

## What is an Individual Education Plan (IEP)?

An IEP is a written plan describing the individualized services, approaches, therapies, and supports (interventions) required by a particular student. IEPs are based on a student's strengths and issues that affect the student's ability to learn, participate in school, and demonstrate their learning.

If your child has been identified as having an exceptionality, the school should contact you to discuss the creation of an Individual Education Plan (IEP).

### Things to Know About IEPs

- ▶ School staff are required to implement any approaches or interventions defined in an IEP. This makes IEPs important documents for ensuring that a student is being well supported by all staff.
- ▶ An IEP will be developed by a group of people who will combine their expertise for the benefit of your child. You will be an important member of that group.
  - You have the most expertise about your child – what they do well, what is hard for them, what kinds of things they like to do, etc.
  - Parents must be consulted and given opportunities to be involved in developing their child's IEP.
- ▶ The IEP will outline any additions, changes, or adaptations to the regular school program that will help your child succeed – both within and outside of school.
- ▶ Once written, the IEP will be the plan to help your child perform as well as possible in the classroom, and to transition smoothly from one setting to another or from one grade to another.
- ▶ The IEP will help you and the school monitor your child's progress and growth. It will provide an ongoing record of what services and supports have been provided for your child.

- ▶ Your child's goals will be outlined in the IEP. The goals should be based on reliable information about your child's strengths, skills, challenges and performance, all of which can evolve over time.
  - This means each IEP will likely need ongoing changes to keep it relevant and up-to-date.
  - IEPs should be reviewed regularly throughout the school year and updated at scheduled reporting periods.
  - IEPs can also be removed if a student has achieved their goals and no longer requires additional supports in order to access education. However, this should only be decided with you.
- ▶ Using the IEP, you and the school's staff can continue to combine your knowledge, experience, and commitment to work together in the best interests of your child.

**When students have an IEP, a person is usually identified to coordinate their education services. This person may be referred to as an IEP Coordinator, a Case Worker, or IEP Team Leader.**

- ▶ You will want to develop a relationship with that person.
- ▶ You may want to ask the coordinator the following questions:
  - When and how often can we meet?
  - What is the best way to communicate?
  - How will I be notified of planning meetings?
  - How will I be involved?
  - Will my child be out of the regular class for any period of time. If so, why? How often?

**Important Note:** Some students who have an IEP may be placed on a modified program. A modified program may be appropriate for a few students with very serious exceptionalities, but it is not necessary for most students who have an IEP.

- Modifications are changes to instruction and assessment approaches that result in learning goals and outcomes that are different from the regular learning outcomes of a course or subject.
- Students on a modified program will leave school with the School Completion Certificate, which is not a graduation certificate. This is a significant decision.
- If your child is going to be placed on a modified program, ask why. Make sure you fully understand the decision before you agree.
- A modified program should still have a clear structure with valuable and challenging goals that will help prepare your child for a fulfilling future. It is still an education program, and you should be regularly informed of your child's learning expectations and progress.
- If your child is on a modified program, remember that this does not always have to be a per-

manent or long-term solution. The use of modifications can be reviewed to make sure you feel fully informed and comfortable with the decision.

- The choice of whether a student's education program should include modifications has consequences, and it should be made carefully and thoughtfully in consultation with parents. It should consider each student's educational, career, and life goals.
- Ask if your child is on the path to graduation and, if not, why. Make sure you are fully informed and comfortable with the answer.

