

Special Education Monitoring System

LEA Public Meeting Script

Background Information from LEA Public Meeting Guidance Document (for use by facilitator—not to be read to participants)

The public meeting generally will begin in a general session with introductions and opening remarks made by representatives of the LEA. It is important to make clear that the meeting is being conducted as part of the state system for monitoring special education programs and that the efforts are a partnership between LEAs and the Texas Education Agency (TEA). The TEA encourages the LEA to open the meeting by sharing the LEA's commitment to the process and its desire to improve LEA programs based on community feedback.

In opening remarks, the LEA will briefly describe the purpose of the meeting and how comments are used in the continuous improvement process. Explain that the request for information will be focused around predetermined questions and comments and feedback should not be limited to areas in need of improvement, but also should focus on areas that are working well. It will be important to emphasize that the purpose of the meeting is to gather system-level input, rather than feedback on individual concerns related to specific students.

Script Language

Opening Remarks

- ***Welcome participants***
- ***Include any logistical information if necessary, (e.g., location of restrooms, telephones).***
- ***Request that participants turn off or set their phones/pagers on vibrate.***
- ***Ask to see if everyone has a copy of the public meeting handouts (agenda, questions, ground rules, etc.).***

Introduction to Discussion Questions

The Texas Education Agency (known as the TEA) and school districts in Texas must ensure that students with disabilities receive appropriate educational services and supports based on both federal and state requirements. Federal requirements are found in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (known as the IDEA), while state requirements are found in state law (the Texas Education Code) and administrative rules. Both federal and state laws require that the TEA monitor school districts to ensure that special education requirements are met.

Recent changes to state law have required the TEA to make changes in the way it monitors school districts. Under the new system, the agency will focus on **how well students are doing** and **how well programs are working**. In order to get information on student performance and program effectiveness, data must be gathered at the school district level from people who know how programs are implemented on a day-to-day basis.

This public meeting is being conducted as part of the state system for monitoring special education programs, and the <district or charter school name> is working in a partnership with the TEA to gather information from schools around the state. This meeting will allow an opportunity for school and community stakeholders, including parents of students with disabilities, to share information regarding the effectiveness of the special education program and the performance of students with disabilities in the <district or charter school name>. The <district or charter school name> is committed to this process and will use information gained from the meeting to improve school programs based on your feedback. The information gained from the meeting will be reported to the TEA, in addition to being used by the <district or charter school name> to plan for continuous improvement.

A series of questions will be asked <today/tonight> that relate to the goals and overall purposes of the IDEA. As stated previously, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is the federal law that establishes the requirements related to the provision of a free appropriate public education to students with disabilities. When the Congress last revisited and reauthorized the IDEA, it was seen as an opportunity to review, strengthen and improve the law to better educate children with disabilities and enable them to achieve a quality education by:

- strengthening the role of parents;
- ensuring access to the general education curriculum and reforms;
- focusing on teaching and learning;
- giving increased attention to racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity to prevent inappropriate identification and mislabeling;
- ensuring schools are safe and conducive to learning; and
- encouraging parents and educators to work out their differences by using nonadversarial means.

The legislation was intended to encourage practices that lead to improved teaching and learning experiences for children with disabilities that result in productive, independent adult lives, including employment.

In this public meeting, we will ask for feedback on four general questions developed by the TEA related to programs for students with disabilities. The questions that we'll be asking <today/tonight> are in keeping with the spirit and purposes behind the IDEA. The questions also are in alignment with the ongoing efforts in Texas to continuously improve programs for students with disabilities. You should have a list of the discussion questions in a handout.

Before we begin discussing the questions, we want to explain the process we will be using <today/tonight> to gather your input. The discussion will be led by a facilitator and your input

recorded by a note-taker. Once a discussion question has been stated, you will be asked to provide your input. When you are ready to speak, please raise your hand so the facilitator can recognize you. Having people speak one at a time will help ensure that you can share your input clearly and effectively, and you can hear input from others. The facilitator will ask you your connection to special education, for example, parent, and then ask you to share your thoughts. In providing your input, you should do so with the goal of offering your “bottom line” in a sentence or two. Remember, we will be recording your input, so the more quickly you can get to the point, the more time we will have to gather everyone’s input.

We will have approximately 30 minutes for each of the four questions we will be discussing <today/tonight>. We will be timing the discussion to ensure we allow enough time to cover all four questions. We will take a short break after the first two questions.

To make sure we get the most out of our time together, we’d like to follow a few ground rules which are included in the handouts you received at registration.

1. Wait to be recognized by the facilitator before speaking – Again, speaking one at a time will help ensure you have an opportunity to provide your input effectively, and hear input from others.
2. Be concise and focus on the **Bottom Line** – We want to understand the main point of the input you’re sharing and also hear from as many today as possible.
3. Provide constructive feedback – In some cases, the input you have to share may be about a negative experience. We ask that you take this opportunity to offer constructive feedback related to that experience. For example, if you know something’s not working as well as it could be, please also share how you think it might be improved (offer improvement ideas).
4. Please respect others’ opinions and experiences – This is a forum for providing broad input – there’s no right or wrong answer, just different perspectives. If you have specific concerns, comments, or complaints regarding services your child has received, there are formal processes to follow—either contacting the special education director or contacting the TEA. Information about the TEA complaints process has been provided in a handout.
5. Adhere to time limits – Please respect the time limits that have been established so we can cover all of the topics we’re scheduled to address. We’ll let you know when we’re nearing the time limit for each question.
6. Focus on meaning, not wording – In the interest of time, we want to spend our time hearing input from as many as possible, not fine-tuning wording.

We now will begin to discuss specific background information related to the questions that we'll address <today/tonight>. These questions are designed to bring out information related to federal and state special education requirements and information about how programs are performing in the <district or charter school name>. These questions are intended to focus on the many aspects of a <district's or charter school's> educational program that contribute to positive teaching and learning. These include systems that are in place prior to students being identified as eligible for special education services, as well as other aspects related to the effective functioning of the special education program once a child is identified as in need of special education or related services. These questions address topics ranging from access to program information and parent involvement in the special education process to those targeted to the ultimate, post-school results of the special education program. Other critical issues along the spectrum also are addressed, such as what supports a district has in place for teaching and learning and how districts monitor the results of teaching and learning to improve student performance over time.

Let's begin with the first question that we'd like to address: <read first question>.

Note to Facilitator: *With each question, utilize the Questions and Follow-Up Probes chart at the end of this document to encourage a comprehensive discussion lasting approximately 30 minutes. The follow-up probes should be used as appropriate to elicit desired information not gained through responses to the initial question.*

The second question that we'd like to address is: <read second question>.

BREAK TIME (approximately 10 minutes)

The third question that we'd like to address is: <read third question>.

The final question that we'd like to address is: <read fourth question>.

Conclusion:

That concludes our discussion <today/this evening>. One final announcement before we close the meeting. We want to share some information about one of the handouts you received. It's called "Making Connections...Who to Contact and When." One of the recurring themes at state-level public meetings is that parents do not always know who to contact when they need technical assistance. <show handout>. This handout is based on information in the "Guide to the Admission, Review, and Dismissal Process" document. It shows who to contact when you need specific types of assistance. You can fill in the appropriate teacher and principal information in the blanks provided. At the bottom, you can read information about the State's complaint process, including the parent information line.

We very much appreciate your participation in the public meeting. The information will be helpful to our school in making plans for improvement, and your participation and feedback will help the TEA know how to plan for future monitoring activities. In the future, the TEA will continue to work with schools, parents and others interested in the educational process to

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refine and implement performance-based monitoring systems that promote improved results for all students.

Thank you again for your attendance.

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LEA Public Meeting Questions and Follow-Up Probes

Question	Desired Information <i>(to be Elicited)</i>	Follow-Up Probes <i>(If desired information is <u>not elicited</u> based on the general question, choose the appropriate follow-up probes from the list below.)</i>
<p>1. The special education program is most successful for students when those involved in the students' education are well-informed about the special education process and its focus on results for individual students. Where do you get most of the information you receive regarding special education?</p>	<p>Methods and scope of information dissemination; availability of information in the native language of parents; primary sources of information (could be school personnel, advocacy groups, websites, disability organizations, etc.); information resources available in the district/charter school; scope of parent training supported by the district/charter school; level of understanding of procedural safeguards and ARD requirements.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How is information on special education shared with parents, school staff, and other community stakeholders and to what extent is the information available in the native language of the parent? ▪ What resources are available to provide information regarding the special education program? ▪ What training is available for parents of students with disabilities? ▪ Who is the contact in your district when you need additional information about special education? ▪ To what extent is information on parents' rights and responsibilities available to and understood by parents of students with disabilities?

<p>Question</p>	<p>Desired Information (to be Elicited)</p>	<p>Follow-Up Probes <i>(If desired information is <u>not elicited</u> based on the general question, choose the appropriate follow-up probes from the list below.)</i></p>
<p>2. One purpose of the IDEA is to strengthen the role of parents and ensure family participation in the education of their children. Within the context of your district, how are parents involved in the educational process for their children?</p>	<p>Leadership roles that all parents play in the district/charter school and the role of parents of students with disabilities within the broader context of the school system; methods of including parents of students with disabilities in planning for their child's education; degree to which parents feel they are meaningfully involved in their child's education; the involvement of parents of students with disabilities in the overall school system; whether parent participation patterns reflect the overall demographics of the district/charter school; participation rates at admission, review and dismissal (ARD) committee meetings; whether participation rates at ARD committee meetings reflect the overall demographics of the district.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In what leadership roles do parents serve in the district/charter school? ▪ How are parents of students with disabilities included in planning for their child's education? ▪ How are parents of students with disabilities included in the overall activities of the school district and/or campus? ▪ To what extent are all parent groups involved in the educational process? Do participation patterns reflect the demographic makeup of the district/charter school? ▪ What role do parents play when they attend ARD committee meetings? In what ways could the district/charter school have an impact on parent attendance at and participation in ARD committee meetings? ▪ To what extent are ARD participation patterns consistent (or to what extent do they vary) across all student groups (elementary, middle and high school; across demographic and socioeconomic lines, etc.)?

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<p>3. A goal of the IDEA is to have high expectations for students with disabilities and include them in the same opportunities available to all students in your district or charter school. Describe how students with disabilities participate and achieve in the school setting in the same ways as students without disabilities.</p>	<p>The extent to which students with disabilities are engaged in the general curriculum; information on participation rates and patterns for students with disabilities in general assessments (TAKS and other district-level assessments); degree to which students with disabilities make progress on the same standards and goals as students without disabilities; degree to which students with disabilities accumulate new skills over the course of their education; the degree to which changes in the IEP indicate progress over time; the degree to which all LEA programs are accessible to students with disabilities (including physical accessibility); participation of students with disabilities in extracurricular activities, physical education, and other opportunities available to all students.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Describe how students with disabilities learn the same skills as students without disabilities. ▪ When might students with disabilities learn different skills than students without disabilities? ▪ To what extent do students with disabilities learn the same skills as other students at their age or on their grade level? ▪ To what extent do the individualized educational programs (IEPs) of students with disabilities reflect increased skills and higher targets for learning over time? How do IEPs change over time to reflect new learning and new goals for students? ▪ Describe the degree to which all LEA programs are accessible to students with disabilities (including physical accessibility). ▪ Describe how students with disabilities access extracurricular activities and other elective programs or classes at your school. ▪ Describe how students with disabilities participate in state or district testing (assessment) initiatives (such as the TAKS or other district-level assessments). ▪ How does the district or charter school decide about the assessments students with disabilities will take? (For parents, if they have not provided feedback) Are you seeing your child make progress in meeting his/her goals and learning new skills? Is he/she learning new skills that you consider to be important and appropriate?

<p style="text-align: center;">Question</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Desired Information (to be Elicited)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Follow-Up Probes</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>(If desired information is <u>not elicited</u> based on the general question, choose the appropriate follow-up probes from the list below.)</i></p>
<p>4. The IDEA establishes qualification and ongoing training requirements related to all educational staff members who provide instructional and related services to students with disabilities. In what ways does your district ensure that all staff members serving students with disabilities are certified, knowledgeable and skilled in their roles?</p>	<p>Degree to which special education staff are certified for their areas of assignment; access of educational staff to professional development; whether special education staff learn the same professional development content that general educators learn; the degree to which general educators are provided training and support in teaching students with disabilities; degree to which paraprofessionals receive professional development related to their job responsibilities; degree to which new teachers have established support systems (mentoring, etc.); access to joint training for parents and school professionals; extent to which effects of professional development activities are evaluated.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To what degree is professional development provided and/or supported by the district/charter school on topics that promote quality instruction for students? ▪ To what extent do special educators learn the same professional content as general educators? ▪ To what extent are parents involved in joint training with educators on topics that promote better results for students with disabilities? ▪ In what ways does the district try to attract and keep qualified special education staff? How does the district support teachers new to the classroom? What supports are in place for teachers of students with disabilities? ▪ How does the district/charter school track information to know whether professional development results in improved achievement for students? ▪ (For parents, if they have not provided feedback) How do parents learn about training opportunities available to them? What is important for parents to know in regard to the qualifications and training of the staff members teaching their children?

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<p>5. An effective school program has supports in place to meet the needs of all students. What are the options available in your district to support the needs of struggling students?</p>	<p>Support services available to all students prior to referral to special education; information on any systems of pre-referral, prevention and/or intervention; information on the continuum of service options available to students with disabilities across age levels and areas of disability; degree to which initiatives are in place to support the needs of all students (such as schoolwide positive behavior supports, 3-Tier Reading Model, culturally responsive education models, etc.).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What support services are available to all students within the campus and district/charter school? ▪ What initiatives are in place to meet the needs of all students, including those struggling with behavior or instructional concerns? ▪ What kind of help do students receive prior to being referred for special education services? ▪ What are various types of special education services provided within the campus and district? To what extent are a variety of service options available to students of all ages, including young children with disabilities? To what extent are a variety of service options available to students of all areas of disability? What different placement and/or program options are available to meet the needs of students without disabilities? ▪ What different placement and/or program options are available to meet the needs of students with disabilities? ▪ Once a student is identified as a student with a disability, is the student still able to access support services and programs in place for students without disabilities? ▪ (For parents, if they have not provided feedback) What kind of help did your child receive prior to being referred for special education services? What kinds of help does your child receive from the special education program? Where is that help provided?

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<p>6. The goal of education is to prepare students to live productive, independent adult lives. In what ways does this LEA ensure that students with disabilities are prepared to live as productive adults after leaving school?</p>	<p>Extent to which students with disabilities graduate under the same standards and requirements as students without disabilities; extent to which district/charter school follows up on students with disabilities after leaving school to determine the effectiveness of the educational program; extent to which students with disabilities have available the same post-school options as students without disabilities; extent to which transition planning plays a meaningful role in determining goals and graduation plans for students with disabilities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To what extent are students with disabilities prepared to graduate by meeting the same standards as students without disabilities? ▪ To what extent do students with disabilities graduate with recommended and distinguished diplomas? ▪ How does the district follow up on students with disabilities who have graduated to determine the effectiveness of the school program? ▪ To what extent do students with disabilities find competitive employment or attend postsecondary educational programs after graduation? Are students able to sustain employment or complete university, college or technical training programs? ▪ How does the school plan for the needs of students with disabilities after graduation? ▪ How does transition planning improve results for students with disabilities in your district/charter school?