

Questions for Families To Ask SES Providers

The SES program offers families a chance to get their children extra academic help and individual instruction they need. Generally, your child is eligible for SES if he/she receives free or reduced-price lunch and attends a Title I school that has not made adequate yearly progress for at least three years. Your school district is required to contact you to let you know that your child is eligible for SES and provide you with information about providers in your area.

If you are trying to choose an SES provider, you can ask the following questions to help you pick the best SES provider for your child.

Who is the local contact person for the provider?

Your district should be able to provide you with this contact information. You would likely contact this person first with questions or concerns about the services of the provider you choose.

Where does the provider offer services?

Providers may offer services in a variety of settings, including:

- Schools.
- Public libraries.
- Provider offices.
- Family homes.
- Community centers.
- 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 a community center. Make sure you and your child are comfortable with the location.

If your child will need transportation to the provider, ask whether transportation will be offered. If no transportation will be offered, make plans to get your child to and from the tutoring sessions.

When does the provider offer services?

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

How often and how long will my child receive tutoring?

This can vary, from everyday to a few times a week. Make sure you know how many sessions the provider will offer, and how long those sessions will continue.

How are students grouped during tutoring?

Providers offer different types of instruction. Some providers tutor small groups of students at a time, while others offer one-on-one instruction or teach through computer programs. Other programs may use a combination of these approaches. Be sure to choose a provider that offers instruction in way that will work best for your child.

What is the provider's track record in raising student achievement?

To get on the state list, providers must be able to demonstrate that they have a track record of raising student achievement in academic subjects, such as reading and math. Be sure to find out whether the provider has a successful track record of working with students whose needs are similar to your child's needs.

Look for evidence in the form of:

- Results on tests developed by the provider, state or district.
- Satisfaction surveys of students or parents.
- Improved classroom grades.
- 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 that will be working with your child.

- Do they have experience teaching reading or math?
- Do they have experience working with children who were struggling in school?

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

What subject areas do your services address?

If your child is having trouble in a specific subject area, such as reading or math, make sure that the provider you choose offers services focused on that subject area.

Can instructors speak languages other than English?

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

Can the provider meet the learning needs of students with disabilities?

If your child has disabilities, be sure that the providers you are interested in can accommodate those disabilities. Your state or district should be able to tell you this. Additionally, you may contact the provider directly to find out what specific services are offered to meet your child's learning needs and to ask if the provider currently works with students who have similar disabilities. If there are no other providers able to serve students with disabilities in your district, your school district must provide the services (either directly or through a contractor). 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. Supplemental services are in addition to, not a substitute for, the instruction and services required under IDEA and Section 504.

Does the provider measure student needs?

Many programs will measure student needs and develop a plan for instruction that meets these needs. Find out whether the program you are considering offers this service. If they do not, ask how the provider will develop a plan for instruction and determine whether this method would work for your child.

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

Once you choose a provider, the provider is required to establish goals for your child in a meeting with you, your district, and your child's teacher or principal. Providers are also required to report back to you, your child's school, and the district about your child's progress towards these goals. Find out how the provider will measure progress and report this information to you. Also ask how often you should expect to get this information. Make sure your child's progress will be measured in a way that will be clear and useful for you. If the provider will report on your child's progress in writing, you can ask for a sample progress report to get a clearer picture of how this process would work.

What happens if I choose a provider, but it does not help my child?

Be sure to ask what procedures are in place if your child does not show improvement after working with a provider. Ask the program and your 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 may offer guarantees of improved student performance. Ask if the program offers such a guarantee and find out what happens if the guarantee is not met.

What if my child is eligible for SES, but is already enrolled in an afterschool program?

Find out if the afterschool program is an SES provider. Many afterschool programs are also SES providers. This means that the program might offer a combination of academic tutoring and other enrichment activities, such as sports, theater or art.

If your child is enrolled in an afterschool program that is not an SES provider, encourage the provider to apply to the state for approval.