

STARTING POINT SERVICES FOR CHILDREN

The Atlantic and Pacific School, Inc.

1575 McDonald Avenue
Brooklyn, New York 11230

Phone: 718-375-8885

Fax: 718-375-8886

www.spsfc.net



We start by caring...

Handbook for Families of Children Enrolled in SEIT and/or Related Services

*Welcome to Starting Point Services for Children
The Atlantic and Pacific School, Inc.*

This handbook has been written to provide you with information about us and about the things we believe are important to students and their families. Please read it and keep it while your child is a student with us so that you can refer back to it. If you have any questions about the information contained here, don't hesitate to ask us!

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Who We Are...

Starting Point Services for Children/The Atlantic and Pacific School, Inc. (“Starting Point”) is a team of educators, therapists, social workers, administrators and support staff dedicated to providing quality programming to young preschool children and their families. All staff are certified and/or licensed as required by law and are cleared through the New York State Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment, The New York City Department of Investigation and The New York City Department of Education.

Starting Point is approved by the New York State Education Department to provide special education services to children 2.9 to 5.9 years of age. Where applicable, the sites used are licensed by the New York City Department of Health/Division of Day Care.

All of the specialized programs and services that are provided by Starting Point are paid for by the government through Section 4410 of the New York State Education Law and are, therefore, free-of-charge to families.



What We Do...

Starting Point provides educational and therapeutic programs for young preschool students with developmental problems. We offer interventions which are caring, nurturing and designed to bring each student to his/her fullest potential. Our programs and methods are based on current best practices and the philosophy that each child is unique and that all children can learn.

Starting Point Services offers special education programming and therapy through the following formats:

Special Education Itinerant Teacher (SEIT):



In this program, a certified special education teacher travels to the student who may be at home, in a nursery school or day care center or who is brought by his/her parent or caregiver to a designated place, i.e. the library, to meet with the teacher. The teacher provides special education to the child in accordance with that child's Individualized Educational Program (the IEP). The teacher may also consult with the classroom teacher, if the child is enrolled in school, to help the teacher best meet the student's special learning needs.

SEIT services may also be combined with Related Services. These services would also be listed on the child's IEP and could include speech therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy or counseling, according to the child's individual needs. The providers of related services also travel to see the child. Related Service providers assigned to your child may or may not be employees of Starting Point.

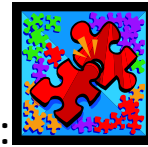
When SEIT services are combined with Related Services, it is the SEIT teacher who is designated as the "case coordinator". It is the case coordinator's responsibility to ensure that there is coordination among the professionals assigned to the child and that each aspect of the child's program is integrated into the total plan for the child. If related services are recommended on your child's IEP, Starting Point's SEIT teacher will coordinate those services even if the related service provider works for another agency.



A child-centered approach to learning:

Starting Point embraces a "child-centered" approach to learning. We begin where the child is and work with the child's strengths and interests. We believe that children are agents of their own learning and that we as teachers and therapists structure and engineer the learning environment to facilitate children's efforts to explore, organize and make sense of their world. Our approach is developmental. We want preschool children to learn what is appropriate to their age: how to use their senses and move their hands and bodies for learning; how to communicate and get along with others; how to gain control and focus on learning; how to be increasingly independent. We agree with early childhood education experts that a developmentally appropriate approach that focuses on basic skills will provide the foundation on which to build academic skills later on in childhood. We design the

curriculum and activities so that children can work toward mastery of the New York State Learning Standards for all preschool children and the New York City Department of Education's Pre-Kindergarten Performance Indicators. Starting Point wants all of our students to have the skills and knowledge they will need for success in kindergarten and beyond. We also know that young children are active learners; that it is important for them to explore their world through observing, listening, moving, touching, tasting, smelling and making "things" happen. We encourage a lot of movement and activity in our learning opportunities and use play as a primary medium for teaching skills.



Related Services...another part of the puzzle:

In addition to special education, your child's IEP may require that other services be given to your child. These could include:



Speech Therapy: This service focuses on a child's ability to communicate. Many children may be slow to learn words, the rules for making sentences, the way to make the sounds of speech or even that talking is something that people can and should do. Sometimes, medical conditions or birth defects impair a child's ability to learn to use language. The speech therapist is specially trained to deal with these problems. S/he can also give special help to children who are having problems learning to eat because of physical deformities or impairment in the processing of sensation in the mouth. S/he can also help children who have problems such as stuttering.



Physical Therapy: Physical therapists help children learn to use their bodies to move, both for getting around in the environment, and to perform all of the wonderful activities of life. Many children are born with, or develop problems, with the growth and strength of their bones, muscles and ligaments and/or have problems with equilibrium and balance. Some children are slow to develop movement skills. The physical therapist can offer special help to all of these children.



Occupational Therapy: These specialists focus on the "fine" motor movements that children must learn to make in order to perform the functions of daily life. With pre-school-aged children these therapists often are devoted to the development of hand skills so children can be independent in activities of daily life, such as dressing and eating and also so they can engage in pre-writing and other activities that involve the use of the eyes in coordination with the hands. Occupational therapists also help children gain control over larger muscles and parts of the body or develop balance and equilibrium (like physical therapists) so that they then can learn to use "smaller" muscles and movements more accurately and with precision.

A special area of concern for occupational therapists is what is called sensory impairment. Sometimes children cannot use the information they gain from their five senses to understand the world and to learn as we do. The occupational therapist will design a specific program to help develop more normal sensory processing in these children.



Counseling: This is a service that can be provided by an appropriately certified and trained social worker, guidance counselor or psychologist. This service aims to help reduce struggles that the child may be having emotionally, socially or with controlling him/herself. Often these problems are seen in the classroom in the form of “acting-out” behaviors, inability or difficulty paying attention, trouble playing with other children, difficulty in enjoying school and developing and maintaining relationships with others. The professional will work closely with families around these difficulties as he/she works with the child.



How Related Services are provided:

Children can receive therapy in a number of different ways according to their needs and the requirements of the IEP. Many children are seen on a one-to-one basis with the therapist while others are seen in small groups of two or three children. Some children have a combination of individual time with the therapist and a session in a small group. Depending on what the IEP states and in conjunction with the teacher, a therapist may decide to use the routines and activities of the classroom to help a child build skills during the actual activities in which he/she needs them. Other times, a therapist may work with a child in another area and use different activities than what is occurring in the classroom. The carry-over of skills to “real” routines is then done in conjunction with the classroom teacher.

Therapy is portable. It can be done, for example, on a playground, class trip or a walk in the community as well as in a classroom or special treatment room.



Parents and therapy:

Parents and caregivers are encouraged to get to know their child’s therapist and to see their children in therapy. If your child is being seen for therapy at a school or day care center, remember that visits are always welcomed as are phone calls and notes.

Therapists want to know from you what you would like your child to learn as well as your concerns about your child. Parents and therapists together should decide what will be worked on in therapy and what you can do at home to help, given the goals and objectives outlined on your child’s IEP.



Services in Your Home:

The home is a wonderful setting to have an educational or therapy session. The best part about it is that the teacher or therapist can help the child learn skills needed for everyday living with the family. Oftentimes, children with learning problems have difficulty doing the normal routines and activities of family life. You should discuss any such problems with your teacher or therapist. He/she can help your child learn skills in the context of your home and with familiar people and objects.

Teachers and therapists also come prepared to do certain activities with your child and may bring materials with them or ask you to have some things on hand when they arrive. If you are in the home when the teacher or therapist is there, you should observe and take part in the sessions, if possible. Be sure to ask the teacher or therapist for things to do with your child to practice the skills he/she is learning.

We are often asked about siblings and what is best regarding their presence during SEIT or Related Service sessions. It may be possible for siblings to participate in sessions under certain conditions. However, this must be at the discretion of the teacher or therapist. If siblings are not participating, every effort should be made by the family to have brothers and sisters occupied elsewhere. Please do not put the professional in the position of caretaking brothers and sisters.

We also request that you not ask our professionals to perform any errands not related to the delivery of the service.

Please try to remember that our professionals are usually on a schedule for the day and have other children and families to see. We ask that you or a responsible adult be in your home with your child at the appointment time and present in the home for the entire session. The teacher or therapist may not have any “extra time” to discuss issues in detail beyond the session time. If you need to have a meeting with the therapist or teacher beyond the session time, by all means discuss that with her/him. Arrangements can be made to give you the time you need without taking away from your child’s session or that of another child.

Please do not offer your home for uses other than those that might be necessary for the professional to have a productive session with your child. You need feel no obligation to provide refreshments, use of your phone or other amenities.



Attendance:

Regular participation in educational and therapy activities is very important to your child's learning. If your child has to miss school or home sessions you must notify Starting Point immediately. We must know the reason for your child's absences or cancellations. By law, unexplained and/or illegal absences can cause your child to be terminated from all programming. If you don't call us, we will call you!

If your child misses five consecutive SEIT sessions and we do not know why, Starting Point is required to contact your child's school district. The district will decide if your child remains with us or is discharged. If your child is discharged s/he cannot return to school without the district's permission.

Your child may be absent from sessions for many different "legal" reasons. If your child's absences are legal and we know what those reasons are, your child's enrollment will not be jeopardized.

The "legal" reasons for absence are:

- Illness;
- Medical appointments;
- Hospitalization;
- Religious observance;
- Transportation problems;
- Severe weather;
- Death in the family (limited to 5 days);
- Your inability to prepare your child for SEIT sessions because you are sick and there is no other adult in the household who can get your child ready (limited to twice a term).

Your child may miss sessions/school for other reasons, which are not considered legal. These illegal absences could result in the NYC Department of Education discharging your child from Starting Point. Examples of Illegal reasons are:

- Family vacations;
- Visits to relatives;
- Frequent (more than 2 times a term) inability to prepare your child for school/sessions because you are sick/overslept.

We give each family a calendar which shows the days Starting Point is closed while we take holidays and vacations. Please plan your own trips, vacations and special events accordingly. We want to make sure that your child does not risk placement at Starting Point due to illegal absences. Please contact us if you have any questions about attendance issues.



Illness:

We request that you call your child's teacher to inform us if your child is ill and cannot participate with the SEIT teacher. If related services are provided by Starting Point, please call us as soon as you know that your child is sick and unable to attend his or her session. Following are some guidelines to help you decide when to cancel SEIT or therapy sessions and keep your child at home to get better. The New York City Department of Health requests that children stay home from school if they show any of the following symptoms:

- Fever over 100° F. Your child should be fever-free for 24 hours before returning to school;
- Severe coughing or trouble breathing;
- Thick nasal drainage;
- Conjunctivitis;
- Spots or rashes;
- Infected skin patches;
- Diarrhea or vomiting. Your child should be well for 24 hours before returning to school;
- Headache and/or stiff neck;
- Loss of appetite;
- Sore throat or trouble swallowing;
- Change in behavior.

We advise you to consult your doctor should your child experience any of these symptoms and to cancel home sessions with the SEIT teacher and/or therapist. Please inform us if your doctor makes a specific diagnosis and/or places your child on medication. We may ask you to provide a doctor's note before your child returns to school or we begin home sessions again.



Health and Safety

Physical well-being is of vital importance to development and learning. Therefore, we ask your cooperation with the rules we have established for the health and safety of all of our students.



Medical Form and Immunizations:

If your child attends a nursery school or day care program, The New York City Department of Health requires that all students have a completed, dated and signed medical form and immunization record on file with this agency prior to the first date of attendance. A new medical examination and updated immunizations are required yearly. You will be notified when the annual medical is due. Failure to provide a medical will delay your child's entrance to a program and may cause a disruption of service when the annual medical is due.



Medical Alerts, Medications and Medical Procedures:

Please inform us of any special medical conditions that your child may have, including asthma, allergies, seizures, heart condition, etc. We want to be able to plan appropriately for your child. Information regarding your child's health can be enormously important in selecting activities for child. Please also inform us of any medications your child is on, or may begin to take, over the course of the year. Some medications can have an effect on the child's alertness, behavior, appetite and mood. Prior knowledge can help us monitor your child's reaction and understand his/her behavior while we work with him/her.

Under New York State law, no member of our staff may administer medications of any type, including over-the-counter medicines. They also cannot provide any other medically-oriented procedures, i.e., tube-feeding, catheterization, inhalation therapy, etc. Medications and medical procedures must be administered by a registered nurse; Starting Point is not funded to have a nurse on staff.



Accidents at home:

We ask you to let us know if your child has gotten hurt at home or elsewhere and the accident has left a scratch, bruise or bump. We want to be partners with you in looking out for your child's safety and health. Should your child sustain an injury at home that requires medical attention, we may ask you for a doctor's note "clearing" the child for all educational and therapy activities.



Child Protection:

All Starting Point staff members are required by New York State law to report the suspicion of child abuse or neglect. Starting Point cooperates with all Child Protection authorities. We will work cooperatively and supportively with families as is allowable and feasible in each instance.

Parents and Caregivers as Partners...



We believe deeply that we are here to help you help your child. We have knowledge and expertise to share but you know your child best. We want our program to be meaningful and relevant to you and to your child as a member of your family and culture. We'll need your help to do this.

Communication is vital. We need to talk to you on a regular basis and we want you to talk to us. You may take as active a roll in your child's education as your responsibilities, life-style and abilities allow you. We want always to be inviting and including you and also to follow your lead.

Do not hesitate to participate in your child's sessions, talk to all the professionals on your child's team and contact administrative staff.

All of our professionals are dedicated to the well-being, growth and development of the children in their care. There are times, however, when a well-meaning professional may say or do something that is not in line with a parent's wishes or is confusing or upsetting to the parent. We ask that you make these feelings known to the professional and/or administrative staff at Starting Point. It is YOU who must be comfortable and confident in the people who work with your child. We want to know if there is something that we can do better; we want to help if problems arise. Please don't hesitate to talk over your concerns with the professional involved or with us at the administrative offices.



Progress Reports:

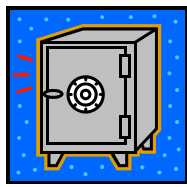
Four times a year, teachers and therapists must update you on the progress your child is making toward achieving the goals on his/her IEP. You will receive a copy of each progress report. You can always request an individual conference with your child's SEIT teacher regarding these reports.

Professionals are also required to provide reports to you and to your child's school district should an annual or requested CPSE review of your child's IEP be scheduled. CPSE reviews must occur annually, but can also be requested by you, the CPSE, or Starting Point staff at any time should your child's placement and program need to be reviewed. As appropriate, your child's teacher and/or therapists are also required at these times to provide drafts of new goals and objectives for your child's IEP.



Cultural Diversity:

At Starting Point we celebrate cultural diversity. Our educational and therapy activities can and do include celebration of special days and holidays of the various cultures our students represent, i.e., Cinco de Mayo, Purim, Halloween, Eid ul-Fitr, Chinese New Year, as well as those important to the American tradition such as Thanksgiving, Columbus Day or Martin Luther King Day. If you would like us to celebrate a special day related to your culture, we would love suggestions for activities to incorporate in our sessions with you and your child as much as may be possible.



Confidentiality:

The information you have given us about your child and your family is held highly confidential by law. Starting Point adheres to all legal and regulatory statutes regarding confidentiality. No staff person may provide identifying information about your child or his/her history, development, family, learning, etc. with anyone outside of Starting Point Services without your written consent. If your child is receiving SEIT or Related Services in a school or day care center, you will be asked to provide written consent so that we may discuss your child and his/her progress with classroom staff and the administrators of the school or center, as needed.

Starting Point will send you notification of your rights annually. If you have any questions or concerns about confidentiality at any time, please do not hesitate to call us.

In conclusion, let us say again, “Welcome to Starting Point!” We are very happy to have the opportunity to work with you on behalf of your child. We hope you and your child have a positive, successful experience with us.

