



Special Day Program Placement Considerations

When considering an alternative school placement, the following can be helpful as a guide to the IEP team in making the decision and to ensure the placement is most appropriate and is the least restrictive environment (LRE). Many factors go into this decision including how a student's behavior is impacting his/her academic progress, the safety capacity of the current environment, what resources are available for the student, if quality support is able to be sustained, and the impact of severe behaviors on peers.

Alternative Day Program Placement

- Capable of being in a classroom with up to 7 students with 2 staff members for support
- Has ability to participate in large group lecture/discussion
- Has ability to work independently
- Has ability to use technology as part of instructional programming
- Capable to transition from class to class with a small group of peers
- Enrolled in the grades 2nd through 12th
- Has a current IEP documenting the need for behavior interventions/supports as a significant need to be addressed
- Has a history of behaviors that has interfered with his/her education
- Behavioral interventions have been implemented in a special education setting with a less than acceptable rate of success.
- Student benefits from an alternate setting to self regulate their behavior away from peers
- Student behavior is such that safety cannot be consistently maintained within the current environment. Students' behavior is at a significant level in comparison to peers.
- Student does not have a primary diagnosis of intellectually disabled
- Student does not have a primary diagnosis of autism*

Placement Decisions Based on Age and Grade Level

Placement decisions can vary based on the student's age and grade level. These are common reasons a student may be referred. It is important to note that, prior to a day school placement, the IEP team has implemented a plan of progressively more intense and structured strategies through to exhaustion with less than acceptable success to assure a day school placement is the LRE.

- Elementary
 - Violent and aggressive behaviors
 - Classroom non-compliance
 - Severe disruption of educational environment
 - Continued peer aggression or bullying
- Middle
 - Continued classroom disruption usually involving other peers
 - Verbal aggression, threats, or physical harm to others
 - Long-term expulsion/ suspension
 - Continued self-harm causing an exhaustion of resources locally

*A primary diagnosis of autism does not necessarily preclude day school placement; however, if a child with a primary diagnosis of autism requires supports specific to the diagnosis (ie toileting, noise/sensory considerations, functional curriculum, 1:1 staff support, etc), a day school placement would not be appropriate.

- Need for a smaller setting for the student to be successful
- Student is producing a hostile school work environment/ culture
- Wandering hallways (elopement) and continued refusing directions causing safety issues
- High School
 - Students needing a smaller setting to be successful (ie credit recovery, anxiety related to large school environment)
 - Unsafe and disruptive off task behaviors
 - Verbal aggression, threats, or physical harm to others
 - Long-term expulsion/ suspension from school
 - Behaviors requiring close supervision (internet behavior, sexual behavior, etc)

Who Benefits the Most from an Alternative Day School Placement?

Many students can benefit from more individualized care in a smaller setting. However, a day school placement is typically the most restrictive environment within a special education continuum. This means students will miss out on opportunities beneficial to academic and social emotional growth that cannot be replicated in a day school setting. Students likely to benefit the most are:

- Students needing to build a “toolbox” of behavioral and social skills for successful post school life
- Students needing a smaller setting
- Students needing structure and consistency (especially elementary)
- Students needing a chance to establish new peer and adult relationships
- Students presenting a safety concern

Transitioning Out of an Alternative School Placement?

Transition of students is individualized based on various factors. Having the same expectations on each kid does not accommodate each student’s unique needs or reason for placement. Here are some questions to guide consideration of placement.

- What was the reason for the student’s placement?
- What expectation did the sending school have for the student’s behavior?
- What are the students’ needs and what needs are most important for continued success?
- Will the local school supports be adequate for the student to maintain?
- What growth has the student made while being at the placement and for how long?
- What data is available to show success?
- What does the student want for their education?

Key factors in a successful transition to a less restrictive environment:

- Above all, the student must want this transition to happen
- The IEP team should build a plan that will provide the tools he/she needs to be successful
- Most often, a gradual, incremental reintegration provides the highest rate of success
- Teachers and staff must be aware of how best to facilitate this transition
- Positive relationships should be established and prioritized