



# **What to Expect at an IEP Meeting: Supporting Your Child's Educational Success**

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January 22, 2025

# The special education department is holding three sessions for Parent University this year.

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- **Session 1** - Understanding Special Education Basics
  - Happened in December - [Parent U Session 1 slides](#)
- **Session 2** - TODAY - What to Expect at an IEP Meeting
  - January 22 at 6 p.m., virtual
- **Session 3** - The SE Continuum in PPS: Our Different Types of SE Programs
  - Date and time TBD



# Who are your presenters?

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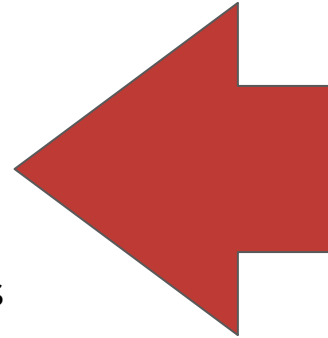
- **Jesse Applegate**, Senior Director of Special Education and Student Support ([applej@portlandschools.org](mailto:applej@portlandschools.org))
- **Blake Kastle**, Director of Special Education for Secondary Schools ([kastlb@portlandschools.org](mailto:kastlb@portlandschools.org))
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- **Tesia McCarthy**, Director of Specialized Programs ([mcart@portlandschools.org](mailto:mcart@portlandschools.org))
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- **Elizabeth Golini**, Coordinator for Specialized Programs ([goline@portlandschools.org](mailto:goline@portlandschools.org))



# Today's session will cover what to expect at an IEP Meeting: Supporting Your Child's Educational Success

## Agenda

- Overview of IEP process-
- What to expect:
  - Before,
  - During, and
  - After the IEP meeting
- More details on types of IEP meetings
- Final Takeaways



**Within each,  
what is your role  
as a parent?**



# What is the IEP Process?



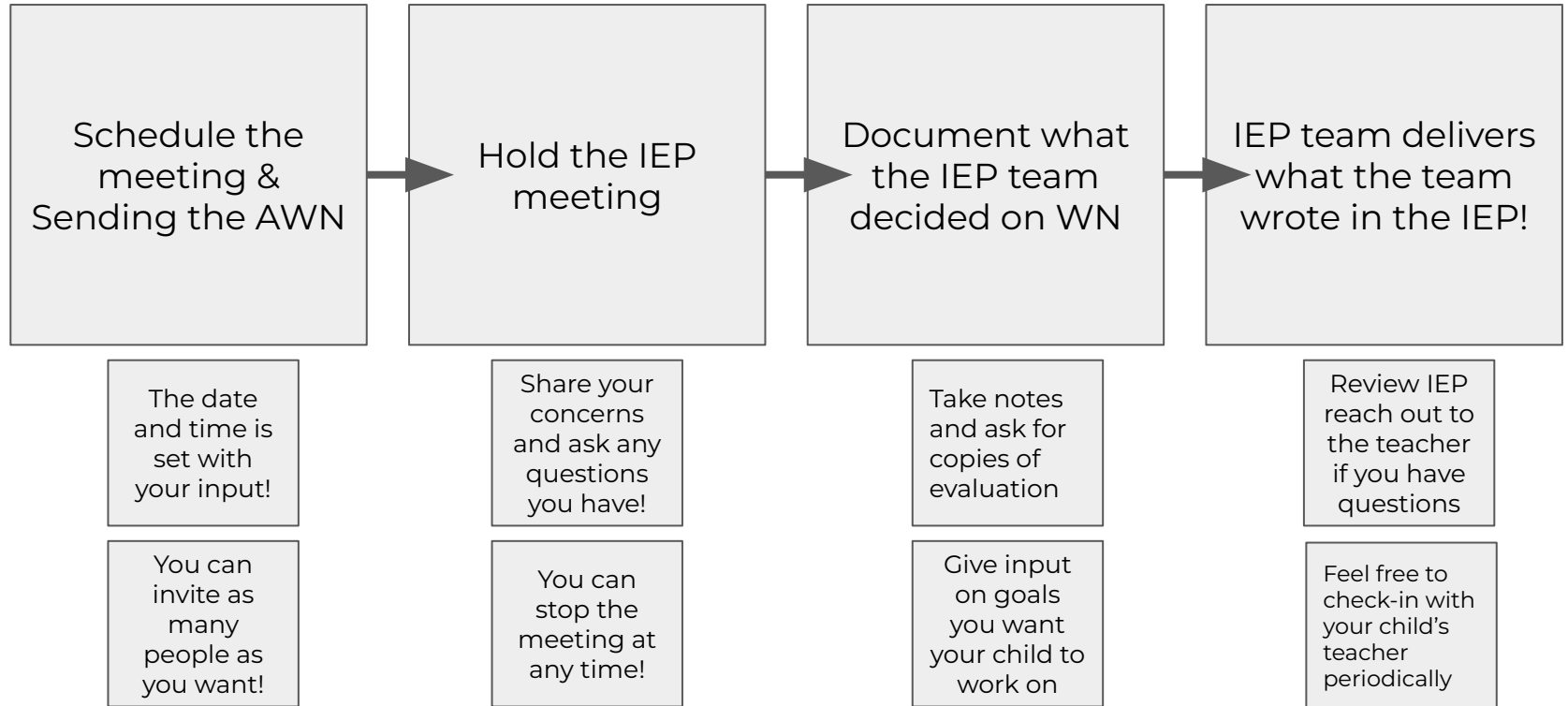
# What is an IEP?

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- IEP = **Individualized Education Program** -
  - This is the name of the meeting and the document itself!
- A legal document under **IDEA (Federal Law)**
- Describes and documents the services, goals, and accommodations a student with a disability needs to access their education
- An Individualized Education Program (IEP) meeting can feel overwhelming, but at its heart, it is simply a collaborative check-in.
  - Everyone involved in your child's education sits around the same table to focus entirely on how to help them succeed.
  - Think of it as a **strategy session** where you are a primary partner.



# IEP Process Review



# Before the IEP meeting



# The AWN is the formal invitation to the IEP meeting.

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"Advanced Written Notice" refers to the formal requirement that schools notify parents in writing before an Individualized Education Program (IEP) Team meeting takes place. MUSER requires the Advanced Written Notice to be clear and "understandable to the general public." It must include:

- **The Basics:** The date, time, and specific location of the meeting. The location can be in person or virtual.
- **The Purpose:** Why the meeting is being held (e.g., an annual review, an initial referral, or a change in placement).
- **The Participants:** A list of who the school has invited to attend, including their names and roles.
- **Parental Rights:** A statement reminding you that you are an equal member of the IEP Team and can invite other individuals who have knowledge or special expertise regarding your child.

The School Administrative Unit (SAU) must provide this notice to you at least **7 days prior** to the scheduled meeting.



# The AWN is the formal invitation to the IEP meeting.

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**Waiver:** You can choose to meet sooner than 7 days, but you must acknowledge that you are giving up your right to the full 7-day notice period before the official IEP meeting date.

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# Before the Meeting: Tips for Parents

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- School will contact you to schedule the meeting at mutually agreed upon time.
- You can ask to have the meeting in-person, virtual, or hybrid
- Advance Written Notice (AWN) will be sent you that is the formal IEP meeting invitation
- The AWN will tell you who will be at the meeting. This is your chance to review this list and know who to expect to see.
- Gather your thoughts, questions, and concerns about your child's education to share at the IEP meeting
- You can invite anyone you would like to the meeting as the parent



# Parent input examples

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- 1. Strengths & Interests:** [ They are particularly good at [specific skill, e.g., building with Legos, helping others, or memory]. At home they enjoy...
- 2. Progress & Successes:** Since our last meeting, I have seen growth in [specific area, e.g., their ability to stay on task for 10 minutes]. They were very proud of [recent accomplishment].
- 3. Primary Concerns:** My biggest concerns right now are [Area 1, e.g., reading fluency] and [Area 2, e.g., social anxiety during recess]. I am noticing that [Child's Name] struggles most when [describe a specific trigger or situation].
- 4. My Vision for the Year:** By the end of this IEP cycle, I hope to see [Child's Name] feel more confident in [specific subject] and be able to [specific social or academic goal].



# The Procedural Safeguards Notice is a parent's guide to their legal rights within the special education system.

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- Right to confidentiality, and to inspect and review the educational records of your child
- Right to give or withhold your consent prior to an evaluation, reevaluation, and initial placement into special education.
- Right to participate in meetings related to the identification, evaluation, and placement of your child, and the provision of Free Appropriate Public Education.
- Right to prior written notification of any changes in your child educational program or IEP.
- Right to FAPE at no cost to you.
- Right to have your child attend classes, participate in nonacademic and extracurricular activities and receive services with child who are not disabled to the maximum extent appropriate.
- Right to request an impartial due process hearing if you disagree with the IEP team's identification, evaluation, or placement of your child or the provision of FAPE to your child.
- Right to withdraw consent for the provision of special education and related services.
- Right to meaningfully participate in the IEP process.
- Right to enlist the district's interpretation or translation services.
- Link to Maine DOE website with family resources, including full procedural safeguards:

<https://www.maine.gov/doe/specialservices/resources>



# During the IEP meeting



# You can ask for an IEP Meeting Agenda



## IEP Meeting Agenda for Annual Reviews

- Introductions
- State Purpose of Meeting
- Confidentiality Statement
  - a. All information discussed in this meeting is confidential and cannot be repeated outside of this meeting unless another IEP team member, or parent/guardian gives signed consent to do so.
- Parental Rights and Safeguards
  - a. Get signed or verbal acknowledgement of receipt of Procedural Safeguards
- Confirm parental/guardian approval of all people in the meeting that are NOT on the Advanced Written Notice. Confirm excusals of anyone on AWN who is absent from the meeting.
- Comments and concerns of Parents / Guardian
- Review All Updates
  - a. Academic Progress Report
  - b. Regular Ed. Teacher(s) Reports
  - c. Special Education Report
  - d. Social Worker Report
  - e. Related Service Provider(s) Reports
  - f. Student Strengths / Needs
  - g. Progress on Goals – IEP Goals and Objectives
  - g. Review Classroom Accommodations
  - h. Behavioral Plan (if applicable)
- Development of new IEP
  - a. Review Recent Assessments
  - b. Review Draft Proposed Goals and Services (Do not add services without the Provider present.)
  - c. Review Proposed Accommodations
  - d. Review Assessment Accommodations
  - e. Special Education Service(s)
  - f. Related Service(s)
  - g. Special Transportation (ONLY if applicable per student)
  - h. Secure parental /guardian approval of IEP start date (if earlier than 7 days)
- ESY – Determine in meeting (ESY needs to be discussed at all IEPs even if a determination can't be made)
- Review Transition Plan (High School Only)
- Determine Evaluations or Reevaluations questions, if further assessments are needed. Get all Eligibility or Re-eligibility forms completed and signed – IN the meeting.
- If in person, parents to sign applicable paperwork /MaineCare 1 time consent

**Make every attempt to have the meeting be no longer than 1 hour. (Keep the meeting on track.)**



# IEP Team Members: What are their roles?

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You'll see several familiar and new faces. By law, the "IEP Team" usually includes:

- **You:** The most important member (you know your child best!).
- **General Education Teacher:** To talk about what's happening in the mainstream classroom.
- **Special Education Teacher:** To discuss specific supports and modifications.
- **An LEA Representative:** Someone who can approve school resources and services (often the building administrator or the special education coordinator)
- **Related Service Providers:** Depending on your child's needs, this might include a Speech Therapist, Occupational Therapist, Physical Therapist, Social Worker, BCBA, or School Psychologist.



# How the meeting goes: IEP agenda

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- **Introductions & Rights:** The meeting starts with introductions and the school *offering* you a copy of your "Procedural Safeguards" (a booklet explaining your legal rights).
- **Present Levels:** The team discusses how your child is doing *right now* in all settings. This includes their strengths, recent test scores, and how their disability affects their learning.
- **Reviewing Progress:** If your child already has an IEP, you'll look at the goals from last year to see which ones were met.
- **Setting New Goals:** The team will propose specific, measurable goals for the next 12 months (e.g., "Sam will be able to read 50 sight words with 80% accuracy").
- **Services & Accommodations:** This is where you decide *how* to reach those goals. It includes things like extra time on tests, specialized equipment, or small-group instruction.
- **Placement:** Finally, the team discusses where these services will be provided (usually keeping the child in the general classroom as much as possible).



# During the meeting for parents:

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- **Bring a Support Person:** Never feel you have to go alone. Bring a spouse, a friend, or a professional advocate. They can take notes for you, so you can focus on the conversation
- **Encourage a Student-first Approach:** Bring a photo of your child , place a piece of their artwork in the center of the table, ask the teacher to bring work samples, ask the team to tell a personal story about your child, have team to bring visuals your student uses.
- **Ask for "Jargon" Clarification:** Education is full of acronyms (like LRE, FAPE, or MTSS). If you don't understand a term or a specific test score, **stop and ask**. You cannot be a meaningful participant if you aren't clear on what is being discussed.
  - [Individualized Education Program \(IEP\) Glossary for Parents](#)
- **Share your "Parent Voice":** IEPs have a section for parent concerns. You can choose to prepare a few sentences about what you see at home, what your child loves, and what you're most worried about.
- **It's okay to wait:** You do not have to sign the final document the second the meeting ends. You can take it home, sleep on it, and return it a day or two later.



# Building the IEP at the meeting!

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## The IEP document is the "Roadmap"

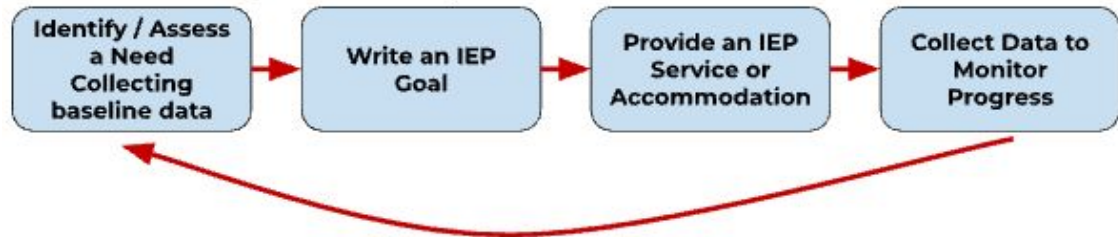
The IEP document is the written commitment from the school. If it isn't in the document, it doesn't exist in the plan.

**Present Levels for all IEP services** Where is the child starting right now?

**Goals** Where do we want them to be in a year? These NEED to have some kind of plan for how to measure the goals!

**Services** What specific help (Speech, OT, Specially Designed Instruction-SDI) will get them there?

**Accommodations** What changes to the environment (extra time, quiet space) do they need?



# After the IEP meeting




# Written Notice information

## What must be included on the WN?

To be legally valid, the WN must answer these 7 specific questions

1. **What** is the school agreeing to do?
2. **Why** is the school making this decision?
3. **What data** (evaluations, records, or reports) did they use to decide?
4. **What other options** did the team talk about?
5. **Why were those other options rejected?**
6. **What other factors** were relevant to the decision?
7. **Parent statements**

  
**WRITTEN NOTICE**  
Maine Unified Special Education Regulations (MUSER) Appendix 1, 34 CFR 300.503

Date Sent to Parents:		SAU: Portland Public Schools	
Child's Name: Joseph Test Student		School: Ocean Avenue School	
Date of birth: 1/1/2014	Grade:	School Phone: (207) 874-8180	
Parent/guardian name: JoAnn Smith		School Address: 150 Ocean Avenue, Portland, ME 04103	
Parent/guardian address: 555 Any Street		City, State, Zip:	
Parent/Guardian City, State Zip: Any Town, ME 05555		School Contact: Natalie Skovran	

Date of Team meeting: 12/01/2025	Date amended IEP/IFSP sent, if parent requested a copy:
Date of agreement for amendment without Team meeting:	

**Written Notice must be given in accordance with MUSER Appendix 1, 34 CFR 300.503 for:**

- Initial referral/eligibility (MUSER IV.2.D)
- Annual review and other IEP program/placement changes including graduation and revocation of consent for continued placement (MUSER XV)
- IFSP Annual or 6 month Review - (MUSER VI.1.B.)
- Evaluation/reevaluation (MUSER V.1.A.(4)(i) & V.3.D.)
- Post-secondary goals and transition services (MUSER IX.3.A(1)(h))
- Transfer student (MUSER IX.3.B(5)(a)(i) and (ii))
- CDS/public school transition (MUSER VI.2.C(2))
- Transition from Part C to Part B (MUSER VI.2.C(1))
- Consent for Initial Placement (MUSER V.1.A(4)(a)(ii))
- Amendments after the annual IEP meeting (MUSER IX.3.C(4))
- Other (e.g., MUSER IX.1.B. or MUSER IX.3.D.(1)(a))


(Reminder: Per LD 489, the Individualized Educational Program (IEP) Team for children identified under 619 must make a determination about extended school year (ESY) services at every IEP team meeting; the IEP Team may make a determination about ESY services based on available data, including information about a child's disability, even if an interruption in service has not occurred; and, in accordance with the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004, 20 United States Code, Sections 1400 to 1445 (2006), a regional site may not unilaterally limit the duration of ESY services.)

Effective 10/1/2018 Written Notice



# IEP final plan is sent to parent

Be on look out for final IEP draft -21 schools days after meeting



**Maine Department of Education**  
Maine Unified Special Education Regulations (MUSER) IX.3.G.

**INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM (IEP)**

SAU or CDS Site: Portland Public Schools  
Date IEP Sent to Parent:

**1. CHILD INFORMATION**

Child's Name: Joseph Test Student	Annual Date of IEP Meeting: 12/1/2025
Date of Birth: 1/1/2014	Duration of the IEP: 12/15/2025 - 12/14/2026
Age: 12	Date of Next Annual IEP Meeting:
School/Program: Ocean Avenue School Grade:	Date of Re-Evaluation: N/A
Parent/Guardian Name: JoAnn Smith	Date(s) of Amended IEP: N/A
Child's Address:	Case Manager: Natalie Skovran
City, State, ZIP: .	
State Agency Client? <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO	

**2. DISABILITY**

<input type="checkbox"/> Autism	<input type="checkbox"/> Deaf-Blindness	<input type="checkbox"/> Deafness
<input type="checkbox"/> Developmental Delay (3-5)	<input type="checkbox"/> Developmental Delay (Kindergarten)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Emotional Disability
<input type="checkbox"/> Hard of Hearing	<input type="checkbox"/> Intellectual Disability	<input type="checkbox"/> Visual Impairment (Including Blindness)
<input type="checkbox"/> Other Health Impairment	<input type="checkbox"/> Orthopedic Impairment	<input type="checkbox"/> Speech/Language Impairment
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Specific Learning Disability	<input type="checkbox"/> Traumatic Brain Injury	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Multiple Disability
<i>(check all applicable concomitant disabilities)</i>		

**3. CONSIDERATIONS – INCLUDING SPECIAL FACTORS**

**A.** Concerns of the parents for enhancing the education or their child (MUSER IX.3.C.(1)(b)):

**B.** Does the child exhibit behavior that impedes the child's learning or that of others requiring positive behavioral interventions and supports and other strategies to address the behavior? (MUSER IX.3.C.(2)(a))  YES  NO

**C.** Is the child identified as a student who is an English learner? (MUSER IX.3.C.(2)(b))  YES  NO

**L.** Does the child have language needs, due to limited English proficiency, which need to be addressed in the IEP?  YES  NO

**D.** If the child is blind or visually impaired, does the child require instruction in Braille and the use of Braille? (MUSER IX.3.C.(2)(c))  YES  NO  NA

**E.** Does the child have a print disability that requires accessible educational materials (AEM) to access the curriculum?  YES  NO

**L.** If yes, what type of accessible educational materials (AEM) does the child require?

**F.** Does the child have communication needs? (MUSER IX.3.C.(2)(d))  YES  NO

**L.** Is the child deaf or hard of hearing?  YES  NO

**G.** Does the child need assistive technology devices and services (MUSER IX.3.C.(2)(e))  YES  NO

**H.** Does the child have academic needs?  YES  NO

**L.** Does the child have functional/developmental needs?  YES  NO

**POST-SECONDARY TRANSITION**

**J.** Is the child in 9th grade or above **OR** is the child 16 years old or older?  YES  NO

**L.** If yes, Section 9 should be completed before completing the remainder of the IEP.

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# After the Meeting for Parents

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- **Review Before You Approve** You are not required to approve any plans the moment the meeting ends.
- **Connect with Your Child** Talk to your child about the meeting in a positive way. Share the strengths and successes the teachers mentioned. If they are old enough, discuss their new goals so they feel empowered and aware of the support they'll be receiving.
- **Look for the Written Notice** Look for an account of the meeting in the Written Notice (WN) which will be sent to you following the meeting.
  - **What is a WN?** A WN is a formal written document from the school district. You often receive it *after* an IEP meeting but *before* the school actually starts the changes they discussed. It gives a written record of what the school is doing (or not doing) and **why**.



# If you disagree with the IEP or have concerns....

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You can:

- Ask for clarification or revisions
- Request another meeting
- Reach out to the building principal, or your Special Education Directors
- Try an IEP facilitator from Maine Department of Education
- Contact the Parent Training Center - Disability Rights Maine or Maine Parent Federation
- File a complaint or due process (if needed)

Remember - you can request a meeting at any time.



# Types of IEP Meetings



# The Initial IEP Meeting

When it Happens	Purpose	Key Parent Role
<p>Initial IEP when your child is found <b>eligible</b> for special education services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● To review the evaluations and data on your child</li> <li>● To <b>develop the very first IEP</b> for your child, including goals, services, and placement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Provide input on your child's strengths, needs, and vision for their future.</li> <li>● Give <b>written consent</b> to services.</li> </ul>



# The Annual Review IEP Meeting

When it Happens	Purpose	Key Parent Role
<p>Must occur <b>at least once every 12 months</b> (annually).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● To <b>review the current IEP</b>, discuss your child's progress toward their goals</li> <li>● To <b>develop a new IEP</b> for the upcoming year.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Review progress reports</li> <li>● Discuss current needs</li> <li>● Suggest new goals and services</li> </ul>



# The Three-Year Reevaluation IEP Meeting

When it Happens	Purpose	Key Parent Role
<p>Must occur <b>at least once every three years.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● To review existing evaluation data, determine if <b>new testing</b> is needed</li> <li>● To decide if your child still qualifies for special education services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Share observations from home</li> <li>● Review testing results</li> <li>● Agree/disagree with the need for further testing</li> </ul>



# Other less-common types of IEP meetings

Meeting Type	When it Happens	Purpose	Key Parent Role
Program Review/ Amendment Meeting	As needed throughout the school year	To make <b>minor changes</b> to the current, active IEP without holding a full annual review (e.g., adding a service, adjusting a goal, changing minutes)	Discuss and agree to the specific proposed change(s)
Transition Planning Meeting	As needed, when changing schools or programs	To make any changes to the IEP, based on what makes sense for the new setting	Discuss and agree to the specific proposed change(s)
<b>Note:</b> parents can also request an IEP meeting at any time	At any time, upon parent request	To review and discuss any aspect of the IEP	Discuss and agree to any specific proposed change(s)



# Final Takeaways



# Final Takeaways for Families

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- Write questions ahead of time
- Ask for an agenda
- Take notes or bring someone with you
- Focus on your child's strengths
- Don't be afraid to ask any questions that you may have
- Remember: **You know your child best**



# Any questions?

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- If you have more questions following the presentation, please reach out to your school team (teacher or administrator)
- Our central team is also available for any questions, you can find our email addresses at the beginning of the presentation
- For more information about special education in Portland, you can review our school board committee presentation from earlier this year
  - [October 27 Board Update](#)
  - [January 12 Board Update](#)



# Special Education is full of Specific Language!

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- Your child's IEP team should make sure that you understand any specific terms or acronyms that are being used
  - **Parents should always feel free to ask for an explanation of any new or unfamiliar term**
- Use this link to access a reference list of common special education acronyms:
  - [Individualized Education Program \(IEP\) Glossary for Parents](#)



# Special education is an individual plan designed to support a student with disabilities, not a specific classroom or place.

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- Every student who is eligible for special education has an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) that could include **pecially designed instruction**, **related services**, and **accommodations** designed to meet their unique learning needs
- **Specially Designed Instruction (SDI)** is teaching that is focused on student's academic, behavior, and functional goals
- **Related services** are services such as speech therapy, occupational therapy, and physical therapy
- **Accommodations** are supports or changes to the learning environment that help a student access their education



## The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is the basis for special education across the country.

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- IDEA is a federal law that provides rights to eligible children with disabilities:
  - A free appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE)
  - An individualized plan of services designed to meet their specific needs
- IDEA guarantees that your child, if eligible, will receive the special education and related services they need at **no cost** to you, and it gives you, the parent, specific rights in the process



## All eligible children with disabilities are entitled to a free appropriate public education (FAPE).

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- FAPE means that the services and supports in your child's Individualized Education Program (IEP) are good enough to allow your child to make **meaningful progress** in school
- “Meaningful progress” may be different for each child, as it is based on their specific needs and skills
- Your child’s team will provide regular updates on their progress throughout the year, usually along with report cards



# Child Find is the legal duty of schools to identify and evaluate all children with disabilities.

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- Child Find applies to **all** children in a school district, including those who are homeschooled or attend private schools
- These are the general steps of the Child Find process, though they may vary slightly depending on the situation:
  - Classroom Screening and General Education Interventions
  - Individual Screening
  - Referral
  - Evaluation
  - Eligibility Determination



## Parents can refer their child for evaluations to determine special education eligibility at any time.

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- If parents believe their child may be eligible for special education, they can refer their child for evaluations at any time
- To make this referral, you can submit a request to your child's school principal or special education coordinator
- We recommend that parents put their request in writing if possible, but the school will also take a verbal request



## After a special education referral is submitted, the team discusses and completes evaluations.

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- An IEP meeting will be held to determine which evaluations should be completed for your child
- Parents must sign a consent form to allow the evaluations
- After the consent form is signed, the school team has 45 school days to complete evaluations
- Parent should receive a copy of all evaluations to review at least 3 days before the IEP meeting
- After the 45 school days, another IEP team meeting is held to talk about all evaluations and determine if special education is needed



## Special education eligibility is a three-part process.

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- To determine eligibility for special education, the team will discuss three questions, all of which must be answered as “yes”
  - Does your child meet the criteria for one of the 13 disability categories?
  - Is there data that shows there is an adverse effect on your child progress related to their disability?
  - Does your child need special education (an IEP), with specially designed instruction or does your child only need general education with support?



# When the IEP team determines that a child qualifies for special education, they create the plan.

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- The team will meet to decide what programs and services should be in the student's IEP
- After the meeting, parents will receive a copy of the written notice, which is a summary of the IEP meeting
- Parents will also receive a copy of the IEP, and the parents must provide consent before special education services start at school



## IDEA requires that students spend as much time as possible in the least restrictive environment (LRE).

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- LRE means that a child should spend as much time as possible in the general education classroom
- They should only be removed if they cannot make meaningful progress in the regular classroom, even with the use of accommodations.
- Placement decisions are always made by the IEP team and based on a child's individual needs
- At every annual IEP meeting, the team should consider trying a less restrictive setting



## Students are provided with a level of support that aligns with their needs.

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- These are the possibilities for support, from least to most restrictive:
  - Intervention supports (RTI) before the special education referral
  - Special education services in the general education classroom
  - Special education services in the resource classroom
  - Special education services in a specialized program
- Most students with IEPs spend the majority of their time in the general education classroom

