

An individual education plan (IEP) is an individual programme for a student with a disability.

This Guide was written to help you feel comfortable with the IEP process as it can sometimes feel intimidating.

The Guide provides tips to help you feel confident because as a parent you know your child best and your ideas and feedback are essential for a good IEP.

Partnership

The IEP process offers an opportunity for families and schools to work together to develop the best possible programme for an individual child.

Partnership between parents and education providers is essential in overcoming barriers to learning.

Ministry of Education Special Education Policy Guidelines

Who needs an IEP?

IEPs are not just for students funded through the ongoing and reviewable resourcing scheme (ORRS). Students who need an IEP include students with a disability, learning difficulty or behaviour difficulty who require any or all of the following:

- extra assistance
- adapted programmes or learning environments
- specialised equipment or materials

You can request an IEP if you think your child would benefit from extra support.

The reason for having an IEP is

- To make sure that your child's learning needs are met
- To discuss what you want your child to learn with the teacher and other staff
- To discuss how your child will be supported so they can learn
- To identify resources that will be needed to support your child
- To share information about your child's progress

An IEP is

- A partnership between parents/caregivers/whanau and the school
- About valuing, respecting and using each other's expertise
- Focused and business-like
- An opportunity to problem-solve
- Confidential
- A map which identifies your child's learning needs and how they can be met
- Written on paper but not set in concrete

An IEP is not

- Just about getting resources
- A time to hear totally new information
- For detailed programme planning
- An endurance test or marathon

Schools have the responsibility to

- Identify one person to coordinate the process
- Involve you with planning 3-4 weeks before the IEP
- Share reports and ideas in advance
- Hold the IEP meeting at the venue and time of your choice
- Give you a clear agenda with an identified facilitator
- Ensure that there is an opportunity for everyone to speak and that no one dominates
- Find solutions to resourcing issues

How to prepare

- Talk to your child and find out how they feel about school - as they get older consider their participation in part of or the entire IEP meeting
- Look at the previous IEP – think about what has been achieved and what still needs work
- Consider what you think your child should learn, including social skills share this with support people who will be attending with you
- Write notes so you don't forget anything - decide if you will share these notes with everyone at the meeting and make copies to distribute if so

Meeting Process

1. Welcome and introductions
2. Review the agenda of the meeting – decide how long you will spend on each item
3. Go over the previous IEP and discuss how it went
4. Talk about and decide your child's current strengths and areas of need
5. Discuss information that has been gathered on your child
6. Set long term goals and specific learning goals
7. Decide how the school will communicate with you about your child's learning
8. Set date for the next meeting

The role of an Advocate/Support person

An advocate or support person can assist by:

- meeting with you beforehand to plan
- speaking alongside you, especially if there are issues you find difficult to talk about
- providing moral support – they may not need to say anything
- providing information about systems, expectations and processes
- debriefing after the meeting
- providing advice or assistance on complaints processes

Strategies to feel confident at the meeting

- If you do not understand something, ask for it to be clarified
- Check your notes frequently to make sure all important issues are discussed
- Ask yourself if what is planned matches your knowledge of your child, have courage to say if it does not
- Feel free to ask for a five minute break to clear your head
- If you feel pressured about agreeing to a decision you feel uncertain about, say you can't make a decision immediately and will need some time to think about it

After the meeting

- Ask for a photocopy of the draft IEP and check this against the final when it arrives
- Encourage staff to contact you if they want to discuss anything
- Complete any tasks you agreed to do
- Keep track of progress or concerns to bring up at the next meeting
- If you are unhappy about the meeting, first contact the meeting facilitator or school Principal
- If your concerns are still not resolved use the school's complaints procedure or contact your local Ministry of Education Office or an advocacy service for advice

Important Contacts

IHC Advocacy

0800 442 442 or www.ihc.org.nz

Parent to Parent

0508 236 236 or www.parent2parent.org.nz

Ministry of Education

0800 622 222 or www.minedu.govt.nz

With thanks to Parent to Parent for the use of their IEP Advocacy Training resources