

# Parent Role in the Individual Education Plan

Parents play an important role in helping their child succeed at school. Parents of children with special education needs also play a key role in planning their child's program at school with the school staff. Parents are often unsure of how they can help and sometimes defer to the teacher and other school staff as they are the "experts". Teachers know a lot about the curriculum they teach, as well as how to teach and assess the student's learning. They are not, however, experts on your child. You are the expert on your child and you have a lot to offer the school when your child's Individual Education Plan (IEP) is being developed.

To be an effective partner in creating your child's IEP you need to understand what an IEP is and how it supports your child's learning. The Individual Education Plan (IEP) is a written, working document that describes the strengths and needs of the student and the special education programs or services that will be used to meet the student's needs. The IEP can include:

- **Accommodations** or supports that will help the child access the curriculum and demonstrate learning. For example, a child with limited vision could have large print books, be seated closer to the teacher, and have verbal reports rather than written ones.
- **Modifications** or changes made to grade-level expectations in the Ontario Curriculum, such as lower or higher grade learning expectations, or changes in the number or complexity of learning expectations like students colouring the map instead of writing in the place names.
- **Alternative programs** not included in the Ontario Curriculum, such as social skill development, anger

management, or teaching of specific skills such as Braille, orientation and mobility for students who are blind or low vision, or self care and independence skills for students with significant intellectual challenges.

You also need to know why your child has an IEP. Reasons for an IEP include:

- Your child must have an IEP if they have been identified as exceptional through an Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC). (For more information check the article on this website on the [IPRC](#))
- Your child may have an IEP if they require accommodations for instructional or assessment purposes, such as assistive technology, including text-to-speech software, or materials in Braille.
- Your child may have an IEP if they require modifications to the curriculum, for example, if they are still learning letter recognition, while most of the other students are reading words.

For more information on the IEP, check the article on this website, [The Individual Education Plan \(IEP\) – Frequently Asked Questions.](#)

The teacher, or other school staff, should contact you about the development of the IEP. They may invite you to a meeting, to talk on the phone, or ask you to send a note. Some boards use a “Parent Portal” that allows you to access information about your child online and a few school boards enable input on the IEP through this method. You can let the teacher or school staff member know which you prefer or you can ask for a meeting.

As the expert on your child, you have lots of information that you can share about your child. This is a list of information that could be helpful in the development of your child’s IEP.

- Your child's strengths and interests – What kinds of activities are they good at, what do they like to do at home?
- Feelings expressed by your child about school – Does your child love school, or do they have some worries?
- Your thoughts about your child's successes and challenges at school – What do you think is going well, and what are you concerned about?
- Information about your child's development or special needs – Does your child have a diagnosis or are there concerns about their health or development?
- Any recent changes or challenges at home – Has your family situation changed, or have you moved?
- Strategies and approaches used at home – What do you do to motivate your child or keep them on task?
- Any reports from doctors, therapists, specialists, childcare providers, etc. – Do you have recent reports that you can share with the teacher?
- Special equipment or supports required by your child – Does your child require a walker, or need help with daily tasks?

Once you have collected and organized the information you want to share, you can prepare for the meeting or phone call. On this website you can find articles on the following:

- [Making Effective Phone Calls about Your Child](#)
- [Tips on Getting Ready for a Meeting](#)
- [Tips for a Great Meeting](#)
- [Building a Positive Relationship with the School](#)

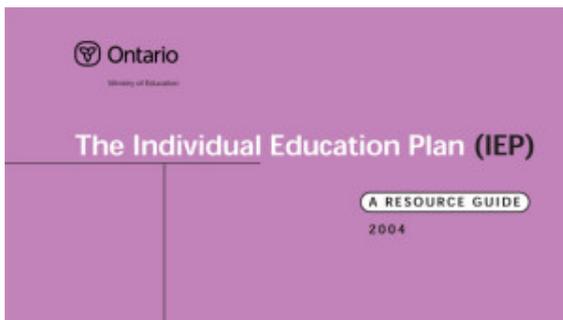
As you work with the school to develop the first IEP, or review the IEP, it is important to remember:

- You are the expert on your child, you know your child best
- You are a valuable member of the IEP development team
- You can ask questions or ask for an explanation when you

don't understand something

- The teacher, and other school staff, want your child to succeed
- The IEP is reviewed three times a year and you will have lots of opportunities to provide your input

For more information you can also check the Ontario Ministry of Education, [Individual Education Plan \(IEP\) – Resource Guide](#):



The Individual Education Plan (IEP) – Special Education