



Special Education

Philosophy

The Special Education Department here at Riverside Elementary School District believes that all children can learn. All children have the right to a free appropriate public education, (regardless of disability) that helps them maximize their potential.

Definition

As defined by federal law, special education means specially designed instruction, at no cost to the parents, to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability [IDEA 97300.26(a)]. Arizona Revised Statutes defines a "child with a disability" as a child who is at least three but less than twenty-two years of age, who has been evaluated and found to have a disability and who, because of the disability, needs special education and related services [ARS 15-761(2)].

Special education is a service not a place. Special education is provided through a continuum of services which include instruction in the general education classroom with supplementary aids and services, services integrated into the general education classroom, specialized instruction in a resource or pull out setting, instruction in a specialized classroom, instruction in a special school, home instruction, and instruction in hospitals or institutions. The removal of students with disabilities from the general educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in general education classes or in a building with non-disabled students, with the use of special education services, cannot be achieved satisfactorily. The district contracts as necessary for the education of students with disabilities in approved public or private agencies when the needs of the student cannot be met within the district.

Under federal law, a student can qualify for special education services under the disability categories of mental retardation, hearing impairments (including deafness), speech or language impairments, visual impairments (including blindness), serious emotional disturbance, orthopedic impairments, autism, traumatic brain injury, other health impairments, or specific learning disabilities [IDEA 97 602(3)(a)]. Arizona state law includes all of these categories, but adds the additional categories of developmental delay, preschool severe delay, multiple disabilities, and multiple disabilities with severe sensory impairment [ARS 15-761(2)]. Arizona law also breaks the category of mental retardation into the three separate categories of mild, moderate and severe retardation.