



Christian Heritage School Learning Center

IDEA, Section 504, and Learning Disabilities

Definitions and explanation of Federal law and private school services

What is IDEA?

Learning disabilities affect 8.8 percent of the U.S. school-aged population (“Questions and Answers, 2011). The education of students with disabilities has been governed by a law that Congress enacted in 1975 called the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA). IDEA seeks four outcomes for students with disabilities: equal opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency (Turnbull, 2013). In 2004, IDEA enacted a significant change for private schools. **“The responsibility for the provision of special education services to students with disabilities placed by their parents in private elementary and secondary schools lies with the school district in which the private school is located (not the town within which the family lives)”** (sde.ct.gov, 2006). It is important for everyone within the CHS community to understand that most referrals for special education for students enrolled at CHS will go through the Town of Trumbull Public Schools. If a parent has a question or concern regarding his/her student and the possibility of services for a learning disability, that parent should contact their child’s teacher(s) and/or division principal at CHS.



What special services is my child guaranteed at Christian Heritage School?

IDEA provides each student with the right to a free appropriate public education (FAPE). As a private school, Christian Heritage does not receive any state or federal funds for special education. It is important for parents to know that the “regulations in IDEA explicitly provide that children with disabilities enrolled by their parents in private schools do not have an individual right to receive some or all of the special education and related services they would receive if enrolled in the public education system” (“Questions and Answers”, 2011). The Town of Trumbull, the local educational agency (LEA) for Christian Heritage School, does not provide CHS with funds for special education. Because CHS does not receive any state or federal funding, there is an additional charge for Learning Center services, above the cost of tuition.

Is CHS able to provide all special services?

CHS is limited in the types of services it can provide for students with special education needs and therefore may not be the best fit for every child with a learning needs. The Learning Center at CHS is designed to offer as many services and accommodations as possible and has been a good fit for a number of students, as we have partnered with parents to provide an education of spiritual and academic excellence.

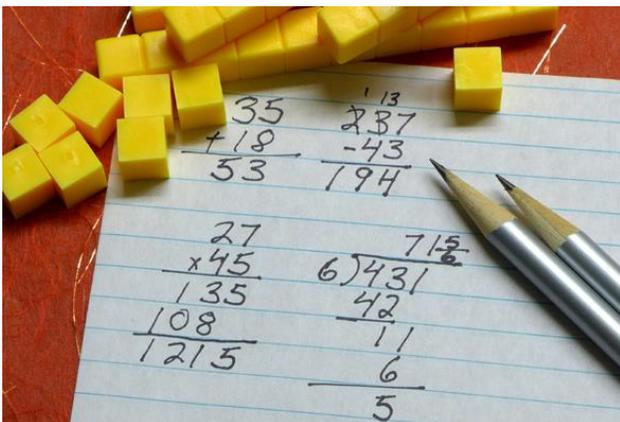
What services at CHS are covered by tuition and government funding?

Even though CHS, as a private religious school, does not receive government funding and therefore may not or cannot provide services for all students with special education needs, CHS does have a commitment to offer services to students with mild to minor learning needs if it appears the student and CHS will be a good fit. Jesus often went out to seek those with disabilities such as the man in John 5:2-9, who could not walk and had no one to help him. So, as Christ followers, we also seek to work with students to help them access a quality education. CHS will seek to adhere to the guidelines set up by IDEA in providing a quality education, as we are financially able to do. To avoid confusion and unclear expectations with the public school terminology, CHS may not always use the same terminology used in the public education system, but has developed its own terminology.



What is a PEP versus an IEP?

CHS partners with the Trumbull Public School system, as well as many specialists in the medical field to identify students with learning needs and then to set up accommodations that will create ways for students to access learning. The Learning Center Director consults regularly with the Special Education liaison from the Trumbull Public School system regarding students that have been identified with special needs, as well as referrals made to the division principals regarding students who may need to be tested for a learning need. Parents may also seek their own private professional in identifying learning needs and then bring this documentation to CHS for the development of a service plan. In either case, a PPT (Planning and Placement Team) will be formed and a service plan will be developed. The service plan at CHS is called a PEP (Personal Education Plan); the public school equivalent is an IEP (Individual Education Plan).



Does CHS admit any students with learning disabilities?

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is a civil rights law designed to eliminate discrimination on the basis of disability in any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance. Section 504 guarantees certain rights to individuals with disabilities, including the right to full participation and access to a free and appropriate public education (FAPE). As a Christian school, CHS seeks to follow Jesus and does not discriminate on the basis of disability. But it is also understood that CHS does not receive federal financial assistance for the educational needs of students with disabilities. Therefore, it may be determined that CHS may not be the best fit for a student in helping them achieve access to learning and academic success. CHS does not use the term 504 to identify accommodations made for students with identified learning needs. Accommodations will be identified in the PEP service plan.

Parents should understand that “since they have placed their child in a private school, their child does not have an individual entitlement to any or all of the services that the children would receive if enrolled in a public school” (Questions and Answers, 2011). The service plan will reflect the services and accommodations that CHS has decided it can appropriately handle and manage with its faculty and staff. A list of those accommodations is available upon request.



What about temporary accommodations due to injury or illness?

Finally, there are times when a student needs temporary accommodation due to a physical injury or illness (broken bone, concussion, etc.). Requests for these accommodations should be first sent to the school nurse who will then notify the division principal. The division principal will then work with the parent and/or student in identifying the most appropriate accommodations to allow for access of learning for the student during recovery. For the Upper School, these accommodations are overseen by the Guidance department. If the injury becomes more permanent and life altering, the Learning Center Director will then be consulted to set up accommodations to meet the needs of the student.

References

“Educational Issue: Section 504”. *National Resource Center on ADHD*. n.d. www.help4adhd.org.

“Questions and Answers on Serving Children with Disabilities Placed by Their Parents in Private Schools”. *IDEA*. April 2011. www.idea.ed.gov.

“Questions and Answers Regarding Parentally Placed Students in Private Schools”. *SDE*. April 2006. www.sde.ct.gov.

Turnbull, Ann and Rud Turnbull. *Exceptional Lives: Special Education in Today's Schools*. Boston: Pearson Education, Inc, 2013.

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