

What is an IEP?

Individual Education Plan (IEP)

Should a student be found by the MDE to be eligible and in need of specially designed instruction under guidelines of IDEIA 2004 and Chapter 14, the educational team will convene to develop an Individual Education Plan (IEP) to meet the unique needs of the student and provide a free, appropriate public education.

An IEP is a working document and can be revised at the request of IEP Team members. It must include the following information:

- Student information- demographics
 - *ex. age, birth date, address, phone number, parents' names, medications*
- Revision Dates- documenting each time the annual IEP is updated or refined to better meet a student's needs
- Team Signatures- documents participation in team meeting, not approval of program
- Procedural Safeguards Notice documentation- parent signature attesting to having received or having been offered summary of parents' rights. This document explains parent's rights concerning protections for students with disabilities. It needs to be given to parents at least once per school year.
- Special considerations- checklist of items that may have impact on educational programming to consider for every student in need of specially designed instruction
 - *ex. visual or hearing impairment, communication needs, assistive technology, limited English proficiency*
- Present levels of educational and functional performance- Qualitative and quantitative information regarding a student's level of performance, presenting issues in the classroom, academic and/or daily living skills, abilities, strengths and weaknesses, and responsiveness to previously tried interventions
 - *ex. instructional levels in reading and math, writing scores, grades, attendance data, PSSA scores, reading lexile levels or guided reading levels,*
- State & Local Assessment participation data- specific accommodations necessary for the student to participate meaningfully in district assessments and PSSA.
 - *Ex. small group test administration, frequent breaks and checks for task comprehension, extended time*
- Transition service plan- delineation of student's goals for post-secondary education, employment, and independent living. This section addresses school-based services that will help to prepare the student for access to and success in desired outcomes. Transition activities are defined by persons responsible, timelines, location of activities, and may be linked to a student's graduation project. Transition planning may include linkages to community-based resources such as Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) or Mental Health/Mental Retardation of Lehigh County (MH/MR).
- Goals/objectives- A descriptive statement projecting a student's expected growth or progress in one domain over a year's time. This section must include how progress will be measured and how often progress data will be sent home. Benchmarks, or standardized milestones of achievement, are often used to delineate progress over time. Evidence of student progress is usually added to this section quarterly.
 - *Ex. student will read and comprehend 5th grade level material with accuracy rates between 80-92% over 3 consecutive trials as measured by curriculum-based assessment; student will complete 5th grade level multi-step math application word problems with 90% or greater accuracy over 3 consecutive probes.*
- Special education modifications and related services- list of specific instructional methods, alternate materials, grouping strategies, curriculum changes, and environmental adaptations that will be modified for the purpose of addressing and remediating a student's specific skill deficiencies. This section reflects changes to the regular education program that will be implemented by one or more of the student's teachers.

- *Ex. small group adapted instruction with multisensory reading program, slower pace of math instruction at 3rd grade level with more frequent opportunities for student practice and immediate corrective feedback, teacher conferencing on essay drafts*
- *Speech & language deficits, physical limitations, or other student issues may prevent a student from full meaningful benefit of his/her IEP. Related services are those that maximize a student's access to the specially designed instruction, such as speech therapy, specialized transportation, or occupational therapy.*
- **Least Restrictive Environment Information**- this section addresses the type of special education support is best suited to carry out the duties of the specially designed instruction.
 - *Ex. Learning support, hearing support, emotional support*
- Time in general education classes and special education classes is defined. Special education supports brought into the general education class (inclusionary techniques) may also be included as special education time.

Who are the IEP team Members?

- An IEP meeting must include the special education teacher, at least one of the student's general education teachers, any related service therapists, and a district administrator (Local Education Agency Representative/LEA). Other participants can include the student, the guidance counselor, consultants brought in by the school district, community agency representatives, professionals who work with the student outside of school (such as a therapist or caseworker), or someone at the request of the parent. Students receiving transition services must be invited to their IEP meetings. Parents must be invited to IEP meetings and they must be held at mutually convenient times within the school day.
- If an IEP team member's area of expertise is not to be discussed or modified, parents and the LEA can agree in writing to omit that team member from the meeting. If a team member needs to participate but must be excused, parents and the LEA can agree in writing to excuse that team member upon sharing a written preview of that team member's information.
 - IEPs are developed at least annually. At any time, the parent, teacher, or any other member of the team may request to convene the team to discuss the continued appropriateness of the document. Minor changes may be made to the document following an annual review, without reconvening the team, provided parents and the LEA agree in writing to these changes.

How can parents maximize their participation in an upcoming IEP meeting?

- An *IEP* is a written individualized education plan created for your child and his/her unique learning needs as identified during the evaluation or re-evaluation process. The IEP document sets forth a commitment of resources in writing. It becomes a management tool and an evaluation device to ensure that each child found to be exceptional is provided with a free appropriate special education.
- The purpose of the *IEP team meeting* is to prepare and record the IEP document. This conference serves as a communication vehicle between parents and school personnel enabling them, as equal participants, to decide what the child's needs are, what services will be provided to meet those needs and what the anticipated outcomes may be. It is the cornerstone of the special education process and the key to the services your child receives.
 - Write down your ideas/questions before hand - bring these with you to the meeting - feel free to take notes and ask questions throughout the meeting.
 - Share your observations about your child (his/her educational and physical development, medical history, social activities, homework habits, study skills, etc. You may want to bring work samples.
 - Talk to your child prior to the meeting. Ask him/her for input. If age appropriate, include child in the planning meeting.

- If you don't understand something - ASK! Educational/psychological jargon can be confusing.
- It is a parent's option to hold the Evaluation Report meeting and the IEP the same day by signing a waiver. You may want to schedule these meetings on 2 separate days.
- Creatively explore options as part of the IEP planning.
- As your child grows, strengths, needs and education demands change. The IEP is a working plan and it can be revised and amended at any time.
- Signing the IEP indicates your participation, not your agreement. It should be a team effort to develop an appropriate IEP. If you are satisfied with your child's proposed program, say so. If you are dissatisfied or uncertain, express your concerns so alternatives can be explored.
- Clarify how your child's program will fit into his/her existing schedule particularly at the secondary level. Will he/she miss clubs, study hall, come in before or after school, etc. Help the plan fit the unique needs of your child.
- Determine who will insure the necessary resources are available.

Other Parent Considerations

- Check with your child frequently regarding the implementation of the IEP and his/her progress. If you have concerns, contact the teacher and/or principal immediately. All teachers have e-mail and voicemail for frequent contact.
- If you believe your child's IEP is not being followed:
- jot down why you believe this is true
- call your child's teacher or principal to share your concern(s)
- discuss possible solutions and plan a course of action
- follow-up with your child and school to see if it's working
- if informal contact has not resolved the issue, contact principal in writing to request the IEP team reconvene.