

FAMILY TIPSHEET:

How to be involved in your IEP



Email: Resourcecentre@hollandbloorview.ca

What is an IEP?

An Individualized Education Plan (IEP) is a personalized plan created to support a student's unique learning needs. It is designed to help students succeed academically and socially by providing accommodations, services, and support tailored specifically to them. It is important to know that students have the right to be involved in the IEP process. This plan is developed by a team that typically includes the student, their parents, teachers, and other professionals, such as special education staff or school psychologists.

What to Expect in an IEP?

The IEP is a plan designed to help students succeed. It typically includes goals that are academic or functional in nature, focusing on areas where the student needs support. The IEP will also outline the accommodations and modifications necessary to help the student access the curriculum, such as extended time on tests or the use of assistive technology. Additional services and support may also be included, such as speech therapy, occupational therapy, or counseling. For older students, transition planning is an important part of the IEP, as it helps prepare for life after school, whether that means further education, employment, or independent living.

The IEP Process

Pre-Meeting:

Before the IEP meeting, it's essential for students to discuss their learning needs with trusted adults, such as their parents, teachers, or school staff. Talking about what works for them and what challenges they face can help the team understand what accommodations or services may be needed. It's important to know that the purpose of the meeting is to discuss educational goals, accommodations, and support that will help the student succeed.

The IEP Meeting:

During the meeting, various people will be present, including the student's parents, the special education teacher, the general education teacher, and possibly a school psychologist or other specialists. The meeting will typically cover topics like academic and social goals, accommodations, modifications, and necessary support. This is an opportunity for students to share their thoughts on what is working, what challenges they are facing, and how they can be better supported in their learning. It's important to be prepared to speak up during the meeting, ensuring that their voice is heard and that their needs are clearly communicated.

Post-Meeting:

After the meeting, students should review their IEP document carefully. This will help them understand the goals set for them and the services and accommodations they will receive. It's essential to track progress regularly to ensure that the accommodations are helping and that goals are being met. If something is not working, students should feel comfortable reaching out for adjustments. Regular check-ins with the IEP team can help make sure the plan is always up to date.

Self-Advocacy in Your IEP: A Quick Guide

Advocating for yourself is one of the most important skills you can develop during your time in school, especially when it comes to your IEP. Being able to clearly express what helps you learn, what challenges you face, and what accommodations or support you need ensures that your educational experience is tailored to your unique needs. This involves speaking up in meetings, making specific requests, and practicing self-advocacy on a daily basis. It might feel intimidating at first, but with practice, it becomes easier and more natural.

To help you get started, we've provided some essential tips for self-advocacy: how to speak up respectfully, how to practice advocating for yourself, and how to ask for help when needed. It's all about building your confidence and learning to navigate the IEP process with your voice front and center.

For more in-depth guidance on how to effectively advocate for yourself in school, check out our separate **Advocacy Tipsheet**. This resource dives deeper into strategies for speaking up, handling challenges, and working with your school to ensure that your needs are always heard and supported.

How to Get Help

Support Network:







It's important for students to know who to turn to for help. A support network can include special education teachers, guidance counselors, family members, or disability advocacy organizations. These individuals can provide valuable advice and support when navigating the IEP process or when advocating for changes in the plan.

Who Can Help in School:

The IEP team, which includes teachers, counselors, and special education staff, is a critical source of support. Students can approach these individuals for guidance, feedback, or to discuss any concerns they may have. Additionally, some schools may have a student advocate or liaison who can assist with understanding and navigating the IEP process.

Outside Resources:

Outside of school, there are many organizations that can help students with disabilities advocate for themselves and understand their rights. Here is a list of potential resources that can help:

Resource	Description	QR Code
A Students Guide to the IEP	This guide will tell you: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What an IEP is • Why you need to be part of your IEP team • How to help write your IEP • and much, much more!! 	
Understanding the IEP Process	From the Understood Podcast Network talking about navigating the IEP process.	
The Disability Foundation	The Disability Foundation provides services, programs, and advocacy for individuals with disabilities in Canada, focusing on inclusive education and employment opportunities.	
Toronto Foundation for Student Success	This foundation works with the TDSB to support students facing barriers to success in school, including those with disabilities. They offer resources, funding, and programs designed to help students achieve their educational goals.	
Community Living Toronto	Community Living Toronto supports individuals with intellectual disabilities and provides advocacy, inclusion programs, and resources to help them integrate into their communities and succeed in school.	
Special Education and Inclusion in the TDSB	Offer a number of “Fact Sheets” that provide information on students with Special Education Needs (SEN) in the Toronto District School Board (TDSB).	

Understanding Rights and Responsibilities

Students' Rights:

Students have the right to participate in the IEP process, as outlined by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). This means that students are entitled to be part of the planning and decision-making process when it comes to their educational goals and accommodations. Understanding these rights is crucial for ensuring that their needs are met.

Responsibilities:

Along with their rights, students also have responsibilities in the IEP process. This includes being engaged in the process, clearly communicating their needs, and following through on the goals set in the IEP. It's essential for students to take an active role in their education and ensure that the IEP remains an effective tool for their success.

Dealing with Challenges

If a student disagrees with the IEP plan, it's important to know that they can ask for changes if something isn't working or if they need more support. They can request a meeting with the IEP team to discuss adjustments. Staying engaged and actively participating in regular IEP reviews and progress reports is key to ensuring that the plan remains effective. Remind students that their voice matters and that they have the right to advocate for themselves when necessary.