



## **OBSERVATIONS OF SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

1. Parents'/guardian's request to observe their child(ren), current program, or a potential placement must be made at least five (5) days in advance with the Director of Student Services or designee and/or Principal.
2. The Director of Student Services or designee shall contact the parent(s)/guardian for an initial scheduling conversation within two (2) business days of receipt of the parents'/guardian's request.
3. When a parent/guardian requests an observation of a special needs student or program, the Building Team Chair or designee will seek approval from the Director of Student Services and the building principal before it is processed. Such approval may only be withheld for those reasons outlined within the law and DESE regulation.
4. The Director of Student Services or designee and/or Principal will work with the classroom teacher and the observer to set up the specifics of the observation (including, but not limited to, scheduling and placement of the observer in the classroom).
5. The number, frequency, and duration of observation periods will be determined on an individual student basis in accordance with the regulations and General Laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The start and end time of observation periods and a schedule of observation periods will be stated in advance. In order to minimize classroom or student disruption, the length of individual observation periods may be limited.
6. If the observer is not the parent/guardian, the parent/guardian must sign a release for the individual to observe.
7. The number of observers at any one time may be limited.
8. The observer will be informed that they are not to interfere with the educational environment of the classroom. If their presence presents a problem, they will be asked to leave. This notice is particularly important since the presence of parents/guardians can influence both the performance of their child(ren) and those of others.
9. The observer will be asked to submit their report of the observation in advance of any follow-up TEAM meeting.

10. The observer will be informed that they are there to evaluate the appropriateness of a specific educational program to meet the needs of an individual child. They are not there to evaluate a teacher's ability to perform his or her contractual job duties.

11. The observer will be instructed regarding the disclosure of confidential or personally identifiable information relating to other children.

12. A school administrator, or designee, also will observe at the same time and take notes as to what is observed, paying particular attention to note anything that is non-typical concerning the period. This observation summary will be placed in the student's file and provided to the parent(s)/guardian two (2) business days prior to any follow-up TEAM meeting.

LEGAL REF.: MGL [71B:3](#)

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Technical Assistance Advisory SPED 2009-2 dated January 8, 2009

CROSS REF.: [KI](#), Visitors to Schools

SOURCE: MASC

ADOPTED: 1/30/20

REVISED: 10/29/20

NOTE: The following quotes from the DESE Advisory are important points of understanding the implementation of this policy.

"School districts and parents/guardians have reported that, typically, observations are between one and four hours. While useful as a general rule, the Department recommends that district policies and practices specify that the duration and extent of observations will be determined on an individual basis. Districts should avoid rigid adherence to defined time limits regardless of the student's needs and settings to be observed. The complexities of the child's needs, as well as the program or programs to be observed, should determine what the observation will entail and what amount of time is needed to complete it. Discussion between school staff and the parent/guardian or designee is a good starting point for resolving the issue."

"The observation law states that districts may not condition or restrict program observations except when necessary to protect:

- o the safety of children in the program during the observation;
- o the integrity of the program during the observation;

o and children in the program from disclosure by an observer of confidential or personally identifiable information he or she may obtain while observing the program."