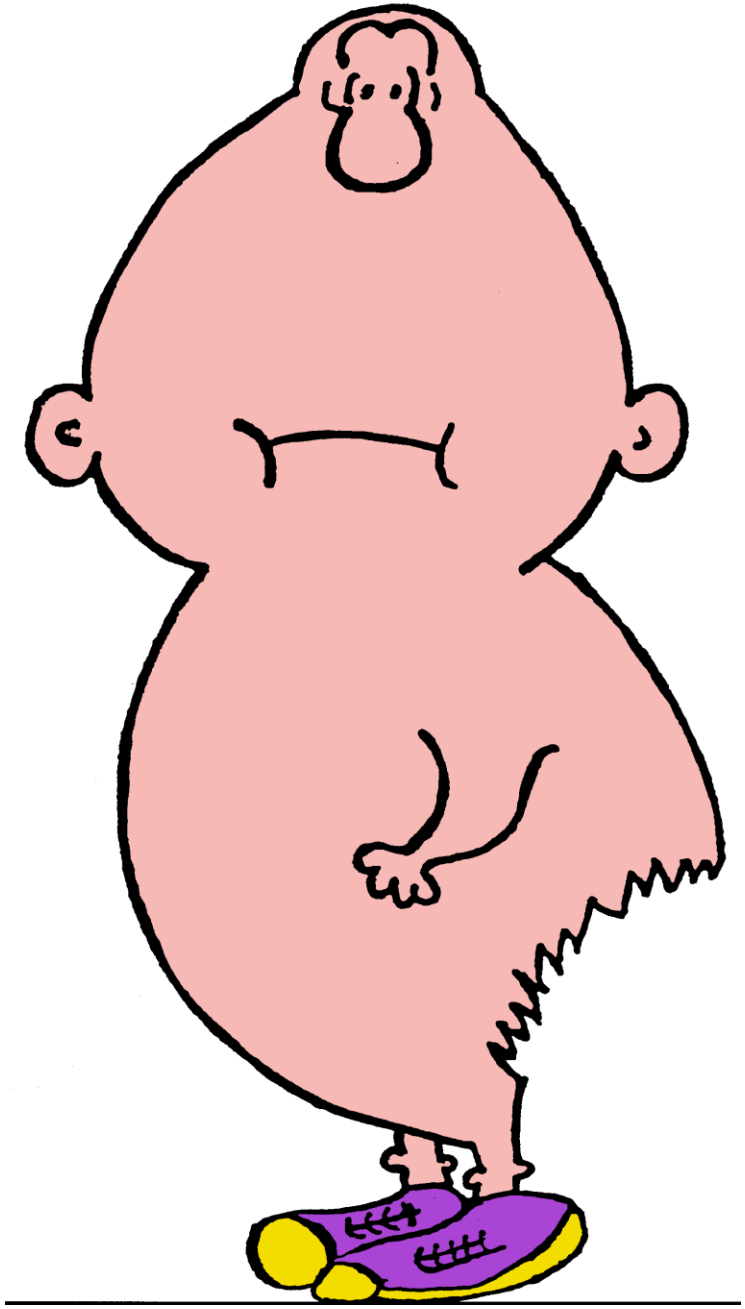
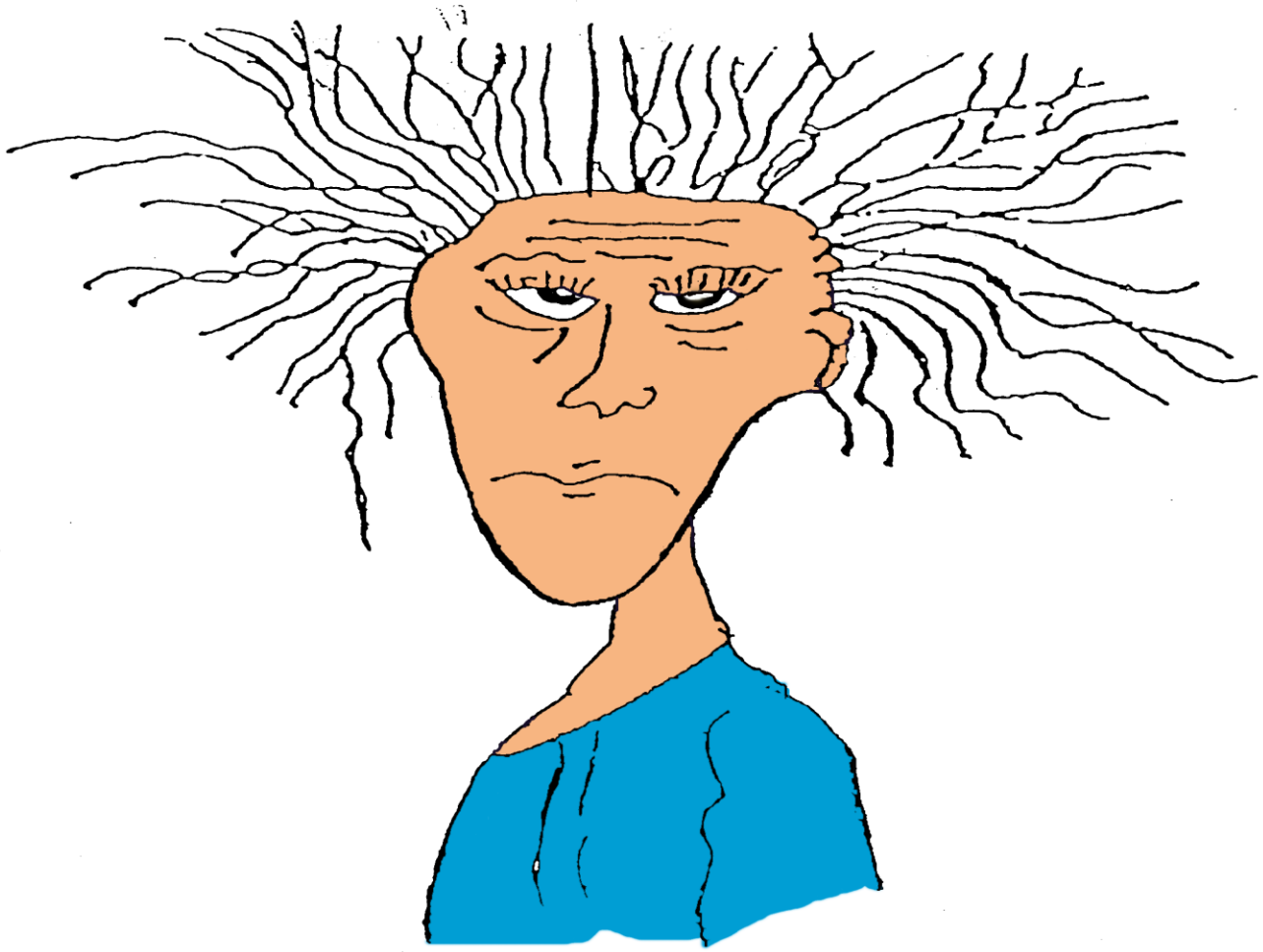
How to Write IEPs

By Michael L. Remus

© 2010 Possibilities, Inc.



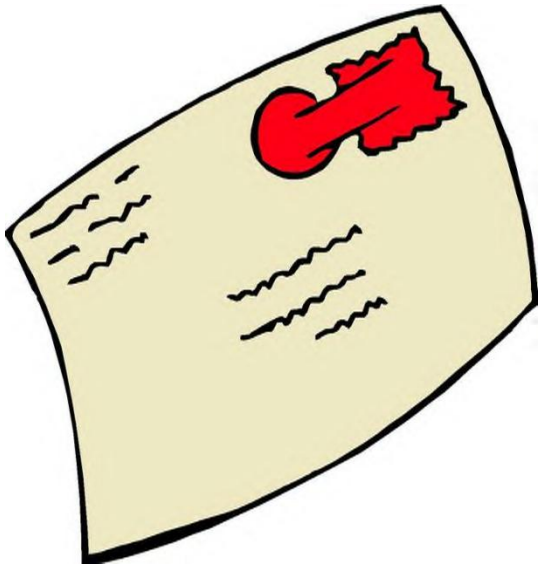
Another successful IEP meeting



What do you mean 1 of my 25 students needs 1 on 1 help with 16 goals?

© 2010 Possibilities, Inc.

10 days notice of IEP meeting



- **Parents must be told at least 10 days before an IEP meeting is held.**
- **If parents agree, the meeting can be held sooner. The parents are the <u>only</u> ones who can do this.**
- **The school and parents must agree on the time and place of the meeting.**
- **Any member of the IEP Team can call an IEP meeting any time during the year.**

© 2010 Possibilities, Inc.

What if parents don’t answer?

- The school has to tell parents about meetings. If they don’t answer, the school can meet without them.
- The school writes the IEP. They have to send parents a letter saying what was decided at the meeting.
- The school must wait 10 days if parents didn’t attend the IEP. This gives parents a chance to tell us what they want.
- Then the school can use the IEP. Parents can stop them by asking for a due process hearing. This means someone who doesn’t work for the school will decide.

© 2010 Possibilities, Inc.

Language Differences

- **What if parents speak another language or use sign language? Schools must provide an interpreter for parents if they ask. The school pays for the interpreter. The interpreter should be used for IEP meetings and any other communication with the school.**

- **If a child comes from a family whose native language is not English, the child should be tested for disability in the native language. Children cannot be put in special education because they do not speak English well.**

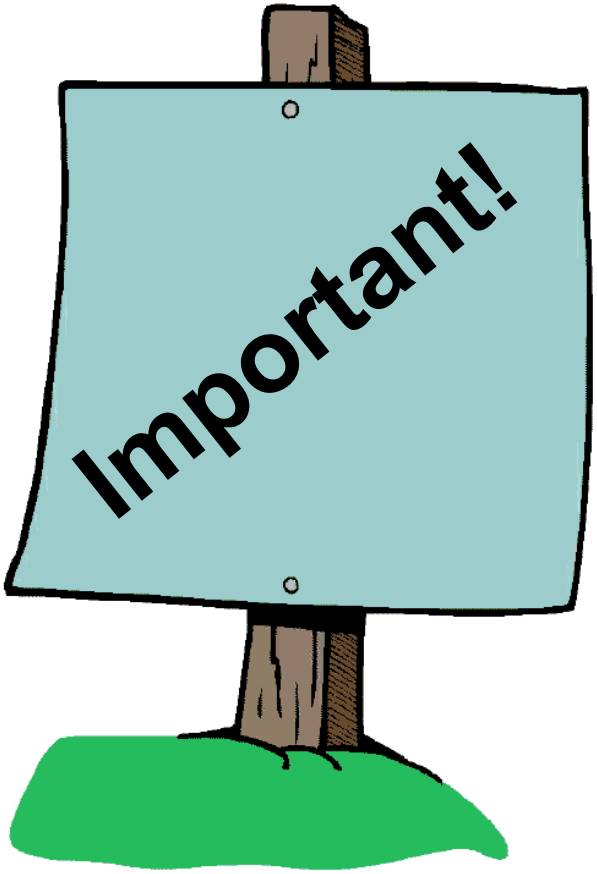
© 2010 Possibilities, Inc.

Who Attends the IEP Meeting?

- Parents
- Student (especially after age 16)
- General education teacher
- Special education teacher
- Member of evaluation team who can explain evaluations
- School representative who knows about general curriculum, knows about the school's resources, and knows how to adapt curriculum
- Student and person from an agency that pays for transition services (if transition will be discussed)
- Anyone parents, student or school wishes to invite

© 2010 Possibilities, Inc.

What if someone isn't there?

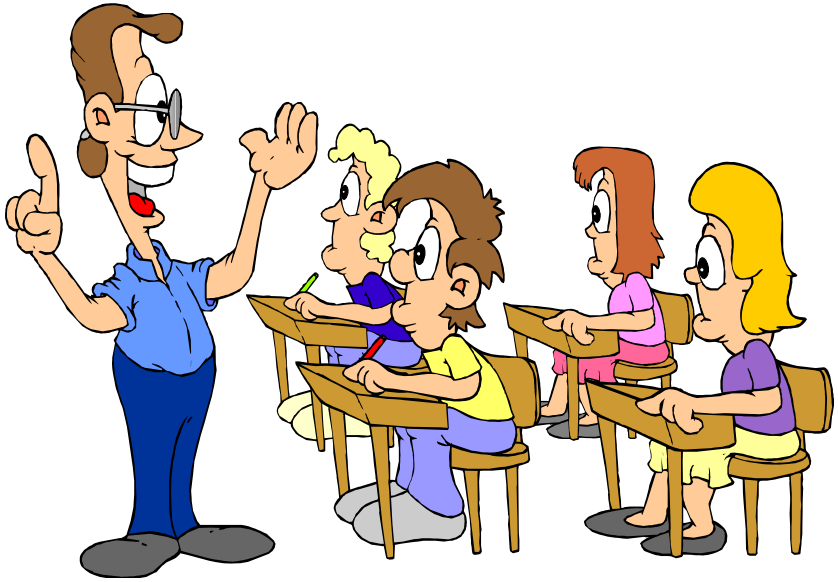


- **The notice telling parents about the IEP meeting says who will be there.**
- **What if someone on the list doesn't come?**
- **Parents have the right to end the meeting and meet again when everyone can come.**

© 2010 Possibilities, Inc.

The Individual Education Plan

is a legally binding document that schools <u>must</u> follow.



© 2010 Possibilities, Inc.

6 principles for IEPs

1. The IEP Team works together to develop the plan.
2. The IEP shows that the student is receiving a free, appropriate public education (FAPE) and following all federal and state laws.
3. The IEP shows the student's and family's vision for the future.
4. The IEP has student in special education learn with peers without disabilities as much as possible.
5. The IEP Team makes sure IEP goals are tied to the general curriculum for a student of the same age and grade.
6. The IEP is checked regularly during the year and needed changes are made to improve student results.

© 2010 Possibilities, Inc.

Before the IEP Meeting

- Ask what other members of the IEP Team will be recommending for this student so there are no surprises at the meeting. Share this DRAFT IEP with the whole team before the meeting.
- Know the student's current strengths and needs (baseline).
- If there is disagreement about goals or progress, try to resolve it before the meeting.
- Know what is working for this student and what is not.
- Know what kind of accommodations or adaptations the student needs.
- Make a list of what you want to discuss at the meeting and share it with the rest of the IEP Team ahead of time.
- Send a copy of the IEP meeting agenda ahead of time. There is one in IEP Pro.
- Think of places where this student can be included with kids without disabilities. List places where inclusive practices has worked for this student.

© 2010 Possibilities, Inc.

During the Meeting

- Work to create the atmosphere of a team working together. Example: Use simple words and terms; don't make anyone feel stupid; arrange the room so everyone is comfortable; make sure everyone is introduced.
- Review the agenda. Schedule separate meetings for "hot" items.
- Build the student's program on what s/he already know and can do.
- Discuss what and how other students will be told about this student's disability. Have this written in the IEP.
- Look for ways to make goals a natural part of the day by fitting them into the general curriculum.
- Look for ways to blend the goals you are recommending with the goals recommended by others.
- Make sure everything is clear.
- At the end of the meeting, decide who will do what and deadlines. Set the next meeting date and times for reporting back.

© 2010 Possibilities, Inc.

Confidentiality

- **Under both IDEA and the Family Educational Rights Privacy Act (FERPA) all information about a student is confidential (secret). All information shared in student files or IEP meetings is confidential.**
- **If you want to share information about a student, you must have <u>written</u> permission from the parent <u>first</u>.**

© 2010 Possibilities, Inc.

Parent Rights

Parents have very specific rights in special education. There are 5 times when schools must give parents a copy of their rights.

1. **The first time a child is tested for disability.**
2. **When parents are told about an IEP meeting.**
3. **When parents get written notice their child will be re-tested for disability.**
4. **When due process is filed.**
5. **When the school wants to change where and how the child learns.**

If parents don't have a copy of their rights, they should call their child's school and ask for one.

© 2010 Possibilities, Inc.

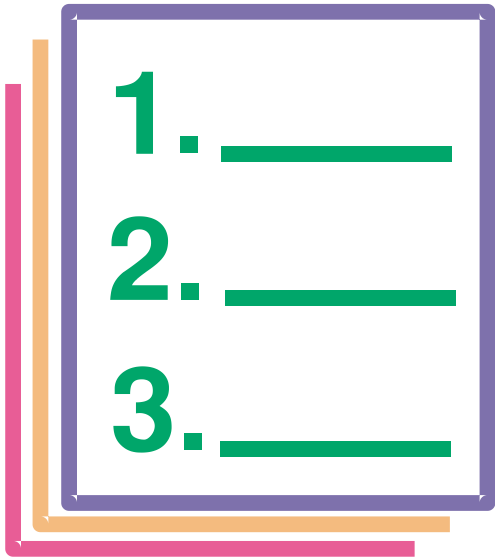
What's in the IEP

- How the student is doing in school now
- Annual goals (what s/he will learn in the next year) and how progress will be measured and reported
- Short-term objectives (steps to reach the annual goal)
- How much time, if any, student will be out of general classroom and away from students without disabilities
- Any changes to be made in curriculum and teaching methods
- Assistive technology needs
- Behavior management or health care plan, if needed
- What related services s/he will need (therapy, transportation, etc.)
- How the student will take district and state assessments
- Extended school year services, if any
- Transition services (required after a student is 16)
- If the student is 18, that s/he has been informed of his/her rights

© 2010 Possibilities, Inc.

Things must happen in order

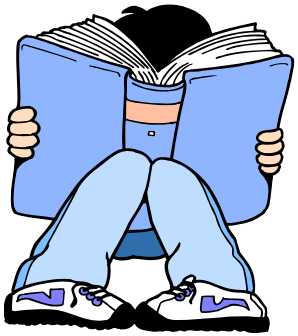
1. Test results
2. How the student is doing in school now.
3. Decide:
   - what the student will learn next year.
   - what related services the student will get.
   - if the student needs help with behavior.
   - if the student needs assistive technology.
   - if any changes in teaching or tests are needed.
   - what kind of report cards parents will get.
   - if the student will take State and District tests.
   - If the student needs services to get ready to be an adult.
   - If the parents have other concerns.
4. Decide placement.



© 2010 Possibilities, Inc.

Evaluating & Planning the IEP

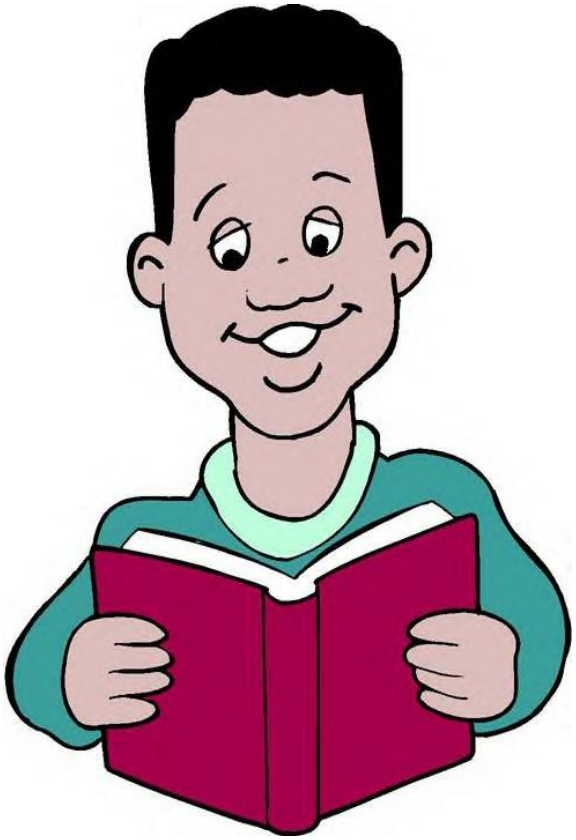
- What do you know now about this student?
  - Testing information
  - Progress on past IEP goals
  - Observation data
  - Reports from people who know this student (parent, teacher, others)
- What should s/he learn by year end? Same as other students? Why not?
- What are the important issues? Behavior? Academic? Both?
- How is general class work evaluated? Expectations? Outcomes?
- What is needed for this student to access the general curriculum?
- Does the IEP measure up on these points?
  - Is the focus clear?
  - Are there high expectations?
  - Are there new things to learn in this plan?
  - Is the student being taught what is being evaluated?



© 2010 Possibilities, Inc.

Present levels of performance

- **The IEP meeting must start with how the student is doing now.**
- **This includes what is going well AND what is hard.**
- **Use simple words to make sure parents understand. Don't make them ask for explanations. Some people will pretend to understand rather than admit they don't know.**
- **Parents have a right to know what is being said.**



© 2010 Possibilities, Inc.

IEP Goals

- Need to be “measurable” -- how will you know when s/he learns it?
- Need to make sense
- Need to be a natural part of the day
- Must be tied to general curriculum for that age and grade of child
- Need to be based on the student’s assessed needs
- Must be <u>individualized</u> to the student. One size does not fit all.
- Need to say how goals will be worked on all during the school day (for example, speech needs to be done in class, lunch, recess, etc.)
- Need to blend so that a student is working on several goals at a time
- Need to say what teaching methods, materials or equipment are used. These must change if the student makes no progress.
- Need to be written to encourage interaction with students without disabilities
- Must be changed if the student is not learning.

No goal should last forever!

© 2010 Possibilities, Inc.

What are goals and objectives?

- ***Goal*** **– what you expect the student to learn this school year**
- ***Objective*** **– Short steps to get to the annual goal**

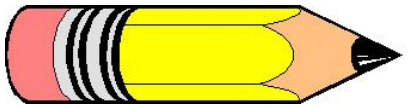
© 2010 Possibilities, Inc.

Measurable Goals

- What is the student expected to learn (like counting to 100)?
- When do we think s/he will learn it (by December 31st, by spring break)?
- How often will s/he work on the goal (daily, weekly, monthly)?
- How will we know when s/he has learned it (when s/he does it right 80% of the time, when s/he always does it right)?
- Who will teach it (teacher, speech therapist, aide)?

© 2010 Possibilities, Inc.

3 Basic Questions

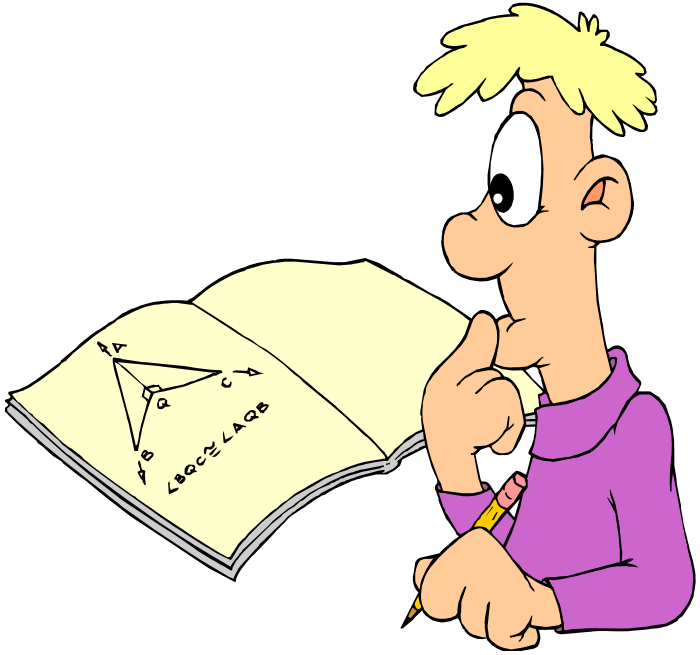


When writing IEP goals, ask:

- ☑ **Is it meaningful to the student?**
- ☑ **Is it done as a natural part of the day?**
- ☑ **Is it tied to the general curriculum for that grade and that age of student?**

© 2010 Possibilities, Inc.

Meaningful to the kid



- Does the student know what you are trying to teach?
- Is it done at a logical time (learning to do zippers when going to the bathroom)?
- Is it something s/he sees the other kids do?
- Is it something s/he <u>can</u> learn?
- Is learning fun or a chore?
- Does s/he know when you are pleased with her/his efforts?

© 2010 Possibilities, Inc.

Goals that make sense

- **If Nate has to say his name when he unzips his backpack, what is he supposed to be learning?**
- **The teacher stops Nate 5 times a day and asks "What's your name?" Does Nate think his teacher is smart?**
- **Chad has to practice opening an empty milk carton in the morning. At lunch the aide opens his milk carton. What is Chad learning?**

© 2010 Possibilities, Inc.

Natural Part of the Day

- What are the other students doing? Do spelling when everyone else does.
- If the goal is counting, when can the student count (checking roll, counting lunch tickets, handing out test papers, etc.)?
- If the goal has to do with getting dressed alone, do it at gym or bathroom breaks.
- Goals that have to do with eating should be done at lunch (or snack).
- Therapy goals should be worked into the day when possible.
- Everyone should know the behavior plan and what to do if behaviors occur.

© 2010 Possibilities, Inc.

General Curriculum

IEPs must have:

"A statement of measurable annual goals, including benchmarks or short-term objectives, related to meeting the child's needs that result from the child's disability to enable the child to be involved in and progress in the general curriculum (i.e., the same curriculum as for nondisabled children), or for preschool children, as appropriate, to participate in appropriate activities."

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 34 CFR 300.347

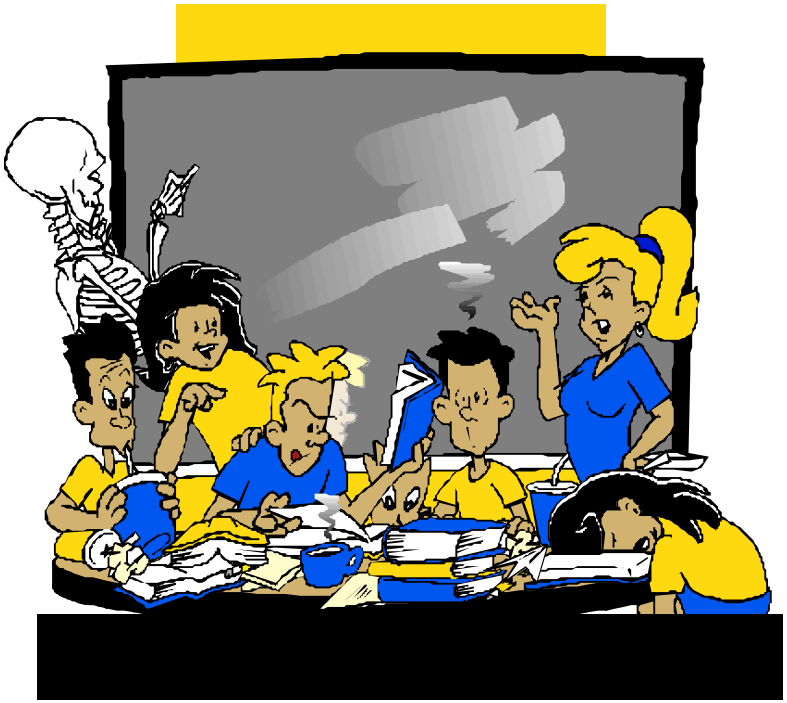
© 2010 Possibilities, Inc.

Tied to the General Curriculum

- **There <u>must</u> be a connection between the general curriculum objectives and this student's IEP goals and objectives.**
- **The IEP Team must decide what the student will learn about each subject the class is studying.**
- **The IEP Team must decide which and how many general curriculum objectives the student is expected to know.**
- **The IEP Team must make general curriculum objectives functional and meaningful for this student.**

© 2010 Possibilities, Inc.

What is the class learning?



- How do the IEP goals fit into the general curriculum?
- Goals may be different but need to be related (like learning to recognize a triangle when others are learning the angles in a triangle)
- The student may need to be taught in a different way
- The student may need to work in a different way (like using a computer instead of pencil and paper)

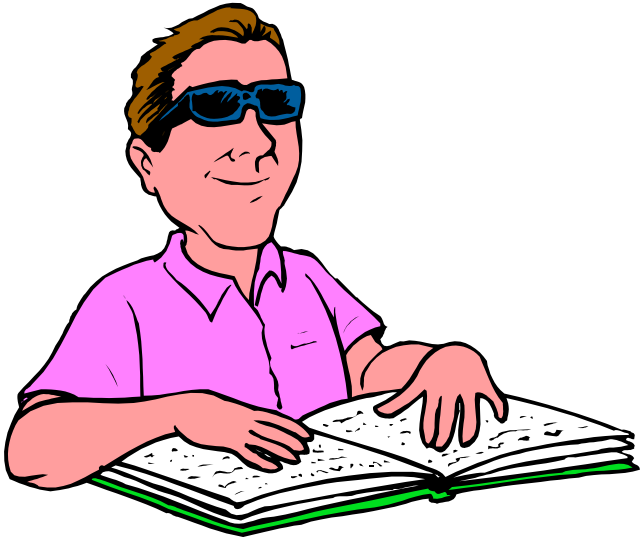
© 2010 Possibilities, Inc.

Being in other school activities

- Meals
- Recess and recreational activities
- Clubs, sports and pep rallies
- Student Council
- School dances, plays and musicals
- School newspaper or yearbook
- Spelling or math bees
- Counseling services
- Transportation
- Health services

© 2010 Possibilities, Inc.

The IEP must say if:



- **The student needs help speaking or understanding English**
- **The student is blind or has trouble seeing. The student must be taught Braille unless there is a good reason not to.**

© 2010 Possibilities, Inc.

The student must get help if:

- He/she has trouble talking or understanding what others say.
- He/she is deaf or hard of hearing. The IEP must say how the student will be taught to communicate.
- The student's teachers need extra help.

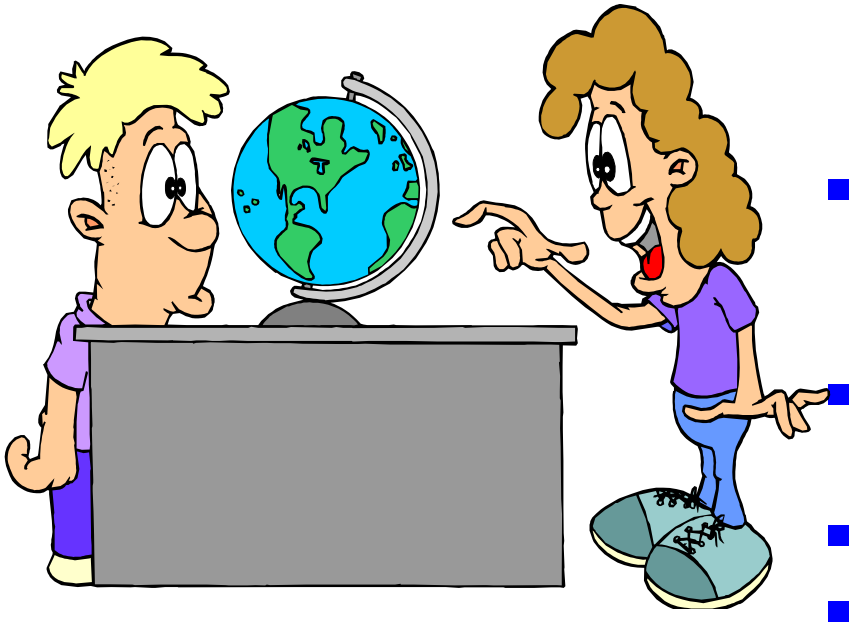
© 2010 Possibilities, Inc.

What help is needed on the bus?

- Does the student need air conditioning or heating because of medical problems?
- Does the student need a seat belt or special seating?
- Does the student need an aide?
- Is there a radio or phone to call for help?
- Does the bus driver or helper know what to do in an emergency?
- Does the student need help or reminders to get off the bus?
- Can the driver leave the student if no one is home?

© 2010 Possibilities, Inc.

Inclusive Goals



- Write goals to include interaction with kids without disabilities
- Don’t have the student spend all his/her time 1 on 1 with an educational assistant
- Make his/her goal part of what other students are doing
- Use peer tutors if possible
- Find ways to have the student take part in all the activities the rest of the class is doing

© 2010 Possibilities, Inc.

Blending Goals Together

Brandon was working on six goals:

- **going from one place to another without getting lost**
- **learning to recognize numbers**
- **learning to dial a phone**
- **learning to speak in sentences (speech therapy)**
- **using his index finger alone (physical therapy)**
- **learning his home phone number**

How could these be blended together?

© 2010 Possibilities, Inc.

Other IEP Team Decisions

- **Goals and objectives are not the only thing an IEP Team must decide for a student.**
- **The Team must also look at what other services, accommodations, adaptations and supports this student will need to learn.**

© 2010 Possibilities, Inc.

Accommodation or Modification?

- **Accommodations are used when the student is expected to learn the <u>same</u> curricular content. But the student may be taught in a different way, respond or test in a different way or need changes in the environment.**
- **Modifications are used when the student is expected to learn <u>less or different</u> curricular content. This could require the modification of assignments, tests, worksheets and other materials in the classroom.**

© 2010 Possibilities, Inc.

Possible Accommodations

- Have at least part of the room bare
- Different or additional lighting (not fluorescent)
- Tilted desk top
- Visual cues
- Quiet times or places to help concentration
- Count to 10 before allowing anyone to answer
- Vary the teaching methods
- Projects instead of timed tests
- Giving instructions one step at a time
- Ask questions to get repeat of information
- Fewer problems on a page

© 2010 Possibilities, Inc.

Assistive technology

- This can include:
  - Software
  - Computers
  - Communication devices
  - Wheelchairs
  - Special seating
- The IEP Team must discuss:
  - Who pays for it and who owns it
  - Where it will be used
  - How it will be used
  - Who will train people to use it

© 2010 Possibilities, Inc.

Behavior and Discipline

- **If behavior is a problem, the IEP should include a functional behavior assessment and behavior plan.**
- **If the child is to be disciplined differently than students without disabilities, how will it be done?**
- **Sending a child home for behaviors is not a good idea. It teaches them a great way to get out of school. This is suspension whether the school calls it that or not.**
- **The focus should be on changing the behavior -- not on punishment.**

© 2010 Possibilities, Inc.

Related Services

- Testing for hearing
- Parent training and/or counseling
- Social work services
- Transportation (to and from school and for IEP activities)
- Interpreter services (sign language or foreign language)
- Psychological services (mental health services)
- Physical therapy (walking, pushing wheelchair, moving arms and legs)
- Occupational therapy (holding a pencil, buttoning a shirt, etc.)
- Recreation (including therapeutic recreation)
- Counseling services (including rehabilitation counseling)
- Orientation and mobility services (going from place to place or in a building – called “travel training” for kids without vision problems)
- Medical diagnosis and evaluation to help a child benefit from education
- Any other services the IEP Team says are needed.

© 2010 Possibilities, Inc.

State and District Assessments

The IEP Team must decide if the student will:

- **Take the standard State and District Assessments**

OR

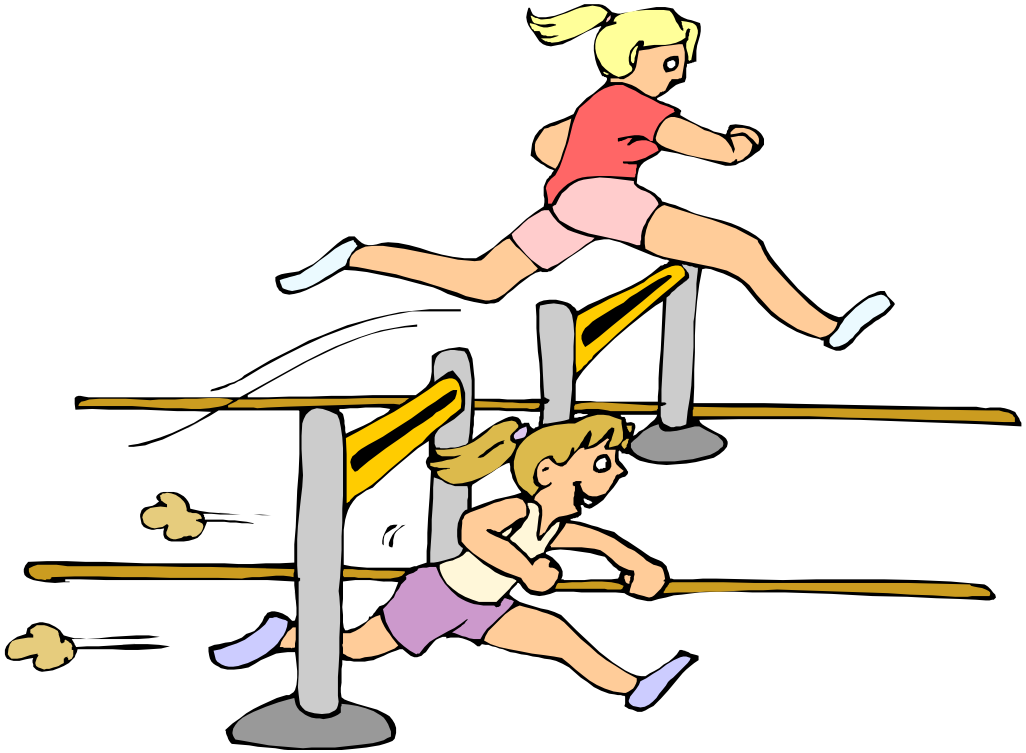
- **Take the standard Assessments with modifications and say which state approved modifications will be done**

OR

- **Take an alternate assessment.**

© 2010 Possibilities, Inc.

PE

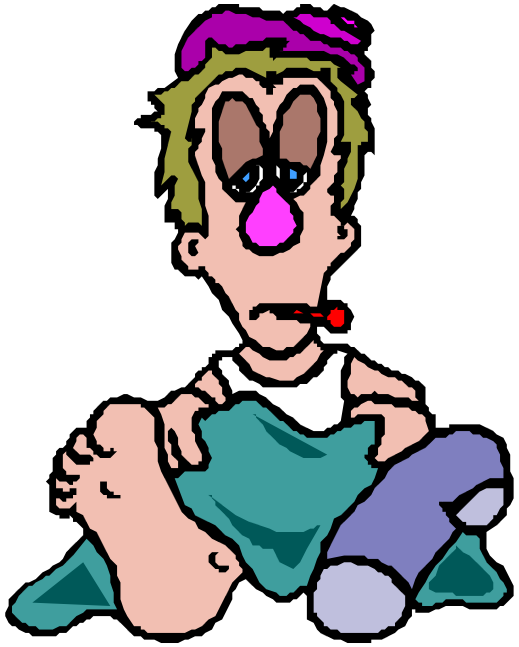


- **The IEP Team must decide if the student will take PE.**
- **They also decide if the student needs adapted PE.**
- **The adaptations that are needed must be written in the IEP.**

© 2010 Possibilities, Inc.

Health Care Plan

- Some children with serious health problems need extra help at school.
- A Health Care Plan says what kind of help they will get and when.
- The plan says if a nurse or someone else can do the services.



© 2010 Possibilities, Inc.

How often will services happen?

- The IEP Team decides how often.
- The IEP Team decides how long each time.
- The IEP Team decides how many weeks.
- The IEP Team decides where it will happen.

© 2010 Possibilities, Inc.

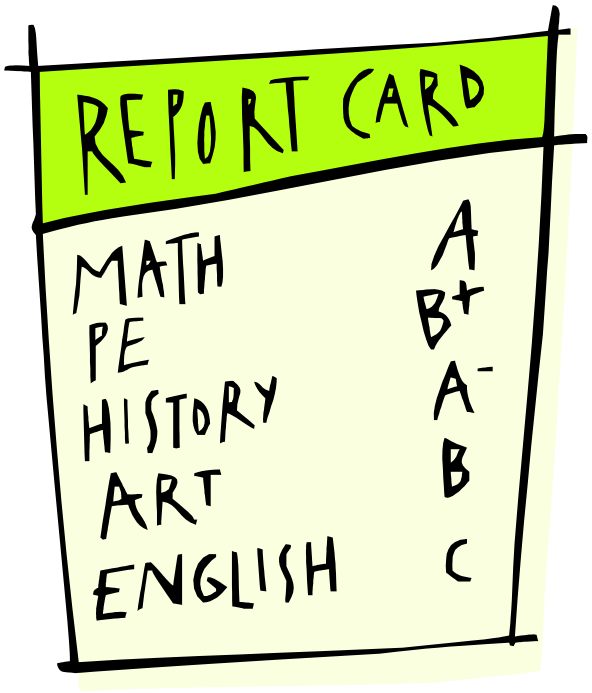
Taught in special ways

This can include:

- **Getting help from an educational assistant.**
- **Speech services**
- **Interpreter services for students who are deaf**
- **Travel training to learn how to get around the building and from place to place.**

© 2010 Possibilities, Inc.

Report Cards



- **Must get report cards at the same times as students without disabilities**
- **IEP Team should decide if they are using a typical report card, the IEP, a narrative or a combination of these to help parents understand progress**
- **If there is no progress, the IEP Team MUST meet and revise the IEP.**

© 2010 Possibilities, Inc.

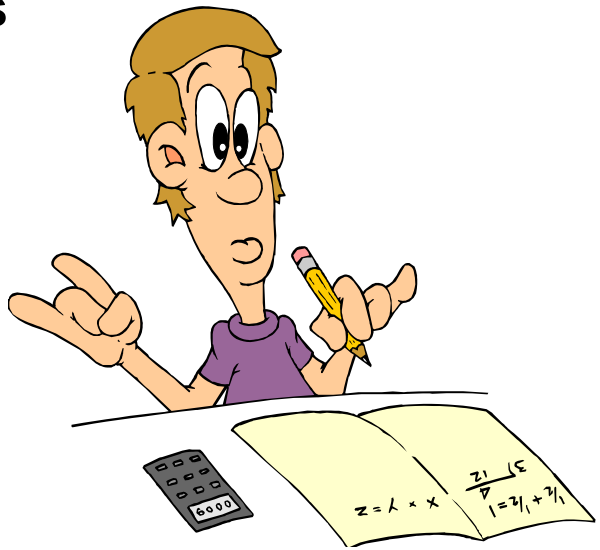
Extended School Year

- Extended school year means a child goes to school beyond the normal school year.
- The IEP Team must decide that extended school year is needed.
- Reasons for a child to attend include:
  - Missing significant amounts of school due to illness
  - There is proof that this student takes longer than average to catch up again after being out of school.
  - This student's progress is slow compared to other children with the same or similar disability
  - A break in behavior plan or therapy services will have a bad effect
  - The job goal should not be interrupted.
- One huge disadvantage for many children is that substitute teachers and therapists will work with them instead of their usual teachers and therapists.

© 2010 Possibilities, Inc.

Transition Services

- **Are activities to help a student move from school to adult life.**
- **Must be done by age 16.**
- **How can you help him/her learn the skills s/he will need to enjoy life as an adult. How will s/he:**
  - **Live**
  - **Learn**
  - **Work**
  - **Play?**



Be creative!

© 2010 Possibilities, Inc.

Live

- Making friends
  - Circle of Friends
  - Group Action Plan (GAP)
- Dating and Marriage
  - How to ask
  - How to answer
  - What to do
- Living skills
  - House cleaning
  - Meal planning
  - Cooking
  - Laundry
- Social skills
  - Conversation
  - Manners
  - Appearance
  - Hygiene
- Using public transportation

© 2010 Possibilities, Inc.

Learn

- Technical college (audit or credit)
- Community college
- Community classes
  - Art or Music
  - Foreign language
  - Cooking
  - Dance
- Adult education classes
- On the job
- Using public transportation

© 2010 Possibilities, Inc.

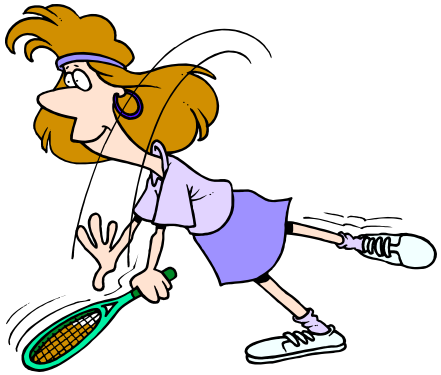
Work

- Steps to employment:
  - Interest inventory
  - Volunteering
  - Job shadowing
  - Training sites to try out different jobs
  - Job placement
- Transportation
- Finding out what they like and can do
- Work skills
  - Timekeeping
  - Following company rules
  - Following directions
  - Staying on schedule

© 2010 Possibilities, Inc.

Play

- Learn different games and skills
- Learn to use community resources
  - YMCA
  - Theaters
  - Concert halls
  - Library
  - Movie theaters
  - Parks



- Plan and attend parties with friends
- Learn to buy tickets for events
- Learn to dance
- Learn to use public transportation

© 2010 Possibilities, Inc.

When a Student Is 18

- Unless a judge has appointed a guardian, students make their own decisions.
- When students are 17, schools must tell them what will change when they turn 18.
- Parents don't attend IEP meetings unless invited by the student or the school.
- The IEP team needs to decide what will be done about graduation and what it will mean for the student.

© 2010 Possibilities, Inc.

What about graduation?

- **Will the student graduate with the class at age 18?**
- **Will the student still get services after that?**
- **What is the school policy on graduation? Can the student still get services after getting a diploma?**
- **If the student gets services after the graduation ceremony, <u>where</u> will it happen?**

© 2010 Possibilities, Inc.

Changing locations with age

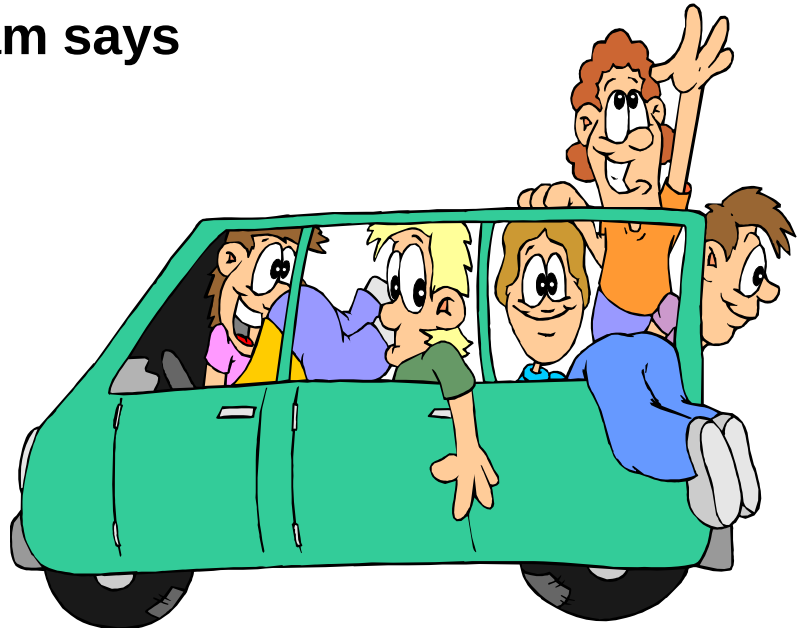
- Students should be where others their age will be
- After age 18, this should mean doing IEP goals:
  - At colleges
  - At work
  - Outside the high school

© 2010 Possibilities, Inc.

How do students get there?

Related services are part of the IEP. It can include:

- **Transportation to and from school, work or other IEP activities**
- **Learning to go from place to place or get around in a building**
- **Any other services the IEP team says the student needs like:**
  - **Job coach**
  - **Assistive technology**
  - **Attendant care**



© 2010 Possibilities, Inc.

If your child is dangerous

- **The IEP Team must decide if taking your child out of the general classroom would help.**
- **The Team must show that putting your child in a different class would solve the problem.**
- **If it would NOT solve the problem, your child should stay in the general classroom.**

© 2010 Possibilities, Inc.

The IEP Team needs to be asking

1. Is an educational assistant needed? Why and how often?
2. Do students with disabilities have an opportunity to learn?
3. Are students with disabilities in the general education classroom?
4. Are students with disabilities accessing general curriculum?
5. Do teaching methods need to change so everyone can learn?
6. When students leave school, are they able to get a job?
7. Do students have the skills they need for life?

© 2010 Possibilities, Inc.

Me and My Shadow

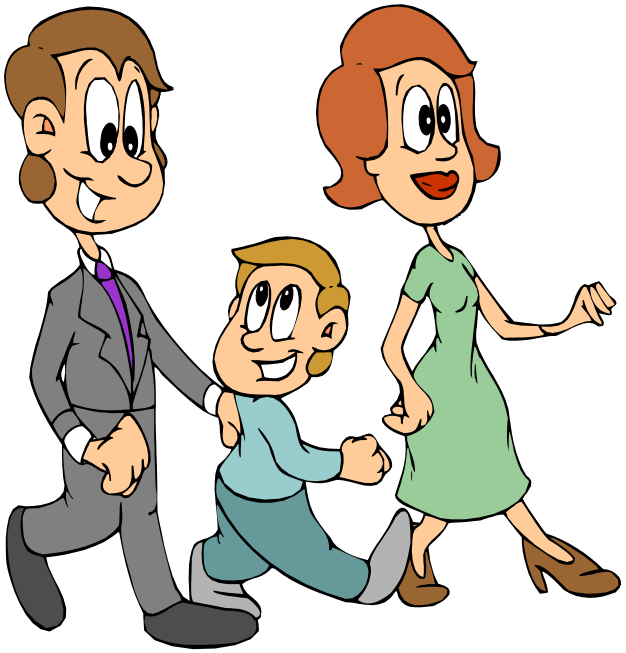
- **Does having an educational assistant take away the student's need to communicate and make choices?**
- **Is having an adult with him/her all day making the student MORE dependent?**
- **Does having an educational assistant there make peers less likely to interact with the student? Is the student ever alone with peers?**
- **Is the student at least arm's length away from the educational assistant when possible?**
- **Would the student be better off having help from several different people rather than always the same assistant?**

Velcro is a no-no!

© 2010 Possibilities, Inc.

Parental Concerns

- **After goals are done, ask parents if there are any other concerns that have not been addressed.**
- **If there are, the IEP Team must discuss the concerns.**
- **Unless the Team decides otherwise, there must be IEP goals to address parental concerns.**



© 2010 Possibilities, Inc.

Placement

- This is the last thing the IEP Team decides.
- Students should be in the general classroom. This is where they would be if they didn't have a disability.
- OR the student may leave the class part of the day to get extra help.
- Students should be with students without disabilities as much of the day as possible. IDEA calls this least restrictive environment or LRE.
- Any time a student is out of the general classroom, the IEP must explain why in writing.

© 2010 Possibilities, Inc.

Harmful Effects of Placement

The IEP Team must discuss:

- **If the placement might have any harmful effects on the student.**
- **If so, the Team must discuss if there is another placement that would be less harmful.**
- **OR if there are services and supports that would make the placement less harmful.**

© 2010 Possibilities, Inc.

Learning Center

- A Learning Center is a way to give students pre-teaching, skill building, directed studies or 1-to-1 instruction as needed. It is like a library except that students come for instruction rather than books.
- It should be open to every student in the building.
- Students should be grouped by what they need to learn – not by disability.
- Students without IEPs can be served as long as the needs of students with IEPs are met.

© 2010 Possibilities, Inc.

Is pull out best?

- **Why can't the skill be taught in the general classroom? Are there ways to change it so it could be taught there?**
- **While the student is in pull out, s/he misses what is going on in the general classroom. How do you help the student catch up on what s/he missed?**
- **How will skills learned in pull out time help the student spend MORE time in the general classroom?**
- **The IEP Team must justify in writing any time the student is out of the general classroom.**

© 2010 Possibilities, Inc.

When the IEP is written

- **Parents can agree with part of the IEP and disagree with part of the IEP. The parts parents agree with can start right away.**
- **If parents disagree with the IEP, they can ask for another IEP meeting, mediation or a hearing.**
- **What if parents disagree but don't ask for an IEP meeting, mediation or a hearing? The school can start using the IEP. Parents have to be told in writing at least 10 days before this happens. This gives parents one more chance to ask for help or file due process.**

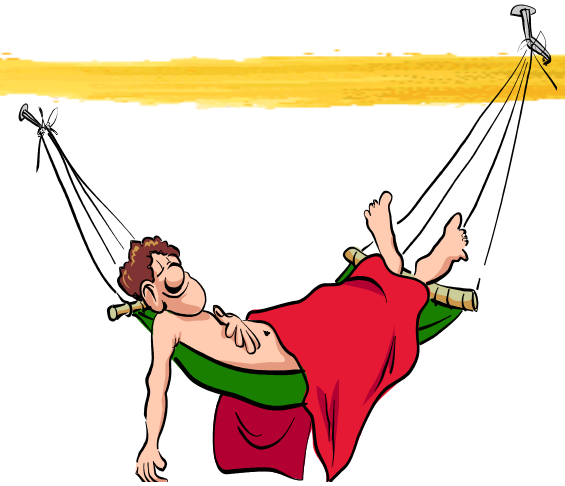
© 2010 Possibilities, Inc.

Developing the IEP

- Developing an IEP is hard work. If IEP Team members disagree, they need to continue to work together to find a solution.
- There are some things that need to be done before, during and after the IEP meeting to make sure the process is smooth and the IEP works for this student.

© 2010 Possibilities, Inc.

After the Meeting



- **Communicate successes. Let other IEP Team members know when you are pleased with what they are doing.**
- **Continue to check to make sure things are working well. When necessary, call follow-up meetings.**
- **If you were given responsibilities or deadlines in the IEP Team meeting, carry them out.**
- **If there are problems, ask for help. Resolve problems as quickly as possible. Communicate!**
- **Communicate, communicate, communicate!!!!!**

© 2010 Possibilities, Inc.

If a student doesn't do well

- The IEP Team must make changes.
- This can be changes in how or where the student is taught.
- It could be giving the student more help or equipment.
- It could even be changes in who teaches the student.
- There must be an IEP meeting to change an IEP.
- Parents must give an OK to change services or where their child learns.

© 2010 Possibilities, Inc.