Special Education Eligibility Categories
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In order to receive special education services at school, a student must: (a) have a formal evaluation by a Special Education Team; (b) meet at least one of 13 different categories; and (c) meet the “3 Prongs of Special Education.” When the team meets to discuss the “3 Prongs of Special Education,” they must conclude that:

- The student has a disability.
- The disability adversely affects the student’s educational performance at school.
- The student requires specially designed instruction in order to gain access to the general curriculum.

The 13 categories under which a student can qualify for special education services are:

1. **Autism** – The student has a developmental disability that significantly affects verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction (i.e., engaging in repetitive activities and movements, resisting change in routines, and responding unusually to sensory experiences).
2. **Deaf-Blindness** – The student has a combination of hearing and vision impairments that severely affects communication and development.
3. **Deafness** – The student has a severe hearing impairment that affects his/her ability to process language, with or without amplification.
4. **Emotional Disturbance** – The student exhibits one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time:
   - inability to learn that cannot be explained
   - inability to build or maintain relationships with peers and teachers
   - inappropriate behavior or feelings in normal circumstances
   - unhappy or depressed mood
   - tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears because of personal or school problems
   - schizophrenia
5. **Hearing Impairment** – The student has a permanent or inconsistent hearing impairment.
6. **Intellectual Disability** – From a very young age, the student has a significantly below-average IQ and decreased functional skills.
   *Note: In years past, “Mental Retardation” (MR) was the term used to describe intellectual disabilities; however, this term is no longer used or acceptable.
7. **Multiple Disabilities** – The student has several disabilities (not including deaf-blindness), that severely affect his/her education.
8. **Orthopedic Impairment** – The student has severe difficulty as the result of a birth defect, disease, or other physical impairment (e.g., cerebral palsy or amputation).
9. **Other Health Impairment** – The student has decreased strength, energy, or attention that affects his/her educational performance stemming from chronic or acute health problems (e.g., ADHD, diabetes, epilepsy, etc.).
10. **Specific Learning Disability** – The student has difficulty understanding and/or using spoken or written language. This may affect his/her ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations. This is **not** due to other disabilities (visual, hearing, motor, or intellectual), disadvantages (environmental, cultural, or economic), or an emotional disturbance.

11. **Speech or Language Impairment** – The student has a communication disorder that affects fluency (stuttering), articulation, language, and/or voice.

12. **Traumatic Brain Injury** – The student has acquired a brain injury affecting one or more areas: cognition, language, memory, attention, reasoning, abstract thinking, judgment, problem solving, sensory, abilities, motor abilities, psychosocial behavior, physical functions, information processing, and speech. This does **not** apply to a brain injury occurring at birth or one that is degenerative.

13. **Visual Impairment Including Blindness** – The student has a vision impairment affecting his/her education, even with correction.

Members of the special education team include a school psychologist, special education teacher, speech-language pathologist, and/or other related service providers. This team will work together to evaluate your student and determine the most appropriate way for him/her to receive services or help at school. If you suspect that your child/student may need special education services, contact your local school and request an evaluation.

**Resources**


**Helpful Products**

The list of Super Duper® products below may be helpful when working with children who have special needs. Visit [www.superduperinc.com](http://www.superduperinc.com) and type in the **item name or number in our search engine**. If you’re viewing this Handy Handout on a computer, click the links below to see the product descriptions.

- **Jeepers Peepers Game**
  - Item #JP-350

- **Anytime Artic**
  - Item #ATA-88