoskeletal components (movement and postural control), architectural accessibility, utilization of appropriate assistive devices (wheelchairs, walkers, adapted seating and work spaces), transfers and transportation (school and community). Intervention is integrated with the student's total educational experience and is closely coordinated with other aspects of the student's program.

**SLI - Speech and/or Language Impairment**

A communication disorder, such as stuttering, impaired articulation, language impairment, or a voice impairment that adversely affects a child's educational performance.

**SLP - Speech and Language Pathologist**

A specialist certified to design and implement special education programming for children with Speech and/or Language Impairments.

**TBI - Traumatic Brain Injury**

An acquired injury to the brain caused by an external physical force, resulting in total or partial functional disability or psychosocial impairment, or both, that adversely affects a child's educational performance. The term applies to open or closed head injuries resulting in impairments in one or more areas, such as cognition, abstract thinking, judgment, problem-solving, sensory, perceptual, and motor abilities, psychosocial behavior, physical functions, information processing, and speech. The term does not apply to brain injuries that are congenital or degenerative or to brain injuries induced by birth trauma.

**VI - Visual Impairment**

Impairment in vision that, even with correction, adversely affects a child's educational performance (includes both partial sight and blindness).