



SPECIAL EDUCATION SCHOOL VISIT CHECKLIST

This checklist was prepared to assist you in determining whether the public school offered by the DOE can provide your child an appropriate education. It is not an “official” checklist, but is meant to help you ask relevant questions and think about the appropriateness of the school. Your child’s needs are unique, so you will need to tailor your questions for your child’s particular situation. This checklist is designed to help you make a good placement decision for your child.

Under special education law, children with disabilities are entitled to a “free and appropriate education and related services.” Courts have interpreted that to mean an education and related services that are *reasonably calculated* to enable the child to learn. If you are concerned about the appropriateness of your child’s schooling or have any questions, please call an advocate at NYLPI, Mondays and Fridays 9:30 AM - 1:30 PM and Wednesdays 1:30 PM – 5:30 PM at 212/244-4664.

No single factor or combination of factors listed below is proof that the Department of Education cannot offer a free appropriate public education.

Prior to the visit, research the school. The New York City Department of Education’s Website provides statistics, reports, and other useful information on a school level at <http://schools.nyc.gov>. Another excellent resource is Inside Schools: <http://insideschools.org>.

Due to the general nature of the information presented, this check list should not be regarded as legal advice.

Feb. 2011

School: _____

Date of Visit: _____

People with Whom You Met (names and titles; phone numbers if appropriate):

What to Ask	Response	Parent's Impression/Follow up
<i>CLASS PROFILE: If a printed version is not available, you may ask generally about the social, academic, and management needs, sex and age range of the students in the class. You are not entitled to names and other personal information about individual students.</i>		
SPEAK WITH TEACHER		
IEP and Evaluation – how class/school will meet recommendations and goals?		
How will your child fit in? <i>Briefly describe your child's personality, strengths and weakness and see if the teacher thinks s/he is a good fit.</i>		
Related services at school (see rooms)?		

What to Ask	Response	Parent's Impression/Follow up
Location/Size/Physical Layout of Classroom(s) within School <i>(how the child will enter building and classroom)?</i>		
Number of Students and Adults in Classroom(s)?		
What instructional methods and materials used?		
Do students have access to Assistive Technology if needed?		
Behavioral techniques and plans used by the teachers and staff?		

What to Ask	Response	Parent's Impression/Follow up
Length of school day and scheduling of art, music, gym, recess (including outdoor time) lunch, etc.		
What kinds of opportunities do children in special education classrooms have to interact with general education students?		
OBSERVE – CLASS AND SCHOOL		
Ask to sit in on offered class.		
Teacher interaction with students (does the teacher individualize instruction?)		
In what activities were children engaged? Would they be appropriate for your child?		
Do classrooms seem cheerful?		
Is student work displayed, and does it seem appropriate for the grade level? Would the decorations pose a distraction or problem for your child?		

What to Ask	Response	Parent's Impression/Follow up
How do students behave as they move from class to class or play outside?		
How well are the facilities maintained? Are bathrooms clean and well supplied, and do the grounds look safe and inviting?		
ADMINISTRATOR QUESTIONS		
Does this school have a particular educational philosophy or mission?		
What is this school's approach to student discipline and safety?		
How does this school encourage/monitor students' progress toward meeting grade-level standards?		
Principal aware of the Special Education Program mission?		

What to Ask	Response	Parent's Impression/Follow up
Is there a specific contact at the school who knows about Special Education resources?		
What extracurricular opportunities (sports, clubs, community service, competitions) are available for students?		
Are all students welcome to participate in school activities?		
What professional development opportunities do teachers have regarding special education? In what ways do teachers collaborate?		
What are some of the school's greatest accomplishments? What are some of the biggest challenges this school faces?		
What are some highlights of this school's curriculum in reading, math, science and social studies?		
How does this school keep parents informed of school information and activities?		
Is there an active Parent Teacher Association (PTA)? What other types of parent involvement take place at this school?		

