

File: IHBAA

GUIDELINES FOR OBSERVATIONS BY PARENTS/GUARDIANS AND/OR PARENT/GUARDIAN DESIGNEES

Chapter 71B, Section 3 of the Massachusetts General Law, requires that upon request by a parent/guardian, granting of timely and sufficient access by parents/guardians and parent-designated independent evaluators and educational consultants to a child's current and/or proposed special education program so that the parent/guardian and/or the parent's/guardian's designee can observe the child in the current program and/or a program that has been recommended by the child's Individualized Educational Program (IEP) Team. The purpose of the law is to ensure that parents/guardians can participate fully and effectively in determining the child's appropriate educational program for their child.

General guidelines for the scheduling and conduct of such observations include the following. Parents may request exceptions to these guidelines by discussing these requests with the child's IEP Team and Building Administrator.

1. Any request to observe an educational program or a program that has been recommended by an IEP Team must be submitted to the building Principal at least five (5) school days in advance of the proposed observation. Requests for observations shall be responded to in a timely manner by the Principal or Principal's designee. Parents/guardians or designees will be offered observation dates and times that are mutually convenient and without unnecessary delay.
2. The Principal shall notify the special education coordinator of the building upon receipt of a request for observation, and prior to the scheduling thereof.
3. Observations should be completed within two (2) hours in order to minimize disruption of the classrooms/programs observed. If necessary, additional observation time can be provided on a case-by-case basis. Parents/guardians and/or their designees shall be allowed to observe the academic classes of their child as well as the non-academic components of the child's educational program.
4. The number of observers at any one time will be limited to no more than two (2) to avoid disruption of the classroom.
5. If the observer is not the parent/guardian, the parent/guardian must sign a release authorizing an observation by a designated observer and permitting communication and the exchange of information regarding the child with the designated observer. That written release shall be submitted to the building Principal prior to the scheduling of the observation.
6. The observer must sign a Student Observation Confidentiality Agreement prior to the start of the observation.

7. The observer will be accompanied at all times by a designated school staff person while in the school building. During any such observation, the classroom teacher is encouraged to refrain from using student's last names and to avoid disclosing or revealing personal or private information about any student other than the specific child under observation. The observer will not be permitted to interrupt, disrupt or otherwise interfere with the instructional services taking place in any school classroom. In the event of improper or disruptive conduct, program/classroom staff may suspend the observation and shall immediately notify the building Principal. Upon such notice, the building Principal or Principal's designee may terminate the observation.
8. The observer shall be situated in a location in the classroom that does not interfere with the class or the delivery of instruction/services to students.
9. The observer may be provided with the opportunity to schedule a meeting with the teacher to discuss the specific student being observed and the educational services provided to that student in the class.
10. Designated observers will be required to obtain written parental consent prior to the day of an observation in order to review student record information. Records must be obtained through the Director of Student Services Office once permission is received.
11. The observer will be informed that s/he is there to evaluate the appropriateness of an existing educational program to meet the needs of an individual child. S/he is not there to evaluate the ability of a teacher to perform his or her contractual job duties.
12. Requests for observations and access to a child's classroom or program by a noncustodial parent (parent without physical custody of the child) shall be responded to in a manner consistent with the requirements of M.G.L. c. 71:34H.

Legal Ref: M.G.L. 71:34H, Noncustodial Parents; Receipt of Information for Child Enrolled in Public Elementary or Secondary Schools; Notice to Custodial Parent

Cross Ref.: KI, Visitors to the Schools

Revised: November 20, 2013