



# 14

## IEP Development and Implementation

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### Student Learning Outcomes

After completing this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- Identify the required components of an individualized education program (IEP).
- Write appropriate goals and objectives based on assessment data from a student's comprehensive evaluation.
- Develop an effective educational plan designed to meet the educational needs of students receiving special education and related services.
- Understand the importance of collaboration in the development and implementation of the IEP.

### INTRODUCTION: INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAMS FOR EDUCATORS

The individualized education program (IEP) is an active document created for each student receiving services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The initial legislation governing special education in 1975 mandated the creation of the IEP for each student, while each reauthorization honed the requirements to make the IEP more relevant and appropriate to the needs of the student. Some of the current requirements include specific goals and objectives relative to the transition from secondary to postsecondary education, identification of necessary accommodations and modifications for participation on required state and local achievement assessments, and incorporation of related factors to academic success (e.g., behavior, assistive technology, related services). The purpose of the IEP is to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the student; the services, accommodations, and modifications necessary to help the student gain access to and succeed in the general education curriculum; and the type and amount of skills to be gained over the course of the school year. The IEP is used to guide instruction for students with exceptionalities. It is the component of the educational program that ensures compliance with the legal mandate to provide a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment for all students with exceptionalities (Armenta & Beckers, 2006).

In this chapter, the process of creating, presenting, and implementing the IEP is discussed. The assessments used to determine initial and continued eligibility for services are integral in the creation of the IEP. This link is explored in detail in this chapter. The chapter also explains how to collaboratively present the working draft of the IEP in such a way as

to meet the needs of the student while giving all of the team members a voice to provide input into the creation of the document. This chapter also includes ideas to make all team members feel that they have parity in IEP meetings. Finally, implementing the IEP and monitoring instructional progress can be a challenge for teachers. This chapter explains how to implement and monitor an IEP in order to better meet the needs of the students.

## CREATION OF THE INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM

The most important aspect of the IEP is the IEP team. The team typically involves many of the same members of the evaluation team, such as the special educator, parent, related services providers (e.g., speech pathologist, occupational therapist, physical therapist), local education agency (LEA) representative (typically an administrator or special education supervisor), and general educator. Depending on the age and ability of the student, he or she should be included on the team. Other team members may include a social worker, guidance counselor, school psychologist, medical personnel, or other people as appropriate and necessary. Parents as well as the school district are permitted to bring other relevant people to the meeting. Each member of the IEP team has valuable information to contribute to the development of the IEP. Each member should have the opportunity to share his or her knowledge as well as to ask questions throughout the process. The IEP is intended to be the product of a collaborative effort between all of the team members, and each stakeholder (parents, student, teachers) should be encouraged to provide as much input as possible to the document. Figure 14-1 shows the members of the team and their roles.

States use their own versions of the IEP form; however, all of the forms contain information required by IDEA: identifying information, present levels of performance, relevant factors, goals and objectives, related services, accommodations and modifications for both the classroom and state and local assessments, and transition information (as appropriate). Figure 14-2 includes a brief summary of each required section. Much of the information needed for the creation of the IEP can be found in the assessments used to determine initial or continued eligibility; however, other information can be obtained from the parents, the student, the related services providers, the general educator, and other personnel who interact directly with the student. The special educator must collaborate with the other team members in order to use the most accurate information possible to build the most appropriate IEP to meet the student's individual needs. Well-written IEPs take

**FIGURE 14-1** Roles and Responsibilities of the IEP Team Members

Role	Responsibility
Parent	Provide input, discuss concerns, provide consent
General education teacher	Provide knowledge of content and input about needs of students
Special education teacher	Provide knowledge of strategies, interventions, and specially designed instruction; facilitate meeting
Local education agency representative	Provide information about logistics and services, make decisions affecting the building
Related service providers	Discuss goals and objectives specific to related services needed based on present levels of performance
Other people who work with the student	Provide information related to any other educational needs (e.g., related services, counseling, medical services)

**FIGURE 14-2**  
Components of  
the IEP

Component	Description
Identifying information	Student and parent names, addresses, phone numbers, and email addresses; student birth date, grade level, and gender; dates of IEP meeting, next IEP meeting, last evaluation team report (ETR), next ETR
Present levels of performance	Present levels of academic achievement and functional performance, including assessment data from the ETR and anecdotal information from the teachers, student, parents, and others who work with the student
Related factors	Specific areas of needs that must be considered in the IEP, if applicable
Goals and objectives	Intended progress in specific areas (academic and/or behavioral) over the course of the calendar year
Related services	Services in areas such as speech-language therapy, occupational therapy, and physical therapy
Accommodations and modifications	Specific supports needed to provide access to general education
State/district assessment specifications	Identification of areas of participation in state/district or alternate assessment, identification of needed accommodations, and so forth
Transition information (as appropriate)	Alignment with IEP goals, specification of postsecondary education or training, employment, and independent living goals, necessary services, and so forth

time and effort to craft (Capizzi, 2008); they function as the foundation for developing effective instructional strategies to meet the needs of the student. The components of the IEP also function to provide access to the general education curriculum for students with exceptionalities and provide what is necessary for the students to find success once they gain access to that content (Armenta & Beckers, 2006).

### **PRESENT LEVELS OF PERFORMANCE**

The present levels of performance include all aspects of the student's performance relative to academics, behavior, related services, and functional performance. The information used to develop this section comes directly from eligibility assessments, record reviews, and personnel input. Academic performance is measured by informal assessments in the classroom, work samples, formal assessments to measure achievement (state and local assessments as well as standardized assessments used for eligibility and ability), and progress-monitoring assessments conducted by the student's teachers. Behavior performance is measured through standardized assessments; interviews with the student, parents, and relevant teachers; observational records; and a review of disciplinary records for the student. If a functional behavioral assessment has been conducted for the student, information garnered from that evaluation can also be included in the present levels of performance. Related services providers contribute to the present levels of performance based on their specific evaluations. If the student is already receiving these services, observations of the performance in the sessions can also be included. Functional performance information is provided by all who interact regularly with the student and can

incorporate life skills needed for employment and life in the community after graduation from secondary school. Parents are in a good position to observe a student's functional performance in the home environment; however, if the student's classes incorporate life skills or community-based lessons, teachers and other personnel may be able to offer significant contributions in this area as well.

All relevant personnel should collaborate when writing the present levels of performance. Teachers can explain what is happening in the classroom, which assessments have been conducted, and how the student has performed. They can provide concrete examples of what the student can and cannot do. In addition to academic performance, they can explain how the student behaves in class. Student behavior includes actual behavior, attitudes, interactions with peers and authority figures, and reactions to varied situations. Related services providers can discuss the student's performance (if applicable), and parents can offer their input for the present levels of performance.

The present levels of performance for all areas should include several pieces of specific information. First, the name and description of formal assessments should be included. The IEP writer should explain how specific skills were measured; the specific information about the assessments will help special educators know which instruments were used in the past as well as exactly what these instruments measured. Second, the writer should provide both the specific scores from the instruments and relevant examples of strengths and weaknesses. All pertinent information for specific scores should be provided. For example, if a student scores a standard score of 85 on the passage comprehension reading assessment, the writer should also include that the mean score of that specific assessment is 100. The writer should include specific information about the student's strengths and weaknesses. On an assessment that measures phonological skills, the writer should include words that the student was able to successfully read, words read incorrectly, and the actual incorrect answers. This provides information for the special and general educators to use when creating goals and objectives as well as planning instruction for the student.

The present levels of performance should include as many details and be as specific as possible. Sometimes, when a student moves into a new district, it can take time for his or her records to be forwarded, and the IEP is the only information that may be available. The present levels of performance should be written in such a way that a person who does not know the student will be able to get an accurate and complete picture of what the student can and cannot do. Another tip is to organize the present levels by content area; for example, the writer should put all of the information about reading in one paragraph, all of the information about math in another paragraph, and so forth. Because parents sometimes hear more negative comments about their student with exceptionalities, start each section by identifying the strengths of that area before moving into the weaknesses. It lends a much more positive tone to the IEP and helps to foster collaborative relationships.

## **GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

As stated previously, the present levels of performance should be written to be as specific and detailed as possible to provide an accurate and complete picture of the student in order to function as a baseline of student progress (Etscheidt, 2006; Yell & Stecker, 2003). The goals and objectives are developed based on the present levels of performance. Assessment information included in the present levels is essential (Capizzi, 2008). Objectives are useful in monitoring progress toward the achievement of related goals as well as planning lessons to meet the student where he or she is instructionally (Yell & Stecker, 2003). This allows general and special educators to plan instruction to show progress toward the IEP goals.

act	enunciate	match	show
apply	exhibit	multiply	sign
assemble	explain	operate	signal
attend	express	organize	sound out
calculate	find	pair (items)	speak
communicate	identify	prepare	spell
compute	indicate	pronounce	state
count	list	prove	tell
demonstrate	listen	read	use
distinguish	locate	recognize	utilize
divide	manipulate	review	vocalize
employ	make	revise	write

**FIGURE 14-3** Action Words for IEPs

Adapted from Luker and Luker (1997).

There should be a goal and related objectives for each area of need identified in the present levels of performance, based on assessment data. In addition, each goal and objective must be written in such a way that the specific behavior is identifiable and measurable. When they are written correctly, the goals and objectives facilitate instructional planning and progress monitoring that allows teachers to adjust instruction as needed (Yell & Stecker, 2003). The goals and objectives should reflect action words because that ensures the items are measurable. Figure 14-3 includes examples of action words for IEPs.

The first step when writing a set of goals and objectives is to identify the target skill to be accomplished. The target skill is an area of weakness for the student in a particular content area and will be the focus of the goal and objectives. For example, in the content area of reading, you might decide that the student has a particular weakness in reading decoding or phonics that needs to be addressed during the next school year. Phonics would then be the target skill.

Figure 14-4 shows an example of present levels of performance for the area of mathematics. The example indicates the student's strengths relative to mathematics. The

When the Calculation subtest of the Woodcock-Johnson III Test of Achievement was administered as part of the multifaceted evaluation in 2009, Sam obtained a standard score of 83, which is at the 13th percentile and is considered Below Average. Sam's particular strengths were in adding and subtracting up to five-digit numbers with regrouping, using both whole numbers and decimals; however, Sam struggled to complete problems with accuracy. He made many careless errors, particularly on multiplication and division problems. Sam also struggled with basic operations involving fractions. His teacher (Mr. Lopez) reports that Sam is a hard worker and pays attention well but becomes easily frustrated in class. Mr. Lopez observed Sam struggling to complete tasks involving multistep problems (e.g., more than two steps). . . .

*\*Note:* This is an abbreviated example that has been limited to a small area of mathematics for a fictional student in the eighth grade; in a typical present levels summary, additional detail in mathematics reasoning, mathematics fluency, and functional mathematics skills would be provided as well as additional information from the teacher and other assessments.

**FIGURE 14-4** Example of Present Levels of Performance

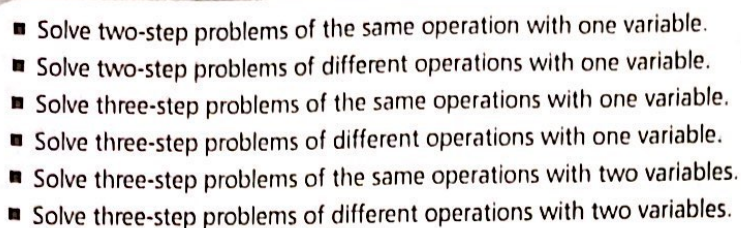
student is successful in the areas of addition and subtraction with regrouping for both whole numbers and decimals. This particular student strength provides a starting point when planning goals and objectives as well as classroom instruction so that the teacher can meet the student where he is performing. The weaknesses have also been identified in the example: accuracy of problem completion, fractions, and multistep problems. Knowing the weaknesses of the student allows the writer to develop goals and objectives that will help the student increase his performance in these areas. The writer will also want to examine grade-level standards for the skills that the student should be able to perform. For purposes of the example being presented, only multistep problems will be used to develop a set of goals and objectives for this student.

The writer should identify a specific behavior as well as the desired direction. Sometimes the team desires a student to decrease behaviors, such as hitting or yelling. Other times, the team desires a student to increase behaviors, such as accurately computing math problems or fluently reading text aloud. For this example, Sam is going to increase his ability to solve multistep problems. The third piece of the goal is to identify the span of the direction. Sam's teacher needs to know his current level of performance and what Sam needs to do to demonstrate goal mastery. In this example, Sam can solve one- and two-step problems but gets frustrated with multistep problems containing more than two steps. The academic standards in the state where Sam lives indicate that students should be able to solve multistep problems with up to two variables by the end of eighth grade. The goal's expected performance level should be written with consideration given to the state standard, the student's current level of performance, and what can be reasonably expected for the student to accomplish in the given amount of time. The expected level of performance in this area for Sam might be to solve multistep problems with up to three steps and including two variables. The goal needs to include criteria for mastery. How many problems does Sam need to solve correctly, and how many trials will he have to demonstrate his performance? Finally, the goal must include the necessary resources that Sam needs in order to accomplish that goal. The IEP writer might use a checklist of steps to help Sam remember the algorithm for solving multistep problems as a resource. The complete goal that includes all the parts might look like this: "Given a checklist to help Sam remember the algorithm to solve multistep problems, Sam will solve three-step problems with two variables with 90% accuracy in four out of five trials by the end of the school year." This goal allows the teacher to see what resources are necessary for instruction, what the target behavior is, what the desired direction of the behavior is, what the present levels of performance are, and what the expected performance level is for Sam. Figure 14-5 summarizes all the parts that need to be included in the goal.

Once the goal has been written, objectives are a good way to articulate the plan from the present levels to the expected levels of performance. In order to develop short-term objectives, one should start with a task analysis of the skill to be taught; in

**FIGURE 14-5**  
Summary of  
Components of  
IEP Goals

Component	Description
Student	Name the student for whom this goal is intended.
Observable behavior	Identify the measurable behavior that the student will do.
Conditions	Identify necessary resources that the student may need.
Outcome	Identify the criteria that will be used to measure student mastery.
Time period	Identify when the student will have mastered the goal.

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- Solve two-step problems of the same operation with one variable.
  - Solve two-step problems of different operations with one variable.
  - Solve three-step problems of the same operations with one variable.
  - Solve three-step problems of different operations with one variable.
  - Solve three-step problems of the same operations with two variables.
  - Solve three-step problems of different operations with two variables.

**FIGURE 14-6**  
Examples of Subskills  
for Solving Multistep  
Problems

this case, the skill is solving multistep problems. Sam can already solve up to two-step problems with one variable; which subskills are between that level and the expected level of three-step problems with two variables? Figure 14-6 provides some example subskills in this area.

Assuming that Sam can already solve two-step operations involving the same operations and one variable, the remaining five subskills can be used as the short-term objectives to help Sam accomplish the goal of solving multistep problems. As with the goal, the objectives must contain criteria that allow the teacher to see exactly what the student needs to do to master the short-term objective, the resources needed for success, and the specific behavior to be measured. The set of objectives should begin at the student's present level of performance. In Sam's case, he can solve two-step equations with the same operations and one variable. The first objective in the set should be relatively close to that skill because he has seen success with it previously. The first objective could be worded: "Given a checklist to help him remember the algorithm to solve multistep problems, Sam will solve at least four out of five two-step problems with the different operations and one variable with 90% accuracy." The remaining objectives could be organized in such an order to indicate the way in which each builds on the others to lead up to the expected performance level. Additional examples of goals and objectives are included in Figure 14-7.

Another way of writing goals is the SMART method. This method is designed to ensure that the goal is Specific, Measureable, uses Action words, is Realistic and relevant, and is Time limited. The goal is considered to be specific when the IEP writer includes descriptions of the knowledge and skill sets to be learned by the student and how the progress will be measured. A measurable goal identifies something that the student will do that is countable. Using action words to describe the direction of behavior and the skill to be performed also increases how measureable the goal is. A goal can be made realistic and relevant by considering the current level of student performance, the amount of time allotted to work on the goal, and the interests of the student. Finally, including a time limit by when the goal and objective should be accomplished allows the teacher to more effectively monitor progress.

Regardless of the method or formula used to write the goals and objectives, the writer should ensure alignment with general education standards for the content areas. The teacher should first identify the needs of the student and then determine appropriate standards that will reflect what the student should be doing at grade level. Using a task analysis procedure, the teacher can then break the standard into component steps and instruct the student in a sequential manner over the course of the school year, with frequent progress monitoring to ensure mastery.

Often the special educator writing the IEP anticipates being the teacher who will work with the student in the coming year (with the exception of those times of transition from one building to another, e.g., from elementary to middle school), but unan-

**FIGURE 14-7**  
Additional Examples  
of IEP Goals and  
Objectives

### Reading

Aiden will decode unfamiliar words using letter-sound matches. (Kindergarten)

1. Aiden will repeat each sound of the letters in a word.
2. Aiden will say each sound of the letters in a word.
3. Aiden will orally blend syllables or onset rimes.
4. Aiden will orally blend individual phonemes.

Sophia will apply self-monitoring strategies to assess understanding of text. (Second grade)

1. Sophia will state or write whether or not a text makes sense.
2. Sophia will state or write whether she needs to look back or read on.

Paulo will apply effective reading comprehension strategies by making predictions. (Seventh grade)

1. Paulo will state or write a prediction from information in the text.
2. Paulo will state or write specific examples from separate sections of the text to support the prediction.

### Writing

Beth will use a variety of editing techniques to improve sentence fluency, grammar, and usage. (First grade)

1. Beth will identify a subject and a verb in a sentence with teacher assistance.
2. Beth will identify a subject and a verb in a sentence independently.
3. Beth will write a complete sentence including a subject and a verb.

Zack will use revision strategies to improve the coherence of ideas with a paragraph. (Fifth grade)

1. Zack will use technology to write a rough draft with teacher-guided activities.
2. Zack will use technology to revise and compose a written assignment independently.

### Mathematics

Emma will use relationships between operations such as subtraction as the inverse of addition and division as the inverse of multiplication. (Third grade)

1. Emma will check answers to subtraction problems through the use of addition.
2. Emma will identify fact families that include the related multiplication and division facts when given two numbers between 0 and 10.

### Behavior

Eli will use words to express the need for a break when feeling frustrated in class. (Third grade)

1. Eli will put a frowning face on the desk when feeling frustrated.
2. Eli will raise his hand when feeling frustrated during independent work.
3. Eli will raise his hand and ask the teacher to take a short break when feeling frustrated in class.

*Note:* These goals and objectives do not include the criteria or condition, which should be individualized to the student's needs. Those pieces are necessary for well-written goals and objectives that are included on IEPs.

anticipated events can arise. The student's family may move to another district, or the student may transfer to another building unexpectedly, and the writer of the IEP is no longer the student's instructor. To prepare for these unexpected events, an IEP writer should write as though he or she will not be the teacher. The writer should include enough detail that a complete stranger could read the present levels and get a complete picture of the strengths and weaknesses of the student. A special educator could read the goals and understand the behavior, the target direction, the present level of performance, and the expected level of performance. A teacher unfamiliar with the student could read the objectives and see the progression from the present level of performance to the expected level and exactly what the student must do to show that the skill has been mastered at each level.

Another tip for writing the IEP is to keep the goals and objectives for the student at a reasonable level. An admirable trait of teachers is to want to create the highest expectations for students; however, any requirements identified in the IEP become the school's legal responsibility (Armenta & Beckers, 2006). The IEP writer should not overreach the expectations to the point where the student only experiences failure and frustration because the expectations are well above what can reasonably be accomplished in the allotted time of the IEP. Teachers need to begin teaching the student at current performance levels and must have an understanding of the student's ability to tolerate frustration. This is particularly important when the student is receiving instruction in inclusive general education classes and the general education teacher is doing most of the implementation of the IEP goals and objectives.

The writer should also consider how the school divides its year. Some schools use a 9-week quarter grading period, whereas others use a 6-week grading period. Other schools use semesters or trimesters to divide their year. The writer should consider these time periods when identifying the time frame for the mastery of the objectives. The goals that are set must be met within the calendar year, but it is easier for progress-monitoring purposes if the objectives have smaller time frames in which they are mastered.

As with the present levels of performance, the team should collaborate when writing the goals and objectives. The general education teachers can explain which skills are expected of typically developing students at that grade level and which skills would be appropriate for the student on an IEP. Also, the student, as appropriate, can indicate what he or she would like to learn. Parents and related services providers can provide input to ensure that goals and objectives are both appropriate and individualized to meet the needs of the students.

As part of developing the goals and objectives section of the IEP, the team can develop a strategic plan that can be used by all of the student's teachers. The plan can be used to tie evidence-based practices and interventions to the goals and objectives of the IEP. This assists the general education teachers to consistently use recommended strategies to facilitate student progress. Lee Ann Jung, Caroline Gomez, Samera Baird, and Cathy Galyon Keramidas (2008) contended that developing IEPs is not sufficient to ensure adequate progress; there must be a connection between the IEP and instruction such as that provided by a strategic intervention plan.

As part of the goals and objectives component, teachers need to identify accommodations and modifications that students will need to support their access to the general education curriculum. Accommodations include varying methods of presenting material and/or methods of student demonstration of understanding. The content that is presented does not change when accommodations are implemented. Modifications do change the content that is presented through the use of strategies such as reducing the complexity of material taught in class or changing the level of expectations for students. Any accommodations needed on the state or district assessments must be identified in the section for goals and objectives as well as in the assessment section.

## ASSESSMENT SECTION

Another critical part of the IEP document is the section that addresses student participation in state and district assessments. This section must identify whether the student is participating in the assessments with or without accommodations or modifications, or participating in an alternate assessment. It also specifies if the student will be excused from consequences associated with these high-stakes assessments. The IEP team identifies the specific accommodations or modifications to be used on each assessment.

Schools have the option of having students receiving special education services participate in state and local assessments or in an alternate assessment. The alternate assessment is associated specifically with the goals and objectives written in the IEP, yet still connect to the state academic standards. The number of scores on these alternate assessments that count toward proficiency is limited to no more than 2% of the total population of students on an IEP in a school (Improving the Academic Achievement of the Disadvantaged, 2003). Individual states may have a more rigorous standard that schools are required to meet.

Students may participate in the state and local assessments with accommodations and modifications. Accommodations and modifications should be provided on an individually needed basis (Gartin & Murdick, 2005); some students will not require these supports to be successful on the assessment. Schools should not have a menu of accommodations and modifications that are mandatorily assigned to all students whether needed or not; accommodations and modifications should only be included on a student's IEP if the team feels they were truly needed by that student. Chapter 13 discusses the types of accommodations and modifications that may be used. When accommodations and modifications are identified in the assessment section of the IEP, those same accommodations and modifications should be listed in the appropriate area by the goals and objectives, indicating that they will be used on classroom assessments as well. If the student requires those accommodations on state and local assessments, they should be necessary for classroom assessment as well (Armenta & Beckers, 2006). This also allows the student to understand how the accommodations and modifications work. For example, if a student requires a calculator on the mathematics section of the state and local assessments, he or she should also be using a calculator on classroom mathematics assessments. If the student does not have practice using the calculator effectively on routine assessments, the accommodation will not be helpful on a high-stakes assessment.

## TRANSITION

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA, 2004) modified the requirements for the transition section of the IEP. Prior to IDEIA, a transition statement was included on the IEP when the student turned 14 years of age, with a full transition plan implemented by the age of 16. IDEIA did not mandate having a transition planning section before the age of 16. It also eliminated the mandate for a transition statement by the age of 14, although some states have chosen to continue using it. IDEIA mandated that a section discussing transition assessment be included in the IEP and addressed as part of the transition planning process. Transition planning should include goals that are specific for postsecondary experiences as well as transition services needed to achieve those goals (West, 2010).

As with the academic goals on the IEP, transition goals must be based on the individual needs of the student as well as his or her present levels of performance. Transition goals must take student interests into account. Open-ended surveys and interviews are valuable tools for gathering data that help develop relevant and appropriate goals. Students who are ready to exit high school must be provided with a statement of performance that summarizes their present levels of academic and functional performance. The

statement is also mandated to have recommendations for how to best assist the student in meeting the postsecondary goals (IDEIA, 2004).

Transition assessments are similar to the instruments used to measure academic and behavioral progress. Transition assessment must be student centered (King, West, Leconte, & Boyer-Stephens, 2010). It must focus on what the student does and does not know, student interests, and student performance. The assessment process must be continuous and ongoing. As stated previous, the IEP is a fluid, working document. Data gathered from frequent assessment allows teachers to see where progress is and is not being made; it permits change to the document as necessary. Transition assessment cannot occur in only one environment (King et al., 2010). The purpose of transition is to prepare students to succeed in environments other than the classroom; thus, it makes sense to assess these skills in environments beyond the classroom as much as possible. As with any kind of assessment, no one team member should be responsible for all of the transition assessment. All team members should be involved in the assessment process, contributing knowledge from their particular area of expertise. Susan King et al. (2010) contended that transition assessment is similar to other types of assessment included in the IEP because both formal and informal methods should be used throughout the process, and the results of the assessment should produce useful and understandable data. Transition assessment is done for the purpose of gathering data to use in the development of transition goals and services; as such, the data must be useable. Someone must be able to interpret the data and determine what the next steps are to help the student. Finally, as with any type of assessment, transition assessment must be sensitive to cultural diversity (King et al., 2010). When instruments are biased, the results are not accurate reflections of the student; transition assessment must take diversity into account and be culturally fair and sensitive.

## **ELECTRONIC INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

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Prior to the IEP meeting, the special educator may choose to write an initial draft of the IEP to share with the team members. This should be done at least 2 weeks prior to the meeting to ensure sufficient time to peruse the draft and contemplate any changes that might be needed. All members of the team should receive the draft copy and be encouraged to bring the copy to the meeting with their changes noted. The initial copy is only a draft copy; the IEP is a fluid and working document. The draft is only created to serve as an initial starting point for the team's discussion. No member of the IEP team should make decisions before the IEP meeting that are considered to be binding. Every member of the team should have an opportunity to contribute, and the document should reflect everyone's voice.

The processes of developing, implementing, monitoring, and modifying IEPs may be time consuming and complex (Serfass & Peterson, 2007; Wilson, Michaels, & Margolis, 2005). Many districts now utilize specialized computer software for writing IEPs to make the process less labor intensive. This technology has many advantages, such as being user friendly for teachers and making the IEP into a working document that can be amended instantaneously. The electronic IEP allows more collaboration from other school personnel during the creation phase and is useful for facilitating electronic IEP meetings using video and/or audio conferencing software. Much of the software attempts to make the drafting process easier for teachers by incorporating a goal and objective bank from which teachers can choose goals and objectives they feel are appropriate. The team should not be limited to what is included in the electronic goal bank; the IEP stands for *individualized* education program, and it is important to keep that individualization a key component of the IEP. It is also important to not get caught up in the idea of a computer "writing" the IEP. There must be oversight to ensure compliance with the law and accurate descriptions of the student; progress-monitoring procedures must be conducted with fidelity (Wilson et al., 2005). Cindy Serfass and Reece Peterson (2007) also recommended

that schools explain where electronic IEP information is housed (on a local server or a server owned by the makers of the IEP program being used). This is important to ensure the confidentiality of the information.

In sum, IEP writers must consider the assessment data for each student. The formal assessments used to determine eligibility as well as informal classroom assessments and work samples should be examined when writing the IEP to gather information for the present levels of performance, goals, and objectives. All components of the IEP are based on the assessment data for each student and should be written to form a textual picture of the student. The components of the IEP must be detailed, complete, specific, and measurable to ensure accurate implementation and monitoring of student progress. The following chapter activity provides additional practice in using assessment data to write present levels of performance, goals, and objectives for an IEP.

### CHAPTER EXERCISE: CREATING AN INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM

The following partial evaluation report for a student was done to determine potential eligibility for special education services. Use the information to develop a paragraph for the present levels of performance section of the IEP as well as an appropriate goal and objective set.

#### EVALUATION REPORT FOR AUTUMN R.

Birth date: 4-24-00

Date of testing: 2-17-11

Current grade: 4

#### A. Intellectual/Cognitive Performance

Weschler Individual Intelligence Scales (WISC): Mean = 100, SD = 15

	IQ Score	Level
Verbal Scale	97	Average
Performance Scale	95	Average
Full Scale	95	Average

#### B. Academic Performance

Woodcock-Johnson III Tests of Achievement (W-J III)

	SS	Level
Broad Reading	73	Below Average
Letter-Word Identification	75	Below Average
Passage Comprehension	70	Below Average
Reading Fluency	71	Below Average

#### Examples:

Letter-Word Identification: Read "august" for *against*; "sign" for *since*.

Passage comprehension: Answered literal questions but not inferential questions; could not retell more than 2-3 details of the passages

#### C. Classroom Information from Teacher

Autumn's comprehension is well developed when someone reads to her; however, when she is asked comprehension questions about passages she has read, she struggles to recall the information. She reads slowly, with hesitations as she attempts to decode each word individually. Autumn's reading skills are not fluent and automatic. Autumn is currently participating in the lowest reading group in class. Although she does an excellent job at following the rules for appropriate participation (e.g., listening while others speak, following teacher instructions, raising her hand to answer questions), she does become quickly frustrated when asked to read aloud. Autumn participates in a supplemental small-group reading intervention class for students who have been identified as struggling readers. She is frequently screened using Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS™). Her average reading fluency score for the first

18 weeks of the school year has been 62 correct words per minute at the fourth-grade level. The DIBELS™ fall benchmark for fourth graders is 93 correct words per minute, so Autumn's score is very low compared to her same-age peers.

#### D. Recommendations for Learning

Autumn would benefit from direct instruction in the area of phonics to assist with her word decoding abilities. Autumn also seems to benefit from having the small-group instruction as it allows her to have more individualized attention; it is recommended that this be continued for her. Autumn may benefit from having reading material on a lower reading level to teach her the skills and strategies she needs to become a more fluent reader. Finally, Autumn may benefit from direct instruction in comprehension strategies such as reading for the main idea, using context clues, and identifying cause and effect.

1. Write a paragraph for the reading present levels of performance using the information from the partial evaluation report.
2. Develop a goal and set of objectives for decoding skills for Autumn based on her needs and recommendations for learning.

### PRESENTING THE INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM

The IEP meeting is held in the presence of the IEP team. Every member of the team must have an equal voice in what is included on the IEP, regardless of whether the special educator has an initial draft of the IEP with which to work or is writing the IEP during the meeting. Andrea Capizzi (2008) stated that team involvement during the IEP development process is necessary in order to create a comprehensive document that best meets all of the needs of the student. The IEP is a fluid document that will guide the student's instruction for a specified amount of time. Every member of the team is allowed to provide input into the document.

There are multiple types of IEP team meetings, each with slightly different purposes. The first type is the initial IEP. In some states, the IEP team uses the initial IEP meeting to determine if the student is eligible for services and then to create an appropriate IEP. Other states require a multidisciplinary team to make the determination of eligibility, with a follow-up meeting with the IEP team scheduled within 30 calendar days to develop the initial IEP. At the initial IEP meeting, the team reviews the information learned from the comprehensive evaluation and works to determine the most appropriate placement as well as the other information required on the IEP. Another type of meeting is the annual review. In this type of IEP meeting, the team convenes to review the progress made on the previous IEP, discuss the present levels of performance, evaluate the placement and instructional components, and develop goals and objectives for the next calendar year. The triennial IEP meeting is required in some states to review results of the triennial evaluation to determine if a student continues to be eligible for services. In these meetings, the team discusses results of the evaluation, determines continued eligibility, and develops the IEP for the next calendar year. In other states, the multidisciplinary team meets to discuss the results of the evaluation, with a follow-up meeting scheduled with the IEP team within 30 calendar days to develop the IEP for the next calendar year. Finally, the IEP team can meet to amend the IEP. This is done if some part of the IEP needs to be changed to be more appropriate for the student to have access to the general education curriculum or to receive additional support in his or her learning.

Sometimes personnel outside of the area of special education and related services do not fully comprehend the importance of the IEP meetings. Therefore, it is especially important to ensure their attendance, their participation, and their understanding of their role in the process. In fact, James Martin, Laura Marshall, and Paul Sale (2004) found that when general educators attended IEP meetings, the participants of the meeting reported an increased level of discussion that related specifically to the strengths and weaknesses

of the student as well as an increased feeling of empowerment in decision making. Participants in the IEP meeting felt more knowledgeable about what was happening and left the meeting feeling positive about the outcomes.

IDEIA (2004) mandated active and full parent participation in the IEP process. Facilitating parent participation can be difficult if the parents are not clear about their role in the process or are not comfortable participating. Schools can work to encourage parent involvement in the process in a number of ways. Wade Fish (2008) recommended creating a welcoming atmosphere in the school. When parents come in for IEP meetings or conferences with teachers, they should be made to feel welcome and valued. Fish also recommended that schools pair up parents with at least one member of the IEP team in a familiar relationship. Allowing the team member and parent to form a relationship may help the parents feel more comfortable participating in the process.

As a special education teacher, you will be in charge of facilitating the IEP meeting. The IEP meeting should start off on a positive note. Conduct the meeting in an environment conducive for productivity. Make sure the table and chairs are of an appropriate height for maximum comfort of the participants, use a room that is spacious enough for several people to fit comfortably, and attempt to limit the number of nonparticipants passing through the area or interrupting the proceedings. Encourage school personnel to sit around the table so that the parents are not on one side, with school personnel on the other. When all team members have arrived at the meeting, welcome them and have them introduce themselves with both name and role (or title as appropriate). Make sure that the purpose of the meeting is stated so that everyone understands why they are there and keeps the student the focus of the meeting. Have an agenda prepared to assist in using time efficiently during the meeting, and always provide a copy of legal rights to the parents.

Make sure every person at the meeting has an opportunity to provide input into the IEP. At the beginning of the meeting, establish the ground rule of being respectful to all participants, and make sure that the rule is followed during the meetings. Encourage the team members to be active listeners and participants. Help the team members understand that they each have valuable information to contribute. If someone has not spoken up in the meeting or has a troubled look on his or her face, ask for the person's thoughts. Also, encourage all members of the team to voice any questions or concerns they may have. Everyone should be comfortable with what is included in the IEP; sometimes people are uncomfortable raising questions. Questions are just as important to IEP meetings as data, observations, and other information.

During the IEP meeting, do not assume that the parents speak the same jargon as school personnel (Fish, 2008). Professionals naturally tend to use acronyms without conscious thought, but such a tendency can make team members who are unfamiliar with the jargon feel uncomfortable. If a person starts to use acronyms, take time to explain the meaning to the other members of the team. The meeting should have a good pace. On one hand, the meeting should not be rushed because the purpose is to craft a comprehensive document to meet the student's needs; on the other hand, do not drag the pace so that time is wasted. Finally, remember that team members do not have to agree on every point. The team should find solutions to dissension that everyone can live with rather than trying to force unanimous agreement.

After discussion is complete and the IEP document has been created to the satisfaction of the team members, the team members sign the appropriate places on the IEP, and the meeting is concluded. Make sure everyone has had a chance to contribute and no one has lingering questions or concerns. Thank everyone for coming to the meeting and for participating in the development of the IEP. Ensure that everyone has contact information in case questions or concerns arise at a later time. If possible, signed copies of the IEP should be disseminated before members of the team leave; otherwise set a date and method by which the copies will be delivered to the stakeholders. Then, consider how to implement the IEP. By law, the IEP should be implemented as soon as possible.

## CASE STUDY

One important job of the special educator is to lead IEP teams. This duty is not just about facilitating the meetings but also about ensuring that all members of the team understand the importance of the role they play as well as why they are part of the team. It includes encouraging active participation from all team members. Consider what happens when a general educator, Mr. Greene, does not feel that his voice is being heard. What are some viable solutions to this situation?

While you are eating lunch in the staff lounge, Mr. Greene approaches you and asks if he can talk to you for a few minutes. You agree, and he tells you that he is not comfortable attending the IEP meeting for Kim (a student in his inclusion English/language arts class) on Tuesday. You ask him why he feels this way, and he opens up to you about his prior experiences on IEP teams:

"Last year I had three students on IEPs in my class. I was excited about having these students in class because they represented a challenge, and I wanted to see how much progress they could make in my class. I was told I would be able to have help from the special educator, Ms. Jeffries, for planning lessons, assessing progress, and solving any problems that might come up. The year started off pretty well because we did some review of instruction from the previous year, but I noticed the three students were already struggling. I tried to give them more personalized attention by using reading and writing workshops and reading circles, but they really had a hard time reading and writing. I asked for some help with strategies I could try but was told to use some small-group instruction, which I was already doing. I did some research on my own and tried to do some other types of instruction, like finding books on a lower reading level, using minilessons to teach specific strategies, and things like that. I tried to keep good notes about what I tried and what worked for each of the students, but it was hard because sometimes things would work for a limited time. Then, I'd be back to square one. In the spring, I got invited to IEP meetings for the three students. I was excited to experience these meetings I had heard about and was ready to share what had been happening in my class. I wasn't sure what to expect, but what I experienced was definitely not what I was expecting. All three meetings were very short, no more than 20 minutes. The IEP was already written, and no one asked me what was happening in my class. No one asked if I thought the goals and objectives were appropriate. I didn't understand everything that was being said because there were a lot of test scores. I felt that if I stopped everything to ask for clarification I would be inconveniencing Ms. Jeffries. I felt kind of bad for the parents because I could tell from the looks on their faces that they were just as confused as I was. Anyhow, I don't think I have much of anything to contribute to the meeting, and I don't really understand why I need to be there. If you need me to sign something, I can do that for you though."

What will you say to help Mr. Greene feel more comfortable about attending the IEP meeting? How can you help Mr. Greene better understand his role on the team?

## PROGRESS MONITORING

Although the development of goals and objectives is important, monitoring the progress of those goals and objectives is equally important. It is so important that Capizzi (2008) contended that teachers and LEAs invite potential litigation if they do not include adequate means of measuring student progress in the IEP. Mitchell Yell and Pam Stecker (2003) argued that determining criteria for evaluation and measurement for progress monitoring is the purpose of the IEP process, but alignment of the assessments, programming, and progress monitoring is often missing from the process. It is important to establish the link

between the assessments administered to the student, the goals and objectives, and instruments used to monitor student progress.

Part of the IEP includes how frequently parents will be notified about the progress their student is making toward the goals listed in the IEP. Because it is included in the IEP, progress monitoring is a legal requirement for schools. The frequency of progress monitoring should be considered carefully when developing the IEP so that it does not become an onerous task for everyone involved. By law, teachers must report progress toward IEP goals and objectives at least as often as parents of typically developing children receive reports on their children's progress. If the school requires midterm and quarterly grade reports, then IEP progress should be reported at minimum at those times. It should also be done in a consistent manner throughout the school year. If a teacher frequently switches methods for monitoring progress, the data obtained through the measures may not accurately reflect the progress that the student has made. Consistency of measurement over the course of the IEP is important. Finally, progress monitoring is applicable to all goals included on the IEP, not just the academic goals. If a student has goals relating to behavior or functional skills, progress must be monitored on those as well as reading, mathematics, and other academic areas.

Yell and Stecker (2003) found that many IEP teams mistakenly assume that only standardized, norm-referenced tests are permitted. Although these formal instruments have their place, progress monitoring is typically not one of the intended purposes. These formal instruments do not provide specific enough data to allow teachers to adjust instruction to help the student make progress toward achieving the goals and objectives. Teachers can use the same type of assessments that are used to monitor other students in the same classroom, such as observations, work samples, curriculum-based measurement, and other informal measures of progress.

Finally, if progress is not being made at a satisfactory level to achieve the specified goals and objectives, then the team must address the issue. Adjusting instruction is the first step. This is typically done by going back to the last point where the student experienced success and providing remedial instruction. Other adjustments may include changing the materials or resources used to teach the skill, changing the pace of the instruction, and breaking the skill into smaller steps. If none of the adjustments change the student's progress, the IEP team may need to reconvene to consider amending the IEP to change the goals and objectives. Whatever steps are taken, proper documentation must outline what was done, why it was done, and the outcome following the changes. This documentation can be beneficial if a similar problem arises at a later time or if questions are raised about student progress.

## LEGAL ISSUES

The IEP is a legal contract between the school and the family. Legal requirements must be met throughout the process of developing, implementing, and monitoring the IEP. Mitchell Yell, Antonis Katsiyannis, Joseph Ryan, Kimberly McDuffie, and Lindsay Mattocks (2008) compiled a list of ways that school districts can ensure compliance with the IDEIA (2004). One of the most important ways to ensure compliance with the law is to guarantee parents a voice throughout the entire IEP process. The inclusion of procedural safeguards in the law allows parents the right to fully participate in the process; these rights are enforceable by courts of law (Yell et al., 2008). Another way to ensure compliance is to hold legally correct IEP meetings. The required members of the team must be full participants throughout the process, and the team must meet annually. If team members cannot attend the meeting, proper procedures should be followed to ensure that they are still able to communicate their knowledge about the student and have input into the development of the IEP. Yell et al. (2008) contended that assessment is a vital piece of the IEP process in

order to establish eligibility for services as well as the actual educational program. Thus, the IEP must use data from assessments to develop appropriate and individualized goals that are relevant to the student's needs. Teachers must also make sure that they are able to monitor student progress continually as the IEP is implemented. Instruction provided in the classroom should link back to the IEP objectives; this is done through progress monitoring and using the data to guide instruction.

The American Federation of Teachers' *American Teacher* publication printed a time line in 2008 that can be used to ensure that no part of the IEP process is omitted (Advance Work for Special Education Meetings Pays Off, 2008). The time line can be found in Figure 14-8 and is a resource for teachers who are new to facilitating the IEP process. It is important to ensure that deadlines are met throughout the process because those deadlines are part of the legal requirements of the IEP.

#### 4-6 WEEKS BEFORE THE MEETING

- Coordinate date, time, and place for the meeting with the team members. The date must be within 30 calendar days of the student being determined eligible for services.
- Gather information from student records, teacher observation, and interviews with parents and other involved personnel.
- Identify and review data for accuracy and level of currency.

#### 2 WEEKS BEFORE THE MEETING

- Gather information and concerns from team members to develop an agenda.
- Remind team members about the day, time, and location of the meeting.
- Confirm attendance of required team members.
- Confirm reservation of appropriate space in which to hold the meeting with any necessary equipment (e.g., computer, printer, projector).
- Prepare and send a draft IEP to the parents and team members.

#### DURING THE MEETING

- Introduce all members of the team and state the purpose of the meeting.
- Review strengths and challenges of the student.
- Identify areas of need that necessitate new goals or services.
- Identify the new goals and objectives.
- Determine the least restrictive environment (LRE) as a team.
- Discuss whether the student would benefit from extended school year (ESY) services.
- Discuss any necessary transition services, including transition from one building to another, one placement to another, or transition into the postsecondary environment.
- Ensure the entire IEP is complete and obtain necessary signatures.

#### AFTER THE MEETING

- Disseminate copies of the signed IEP to team members.
- Maintain official copies of the IEP according to state and district policies.
- Provide follow-up on outstanding issues, questions, or concerns.
- Update student records as needed.
- Implement the IEP as soon as possible.

**FIGURE 14-8** Time Line for Developing and Implementing the IEP

Adapted from Advance Work for Special Education Meetings Pays Off. (2008). *American Teacher*, 92(5), 4.

## THE FUTURE OF THE INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM

As stated previously, the IEP process is very labor intensive and complicated by legal restrictions. The process can end up taking time away from instruction while teachers meet legal requirements. Several modifications to the process are being tested to attempt to alleviate the burden of the process. One such modification is the use of a 3-year IEP. This type of IEP would not be written annually, as is presently required; instead, the document would be written with sufficient goals to be accomplished over the course of a 3-year period. The document is reviewed annually but only modified as necessary. The advantage of this type of IEP is that it would allow teachers to focus more on monitoring progress as opposed to writing the actual document; however, a potential disadvantage is that it might not accurately reflect the growth made by the student over the course of the year.

Another modification is the elimination of the short-term objectives and benchmarks for all students except those taking alternate assessments. The advantage of this modification is that it omits the tremendous amount of work needed to formulate effective, measurable objectives. The IEP team needs to only develop the goals to be accomplished by the end date of the document. The disadvantage to this modification is the elimination of the plan that takes the student from the current level of performance to the expected level of performance. Barbara Gartin and Nikki Murdick (2005) contended that the elimination of short-term objectives diminishes the individualization of the goals. Short-term objectives allow educators to see the process through which the student must travel to go from Point A to Point B. Without that plan, teachers have a difficult time knowing where to go with their instruction to keep it on track, sequential, and effective for each individual student.

### CHAPTER REFLECTION

Think about the IEP process. In the earlier Chapter Exercise, you developed present levels of performance, a goal, and a set of objectives. Now consider how you would monitor Sam's progress in the classroom. Which instruments would you use? How might you use the data to influence instruction? How can you collaborate with the general educator to ensure the instruction that Sam receives is on track to help him master the goals and objectives? How might the results of the progress monitoring be used to develop next year's IEP for Sam?


### CONCLUSION

IEPs have been mandated for every student receiving special education services under federal law since the beginning of formal special education in the United States. In the years since that initial legislation, the link between assessment and the IEP has been greatly emphasized. Data from current student assessment must be used to develop the present levels of performance, goals, and objectives that are the backbone of the IEP. The present levels are then used as the baseline for which progress on the goals and objectives is compared.

All members of the team have a say in the development of the goals and objectives. Each member should have an equal voice in the meeting and should feel welcome and valued. As the facilitator of the meetings, the special educator

has the responsibility to prepare the environment and the team members in such a way that there is maximum productivity and the focus is always on what is best for the student.

Once the IEP has been implemented, the special educator and other team members are responsible for monitoring student progress toward the goals and objectives. Formative and informal assessments are the best tools for progress monitoring because they provide timely and detailed information that allows the teacher to adjust instruction as needed to help students see success in their education. Progress monitoring is not only mandated by law, but it is also important for measuring student success on the goals and objectives in the IEP and developing future IEPs.



## PROGRESS CHECK

Review and answer the following questions; these queries are designed to help provide a self-check of the material and concepts that have been covered in the chapter:

1. Why is the link between assessments done for eligibility and the development of the IEP so important?
2. Identify the components that should be included in IEP goals.

3. What can you do to make IEP team members feel valued in an IEP meeting?
4. Why is progress monitoring an important aspect of the IEP process?

## RESOURCES

One idea to get students more involved in the IEP process is to initiate student-led IEP meetings. The Self-Determination Toolkit from the Center for Human Development ([www.uaa.alaska.edu](http://www.uaa.alaska.edu)) has a collection of resources and information about how to prepare students to lead their own IEP meetings. The National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities website ([www.nichcy.org](http://www.nichcy.org)) provides several pages

to explain an overview of the IEP process, the roles of each member of the IEP team, the contents of the IEP, and frequency and purposes for convening IEP meetings. These pages can be found when a topical search for "IEP" is done on the homepage.