

Section 2 – Services and Supports

Individual Education Plan Overview State Board Rule 160-4-7-.06

An Individualized Education Plan (IEP) must be developed for every disabled student who is or will be receiving special education services. This IEP becomes the important document that ensures the special education student is provided appropriate educational services based on his/her special needs. The IEP serves as the framework for determining the meaning of the term “free appropriate public education” in the least restrictive environment. IEPs must be developed and reviewed at least annually. IEPs may be reviewed more frequently if requested by parents or any other member of the IEP team. IEPs must not expire for students who continue to meet eligibility requirements. The IEP document ensures that the school system will provide the special education services and supports as well as related services outlined in the IEP. The IEP is a living document that should change with the needs of the student. Changes should be recorded in the form of an amendment to the IEP.

When developing an IEP for the first time or for annual reviews, the parents/guardians are notified of the proposed date, time and location of each IEP meeting in order to give them sufficient time to make arrangements to attend or to contact the school to reschedule the meeting. The parents are sent written notice on the Meeting Notification Form regarding the meeting date and time. The notification of meeting form can be found on Infinite Campus. The school system must give the parents every opportunity for a convenient, mutually agreed upon meeting time as well as the option to reschedule so that the parents may attend.

An Individual Education Plan (IEP) is required for each student who is served in the Special Education Program and is reviewed at least annually. The IEP is developed to meet the special needs of the student as identified by the assessments, observations, and other data collected during the referral/eligibility process. The IEP is developed after the student is determined eligible for services. In the case of a child with a disability aged three through five, an IEP or IFSP (Individual Family Service Plan) shall be in place. If the IFSP is utilized, it will be consistent with the Georgia rule for IEPs, and agreed to by the school system and the child’s parents. Towns County Schools provides to the child’s parents a detailed explanation of the differences between an IFSP and an IEP and if the parents choose an IFSP.

The IEP Team Meeting provides an opportunity for all stakeholders involved in the education of the student to meet to determine eligibility as well as discuss appropriate options to meet the individual educational needs of that student. Required members of the IEP Team include the general education teacher, the special education teacher, a representative from the school system (Local Educational Agency), and the parents (unless they indicate the meeting should proceed without their presence). Other people may be invited to the team meeting at the request of the school and/or parents (such as related services providers, counselors, the school psychologist, etc.) The student, as appropriate is invited to his/her IEP meeting at any time. Student participation in IEP development is encouraged. Towns County Schools participates in the ***Active Student Participation Inspires Real Engagement*** (ASPIRE) program. Students work

with case managers to become actively engaged in the development of the IEP in a variety of ways as appropriate for each individual student.

If the student does not meet eligibility for a special education program, regular education options are discussed, and the student is referred back to the Student Support Team for follow-up and continuing interventions, as needed. If the Placement Committee recommends that a student be placed in any special education program, a Parental Consent for Placement will be signed before services are initiated. A variety of efforts should be made to ensure parental participation in both the eligibility and the IEP meeting. In addition to the aforementioned written notice, a variety of methods of communication should be used. If a case manager is unable to make contact with a parent after multiple and varied attempts, he or she should notify the Director of Special Education for assistance. If a parent states that he or she will attend a meeting but does not arrive, the meeting should be rescheduled. Meetings should be scheduled enough in advance to allow for possible cancellations, etc. All rescheduled meetings should fall within the appropriate timeline. If after all attempts have failed and multiple meetings have been attempted (minimum of three) without success, the case manager will send the parent a copy of the eligibility report, the IEP, psychological report, parental rights and Consent for Placement form by mail for review and signature, following up with a telephone call to ensure understanding. If the parent did not attend the IEP meeting where eligibility and placement were decided, the date for initiation of services must be at least 10 days from the date of the IEP meeting in order to allow proper notice and opportunity for the parent(s) to respond (assuming the parent agrees to the placement and signs the Consent for Placement form).

Annual Review: Overview/Procedures

The IEP must be reviewed annually. Procedures for initiating the Annual Review are the same as the process for creating the original IEP:

- The student's Case Manager will send a Notice of IEP Meeting to the parents at least ten days prior to the projected review date. The projected review date must occur before the end date of the current IEP, so case managers are encouraged to begin working with parents to arrange a mutually-agreed upon date well before the ending date. All required attendees are invited, along with other stakeholders invited by the parent or the school. The parents will be given the names in writing of all members invited to the Annual Review.
- At the Annual Review meeting, the current IEP, including mastery/progress toward goals/objectives is reviewed by the committee and a new IEP is developed based on the student's Present Level of Performance.

NOTE: The *Parental Consent for Placement* is required to be signed only once, at the time of the initial placement, even though the program or location of program may change. Essential steps in the IEP process:

Steps in the IEP Process:

Step 1 – Referral

Referral is made after Pyramid of Interventions / Response to Intervention (RTI) and Student Support Team (SST). A referral is a formal request for professional assistance in the evaluation of a student's needs. Referrals may also come from other sources such as a parental referral. (See guidance related to referrals). The referral decision is reached through a process of identifying and verifying concerns about the student from many different sources. The RTI team decides whether or not to refer a student for further evaluation. (See guidance related to the initial referral process for more detailed information)

Step 2 - Pre-Evaluation

Immediately after a referral is made, all available information relative to the suspected disability, including information from the parent and information about the interventions that have been attempted within the regular class, should be collected. See guidance in previous sections regarding setting up a meeting to discuss this content. The team will discuss whether or not appropriate intervention strategies have been provided. Parents and other team members will make a decision about the next steps. All relevant information must be considered before determining whether additional data, such as medical information or evaluation results, are needed. This decision cannot be made by an individual teacher or administrator but must be made by a team. If the decision is to conduct an evaluation, school personnel must obtain informed written consent from the parent before proceeding with the evaluation. If the team determines that an evaluation is not warranted, prior written notice must also be given to the parent. The notice must include the basis for the determination and an explanation of the process followed to reach the decision. If the LEA refuses to evaluate or if the parent refuses to give consent to evaluate, the opposing party may request a due process hearing.

Step 3 – Evaluation

Referral information and appropriate involvement of the child's team lead to the identification of specific areas to be included in the evaluation. All areas of a suspected disability must be evaluated. In addition to determine the existence of a disability, the evaluation should also focus on the identification of the child's special education and related service needs.

Step 4 - Eligibility Determination

The determination of eligibility for special education services is two-pronged. After the completion of the evaluation, the IEP team meets to determine whether the evaluation results indicate the existence of a disability and whether the child needs special education.

Step 5 - Development of IEP

Special education services are determined by the Individualized Education Program (IEP) Team which meets to develop a unique plan for each child. The IEP should focus on educational

needs/skills that cannot be met in the general education program. Goals and objectives in the IEP are based on the strengths and needs of the child, concerns of the parent(s), and results of the initial or most recent evaluation of the child, as appropriate. The IEP team is prescribed by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and must include the following:

- The parents of the child.
- Not less than one regular education teacher of the child.
- Not less than one special education teacher of the child.
- A representative from school administration (principal, assistant principal, special education director) who is qualified to provide or supervise the provision of specially designed instruction to meet the unique needs of children with disabilities, is knowledgeable about the general education curriculum, and is knowledgeable about the availability of resources of the school system.
- Related service personnel if appropriate.
- The child with a disability if appropriate.

Notice of IEP Meeting

The parent must be notified of the proposed date, time, and location of an IEP meeting to give him or her sufficient time to make arrangements to attend or to contact the school to reschedule the meeting. This notice should include the purpose of the meeting (including transition, if appropriate); the proposed date, time, and location of the meeting; as well as the positions of the people who will be invited or have been invited to attend. The IEP meeting should be scheduled for a time, date, and location that is mutually agreeable to the parent and the school. The parent may request to reschedule the IEP meeting or to participate by telephone or videoconference if they are not able to attend.

Special Parent Requirements

In the event that a parent requires a translator or interpreter, it is the responsibility of the school and special education office to ensure that an appropriate adult is available to serve in that capacity.

Excusal from the Meeting

Two circumstances may allow a required member of the IEP team to be excused:

- When an IEP team member's area of curriculum or related services is NOT being changed or discussed at that IEP meeting, the parent and school personnel may agree to excuse an IEP team member from all or part of a meeting if the parent consents, in writing, to this excusal.
- When the IEP team member's area of curriculum or related services is being discussed at the meeting, the parent and school personnel may excuse an IEP team member from all or part of a meeting if the parent consents, in writing, to the excusal and the excused person submits relevant, written input to the IEP team prior to the meeting.

- Please note that excusals from a meeting should be used sparingly. Parents may choose not to agree to an excusal and the meeting should be rescheduled. Consider an excusal only when unexpected circumstances arise to necessitate it.

Step 6 - Implementation of IEP

The LEA is responsible for obtaining parental consent for placement if all agree that the child is eligible to receive services. This consent must be given prior to placement and implementation of the initial IEP. The written IEP reflects the beginning and end dates for the goals and objectives agreed upon by the IEP team.

Step 7 - Annual Review

The student's IEP team must review the IEP at least annually. Review of the child's IEP and the goals and objectives therein may be requested at any time by any member of the IEP team.

Components of the IEP

Please be sure to complete the following information:

- Type of Meeting (Annual Review, Amendment, etc.)
- Meeting Date
- Implementation Date
- IEP End Date
- Most Recent Eligibility Date
- Home/Service School
- Primary Exceptionality
- Eligibility Date
- Re-Evaluation Date
- ALL Demographic Information for student/parent

Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance

The present levels of academic achievement and functional performance section establishes the starting point or baseline that is used to develop the entire IEP. It includes a description of the child's current academic, developmental, and/or functional strengths and needs; results of the initial or most recent evaluation; the results of district or statewide assessments; an explanation of how the disability affects the child's participation in the general education curriculum; any concerns of the parent; and, for preschool children, the impact of the disability on participation in age-appropriate activities.

The remainder of the IEP, including goals and objectives, accommodations, transition services, and placement decisions, should be directly linked to the information contained in the present levels of academic achievement and functional performance, which include the following:

- The results of the initial or most recent evaluation of the child: This should include a summary of the relevant information from the child's evaluation (not just a listing of

scores). This section does not have to include only formal evaluation measures performed on a child. It can include additional formative and summative assessments used for instructional purposes. Best practice is to include information from most recent psychological including processing strengths and weaknesses.

- The results of district or statewide assessments: This information must include test scores and must indicate whether the child did not meet, met, or exceeded standards. This should also provide a frame of reference for how the child is performing in comparison to same age peers. In addition, IEPs should include the strengths and weaknesses as indicated by the domains of the subtests.
- A description of academic, developmental, and/or functional strengths and needs: Areas of strength may refer to academic subjects such as reading, language arts, math, etc.; developmental areas such as communication, motor, cognitive, social/emotional, etc.; functional areas such as self-care, social skills, daily living, communication, social/emotional, etc. This area should describe SPECIFIC SKILL needs/deficits that impact achievement and must be addressed through the IEP goals and/or objectives or through accommodations.
- Parental concerns regarding the child's education: What is written should be the result of ongoing communication with the parent regarding the child's academics, behavior, performance on goals, and/or future plans. Even if the parent does not attend the meeting or does not provide input at the time of the meeting, this information should be drawn from communication that has occurred over the previous school year.
- Impact of the disability on involvement and progress in the general education curriculum: This section should describe individual characteristics of the child's disability that affect his or her classroom performance. Examples of specific characteristics for a specific learning disability may include short term memory problems, poor organizational skills, and auditory processing problems, etc. This section must indicate how classroom instruction is impacted by the specific characteristics or deficits of the disability. Merely stating the student's eligibility category does not adequately describe the impact on involvement and progress in the general education curriculum. Statements should reflect individual needs and not be applicable to a large group of students.

Consideration of Special Factors

Consideration of special factors must be documented in the IEP by checking Yes or No. The factors to consider are behavior, limited English proficiency, visual impairments, communication needs, assistive technology, and alternative format for instructional materials. If needs are determined in any of these areas, the IEP must include a description of the supports and/or services that will be provided to the child.

TRANSITION

Transition involves the steps that are taken to support the child's purposeful and organized move from one program to another.

Early Childhood Transition (Babies Can't Wait)

Transition from Early Childhood Intervention (Part C) services is facilitated through a transition conference to assist families in moving from one system of services to another in a smooth and timely manner. The purpose of the transition conference is to:

- facilitate discussion among the family, current service providers and potential service providers regarding the child's present and future individual needs
- engage in planning, including identification and documentation, regarding specific actions that will be necessary to assist the child in accessing future services
- provide ample time to allow action plans to be completed, including the development of an IEP, when applicable, by the child's third birthday.

Secondary Transition

For special education purposes, transition is the change from secondary education to postsecondary programs, work, and independent living. Transition services aid students in this process through a coordinated set of activities that are designed within a results-oriented process, which promotes movement from school to post-school activities including: measurable post-secondary goals in:

- postsecondary education/training
- employment
- independent or supported living
- community involvement
- based upon the individual student's strengths, preferences, and interests
- includes instruction, related services, community experiences, employment and/or adult living objectives and, when appropriate, daily living skills
- objectives and functional vocational evaluation

The IDEA requires that students be offered an opportunity to be a part of the IEP Team when secondary transition services are initiated, at age 16, or younger if determined appropriate by the IEP Team. It is critical to remember that unless the student's ideas and interests are captured and included, transition plans may not be as valued by the student. The successful transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school environments should be a priority of every IEP team. The purpose of a Transition Service Plan is to assist students in building the skills and supports they need to reach their post-school goals. Transition requires support from multiple sources so the student and his or her family can make choices, develop connections, and access services. Beginning not later than the IEP to be in effect when the student begins ninth grade or turns 16, or younger if determined appropriate by the IEP team, and updated annually thereafter, the IEP must include:

- appropriate measurable postsecondary goals based upon age-appropriate transition assessments related to training, education, employment, and where appropriate, independent living skills; and

- transition services (including courses of study) needed to assist the child in reaching those goals. A course of study should focus on instructional and educational classes and experiences that will assist the student in preparing for transition from secondary education to postsecondary life. This should relate directly to the student's postsecondary outcome goals and should show how a planned course of study is linked to these goals. The course of study should be meaningful to the student's future and should motivate the student to reach successful post-school outcomes.

Desired Measurable Postsecondary Outcome/Completion Goals should be measurable and related to what the student wants to achieve after graduation. They should be "major life accomplishments" or "completion goals." Goals should be written in the areas of education/training, employment, and independent living (if appropriate). They should be clear and understandable, positively stated, and based on academic achievement and functional performance. They must be based on age-appropriate assessments and must be practical and relevant to transition needs. Outcome/completion goals can change and become more refined as the student has more experience and gets closer to graduation.

Preferences, Strengths, Interests, and Course of Study Based on Present Levels of Performance and Age-appropriate Transition Assessments should provide an assessment of the skills and interests related to education, employment, training, and independent living skills (as appropriate) and should be conducted in conjunction with the development of the transition components. The initial transition assessment may be prior to the eighth grade and could occur when a reevaluation consideration is conducted. It should also be ongoing and fluid. Assessment tools that clearly describe a student's strengths and weaknesses and document a student's interests and perceptions about their skills should be utilized. Surveys and interviews work well for this type of assessment

Measurable Transition IEP Goals are based on age-appropriate transition assessment, including transition activities and services appropriate to attain the postsecondary outcome/completion goals. This section should include measurable transition IEP goals that directly relate to the how, when, where, and what answers that are needed to complete each postsecondary outcome/completion goal. These goals should be relevant to "how to get to" the desired postsecondary outcomes. They must be meaningful. This section is divided into the following areas: education/training, development of employment, community participation, adult living skills and post-school options, related services, and daily living skills (as appropriate). At least one measurable transition IEP goal must be determined for education/training and development of employment. Measurable transition goals for independent living should be addressed if appropriate.

Transition Activities and Services should address the transition activities and services that are needed to attain these measurable goals. Transition activities and services should be planned as the "what is needed to achieve these goals." Many activities and services should be planned and implemented for each goal.

Persons and Agency Involved should include those who will help the student achieve the goals stated. Documentation that these persons were invited to the Transition IEP meeting and that the parent and student (if over 18) were notified of their possible attendance must be kept. (If a necessary, participating agency does not attend; you should document other actions for agency linkages.)

Date of Completion and Achieved Outcome should state the date completed and specify what was achieved. If the student does not attend the IEP meeting, the district must take other steps, including verbal and written input, to ensure that the student's preferences and interests are considered before developing the transition aspects of the IEP.

Transfer of Rights at 18 Years of Age

At the IEP meeting before the student turns 18, a statement that the student has been informed of his or her rights that will transfer to the student upon reaching the age of 18 must be included in the IEP. The IEP should also document, at age 18, that the rights have been transferred. Once the rights have transferred to the student at age 18, the district must provide any notice required to both the child and the parent. All of the rights given to the parent transfer to the student.

The Summary of Performance (SOP) & Exit for Age 21

For a student whose eligibility terminates due to graduation with a *regular* diploma or to exceeding the age requirements, the district must provide the student with a summary of his or her academic achievements and functional performance, including recommendations on how to assist the student in meeting the student's postsecondary goals. Although not required, it is good practice to provide the SOP for students who graduate with a certificate of attendance or a special education diploma as well. The purpose of the SOP is to provide strategies for successful transition with needed supports. The SOP and directions for completing the SOP are available on the GaDOE Special Education web page. If a student is receiving special education services upon reaching age 22, Towns County Schools will serve the student until the end of the semester in which the student turns 22. Towns County Schools will stop providing services on the date of the 22nd birthday or the last school day prior to the birthdate if the birthday falls during the summer. It is the goal of Towns County Schools to secure the successful transition of students to their desired post-school outcomes and will collaborate to complete that transition by age 22. The adult student and parents will be notified that no individual entitlement to FAPE or other rights under IDEA are afforded the adult student after age 22.

Measurable Annual Goals/Short Term Objectives

IEP goals are written to address an individual student's skill deficits in order to enable that student to make progress in grade level standards. All students are expected to be working toward grade level standards, so it is not necessary to list those standards in the IEP. The goals should address the skill needs described in the present levels of academic achievement and functional performance that will enable the child to progress in the grade level standards-based

curriculum. The goals should be written in measurable form and should describe what the student can be reasonably expected to accomplish within one school year.

- Example: The student is not making progress in the general education curriculum because of his inability to follow directions from the teacher, and he often completes assignments incorrectly.
- Goal: The student will comply with oral directions the first time given by the teacher by listening, clarifying, and verbally agreeing to do as asked 4 out of 5 times for three consecutive weeks.
- ***Short term objectives or benchmarks are not required for all students. Only those students who participate in the GAA are required to have either benchmarks or short term objectives. However, it is recommended that short term objectives or benchmarks for all students be considered.***
- At times a parent may request short term objectives for a particular area of the IEP even though they may not be required. Therefore, school personnel and the parent should work together to reach an agreement about short term objectives as appropriate.

Student Supports

Student supports consist of accommodations for instruction and testing, supplemental aids and services, and/or supports for district personnel. These may be provided to assist students in advancing toward attaining annual goals, in being involved and making progress in the general curriculum, and/or in being educated and participating with other nondisabled students. Instructional accommodations may include how instruction is provided, how the child is expected to respond instructionally, how the child participates in classroom activities and the kinds of instructional materials used. Accommodations provide children with disabilities a variety of ways to access the Georgia Performance Standards so that their disabilities are not barriers to achievement. Children with accommodations are still expected to meet the same grade level standards as their peers without disabilities. For example, a student might listen to portions of a text on tape rather than reading it, answer questions orally or use a computer keyboard instead of writing with a pencil, use large print text books, watch video with captions, or participate in a discussion in a biology class with a sign language interpreter.

Accommodations should provide access to or promote skill growth, and some accommodations may be used instructionally that will not necessarily be used for assessment. Appropriateness and efficacy of accommodations should be evaluated on an ongoing basis. Accommodations should not be confused with differentiated instruction.

Classroom testing accommodations should be individualized, determined by subject area, and be as specific as possible. For example, if a student may require additional time to complete tests, it is recommended that the amount of time is specified such as, "50% more time." Other examples of testing accommodations are the use of a text reader or calculator, special seating, etc. Testing accommodations should only be recommended if they are also the student's instructional accommodations, and some instructional accommodations may not be appropriate for testing.

Supplemental aids and services should include supports that are provided in general education classes or other education-related settings to enable students with disabilities to be educated with nondisabled students to the maximum extent appropriate. Examples include tutoring, adult assistance, note-taking, peer helper, pre-teaching/re-teaching or reinforcing concepts, behavior intervention plan, point sheet, assigned seating, etc. Some accommodations used for instruction may also be considered a supplemental aid and service.

All special education case managers should read and become familiar with the GADOE's annual accommodations manual. This manual provides a list of both standard and conditional state assessment accommodations. The manual also provides guidance on how to choose appropriate accommodations to meet the needs of students with particular issues. Accommodations are changes in the administration of an assessment in terms of how the student takes or responds to the assessment. Categories of accommodations include presentation (adjusts the presentation of test material and/or test directions), response (adjusts the manner in which students respond to or answer test questions), setting (adjusts the place in which the testing normally occurs), and scheduling (adjusts the time allowance or scheduling of a test). Accommodations do not reduce learning expectations. They are designed to provide equity and not an advantage for test taking. Some accommodations used in the classroom for instruction may not be appropriate for state mandated assessments. It is critical to use the GADOE accommodations manual as a guide to be sure accommodations are being listed appropriately in the IEP. Consider carefully the criteria necessary to be eligible for a conditional accommodation which is to be used sparingly with only 3% of the population of assessed students being the maximum amount of conditional accommodations that should be given. Work closely with your department to determine which students meet this criteria if you have a particular recommendation regarding a conditional accommodation. Three groups of students are eligible for state mandated testing accommodations: students with an IEP, students with a Section 504 plan (also known as students with an Individual Accommodation Plan or IAP), and English Language Learners with a Test Participation Plan. The accommodation manual discussed for these purposes does not include accommodations for Section 504 or EL students. For information about appropriate accommodations for EL students, the GADOE Student Assessment Handbook is available for review on the GADOE website.

Consider the difference between accommodations and modifications. Accommodations do not reduce learning expectations. They provide access. Modifications do alter or reduce learning expectations. An example of a modification would be to alter the expectation of grade level standards by requiring fewer objectives, leaving out units or lessons that are in the state standards.

Monitor the use of classroom accommodations to see what affect the accommodations are having on the student's learning. Are the same classroom accommodations appropriate or would a change be appropriate? Experiment with the outcome of using accommodations vs not using the same accommodations in order to document the difference. If the team is considering a new accommodation, experiment in the classroom with the results of this accommodation to see if it has the desired effect. Always consider the student's willingness to receive the accommodation.

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

Supports for district personnel should be included when training or other supports are being provided to district staff regarding a specific student's need. Examples may include training on an assistive technology device, a workshop on a content area or disability area, crisis prevention training, etc. Assistive technology (AT) is a component of the educational programs of students with disabilities. Assistive Technology Devices are any items, equipment, products, or system whether acquired commercially, teacher-made, modified, or customized, that are used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of children with disabilities. For example, some students' ability to learn, complete, work, and interact with others may improve with the use of the following:

- adapted toys
- switches
- computers
- amplification systems
- wheelchairs
- memory aids
- magnifiers
- augmentative communication devices
- other adapted devices

Assistive Technology Services are services needed to support effective use of AT devices. AT services may include training or technical assistance for the child and/or the child's family, and training or technical assistance for professionals, employers, or other individuals who are substantially involved in the major life functions of an individual with a disability. Services also include selecting, designing, fitting, customizing, adapting, applying, retaining, repairing, or replacing assistive technology devices.

SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

In determining the services that will be provided be reminded that services are based on needs addressed in the present levels and have a corresponding goal. For more detailed guidance see the section of the manual related to Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

PARTICIPATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES IN ASSESSMENTS

Assessment Determination for District and Statewide Assessments for Grade K-12 Georgia requires all students to participate in statewide assessment programs. For any grade where all students are assessed, students with disabilities must participate in the regular assessment or the Georgia Alternate Assessment (GAA). The GAA is designed for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities, approximately one percent of all students enrolled in assessed grades. All students must be included to the fullest extent possible in all state wide assessments and have their assessment results included with Georgia's accountability system.

The GaDOE participation requirement is supported by federal legislation requiring the participation of students with disabilities in standards-based instruction and assessment initiatives. The section of the IEP regarding district and statewide assessments should be as specific as possible and should only identify testing accommodations the student must have in order to participate in the assessment. The IEP team may not identify any accommodations that are not on the approved list. Refer to the updated DOE accommodations manual to ensure that the accommodation is on the list and that the appropriate wording is being used. If the team feels that a student must have an accommodation that is not on the list, the IEP team should work with the special education director and district testing coordinator who will contact the GaDOE Testing Division to discuss the ramifications of the potential accommodations. Each assessment should be listed individually and by content area so that accommodations can be individualized.

Formal Assessments

Georgia Milestones: The Georgia Milestones Assessment System (Georgia Milestones) is a comprehensive summative assessment program spanning grades 3 through high school. Georgia Milestones measures how well students have learned the knowledge and skills outlined in the state-adopted content standards in language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. Students in grades 3, 5, and 8 will take an end-of-grade assessment in each content area, while students in grades 4, 6, and 7 will not take assessments in science and social studies. High school students will take an end-of-course assessment for each of the eight courses designated by the State Board of Education to include the following:

- Language Arts
 - Ninth Grade Literature and Composition
 - American Literature and Composition
- Mathematics
 - Coordinate Algebra
 - Analytic Geometry
- Science
 - Physical Science
 - Biology
- Social Studies
 - United States History
 - Economics/Business/Free Enterprise

Middle school students who are enrolled in one or more of these high school courses will also take the end-of-course measure. The end-of-course measures are administered at the completion of the course, regardless of the grade level. These measures serve as the final exam for the course, and contribute 20% to the student's final course grade. Each school district selects a local testing window, based on their local school calendar, from within the state-designated testing window.

The Georgia Milestones Assessment System includes:

- open-ended (constructed-response) items in language arts and mathematics (all grades and courses);
- a writing component (in response to passages read by students) at every grade level and course within the language arts assessment;
- norm-referenced items in all content areas and courses, to complement the criterion-referenced information and to provide a national comparison; and
- transition to online administration over time, with online administration considered the primary mode of administration and paper-pencil as back-up until the transition is complete.

Student Learning Objectives (SLO)

LEA developed Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) are content-specific, grade level learning objectives that are measurable, focused on growth in student learning, and aligned to curriculum standards. As a measure of teachers' impact on student learning, SLOs give educators, school systems, and state leaders an additional means by which to understand, value, and recognize success in the classroom. The primary purpose of SLOs is to improve student learning at the classroom level. An equally important purpose of SLOs is to provide evidence of each teacher's instructional impact on student learning.

Essential SLO Components:

Data Driven Process

Student Learning Objectives require that teachers, principals, and LEAs pay close attention to the annual academic progress made by students in non-tested subjects. LEA developed growth targets within SLOs are determined using baseline data, previous data, or data trends and are the foundation of the SLO process. Before writing SLO growth targets, LEAs should analyze assessment and other qualitative data to inform decisions.

Aligned with curriculum standards

SLOs must correlate with the Georgia Performance Standards (GPS), Common Core Georgia Performance Standards (CCGPS), or other national standards for the course being taught. District-selected standards should warrant the year-long or course-long focus of the students and teachers. They should be rigorous, measurable, and should deepen and extend knowledge for all students in the class/group/course. Each SLO must specify the exact course, subject, grade level, and set of standards for which it was designed.

Scope of SLOs

It is a LEA's decision as to whether the SLO comprehensively addresses all course standards or addresses a prioritized set of standards. If a LEA chooses a set of prioritized standards, teachers are expected to teach all of the standards for the course and not exclude standards not assessed in the SLO. Interval of instructional time

LEAs determine the pre and post assessment administration windows for each SLO. SLOs should be written for the entire length of the course being taught. For the majority of teachers, the instructional period is the full academic year. However, for teachers with courses that span only part of the academic year, the instructional period will be the duration of that course (e.g., a semester, six weeks, or nine weeks). The interval cannot change once approved.

Assessments and measures

An assessment measures student learning of the chosen standards. Appropriate measures of student growth differ substantially based on the learners' grade level and content area. Therefore, the type and format of assessments will vary.

Georgia Alternate Assessment (GAA)

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (IDEA) and the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) require that states ensure all students, including those with significant cognitive disabilities, have access to challenging academic standards and participate in the state's assessment program. The U.S. Department of Education defines alternate achievement standards as establishing performance expectations that differ in complexity from grade-level achievement standards. These standards must be aligned with the state's content standards, promote access to the general content standards, and articulate the highest achievement levels possible for the individual student. This means teachers may customize learning expectations for students who participate in alternate assessments.

For students with disabilities, each student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) team determines how the student shall participate in Georgia's student assessment program. If a student's IEP team determines that a student cannot meaningfully access the Georgia Milestones Assessment System, even with maximum appropriate accommodations, then the student must participate in the GAA 2.0.

The GAA 2.0 is designed to ensure that students with significant cognitive disabilities are provided access to the state academic content standards and given the opportunity to demonstrate achievement of the knowledge, concepts, and skills inherent in the standards.

This assessment will provide meaningful information about classroom instruction and help identify students' areas of strength and improvement through standardized tests. Unlike the original GAA, GAA 2.0 is not a portfolio-based assessment. Thus, it will measure students' achievement and not progress. The GAA 2.0 will be administered to all eligible students in the following areas:

- Grades K, 3-8, and 11 will be assessed in English language arts and mathematics.

- Grades 5, 8, and 11 will also be assessed in science and social studies.

The GAA 2.0 will include standardized items with multiple access points. The intent is to reduce the teacher's burden related to selecting or developing tasks; bring greater standardization to the administration; improve scoring reliability; and introduce an online task submission system.

Procedures for Appropriate Use of the Georgia Alternate Assessment (GAA):

Consideration for participation in the GAA is given to only those students with the most significant cognitive disabilities who generally participate in a curriculum working towards alternate achievement standards. The decision to assess using the GAA should be made only when an IEP team determines that a student's cognitive disabilities prevent him or her from attaining grade-level achievement standards even with the very best instruction, and the IEP team is unable to identify appropriate accommodations that would allow meaningful participation in the regular state assessments. The students must meet all of the guidelines for participation in the GAA. The IEP must document the student's current level of performance within the curriculum, the participation in the GAA and the reasons for that participation.

The IEP team must complete the *Eligibility Criteria for Participation on GAA 2.0* form annually for each student who is to participate in the GAA. Answers must be "yes" to each questions with evidence sources and justification written in the appropriate area.

Factors to be Considered by the IEP Team:

When considering whether or not a student should participate in the GAA, the IEP team must carefully consider multiple factors. The GAA is an appropriate choice only for students with significant cognitive disabilities. Consider the following:

- Does the student require intensive, individualized instruction in a variety of instructional settings? This student needs specialized academic instruction and techniques over a period of time to ensure that he or she can learn, retain information, and transfer skills to other settings.
 - Sources of evidence can be obtained from the present level of academic achievement and functional performance, anecdotal notes and observations, benchmark data, progress monitoring data, etc.
- Does the student have a significant cognitive disability? The student must have a significant cognitive disability determined by the IEP team and this must be based on evaluation information performed by a qualified evaluation team. The significant cognitive disability must affect the student's intellectual functioning and be documented as such in the student's IEP.
 - Sources of evidence can be obtained from results of individual cognitive ability test(s), results of adaptive behavior skills assessment(s), etc.
- Does the student require specialized supports to access and participate in the grade-level GA Standards of Excellence that require modifications based on the student's present levels of academic achievement and functional performance? Access to the grade-level curriculum is mandated by the federal government. A student with a significant cognitive disability requires access to the Georgia

Standards of Excellence through prerequisite skills that are linked to the grade-level curriculum.

- Sources of evidence may include results of individual cognitive test(s), results of adaptive behavior skills assessment(s), anecdotal notes and observations, benchmark data, progress monitoring data, results of language assessments including English Learner assessments, if applicable, etc.
- Does the student require specialized supports to demonstrate age-appropriate adaptive behavior? A student with a significant cognitive disability needs specialized support throughout the day in areas such as expressing his or her needs, getting from place to place, eating lunch, negotiating social situations, and/or taking care of personal needs.
 - Evidence may be supported through results of individual cognitive ability test(s), results of adaptive behavior skills assessment(s), etc.
- The IEP team must have participated in training and guidance regarding student participation in state mandated assessments that includes the following information:
 - Additional summary statements may be provided if necessary as to why the student cannot participate in the GA Milestones Assessment System with or without allowable accommodations and why the GAA is appropriate for the student including that all of the eligibility criteria are met.
 - The decision to administer the GAA is based on multiple sources of measurable, objective evidence, including but not limited to current IEP PLAAFP statements, goals and/or objectives, report cards, progress reports, work samples, teacher observations, full and individual evaluations, standardized achievement test results, and classroom, district, and statewide assessment results. This decision is not based solely on the student's previous performance on statewide assessments.
 - The decision to administer the GAA is made by the IEP team, not administratively based on federal accountability requirements which limit the number of students taking an alternate assessment who can be counted as proficient in CCRPI performance calculations. Although GAA is intended for a small number of students, the proficiency cap does not limit the number of students receiving special education services who may take the alternate assessment.
 - The decision to administer the GAA is based on the student's educational needs and the instruction the student is receiving. This decision is not based solely on the student's disability category and is not based on the student's racial or economic background, excessive or extended absences or amount of time or location of service delivery.

Functional Behavior Assessments (FBA) and Behavior Intervention Plans (BIP)

Any student identified with an emotional behavior disorder must have a completed functional behavioral assessment (FBA) and a behavior intervention plan (BIP). See previous sections regarding development of the FBA and BIP as well.

Functional Behavior Assessment- A functional behavior assessment involves gathering information in order to determine the cause or function of a behavior. In most circumstances a FBA should be conducted before developing a behavior intervention plan. There are many different tools that could be used for a FBA. Tools should be selected on a case-by-case basis for each individual student. The information that is collected in a FBA is used to help understand why and in what conditions problem behaviors occur. The information will help the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team develop a behavior intervention plan.

Components of the FBA:

- A definition of the behavior that you want to change: What is the student doing that is interfering with learning or causing harm to the student or others? What is the behavior we want to change? This behavior must be observable and measurable.
- Measurement of the behavior: When does it happen? Where does it happen? How often does it happen? How long does the behavior last? Who is present when it happens? What happens before the behavior is exhibited (antecedent)? What happens after the behavior is exhibited?
- Data collection and assessment: This can include parent, student and teacher interviews whenever possible. It may include record reviews. It could include completing checklists or questionnaires. It may include observations of the student in different settings.
- A summary (hypothesis): This means that the team uses the information collected to try to understand the function or purpose of the behavior (why the student is exhibiting the behavior).

Components of a BIP:

- Information from the FBA: This includes the target behavior, the data that was collected, and the best ideas about the purpose or function of the behavior.
- Positive strategies to avoid or prevent the behavior: These can include changes in routines, changes in classroom instruction, opportunities for choice, etc.
- New skills to replace the target behavior: These can include communication skills, social skills, self- management skills, choice-making, etc.
- Ways to teach the new behaviors: These may include modeling, practice, social stories, prompts, direct instruction, etc.
- Consequences: These include what happens if the target behavior is exhibited and also what happens when the desired behavior is exhibited.
- Dates when the plan will be implemented.
- Names of people who will implement the plan. Materials, training and support for persons implementing the plan.
- Collecting and reviewing data.

Instruction/Related Services in General Education Classroom/Early Childhood Setting

Placement Options

Special education is a service and **not a place**. After the IEP team has reviewed all required information and developed an IEP, it must make the decision as to where services need to be delivered in order to enable the student to receive a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. Placement decisions should start with the expectation that services will be provided in the general education setting and should be made on a subject by subject basis. The placement decision should be fully supported by the present levels of academic achievement and functional performance and by the level of supports and accommodations/modifications the student requires to access the curriculum.

Consult Services

Consult services should be offered to students who are able to function with few, if any, accommodations and have met previous goals/objectives. In order to maintain contact with a consult student and accurately monitor his/her progress, a minimum of paraprofessional services should be provided in at least one content class.

Extended School Year (ESY)

Extended school year (ESY) refers to special education and/or related services provided beyond the normal school year for the purpose of providing FAPE to a student with a disability. These services are distinct from enrichment programs, summer school programs, and compensatory services and are not simply an extension of time. These services, at no cost to the parent, will vary in type, intensity, location, inclusion of related services, and length of time, depending on the individual needs of the student. The consideration of ESY services is a part of the IEP process. The IEP must address the provision of ESY services, if required, in order for the student to receive FAPE.

Determining the need for Extended School Year Services

Please use the following guidelines when making a decision relative to ESY. Because ESY services are uniquely designed to provide FAPE to students with disabilities, it is necessary to emphasize that these services are:

- not based on the category of student's disability but are based on the student's unique educational needs;
- not mandated twelve-month services for all students with disabilities;
- not a child care service;
- not necessarily a continuation of the total IEP provided to a student with a disability during the regular school year;
- not required to be provided all day, every day, or each day;
- not an automatic program provision from year to year;
- not summer school, compensatory services, or enrichment programs;
- not required to be provided in a traditional classroom setting;
- not a service to be provided to maximize each student's potential

The IEP team should consider the need for these services at least annually. The request to consider ESY services may be initiated by the parent, the student, the student's teacher(s), related service providers, or administrators. It is important that the decision regarding whether ESY services are provided not be delayed. The IEP Team should make the decision early enough to ensure that parents can meaningfully exercise their due process rights if they wish to challenge an ESY decision. As with all other programming needs, it is recommended that the need for ESY be documented via data gathered about the student's performance in relation to the IEP goals and objectives as well as the individual needs of the child. This may include such factors as: the severity of the disability; the age of the child; any transitional needs; the rate of progress or regression that may limit the child's ability to achieve IEP goals/objectives; the relative importance of IEP goals at issue; whether the child is at a critical point of instruction, such as emerging skills; and whether any delays or interruptions in services occurred during the school year. The following factors may be considered:

- degree of regression/ time of skill recoupment
- degree of disability
- the child's rate of progress
- consideration of any behavioral/ physical problems which the child may possess
- the availability of alternative resources for serving the child
- the ability of the child to interact with children who are non-disabled
- areas in the child's program which require continuous attention
- The rationale for any decision must be indicated in the IEP.

For example:

"Based on data collected, 180 day school year is adequate to meet _____'s IEP goals and objectives"

Or

"_____ requires extended school year services due to data indicating that his/her tantrum behaviors increase over breaks"

ESY services may include a variety of program delivery models: work packets sent home, strategies to support the maintenance of appropriate behavior – i.e. behavior management plan that may be used in the home setting or summer services by certified personnel. If the need for ESY is determined, the IEP team must identify which goals in the current IEP are being extended or modified. ESY is not the same thing as summer school; however, ESY services may be provided during summer school.

Documentation of Extended School Year Services

If a student is determined eligible for extended school year services by the IEP team, the team must: Indicate which goals and objectives from the current school year are being extended or modified. Such extension is needed to develop FAPE.

- Document the services needed
- Document the amount of time for each service
- Document the beginning and ending dates for the services
- Document the service provider and location

Related Services

IEP teams may determine that services other than instruction are necessary to help students benefit from special education. The IEP team makes the determination of need for related services. In some cases, the IEP team may recommend an evaluation to determine the need for a specific related service. In all cases, related services should support the special education program outlined in the IEP with a clear correlation between the related services and IEP goals and objectives. Related Services normally include transportation and such developmental, corrective, and other supportive services as required to assist a child eligible for special education to benefit from special education. Related services may be delivered in school, home, or community settings as determined appropriate by the IEP team. Related services are required to assist a student with a disability in benefiting from and accessing educational services. The term “related services” means developmental, corrective, and other supportive services including, but not limited to the following:

- Audiological services
- Psychological and counseling services
- Physical and occupational therapy
- Social work services
- Counseling services, including rehabilitation services
- Speech/language pathology services
- Orientation and mobility services
- Interpreting services
- School nurse or other medical services
- Parent training
- transportation

To determine what special education services and/or related services will be provided to the child, the IEP team will look at the child’s present levels of academic and functional performance, assessment results, the measurable annual goals, and, if appropriate, the short term objectives or benchmarks that are included in the IEP. Any services should be based on the unique needs and abilities of the child **and**, help the child advance appropriately toward attaining the annual goals.

IDEA refers to related services and supplementary aids and services that are “based on peer reviewed research to the extent ‘practicable.’” This means research that involves the application of rigorous, systematic, and objective procedures to obtain reliable and valid knowledge relevant to education activities and programs, which refer to those services and supports that are proven through research data to improve student learning. Related services may be documented in the IEP in several areas, including the recommended special education and related services section, the supplementary aids and services section, and the instructional accommodations or modifications section.

Amendments

An amendment is required under any of the following circumstances:

- Significant changes in service(s) provided
- Scheduling changes involving change of placement/service(s)
- Changes in accommodations
- Adding or removing standardized test(s)

Best practice is to schedule an amendment meeting with team including the parents; however, it is possible to amend an IEP without conducting a meeting provided there is documentation of communication regarding change(s) and all parties are in agreement.

Reporting Progress to Parents

Teachers must provide parents with an update on their child's progress on goals and objectives. This information must be reported at each progress report and report card. This documentation can be in the form of grades, test scores, class work, etc. This form will be placed in the student file in the special education office.

A student should never have an expired eligibility

It is the responsibility of the case manager to make sure that you keep up with the students on your caseload to ensure that they have current eligibilities and that their eligibility does not lapse.

EXIT FROM SPECIAL EDUCATION

A child's eligibility to receive special education and related services is terminated by an evaluation to determine that the child:

- no longer meets the Georgia eligibility standards
- no longer requires special education and related services
- graduates from high school
- reaches 22 years of age before the start of a school year; or
- Parents request in writing that the child be removed from special education at which time the school system must stop all special education and related services and return the child to general education. This is known as Revocation of Consent.
- Parents who revoke consent for services must complete forms. Please contact the Special Education Director or Special Education Facilitator for assistance with this process.

Before dismissing a student, there must be an evaluation completed by the school psychologist unless the parents revoke consent for placement. In addition, there must be a meeting to discuss the dismissal in order for parents to sign dismissal forms. Follow the same guidelines as for reevaluations.

Placement of Transfer Students

The registrar will obtain enrollment information from all parents. All parents / guardians will be asked to complete paperwork containing questions about whether or not their child received special education services and supports in the previous school system. If a parent or guardian reports that the student did receive services and supports from special education in the previous school system, the Director of Special Education should be notified immediately. A special education case manager will be assigned. GTID numbers should be checked for all students enrolling by the registrar to ensure that this section has not been incorrectly completed or overlooked by the person enrolling the student. If the student received special education services at the previous school, the registrar should immediately request those records from the transferring school. Once received, records should be given immediately to the Director of Special Education for review. Upon enrollment of the student and once it is indicated either by the person enrolling or through actual records, Towns County Schools will begin providing the services indicated from the records of the previous school. If the records cannot be obtained immediately, the case manager will determine from the parent what services and supports the student was receiving to be implemented immediately until the paperwork is received for review. The case manager will also contact the transferring school to verbally confirm needed services and supports. Every effort will be made to obtain the written records as soon as possible. Upon receipt of the written records, a "transfer-to-system" meeting will be set up to include the required members of the IEP team as well as the School Psychologist. The team will review all dates to ensure that paperwork is current. The School Psychologist will review the student's psychological report and eligibility with the IEP team. The team will consider whether or not the student's current eligibility meets Georgia requirements. If the team feels that the current eligibility does not contain the appropriate information to complete a Georgia eligibility, the team may request a reevaluation. See guidelines for reevaluation. The student would continue with the transferring eligibility until such time that a new eligibility meeting is held to determine eligibility. This meeting would be held within 60 days of obtaining parental consent or before the expiration of the current eligibility, whichever comes first. The team will review the student's IEP. Current and accurate information from the transferring IEP will be transferred to a Towns County IEP with the addition of any new information that the team has gathered since the student's transfer. If it was determined that further evaluation is needed in order to determine eligibility, and the student does become eligible in Georgia, a new IEP will be written within 30 days to contain the more updated information from the psychological and eligibility.

Tips for a Successful IEP Meeting:

- *Begin setting up and preparing for the meeting early.*
 - *At least 4 weeks prior to the meeting:*
 - *Contact all team members about available dates.*
 - *Remember to include all related service providers.*
 - *Make sure you have collected your data to include results of all formal assessments to include state assessments and psychological evaluations.*
 - *Be sure you have collected the data from classroom assessments and progress monitoring.*
 - *Speak to all parties involved with providing information to the development of the IEP or with providing updates / data collection not only to ensure that you are setting up the meeting at a time and date that is available to them but also to be sure each party knows to begin preparing their data as well. Don't forget the importance of the:*
 - *Speech Language Pathologist*
 - *Occupational Therapist*
 - *Certified Occupational Therapist Assistant*
 - *Physical Therapist*
 - *Teacher of the Visually Impaired*
 - *Orientation and Mobility Specialist*
 - *Use a variety of communication methods to ensure the parent is contacted and agrees to a time and date that works for all members of the team to include the parent or guardian. Be sure to send a written notice as well.*
 - *Make sure the written notice includes the purpose of the meeting, team members for review by parent, and specified date as well as time of meeting.*
 - *Notify all team members of the date and time agreed upon by parents or guardians.*
 - *Notify all members of the location of the meeting. Make sure your meeting does not conflict with use of that space.*
 - *Review the current IEP to determine mastery of goals and objectives. Prepare your data to correlate with determination of mastery.*
 - *Gather work samples, progress monitoring data, put progress monitoring data into a form that is easily understood by all team members.*
 - *Prepare a draft IEP with input from all teachers and service providers.*
 - *Be sure to remind related service providers to input their data before the agreed upon time and date for printing the rough draft. It does not look professional to have part of the data not entered for the rough draft.*
 - *Be sure to remind specific general education teachers and parents prior to the meeting to ensure that your required members will be attending. The use of excusals should be extremely sparingly and only in situations that cannot be avoided.*

- *Review your draft IEP for errors. Make sure that your draft IEP says that it is a draft.*
- *Prior to the meeting, make copies of the rough draft for all team members.*
- *Bring all necessary forms such as parent rights and parent right verification to the meeting.*
- *On the day of the meeting, notify office personnel so they may notify you when parents arrive. Be sure to have instructed parents prior to this on how to get to the designated location. Make sure materials are ready and available for the meeting to include pens, notepads, copies of all essential paperwork such as the rough draft IEP, your progress monitoring, any ASPIRE contributions from students, etc.*
 - *If you feel that time may be an issue, be sure to share time parameters with all members of the team to ensure that participants remain focused and complete necessary duties in a timely manner.*
 - *Make the participants feel welcome.*
 - *Be sure to make introductions.*
 - *Explain the purpose of the meeting.*
 - *Be sure to take minutes or have someone take minutes for you. If someone else is taking minutes, be sure to have pre-arranged this so that all members already understand their duties.*
 - *Provide parents with a copy of their parents' rights. Ask if they need to have anything clarified or have any questions.*
 - *Have parents take a look at demographic information on the front cover of the IEP. Ask parents to mark any changes with contacts, addresses, and/or phone numbers. You can report this information to the front office after the meeting to ensure that the most updated information is in our school information system.*
 - *Begin by making positive statements about the student.*
 - *Always ask parents to share relevant information about their children. Encourage participation throughout the meeting. Listen actively to all participants.*
 - *Reach consensus with members of the team about goals and objectives, accommodations, service options, etc. Everyone is a part of the decision making team.*
 - *Obtain all necessary signatures.*
 - *Always end meetings on a positive note and thank parents for their participation as well all team members.*
 - *Make sure that parents understand you will be providing a final copy of the IEP to them as soon as you make finalizations to the rough draft.*
- *After the meeting:*
 - *Be sure to confirm that you have obtained signatures from all parties.*
 - *File hard copies of the paperwork as soon as possible in the appropriate blue binder in your caseload drawer in the office of the Special Education Director.*

Meeting Etiquette for All Members

- *Case managers are facilitators. Facilitators should always attempt to:*
 - *Control the time*
 - *Always allow for an appropriate amount of time when planning your meeting. Take into consideration the time that other teachers may need to be back in their classes once planning time is over.*
 - *Maintain the atmosphere*
 - *When necessary remind members of our shared goals for students*
 - *If absolutely necessary, correct meeting behaviors by making interjecting with a positive example or model of how the topic might be expressed*
 - *Remember this is a team. Use a “we” attitude.*
 - *Ask questions when necessary to steer the team in the right direction.*
 - *Call upon related service providers and other members of the team to give their input.*
 - *Maintain harmony.*
- *Meeting participants are invaluable to the team. Many are required. All have been invited for a purpose. Meeting participants should:*
 - *Stay focused on the purpose of the meeting.*
 - *Stay focused on the student.*
 - *Report all appropriate data using organized material that you have brought to share.*
 - *Have already completed all parts of the rough draft of the IEP if you have a part.*
 - *Avoid side conversations.*
 - *Reiterate the “we attitude” since we are a team, and it takes the input and participation of the whole team to accomplish a successful IEP.*
- *Difficult Situations:*
 - *Think about body language and tone of voice. Often times, offense is taken not to “what is being said” but to “how it’s being said.”*
 - *Understand that everyone wants to be heard and to be able to complete his or her thoughts. Allow all members of the team to express themselves and acknowledge any concerns. Work as a team to alleviate concerns and to solve problems.*
 - *Poor communication is another common reason for being getting upset. Watch for signs to see if people are actually understanding what is being said rather than just hearing it. It may be necessary to further explain comments that either you or another team member said. Check for understanding if you are in doubt in a pleasant way.*

- *Don't take complaints personally. Stay focused, calm and careful not to become defensive.*
- *Keeping and presenting sound data on progress monitoring is a very objective task. Again, be sure there is a clear understanding. Watch for and solve any potential problems or areas of misunderstanding as soon as they arise.*
- *Although the goal is redirect back to a focused and productive meeting, in an extreme situation where this is not happening, the meeting may become non-productive. It may be better to ask parties if they would like to reconvene at another time.*
- **Professionalism & Keeping the Flow:**
 - *Avoid the following:*
 - *Arriving late*
 - *Interrupting others, but do make sure the meeting stays on track*
 - *Coming and going into and out of a meeting*
 - *Side conversations*
 - *Leaving a meeting to retrieve forgotten items*
 - *Having to get excusals for general education teachers*
 - *Avoid making apologies for items that aren't completed or filled in by having everything completed in rough draft form prior to the meeting.*
 - *Avoid any talk of how unusually busy it is, how many other things there are to do, how many students have particular needs, how many problems we have faced prior to the meeting, appearing to be in a hurry, etc. as these may cause you to seem pre-occupied with other things and not totally focused on the student at hand. Imagine you have gone to see your physician or dentist. How distracted would you want this person to be?*
- **Roles and Responsibilities of IEP Team Members:**
 - **Special Education Teacher:**
 - *Invite the building principal, assistant principal, counselor to all meetings. Invite the school psychologist to all consideration of reevaluation and eligibility meetings. Invite required team members and ensure that they have coverage to be able to attend. Invite out therapist for which the student receives services such as the occupational therapist, physical therapist, speech language pathologist, orientation and mobility specialist. Invite the teacher of the visually impaired if appropriate. Invite all members of the team who work with the student. Ensure that the meeting is being held at a time and date that works for all team members. Invite the student to participate at his or her appropriate level through our work with ASPIRE (Active Student Participation Inspires Real Engagement Program). Each student participates at a level that he or she feels comfortable with through teacher guidance and direction to help the student become a self-advocate who is aware of his or her own needs. The type of participation varies with each student and may be influenced by his or her age. However, all students should be given the opportunity*

and invitation to attend the IEP meeting. Student invitation is required for those students at the transition service plan development age.

- *Ensure the rough draft of the IEP is completed with correct dates and updated information from all service providers in a rough draft form prior to the meeting.*
- *Make copies of the IEP prior to the meeting for distribution at the start of the meeting.*
- *Complete the meeting notice and obtain necessary signatures.*
- *Obtain all signatures for consent for placement if needed and on the IEP.*
- *Present parents' rights and obtain signature on verification form.*
- *Be sure to give a copy of accommodations to all teachers and obtain signatures on the verification form.*
- *Make sure minutes are taken at the meeting.*
- *Provide input regarding a review of the eligibility information.*
- *Ensure that all components of the IEP are addressed.*
- *Provide input regarding placement.*
- *Provide input regarding progress monitoring toward mastery of IEP goals and objectives from previous IEP.*
- *Share results of state mandated assessment and all school assessments and progress monitoring from interventions, classroom work, and benchmarks.*
- *Representative of the Local Education Agency (LEA)*
 - *This person will most likely be the Special Education Director at Towns County Schools. However, if the Special Education Director is unexpectedly unavailable, the building level administrator or assistant principal should serve as the LEA.*
 - *This person is qualified to provide or supervise the provision of specifically designed instruction to meet the needs of students with disabilities, is knowledgeable about the general curriculum, and is knowledgeable about the resources within the Towns County School System.*
 - *Provides input regarding eligibility, IEP, and placement*
 - *Reviews and signs all documents*
- *General Education Teacher*
 - *Describes the strengths and weaknesses of the student as they pertain to the general education classroom performance*
 - *Describes accommodations and the impact of these accommodations on performance in the general education classroom*
 - *Provides input regarding eligibility, IEP, and placement*
 - *Provides work samples from the general education classroom*
 - *Provides update on grades, benchmarking, progress monitoring*
 - *Reviews and signs all appropriate documents*
- *Parent*
 - *Describes their concerns for the student*
 - *Provides input regarding eligibility, IEP, and placement*

- *Reports on progress from his or her point of view*
 - *Reviews and signs all appropriate documents*
- *School Psychologist*
 - *Explains evaluation results and ensures completion of the psychological report and eligibility report*
 - *Obtains all appropriate signatures on those two documents*
 - *Provides input regarding the IEP and placement*
 - *Reviews and signs all appropriate documents*
 - *Offers guidance to parents and teachers on appropriate strategies for participate student's processing deficits if appropriate*
- *Other Participants*
 - *Provide pertinent information regarding his or her area of expertise*
 - *Makes recommendations regarding services for his or her area of expertise*
 - *Provides input to the eligibility, IEP, and placement*
 - *Reviews and signs all appropriate documents*

Case Manager Responsibilities

- **Know Your Students IEPs**
 - Become familiar with every aspect of a student's IEP prior to the start of the school year.
 - Keep track of student progress. Collect data on all IEP goals and objectives.
 - Determine appropriate interventions to meet the individualized needs of students on your caseload. Monitor progress. Determine what changes may need to occur with interventions if progress is not being made.
 - Be sure to read all meeting minutes to get a better understanding of much important information that may not be included in a box or summary section of an IEP.
- **Make sure IEPs are Fulling and Accurately Completed**
 - Check and recheck for consistency between all sections of the IEP.
 - Hours of service stated in the IEP must match the student's schedule.
 - Eligibility categories for services must patch the student's eligibility.
 - Avoid accidentally leaving old service dates in a new IEP.
 - Goals must be measurable.
 - Accommodations for state mandated assessments must match the DOE accommodations manual and be appropriate for the individualized needs of each student.
 - Be timely and efficient as well as accurate
 - Making sure IEPs are locked in Infinite Campus
 - Making sure all related service provides and therapists have completed their sections on time.
- **Distribute IEP Accommodations and Behavior Intervention Plans**

- Deliver accommodations and explain them to each general education teacher.
- Deliver accommodations and explain them to each special education teacher.
- Provide para-professionals who are responsible for delivering accommodations and/or following through with BIP with a copy and explanation.
- Collect signatures on the verification sheet for all to whom you have distributed copies of accommodations and behavior intervention plans.
- Provide copies to teachers during pre-planning so they will have time to read, understand and ask questions if needed.
- If a change is made to accommodations or BIP, be sure to provide new copies and obtain signature verifications.
- Don't forget about transfer student accommodations / BIP.
- Be sure to include new teachers if classes change at the start of a new semester.
- **Monitor Student Progress**
 - The case manager must monitor both academic and behavioral progress of each student you teach and those on your caseload. Progress monitoring information should be turned in monthly to the Special Education Director. If progress monitoring indicates that a student is not progressing as expected, consider what changes need to be made to interventions, behavior intervention plans, etc. Schedule a team meeting if necessary.
 - The case manager should contact parents at the start of a new school year to introduce himself or herself to the parents or guardians. This may be done at open house or with a phone call.
 - Keep documentation of all parent contacts.
 - Complete progress reports per IEP guidelines.
- **Maintain Current Eligibility on All Caseload Students**
- **Maintain All Timelines**
- **Monitor and Ensure Implementation of all IEP Services and Supports**