

**Shrewsbury Public Schools**  
**Guidelines for Classroom/Program Observation**

(2/18/09)

**Introduction**

The purpose of *An Act to Provide Access to Information for Parents and Evaluators* (House Bill No. 391) is to protect the rights of parents in participating fully and effectively with school personnel in the development of appropriate educational programs for their children. To that end, the Shrewsbury Public Schools has established guidelines regarding parents' observations of their child or child's program conducted by themselves, their educational advocate, or an evaluator. The cooperation of school and parent is essential to ensure the safety of children and the integrity of the program while under observation. The district's guidelines for observations of students and programs are as follows:

**Requesting an Observation**

*Parent(s)/Advocates/Evaluators*

- In order for the school district to have verbal or written contact with an educational advocate or evaluator, a "Release of Information" form must be signed by the parent for requests for an advocate or evaluator to observe the student in the classroom.
- A request for an observation shall be made to the school principal either through email, letter, or telephone minimally 3 days in advance of the requested observation date. Principals will immediately notify the teachers involved and determine the appropriateness of the specific date requested.
- Requests for an observation shall include the purpose and desired outcome of the observation.
- Principals should inform parents that their presence might influence the performance of their child that day, as well as the performance of other children.
- The building principal shall notify the Director of Special Education and Pupil Personnel Services of the request to observe.
- Different observation requests may require more planning and observation time than others depending on the complexity of the students needs being evaluated or observed. For example, timely access following a request to observe a specific classroom, which the parties agree, can be achieved in an hour. In other instances, such as when a designee needs to observe the current and proposed programs, including periods of unstructured time to observe student's interactions and responses the observation may take longer to schedule.
- For evaluators, observations may occur at greater frequency to complete an assessment. An evaluator must be credentialed/licensed in the area being evaluated. This will also be scheduled with the Principal or designee.
- There will be periods of time when observations will not be scheduled, such as during MCAS or other district wide testing and during the first two weeks of school and the last two weeks of school.

- The duration and extent of the observation will be determined on an individual basis.

### **Expectations during observations**

- For evaluators, the length of the observation shall be a reasonable time to address the purpose of the observation and desired outcome and shall be limited to an amount of time agreed upon by the evaluator and school principal or designee.
- The number of people scheduled to observe a child or program at one time shall be limited to 2 people and no children may accompany a parent, advocate, or evaluator.
- A staff member will accompany a parent, advocate, or evaluator for the duration of the observation.
- Those observing will be seated in an area that will not disrupt instruction.
- Staff members involved in a classroom observation will welcome observers to the class but will not interact with observers before, during, or immediately after the observation period. Discussion of the observation may take place at subsequent conference. Discussions should last no more than 20-minutes unless a TEAM meeting is being scheduled.
- Those observing shall respect student confidentiality and shall not share any impressions of other students with anyone. Observers will be asked to sign a statement that in the event that they obtain personally identifiable or confidential information during the course of an evaluation/observation, they will not disclose it.
- School safety procedures shall be adhered to at all times.
- Principals retain the authority to exercise their discretion at any time to reschedule or terminate an observation in the event of a building emergency or a disruption that impacts the physical or emotional well-being of the children in the school or the program being observed or when necessary to protect:
  - The safety of the children in the program during the observation;
  - The integrity of the program during the observation; 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.

### **Follow up**

- Depending on the purpose of the observation, staff will schedule a meeting or make telephone contact to follow up on the observation.
- If the parent requests a TEAM meeting and an evaluation was conducted as part of the observation, the evaluator shall provide a written evaluation report to the school district at least 10 days prior to a scheduled team meeting.

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Statement of Confidentiality**

I/we understand that student confidentiality must be respected at all times when observing a classroom, program, or student.

I/we will not share any impressions of other students with anyone.

In the event that personally identifiable or confidential information is obtained during the course of an evaluation/observation, I/we will not disclose it.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Observer

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Observer

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Shrewsbury Representative

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date