

The Individual Education Plan (IEP): Advice to Members

The Individual Education Plan (IEP) – What You Need to Know

IEPs are written plans describing the special education assistance provided to exceptional students and how that assistance will be delivered. Ontario Regulation 181/98 requires that an IEP be developed for every student identified as exceptional by an Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC). School boards may also prepare IEPs for students who have not been identified as exceptional but are receiving accommodations and program modifications.

The principal is responsible for ensuring that an IEP is prepared within 30 school days after a student has been placed in a special education program. This is a program based on and modified by the results of continuous assessment and evaluation and that includes a plan containing specific objectives and an outline of educational services. For most students, this would occur at the beginning of the school year. The principal must also take into consideration any recommendations made by the IPRC.

Every IEP must include:

- program goals;
- an outline of the special education services the student will receive;
- a statement about how the student's progress will be reviewed; and
- a transition plan, if the student has no particular need of support during transitions, should state that no actions are required.

The IEP is the result of a collaborative effort among teachers, parents, the student, the school, and other professionals involved with the student. Parents must be asked to sign the IEP and indicate whether they were consulted during its development; parents are also entitled to receive a copy of the final IEP. The IEP is kept in the Ontario Student Record (OSR), unless parents object in writing.

IEPs are reviewed at least once every formal reporting period. The Elementary Progress Report Card introduced in the fall of 2010 represents one formal reporting period, and so the requirement for three IEP reviews during the school year remains. Because the IEP is a working document, adjustments to its program goals may be necessary throughout the school year; those adjustments should be noted and significant changes should be shared with the parent.

The IEP Process – Tips for Teachers

- Become familiar with IEP requirements in the IEP standards document, *Special Education in Ontario Kindergarten to Grade 12: Policy and Resource Guide (2017)*. An electronic version is available through the Ontario Ministry of Education website at: <https://files.ontario.ca/edu-special-education-policy-resource-guide-en-2022-05-30.pdf>
- Ensure your principal has established, in a collaborative manner, clear roles and responsibilities for staff members assisting in the development of the IEP.

- Involve parents in the collaborative process as early as possible.
- The IEP is a confidential document; use discretion when disseminating any information contained in an IEP.
- Consult with the principal and teachers involved in the student's program as often as necessary.
- Communicate regularly with parents regarding the IEP and resources available to support the IEP.
- Differences of opinion related to IEPs may arise between teachers or between teachers and principals; express your opinion in a professional manner.

IEPs and Workload

Completion of IEPs can represent a significant time commitment. It is important for ETFO members to establish strategies that keep their IEP workload manageable while ensuring that the needs of students are being met.

- Ask your principal for time during the instructional day to be trained on and complete IEPs.
- An IEP should not commit to accommodations and alternative programs or services that cannot be delivered. Keep the plan's program goals achievable, reasonable, and manageable.
- Although the decision to create a discretionary IEP lies with the principal, best practices cited by the Ministry refer to a "team approach" on the part of teachers and principals with respect to the development of IEPs. Think carefully about whether the degree of accommodation for a student warrants the development of an IEP or can be met through the instructional techniques that teachers normally employ in their classrooms (e.g., differentiated instruction).
- Remember the "E" in IEP – you are responsible for the education plan of the student, not therapy or medical plans.
- Promptly report in writing to your principal any technical difficulties you encounter using web-based IEP tools.
- Make arrangements with your principal to have school support personnel photocopy and file IEPs.
- Refer to your local collective agreement as it may contain negotiated language specific to the workload associated with the preparation of IEPs.

For more information, contact Professional Relations Services Staff at 416-962-3836 or 1-888-838-3836 at the provincial office. Also see ETFO's website - Advice for Members.

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