

Who Can Benefit from Special Education Services?

Every child has unique strengths and needs. Some children have obvious challenges: a visual, hearing, or motor impairment. Others have "hidden" disabilities, such as specific learning disabilities, autism, sensory processing problems, or difficulty regulating emotions and behavior.

There are many types of special needs and many ways to support students with them. The goal of education is to enable *all* children to progress in school according to their potential. State law states that all children should make "documented growth" in acquiring skills, including social/emotional development. Support services the school can provide include: special curricula; physical, occupational, or speech therapy; a classroom aide; assistive technology; transportation; or placement in a specialized program or school.

How Can NewtonPAC Help Me?

When a child struggles in school, parents may feel frustrated, helpless, angry, sad, and alone. NewtonPAC welcomes you into a network of supportive parents who have "been there."

NewtonPAC members provide information and support to help other parents feel empowered and optimistic about their child's education.

We offer:

- Parent-to-parent support and networking
- Educational forums and workshops
- Online discussion group
- An avenue to bring concerns to the school administration.

Please Join Us!

Membership is free and open to all people interested in supporting children in Newton with special needs and learning differences.

Get Involved!

If you are interested in volunteering, please fill out the volunteer survey on our website or contact us at info@newtonpac.org. Some of the things you can do to help include:

- School PAC-PTO Liaisons
- Liaison to community groups
- Contribute to newsletters
- Outreach to new members
- Outreach to families whose primary language is not English

Did You Know?

Parent Advisory Councils are established by Massachusetts special education law requiring every school district to establish a PAC "to advise the school committee on matters that pertain to the education, health, and safety of children with special needs." [603 CMR 28.07(4)]

NEWTON PARENT ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION

www.newtonpac.org

c/o Newton Public Schools
100 Walnut Street
Newton, MA 02460

Phone: 617-559-6025 Email: info@newtonpac.org

This brochure was prepared by NewtonPAC for Special Education with the support of the Newton Public Schools. (8/2010)

Newton Parent Advisory Council for Special Education



You are your child's best
advocate.

Become informed!

NewtonPAC

What is NewtonPAC?

NewtonPAC provides advocacy, information, and community connection for Newton families whose children receive special education services. We are an all-volunteer group that welcomes parents, educators, providers, and interested community members.

We meet regularly with school administrators to discuss services, policies and programs, bringing input and concerns from parents, and are actively involved in School Committee matters. Our goal is to work collaboratively with administrators and staff to continually improve the experience of students, parents, and staff in supporting children in need of special education services.

NewtonPAC holds monthly meetings that offer opportunities to network with other parents, with school staff, and with outside speakers. The meetings offer information about Newton's current education programs and about topics of particular interest to NewtonPAC families, such as disability law, transition planning, and specific disabilities.

At NewtonPAC events and in our online community we connect with each other to recommend resources and share experiences. NewtonPAC liaisons to the PTO in each Newton school increase awareness of special education in the school community and provide a neighborhood contact for our members. Check on our website or in your school's directory for the name of your school's NewtonPAC representative.

We welcome you into our group to attend any of our monthly meetings, to seek or offer advice and information, to join our email group, or to volunteer. By working together, we can effectively advocate for our children to ensure quality education services.

Your Rights Under Federal and State Law Include the Right to:

- Request and receive a free evaluation by the public school if you think your child has a problem affecting progress in school. Assessment can be done in all areas of concern including vision, hearing, social/emotional/behavior, language, and motor skills.
- Have your child evaluated for the potential to benefit from assistive technology.
- Obtain an independent evaluation by an approved provider should you not agree with the school's findings.
- Approve or decline all evaluations that are proposed for your child.
- Request and receive copies of all evaluations two school days before the Team meeting to develop the IEP (Individualized Education Plan).
- Attend and participate in all meetings where the IEP is developed.
- Participate in transition planning for your child beginning the year he/she turns 14.
- Bring a friend, professional, advocate, or attorney to all meetings.
- Receive a clear explanation of evaluation summaries.
- Meet whenever necessary with any school staff working with your child and reconvene the Team at any time.
- Reject part or all of the IEP, including parts that are missing.
- Review and inspect your child's record.
- Participate in the decision to remove your child's IEP or 504 Plan.
- Mediation to resolve differences with the school district regarding services for your child.

Resources

Asperger's Association of New England
www.aane.org 617-393-3824

Charles River Center, Needham, MA
www.charlesrivercenter.org 781-972-1000

Concord SEPAC web site with many area resources
www.concordspedpac.org

Family Autism Center, Westwood, MA
www.sncarc.org/FAC.htm
781-762-4001 x310

Federation for Children with Special Needs
www.fcsn.org 617-236-7210

LD Online www.ldonline.org

Learning Disabilities Worldwide
www.ldam.org

Massachusetts Advocates for Children
www.massadvocates.org 617-357-8431

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (formerly DOE)
www.doe.mass.edu 781-338-3000

Mass. General Hospital School Psychiatry Program
www.schoolpsychiatry.org

Network of Newton Autism Parents (NoNAP)
617-964-6572

New England INDEX: Database of MA disability resources www.disabilityinfo.org

Project INTERFACE: Mental health helpline and information 617-332-3666 x411
www.projectinterface.org

U.S. Department of Education
www.ed.gov/parents/landing.jhtml

Wrightslaw www.wrightslaw.com