

# All About the IEP

Listen

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Think you know all you need to know about your child's IEP – or that her teacher does? Maybe not!

Too often we fall into the bad habit of “trusting the process” without making sure that we *understand* the process. School districts develop forms, checklists, and procedures and we don't always feel comfortable asking *why* we're doing what we're doing.

Why does it matter? The IEP should identify your child's strengths and needs so the IEP team can put together a group of supports to enable your child to be more successful in school. The wrong supports can result in a lack of progress, or unruly behavior due to frustration. Be prepared with information from The National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities (NICHCY).



Don't you ever wonder . . .

- ***Why does federal law require a general educator to be on the IEP team?***

The regular education teacher knows the curriculum for a child's grade level and what children in regular education classes are typically expected to do. If the child is going to be educated in the regular education environment for any part of the school day, then the child's regular education teacher may talk at the IEP meeting about what the child will be taught and expected to learn. To read more about this, visit *Regular Educators* on our *IEP Team* page at <http://nichcy.org/schoolage/iep/team/regulareducator>.

- ***When is it appropriate for the student to be included on the IEP team?***

If transition goals and services are going to be discussed, the student with a disability *must* be invited to attend the meeting. In reality, parents and children often make this decision together. It's not uncommon for parents and even teachers to encourage children to take part in developing their own IEPs. Some children in elementary school come to the meeting just to learn a little about the process or to share information about themselves. To read more about this, visit our *Student with a Disability* on our *IEP Team* page at <http://nichcy.org/schoolage/iep/team/student>.

- ***Who else should be on the IEP team?***

In addition to parents, special educators, regular educators, a school system representative, someone to interpret evaluation results, and the student (when appropriate), the IEP team may also include, at the discretion of the parent or the school system, additional *individuals with knowledge or special expertise about the child*, including related services personnel as appropriate. The parent or the school system may invite these individuals to participate on the team. To read more about this, visit *Others with Knowledge or Special Expertise About the Child* on our *IEP Team* page at <http://nichcy.org/schoolage/iep/team/specialexpertise>.

- ***What exactly are “present levels”?***

The “present levels” statement is crafted by considering the areas of development in which a child with a disability may need support. These are roughly divided into the two areas of development: academic and functional. To read more about this, visit *Present Levels* on our *Contents of the IEP* page at

<http://nichcy.org/schoolage/iep/iepcontents/present-levels>.

- ***Who decides the appropriate placement/service delivery model for the child?***

Placement is directly connected to the child's IEP, is based on the child's IEP, must be decided by a knowledgeable group of persons, including the child's parents, but is not necessarily decided by the IEP team. To read more about this, visit *Placement* on our *When the IEP Team Meets* page at <http://nichcy.org/schoolage/iep/meetings#placement>

- ***What are "accommodations" all about?***

IDEA requires that students with disabilities take part in *state or districtwide assessments* . . . To support the participation of children with disabilities in such large-scale testing, accommodations or modifications may be necessary in how the test is administered or how a given child takes the test. It's the responsibility of the IEP team to decide *how* the student with a disability will participate, and then to document that decision in the child's IEP. To read more about this, visit *Accommodations in Assessment* on our *Contents of the IEP* page at <http://nichcy.org/schoolage/iep/iepcontents/assessment>.

The National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities can answer these questions and many, many more! Bookmark our *All About the IEP* page (<http://nichcy.org/schoolage/iep>) in English or Spanish so you'll be prepared for your child's next IEP meeting.

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