

What is Special Education? An IEP Bootcamp for Parents and Caregivers

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Learning Objectives

In this session, participants will:

- Understand Assistive Technology and available resources
- Understand the Evaluation/Re-Evaluation Process
- Identify the critical components of an IEP
- Develop understanding of Least Restrictive Environment
 - Continuum of Services
 - Placement Decisions
- Learn valuable skills to increase parental involvement in your child's special education planning

What is Assistive Technology (AT)?

Per IDEA, AT means “any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially off the shelf, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of a child with a disability...” (Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1401 (1)).

What does this mean? “Any item” should be thought of in broad terms to include any technology from high tech software systems to everyday items such as tennis balls.

The AT continuum moves from no tech/low tech to mid tech to high tech.

If it helps do something better or more easily...it's AT!

Domains of AT:

AT can be used in any academic/access area: hearing/vision, reading, writing (motor and content), math, communication, study and organization, activities of daily living, recreation/leisure, pre-vocational/vocational, seating and mobility, computer access.

When considering AT, move on the continuum from low tech to high tech.

AT decision making - where do we start? SETT Process

AT Consideration

AT should be considered at least annually at a student's IEP annual review.

Questions to consider:

1. What task do we want the student to do, that he/she cannot do at a level that reflects his/her abilities?
2. Is the student able to complete the task with special strategies or accommodations?
3. Is the student using any universal tools?
4. Are any AT tools currently being used? If so, are they effective?
5. Would the use of AT help the student perform the task?

What universal tools are available in D95?

Universal tools are available in the following areas:

Communication (static core vocabulary boards, simple voice output devices, social scripts, universal AAC in Early Childhood and Social Communication programs)

Reading (predictable texts, change settings for font/spacing/color/background, adapted books for page turning, use of pictures/symbols with text, line readers, remove visual distractions, text to speech/text reader software)

Writing - content (writing templates, word walls/cards/boards, word prediction software, speech to text software, text to speech software)

Universal Tools continued

Writing - motoric aspect (variety of pens/pencils, adaptive grips, slantboard, prewritten words/phrases, templates, word processing, speech to text software)

Math: calculators, timers

Study/organization (print/picture schedules, highlight text, apps for planning, timers)

Questions?

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What is Special Education

Special education is a broad term used to by the law (IDEA) to describe specially designed instruction that meets the unique needs of a child who has a disability. These services are provided by the public school system and are free of charge. Services can include instruction in the classroom, at home, in hospitals and institutions.

The Secret Language of IEPs

IDEA- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act- a law ensuring services to children with disabilities throughout the nation. IDEA governs how states and public agencies provide early intervention, special education and related services to more than 6.5 million eligible infants, toddlers, children and youth with disabilities.

EDC-Eligibility Determination Conference

MD-Multidisciplinary Conference

FAPE-Free and Appropriate Public Education

LRE- Least Restrictive Environment

Rtl- Response to Intervention

PLAAFP- Present Levels of Academic and Functional Performance

FBA- Functional Behavioral Assessment

BIP- Behavior Intervention Plan

Steps in the IEP Process

- **Identification**
 - Child Find
 - Request for evaluation
- **Domain Meeting**
 - Determines whether or not the district will proceed with an evaluation.
 - If an evaluation is indicated, determines which assessments will be administered and by whom.
- **Evaluation**
 - Case Study
 - Responsiveness to Intervention (RtI)
 - Multidisciplinary Conference (MD)/ Eligibility Determination Conference (EDC)

Referral Process

The *referral* process for special education begins when a parent or staff member asks the school district to evaluate a student to determine if the student qualifies to receive special education services.

The *date of referral* is the date of written parental request for an evaluation. Screening procedures are NOT considered an evaluation.

Within 14 school days of receiving a written request, the school district will decide whether or not an evaluation is warranted, then provide parents with paperwork to provide formal written consent or with a letter describing why an evaluation is not warranted.

A request for an evaluation is made by the parent to determine the child's eligibility for special education.

14 school days

Step 2: Decision to Proceed
At this stage, the district meets with the parent to determine whether an evaluation should proceed. If yes, the district needs to determine what domains will be evaluated and will request the parent's consent to do the evaluation.

Timeline does not start until parent signs consent

Step 3: Consent to Evaluate

The evaluation cannot proceed until the parent has provided informed written consent for the district to begin the evaluation. Timelines for completing the evaluation do not start until consent has been given by the parent.

Step 4: Evaluation

During a period of up to 60 school days, district personnel can take the steps needed to complete the evaluation. If any part of the evaluation has been written in final form, it may be shared with the parent.

60 school days
(Step 5 must occur by the 60th day)

Step 5: Eligibility Conference & IEP

By the end of the 60th school day, the evaluation team must meet with the parent to decide if the child is eligible for special education. If yes, an IEP team must then meet with the parent to develop the IEP for the student.

Initial Placement does not occur until parent signs consent

Step 6: Consent for Placement

Before the special education services can begin, the parent must provide written informed consent to allow the district to proceed with the placement. Placement may begin no sooner than 10 days after the parent consents, unless the parent gives permission for it to start sooner.

Parental Involvement in the Referral Process

Be an active participant in your child's education by:

- Contacting your child's teacher if you are concerned about your child's progress in school.
- Taking note of both your child's strengths and needs.
- Participating in discussions or meetings with school personnel to decide if your child is eligible to receive special education services.
- Attending and being prepared to actively participate in the Eligibility Determination Conference (EDC) meetings.

Parental Involvement in the Referral Process, *continued*

Be an active participant in your child's education by:

- Asking questions if you do not understand terms, language, or the referral process.
- Sharing letters or reports from doctors or therapists that can help the school consider the needs of your child.
- Starting a file to keep important papers you receive from school regarding your child's progress in school, referencing meetings, or email communications.

Case Study Evaluation

Once an evaluation is deemed necessary and parents have signed consent, the educational team has 60 days to complete the evaluation and conduct and eligibility conference. This process is also called a domain meeting.

In preparing for an evaluation, the school district must assess the child in all areas of suspected disability including some or all of the following:

- academic achievement
- cognitive/intellectual functioning
- health
- vision/hearing
- social and emotional status
- communication
- functional performance
- motor abilities

All testing must be completed by qualified professionals, using a variety of reliable and valid testing measures which may include standardized testing, interviews, observations and checklists.

Who's around the table?

- Parents (may bring others with knowledge or expertise about the child, or an advocate)
Special Education Teacher
- General Education Teacher
- School Psychologist
- Any professional who conducted evaluations
- District Representative (LEA-Local Educational Authority) Student (if appropriate-must be invited if 14.5 years or older) Parents must agree in writing to dismiss a member of a team



Eligibility Determination Conference (EDC)

The eligibility conference is a meeting wherein the results of all of the evaluation components are discussed to determine special education eligibility as determined by IDEA.

For a child to be eligible for special education services, the disability **MUST** have an adverse effect on the child's educational performance. Students may qualify under more than one category.

The category of disability alone does determine where a student will go to school and what kind of services they need.

Meaningful Parent Participation during the EDC Meeting

Share your:

- child's strengths, interests and needs
- vision for your child's future (transition planning)
- perspective as the foremost "expert" on your child
- **Ask questions to understand others' perspectives and listen to their answers**
- **Ask teammates for input and insight based upon their areas of expertise**



What to expect at an Eligibility Determination Conference (EDC)

- Parents will receive draft copies of all evaluation reports prior to the meeting
 - Expect the meeting to last 1.5 to 2 hours
 - Team reviews evaluation reports
 - Areas of need and strength are identified
 - Team determines if the student is eligible for special education services
 - The disability must have an educational impact
 - If child is eligible, an IEP is developed
 - If child is not eligible, the district must justify their refusal.

Eligibility Categories (as determined by IDEA)

- Autism
- Intellectual Disability
- Deaf-Blindness
- Deafness
- Hearing Impairment
- Developmental Delay (aged 3-9 years old)
- Emotional Disability
- Multiple Disabilities
- Orthopedic Impairment
- Other Health Impaired
- Specific Learning Disability
- Speech or Language Impairment
- Traumatic Brain Injury
- Visual Impairment

Initial Consent for Special Education

Initial consent is required to provide special education services. This is called the Initial Provision of Special Education Services.

After ***initial*** eligibility is determined, parents must provide written consent to allow the school district to provide special education supports and services to their child as determined by the team on the new IEP.

- Only one parent signature is required (depends of JPA)
- A lack of consent means that NO special education services are provided and the child is not eligible for special education
- This is ONLY time that a parent must agree and sign off on services
- At any other IEP meeting, parents have 10 days to either:
 - Call another IEP meeting
 - File for Due Process

When the sun sets on the 10th day, (if no other action is taken) the IEP shall rise like a Phoenix and shall become law!

Goal of every IEP meeting is for schools and parents to collaborate in order to use data to make appropriate educational decisions for children.



Meaningful Parent Participation:

Preparing for an IEP Meeting

- Review the most recent IEP, progress reports, work samples, and other school records
- Review drafted goals and present levels of functioning prior to meeting
- Prepare to share ideas for drafted goals based on present level of performance and your vision for your child
- Discuss what information will be shared at the meeting with your spouse or child's mother/father/guardian
- Inquire with your child's school how long they have scheduled the IEP team meeting

Next Step...*The IEP*

A written plan that guides the delivery of special education and related services for a child with a disability.

An IEP is a right that is granted by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

An IEP:

Is developed at least annually and is designed *collaboratively* by a multidisciplinary *team* that includes parental input. Is predicated on assessment data that determines:

- Eligibility
- Services
- Contains measurable goals and objectives that related to the Common Core and State Learning Standards.
- Secures your child's rights under IDEA.
- Must convey an educational benefit.

An IEP is NOT a parent/teacher conference!

Major Components of an Individual Education Plan

An IEP MUST contain:

- Parental input
- Present Levels of Performance
- How disability impacts performance
- Data
- Discrepancy from peers (RTI)

Annual goals

- Correlate to standards
- Academic and functional
- *SMART*
 - Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Timely

Major Components of an Individual Education Plan (cont'd)

- Objectives and benchmarks
- How and when progress will be measured.
- Goals drive placement
- Special education services
 - Type
 - Minutes
- Related Services
 - Type
 - Minutes
 - Supplementary aids and services

Transition Planning

- IEP must include a transition plan for all students ages 14 1/2 and older.
- Postsecondary goals
 - Strengths
 - Preferences
 - Interests
- Vocational and Postsecondary Assessment
- Coordinated Transition services
 - Instruction
 - related services
 - participation in the community
- Development of employment and other post-secondary life goals
 - Acquisition of daily living skills
- Referral to postsecondary agencies for housing, day program, employment

Related Services

- ★ Social Work/Counseling
- ★ Speech and Language
- ★ Occupational Therapy
- ★ Physical Therapy
- ★ Adaptive PE
- ★ Assistive Technology
- ★ Nursing/Health Services
- ★ Others as determined by the team



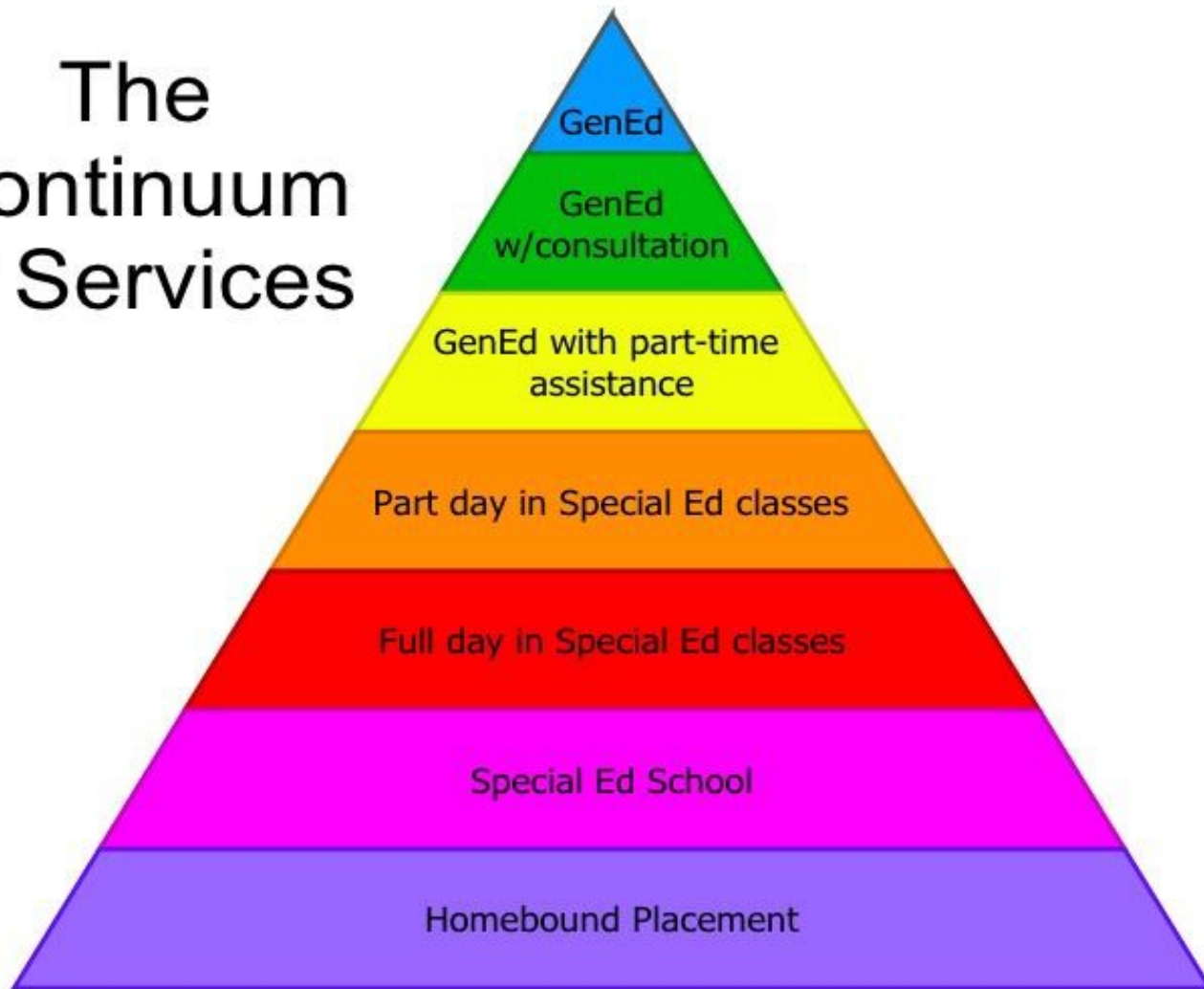
Special Education Placement

Special Education is NOT a place,
classroom or school

Special education is the practice of
educating students with qualifying
disabilities with individualized instruction
based on specific deficits in their Least
Restrictive Environment.



The Continuum of Services



Meaningful Parent Participation:

After an IEP Meeting

- Get to know the names and responsibilities of all those working with your child.
- Develop an ongoing working relationship with those persons who are responsible for providing services to your child. Get to know the names and responsibilities of all those working with your child.
- Ask for and provide communication that is both positive information as well as expresses any concerns.

Parental Rights

- Request an evaluation for special education services.

- Note: RTI cannot be used as an excuse to refuse or delay an evaluation.

- Have all parental concerns listed in the IEP.

- Request a new IEP meeting be held within 30 days of written request, when an IEP is already in place.

- Participate in the IEP meeting and have opinions heard and noted.

- Bring any person with knowledge or expertise to the IEP meeting.

- Bring an advocate to the IEP meeting.

- Review and receive copies of the child's educational records.

Parental Rights, *continued*

- Consent, refuse to consent, or revoke consent for special education services.

- Receive prior written notice when the school district proposes a change in placement or refuses a parent's request.

- Ask for an independent educational evaluation at district expense when they disagree with the district's

assessment. (However, the district is not obligated to provide one)

- File complaints

- File for Due Process

 - File in writing

 - Specific timelines

 - Resolution Process and Mediation

 - Stay put

 - Hearing

 - Attorney

Rights should be given to parents at every IEP meeting

Special Education Forms that Require Parent Signature & Purpose

Form	Purpose
Notice of Conference Recommendation Form	Summarizes and notifies the parent/guardian of any recommendations made at the conference(s).
Consent for Initial Provision of Special Education and Related Services	Used to obtain a parent/guardian's voluntary written consent when a student has been determined eligible for special education and related services, an IEP has been developed, and the student has been recommended for initial special education services.
Excusal of an Individualized Education Program Team Member	Provides the written documentation for the excusal of one of the required team members.
Notification of Transfer of Rights Due to Age of Majority	Provides the parent/guardian and student notice of the transfer of rights when the student reaches the age of majority (18 years of age).
Conference Summary Report (Sign-In)	Provides purpose of meeting, summary of student information (i.e. name, grade, disability, etc), and serves as an attendance/sign-in for meeting participants
Eligibility Determination Form (Specific Learning Disability)	Provides the parent/guardian with criteria to determine that a student is eligible for special education under the specific learning disability category.

Meaningful Parent Participation Tips

- Remain professional and rational
- Take a break if necessary
- Request to reconvene on another date if necessary
- Disagreement happens, even with the most collaborative teams.

Strive to resolve your disagreements through open dialogue.

Resources:

Illinois State Board of Education

<http://www.isbe.net/spec-ed/html/parents.htm>

One Place for Special Needs

<http://www.oneplaceforspecialneeds.com/>

Disability Scoop

<https://www.disabilityscoop.com/>

Illinois Council for Exceptional Children

<http://illinoiscec.org/>