



Your Individualized Education Program (IEP) and Transition

A fact sheet about your IEP written by youth for youth.

Written By Sam Katz; Edited by Stephanie Birmingham and Jenny Wagner Neugart

Waisman Center, University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities, University of Wisconsin - Madison

What is an IEP?

An Individualized Education Program is a document that prepares you for your future. It is created by you, your family, and your school. An IEP is a way of telling your school what you need in order to do your best in school. The IEP makes it possible for you to have a say in how your education is arranged. When you have a disability, you have certain rights to help you succeed. The IEP is one of those rights.

What is a Transition Plan in the IEP?

A transition plan must be included in your IEP starting at 14 years old. The transition plan will help determine which classes you will need to graduate, tells the IEP team what you like to do and includes agencies that may help you transition out of high school easier, such as the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation.

Does the IEP involve tests?

Sometimes - if the school needs more information about your disability and what you need to reach your educational goals. The tests are done to help you, not to embarrass you.

If you have to take a test, remember to give your best effort and tell the person testing you what you are thinking. For example, if the test you are taking is too hard, let someone know. This will help them learn more about you.

Who can go to my IEP?

Anybody who knows you well enough to know what you can do and what you want to do can go to your IEP. You should start going to your IEP meeting at least by age 14. ***If you haven't started going yet, please go. You are the only one who knows exactly what you want.*** Ask for a copy of the invitation list so you know who might be there and so you can invite other people you feel would be able to share information about you, your abilities, and even areas you need help with. If you are planning on going on to college, it is a good idea to invite a teacher who supports your decision. Other ideas for people you may want to invite are:

- Brother/sister
- Best friend
- Classmate
- Close relative
- Favorite teacher (if not invited already)
- School nurse
- Employer and/or DVR counselor

Some people who will automatically be invited are:

- You
- Your parents
- One of your regular education teachers
- One of your special education teachers
- A local educational agency representative (someone who makes decisions for the school)
- A person who can talk about any tests you may have taken

Goals for your IEP

Goals should be written in a way that you can understand. If you are not sure how to write a goal, just tell the people at your IEP meeting what you are thinking about. Goals should include small steps that you work on throughout the school year.

If your goal requires something the school needs to loan you or purchase for you such as a communication device – they can do that. If your goal requires time with a physical therapist (PT), an occupational therapist (OT), and/or a speech and language therapist (S&L) – they can do that too.

Things to think about when writing goals:

- What supports do you need in school to help you be successful?
- Are there any health issues that interfere with learning or being in class all day?
- Do you plan on going to college? If so, do you want to go to a university or technical college and what classes do you need to take?
- Where do you want to work and what supports would you need to work there?

Accommodations you may need to help you make progress toward your goals...

- A computer or communication device.
- A note-taker.
- A calculator for tests and assignments.
- Different assignments (you need to understand how these will show up on your transcript – special education classes won't count if you want to go to college).
- Auditing a class – this is an option where you watch a class, sometimes for an entire year before having a chance to decide whether to receive a grade or be graded pass/fail (this might not be an option in all schools).

When does the IEP meeting happen?

You will have an IEP meeting at least once a year. You may also have an IEP meeting when there are significant changes in your disability that would modify what is in your IEP or transition plan.

What is it like to go to your IEP meeting?

Going to or running your own IEP meeting for the first time can be nerve wracking. By the time you are in high school, you should consider running your own IEP meeting. Be sure to ask the team if you can run the meeting. If you don't know how to run a meeting, ask your parents or a favorite teacher for help. You can get together a small group of people (parents, friends, or a teacher) and practice what you would like to say. Some youth have even created a PowerPoint presentation to help them talk about what needs to be included in the IEP.

After you've done it once, it gets much easier. For some students, it is natural to attend, speak up, or run the meeting. It is important not to let others run your meeting because you are the best person to know what you need.

Final Thoughts...

Everybody who was at the IEP meeting should make sure that progress is being made toward your goals. If progress is not being made and you are doing what you should, think about what you need to help you reach your goals better. Point out to your teachers the areas in the IEP that you are most concerned with. It may help you to write a note or tape record your concerns before you talk to your teachers.