

# Key Components of an IEP

## *A Parent's Guide*



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### IN THIS GUIDE:

- What is an Individualized Education Program
- Who Develops An IEP
- What's Including in the IEP Document
- Key Components of an IEP Document

### **Your child qualifies for Special Education Services.**

The next step is developing his or her Individualized Education Program, also known as an IEP.

This guide will help you better understand and be an active participant of the IEP team.

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## First, let's briefly cover what Special Education is and is not and how services are offered.

### SPECIAL EDUCATION IS NOT

- A classroom
- A place a student is sent to

### IT IS A SET OF SERVICES MEANT TO ENABLE STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DIFFERENCES TO

- Be involved in their general classroom
- Make academic progress/close the achievement gap
- Provide the opportunity to participate and interact with students who do not have disabilities.
- Prepare for further education and/or employment



### SERVICES-OFFERED BY FAPE

Free Appropriate Public Education, or “FAPE,” is guaranteed through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Through FAPE, services are provided to meet the unique needs and goals of students with disabilities. The IDEA requires school districts to provide appropriate education—not necessarily the best.

What is determined to be “appropriate” is left up to the IEP team and is different from student to student, as their “unique” needs are different. Hence the term “Individualized” in IEP. What is appropriate for one child may not be deemed appropriate for another, but school districts have the responsibility to offer instruction “specially designed” to meet a child’s needs through an IEP.

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## "APPROPRIATE" DEFINED BY IDEA

1. "To be appropriate, education programs for students with disabilities must be designed to meet their individual needs to the same extent that the needs of nondisabled students are met."
2. "An appropriate education may include regular or special education and related aides and services to accommodate the unique needs of individuals with disabilities."



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## WHO DEVELOPS AN IEP?

Developing an IEP is a team effort including

- Parents and/or guardians
- Student (as appropriate)
- Principal/ Vice Principal/ Administrator/District Representative
- Special Education Teacher
- Speech and Language Pathologist
- Occupational Therapist
- Physical Therapist
- School Psychologist
- General Education Teacher

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## WHAT IS AN INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM?

- "The term "**Individualized Education Program**" means a written statement for each child with a disability that is developed, reviewed, and revised." IDEA, Sec. 1401 (14)
- An IEP is an individualized plan designed to meet a student's unique needs—through Special Education Services, supplementary aides, and related services. Every student qualifying under FAPE and receiving services has an IEP, which defines the student's current academic baseline, goals to drive progress, and services to support progress.
- Goals, services, and other factors of an IEP are determined through an evaluation, observations, samples of work, and input from teachers and parents.

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# What's Included in the IEP Document?

The goal behind every IEP document is to close the achievement gap. The document itself may vary from district to district as there is not a standard format, but certain information is required.

The process of developing an IEP can feel overwhelming for parents and some teachers, leading to some negativity early on. Familiarity with the key components of an IEP can empower parents to be active members of the team due to greater understanding of the process. Every district uses a different IEP writing system. The format of the IEP will look different depending on the district, but all of the required components are the same.



## Key Components of an IEP Document

### 1. ELIGIBILITY CATEGORY(S)

There are 13 eligibility categories. Students diagnosed or suspected of having dyslexia should be listed under Specific Learning Disability (SLD).

Specific Learning Disability (SLD)—a term used in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)—is not a diagnosis, but rather an umbrella term which identifies students with language-based learning differences such as dyslexia. These students are eligible for Special Education Services through the public school system—i.e. their eligibility.

Don't be scared to use the "D" word. Dyslexia is listed as a qualifying factor under the umbrella term SLD.

### 2. CONSIDERATION FACTORS

Parent and teacher concerns will be documented in this section, usually in the form of a development statement about the student including important factors to consider. These factors are

- Areas of strengths
- Parent concerns
- Results of initial evaluation or most recent evaluation
- Academic development (reading, math, communications, etc.)
- Functional needs (behavior, social skills, daily life activities, mobility, extra-curricular activities, etc.)

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### 3. PLOPS

PLOPs stands for Present Levels of Performance, some districts will call this section PLAAFP, which stands for Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance, both are often referred to as “present levels.”

#### PLOPs

- Identifies and describes a student’s present levels of academic and functional performance.
- Is the framework for every IEP, which helps the IEP team identify goals and services to meet a student’s individual needs.

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#### PLOPS ARE DEVELOPED USING A VARIETY OF INFORMATION AND DATA, SUCH AS

- Input from parents
  - Information on how a student’s disability affects their participation and progress in the general education classroom
  - Evaluation data
  - Samples of work
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#### PURPOSE OF THE PLOPS SECTION

*Describes the effects of the student's disability upon the student's involvement and progress in the general curriculum and area(s) of need. This includes the student's performance in academic achievement and functional performance. For preschool students this section should include how the student's disability affects the student's participation in appropriate activities.*

*- excerpted from IEP Document, Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction*

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### 4. GOALS

Measurable annual goals are based on PLOPs, every goal must be a SMART goal—specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time bound. This section is the roadmap of what a student will work on during the school year.

- Every goal is preceded with baseline data that describes current skill level
- Designed to address a student’s needs, supporting their involvement and progress in the general education classroom
- Special education services and other services are identified through goals

#### PURPOSE OF THE GOALS SECTION

*IEPs must include a statement of measurable annual goals, including academic and functional goals, designed to meet each of the student's educational needs that result from the student's disability to enable the student to be involved and make progress in the general education curriculum. In order to be measurable, the goal should include a baseline ("from"), a target ("to"), and a unit of measure.*

*- excerpted from IEP Document, Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction*

## 5. SERVICES

The information in this section is a summary of the student's program/services, including

- When service(s) will begin and end
- How often will a student receive service(s)
- Where the service(s) will be provided
- Who will be responsible for providing the services



### SPECIAL EDUCATION AND RELATED SERVICES

This part of the IEP will list Special Education Services (specially designed instruction) and related services, supplementary aids and services that will assist a student to meet goals, be involved and make progress in the general education class, and be able to participate with students that do not have disabilities.

When reviewing this section, it should be clear that the student's needs are driving the goals, the goals are driving services.

If not, ask questions. How are these services going to help my child make progress and/or meet their goals?

### QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- How will you be targeting my child's specific needs?
- Who will be providing the instruction?
- What program will they be using?
- How many students will be in the group with my student?
- How do you group the students together?
- Will a professional be working with my student? If so, what are their qualifications?

#### PURPOSE OF THE SERVICES SECTION

*To document the extent to which the student will be involved and progress in the general curriculum, participate in extracurricular and nonacademic activities and be educated and participate with other special education students and non-disabled students. Other education-related factors that may impact the student should also be considered.*

*- excerpted from IEP Document, Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction*

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**Accommodations are adjustments made to ensure that students...can fully participate in school and demonstrate their learning without being impeded by their disability.**

**- Nancy Cushen White, Ed.D.**

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## 6. ACCOMMODATIONS/MODIFICATIONS

### ACCOMMODATIONS

Adjustments that enable a student to demonstrate knowledge, skills, and abilities without lowering learning or performance expectations.

### MODIFICATIONS

Provision of services that change the nature of a task. i.e., use of a calculator on a test of math facts accuracy.



**Accommodations and modifications** are tools necessary for a student to have equal access to instruction, so that they can maintain learning or performance expectations.

Accommodations and modifications provide an “even playing field” for students with learning differences, as well as

- Gives access to and the ability to produce grade level content
- Even playing field—not providing advantages
- Are for general education classroom and home



#### PURPOSE OF THE ACCOMMODATIONS/MODIFICATION SECTION

*To document the modifications and/or accommodations that the student requires, based on the student's assessed needs, in order to advance appropriately toward attaining the identified annual goals, to be involved and make progress in the general education curriculum, and to be educated with non-disabled peers to the maximum extent appropriate.*

*- excerpted from IEP Document, Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction*

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## 7. PROGRESS REPORTING

### THIS SECTION DESCRIBES

- How progression towards meeting annual goals will be measured
- When progress will be reported

**Keeping track of your child's progress is extremely important.** If a goal is not met, the team needs to understand why. This may be a sign that the current services are not “appropriately” supporting a student's needs and progress.



## Beyond the IEP Document

### Important points to keep in mind

- General education or special education teachers (or both) and service providers record progress
- Remember the mantra, needs drive goals and goals drive services
- Ask the IEP team members questions throughout the year as they come up. This can save a lot of time and unnecessary meetings.
- Every three years the team reevaluates all areas of concern if the current data is not sufficient to determine eligibility
- Request IEP meeting at any time when an addendum is needed
- Add or change goals at any time (IEP addendum)
- Annual Review—every year the team reexamines the progress towards goals

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# IEP Checklist for Parents

*Provided by the National Center for Learning Disabilities; IDEA Parent Guide*

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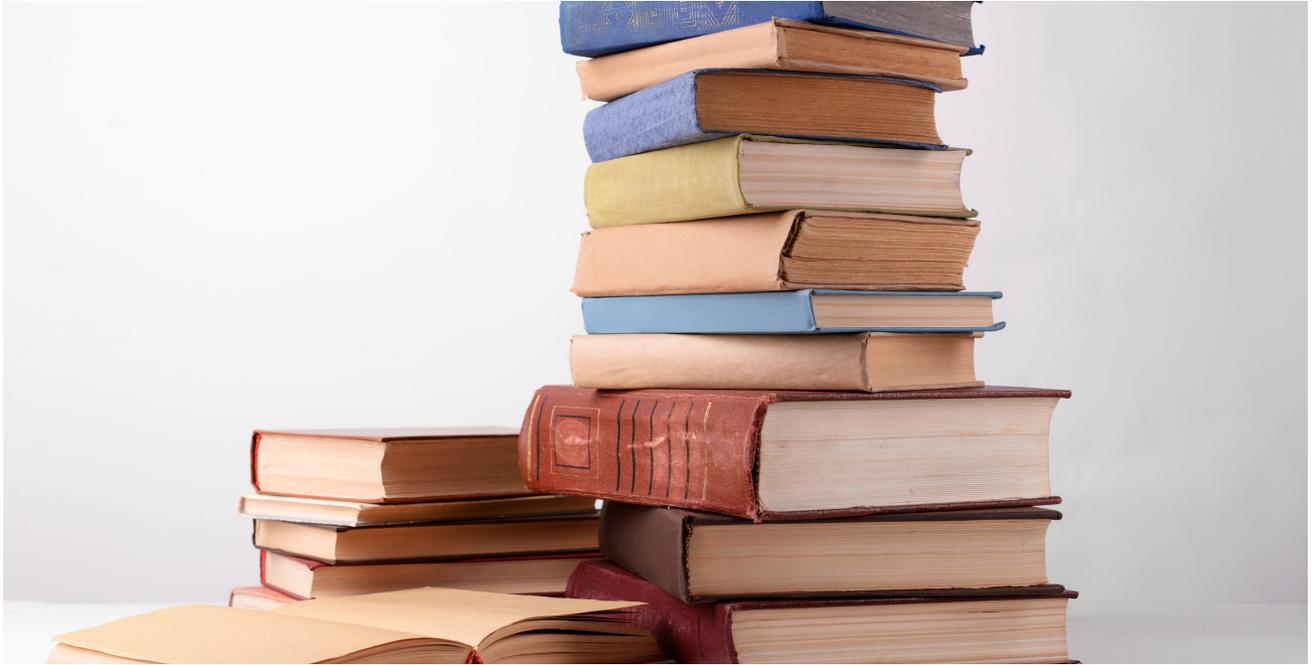
## IEP Checklist for Parents

Use this list to determine if your child's IEP contains all of the components required by IDEA. Remember to provide your input to the school in advance of your child's IEP meeting.

- YES  NO Is the information in your child's present level of performance (PLOP) clearly stated and supported with objective information and assessment or evaluation data, such as information from standardized testing, curriculum based measurements or performance on district or state-wide assessments?
- YES  NO Does the present level of performance (PLOP) section of the IEP contain information about the academic, developmental and functional needs of your child?
- YES  NO Are your concerns and expectations for your child included in the present level of performance (PLOP) section of the IEP?
- YES  NO Are your child's annual goals clearly stated and can they be measured?
- YES  NO Knowing the effects of your child's disability, do the annual goals directly relate to your child's needs as stated in the present level of performance (PLOP)?
- YES  NO Is the specific way(s) to master the annual goals clearly stated?
- YES  NO Is the method(s) to monitor and evaluate your child's progress toward the annual goals clearly stated?
- YES  NO Does the IEP indicate the amount of time your child will spend in general education?
- YES  NO Are the special education services and related services recommended for your child supported by scientific research that supports their effectiveness? If not, what evidence has the school provided to indicate that the services and instructional methods proposed for your child have been found to be effective for children with similar learning difficulties and of similar age?
- YES  NO Does the IEP state who will be responsible for implementing the services listed?
- YES  NO Are the appropriate related services addressed on the IEP?
- YES  NO Do you know how the IEP content will be communicated and shared with the staff responsible for their implementation?
- YES  NO Are all of the appropriate accommodations listed?
- YES  NO Does the IEP indicate how your child will participate in state and district testing?
- YES  NO Have any potential consequences of your child's assessment participation been explained to you? Have you discussed whether your child may or may not be allowed to move on to the next grade or graduate with a regular diploma?

Your active participation in your child's IEP is critical to your child's success. Every state has additional laws or regulations, so be sure to contact your state's Parent Training and Information Center to obtain additional information specific to your state's IEP procedures.

***For detailed information on the IEP document—visit our toolbox  
Parent Guide to IDEA; Chapter 7, pages 36-43.***



## Sources

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- PL 94-142, IDEA, Subpart A – Purposes and Applicability Sec. 300.1
- The IEP Document; Dyslexia Training Institute, Dr. Kelly Sandman-Hurley, Tracy Block-Zaretsky
- National Center for Learning Disabilities; IDEA Parent Guide, Ch. 7 pages 36-43
- Accommodations vs Remediation; Dyslexia Training Institute, Dr. Kelly Sandman-Hurley, Tracy Block-Zaretsky
- Identification of Dyslexia, Accommodations; Annual Dyslexia Conference 2018, Nancy Cushen White, Ed. D
- Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction;  
<https://www.k12.wa.us/sites/default/files/public/specialed/resourcelibrary/eval-iep-module/iep-e.pdf>