

# Understanding the IEP




*Wiseburn Unified SD*  
&  
*Da Vinci Schools*

***Commitment to Students with Special  
Needs***




*The IEP and You*



Dear Parents and Guardians,

This resource was developed to provide you information on how the special education program and the Individualized Education Program (IEP) works so you can meaningfully participate in making informed decisions about your student's educational program.

The guide gives suggestions on what you can do to prepare for the meeting, and additional information about what happens during the meeting and the development of the IEP document. If you require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact the special education staff at your school or through the district office.



We hope that you find this to be a useful tool in understanding the process and supports you and your family as you journey through the educational system as a parent with a child with a disability.

Sincerely,

Wiseburn & Da Vinci Schools

Special Education Leadership Team

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Peter Burnett Elementary School (3-5)  
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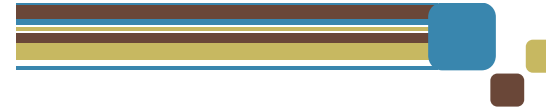
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## Background

If your child is eligible for special education services he or she is entitled, by federal law known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) to receive a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) at no expense to the family. FAPE is different for each child because each child has unique or individual needs. Generally, children receiving special education supports and services should have access to and make progress in the general education curriculum. They should also be allowed to fully participate in all activities sponsored by the school, as appropriate.

Federal law requires that children with disabilities must be educated in the general education classroom with their nondisabled peers as much as possible based on what is appropriate for the child. This is known as the Least Restrict Environment (LRE). LRE means that the IEP team must first consider education of the child at the school the child would attend if nondisabled, in a general education classroom, with appropriate supports and services. If the IEP team believes the child's unique needs cannot be met there, then other options are considered. Page 5 will provide you a list of placement options that teams often consider.



### **The Referral and Assessment Process**

Once students are referred to the special education team for assessment, an assessment plan is developed and sent to parents for review and consent. It outlines the types of assessments recommended and the staff member who will be conducting the assessment. Upon receipt of permission to assess the student,, the district has 60 calendar days to complete the assessment. The assessment process requires several staff members to observe, interview, conduct informal and standardized assessments with the student. After the assessments have been completed, the team combines information in a multi-disciplinary report for the team to review at the meeting.

The assessment domains considered in a comprehensive assessment include:

Pre-academic and Academic Achievement  
Social & Emotional Development  
Motor Ability  
Language and Speech Communication  
General Ability  
Audiological Assessment (if required)  
Health and Developmental Information  
Post Secondary Transition.

These assessments are conducted by specialists such as Adaptive Physical Education Teacher, Audiologist, School Nurse, School Psychologist, Language and Speech Specialist, Special Education Teacher, Interpreter/Translator, Occupational Therapist.

### **The IEP**

One of the most important parts of the special education process for students found eligible for special education is the Individual Education Program (IEP). It is developed by a team of qualified staff including parents to assure that the student's unique needs are considered.

It includes;

- Present levels of educational performance
- Annual goals
- Progress toward annual goals and how parent(s) will be informed
- Short term instructional objectives or benchmarks
- Specific special education, related services, supplementary aids and services, and a statement of program modifications or supports for school personnel
- Beginning date, amount, frequency, location and anticipated duration of services and modifications
- Extent of participation in regular education programs
- Language) or mode(s) of communication
- Participation in statewide assessments
- Placement
- Extended school year if appropriate

## **What Agency Can Assist Me with Supports for my child who has Developmental Disabilities?**

The Department of Developmental Services is responsible for designing and coordinating a wide array of services for California residents with developmental disabilities. [Regional centers](#) help plan, access, coordinate and monitor these services and supports.

A Person-Centered Planning approach is used in making decisions regarding where a person with developmental disabilities will live and the kinds of services and supports that may be needed.

### **Harbor Regional Center**

21231 Hawthorne Blvd.  
Torrance, Ca. 90503

310-540-1711

### **Westside Regional Center**

5901 Green Valley Circle # 320  
Culver City, CA 90230

310-258-4000



# How Can I Learn More About Programs & Services and Get Involved?

## Community Advisory Committee (CAC)

The Community Advisory Committee (CAC) acts in an advisory capacity to the Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA). This committee provides an opportunity for parents, professionals and other community members to provide important input as it relates to our special education programs.

Parents comprise a majority of the membership of the CAC. Of these members, the majority are parents of children with special needs. Other members may include special education teachers, general education teachers, other school personnel, representatives of related public and private agencies and school administrators.

Regular monthly meetings/workshops ensure that members are well informed about current programs and legislation. All CAC meetings are open to the public. For a complete schedule of the CAC meetings go to [www.swselpa.org](http://www.swselpa.org) or contact the Family Resource Center at 310-

## What is a SELPA?

In 1977, all school districts and county school offices were required to form geographical regions of sufficient size and scope to provide for all special education service needs of children residing within the region boundaries. Each region (Special Education Local Plan Area) developed a local plan describing how it would provide special education services. Today, there are approximately 128 SELPAs in the state.

Two SELPAs support the Wiseburn USD and Da Vinci Schools. Southwest SELPA (310) 944-3217 & El Dorado County SELPA (530)295-2462



## Disability Categories

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), lists 13 separate categories of disabilities under which children may be eligible for special education and related services. These are:

- **autism:** a developmental disability significantly affecting verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction, generally evident before age 3. Includes Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD)
- **deafness:** a hearing impairment that is so severe that the child is impaired in processing linguistic information, with or without amplification
- **deaf-blindness:** simultaneous hearing and visual impairments
- **hearing impairment:** an impairment in hearing, whether permanent or fluctuating
- **Intellectual disability:** significantly sub average general intellectual functioning existing concurrently with deficits in adaptive behavior
- **multiple disabilities:** the manifestation of two or more disabilities (such as mental retardation-blindness), the combination of which requires special accommodation for maximal learning
- **orthopedic impairment:** physical disabilities, including congenital impairments, impairments caused by disease, and impairments from other causes
- **other health impairment:** having limited strength, vitality, or alertness due to chronic or acute health problems
- **emotional disturbance:** a disability where a child of typical intelligence has difficulty, over time and to a marked degree, building satisfactory interpersonal relationships; responds inappropriately behaviorally or emotionally under normal circumstances; demonstrates a pervasive mood of unhappiness; or has a tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears
- **specific learning disability:** a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, which may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations
- **speech or language impairment:** a communication disorder such as stuttering, impaired articulation, a language impairment, or a voice impairment
- **traumatic brain injury:** an acquired injury to the brain caused by an external physical force, resulting in total or partial functional disability or psychosocial impairment, or both
- **visual impairment:** a visual difficulty (including blindness) that, even with correction, adversely affects a child educational performance

## IEP Meeting Agenda

All members of the IEP team gather in one location to discuss your child and decide whether he or she requires special education services.

The sample agenda below supports that the team will develop, review and/or revise the document.

- Welcome & Introductions
- Purpose of the Meeting-Overview Time Restraints and Ground Rules
- Review of Parent rights and Responsibilities
- Parent Concerns
- Student Strengths
- Distribution of reports from team members
- Discussion of findings

Staff members will be summarizing this information on the Notes page and/or on several pages of the document. This is done electronically with a confidential web-based system.

- Present levels of Performance are reviewed
- Team discussion regarding eligibility
- Recommendations/Establishment of specific goals and objectives based on the information
- Supports and Services are discussed
- Placement and Consideration of Least Restrictive Environment
- District offer of Free and Appropriate Public Education
- Signatures for attendance and consent of recommendations
- Next steps if there are follow up items

Parents should be included in all discussions and be encouraged to provide meaningful participation in the discussions.

Students may attend the IEP as well to provide their preferences and support (prior to age 16) information in order to develop a Individual Transition Plan.

Districts will provide a copy of the IEP to parents at the close of the meeting.

## Items Parents Should Keep

- ◆ Report cards and progress reports
- ◆ Standardized test scores
- ◆ Assessment results
- ◆ Individualized Educational Program (IEP)
- ◆ Medical records relating to disability and ability to learn
- ◆ Notices of disciplinary actions
- ◆ Notes on your child's behavior or progress
- ◆ Letter or notes to and from the school or teacher, special educators, evaluators, and administrators
- ◆ IEP meeting notices
- ◆ Attendance records
- ◆ Parent Student Handbooks
- ◆ Awards Received by your child
- ◆ Samples of school work



## After the IEP Meeting

### ***The School will:***

Distribute copies or summaries of the IEP to the child's teacher(s) and other staff responsible for implementing the IEP so they can begin providing services to your child.

Discuss with the student any changes that will occur as a result of the IEP.

Notify District staff responsible for follow up actions such as additional assessment, translation of the IEP or other needs such as transportation and/or school changes.

Provide parents information in the form of written progress reports relating to your child's progress toward meeting his/her IEP goals and objectives. A meeting may be requested at any time to review and revise the IEP.

Conference with you at the same time the other students receive conference opportunities.

### ***Parents & Guardians will :***

Ask staff responsible for providing special education and related services to your child what you can do to reinforce skills at home.

Attend meetings and conferences schedule with the staff to discuss school wide activities and individual progress and learning.

Access area wide parent education made available through the SELPA and/or Family Resource Centers.

Share a copy of the IEP or reports with non –District professionals such as pediatricians or day care providers so that they can assist you and the student with any non educational concerns.

Make a folder or notebook to keep copies of your child's IEPs, report and other information relating to special education services.

Keep in mind that developing an IEP is a process and includes a collaboration between home and school. Students learn at different rates and make academic gains in slow but steady progressions.

Learn more about the specific disability your student has been identified with and ask questions of the professionals to help explain any information needed to support your child.

## Range of Service Options to Support Access to the General Education Curriculum

Services for your child may be provided at the school of residence or non resident school with the following level of support:

General Education classroom with in-class special education instruction which may include co-planning, consultation and push in or embedded services.

General Education classroom with out of class special education support which may include strategy instruction, the use of supplemental programming , ongoing progress monitoring and /or related services.

Special education classroom with or without participation in the general education setting. Services may be provided at the resident or non resident school, Special School or Center, Non public School, at Home or in a Hospital Program, or In or Out of State Residential School.

### **Definitions**

Special Education Services (Specialized Academic Instruction). These services are designed to help you child access the general education curriculum and may include the support of a Resource Teacher, Education Specialist or Special Day Class Teacher.

### **Related Services**

These services may include Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy or Counseling. Speech/Language Specialists and Adaptive Physical Education are also considered related services.

### **Accommodations**

Actions that do not fundamentally alter the instructional requirements but provide access to students who need support due to their disabilities. Examples are : providing extra time to complete work, working in a small group, use of audiotape lectures or materials such as books on tape. Reducing the reading level for instruction or use of a word processor or other device.

### **Modifications**

Students who are included in general education classes may require materials and instruction that fundamentally alters the general education content at their age appropriate levels. For example, some students may be working on an alternative curriculum based on their present levels of performance vs. grade level standards in a specific area. Students with more impactful conditions often require life skills and/or basic skills curriculum.

### **Supplementary Aids**

Some students require additional supports such as the use of an interpreter, adaptive materials such as braille or behavioral assistance staff.

### **Individual Transition Plan (ITP)**

A plan written for children by age 16 which identifies goals and activities to help them move from high school to adult life.