

Questions for Families to Ask Supplemental Educational Service (SES) Providers

The Supplemental Educational Service (SES) program offers families a chance to get their children extra academic help in reading and mathematics. If you are trying to choose an SES provider, the following questions may help you pick the best SES provider for your child.

You should feel good about the provider you pick to help your child. Ask providers the questions below. Their answers should leave you feeling that the provider:

- Knows how to help children do better in school;
- Will treat your child as an individual;
- Will take the time to answer your questions and share information with you and your child's teacher;
- Will take the time to build a relationship with your child to help her grow more confident as a learner.

Where are the tutoring services provided?

Services may be offered in a variety of settings including schools, libraries, provider offices, family homes, community centers and places of worship. Many providers will offer "hands on" tutoring by trained instructors. Others may offer internet-based instruction that students can access through a computer at home, in a school or in a community center. Make sure you and your child are comfortable with the location.

Will you as a provider provide transportation for my child?

Neither providers nor the school district are responsible for transporting students to a tutoring service. If the provider does not supply transportation you will need to make plans to get your child to and from the tutoring sessions.

When do you offer tutoring services?

Students can receive supplemental services anytime outside of the regular school day. After school is the most common time for SES, but it could also be offered before school, on weekends, or during the summer. Make sure the services are scheduled at a time that works for you and your family so that your child will be able to attend regularly.

How often and for how long will my child be tutored?

This can vary from every day to a few times a week. The hourly cost of the tutoring program often determines how many sessions your child will receive. Make sure you know how many sessions your child will receive and how long each session will last. Research shows that tutoring helps students most when it is provided over a long period of time as opposed to only a few weeks.

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Will my child be tutored in a group or worked with one-on-one? If my child is in a group, how many students will each tutor have?

Providers offer different types of instruction. Some tutors work with small groups of student, while other offer one-on-one instruction or teach through computer programs. Other providers use a combination of these approaches. Be sure to choose a provider who offers instruction in a way that you feel works best for your child. Generally, the fewer students a tutor has to work with, the better.

What is your track record in raising student achievement?

Experienced providers keep records about how well students do in the program or in school as a result of receiving tutoring service. New providers should be able to explain how they plan to gather information that shows they've been effective. Ask the provider to give you written information about:

- Satisfaction surveys of students or parent
- Improved classroom grade
- Improved attendance rates
- Better homework completion
- Written testimony by parents or teachers.

Who will be instructing my child? What are their qualifications?

Ask about the backgrounds and qualifications of staff who will be working with your child:

- Do they have experience teaching reading or mathematics?
- Do they have experience working with children who are struggling in school?
- What training do tutors receive to prepare them to tutor children?
- Do tutors have a teaching license?
- Have tutors taken college classes in education?

SES providers are not required to hire certified teachers. However, you should be confident that each instructor's level of experience and knowledge has prepared him to help your child improved academically.

Do instructors speak language other than English?

If you child's first language is not English, ask whether the provider can offer services in your child's first language.

Can you adapt your tutoring to meet my child's learning style?

Take the time to tell the provider how your child learns best or about problems she may have faced in the classroom. You should get the feeling that the provider is willing to listen to you, be flexible with your child, and be competent to meet your child's learning needs.

Can you meet the learning needs of students with disabilities?

If you child has disabilities, be sure that the provider can accommodate those disabilities. Ask if the provider currently works with students who have similar disabilities. If there are not providers able to serve students with disabilities, your school district must provide the services. Your child's SES program may not discriminate against your child and all services provided should be consistent with your child's individualized educational program (IEP) or specialized services under Section 504. SES is an addition to, not replacement for, the instruction and services required under IDEA and Section 504.

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How will you determine what my child's academic needs are?

Once you choose a provider, the provider is required to establish learning goals for your child in a meeting with you. The school district must approve your child's learning plan. The learning goals must meet each student's academic needs. Ask how the provider will develop a plan for instruction and decide whether this method would work for your child.

How will you keep me informed of my child's progress?

Providers are required to report back to you, your child's school, and the district about your child's progress. Find out how the provider will measure progress and report this information to you. Also ask how often you will get this information and how it will be delivered to you. Make sure your child's progress will be measured in a way that is clear and useful to you. If the provider will report on your child's progress in writing, ask for a sample progress report to get a clearer picture of how this process would work. Providers should be able to inform parents how well their child is doing anytime parents want to know.

What happens if my child is not making progress?

Be sure to ask what procedures are in place if your child does not show improvement after working with the provider. Ask the school district if and when you can switch to another provider. If you are unhappy with a provider's services, be sure to provide feedback to the district and state to help them monitor the provider. Some providers offer a guarantee of improved student performance. Ask if the program offers such a guarantee and find out what happens if a guarantee is not met.

Adapted from www.tutorsforkids.org/basics.asp a service of the Supplemental Educational Services Quality Center.