



## NYSSD Parent News – First Edition

### IEP (or Individualized Education Plan)

IEP (or Individualized Education Plan) is a well-known term for many parents. Throughout the years, working with your child and respective educators, you have perhaps developed a good understanding of the process and how it benefits your son/daughter. However, once you look at the IEP document it may look like a foreign language to you. This is a common feeling for many parents. The key is to understand how the IEP document is broken down, what sections it contains, and what information is shared in these sections. There are IEP's that may be structured differently but all contain the same breakdown of information regarding each student's individual needs.

Here is a breakdown of the IEP's at NYSSD – Rome School for the Deaf.

#### **Current Levels of Performance**

- This section may, depending on your child's levels, discuss a variety of scores on certain exams.
- The scores, depending on your child's age and levels, could cover a variety of assessments such as regents/RCT scores, state assessment tests given to their grade level, and speech and language scores to name a few.
- In many cases, there is confusion on how to read the results of a particular exam/assessment.
- Here are some examples. A regents/RCT exam is out of 100% and is pretty cut and dry. If a student scores a 70% on a regents/RCT exam then that's their score.
- If you see a student scored in the 70<sup>th</sup> percentile you may have trouble deciphering this. Here's how to read this, on this particular part of the assessment your child scored better or the same as 70% of the students who participated in this section of the assessment.
- Grade equivalents are another statistic you may see. For example, on an assessment you noticed your child received a grade equivalent of 2. In other words, your child's score on this section was equivalent to a student in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade.

#### **Academic Achievement, Functional Performance, and Learning Characteristics**

- This section starts by discussing your child's performance in their current program of study.
- Initially, this provides a brief overview of the positive and negative aspects of your child's performance in their respective course of study.
- It then has a separate section to discuss more in-depth positive aspects of your child's performance and then discusses areas of weakness as identified by parents and educators.
- The needs section discusses strategies that can be used to positively address the stated concerns.





### **Social Development**

- This portion addresses student peer interactions, adult interactions and overall self-esteem.
- Strengths and weaknesses are discussed along with strategies to address the identified areas of weakness.
- Here is an example. Say a student has a good sense of humor but struggles communicating their issues. The needs part in the social development section may recommend positive encouragement when the student appropriately expresses their feelings or emotions.

### **Physical Development**

- This section follows the same format as academic and social development.
- It addresses if there are any impairments to the child's physical development.
- Strengths are addressed such as the student is a very positive participant in physical education. Then the needs section may specify that the student needs to improve on a specific part of the physical fitness test which is given every year.

### **Management Needs**

- Once the areas of need are identified the IEP goes into a management needs section.
- This discusses to what extent certain resources are needed throughout the school day in order to ensure an environment which gives the student the best chance to be successful in their academic, social, and physical development.
- There is also a brief summary of what effects, if any, this will have on their participation in the general education setting. For example, the general curriculum in classes/subjects would need to be modified appropriately to help benefit the development of students who are deaf or hard of hearing (i.e. a sign interpreter being present in class).
- This section identifies if any plans or devices are needed to help address the student's impairment(s). Behavior plans, the use of Braille for visually impaired students, technology devices, and communication devices for students who are deaf or hard of hearing.
- All of our students will have the communication needs section checked yes. However, depending on the impairment(s) the other sections may apply to your child.

### **Postsecondary (after high school) Goals**

- Education/training they plan to receive (i.e. college), current plan for employment, independent living skills (i.e. where they plan on living following high school) are outlined in this section.
- A transition plan is then put in place to summarize the student's postsecondary goals and what they need to accomplish and/or improve on in order to obtain these current goals.
- Students who are not entering 9<sup>th</sup> grade may have this space left blank until they reach the necessary age to address these goals.

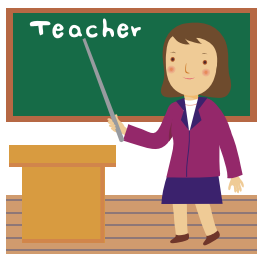


### **Measurable Annual Goals**

- Each year as a student progresses through school they will face new challenges and have to develop new skills in order to be successful. The IEP team will identify areas of weakness and what interventions or services they can put in place for the upcoming school year to help address and improve these areas of weakness.
- There are four sections discussed in the measurable annual goals section. Annual goals, criteria, method, and schedule.
- In the annual goals section the service and/or goal is identified. In addition, the question is asked what will the student improve upon by successfully completing this established goal?
- The next section discusses the criteria for fulfilling the set goal. For example, depending on the student's current level of ability, a goal could be the student will improve their study skills. The criteria could be when a test date is established the student will stay after for that subject at least twice until the test is taken.
- Method, or how will this be measured, is the next section. This can be done in several different ways depending on the goal. Whether through daily observations of a classroom teacher, dorm staff, or score on a unit test are only a few examples. However, if sticking with our previous example of improved study skills the observation would be done by the classroom teacher keeping a checklist of how many times the student stays after once a test date is established.
- Schedule is the last section which breaks down when or how often this will be evaluated. There are many ways to break this down from as little as annually (once a year) to measuring it every day. In regards to our study skills example it could be worded as being measured during every unit test throughout the school year. The section is very flexible to provide an accurate way to identify the goal and whether or not a successful result has been achieved.
- At the end of this section it identifies time periods in which progress towards annual goals will be discussed with the student's parents/guardians.

### **Recommended Special Education Programs and Services**

- This section discusses what services your child receives while in the school setting to help them reach their full potential in regards to academic, social, and physical performance.
- The first questions asked is what special education program is recommended. In many cases you will see special class or direct teaching. First, don't get concerned by the terminology used. Special class and direct teaching are saying that your child will perform better in a smaller setting where they can receive more interaction and feedback from the classroom teacher.
- The next question discusses service delivery recommendations. Most commonly you will see the ratios of 12:1:1 which indicates that for the classroom teacher there is a teaching assistant and to be no more than twelve students in the



- classroom. The ratio 8:1:1 indicates there are one classroom teacher and one teaching assistant and a maximum of eight students in the classroom.
- The next area is titled related services. This can include such things as counseling, occupational therapy, and/or speech/language therapy depending on your child's needs.
  - Supplementary aids are discussed in the next section. This lists accommodations or modifications that can be used in the classroom setting to help overcome a student deficiency and benefit their performance. A few examples are perhaps simplified curriculum, highlight key sections when giving notes, and/or use of a graphic organizer to name a few.
  - Assistive technology devices or services are also identified in the next section. Hearing aids may be listed here or any approved form of technology to benefit the student's educational development.
  - The next section discusses supports for school personnel. ASL lessons could be listed here for staff to help them better communicate with students who are deaf or hard of hearing.
  - Each service is then broken down into these specified sections. How the service will be delivered, frequency (how often service will be provided), duration (how long will the service be provided), location (where will it be provided), and when this service will begin to be implemented.
  - You'll see a section discussing if this is a 12 month service or program. In other words, can they receive this service in July and August (summer school)? A vast majority of students will be checked yes. Some students will receive the same services as they do during the school year. However, with it being summer school some services may be limited. If this is the case the IEP will list the services that need to be provided during this time period and the school that will provide them.

### **Testing Accommodations**

- There are a wide range of accommodations that can be provided.
- The IEP team examines your child's needs and puts forth a plan of accommodations that will give them the highest rate of success on any given exam.
- Examples of some accommodations are extended time, simplify directions, and/or read/sign test directions or examples. It is not limited to this and any accommodation can be approved if it provides necessary assistance for their identified deficiency yet still requires the student to put forth necessary effort to obtain a passing mark.

### **Transition Activities**

- If your child is 15 years or older this section will be filled out.
- This discusses what services will be performed and by who in order to prepare the student for a smooth transition to postsecondary life.
- The section discusses the needed activities, services, and the school district agency responsible.





- This varies from student to student and their postsecondary goals. However, it provides a well structured plan to help get them on the right track to postsecondary success.

### **Participation in District-Wide and State Assessments**

- If a student is identified as having a severe disability this section could be checked no and an explanation will be provided.
- Otherwise, it'll be checked yes just stating that a student will be participating in district-wide and state assessment(s) similar to general education students.

### **Student's Participation with Students without Disabilities**

- All students will have a discussion of their participation at NYSSD for students who are deaf or hard of hearing.
- It will also explain if the student is exempt or not required to take a second language depending on their disability.
- Any concerns regarding special transportation needed are discussed next.
- The IEP concludes with a recommendation of placement. The recommendation would be to participate in school at NYSSD (New York State School for the Deaf).

This is a lot of information to take in and you may feel overwhelmed. The fact that you took the time to read this article identifies your commitment to your child's educational success. A key point to remember is that the IEP is a legal document which identifies a student's disability or deficiencies and outlines techniques, strategies, or accommodations that can be used to help ensure success both in the school setting and post-high school. You as the parent are a key contributor to your child's success. Throughout these meetings your opinion and input is the most valued. If a concern arises contact the school to set up a meeting. This can be a simple meeting with the classroom teacher(s) or a meeting involving several respective educators to address the issue. Either way, if you identify a concern with your child, don't hesitate to contact the school so we can develop the necessary intervention strategies to benefit your child's development. In addition, talk to your child about their IEP and accommodations. I don't mean you necessarily have to go page by page with your child but instead ask if they are benefiting from their accommodations. If they receive extended time ask if that helps them reduce test anxiety and feel comfortable during exams. If they receive counseling or speech therapy ask how it's going. I understand you might get a simple "good" or "ok" but it never hurts to check frequently to identify areas they are struggling in or areas that are beneficial for that matter. Contact the school even if it's to simply check on your child and see how they are doing. As stated previously, we are a team and you are a valued member of it. I hope this information proves beneficial for you and I hope to hear from you soon to discuss your son or daughter's performance.

