



Dear Parents and Caretakers,

Although family constellations vary from house to house, the strongest common thread that runs through them all is concern for children and their health, happiness, and success. Approximately 10% of the students in the San Mateo County schools find success a bit more challenging because of special educational needs. The Resource Parent Council (RPC) for our SELPA has prepared this handbook as your guide through the maze that the special education process often seems to be. Your district's RPC representative is someone you should get to know soon. They are specially trained and available to answer your questions or concerns. You are also more than welcome to join the RPC for any of our informational meetings. The RPC meets three times a year for training on a particular issue, maintaining an informative website ([www.](http://www.)), and offering trainings by the SELPA Program Coordinator on a variety of topics.

SELPA stands for Special Education Local Plan Area. California is divided into 130 SELPA offices. The San Mateo County SELPA consists of 28 school districts and the County Office of Education. The SELPA is advisory to school teaching and administrative staff, parents, and community agencies serving students with special educational needs. The SELPA oversees San Mateo County's continuum of programs and services for disabled individuals from birth through 21 years of age.

As someone who wants to be an effective advocate for your child, it can often seem overwhelming; there is just so much to know! The procedures can be confusing, it can often seem you are not quite fully informed about available resources for your child, and

what you read and hear can often be contradictory. It is our hope that this handbook will guide you in sorting through the maze of terms, federal and state laws, and services and resources available so that you can be an active participant in your child's Individualized Education Plan (IEP) Team. You don't have to go it alone- we encourage you to join other parents within the Resource Parent Council and your district's Special Education District Advisory Council (SEDAC), and to visit the RPC website to get started in making these contacts.

The San Mateo County SELPA Resource Parent Council