

Laurel Highlands School District

Annual Public Notice of Child Find Activities

The Laurel Highlands School District uses the following procedures for screening, identifying, and evaluating specified needs of school-aged students requiring special programs of service.

The district meets the health screening requirements as described in Section 1402 of the School Code. The district routinely conducts screenings of a child's hearing acuity in following grades: Kindergarten, 1, 2, 3, 7, and 11, and other grades according to need. Visual acuity is screened in every grade. Height and weight data are collected yearly at every grade level and Body Mass (BMI) is calculated. Visual acuity, hearing acuity, height and weight screenings are conducted throughout the school year at the child's home school. School nurses work with the private schools (such as Montessori, New Directions, etc.) to provide required screenings. Dental exams are conducted in the spring of each school year in Kindergarten, grades 3 and 7 at the respective schools. Physical exams are conducted in the spring of each year. Physicals are conducted in Kindergarten, grades 6 and 11, as well as scoliosis screenings in grades 6 and 7.

Kindergarten registration is held in the spring of each year. Currently all school districts throughout Fayette County are holding kindergarten registration during the same week in order to take advantage of local media to inform parents of the need to register students who will attend kindergarten in the fall. Students are to accompany parents when registering for kindergarten. During the registration, kindergarten teachers will screen each student's readiness skills, speech/language therapists will screen the student's articulation and language abilities, and the nurse will review the student's health record including immunizations. Classroom teachers assess gross motor and fine motor skills, academic skills, and social-emotional skills on an on-going basis and referrals made for follow-up when needed.

Throughout the school year, the district will administer standardized tests to students, beginning in kindergarten. These tests may include the Group-Mathematics Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation (GMADE) and Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) administered in K, 1, and 2. 4-Sight tests will be administered throughout the year in grades 3-8. Results of these tests are provided to the parent/guardian each year. In addition, elementary teachers will test students to see if they have learned the particular skill being taught. These tests are given throughout the year.

The Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) is administered at the mandate grade levels each school year. Other testing occurs on the basis of individual need. Vocational interest tests may be given in the secondary schools. Report cards are issued quarterly. Any parent who has a question about the testing program should contact the

Building Principal. The Pennsylvania Alternate School Assessment (PASA) is available for students who meet the eligibility for this assessment.

If the student is experiencing academic, social, and/or behavioral issues that are impacting the student's education, then the student may be eligible for intervention to address the student's concerns. Every attempt will be made to maintain the student in his/her regular education environment prior to considering special education services. Screening information is utilized by a team consisting of the building principal, classroom teacher, guidance counselor, and school psychologist to determine if adjustments can be made in the child's current program and/or if a multidisciplinary evaluation is warranted. Once the student's needs are identified the team will discuss strategies to implement in the child's current program. If a student does not make progress, parents will be asked to give written permission for a multidisciplinary evaluation.

If the student continues to have academic, social, and/or behavioral issues despite participation in intervention, the parent, teacher, building administrator will make a referral to the Multi-disciplinary Team (MDT) to consider testing the student to determine if the student has a disability and is in need of specialized instruction.

Parents with concerns regarding their child may contact the building principal at any time to request a screening or evaluation. The request shall be in writing, If the request is made orally, the parent will be asked to make the request in writing and will be provided with the proper form. Communication with the parents and students shall be in English or their native language. For parents with a hearing impairment, the school district will provide a person to communicate in sign language.

After the multidisciplinary evaluation is completed, an Evaluation Report (ER) is compiled with parent input and includes recommendations for the types of intervention necessary to accommodate the child's specific needs. Parents are provided with a draft copy of the ER to review prior to the meeting where the results of the evaluation are explained and discussed. An Individualized Education Plan (IEP) is developed for those students qualifying for special education services. This plan includes demographic information regarding the student; his/her strengths and needs with goals and objectives that address needs, along with specially designed instruction and related services necessary to accomplish the goals and objectives. The IEP Team consists of the following: the parent, the building principal/LEA, a special education teachers and a regular education teacher. Other team members may include: the student when appropriate, the school psychologist, public agency representative, other teachers or specialists, other administrative staff, etc. Parents are an integral part of the IEP team and are encouraged to be physically present at the IEP meeting. The district makes every effort to ensure parent participation. The district notifies the parent in writing and makes documented phone calls to make parents aware of the IEP conference and the importance of parent participation. Parents are then presented with a Notice of recommended Educational Placement (NOREP) with which they may agree or disagree. If parents

agree, the IEP is implemented. If parents disagree with the recommendation, the issue may be taken to mediation or to a due process hearing.

The Laurel Highlands School District operates a comprehensive continuum of services for special needs students. For the most part identified exceptional students are served in their home school. Types of services available include: **Learning Support** that is primarily for students with academic learning needs. **Life Skills Support** that focuses primarily on the need for independent living skills. **Emotional Support** which addresses social and emotional difficulties, **Multiple Disabilities Support** which is for students with more than one disability, **Physical Support** for students who need is the result of a physical disability, **Autistic Support** for those students diagnosed with Autism and/or Pervasive Development Disorder, **Speech/Language Support** that is for students who have articulation and/or expressive/receptive language difficulties, **Hearing Support** for students who are hearing impaired/deaf, **Vision Support** which is for students who are blind or visually impaired, and **Gifted Support** for those students identified as mentally gifted. The Laurel Highland School District works closely with neighboring school districts and Intermediate Unit # 1 to place students who cannot be served within the district. The small number of students who needs cannot be accommodated in the public school setting can receive services in an approved private school such as New Directions, Communities in Schools- Success Academy within the Laurel Highlands School District or other licensed facilities at school district expense. No such placement is made without an IEP meeting and parental agreement. Laurel Highlands intends to serve students at the home school or within the district before considering other placements.

If a child does not qualify for special education services, he/she may still be considered a protected handicapped student and require services under Chapter 15. A protected handicapped student is a student who is school aged with a physical or mental disability that substantially limits or prohibits participation in or access to any aspect of the school program. The Laurel Highlands School District provides each protected handicapped student the aids, services or accommodations which are needed to provide equal opportunity to participate in and obtain the benefits of the school program and extra curricular activities to the maximum extent appropriate to the student's abilities. If you believe your child comes under this classification and is in need of a service to assist him/her in benefiting from his/her education, you should contact your building principal.

The Laurel Highlands School District recognized the need to protect the confidentiality of personally identifiable information in the education records of exceptional children. The Laurel Highlands School District confidentiality Assurance Policy has been prepared as to insure the privacy rights of both the parents and the exceptional child in the collection, maintenance, release, and destruction of these records. The Laurel Highlands School District and its staff are required by Federal law and State and Federal Rules and Regulations to protect the rights of students. The foundation of these rights comes from Federal Legislation entitled the Family Educational rights and Privacy Act of 1974 – FERPA (also known as the Buckley Amendments). All students are protected by the State Regulations contained in Chapter 12 known as Student's Rights and

Responsibilities. In addition, State Rules and regulations protect regular and special education students' right and privacy.

School records are always open and available to parents and only to school officials who have legitimate "need to know" information about the child. Disclosure of information means to permit the release, transfer or other communication of education records to any part, by oral, written and /or electronic means. This means that information about a student cannot be shared in conversation without permission. This also applies to other personnel who do not have an educationally relevant reason to possess knowledge student.

The parents of a student or eligible student have the right to inspect and/or challenge their child's or their own educational records, to receive copies of the records, and to have a school official explain the records if requested as outlined in the Laurel Highlands District Policy. The school district will disclose directory information which includes: the student's name, address, telephone number, date and place of birth, major field of study, participation in officially recognized activities and sports, weights and heights of members of athletic teams, dates of attendance, degrees and awards received, the most recent previous educational agency of or institution attended by the student, and other similar information. Should the parent of a student or eligible student wish to refuse disclosure of this information, a written notice or refusal of disclosure of directory information must be sent to the Principal within twenty (20) days of this public notice. To inspect your child's or your records, contact the Building Principal.

The Laurel Highlands School District will release information from a student's education record without prior consent to officials of the other primary or secondary schools or school systems in which a student seeks or intends to enroll. Transcripts to post-secondary institutions in which a student seeks or intends to enroll will be sent upon request of parents of a student or eligible student. Parents, upon written request, may receive a copy of records that may be released by the school district. The parents have the right to request that their child's or their educational records be changed if they are inaccurate, misleading or violate student's rights, and to have a hearing if that request is refused.

A more detailed explanation of these rights, the procedure to follow, and the limitations on the release of records are presented in the school district's policy on the collection, maintenance and release of student records. You may obtain a copy of this policy by contacting the Building Principal.

For further information in the screening procedures, evaluation procedures, and provision of services to protected handicapped students, contact Mr. Jesse T. Wallace, Superintendent of Schools, 304 Bailey Avenue, Uniontown, PA 15401 or call 724-437-2821