

Special Education Corner

One of the most difficult parts of being a parent, can be watching your child struggle emotionally or academically. Parents frequently search out solutions or supports that will help their child. Sometimes this search leads to special education. As a Director of Special Education who genuinely cares for all of the kids in our District, I want to help everyone. It is very hard for me to explain to a concerned parent that having a doctor's note with a diagnosis of a learning disability, attention deficit disorder, or depression does not automatically qualify a child for special education. This can be difficult for even the doctor to understand. Often, parents get caught in between two systems and find themselves frustrated. Unfortunately, the procedure and protocols of the medical and educational systems are very different, even with the same terminology! It's no wonder parents begin to mistrust the educational system!

In the world of special education, a student must meet **ALL THREE** of the following criteria to qualify as a child with a disability in need of special education support:

1. The Student must have a disability or disabilities
2. The Student's disability **must adversely affect educational performance**
3. The student's unique **needs cannot be addressed through general education classes with accommodations.**

A diagnosis from a doctor is not enough to qualify a child for special education support. Eligibility requires that the child have a disability and also be struggling in school. Many times this means, that the child is receiving low grades and not making progress at the same rate as their classmates. This can be very frustrating for a parent who watches their child struggle at home to get good grades and as a result not qualify for special education.

Information from the doctor is very helpful in beginning a special education referral, but is not the only requirement. A school may not medically diagnose a child, this can only be done by a physician. The school can make an educational determination. Whew! This can be frustrating and hard to understand!

As difficult as it is to state, IDEA law "does not require your school district to provide the *very best* education for your child, the school district is only required to provide an appropriate education." The Colfax School District strives to always provide the very best within the guidelines and financial constraints provided to us from the state. These guidelines can be quite confusing to those who do not work within the system on a daily basis. I hope this article helped to clear up a piece of this puzzle.

As always, if you have questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at any time! Happy February! May you enjoy the beauty of our winter wonderland, while staying cozy warm!

Polly Rudi,
Director of Special Education