

## Individual Education Plans

The Disability Standards for Education (DSE) recognises that individuals have the right to access public institutions and be served appropriately, with dignity and respect. Inclusion of a student with disabilities requires that reasonable accommodations and adjustments are made so that a student with a disability can access the environment, the curriculum and provisions of the school; and also to be able to associate with other students and develop social connections and relationships with their peers. The I.E.P. (Individual Education Plan) is a meeting and a document which should contain information about these accommodations/adjustments. It should also contain goals for the student which encompass academic, communication, social skills, and mobility and Activities of Daily Living skills. The IEP should also be clear on placement: i.e. where lessons/sessions take place and what supports are put in place. Thus it is a written description of the student's educational program.

The Inclusion policy of the DoE Tasmania states:

- 1. Students with disabilities will attend a school setting which is as close as possible to the norms and patterns of schooling experienced by other students and one that provides the least possible restriction on their right to lead a normal life, while adequately catering for their special needs.**

This is also known as the Least Restrictive Environment or LRE. DoE policy assumes the LRE is the regular classroom setting, but you/others may recognize that no one setting is correct for every child. The policy requires that "to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities . . . are [to be] educated with children who are not disabled, and special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability of a child is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services **cannot** be achieved satisfactorily" (This means that (a) once Individualized Education Program (IEP) goals are agreed to, first consideration must be given to placement in general education, with whatever supplementary aids and services your child needs to succeed; (b) your child's program must be sufficiently personalized for him to achieve each of the goals in his IEP; and (c) your child must be educated in settings or classes that are as typical as possible, and in which he can achieve his IEP goals.

### An Educator's Comments about LRE

"If your child can achieve his IEP goals in a regular class with the daily in-class help of an aide or aids, a special education class would be too restrictive and therefore violate the policy; in contrast, if your child requires the intensity and non-competitiveness of a specialized school for children with disability to

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achieve his IEP goals, placement in a regular class with extra help from an aide/specialist would be too restrictive, as he is unlikely to make adequate progress. Decisions about the appropriate setting or LRE must always be made on the basis of your child's unique needs, the degree to which the setting involves him with children without disabilities, and his ability to make progress in the placement."

**Cost or funding** should not be a factor when putting the IEP together. The planning should always be done before the funding. Once the placement and supports are determined then the school and DoE can look at funding and resources.

### **The I.E.P. Team:**

#### ***Who shares responsibility for IEPs?***

The IEP process is consultative, including the contributions of families, school personnel, the student and other relevant people, such as Special Education Advisors, support teachers and teachers, teacher aides and consultants such as: Learning Services Physical Impairment Service, vision impairment Coordinators; and Autism Consultants, and therapists.

**Principals and the school leadership team** are responsible for management and support of the IEP process.

**Class teachers and support teachers** are collaboratively responsible for implementing the IEP process and developing the IEP document.

**Class teachers** are responsible for the translation of IEP goals into practice including the supervision of teacher aides who may be responsible for implementing some parts of the IEP. Teachers have responsibility for reviewing and documenting progress.

Each year, schools should designate a teaching staff member responsible for coordinating the IEP process. This information should be communicated to families early in Term 1.

**Parents** are key participants, with schools, in determining their child's learning priorities as documented in IEPs. School personnel should consult with families from the initial stages of IEP development so that families can be actively involved in identifying priorities and in updating and reviewing the IEP. Parents may choose different levels of participation and involvement depending upon individual circumstances. Families may choose to include another person as a support for them in their participation in IEP meetings:

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- Parent
- Child/student if appropriate
- Student's teacher
- Support teacher
- Special Education Advisor
- Therapists
- Other parties as deemed appropriate: e.g. State rep for wards of the state; advocate; lawyer; special friend.
- Medical personnel
- Learning services rep

**Include a Profile of the student:**

The IEP should include a profile of the student, including strengths and interests and any other relevant information that the team wants to include.

**Placement:**

Goals and strategies; and supports should be clearly shown in the IEP and it is also a good idea to indicate where the student will be given instruction and support as pertaining to each goal.

- regular class
- small group within regular class
- small group in a different location in the school
- one to one teaching with aide or special Ed teacher
- Special Ed School

**Support:**

- communication device and/or system
- computer
- visual aids
- therapy; SLP; OT; PT; art; music
- sensory aids
- one-to-one instructional aide
- mobility aide
- toileting aide

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**Positioning: This is an often missed but vital part of planning. It affects learning, social interaction, attention, comfort and access:**

- student's location in class
- location of aide
- location for different sessions/lessons
- seating requirements
- mobility and access
- other considerations for positioning: lighting; noise; temperature; space

**Services:**

- medical (e.g. Epilepsy plan, asthma plan etc)
- social work/counselling
- school psychologist assessment/counselling

**Transition plan:**

- into school
- from one grade to the next
- micro transition if needed between classes, sessions; into and back from recess
- from primary to high school
- to college
- from college

**Goals:**

**All** IEPs must include *Present Levels* of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance that describe what your child knows and is able to do (or not do). These should be clear before new goals are set, or current goals maintained. All goals:

- must be appropriate
- must be measurable
- must relate to curriculum for grade
- Follow the **S.M.A.R.T** guide: (this is an example of a way to do realistic goal setting. There are other ways that can be considered, but these are important elements to consider).
  - S. specific:** is there a gap in skills that can be learned? How will the student learn/receive instruction in the skill/s?
  - M. measurable:** the student can demonstrate that learning of the skill or part of the skill has occurred.

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**A.** use action words e.g. Jane will use her computer to answer 5 worksheet questions on the subject topic 3 x per week. (Will she need 1:1 assistance for this?)

**R.** realistic: does a goal need to be broken down into short term objectives?

**T.** time-limited: as above; can be by next review, or by term 2 etc.

**Be collaborative:**

Planning for (your) child's education requires collaboration with all the important people who have influence over and contribute to (your) child's education.

Collaboration involves sharing information, knowledge and skills. It does not mean everyone will always agree, but when diverse opinions are raised, it is important to respect them and discuss reasons. Opinions should be evidenced based wherever possible.

Collaboration also means that the overall goals of the team are agreed to. It also means that team members are committed to the goal/s and are prepared to be accountable for working towards the goals.

**Tips:**

- start an IEP Binder, with clearly labelled sections
- include:
  1. evaluations/assessments
  2. student's work samples
  3. notes from teacher/other staff
  4. correspondence between you and school
  5. past IEP's
  6. meeting notes/or IEP Journal.
  7. Medical records
  8. Special Ed contacts

**Prepare an IEP Blueprint:**

- Define your child's needs.
- Classroom setting and peer needs
- Teacher and staff needs
- Curricula and teaching methodology
- Identified programs
- Goals
- Classroom environment and other features
- Involvement in general curriculum

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**Keep tabs on your child's progress:**

- Goals should be clear and measurable, and as the IEP is a working document, team members should refer to the IEP regularly and indicate gains or struggles, and especially identify barriers early e.g.: communication device not working; wheelchair awkward to manoeuvre in classroom.

**Signing the IEP:**

- When you sign the IEP you are signing that you agree with what it contains.
- A DoE representative should also sign the IEP. This also indicates agreement with the IEP and a responsibility to be accountable to agreed upon actions and outcomes.
- It is possible that if you do not agree with all of the IEP, you can make this clear when you sign. (E.G. you could sign that you agree with the IEP except for goals 2 and 5)  
You can add an addendum page to clearly state why you disagree and what you prefer on the I.E.P.
- If review of the IEP is annual or Bi-annual, ask if you can meet more often with the teacher or support teacher to monitor goals and objectives.