

Litchfield Public Schools
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To Parents of All Children in Litchfield,

The Connecticut State Department of Education distributes a useful booklet entitled **Parent's Guide to Special Education in Connecticut**. This information guide has been developed to answer frequently asked questions, describe some key points of state and federal laws, and assist parents in understanding their rights in the special education process. For a complete copy of this guide you may contact me or visit www.state.ct.us/sde/ and click special education. Another source of information is SERC, the State Education Resource Center (860-632-1485, www.ctserc.org) Both web sites will provide access to other educational resource materials and special education publications.

Several of the questions in the guide along with partial answers follow.

- What is a referral to special education? A referral to special education is a written request for an evaluation of a child who is suspected of having a disability and who may be in need of special education and related services.
- What if my child hasn't started school, but I suspect a disability may exist? In Litchfield, if your child is at least three years old, a parent may request a preschool intake by calling Center School (567-7510). Some services for infants and toddlers, from birth to age three, may be available from Connecticut's Birth to Three Program. Concerns about these very young children should be addressed with the Birth to Three Programs at 800-505-7000.
- What is a PPT and an IEP? A Planning and Placement Team (PPT) is the team of educators and parents that make decisions regarding a child's special education. An Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a written plan developed by a PPT that describes a child's special education program.

- What is the LRE? The Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) means that a child with a disability must, to the maximum extent appropriate, be educated with children who are nondisabled in the general education class in the school that he/she would attend if the child did not have a disability.

In Litchfield there are approximately 160 students with special education needs. Many of these children have mild disabilities. Their participation, or inclusion, in regular classes and activities is determined on an individual basis by the three hundred PPT meetings that are held during each school year. Students with special needs are in most regular classes and participate with typical students across all grade levels.

In keeping with our efforts to inform the community of Litchfield of significant happenings in education this information is shared with you. On behalf of the students with disabilities and their families, I thank the Litchfield Board of Education and residents of Litchfield for their continued support of special education services in their schools. The school system reminds the community of its responsibility to identify students with disabilities and to provide appropriate special education services as needed and required beginning at the age of three. If you are aware of a child you suspect may have a disability and who resides in the Town of Litchfield, we would appreciate you referring the parent of that child to us.

You are always welcome to contact me at 567-7505 if you have any questions about special education, if you would like additional printed information, or if you would like to discuss some aspects of special education, such as mainstreaming, inclusion and the implementation of the least restrictive environment.

Gary Zaremski
Director of Special Services