



# The Why's, What's and How's of the IEP

## Understanding and using the Individual Education Plan

So, your student is getting an IEP... Now what? What does that mean for them at school? How will it affect their daily education, their assessment and their report cards? What does it mean for them going forward? How can you, as a parent, help to make sure their IEP meets their needs?

### What is an IEP?

*IEP stands for Individual Education Plan. Simply, it is a document that outlines your child's specific strengths and needs, and what the teachers and school will do to support their learning in the classroom and during assessments. It may also include specific learning goals that your child is working on.*

## IEP Tips for Parents

### \* Talk to the teacher about IEP goals

A year is a long time in the life of a child and their development. At the beginning of each year, have a conversation with your child's classroom teacher (face-to-face, if possible). They will have the most contact with your child and will usually be responsible for following the IEP. Talk honestly with them about your child's strengths and interest, and about what you see at home.

### \* Read the IEP carefully

The IEP will come home no more than 30 days from when your child starts getting support, as well as with each report card. Read it carefully to make sure it matches what you have discussed. The IEP is a working document, which means it can be changed and updated throughout the year if needed. Depending on your child's program, some expectations may be reported on in the IEP instead of in the report card.

### \* Ask your child about their learning day

Classrooms are busy places, and teachers can have a number of students with IEPs. Be sure to check in with your child about how they are being supported in the classroom, and make sure it matches what is in their IEP. Are they being withdrawn by a support teacher, or supported in the classroom? If they are supposed to have access to technology for writing, is it available to them? If possible, teach your child about what they need to learn their best, and remind them to ask for accommodations like a quiet workspace, scribing or extra time.

### \* Ask questions

If you don't understand something about your child's IEP, how they are being supported, or how they are meeting their goals, don't be afraid to ask! Short forms, teaching language and IEP format can be confusing, and teachers are usually happy to help you understand exactly what the IEP means for your child. Initial meetings with lots of school personnel can be overwhelming and time-crunched, but you have the right to understand exactly what is happening with your child and their IEP. Don't be afraid to speak up and ask!

## ***Learning Styles May Help***

Schooling is designed in such a way that it supports students who are linguistic and logical-mathematical learners, but other learning styles are often less-recognized, particularly as students move into upper grades. Knowledge of your child's learning style may help them, you and their teacher identify ways to help them connect with tasks. Dr. Howard Gardner (1983), a well-known professor at Harvard University, identified 8 broad types of intelligences:

- ◆ **Linguistic intelligence** ("word smart"):
- ◆ **Spatial intelligence** ("picture smart")
- ◆ **Bodily-Kinesthetic intelligence** ("body smart")
- ◆ **Logical-mathematical intelligence** ("number/reasoning smart")
- ◆ **Musical intelligence** ("music smart")
- ◆ **Interpersonal intelligence** ("people smart")
- ◆ **Intrapersonal intelligence** ("self smart")
- ◆ **Naturalist intelligence** ("nature smart")

## ***Helpful Websites***

**The Peel District School Board's Special Education Page** - [www.peelschools.org/speced](http://www.peelschools.org/speced)

\* Specific information about how and why IEPs are created in the PDSB

**People for Education** - <http://www.peopleforeducation.ca/>

\*An independent organization that supports public schools in Ontario, they have tip sheets and information for parents available in 15 different languages

**Special Education Advisor** – [www.specialeducationadvisor.com](http://www.specialeducationadvisor.com)

\* Although this is an American site, it is a great website with articles and information about special education and IEP's.

**The Ontario Ministry of Education** - <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/speced.html>

\*Information about special education policies, funding and regulations in Ontario

## **TRY THIS MONDAY...**

### **“The One Best Thing”**

First chance you get to see your child after school each day, ask them what the one best thing about their day was. It can be anything, from “Amala played with me at recess”, to “I learned a trick for how to multiply by nine” to “My teacher said my story was amazing”. It gets them really thinking about their day, teaches them to focus on the positives, and often, “one best thing” turns into many!

*This tip sheet was originally prepared by Emily Hastings-Speck, M.Ed. & Special Education Specialist.*