

Planning & **P**lacement **T**eam

Meetings

**At a
Glance**



Pupil Services

A Parents' Guide

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Introduction

“We are here for You”

This outline describing the **Planning and Placement Team (PPT) Meeting** process has been developed for you by the Westport PTA Special Education Committee known as **SpEd Parents**. We are your representatives from each school building and out-placed program who work to bring your concerns forward to the administration and to communicate initiatives and policy back to you.

We know that parents often find themselves overwhelmed by the formality of the PPT process. Based on feedback from parents and our own varied experiences, we have created this outline as a means to demystify the PPT process. Our goal is to help parent team members participate comfortably in the PPT process as full and equal partners in the preparation, discussions, and decision-making process regarding your child’s educational program.

Together with the Parent Handbook for Special Education in Westport (available in your school office), this outline should provide you with the information and tools you need to begin effective advocacy for your child.

What Is A PPT?

- A PPT is a Planning and Placement Team meeting at which parents, other professionals, and educators discuss and plan for a child's educational program. Parents are equal members of the team.
- Your first PPT meeting will occur when your child has been referred to the team because parents and/or school staff suspect your child is in need of special education instruction in order to benefit from his/her education.
 - **The reason that a child may need additional support varies widely depending on the individual child.**
 - **All children are entitled to a free and appropriate education, the ability to access the curriculum, and to benefit from his/her education.**
 - **Not all children will be deemed eligible for special education after an initial PPT meeting has been held.**
- In the meeting you may discuss the possibility of evaluation for more information about your child.
- The educational plan designed at the PPT meeting is referred to as the **IEP or Individualized Educational Program.**
- If it is decided that your child is in need of special education instruction, the Individualized Educational Program (IEP) is a legal agreement and describes the commitments made for evaluating and programming for your child.
- Please refer to the Parent Handbook for Special Education in Westport for more detailed information about the IEP.

When Will We Have A PPT Meeting?

- Your first PPT meeting will occur when your child has been referred to the team because you and/or school staff suspect your child is in need of special education instruction in order to benefit from his/her education. The reason that a child may need additional support varies widely depending on the individual child.
- If the initial PPT results in an agreement to conduct educational evaluation or observations as a means to determine eligibility for special education services, you will have a second PPT to discuss the results and eligibility for special education services.
- There are several designations for eligibility for special education services.
- If your child has been identified as eligible for special education services, a PPT will be held at the following times:
 - Annually to determine continued eligibility and review goals and objectives for the next year.
 - Triennially (3 years.) to determine the need for continued special education services and the need for updated evaluation to determine current levels of functioning and progress.
 - When parents or the school ask for a PPT meeting at any time to address issues as they arise.
 - When reports or evaluation results are submitted to the school a PPT meeting must be held to discuss the results.
 - When a child transitions from one school to another.
 - If the team is considering **Extended School Year Services (ESY** is a summer program).

Understanding The Notice Of PPT

- You will receive a Notice of the PPT meeting from your school in the mail with date, time, and place at least 5 days prior to the meeting date. Some people refer to the Notice of PPT as an invitation, but the legal term is Notice of PPT meeting. If you receive the Notice less than 5 business days prior to the meeting you will be asked by the school to sign a form agreeing to have the meeting anyway, or you can ask to reschedule the meeting at a later date.
- You will know what the overall purpose is for your PPT because the Notice will have a checked box indicating the type of PPT you are having.
- You will know who is attending your PPT, in addition to yourselves, because the Notice will list all school staff and any outside providers scheduled to attend.
- Please refer to the Parent Handbook for Special Education in Westport for detailed information about the Notice and required attendees at a PPT meeting.

If You Have Received A Notice Of PPT You May, But Are Not Required To:

- Ask for an alternate date and time if you or anyone else who you want to attend cannot make it.
- Invite others who you feel you would like as part of your child's team. This may include but not be limited to: friends or family members, an outside professional who knows your child, or an advocate. If you will be inviting someone who is not listed on your invitation the school would like to be informed in advance. (If English is not your first language you may request an interpreter to be at the meeting so that you may fully understand and participate.)
- You may plan to tape the PPT meetings as a means to re-listen to the information discussed, or take your own notes even though the school is taking notes. (Taping a meeting is helpful because it is hard to take notes and listen at the same time. A spouse or other team member may not be able to attend and can listen to the tape as a means to staying informed. Listening to the tape after the meeting often uncovers information you missed or misunderstood.)
- If you plan to tape the PPT meeting you should, as a courtesy, advise the school in advance so they can be prepared as well. If you tape the meeting, the school will also tape the meeting. It is the practice of the Westport Public Schools to provide you with reports and evaluations prior to a PPT meeting. If you do not receive them, ask for them.
- You may request to see any draft goals and objectives several days prior to the PPT meeting. The goals and objectives will be discussed and can be changed during the meeting to reflect the decisions made at the meeting.
- Provide any private evaluation reports to the school team several days in advance of the PPT meeting so they may digest the information prior to meeting with you.

Requirements For All PPT Meetings

- Parents are equal members of the PPT and have an equal right to discuss issues, make suggestions or requests, and be part of the decision-making process.
- PPT meetings are legal meetings where a child's educational program is discussed and programs, placements, service hours, and responsibilities are committed to by the school.
- The school staff is required to offer you a copy of the State of Connecticut Department of Education Procedural Safeguards (due process rights) once a year. However, copies of Procedural Safeguards will be available at every PPT meeting. If you do not understand them you should ask for an explanation. Your Procedural Safeguards outline the legal requirements followed by the school and the procedures to use should there be an unresolved disagreement between you and the school staff. We advise you to read them carefully and refer back to them often, especially if you have not been able to reach an agreement within the PPT setting. Contact the State of Connecticut Department of Education for further clarification.
- A PPT meeting must include a core team of representatives of the local education agency, including (administrator or designee), a special education teacher, general education teacher, and a member of the pupil personnel services staff (speech therapist, guidance counselor, psychologist, social worker, nurse, aide etc.). As a parent, it is always important for you to participate in your child's PPT meeting.
- Your signature is needed to consent to evaluations, observations, eligibility for special education services, and other unique situations.
- If you disagree or have concerns about a recommendation, you should ask for more information about what your options are if you disagree.
- The school is responsible for documenting the PPT meeting by filling out an Individual Education Plan (IEP) form. The form should always include documentation of all agreed upon actions as well as actions that were discussed but denied, or discussions that did not lead to an agreement. Goals and objectives will be documented. Any reports or other written documents presented at the meeting will be included. Parents are entitled to receive this finished documentation within 5 days after the meeting.
- If you made decisions and either agreed or disagreed with proposals made at a PPT meeting, you still have the right to change your mind after the meeting. If you have changed your mind after the PPT meeting, you must submit your decisions in writing to the school administration. Another PPT meeting will be held to discuss your thoughts about your child's program.
- Parents have the right to disagree with the facts and information documented in the IEP by the school. You must document your disagreements in writing and send a letter to the school administration.

The PPT Meeting Format

- The Principal, vice principal, or other administrator will act as the leader of the meeting.
- You will be offered a copy of your Procedural Safeguards (due process rights).
- All persons in attendance will introduce themselves.
- One or more of the school-based team members will be taking notes either by hand or on a computer or Alpha Smart (a small portable keyboard).
- Parents may be taping the meeting or taking their own notes. (see page 5)
- School team members will be asked one at a time to give an update of the child's program, performance, or progress. This may include testing results, samples of work, or verbal descriptions.
- Parents should be asked if they have any new information to add or have any questions.
- If an outside provider is present she/he will be given an opportunity to present findings, comments, etc. At any time an open discussion may ensue.
- Areas of strength and weakness and educational programming will be discussed. Eligibility for special education services may be discussed. (See definition of categories for eligibility by disability in your Parent Handbook for Special Education in Westport or by contacting the State of Connecticut Department of Education.)
- Recommendations for testing may be made by staff and parents or other team members present.
- Draft educational goals and objectives will be presented by the school staff.
- The whole team (including parents) will be asked if they agree with the goals and objectives. The school staff should take you through each goal/objective one at a time. The draft goals and objectives are not finalized until discussions lead to an agreement. At this time you should ask for clarification of suggested goals and objectives and state your opinions about such suggestions. It is typical for changes to be made to the draft goals and objectives before finalizing the document. Changes may be required in the way a goal is stated, the measurements of progress, and in the content of goals/objectives. Goals may be eliminated or added as an outcome of discussions among the team members (including parents).
- Parents, staff, and other team members may have other suggestions and/or concerns about the goals and objectives, and they should be discussed and considered.
- At the end of the PPT meeting, the leader of the meeting, should review areas of action and agreement, areas of further investigation, and areas where agreement was not reached.
- If eligibility for special education has been established, the outcome of this meeting is the creation of the **Individualized Educational Program** referred to as the **IEP**.
- **IEP** forms, when filled out as documentation of a PPT meeting should include the following pages: a PPT cover page, List of Recommendations, Prior Written Notice, Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance, Transition Planning, measurable Annual Goals and Short Term Objectives, Program Accommodations and Modifications, State and District Testing and Accommodations, Alternate Assessments, Special Factors, Progress Reporting, Exit Criteria, Special Education, Related Services and Regular Education, and Required Data Collection pages. Each page is filled out only as it applies to your child (some pages may not be applicable in your child's education plan depending on the purpose of the PPT meeting and the age of your child). Each page has a specific planning and legal purpose to document the commitment of resources established during your PPT meeting.
- Details of the **IEP** document are described in the Parent Handbook for Special Education in Westport. It is a good idea to review the information.

Preparing For A PPT Meeting

- Begin preparing well in advance of your PPT meeting date. Collect any school work, test scores, or other notes you have taken from the time you first suspected your child was struggling or needed support. Depending on the age of your child and the circumstances, reports from early childhood, birth to 3, and pre-school may help to create a comprehensive history. Once you are well into the PPT cycle, the information you prepare may vary.
- Prepare a list, outline, or statement describing your observations or the observations of school staff or other professionals that have led you to believe your child does or does not need special education instruction. Some **preparation tools are included in this brochure** to help you organize your information and use your PPT meeting time more efficiently. Be prepared to discuss this information at the PPT meeting.
- Create a list of areas where you feel your child is struggling. Academic, social, and behavioral issues are all valid concerns. Use statements that describe specific behaviors or academic difficulties and be prepared to ask about what the school can do to help your child.
- Consider and list your child's strengths and interests. Be prepared to discuss this at the PPT meeting. Often, solutions for educational challenges can be created using a child's strengths as a starting point.
- You may submit your outlines, statements, and forms to the school staff several days prior to the meeting so that they can give thought to the materials and have related information to share at the meeting. Or, you can bring them with you to the PPT meeting as a means to guide you as you discuss your child's program. You may also submit your organized notes and lists as part of the record of the meeting after they have been reviewed.

Differences In PPT Meeting Agendas

- Core members are always in attendance at PPT meetings. Specialists or other school personnel may be in attendance depending on the purpose of the PPT meeting. (If a core team member cannot attend, the school is required to get your written permission to excuse that person).
- Specialists or other people of your choice or of the school's choice may be in attendance. Parents may bring persons of their choice to the PPT meeting for additional support including private specialists, advocates, family members, and friends. An interpreter will be supplied if needed.
- The length of the meeting will be determined by the topics for discussion. Some meetings may be brief. If you feel you have a lot to discuss we suggest you ask the team, at the onset of the meeting, if anyone has any time constraints. This will help you to make the most of your time.
- If the PPT time has run out and you feel you have more to discuss, you may request another PPT meeting.
- Goals and objectives may be discussed in detail or merely as a point of continued agreement.
- If and only if you are comfortable with it, you may have a PPT meeting over the phone.
- Some team members may need to attend via conference call over the phone.

After The PPT Meeting

- You will receive the Individualized Education Program (IEP) document that should reflect a summary and decisions made at the PPT meeting. While the summary of the meeting discussion is meant to accurately document the meeting, it is not meant to be a word for word transcript. The summary should accurately reflect important issues raised such as, agreements and disagreements, evaluation summaries, anecdotes of your child's well-being, concerns raised, and other topics that directly affect programming decisions.
- If you agree with the summary and documentation of facts of the meeting you do not need to respond. The program agreed upon at the PPT will be implemented 5 days after you receive the IEP in the mail unless you have agreed upon another time frame.
- You have the right to disagree with the documentation of the meeting or to change your mind about consent you may have given or agreements you made.
- If you disagree, or think anything important was left out of the document, you must put your point of disagreement and clarification in writing to the administration of your school.
- Decisions made regarding programming will take effect as determined by the team.
- You will begin to receive quarterly progress reports from the school.
- You can call for a PPT meeting at any time you choose if you feel the program plan needs to be amended or supplemented.
- You may contact team members for casual conversations to share information as a means to support your child and the staff who provide programming and support to your child. (However, only conversations held during a PPT meeting are considered as relevant commitments under the law. Therefore, if you would like your conversations to lead to changes in your child's program or the delivery of the program you must call a PPT meeting.)

Tips For Developing A Positive Partnership

1. Remember that all members of the PPT are there to help your child.
2. Respect those at the table as you wish to have them respect you.
3. Try to see the "whole" child and ask that others at the table do the same. Understand that others will see the child differently and that's ok.
4. Establish a rapport and maintain communication throughout the year with your child's educators and service providers.
5. Get to know the district "chain of command," PPT players and their roles and responsibilities, and who to contact for which issues.
6. Be mindful of the time limitations for the PPT meeting and be concise without rushing. Be organized and arrive on time. You do not need to know professional terminology to be effective. Use words and ideas as you understand them.
7. Present your opinions at the PPT meeting firmly, but also in a respectful manner.
8. Maintain your composure even when there is a disagreement. Remember that it is your right to disagree, so you should not feel like you have to fight for that right. Calmly and firmly state your area of disagreement and the PPT notes will reflect your opinion.
9. Accept that team members may have a differing opinion than your own but still have your child's best interest in mind. No one is always right or wrong.
10. Avoid putting team members on the spot or consciously embarrassing them.
11. While school staff are all professional educators, they are people with feelings, too.
12. Be sure to appreciate the things that deserve to be appreciated in your child's program.
13. Educate yourself about your child's disability by reading and understanding all the reports and test results about your child. Read up on your child's disability and attend workshops and conferences when they apply.
14. Learn about the significance of IDEA and 504 by accessing the State Department of Education website.
15. You do not need to feel confused at any time. You may ask for definitions and explanations at any time. Doing so will avoid miscommunications.

Preparation Tools:

SpEd Parents Quick Prep Questionnaire

Many veteran parents of the special education system have found it useful to ask the following questions prior to every PPT meeting as a means to gather their thoughts, plan ahead, and to use PPT meeting time effectively. Knowing your answers to these questions will benefit your child since no one knows your child better than you.

You may use this form as a means to guide you while you are at a PPT meeting and if you would like, you may submit this to the school-based team prior to the PPT meeting so they can give thought to your comments and be prepared to address them.

1. **What issues do you want addressed to enhance your child's education?**
2. **What are your child's unique characteristics, interests, significant personal attributes, and/or personal accomplishments?**
3. **What are your expectations for your child in the next year's period of time?**
4. **What are your long-term hopes and what are your child's long-term hopes?**
5. **What is your child good at? Ask your child the same question and jot it down.**

Important Note From SpEd Parents

While we have tried to demystify the PPT process and include all the basic information about the PPT meeting format, we know that the individual needs and situations of the children and families who receive services and support from the Westport Public School District are unique. Therefore, you may still have unanswered questions or concerns, and in some cases the answers will depend specifically on your situation. Please be sure to ask questions at your PPT meeting to clarify the answers for your specific needs and concerns.

SpEd Parents and the Westport School District encourage you to **educate yourself** by reading more about the guidelines for PPT meetings and Individualized Educational Programs (IEP). More information can be found in the Parent Handbook for Special Education in Westport available from your principal's office, the Westport Public School District's website, and the State of Connecticut Department of Education.

SpEd Parent representatives are available to help you find the information you may need. Each school building has a representative, as do the students who are placed out of district. Please contact your building administrator for the names of your representatives or consult the Westport Public School District's website for Westport PTA Council Special Education committee representatives, who are listed under Special Education. All conversations are confidential.

Notes

Pupil Services

Westport Public Schools

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The Westport PTA Council Special Education Parent Representatives (SpEdParents) mission is to work with the WPS district to develop a partnership between the professional staff, parents and students to identify, build consensus and implement the best educational practices which result in increased student learning. The goal of Sped Parents is to transmit information, in both directions, between the special education parent body and the school administration.

Please sign up for our e-mails at spedparents@westport.k12.ct.us