

**Cambridge Public Schools**  
**Administrative Guidelines on the Observation of Educational Programs**  
**by Parents/Guardians and their Designees for Evaluation Purposes**

**I. Introduction**

The Cambridge Public Schools seeks to insure, consistent with the provisions of federal and state laws and regulations, including the provisions of M.G.L.c. 71B, §3, that parents/guardians can participate fully and effectively within school personnel in consideration and development of appropriate educational programs for their child. The following administrative guidelines set forth the process to be followed when a parent/guardian requests timely access to parent/guardian and parent/guardian designated independent evaluators and educational consultants for observations of a child's current program or any proposed program for the child, including both academic and non-academic components of any such program.

**II. Process for Requesting and Scheduling an Observation of an Educational Program**

1. Parents/Guardians seeking to observe their child(ren), current program or a potential placement must make such a request at least five (5) days in advance. Such request should be directed to the attention of the Executive Director of Special Education or designee, Assistant Director of Special Education and/or the school principal/head of upper school.
2. The Executive Director of Special Education or designee shall contact the parent/guardian for an initial scheduling conversation within five (5) days of receipt of the parent/guardian's request.
3. The Executive Director of Special Education or designee will work with the school principal/head of upper school, classroom teacher(s) and/or specialist(s) and the observer to set up the specifics of the observation, including but not limited to, scheduling and placement of the observer in the classroom. Observations generally will not be scheduled during the first or last week of school or when MCAS or district-wide assessments are being administered within the classroom that is to be observed.
4. The number, frequency and duration of observation periods will be determined on an individual student basis in accordance with law and regulation. The start and end time of observation periods and a schedule of observation periods will be stated in advance. In order to minimize classroom or student disruption, the length of individual observation periods may be limited. As noted in the Massachusetts Elementary and Secondary Education Technical Assistance Advisory SPED 2009-2, "[t]he complexities of the child's need, as well as the program or programs to be

observed, should determine what the observation will entail and what amount of time is needed to complete it.”

5. If the observer is not the parent/guardian of the student, the parent/guardian must sign a release for the individual to observe and to review the student’s student record information if that is to be part of the observation. The attached Observation Release Form should be used for this purpose.
6. The number of observers at any one time may be limited.
7. The observer will be informed that he/she is not to interfere with the educational environment of the classroom. If the observer’s presence presents a problem, he/she will be asked to leave. This notice is particularly important, since the presence of parents/guardians or other unknown individuals in a classroom can influence both the performance of children and others.
8. The observer also will be informed that he/she is there to evaluate the appropriateness of a special education program to meet the needs of an individual child. He/she is not there to evaluate a teacher’s ability to perform his/her contractual job duties.
9. The observer will be instructed regarding the disclosure of confidential or personally identifiable information relating to other children. Staff must be mindful of removing materials which may be part of students’ records from plain view. All observers will be asked to sign a Non-Disclosure Agreement Relating to Student Record Information During Observation or Evaluation of Student. A copy of this form also is attached to these administrative guidelines.
10. A school administrator or designee will accompany the observer at all times and will also observe and take notes of what is observed, paying particular attention to note anything that is non-typical concerning the observation period. This observation summary will be placed in the student’s file and provided to the parents/guardians prior to any follow-up team meeting.
11. Notwithstanding the foregoing, the Cambridge Public Schools, consistent with law and regulation may condition or restrict program observations when necessary to protect the safety of children in the program during the observation and/or the integrity of the program during the observation.

*To be translated into the student's home language*  
**OBSERVATION RELEASE FORM**

I authorize \_\_\_\_\_ of  
Name of Independent Evaluators or Educational Consultants

\_\_\_\_\_  
Business Address of Independent Evaluators or Educational Consultants

to observe my child's current program or any proposed program for my child, including both academic and non-academic components of any such program, and I further authorize the Cambridge Public Schools to provide the above identified independent evaluator or educational consultant with access to my child's current program or proposed program for my child for purposes of this observation. I hereby further authorize the Cambridge Public Schools to release a copy of my child's complete student record and/or information regarding my child's complete student record to the above identified independent evaluator or educational consultant. I further represent that I have authorized to the above identified independent evaluator or educational consultant to receive a copy of the complete student record and/or student record information.

By signing this Authorization for Release of Student Records and granting permission as stated herein, I am releasing the City of Cambridge, the Cambridge School Committee, the Cambridge Public Schools and its individual schools and their respective officers, directors, members, agents and/or employees from and against all claims arising out of the observation of my child's current program or any proposed program for my child by the above identified independent evaluator or educational consultant and the release of my child's student records and/or student record information and any subsequent use of this information by the above identified independent evaluator or educational consultant and his/her respective officers, directors, agents and/or employees.

I have read this Observation Release Form and understand its terms. I sign it voluntarily and with full knowledge of its significance.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Grade

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Birth

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student Signature (if over 16)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Non-Disclosure Agreement Relating to Student Record Information  
During Observation or Evaluation of Student**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, a parent designated independent evaluator and/or educational consultant for \_\_\_\_\_, the parents/guardians of the student, \_\_\_\_\_, acknowledge and agree that I shall fully comply with the provisions of 603 C.M.R. 23.00 et seq., the state's student record regulations, and fully protect the confidentiality of any personally identifiable or confidential information that I obtain during an evaluation or observation of the above referenced student. I further acknowledge and agree that in the event that I obtain personally identifiable or confidential information during an evaluation and/or observation of the above-referenced student that I will not disclose such information to any other party except when such personally identifiable or confidential information is regarding the above-identified student and then I shall only use and disclose such information in a manner consistent with the authority and direction that I receive from the student's parent/guardian.

I have read this Non-Disclosure Agreement Relating to Student Record Information During Observation or Evaluation of Student and understand its terms. I sign it voluntarily and with full knowledge of its significance.

Dated: \_\_\_\_\_