

## Important Resources

### A Parent's Guide to Special Education

(available in English, Spanish and Portuguese)

*This is a guide written by the Federation for Children with Special Needs in conjunction with the Massachusetts Department of Education. The guide contains the most up-to-date information regarding special education in Massachusetts and will answer all or most of your questions regarding the complexities of special ed.*

<http://fcsn.org/parents-guide>

### Mass. Advocates for Children

*This non-profit organization provides support for special education students and their families. You can call the hotline (in English and Spanish) at (617) 357-8431 ext. 3224 for immediate help and support or visit their website at [www.massadvocates.org](http://www.massadvocates.org).*

### Children's Law Center of Massachusetts

*This non-profit organization provides quality advocacy and legal services to low-income families regarding education issues. Bilingual services available. You can call their hotline at 1-888-KIDLAW8 (1-888-543-5298) or visit their website at [www.clcm.org](http://www.clcm.org).*

### Disability Law Center

*This non-profit organization provides protection and advocacy services for Massachusetts residents with disabilities. Call at (800) 872-9992 or visit [www.dlc-ma.org](http://www.dlc-ma.org).*

For more resources and information visit

[www.btu.org/inclusion](http://www.btu.org/inclusion)



So, now what?

- Make sure you ask your school the important questions regarding your child's school resources and the current program they offer.
- Request an educational advocate through the organizations provided in the "Resources" section if you are not happy with the special education services. **You have a legal right to an advocate free-of-charge if you cannot afford one.** This advocate can accompany you to IEP meetings and fight on your behalf.
- If you are not happy with the resources at your school, become a member of your Parent Site Council or speak with the school principal. When parents advocate together, it can be very powerful.
- You have the legal right to interpretation services, free-of-charge, if English is your second language. Visit the Office of English Language Learner's online at [www.bostonpublicschools.org/Domain/194](http://www.bostonpublicschools.org/Domain/194).
- File a PQA form if your school is not meeting your student's legal rights. The form is available in 10 languages. It can be found here: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/pqa/prs/>
- Contact the Boston Public Schools Office of Special Education at (617) 635-8599 or visit their website at [www.bostonpublicschools.org/Domain/195](http://www.bostonpublicschools.org/Domain/195)



## Get Informed! Inclusion Classrooms in Boston Public Schools

"Inclusion is a term which expresses commitment to educate each child, to the maximum extent appropriate, in the school and classroom he or she would otherwise attend. It involves bringing the support services to the child (rather than moving the child to the services) and requires only that the child will benefit from being in the class (rather than having to keep up with the other students)."

Inclusion Task Force, BPS  
"Increasing Inclusive Practices in the Boston Public Schools" June 2013

Your child is in an inclusion classroom - what does that mean? This guide will help you navigate through the process and ask the important questions.

Get Involved!  
Join teachers, parents and students  
advocating for quality inclusion.

[inclusion@btu.org](mailto:inclusion@btu.org)

617-288-2000

## Questions you should be asking as a parent/guardian



### Choosing a school:

- **What does inclusion look like at this school?**

Inclusion classrooms are different across BPS. Make sure you know what support your child will be receiving. For example, does the classroom have two teachers? One teacher and a paraprofessional? A half-time paraprofessional? Are there social workers, family coordinators, counselors?

- **How will the school support my child's second-language needs?**

If your child is an English Language Learner (ELL student), make sure you choose a school that can support these needs. For example, is there a Structured English Immersion (SEI) Inclusion classroom? Is there an ELL pull-out teacher available?

### At your current school:

- **How do I know my child is making adequate progress?**

You have a right to ask for updates on your child's progress toward the IEP goals. If your child is not making the progress you would like to see, you have the right to ask for a "reconvene IEP meeting" to discuss progress with the entire team. You also have the right to have changes made to the IEP to better support your child. **You are an equal member of the IEP team.** When there is a disagreement on an IEP, you have the right to reject the IEP and possibly enter mediation to further discuss your child's IEP. You may also request an advocate (please see section on Resources) to attend the meetings with you. Make sure you receive the Parents' Rights Brochure.



- **What is the current budget for this school?**

Every school has a different budget given from Central Office. These budgets are available online or if you ask your principal/school secretary. As a parent, you have the right to question these budgets. Parents' voices are the ones that are heard the loudest, so speak up if you are not satisfied including at school committee. Meeting schedules are available at [bostonpublicschools.org](http://bostonpublicschools.org).



- **What resources does this school have to help my child reach state grade level standards?**

State standards are shared goals and expectations for every state and which every student is expected to meet. How is your school providing resources to help your child meet those standards? What does the technology look like in the school? Are there SmartBoards? Computer labs? Tablets? What about literacy materials - is there a school library? What books does each classroom have access to? Leveled readers? Your child has a right to resources outlined in their IEP - and you have a right to know which are available.

- **How does the school support my students needs outside of academics?**

School is not all about math, science and reading. School is about socializing, developing creativity, and being physically active. Does the school have a playground? Cafeteria? Gymnasium? What do the arts look like - is there an art classroom? Auditorium? Are there before or after school activities and opportunities?