

**PRESCHOOL  
SPECIAL EDUCATION  
HANDBOOK  
COLSTRIP PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
2015-2016**



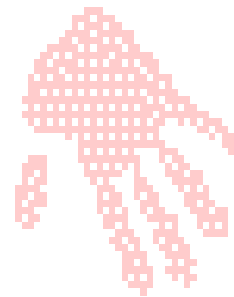
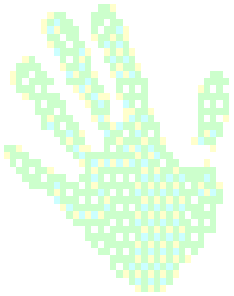
**Vision**

Our Vision is to provide a world-class education while preparing our students for life, college and career readiness.



**Mission**

The core purpose of Colstrip Public Schools is to provide a safe, healthy and secure environment in which to educate and prepare students for the demands of the future by engaging children in lifelong learning.



## INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Special Needs Preschool Program! The preschool staff sincerely hopes that you and your child have a successful, enjoyable year.

Our preschool program is designed to serve students who have been identified with federally recognized disability under the *Individuals with Disability Education Act* (IDEA). Each child will have individual objectives based on his/her area(s) of need. Objectives in the following areas may be included in each child's individual program: Social, Self-help, Speech and Language, Cognitive, Gross Motor, and Fine Motor, Kindergarten Readiness and/or Behavior. Both the child's strong and weak areas receive attention individually, in small groups, and in whole group settings based on the number of students being served.

Preschool staff will assist the family in finding services and will collaborate with specialists, therapists, and other agencies to ensure an integrated, appropriate program for each child.

The entire preschool staff is looking forward to working and playing with your child to help him/her accomplish as much as possible during the school year.



## **PROGRAM CRITERIA**

### **Special Needs Preschool Placement Criteria**

The Special Needs Preschool program prepares children for entry into a regular classroom, resource room, or other appropriate setting for the disabled child.

Entry criteria into the preschool classroom:

- Attained third birthday
- Diagnosed disabled

Despite the recognized need for early intervention for high risk children, the preschool program does not serve as a prevention program. Children must demonstrate a significant delay in one or more domain areas.

Children who are accepted into the program are asked to have a current medical examination; this includes a record of required immunizations. A birth certificate is also necessary to establish age eligibility. Medical, psychological, and educational records should be made available to school personnel upon request for use in program planning.

### **Eligibility**

A child becomes eligible to receive special education and related services when he or she is identified as a child with a recognized disability. The IDEA lists thirteen different disability categories under which three through twenty-one-year-olds may be eligible for services. For a child to be eligible for services, the disability must affect the child's educational performance. Twelve of the disability categories listed in IDEA are as follows:

- Deafness
- Hearing Impairment
- Cognitive Delay
- Orthopedic Impairment
- Other Health Impairment
- Emotional Disturbance
- Learning Disabilities
- Visual Impairment
- Deafness/Blindness
- Autism
- Speech and Language Impairment
- Traumatic Brain Injury

## **Developmental Delay**

It is important to know that, children aged three through six can be identified as having a “Developmental Delay” rather than one of the disability categories above. To qualify as a child with “Developmental Delay,” the child must be experiencing developmental delays, as measured by appropriate diagnostic instruments and procedures in one or more of the following areas:

- a. Cognitive Development
- b. Physical Development, (including vision and hearing)
- c. Speech and Language Development
- d. Social and Emotional Development
- e. Self-Help Skills

An Evaluation Team may identify a three, four, or five-year-old child who needs special education as a child with “Developmental Delay” in either of two ways, by:

- Applying the same criteria used to identify school-age children suspected of experiencing a disability, or
- Meeting the criteria defining a severe delay in development.

It is up to the Evaluation Team to identify a child with “Developmental Delay” who experiences a severe delay in development when its evaluation documents that the child functions at a developmental level:

- Two (2) or more standard deviations below the norm in any one area of development;  
or
- One and one-half (1.5) standard deviations below the norm in two or more areas of development.

The Evaluation Team must ensure that the delay in development is not due to factors related to environment, economic disadvantage, or cultural differences.

The criterion defining severe delay in development sets a norm-referenced standard, which differentiates children with severe delays from those who do not experience severe delays. This criterion does not address specific abilities, skills, or deficits; rather, it should address eligibility standards. Consequently, criterion-referenced measures should be considered in the classification decision regarding eligibility, as should the results of other tests and observations.

No single test is used as criterion for determining an appropriate educational program for the child.

Other measures of delay may be appropriate for distinguishing children with disabilities from children without disabilities. In such cases, quantitative measures of delay such as months, percentiles, or percentages equivalent to standard deviations, may be used to indicate severe delay in development.

### **Least Restrictive Environment**

By law, the IEP team must consider all options available to the child before placement is made. Special consideration must be made to placing the child in the least restrictive setting. Some of the options that may be available to preschool students who qualify for special education services are:

- Special Needs Preschool designed for students who meet the criteria as having a developmental delay or specific “federally recognized” handicapping condition.
- Individual or small group therapy and/or instruction within the public school setting.

Consideration for placement in the Special Needs Preschool is based on the severity of the disability and the enrollment numbers at the time of the student’s initial Evaluation Report meeting. Higher consideration is given to students who have a delay in development in two or more of the developmental milestones however; if a student is delayed in only one area of development, such as speech and language, the team will consider a preschool placement if the total enrollment in the preschool at the time of the initial Evaluation Report has not exceeded 6 students. Consideration for placement will be reevaluated at the beginning of each school year and/or at annual IEP meetings and will be based, once again, on enrollment numbers and progress made towards IEP objectives.

### **Dual Placement**

A child may qualify for dual placement in preschool and kindergarten if the following criteria are met.

- The child is six years of age prior to September 10<sup>th</sup>
- The child has been enrolled in the preschool program
- The IEP team has recommended a dual placement.
- The child is in need of this program to have a successful kindergarten experience.
- The child continues to qualify for preschool services.
- The child has the prerequisite skills necessary for kindergarten success.

Dual placements are available to the child for the first semester only. At semester time, an IEP meeting will be reconvened in order to:

- Determine whether the child should be exited from preschool and continue in the kindergarten placement if current placement is successful.

- Review alternative placements if the current placement is unsuccessful.
- Remain in dual placement setting.

### **SPECIAL EDUCATION PROCESS FOR CHILDREN AGE 3-5**

It is the purpose of the Child Find/Preschool Screening to identify and define the disabled preschool population so as to assist the District in planning and budgeting for future services, as well as assist in the early educational intervention of these children with disabilities. Local publicity campaigns provide the specific date and location for the screening to the appropriate newspapers, radio and television stations as well as the District's Patron Newsletter. Notices and pamphlets are posted throughout the Colstrip community.

If a referral for a comprehensive evaluation results from Child Find/Preschool screening and the student is determined to be a resident of Colstrip School District the appropriate steps will be taken as outlined below:

#### **Follow-up Procedures for Referral and Evaluation:**

Parents voluntarily bring their children to the Child Find/Preschool Screening. An explanation of the procedures and an exit interview regarding each child's performance is conducted with the parents, and they are given a copy of the summary statements from each testing station. The parents of any child whose screening indicates possible concerns are given suggestions of activities and interventions to work on at home. If the child shows significant delay(s) 1.5 standard deviations below in 2 or more developmental areas or 2 standard deviations below in one area a referral meeting is scheduled and the referral process is followed. Parents will be notified if a referral for hearing and/or vision is necessary so that parents can follow up with the appropriate professionals.

\*When appropriate, parents are also referred to DEAP (Developmental Educational Assistance Program) the regional Part C agency.

#### **Procedures for Responding to Individual Referrals:**

Individuals wishing to refer a preschool age child for possible evaluation would be assisted with the completion of the same referral process used for students who are referred through our screening events or an outside agency. If the parent is unsure if the child needs or qualifies for such services, they are asked to consult with the Director of Special Education. Once a clear understanding of the nature of the concern is established, the parent can work with the local school personnel to pursue the proper services.

#### **Transition from Early Intervention**

Children involved in early intervention services or the Developmental Education Assistance Program (DEAP) are referred for special education services to Colstrip Public Schools at least 90 days prior to a their third birthday. The family support specialist (DEAP) will schedule an

Individual Family Support Plan (IFSP) meeting to help with the transition from early intervention services (Part C) to special education service (Part B).

With the family's consent, the Special Education Director and family support specialist will complete and sign the district's *Referral* to begin the special education process. A smooth transition for an eligible child with disabilities (as determined by the Evaluation Report meeting) will result with the development of an Individualized Education Program (IEP) on or before the child's third birthday. The actual special education and related services in the IEP will begin on the dates of service set by the team developing the IEP. Children with disabilities, whose third birthday falls during the summer months, may not receive special education and related services when school is not in session. It is the decision of the team developing the IEP to evaluate the child's need for extended school year services based on a regression/recoupment analysis.

Transition from early intervention services (IDEA Part C) to Special Education services (Part B) shall follow the office of Public Instruction's guidelines *Child Find, Referral and Evaluation Plan: A Special Educator's Guide to Montana's Special Education Process*, Office of Public Instruction.

### **Parental Notice and Approval**

The process for informing parents is the same for preschool-age children and school-age children.

If a district intends to conduct an initial evaluation to determine whether a child of any age is experiencing a disability and needs special education, the district must inform the parent that it intends to conduct an evaluation.

This notice must explain all procedural safeguards available to the parent and describe the evaluation procedures.

Parental approval must precede individual testing and observation.

### **Evaluation Components**

When a child is referred for a preschool program, a comprehensive evaluation is conducted to pinpoint the child's:

- Present level of functional performance
- Strengths and weaknesses
- Possible disabilities

The purpose of the evaluation is to determine whether or not a disability exists.

The evaluation must be conducted by a multi-disciplinary team, which may include a school psychologist, a physician or nurse, a special educator, or early intervention specialist, a speech-

language pathologist and other similar personnel. Parents will also be contributors to the evaluation process.

The following areas may be assessed:

- Classroom assessment and observation by the teacher
- Speech and language evaluation by the speech-language pathologist
- Gross and fine motor screening by the occupational and/or physical therapist
- Behavioral assessment by the teacher, psychologist or behavior specialist
- Psychological or intellectual assessment by a psychologist
- Hearing evaluation by an audiologist
- Visual and/or health assessment by the nurse

### **Evaluation Report**

Once the evaluation is completed, the Evaluation Report Team is convened. Members of the team include the parents, an administrator, and a special education teacher. Others that may contribute to the team are, an occupational therapist, physical therapist, speech-language pathologist, audiologist, school nurse, and involved outside agencies. The purpose of the Team meeting is to review evaluation results, establish placement eligibility, and make program recommendations.

If the child qualifies, the need for services is determined and the child may be entered into the program. After placement, a comprehensive re-evaluation must be held before the student's 6<sup>th</sup> birthday if they have been identified as having a "developmental delay". This handicapping condition only applies to students between the ages of 3-5. Re-evaluations must be discussed at least every three years for students falling in any of the other handicapping categories.

Occasionally, at the time of the initial referral, an evaluation has already been conducted by another agency. The Evaluation Team must decide whether further evaluation is needed.

### **INDIVIDUAL EDUCATIONAL PLAN (IEP)**

Once the assessment has been completed and the Evaluation Team has determined the need for services and the program eligibility, an IEP meeting is held where an individual educational plan will be developed. The purpose of the IEP meeting is to establish appropriate goals for the child. The goals established become the program outline for the professionals that will be working with the child. The most appropriate educational placement for the child to meet the established goals will be determined by the IEP team.



### **IEP Team**

The IEP team must include the administrator, special education teacher and parent. It may also include the regular class teacher and other support staff that will provide services to the child (speech clinician, OT, PT). It is this team that together writes the IEP.

### **IEP Components**

The following components will be written into the IEP:

- Statement of the present level of functioning.
- Annual goals.
- Specific services to be provided and the extent of integration in the regular classroom.
- Setting of service. [Identification of student does not guarantee placement in the special education preschool. Setting is determined on an individual basis and is based on severity of delay(s).]
- Dates for the initiation of services.
- Criteria and evaluation procedures
- Transportation.

### **Annual Review**

A child's program placement and IEP must be reviewed annually. At the annual review, the parents are updated on progress and recommendations are made for the upcoming year. A new IEP is established if program continuation is recommended.

## **PARENT RIGHTS**

Please familiarize yourself with your parental rights as contained in the brochure, *Procedural Safeguards in Special Education under IDEA*.

## **GENERAL INFORMATION**

### **Classroom Visitations**

We welcome classroom visitations. We feel parents need to be actively involved in their child's program and frequent visits to the classroom make a more coordinated and successful program.

We request that you make the classroom teacher aware of your planned visit the day before you plan to visit.

### **Attendance**

As you may know, the program's success, like that of any educational endeavor, depends greatly upon regular attendance. We ask for your cooperation and support in keeping your child's attendance as consistent as possible.

The preschool staff will continue to monitor your child's performance and progress closely. Should it become apparent that your child's progress is being hindered by frequent absences, you will be contacted. Inconsistent attendance is a major concern for both the school and the parent because it jeopardizes the benefits your child would otherwise be receiving through participation in the special education services/program. For this reason, if attendance related difficulties arise, a discussion will be held with you regarding the value of the child continuing in the program.

If you have any questions, please contact your child's teacher or the Director of Special Education.

### **Requested Supplies**

We suggest that you send an old change of clothes that could remain at school. These would be used in the event of an accident. If your child uses diapers, it is the parents' responsibility to supply them as well as wet wipes. Usually, a large box of diapers is most convenient and when your child runs low, the teacher will send home a note requesting more.

Please plainly mark your child's name on all belongings that he/she will bring to school including hats, mittens, coats, sweaters, boots, and toys.

### **Busing**

#### **Colstrip Public Schools – Transportation: 748-4699 Ext. 3400**

Busing is provided by Colstrip School District #19 at no cost to the parents. The children are picked up and delivered at or near their home or designated daycare. Please notify the preschool staff if your child is going to be absent from school. If your child will not be riding the bus, please notify the transportation office by calling the number listed above, so they need not make your stop.

Parents or a caregiver must be present when preschoolers are dropped off. If you are requesting an address pick-up or drop-off change, call the Colstrip Public Schools Transportation office or Debi Smith at 748-4699 ext 4086.

### **Parent Resource Information**

The following organizations are available to assist if you would like more information about special education:

**Office of Public Instruction**—phone (406) 444-4402

**Parents, Let's Unite for Kids**—phone (406) 255-0540

**Montana Advocacy Program**—phone (406) 449-2344

### **Cost and Funding**

A combination of federal, state, and local school district monies fund the preschool program. There is no cost to the child or parents of a disabled child for the preschool services or for the transportation provided.

### **Out of District Enrollment**

The Board, recognizing that an educational requirement of its resident students includes the need for an orderly educational process and environment free from disruption, overcrowding, and any kind of violence or disruptive influences, hereby establishes criteria for the admission of out-of-District students. These will not apply to students whose parents/guardians move into the District.

Out-of-district students will be subject to the following criteria when making application for enrollment and must provide proof of the following to the superintendent/designee before admission:

The student applying for enrollment must:

- A. Be in good standing with the school(s) attended during the present and previous school year;
- B. Provide an attendance record free of truancy;
- C. Provide a clean behavior record in the school last attended for a period of at least one (1) year;
- D. Be within the district's established transportation routes or agree to provide personal transportation for the duration of enrollment in the district;
- E.. Have no criminal record;
- F. Have correctly completed the out-of-district application process.

The student will not be considered for admission if the student's enrollment would:

- G. Require hiring additional staff;
- H. Require additional educational services not currently provided in this school district;
- I. Create overcrowding of existing classes.

# Handbook Acknowledgment

Please sign below indicating you have received and have reviewed the *Preschool Special Education Handbook* for the 2015/2016 school year. Please return the form to preschool with your child.

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Student Name

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Signature of Parent/Guardian

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Date