

Video Transcription: *What is an IEP?*

What is an IEP?

The education system in Ontario is based on the belief that students are best served through an inclusionary model. This means that, rather than a placement in specialized programs, the first choice is to have students with special education needs placed in a typical classroom with various types of learning support.

To fully support their learning, these students may require changes to their program through an Individual Education Plan, or IEP.

But what is an IEP?

By definition, an Individual Education Plan, or IEP, is a legal, written plan created for students with exceptionalities or exceptional needs.

The IEP can be broken down into five phases: 1. Gathering information

2. Setting the direction

3. Developing the IEP

4. Implementing the IEP

5. Reviewing and updating the IEP

Phases 1 and 2:

During the first two phases, information is gathered on the student. This information can include classroom assessments, work samples, observations, formal academic testing and any other information deemed important. Information gathering may also include conversations with parents, former teachers and, in some cases, the students themselves. This information is used to determine a student's strengths and needs. Support, instructional services and other relevant factors are considered and developed for the student. If necessary, a specialized program can be suggested.

An effective IEP helps a student access the curriculum through strategies and interventions that support individual strengths and needs. The IEP is also a tool of accountability, and helps determine how a student's progress is measured and reported to the parent or guardian.

Phase 3:

IEPs are developed by a team under the direction of the school principal. This team can take many forms, but usually includes the child's teacher, special education teachers, resource staff, parents and, when possible, the student.

Students who are 16 and older are expected to provide input into their IEP. Indeed, any student for whom



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an IEP is being developed should be included in the process.

An IEP is typically created after a meeting of the Identification, Placement and Review Committee, or IPRC. An IPRC determines if a student meets the criteria for an exceptionality and determines the most appropriate placement for the student. Exceptionalities can be of various natures, including behavioural, intellectual, physical or communicational, such as a learning disability (LD).

An IPRC can be requested by the school principal or by the parents. This committee also meets annually to review both the student and the program.

An IEP must be developed within 30 days of a student's arrival in a new classroom. This could be in a new school, after a change of schools or through a placement determined by the IPRC. IEPs can be developed at any point during the school year.

The Education Act requires schools to provide special education programs to any student who would benefit, regardless of whether or not they have a diagnosis of an exceptionality. This is because all children have the legal right to education.

Therefore, schools can create an IEP without a formal exceptionality or an IPRC, and many students are able to have their learning needs met without the need for formal testing and identification of an exceptionality. Parents must be informed of the IEP but do not have to consent or sign the IEP for it to be implemented.

What's included in an IEP?

The format of the IEP will vary slightly between school boards, as each creates and supplies their staff with a template. Regardless of the school board, IEPs in Ontario will include information such as:

The reason for the IEP

The student's profile

The student's strengths and needs

Relevant assessment data, including psychological, behavioural, health and occupational assessments, etc.)

Documentation of the consultation with parents or guardians

Accommodations, modifications, alternative skills areas and the subjects they apply to, required human resources, such as support from an Educational Assistant (EA), resource staff, or Special

Education Resource Teacher

Learning expectations

Instructional and assessment strategies that differ from what is typically provided A Transition plan



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The team should consider a range of options to determine which will best meet the needs of the student. Accommodations
Modifications
Alternative skills areas

Accommodations are the most likely program changes one might find on an IEP created for a student with learning disabilities.

Accommodations are changes in HOW the student learns material or completes an activity. Curriculum expectations stay the same. Accommodations can include:

different ways of teaching or presenting material during lessons

assessment changes. For example, an accommodation could allow a student to provide answers to test questions orally instead of writing them down.

the use of assistive technology
changes to the learning environment such as seating, cueing, or hallway routines

Modifications are used when changes need to be made to curriculum expectations in order meet the needs of the student.

Modifications are changes in WHAT the student is expected to learn. Usually, modifications involve changing or reducing the grade level expectations that the student should meet. Expectations may be selected from various curriculum levels to ensure the student is working at a level considered appropriate.

When a student is unable to work within the Ontario Curriculum, alternative expectations may be used. Alternative Skills Areas do not correspond with curriculum expectations.

They are non-academic areas to work on such as social skills, fine motor skills, or personal care. At the secondary level, these are non-credit courses.

A transition plan is mandatory for all students who have an IEP. The goals of this plan are developed to help ease transitions between activities and settings. This plan will ensure smooth transitions through a student's academic career, help students identify and achieve personal and academic goals, and prepare them for their post-secondary experience.

Phases 4 and 5:

It is the principal's responsibility to ensure that the correct IEP development process is followed and that the IEP is properly implemented, monitored and reviewed. Teachers are required by law to follow the IEP.



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The IEP is a living document, which means it is meant to be continuously adjusted and updated throughout the child's school years. Teachers are required to evaluate and update the student's learning expectations at least once every reporting period. Any revisions, such as new instructional strategies or changes in the level of support, are recorded in the IEP. An up-to-date copy of the IEP is stored in the documentation file of the Ontario Student Record (OSR) and a copy is sent home.

By following these steps and creating IEPs, schools and educators help ensure that students with special needs receive continuous, effective support in their learning journey.

If you have any additional questions about IEPs, visit www.LDatSchool.ca or contact us at info@LDatSchool.ca

