
CHAPTER 1: *INDIVIDUAL EDUCATION PLANNING*

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CHAPTER 1: INDIVIDUAL EDUCATION PLANNING

What Are the Benefits of Collaborative Planning?

Through individual education planning, the people who work most closely with students are provided with an opportunity to collaborate. IEP meetings represent a coordinated effort by school staff, families, school division or district staff, and community agencies to develop and implement programming to accommodate student needs.

Each member of the IEP team has different knowledge, skills, and experiences with the student. Collaborative planning allows the team to identify, coordinate, and make use of a range of resources and strategies that will offer students the best opportunity for developing and achieving in all educational experiences. This ensures that the whole child is considered.

IEP planning requires coordination and an initial commitment of time. However, if steps are taken to ensure that meetings are efficient and that IEP planning is effective, the IEP becomes a means of focussing energies and facilitates planning.

The IEP planning process helps individuals who work with students to

- develop a common understanding of the students' strengths, interests, and needs
- share information and observations about their behaviour and learning in a variety of settings
- establish current levels of performance
- identify priorities for programming and planning across curriculum areas
- consider a variety of environments for achieving student specific outcomes
- communicate programming information to parents and colleagues
- monitor and report on student progress and achievement
- ensure continuity in programming through providing essential information when students transfer from one programming approach or environment to another

Toolbox A: Managing Time for Individual Planning



What are the Benefits for Parents and Students?

IEP planning is important in providing parents with a voice in their child’s education. Once developed, the IEP provides a framework for communicating with families, who play a role in reinforcing the outcomes of IEPs at home. This process is also valuable in helping students focus their efforts on attainable outcomes.

Individual education planning enables families to

- communicate goals and values
- contribute their perspective to their child’s IEP
- understand and support school programming and planning
- discuss questions concerning programming and services

Essential Components of IEPs

The seven essential components of IEPs are

- student identification and background information
- current levels of performance, which reflect team consensus on the student’s abilities and needs
- student specific outcomes
- performance objectives
- methods, materials, and strategies
- the names of team members who will implement the IEP, and the setting(s) where it will be implemented
- plans and timelines for evaluation and review

What Does IEP Planning Involve?

Planning involves an initial meeting to develop the IEP. This is followed by a series of short meetings at scheduled intervals to monitor and review the student’s progress and evaluate the plan. The size of the team depends on the needs of the student.

All IEPs typically include certain **essential components**. School divisions/districts determine the manner in which these components are organized. The difference between a short and a long IEP depends on the detail contained in each component.

Typically, students with more complex needs require more detailed and comprehensive plans. The areas in which the student is following the provincial curriculum without any adaptations or modifications do not need to be included in the IEP.

What Makes IEPs Effective?

Educators and parents are concerned that the time they invest in IEP planning results in measurable gains for students. IEPs that are developed as a formality and filed away are unlikely to have any impact on the day-to-day performance of students or on their long-term progress and achievement.

IEPs that are most effective in promoting student learning

- are working documents, linked to daily instruction. (Through daily plans, effective IEPs spell out the learning activities students will be involved in at specific times in their schedules.)
- involve all members of the team in assessing student performance within their area of expertise
- identify clearly who is responsible for student instruction
- are living documents (revised as a student's circumstances and progress indicate)
- link clinician and consultant reports and programming to daily instruction
- involve parents as active and equal team members in planning and implementation

Summary

An IEP is not a description of everything that will be taught to a student.

It is a summary of the student specific outcomes and performance objectives that have highest priority for a student's learning during a school year, with concrete plans for how these outcomes and performance objectives can be reached.

An IEP is not restricted to curricular/curriculum issues and concerns.

It may address social or cultural adjustments, adaptive behaviours, and transitions from one environment to another.

An IEP is not just for students with severe disabilities.

It can be used to plan for students whose needs are not being met through the provincial curriculum.

An IEP does not draw on classroom resources alone.

It can involve decision-making related to other services (e.g., speech-language pathology, occupational therapy, and physiotherapy).