What is Special Education?
Special Education is instruction and services that help eligible children to learn the material and skills that their peers are learning. Special Education is at no cost to the family and is called Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE), which takes place in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) for the student.

Eligibility Requirements
There are two requirements for a child to meet the criteria:
1. Meet the criteria for disability, as defined by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Additionally, New Mexico State Rules allow for an eligibility of Developmental Disabilities (DD) for children ages three to nine.
2. The student needs specialized instruction because of their disability so they can access the general education curriculum.

Process for Evaluation and Services
The steps in the Special Education assessment and services process are as follows. Depending on the student, steps 1 and 2 may happen in reverse order.

Step 1: Referral - The school, parent(s), or guardian(s) can refer the child for special education assessment.

Step 2: Interventions/strategies - Classroom attendance is important. The teacher will try new ways to help the child learn. If there is limited or no improvement, an evaluation may be necessary. If there is improvement, testing may not be necessary.

Step 3: Initial evaluation – This includes information from parents, guardians, teachers, classroom observations, medical diagnoses, and an assessment of the child’s academic and functional abilities by a licensed educational diagnostician. This is done within 60 days of a parent giving permission and is at no cost to the family.

Step 4: Determine if eligible - The school will plan an Eligibility Meeting. At this meeting, the team decides if a child’s education is delayed by a disability. That disability must fall under the IDEA law. The Eligibility Meeting is held within 15 calendar days after testing done.

Step 5: Individual Education Program (IEP) – Developed at a meeting with school and district staff, parents, guardians and when appropriate, the student. The IEP sets goals, services and supports for the child, accommodations and/or modifications, and how to measure growth.

Step 6: IEP implementation - Child receives appropriate teaching and/or services.

Step 7: IEP review & revision – The team meets to see if the child needs a change in teaching and/or services. IEP meetings are held at least once a year for an annual review, however, if a parent or guardian has concerns, they can call a meeting at any time.

Step 8: Reevaluation to determine if eligible – The student is evaluated every 3 years. Team reviews to see if the child is still eligible for services after a reevaluation.

Step 9: Continue or exit from services - If the child is still eligible for special education, the IEP team starts from step 5. If the child is not eligible, they exit from special education and return to general education. Students may still receive interventions in general education.