

This policy has been temporarily suspended, effective August 19, 2021, until such time as Policy C-19-1250 is no longer in effect.

Community Relations

Visits to the Schools

Classroom Observations

The Board of Education (Board) values and supports collaboration and partnerships between families and schools. The Board, teachers and administrators strongly believe that education is a shared responsibility between parents/guardians and school personnel. It is desired by the Board that families and District schools establish and maintain productive relationships which utilize effective methods of communication and shared decision-making. Strong, trusting relationships between families, schools and the District serve as a foundation for positive and productive educational experiences for all students.

Parents/guardians have an important role to play in the identification, evaluation, and educational placement of their children, and in the development, review, and revisions of the IEPs for their children if their child is being considered for or is currently involved in special education services. This policy and its administrative regulations/procedures for in-school observations have been developed with this principle in mind.

At times, parents/guardians or other connected outside providers may wish to formally observe a specific student in a classroom. As assigned by the Superintendent of Schools, each principal shall be responsible for and have authority over the actions of students, professional and support staff, visitors, and other persons hired to perform specific tasks. To ensure a successful observation, a set of regulations that permit formal observations shall be developed by the Superintendent of Schools or his/her designee.

Guiding Principles

The Board expects that:

1. A process be developed to receive and respond to observation requests in a timely manner. Such process shall include the method of response and person responsible for responding.
2. Requests be reviewed with parents/guardians, and independent evaluators to determine purpose, questions to be addressed, location and length of observation, date and time.
3. After reviewing the request the administration shall determine a reasonable amount of time for an in-school observation. Some observations may require more time than others depending upon the purpose and the complexity of the student's programming. These issues should be addressed and resolved in discussions with the parents/guardians.
4. The District will not arbitrarily limit in-school observations to only one type of setting (e.g., academic classroom). In some cases, it may be appropriate for the observation of the student to occur in a variety of settings (e.g., classroom, lunchroom, recess, etc.). Conversely, it may not be appropriate for the observations to occur in certain settings, such as during individual or group counseling sessions.

Community Relations

Visits to the Schools

Classroom Observations

Guiding Principles (continued)

The Board expects that:

5. The District must balance its obligation to operate and maintain a safe school environment that fosters learning, with the importance of meaningful parental participation. Therefore, the District may place appropriate conditions on observations, such as the examples provided below. These decisions should be made carefully and on an individual basis.
 - a. Schools are responsible for maintaining a safe school environment for students, staff, and visitors. A school building administrator may determine it is necessary to restrict an observation due to safety concerns. If it is decided to restrict an observation, the decision is to be clearly communicated to the parents/guardians with a detailed explanation regarding the reasoning behind the decision. The school staff should work with parents to develop possible solutions to address any issues of concern.
 - i. The District must protect the privacy of student education records and protecting the confidentiality of personally identifiable information collected, maintained, or used pursuant to the IDEA. A school building administrator may determine it is necessary to condition or restrict an observation to protect disclosure by the parents/guardians of confidential or personally identifiable information about other students they may obtain while observing a classroom or program. (School staff can limit exposure to other student's education records by removing such records from view.)
 - ii. It is reasonable to ask parents/guardians to sign a statement that they will not disclose personally identifiable or confidential information about other students who are not the subject of the observation.
 - iii. It is not reasonable for school staff to deny an observation because other students would be present during the observation, or to require a parent/guardian to obtain permission from the parents/guardians of other students in the classroom or program prior to conducting the observation.
 - b. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) protects the privacy of student education records. However, it is inappropriate for school staff to cite FERPA as the sole reason for denying an otherwise reasonable observation request.

Community Relations

Visits to the Schools

Classroom Observations

Guiding Principles (continued)

The Board expects that:

6. The learning environment have limited distractions and disruptions. Any visitor can change the dynamics within a school or classroom whether it be another teacher, the principal, or a parent. The school administrator may determine that it is necessary to condition or restrict an observation based upon a variety of factors including but not limited to: classroom schedules; assessment schedules; and teacher/staff/administrator availability.
7. School administrators work with the classroom teacher(s) and the parents/guardians on how to avoid or minimize disruptions to instructional time and the students' routines. Additionally, school administrators should make parents aware of any additional policies that might apply to the observation as well, such as visitor policies and/or protocols.
8. This observation policy and its administrative regulations/procedures be consistently implemented across all schools within the District.
9. This policy and its administrative regulations/procedures be applied in the same way for students with disabilities, as well as for students without disabilities.
10. When observations requests are declined or restricted, school administrators should provide a detailed explanation to the parents/guardians explaining the reason for the decision and work to develop alternative ways for the parents to obtain the information they are seeking.

(cf. 1110.1 – Parental Involvement)

(cf. 1250 – Visits to the Schools)

(cf. 6159 – Individualized Education Program/Special Education Program)

(cf. 6171 – Special Education)

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes

10-76a Definitions (as amended by PA 06-18)

10-76b State supervision of special education programs and services.
Regulations. (as amended by PA 12-173)

10-76d Duties and powers of Boards of Education to provide special
education programs and services.

10-76ff Procedures for determining if a child requires special education

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Visits to the Schools

Classroom Observations

Legal Reference (continued)

State Board of Education Regulations

34 C.F.R. 300 et seq. Assistance to States for Education of Handicapped Children.

300.14 Special education definitions.

300.340-349 Individualized education programs.

300.502 Independent educational evaluation

300.503 Independent educational assessment.

300.533 Placement procedures.

300.550-556 Least restrictive environment.

P.L. 108-446 The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004

“Guidelines Regarding Independent Educational Evaluations at Public Expense and In-School Observations” issued by the Connecticut State Department of Education, March 27, 2018.

Policy adopted: March 7, 2019
Policy revised: August 19, 2021

NEW FAIRFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS
New Fairfield, Connecticut
*Suspension of Policy until such time as
Policy C-19-1250 is no longer in effect.*

This regulation has been temporarily suspended, effective August 19, 2021, until such time as Policy C-19-1250 is no longer in effect.

Community Relations

Visits to the Schools

Classroom Observations

These regulations apply to observation access requested by the parent/guardian of a student receiving special education services or being evaluated for eligibility of such services, an independent educational evaluator, a qualified professional retained by or on behalf of a parent/guardian or child or from parents/guardians of a child presently not receiving any special education services.

1. Parents/guardian's request to observe their child(ren), current program, or a potential placement must be made at least five days in advance with the building Principal or designee or Special Education Director or designee, as applicable.
2. Reasonable access will be provided to a parent/guardian for the purpose of observing his/her child in the child's current educational placement, services or program; or to visit an educational placement or program proposed by the PPT/IEP Team.
3. If the observer is an independent educational evaluator or a professional retained by or on behalf of a parent/guardian or child, he or she must be afforded reasonable access of sufficient duration and scope for the purpose of conducting an evaluation of the child, the child's performance, the child's current educational program, placement, services, or environment, or any educational program, placement, services, or environment proposed for the child.
4. The building Principal or designee or the Special Education Director or designee, as applicable, shall contact the parent/guardian(s) for an initial scheduling conversation within five (5) days of receipt of the parents'/guardians' request.
5. The building Principal or designee and/or the Special Education Director or designee, as applicable, will work with the classroom teacher and the observer to establish the specifics of the observation, including, but not limited to, scheduling and placement of the observer in the classroom.
6. The number, frequency, and duration of observation periods will be determined on an individual basis in accordance with federal and state law and regulation. The start and end time of observation periods and a schedule of observation periods will be determined in advance. In order to minimize classroom or student disruption, the length of individual observation periods may be limited.
7. If the observer is not the parent/guardian, the parent/guardian must sign a release for the individual to observe.
8. If the visitor/observer is a professional retained by the parent/guardian, such individual must provide identification and credentials to a school administrator before the scheduled observation visit.

Community Relations

Visits to the Schools

Classroom Observations (continued)

9. Parent/guardians or outside providers that disagree with the decision of the building Principal or designee pertaining to the requested observation have the right to challenge the decision with the Superintendent of Schools. The decision of the Superintendent shall be final, subject only to raise an issue in open meeting at a regular session of the Board of Education.
10. The number of observers at any one time may be limited by the building Principal or designee or the Director of Special Education or designee.
11. Observers, as visitors, must comply with:
 - a. School safety, security, and school visitation policies at all times.
 - b. Applicable privacy laws, including those laws protecting the confidentiality of education records such as the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).
 - c. Board Policy #1250, Visits to the Schools.
12. The observer is to be informed that he/she is not to interfere with the educational environment of the classroom. If his/her presence presents a problem, he/she will/may be asked to leave. This notice is particularly important, since the presence of parents/guardians can influence both the performance of their child(ren) and others.
13. The observer, in a special education situation, will be asked to submit his/her report of the observation in advance of any follow-up PPT or related meeting.
14. The observer will be informed that he/she is there to evaluate the appropriateness of a specific educational program to meet the needs of an individual child. He/she is not there to evaluate a teacher's ability to perform his/her contractual job duties.
15. The observer is to be instructed regarding the disclosure of confidential or personally identifiable information related to other children. The observer must acknowledge, before the visit, that he/she is obligated to honor students' confidentiality rights and refrain from any disclosure of such records. Staff must be mindful of removing materials which may be part of students' records from plain view. In the event that removal is not possible, the observer may be asked to sign a non-disclosure agreement.
16. A school administrator, or his/her designee, is to also observe at the same time and take notes as to what is observed, paying particular attention to anything that is non-typical concerning the observation period. This observation summary will be placed in the student's file and provided to the parent/guardian(s) prior to any follow up PPT or related meeting.
17. Formal observation does not include times when parents/guardians are invited to a classroom for a special event or presentation, serve as a volunteer with a teacher, or to have lunch with their student.

Community Relations

Visits to the Schools

Classroom Observations (continued)

18. The school Principal or designee reserves the right to decline any request for a classroom observation if it is determined that such an observation would cause undue disruption of the educational process.
19. Out of respect for the teaching environment, parents/guardians shall not bring younger siblings or children while observing in the classroom or utilize any electronic equipment such as cell phones while in the classroom. (See #20 below)
20. Observers should not disrupt the learning environment by engaging students or the teacher in conversation. A follow-up meeting may be scheduled to answer questions or concerns. Recordings of the observation shall not be permitted absent specific approval by the building Principal or designee.
21. During the observation the building Principal or designee and/or the Director of Special Education or designee may/will be present in the observed setting in order to accommodate follow-up discussion or clarify questions that may arise.
22. A building Principal or designee may deny visitation/observation privileges to any parent/guardian who had previously disrupted class activities or cannot justify a useful purpose of repeated classroom observations.

In-School Observations Conducted by an Independent Evaluator

<i>Note: This section applies only to in-school observations conducted by an independent evaluator as part of a parent/guardian request for an independent educational evaluation (IEE) at public expense.</i>
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1. For most evaluations, it is important for the independent evaluator to understand the student within the context of his or her classroom, and the student's general presentation in school. Some observations conducted by independent evaluators may require more time than others depending upon the purpose and the complexity of the student's programming.
2. When determining the scope of the observation, all parties should be clear about the specific questions that the independent evaluation is attempting to address.
3. The District will not arbitrarily limit in-school observations to only one type of setting (e.g., academic classroom). In some cases, it may be reasonable for an independent evaluator to observe a student in a variety of settings (e.g., classroom, lunchroom, recess, etc.), given his or her IEP goals and objectives. These parameters should be addressed and resolved in discussions with the parents/guardians and the independent evaluator.
4. The District acknowledges that the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) has provided guidance stating that any policy limiting the length of observations conducted by independent evaluators would also have to apply to district personnel and independent evaluators hired by the school district in order for it to be consistent with the IDEA.

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Visits to the Schools

Classroom Observations (continued)

Note: *The IDEA and its implementing regulations do not provide a general entitlement for parents, or third parties, including attorneys or educational advocates, to observe students in their current classrooms or observe proposed educational placements in a public school district. However, the Bureau of Special Education encourages school districts to adopt policies and procedures that allow parents of observe their children in school and proposed placement options.*

Regulation approved: March 7, 2019
Regulation revised: August 19, 2021

NEW FAIRFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS
New Fairfield, Connecticut
*Suspension of Regulation until such time as
Policy C-19-1250 is no longer in effect.*

Parent/Provider Request for Classroom Observation

The New Fairfield School District welcomes visits to our schools and classrooms by parents/guardians, community members, and other interested educators. In addition, we encourage volunteers in our classrooms when opportunities are presented. However, to minimize disruptions to our students' experience in our schools, we have established procedures governing classroom observations.

Parents/guardians or providers will make a written request to the Principal at least **five days** in advance of a requested observation. An administrator or other school staff member (e.g., special educator, team leader, etc.) may accompany the observer for the duration of the observation. Unless there are special circumstances, observations will be limited to one person, one observation per child per month for a period of up to 60 minutes.

Date: _____

Person Making Request: _____

Student: _____ School: _____ Grade: _____

Requested Location and Date of Observation: _____

Reason for Observation (*What specifically would you like to observe?*)

For Outside Agency Providers Only:

Name of Agency: _____

Purpose of the Observation: _____

(*Must provide proof of release of information signed by parent within past 12 months*)

For School District Personnel:

Date of Pre-Conference: _____

Conference Facilitator: _____

Date of Scheduled Observation: _____

Observer Assigned: _____

Date of Post-Conference: _____

Conference Facilitator: _____

Concerns and/or Main Points Discussed? _____

If disapproved, please state reason(s): _____

**Request to Access Classroom(s) or Personnel for Special Education
Evaluation and/or Observation Purposes**

Student Name: _____ DOB: _____

School Attending: _____ Grade: _____

The following information must be completed by individuals requesting to access a school building, facility, and/or educational programs or to interview District personnel or the student named above for the purpose of assessing the student's special education needs. Please complete this form and return it to the Building Principal or Program Director where the student is enrolled. He or she will contact you to coordinate your visit:

Parent/Guardian *(Complete this section if the person making the request is the parent/guardian.)*

Name: _____ Title: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

☐ I am the parent/guardian of the above-named student and wish to observe my child in the following classroom/settings: _____
for the purpose of: _____

☐ I am the parent/guardian of the above-named student and wish to observe the following classroom/settings which have been recommended for my child: _____

for the purpose of: _____

Parent's Independent Evaluator or Other Qualified Professional *(Complete this section if the person making the request is not the parent/guardian.)*

Name: _____ Agency/Company: _____

Phone: _____ Email Address: _____

Address: _____

My professional training and/or licensure or certification, if applicable, is (check all that apply):

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ Teacher, certified in the areas of: _____ | Connecticut certified? ☐ Y ☐ N |
| ☐ Clinical Psychologist | ☐ School Psychologist |
| ☐ Licensed Clinical Social Worker | ☐ Licensed Social Worker |
| ☐ School Social Worker | ☐ Occupational Therapist |
| ☐ Physical Therapist | ☐ Speech/Language Pathologist |
| ☐ Audiologist | ☐ Psychiatrist |
| ☐ Registered Nurse | ☐ Certified School Nurse |
| ☐ Other qualified Professional (list credentials): _____ | |

I have been requested by the above named student's parent/guardian to conduct an evaluation of the student for the purpose of: _____

1250.1
Form B
(continued)

As part of this evaluation, I am requesting the following for the length of time noted (check all that apply):

- ☐ Observation of student in the following classroom(s)/setting(s): _____
_____ Duration: _____
- ☐ Opportunity to interview the following personnel believed to work with the student: _____
_____ Duration: _____
- ☐ Opportunity to interview the student.
- ☐ Student records, as noted in the attached, signed Authorization to Release Student Record Information.

Acknowledgement *(To be completed by the person making the access request.)*

I understand that the School District will allow me reasonable access to the school, school facilities, or educational programs or individual(s) I have requested as related to the purpose of my visit. I have been provided with a copy of Policy #1250.1 and its accompanying Administrative Regulation, and agree to comply with its terms and conditions. I further understand that during my visit, I must honor all students' confidentiality rights and refrain from any re-disclosure of such records.

Individual Requesting Access Signature

Date

Parent/Guardian Verification *(Must be completed whenever an independent evaluator or other qualified professional requests access.)*

I, _____, am the parent/guardian of the above-named student, and I confirm that I have requested an evaluation of my child by the individual named herein, for the stated purpose(s). If requested above, I consent to my child being interviewed by the named evaluator as part of this visit understanding that the District has not conducted a background check on the evaluator. I have no reason to believe the evaluator poses a safety risk to my child or others. I further understand and agree that it is my responsibility to notify the School District in writing if I end my working relationship with the named evaluator prior to the completion of the tasks outlined herein and that the School District otherwise will work with the evaluator to provide reasonable access to the school, school building, school facility, personnel, or my child at mutually agreed upon times and in a manner that is least disruptive to the school setting or my child's academic program.

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date