

Parent Handbook for Initial Staffing

The purpose of this handbook is to help you, as the parent of a child who might be eligible for gifted services, to learn about gifted programming in Broward County Public Schools. If your child is eligible and you decide to accept gifted services, this handbook will help prepare you so that you are ready to attend your child's first Educational Plan (EP) meeting. If your child is already in the gifted program in Broward County Public Schools (already has an EP), please see the Handbook entitled "Parent Handbook for an Educational Plan" available on this website.

Is my child gifted?

Broward County Public School's identifies children who have high IQ's and need services beyond those offered by the general curriculum in the classroom. These children are screened, and as appropriate are placed in a special Exceptional Education (ESE) category labeled "gifted". The definition of "gifted" (which makes your child eligible for gifted services) is:

1. A child with an IQ score of 130 or more. For children who are in the Free and Reduced Lunch program (lower socioeconomic children who are underrepresented in the gifted population) or in the Limited English Proficient Program in Broward County (also underrepresented), the minimum IQ score required is 115. The IQ requirement for underrepresented students is lower to compensate for research-proven bias in IQ tests.

and

2. The child demonstrates a majority of characteristics of gifted children,

and

3. The child demonstrates the need for programming that is beyond the scope offered in the general education classroom. If your child has additional identified learning needs, your child may qualify for another exceptional student education program and might require an IEP. You should talk with your child's school about IEP's if your child has more than one exceptionality. Examples of having more than one exceptionality would be if your child is gifted and has speech needs or your child is both gifted and learning disabled.

Why would I want my child to receive gifted services?

If your child qualifies for gifted services and you agree to let your child participate in gifted programming in Broward County Public Schools, your child will be identified as an Exceptional Student Education (ESE) student with the legal rights associated with gifted ESE students. Your child will receive an Educational Plan (EP) which outlines the special educational needs of your child related to his or her areas of giftedness. The plan also identifies the services that will be provided to your child by the school. As a result of the development of your child's EP, your child's curriculum will be differentiated (modified to meet the needs of your child), and your child will potentially receive acceleration and/or enrichment. Finally, there will be a teacher involved with your child's education who has or is working on a "gifted endorsement". (This means the teacher is currently taking or will have taken multiple classes regarding the unique needs of gifted children). The EP, the differentiated curriculum, and the gifted endorsed teacher are all provided to gifted students to try and assure that their individual gifted needs are met. If your child

qualifies to be a part of the gifted program, you are encouraged to allow your child to have access to these services.

Testing for Gifted Eligibility

Testing: In order for your child to be eligible for gifted services, your child must be tested with an approved intellectual assessment to demonstrate that s/he has an IQ that will qualify for the program. The test must be administered by a State licensed psychologist. See “Is my child gifted?” (above).

There are a number of ways that you can have your child tested. IQ testing by a school psychologist is a free service through Broward County Public Schools.

To have your child tested, your child’s school needs to be aware that your child appears to be “exceptional” (bright) and warrants testing. You may request testing for your child. Your child’s teacher or other staff member may refer your child for screening at the school to determine if additional IQ testing is appropriate. Please note: your child will not be referred to a Psychologist for a full IQ test for gifted without your written consent. The school can screen your child and if s/he passes the screening, your child will be referred to a licensed Psychologist for a full IQ test.

Finally, Broward County screens all students at the end of second grade to identify children who may benefit from additional IQ testing. If your child is identified through this automatic screening process, you will receive a written consent asking for your permission to fully IQ test your child.

If you feel your child is “gifted” and you do not want to wait for the school system to test your child, you can pay for private

testing. This testing needs to be conducted by a licensed, qualified psychologist or social worker using an approved instrument. Your private psychologist or social worker should know if the intellectual assessment will be accepted by the State of Florida for admission into the gifted program. The school psychologist will review the test results to consider your child's eligibility.

What type of screening/testing does Broward County Public Schools conduct?

As discussed above, Broward County does two levels of testing: an initial screening and a full IQ test.

If you opt to have Broward County Public Schools conduct the screening and/or testing, please be patient. Given the County's limited resources, you can expect that this process could take as long as 90 school days.

What if my child doesn't "pass" the screening/test?

If your child does not have a score that is high enough on either the screener or the IQ test, you must wait at least a year to re-screen and/or retest your child unless you request (in writing) that your child be retested using a different instrument (test). Re-screening and/or retesting may or may not be granted by your child's school depending on the unique circumstances of your situation.

What happens if my child scores high enough to be considered for gifted services?

If your child's IQ score is high enough to be eligible for the gifted program, the next step is to have your child's teacher(s) fill out a form called the "Gifted Indicators Checklist". This form indicates whether your child displays a majority of the characteristics generally associated with gifted children. To

be admitted into the gifted program, your child must display a sufficient number of gifted characteristics.

When the IQ test report and the checklist(s) have been completed, the school will then get your written consent for an Initial Staffing to determine eligibility.

Initial Staffing

What is an Initial Staffing/Eligibility Determination?

It is a meeting that determines gifted eligibility for your child. During the initial staffing, agreement must be reached that your child has a need for gifted services that are beyond the scope of the services offered in the general education classroom. During the staffing, if all three requirements are met (IQ, gifted characteristics, and need for services), an Educational Plan (EP) will be developed specific to the areas of your child's giftedness. The EP will document how the school plans on meeting your child's educational needs.

Who attends the Initial Staffing?

Your child will be assigned a "team" to determine eligibility and potentially write your child's first EP. At a minimum, your child's team will consist of your child's gifted teacher, a general education teacher, and the school's representative. If your child has more than one general education teacher, the teacher in the area of your child's strength should be on your child's EP team. Additionally, because this is an initial staffing, the school's Psychologist will be present.

You are also a **key** member of "The Team". Your input is valued and is important to your child's future.

Other parties that may attend your child's EP Meeting include any other persons that you or the school perceives would be helpful in writing or implementing your child's EP. Depending on his/her age and maturity, your child may be asked to be part of the EP team. You may invite any other individuals that you perceive may offer some insight into your child's needs. Some examples of other individuals you might invite include previous teachers, outside psychologists, medical personnel, district staff, etc. As a courtesy, please let your school know who you are bringing prior to the meeting.

Where and when does the initial staffing take place?

Most initial staffings and EP meetings are held at the child's school. The location and time for the meeting will be indicated on the Parent Participation Form. (See "What should I do to prepare for the meeting" below.)

What will happen at the at Initial Staffing portion of the meeting?

During this part of the meeting, your child's IQ test and Gifted Characteristics will be discussed. The team (including you) will determine if gifted services are warranted for your child. If services are appropriate, the team (including the Psychologist) will discuss the areas of your child's giftedness.

What should I do to prepare for the meeting?

The first thing you should do is read this entire Parent Handbook for Initial Staffing. It was written to help provide you with some insight into the Initial Staffing and EP Process.

You should then sign the Parent Participation Form. This form is an invitation to your child's Initial Staffing and EP Meeting. It indicates the purpose of the meeting, the time and location of the meeting, and asks if you are able to attend. Note: If the time of the scheduled meeting is not convenient you can request an

alternate time by notifying the contact person listed on the Parent Participation Form. Or, if you would prefer, you can ask to be included via a telephone conference.

You should also obtain and read the document called “Procedural Safeguards for Exceptional Students Who are Gifted”. This document outlines your legal rights, as a parent of a gifted child.

Preparation– Prior to the EP Meeting think about and document your perception of your child’s unique strengths, interests and needs. You can use the Parent Feedback Form provided in this website. It will provide the school’s staff with critical information regarding your perception of your child.

Additionally, if your child is mature enough, your child should participate and include their own thoughts in this process. There is also a Student Feedback form provided on this website.

Additionally, if you have any testing, evaluation reports, or samples of your child’s work that the school has not seen, you should provide the contact person with copies. The feedback forms and additional documentation will enable the staff to integrate your comments and information into your child’s goals and objectives.

Your child’s teacher will also think about your child’s strengths and needs prior to the meeting. S/he will bring this information to the meeting, along with impressions of your child, and any test data that will be helpful in planning for your child.

What is my role in the meeting?

It is your job to speak on behalf of your child and to be part of the team that decides the best educational course of action for your child.

You are an important member of the Initial Staffing/EP team. You know your child best. You know your child's history. You also have information about your child's development, how your child does at home in areas such as communication, completing tasks such as chores, homework, long term assignments and projects, etc., and how your child gets along with adults and other children. You know your child's interests, skills and hopes for the future. You know what concerns your child has express at home about their educational program. It is your responsibility to share this information with the team. You play an important part in the EP process.

You are seen as partner with the school and the school district personnel in developing, reviewing, and revising the initial staff and Educational Plan.

What if I don't agree with the eligibility determination?

If you are not in agreement with the results of the eligibility determination, you may ask that the meeting be continued at a later date. This will give the Team members (including you) time to think about and research the issues. If you disagree with the recommendations generated by the committee, send a letter to the school so that your comments are documented in writing and you are "on record". You may wish to review the Procedural Safeguards for Exceptional Students Who Are Gifted. This document details the process for filing Due Process paperwork if you do not agree with the outcome of the staffing.

The Educational Plan (EP)

If it is determined that your child is eligible (would benefit) from gifted services, the group, including you, will develop an Educational Plan (EP) for your child.

What is an EP?

An EP (Educational Plan) is a written plan for each child who is identified as eligible for gifted education/services and has no other special education needs. It describes the special educational needs of the student related to his or her areas of giftedness. It also identifies the services that will be provided by the school. Parents are partners with schools and school district personnel in developing and revising the EP for their child. The Educational Plan (EP) is a legal document.

What will happen at the EP portion of the meeting?

At this part of the meeting, you and your child's school team will discuss your child's individual/unique strengths, your child's present level of educational performance, and his/her interests and needs. The EP meeting is your opportunity to express your thoughts and concerns regarding your child's education so that your child receives an appropriate public education. The team will then decide how your child will be involved and progress in the general curriculum during the EP timeframe. You and your child's team will also develop a plan that addresses your child's needs beyond the general curriculum resulting from your child's giftedness. The team will discuss your child's need for specially designed instruction including where there may be a need for enrichment and/or acceleration. As an example, you think your child is advanced in math, but you are not sure his/her level nor if s/he is really ahead of the class. You can request that the school assess your child to determine the grade level for your child's instruction. If, in fact, your child is above his/her grade level, it would be appropriate for your child's EP team to discuss goals that address your child's advanced instructional needs. The district has assessments available for all content areas for children who are potentially advanced. These content areas include reading, language arts, social studies and science.

Note: If your team does not talk about enrichment at your child's EP meeting, you might want to ask what areas will be enriched to meet your child's needs, and what will the enrichment look like. If your child's team does not talk about acceleration, you might want to ask if acceleration is appropriate and in which areas.

Written into your child's EP will be the specific services that the school will provide your child, along with the frequency (daily, weekly, monthly, etc.), and location of these services. Your child's EP will include a statement of measurable goals, including short-term instructional objectives. For each educational goal, evaluation procedures will be developed.

The purpose of the EP is to meet your child's needs relative to the areas where your child is "gifted". The EP will not address your child's needs in areas where your child is at grade level and the general instruction will meet your child's needs. (If you have concerns about your child's grade level needs, you should talk with your child's teacher).

Your child's EP should address your child's strengths resulting from your child's giftedness. Additionally, there will be times when your child has areas of need not related to your child's primary strengths, but are areas that are above grade level, limit your child, and are not adequately addressed by the general curriculum. These areas can be addressed in your child's EP. As you review your child's educational goals and objectives, ask yourself the following questions:

1. Are the written goals and objectives specific to my individual child?
2. Do the written goals and objectives address my child's strengths?
3. Do the written goals and objectives meet my child's needs?

4. Do additional goals need to be written?
5. Are the written goals measurable? Will I be able to see that my child reached the goals? How?
6. How will the school communicate my child's progress toward his/her EP goals?

Broward County Public Schools uses the EASY IEP, a computerized Educational Plan format for documenting EP's.

How often is an EP written?

In Broward County, the EP team determines if your child's EP meeting should be held annually or every other year.

Additionally, EP meetings are held at the end of 5th grade (in preparation for the student going to middle school) and at the end of 8th grade (in preparation for the student going to high school). An EP meeting can also be held when you or your child's school team determines that your child's needs have changed and/or new goals and objectives need to be written.

NOTE: Parents can request an EP any time they feel their child's EP goals and objectives need to be discussed and/or modified.

Outcome Concerns

What if I am not happy with the outcome of the meeting?

If you are not happy with the results of the meeting, you may ask that the meeting be continued at a later date. This will give the Team members (including you) time to think about and research the issues. If you disagree with the recommendations generated by the committee and documented on your child's EP, send a letter to the school so that your comments are documented in writing and you are "on record". As part of your documentation, request an EP meeting to address your issues.

Note: You have the following rights:

- 1) You have the right to ask for time to think about the decisions that the committee is recommending regarding your child, and
- 2) You have the right to withdraw placement for your gifted child at any time.

If this does not resolve your issues, see “Need Further Help”, below.

After the EP Meeting

What happens AFTER the Initial Staffing/EP Meeting?

The first thing that will happen is that your child will start receiving the services defined by the EP team and outlined in your child’s EP. But your job is not done. Your child’s teacher has numerous throughout the year and, as necessary, take steps to better assure that the goals, objectives and action steps outlined in your child’s EP are implemented.

In order to assure that your child’s EP is being implemented you should do the following:

1.Review your child’s EP QUARTERLY: You should re-read your child’s EP goals at least once a quarter. Ask yourself the question, “Is progress being made so that my child will meet his/her goals on the time frames stated in the EP?” As necessary, contact your child’s teacher to discuss your child’s EP goals. (See “What if I feel my child’s EP is not being followed”, below).

2.Parent Conferences: You will want to review your child’s EP Goals with your child’s teacher at the initial parent conference of the year. You and the teacher will want to discuss what needs to be accomplished for your child during the year. You

should further review your child's EP with the teacher as part of all additional parent conferences.

Can I request additional EP meetings?

If at any time you feel your child's EP goals or objectives need to be revised, or you have questions or concerns about your child's education, you can:

- 1) request an informal meeting with your child's teacher to discuss your child's progress, and/or
- 2) request a EP Meeting through the school's designee (usually the ESE Specialist).

What if my child's needs are not being met?

Start by talking to your child's teacher. If this does not resolve the situation, review your child's EP. If you feel your child's EP does not meet your child's needs, ask the school's ESE Specialist or appropriate designee to schedule an EP Meeting. As warranted, talk with your child's Assistant Principal or Principal.

If you are not satisfied with the results of these contacts, follow the steps found in "Need Further Help", below.

What if I feel my child's EP is not being followed?

Start by talking with your child's teacher. If this does not resolve the issue, talk with the school's ESE Specialist or appropriate designee. As warranted, talk with your child's Assistant Principal or Principal. If you are not satisfied with the results of these contacts, follow the steps found in "Need Further Help", below.

Need Further Help?

What if I need more help? If you have additional questions or concerns, talk with your school's ESE Specialist, Assistant

Principal or Principal. If you still are not satisfied, contact the district office. The contact number for the Math, Science and Gifted Department is 754-321-2119. You may also contact the Broward County Gifted Advisory. A link to this group is available on this website. As you talk with school staff, make sure you keep copies of all written correspondence. If you have oral conversations, take notes stating the date of the conversation, who you talked with, and what was said in the conversation. Additional help, including links to the State of Florida's EP laws and State of Florida's EP Technical Assistance Paper can be found at the DOE website (fldoe.org).

What if there are EP issues that still are not resolved?

Finally, if your EP issues are not resolved, follow the procedures outlined in the "Procedural Safeguards for Exceptional Students Who are Gifted".