



## What can you do if your child is struggling?

At Dolores School District we are committed to meeting the needs of all students whether at, above or below grade level. It is our intention to help ensure that each child reaches their full potential. Knowing students progress at different rates, this information is provided as a resource to you. We are truly here to serve you. Here are some steps to take that will help us better understand the needs of your child:

1. Your first step is to ask for a meeting with the teacher. Discuss the areas of concern and seek solutions. The sooner you bring your concerns, the better for your child.
2. If you see that your child is continuing to struggle, don't delay. You may request an appointment with the principal and the teacher. The principal has the ability to speed the process of getting resources to your child.
3. Next, our team will determine which direction is most appropriate. Dolores School District offers several programs for students who are struggling:

### **Literacy Team**

As a result of progress monitoring and collaboration between the kindergarten – fifth grade general education teachers and the Literacy Intervention Team, students who are struggling with phonemic awareness, phonics, spelling, fluency, and other are identified and a literacy intervention is developed to meet each individual child's needs based on reading assessment results. The Literacy Intervention Team (LIT) and the classroom teacher work together to ensure an ideal time that the interventionist can work with your student.

---

### **Interventionists**

In the elementary and the middle school, we have special interventionists on staff. Their specific responsibilities are to assist those students and families who are struggling in any subject area. They are very intent upon finding the best solutions for your child. We recognize that children learn differently and learn at different paces; therefore, we do our best to provide some special help for those students who need it.

---

### **Response to Intervention (RTI)**

Response to Intervention (RTI) is an intervention program that DSD uses to assist students and parents in student success. Once you have brought your concerns, a team is formulated to set up an intervention plan for your child. The plan may address academic and/or behavior concerns along with a supportive plan to help your child. The RTI team normally consists of you, all of your child's teachers, the RTI coordinators, and principal. The team will discuss the issues at hand and come up with a custom program for your child. Parents receive updates and information on their child's progress.

### ***How do you start this process?***

Discuss concerns with the classroom teacher. As always, you are free to contact the principal who can refer you to the aforementioned contacts. Your concerns are of utmost importance to us. Please do not wait.

---

## **Section 504**

### **What is Section 504?**

Section 504 is a part of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 that prohibits discrimination based upon disability. Section 504 is an anti-discrimination, civil rights statute that requires the needs of students with disabilities to be met as adequately as the needs of the non-disabled.

**Section 504 states that:** “No otherwise qualified individual with a disability in the United States, as defined in section 706(8) of this title, shall, solely by reason of her or his disability, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance...” [29 U.S.C. §794(a), 34 C.F.R. §104.4(a)].

### **Who is covered under Section 504?**

To be covered under Section 504, a student must be “qualified” (which roughly equates to being between 3 and 22 years of age, depending on the program, as well as state and federal law, and must have a disability) [34 C.F.R. §104.3(k)(2)].

**Update:** At DSD, to ensure timely monitoring, some students are placed on a 504 as well as an RtI Plan. The 504 Plan Coordinator and the Director of Literacy and Interventions meet to determine which students fit these criteria.

**Elementary:** Amanda Hill, Coordinator

**Secondary:** Justin Schmitt, Coordinator

### **Who is an “individual with a disability”?**

As defined by federal law: “An individual with a disability means any person who: (i) has a mental or physical impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activity; (ii) has a record of such an impairment; or (iii) is regarded as having such an impairment” [34 C.F.R. §104.3(j)(1)].

### **What is “impairment” as used under the Section 504 definition?**

Impairment as used in Section 504 may include any disability, long-term illness, or various disorders that “substantially” reduces or lessens a student’s ability to access learning in the educational setting because of learning-, behavior- or health-related condition. [“It should be emphasized that a physical or mental impairment does not constitute a disability for purposes of Section 504 unless its severity is such that it results in a substantial limitation of one or more major life activities” (Appendix A to Part 104, #3)].

Many students have conditions or disorders that are not readily apparent to others. They may include conditions such as specific learning disabilities, diabetes, epilepsy and allergies.

Hidden disabilities such as low vision, poor hearing, heart disease or chronic illness may not be obvious, but if they substantially limit that child's ability to receive an appropriate education as defined by Section 504, they may be considered to have "impairment" under Section 504 standards. As a result, these students, regardless of their intelligence, will be unable to fully demonstrate their ability or attain educational benefits equal to that of non-disabled students (The Civil Rights of Students with Hidden Disabilities under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973—Pamphlet). The definition does not set forth a list of specific diseases, conditions or disorders that constitute impairments because of the difficulty of ensuring the comprehensiveness of any such list. While the definition of a disabled person also includes specific limitations on what persons are classified as disabled under the regulations, it also specifies that only physical and mental impairments are included, thus "environmental, cultural and economic disadvantage are not in them covered" (Appendix A to Part 104, #3).

### **How Do You Start this Process?**

Request a meeting with the principal. This initial meeting is to discuss your specific concerns and provide direction on securing a meeting for qualification purposes. The principal will then direct you to the 504 Coordinator who will form the qualifying team.

---

### **Tutoring**

Many of our teachers offer before and after school help. If you wish to have your child tutored on an ongoing basis, the rate for this is \$25.00 per hour. Our teachers can voluntarily choose to tutor, or the office can recommend some tutors to you. We **strongly** recommend that all tutors use our curriculum. We have found over the years that students receiving help from outside entities are often further confused by different programs. (Note: If you are unable to afford the tutoring fee, speak to your principal.)

---

### **Gifted and Talented Program**

"Gifted and talented children" mean those persons between the ages of five and twenty-one whose abilities, talents, and potential for accomplishment are so exceptional or developmentally advanced that they require special provisions to meet their educational programming needs. Children under five who are gifted may also be provided with early childhood special educational services. Gifted students include gifted students with disabilities (i.e. twice exceptional) and students with exceptional abilities or potential from all socio-economic and ethnic, cultural populations. Gifted students are capable of high performance, exceptional production, or exceptional learning behavior by virtue of any or a combination of these areas of giftedness:

- General or specific intellectual ability.
- Specific academic aptitude.
- Creative or productive thinking.
- Leadership abilities.
- Visual arts, performing arts, musical or psychomotor abilities.

Students undergo a qualification process before their area of giftedness is determined. The criteria for this is posted online.

Dolores School District has a fully qualified GT coordinator. There are times when students have behavioral or academic struggles due to the fact that they have not been identified as gifted and therefore are not being properly serviced. Please refer to the website for more information and resources available.

---

## **Special Education**

Once the teams have gone through our Response to Intervention programs, and find that your child is still struggling, it may be beneficial to seek evaluation by our special education team. This will be a collective decision based on the interventions and documentations as well as a consent to evaluate signed by parents. We have the following available:

- ❖ Full-time Resource Teachers
- ❖ Physical and Occupational Therapist
- ❖ School Counselor
- ❖ School Psychologist
- ❖ Speech Therapist
- ❖ Trained Reading Specialists
- ❖ Several Paraprofessional Specialists
- ❖ Full-time Registered Nurse

Any of the professionals listed above will be able to help with the special education referral. You may always schedule an appointment with the principal to gain any additional information needed.