BISONBRIDGE
BEHAVIORAL INSIGHTS

🧩 Understanding Eligibility for Preschool Special Education

📘 What Does Eligibility Mean?

Before your child can receive preschool special education services through the school district, they must be found **eligible** under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, Part B). This means your child:

- **Has a disability** under one of the IDEA categories **and**
- **Needs special education and related services** to make progress in a preschool setting

A diagnosis alone is not enough — the disability must affect educational performance and require specialized instruction.

🔍 The Evaluation Process

- **Referral:** A parent, doctor, or early childhood provider can ask for an evaluation.
- **Parent Consent:** The school must have your written permission to begin testing.
- **Evaluation Team:** Specialists will assess your child's communication, motor skills, social-emotional development, behavior, and more.
- **Observations & Reports:** Information is gathered through testing, observations, and interviews with you.
- **Eligibility Meeting:** You will meet with a team to review results and decide if your child qualifies.

⏰ In Kansas, the process must be completed within **60 school days** of receiving consent.

📋 Categories That May Apply

Kansas uses the federal IDEA disability categories. Preschool-aged children may qualify under:

- Developmental Delay (for children ages 3–9)
- Speech or Language Impairment
- Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Other Health Impairment (such as ADHD)
- Intellectual Disability
- Emotional Disturbance
- Hearing or Visual Impairment

Note: Preschool-aged children typically do not qualify under "Specific Learning Disability" because formal academic instruction has not yet begun. In most cases, Developmental Delay or Speech/Language Impairment are the most common categories.

Remember, a medical diagnosis alone does not guarantee services. The team must show that the disability affects educational progress and that your child needs special education support.

🤝 Your Role as a Parent

You are the expert on your child. You know their story, their strengths, and their challenges better than anyone. The school team brings expertise in developmental milestones, learning, and behavior, but your voice brings the whole picture together.

- Share your concerns, questions, and insights
- Help the team understand your child's strengths and needs
- Ask how and where testing will happen
- You can ask for copies of all reports before the meeting
- You have the right to agree or disagree with the eligibility decision

---

💬 What Other Parents Wish They Knew

- "The evaluation was more play-based than I expected, which helped my child feel comfortable."
- "I didn't realize I could ask questions throughout the whole process."
- "Even though my child didn't qualify, I was given ideas to support them at home."

📝 Parent Reflection Space

Use these questions to prepare for the process and make your voice heard.

- What concerns do I have about how my child learns or behaves?
- What helps my child thrive in daily routines?
- What questions do I want to ask about the evaluation?
- How do I want to feel walking out of the eligibility meeting?

Sources

- Kansas State Department of Education. (2023). *Special Education Process Handbook.* Retrieved from https://www.ksde.org/
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Part B. (2004). Retrieved from https://sites.ed.gov/idea/
- National Association of School Psychologists. (2022). *Preschool Evaluation Best Practices.*

Important Reminder

This guide reflects Kansas-specific procedures for preschool special education eligibility. Always check with your local school district or the Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE) for the most accurate and updated information.