

Each school and district is different from each other. Learning how to navigate school systems can be overwhelming. In order to better help your student(s) succeed, it's important to know how to access resources and information from the school.

## Tips & Practices

**Know Your School - each school is unique even though many provide similar services. Because of this, take the time to learn your school's policies and procedures.**

- Introduce yourself to your student's teachers, office staff, and administrators.
- Take time to talk to office staff, teachers, and administrators to understand different school processes.
  - » Ex. Check-in/check-out system for students and visitors.
- Learn how to use the school's enrollment system, apps, and digital platforms.
- Update your information as things change.
- Review the school websites and handbooks for requirements and policies.
  - » Ex. attendance, immunizations, medication, participation in sports, etc.
- Find the school and activities calendar(s) that provide information about important dates and events.
- Attend orientation sessions, open houses, and parent-teacher conferences to stay informed about your child's school environment, expectations, and academic progress.
- Learn about existing opportunities to get involved.

## Understand Educational Terms

- Ask for clarification when an unfamiliar term or acronym is used.
- Commonly Used Terms
  - » IEP/504 Plan - Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and 504 plans, are documents that explain the support and accommodations a student with disabilities will receive to help them succeed in school.
  - » Standards - Educational standards are guidelines that explain what students should know and be able to do in each grade level to help them build skills and knowledge as they move through school.
  - » Assessment
    - ♦ **Formal assessments** are structured tests or activities, like quizzes or standardized exams, that measure how well students are learning based on specific standards or goals.
    - ♦ **Informal assessments** are more casual checks, like class discussions or observing students while they work, to see how they're doing and what they need help with.
  - » Differentiated Instruction - Changing lessons or activities to fit each student's needs and help them learn in the way that works best for them.

## Ask for Help When Needed

- Where to find contact information
  - » School website or mobile app
  - » Main office
  - » School handbook
- Some people you could ask for help might be:
  - » Office Staff
  - » School Counselor
  - » Parent Liaisons/Advocates - PTI Nebraska

- » Translators/Interpreters
- » Behavioral Health Point of Contact
- » Another parent at the school
- Possible resources and services schools often provide/have access to:
  - » Mental Health
  - » Access/Information for food, clothing, hygienic supplies, etc. if needed
  - » Community School Resources
  - » Support Services
  - » Before and after school care and activities
  - » Transportation

### School Emergencies/Safety/Weather

- Nebraska is a local control state, meaning school safety procedures are a local decision. However, NDE makes every effort to instill approaches that should be consistently used across the state of Nebraska:
  - » **Standard Response Protocol (SRP):** A set of 5 responses (HOLD, SECURE, LOCKDOWN, SHELTER, EVACUATE) that schools, law enforcement, and emergency personnel use to respond to threats. These protocols apply in schools and the community.
  - » **Standard Reunification Method (SRM):** A process for reuniting students with their families after a threat or incident, practiced by schools annually.
  - » **Anti-Bullying Program:** Schools must have anti-bullying policies, and families should follow the chain of command for concerns. Serious issues are handled by local law enforcement.
  - » **Safety Drills:** Schools are required to conduct 14 drills, including fire, bus evacuation, and tornado drills. Many also practice HOLD, LOCKDOWN, and SECURE drills to ensure preparedness.
  - » **Resources:** Nebraska's Department of Education offers resources focusing on Prevention, Preparedness, Response, and Recovery for both schools and communities. For more details, visit [Nebraska Safety Resources](#).

## Sample Questions for Families to Ask School Staff

\*Feel free to adapt these questions to better fit your family's needs

- Where can I find information about school processes?
- How can I expect to receive information?
- How do I request an interpreter?
- Could you explain what \_\_\_\_\_ means?
- Could you explain how \_\_\_\_\_ works?
- Could you connect me with another family that has a similar situation to ours?
- I don't have a lot of time, how can I still be engaged with the school?
- What steps are needed to create a Parent-Teacher Association or Organization if the school doesn't already have one?
- I think my child might need an IEP or 504 Plan. Could I meet with the Special Education Coordinator?

## Links to More Information

- [Family Guide to Special Education in Nebraska](#)
- [School, Family, & Community Engagement Framework: Family Version](#)



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