

School and Special Education Laws and Policies

Spring 2026
SOWK 587
Week 04

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Agenda How Does Special Education Services Work in Schools

Week four course plan

General overview of special education

Referral process for special services

Positions and rolls

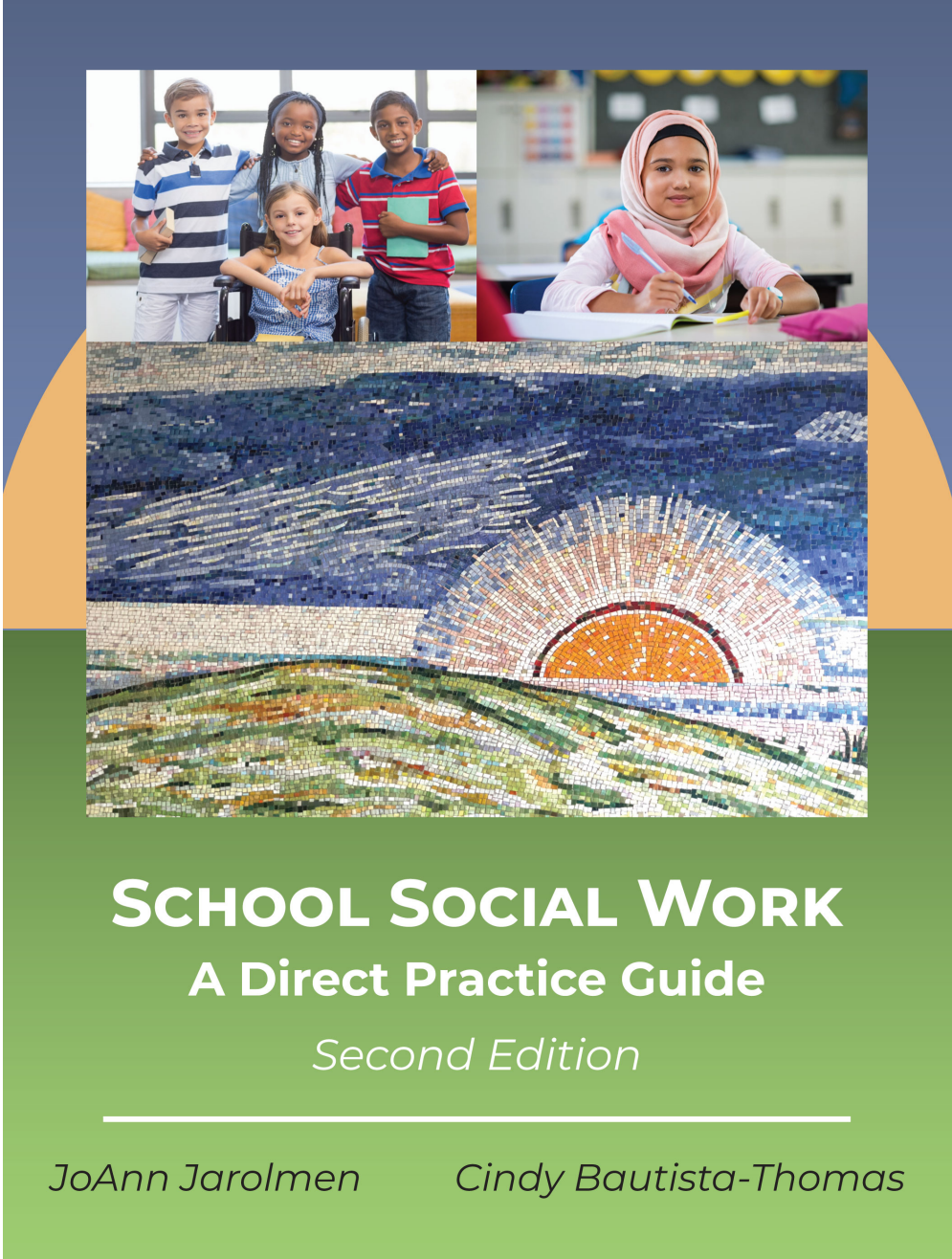
Mandated reporting

Learning Objective

- To gain knowledge regarding the legal landscape of disability services within a school setting
- To have an understanding of the obligations schools have to serve students with special needs
- To articulate ethical decision-making

Week Three Course Plan

What You Need to Do

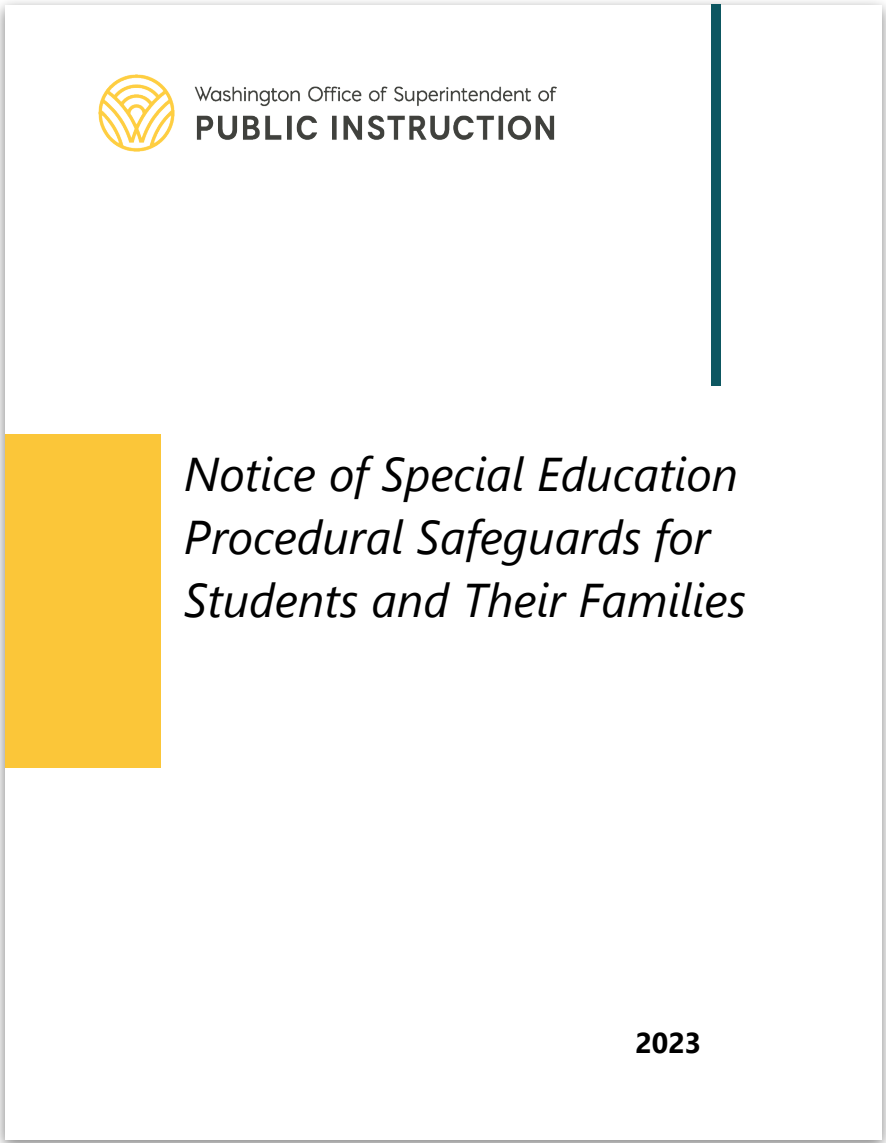


Read Chapter 4

Special Education and School
Social Work

Review OSPI's

Procedural Safeguards



and take the quiz

- * Exploring Due Process Hearings
- * School Law and Decision Making
- * Textbook Questions

**At Least 4 Replies
in Group Forums**

Legal Basis for Special Education

- Americans With Disabilities Act
- Individuals With Disabilities Education Improvement Act
- Washington Administrative Code (Chapter 392-172A): Rules for the Provision of Special Education to Special Education Students

A service not a place...

- Special education is not a classroom, it is a **continuum** of services
- Special education is defined by the **type of instruction** the student gets, not where the instruction occurs
- Special education is **specially designed instruction** which is defined as:



a change in the teaching strategies and methods
used in order to differentiate material for students

Important Terms in Special Education

- **Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)**

A program designed to meet the student's individual needs at no cost to the family.

- **Specially Designed Instruction (SDI)**

Organized and planned instructional activities, which adapt, as appropriate, the content, methodology, or delivery of instruction, to address the unique needs resulting from a student's disability.

- **Family Educational Rights and Privacy (FERPA)**

A federal law that protects the privacy of student education records. It grants students and parents the right to access these records and restricts schools from disclosing personally identifiable information without consent.



504 Plan

Explanation & Eligibility

A 504 plan is an **accommodation** plan that allows a student access to his/her educational program to the same extent as non-disabled peers.

To be eligible, a student must have an identified disability that:

- *Adversely impacts* educational progress
- *Requires accommodations* to mitigate the inequity in their to access to their educational program

What is an IEP?

Individualized Education Program

- Defines the student's **present levels** of performance in areas of eligibility
- Outlines **measurable goals and objectives** in all areas of eligibility
- Describes the **accommodations and modifications** the student requires
- Identifies the **least restrictive environment (LRE)**, how much time the student will spend in special ed and general ed settings, and who is responsible for the implementation of services and tracking of progress
- Defines a **transition plan** and course of study after age 16

Qualification for Services

What Does it Take?

A student eligible for special education must:

Have an identified disability (in one of 14 categories) that...

1. Adversely impacts their education progress and
2. Requires specially designed instruction (SDI)

A student can have a disability and not meet the other 2 tiers, therefore, not be eligible for special education services under IDEA.

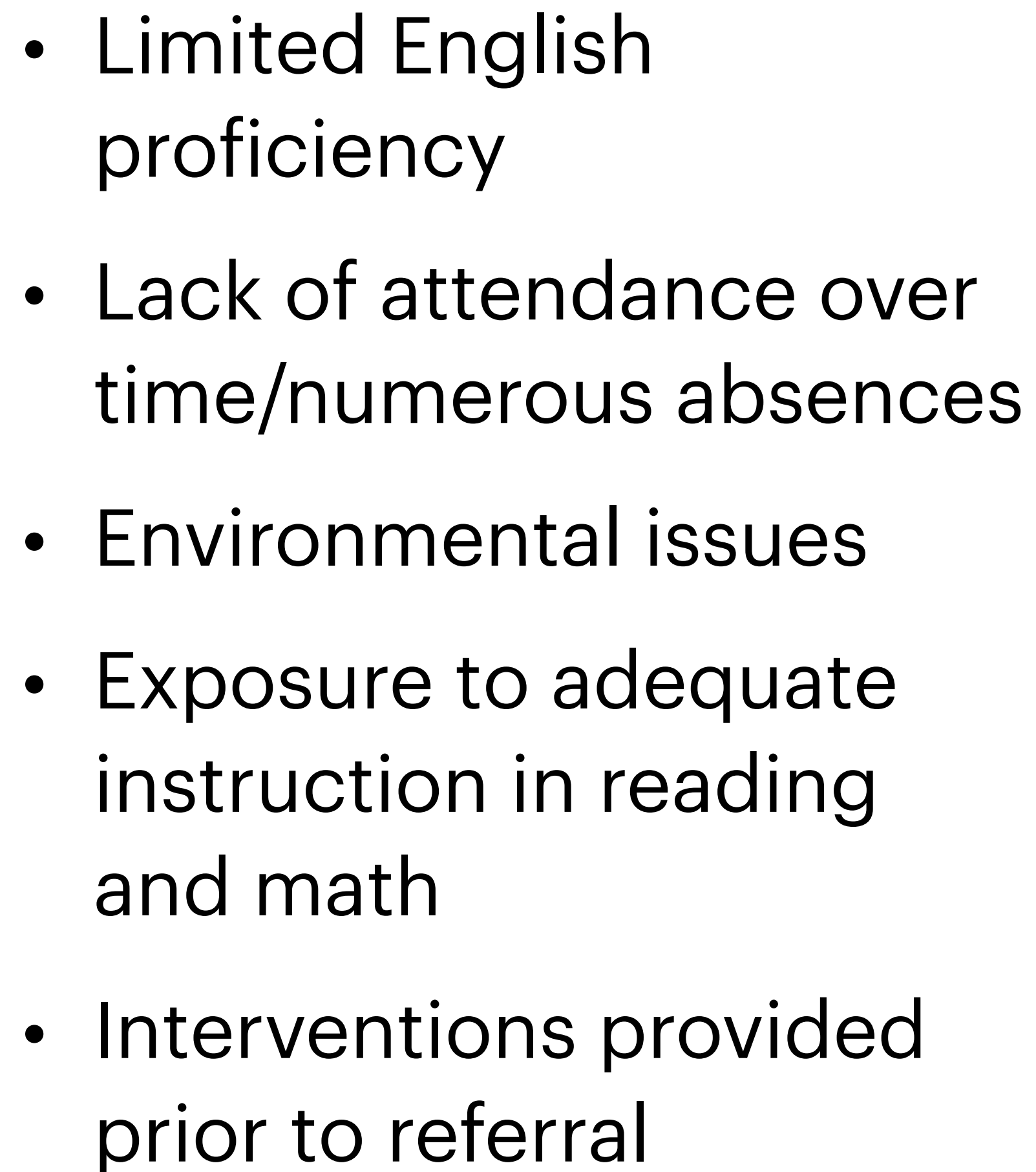
Typical Referral Concerns

Frequent Needs of Students

- **Academic delays** of ~2 or more years despite average capabilities/cognitive skills and multiple interventions over time
- **Lack of progress** within an intervention when peers are making consistent progress
- Attention or behavior results in **significant academic delays** or lack of access to instruction
- Social skill or behavior delays result in **underperformance or inability to benefit** adequately from instruction

Considerations

What Do Schools Look At?

- 
- Limited English proficiency
 - Lack of attendance over time/numerous absences
 - Environmental issues
 - Exposure to adequate instruction in reading and math
 - Interventions provided prior to referral



Who Makes Them

Anyone can make a referral for special education services if they believe the student would benefit from a more specialized instructional program than can be provided in the general education setting.

The Road to Referrals

The Road To Referrals

What is the Process

Anyone can make a referral for special education services if they believe the student would benefit from a more specialized instructional program than can be provided in the general education setting



A referral must be submitted in writing to the building or district level

The best person to send the referral to is the building administrator and/or the school psychologist



At the Referral

The teacher presents the data they have collected on:

- ✱ Interventions that have been attempted,
- ✱ How long they were attempted, and
- ✱ Results of the interventions

Based on this information the referral team makes a determination as to whether to proceed with a special education evaluation or if more information is needed.

Other data shared includes:

- absence profile
- assessment information from student track
- primary language
- discipline history
- health
- academic history

Timeline

What Are the Requirements after a Official Request

25 school days


- The amount of time the team has to meet to decide if an evaluation is going to occur, inform parents of the decision, and obtain consent to evaluate

35 school days

- The number of days from the date of consent that a team has to complete an evaluation if one is recommended.

30 calendar days

- The number of days a team has to develop an initial IEP if the student is found to be eligible for special education services.



So...
an evaluation
is not a quick
process

Eligibility Categories & Programs

What Is Offered In Pasco

14 Eligibility Categories

- Health Impairment
- Emotional/ Behavioral Disability

13 Special Service Programs

- Behavior Programs (BRIDGES)

Coordinating Services

How Outside Services Can Collaborate with Special Education



Positions and Rolls



Positions and Rolls

- Student
- Parent
- Teachers
- School Counselor
- School Psychologist
- Education Specialists
- School Administrators or Principals
- Special Services Administrators
- Speech Language Pathologist
- Occupational Therapist
- Physical Therapist
- School Nurse
- School Social Workers

Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse and Neglect

- Social service counselors/therapists
- School personnel