



Ontario Association for Families of Children with Communication Disorders OAFCCD

Individual Education Plans (IEP) The Parent's Role

Over the past few years the Ministry of Education has been working to improve the quality of Individual Education Plans through the publication of the *Individual Education Plan (IEP) A Resource Guide (2004)*, and the release of the *Individual Education Plans, Standards for Development, Program Planning, and Implementation* in 2000. To assist school boards in implementing these new standards the Ministry has provided school board staff with training. School boards have been working hard to implement the standards and most boards have modified their IEP forms and provided staff with intensive training.

Unfortunately, there has not been a training program for parents (or students over the age of 16) and few parents are not sure about their role in the IEP development. All parents want to help their child succeed in school, but many parents are unclear about the purpose of the IEP and how it helps their child. They are also unsure about how they can participate and what the school staff expects of them. To help parents understand their role, answers to the most frequently asked questions have been prepared.

What is an Individual Education Plan (IEP)?

An IEP is a written plan. It is a working document which describes the areas of strength and areas of need of an individual pupil; the learning expectations of the student; if they are different to the curriculum; the teaching strategies, or special education programs and services which will be provided to the student; and the assessment strategies which will be used to assess student progress.

How does an IEP differ from an IPRC?

The Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) is the process of identifying a child as exceptional and determining the child's placement. A child is considered exceptional if they meet the criteria for identification in one of the Ministry of Education Categories of Exceptionality. The main categories are:

Behaviour

Communication - including Autism, Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Language Impairment, Speech Impairment, and Learning Disability.

Intellectual - including Giftedness, Mild Intellectual Disability and Developmental Disability

Physical - including both Physical Disability and Blind and Low Vision
and **Multiple Exceptionalities**

The IPRC will also determine the placement of the child. Placements include:

Regular Class with Indirect Support

Regular Class with Resource Assistance

Regular Class with Withdrawal Assistance

Special Education Class with Partial Integration

Special Education Class Full Time

An IEP is the education plan for the student and it must be developed within 30 days of the decision of the IPRC.

What are Learning Expectations?

All public schools are required to teach the provincial curriculum. The provincial curriculum identifies the learning expectations for each component of each grade and course. That is, what the student will know at the end of each grade or course. Students are required to have an IEP when their learning expectations will be different from the curriculum.

What is the difference between Accommodations, Modifications and Alternative Expectations?

Accommodations are the teaching strategies, supports and/or services that are required in order for the student to access the curriculum and demonstrate learning. Accommodations do not alter the provincial learning expectations for the grade level. Examples of accommodations include: the use of tape recorders, scribes, voice recognition technology or Braille.

Modifications refer to the changes made to the grade level expectations for a subject or course to meet the needs of the student. For core subjects, such as Math and Language, the expectations may be from another grade level (higher or lower). For content subjects, such as Social Studies or History, the modifications may include significant changes to the number and/or complexity of the learning expectations.

Alternative Learning Expectations refer to learning related to skill development in areas not represented in the provincial curriculum. The expectations represent a specific program or course taught to the student. For example; an Anger Management program, Orientation and Mobility training for the visually impaired, or a Social Skills program.

How often is an IEP changed?

An IEP is developed for each school year, and should include learning expectations which are related to each reporting period. At the elementary level the IEP may be revised for each term to reflect the course content and learning expectations for that term. At the secondary level, in schools with a semester system, the IEP will be revised at the beginning of the second semester to reflect the new course load. The IEP may also be revised if there is a significant change in the child's needs or circumstances. For example; a change in the child's health or behaviour.

What can parents contribute to the IPRC Process?

Parents must be consulted in the development of the IEP and must receive a copy when it is completed, and whenever it is revised. Parents can provide an invaluable perspective on their child's personality, development and learning. Parents should provide up-to-date medical information about their child; important information about their child's likes, dislikes, learning style, interests, and reactions to situations, and about the talents and skills their child demonstrates in the home and community; reinforce and expand the educational efforts of the teacher by providing opportunities to practice and maintain skills in the home; and provide feedback on the transfer of skills to the home and community environments. Parents know their child and can advocate for their child's best interest.

What if I can't attend school meetings?

The development of an IEP will not always require a face to face meeting. When an IEP is developed as a result of the IPRC, a case conference before or after the IPRC may be held. However, in many cases the school staff may involve parents through phone calls or by sending copies of the draft IEP home. At the end of the process parents must be provided with a copy of the IEP and a form to sign and indicating whether they were involved in the development of the IEP. This form usually includes a place for comments.

Further Information

1. OAFCCD has developed a number of Parent Fact Sheets relevant to the IEP process including:
 - Special Education Terms used in Ontario Schools.
 - Preparing for an I.P.R.C. (Identification, Placement and Review Committee).
 - Preparing for an I.E.P. (Individual Education Plan)

These articles are available on the OAFCCD Website at www.oafccd.com or by calling (905) 842-9506.

2. The *Individual Education Plan (IEP) Resource Guide (2004)*, and the *Individual Education Plans, Standards for Development, Program Planning, and Implementation (2000)* are available from the Ministry of Education Website at: www.edu.gov.on.ca
3. Many School Boards also have Parent Guides with information on the IEP process, as well as their Parent Guide on the Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) Process.

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