



IEP FAQs

A Word Or Two From Our Editors...

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An IEP is a written plan that describes the modification of level of instruction or adaptations to the curriculum required by a particular student.

Students who have a diagnosed handicap are required to have an IEP in place at the start of their schooling. (MELS, 2004) An IEP is also recommended for students with diagnosed learning disabilities or those students considered 'at-risk'.

The IEP process is a constructive approach creating the opportunity for students, school teams, parents, and external agencies to work together to generate a viable road map for students with diverse learning needs.

The main strengths of the IEP lie in facilitating cooperation and collaboration among

the various partners, and better identification of the needs of the student. (Reference Framework for the establishment of IEPs, 2004)

The key challenges encountered are typically related to finding the time required to bring all of the partners together, composing a viable and sustainable IEP, using the IEP as a teaching support tool, and obtaining the student's participation throughout the process. (Reference Framework for the establishment of IEPs, 2004)

Developing an IEP is a demanding pedagogical challenge. In order for this road map to become a meaningful tool, the following principles should be followed:

All students are unique, and have potential that can be developed;

Students should play an active role in their own development; they should be allowed to make choices of influence them;

Students have a wide range of needs; the best response is one that is adapted to their individual needs and abilities;

Parents have primary responsibility for their children and their children's development; they should be recognized as genuine partners in the process;

Early intervention, as soon as the difficulties are observed, should become standard practice. (Reference Framework for the establishment of IEPs, 2004)

The IEP process embraces the philosophy that educational success has different meanings depending on the abilities and needs of different students.

A Little IEP History....

In 1979, in the publication *The Schools of Quebec: Policy Statement and Plan of Action* (Quebec, Ministère de l'Éducation, The Schools of Quebec: Policy Statement and Plan of Action, 1979), the Minister of Education announced its intention to have our education system provide high-quality education

adapted to the needs of students with diverse needs in the least restrictive learning environment.

In 1988, the Education Act (Education Act, R.S.Q., I-13.3) required school boards to specify their orientations and standards concerning the organization of services for student with diverse needs .



Who Gets Involved

Prior to starting the process, it is important that all partners take the time to identify those students who require an IEP as well as the orientation of the plan.

Each partner has a role to play in the process:

- Administrator's responsibilities: gathering information from the team; setting up the meeting; and requesting additional information from non-teaching professionals
- Teacher's responsibilities: observing student learning and challenges; evaluating the situation; making necessary changes to support learning; evaluating learning following adaptations; contacting parent/guardian; referring student to administrator; requesting Ad Hoc meeting / case conference; and requesting additional information from non-teaching professionals.
- Parent/Guardian's responsibilities: open communication with school team; open conversation with child, when possible; active participant in the process; provide home support for student; keep school team informed of any changes in student's routine.

Considering learning difficulties from a global perspective allows educators to contemplate the interaction of these variables as well as their influence on the development of these difficulties.

Adaptation vs Modification of Level of Instruction

Once it has been decided that a student requires an IEP, the team should determine whether the student requires adaptations or modification to level of instruction.

Students following an adapted curriculum will be able to meet end of cycle outcomes; therefore, this student can be evaluated at the current cycle and year.

Ask yourself: If the student is able to meet the requirements, which types of adaptations are required within the QEP?

Students following a modified level of instruction will not meet the end of cycle outcomes. These students must be evaluated at an appropriate cycle and year using the subject specific and cross-curricular competencies of the QEP as well as broad areas of learning.

Students can be on modified levels of instruction for some competencies and require only adaptations for other competencies.

Ask yourself: If the student cannot meet the end of cycle requirements, to what degree do we need to modify the level of instruction within the QEP and how can we determine the level?



To determine an appropriate level for a student on a modified level of instruction, you can use information from standardized assessment tools, professional reports, observations, formal and informal assessments, competency scales as well as the essential knowledges.

Important! Whether a student is working on an adapted curriculum or a modified level of instruction, the QEP competencies should always be used as the guide for assessment, instruction and evaluation.



The Process

Once the student with diverse needs has been identified and strategies in place are deemed insufficient, an initial ad hoc/case conference should take place. At this point, the partners should discuss the strengths, needs and possible objectives/strategies and accommodations required.

This is a good time to have an in-depth discussion. Following this initial discussion, if the team feels an IEP is necessary, the next step will be the IEP meeting.

Due to time constraints, it is strongly recommended that everyone come to the meeting ready to focus on constructing a plan of action; it might be a good idea to jot down what you feel the student needs to work on, as well as some of the strategies and accommodations

the student might require.

To work efficiently and effectively, the following steps are suggested.

Discuss the student's present level of performance in the areas of concern; decide if student requires adaptations or modification of level of instruction; present any new information pertinent to the discussion; strengths, needs and interests; competencies to be worked on as well as the appropriate level and student's goal for self.

Establish prime areas of focus— competencies and goals; necessary accommodations; any special services necessary; areas of responsibilities and the review date.

Select the competencies linked to the QEP and decide the student's actual level of function-

ing.

Write Goals that describe what the student will accomplish. They should be measurable, functional and meaningful to the student. Strategies are tools used to achieve the goal. Strategies can address delivery of instruction, adaptations and/or modification of level of instruction. Accommodations are environmental supports such as assistive technology, attendant support and exam supports.

Follow-up by keeping a record of meetings and follow-up activities; review key decisions; formalize the plan and share the information with all team members.

Review as needed.



Writing The IEP Using ISM

What information should go into the strengths and needs/concerns box?

Not everything—only those strengths and needs/concerns that can be addressed in school or at home.

What information should go into the home support/additional information box?

This can be information on therapies, involvement of external services, and any home support provided to student. For this section, make sure to communicate with parents. Be careful not to include highly confidential information. The IEP does not go into the red file.

What information goes into the competencies section?

Select the targeted QEP competency (drop-down menu) for your subject area. Please note that a student can be on a modified level of instruction for some competencies and adapted

curriculum for others **WITHIN** the same subject area. Check off modification or adaptation for specified competency.

Cycle

This is the cycle the student is functioning at for that specific competency.

Class/Level

This is the class the student is currently enrolled in.

Goals

Be as specific as possible. The goal must be linked to the specified competency. You can use the essential knowledges in the QEP as your guide.

You can use the drop down menu, however, it is encouraged that you write your own goals; as the teacher, you know what is most important for your student to learn.

Strategies

These are the tools (learning materials

and resources, delivery of instruction) teachers will use in the classroom to support the specified goal. Be as specific as possible.

Accommodations

These are environmental, technology and evaluation supports a student requires in order to succeed. They are important to record in the IEP; when a student gets to high school, he/she can be eligible for exam accommodations.

Here is a link to an article on common accommodations:

http://www.ldonline.org/article/Accommodations_for_Students_with_LD

Here's a link to a good goal bank: <http://www.bridges4kids.org/IEP/iep.goal.bank.pdf>

Getting Parents Involved

According to the MELS IEP framework (2004), all parents/ caregivers are required to be involved in the IEP process for their child. Parents are advocates for their child and contribute valuable information to the IEP regarding their child’s learning style, behavior and social skills.

When school teams have multiple IEP meetings to coordinate, involving parents in the IEP process can be a challenging task. Here are some ideas of how to include parents in the process:

- Regular contact with the parents will help to build a rapport and a sense of trust. Share information with the parents and encourage the parents to do the same.

- Important information regarding the student’s IEP should be given ahead of time. Schools can use parent information forms, question sheets and feedback forms to provide background information and to gather information from parents. (Please ask your special education consultant or administrator for more information).
- Presenting the IEP to parents should be done in person. However, there are a variety of formats in which to present the IEP to parents. Some schools meet with parents on parent teacher nights, while other schools call parents to meetings during or after the school day.

- The “home support” section of the IEP should be information that is provided by parents on: any external social service agencies working with their child; homework support provided; tutoring services; or any other home information that will contribute to their child’s school success. This section can be information gained from parent feedback forms or from meeting with the parent in person.



Writing Goals

The **S.M.A.R.T** approach to writing objectives is an effective framework .

- **Specific:** written clearly
- **Measurable:** allows student progress to be assessed and evaluated, linked back to the competency
- **Achievable:** realistic and attainable for the student and for teachers
- **Relevant:** meaningful and transferrable to “real life”
- **Time-Limited:** can be accomplished in a school year, or in specified time.

Here is an example of a competency, goal, strategy and accommodation for a student:

Competency	Goal	Strategy	Accommodation
To write self-expressive, narrative and information-based texts	To understand writing conventions (sentence structure)	-use of graphic organizers for brainstorming ideas -use of cloze activities -use of sentence starters with familiar structures. -use of word wall and personal dictionary with pictures	-use of assistive technology; Word Q to play back sentences, use of Clicker5 for sentence construction -reduced homework due to fatigue

Editors
Silvia Patella - Special Education Consultant - Pedagogy
 spatella@swlauriersb.qc.ca
Andrea Prupas - Special Education Consultant - Pedagogy
 aprupas@swlauriersb.qc.ca