



**Special Education  
Policies and Procedures Manual  
2025-2026**

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## Special Education

The [Guide Steps](#) is a document provided by Arizona's Department of Education that outlines compliance standards specific to Arizona and includes references to the [Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act \(IDEA\)](#), [Arizona Administrative Code R7-2-401](#) and [Arizona Revised Statutes, Title 15](#). All staff will follow the Guide Steps and the standards set in the Freedom Academy's Exceptional Student Service Process Manual. Each section of this manual will reference the corresponding sections of the Guide Steps.

### Child Find

#### Child Find Requirements and PEA Policies and Procedures

*Guide Steps 1.A.1*

#### Child Find

##### §300.111

The Freedom Academy will identify, locate, and evaluate all children with disabilities within the populations they serve who require special education and related services. This includes students progressing from grade to grade, highly mobile students, as well as homeless and migrant children.

#### Public Awareness

##### AAC R7-2-401.C

The Director of Special Education shall ensure that Child Find procedures are made accessible to parents through the school website, incorporating a link to [AzEIP](#), the display of Child Find posters in the office, and the provision of flyers by the Administrative Assistant for distribution.

### Child Find Procedures

*Guide Steps Section I.A.2*

#### Child Identification and Referral

*R7-2-401.D.5 and R7-2-401.D.6*

All students newly enrolled at the Freedom Academy shall undergo screening in the areas of hearing, vision, cognitive or academic performance, communication, motor skills, social or behavioral development, and adaptive or self-help capabilities within 45 calendar days of their enrollment. The screening process shall incorporate data derived from benchmark assessments, universal screening tools, and teacher documentation. In the event that concerns are identified in any area, appropriate follow-up actions and notification to parents via a formal letter must be completed within 10 school days. Follow-up measures may include documentation of efforts to obtain additional records, referral to the Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS), or consideration for a special education evaluation.

## 45-Day Screening Timeline and Process

RESPONSIBLE PARTY	TIMELINE	ACTION
Administrative Assistant	No more than 30 calendar days after student enrollment	Provide a list of students who need 45 Day Screening Form completed to all homeroom teachers.
Teacher(s)	No earlier than 30 calendar days but not later than 45 calendar days after student enrollment	45-Day screening form completed and saved in Student's Cum file. <u>MUST use data to complete the form.</u>
Administrative Assistant	No later than 2 days after the 45-day screening form was submitted by the teacher	Use report to notify Principal of students who have concerns noted on the 45 Day Screening Form.
Principal	No later than 10 calendar days after concerns were documented	<p>Make a determination of appropriate follow-up, and document on 45-day screening form.</p> <p>Notify parents of concerns and next steps using the Parent Notification Letter.</p>
Principal	No later than 10 calendar days after the 45-day screening form was returned without concerns noted	Verify data on the completed form and sign.

# Evaluation/Reevaluation

## Parent Consent

§ 300.300

### Mandatory Parent Consent

It is considered best practice to ensure that parents are consistently informed, actively included, and provide their consent in matters pertaining to their child’s education. Nevertheless, there may be exceptional circumstances in which a parent is unable or unwilling to participate, and consent cannot be obtained. In such instances, established protocols must be adhered to accordingly.

SITUATION	CONSENT REQUIRED	EXPLANATION
Initial Evaluation	Parent Consent is required	An evaluation cannot be completed without parent consent
Initial Provision of Special Education and Related Services	Parent Consent is required	<p>After the initial evaluation, consent is needed <i>again</i> to begin services.</p> <p>Children that are wards of the state may begin services without consent if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Whereabouts of the parent are unknown</li> <li>b. Rights of the parent have been terminated</li> <li>c. Right of the parent to make educational decisions have been subrogated by a judge and consent for an initial evaluation has been given by an individual appointed by the judge to represent the child</li> </ul>
Reevaluation	Parent consent is required sometimes	<p>No additional testing needed = No consent required</p> <p>Additional testing needed = Consent required</p> <p>Additional testing needed that is given to all children at the school without consent – No consent required</p>
Continued Provision of Special Education and Related Services	Parent consent is not required	Parent consent is not required for a student that will be continuing services after a reevaluation.

The active involvement of parents in Individualized Education Program (IEP) and Multidisciplinary Evaluation Team (MET) meetings is essential to fostering the academic and developmental success of students with disabilities. Parents hold a significant responsibility in their child’s educational process and are entitled to engage meaningfully in decisions pertaining to their child’s learning experience.

*The IDEA regulations state a school “must take steps to ensure that one or both parents of a child with a disability are present at each IEP Team meeting or are afforded the*

*opportunity to participate.” Schools must notify “parents of the meeting early enough to ensure that they will have an opportunity to attend,” and schedule “the meeting at a mutually agreed time and place.”*

All special education meetings must be scheduled by making every effort to speak with the parent (phone or face to face) to determine the mutually agreed upon time and followed up with an email containing a summary of the call, the meeting notice, and Procedural Safeguards Notice (PSN).

- If a parent is unresponsive to attempts to schedule and/or attend an IEP meeting, contact the Director of Special Education no later than **10 school days prior** to the annual due date.
  - At least 3 documented attempts must be made using at least 2 different modes (ie. phone call/text, email, written letter)
- If a parent is unresponsive to attempts to schedule and/or attend a RED/MET meeting, contact the School Psychologist no later than **10 school days prior** to the meeting's due date.
- \*All attempts to schedule a meeting must be documented in Synergy.

### **Scheduling IEP and RED/MET Meetings**

- The Meeting Notice must:
  - Provide *individualized* purpose(s) of the meeting. Do not rely solely on the IEPPro drop down menus when developing meeting notices. There may be times when an individualized meeting purpose is necessary.
  - The roles of each participant who will be attending
    - It is not required to include the names of the participants
- Each IEP or RED/MET meeting will be scheduled by the service coordinator.
  - *Regardless of who schedules the meeting, the service coordinator assigned to the student holds ultimate responsibility for meeting annual and triennial due dates.*
- A meeting invitation will be sent to all participants including parents, using the Outlook Freedom SPED Calendar.
  - All meeting participants, including related services providers and parents, must be included in this invitation.
- Parents will be provided the Meeting Notice, and a copy of their Procedural Safeguards Notice via email. *Guide Steps Section IV.A.1*
  - A paper copy of the meeting notice will be sent to parents, if necessary
  - A paper copy of the Procedural Safeguards Notice is to be available at the meeting and at the parent's request
  - The date and method that the meeting notice was sent home to the parent must be documented in Synergy.
- Every effort will be made to align MET and IEP due dates to reduce the number of meetings.

## Completion of Evaluation/Reevaluation

*Guide Steps Section II.A.2*

### Parent Written Requests for Evaluation

§ 300.301(c)(i) R7-2-

401. E.4

If a parent submits a request for a special education evaluation, the Director of Special Education must be notified immediately. The Director of Special Education will contact the parent to discuss his/her request. The school must formally respond to the parent's request within **15 school days** by either issuing Prior Written Notice or by holding a Review of Existing Data (RED) team meeting.

\*Prior written notice must be issued to parents either accepting or denying the parent's request for initial consideration of a special education evaluation. This PWN is not to propose a meeting, instead it is to propose consideration for a special education evaluation.

*Guide Steps Section IV.A.2*

### Timeline for Scheduling Annual and Triennial Reviews

TYPE OF MEETING	CIRCUMSTANCES	SCHEDULED BY	HELD BY	WHO ATTENDS
<b>Review of Existing Data (RED)</b>	<b>Every three years</b>	<b>Not later than 90 calendar days</b> prior to the triennial due date.	<b>Not later than 70 calendar days</b> prior to the due triennial date.	Parent, Student, SPED teacher, Gen Ed Teacher(s), LEA rep, Related Service Providers (if applicable) School Psychologist (if applicable)
<b>MET (Determination)</b>	After the additional data is gathered (testing determined from RED)	During the RED meeting	<b>Not later than 60 calendar days</b> from the date of informed parental consent or the triennial due date whichever comes first  <i>*Guide Steps Section II.A.5</i>	Parent, Student, SPED teacher, Gen Ed Teacher(s), LEA rep, Related Service Providers (if applicable) School Psychologist (if applicable)

<p><b>Annual IEP</b></p>	<p><b>Every year</b></p>	<p><b>Not later than 30 calendar days</b> prior to the annual IEP due date</p>	<p><b>Not later than 364 days</b> after the last annual IEP meeting was held.</p> <p><i>*Guide Steps Section III.A.1</i></p>	<p>Parent, Student, SPED teacher, Gen Ed Teacher(s), LEA rep, Related Service Providers (if applicable)</p>
<p><b>IEP Review</b></p>	<p>*The student is not making progress on IEP goals</p> <p>*The student has met goals on IEP</p> <p>*A review is requested by a parent or LEA</p>	<p>As soon as possible</p>	<p>IEP meetings must be held <b>no later than 45 school days</b> of a written request made by a parent or LEA representative.</p>	<p>Parent, Student, SPED teacher, Gen Ed Teacher(s), LEA rep, Related Service Providers (if applicable)</p>

## Timeline for Scheduling Students Referred for a Special Education Evaluation

TYPE OF MEETING	CIRCUMSTANCES	SCHEDULED BY	HELD BY	WHO ATTENDS
<b>Review of Existing Data (RED)</b>	<p>The MTSS team has referred the student for an Initial Evaluation or the parent has requested an initial evaluation in writing</p> <p><b>*Within 5 school days</b>, Provide parent with: Prior Written Notice, Procedural Safeguards, Meeting Notice</p>	<p><b>Within 5 school days</b> of the referral or parent request</p>	<p><b>Within 15 school days</b> of referral/parent request</p> <p><i>*Guide Steps Section II.A.2</i></p>	<p>Parent, Student, SPED teacher, School Psychologist, Gen Ed Teacher(s), LEA rep, Related Service Providers (if applicable)</p>
<b>Initial MET</b>	<p>After the additional data is gathered (testing determined from RED)</p>	<p>During the RED meeting</p>	<p><b>Within 60 calendar days</b> from the date of informed parental consent</p> <p><i>*Guide Steps Section II.A.5</i></p>	<p>Parent, Student, SPED teacher, School Psychologist, Gen Ed Teacher(s), LEA rep, Related Service Providers (if applicable)</p>
<b>Initial IEP</b>	<p>After the student has been found eligible for special education services</p>	<p>At the MET meeting- once eligibility has been determined and initial placement for Special Education Services has been agreed upon by the parent.</p>	<p><b>Not later than 30 calendar days</b> from the MET meeting or <b>90 calendar days</b> from the time of informed written consent.</p> <p><i>*Guide Steps Section II.A.2</i></p>	<p>Parent, Student, SPED teacher, Gen Ed Teacher(s), LEA rep, Related Service Providers (if applicable)</p>

**\*Prior written notice must be issued when a student is referred for initial consideration of a special education evaluation. This PWN proposes consideration for a special education**

## **evaluation. Guide Steps Section IV.A.2**

\*During an initial evaluation, the school psychologist is the service coordinator and is responsible for ensuring meetings are scheduled appropriately. The school psychologist will collaborate with the teachers to schedule meetings. A special education teacher will become the service coordinator after the child has been found eligible for special education services.

## **New Students Transferring to Freedom Academy**

Transferring to a new school can present challenges and uncertainties for students and their families. To ensure a smooth transition and foster confidence in Freedom Academy, it is critical to make informed educational decisions and document them promptly to support student success. The following procedures outline the steps to be followed when Freedom is notified that a student with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) will be enrolling at our school:

## **Special Education Director Responsibilities**

Upon notification of a new student with a potential Individualized Education Program (IEP), the Special Education (SPED) Director will undertake the following steps to ensure a seamless enrollment process and compliance with special education requirements:

### **Request for Records**

The SPED Director will promptly contact the student's previous school to request all relevant special education records, including the IEP, evaluation reports, and related documentation.

### **Internal Notification**

While awaiting the records, the SPED Director will inform the Principal, relevant general education teachers, and special education staff about the incoming student who may have an IEP, ensuring all parties are prepared for the transition.

### **Record Processing**

Upon receipt of the records, the SPED Director will upload them to IEPpro and update Synergy with the appropriate areas of eligibility to maintain accurate student information.

### **Notification of Availability**

The SPED Director will notify the Principal and relevant teachers that the student's records are available in IEPpro for review, ensuring timely access to critical information.

This structured process ensures efficient handling of special education records and supports the student's successful integration into Freedom Academy.

## **Service Coordinator Responsibilities**

- Within 48 hours of notification of a new student's enrollment, the service coordinator will review the IEP for compliance and call the parent/guardian. The parent and service coordinator will discuss the student's IEP and needs. Based on this discussion, the service coordinator will determine which of the following options is the appropriate next step:
  - **Option 1:** If the IEP can be accepted as is, and the parent agrees:
    - Complete a PWN indicating the acceptance and agreement.
    - Email the parent the PWN

- Document in Synergy.
- **Option 2:** If the IEP needs only minor changes and the parent agrees:
  - Complete an IEP addendum to reflect the changes.
  - Complete the PWN in the addendum indicating the proposed changes.
  - Email the parent the addendum with the embedded PWN
  - Document in Synergy.
- **Option 3:** If the IEP needs more significant changes, the parent is not in agreement with the proposed changes, the parent wants a transfer meeting, or the IEP is not in compliance:
  - Schedule an IEP transfer meeting to be held no later than 30 calendar days from the student's date of enrollment.
  - Document the scheduled IEP transfer meeting date and what services and supports will be provided until the meeting in the PWN.
  - Email the parent the PWN and document in Synergy.
- **Option 4:** If the student's evaluation is not compliant:
  - Schedule a Review of Existing Data (RED) within 30 calendar days of the student's enrollment.
  - If the evaluation leads to a non-compliant IEP:
    - Bring the IEP into compliance within 30 days (follow Option 3).
    - Once evaluation is complete, the IEP team must consider revisions.
  - If the evaluation results in a compliant IEP:
    - Determine the appropriate previous option (Options 1-3) and complete it.
    - Once evaluation is complete, the IEP team must consider revisions.

### **Psychologist or Related Services Providers (when appropriate) Responsibilities**

- Review all METs for compliance
  - Complete a transfer MET if the document is not in IEPPro.
    - Every box in the transfer MET needs to be completed when prior documents are not in IEPPro.
  - Ensure METs contain signatures for SLD eligibility and medical certification forms when required.
  - Notify the service coordinator of noncompliant MET documents to coordinate and schedule the RED meeting with the IEP review.
  - If the student has moved from out of state, the Psychologist will write a PWN specifically

explaining eligibility criteria, what data was used to make the determination, and the team's decision. This can be combined with PWN from the IEP, but the Psychologist needs to write the components related to eligibility. *Guide Steps Section IV.A.1*

- If a student is eligible with a specific learning disability and there are no signature pages, the team will need to sign the supplemental blank evaluation SLD form and this needs to be scanned into the supporting documents area of IEPPro and documented in a PWN. *Guide Steps Section IV.A.1*

## **Related Service Providers**

### **Procedure for Evaluating Transfer Students for Speech-Language Impairment (SLI) Eligibility**

If the Multidisciplinary Evaluation Team (MET) determines that a Related Service Provider needs to collect additional data to assess a transfer student's eligibility for speech-language services, and no other disciplines require evaluation, the following steps will be implemented:

#### **1. Data Collection Guidelines**

- Additional data should only be gathered through a formal evaluation process if it is necessary to determine eligibility for Speech-Language Impairment (SLI).
- If an evaluation is required to determine SLI eligibility, the Related Service Provider will initiate a MET report and complete all required documentation, including meeting notices, Permission to Evaluate (PTE), and Prior Written Notices (PWN), in accordance with Guide Steps Section II.A.5 and IV.A.2.
- For developing goals or establishing baselines, use curriculum-based measures and/or screening tools instead of initiating a MET report.

#### **2. Recording Eligibility Date**

- During the MET meeting, the student's original eligibility date (not the current date) must be recorded in the "Date of Eligibility" field on the eligibility form.

#### **3. Documentation in Prior Written Notice (PWN)**

- The rationale for retaining the student's original eligibility date must be clearly documented in the "Considerations of Other Factors" section of the PWN for eligibility.

This procedure ensures compliance with special education regulations, maintains accuracy in eligibility documentation, and supports an efficient evaluation process for transfer students.

## Timeline for Scheduling Transfer Meetings (For students new to Freedom)

TYPE OF MEETING	CIRCUMSTANCES	SCHEDULED BY	HELD BY	WHO ATTENDS
<b>Transfer Review IEP</b>	The new student has a current and complete MET and Freedom is rejecting the IEP	<b>Within 5 days</b> of student enrollment/start	<b>No later than 30 calendar days</b> from the date of enrollment/start date.	Parent, Student, SPED teacher, Gen Ed Teacher(s), LEA rep, School Psychologist (if applicable), Related Service Providers (if applicable)
<b>Review of Existing Data (RED)</b>	The new student has an expired MET (past the triennial due date)	<b>Within 5 days</b> of student enrollment/start	<b>No later than 30 calendar days</b> from the date of enrollment/start date.	Parent, Student, SPED teacher, Gen Ed Teacher(s), LEA rep, School Psychologist (if applicable), Related Service Providers (if applicable)
<b>MET (Determination)</b>	After additional data is gathered (evaluation determined from MET)	At the RED meeting	<b>No later than 60 calendar days</b> from the date of informed parental consent, which is typically obtained at the Review of Existing Data (RED) meeting.	Parent, Student, SPED teacher, Gen Ed Teacher(s), LEA rep, School Psychologist (if applicable), Related Service Providers (if applicable)
<b>IEP (After MET Determination)</b>	An IEP must be developed or reviewed and revised after <b>every</b> MET.	At the RED meeting- All participants, and the meeting notice must document that the IEP will be held with the MET <b>IE</b> the student continues to qualify for special education services.	Typically held immediately following the Multidisciplinary Evaluation Team (MET) meeting or <b>within 30 calendar days</b> of the MET meeting.	Parent, Student, SPED teacher, Gen Ed Teacher(s), LEA rep, Related Service Providers (if applicable)

## Evaluation Reports

### MET Report Components Completion Timeline

TYPE	TO WHOM	TIMELINE	ACTION
<b>PWN Initial Referral (initial evaluations only)</b>	Parent/ Guardians	No later than <b>15 school days</b> from referral date	Email to parents. Document in Synergy.
<b>RED Components of Report</b>	MET Team	<b>3 days prior</b> to RED meeting	E1 through E3 needs to be completed in PRO prior to the RED meeting so that all data is available for the team to review at the RED.
<b>PWN Evaluation Determination</b>	Parents/ Guardians	Immediately- prior to or along with PTE being obtained.	Email to parents. Document in Synergy.
<b>PWN Eligibility Determination</b>	Parents/ Guardians	<b>2 school days</b> after the meeting	Email to parents. Document in Synergy.
<b>Signature Pages</b>	Service coordinator	<b>2 school days</b> after the MET meeting	Service coordinator uploads all required documents in 1 PDF into Supporting Documents in e-IEP Pro.
<b>Final MET Report (Including additional copy of all PWNs)</b>	Parents/ Guardians	<b>5 school days</b> after meeting	Email to parents. Document in Synergy.
<b>Evaluation Documents</b>	Service coordinator	Monthly	Service coordinator collects all paper protocols (including related service provider protocols) used during the evaluation as well as all hard copy signatures.

## **Initial Evaluation vs. Re-Evaluation**

Evaluations are considered an initial evaluation any time a student is being considered for introductory placement into special education. This includes students who have never been previously evaluated, previously evaluated but did not qualify, and previously qualified students who were dismissed from special education. Re-evaluations are only when a student is currently considered a special education student and is being evaluated to determine continued qualification for special education.

## **Participants in Evaluation Meetings**

The following are required to attend evaluation meetings:

- Parent/Guardian
- Special Education Teacher
- Regular Education Teacher of the Student
- Individuals to interpret instructional implications (this is typically the school psychologist or Speech and Language Pathologist for evaluation meetings)
- Representative of the Local Education Agency (LEA Representative)
  - The LEA representative must be someone who is qualified to provide or supervise the provisions of special education and who is knowledgeable of the general curriculum and the availability of resources (the LEA rep must have the authority to commit resources needed to implement the IEP). When an IEP team cannot reach consensus on a decision, the LEA representative will make the decision for the school.

## **Review of Existing Data (RED)**

### *Guide Steps Section II.A.1-3*

A RED meeting is scheduled under the following circumstances:

- A new student to Freedom has a MET that is expired or does not meet eligibility criteria
- A student has been referred for an initial RED by the MTSS team
- A parent has submitted a written request for consideration of a special education evaluation, and it has been determined that a RED should be held. (Guide Steps Section II.A.2)
- The student's triennial review is due

The school psychologist or service coordinator coordinates the completion of the RED documents with the applicable team members. Pages E1-E4 must be completed 3 days prior to all RED meetings. The psychologist and related service provider(s) are responsible for the following document areas, where applicable:

- Cover Sheet (E1)
- Create a PWN Initial Referral (For initial evaluations only)
- Background (E2) (Remain within the discipline for entering previous assessment data)
- Current Data (E3) (For initial evaluations only)
- Considerations (E4) (enter required team member names into E4)

- Create a PWN Determination (PWNs cannot be drafted prior to decisions made by MET teams)

The Special Education service coordinator is responsible for:

- Current Data (E3) (for triennial reviews)
  - This data should be a combination of data collected from general and special education teachers.
  - Observation notes should be obtained and put into this section in E3

## **MET (Determination)**

### *Guide Steps Section II.A.4*

If a team determined additional data was needed, the team will meet to determine the student's eligibility for special education services.

*\*If the team determines existing data is sufficient for educational decision-making, the team will finish the evaluation process at the RED meeting by making an eligibility determination.*

The school psychologist, service coordinator, and related service providers complete the MET.

- Assessments (E5)
- Evaluation Summary (E6)
- Eligibility Determination (E7) (type team member names into E7)
- PWN Eligibility (PWNs cannot be drafted prior to decisions made by MET teams)
- Upload signature pages into IEPPro
  - Eligibility for SLD only, Initial Placement statement, Permission to Evaluate

To determine eligibility for special education services, the MET team must review the data collected and determine if the student has a disability, if the disability has an adverse educational impact, and that the student requires specially designed instruction to make progress in the general education curriculum.

Students may only be exited from special education services through an evaluation ("test in, test out") or if the parent signs a Revocation of Services form.

Eligibility decisions will be made with the [Eligibility Considerations by Category](#) document as the guide.

*\*If a team strongly believes symptoms of ADHD are significantly impacting a student's educational performance and therefore want to consider OHI as a category of eligibility the team should first make every attempt to obtain medical/clinical verification of a condition from a qualified professional. When this is not available, the Certified School Psychologist can choose to utilize the [ADHD Verification Form](#).*

*\*A copy of the [ADHD Verification Form](#) must be scanned and uploaded into supporting documents in e-IEP Pro.*

*\*In the event a student is **only** considered for an evaluation or reevaluation for speech and language, the SLP will be responsible for all portions of the MET document.*

## **Evaluation Extensions**

*34 C.F.R. § 300.301(c)(i)*

*R7-2-401.E.5*

*Guide Steps Section II.A.5*

Arizona Administrative Code states “The 60-day evaluation period may be extended for an additional 30 days, provided it is in the best interest of the child, and the parents and LEA agree in writing to such an extension. Neither the 60-day evaluation period nor any extension shall cause a re-evaluation to exceed the timelines for a re-evaluation within three years of the previous evaluation.”

\*The Psychologist and Director of Special Education **MUST** approve extensions for evaluations.

## **Removing SLI Secondary Eligibility Outside Three-Year Evaluation Process**

If a student has secondary eligibility under SLI and the team is considering removing this eligibility prior to the scheduled triennial evaluation, a Multidisciplinary Evaluation Team (MET) meeting must be conducted. It is the responsibility of the Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP) to complete all sections of the MET report, including comprehensive review of previous evaluation data across all relevant areas (e.g., cognitive, academic, communication, motor, etc.), summary data, and any additional pertinent information documented on E6 (such as conclusions, documentation of suspected disability, recommendations, etc.) that was contributed by other disciplines during the prior evaluation.

When the team convenes to review eligibility and decides to retain the primary eligibility while removing the secondary SLI category, the original eligibility determination date must be preserved (not updated to the date of the current meeting). The rationale for maintaining the original eligibility date must be explicitly documented in the Prior Written Notice (PWN) under the “Considerations of Other Factors” section.

## **Evaluating for Related Services**

If the student’s IEP team determines that the student may require related services (such as speech, occupational therapy, physical therapy, etc.) and the student is not scheduled for a triennial evaluation, the process for considering qualification for related services will be conducted independently of the formal Multi-Disciplinary Evaluation Team (MET) procedures. The designated related service provider will obtain the Parent/Teacher Evaluation (PTE), provide the appropriate Prior Written Notice to the student’s parent, and carry out any necessary assessments. The assessment data will be incorporated directly into the student’s IEP, and the team will reconvene to review the results and determine the student’s need for the related service.

In cases where the related service in question is speech/language support and the student is between triennial review dates, the team will document the student as qualifying for the related service. Should there be a need to reclassify the student as having Speech-Language Impairment (SLI) as a secondary category, this change will be made during the next triennial evaluation.

## **Initial Eligibility**

*Guide Steps Section IV.A.2*

In cases where a Multidisciplinary Evaluation Team (MET) determines a student’s eligibility for special

education during their initial eligibility assessment, the team is required to complete the Initial Placement Statement and Prior Written Notice (PWN) following the eligibility determination but prior to convening the initial IEP meeting or initiating services. The parent signature page for the Initial Placement Statement should be signed and completed at the conclusion of the MET meeting. Additionally, the PWN regarding initial placement must be incorporated into the eligibility PWN, including a statement documenting parental consent for the initial placement.

### Independent Educational Evaluation

*34 C.F.R. § 300.502*

Parents have the right to request an Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE) if they disagree with the school's assessment. Upon receiving a parent's request for an IEE, promptly inform the School Psychologist.

### Individualized Education Plan (IEP)

*Guide Steps Section III*

The service coordinator is accountable for the precise and prompt completion of this entire document. When input is provided by a related service provider, the service coordinator will ensure its completion prior to the relevant deadlines.

The subsequent sections outline the compliance requirements for each component of the Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Each section is organized according to the corresponding pages in IEPPro and references the pertinent legal standards established by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

### IEP Completion Timeline

TYPE	TO WHOM	TIMELINE	ACTION
<b>IEP Draft</b>	Special Education Director	<b>5 school days prior</b> to the meeting	The Special Education Teacher will send the draft IEP Special Education Director for review.
<b>PWN</b>	Parents/ Guardians	<b>2 school days after</b> the meeting	Emailed to parents and documented in Synergy by the service coordinator who sent the PWN home.
<b>Final IEP</b>	Parents/ Guardians	<b>5 school days after</b> meeting	Ensure that most recent evaluation dates and data are included, Related Service documentation is included, final IEP is locked and provided to parents/guardians and documented in Synergy by the service coordinator who sent the IEP home.

The service coordinator and/or related services provider must inform the Special Education Director of any delays in completing the draft IEP at least three days prior to the scheduled IEP meeting. Such

delays should also be communicated to campus administration.

The draft IEP serves as the service coordinator and related service provider's preliminary plan for review and consideration by the IEP team during the meeting. A draft IEP is not considered finalized until a Prior Written Notice is issued to the parent or guardian. Parents or guardians may be provided with a draft IEP prior to the meeting; however, draft versions are marked with a "Draft" watermark and do not include a Prior Written Notice. Any dissemination of a draft IEP to parents or guardians must be documented in Synergy.

#### **A Draft IEP Contains:**

- Closeout progress report to drive the present levels of the draft IEP
- Present levels of academic and functional performance (PLAAFP) which include data from the closeout progress notes, how the disability affects the student's involvement and progress in the general curriculum, current evaluation data from the most recent evaluation report, and measurable classroom data.
- Proposed goals, accommodations, and modifications that are aligned with the information document in the PLAAFP

#### **Cover Sheet**

Ensure that all cover sheet data, including the evaluation date, is updated to the most recent dates.

- The IEP meeting date is the date the IEP was held.
- The IEP start date is the date the IEP is to be implemented, usually 1 school day after the IEP meeting.
- The IEP end date is 364 days after the IEP meeting date. *Guide Steps Section III.A.2*
  - *There are no provisions that allow for an annual IEP review to go beyond 364 days.*
  - *If an IEP is not held within 364 days of the previous IEP meeting, the service coordinator will be held responsible and must complete the [Notice of Expired IEP Form](#) and provide it to the Director of Special Education on the 365<sup>th</sup> day.*
  - *In the event, the parent is not responsive to meeting requests, the Director of Special Education must be notified no later than 10 school days prior to the annual due date.*

## Types of IEP Meetings

TYPE OF IEP MEETING	DESCRIPTION
Initial	<p>When an IEP meeting takes place for a student who does not currently receive special education</p> <p><i>*If a student was previously exited from special education and has qualified for services again, the IEP meeting is an initial.</i></p>
Annual	<p>When the IEP is reviewed and revised 364 days after the previous IEP review meeting.</p>
Addendum	<p>When the IEP team makes changes to an IEP but does not need to hold an annual IEP.</p> <p>Parents must agree to making changes without the full IEP team and the agreement must be documented in the PWN.</p> <p>An addendum includes clarifying the agreed upon changes on the cover page and a PWN.</p> <p>A full IEP team must be present to change placement.</p>
Transfer	<p>When a student is new to FREEDOM, a transfer meeting is to be scheduled within 30 calendar days from enrollment.</p>

**\*Each time eligibility is determined, the IEP team must consider how the new data and most recent eligibility determination affects the services in the IEP. The IEP team must, at minimum, document the most recent data in the IEP by completing an addendum and linking the IEP to the current MET. A PWN must be included to document the team's considerations.**

### Participants in IEP Meetings

*34 § C.F.R. 300.321(a)(1-7), 300.321(b)(1), 300.321(e)(1-2) and 34 § C.F.R. 300.324(a)(4)(i), and 300.325(a)(2)*

#### *Guide Steps Section III.A.2*

The Service Coordinator overseeing the student's IEP is required to attach the IEP meeting notice to the IEP to and ensure the names transfer over. **Signatures are not required to document who attended the IEP meeting, however the names/roles of the participants are required to be written in the PWN.**

The following are required to attend IEP meetings:

- Parent/Guardian
- Special Education Teacher or Special Education Provider of the Student
- Regular Education Teacher of the Student
- Individual to interpret instructional implications (this is typically the service coordinator)

during an annual review)

- Representative of the Local Education Agency (LEA Representative)
  - The LEA representative must be qualified to provide or supervise the provisions of special education and who is knowledgeable of the general curriculum and the availability of resources (the LEA rep must have the authority to commit resources needed to implement the IEP). When an IEP team cannot reach a consensus, the LEA representative will make the decision for the school.

If the team will be considering placement in private placement, additional paraprofessional support, transportation, counseling services, assistive technology, Hearing and/or Vision equipment, or any other “*out of the norm*” services and/or supports, the Director of Special Education must be notified 10 days prior to the meeting and may attend the meeting as the LEA representative.

If the team is considering placement in a private placement for an Emotional Disability and/or behavior a Functional Behavioral Assessment, and subsequent Behavior Intervention Plan will have been implemented and shown to be ineffective before an IEP team considers a more restrictive placement.

If the team is considering private placement, a representative from the private placement must attend the meeting.

If the family notifies the school that they are planning to bring an advocate to the meeting, the Director of Special Education must be notified 10 days prior to the meeting. The Director of Special Education will attend the meeting and may act as the LEA representative depending upon the individual circumstances and the campus director’s preference.

If the family is planning to bring an attorney, the school’s legal counsel must attend. The Director of Special Education must be notified immediately if a parent indicates that they have or are seeking legal representation. If a family brings an attorney without notifying the school of their intent to do so, the meeting must be rescheduled for a time when the Director of Special Education and District’s legal counsel can attend.

**Members of the IEP team must attend the IEP meeting and remain for the entirety of the meeting unless:**

1. The parent has agreed in writing (IEP Meeting Excusal Form) prior to the IEP meeting and
2. The IEP team member who will not attend has provided the parent and IEP team with written information to support the development of the IEP.

**Present Level of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance**

*34 § C.F.R. 300.320(a)(1) and 300.324(a)(1)*

*Guide Steps Section III.A.3*

*The IEP includes the student’s present level of academic achievement and functional performance and how the disability affects the student’s progress in the general curriculum.*

The MET drives the IEP and service coordinators are required to know what the MET includes and be able to discuss it with IEP team members. The evaluation information should be loaded into the IEP from the MET unless there is not a completed evaluation to pull from. If the MET information is not available in IEPro, consult with the school psychologist.

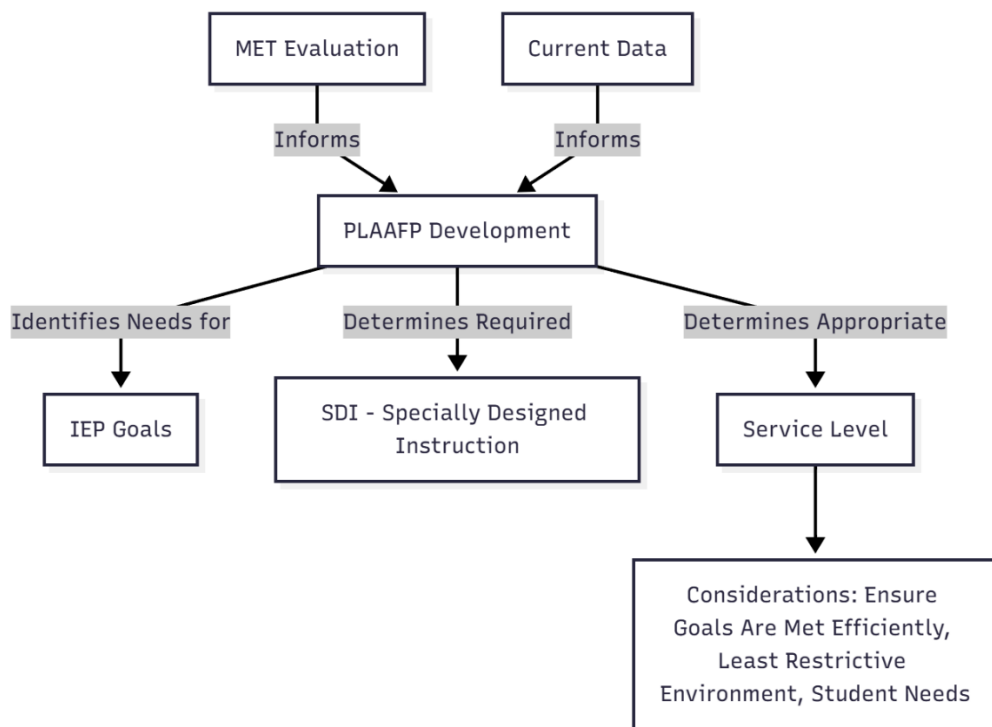
Reading, Writing, and Math skills should include the student’s current progress including a review of the student’s progress on previous IEP goals, baseline data from classroom assessments, district

assessments, and area(s) of need related to the student's disability.

A clear link between the needs outlined in the PLAAFP, the goals, and services must be evident throughout the entire IEP. The reader should be able to predict the IEP goal based on the information in the PLAAFP. *Guide Steps Section III.A.8*

Teacher reports should come directly from the general education teacher(s) of the student. All teacher reports should provide factually stated information that does not portray judgment.

All social emotional and behavioral strengths and needs will be written using factual language. If the student's behavior interferes with his/her learning a description of the behavior including data, incident reports/referrals, antecedents to the behavior, descriptions of the behavior, and interventions/strategies used.



### Consideration of Special Factors

34 § C.F.R. 300.324(a)(2)

*Guide Steps Section II.A.4*

Identify considerations for behavior, communication, assistive technology including needs of students with Visual Impairments, language needs for English Language Learners, language and communication for students with a Hearing Impairment.

### Measurable Annual Goals

34 § C.F.R. 300.320(a)(2)(i); 300.320(a)(6)(ii)

*Guide Steps Section III.A.3*

*Measurable annual goals, including academic and functional goals, that reflect the needs identified in the PLAAFP and current assessment data.*

Goals are to be developed from the clearly defined needs in the PLAAFP, related to the student's disability. Goals must include:

- What the student will do

- To what extent the student will do it
- How the *single* skill will be measured, including the measurement tool
- Baseline measurements that are written in the same way the goal is written and measuring only one skill at a time

**Best practice:** *Baseline data of 0% can only be used if the student has attempted the skill but was unsuccessful. This must be clearly documented in the PLAAFP and goal.*

If a student is eligible to take an [alternative assessment](#), the Measurable Annual Goals must be aligned to alternate achievement standards and include a description of benchmarks or short-term objectives.

If the IEP team has decided to track a goal as a critical skill that may lead to the need for ESY, the goal must be marked as such on the IEP. *Guide Steps Section III.A.4; 34 § C.F.R.300.106*

## **Progress Reporting**

*34 § C.F.R. 300.320(a)(3)(ii)*

*Guide Steps Section III.A.3*

The special education service coordinator is responsible for completing periodic progress reports for each student who has an IEP. Progress reports must be completed at the same time as grade reports are provided to students from general education and at the close of each IEP year.

If an IEP meeting was held no more than two weeks prior to the end of the grade reporting period, a progress report will not be completed because the IEP reported progress on the closeout of the previous IEP goals.

**\*\*If adequate progress is not made on one or more IEP goals within no more than two reporting periods, the IEP team will convene to consider revisions. If revisions to the IEP goals are determined necessary, the team will create an addendum to the IEP that reflects the changes.**

Progress reported on the progress report must be documented in the same way that the IEP goal indicated progress would be measured. For example, if the goal identifies a percentage for mastery the data collection should be reported in the percentage format.

Data collection will be recorded in IEPPro. Data will be recorded no less than the duration documented in the IEP. If the IEP goal is written that data will be collected weekly, those data points will be charted weekly in IEPPro.

## **Accommodations and Modifications**

*34 § C.F.R. 300.320(a)(4) and 300.324(a)(3)(ii)*

*Guide Steps Section III.A.4, III.A.5*

Accommodations are included to change how the student accesses the curriculum. They do not change how much of the curriculum a student needs to learn. The need for accommodations must be evident from the PLAAFP.

Modifications are “substantial changes in what a student is expected to learn and to demonstrate. Changes may be made in the instructional level, the content, or the performance criteria.” This is often described as changes to how much of the curriculum a student is expected to learn.

Modifications are intended to customize the curriculum and expectations of the student’s mastery of

essential skills. The need for modifications must be evident from the PLAAFP.

### **Extended School Year**

*34 § C.F.R. 300.106 and R7-2-408*

*Guide Steps Section III.A.4*

Extended School Year (ESY) services must be considered on an individual basis for all students during the annual IEP meeting or **no later than 45 days prior to the last day of school**.

**In the 2025-2026 school year the due date for ESY eligibility will be **April 13, 2026**.**

ESY focuses on critical skills that impact the maintenance of educational benefits and loss of FAPE. Critical skills may include communication skills, self-help skills, social-emotional skills, and motor skills. Loss of a specific academic skill may not qualify the student for ESY services unless it results in loss of meaningful educational benefit.

An IEP team cannot determine that a student is not eligible for ESY at an initial IEP meeting because data has not yet been collected. In those cases, the team needs to consider ESY services no later than 45 school days prior to the last day of school.

The IEP goal should be marked for ESY consideration and charted. A printed chart should be presented when determining ESY eligibility.

See the [Extended School Year \(ESY\) Frequently Asked Questions](#) for additional information.

### **Assessment**

*34 § C.F.R. 300.320(a)(6)(i) and 300.320(a)(2)(iii)*

*Guide Steps Section III.A.5*

Document the state test the student will take. Identify accommodations the student will need to take state and district assessments.

### **Alternate State Assessment**

*Guide Steps Section III.A.3*

To be eligible for the Alternative Assessment, a student's IEP team must verify all aspects of the Alternate Assessment Eligibility Form found in IEPPro when Alternate State Assessment is selected as the student's test type.

- To be eligible for Alternate Assessment, a student must have a **significant cognitive impairment**.
- Eligibility for Alternate Assessment must be reviewed annually and included in every annual IEP.
- Eligibility for Alternative Assessment must be established prior to November 1<sup>st</sup> of each year to allow for intentional instructional planning for the remainder of the school year.
- [Participation Guidelines and Eligibility Determination for Alternate Assessment](#)

**If a service coordinator intends to propose that a student is eligible for alternative assessment, the Director of Special Education must be notified 10 days prior to the IEP meeting.**

## **Environment & Services**

34 § C.F.R. 300.18(b) and 300.39 and 300.320(a)(4) and R7-2401.G.4

*Guide Steps Section III.A.4*

Specially designed instruction (SDI) means adapting, as appropriate to the unique needs of a student who is eligible for special education, the content, methodology, or delivery of instruction to address the unique needs of the child that results from the child's disability and to ensure access to the general curriculum.

All special education services documented in the IEP must clearly describe how the SDI is provided and must clearly outline the frequency and duration of the service.

**\*\*SDI cannot be provided by a paraprofessional.**

## **Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)**

34 § C.F.R. 300.320(a)(5)

ARS 15-943(2)(b), ARS 15-1042, 20 U.S.C. 1416(a)(3)(A)

*Guide Steps Section III.A.4*

Following the review of a student's PLAAFP, goals, and services by the IEP team, the team will establish the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) in which the student's IEP will be implemented. The IEP must include a detailed explanation regarding the extent to which the student will not participate with nondisabled peers, as well as any potential adverse effects of the proposed placement. **This rationale should clearly articulate the reasons underlying the team's decision.** See the 2025-2026 [Guide Steps](#) for examples.

Whenever the IEP team plans to consider a placement that limits the student's access to the general education environment for over 50% of the school day, the student's special education teacher must:

- Consult with the Director of Special Education at least 10 days prior to the IEP meeting and ensure the Director is included in the meeting invitation.
- Present data demonstrating the supports and services currently provided to the student, which substantiate the need to consider a more restrictive placement.

## **Level of Service (LOS)**

The Level of Service (LOS) dictates the percentage of time a student will be with their nondisabled peers in the general education setting, with or without the intervention of a special education teacher, related services provided, supplemental support, or health aid support from a paraprofessional. This percentage includes non-instructional periods, such as recess and lunch, and begins when the student starts his/her school day (including 0 hours or when a student who has transportation included in his/her IEP gets on the bus) and ends at the end of the student's school day (including when students who have transportation in his/her IEP get off the school bus). This time does not include extracurricular activities that are not a regular part of the school day.

Use the Least Restrictive Environment Worksheet on Form I in e-IEP Pro to Calculate the percentage of time that the student spends with their non-disabled peers in the general education setting or on campus.

Formula: # of hours spent in a regular class / total # of hours in a school day \* 100

## **Supplementary Aids and Services**

34 § C.F.R. 300.320(a)(7) and 300.320(4) and 300.324(a)(3)(iii)

### *Guide Steps Section III.A.4*

Supplementary aids and services means aids, services, and other supports that are provided in regular education classes, other education-related settings, and in extracurricular and nonacademic settings, to enable children with disabilities to be educated with nondisabled children to the maximum extent appropriate.

Supplementary Aids and Services may include:

- Child's specialized equipment needs (e.g., utensils/cups/plates, restroom equipment);
- Materials needed (e.g., large print or Braille, assistive technology);
- Self-management and/or follow-through needed (e.g., calendars, reinforce skills, behavior);
- Social interaction support needed (e.g., reinforcement of Zones of Regulation, use of cooperative learning groups, reinforcing social skills);
- Levels of staff support needed (e.g., consultation, additional adult support)
  - **Paraprofessional supports-** The purpose of a paraprofessional is to promote overall growth (e.g. academic, behavioral), independence, and interaction with peers for a student with disabilities until more natural support can be effectively utilized. Supports from a paraprofessional are provided for students with disabilities when additional support is necessary for the student to meet his or her IEP goals.
    - The need for paraprofessional support must be clearly explained in the IEP
    - Paraprofessional support **may not** include the paraprofessional as the primary instructor
  - **Activities of Daily Living-**
    - Activities of Daily Living may Include;
      - Mobility
      - Eating, feeding
      - Toileting, diapering
      - Grooming, dressing
      - Assistive Devices
      - Positioning, transferring

### **Examples of Supplementary Aids and Services for Activities of Daily Living:**

Supports for School Personnel may include:

- Training needed for those who work with the student (i.e. CPI, medical care, use of assistive technology, positive behavioral interventions)
- Consultation services between general education and a service provider

Related Services may include:

- Speech and language therapy
- Occupational therapy

- Physical therapy
- Orientation and Mobility
- Counseling
  - Inform Director of Special Education when considering educational counseling services.
- Special Education Transportation
  - Inform Director of Special Education when considering special education transportation.

All related services and supplementary aids and services documented in the IEP must clearly describe how the SDI is provided and include the frequency and duration of the service.

## Prior Written Notice (PWN)

34 § C.F.R. 300.503(a), 300.503(b)(1-7)

*Guide Steps Section IV.A.2*

IEPPro automatically generates a Prior Written Notice (PWN) in most situations where one is required. All PWNs that are automatically generated in METs and IEPs must be utilized.

PWN is required to be given to parents in the following instances:

- Identification- When a student is referred for an initial evaluation, either from the MTSS team or a written request from a parent. (Before the initial RED meeting.)
- Evaluation- Before obtaining consent for the collection of additional data in the evaluation process. (When a team has determined that additional data is or is not needed to make educational decisions.)
- Eligibility- After the team has determined the eligibility of a student for special education.
- Provisions of FAPE- When there is a change or refusal to change the provision of FAPE:
  - Before implementation of an initial IEP
  - Before a revised IEP can be implemented
  - Prior to ceasing services when a parent revokes consent for the provision of special education services.
- Educational Placement- Every time a team makes a decision about the placement and/or decisions regarding the implementation of a proposed IEP.
  - When there is a change or refusal to change the educational placement, including the initial placement.
  - When a student exceeds the age of eligibility for IDEA-based services or graduates with a regular diploma (Summary of Performance must also be provided to the parent in this circumstance.)
  - **Prior to the 11th day of suspension** and/or before an accumulation of suspensions constituting a pattern and/or at the beginning of an expulsion, all of which require a change in services and the provision of FAPE. These decisions are made:
    - At the outcome of the Manifestation Determination meeting held to determine if the conduct in question is a manifestation of a student's disability.
    - Prior to placement at an interim alternative education setting (IAES).

The PWN offers a comprehensive overview of all proposed and/or rejected changes. It should be objective, free from judgments or personal opinions, and does not need to include a summary of the conference.

The PWN does not serve as a record of proposals to convene a meeting.

Additionally, the PWN cannot document options that were considered but did not occur during the meeting, nor can it include hypothetical or unrealistic scenarios, such as neglecting to hold a legally mandated IEP meeting or considering options that were not actually discussed.

## **Discipline and Students Who Have IEPs**

*34 § C.F.R. 300.530 300.530(h), 300.530(c), 300.530(e), 300.530(f)(1)(i), 300.530(f)&(i), 300.530(d) SF, SASF*

### *Guide Steps Section IV.A.3*

All students enrolled at Freedom Academy, including those with disabilities, are required to adhere to the established school policies. Disciplinary actions may be subject to review and processing in accordance with the procedures outlined in the Freedom Family Handbook. Campus administration will consider individual circumstances on a case-by-case basis when determining whether a change of placement—conducted in accordance with the Procedural Safeguards Notice—is appropriate for a student with a disability who violates school policies.

A disciplinary change of placement is initiated under the following circumstances:

1. Proposed expulsion
2. Proposed long-term suspension (exceeding 10 consecutive school days)
3. Proposed short-term suspension that, in aggregate with prior short-term suspensions, exceeds 10 school days in a school year

Upon the proposal of a disciplinary change of placement, the following steps must be taken:

The parent must be notified on the **same day** as the proposal and provided with the Procedural Safeguards Notice. Additionally, the Director of Special Education and the School Psychologist must also receive notification of the proposed disciplinary change on the same day. The Principal is responsible for ensuring this communication.

- A Manifestation Determination Review (MDR) must be scheduled within 10 school days from the date of the proposed change, not to extend beyond the current school fiscal year.
- Scheduling the MDR and issuing the meeting notice is the responsibility of the Principal.
- The Director of Special Education will assist in preparing the MDR meeting notice.
  - If the scheduled MDR exceeds the “FAPE Free Zone” (10 suspension days), the student must continue receiving educational services that enable participation in the general education curriculum and support progress toward IEP goals.

The following members are required to participate in the MDR:

- Parent(s)
- At least one general education teacher of the student
- Special education teacher
- Director of Special Education

- School Psychologist
- Principal (when applicable)
- Local Education Agency (LEA) Representative

*Note: The LEA Representative at the MDR may not serve as the Disciplinary Hearing Officer.*

The Principal or Campus Administrator must provide documentation and evidence related to the disciplinary incident, consistent with what was presented at the disciplinary hearing. These documents should be shared with the Director of Special Education and the School Psychologist at least prior to the MDR.

The MDR will be facilitated by the School Psychologist and/or Director of Special Education. The team will determine whether the incident was a manifestation of the student's disability:

If not a manifestation:

- The disciplinary hearing will proceed.
- If the student has an IEP, special education services must continue regardless of disciplinary outcome.

If is a manifestation:

- The disciplinary hearing will be canceled, or if already held, any expulsion or long-term suspension will be rescinded.
- The IEP team must convene within 10 days of the MDR to review the student's needs and consider a non-disciplinary change of placement if appropriate.
- The IEP team may determine whether a non-disciplinary placement change is necessary to meet the student's needs.

If neither a non-disciplinary change nor parental agreement to a placement change is deemed necessary, the student must return to their current placement, except in cases involving weapons, drugs, or serious bodily injury. Immediate consultation with the Director of Special Education is required if such behaviors occur.

The IEP team will conduct a Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA) and develop or review a Behavioral Intervention Plan (BIP). If an FBA and BIP already exist, they must be reviewed and modified as necessary to address the behavior.

After the MDR:

- The School Psychologist must complete and finalize the Manifestation Determination Form.
- A Prior Written Notice outlining the MDR outcome must be issued to the family within 2 days.

Educational services must continue regardless of whether the conduct was determined to be a manifestation of the student's disability.

Principals are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the IEP Procedural Safeguards Notice and the discipline requirements outlined **in this** document. The Director of Special Education must be notified immediately if a student with an IEP commits an offense that could result in long-term suspension or expulsion. Additionally, the Director and School Psychologist must be notified no later than the 7th day of suspension within a school year, and the IEP should be reviewed prior to that 7th day to determine appropriate services.

## **Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS)**

The Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) is a prevention system that enables teachers to effectively utilize grade-band data meetings and Child Study Teams (CST) processes to identify students who require interventions and extension of learning. When CST utilize common formative assessments and other data sources to identify students who are not demonstrating mastery of content, they are able to identify students who require intervention and/or extension to prevent students from falling further behind and to provide students an opportunity for growth prior to an evaluation for special education services. MTSS is designed to support students in closing any gaps in their individual skills to prevent the need for specialized services. However, MTSS cannot be a barrier to a referral for a special education evaluation.

[Freedom's MTSS Process can be found here.](#)