



Family Handbook

A Parent/Guardian/Ed Right Holder
Guide to Special Education



Table of Contents

I. Introduction:

Welcome.....	5
What is Special Education?	5
What is an IEP?	6
Your Participation is Key!.....	6
We Are Here for You	7
Definitions	8

II. What to Know About the IEP Process

Referring Your Child for an IEP	13
The Assessment Process	14
Determining Eligibility	14
Developing the IEP	15
Let's Read an IEP Together	17
Goals.....	18
Behavior	19
Manifest Determination Review (MDR)	19
Discipline/Accountability	20
Progress	21

III. Preparing for Your First IEP Meeting

What You Will Need for Your First Meeting (Before/During/After)	23
Signing the IEP.....	25
Understanding the IEP Timeline	26
Know Your Rights! Your Procedural Safeguards	28
Supporting Your Child with Their IEP	29
Talking to Your Child About Disabilities.....	29

IV. Conclusions and Final Thoughts

Conclusions and Final Thoughts	32
--------------------------------------	----

V. Acknowledgements

Acknowledgements	32
------------------------	----

VI. Additional Resources

SCUSD, Special Education Department & SELPA Parent Resources	33
SELPA Alternate Dispute Resolution (ADR)	34
Sacramento Community & Disability Resources	35
Learn More About the Law.....	36
Things to Know About an Individualized Education Program (IEP)	38



LEGEND



Important Item: Crucial information or guidelines that should be prioritized



TIP: Helpful advice or practical suggestions for parental involvement



NOTE: A brief record of facts for clarification.

BOLD TYPE: Bold type throughout the document refers to **DEFINITIONS** (pg 8)



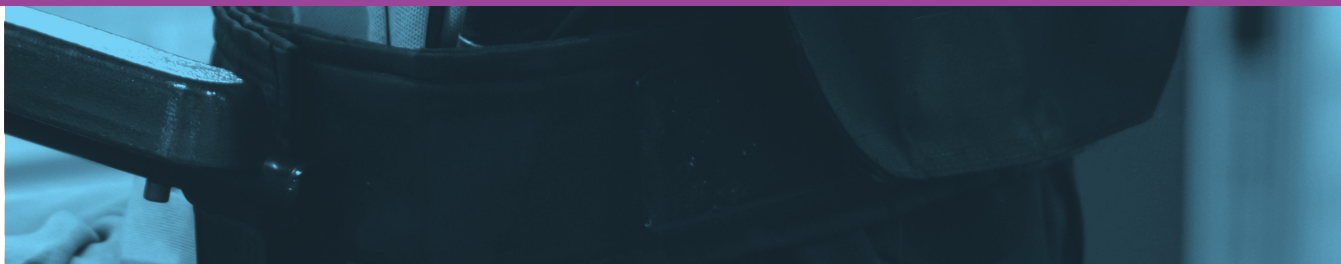
Scan the QR code to download the digital version of this handbook or visit:
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1PEiL18EfHFKWjgrqML3HA_x448QVVlg3/view?usp=drive_link



Alternate Dispute Resolution (ADR):
<https://www.scusd.edu/explore/programs-services/special-education/selpa/parent-resources/adr>



Introduction



I. INTRODUCTION

WELCOME!

We welcome you to the Sacramento City Unified School District (SCUSD), **Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA)**, & **Community Advisory Committee (CAC)** handbook. This resource aims to provide you with clear, concise, and helpful information about participation in your child's **Individualized Educational Program (IEP)**. We believe that every child deserves to succeed, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, ability, immigration status, religion, or language spoken, and we are committed to working together with you to ensure that your child receives high quality education in the least restrictive environment. We are committed to working together with you to ensure that your child receives the best possible education.

The SCUSD SPED Family Handbook will:

- Explain what special education is and how it supports students with disabilities
- Define common terms used in the IEP process
- Introduce you to your **Procedural Safeguards** as parents
- Prepare you to participate as a member of your child's **IEP Team**
- Provide you with tools to support your child at school

This Handbook is provided as a resource to get you started on your child's special education journey. It provides general information only and does not offer recommendations regarding your child's specific needs. This Handbook is not for the purpose of providing legal advice.



TIP: Words you see in **bold** are further explained in the Definitions section of this handbook.

WHAT IS SPECIAL EDUCATION?

Special Education is a tailored educational program designed to meet the individual needs of eligible students with disabilities.



TIP: Under the **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)**, a federal law, schools are required to provide special education services to eligible students at no cost to families regardless of immigration status. These services aim to ensure that all students have access to a **Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)**.

WHAT IS AN IEP?

The **Individualized Education Program (IEP)** is a program outlined in a written document that is developed for each public school child who is eligible for special education services. The **IEP** shows how the district will provide an eligible student with disabilities with a **FAPE** in the **LRE**, and allows you to make sure your child receives the services and supports they need.

According to the **California Department of Education**, 850,995 individuals were supported with an **IEP** in 2024. The reality is that each child is unique and learning is not one size fits all.

AN IEP IS:

- An individualized learning plan for your child designed to identify your child's unique educational needs
- Co-created with the parent or guardian and school team
- An identification of disability-related needs that impact a child's learning
- A legal contract with agreed upon support and services for your child
- An unbiased and informed assessment of ways to support your child's learning
- Confidential and only shared with staff that support your student so they can be informed of your child's learning needs
- Requires **Informed Consent** before the plan can be implemented
- A flexible plan that can change as your child's needs change

BENEFITS OF AN IEP INCLUDE:

- Provides students with disabilities additional supports and resources based on their needs
- Provides students, families and schools with legal protections
- Centers families in decisions that impact your child's education
- Provides guidance to school staff in meeting a student's disability-related needs, including behavioral needs



YOUR PARTICIPATION IS KEY!

Parent participation is one of the most important parts of the **IEP** process. As a parent, you can provide crucial information about your child and ask questions about their educational program at **IEP** meetings. You can also support your child at home by helping to monitor their progress, reinforcing skills they learn in the classroom, communicating with teachers, and supporting their attendance.

WE ARE HERE FOR YOU - LET'S WORK TOGETHER!

Participating in your child's first **Individualized Education Program (IEP)** meeting can feel intimidating and overwhelming. Please know, it's typical to have a lot of questions. However, take comfort in knowing you are not alone—there is a supportive community ready to assist you every step of the way.

We can do BIG things alongside one another when each member of the team has a voice!

For any questions or concerns along your child's special education journey, please feel free to reach out to the following contacts:

- Assistant Superintendent of Special Education: _____
- Administrators of Teaching & Learning (ATL): _____
- Designated Instructional Services (DIS)/Support Provider(s): _____
- Program Specialist (PS): _____
- Your Child's Teacher: _____
- Your Child's Principal: _____
- School Office: _____

Below is a recent testimonial from a SCUSD family who navigated the **IEP** journey:

“Participating in my son's **IEP** meetings helps us to better understand how he's being supported. Being involved gives us the opportunity to discuss with his whole **IEP** team what's working well, or what might need to be adjusted to better support his education. It's really helpful to collaborate with his entire team, and levelset what kind of growth/progress we might expect in the coming year, including the opportunity to provide input/ask questions on revised goals with his **IEP**. Actively participating in the **IEP** meetings helps ensure we're connected and in agreement that his plan suits his educational needs as well as possible.”

—SCUSD Parent, John Cabrillo
January 2025

DEFINITIONS: WORDS TO GET FAMILIAR WITH

As you address your child's learning with teachers, and **special education** providers, you will probably hear many terms that are new to you. The following is a guide to terms frequently used in educational settings. If you find that there are words being used that you do not understand, pause the process and ask the **IEP Team** to explain and clarify for you.

A

Accessibility: The “ability to access” the functionality and benefit of some system or entity. This term is used to describe the degree to which a product (such as a device, a service, or an environment) is accessible by as many people as possible.

Accommodations: Adaptations made for specific individuals with disabilities (as defined by law) when a product or service isn't accessible. An example of an accommodation may be getting extra time to complete homework or take a test. Accommodations don't change the basic curriculum but make learning a little easier or help kids communicate what they know.

Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR): Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) is a way to resolve special education disagreements without going to court. Parents and school district personnel work together with a neutral person who helps them find a solution everyone can agree to.

Alternative Pathways:

Copy TK

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA): A federal civil rights law that provides legal protections for individuals with disabilities from discrimination in employment, state and local government, public accommodations, commercial facilities, telecommunications, and transportation. [Title II of the ADA](#) requires schools to make educational opportunities, extracurricular activities, and facilities open and accessible to all students.

Annual Goals: Specific, measurable goals in a student's areas of need that the student's **IEP Team** determines the student should achieve within a year.

Assessment: The process a school district uses to identify a student's areas of strength and

areas of need to assist in educational planning. Assessment can include observation, record review, interviews, and standardized tests to develop appropriate **IEPs**, and to monitor progress.

Assessment Plan (AP): The description of the types of tests (psychological, achievement, language, etc.) the district plans to use in a particular student's special education assessment.

Assistive Technology (AT): Any item or piece of equipment that is used to help a student with a disability function in the school environment or during educational activities.

B

Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) The Board Certified Behavior Analyst® (BCBA®) is a person who has a graduate-level certification in behavior analysis. Professionals certified at the BCBA level are independent practitioners who provide behavior-analytic services.

Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP): A BIP is a written plan to help a student who has behavior that interferes with their learning or the learning of their classmates. It's designed to reduce and replace problem behaviors by making changes to the school environment, teaching the student skills, and providing teachers with strategies to address the student's behavior.

C

California Department of Education (CDE): The California Department of Education provides leadership, assistance, oversight and resources so that every Californian has access to an education.

Community Advisory Council for Special Education (CAC): A group of parents of children with disabilities, members of the community, students and special education professionals who advise the school board and school district administration about special education programs.

Continuum of Placements: A range of educational service and placement options for students with disabilities that can meet the full range of students' unique needs. It's a requirement for **Special Education Local Plan Areas (SELPA)** to have this range of options available to best serve the diverse population of students.

D

Due Process: The legal procedure for resolving special education disputes in court. Due process hearings are court trials in which administrative law judges from the Office of Administrative Hearings hear evidence about special education disagreements and decide how the disagreement should be resolved.

E

Educationally Related Mental Health Services (ERMHS): Educationally Related Mental Health Services (ERMHS) are mental health services for students with disabilities who require school-based mental health services and supports.

Educational Rights Holder: The adult who is legally responsible for making educational decisions for a child, including decisions about special education. Parents are usually educational rights holders, but legal guardians, foster parents, or other adults can be appointed educational rights holders during court proceedings. Students have a right to make their own educational decisions when they turn 18.

English Language Learners (ELL): A student who is learning English as a new language while also studying other school subjects. These students may speak a different language at home, and they get special support to help them learn English so they can understand their lessons, access the curriculum, talk to teachers and friends, and do well in school. [English Language Learners \(ELL\) Persons w/ Disabilities](#)

Extended School Year (ESY): Special education services provided during school breaks to prevent a student from losing the skills they were taught during the regular school year. A student's **IEP Team** determines whether a student is eligible for **ESY** services based on the student's needs.

F

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA): A federal law that regulates the management of student records and disclosure of information from those records.

Functional Behavior Assessments (FBA): A process for gathering information about a student's behaviors to understand their purpose/function and how to change them. When gathering such data, the purpose is to develop strategies to support a student and reduce or replace negative behaviors with more appropriate ones.

Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE): Entitles a qualifying public school child with a disability to an educational program and related services to meet their unique educational needs at no cost to the parents. A student's **FAPE** must meet state standards and be provided according to their IEP.

I

IEP Team: The group of individuals who work together to develop a student's IEP. The **IEP Team** includes the student's **educational rights holder**, teachers, special education service providers, school administrators, and other individuals with important information about the student's needs. Students are also often important members of their **IEP Team**.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA): The nation's main law governing specific rights of K–12 students with disabilities, **IDEA** entitles all public school students to a **free appropriate public education (FAPE)**.

Individualized Education Program (IEP): An **IEP** is a plan developed to ensure that a child who has a disability identified under the law and is attending an elementary or secondary educational institution receives specialized instruction and related services.

Individualized Transition Plan (ITP): An individualized plan including services and supports for a student's transition from high school based on the student's goals for higher education, career, and independent living. These plans are required parts of the **IEP** for students ages 16 and older.

Informed Consent: Agreement in writing from educational rights holders that they have been informed, understand, and agree to allow the school district to conduct special education assessments or provide special education according to a student's **IEP**. This consent is voluntary and may be withdrawn.

L

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE): A term meaning that children with disabilities must be educated to the maximum extent appropriate with children without disabilities. A student's **LRE** will depend on their unique needs.

M

Manifestation Determination Review (MDR): A "manifestation determination meeting" is a meeting with parents and relevant members of a student's **IEP Team** to figure out if a student's behavior that has led to suspension or a recommendation for expulsion is connected to their disability or to a failure to provide their IEP services. To do this, the team looks at the student's IEP, details about the behavior, and other relevant information about the student. This meeting is required when a student with a disability is facing suspension for more than 10 days in a school year.

Modification: Modifications are changes in the delivery, content, or instructional level of a subject or test based on the individual needs of a student with a disability.

N

Non-public school (NPS): A private placement under contract with the district and certified by the state, to service pupils with disabilities whose needs can not be served by the special education programs offered within the district.

Neurodiversity: Neurodiversity describes the idea that people experience and interact with the world around them in many different ways; there is no one "right" way of thinking, learning, and behaving, and differences are not viewed as deficits.

The word neurodiversity refers to the diversity of all people, but it is often used in the context of autism spectrum disorder (ASD), as well as other neurological or developmental conditions

such as ADHD or learning disabilities. The neurodiversity movement emerged during the 1990s, aiming to increase acceptance and inclusion of all people while embracing neurological differences.

O

Occupational Therapy: Therapy provided by trained occupational therapists to help students gain independence in various skills of daily living. At school, this can include working on skills needed to manage the physical and sensory parts of the classroom and to use common classroom tools like pencils, scissors, and keyboards.

Orientation and Mobility: Specialists teach students who have visual impairments the specific orientation skills used to find one's way in the environment and the mobility skills needed to travel safely and efficiently at home, school, work, and in the community.

P

Person Centered Planning: A collaborative process that helps people with disabilities achieve their goals. It's based on the idea that everyone has the right to live their life as they choose, and that the person should be at the center of the planning process.

Primary Language: Language that the child first learned, or the language that's spoken in the home.

Prior Written Notice (PWN): A Prior Written Notice (PWN) is a document that informs (provides notice to) a parent/guardian/education rights holder of actions that the school intends to take in regard to their child's Individualized Education Program. It is important that parents understand what the school plans to do (or not do) for their child.

Procedural Safeguards: Legal requirements that ensure parents and kids will be treated fairly and equally in the decision-making process about special education.

Progress Reports: Periodic reports to inform parents of their child's progress toward reaching each of their **annual goals** and to help the **IEP Team** determine whether the student is on track to achieve their goals by the annual IEP due date.

R

Related Services: The term for those services a disabled student needs in order to benefit from special education. Related services include speech therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, and rehabilitation counseling. Transportation to school may also be a related service depending on the student's unique needs.

Resource Specialist Program (RSP): Students who can participate in regular education may also receive special education instruction from the **RSP**. These students can receive services “pushed-into” the classroom, or can be “pulled out” of the regular education classroom for special assistance during specific periods of the day or week and are taught by specially credentialed teachers.

S

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act

(504): A federal civil rights law that prohibits discrimination in the education of children and youth with disabilities by federally funded school districts. Section 504 also prohibits discrimination in vocational education; college and other post-secondary programs; employment; health, welfare and other social programs that receive federal funds.

Special Day Class (SDC): Students in Special Day Classes (SDC) are enrolled in “self-contained” special education classes, or classrooms that only serve students with IEPs who require more support and structure than can be provided in the general education classroom. They are assigned to these classes based on an **IEP Team** decision in the offer of **FAPE**.

Special Education (SPED): Specially designed instruction and related services to meet the unique needs of eligible students with disabilities whose educational needs can't be met through the regular instructional program.

Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA): Is a team of Special Education experts that work together with the district and families to help students with disabilities get the support and resources they need to succeed.

Specialized Academic Instruction (SAI): Special instruction and services for students with disabilities that are determined by a student's IEP Team based on assessment information, data collected, and goals developed in the student's areas of need. Each student's educational needs are unique; thus, SAI and services may vary greatly between students.

Speech and Language Therapy: Therapy provided to students by trained speech language pathologists to address student needs in the areas of speech, language, voice, fluency and pragmatics.

T

Transition: Process of preparing kids to function in future environments and emphasizing movement from one educational program to another, such as from elementary school to middle school, or from school to work.

U

Universal Design for Learning (UDL): A way to optimize teaching to effectively instruct a diverse group of learners. It emphasizes accessibility in how students access material, engage with it, and show what they have learned. UDL can be applied to in-person or virtual educational settings.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, PLEASE SEARCH TERMINOLOGY HERE

[SCUSD Common SPED Abbreviations and Acronyms](#)

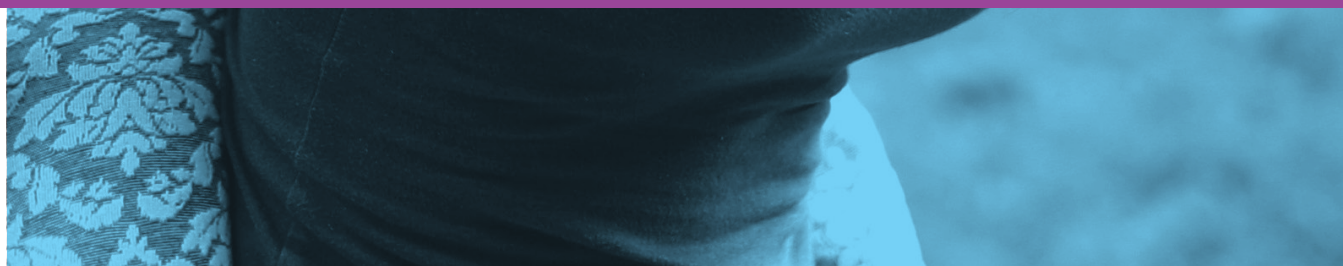
CDE Acronyms & Initialisms: <https://www.cde.ca.gov/re/di/aa/ap/index.asp>

Department of General Services (DGS) Abbreviations & Acronyms: <https://www.dgs.ca.gov/OAH/Case-Types/Special-Education/Self-Help/Abbreviations-and-Acronyms>

CDE English-Spanish Glossary for Educational Settings: <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/ml/engspanglossary.asp>



What to Know About the IEP Process



II. WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT THE IEP PROCESS

The process of getting an **IEP** includes:

- A referral of the student, usually initiated by a parent, teacher, or other school staff;
- A comprehensive assessment to determine the student's areas of strengths and areas of need;
- A determination of whether the student is eligible for special education; and
- Development of an IEP by the IEP Team if the student is found eligible.

REFERRING YOUR CHILD FOR AN IEP

Students are often referred for special education services by their teachers or other school staff. However, you can also make the initial referral of your child for special education services.

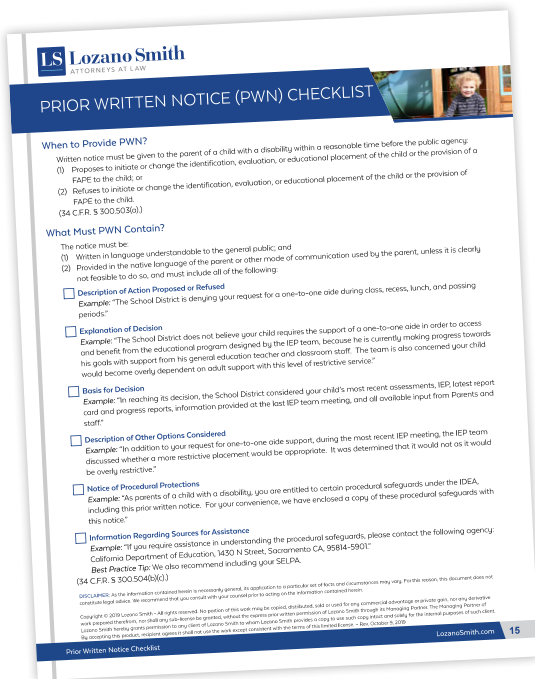


Here's how to ask for an IEP:

- 1 Submit a request for a special education **assessment** in writing to the administrator of your child's school.
- 2 The district must approve or deny your request for an **assessment** in writing within 15 calendar days.
- 3 If the District approves your request, it must also send you an **assessment plan** within 15 calendar days of your written request for **assessment**.
- 4 You will then have at least 15 calendar days to review and provide your **informed consent** by signing the **assessment plan**.



TIP: When you send your written request, include specific information about what subjects and parts of school are challenging for your child, what you see before and after school, and what kind of help you think your child might need. This will help the district develop an appropriate **assessment plan** to assess your child in all areas of suspected disability. You can also provide your written request via email so you have a record of your request and your school team can respond quickly.



If the school decides that your child does not need a special education assessment they will notify you in writing in a document called a **Prior Written Notice (PWN)**, and may ask you to participate in additional meetings to discuss other support options for your child. The school district is legally required to create and send a **PWN** when responding and giving notice but the school will also continue communicating directly with you and you are free to contact the school with any questions you may have.

Please know, whenever you think your child may be struggling, you can always request a meeting with their teacher and a school administrator to share your concerns.



THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

Once you provide **informed consent**, the district has 60 calendar days to complete your child's **assessment** and review the results with you. This 60 days will not include days of school break longer than five school days.

The purpose of this assessment is to determine whether (1) your child has a qualifying disability and (2) if so, whether your child requires special education and related support to make educational progress. Your child will be assessed by a multidisciplinary team that includes teachers and staff from your school site as well as a school psychologist and other special education therapists as needed.

As part of the assessment process, the district may also want to interview you about your child and may ask that you complete surveys about different areas of your child's functioning. The information you have about your child is very important to the assessment process, so be sure to return any surveys you are provided. If you have any questions about what is being assessed and why, reach out to your school psychologist.

The results of the assessment will be shared at or before your first **IEP** meeting. If you think you will need extra time to read the report or will need a translated version of the report, please let your assessment team know as soon as possible.

DETERMINING ELIGIBILITY

Once the assessments are completed, the **IEP Team** will meet to review the results and determine if your child is eligible for special education.

To qualify for special education services, a student must meet specific criteria under the **IDEA**. This includes (1) having a disability that is recognized under the **IDEA** (2) that impacts their ability to learn in a general education setting without special accommodations.

The types of disabilities that are recognized under the **IDEA** include:

- Autism (AUT)
- Deafness
- Emotional Disability
- Intellectual Disabilities
- Orthopedic Impairments
- Specific Learning Disabilities (dyslexia and dyscalculia are common examples of specific learning disability)
- Speech or Language Impairments
- Deaf Blindness
- Hard of Hearing
- Visual Impairment
- Traumatic Brain Injury
- Multiple Disabilities
- Other Health Impairment (ADHD, diabetes, and epilepsy are common examples of other health impairment)

The **IDEA** provides special definitions for each of these types of disabilities. In determining whether your child is eligible, the **IEP Team** will consider both (1) whether your child has one of these disabilities, and (2) whether your child is able to learn in the general education setting without special education supports and services.

Eligibility for an **IEP** is different from a medical diagnosis from a medical doctor or physician. A student may have a medical diagnosis but not qualify for an **IEP**. Similarly, a student may qualify for an **IEP** even though they don't have a medical diagnosis.

DEVELOPING THE IEP

If your child qualifies for special education, they are entitled to a **Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)** under the **IDEA**. You and the other members of the **IEP Team** will work together to write the **IEP** document and to determine what constitutes **FAPE** for your child based on their assessed strengths and needs. The school is obligated to make recommendations consistent with the **Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)** necessary to meet your child's unique needs. The goal behind **LRE** is to support your child's educational progress and ensure access to their peers in general education.

You are an important member of your child's **IEP Team**! Your valuable insights and knowledge about your child will help guide the team. Ask your child's teacher or principal if you have questions or concerns about who will be at the IEP meeting as part of the **IEP Team**.

SACRAMENTO CITY UNIFIED ANNUAL GOALS AND OBJECTIVES	
Student Name: <i>Gum, Bubble</i>	Birthdate: <i>12/8/2006</i> IEP Date: <i>12/25/2024</i>
Area of Need: Listening and Speaking	Measurable Annual Goal #: <i>1</i>
Baseline: The student is currently able to respond to simple directions and questions provided orally in English and Spanish by using physical actions such as pointing or other nonverbal communications in one out of four opportunities.	Goal: By 11/9/2023, Bubble will respond to simple directions and questions provided orally in English and her primary language by using a complete simple sentence in English and Spanish with three out of four opportunities over a one-week time period as measured by teacher records.
	☒ Enables student to be involved/progress in general curriculum/state standard ELA ☐ Addresses other educational needs resulting from the disability ☒ Linguistically appropriate
	☐ Transition Goal ☐ Education/Training ☐ Employment ☐ Independent Living Person(s) Responsible: General Education and Special Education teacher
Short-Term Objective: By 3/9/2023, Bubble will respond to simple directions and questions provided orally in English and her primary language by using one-word utterances in English and Spanish with three out of four opportunities over a one-week time period as measured by teacher records.	
Short-Term Objective:	
Short-Term Objective:	
Progress Report 1: Summary of Progress: Comment:	
Progress Report 2: Summary of Progress: Comment:	
Progress Report 3: Summary of Progress: Comment:	
Annual Review Date: Goal met ☐ Yes ☐ No Comments:	

Here is what you can expect at your child's first IEP meeting :



LET'S READ AN IEP TOGETHER

The **IEP** includes several key components:

- **Present Levels of Academic Achievement & Functional Performance (PLAAFP):** A description of the student's current academic and functional performance. This will include information about your child's grades and reports from their classroom teacher(s).
- **Annual Goals:** Specific, measurable goals that the student is expected to achieve within a year. Each goal will identify the school staff responsible for helping your child achieve it.
- **Related Services/Designated Instruction & Services (DIS):** A description of the services the student will receive, such as speech therapy, occupational therapy, or SAI. This will include information about the timing of services, including when they will start, how often they will occur, and how long they will last.
- **Accommodations and Modifications:** Adjustments made to the learning environment or curriculum to help the student succeed. Accommodations help your child learn in the way that works best for them, while modifications change the level or type of work to match your child's abilities.
- **Standardized Tests:** Information about how your child will participate in state testing, including any accommodations they will be provided.
- **Progress Monitoring:** How the student's progress toward meeting the annual goals will be measured and reported.
- **LRE:** Information about your child's LRE and how they will be included in general education classes and activities.

- **Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP):** If your child struggles with behavior, their IEP may also include a BIP.
- **Assistive Technology (AT):** Information about whether your child requires any assistive technology to make appropriate educational progress and information about what that AT will look like.
- **Extended School Year (ESY):** Information about whether your child requires extended school year services to prevent skill regression and information about what those services will look like.

INDIVIDUALIZED TRANSITION PLAN (ITP)

- **Transition to Preschool:** When a child turns three, they may transition from early intervention services to preschool special education. This process involves developing a new **IEP** that reflects the child's current needs and preparing for a smooth transition to the preschool setting.
- **Transition to Adulthood:** Starting at age 16 (or younger in some states), the **IEP** must include a transition plan to prepare the student for life after high school. This plan may include goals related to post-secondary education, employment, and independent living.
- **Resources for Transition:** There are many resources available to support your child's transition to adulthood, including vocational training programs, community services, and post-secondary education options. Your child's **IEP** team can help you identify and access these resources.



WHAT ARE IEP GOALS?

An **IEP** meeting gives you and the school a chance to work together to design an educational program for your child. The annual goals represent what you and the other **IEP** team members think your child will be able to accomplish in a year's time. As a parent/guardian, your input will play an important role in developing your child's **IEP** goals.

Goals must directly relate to the needs identified in the present level of performance. They should be prioritized in order of greatest need, and be stated in objective, and measurable terms. Your child may have goals for reading, writing, math, speech, or other areas based on your child's needs. A best practice is to make sure your child's team writes "**SMART**" Goals that are specific, measurable, attainable, results oriented, and time bound.

HOW ARE GOALS DEVELOPED?

The goals for your child will be based on your child's areas of need, present levels of performance and potential for growth. Each child's **IEP** goals are unique. The **IEP** team develops goals based on :

- Input from you
- Teacher assessments
- Performance on state assessments
- Your state's academic content standards by grade level



TIP: Before the meeting, talk to your child's special education teacher about goals you would like your child to work on in the year ahead and create some draft goals together.

SMART GOALS

S **P**ECIFIC
Simple, Significant, Sensible

M **E**ASURABLE
Meaningful, Motivating

A **C**HIEVABLE
Attainable, Actionable

R **E**LEVANT
Reasonable, Realistic, Results-based

T **I**ME-BOUND
Time-based, Time-limited

G **O** **A** **L** **S**



Scholar Within

ScholarWithin.com

© Copyright 2022 - Scholar Within, Inc.

SAMPLE GOALS

Please keep in mind that the goals below are provided as examples only and that each child's IEP goals will be based on their unique needs as determined by their IEP Team.



SAMPLE READING GOAL

By 1/10/26 after reading/listening to instructional reading level (L) reading selection, given 3 choices, (student name) will identify the main events of the plot, their causes, and the influence of each event on future actions with 80% accuracy in 4 of 5 trials as measured by teacher assessments/student work samples.



SAMPLE MATH IEP GOAL

By 5/23/26 given models, graph paper and a multiplication chart, (student name) will fluently add, subtract, multiply, and divide multi-digit decimals using the standard algorithm for each operation with at least 80% accuracy in 3 trials as measured by student work samples and teacher observation, and teacher created tests.



SAMPLE SOCIAL EMOTIONAL GOAL

By 1/10/26 when (student name) becomes upset, frustrated, or angry, she will use a self-regulation/coping strategy (Movement break, deep breathing, quiet space break, deep pressure/heavy work activity, Etc) to avoid engaging in an unexpected behavior, with one reminder, in 80% of instances of conflicts with peers or adults, as measured by observations and documentation.

BEHAVIOR

In the context of an **Individualized Education Program (IEP)**, *behavior* typically refers to how a student acts, especially if certain behaviors interfere with their own learning or that of others. When behavior becomes a concern, tools like a **Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP)** and a **Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA)** are used to address the issue & develop a collaborative plan so the student can be successful at school and access the curriculum.

If a student has behaviors that are making it hard for them or others to learn, and these behaviors happen often, the school might create a **Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP)**. This plan is designed to help reduce the behaviors that get in the way of learning and teach the student better ways to behave. The plan uses proven strategies that help the student learn and practice new skills. The **IEP** team might also look at doing a **Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA)** to understand why the behavior is happening and how to help.

MANIFEST DETERMINATION REVIEW (MDR)

A MDR is a meeting that is required to be held prior to 10 days of suspension, when a student with a disability has displayed inappropriate behavior and breaks a school rule in a serious way. Considerations will be discussed surrounding suspension, alternate accountability measures, implementation of Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP), etc. It's like a big "problem-solving session" to figure out if the student's behavior happened because of their disability or if the school team needed to provide additional support for the students to be successful. The goal is to be open, equitable and overall fair in analyzing the individual case and to make sure the student is getting the support they need to succeed, not just being punished.

Here's how it works in simple terms:

- 1 **When it happens:** This meeting happens if a student might be removed from school for more than 10 days in a school year because of their behavior.
- 2 **What's the goal?** The team looks at the student's actions to see if: Their disability caused the behavior or the school didn't follow the student's plan (IEP and/or 504 Plan).
- 3 **Who's there?** The team includes the student's parents, teachers, and school staff who understand the student's needs.
- 4 **What happens next?** If the behavior is linked to the disability or the school didn't follow the plan, the student might get more help instead of being punished. If it's not linked to the disability, the school can discipline the student like other kids, but they must still make sure the student gets their special education services.

DISCIPLINE/ACCOUNTABILITY

The Sacramento City Unified SELPA and School District created rules to help explain how student discipline works, including for students with disabilities. These rules are meant to add to local policies about suspension and expulsion, not replace them, since those are the main ways discipline is handled for all students. Most of the information comes from the **California Education Code** and the **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)**.

According to California law, suspension should only be used when other ways to fix behavior don't work. Principals and superintendents can use alternatives, like counseling or anger management programs, instead of suspending or expelling a student.

However, a student, including one with special needs, can be suspended the first time they break serious rules, like hurting others, damaging property, or making the classroom unsafe. To help prevent this from happening, work with your **IEP** team to come up with strategies (called program accommodations in the **IEP**) to stop the behavior from happening again or reduce the occurrences of the problem behavior. The **IEP** team might notice a pattern of problem behaviors and decide that the best way to help the student is to create a **Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP)** or do a **Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA)** to understand why the behavior is happening and how to stop it.

Teachers and administrators are encouraged to handle student behavior with interventions that don't remove the student from their learning environment. Examples include:

- Using a fair and positive behavior management system in the classroom.
- Helping the student get back on task.
- Talking with the student about their behavior.
- Speaking with the student's parent or guardian.

WHEN CAN YOU EXPECT PROGRESS REPORTS?

The **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)** requires that your child's **IEP** include a description of how and when progress will be measured. Periodic reports on your child's progress toward their **IEP** goals should be issued at least as often as those issued to parents of students without a disability, for example, at the same time report cards are issued.

SAMPLE PROGRESS REPORT

The two examples below show what a progress report on improvement of a child's math computation skills within a single grading period might look like:

EXAMPLE 1

"At the end of the first grading period, given 10 problems requiring two-digit plus two-digit addition without renaming (regrouping/carrying e.g., $14 + 11 =$), (student name) wrote the sums with 80% accuracy, as measured by a valid, curriculum-based assessment."

EXAMPLE 2

"At the end of the second grading period, given 10 problems requiring two-digit plus two-digit addition with renaming (e.g., $14 + 18 =$), (student name) wrote the sums with 80% accuracy, as measured by a valid, curriculum-based assessment."



TIP: As a parent of a child with an **IEP**, you should communicate regularly with teachers, **DIS** and other school professionals, to ensure that your child is making measurable progress toward their **IEP** goals, this will help you avoid "Surprises" during parent/teacher conferences and **IEP** meetings.

WHAT IF THERE'S NO PROGRESS?

Sometimes parents and schools have different expectations about whether progress is being made toward a child's **IEP** goals or how quickly it's happening. For many children, **IEP** goals will be aligned to California's grade level content standards, but your child's learning style is unique and learning outcomes must also be realistic.

If you're still concerned after you talk with your child's teacher about progress towards **IEP** goals ask for an **IEP Meeting**. You can do this by sending an email to your child's **Case Manager**. You can also request other staff who you consider supporters, such as an afterschool provider or other staff member you have a relationship with. Once district staff receive your request for a meeting, the meeting must take place 30 days from the date the request was received.



NOTE: There is no such thing as an "Emergency **IEP**". You can request an **IEP** meeting at any time to discuss concerns about your child. [Legal Timelines](#)



Preparing for Your First IEP Meeting

III. PREPARING FOR YOUR FIRST IEP MEETING

WHAT YOU WILL NEED FOR YOUR FIRST MEETING

An important part of preparing for your first **IEP** is checking in with your feelings. All of this information can be very overwhelming and it's normal to feel a roller coaster of emotions. At any given moment, you might experience: anxiousness, a sense of being overwhelmed, tired, and/or a sense of relief at finally getting some help for your child.

Please know you have allies among your school community who are rooting for your child's success. On the next page we will share some things you can do to help you feel more at ease, prepared, and able to participate in planning your child's educational program as a full member of the **IEP team**.

Here are a few things you can do to prepare for the meeting to increase your participation. **Don't worry**, these are just suggestions, take on as little or as much as feels right for you.

- Before the meeting, **try to connect and build a positive relationship with at least one person** on the **IEP** team, such as the classroom teacher, principal, or school psychologist. Ask them questions about what to expect. This will help you feel more comfortable during the meeting.
- **Plan ahead and write down your thoughts** or any questions, so you won't forget to mention what's important to you during the meeting. There are no silly or bad questions.
- **Person Centered Planning**, please bring a All about Me form, MAP, COACH with you to ensure team members are aware as to who your child is from your perspective, your goals, fears, dreams, etc.
- **Ask who will be attending**, so you won't be surprised by the number of people around the table and understand their roles.
- **Ask to see any forms available to review** ahead of time and/or share the results of a private evaluation with the **IEP** team so they can be familiar with the data. If you need any of the forms to be translated into a language other than English, it is your right to request that the forms be translated prior to your meeting so you have time to review them in your language of choice. Please allow up to 14 days for a document to be translated.
- **Request to record the meeting**. You can request to audio record the meeting so you can listen to the recording later. Make sure you notify the district 24 hours in advance if you want to record. Be aware that if you are recording the meeting the district will also record the meeting.
- **Request an interpreter**. If you need to do so and plan for additional time so that you do not feel rushed

DURING THE IEP

- **Actively participate.** Share your thoughts and ask questions. Understand that, as the parent, **you are an important part of the IEP team.**
- **Your child is amazing!** Find a way to share your child's talents and quirks. When you talk about them, make them recognizable to all team members. Remember that you know your child best — strengths, talents, interests and needs, so take in what the professionals have to say, and add your perspective. Some parents bring an All About Me page.
- **Bring a photograph of your child** and place it in the middle of the table, to help keep the discussion student-focused. Read more about **Person Centered Planning** to begin to shape the process.
- **Listen to understand.** Try to understand the perspectives being shared by each of the experts who make up your child's **IEP** team. Be prepared to hear about your child's assessment data and observation from the team. This may be different from your perspective and it will offer another point of view to support your child's educational planning.
- **Keep focused.** Focus on what questions you want answered or services provided for your child. The professionals will help offer strategies to help your child get there.
- **Ask questions!** The team may use jargon and acronyms; it's okay to ask them to pause and clarify anything you are unclear about. The more questions you ask the more likely you'll be able to leave the meeting feeling clear about next steps. This will help you communicate the plan to your child.
- **Bring a trusted person with you.** Consider bringing your spouse, partner, family member, neighbor, friend or service provider so you have a support system and another set of ears to hear what the **IEP** team has to say. This work takes a village, and having support from someone who is there for **you** will let you show up for your student. (If you decide to bring a friend or advocate, consider informing the school personnel.)
- **Assume good intentions/positive intent.** Remember, the purpose of this group coming together is to help your child.



SIGNING THE IEP

- ✓ At the end of your **IEP** meeting you will be asked to sign and consent to the **IEP**. You have a few options when signing the **IEP**:
 - ✓ **Sign the attendance form**, this shows that you were at the meeting. Signing the attendance form does not mean you consent to the **IEP**
 - ✓ **If you AGREE with the entire IEP**, sign in consent to the **IEP** so the school can move forward and provide special education services for your child.
 - ✓ **If you AGREE WITH ONLY PARTS of the IEP**, let the school know so the services you do agree with can begin for your child. Once you sign the first **IEP**, you have granted permission for the school to provide ongoing special education services for your child.
 - ✓ **If you DON'T AGREE with the IEP**, identify which parts of the **IEP** you disagree with — you can write down the parts you disagree with right on the signature page. The school will want to hold another **IEP** meeting to discuss your concerns.
-  **NOTE:** You can request to take the **IEP** home to review if you need time to make a final decision at the meeting. You can sleep on it, ask school staff questions about anything you don't understand or get a second opinion from any of the resources in this document.



TIP: You are not required to sign the **IEP** if you disagree or if you're uncertain about what it contains. However, a signed parent/guardian consent is necessary before the **IEP** can go into effect

UNDERSTANDING THE IEP TIMELINE

Concerns About Student Progress

If the caregiver or school has concerns about student's academic progress, attendance, behavior, or social/emotional functioning; reach out to your child's teacher or social worker to hold a Student Success Team (SST) meeting to discuss concerns.

Caregiver Rights Interventions in general education are recommended before evaluating for special education, but caregivers always have the right to request an evaluation.

Student Success Team (SST)

SST is a meeting to discuss concerns, analyze issues impacting student progress, and identify resources to support needs. The team (caregiver, teacher, relevant staff members) can start general education interventions or report progress on ongoing interventions. The team may refer for a special education evaluation if an educational disability* is suspected or continue tracking effectiveness (and implementation) of interventions.

General Education Intervention

School staff provide interventions and monitor student response. After set period, the team holds follow-up meeting to discuss whether student has made adequate progress with the interventions.

No Referral

Adequate progress — no educational disability* suspected. Student will continue to be supported through general education.

Referral

If an educational disability* is suspected, an assessment plan covering all areas** of concern (with assessors listed) will be sent to the caregiver. Caregiver must decline/consent to the evaluation, sign, and return it to school.

Evaluation

The evaluation is completed within 60 calendar days. Evaluation procedures include a variety of strategies and tools (i.e. testing, interviews, observations) to gather information related to the student's educational needs, including information provided by the caregiver.

Eligibility Review: Individualized Education Program (IEP) Meeting

The IEP team (caregiver, assessor(s), teacher, special education teacher, administrator) meets to discuss evaluation results, eligibility for special education, and potential goals and services.

Does Not Qualify

Team discusses general education supports, as needed.

Qualifies for Special Education

Student demonstrates an educational disability* and a need for specially designed instruction and related services to make academic progress. An IEP is a legal agreement between the school district and the caregiver offering special education services to the student, specific to their needs. The IEP does not start until caregiver signs to agree to all, parts of, or none of the services.

*13 Educational Disabilities (California Code of Regulations)

Autism
Speech & Language Impairment
Specific Learning Disability (SLD)
Other Health Impairment (OHI)
Emotional Disturbance (ED)
Intellectual Disability (ID)
Hard of Hearing

Deafness
Deaf-Blind
Visually Impaired
Traumatic Brain Injury
Orthopedic Impairment
Multiple Disabilities

**Potential Areas for Evaluation

Academic, Health, Cognitive, Language/Speech Communication, Motor, Social/ Emotional, Adaptive, Post-Secondary Transition, other areas as needed

[Special Education Timelines in California](#)

- Before signing, review the **IEP** to make sure you understand it and all the important parts of the **IEP** team discussion are included. This **IEP Checklist** from *understood.org* is a handy tool
- Your child needs to understand what their goals (and objectives or benchmarks, if any) are, as they get older, they should be involved in developing them as well. The more they are aware of what they are working on, the greater their chances of success.



NOTE: You can always change your mind and withdraw consent for any or all parts of the **IEP** you agreed to and you can always request another **IEP** meeting if things are not working.

TIPS FOR STAYING ORGANIZED

Place the **IEP** in the binder or file where you keep other school notices and reports. Mark your calendar with the dates that you can expect to receive regular reports from the school of your child's progress toward their annual **IEP** goals.

Meet with your child's special education teacher to share observations and to learn how you can reinforce at home the skills and strategies being taught to them at school

Develop a collaborative relationship with the professionals who interact regularly with your child. Find time to check in with them and ask for updates.

REVIEWING AND REVISING THE IEP

The **IEP** is reviewed at least once a year. If you or the teacher believe that your child isn't learning, making progress, or has achieved the goals sooner than expected, a meeting may be scheduled to revise the **IEP**. If you feel that an **IEP** review meeting is needed, put your request in writing and send it to the school and/or district administrator. Schools must hold an **IEP** meeting within 30 days from the date of the receipt of the written request.



WHAT TO DO WITH ADDITIONAL CHANGES

When the school recommends a change in a child's services or placement, they must inform families in writing before the change. This is called a **Prior Written Notice (PWN)**. This notice is also required for any **IEP** meetings and evaluations. Families also have "stay put" rights to keep services in place should there be a disagreement about the **IEP**. "Stay Put" refers to the idea that if there is a disagreement about the **IEP** the school will continue with the current services in the signed **IEP** until an agreement is reached.

START THE NEW YEAR OFF RIGHT

At the start of each school year, introduce yourself to school staff and give a quick introduction of your child to their new teacher. This is also a good time to ask the school for the latest copy of your **IEP**. Making sure everyone is on the same page at the start of the New Year can go a long way.

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS! YOUR PROCEDURAL SAFEGUARDS

Understand that the school cannot move forward with any services without your consent. You have rights! Read through each one of the following and check off the ones you have experienced.

- **The right to participate in IEP Meetings:** You have the right to participate in **IEP** meetings that discuss your child's educational needs. If your child is eligible for an **IEP**, you have the right to ask for an **IEP** meeting at any time and the school district has 30 days to respond. (You don't have to wait for your annual **IEP**— if things come up, ask for an **IEP** meeting !) You can join meetings by phone or video if necessary.
- **The right to an Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE):** After the school has conducted an evaluation of your child, if you disagree with the results, you may request an independent educational evaluation at school district expense. If the District determines that its evaluation was appropriate, it may deny your request through a **Prior Written Notice** and request a due process hearing to demonstrate that its assessment was appropriate. The district must either agree to publicly fund the independent educational evaluation or request a due process hearing without unreasonable delay. You may also pay privately for an **Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE)** and present it at the **IEP** meeting. The school must consider the publicly funded or private independent educational evaluation but doesn't have to accept the results.
- **The right to give (or deny) consent :** A school must obtain your written permission called "informed consent" before evaluating your child or providing special education services. You can agree to all , some or none of the services offered. That's called "signing with exception" and it's a great way to make sure your child gets the help they need while you work out the details in areas where there might be disagreement.
- **The right to disagree with a school's decision:** If you and the school **IEP Team** members cannot reach an agreement, you can ask for the help of a neutral third party facilitator through SCUSD's **ADR** process <https://selpa.scusd.edu/alternative-dispute-resolution-adr-0> If continued support is needed, please follow your **Procedural Safeguards** and as appropriate, you have the right to connect with a hearing officer through the Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH) to ask for **Due Process**.

SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD WITH THEIR IEP

It's never too early to include your child in the **IEP** process. While federal law requires that your child be included in the **IEP** meeting whenever transition services are going to be discussed. Many **IEP** teams find that including elementary and middle school age children in the **IEP** process can be very helpful. Please take a moment to read more about **Person Centered Planning**, to digest all the ways to include your child in their next **IEP** using a tool that works for you & your family (e.g. **COACH, MAPS**).



NOTE: When your child turns 18, they will be the adult making decisions about their own placement. They will be deciding about what services they need and who will be invited to their **IEP** meetings.

- 1 Talk to your child about what was discussed at the **IEP** meeting in terms they will understand
- 2 Be sure to start with the positives – the progress they made, the number of people supporting them, and examples of the kind things the other adults in the meeting said about them
- 3 Review goals and objectives so they will know what they will be working on during the coming year.
- 4 Share the names of the adults who will be working with them closely
- 5 Let them ask questions
- 6 Ask for their ideas and suggestions
- 7 Affirm them and continue to let them know there is nothing wrong with having an **IEP**

TALKING TO YOUR CHILD ABOUT DISABILITIES

Talking with your child about a sensitive topic like a disability is not easy. But it may be one of the most important things you can do to foster their learning and emotional development. It is okay to not have all the answers. Be honest with your child and let them know you are learning together.

When kids experience learning difficulties as a result of different abilities without understanding what's going on, they're apt to imagine the worst and blame themselves. Talking openly about disabilities shows kids there's nothing to be ashamed of. The first conversation can be hard, so try to keep it simple. Tell your child that everyone is different in some way.

Below is some general information about students' needs for information about disabilities at various ages and best practices on how to engage in the conversation.

GRADES K-3

Even young children worry about their performance in school. In the primary grades (K through 3), most students begin to identify what they do well and what they have trouble with. Whether it's school work or athletics, kids begin the process of self-assessment and peer comparison. When you address your child's learning differences, assure them that you and their teachers are working together to help them do well in school, so that they don't have to do it all alone! If you feel it's appropriate, have them participate in informal meetings about learning challenges and goals with you and the teacher. If they are directly involved in the solution, it's more likely they'll be committed to improving.

GRADES 4 AND 5

By the upper elementary grades (4 and 5), students should have a good sense of their academic strengths and areas of growth. If your child identifies themselves as a "poor" or "slow" student, help them understand their disability. Let them know that, for some academic subjects, they just need some very specific strategies to help them learn. Be honest about their difficulties, but provide factual information about their strengths and the things they do well. Help them understand that their learning challenges are just one part of who they are and do not define them.

MIDDLE SCHOOL

In middle school students will be aware of the differences in their ability to access their education. Remind them that all students learn differently and special education ensures their right to access education even if the teachers need to support them in a different way. At this age your child may feel some apprehension to discuss these issues as they are very focused on peer interactions. Remind your child that teachers help all children and that they try to appropriately accommodate all students and all the differences in the classroom.

HIGH SCHOOL AND OLDER

In high school and beyond, it is important for students to understand not only their disability but also how to advocate for themselves. This is a great time for students to learn how to lead their own **IEPs** and to practice communicating with teachers about their needs. All of this practice helps students prepare to independently advocate for themselves in college and at work.



TIP: When you can talk to your child about their learning disabilities in a knowledgeable and caring manner, there's a greater likelihood that they'll maintain their self-esteem, develop effective coping strategies, and learn to appreciate the diversity of their talents, both in and out of school. Ultimately, self-awareness, self-advocacy, self-respect, and hard work will be the keys to their success.

PREPARING FOR YOUR FIRST IEP MEETING

Practices to Engage in Conversation with Your Child

PRACTICE	TRY SAYING...
1 Engage your child regularly in a conversation to find out how they currently understand how they learn and their learning differences.	“Can you share with me what is challenging about doing the multiplication steps?”
2 Listen actively and carefully to draw out your child’s thoughts and uncover any misunderstandings.	“I’d like to hear a little more about how ‘things get all messed up’ when you try to copy words off the whiteboard.”
3 Acknowledge honestly that your child is having a difficult time.	“Yes, I know reading is very hard for you; and when school work takes that much effort, it can make you feel really tired.”
4 Accept their feelings of anger, frustration, or anxiety as an understandable response to their learning struggles.	“I know that math is really frustrating for you; I don’t blame you for getting angry.”
5 Be specific about the identified learning challenge so that it feels manageable and solvable.	Rather than saying, “You have language problems,” try, “You have a hard time answering your teacher out loud in class.”
6 Let them know they are not alone.	“Your teachers and I will work with you — you are not in this alone.”
7 Share their goals and reassure them that they can take a series of small steps to achieve them.	“Your teacher and tutor are going to help you memorize your multiplication facts through 5 by winter break; this week and next, they’re going to show you a way to remember the 2’s.”
8 Recognize your child’s progress and give them praise and encouragement along the way.	“Remember when you didn’t think you could even read one page of that book? Now look at you!”
9 Balance the discussion of their challenges with reminders about their strengths and talents.	“Yeah, I know you missed a couple of spelling words this week, but you’re improving. And your teacher says you’re doing a really super job on your science fair project; you can be very proud of that.”
10 Reassure them that learning challenges are just one part of who they are.	“You’re great at making people laugh, and you can always get the kids on your baseball team to try their hardest. Your reading challenges can never mess up those strengths.”

IV. CONCLUSION & FINAL THOUGHTS

This work ahead can be hard but remember that you are not alone; one step forward at a time! Use the information in this guide to start your journey and remember this is a marathon, not a sprint. Don't be afraid to ask people for help and to pause so you can ask questions. There are a lot of resources available to you and it can be overwhelming. Ask your **IEP** Team to share their top resources and connect you with other people in the community who can help answer your questions.

All the emotions and challenges your student will face will impact you as well, so make sure to take care of yourself and get support when you need it. Have 2-3 people who can support you when you are feeling frustrated, overwhelmed or exhausted and who can share in celebrating the successes. As the saying goes, "remember to put your own oxygen mask on first".

Navigating the Special Education process is novel for most, but you are not alone. By working together with your child's school and utilizing the resources available to you, you can ensure that your child receives the support they need to thrive. We encourage you to stay involved, ask questions, and advocate for your child's education.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We wish to acknowledge and express gratitude to all the people who have been engaged in this process.

Thank you for your time, passion, and dedication in supporting our students and families. This guide was created based on continued feedback and input from many families, individuals, and community members who are passionate about ensuring our neurodivergent population and their families are provided with all of the necessary tools they need to make the most of their education.

A special thanks to:

- Black Parallel School Board (BPSB)
- Community Advisory Committee (CAC)
- District English Learner Advisory Committee (DELAC)
- Local Control and Accountability Plan Parent Advisory Committee (LCAP PAC)
- Lozano Smith Law Firm
- SFUSD & SFUSD SELPA ADR Colleagues
- SCUSD SELPA Team
- SCUSD Alternative Dispute Resolution (SCUSD ADR)
- SCUSD Special Education Services Administrators, Teachers, and Staff
- SCUSD Special Education Services School Psychologists
- SCUSD Student Support and Health Services Division

Lastly, thank YOU — to the families, who support our Special Education efforts and collaboration regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, ability, immigration status, religion, or language spoken, and we are committed to putting your child first! Your feedback and wisdom has been the very thing that keeps our work and community going. We are grateful for your commitment, compassion, and care.

RESOURCES

Sacramento has a very large and active disability community and many supportive organizations that can help you navigate the road ahead. We have shared some of our favorite resources and materials to support your learning.

In this section, we have shared some of our favorite resources and materials to support your learning and please as always, focus on your SPED-SELPA Parent Resource Page which is updated frequently for your reference & usage.

SCUSD, SPED DEPARTMENT & SELPA PARENT RESOURCES

Have a Special Education Question? Here is how to contact us:

- **Sacramento City Unified School District (SCUSD)-Special Education Department**
5735 47th Avenue
Sacramento, CA 95824
TELEPHONE: (916) 643-9174
WEBSITE: <https://www.scusd.edu/special-education>
- **Special Education Local Planning Area (SELPA)**
5735 47th Avenue
Sacramento, CA 95824
TELEPHONE: (916) 643-9163
WEBSITE: <https://www.scusd.edu/explore/programs-services/special-education/selpa>
- **SPED Data**
[Special Education Continuous Improvement Dashboard.](#)
- **Special Education Records:**
SPEDRecords@scusd.edu
SPED Student Records
SCUSD Special Education
Dept 5735 47th Avenue
Sacramento, CA 95824
Procedural Guide: [Student Records](#) Sample
Records Request Letter: [SAMPLE](#)
- **Special Education-SELPA Parent Resources Page:**
<https://www.scusd.edu/explore/programs-services/special-education/selpa/parent-resources> (e.g. Procedural Safeguards, CAC, Inclusive Practices, ELL & IEPs. Family tools for IEPs, How to talk to your child, etc.)
Family & Community Resources Page: <https://www.scusd.edu/explore/programs-services/family-and-community-empowerment-face-department> (e.g. Family Community Engagement Activities, Family Communications, Behavior Handbook, Resources, etc.)
- **English Language Learner (ELL) Supports:**
Migrant Parent Advisory Council-<https://www.scusd.edu/migrant-parent-advisory-council>
<https://www.scusd.edu/multilingual>

SCUSD SELPA-ALTERNATE DISPUTE RESOLUTION (ADR)

The SCUSD Special Education Department strives to meet the educational needs of each child with an Individualized Education Program (IEP). However, disagreements occasionally arise. When a disagreement arises, the first step is to talk to your child's special education or general education teacher, and site administration about your concerns.

PROBLEM SOLVING STEPS FOR PARENTS

1. Review your child's IEP and determine if the plan is being implemented. Does it need to change to meet any changing needs of your child? You may request a review of the IEP at any time. A meeting must be held within 30 days of your request.
2. Discuss the problem with your child's classroom teacher and/or other school staff member who knows your child's needs. This can include your child's resource teacher, counselor, hearing or speech therapist, or other specialist helping your child.
3. Next, discuss the issue with the principal and/or request an IEP meeting to discuss your concerns. If an IEP meeting does not bring a resolution, please contact the Special Education Content Specialist or Special Education Supervisor for your child's school. Parents/guardians may use the contact page on the special education website or special education contact list to find the name and contact information of the Content Specialist and/or Supervisor for your school. Parents/guardians may use this special education contact list to find the name and contact information of the Content Specialist and/or Supervisor for your school.
4. Families may also contact the SCUSDs Constituent Service Office at <https://www.scusd.edu/constituent-services-office> (916) 643-9000 and through our forms. The ombudsperson services are free, neutral and confidential. The Ombudsperson helps families navigate the special education process and can investigate complaints and concerns. They can provide advice on the special education process, inform parents of their rights and connect families to special education resources in the community.
5. Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) <https://selpa.scusd.edu/staff-resources> Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) is an umbrella term referring to the informal method of settling disagreements that may arise. In the field of special education, areas of disagreement sometimes involve implementation of the individualized education program (IEP), assessments and timelines, the content of the IEP, and the appropriateness of special education programs and/or services. It is the intent of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) that the IEP process be a non-adversarial one, and SELPA staff is there to support families and school and district staff in coming to agreement and moving forward. The goal of using ADR is to achieve student-centered resolutions early in a dispute. Your facilitator would work to understand each participant's goal, and would support each party to engage in a process that supports improved communication, restored collaboration, and the reaching of fair and equitable mutual agreements.

When a dispute between the District and the parent/guardian of a student with disabilities cannot be resolved at the school level, the District or parent/guardian may request alternative dispute resolution, mediation and/or a due process hearing with the Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH), [Office of Administrative Hearings, Special Education \(OAH\)](#), or file a [complaint](#) with the California Department of Education.

SACRAMENTO COMMUNITY & DISABILITY RESOURCE

ALTA

ALTA Regional Center has the primary responsibility for early intervention services for children aged 0 to 3 years old. 4151 E Commerce Way, Suite 100
Sacramento, CA 95834

TELEPHONE: (916) 978-6400

WEBSITE LINK: <https://www.altaregional.org/>

[Regional Center Lookup by Zip Code](#)

Best Buddies Sacramento

Best Buddies is a nonprofit organization whose goal is to provide people with developmental disabilities with opportunities for one-on-one friendships & outreach. 4909 Franklin Blvd, Sacramento, CA 95820

TELEPHONE: (916) 469-9284

WEBSITE LINK: <https://beaminghealth.com/providers/best-buddies-sacramento-sacramento-ca>

California Children Services (CCS) Program

Services are provided by California Children's Services for 2,500 infants, children and youth in San Francisco with severe medical conditions or physical disabilities.

9616 Micron Avenue, Suite 970
Sacramento, CA 95827

TELEPHONE: (916) 854-9500

WEBSITE LINK: dhs.saccounty.gov/PUB/CCS/Pages/CCS-Home.aspx

Disability Compliance Office

The mission of the Mayor's Office on Disability is to ensure that every program, service, benefit, activity and facility operated or funded by the City and County of Sacramento is fully accessible to, and usable by, people with disabilities.

9310 Tech Center Drive
Sacramento, CA 95826

TELEPHONE: (916) 874-7642

WEBSITE LINK: <https://personnel.saccounty.gov/us/en/dco.html>

National Alliance on Mental Health (NAMI) - Sacramento

The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) is the nation's largest grassroots organization dedicated to improving the lives of individuals living with a mental health condition and their families.

7230 S. Land Park Dr., Suite 111
Sacramento, CA 95831

Help Line: (916) 890-5467

EMAIL: office@namisacramento.org

Office for Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Education — Sacramento Office

Enforces federal civil rights laws that protect the rights of individuals and entities from unlawful discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, disability, age, or sex in health and human services.

1430 N Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

TELEPHONE: (916) 319-0800

WEBSITE LINK: ed.gov/contact-us/state-contacts/ca

Sacramento Children's Home Family Resource Centers

Offers intervention services, parenting education, home visitation, and school readiness programs, along with support groups and recreational activities. First 5 Sacramento Provides various free programs and resources for families, including support for those raising children with developmental delays or medical issues.

1565 River Park Dr, Sacramento, CA 95815

TELEPHONE: (916) 679-3743

WEBSITE LINK: <https://www.kidshome.org>

Sacramento Department of Child, Family and Adult Services (DCFAS)

The Department of Children, Youth and Their Families (DCYF) has administered San Francisco's powerful investments in children, youth, transitional age youth, and their families through the Children and Youth Fund since 1991. 3701 Branch Center Rd, 95691

TELEPHONE: (916) 875-5437

EMAIL: DCFAS-Ombudsperson@saccounty.net

WEBSITE LINK: dcfas.saccounty.net/Pages/Contact-Us.asp

Sacramento County Office of Education (SCOE)

Special Education Department Provides special day class programs for students aged three to 22 with various disabilities, including emotional, cognitive, physical, medical disabilities, or autism.

10474 Mather Blvd Mather CA 95655

TELEPHONE: (916) 228-250

WEBSITE LINK: <https://www.scoe.net/>

SCUSD Community Advisory Committee for Special Education

The state Education Code mandates that each Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA) has a Community Advisory Committee (CAC). The purpose of the CAC is to advise the Board of Education on special education policies, programs, priorities and parent education in the SELPA.

EMAIL: cac@scusd.edu

WEBSITE LINK: scusd.edu/community-advisory-committee-cac

Special Olympics Northern California

Special Olympics provides year-round sports training and competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for people eight years of age or older with developmental disabilities.

1401 Halyard Dr, West Sacramento, CA 95691

TELEPHONE: (916) 375-1930

Email: info@sonc.org

WEBSITE LINK: <https://sonc.org/>

UC Davis MIND Institute

A research and treatment center dedicated to neurodevelopmental disorders, offering resources and support for families.

2825 50th St, Sacramento, CA 95817

TELEPHONE: (916) 703-0300

WEBSITE LINK: <https://health.ucdavis.edu/mind-institute/resources/autism>

WarmLine Family Resources Center

Warmline Family Resource Center provides resources, training, and consultation to families of children with developmental delays or disabilities, from birth to age 22.

3336 Bradshaw Rd #255,

Sacramento, CA 95827

TELEPHONE: (916) 455-9500

WEBSITE LINK: <https://warmlinefrc.org>

WE Embrace

We Embrace Offers free classes, a Buddy Match program, seminars, workshops, and support groups for individuals with different abilities and their families.

140 Gold Camp Dr #80,

Rancho Cordova, CA 95670

TELEPHONE: 510-386-6842

WEBSITE LINK: <https://www.weembracefamilies.org>



LEARN MORE ABOUT THE LAW

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) - US Department of Education The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a law that makes available a free appropriate public education to eligible children with disabilities throughout the nation and ensures special education and related services to those children. The IDEA governs how states and public agencies provide early intervention, special education, and related services to more than 7.5 million (as of school year 2020-21) eligible infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities.

Read more: sites.ed.gov/idea/about-idea

Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund (DREDF)

Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund (DREDF), founded in 1979, is a leading national civil rights law and policy center directed by individuals with disabilities and parents who have children with disabilities. We train and educate people with disabilities and parents of children with disabilities about their rights under state and federal disability rights laws so they can use the laws as tools to challenge exclusion and discrimination, and advocate effectively for full participation in the lives of their communities.

Read more: dredf.org

The Special Education Fundamentals of IDEA Every child with a disability has the right to be educated with his or her grade-level peers without disabilities. This right also applies to children with disabilities who attend charter schools. This right is the law—specifically, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which governs and guides the public education of all children with disabilities in the United States. Realizing the vision of IDEA involves having and holding high expectations for each and every student so all students have the opportunity to realize their dreams. What exactly this means—in statute, in intent, and in practice—points to a public education system that supports and ensures equity, access, and inclusion for each and every child and student with a disability.

Read more: drive.google.com/file/d/1FlvEoDHIAJuKCI-pWNkyDNvb4Y3-6U5n/view

Special Education Rights & Responsibilities Manual from Disability Rights of California. The Federal and California special education laws give eligible students with disabilities the right to receive a free appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE). This manual explains how to become eligible for special education, how to request and advocate for special education services, and what to do if you disagree with school districts.

Read more: serr.disabilityrightscalifornia.org

Wright's Law — IDEA 2004

Parents, advocates, teachers, and attorneys come to Wrightslaw for reliable, up-to-date information about special education law and advocacy for children with disabilities. The information in IDEA 2004 at Wrightslaw will help you find answers to your questions.

Read more: www.wrightslaw.com/idea

THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT AN INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM (IEP)

U.S. Department of Education — IDEA Resources for Parents and Families Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP)

Supports projects that provide information and technical assistance to families of infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities. These projects also support families whose children are suspected of having a disability or developmental delay or who may be inappropriately identified as needing special education and related services. Information and assistance from these OSEP-funded projects are available free of charge. Families can find information about IDEA-specific topics through these centers.

Read More: sites.ed.gov/idea/parents-families

Parent Training and Information Centers (PTI)

Provide services in every state, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands and Pacific entities. PTIs are a rich source of information and training especially for parents, including parents whose primary language is not English or themselves have special training needs. In addition, Community Parent Resource Centers (CPRC) throughout the country serve targeted, underserved communities. To find the PTI or CPRC that serves your community or to locate additional informational materials for families, visit the Center on Parent Information and Resources.

Read More: <https://www.ed.gov/sites/ed/files/parents/needs/speced/iepguide/iepguide.pdf>

Center for Parent Information and Resources — All About the IEP

When a child receives special education services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), he or she must have an Individualized Education Program (IEP). This is a written document listing, among other things, the special educational services that the child will receive. The IEP is developed by a team that includes the child's parents and school staff.

The IEP is an extremely important document in the educational lives of students with disabilities receiving special education under IDEA. The resources we've listed below will help you learn more about IEPs—what the law requires, what information a typical IEP contains, how IEPs are developed, and so on.

Read more: parentcenterhub.org/iep

Understood.org — The IEP meeting: An overview

The IEP meeting is one of the most important parts of the special education process. In this meeting, school staff and parents come together to discuss, develop, and review a student's IEP. They make sure the IEP meets the student's needs.

There are rules for IEP meetings. They cover who must attend and what happens. The best way to understand these rules is to remember the goal of the meeting. The school and parents are working together to plan a student's special education experience at school.

Read more: understood.org/en/articles/the-iep-meeting-an-overview



Scan the QR code to download the digital version of this handbook or visit:
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1PEiL18EfHFKWjgrqML3HA_x448QVVlg3/view?usp=drive_link



Alternate Dispute Resolution (ADR):
<https://www.scusd.edu/explore/programs-services/special-education/selpa/parent-resources/adr>

