

Special Education Terms

Information for Parents

Navigating the special education services provided by your school can be confusing and full of unfamiliar terms. The following are some of the terms you may hear as you work to support your child's success.

- **Accommodations:** Changes that enable a student to work around a disability, without a change in the curriculum (for example, giving answers orally instead of in writing).
- **Assistive technology (AT):** A device or service that is determined by an IEP team to be necessary to provide a student with educationally relevant and necessary access to a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE).
- **Behavioral Intervention Plan (BIP):** A written plan designed to increase pro-social behavior and decrease problem behavior.
- **Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE):** The right to special education and related services, free of charge, that are appropriate to meet the unique needs of the student in order to prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living.
- **Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA):** An assessment that identifies a specific or target behavior that interferes with a student's education.
- **Individualized Education Program (IEP):** A legal document that is developed to ensure that a child with an identified disability receives specialized instruction and related services.
- **IEP Team:** A group of individuals who meet to discuss and make decisions on a student's IEP. An IEP team consists of a parent, general education teacher, special education teacher, an individual who can interpret the instructional implications of evaluation results, a representative of the public agency, and whenever appropriate, the child with a disability.
- **Inclusion:** The opportunity for students with disabilities to learn alongside their non-disabled peers in the general education setting.
- **Least Restrictive Environment (LRE):** A requirement stating that, as much as possible, students with disabilities must be taught in the same setting as students without disabilities.
- **Modifications:** Changes (or adaptations) to what is being taught or expected of a disabled student, making it possible for them to participate in a classroom with students who have no disabilities (for example, giving an easier assignment).
- **Specially Designed Instruction (SDI):** Instruction in which the content, methodology, or delivery of the instruction is individually adapted to address the student's disability-related needs.
- **Extended School Year (ESY):** Services identified annually by the IEP team that the student requires beyond the normal school year. The purpose of these services is the maintenance of the student's learning, skills, or behavior, not the teaching of new skills or behavior.
- **Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) -** a framework schools use to provide tiered supports (universal, targeted, intensive) to address student needs.
- **Response to Intervention (RTI) -** a method of determining student eligibility in special education as a student with a specific learning disability (SLD).

Understanding the IEP Process: A Guide for Parents

What is an IEP?

An Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a legal document developed for children with disabilities in public schools. It outlines the special education services and support your child will receive to help them succeed in school with specific goals.

Steps in the IEP Process

1. Referral

The IEP process begins with a referral, which can be made by you, your child's teacher, or anyone who suspects a concern. This step notifies the team that they have 25 school days to review any concerns and data and determine if an evaluation is needed.

2. Evaluation

Once consent for an evaluation is received, the school will conduct an evaluation to determine if your child qualifies for special education within 35 school days. This evaluation includes various assessments to understand your child's strengths and challenges.

3. Eligibility Determination

A team of professionals, including you, will review the evaluation results to decide if your child is eligible for special education services. There are 3 basic components;

- Does the student have a disability?
- Does that disability adversely impact their education?
- Does the student need specially designed instruction (SDI)?*

If your child qualifies, the team moves forward to develop an IEP.

4. IEP Meeting (minimum required members- Parent/Guardian, General education teacher, Special Education Teacher, administrator)

- Within 30 Calendar days from the evaluation date, a meeting will be scheduled
- At a minimum the team will include the following
 - Parent/Guardian
 - General Education Teacher
 - Special Education Teacher
 - Administrator
 - Other members as determined by the evaluation/IEP
- The following will be discussed
 - Students Strengths
 - Setting specific, measurable goals for your child.

- Determining the services and supports your child needs.
- Deciding how your child will participate in general education classes and activities.

5. Writing the IEP

The IEP document includes:

- **Current performance:** A snapshot of your child's current abilities.
- **Goals:** Short-term and long-term objectives.
- **Services:** The special education services your child will receive.
- **Participation:** How your child will join in regular classroom activities.
- **Accommodations:** Adjustments and supports to help your child succeed.
- **Progress:** How your child's progress will be measured and reported.

6. Implementation

Once the IEP is finalized and you have given consent to start services, the school will begin implementing the plan as written.

7. Review and Update

The IEP is reviewed at least once a year to ensure it meets your child's needs. You can request a meeting at any time if you have concerns or if your child's needs change.

Your Rights as a Parent

- **Participation:** You have the right to be involved in all aspects of the IEP process.
- **Consent:** You must give written consent before any evaluation or special education services begin.
- **Records:** You can access your child's educational records at any time.
- **Dispute Resolution:** If you disagree with the IEP, you have options for resolving disputes, including mediation and due process hearings.

Tips for Parents

- **Stay Informed:** Learn about your child's disability and rights.
- **Communicate:** Maintain open communication with teachers and school staff.
- **Document Everything:** Keep records of all meetings, evaluations, and communications.
- **Advocate:** Be proactive in advocating for your child's needs.

Conclusion

The IEP process is designed to ensure your child receives the appropriate support and services to succeed in school. By understanding the steps and your rights, you can effectively collaborate with the school to develop a plan that best supports your child's educational journey.

*Specially Designed Instruction