


ANCHORAGE SCHOOL DISTRICT
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA

MEMORANDUM

NOVEMBER 28, 2011

TO: CAROL COMEAU, SUPERINTENDENT
ED GRAFF, ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT, INSTRUCTION
MIKE HENRY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, HIGH SCHOOL
EDUCATION
LESLIE VANDERGAW, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, MIDDLE
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DOUG GRAY, DIRECTOR, E.C.E. SPECIAL EDUCATION
LINDA GRIFFITH, DIRECTOR SECONDARY SPECIAL
EDUCATION
DIANE POAGE, DIRECTOR, RELATED SERVICES
SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

FROM: CINDY ANDERSON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
SPECIAL EDUCATION 

SUBJECT: REQUESTS FROM PARENTS OR PRIVATE SERVICE AGENCIES
TO PROVIDE SERVICES TO OR OBSERVE SPECIAL EDUCATION
STUDENTS

This memo is designed to address two specific requests that administrators may receive from interested public persons who may wish to provide services or visit in a special education setting:

1. Requests from community service agencies (ABA, mental health organizations, private therapists, etc.) to provide services to students during or outside of the school day on school campus.
2. Requests to visit or observe in a special education classroom or setting.

Requests to Provide Services

The only avenue available to a private service provider who wishes to provide services to a student during the school day or on school campus is through the development of a memorandum of agreement (MOA). This contract addresses the supervision issues, worker's compensation or other legal issues included in any situation where two agencies desire to work collaboratively in providing services to students. Only the Executive Director of Special Education can conduct negotiation of MOAs, with relevant input from both building level and division level administration.

When a request is made to provide private student services, the requesting party should be referred to the Executive Director for Special Education, 742-4236.

Observations or Visits of Special Education Classrooms or Settings

Throughout the school year, building level administrators and special education teachers are routinely asked to allow access to special education classrooms for a number of reasons. Since the reasons differ greatly, the following is guidance for administrators to determine when such requested access is appropriate.

Reasonable requests to observe may include, but are not limited to, the following purposes:

- IEP team is considering a change of placement and a parent or outside professional wants to gain perspective as they consider this decision
- An outside professional is completing a private evaluation and wants to see the student in the educational setting
- Parents or outside professional want to see how a student responds to peers to assist in working on social skills
- Outside providers want to observe to be able to coordinate after-school services with what is occurring in the school setting

Ultimately it is the building administrator who determines whether a proposed visit from parent or their representative (private evaluator or provider) is appropriate. The administrator should consider the following when making his or her decision:

Understanding the Purpose of the Proposed Visit is Important.

- Determine if a classroom visit or observation is the most effective choice.
- There are times that are more appropriate for parents or outside professionals to observe a student. Having the observer clarify what environment, subject or behavior they would like to see will help to identify a time and place for the observation. An observation can then be scheduled to meet these requests.

Consider Alternatives When Appropriate

- For example, if the parent or observer desires to learn about the student's educational environment or a proposed placement, a meeting with the teacher may provide more information than a 20-minute observation of a particular activity.
- A meeting with a classroom teacher after instruction has ended for the day provides a parent the opportunity to conference with a teacher regarding the program and the child's individual educational, behavioral and functional needs.

- Open house events scheduled outside the school day offer substantial opportunity for parents to receive general information on the placement continuum, curriculum and instruction, and classroom management.
- Equally, individual appointments for parents with teacher consultants and the special education teacher have effectively addressed parent concerns and inquiries.

Consider Impact to the Educational Environment:

- **It is also important to distinguish the observation from a discussion or opportunity to interview classroom personnel;** an observation is just that – a non-intrusive opportunity for someone (parent or professional) to observe a student or a setting for a limited period of time. An observation is not an interview or interaction with student or teacher.
- **Schedule** the observation for a date, time and duration so that it does not impact scheduled activities such as testing, field trips, assemblies, etc. Classroom visits are welcomed and encouraged, however, the AEA collective bargaining agreement Section 409 provides that **classroom visits are arranged** through the principal in advance. Teachers shall receive prior notice of any visit and will collaborate with the administrator to minimize disruption to the classroom.
- All visitors will check-in at the school office before observing in a classroom. Prior to observing in a special education setting, visitors should sign the confidentiality statement, Acknowledgement of Student Information Statement, attached to this memo and available at: <http://www.asdk12.org/depts/sped/policy/part7.asp>.

In conclusion, **all observation requests must be responded to utilizing the same procedure.** Disparate treatment can be inferred if certain requests are granted and others are denied. For example, if a charter school or optional program allows parental observations to review the program prior to submission of lottery application, the same access must be available to parents of students with disabilities. If you have questions or concerns regarding a request to provide services or a visit, please contact the Special Education office at 742-4236.

Acknowledgement of Confidential Nature of Student Identity and Information

I acknowledge that I will be observing in a special education classroom and may inadvertently learn part or all of another student's personal information, including but not limited to identity, disability information or functional levels via my observation.

I have read "Parent and Student Rights under FERPA", located online at: http://www.asdk12.org/depts/sped/policy/part7/FERPA_Rights.pdf and understand that I acknowledge that I am to maintain the confidentiality of all students I observe in this setting and am not authorized to disclose any information inadvertently learned about students enrolled in the program for which I am conducting an observation.

Visitor name (Printed and signed)

Date