

# **Chalkboard**

By

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Take a moment and ask yourself this question: Does my child do the same things other children his or her age do? Some children need help walking, speaking, seeing, hearing, or learning. The Gentry School District strives to ensure that all children with disabilities have available to them a Free Appropriate Public Education that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for employment and independent living. The district's program is designed so that it is aligned with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). IDEA is federally funded to assist school boards as they guarantee and ensure that all students with special learning needs have access to fair and appropriate education programs.

We currently serve approximately 10% of the total school enrollment in the special education program. Those served exhibit one or more of 13 disabilities identified in a manner consistent with IDEA regulations.

Our school district currently employs a variety of professionals to meet the needs of students with specialized instructional needs. Those professionals include licensed special education teachers, speech/language pathologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, paraprofessionals, counselors, transition and behavior specialists, educational examiners, general education teachers and administrators, psychological examiners, bus drivers, administrators, and office staff. Much of this staff is employed through a special education consortium developed to serve the Gentry, Decatur, Gravette, and Pea Ridge special education programs. Staff members provide direct and indirect services to students who are placed in the special education program. They are also a valuable resource to other professionals providing services to students not enrolled in special education. These consultation supports enhance the educational experience of children with diverse needs.

Students are served in a variety of settings based on their individual needs as identified by an Individual Education Plan (IEP) devised yearly by a team consisting of professionals and the student's parents. Students often are included as part of the IEP Team. Placement options are determined by a continuum based on the placement which will provide the best outcome within the student's least restrictive environment. Services are implemented through speech therapy, resource rooms, self-contained classrooms, and consultation services. Students are also served in classrooms which are co-taught by a general educator and special educator working together to instruct students. The district also has access to Therapeutic Day Treatment classes provided at Ozark Guidance Center in Springdale and Vista Health. The Arkansas School for the Deaf and Arkansas School for the Blind are also available to qualifying students.

For some students related services are required in order for the student to access their educational program. Occupational therapy, physical therapy, specialized transportation, specialized equipment, technology supports, counseling services, school health services, and consultants provided by the Arkansas Department of Education are some of the related services that may be appropriate for the needs of our students.

Funding for special education services is provided by local, state, and federal sources. The district develops a consolidated application for these funds annually. This application includes budgetary information as well as required assurances that the district agrees to implement. Funds appropriated under IDEA are based on a variety of factors including an annual child count of students enrolled in special education programs.

Services are provided to students enrolled in private schools and home school based on individual needs as determined by the district, parents, and private school staff. Meetings are held annually to identify the needs and services which are provided by the school district.

If you feel your child is in need of consideration for special education services and related services, you may contact the Gentry Special Education Office at 479-736-8562.