



**San Mateo County  
Special Education Local Plan Area**

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**POLICY**

**SCHOOL AND CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS  
BY PARENTS AND INDIVIDUALS REPRESENTING PARENTS**

The San Mateo County Special Education Local Plan Area (“SELPA”) recognizes that, from time to time, parents of students attending school within the SELPA will request the opportunity to observe their child’s educational program or a program that has been proposed for their child. It is the policy of the SELPA that all Local Education Agencies (“LEAs”) shall ensure that parents are full and equal participants in the development of an appropriate Individualized Education Program (“IEP”) for their child. Therefore, it is the policy of the SELPA to encourage member LEAs to guarantee parents and their representative(s) a reasonable opportunity to observe their child’s classroom(s) and/or proposed placement.

**Member LEAs shall implement the following procedures for facilitating observations of students and programs:**

1. To the maximum extent possible, parents and parental representatives shall be asked to obtain required observational information in settings outside the classroom environment.
2. Parents and parental representatives shall not be allowed to observe at will and/or with such frequency that such observations actually or arguably create a disruption in the classroom.
3. Observations shall not be used as a means to evaluate a teacher, specialist, paraeducator or other school staff member. In the event that an observer has any concerns regarding the performance of any staff member, such concerns shall not be included in any written report developed by the observer. Concerns shall be directed to the administrator of special education or designee.

**Before the Observation**

1. Observations shall be scheduled in advance and be approved by the LEA special education administrator or designee.
  - a. Under ordinary circumstances, a request to observe a student, or a program proposed for the student, must be made at least five (5) school days in advance of the proposed observation.
2. All requests for observations shall include the reason for the observation, the qualifications and credentials of the person making the observation, the name of the agency with which

the observer is affiliated (if any), and the specific standardized observational measures to be used (if any).

3. Observations are to be for a reasonable period of time, generally limited to one (1) hour, with the start and end times clearly specified to the parent or parental representative prior to the observation.
4. If the observer is not the parent, prior to the parental representative observing a specific student at school, the parent of the student shall provide written consent to the LEA on a SELPA Release of Information form to allow the LEA to share information about the student with the parental representative prior to, during, or subsequent to the observation. The parent shall also provide the LEA with a copy of the observer's curriculum vitae prior to the observation.

### **During the Observation**

1. The observer shall be accompanied at all times during the observation by an LEA staff member selected by the special education administrator or designee
2. The number of observers shall be limited to one (1) per observation, although one (1) parent may accompany the observer during the observation.
3. The observer shall be informed that his/her presence might influence the performance of the student, as well as the performance of other students in the class.
4. The accompanying LEA staff member will seat the observer in an unobtrusive location within the classroom.
5. Individuals requesting the opportunity to observe a student and/or an LEA's educational program shall conform to the policies and procedures of the LEA. The observer shall not interfere with the educational environment of the classroom. If the observer is disruptive or inappropriate, the accompanying LEA staff member will cease the observation, and the observer will be asked to immediately leave the school.
6. The observer will not have access to confidential information regarding students in the classroom (other than the student to which the observation request pertains), including but not limited to grade books, papers, and Individualized Education Plans (IEPs).

### **After the Observation**

1. Immediately following the observation, the accompanying LEA staff member will meet with the observer to discuss the observation for a period not to exceed 15 minutes.
2. The accompanying LEA staff member will ask the observer for a copy of his/her observation notes immediately following the observation.

**Approved by SELPA Governing Board      9/7/10**