

# **P**lanning & **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 programs 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.

## **Parent Handbook Notes**

### **What is a Planning and Placement Team (PPT) meeting?**

- A Planning and Placement Team (PPT) reviews referrals to special education, determines if your child needs to be evaluated, decides which evaluations will be given to your child and determines whether your child is eligible for special education services. The team includes a school administrator or designee, regular education teacher, special education teacher, school psychologist and you. The school personnel may vary depending on your child's needs. Parents are important and equal members of the team and are encouraged to be part of the decision-making process.
- Parents are welcome to invite who they feel they would like to be a part of their child's team. This may include, but is not limited to, friends or family members, an outside professional who knows your child or an advocate. If you are inviting someone who is not listed on your invitation, please inform the school in advance. (If English is not your primary language you may request an interpreter to be at the meeting so that you may fully understand and participate.)
- The Planning and Placement Team (PPT) meeting will be facilitated by a school administrator or designee and all attendees will introduce themselves. The State of Connecticut Department of Education Procedural Safeguards will be available at each meeting. Your Procedural Safeguards outline the legal requirements followed by the school district and explain how to proceed if there is an unresolved disagreement between you and the school-based team. If you do not understand the document please do not hesitate to ask for an explanation of your due process rights.
- PPT meetings are legal meetings where your child's educational program is discussed and committed to by the school-based team. Your written consent is required for the school to conduct an evaluation of your child, to receive special education services and certain other unique situations. If you disagree with the information documented in the IEP you must submit your concerns in writing to the school administration. The school-

based team will convene a PPT meeting so that you may discuss your thoughts about your child's program.

- The school-based team takes minutes of the PPT meeting which will be included in the paperwork that is sent to you following the meeting. You may also take notes or record the meeting. If you plan to record the PPT meeting, you should advise the school in advance so they can be prepared as well. If you record the meeting, the school will also record the meeting.
- Your first PPT meeting is referred to as a pre-referral meeting. It will occur if school personnel feel that your child has not responded within state-mandated timelines to regular education academic supports through the Response to Intervention (RTI) process that exists in each school. (Please refer to the Westport district website for specific information regarding the RTI process.) As parents, you may also request a PPT meeting if you have concerns about your child's performance in school.
- At the pre-referral PPT meeting, the team will discuss your child's performance and review the reasons for the request to meet whether initiated by the school or the parents, and determine if an evaluation is warranted. If an evaluation is recommended, the team will outline the areas to be assessed and discuss how the team will conduct the evaluation with your child. The team is required to reconvene for an eligibility PPT meeting within 45 school days of the pre-referral PPT meeting.
- The school-based team will schedule an informal feedback session with you at least 3 days prior to the eligibility PPT meeting. The team will review the results of your child's evaluation and provide you with results of the evaluations.
- At the eligibility PPT meeting, the school-based team is responsible for determining eligibility for special education services. There are several possible designations for eligibility based on specified disability definitions. If the results of the evaluations correspond with one or more of the disability definitions and if, due to this disability your child requires special education services; your child will be eligible for these services and an Individualized Educational Program (IEP) will be developed. (Please refer to

the *Parent Handbook for Special Education in Westport* on the district website or *A Parent's Guide to Special Education in Connecticut* located on the Connecticut State Department of Education website for detailed definitions of disability criteria and components of the IEP.)

## What is an IEP?

- The development of the IEP is a team process intended to meet the specific needs of your child. Parents are equal partners in this process. The IEP identifies your child's needs, what will be provided to meet those needs, and what the anticipated outcomes may be. The IEP consists of a list of recommendations resulting from discussions at the meeting, present level of academic achievement and functional performance, transition planning, annual goals and objectives, program accommodations and modifications, state and district testing accommodations, specific service time and exit criteria. Each page is filled out only as it applies to your child. Each page has a specific planning and legal purpose to document the commitment of resources established during the PPT meeting.
- A PPT meeting will be held for the following reasons:
  1. Annually, to discuss a child's present level of performance and determine goals and objectives for the coming year.
  2. The team will conduct a re-evaluation every three years to determine the need for continued special education services.
  3. If parents or the team working with your child needs to meet to discuss the IEP.
  4. To discuss the results of any reports or evaluations that are submitted to or completed by the school.
  5. When students transition between levels within the school system.
  6. If the team is considering Extended School Year (ESY) services, which occur during the summer.

- You may request a copy of draft goals and objectives prior to the PPT meeting. The goals and objectives will be discussed and can be changed to reflect the decisions made at the meeting.
- You should provide any private evaluation reports to the school-based team for review several days in advance of the PPT meeting.

### **What is the PPT Meeting Notice?**

- The school is required to provide you with at least five days written notice of a PPT meeting. The notice will include the date, time, and location of the meeting. You may agree in writing to waive the five-day notice requirement.
- The PPT meeting notice will also include the purpose of the meeting and individuals invited to attend. If a core team member cannot attend, the school is required to get your written permission to excuse that person. You may choose to participate in a PPT meeting over the phone if you are unable to attend. (Please refer to the *Parent Handbook for Special Education in Westport* for more detailed information.)

### **What will help to prepare for your PPT meeting?**

- We advise that you should begin preparation for your meeting well in advance of its scheduled date. This may include collecting school work, test scores, and reports that will help create an understanding of your child's education.
- We suggest preparing a statement describing your observations and information received from staff working with your child. This can be helpful in organizing your thoughts so that you can use your PPT meeting time efficiently. Create a list of areas where you feel your child is struggling, including any academic, social or behavioral concerns. Be prepared to ask how the school can help your child. It is also helpful to share your child's strengths and interests as this information may be used when addressing areas of concern.

- You may submit this information to the team prior to the meeting or ask that it be made part of the record to be included with your IEP paperwork.

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 use the PPT meeting time effectively. You may use these questions 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 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.**

### **What happens after the PPT meeting?**

- You will receive the IEP document that reflects a summary and decisions made at the meeting. The summary of the meeting is meant to accurately document the meeting; however, it is not meant to be a transcript of the meeting. The summary normally includes 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 contents of the IEP you do not need to respond. The program agreed on at the meeting will be



implemented five days after you receive the IEP in the mail unless you have agreed to 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 provided 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 receive quarterly reports from the school charting progress on the IEP goals and objectives.
- It is important to communicate with team members on an informal basis so that you can share information with the staff who work closely with your child. Note, however, that formal changes to your child's IEP can only occur at 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 alright.
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 miscommunication.

## Important Note From SpEd Parents

While we have tried to demystify the PPT process and include all the 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

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**Pupil Services  
Westport Public Schools  
And**

**The Westport PTA Council Special Education Parent Representatives (SpEd Parents) 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 SpeEd 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  
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