

## ***I.E.P. (Individual Education Plan): An Introduction for Parents***

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

An I.E.P. is a written plan. It is a working document which describes the strengths and needs of an individual exceptional pupil, the special education program and services established to meet that pupil's needs, and how the program and services will be delivered. It also describes the student's progress.

### **An IEP will be developed for one of the following reasons:**

- An IEP must be developed for every student who has been identified as an “exceptional pupil” by an Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC), in accordance with Regulation 181/98.
- An IEP may be developed for a student who has not been formally identified as exceptional, but who has been deemed by the board to require special education programs or services in order to attend school or to achieve curriculum expectations and/or whose learning expectations are modified from or alternative to the expectations set out for a particular grade level or course in a provincial curriculum policy document.
- An IEP must be developed, as supporting documentation, if an Intensive Support Amount (ISA) funding claim is submitted by a school board on behalf of a student who has not been identified as exceptional by an IPRC, but who is receiving a special education program and services.

### **The I.E.P. summarizes the following:**

- ✓ Students strengths and needs
- ✓ Medical/health information
- ✓ Assessment data
- ✓ Student's current level of achievement in each program area.
- ✓ Goals and specific expectations for the student.
- ✓ Program modifications (changes to grade level expectations in the Ontario Curriculum).
- ✓ Accommodations (supports, services that will help your child access the curriculum and demonstrate learning).
- ✓ Special education services provided to the student.
- ✓ Assessment strategies for reviewing the student's achievements and progress.
- ✓ Regular update, showing dates and results and recommendations.
- ✓ A Transition Plan (over the age of 14).

### **Developing the IEP**

*How Can I Contribute to Planning Goals for My Child?* Beginning with your child's strengths and needs is an important first step

You can help by:

- ✓ Including your child in the discussion; and
- ✓ Telling the teacher what you hope your child will accomplish this year.

## Carrying out the IEP

There are many things that you can do at home to help your child to reach his/her goals.

- ✓Talk to the teacher about what s/he is trying to accomplish.
- ✓Do what you can at home to try to support your child's goals.
- ✓Take every opportunity to communicate with your child's teacher.
- ✓Provide additional insights and resources to the school.
- ✓Share significant personal/family events as relevant.

## Review and Update the I.E.P.

Your child's progress towards his/her goals will be reviewed. Then, the I.E.P. will be updated to include different strategies, approaches, and/or resources considered necessary to help the learning process.

- ✓Talk to your child's teacher about the goals that have been set.
- ✓Communicate regularly with your child's teacher regarding process.
- ✓Look for evidence of growth towards goals in your child's report card.
- ✓Recommend changes in goals, strategies and/or resources or support where you see a need.
- ✓Be actively involved in discussions at school when your child is changing grades, schools or moving into the workplace.

You may wish to consider making a "portfolio" of this information for your child's teacher under the following headings:

<b>Physical -</b>	Medical information, athletic abilities self care, gross and fine motor skills.
<b>Intellectual -</b>	Abilities at home, strategies that have worked, or haven't worked, communication strategies.
<b>Educational -</b>	Assessments, learning styles, examples of work and abilities, motivation.
<b>Cultural -</b>	Cultural and language considerations.
<b>Emotional -</b>	Emotional well being
<b>Social -</b>	Peer and adult interaction, social skills, schoolyard interactions, extra curricular in school activities.

## Setting the Direction

How do I Work as an Effective I.E.P. Team Member?

Students are most successful when all team members work together towards achievable goals.  
As a parent:

- ✓Keep the focus on your child at all times;
- ✓Tell the teacher the hopes you have for your child's learning;
- ✓Bring ideas and information;
- ✓Ask questions; and value everyone's input.

## How Does an I.E.P. Work?

An I.E.P. outlines the special education programs and services your child will receive. There are five phases in the development of an I.E.P.

- ✓Gather information
- ✓Set the direction
- ✓Develop the plan
- ✓Carry out the planned activities
- ✓Review and update the I.E.P.

### **As the Parent, What Role Do I Play?**

Parents play a powerful supporting role in the I.E.P. process. It is important to understand and participate in the five phases of the I.E.P. process. As well. Be sure to ask for a copy of your child's I.E.P. within 30 days, so that you can support the planned activities at home.

You know things about your child's approach to learning that no one else know. Be sure to tell the teacher about your child's;

- ✓likes, dislikes, and interests
- ✓Interests in extra curricular activities
- ✓Talents and abilities
- ✓Family relationships and dynamics (including extended family and pets)
  
- ✓Peer relationships and dynamics; and
- ✓Family routines and schedules.

Special Education strategies, accommodations, and resources support the student in achieving his or her annual goals and learning expectations. In its statement of decision, the IPRC may have made recommendations for the special education services needed to facilitate the student's learning. Both student's who are working on expectations from the Ontario curriculum and student's who are working on modified or alternative expectations may require specialized supports and services.

The specific teaching strategies, accommodations, and resources required to facilitate the student's learning must be identified in the IEP in the following categories: teaching strategies and accommodations; human resources; and individualized equipment.

If the student requires the same type of strategies, accommodations, and resources in all subjects, courses and skill areas, the information may be grouped in the IEP in a separate section. Alternatively, if the student's needs relate to particular subjects, courses, or skill areas, the information relevant to each may be included under individual program area headings.

When determining the strategies, accommodations, and resources to be provided to the student and listed in the IEP, the team developing the plan must take into account the recommendations regarding special education programs and services made by the IPRC in its statement of decision.

For the human resources identified in the IEP, the following information must be recorded:

- ✓the type of service provided
- ✓the date on which the service was initiated
- ✓the planned frequency or intensity of the service
- ✓the location if which the service is provided (i.e., regular classroom, resource-withdrawal classroom, or special education classroom.)

Regulation 181/98 requires that the IEP of an exceptional student who is 14 years of age or older must include a plan for the student's transition to appropriate post secondary activities, such as work, further education, and community living. The transition plan is optional for students who are identified as exceptional solely on the basis of giftedness.

The regulation also requires the principal, in developing the transition plan, to consult with such community agencies and post-secondary institutions as he or she considers appropriate.

A transition plan must be included in the student's IEP.

The plan must include the following elements:

- ✓ Specific goals for the student's transition to post-secondary activities. The goals must be realistic and must reflect the strengths, needs and interests of the student;
- ✓ The actions required, now and in the future, to achieve the stated goals. The actions identified must build on the student's identified strengths, needs and interests;
- ✓ The student or agency (the student, parents, educators, providers of specialized support and services, community agencies) responsible for or involved in completing or providing assistance in the completion of each of the identified actions;
- ✓ Time lines for the implementation of each of the identified actions.

It should be noted that the goals and actions outlined in the student's annual; education plan should support those identified in the transition plan.

### **Date of Completion of the IEP**

Under Regulation 181/98, an IEP must be developed within 30 instructional days of the exceptional student's placement in a special education program. "Placement" will be taken to mean one of the following:

- ✓ the first day of a student's attendance in the new special education program specified in the IPRC's statement of decision
- ✓ the first day of the new year or semester in which the student is continuing in a placement subsequent to its confirmation by the annual IPRC review
- ✓ the first day of the student's enrollment in a special education program that he or she begins in mid year or mid-semester as the result of a change of placement.
- ✓ Both the date on which the student begins his or her placement in a special education program and the date on which the IEP is completed must be recorded in the IEP.

### **The Students Strengths and Needs:**

A description of the strengths and needs of the student must be recorded in the IEP. In the case of the student who has been identified as exceptional by an IPRC, a description of strengths and needs will have been provided in the committee's statement of decision. The description in the IEP must be based on and consistent with the description contained in the IPRC's statement, but may elaborate on it to reflect the results of any further assessments conducted or observations made of the student.

In the case of students who have not been identified as exceptional, descriptions of strengths and needs must be developed on the basis of appropriate educational, psychological, and/or health assessments, and on the basis of observations of the student.

The description of the student's strengths and needs must be specific.

### **Sample of Statements of Need**

This Student Requires Significant Instruction/Support to...

- ✓ develop and maintain motor skills (fine motor skills, gross motor skills, etc.)
- ✓ acquire reading skills including decoding and comprehension.
- ✓ communicate in a written form

- ✓demonstrate organization skills
- ✓computer technology and software

### **Sample of Statements of Strength**

- ✓able to comprehend beyond grade level
- ✓highly able to deal with abstract concepts
- ✓great sense of humour
- ✓well developed gross motor skills
- ✓keen interest in science
- ✓kind and compassionate individual

### **The Special Education Program**

The components of the students education program that are addressed involve an assessment of the student's current level of achievement and the development of annual goals and learning expectations that meet the unique educational needs of the student.

The requirements outlined pertain to the specifics of the student's education program in each subject, course, or skill area to which the IEP applies. Where appropriate, the skill areas addressed should include areas such as:

- ✓academic skills
- ✓gross motor development
- ✓perceptual motor skills
- ✓life and social skills.

Information on the student's current achievement level, annual goals, and learning expectations must be recorded in the IEP under the appropriate subject, course, or skill area heading.

The IEP also helps teachers monitor the student's progress and provides a framework for communicating information about the student's progress to parents and to the student. The IEP is updated (at least once each reporting period) to record any changes in the student's special education program and/or the special education services that the student requires. These changes should be based on a variety of assessments and/or evaluations of the student's achievement.

The IEP reflects the school board's and the principal's commitment to provide the special education program and services within the resources available to the school board. The intent is to meet the identified strengths and needs of the student. The principal is responsible for ensuring compliance with all of the standards set by the Ministry of Education for IEPs.

### **Important Definitions: Section 1, Education Act**

#### ***Exceptional Pupil***

An exceptional pupil is "a pupil whose behavioral, communicational, intellectual, physical or multiple exceptionalities are such that he or she is considered to need placement in a special education program....." (School Board must use the categories and definitions are set out by the Ministry of Education.)

#### ***Special Education Services***

Special education services are defined as the facilities and resources, including support personnel and equipment, necessary for developing and implementing a special education program.

#### ***Special Education Programs***

Special education program means, in respect of an exceptional pupil, an educational program that is based on and modified by the results of continuous assessment and evaluation and that includes a plan containing specific objectives and an outline of educational services that meets the needs of exceptional pupil.