

IEP'S: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

WHAT IS AN IEP?

An IEP is a live and flexible document. It is a legally binding comprehensive tool collaborated on and curated by an IEP TEAM to meet the needs of individual students who require a range of support(s). It helps the school team, the parents, and the student to plan, monitor, and evaluate student academic progress and/or social/emotional/behavioral growth. The key to being a successful, confident advocate in your child's IEP sessions is preparation. Here are five things you should do before an IEP meeting.

1

GATHER AND EXAMINE YOUR RECORDS

Take out any official documents you have copies of, such as your child's current IEP, recent progress reports, and report cards. Collect samples of your child's homework, tests, and teacher notes. Make your own notes and observations as well. (An IEP binder is a handy method to collect all this information in one spot.)

When you've gathered everything, search for areas that want attention. Where is your child progressing or struggling? What resources and services are (or are not) beneficial? Is there anything fresh to report?

INVITE VISITORS AND SUPPORTERS

If you believe you will require assistance at the meeting, request someone to accompany you. This might be a family member or friend, a professional who works with your child, or an advocate. Explain how you believe they can assist you.

You may wish to meet with them before to the meeting to discuss your issues, obtain their perspective, and prepare your approach. If your child is attending an IEP meeting, be sure to prepare them as well.

2

PLAN YOUR QUESTIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

You may have a lot on your mind after reading your records and speaking with your child, family, or invited guests. Making a short list of the points you wish to make during the meeting might be beneficial. Consider the fundamentals: your worries, questions, and ideas. During the meeting, you might refer to this list.

3

INFORM THE SCHOOL ABOUT YOUR VISITORS AND REQUESTS

Inform the IEP team leader of any visitors you want to bring to the meeting. Give their names and explain how they are related to you and your child. If you or any of your visitors require special accommodations, such as videoconferencing or a translator, please notify the team leader in advance.

4

UNWIND AND THINK ABOUT YOUR CHILD

Once you've prepared everything for the meeting, try to unwind and concentrate on your child's skills, interests, and problems. Pay attention to what your child has to say about school and learning. You can provide valuable insights into how your child in various setting outside of school. That frame of mind will allow you to approach the IEP meeting with power and confidence.

5

5 THINGS YOU SHOULD DO DURING AN IEP MEETING



DISCUSS WITH YOUR CHILD

No one on the IEP team is as familiar with your child as you are. Share your thoughts about your child's personality, challenges, and strengths. You are not required to limit your remarks to academics. Discuss your child's performance on sports teams and other extracurricular activities. This provides the team with further information about your child's strengths and interests.

MAINTAIN AN OPEN MIND

if someone brings up an issue or solution that you are unsure about, listen to them out. Sometimes obstacles arise at school that you do not encounter at home. After all, school is a unique setting with its own set of rules and objectives. You can create the best plan for your child if you work together.

MAKE INQUIRIES

Laws and programs governing special education are complex. Even if you're well prepared, new terminology may be introduced at an IEP meeting. When this occurs, request an explanation. You have the right to be informed about every aspect and choice. You can also request that someone take notes during the meeting ahead of time. Then, at the end of the meeting, request a copy of the notes.



INFORM THE SCHOOL ABOUT YOUR VISITORS AND REQUESTS.

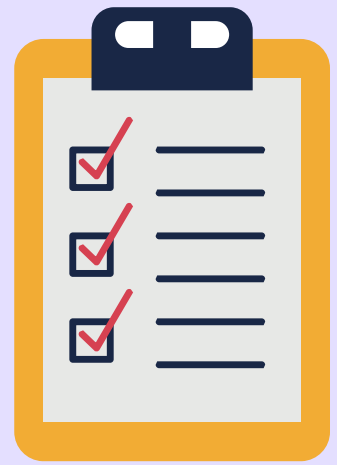
Verify that the staff is aware of your expectations and goals for your child. This puts everyone on the same page while you work on a plan together. Inquire about the team's proposals. You can also make changes. Share your concerns if you're not sure how something supports your child's objectives.

ADVOCATE FOR YOUR CHILD'S-AND YOUR OWN- RIGHTS

For example, if you are told that the school would not cover specific services, request to see a copy of the section of the Education Act that supports that claim. If you are hesitant about the IEP draft, do not feel obligated to sign it. You have the right to take the IEP draft home and think about it. Be polite yet firm.



STAYING ON TOP OF YOUR CHILD'S IEP



Your involvement in the IEP process does not cease once your child has a plan in place for special education services. In fact, the IEP's actual work is only getting started. Here are five methods to remain on top of your child's IEP and ensure he or she is receiving the necessary help.

1. MAINTAIN YOUR INVOLVEMENT AND AWARENESS

Managing the IEP is a collaborative endeavour. You'll want to collaborate with the school and your child's teacher to stay on top of your child's plan. It is easier to ensure that your child's supports and services are effective when you are more involved.

Ensure that all components of your child's IEP are communicated to the instructors. And that the IEP is being used correctly.

For example, the goals set in the IEP will be used to assess your child's progress. Knowing what these goals are (and that they are SMART) allows you to keep track of how much your child is improving. Every year, the team will create new goals to meet your child's changing needs.

It may appear like your child's progress has stagnated at times. You might also notice a drop in grades in one or more subjects. You have the option of meeting with the IEP team to discuss your concerns and questions. Keep in touch with the teacher so that she can give specifics about what's going on in the classroom.

2. BE READY TO SPEAK UP IF NECESSARY

The more you know about your child's IEP, the easier it will be to manage it. Write down any questions you have about how the IEP works. It has the potential to make your meeting more effective. As an example:

- Is extracurricular activity covered by the IEP?
- How are IEP objectives reinforced during the summer?
- Sometimes a child's IEP must be revised. You might want to bring up an issue that isn't working.

3. PUT TOGETHER AN IEP BINDER

The more you know about your child's IEP, the easier it will be to manage it. Write down any questions you have about how the IEP works. It has the potential to make your meetings more effective. As an example:

- Is extracurricular activity covered by the IEP?
- How are IEP objectives reinforced during the summer?

4. LEARN HOW TO HANDLE IEP DISAGREEMENTS

It's probable that you will have concerns, dispute with the school at some point regarding your child's IEP or specific supports. Cutting or refusing services, for example, can cause conflict. There are a few options for resolving disagreements.

- Working directly with your child's school to resolve the conflict. This means working directly with the school to come to an agreement.

Involve your school's special education consultant or a member of the Student Services Department. Mediation. This involves an outside professional who helps you and the school settle a dispute.

Student Ombudsman. A formal way to resolve disputes. But it's only for disagreements that have to do with rights to special education. This process can take a while, and it should only be used as a last resort.

5. BECOME AN EFFECTIVE ADVOCATE FOR YOUR CHILD

Contact the person responsible for complaints as a last resort. This will pertain to disagreements that directly relates to rights to special education.

Having an impact on your child's IEP requires you to be a strong advocate. Some parents find it difficult to do so. There are, however, ways to develop those skills and be a voice for your child when necessary.

As a last resort, there is a complaint process in place when there is a complaint related directly to your child's rights.



THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN IEP MEETINGS AND PARENT-TEACHER MEETINGS

If your child has an IEP, it can be confusing to have both an IEP meeting and a parent-teacher meeting. It may feel like both cover the same ground. But the reasons for each meeting aren't the same. The people who come to the meeting are different. And the conversations focus on different aspects of your child's education. Here are the differences between IEP meetings and parent-teacher meeting.

IEP MEETING

THE PURPOSE

TO REVIEW, REVISE, AND UPDATE YOUR CHILD'S IEP.

HOW LONG

IT DEPENDS ON WHAT'S BEING DISCUSSED. A MEETING CAN BE 30 MINUTES, OR IT CAN LAST AN HOUR OR MORE.

WHICH STUDENT

STUDENTS WITH IEPs, OR STUDENTS BEING EVALUATED FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION.

MCY ATTEND

YOUR CHILD'S GENERAL EDUCATION TEACHER(S)

A RESOURCE TEACHER & SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER OR CASE MANAGER

REPRESENTATIVE FROM STUDENT SERVICES

OTHER SERVICE PROVIDERS WHO WORK WITH YOUR CHILD

A PROFESSIONAL WHO CAN INTERPRET EVALUATION RESULTS (IF THERE ARE EVALUATIONS TO DISCUSS)

YOUR CHILD, DEPENDING ON AGE AND WHETHER YOU WANT YOUR CHILD TO ATTEND.

TOGETHER, THIS IS THE IEP TEAM.

PROVINCIAL LAW REQUIRES SCHOOLS TO HOLD ANNUAL IEP MEETINGS. BUT YOU CAN REQUEST AN IEP MEETING AT ANY TIME. THE SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER OR IEP CASE MANAGER CAN ALSO ASK FOR ONE.

THESE MEETINGS CONTINUE FOR AS LONG AS YOUR CHILD HAS AN IEP.

WHEN THEY HAPPEN

WHAT'S DISCUSSED

IT DEPENDS ON THE PURPOSE OF THE IEP MEETING. FOR EXAMPLE, IF YOUR CHILD ISN'T MAKING PROGRESS TOWARD IEP GOALS AS EXPECTED, YOU'LL TALK ABOUT WHY. YOU'LL ALSO TALK ABOUT WHAT NEEDS TO BE CHANGED. IF YOUR CHILD HAS RECENTLY BEEN EVALUATED, THE TEAM WILL TALK ABOUT THE RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS. AT THE ANNUAL IEP MEETING, THE TEAM WILL TALK ABOUT HOW MUCH PROGRESS YOUR CHILD MADE OVER THE LAST YEAR. YOU'LL ALSO DISCUSS HOW IEP GOALS, SERVICES, AND SUPPORTS SHOULD BE ADJUSTED FOR NEXT YEAR.

PARENT-TEACHER MEETING

TO DISCUSS YOUR CHILD'S ACADEMIC AND SOCIAL PROGRESS IN SCHOOL.

IT DEPENDS ON WHAT'S BEING DISCUSSED. A MEETING CAN BE 30 MINUTES, OR IT CAN LAST AN HOUR OR MORE.

ALL STUDENTS.

YOU AND YOUR CHILD'S TEACHER WILL ATTEND THE PARENT-TEACHER MEETING. A SECOND TEACHER OR ADMINISTRATOR MAY ALSO BE THERE.

SOME SCHOOLS ARE ALSO MOVING TOWARD STUDENT-LED MEETINGS. SO YOUR CHILD MIGHT ATTEND WITH YOU. DEPENDING ON WHAT'S BEING DISCUSSED, YOUR CHILD MIGHT ATTEND ALL OR PART OF THE MEETING.

TYPICALLY, SCHOOLS OFFER ONE PARENT-TEACHER MEETING IN THE FALL AND ANOTHER IN THE SPRING. IN SOME SCHOOLS, IT'S HELD AT THE SAME TIME AS AN IEP MEETING FOR STUDENTS WITH IEPs.

HOWEVER, YOU CAN ASK FOR A MEETING WITH THE TEACHER AT ANY TIME. IT'S IMPORTANT TO DO THIS IF YOU HAVE CONCERNS ABOUT YOUR CHILD, OR IF YOU NEED TO TALK THROUGH ANY SPECIFIC ISSUES. PARENT-TEACHER MEETINGS OCCUR UNTIL THE END OF HIGH SCHOOL.

MANY PARENT-TEACHER MEETINGS FOLLOW A SET AGENDA. THE TEACHER PROVIDES BASIC INFORMATION ABOUT TEST SCORES AND SHARES WORK SAMPLES. THEN, THE TEACHER TALKS THROUGH OBSERVATIONS ABOUT YOUR CHILD'S ACADEMICS AND SOCIAL LIFE WITH PEERS. IT CAN BE HELPFUL TO USE A PARENT-TEACHER WORKSHEET TO MAKE SURE YOU COVER ANY QUESTIONS YOU MAY HAVE. YOU CAN EVEN EMAIL YOUR CONCERNS AHEAD OF TIME. THIS IS IMPORTANT SINCE TIME MAY BE LIMITED.

KNOWING THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN AN IEP MEETING AND A PARENT-TEACHER MEETINGS CAN HELP YOU MAKE THE MOST OF BOTH MEETINGS.