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*Talking About Special Education  
Volume VI ...*

# **A Teacher's Guide to Individual Education Plans (IEPs)**

An Information  
Handbook  
Prepared by  
  
First Nations  
Education Steering Committee  
and the  
First Nations  
Schools Association

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## Introduction

The Individual Education Plan (IEP) is a useful tool for planning and communicating with colleagues and parents. It is a written plan, developed for an individual student, which describes the program modifications and/or adaptations for the student and the services that are to be provided. It is a concise, flexible and usable document that summarizes the plan for the student's education program.

An IEP is needed when a student's program is either adapted or modified. An **adapted program** retains the learning outcomes of the curriculum, but adaptations are provided so the student can participate in the program. Examples of adaptations:

- ◆ alternative formats, such as books on tape;
- ◆ instructional strategies, such as visual cues and aids; and
- ◆ assessment procedures, such as oral exams and additional time.

A **modified program** has learning outcomes that are substantially different from the prescribed curriculum, and specifically selected to meet the student's special needs. As well as

regular courses, a student's program may include some courses that are modified and others that are adapted.

**Note: Those areas in which the student is following the curriculum, without any adaptations or modifications, do not need to be included in the IEP.**

This handbook was developed to provide suggestions for teachers as they develop IEPs for their students with special needs. The majority of the information for this handbook was adapted from: *Individual Education Planning for Students with Special Needs - A Resource Guide to Support Teachers*, BC Ministry of Education Special Programs Branch.

## 1. Preplanning

By the time it has been decided that a student requires an IEP, some or all of the following steps should have taken place:

- ◆ systematic assessment and evaluation by the classroom teacher;
- ◆ consultation between the classroom teacher(s) and school-based colleagues;
- ◆ introduction of alternate strategies and evaluation of their effect; and
- ◆ referral to school-based team for specialized assessments and consultation.

Once the student has been identified as having 'special needs,' a team should be formed to plan for the student's educational needs.

## 2. Establishing an IEP Team

Depending upon the educational needs of an individual student, membership on the IEP team can and should vary.

Participants of the team can include:

- ◆ classroom teacher(s);
- ◆ school administrator;
- ◆ parents or legal guardians and, if appropriate, the student; and
- ◆ other school-based and community support staff who are going to be involved in the delivery of the IEP.

An IEP case manager should be assigned to coordinate the development and implementation of the IEP. This includes:

- ◆ making sure a regular process for monitoring progress is established;
- ◆ organizing and chairing the IEP meetings; and
- ◆ making sure the meeting records are properly kept and distributed.

Typically, the person coordinating the IEP will be someone from the school staff, such as the classroom teacher, the learning assistance teacher, or the special education teacher.

When a student has multiple or severe needs, it is essential that community services, such as public health and/or mental health, are part of the IEP team to ensure consensus regarding goals, consistency in interventions, and an integrated approach to service delivery.



### 3. IEP Meeting

The IEP process is new to many people, and as such, it is a process that needs to be explained to parents. Parents should be encouraged to be actively involved in decisions regarding educational services for their children. They provide a unique perspective about the student's personality, development and learning. Open communication and cooperation between home and school increases the opportunities for students with special needs to experience success.

#### A) Prior to the meeting

The case manager should provide ample notice of the upcoming IEP meeting to all IEP Team members. Parents should be made aware of the meeting and who will be attending. Prior to the meeting, it is helpful for parents to prepare for the meeting. See Appendix 1 for a sample of an 'IEP Planning Sheet for Parents'. Send this form home to start parents thinking about the types of goals they have for their child.

#### B) At the meeting

The following is a list of suggestions that will be helpful in running the IEP meeting:

- ◆ introduce all members;
- ◆ designate a recorder (often the case manager);
- ◆ set the length of the meeting;
- ◆ follow a meeting plan (see Appendix 2);
- ◆ compile the information on an IEP form. For samples of different IEPs, call Karen Horner at the First Nations Special Education Resource Line at 1-877-547-1919, Monday to Thursday 12:30 - 4:30 p.m.;
- ◆ have everyone sign the IEP form to indicate that there is consensus on the goals and the timelines set at the meeting; and
- ◆ set a rough date for an IEP review, such as "in February."

#### C) After the meeting

Following the meeting, it is useful to distribute minutes of the meeting and a copy of the IEP to participants, as appropriate.

## 4. Writing the IEP

The IEP guides the implementation of adaptations or modifications to a student's instructional program. It must be written in such a way that it can be understood by all current and future team members.

The IEP should contain:

- ◆ what the student now knows and can do;
- ◆ essential information, including relevant medical, social and education background;
- ◆ degree of participation in regular program;
- ◆ areas requiring modification and/or adaptation;
- ◆ what and how the student should learn next;
- ◆ goals appropriate to the student in one or more of the following areas: physical, intellectual, social/emotional, career/work experience;
- ◆ instruction plans, such as required classroom accommodations, who will provide instruction, where it will take place, and for how long;
- ◆ what the student will do to demonstrate learning;
- ◆ date for (at least annual) review; and
- ◆ plans for the next transition.

For most students with special needs, priorities are quite evident and setting goals and objectives is not difficult. More information on how to establish and implement goals and objectives is included in Appendix 3.

**Note:** If a modified program is necessary, make sure the parents are made aware that a modified program in the high school years will lead to a *British Columbia School Completion Certificate*. This certificate is not the same as a *Dogwood Diploma*. **Students with a BC School Completion Certificate will not be able to go on to post-secondary university opportunities.**





## 5. Implementing the IEP

The IEP must be linked to ongoing instructional planning to be effective, as it is a working document. The student with special needs should be seen first as a student in the class, and should not be defined exclusively by those special needs. The implementation of the IEP is putting into practice the plans, strategies and supports agreed upon by the team members.

This usually includes one or more of the following:

- ◆ modifications to the curriculum;
- ◆ adaptations to instruction and/or assessment methods;
- ◆ use of adaptive/assistive technologies;
- ◆ changes to make the learning environment more accessible;
- ◆ provision of support services; and
- ◆ provision of specialized training, such as mobility and orientation, sign language instruction, etc.



## 6. Reviewing the IEP

At the IEP meeting, the team should decide when and how to monitor the student's progress and the appropriateness of the plan. Making the IEP review consistent with a regular reporting period may be the most time efficient manner. This will avoid having to hold separate IEP review and report card meetings and will provide the information required for the report card.

As in the case of the first IEP meeting, the case manager should organize and chair the meeting. All team members should share information on strategies used and assessment results since the last meeting. At that time, the team may decide to carry on with the current plan, change the goals or adaptations, or seek help from additional community resources.



Questions that may assist with the review of the IEP include:

- ◆ Does the IEP accurately reflect the student's current programming needs?
- ◆ Are the strategies and resources selected to support the student learning effective?
- ◆ Is the student achieving the goals and objectives set at the IEP meeting?
- ◆ Should new goals be selected and new objectives created to more accurately reflect the student's changing strengths, needs and interests?

Transition can occur from home to school, one school or one level of schooling to another, and from school to independent or supported adult living. These transitions can be a very difficult and confusing time for students. Before any transition takes place, the IEP team should meet to discuss the student's plan and add recommendations to the IEP. Such a review can help communication between the student's current teacher(s) and the receiving teacher(s), and ensure continuity of the programming for the student. The transition process should be coordinated and implemented well before the anticipated move to ensure that the student has necessary supports in place.

The meeting should include any agencies expected to be involved with the student and family in the new setting.

If a student's short term objectives and annual goals of the IEP **have** been met, the team should determine if the student will be able to follow the regular curriculum without adaptations or modifications, and what the student has to learn next.

If the goals and objectives **have not** been met, the following questions should be asked:

- ◆ were the goals and objectives, materials, methods and procedures appropriate?;
- ◆ what gains did the student make?;
- ◆ did the student assume some responsibility for his or her learning?;
- ◆ did independence increase?;
- ◆ did home reinforce the agreed upon objectives?; and
- ◆ how should the family be involved in the revision of the IEP?



## 7. Reporting

Reports for students with special needs should describe progress with respect to all components of the program, including those areas which have been adapted and/or modified. When a student is expected to achieve or surpass the regular curriculum learning outcomes, the same grading and reporting should be followed as with other students. When the student requires substantial course or program modification, the use of letter grades or percentages to report student progress is not appropriate. Instead, structured written comments should be used to report the level of student success in achieving the individual goals and objectives set out for him or her.

When other community professionals provide services for the student, such as speech-language pathologist, physio or occupational therapist, or vision teacher, they should provide written information on the student's progress to be included in the classroom teacher's report.

## References

**The majority of this booklet was developed from the following resource:**

*Individual Education Planning for Students with Special Needs - A Resource Guide to Support Teachers.* Prepared by the BC Ministry of Education, Special Programs Branch.

Available on-line at:

[www.bced.gov.bc.ca/specialed/docs.htm](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/specialed/docs.htm)

or can be ordered from:

Office Products Centre, 742 Vanalman Ave., PO Box 9455 Stn Prov Govt Victoria, BC V8W 9V7

ph: (250) 952-4460 fax: (250)952-4442

Toll-free within BC 1-800-282-7955

Webpage: <http://qppubs.qp.gov.bc.ca/pqstore/Website>:  
<http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/specialed/iepssn/toc.htm>

### Another helpful resource

First Nations Special Education Resource Line

Toll-free: 1-877-547-1919

Call Monday to Thursday, 12:30 - 4:30 p.m., for any questions related to IEPs or the IEP process



## Appendix 1

### IEP Planning Sheet for Parents

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

To develop the best possible program, we need your assistance and knowledge of your child. Below are some questions for you to think about in preparation for the IEP meeting. You may wish to write down your thoughts for future reference by the IEP Team.

What do you feel are the strengths of your child?

What do you feel are your child's weaknesses (e.g., areas that may be frustrating or that your child can improve)?

How do you think your child learns best (what kind of situation makes learning easiest)?

Please describe educational skills that your child practices at home regularly (e.g., reading, making crafts, using the computer).

Does your child have any behaviours that are of concern to you or other family members? If so, please describe the behaviour(s).

What are your child's favorite activities?

What are your child's special talents or hobbies?

What are your main hopes for your child this year?

Does your child have any particular fears? If so, please describe.

Is there other information that would help us gain a better understanding of your child?

How does your child usually react when upset and how do you deal with the behavior?

Are there any concerns that you would like to discuss at the next IEP meeting?

Do you have any particular concerns about your child's school program this year?

*Thank you for contributing valuable parental insights.*

*Sincerely,*

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*(IEP Team Coordinator)*



## Appendix 2

### Planning Tips for IEP Meeting

#### 1. Provide Instruction:

- ◆ introduce people in attendance
- ◆ state purpose and time frame for the meeting, indicate that minutes will be taken, and present options for post-meeting follow-up
- ◆ encourage openness in information sharing, comments and questions

#### 2. Review:

- ◆ student's medical, social and school history as appropriate
- ◆ previous goals and services provided
- ◆ involvement from other agencies

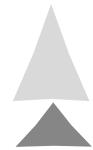
#### 3. Discuss:

- ◆ the student's present level of performance
- ◆ any new assessment data, reports and observations
- ◆ the student's strengths, interests, talents
- ◆ the student's areas of need
- ◆ the parents' goals for their child

- ◆ the student's goals for self
- ◆ educators' goals for student, and any concerns

#### 4. Establish:

- ◆ prime areas for focus
- ◆ goals, objectives and strategies
- ◆ any special services required
- ◆ areas of responsibility
- ◆ review date



#### 5. Plan meeting follow-up:

- ◆ keep a record of planning meetings held and follow-up activities
- ◆ review key decisions of planning meetings
- ◆ formalize the IEP plans and share the information with team members

#### 6. Summarize the meeting and end on a positive note





## Appendix 3

### Establishing and Implementing Goals and Objectives

#### 1. Identify priorities

Based on the information gathered and shared by IEP team members, the team can determine the student's strengths, needs and interests, and from these can clarify priorities.

Factors which should be considered when choosing priorities:

- ◆ parents' values and goals
- ◆ student's values and goals
- ◆ immediacy/urgency of need
- ◆ contribution to overall intellectual achievement
- ◆ contribution to social and career development
- ◆ contribution to independence
- ◆ transferability to other curriculum areas
- ◆ age appropriateness
- ◆ usefulness in other environments



#### 2. Determine goals and break them down into objectives

Long-term goals address the prioritized needs of the student and indicate the trend (e.g., increase, improve) in learning the student is expected to demonstrate.

Goals should:

- ◆ challenge the student but be achievable
- ◆ be relevant to the individual student's actual needs
- ◆ focus on what will be learned rather than what will be taught
- ◆ be stated positively, i.e., state what the student will do

*Example of goals:*

(Student's name) ... will use money accurately as a form of exchange

...will demonstrate competence in multiplication and division with one and two digit numbers

...will demonstrate an understanding of reading materials beyond literal meaning

...will use sign-language to communicate personal needs to teacher and teacher assistant

...will increase appropriate classroom participation

The core of the plan develops as the goals are broken down into short-term objectives. These represent intermediate steps between the student's present level of performance and the established goals for the student. They are the specific statements which describe observable, measurable behaviours and provide indicators of student progress.

As a teacher, you may wish to consider the following steps when writing objectives:

- ◆ identify the various steps involved in achieving the intended goals
- ◆ organize the tasks into sequential components
- ◆ screen out unnecessary steps and focus on essential components
- ◆ describe how the student can demonstrate that the objective has been achieved

*Examples of short-term objectives* (for the goal: will demonstrate competence in multiplication and division with one and two digit numbers).

- ◆ give oral answers to multiplication facts up to  $10 \times 10$  with 100% accuracy
- ◆ give oral answers to basic division facts with 100% accuracy



- ◆ multiply two-digit numbers by two-digit numbers with 95% accuracy
- ◆ complete 20 multiplication and division questions within 20 minutes with 100% accuracy, using a calculator