



## First 30 Days

In the first 30 days on the job, special education administrators should focus on several key areas to ensure a smooth transition and effective leadership. Discuss with the superintendent, executive director, or charter school executive officer which key areas are most important relative to the needs and priorities of the LEA.

*Click on the topics that are linked to navigate directly to the pertinent sections of the document.*

### Familiarize yourself with policies and procedures

- Understand the policies and procedures governing special education at the local, state, and federal levels. This includes laws such as the [Individuals with Disabilities Education Act \(IDEA\)](#) and [Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, Chapter 14](#) and/or [711](#).
- Review [Basic Education Circulars \(BECs\)](#) for guidance on the implementation of laws, regulations, and policies.

### Review student records and Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)

- Gain familiarity with the current caseloads of students receiving special education services.
- Review individualized education programs (IEPs), assessments, and progress reports to understand student needs and goals.

### Meet with staff and others

- [Schedule meetings with special education teachers, support staff, general education teachers, parents/guardians, and other interested parties.](#)
- Introduce yourself, learn about the roles and responsibilities of staff, and gather input on current practices and challenges.

### Assess resources and budget

- Evaluate the resources available for special education services, including staffing, materials, and technology.
- Review the budget allocated for special education and identify any areas for improvement or reallocation of funds.

### Establish communication channels

- Set up regular communication channels with staff, parents/guardians, and others to ensure transparency and collaboration. This may include regular meetings, email updates, newsletters, or online platforms.

### Observe classroom instruction and student support services

- Spend time observing [special education classrooms](#), related services (e.g., speech therapy, occupational therapy), and inclusive practices to gain insight into instructional practices and student needs.

### Identify professional learning needs

- Assess the needs of staff and develop a plan to address any gaps in knowledge or skills. This may include training for new instructional strategies, assistive technology, behavior management techniques, or legal updates.

### Build relationships with community partners

- Reach out to community organizations, agencies, and other external partners involved in supporting students with disabilities.
- Establish how relationships can enhance access to resources and services for students and families.

### Review data and assessment practices

- Analyze data related to student outcomes, including academic achievement, behavior, and attendance.
- Evaluate assessment practices to ensure alignment with best practices and provide meaningful data for instructional decision-making.

### Set goals and priorities

- Based on input and a thorough assessment of current practices, establish short-term and long-term goals for special education services and outcomes.
- Prioritize areas for action and develop a plan for addressing identified needs.



# Orienting to the LEA

This series of questions may assist you in learning about LEA meetings and communication protocols.

Questions to Ask	Notes
<b>Board Meetings:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ When and where do they occur?</li> <li>○ What are the expectations regarding your attendance and participation?</li> </ul>	
<b>Special Education Staff Meetings:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Are dates and locations already established?</li> <li>○ Are meetings inclusive of all special education personnel, including school psychologists, paraprofessionals, and related service providers?</li> <li>○ How can you access past agendas?</li> <li>○ Have you reviewed student special education forms and/or data to know what to address at staff meetings?</li> </ul>	
<b>District Staff Meetings:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ When and where do they occur?</li> <li>○ Who is involved?</li> <li>○ What are the expectations regarding your attendance and participation?</li> </ul>	
<b>Communication With Parent/Legal Guardians/Family Groups:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ How are meetings scheduled – including IEP meetings, parent information meetings?</li> <li>○ How is information shared?</li> <li>○ How can you access past agendas?</li> </ul>	
<b>Communication With Agencies:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Which agencies have the special education department interacted with previously?               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Who are the agency points of contact?</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ How are meetings scheduled?</li> <li>○ How is information shared?</li> <li>○ How can you access past agendas?</li> </ul>	
<b>Special Education Personnel Contracts:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ How does the contract address caseload and workload management?</li> <li>○ How does the contract address the provision of support services, such as paraprofessionals or aides, to special education personnel?</li> </ul>	



# LEA Contacts

List the LEA personnel who are associated with special education programs.

Role/Position	Contact Information and Notes
<b>Behavior Specialists:</b>	
Who are they? Which building(s) are they assigned?	
How are assignments determined?	
<b>Building Administrators:</b>	
Who are the principals, assistant principals, and/or deans in each building?	
Who evaluates the special education staff?	
<b>Business Office:</b>	
What role does the business office have regarding the special education budget and expenditures?	
Who are the contacts?	
<b>LEA Representatives at IEP Meetings:</b>	
Who serves in this role?	
What qualifications do they have? Who ensures they fulfill the criteria required to act as LEA representatives?	
<b>Professional Development and Learning:</b>	
Who oversees scheduling for professional development?	
What role does the special education administrator have in professional development and learning?	
What professional development has special education staff recently received?	
What professional learning is already scheduled that pertains to special education (e.g., teachers, related services, paraprofessionals)?	



# LEA Contacts

List the LEA personnel who are associated with special education programs.

Related Service Providers:			
Who are the in-district related service personnel (e.g., speech-language pathologists, occupational therapists, nurses?)			
Which building(s) are they assigned?			
School Psychologist(s):			
Who are the school psychologists?			
Which building(s) are they assigned?			
What is their caseload for evaluations/re-evaluations for the remainder of the year?			
Secretaries/Administrative Assistants:			
Who manages Child Find, move-ins, 4010/4011/APSEM (approved private school electronic management system) entry, state reporting, etc.?			
Who manages the data for RISC (Restraint Information System of Collection)?			
Who manages the PA School-Based Access Program (SBAP)?			
Special Education Teachers:			
What supports (e.g., autistic support, emotional support) are provided in each building?			
Per building, what are the names of the teachers and what type(s) of support does each provide?	Building	Teachers	Supports Provided
Transportation Director:			
Who is the transportation director?			
What outside transportation agencies are used, if any?			
How many students receive special transportation?			
For students who receive special transportation, what specific information is listed in their IEPs?			
504 Coordinator:			
Who is the 504 Coordinator?			
How are 504 plans accessed?			



# Resource Assessment

Assess resources available for special education services, review budget allocations, and identify any immediate resource needs or areas for improvement.

QUESTIONS TO ASK	NOTES
<b>CONTINUUM OF SERVICES</b>	
What is the continuum of special education services offered?	
What supports and/or services are not currently available?	
<b>INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAMS</b>	
What is the IEP management system?	
Who schedules IEP meetings?	
Who completes Reevaluation Reports (RRs) when no additional data is needed - case managers or school psychologists?	
What is used for IEP progress data collection? Do staff use commercially made, district-made, and/or teacher-made programs?	
<b>INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAMMING</b>	
What core programs are used at each grade level for academics and social/emotional/behavioral learning?	
What supplemental programs/resources are used at each grade level?	
Who oversees ordering of assessment materials (e.g., PASA)?	
<b>OUTSIDE PLACEMENTS – including other placements with educational responsibilities (e.g., Children Youth Services, Foster Care, Residential Treatment Facilities (RTF), Partial Hospitalizations, Detention Centers, State Correction Institution (SCI), Probation)</b>	
Which students are in outside placements and for what type(s) of special education support?	
For each student, verify: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The student's neighborhood school</li> <li>● How long the student has been in this outside placement</li> <li>● How the placement was determined</li> <li>● The placement points of contact</li> <li>● The student's needs that precipitated the IEP team's decision for the placement</li> </ul>	



# Resource Assessment

Assess resources available for special education services, review budget allocations, and identify any immediate resource needs or areas for improvement.

## PRIVATE/PAROCHIAL SCHOOLS

What students, who qualify for special education services, attend private/parochial schools?

For each student, determine:

- For which services is the student eligible?
- What diagnoses were documented on the most recent report?
- Who completes the Evaluation Reports (ERs) and Reevaluation Reports (RRs) for the student?

## SPECIAL EDUCATION BUDGET

What is the spending to date for this fiscal year?

How flexible is the budget to accommodate unforeseen needs or adjustments?

## SPECIAL EDUCATION STAFFING

What is the status of the caseloads of your current staff?

Who can assist in calculating staff members' full time equivalent (FTE) when/if needed?

What system is in place to support the school psychologists should they receive more Evaluation Reports (ERs)/Reevaluation Reports (RRs) than they can complete?

## SPECIALIZED SUPPORTS

Which students require "specialized supports" (e.g., assistive technology, equipment, toileting, feeding, transportation)?

Who are the contacts?

What procedures are in place when a private duty nurse/personal care assistant calls off?

What procedures are in place when a private duty nurse/personal care assistant, needed for transportation purposes, calls off?



# Service Provider Contracts

Keep track of agency and LEA contracts for the related services and supports provided to students with disabilities.

Service	Provider	Point of Contact	Cost	Term - Dates contract is in place
Behavior Therapists				
Counseling/Mental Health as a Related Service				
Extended School Year				
Hearing Support; Audiology				
Occupational Therapists				
Out of LEA Placements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For each point of contact, secure school calendar and note IEP and Reevaluation due dates/meetings</li> </ul>				
Paraprofessionals and Personal Care Assistants (PCAs)				
Physical Therapists				
Private Nurses				
School Psychologists				
Speech-Language Therapists				
Transportation (if different than the LEA transportation provider)				
Vision support; orientation and mobility services				
Other				