

Manchester Academic Charter School
ANNUAL PUBLIC AND PARENT NOTICE

Screening and Evaluation

The Manchester Academic Charter School uses the following identification activities for locating, identifying, and evaluating the needs of school-aged students who may require the provision of special education programs and services. These services, as required by law, include:

The Manchester Academic Charter School has a system to collect and maintain data on child identification activities. Parents with concerns regarding their child may contact the school at any time to request an evaluation of their child that may result in special education determination. All communication with parents will be in English, and if appropriate, their native language.

The Manchester Academic Charter School, as prescribed in Section 1402 of the School Code, conducts vision and hearing acuity screening for students. Academic skills, social-emotional skills, and gross and fine motor skill development are assessed by the classroom teachers on an on-going basis. Other screening activities include: the review of student records as they are forwarded from the student's previous school, the review of cumulative group achievement and ability data, health and attendance records, grades and other relevant information shared by the teachers and parents. Teacher and parent concerns should be directed to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the school. A parent may request that the school initiate a screening or evaluation of their child's specific needs at any time by contacting the CEO and expressing his/her concerns.

School records are always open and available to a child's parents/legal guardians, and only the school officials who have a legitimate "need to know" about the child. Confidentiality of information obtained regarding a specific child is protected by federal and state laws. Education records and personally identifiable information cannot be disclosed or released without written parental consent. Information from the records is released to other persons or agencies with appropriate authorization that involves written signed permission by parents.

The purpose of screening activities is to gather information for the pre special education referral process. This information is reviewed in an attempt to develop a strategic educational plan for the student. The information might, if appropriate, be used to determine if a child needs additional services including special education. If it is determined that the child needs additional services, the referral team will make recommendations relative to specific educational programming geared to maximize the student's learning. If a student does not make progress after the strategic educational plan is implemented, parents will be asked to give written permission for further individual evaluation that might lead to a special education eligibility decision.

If it is necessary to evaluate a student to determine special education eligibility, an Evaluation Report (ER) will be compiled with parent involvement and include recommendations for the types of intervention necessary to meet the student's specific needs. Parents are then invited to participate in a meeting where the results of the ER will be discussed. An Individualized Education Program (IEP) will be developed for any eligible student requiring specialized services.

Parental and student attendance and involvement will be encouraged at the IEP meeting. Teachers who instruct the student will also be in attendance at the IEP meeting. The IEP team may consist of the following individuals: the parent, the student, the CEO and/or Special Education Chairperson, the school psychologist, a special education teacher, a regular education teacher, community agency representatives, and other individuals and specialists as appropriate.

Staff will notify the parents in writing and make documented phone calls to coordinate efforts to arrange for a mutually convenient IEP meeting. At the conclusion of the IEP meeting, parents will be presented with a Notice of Recommended Education Placement notice which enables a parent to agree or disagree with the recommended program. If parents disagree with the program recommended, the issue may be taken to mediation or a due process hearing. The parents will be provided with a comprehensive listing of their due process protections at the IEP meeting.

Privacy Rights of Parents and Students

The Manchester Academic Charter School protects the confidentiality of personally identifiable information regarding exceptional children in accordance with state and federal laws dealing with regular and special education students' rights and privacy. The foundation of the rights and laws comes from federal legislation titled, Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974. There are also State Rules and Regulations dealing with students' rights and privacy. All students are covered by the regulations contained in Chapter 12 known as Students' Rights and Responsibilities.

The basic premise of the above mentioned laws, rules and regulations is that information about students cannot be disclosed without written parental consent. Educational records consist of information directly related to students which are maintained by an educational agency. Personally identifiable information includes the student's name, the name of the parent, or other family members, a personal identifier or a list of personal characteristics that would make the student's identity easily traceable. Educational records and personally identifiable information cannot be disclosed or released without written parent consent or without student consent if over the age of 18. Disclosure of information means to permit access to or the release, transfer, or other communication of educational records, or the personally identifiable information contained in these records, to any party, by any means. The consent must: (1) specify the records that may be disclosed; (2) state the purpose of the disclosure; (3) identify the party or parties to whom the disclosure may be made.

There is certain information that can be released without consent which is called directory information. Directory information includes information contained in an educational record of a student which would not generally be considered harmful or an invasion of privacy if disclosed. The Manchester Academic Charter School designates information that is labeled as directory information. It shall include the following: the student's name, address, date and place of birth, major areas of study, and participation in school related activities, events, or clubs, dates of attendance, awards received, a student's email address, photograph, and the most recent educational agency attended.

Chapter 15 Protected Handicapped Students

In order to qualify as a protected handicapped student, the child must be of school age with a physical or mental disability which substantially limits or prohibits participation in or access to an aspect of the school program. In compliance with state and federal law, Manchester Academic Charter School, will provide each protected handicapped student without discrimination or cost to

the student or family, those related aids, services, or accommodations which are needed to provide equal opportunity to participate in and obtain the benefits of the school program and extracurricular activities to the maximum extent appropriate to the student's abilities. These services and protections for "protected handicapped students" are distinct from those applicable to all eligible or exceptional students enrolled (or seeking enrollment) in special education programs.

Special Education Programs

The Manchester Academic Charter School provides a free, appropriate, public education and least restrictive environment to exceptional students. To qualify as an exceptional student, the child must be of school age, must be in need of specially designed instruction, and must meet eligibility requirements for one or more of the following physical or mental disabilities, as set forth in Pennsylvania State Standards: autism/pervasive developmental disorder, deaf-blindness, blindness/visual impairment, deafness/hearing impairment, mental retardation, multiple disabilities, neurological impairment, orthopedic impairment, traumatic brain injury, other health impairment, emotional disturbance, specific learning disability, and speech/language impairment.

Services designed to meet the needs of exceptional students include the annual development of an IEP and a re-evaluation as mandated. The IEP Team will consider a student's learning needs when assigning the student to one of the following instructional groupings: autistic support, blind/visually impaired support, deaf/hearing impairment support, emotional support, learning support, life skills support, multiple disabilities support, physical support, and speech and language support. The extent of special education services and the location of delivery of such services are determined by the parents and staff at the IEP meeting and is based on the student's identified needs and abilities, chronological age, and the intensity of the specific intervention. The Manchester Academic Charter School provides a range of services as appropriate.

The Manchester Academic Charter School does not discriminate on the basis of age, race, color, national or ethnic origin, gender or handicap in employment practices or in the administration of any of their educational programs and activities in accordance with applicable federal statutes and regulations.

Any questions regarding the content of this notice may be referred to the following school contacts:

Manchester Academic Charter School; Mr. Vasilios Scoumis; 1214 Liverpool Street; Pittsburgh, PA 15233; (412) 322-0585