

Seattle Public Schools Special Education – Change of School Family Guide

Create a path to the right school assignment for your student

Assignment is the specific school a student will attend. **Placement** describes information in your student’s **Individualized Education Program (IEP)** that may affect assignment. As a result, the assignment process begins with a review of placement. This ensures that your student’s assignment supports their individual needs as described in their IEP.

A **Primary Service** type categorizes a student’s placement for the purpose of assignment. Primary Service **Case Managers** manage IEPs, teach specially designed instruction, and coordinate services. This includes working with all school staff to achieve an integrated learning and social experience. A student’s special education teacher is usually their case manager.

1	IEP Placement Factors	2	Primary Service Types	3	Align Placement & Primary Service
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Discuss your student’s placement with their **IEP Team**.

All students receiving **services** have an IEP that describes placement. Placement has three parts:

- **Instruction** describes what the services are.
- **Setting** describes the location of instruction.
- **Intensity** measures how complex services are.

A student’s specific condition or disability may guide placement. This applies to only four areas:

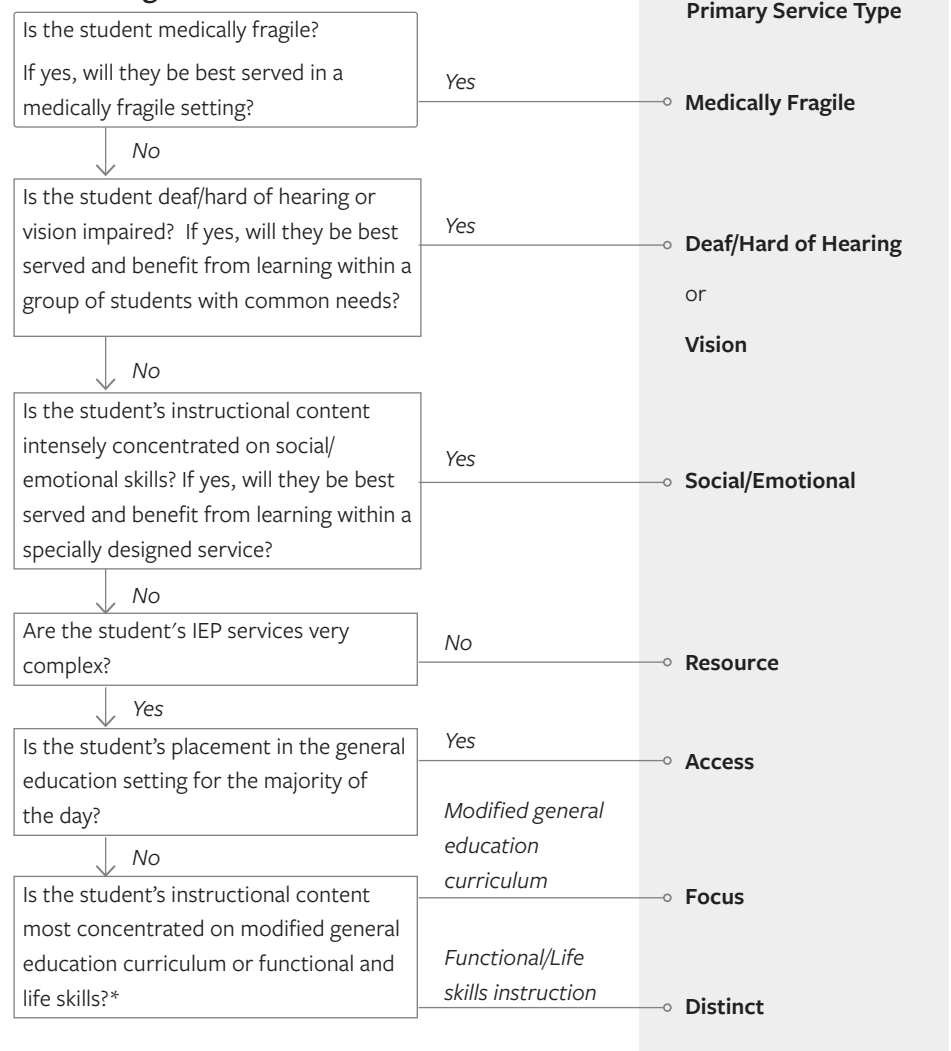
- Students who are **deaf or hard of hearing** may learn within a community of peers.
- Students who are **blind or vision impaired** may learn within a community of peers.
- Students who are **medically fragile** may learn within a specially designed service.
- Students whose services are primarily **social/emotional** may learn within a specially designed service.

All placement decisions are determined by the IEP team, not the District.

Discuss the meaning of **Primary Service** with your student’s IEP Team. Consider how the eight Primary Service types (see definitions on page 4) relate to placement.

Work with your student’s IEP Team to use the alignment flowchart below. This ensures a path to an assignment that will meet your student’s needs.

Service Alignment Flowchart



* At the secondary level, students in existing SM2 service models may continue with that service model if appropriate and selected by the IEP Team.

How the District makes your student’s assignment

Every student is assigned to their designated **attendance area school** first. This school is based on your home address. Most students receiving services will attend this school. In two situations, your student may be assigned to a different school:

- Based on the student’s Primary Service type and grade level, a different school will offer support aligned with your student’s IEP. This is a **modified assignment**.
- The family applies to a preferred school using the **School Choice** process during open enrollment.

4 Standard Assignment

Your student will keep their designated attendance area school if their primary service and grade level are one of the following:

- *Resource* (grades K–12)
- *Access* (grades 6–12)*
- *SM2* (grades 6–12)*
- *Distinct* (grades 6–12)*
- *Social/Emotional* (grades 9–12)*
- Itinerant services for *Deaf/Hard of Hearing* (grades K–12)
- Itinerant services for *Vision* (grades K–12)

This is called a **standard assignment**.

5 SpEd Modified Assignments

The District makes two types of **modified assignments**, to align with students’ IEPs.

Regional assignments occur within multiple locations across the District. This applies to students with Primary Services of:

- *Access* (grades K–5)
- *Focus* (grades K–5)
- *Distinct* (grades K–5)
- *Social/Emotional* (grades K–8)
- *Medically Fragile* (grades K–12)

To the greatest extent possible, regional assignments are made within a student’s Middle School Service Area.

Centralized assignments occur at one location in the District. Applies to students with Primary Services of:

- *Deaf/Hard of Hearing* (grades K–12)
- *Vision* (grades K–12)

6 School Choice (optional)

School Choice is administered by the Admissions Department during open enrollment. It provides families the option to state a school preference.

Families may use School Choice to apply to a preferred school and are responsible for:

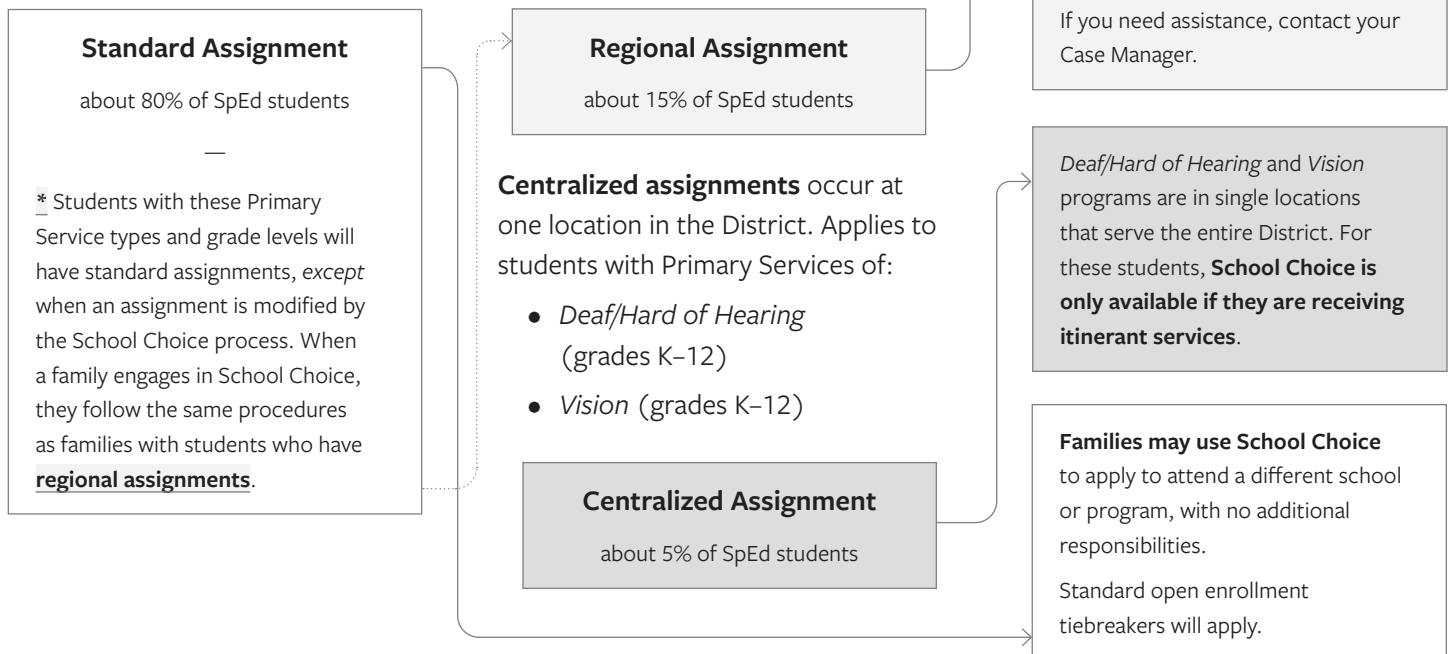
- 1) Reviewing the *Regional Assignment Supplement* form with your Case Manager
- 2) Determining if the preferred school offers their student’s Primary Service by using the **Linked Schools Chart**
- 3) Indicating on the Admissions *School Choice form* that your student receives services

If you need assistance, contact your Case Manager.

Deaf/Hard of Hearing and Vision programs are in single locations that serve the entire District. For these students, **School Choice is only available if they are receiving itinerant services.**

Families may use School Choice to apply to attend a different school or program, with no additional responsibilities.

Standard open enrollment tiebreakers will apply.



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Why do we modify school assignments?

We make assignment changes to offer students aligned services that support their IEP progress. Here are some specific examples of when an assignment may be modified:

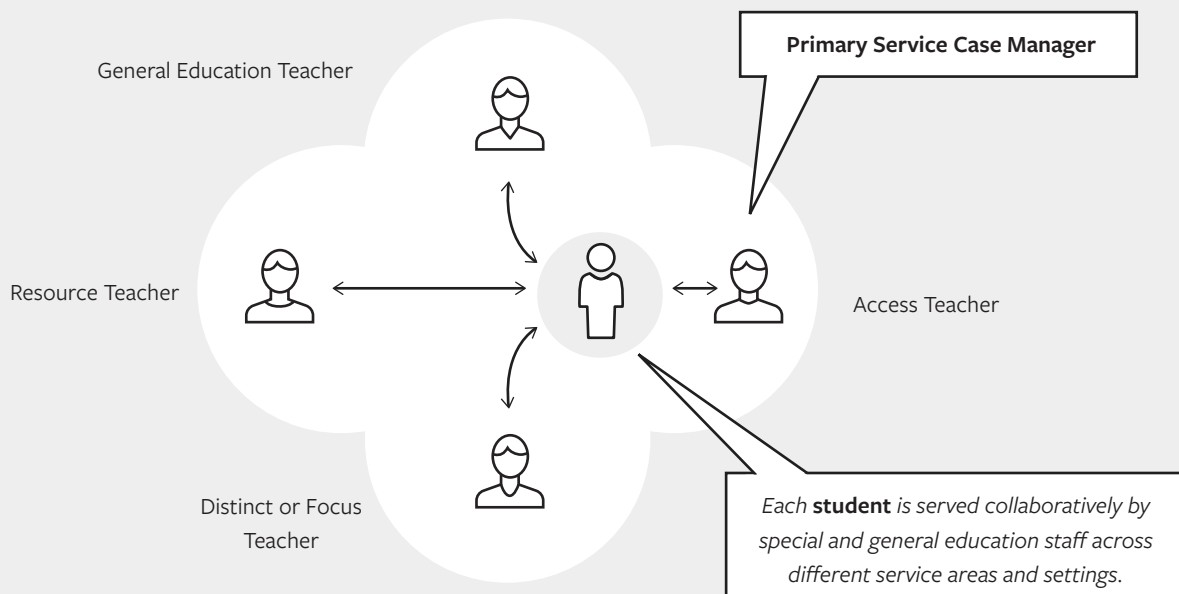
- A student is deaf, has hearing loss, or has visual impairment and prefers to learn within a community of their peers.
- A student with advanced medical needs requires access to specific facilities.
- A student’s IEP Team aligns Primary Service with Placement and that service is not available at the student’s Attendance Area School.

*District-wide, we are building our new **Continuum Approach**.*

This is our delivery structure and teaching approach for special education. This approach benefits all students receiving services but it is especially valuable for students with more complex service needs. Access to Continuum schools and their services are the most common reason we modify assignments.

Continuum Approach	Continuum Schools	Continuum Development
The Continuum Approach supports a highly individual experience for students. Teacher teams span a range of intensity, setting, and instruction. Working together, they increase opportunities for student learning and inclusion by extending learning across a range of settings. Competent, adaptive, and inspired teaching thrives in these conditions.	All Attendance Area Schools at the secondary level currently provide Continuum services. Generally, one or more elementary schools per Middle School Service Area (MSSA) are Continuum Schools. In a Continuum School, special education is delivered through a team-based approach.	Our Continuum Approach developed over time with input from teachers, families, District staff, and the community. It is informed by practical experience and data. We continue to build Continuum Teams District-wide. We are working to refine the Continuum Approach by learning from our challenges and successes, and making changes as needed.

Example: Elementary **Continuum Team** for a student with a Primary Service type of Access



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Please note, this guide contains descriptions and definitions intended for families. As a result, they may vary from more technical or legal definitions.

Definitions

Access Case Managers teach and coordinate a full range of special education within the general education setting for students with more complex service needs.

Assignment is the specific school a student will attend.

An **Attendance Area School** is based on your home address.

Centralized assignments occur at a single location in the District.

A **Case Manager** (or **Primary Service Case Manager**) manages student IEPs, teaches, and coordinates services.

The **Continuum Approach** (or **Continuum**) is the District's delivery structure and teaching approach for special education.

Deaf/Hard of Hearing (DHH) Case Managers teach and coordinate special education for students who are deaf and hard of hearing.

Distinct Case Managers teach and coordinate special education that differs significantly from general education. This may include academic, communication, functional and life skills. Services are frequently delivered within a small group setting.

Elementary schools serve students in grades K–5.

Focus Case Managers teach and coordinate a full range of special education for students with more complex service needs. Services are frequently delivered within a small group setting.

General education describes the standard curriculum taught to all general education students attending Seattle Public Schools. When **modified**, it is delivered differently.

General education setting is any place where general education curriculum is taught.

High schools serve students in grades 9–12.

The **IEP Team** consists of a parent/guardian, special education teacher, general education teacher, and a representative designated by the District. If applicable, the team may also include other providers and/or the student (when appropriate).

Individualized assignments apply to a very small number of students with exceptional circumstances.

An **Individualized Education Program (IEP)** is a written record of a student's services. IEPs are updated annually.

Instruction describes what a student's services are.

Intensity measures how complex a student's services are.

Itinerant services are services that are not housed at the school the student attends.

K–8 schools are schools that serve both elementary (grades K–5) and middle school (grades 6–8) students.

Medically Fragile (Med. Frag.) Case Managers teach and coordinate intensive support for students with medical care needs. Services are frequently delivered within a small group setting.

Middle schools serve students in grades 6–8.

A **Middle School Service Area (MSSA)** is a local area determined by a student's address. MSSA determines the "feeder pattern" students follow from elementary to middle to high school.

A **Modified assignment** is a change from a student's Attendance Area School to a school that will offer supports aligned with their **IEP**.

Placement describes information in your student's **IEP** that may affect **assignment**.

A **Primary Service** categorizes a student's placement for the purpose of case management and assignment.

Regional assignments occur within, or as close to, a student's **Middle School Service Area** as is feasible.

Resource Case Managers teach and coordinate a full range of special education for students with mild to medium service complexity. Services are frequently

delivered within the general education setting.

Secondary schools include middle schools (grades 6–8) and high schools (grades 9–12).

Setting describes the location of a student's special education instruction.

SM2 is an existing service delivery model at secondary schools.

Social/Emotional (SEL) Case Managers teach and coordinate special education to support the development of students' social/emotional skills, function, and understanding. Services are frequently delivered within a small group setting.

Special Education Services may be referred to as **special education** or **services**.

Vision Case Managers teach and coordinate special education for students who are blind and visually impaired.

Resources

The **Admissions Department** administers the assignment process.
206-252-0760
seattleschools.org/admissions

The **Address Lookup Tool** shows the elementary, middle, and high school Attendance Area Schools for your address.
seattleschools.org/address_lookup_tool

The **Linked Schools Chart** provides locations for District services and programs. The Admissions Department updates the chart each school year.
seattleschools.org/linked_schools

School Choice provides families with an annual opportunity to request a different assignment through the Admissions Department.
seattleschools.org/open_enrollment

Up-to-date information on **Change of Schools** for special education students.
seattleschools.org/sped_cos

Special Education Department
206-252-0058
seattleschools.org/special_ed

SPS District Ombudsperson
seattleschools.org/ombudsman