

A Parent's Guide to Choosing Supplemental Educational Services Providers

This guide is designed to help parents understand supplemental educational services and select a provider that meets their children's educational needs.

How do I choose my child's supplemental services provider?

You select a supplemental services provider from a list of providers approved by the NJDOE and given to you by your school district. Approved providers may include schools, after-school programs, community organizations, and commercial companies.

The following questions will help you select the best provider for your child:

- Where are the services provided – at the school, at another building in the community, or by computer? If the services are provided by computer, do I need my own computer and Internet access?
- Is transportation to the services provided? (School districts are not required to provide transportation for supplemental services.)
- How many sessions of services will my child receive and how long will each session last? (If you want your child to receive more sessions than the district can pay for, you will need to pay for those sessions on your own.)
- Will my child be taught by a qualified teacher? If not, will my child's instructor be supervised by a qualified teacher?
- What is the student-to-teacher ratio? (One-to-one tutoring is best. For group instruction, there should be one teacher for every three children.)
- Will my child work with the same instructor each time?
- Does the provider conduct criminal background checks on all employees who come in contact with children?
- Do the materials used in the provider's program cover the same material my child is being taught at school?
- What kind of materials will the provider send home with my child so I can continue to work with him/her at home?
- Are the provider's materials up-to-date? Do the materials contain religious or cultural messages that make me uncomfortable?
- Is the atmosphere at the provider's facility comfortable and inviting to my child?
- What kind of evidence does the provider have that her program has helped other students? Will she provide references from other parents?
- How often will the provider report my child's progress to me and to my child's teacher? Will these reports be phone calls, written reports, or meetings? Will the communications be two-way?
- For children with special needs: Is the provider's facility accessible? Are the materials appropriate for my child's needs?
- For children learning English: Can the instructors communicate with my child? Can my child understand the materials?

As you can see, choosing a provider is not simple. Talk to your child's teacher about what kind of help your child needs and which providers might be best for your child. The decision is yours, but your child's teacher can help you make an informed one.

What can I expect from my child's supplemental services provider?

Once you have chosen a provider, the school district will negotiate a contract with that provider. This contract should include the number of sessions of instruction your child will receive, the length of each session, learning goals for your child and a timetable for reaching those goals. You should get a copy of this information. It is important that you understand how long your child will receive services, the goals for your child, and how the provider plans to meet those goals.

The provider should regularly communicate with you to let you know whether your child is meeting his/her learning goals. If your child is running into problems, the school, the provider, and you should discuss what changes should be made.

What if I'm not satisfied with my child's provider?

You may not feel that your child is making sufficient progress. If that should happen, first try to talk with the provider.

If that doesn't fix the problem, request a conference with your child's teacher and the principal of the school to evaluate the effectiveness of the services your child is receiving. If you conclude the services aren't helping your child reach his/her goals, talk with the principal about what your next steps should be.

If your child is uncomfortable because of a religious or cultural point of view in the provider's instruction or environment, talk to the principal of your child's school or to the school district office.

Your school district is responsible for helping the NJDOE monitor the effectiveness of supplemental service providers, so the district will want to know if there are problems.

