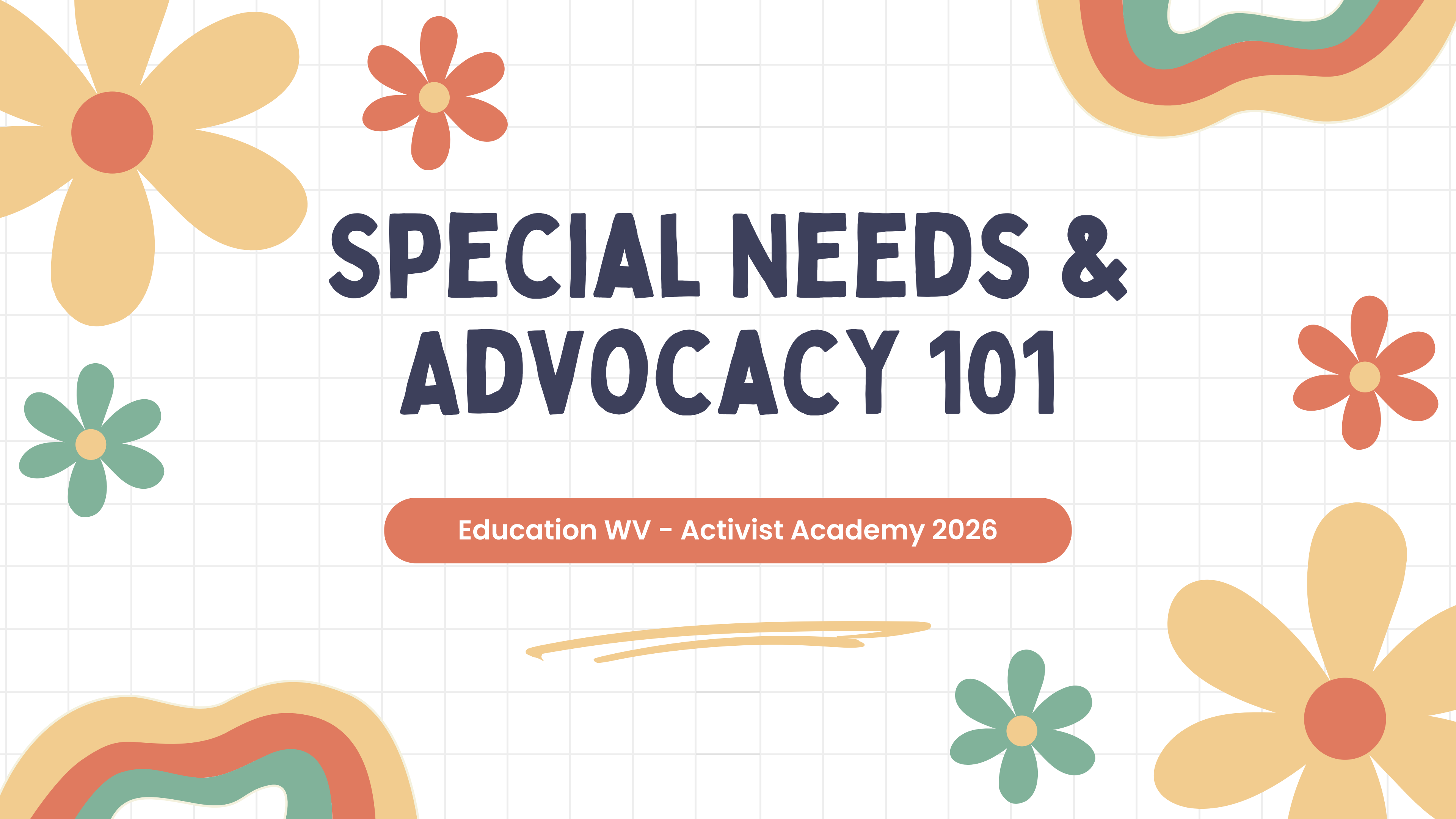
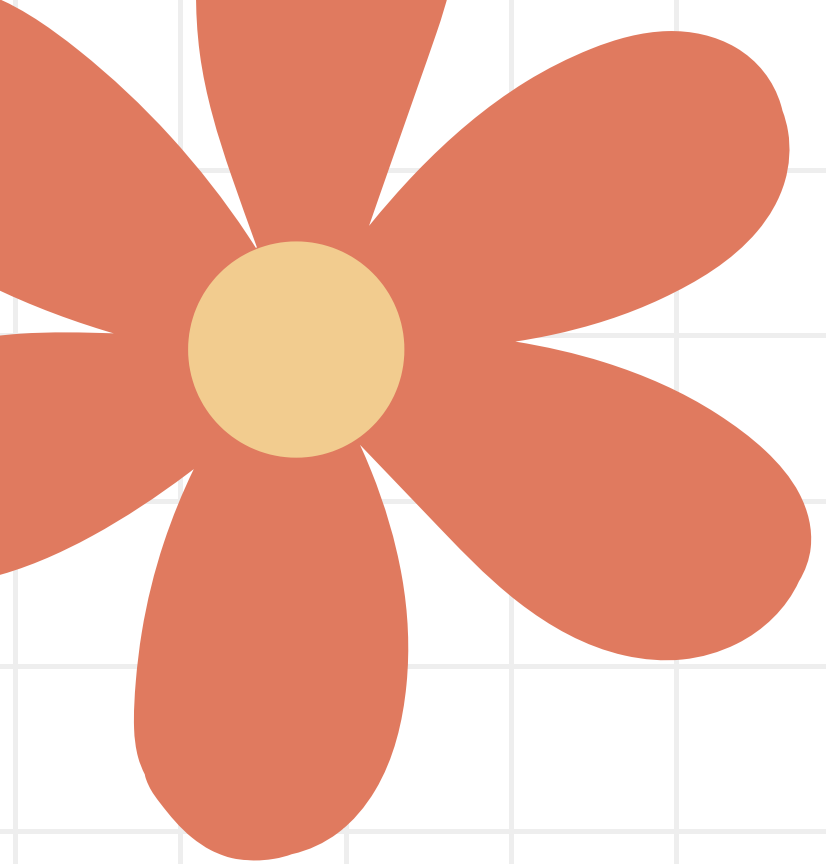


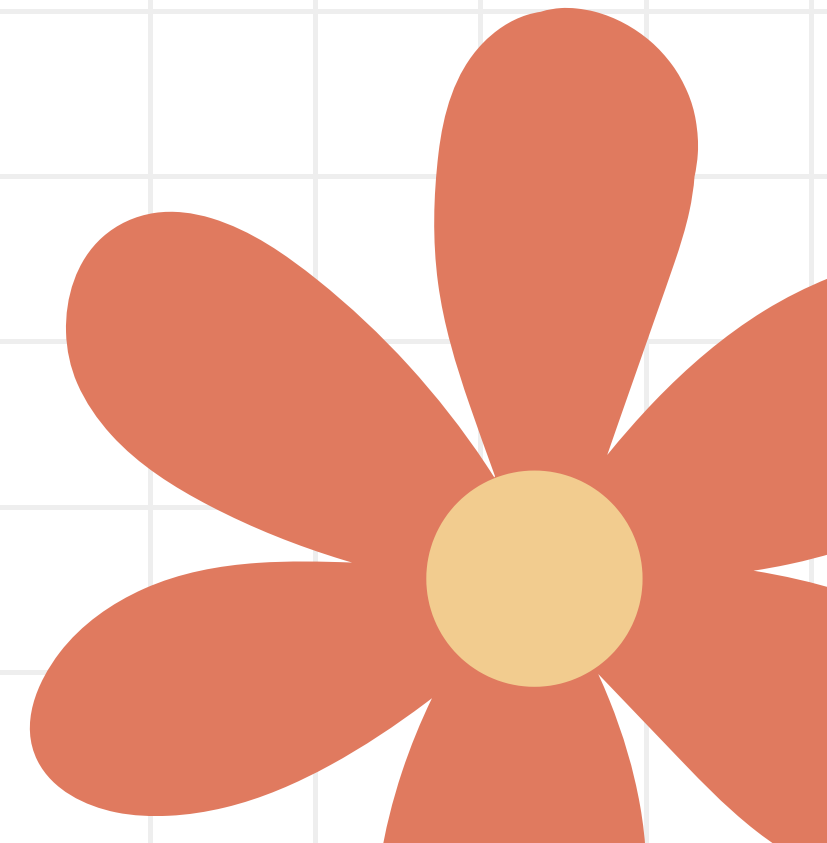
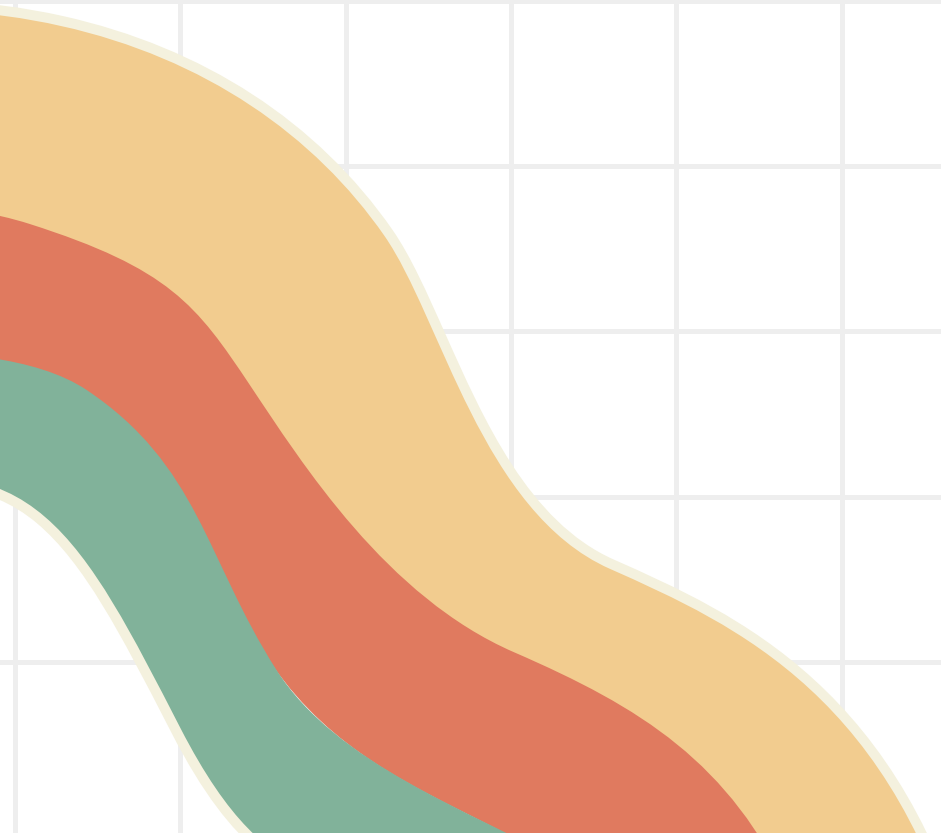


SPECIAL NEEDS & ADVOCACY 101

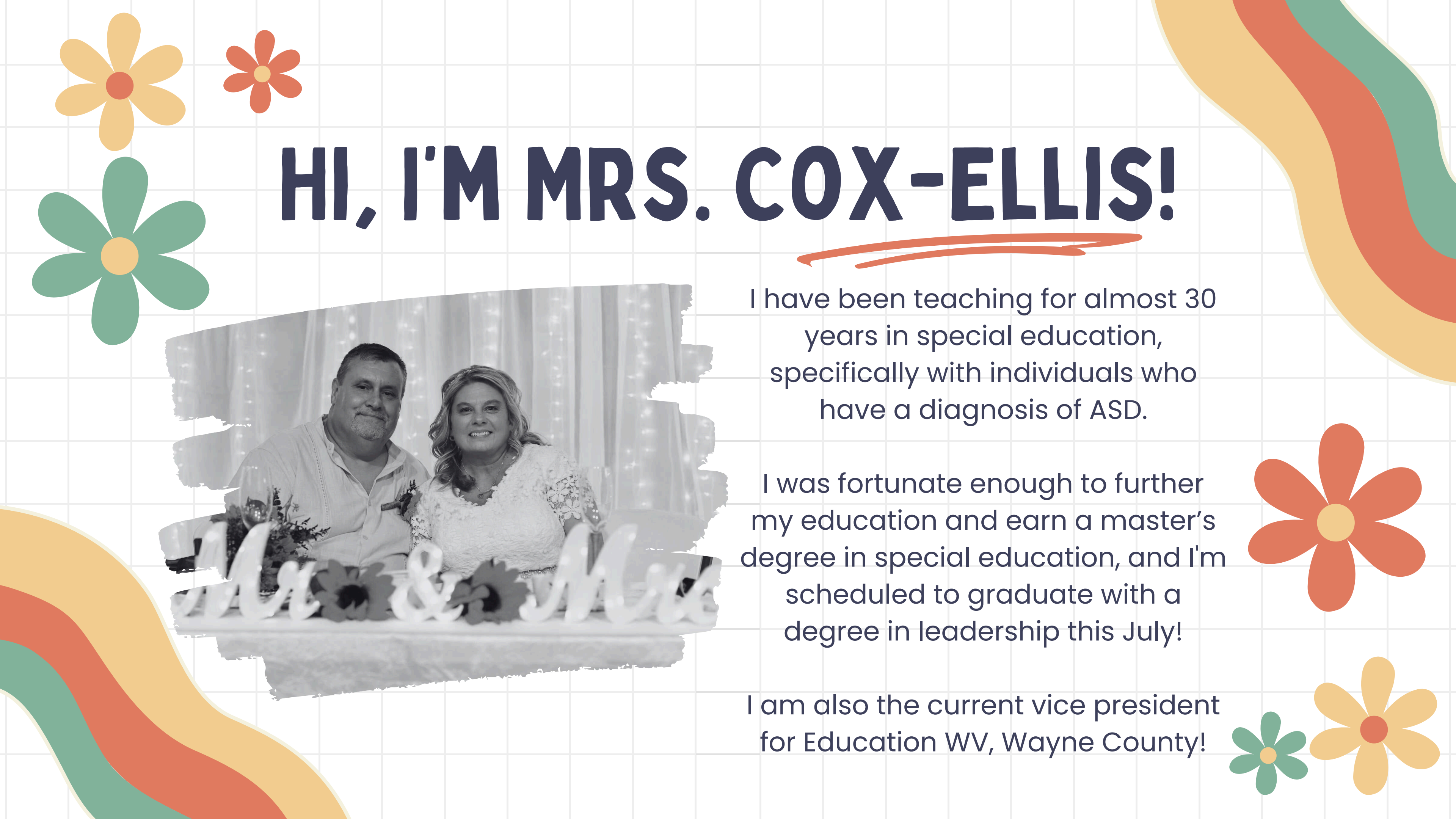
Education WV – Activist Academy 2026



WELCOME TO SPECIAL NEEDS & ADVOCACY 101!



I'm so glad you're here!

The background features a light gray grid pattern. In the top left corner, there are three stylized flowers: a large yellow one, a small orange one, and a large green one. In the top right corner, a portion of a rainbow is visible, curving downwards. In the bottom left corner, another portion of a rainbow is visible, curving upwards. In the bottom right corner, there are two more stylized flowers: a small green one and a large yellow one.

HI, I'M MRS. COX-ELLIS!



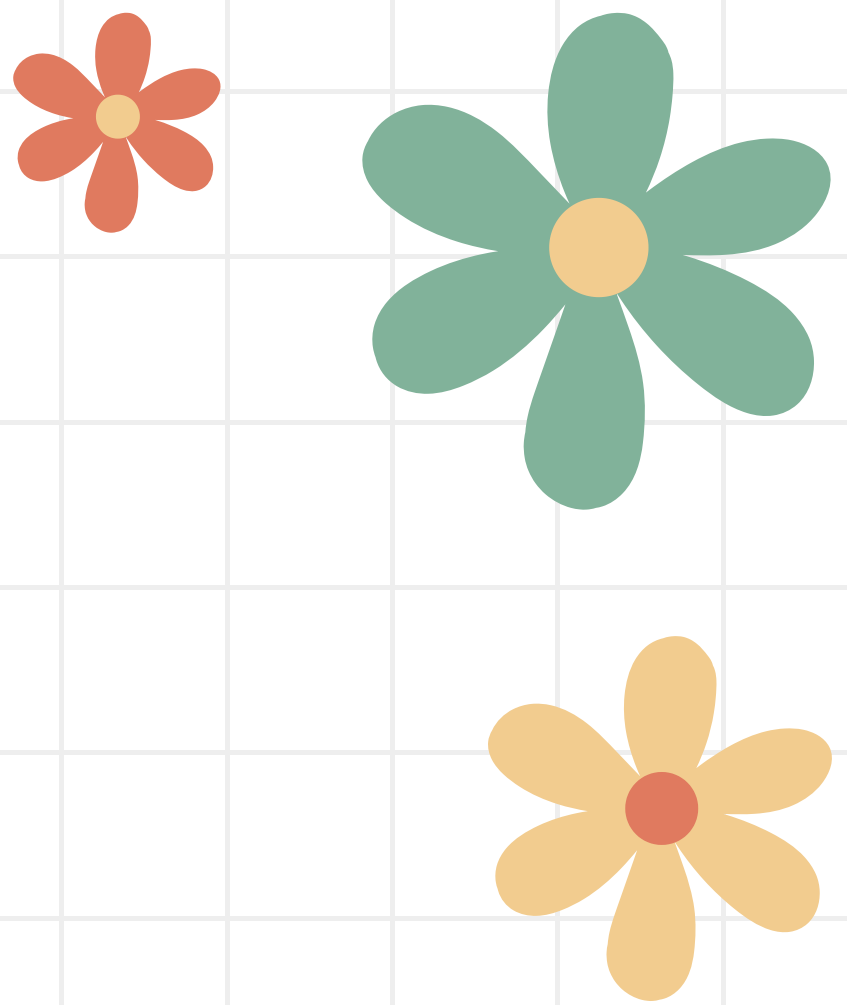
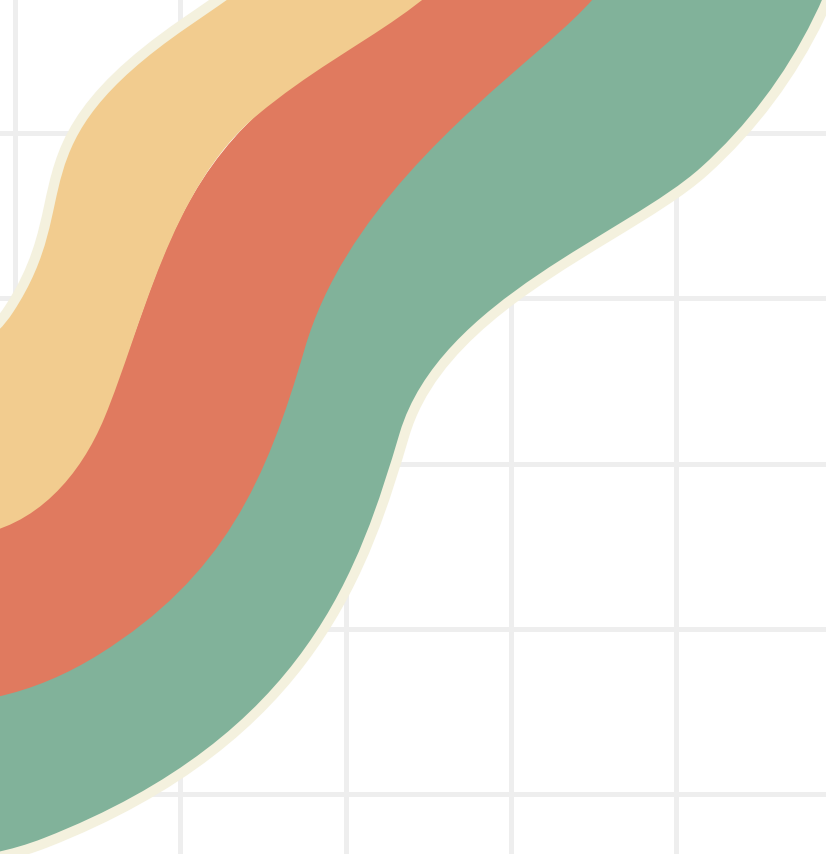
I have been teaching for almost 30 years in special education, specifically with individuals who have a diagnosis of ASD.

I was fortunate enough to further my education and earn a master's degree in special education, and I'm scheduled to graduate with a degree in leadership this July!

I am also the current vice president for Education WV, Wayne County!

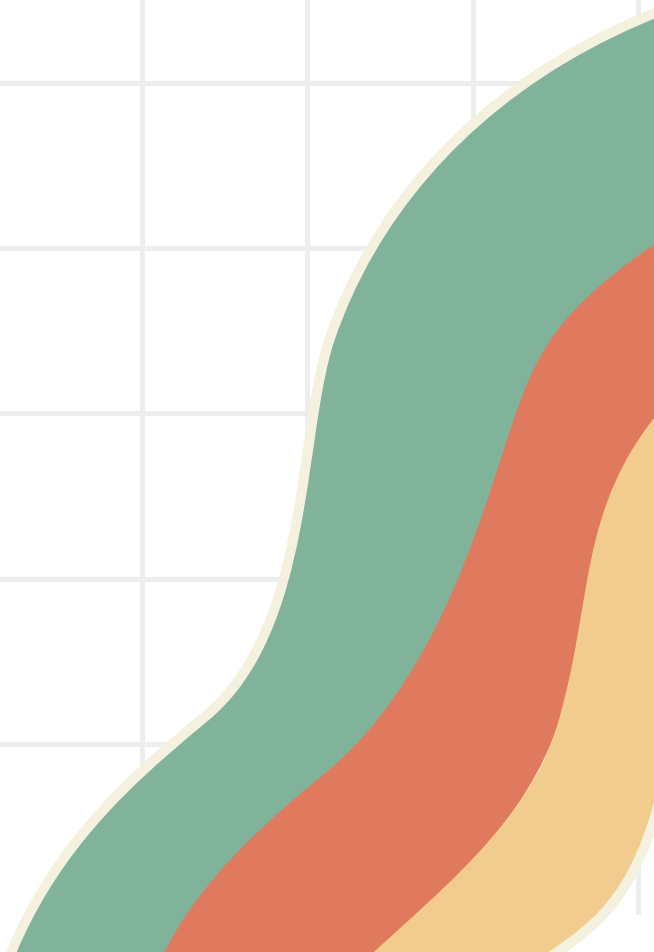
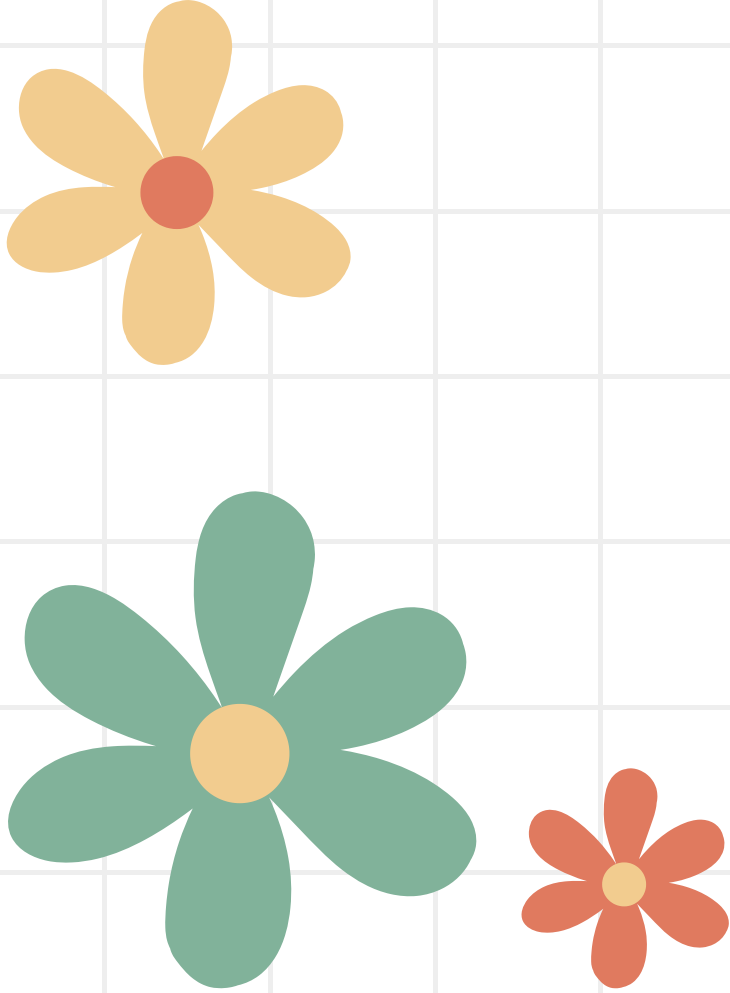
THINGS TO KNOW

- IDEA – changed name to the Education Improvement Act
 - ensures students with a disability are provided with a FAPE
 - Parents are considered an equal partner
- FAPE – Free an Appropriate Education
 - is a legal right that guarantees students with disabilities access to an education that meets their needs
- “Appropriate” – relates to your child’s needs
- LRE – Least Restrictive Environment
 - Best possibility to interact with children who do not have a disability and to participate in the general education environment
- Fidelity – this means that the current curriculum or lesson plans are taught as intended by the program developers
- GEE – General Education Environment
- SEE – Special Education Environment
- PWN – Prior Written Notice
- IEP – Individualized Education Plan
- SAT – Student Assistance Team
- FBA – Functional Behavior Assessment
- ASD – Autism Spectrum Disorder
- ADHD – Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder
- ED – Emotional Disorder
- OHI – Other Health Impairment
- OSP – Office of Special Programs



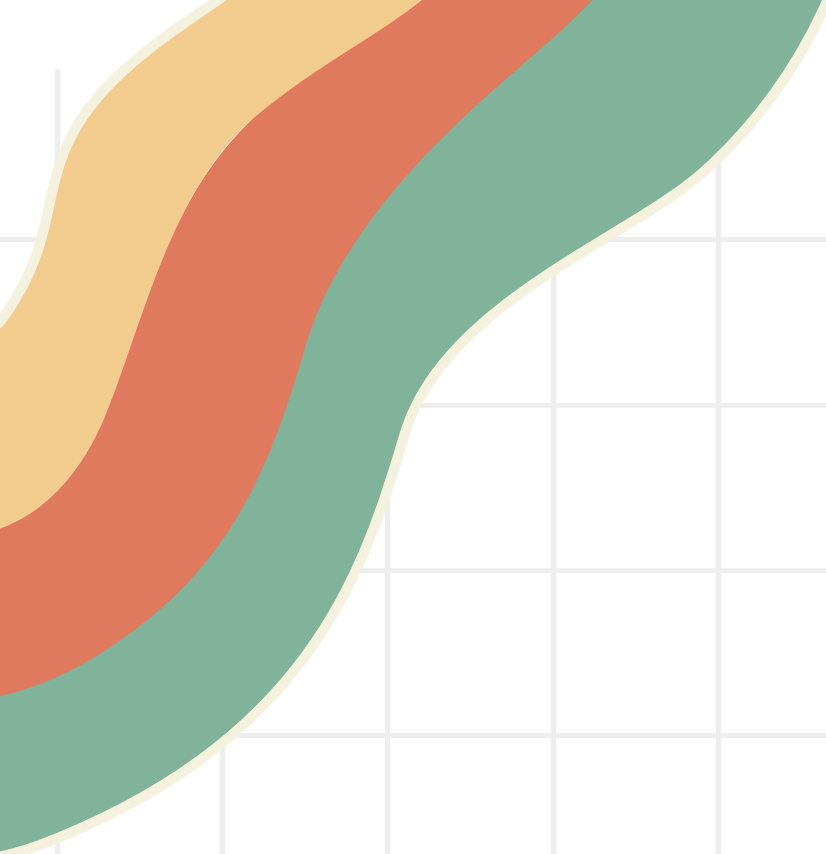
WHAT IS SPECIAL EDUCATION?

Special Education is specifically designed instruction at no cost to the parent, to meet the unique needs of a child with disability.

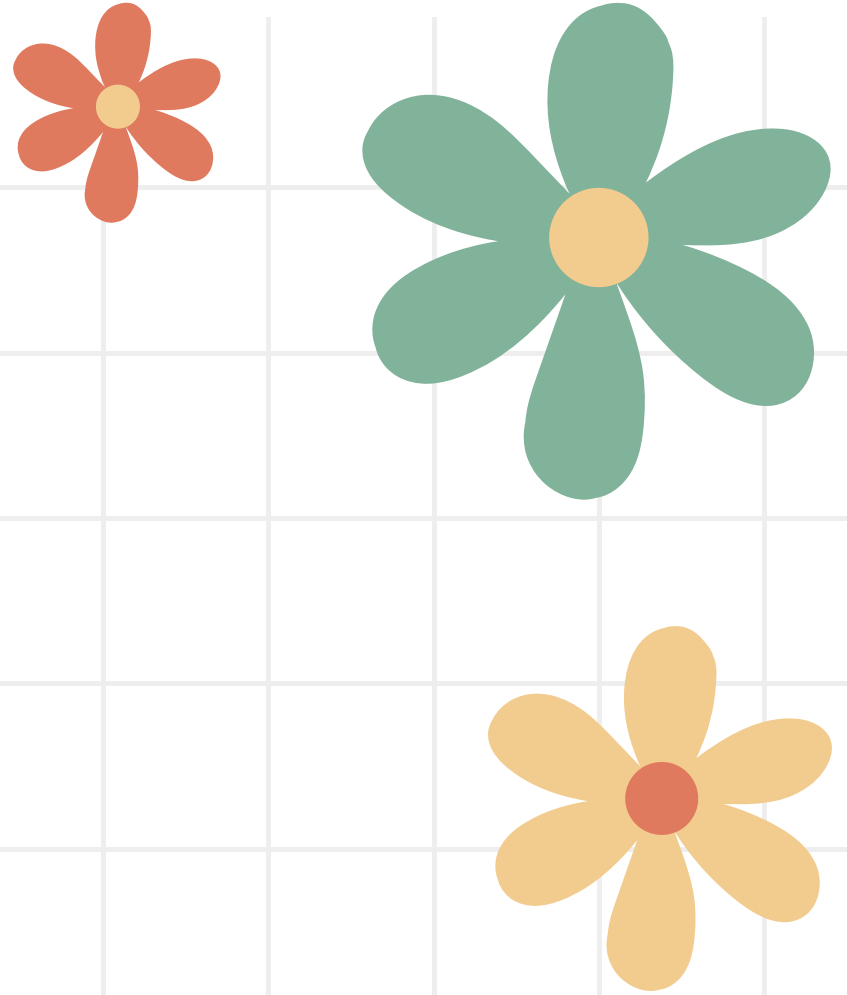


WHO IMPLEMENTS SPECIAL EDUCATION?

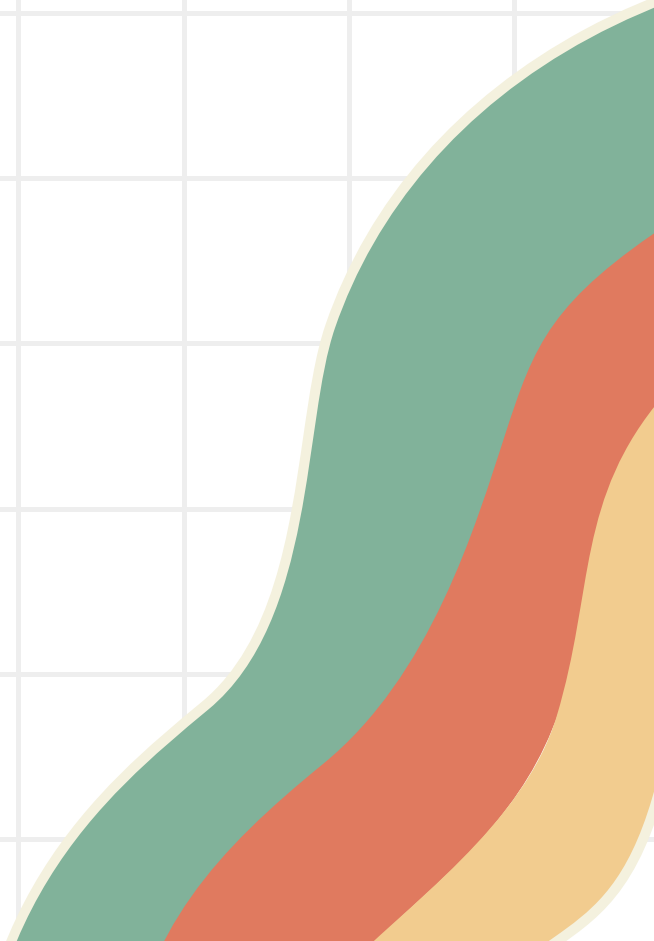
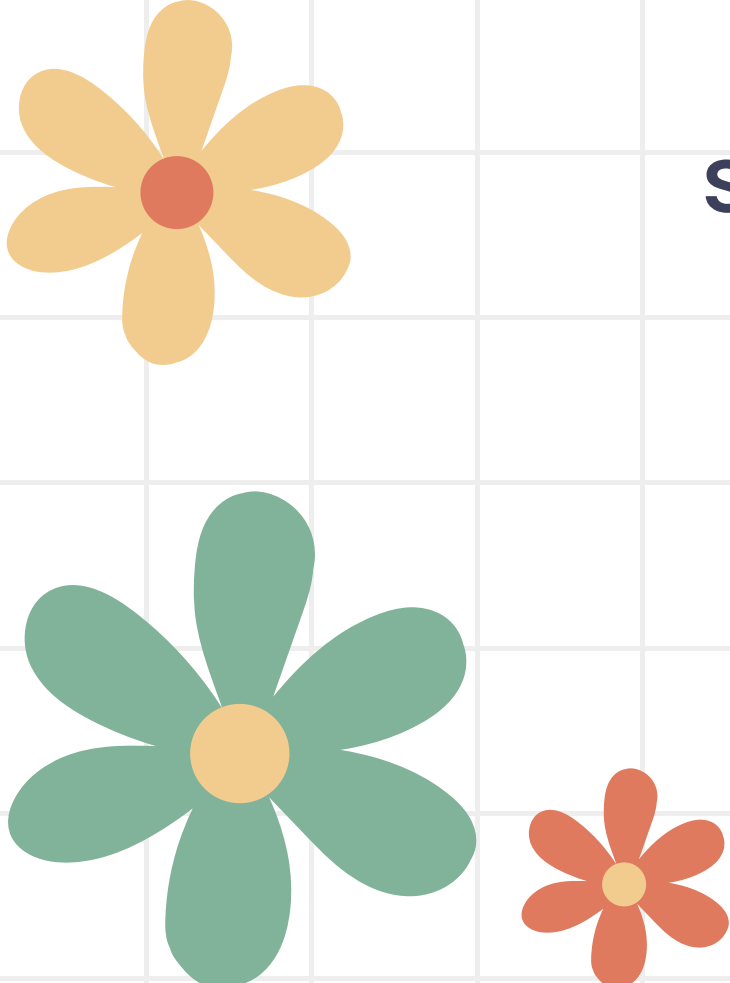
Special Education services that are developed through the student's IEP are the responsibility of the local school division.

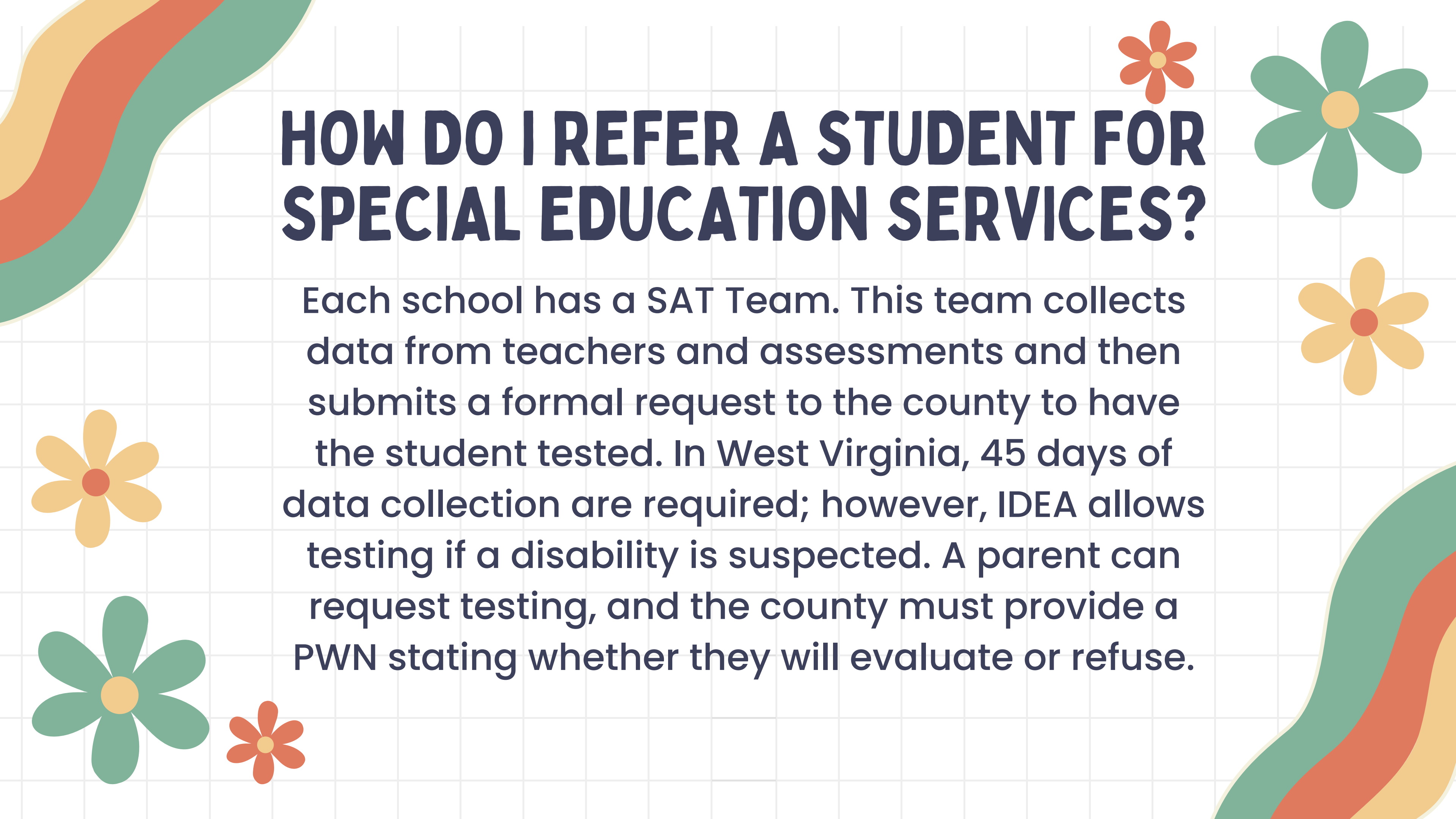


WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN AN IEP AND A 504?



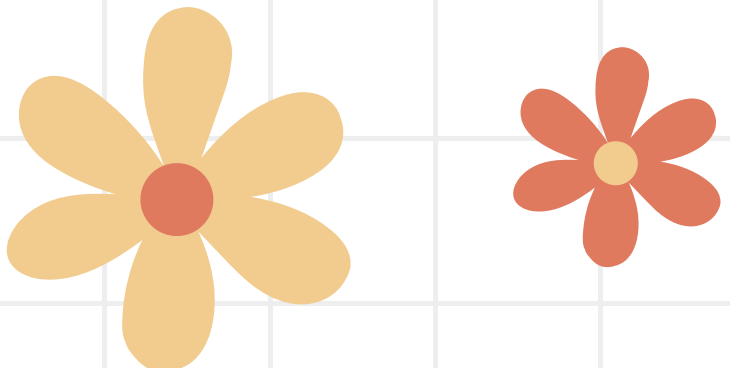
A 504 plan removes learning barriers by providing accommodations that allow the student to learn alongside their peers. An IEP is a more comprehensive plan for students with disabilities that provides accommodations, modifications, and specialized instruction tailored to their unique learning needs.



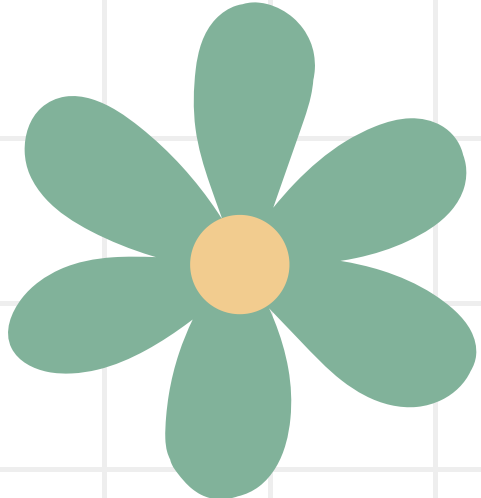
The background features a light gray grid. In the top-left corner, there is a decorative rainbow with yellow, orange, and green bands. In the top-right corner, there is a small orange flower and a larger green flower. In the bottom-left corner, there is a yellow flower, a green flower, and a small orange flower. In the bottom-right corner, there is a decorative rainbow with green, orange, and yellow bands.

HOW DO I REFER A STUDENT FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES?

Each school has a SAT Team. This team collects data from teachers and assessments and then submits a formal request to the county to have the student tested. In West Virginia, 45 days of data collection are required; however, IDEA allows testing if a disability is suspected. A parent can request testing, and the county must provide a PWN stating whether they will evaluate or refuse.



THE 8 TESTING COMPONENTS



Speech & Language
Evaluation (including
pragmatics)

Medical/Physical
Evaluation

Sociological Evaluation

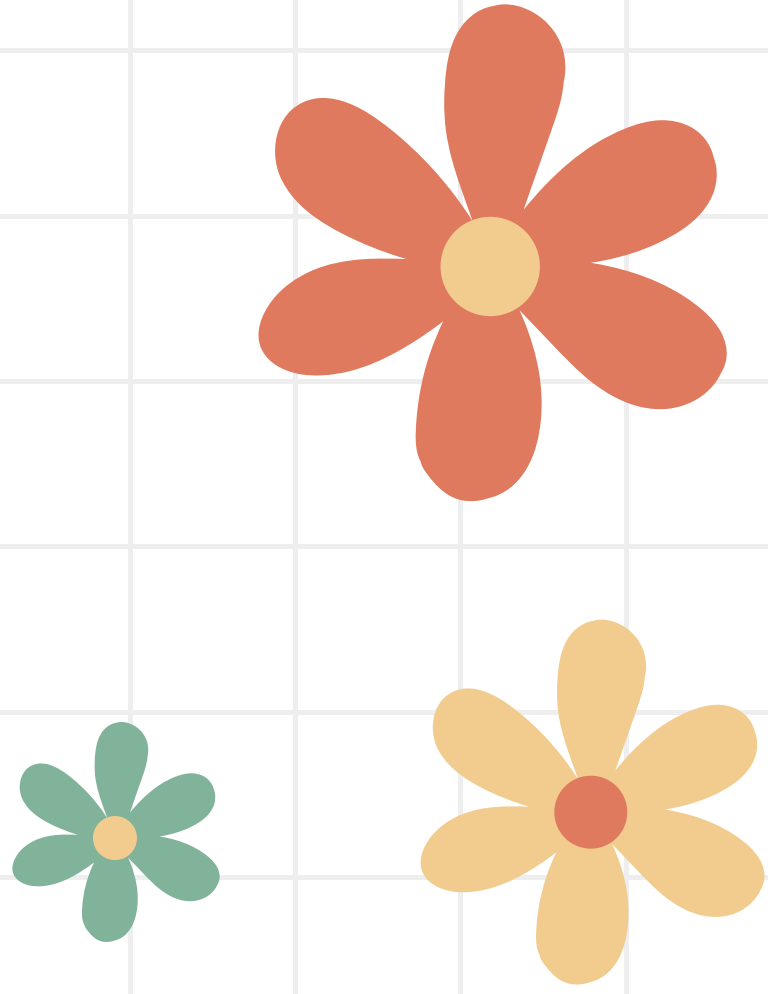
IQ Testing

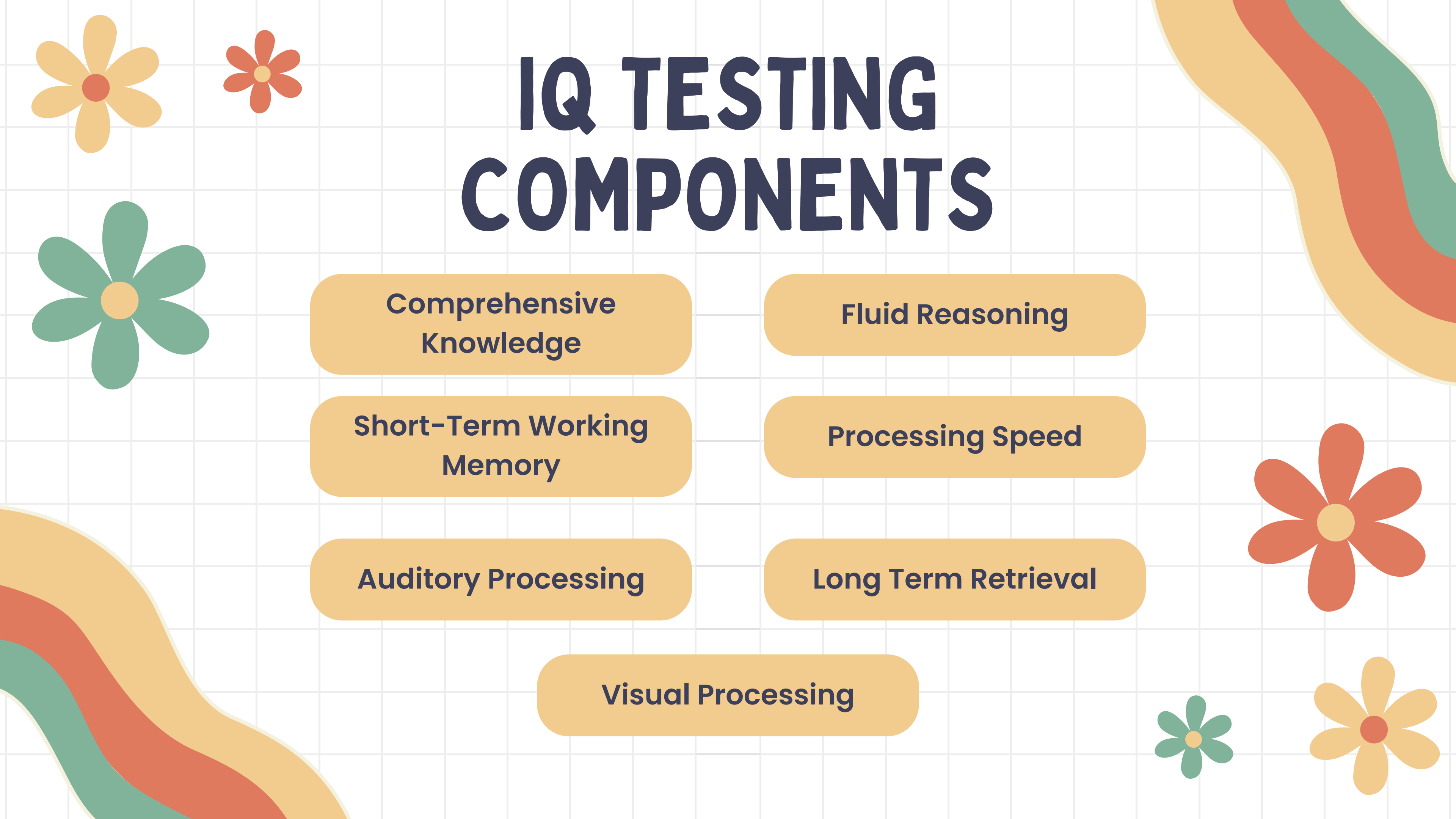
Adaptive Testing

Achievement Testing

Full Psychological
Evaluation

Related & Instructional
Services



The background features a light gray grid. In the top-left corner, there are two flowers: a large yellow one and a smaller orange one. In the middle-left, there is a large green flower. In the bottom-left, there is a large wavy line with yellow, orange, and green segments. In the top-right, there is a large wavy line with yellow, orange, and green segments. In the bottom-right, there are two flowers: a large orange one and a smaller yellow one.

IQ TESTING COMPONENTS

**Comprehensive
Knowledge**

Fluid Reasoning

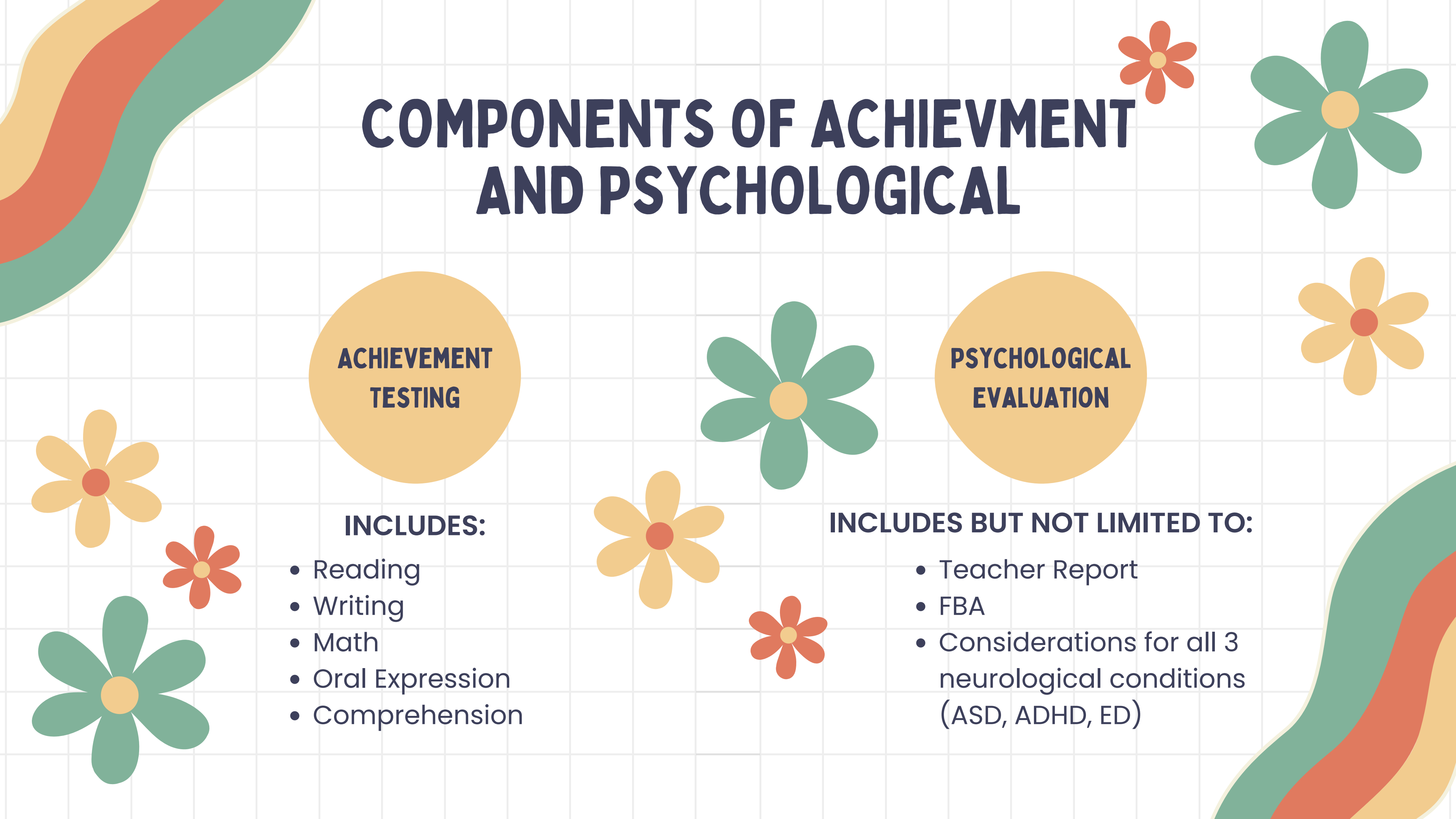
**Short-Term Working
Memory**

Processing Speed

Auditory Processing

Long Term Retrieval

Visual Processing

The background features a light gray grid. In the top-left corner, there is a decorative rainbow with yellow, orange, and green bands. In the top-right corner, there is a small orange flower and a larger green flower. In the bottom-left corner, there is a large green flower and a small orange flower. In the bottom-right corner, there is a decorative rainbow with green, orange, and yellow bands. The main title is centered at the top in a large, bold, dark blue font.

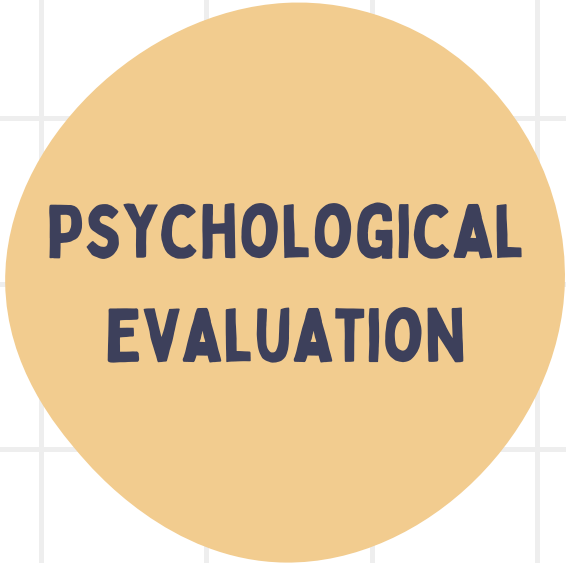
COMPONENTS OF ACHIEVEMENT AND PSYCHOLOGICAL

A large orange circle containing the text 'ACHIEVEMENT TESTING' in bold, dark blue, uppercase letters.

ACHIEVEMENT TESTING

INCLUDES:

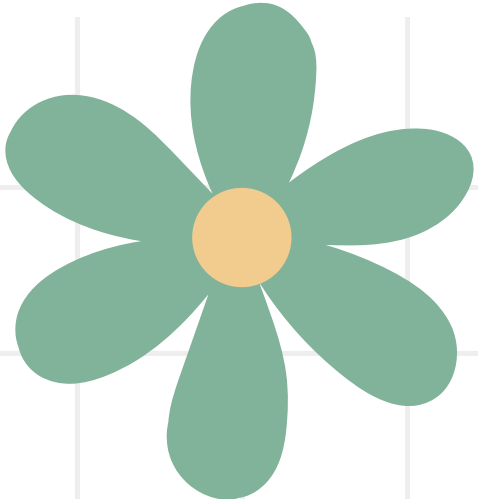
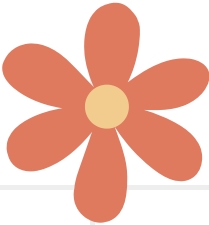
- Reading
- Writing
- Math
- Oral Expression
- Comprehension

A large orange circle containing the text 'PSYCHOLOGICAL EVALUATION' in bold, dark blue, uppercase letters.

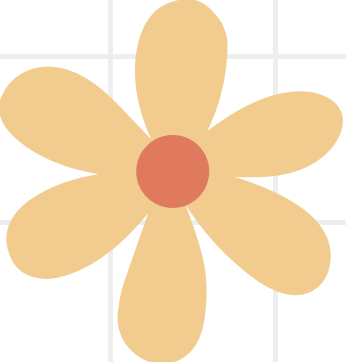
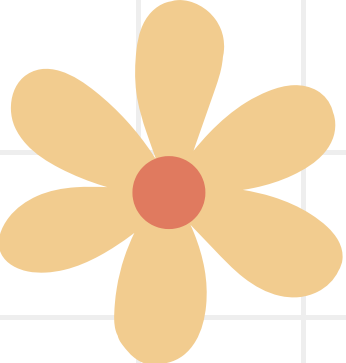
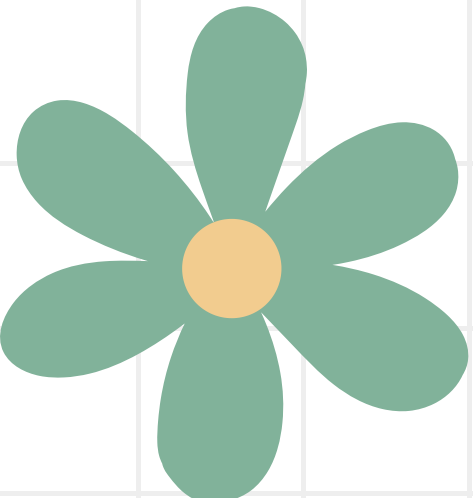
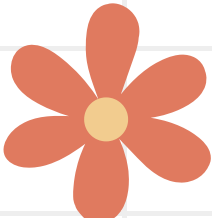
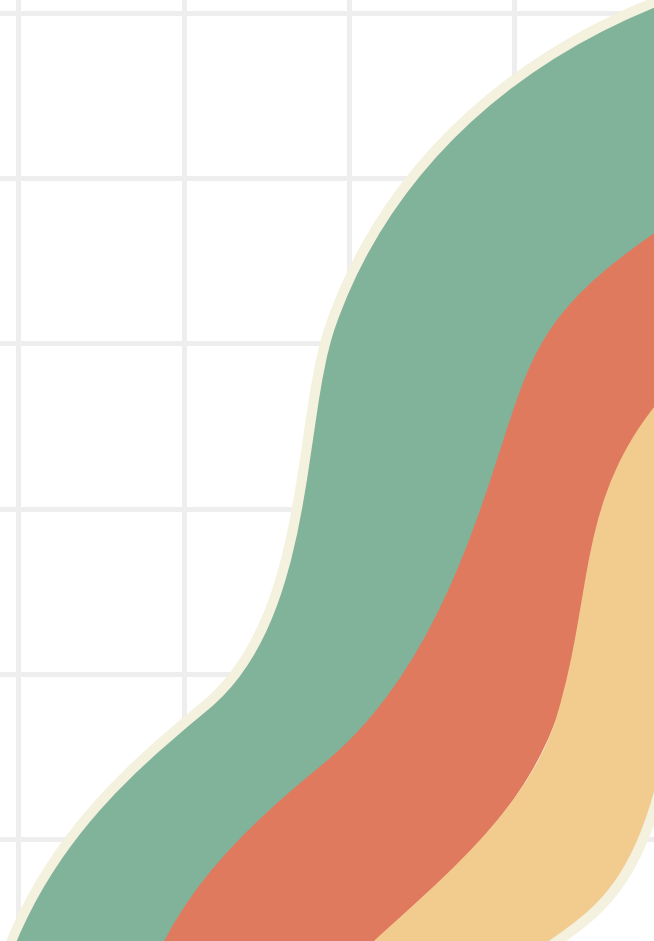
PSYCHOLOGICAL EVALUATION

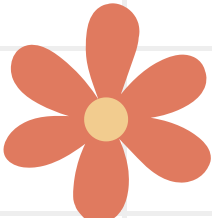
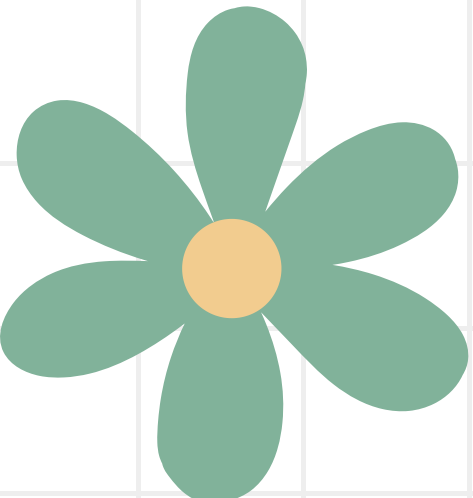
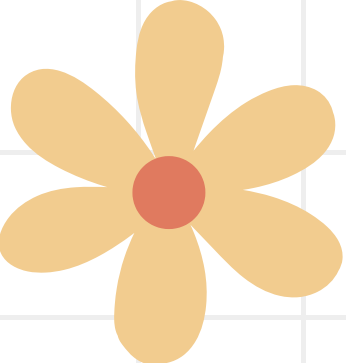
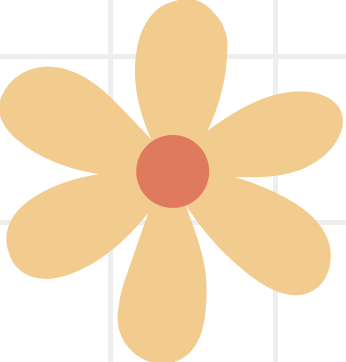
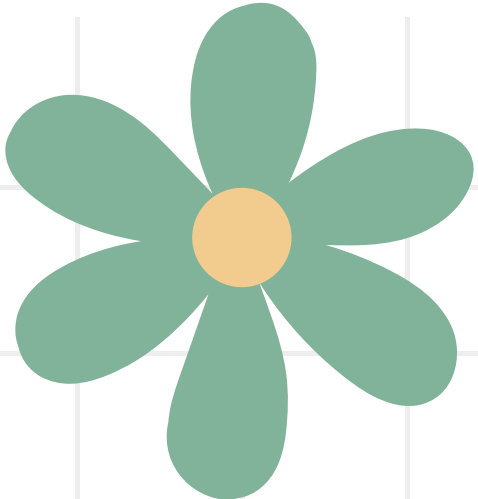
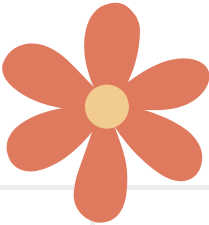
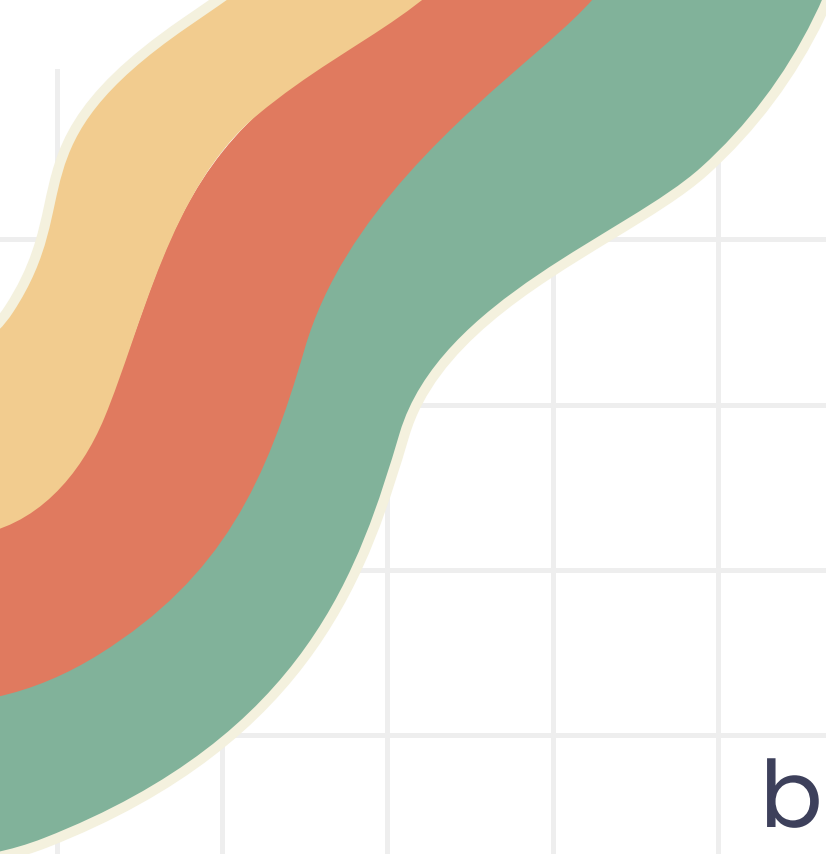
INCLUDES BUT NOT LIMITED TO:

- Teacher Report
- FBA
- Considerations for all 3 neurological conditions (ASD, ADHD, ED)



WHY SO SPECIFIC?

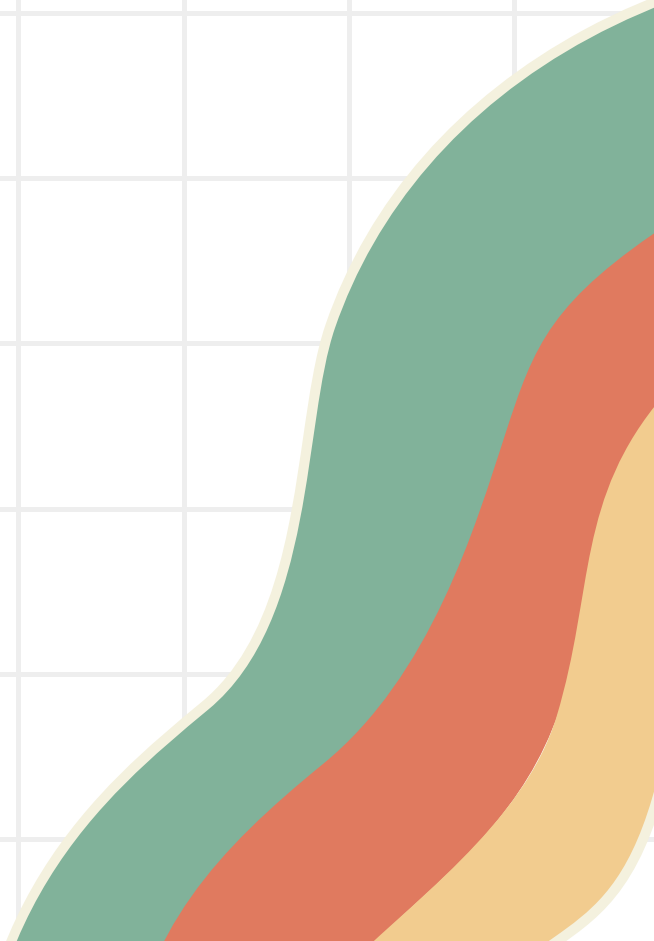
- If a specialist or the OSP contacts you by phone or mail, you should request a face-to-face meeting and ensure that all of the testing stated is done. Do **NOT** just sign what they sent you.
 - The comprehension evaluations are designed to show deficits and will help with any confusion over areas that impact your student and may require an IEP.
 - **Without all these components, a misinterpretation of the law may occur.** There may not be enough information, and the district may not want to provide an IEP or a 504.
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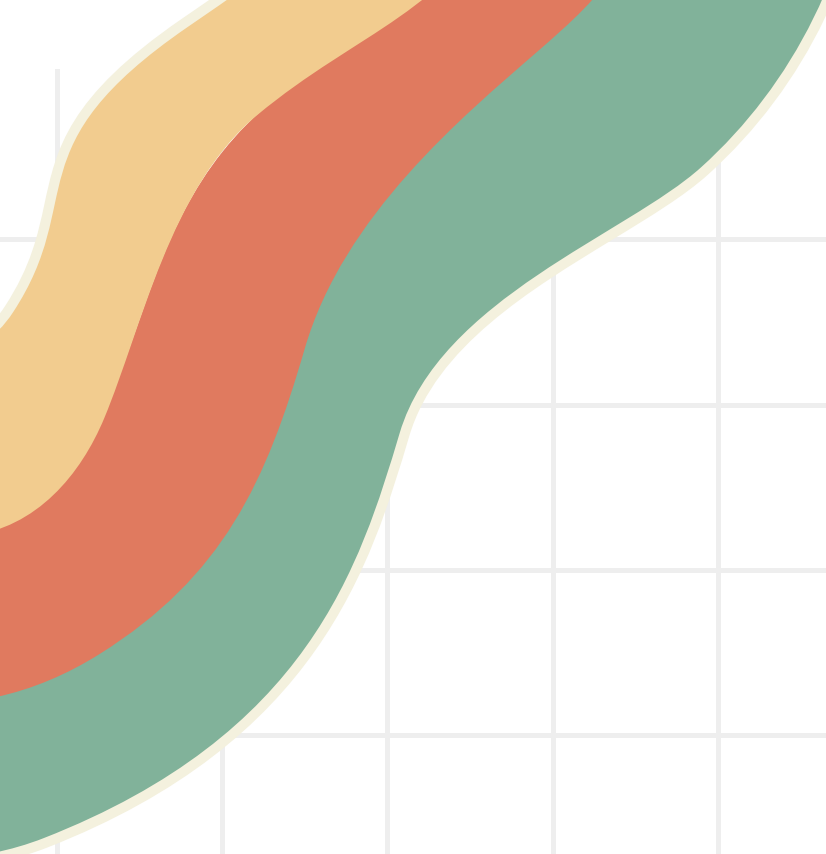


WHAT TO DO?

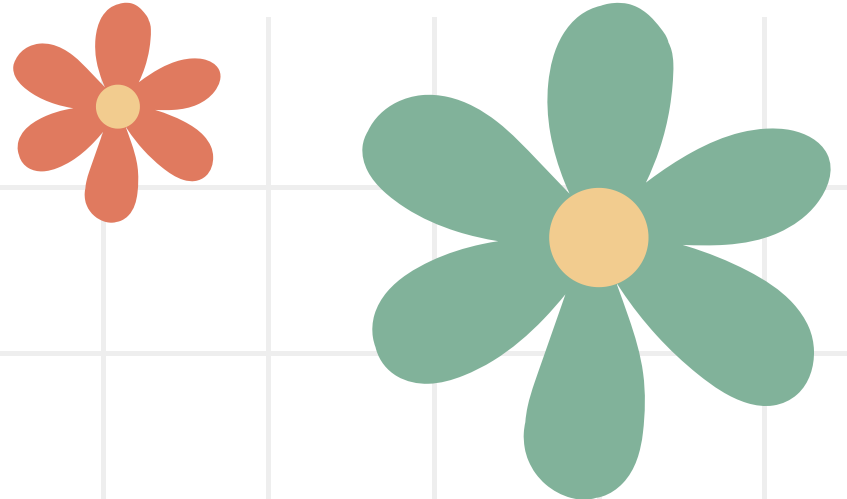
If the IEP team disagrees with the district and believes that the documentation shows that there is a clear impact on the student's education then you should request a PWN, including what the district is refusing and why.

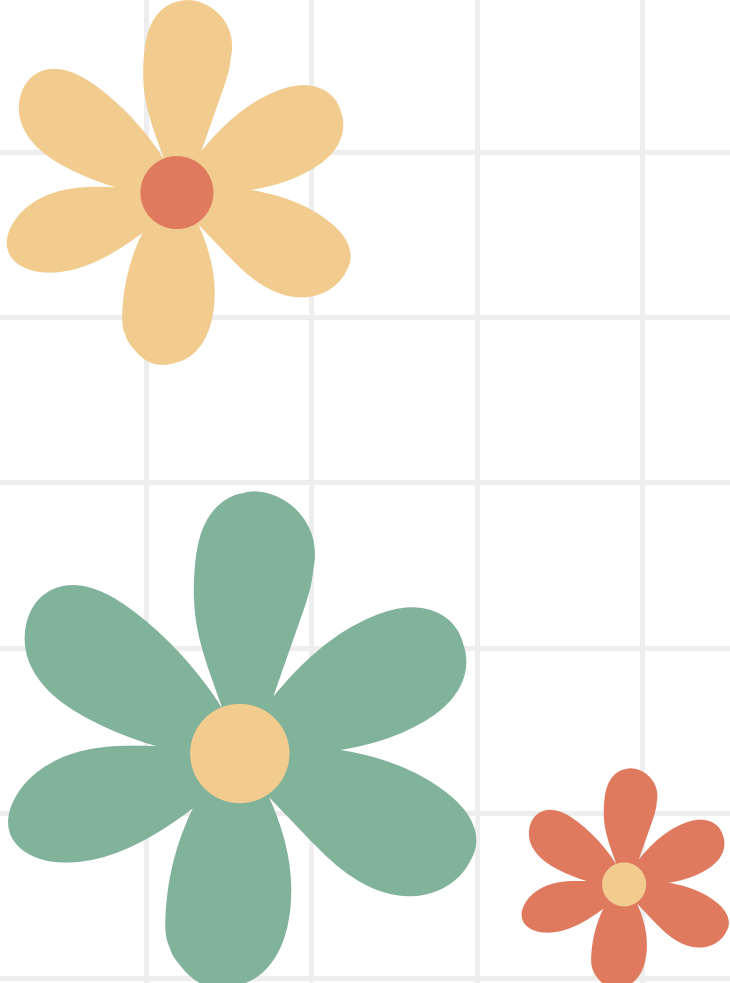
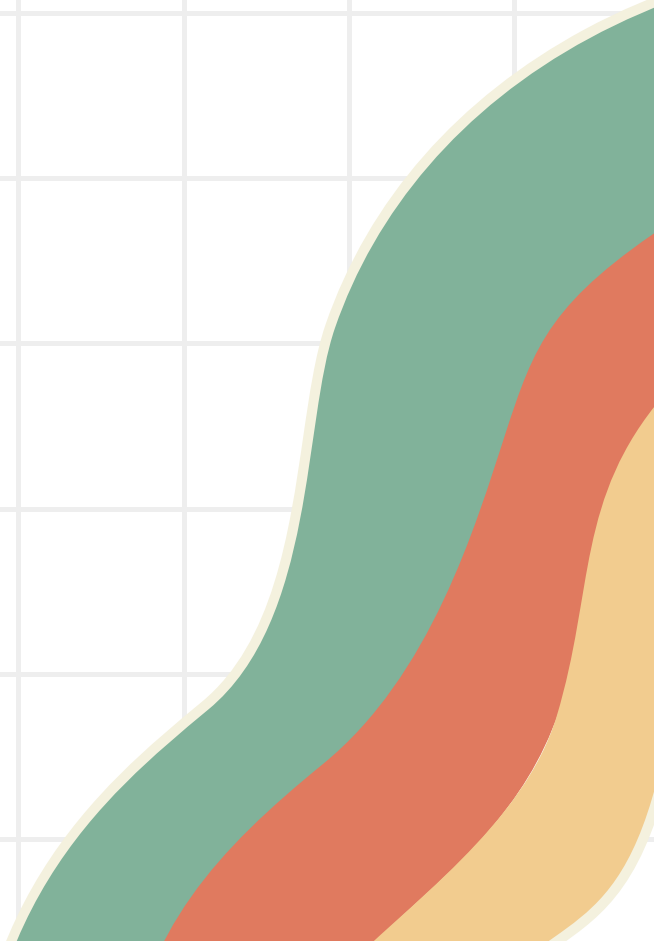
This is why you need as much information as possible and not only what the district is suggesting. **Remember that this is a team decision.**

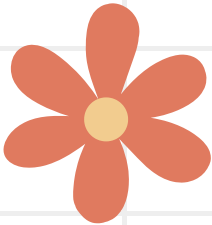
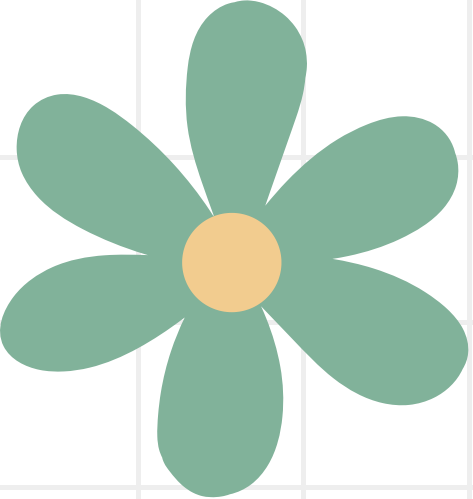
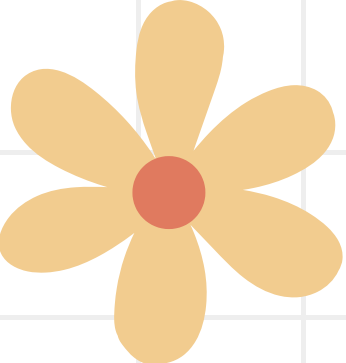
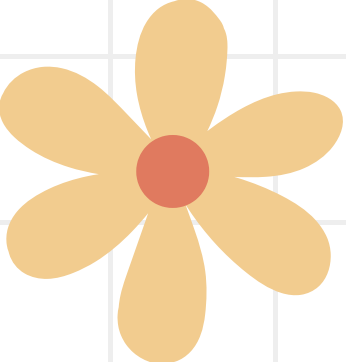
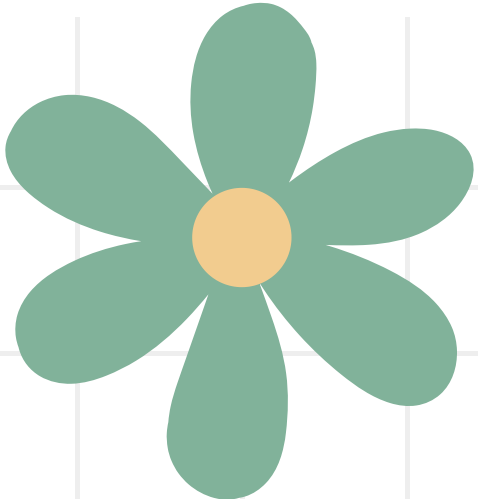
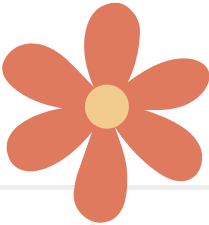
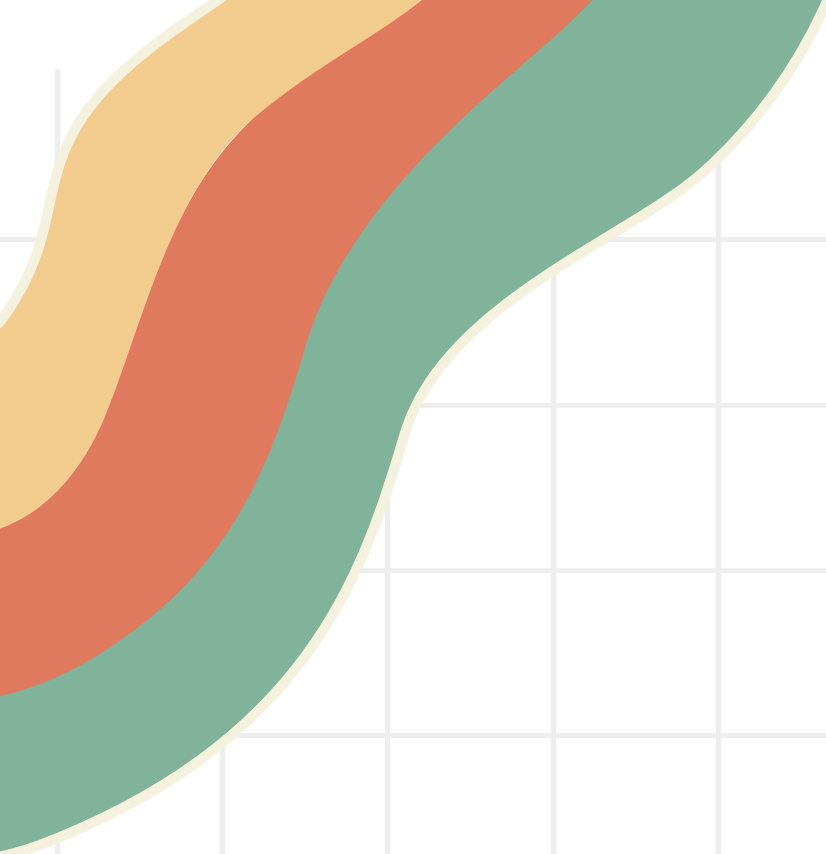




QUALIFYING FOR AN IEP



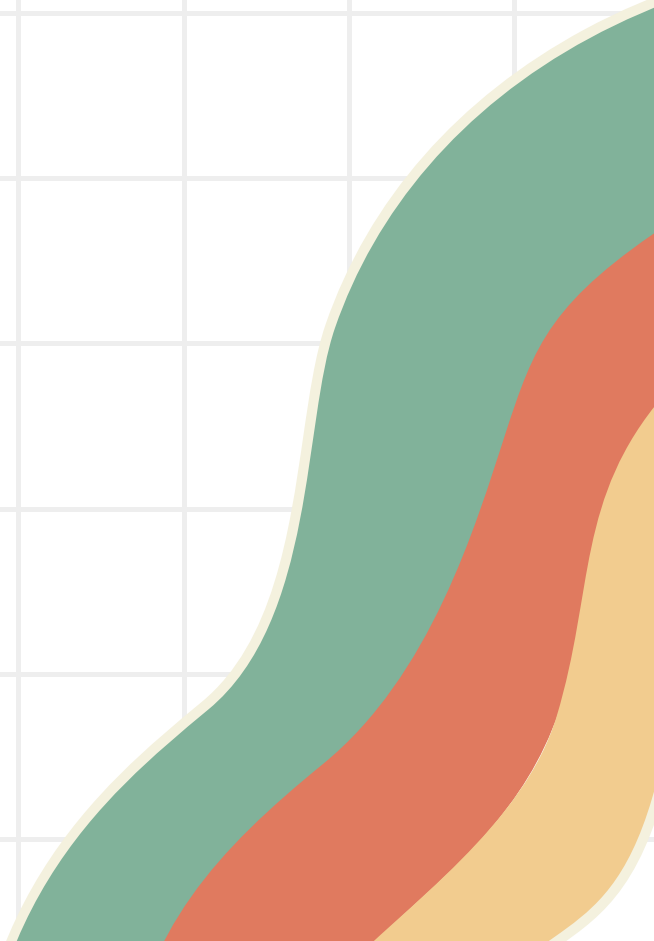
- If the student qualifies for an IEP, then they should be assigned a case manager. This should be whoever the teacher is who will primarily provide the students' special education services.
 - A draft IEP is created by the case manager. A parent can request the draft **prior** to the IEP meeting.
 - The parent input statement is important. It should be specific to what the parent feels the child needs. This is the only statement on the IEP that **CANNOT** be changed.
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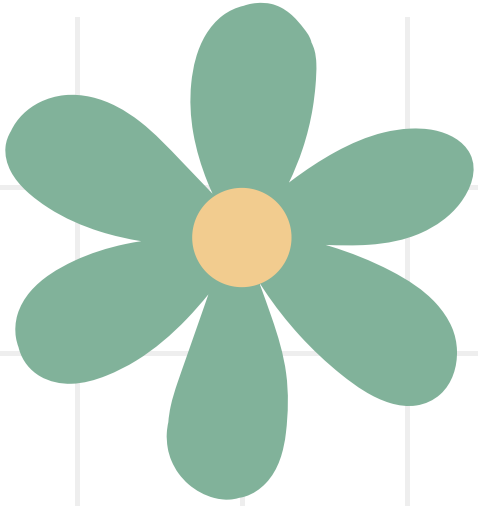
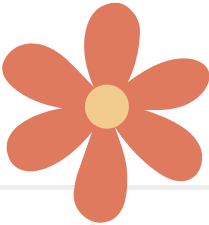
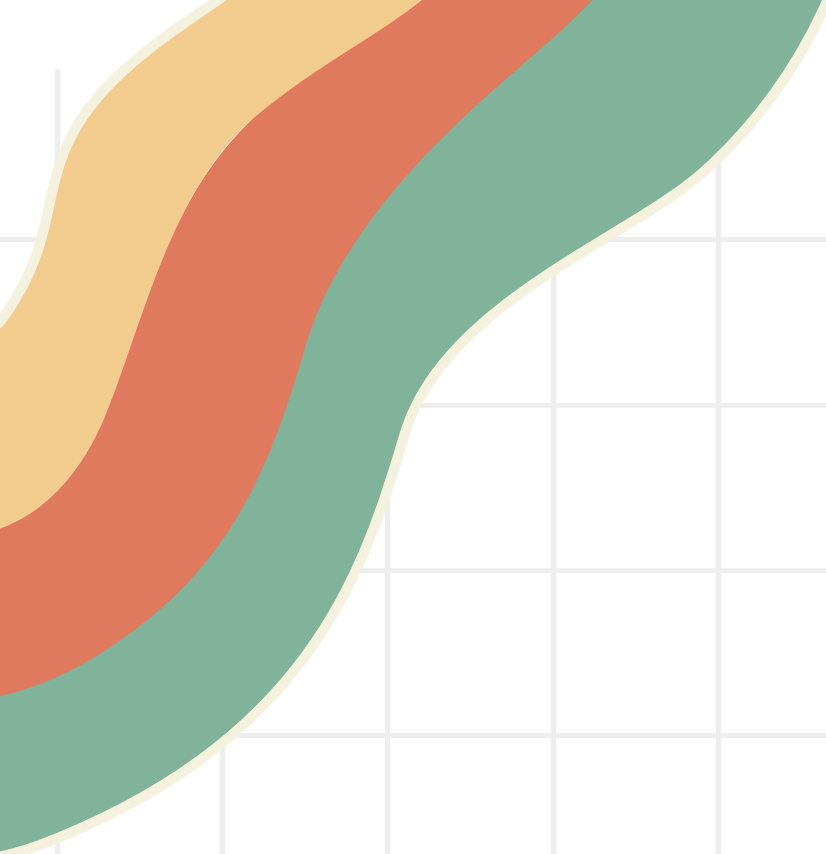


QUALIFYING FOR AN IEP CONT.

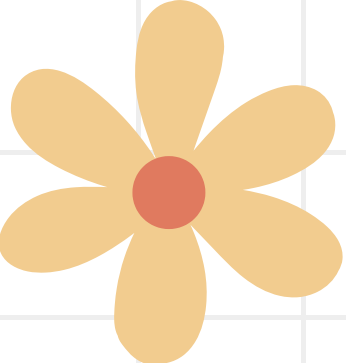
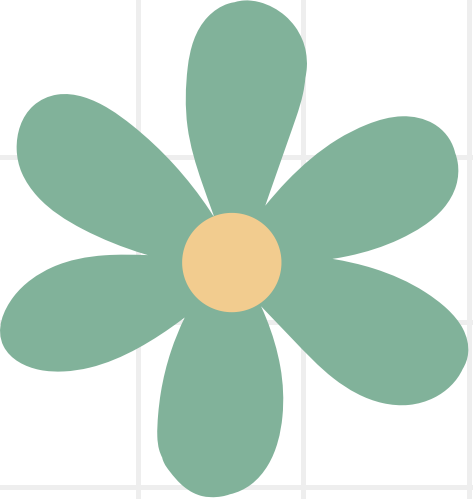
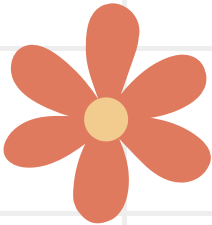
- If the district is involved in your IEP (which should only occur if you are having issues obtaining services for a student), request that it be transcribed or audio. If this request is denied for a PWN, provide an explanation.
- After the meeting, go to your computer and develop an email with your understanding of what occurred during the meeting.

Documentation is key!

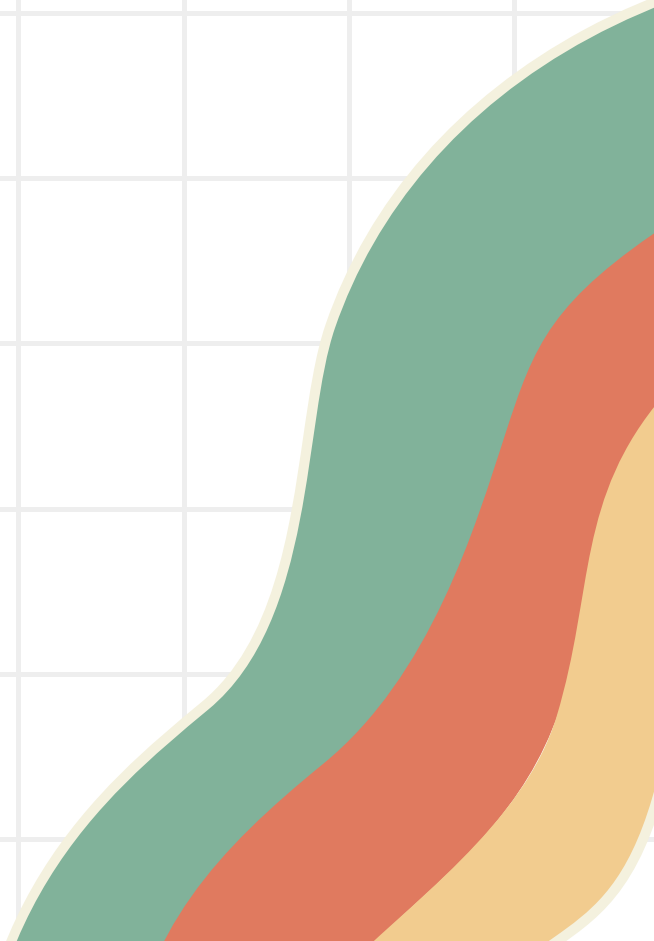




AFTER THE IEP IS IMPLEMENTED

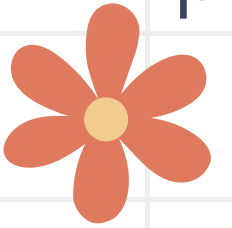
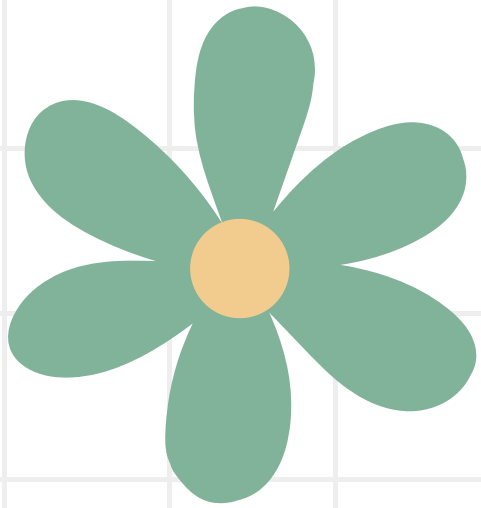
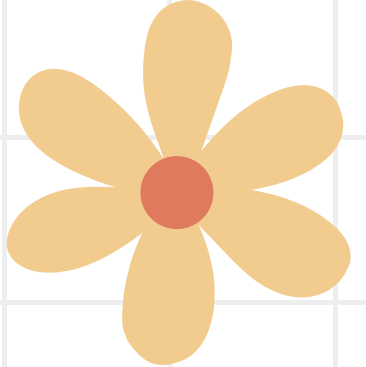
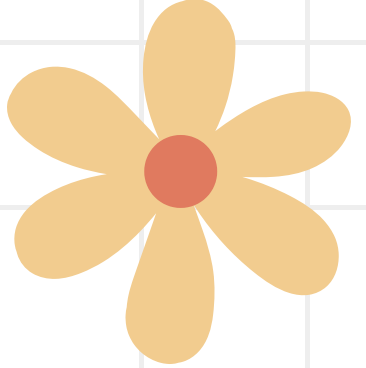
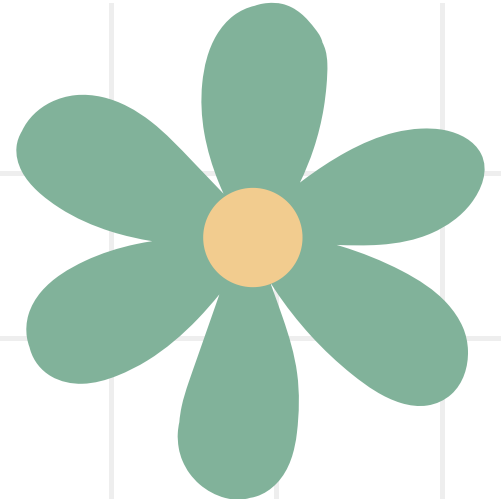
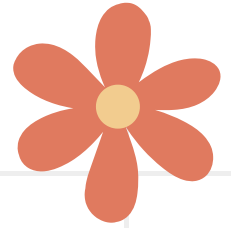
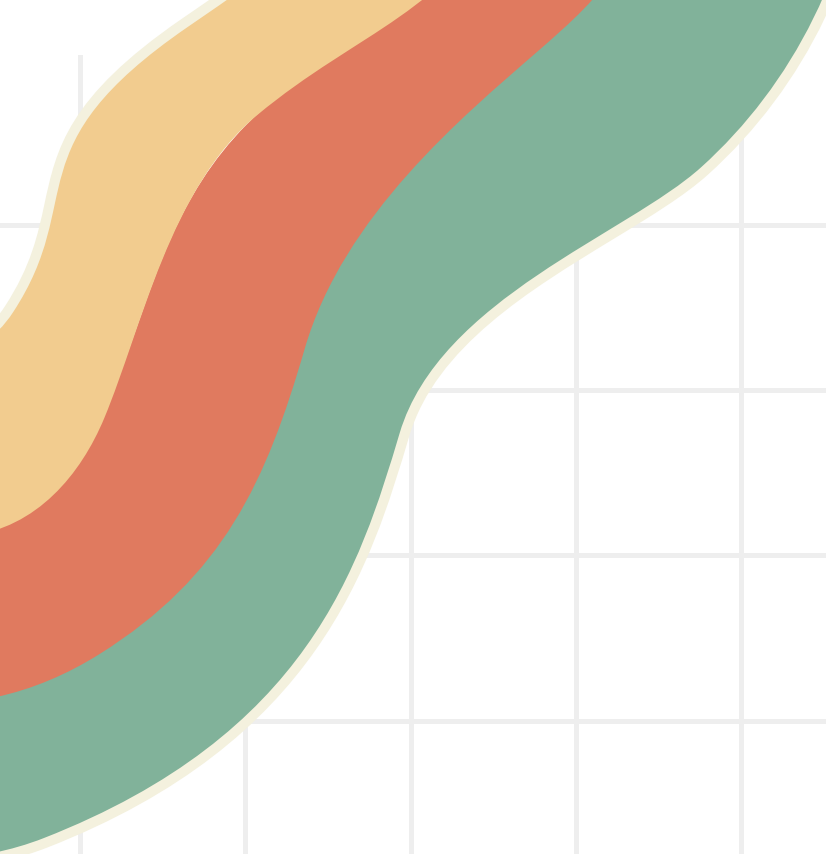
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1. Create an open line of communication with your teachers
 2. Request active data sheets periodically
 3. Ask if your student is being integrated with their non-exceptional peers (Art, Music, P.E., counseling, parties, field trips, eating in the cafeteria, recess, etc.)

These students must be integrated. Saying that they are understaffed is NOT an excuse.





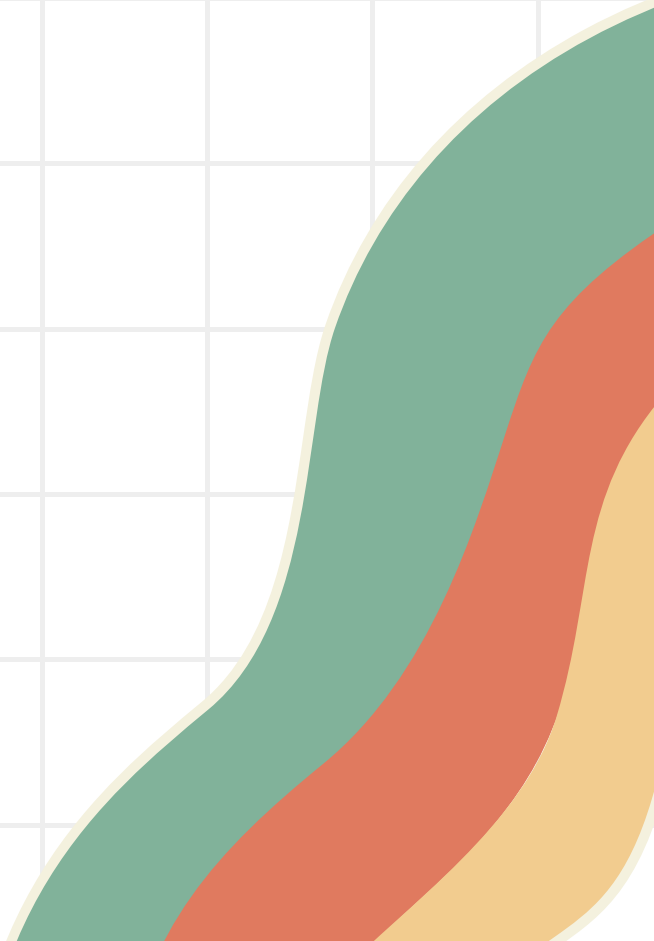
STAFF ROLES IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

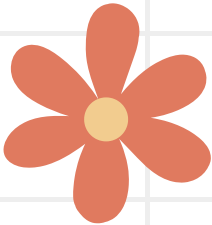
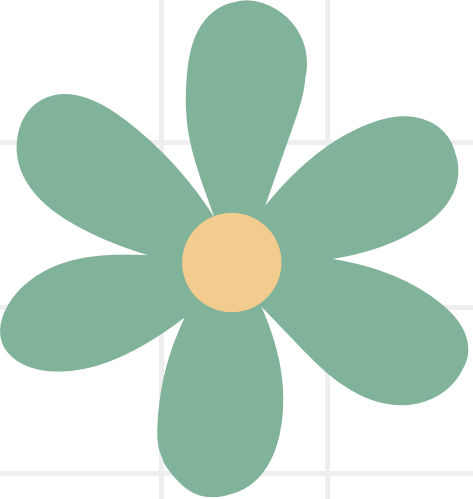
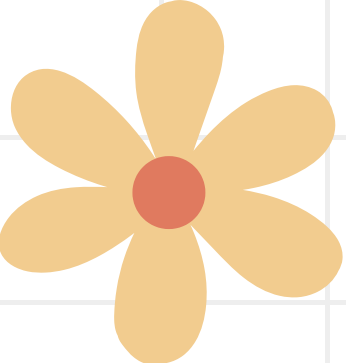
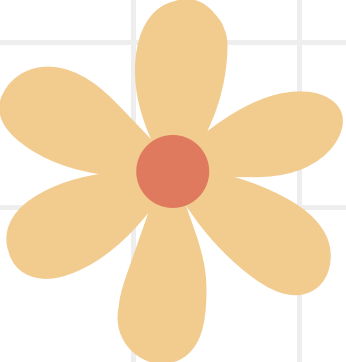
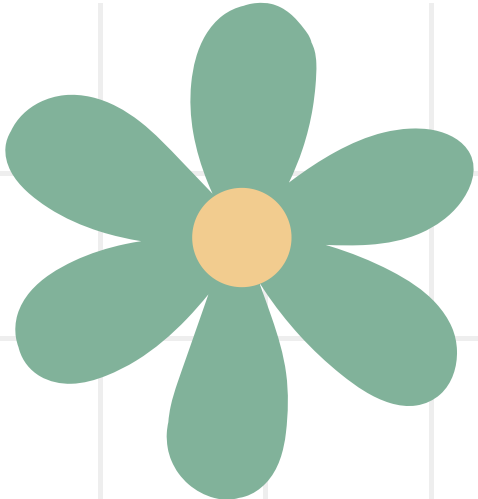
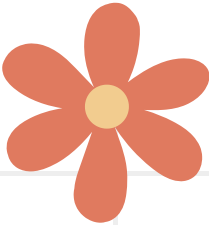
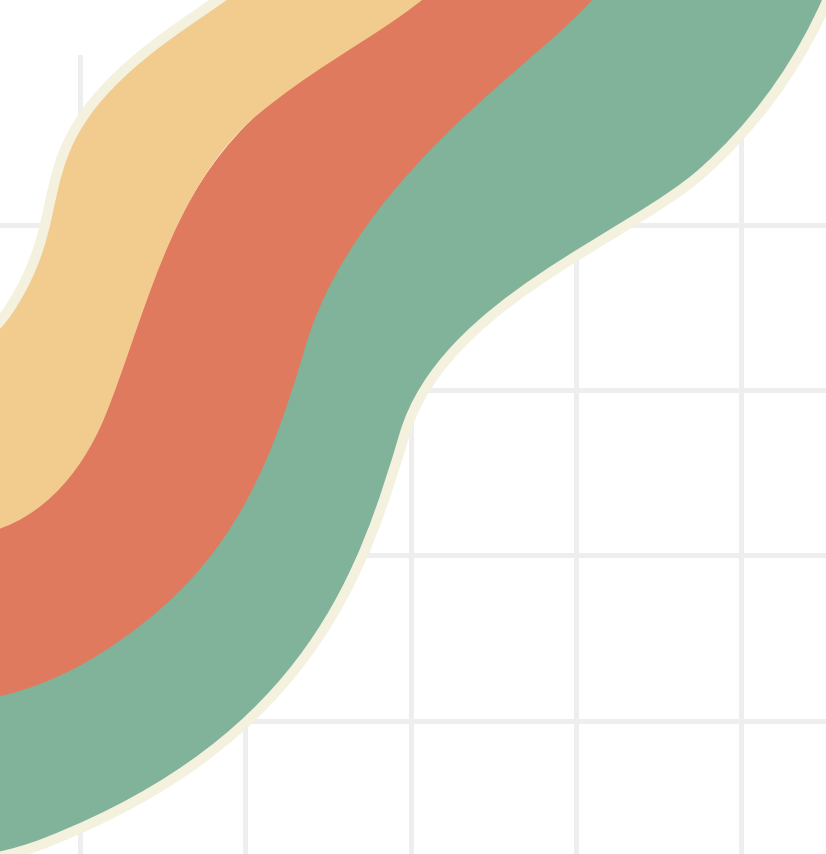


GENERAL EDUCATION TEACHERS

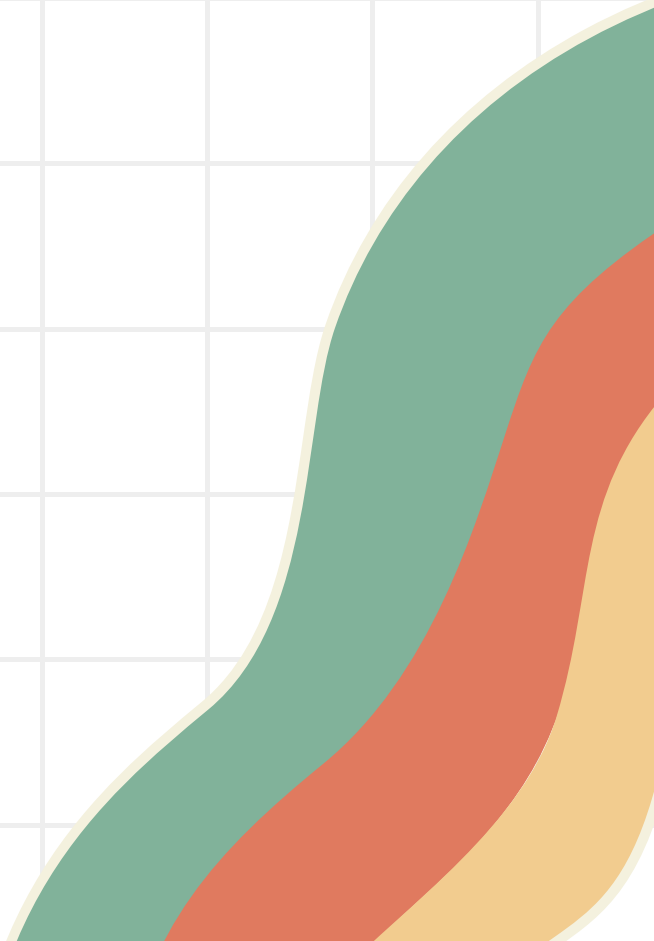
- Legally required to provide the accommodations outlined in the IEP
- Expected to acknowledge at the end of each grading period that the requirements have been met

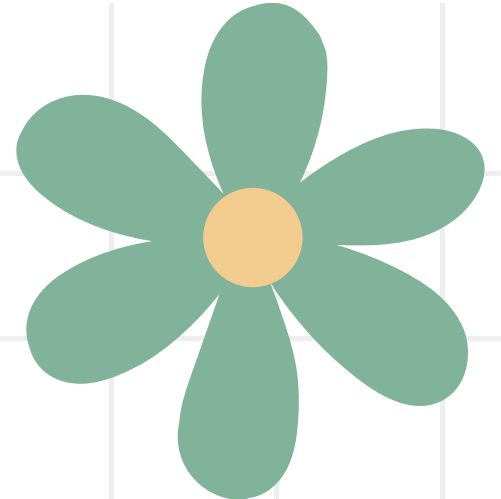
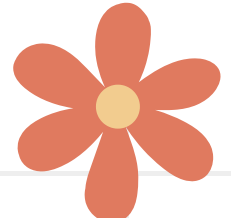
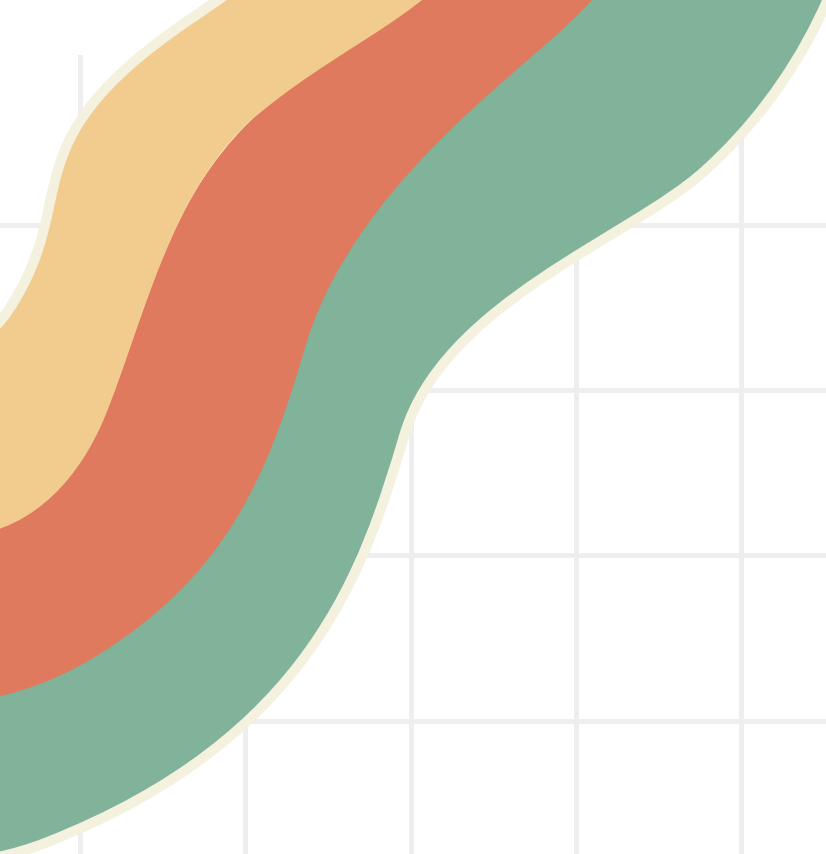
Under **West Virginia Code §18-20-1C**, the state is to provide dedicated assistance and training to help general education teachers successfully serve integrated students. Furthermore, integrated teachers have the right to request an IEP review if they document that a student is not making appropriate progress in the general education classroom.



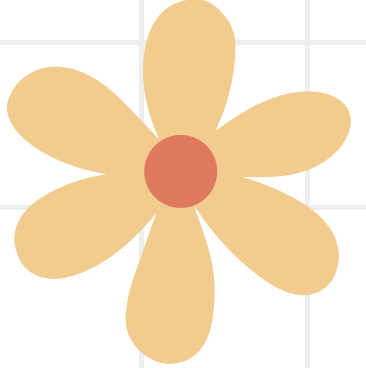
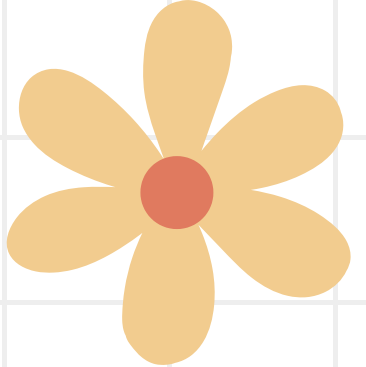
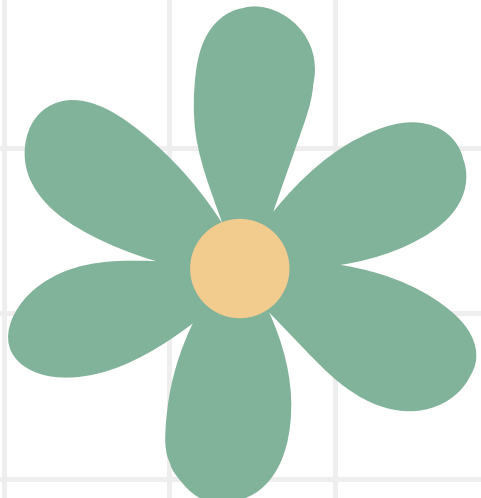
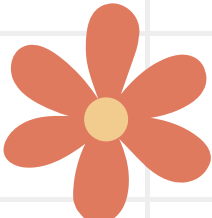
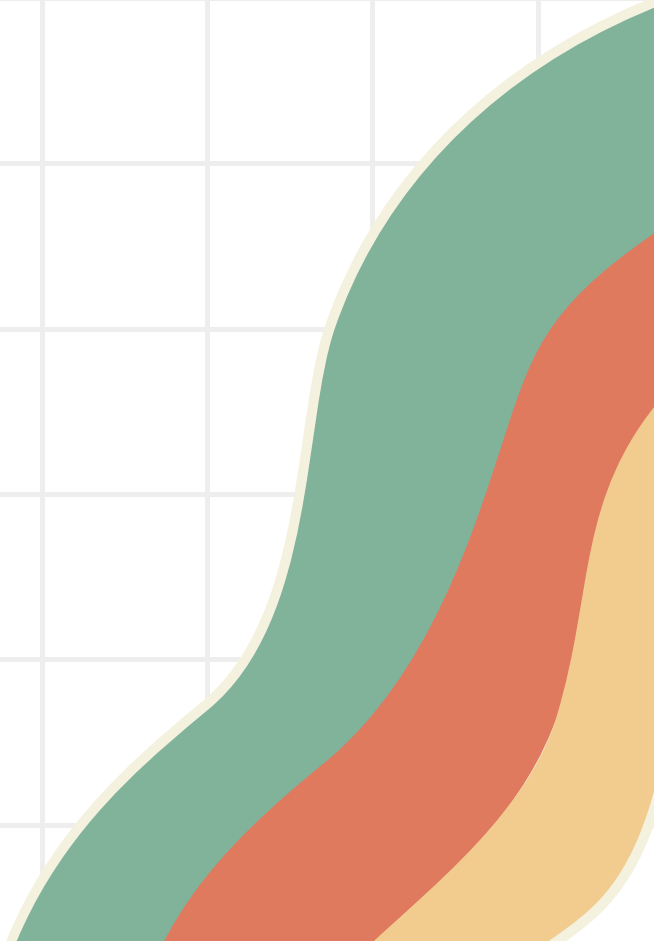


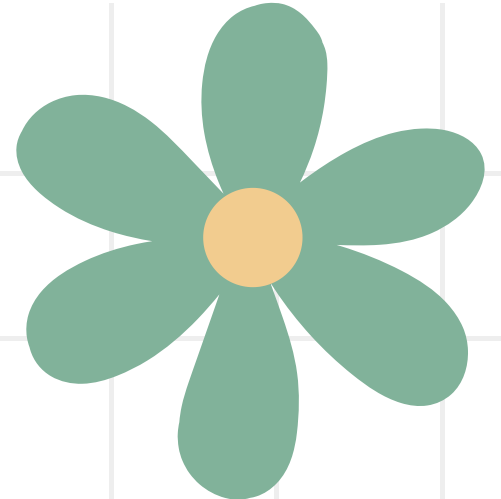
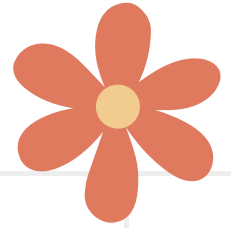
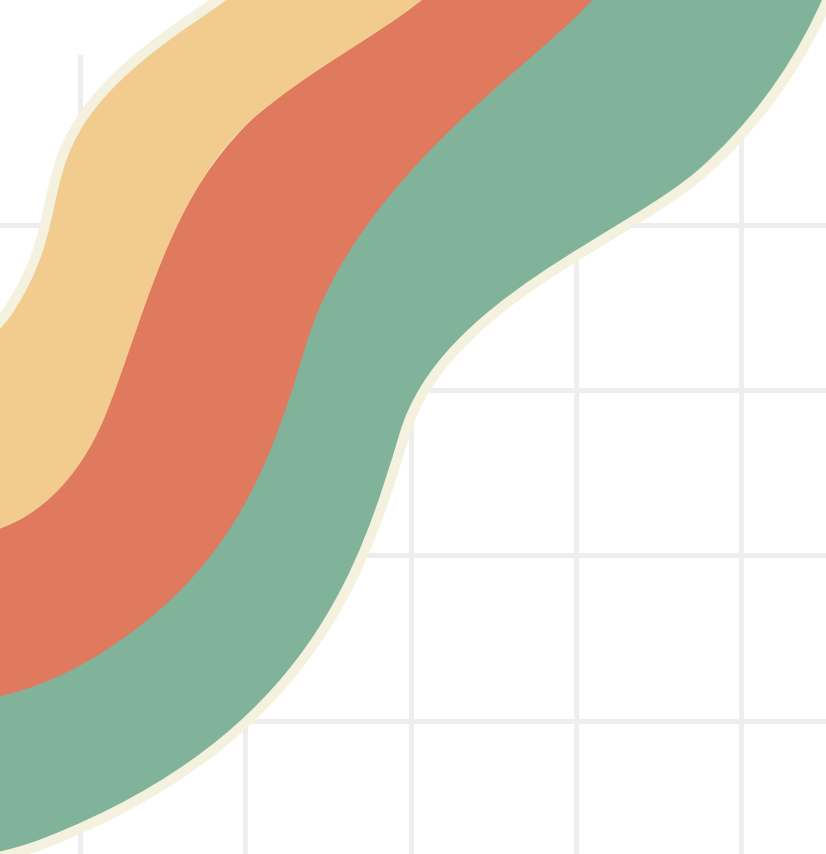
SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS

- Handles the formal assessment and documentation
 - Monitors student progress towards annual goals, includes progress monitoring updated each grading period
 - Collaborates with the general educator to ensure integration is successful
 - Takes raw data periodically
 - Training staff to follow BIPs and other protocol
 - Communicating with parents
- 



PARA PROFESSIONALS

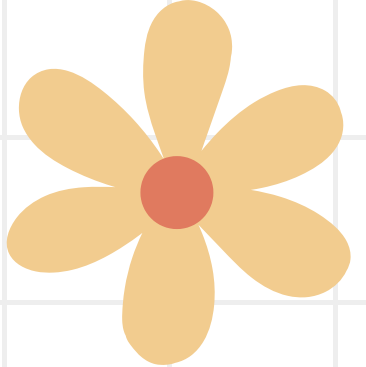
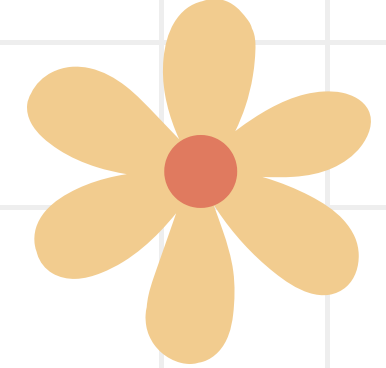
- A support staff that is not a teacher but that assists, supports, and works closely with teachers in instructing students
 - Minimum of 3 hours of college/university credit or equivalent in special education
 - Supports the teacher, but they are not responsible for direct instruction, taking data, or parent communication
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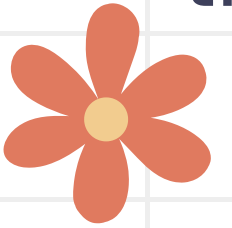
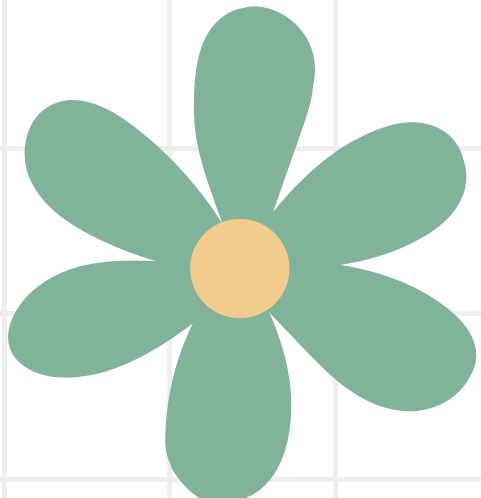
LEVELING

The level of your students was assigned on the case management list on WVEIS.

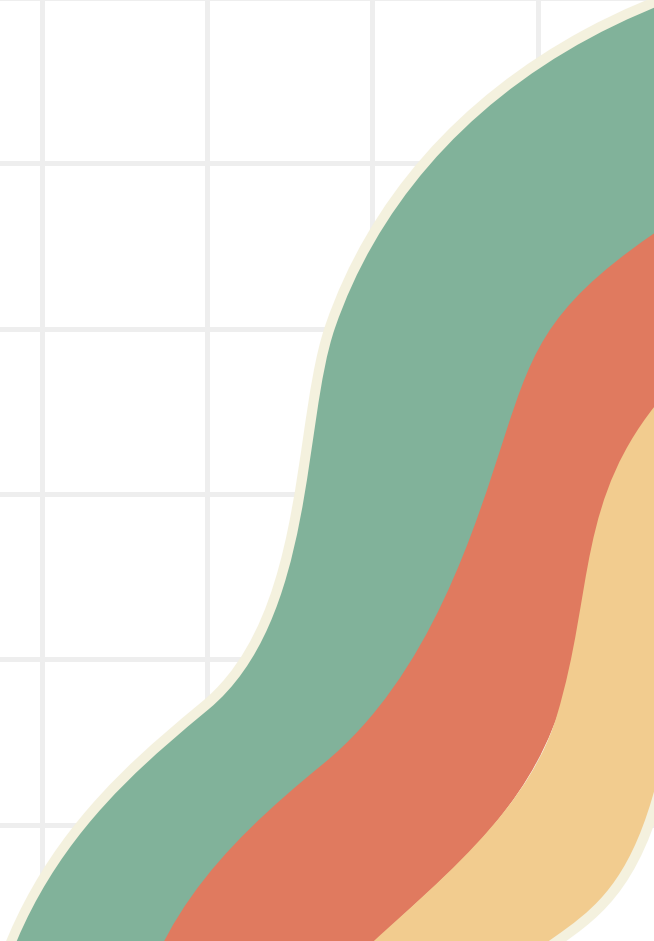
Leveling goes hand in hand with services. The student's level should determine the amount of services they need. Often, the level may not reflect the student's needs.

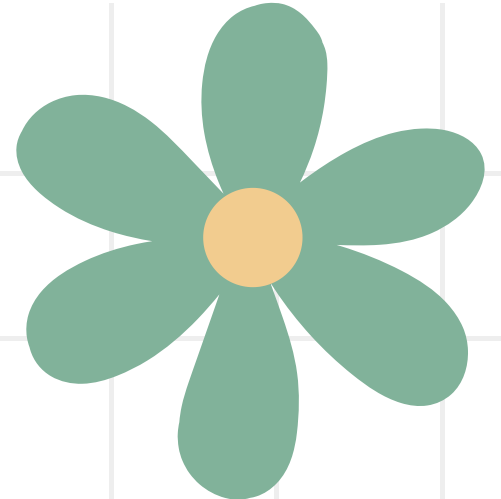
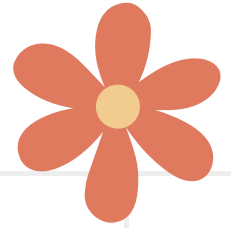
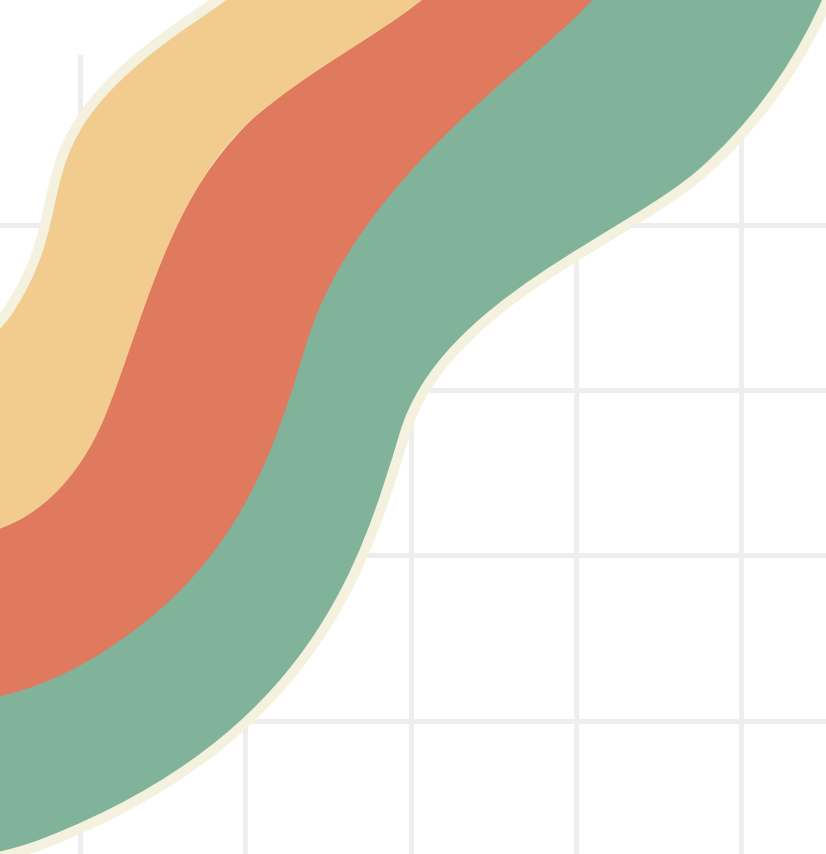


POLICY 2419

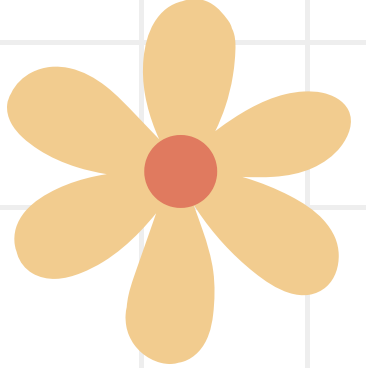
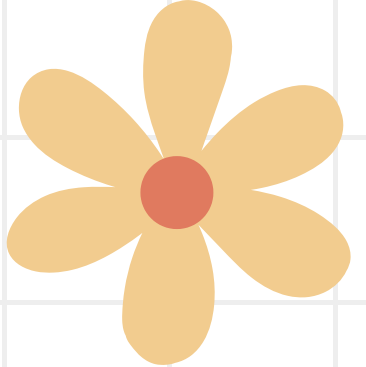


Your students level determines the caseload of the teacher and the minimum amount of staffing required.



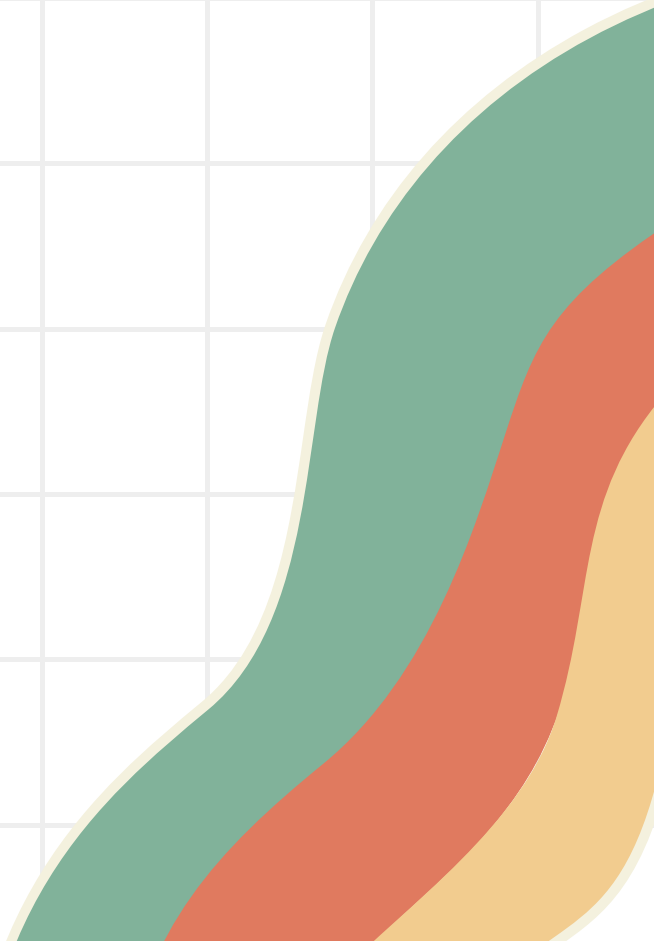
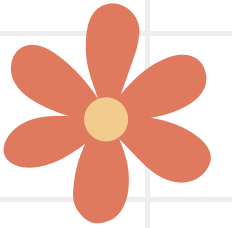
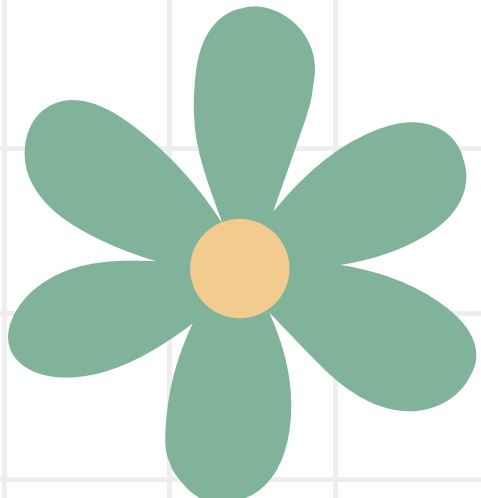


WHAT HAPPENS IF THE LEVELING ISN'T ACCURATE?

- Inaccurate leveling gives the appearance that the student has fewer needs. This also means that the teacher can have more students on their caseload and less staffing.
 - A teacher has to have enough support to teach with **fidelity**.
- 
- 

In short, this means your students must receive their IEP minutes as intended.

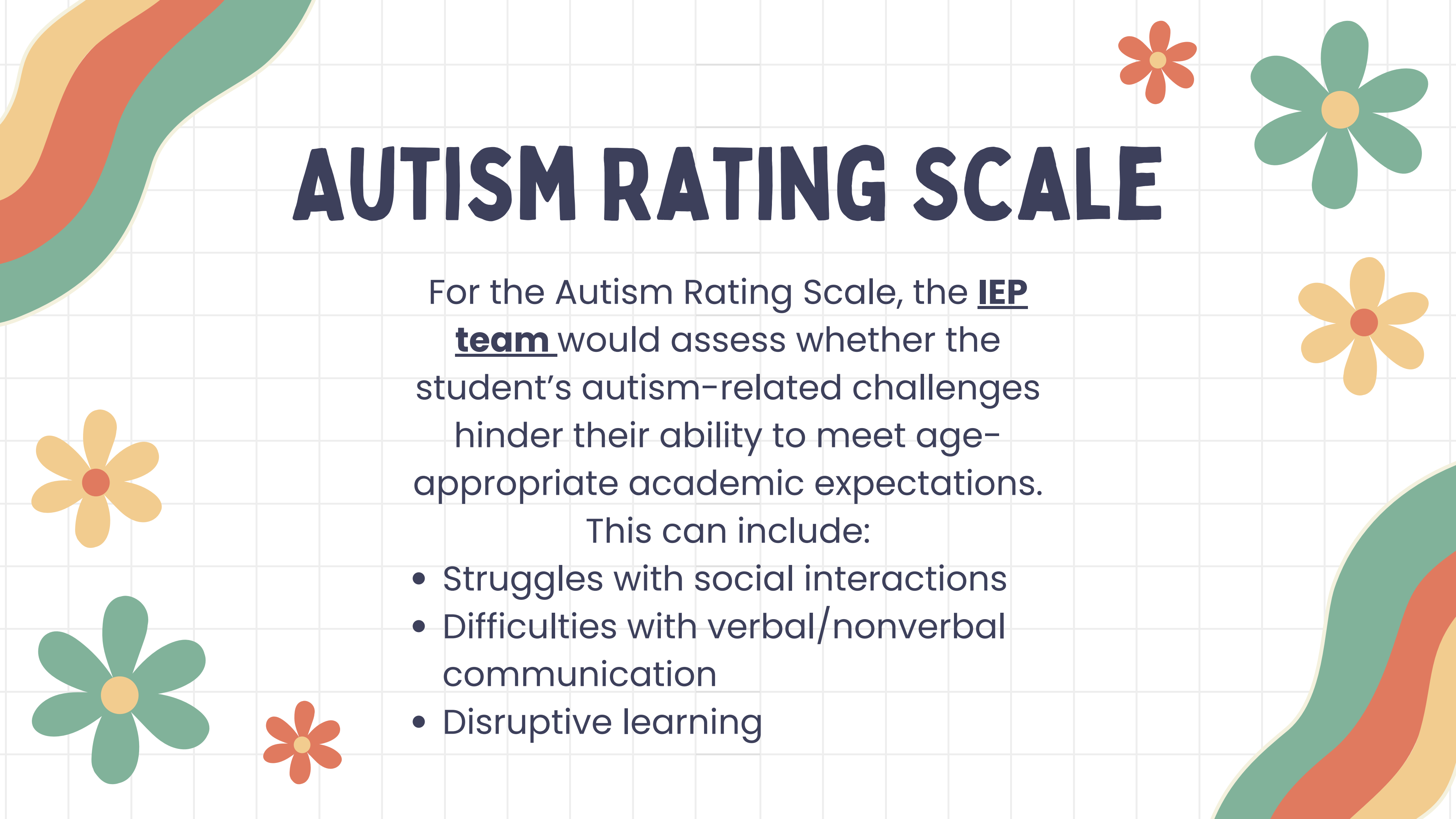
(See *Leveling Handout*)



WHAT QUALIFIES A CHILD FOR AN IEP?

IEP eligibility has 2 components

1. The IEP team must decide if the student qualifies under one of the 13 disability categories
2. Will that disability affect the student's academic performance, and/or can the general education teacher provide the student's instruction without supplementary aides and services? If the answer is **NO**, then they should qualify for an IEP

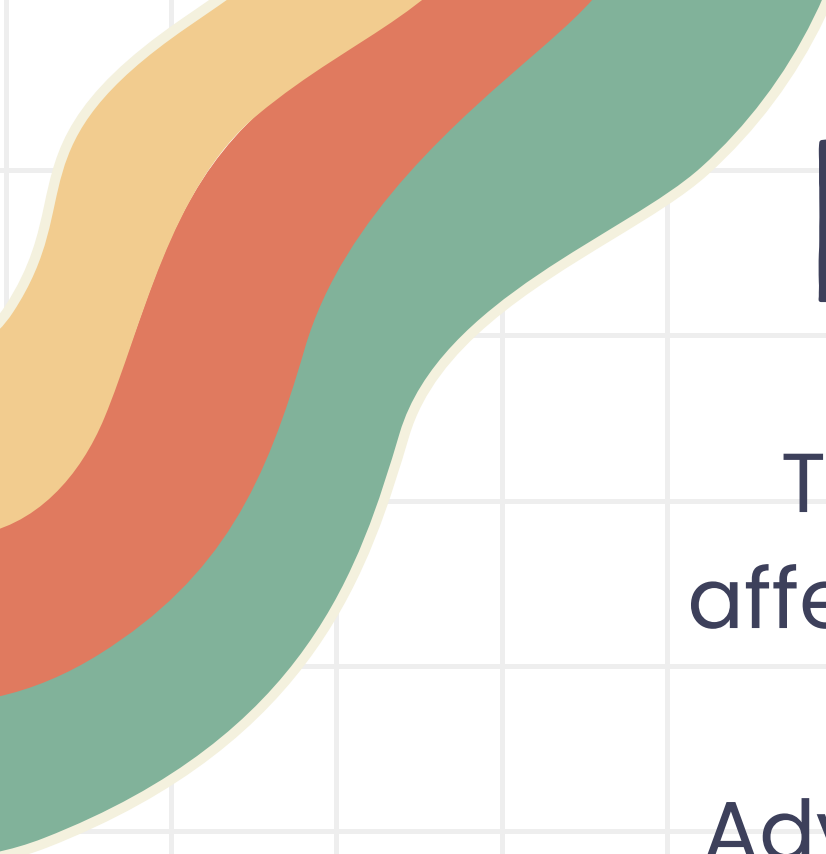
The slide features a light gray grid background. In the top-left corner, a stylized rainbow with yellow, orange, and green bands curves upwards. In the top-right corner, there are two flowers: a small orange one and a larger green one with a yellow center. In the bottom-left corner, there are two flowers: a yellow one and a larger green one with a yellow center. In the bottom-right corner, a stylized rainbow with green, orange, and yellow bands curves upwards. The title "AUTISM RATING SCALE" is centered in a large, bold, dark blue font.

AUTISM RATING SCALE

For the Autism Rating Scale, the **IEP team** would assess whether the student's autism-related challenges hinder their ability to meet age-appropriate academic expectations.

This can include:

- Struggles with social interactions
- Difficulties with verbal/nonverbal communication
- Disruptive learning



IEP TEAM DETERMINATION

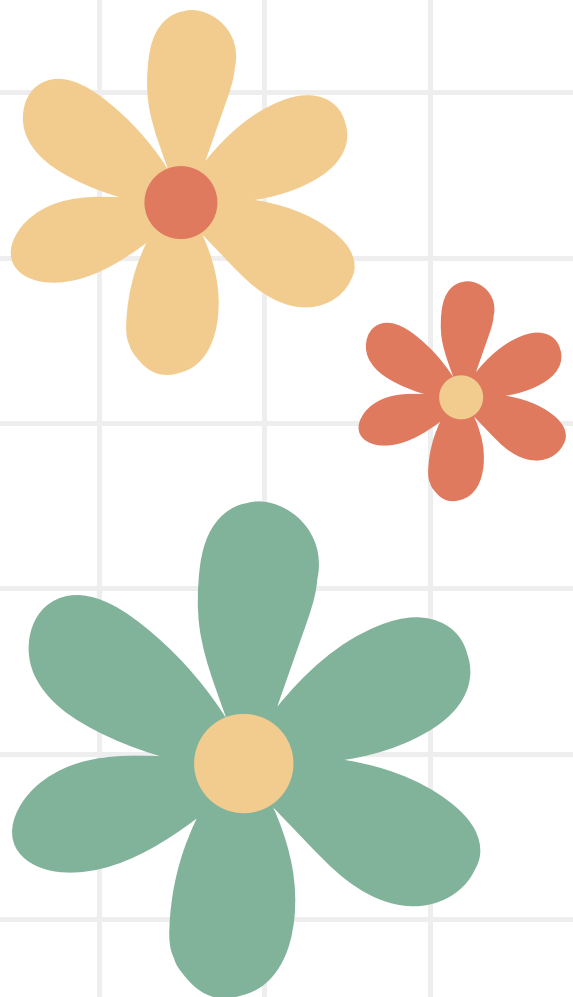
The IEP team must determine if the disability adversely affects the student's educational performance. Sometimes this may not affect them from accessing their GEE.

Adverse effects on educational performance may include:

- all aspects of the student's functioning at school
- accessing curriculum – depends on emotional health, age, appropriate social skills, and their ability to conduct appropriate classroom behavior, staying organized, etc.

Many IEP teams **mistakenly** limit their assessments to only someone's academic scores, instead of conducting a **holistic** review

Lack of availability or cost cannot be used as an excuse for denying services



THE ADVERSE IMPACT

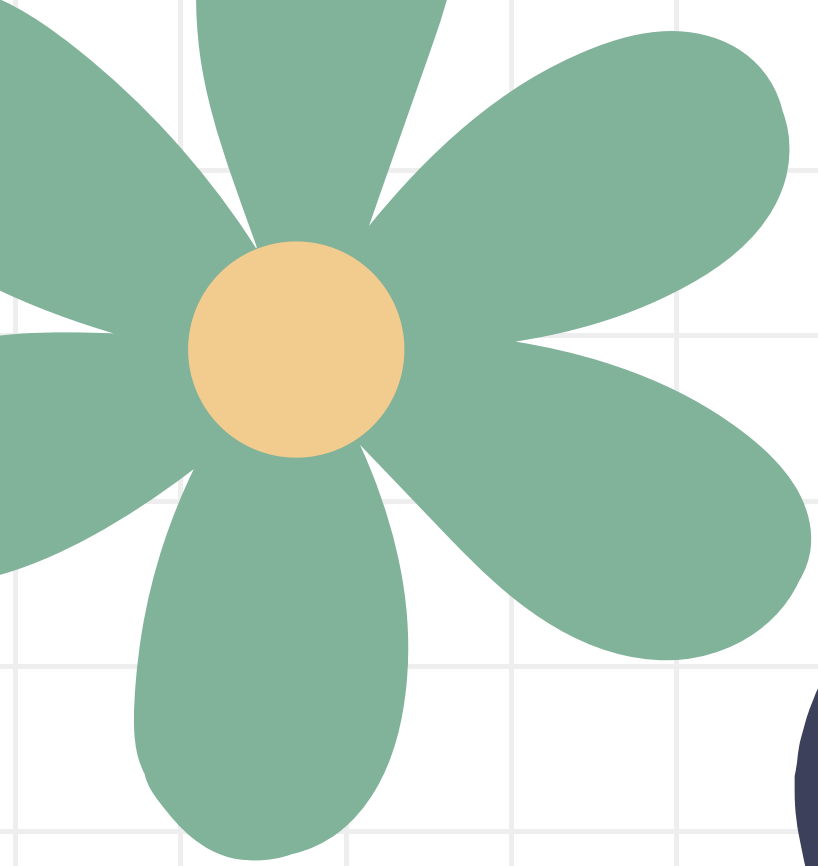
A disability can adversely impact a student's ability to learn in the GEE when it:

- Impairs functional skills (including fine motor) – if a student is frequently late, disoriented, or forgetful
- If they struggle to follow rules consistently.
- They may be a “messy writer” (difficulty with writing impacts almost every activity at school)
- Causes “behavioral problems” – if a student requires added supports to access the GEE, meaning these behaviors stem directly from the disability, those services would be provided with an IEP
 - Children lose hours of classroom instruction due to punishment
- Leads to poor emotional health
 - Children lose classroom time because they “spiral” – ADHD usually qualifies under OHI
- Medical needs
 - Children lose classroom time due to medical needs such as diabetes, seizure disorders, Tourette's syndrome, etc. These also qualify under OHI

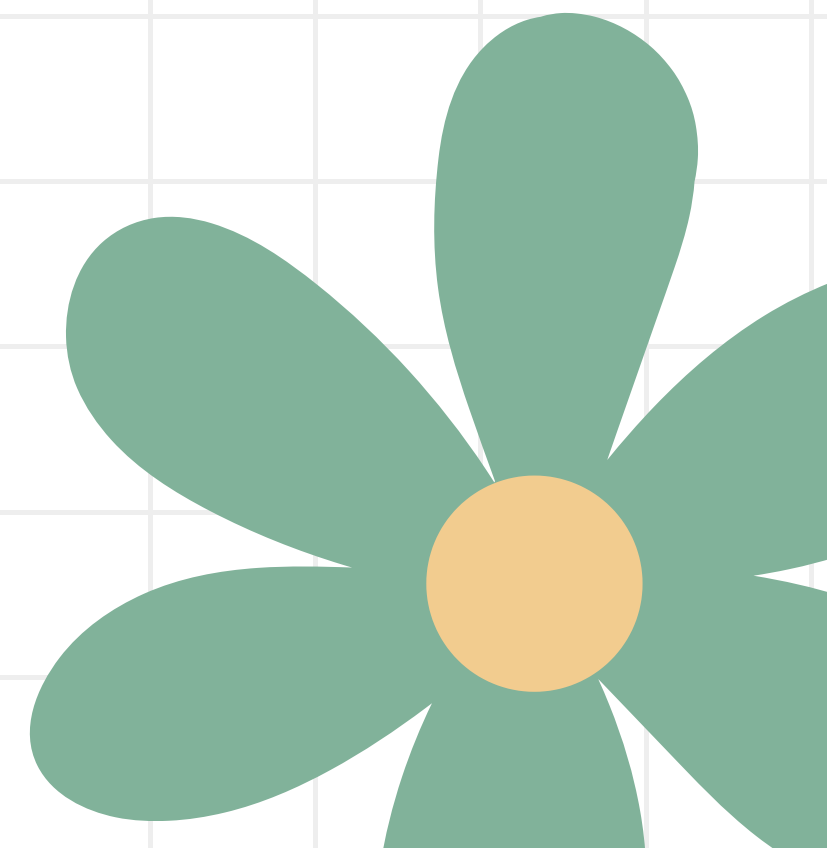
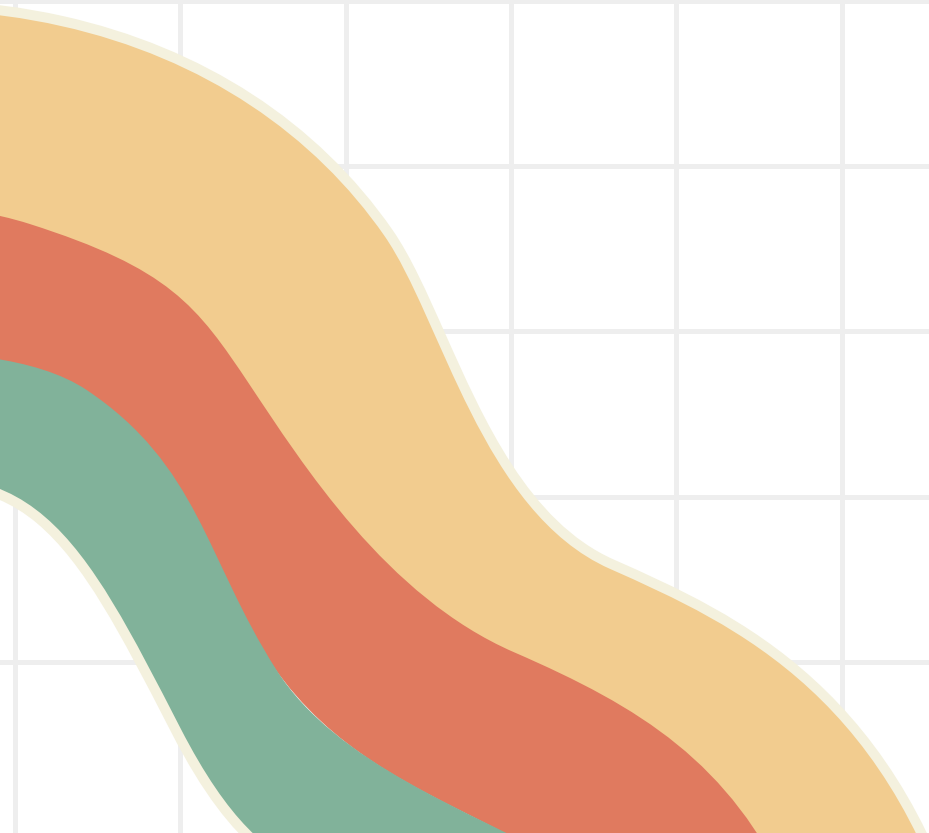
DENYING AN IEP

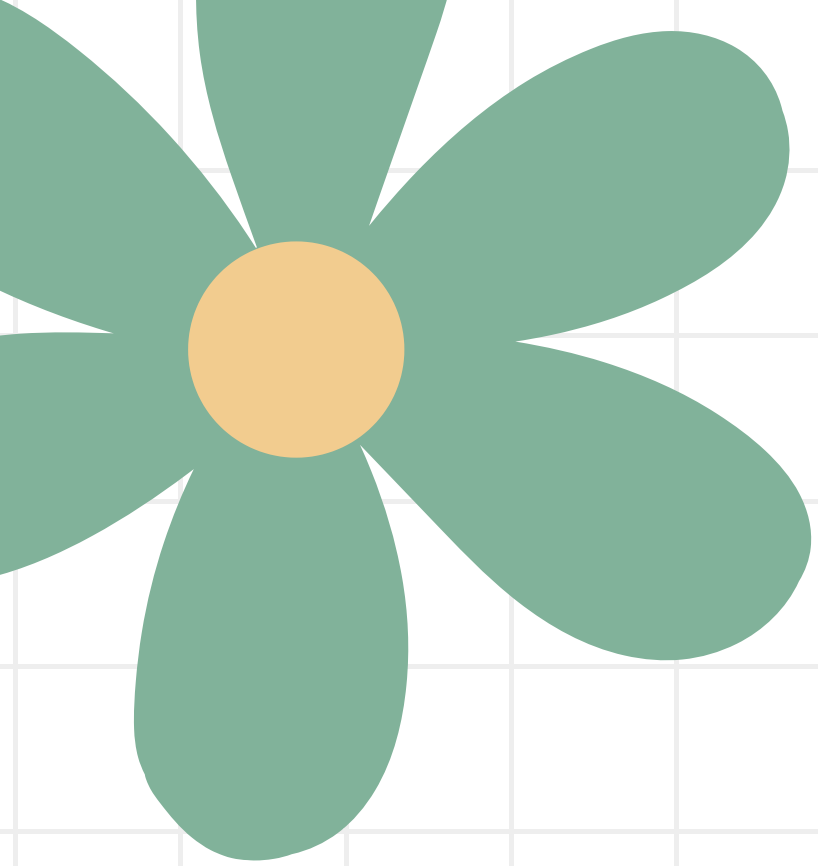
Denying an IEP based solely on school grades may be the most common misunderstanding of special education

- IDEA, Section 300.10 states that:
 - Each state must ensure that a FAPE is available to any individual child with a disability, including special education and related services
- Being smart, scoring highly on tests, and/or maintaining grade-level academics are not valid reasons to deny an IEP

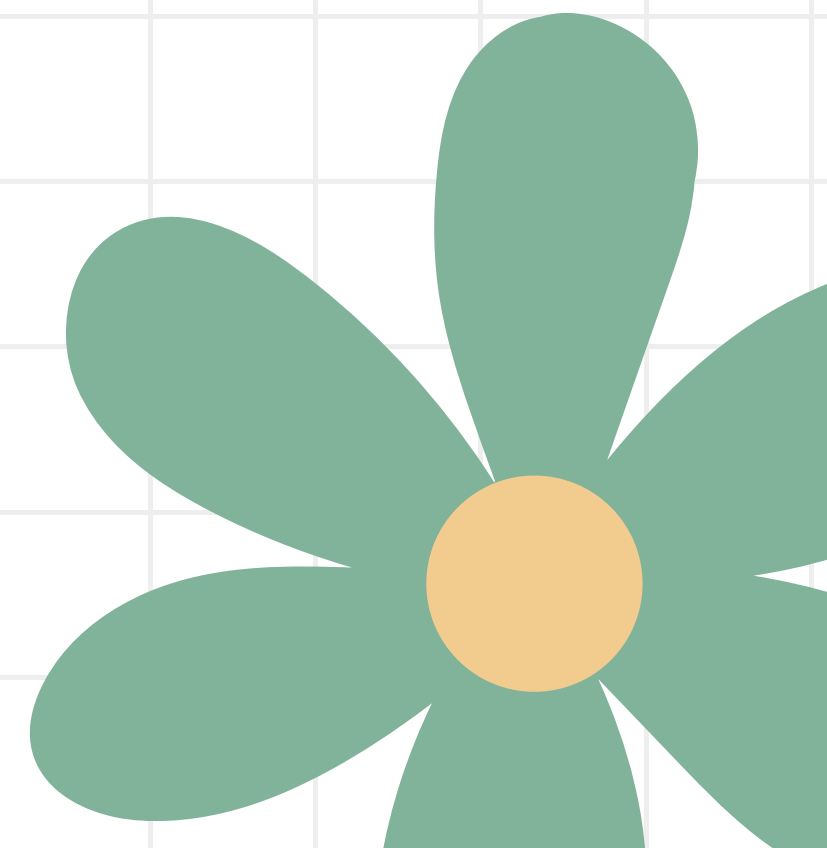
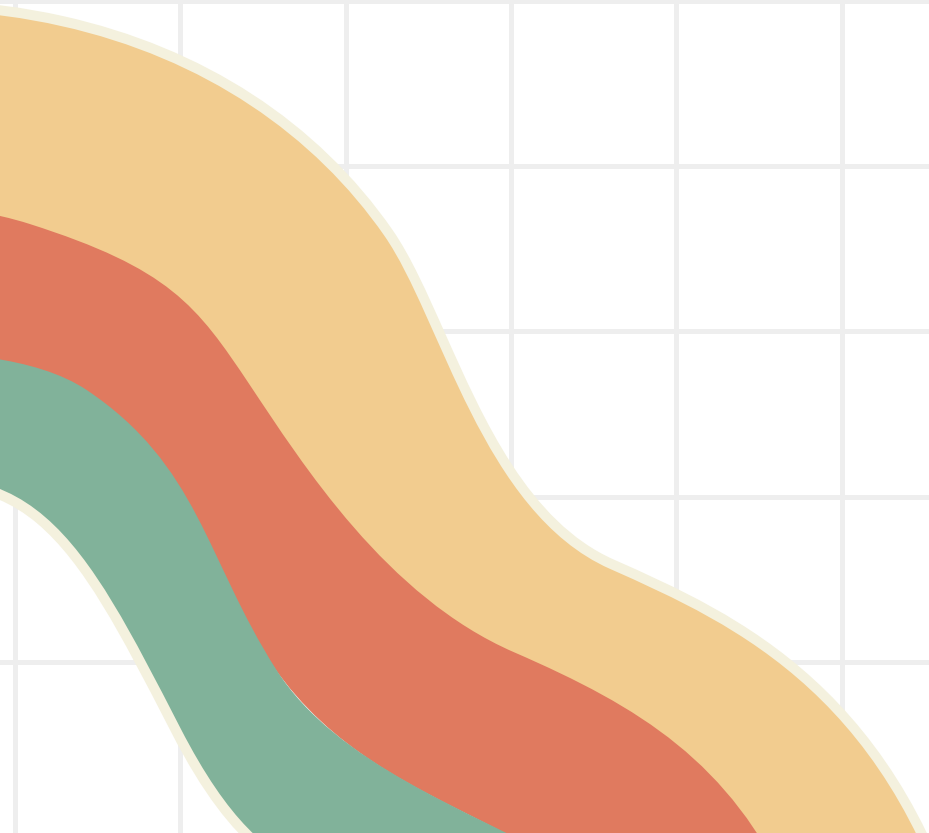


QUESTIONS?





THANK YOU!



CONTACT ME



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Please feel free to
contact me via email
or phone!