



# Parent University: Understanding the IEP Process

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**November 13, 2025**



# Objectives

01

Understand the IEP process and laws

02

Learn timelines and key decisions

03

Build confidence to collaborate with the school team

04

Know your rights and resources



# Purpose

## Why We Have IEPs

IDEA 2004 (federal) +  
Illinois State Board of Education

Ensures Free Appropriate Public  
Education (FAPE)

Supports inclusion and Least  
Restrictive Environment (LRE)



# How Students Qualify

Child Find: Schools must identify students with suspected disabilities.

13 categories of eligibility:

Autism

DeafBlindness

Deafness

Developmental Delay

Emotional Disability

Hearing Impairments

Intellectual Disability

Multiple Disabilities

Orthopedic Impairment

Other Health Impairment

Specific Learning Disability

Speech or Language Impairment

Traumatic Brain Injury

Visual Impairment



# ISBE Eligibility Categories

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Learning & Thinking – SLD, OHI, ID

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Communication – Speech/Language,  
Deafness, Hearing

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Physical/Sensory – Orthopedic,  
Visual, Deaf-Blindness

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Behavior/Emotional – Emotional  
Disability, Autism, TBI

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Developmental – Developmental  
Delay



# ISBE Eligibility Categories

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SLD = struggles in reading and/or math despite reteaching

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OHI = ADHD, anxiety & medical accommodations

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ED = exhibits chronic emotional or behavioral challenges that significantly interfere with learning and relationships.



# Evaluation Process



Academic



Cognitive



Communication



Health



Motor



Social-emotional



Functional data



# Evaluation Process

Evaluations completed  
within 60 school days

Parent input is essential

Assessments must be  
from the domain  
paperwork and culturally  
and linguistically  
appropriate



# Eligibility Meeting



Data from the evaluations and student history are discussed.



Data is analyzed to determine if the student is eligible for special education services.



There must be a significant educational impact and a need for services to qualify for an IEP.



# Eligibility Meeting: Parent Collaboration

Provide input  
and/or  
concerns

Helps the  
team  
understand  
the student's  
history

Understand  
the parent  
wishes and  
goals for their  
child

Clarifies how  
the child  
presents  
outside of  
school



# Preparing for the Evaluation Meeting



Review evaluation reports-Provided 3 days before the meeting.



Bring notes about strengths and concerns.



You may bring anyone to the meeting. It is best to inform the school of this before the meeting.



# Eligibility Meeting: Paperwork

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Parents will receive written notice of the decision.

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If the student is eligible for services for the first time, parental consent is needed to start services.

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If services or placement changes for a student who was already eligible, parents need to waive 10 days if they want it to start sooner.



# Individualized Education Plan

If a student qualifies for special education services

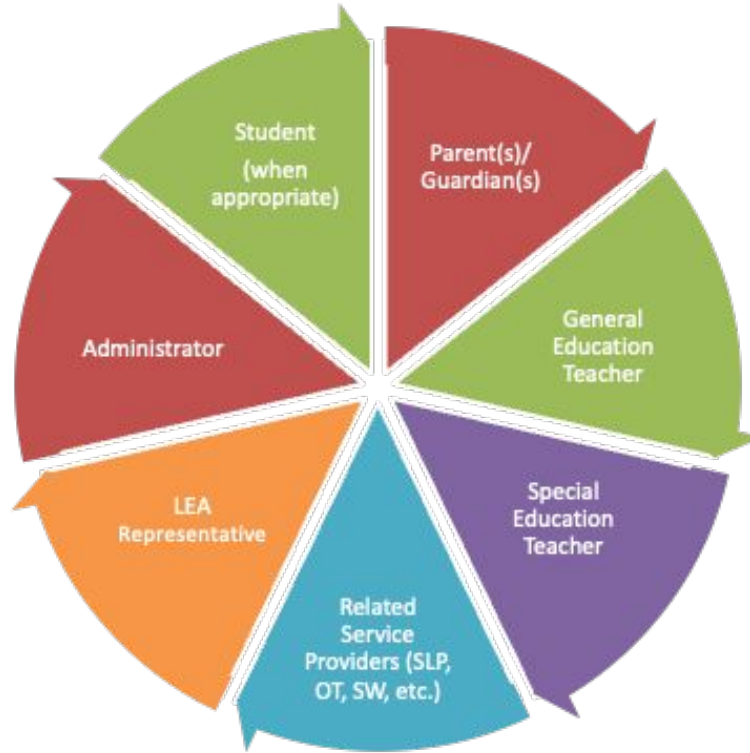
An Individualized Education Plan (IEP) is created.

The IEP runs for one calendar year.

Each year that the student is eligible for special education services, the team meets to create an updated IEP (annual review).



# Who is on the IEP Team





## Preparing for the IEP Meeting



Review the draft IEP (3 days before meeting).



Bring notes about strengths and concerns.



You may bring anyone to the meeting. It is best to inform the school of this before the meeting.



# Components of the IEP



Present Levels of Performance



Measurable Annual Goals



Educational Accommodations



Educational Services &  
Placement

Discussion of the continuum of Services  
Transportation Needs  
ESY Qualification



## Other Components of the IEP

Autism Considerations

Behavior Intervention Plan

Transition Plan  
(14.5 and older)

Early Childhood Outcomes  
(Preschool/Early Childhood)



# IEP Goals & Benchmarks

Goals  
must  
be:

- Linked to student-specific needs
- Measurable
- Achievable



# Accommodations & Assessments

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Based on student needs

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Consider communication and cultural factors

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Include assistive technology

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Indicate if the behavior impedes the learning of self or others

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Include accommodations needed for emergencies and drills

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Training for staff and parents

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Specific accommodations needed for classroom, district, state testing



# Services & Placement

Review the continuum of services

Must justify any removal from general education

Focus on Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)



# Parental Consent & Implementation

The IEP is a legally binding document.

Parental consent is required for initial IEP services.

Services must begin within 10 school days.



# Monitoring and Progress Reports



Progress is reported on the same timeline as district report cards.



Specific data is used to show growth toward goals.



If the data shows a lack of progress, adjustments should be considered.



# Timelines

**Annual Review Meeting:** The IEP is reviewed annually.

**IEP Meeting:** The IEP team can meet more than once per year if needed.

**Reevaluation Meeting:** Reevaluations are conducted every 3 years

Evaluations can be conducted sooner, if needed.



# Parent Perspective

## What Helped the Most

Clear communication from the school

Feeling like a partner on the IEP team

Teachers following through on supports

Consistent updates on progress



# Parent Perspective

## What I Wish I Had Known

“If I could go back, I’d tell myself...”



Advocate sooner



Develop a relationship  
with the IEP case  
manager



Don't be afraid to ask  
questions



You are part of the  
team

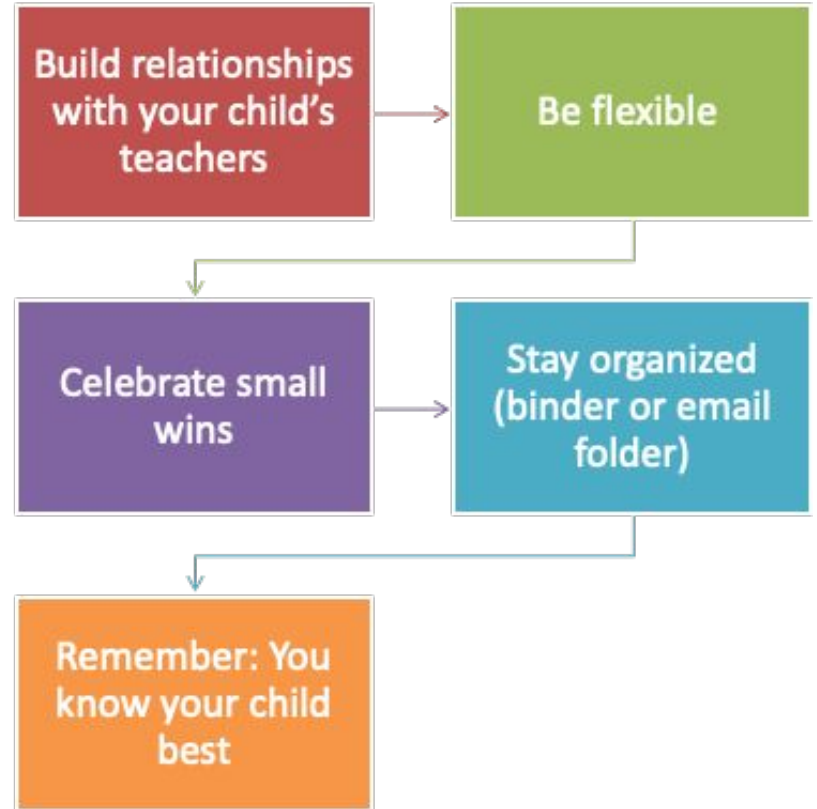


Bring notes and ask for  
examples



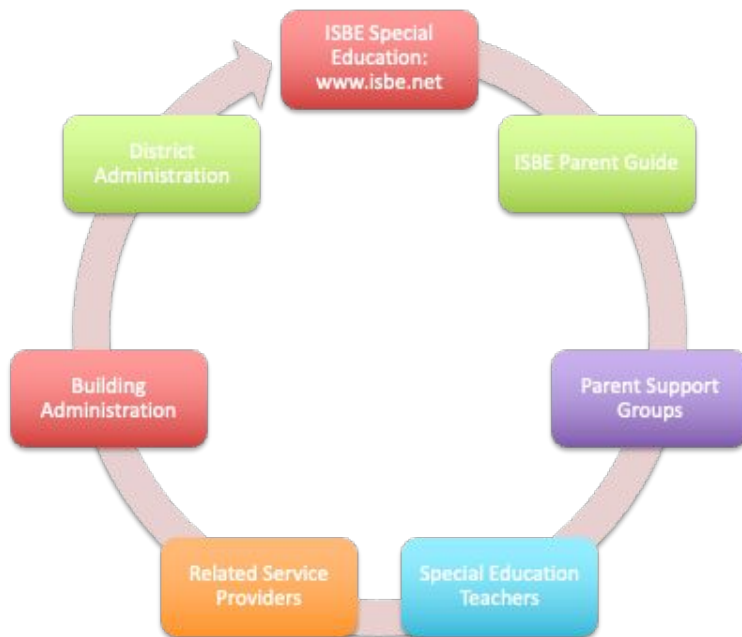
# Parent Perspective

**“My Top  
Tips for  
Parents”**





# Resources & Support





**Questions?**



**FREMONT**  
SCHOOL DISTRICT 79



# Please share your feedback!

