

Section III — The IEP Process

Individualized Education Program (IEP) Guide for Parents

How to work effectively for your child before, during and after the IEP

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Parent Handbook

Parent Education & Diversity Awareness
Special School District of St. Louis County
12110 Clayton Road
St. Louis, MO 63131
(314) 989-8108/989-8438/989-8194

Dear Families/Guardians,

The purpose of this guide is to simplify the IEP process for you.

By breaking it down into various steps — about the IEP, before the IEP, during the IEP, and after the IEP — we hope to make it a more manageable and less intimidating experience.

Please do not feel you have to read the entire guide at one sitting. It may be best to familiarize yourself with the index and then use the various sections as you need them.

We have attempted to put together the best resources we could find and to be as comprehensive as possible in creating this guide. We encourage you to give us feedback. In future editions, we will include input we receive from you.

Good luck on your journey...

Michelle Levi-Perez, Debra Fiasco, Pam Russell

Parent Education & Diversity Awareness
Special School District of St. Louis County
August 2017

Special School District — Notice of Non-Discrimination and Accommodation

Special School District does not discriminate or tolerate discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, sexual orientation, ancestry, disability, veteran status, age, or activity protected by federal or state law in its programs, activities and employment. Direct inquires and complaints under this policy to Special School District's Compliance Coordinator, 12110 Clayton Road, St. Louis, Missouri 63131; telephone (314) 989-8100 or to the Office of Civil Rights, 8930 Ward Parkway, Suite 2037, Kansas City, MO. 64114-3302; telephone (816) 268-0550. Information about the existence and location of services, activities, and facilities accessible to impaired persons can be obtained from Special School District's Compliance Coordinator at the phone number and address listed above.

Acknowledgments

A tremendous amount of information exists on the IEP process. We wish to acknowledge the following organizations in providing the information used for our guide:

Center for Parent Information & Resources: *Helping Students Develop Their IEPs*

Child Advocacy Center of Ohio, Parent-to-Parent Newsletter

Exceptional Children's Assistance Center, Newsletter: *What Does IDEA Say About Individualized Education Plans?*

Federation for Children with Special Needs in collaboration with Exceptional Parent Magazine: *Advocating for Your Child*

Florida Department of Education, Parent Information Series: *The Individualized Education Plan, & Rights and Responsibilities*

Harbor Regional Center for Developmentally Disabled Citizens, Inc.: *Parents, Team Up With Your School, A Handbook to Help Your Special Child*

Kailua Intermediate School, Kim Sherman: *IEP Checklist Form*

Learning Disabilities Association: *How to Participate Effectively in the IEP Process*

Missouri Department of Elementary & Secondary Education, Division of Special Education: *Procedural Safeguards for Children and Parents, & New Special Education Due Process System and Mediation System*

Missouri Protection & Advocacy Services: *Individualized Education Program (IEP)*

Montgomery County Public Schools, Rockville, Maryland: *Prompting Successful Mainstreaming: Classroom Accommodations for LD Students*

MPACT Parent Training Manual

Nebraska Network for Children & Families: *Checklist*

PACER Center, The Pacesetter Newsletter: *IEP Involving the Student is Important for a Successful Plan, & What Makes a Good IEP for Your Child?*

Parkway Parents Advisory Council for Children with Disabilities: *Special Education Meeting Planner*

State of Ohio Department of Education: *Individualized Education Program: A Road Map to Success—Celebrate the Journey*

University of Southern Mississippi Resource Manual for Parents: *The Future is in Our Hands*

Numbers you may need at Special School District

**Main Number:
314-989-8100**

Superintendent's Office _____	989-8281
Communications Department	989-8288
Information Line	989-8450
Compliance	989-8143

Special Education Directors and Area Coordinators _____	989-8151
Affton	989-8230
Bayless	989-8566
Brentwood	989-8497
Clayton	989-8422
Ferguson-Florissant	989-2655
Hancock Place	989-8375
Hazelwood	989-8228
Jennings	989-8182
Kirkwood	989-8205
Ladue	989-8277
Lindbergh	989-8277
Maplewood/Richmond Heights	989-8569
Mehlville	989-8205
Normandy	989-8422
Parkway	989-8435
Pattonville	989-8585
Ritenour	989-8585
Riverview Gardens	989-8182
Rockwood	989-8268
University City	989-8422
Valley Park	989-8158
Webster Groves	989-8277

Special Education Schools - Director _____	989-8486
Ackerman School	989-7200
Litzinger School	989-8800
Neuwoehner School	989-8700
Northview School	989-7300
Southview School	989-8900
Bridges Program	989-7540
Transition programs	989-8399
Court Programs	615-2974

Early Childhood Special Education		989-8411
Technical Education		989-8242
Technical High Schools:	South Tech	989-7403
	North Tech	989-7603
Deaf/Hard of Hearing; Orientation & Mobility; Physically Impairment; Traumatic Brain Injury, Vision		989-8251
Special Non-public Access Program (SNAP)		989-8239
Homebound		989-8307
Student Intake		989-8125
Student Records		989-8170
Planning and Development		989-7804
Workshop Registration		989-7807
Parent Education & Diversity Awareness/ Family & Community Resource Center:	West Area	989-8438
	South Area	989-8108
	North Area	989-8194
	Central Area	(above 3#s)
Instructional Resource Center (IRC)		989-8308
Special Olympics Facilitator		989-7524
Transportation Services		989-7118

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I. About the IEP

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- G. Frequently asked questions — what does IDEA say about IEPs**
- H. Program placement recommendations**
- I. Timelines for the IEP process**
- J. Definitions/acronyms**

A. Beliefs that should guide the development of the IEP

- All children belong to the community where they live and the responsibility for their education rests with the school districts within that community.
- The goal of education is to enhance the pursuit of a meaningful life.
- The family is the foundation of lifelong planning for and with the child.
- The success of children is built, in part, on the natural support systems developed to encourage lasting friendships in educational and community settings.
- Teams working through collaborative relationships are essential to ensuring that each child's educational experience is a success.
- Planning by teams needs to be based on trust and respect for each person's experience, which, in turn, supports flexibility of roles.
- The use of problem-solving methods and intervention-based services will support the accomplishment of long-term goal planning for children.
- Special education is a series of individually designed services and supports; it is not a place to which children are assigned.

B. Who develops an IEP?

Your school is required to notify you to arrange an IEP meeting at least annually. Those who will participate in the meeting should include:

1. The parents or guardian of the child
2. At least one regular education teacher of the child (if the child is, or may be, participating in the regular education environment)
3. At least one special education teacher
4. A representative of the local district who is knowledgeable about resources and curriculum of the district
5. An individual to interpret instructional implications of evaluation results
6. At the discretion of the parent or local education agency, other individuals who have knowledge or special expertise regarding the child
7. The child if appropriate
2. At transition, other agencies needed to plan for the child's future

Team Member Excusals An IEP team member may be excused from all or any part of an IEP team meeting when their area of curriculum or related services is not being modified or discussed, (a) if the parent and district agree to the excusal, and (b) the parent's agreement is in writing. An IEP team member may be excused from all or any part of an IEP team meeting when the meeting involves a modification to or discussion of the member's area of curriculum or related service, (a) if the districts consent to the excusal, (b) the parent's consent is in writing, and (c) the excused member submitted written input

into the development of the IEP to the parent and the team prior to the meeting. An excusal is required to be done **before the meeting**. At least one time a year, the entire team should meet together to share ideas for the benefit of the student. (**Note:** There are no team member excusals for diagnostic conferences.)

C. What the IEP is, is not

The IEP is:

- A meeting where parents, students when appropriate, and school personnel jointly make decisions about an educational program for a student with a disability.
- A document; a written record of the decisions reached at the meeting for a student who will receive special education and related services.
- A management tool in implementing an educational program.

The IEP has a number of purposes and functions:

- The IEP meeting serves as a communication opportunity between parents and educators and enables them, as equal participants, to jointly decide what the student's needs are, what services will be provided to meet those needs, and what the anticipated outcomes may be.
- The IEP process provides an opportunity for resolving any differences between the parents and the school concerning the special education needs of a student with a disability — first, through the IEP meeting, and second, if necessary, through the procedural protections that are available to parents.
- The IEP sets forth in writing a commitment to provide services and resources necessary to enable a student with a disability to receive needed special education services.

The IEP is not:

- The IEP is not a daily lesson plan — but it does cover a whole year.
- The IEP is not an evaluation report — an evaluation report describes your child's strengths and needs. The information from an evaluation report is used to help write the IEP.
- The IEP is not a contract — it does describe things you and the school have agreed to do for your child, but it cannot guarantee that all the special help will be successful.
- The IEP is not a comprehensive curriculum — it relates to special considerations within your child's overall education.
- The IEP does not last forever — as your child grows and learns and changes, the IEP will need to reflect these changes.

Adapted from Florida Department of Education Parent Information Series: The Individualized Education Plan, and Missouri Protection and Advocacy Services' Individualized Education Program (IEP)

D. Components of a quality IEP

The IEP answers the following questions:

- Where are we going (what is the vision for this child)?
- Where are we now (what he or she knows and does well; i.e., present level of performance)?
- How far can we get this year (what will be this year's annual goals and objectives or benchmarks)?
- How will we get there (what services will be provided)?
- What route will we take (how services will be provided)?

These are the components of the IEP that lead to the answers — parent involvement is crucial; student participation is also important when appropriate:

1. Your child's present level of academic achievement and functional performance (PLAAFP)

Under IDEA 2004, the IEP must contain a statement of the student's present levels of academic achievement and functional performance, which are objective data from assessments.

- How the child's disability affects his or her involvement and progress in the regular education curriculum, or for preschool children, participation in age-appropriate activities (*for students with transition plans, consider how the child's disability will affect the child's ability to reach his or her post-secondary goals (what the child will do after high school)*)
 - *your child's educational disability/disabilities
 - *how the disability/disabilities affects performance in both academic and nonacademic areas
 - *your child's learning style
 - *how the regular education curriculum will be accessed by your child
- **Examples of how your child's disability/disabilities might affect his/her involvement and progress in the regular education curriculum, or for preschool children, participation in age-appropriate activities. (All areas of concern that are in need of special education as identified through the evaluation or IEP process must be addressed by a goal(s) and/or accommodation(s), or an explanation of why the concern is not addressed.)**
 - *needs to improve conversational skills with peers without disabilities
 - *needs to learn to appropriately express anger
 - *needs assistance with learning sight words and vocabulary from grade level science and social studies text
 - *needs means of augmentative communication
 - *needs assistance with eating, toileting, mobility, participation in class activities
 - *needs system of positive reinforcement for behavior
 - *needs a positive behavior support plan
 - *needs assistance in developing social skills appropriate for grade level
 - *needs friendship and peer support
 - *needs stimulating and challenging curriculum

- *needs some "down time" each day
 - *needs written direction for assignments
 - *needs to improve fine and gross motor skills
 - *needs assistance with organization of papers, assignments, locker
- The strengths of the child (*for students with transition plans, consider how the strengths of the child relate to the child's post-secondary goals*)
 - *strengths noted by school staff
 - *strengths noted by parent
 - *strengths noted by the child
 - Concerns of the parent/guardian for enhancing the education of the child (*for students with transition plans, consider the parent/guardian expectations for the child after the child leaves high school*)
 - Changes in current functioning of the child since the initial or prior IEP (*for students with transition plans, consider how changes in the child's current functioning will impact the child's ability to reach his or her post-secondary goal*)

Should:

 - *Specify what the student has learned/accomplished.
 - *Report progress in the general education curriculum and may include grades, group participation rates, task and project completions.
 - *Report school staff concerns.
 - *Include student-reported concerns as appropriate. Student participation is encouraged at any age but is mandated at age 1 when transition is being addressed.
 - *Summarize assessment data documenting the student's progress toward goals included in the previous IEP. This summary should reflect, and be limited to, the data that was reported to parents/guardians via the goal progress reporting process.
 - *Include prior interventions and an explanation of data indicating the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the interventions.
 - Summary of the most recent evaluation/re-evaluation results
 - *if the re-evaluation is being completed at the IEP, it should include information from previous evaluations, information provided by the parents, current classroom-based assessments and observations, observations by teachers and observations by related services providers if applicable
 - A summary of the results of the child's performance on any general state and district-wide assessments should include:
 - *Test names and scores for any district-wide assessments. If scores are not available, the reason why should be stated.
 - *A summary of results from the latest MAP or MAP-A assessment.
 - *National percentiles when standard scores are reported as they have more meaning.
 - *An interpretation/explanation of the impact of the disability on test performance.
 - *If the student is not participating in district-wide assessments, a statement as to why the assessment is not appropriate and how the student will be assessed to measure the skill and/or knowledge assessed by the district assessment.
 - * Formal or informal age-appropriate transition assessments

2. Special Considerations: Federal and State Requirements

The IEP development process is comprised of specific considerations that are federal and state requirements that need to be addressed to produce the written IEP document. All of these items must be considered annually:

- Needs of students who are blind or visually impaired (consideration of whether Braille or Braille instruction is needed)
- Needs of students who are deaf or hearing impaired (consideration of the student's language and communication needs and whether the student uses an assistive hearing device)
- Needs of students who exhibit behaviors that impede his or learning or that of others (strategies including positive behavior interventions and supports — if a behavior intervention plan is developed it becomes a part of the IEP)
- Needs of students with limited English proficiency
- Needs of students with communication difficulties
- Student's need for assistive technology devices and/or services
- Whether the student is eligible for Extended School Year (ESY). The need for ESY services will be considered by the IEP team as an integral part of your child's IEP. The extended school year program is usually based on a regression/recoupment formula; i.e., how long it takes your child to regain a skill after a school break. This can be documented through data obtained throughout the year or by historical data that indicates a high likelihood of significant regression and excessive recoupment time if an extended break occurs.

Other considerations that may be used regarding ESY:

- The nature and severity of the child's disability
 - Critical stage of development
 - The child's progress, behavioral and physical
 - The need for continuous programming to maintain a level of self-sufficiency and independence
 - Other unique or unusual circumstances of an individual student
- Whether Post-secondary Transition Services for students 16 and older are required (may be provided for students under 16 if appropriate) — See page 17 for more information on transition planning.
 - Whether notification of the Transfer of Rights must be given (notice must be given one year before the student's 18th birthday informing him or her of the rights under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act that will transfer to the student upon reaching the age of majority)
 - Whether state assessments are administered for the student's age or grade level
 - Whether district-wide assessments are administered for the student's age or grade level

3. Your child's annual goals, and if appropriate, benchmarks or objectives

Annual goals are the targets toward which your child's special education program is directed. They describe what he or she can be expected to accomplish within an academic year. They are written to increase your child's successful participation in the regular education curriculum, include appropriate activities and to allow for inclusion in the regular education environment to the maximum extent appropriate. A well-written goal is meaningful, measurable, able to be monitored, useful in making decisions, and aligned with learning, behavior and industry standards.

Required Components of IEP Goals:

The IEP includes goals that:

200.810.a. Demonstrate consistency with the content of the present level of performance.

200.810.b. Are written in terms that are:

200.810.b.(1) Specific to a particular skill or behavior to be achieved.

200.810.b.(2) Measurable.

200.810.b.(3) Attainable (can reasonably be accomplished within the duration of the IEP).

200.810.b.(4) Results oriented.

200.810.b.(5) Time-bound (generally happen within one year).

200.810.c. Enable the child to be involved in the general education curriculum, as appropriate (for preschool children, participation in appropriate activities).

200.810.d. Address the child's other educational needs resulting from her/his disability.

200.810.e. Are present for each special education and related service (N/A for transportation as a related service).

200.810.f. For children taking alternate assessments, description of benchmarks or short-term objectives aligned to alternate achievement standards. This information may be shown under goals or in the Present Level of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance.

NOTE: Measurable means written in terms that includes the skill or behavior and the level of attainment that will be achieved.

https://dese.mo.gov/sites/default/files/200-Special%20Education%20Process_5.pdf revised July 6, 2017

Goals Drive Services

- Disability does not determine what services, including goals, a student will need.
- Goals are not written for disability, but rather to address the academic, functional, and behavioral needs of the student.
- The IEP Team must determine a logical link between the PLAAFP and the proposed goal.
- When possible, related service needs of the student are addressed in existing goals.
- Behavior concerns that interfere with learning can be addressed through IEP goals regardless of diagnosis.

Special Education Process Training

“IEP goals address skills or behavior for which specially designed instruction is required for children to access and make progress in the general education curriculum.”

“IEP goals should not reiterate the curriculum but should address the skills or behaviors the child needs in order to be successful (progress) in the regular education classroom.”

DESE Q&A

IEP Goal Development

Starting Point:

- What are the areas of need for the student?
- What does the IEP team want the student to know or be able to do?
- How is this relevant to the student’s needs?
- What is the starting point for this knowledge or skill?
- What will the student be doing when the goal is reached?

PLAAFP Example (A):

Not specific enough: *“Billie tries very hard, but has difficulty completing assignments and turning them in on time.”*

More Specific:

Teachers report that Billie is rarely off task in class yet she fails to turn in an average of 60% of assignments per week. On average, 50% of assignments that are turned in are incomplete.

Goal Example (A)

Not specific enough: *“Billie will complete assignments and turn them in 80% of the time.”*

More Specific:

Provided with modified assignments and adult assistance, Billie will increase her task completion skills by completing (and turning in) 75% of her modified assignments per week.

PLAAFP Example (B):

Not specific enough: *“Joe is a 3rd grader who has difficulty with written language.”*

More Specific:

Joe is a 3rd grader who has difficulty with written expression. When writing he correctly uses capital letters at the beginning of sentences and ends his sentences with a period 70% of the time. He is just beginning to demonstrate an understanding of other capitalization and punctuation skills using them correctly 30% of the time. He is able to write a complete simple sentence containing and subject and a verb 40% of the time.

Goal Example (B)

Not specific enough: *“Joe will increase written expression skills.”*

More Specific:

Joe will increase his written language skills by using correct capitalization and punctuation within sentences independently with 80% accuracy in 8 out of 10 trial sentences.

4. Reporting Progress

Notes how often progress will be reported to parents.

5. The special education (see Section I.G.—pg.18), related services, supplemental aids/services and supports for school personnel required to accomplish the goals and objectives:

The minutes, frequency and location of these services, as well as the begin and end date of services is documented on the IEP on the Services Summary page.

Related services are services that are required to assist a student in benefiting from special education. These may include occupational therapy, physical therapy, adaptive physical education, music therapy, recreation, social work, counseling, vision or hearing services, transportation (**IEP team determination of whether it is a needed related service may be facilitated by the use of the Optional Guide for Determining Transportation as a Related Service*), orientation and mobility services, medical services for diagnostic or evaluation purposes, parent training and counseling, rehabilitation counseling services.

Supplemental aids/services are those necessary to enable the student to benefit from the regular education environment. Examples include support to facilitate social interactions at lunch, recess or on field trips; assistance with note taking; referral to assistive technology, augmentative communication, or other facilitators; providing an interpreter's service; use of assistive technology devices; audiology; adult support across specified environments, etc.

Supports for school personnel are any specialized materials, training or consultant services needed in order for school personnel to work effectively with the student. Examples would be use of facilitators, consultations, access to reading materials and videotapes, training opportunities, observational site visits.

Program accommodations and modifications (see Section II.D—pg. 33): These are statements of the supplementary aids, services, supports and equipment a student needs to help him or her be successful in school. They are documented on Forms D, E and F.

Accommodations are specific supports needed by the student because of his or her disability and provide equitable access during instruction and assessment.

Accommodations allow students to complete assignments, tests and activities in different ways or to solve or organize problems using some type of assistive device or organizer. Examples would be: oral test, taped textbook, large print, extended time, highlighted instructions.

Modifications indicate changes in the curriculum content and performance expectations. Examples would be: reduced number of math problems, fewer objectives, shorter units or lessons, adapted materials.

From the Missouri Accommodations Manual March 2006: Accommodations do not reduce learning expectations. They provide access. However, modifications refer to practices that change, lower or reduce expectations. Modifications can increase the gap between the achievement of students with disabilities and expectations for proficiency at a particular grade level. Using modifications may result in implications that could adversely affect students throughout their educational career.

6. **Transportation as a Related Service**

7. **Regular Education Participation**

8. **Placement Considerations and Decisions**

How your child will receive his or her special education services (see Section I.H.—pg. 24).

9. **Signatures:**

Indicates attendance at the meeting.

10. Transition Planning:

Required for students age 16 and older or who will be 16 before the next annual IEP. (See Section I.E.—pg. 17). This is documented on the IEP on Form C.

11. IEP Amendments/Addendums

If the parent and the districts **all agree to amend or modify the IEP**, they may revise the IEP by agreement **without convening an IEP meeting**. The team **must create a written document that describes the changes or modifications** in the IEP and note that, **by agreement of the parties, an IEP meeting was not held**. Every part of an IEP can be amended and there is no limit to the number of amendments that can be made. An amendment does not change the date of the annual IEP. *Upon request, a parent shall be provided with a revised copy of the IEP with the amendments incorporated (Missouri State Plan for Special Education Revised 2005).*

(**Note:** Significant changes in the services to be provided should be handled by a full IEP meeting.)

12. Alternative Way to Participate in Meetings

School meetings do not have to be face-to-face. IEP and placement meetings, mediation meetings, and due process resolution sessions may be convened by **conference calls or videoconferences**.

E. Transition Planning

When a student reaches age 16, transition planning as part of the IEP must be in place. Thus, planning may need to begin at age 15 and may begin earlier if needed, and must be developed considering the individual student's needs, preferences and interests. This process will assist families in identifying post school outcomes and developing action plans to reach the identified goals. The IEP **must contain appropriate, measurable post-secondary goals** in areas related to training, education, employment and, where appropriate, independent living, and the transition services needed to assist the student in reaching those goals. Families will be asked to become active participants in transitioning their children from school to adult life, and agencies important in the student's transition SHOULD be invited to attend the meeting. Examples: Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Rehabilitation Services for the Blind, St. Louis Regional Office for Developmental Disabilities. For more information about transition planning, please contact the SSD Family & Community Resource Center at 989-8460.

Transition Services and the Law, IDEA 2004:

“Transition services” means a coordinated set of activities for a child with a disability that:

- is designed to be results-oriented;
- is focused on improving your child's academic and functional achievement to facilitate his or her movement to post-school activities (including post-secondary education, vocational education, integrated employment, continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living or community participation);

- is based on your individual child’s needs, including his or her strengths, preferences and interests;
- and includes instruction, related services, community experiences, the development of employment and other adult living objectives, and when appropriate, acquiring daily living skills and a functional vocational evaluation.

Contents of the IEP for transition-age students:

- begins not later than the first IEP that will be in effect when your child is age 16, and updated annually;
- contains **appropriate measurable post-secondary goals** based on age-appropriate transition assessments related to:
 - **post-secondary education/training**
 - **employment**
 - **independent living skills, if appropriate**
- contains the **transition services (including courses of study)** needed to assist your child in reaching those goals
 - an annual goal must be stated for each post-secondary goal listed for your child
 - a course of study must be identified to assist your child in meeting his or her post-secondary goals
- not later than one year before your child turns 18, a statement that your child has been informed of his or her rights, if any, that will transfer to him or her when they reach that age (referred to as the “age of majority”)

Sample of goals:

Post-secondary Education — 4-year college or university to gain a degree in ..., community college, transitional post-secondary program, continuing education courses in..., adult basic education classes, etc.

Training — on the job training, vocational training in the area of..., apprenticeship program in the area of..., community integration day program, job corps, adult day health care, military, etc.

Employment — competitively employed as a ..., supported employment with time-limited supports, volunteer work, etc.

Independent Living — live independently without supports, live with parents while attending..., live in dorm while attending..., live in own home or apartment independently or with a friend, live in community with support, live in group home, live in specialized care facility, participate in recreation activities supported independently or by a provider, use transportation, etc.

The Transition Planning process includes the following steps:

A. Transition Planning Assessment

Reviewing multiple assessment data should be part of every transition planning IEP. Age appropriate assessments should be gathered over time and should reflect the student's strengths, interests and preferences. The assessments should help the student plan for his/her post-secondary goal and may be associated with both present and future environments. Assessments can be informal or formal and may include:

- Observations
- Meetings with student
- Self-determination assessments
- Interest inventories
- Interviews with student, parent (i.e. Transition Planning Checklist levels A-C)
- Futures Plan
- Work evaluations
- Vocational evaluations
- Therapy reports
- Psychological evaluations
- Assistive technology

B. Transition Services Planning Page (Form C)

This page documents the student's post-secondary goals for education or training, employment and, if needed, independent living. For each of those areas, transition services or action plans and the course of study needed to work toward the post-secondary goal must be provided. The page also documents the anticipated date of graduation and whether the student will graduate by earning required credits or by meeting IEP goals and objectives. There must be an IEP goal to address how the student will reach each post-secondary goal.

Example:

Employment Postsecondary goal: After graduation Juan will work as a graphic designer

Transitional Services/Action Plans

Get information about financial aid with the community college – Time Line 10/10/09
(Responsible Agency/Person: Student/Parent/family)

Look in the Occupational Outlook Handbook for specific information about graphic design jobs.
Time Line- 9/12/09 (Responsible Agency/Person: Student)

Schedule appointment with Guidance Counselor to take an interest inventory – Time Line 10/1/09 (Responsible Agency/Person: School)

Independent Living Postsecondary goal: After graduation Juan will live with his parents then in an apartment with friends.

Open checking and saving account. Time line 10/1/10 (Responsible Agency/Person: Student)

Create opportunities for Juan to learn laundry, cleaning, and budgeting. TL 5/10/10
(Responsible Agency/Person: Student/Parent/family)

C. Transition Portfolio

Every student age 16 and older will have a portfolio (folder) where pertinent transition-related information may be housed until the student takes it with him/her upon graduation. Some examples of items to be placed in the portfolio could include resumes, self-advocacy statements, letters of recommendations, agency referrals, etc.

D. Summary of Performance (SOP)

No sooner than 30 calendar days before your child's graduation or aging out (age 21) and not later than 10 calendar days after he or she exits, your child should receive a summary of academic achievement and functional performance that will include recommendations on how to assist your child in meeting postsecondary goals.

E. Guardianship/Supported Decision Making

Beginning at least one year before your child reaches the age of majority (age 18), he or she must be informed of the rights under law that will transfer to him or her. At age 18, your child will become the educational decision-maker and will receive all notices required under IDEA. If your child is still your dependent, as defined by the Internal Revenue Service Code, then you will receive copies of any notices sent to your child by Special School District, have the right to attend IEP meetings and continue to have the right to access the special education records of your child.

When a child with a disability turns 18 some parents obtain power of attorney so they can assist the child in making financial and legal decisions. The child is not declared incompetent but the parents are given the right to act on their behalf. A power of attorney can be revoked at any time. On the other hand, a guardian is appointed by the court and a court order is required to remove a guardian.

The parent procedural rights under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) transfer to your child unless he or she has been declared incompetent by a court of law and you have been appointed guardian by the court. If you need information on guardianship, please call the SSD Family and Community Resource Center, 314-989-8460 or visit www.moguardianship.org

F. Special Education Services

What will special education do to help my child in school? This is a question commonly asked by parents whose child will be receiving services. Once the IEP has been written, it is the responsibility of the special education teacher to choose appropriate strategies and techniques to implement the goals and objectives that have been designed for your child. **From elementary to high school, you may find any number of the following activities going on to accomplish this task:**

- Teaching in small instructional groups as a pullout
- Small instructional groups in the regular education classroom
- Co-teaching by special and regular education teachers

- Consultation between special and regular education classroom teachers regarding
 - Curricular modifications
 - Classroom adaptations
 - Behavior support plans
 - Testing modifications
 - Crisis intervention
- Behavior feedback sheets (home and school)
- Helping with
 - Organization of material
 - Locker or desk organization
 - Checking homework assignment sheets before going home and upon arrival
- Helping with the organization of school work
- Teaching social skills
- Teaching study skills such as learning strategies
- Working with individual students on social skill development
- Conferencing with regular education classroom teachers in relation to evaluation of goals, parent conferences and report cards

Elementary School —

In addition to the activities above, the following may occur:

- Providing input and assistance for outdoor education programs
- Providing input and assistance for field trips
- Transitioning students from early childhood programs into elementary schools and from elementary schools into sixth grade centers, junior highs or middle schools (conferencing with staff, making sure classes are appropriate, accompanying students and parents to orientation activities)

Junior High/Middle School —

In addition to the activities listed above, the following may occur:

- Teaching learning strategies classes
- Teaching study skills classes
- Working with a team of teachers
- Providing input and assistance in extracurricular activities
- Scheduling students, collaborating with the guidance counselor or person responsible for scheduling
- Transitioning students from eighth grade to the high school (conferencing with the staff, making sure appropriate classes are taken and schedules are accurate, accompanying students and parents for orientation activities)

- Transition planning when appropriate (becomes a required part of the IEP at age 16 and until graduation)

High School —

In addition to the activities listed above, the following may occur:

- Designing and implementing programs so students will be able to achieve a high school diploma
- Working with other departments in relation to GED, college selection or vocational training
- Sponsoring after school clubs
- Inviting appropriate community agencies involved in transition as needed
- Preparing students to participate in the IEP
- Insuring that the appropriate adult agency supports are in place before the student graduates

Adapted from Harbor Regional Center for Developmentally Disabled Citizens, Inc.:
Parents, Team Up With Your School, A Handbook to Help Your Special Child

G. Frequently asked questions — what does IDEA (The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) say about IEPs?

Must IEPs be reviewed or revised at the beginning of each year?

No. The basic requirement in the regulations is that IEPs must be in effect at the beginning of each school year. IEP meetings must be conducted at least once each year to review and, if necessary, revise the IEP of each child with a disability. However, periodic reviews may be held anytime during the year, including at the end of the school year, before the new school year, or just on the anniversary date of the last IEP meeting. Parents are required to be informed about the educational progress of their child as often as parents of children without disabilities.

How frequently must IEP meetings be held and how long should they be?

IDEA says that each school system must hold a meeting not less than once a year to review and, if appropriate, revise each child's IEP. The legislative history of the law makes it clear that there should be as many meetings a year as any one child may need. The Missouri State Plan for Special Education Revised 2005 allows for amendments/addendums to make changes to the IEP without a meeting, if **all parties agree**.

There is no prescribed length for IEP meetings. In general, meetings will be longer for initial placements and for children who require a variety of complex services, and will be shorter for children who require only a minimum amount of services. It is expected agencies will allow sufficient time at the meetings to ensure meaningful parent participation.

May IEP meetings be recorded?

The use of recorders at IEP meetings is not addressed by either IDEA or regulations. Recording of IEP meetings can be prohibited by the written policy of each school district, but must not interfere with parent participation as prescribed by the ADA (American's with Disabilities Act). Please contact your individual school district for more information.

Must related services personnel attend IEP meetings?

If a child with a disability has an identified need for related services, at the discretion of the parent or school system, the related services personnel would attend the meeting or otherwise be involved in developing the IEP. The school system should ensure that a qualified provider of that service either attends the meeting or provides a written recommendation concerning the nature, frequency and amount of service to be provided to the child.

Is the IEP a commitment to provide services?

Yes. The IEP of each child with a disability must include all services necessary to meet the child's identified special education and related service needs. All services in the IEP must be provided in order for the school system to be in compliance with IDEA.

Does the IEP include only special education and related services or does it describe the total education of the child?

The IEP is required to include those matters concerning the provisions of special education and related services, the extent that the child can participate in regular education programs, and how the child will be involved and progress within the regular education curriculum.

If adaptations and modifications are necessary for a child with a disability to participate in a regular education program, must they be included in the IEP?

Yes. If supplementary provisions to the regular education program are necessary to ensure the child's participation in the program, they must be described in the child's IEP.

Can the school system personnel have the IEP completed when the IEP meeting begins?

No. It is not permissible for a school to present a completed IEP to parents before there has been a full discussion with the parents of the child's need for services and what services the school will provide to the child. IDEA defines the IEP as a written statement developed in any meeting with the school system representative, the teacher, the parent, and if appropriate, the child. It would be appropriate for staff to come prepared with evaluation findings, statements of present levels of educational performance, and a recommendation regarding annual goals, short-term instructional objectives, and the kind of special education and related services to be provided. However, the school personnel must make it clear to the parents at the beginning of the meeting that the services proposed are only recommendations for review and discussion with the parents.

Adapted from Exceptional Children's Assistance Center, ECAC News Line, fall 1995.

H. Program placement recommendations

Following the completion of your child's IEP, a placement recommendation will be made.

The placement decision, made at least annually, is based on your child's IEP and should be as

close as possible to your child's home. It is made by a group of people that includes the parents, the child (age 16 and older required, younger when appropriate) and other people who are knowledgeable about the child, the meaning of the evaluation data and the placement options.

Least Restrictive Environment: By law, your child with a disability should be educated, to the maximum extent appropriate, with children without disabilities. The IEP team must first consider if your child can remain in the regular education classroom and achieve the IEP goals and objectives with the help of supplementary aids and services. If the team agrees this cannot be achieved satisfactorily in the regular education classroom, it then must decide the route that will allow your child opportunities to be integrated with peers without disabilities to the maximum extent possible and as close to his or her home school as possible.

Consideration for removing a child from regular education should occur only when:

- The nature or severity of a child's disability is such that his or her education in the regular education class, with the use of supplementary aids and services, cannot be achieved satisfactorily
- A child is so disruptive in the regular education classroom that the education of the other students is significantly impaired

Removal from regular education must be based on the following factors:

- The nature and severity of the disability (cannot be the only factor)
- The diverse learning styles that would require your child to be educated in a setting other than the regular education classroom
- The need for specially designed materials, supplies or equipment that would prohibit access to the curriculum and goals of the regular education class
- Significant modifications to the regular education curriculum that would have an adverse effect on the educational program and learning environment for other students in the class
- The extent to which your child is distractible
- The inability of your child to engage appropriately with other students
- Any potential harmful effect on your child or on the quality of services that your child needs
- The significant disruptions that would occur in the regular education classroom that would have a negative effect on the education of other students
- The degree to which your child would not benefit from placement in the regular education class

The team cannot base the placement decision solely on any of the following:

- The category of your child's disability
- The configuration of schools in the district
- The availability of related services
- Curriculum content
- Methods of curriculum delivery
- Availability of space
- Budgetary factors
- The severity of the disability
- Administrative convenience

Kindergarten–grade 12 placement continuum

Inside the general education classroom 80% or more of the day

Students with disabilities who are inside the general education classroom for 80% or more of the school day. (These are students who receive their special education and related services outside the regular classroom for less than 21% of the school day.) This may apply to children with disabilities placed in:

- regular class with special education/related services provided within regular classes;
 - regular class with special education/related services provided outside regular classes;
- or
- regular class with special education services provided in resource rooms.

Inside the general education class no more than 79% of the day and no less than 40% of the day

Students with disabilities who are inside the general education classroom between 40 and 79% of the day. (These are children who receive special education and related services outside the regular classroom for at least 21% but no more than 60% of the school day.) This does not apply to children who are receiving education programs in public or private separate school or residential facilities. This may apply to children placed in:

- resource rooms with special education/related services provided within the resource room; or
- resource rooms with part-time instruction in a regular class.

Inside the general education class less than 40% of day

Students with disabilities who are inside the general education classroom less than 40% of the school day. (These are children who receive special education and related services outside the regular classroom for more than 60% of the school day.) This category does not apply to children who are receiving education programs in public or private separate day or residential facilities. This category may apply to children placed in:

- self-contained special classrooms with part-time instruction in a regular class; or
- self-contained special classrooms with full-time special education instruction on a regular school campus.

Public separate school (day) facility

Children with disabilities who receive all of their special education and related services for greater than 50 percent of the school day in public separate facilities for children with disabilities.

Private separate school (day) facility

Children with disabilities who receive all of their special education and related services, at public expense, for greater than 50 percent of the school day in private separate facilities for children with disabilities.

Public residential facility

Children with disabilities who receive all of their special education and related services for greater than 50 percent of the school day in public residential facilities.

Private residential facility

Children with disabilities who receive all of their special education and related services, at

public expense, for greater than 50 percent of the school day in private residential facilities.

Homebound/hospital

Children with disabilities who receive all of their special education and related services in hospital programs or homebound programs.

Early childhood special education (ECSE) placements:

- Early childhood setting
- Early childhood/special education (ECSE) setting
- Home
- Part-time early childhood/part-time ECSE
- Residential setting
- Separate school
- Itinerant service outside the home

Inclusion:

Inclusion refers to students with disabilities being educated in age-appropriate regular education settings, in their neighborhood school, for the benefit they will realize from being there, rather than requiring them to keep up in order to be a part of the class. The appropriate special education supports and services are provided through collaboration among all the professional educators and the parents. An inclusion philosophy will guide placement decisions as specified by Special School District's Board of Education Policy on Least Restrictive Environment:

Special School District supports the inclusion of children with disabilities as members of the community and of general education classrooms, participating, learning, belonging and working with age-appropriate peers. General education will be the starting consideration for all students. The amount of time out of general education and programming details will be determined by the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team based on the individual student's needs. The full range of options will be considered for all students up to and including inclusion. The district will continue to fund all the special education requirements for the continuum of placement options. The district will continue to provide staff development and in-service training for both special and regular education staff members concerning the implementation of options on the continuum of service. The inclusion of children with disabilities requires the support and collaboration of the staffs of Special School District and its partner districts, and of parents, students and the community.

I. Timelines for the IEP

A meeting to develop an IEP must be held within 30 calendar days of a determination of an educational diagnosis.

The parent must give consent if the IEP is to be implemented sooner than 10 days after the meeting. It is expected that student's IEP will be implemented immediately following the IEP meeting and is specified on the IEP form. Exceptions would be when the meetings occur during the summer or a vacation period, or where there are circumstances that require a short delay

(e.g., working out transportation arrangements). There can be no undue delay in providing special education and related services to the student.

An IEP must be in effect before special education and related services are provided to a child. The appropriate placement for a child with a disability cannot be determined until after decisions have been made about what the child's needs are and what will be provided.

J. Terms & acronyms for the IEP process

As you go through the IEP process, read reports, talk to professionals and attend various meetings, there are many terms and acronyms with which you will need to become familiar.

Please refer to the *Glossary of Terms and an Alphabet Soup of Acronyms* in Section VII of the *SSD Parent Handbook* to assist you in understanding the language of regular and special education.

II. Before the IEP meeting

A. Preparing for the conference

B. What to bring with you

C. IEP preparation and participation form for parents

D. Checklist of adaptations/modifications/supports to consider for your child

E. Keeping good records

F. Self-advocacy/student participation

A. Preparing for the conference

1. The IEP Preparation and Participation Form for Families form should be sent to you before the IEP conference (see Section II.C—pg. 30). Take some time to fill this out. The form is designed to follow the IEP and will help you gather your thoughts so you can share what you know about your child and have meaningful participation throughout the meeting. You may want to ask for a blank copy of the IEP form to follow along during the meeting.
2. Talk to your child. Involve your child in the process and get his or her understanding or agreement as to the things you will be addressing at the meeting. Find out what his or her feelings are about school, home and friends. Ask what he or she thinks are his or her strengths, what he or she wants to learn, or if there is something he or she would like to do or to do better.
3. Become knowledgeable about your child's disability and how it may affect his or her education.
4. If you have concerns, review your child's file. You can make an appointment with school prior to the meeting and review what is contained in your child's record. Make sure you understand what it contains. The Family Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) insures your right to examine school records, receive an explanation of the contents, challenge the contents and obtain copies of records.
5. Review any previous IEPs for your child.
6. Make an outline of what you believe your child needs to learn. Examine long-range goals you have for your child and rethink them if necessary. Consider annual goals that will have value for your child and your family, and which will help your child accomplish his or her long-range plans.
7. Prepare a list of questions. Many of these may be answered as the conference progresses; however, don't hesitate to ask questions that have not been addressed.
8. Talk to other parents of children with disabilities and learn as much as you can from them about their IEP experiences.
9. **Feel free to invite anyone you feel can provide information for the IEP committee. This may include any therapists, counselors, or doctors who may be working with your child outside of school. In addition, you also may want to invite someone to attend, relative or friend, who can provide moral support or who makes you feel more comfortable participating in a group. Remember, this is a team effort and everyone working with your child needs to be working together in order to produce the best results.**
10. You should be notified in writing who will be attending the conference beforehand. If you are not, call your child's teacher or area coordinator. Be sure to inform the teacher if you plan to bring someone to the conference.
11. If you are unable to attend, call the teacher to reschedule the meeting. You are an important part of the committee and your input is valued.

Material for this list was taken from LDA "How to Participate Effectively in the IEP Process"; Child Advocacy Center "Parent to Parent Newsletter," Mar./Apr. 1995; and the MPACT Parent Training Manual

B. What to bring with you

- Goals you have for the coming year — put your child's needs and preferences at the center of any discussion
- Examples of strategies and interventions that have and have not worked
- Last year's IEP — if you can find it!
- IEP Preparation and Participation Form for Families — if not already turned in
- Positive mindset and willingness to try new things — look at the meeting as an opportunity for growth and a chance to make things better
- Realization that not everyone may agree — try not to be judgmental or defensive
- Commitment to collaboration — acknowledge and respect each team member

Adapted from Individualized Education Program: A Road Map to Success — Celebrate the Journey, State of Ohio Department of Education

IEP Preparation and Participation Form for Families



This form follows the order of the IEP. It is designed to help you (and when appropriate, your child) participate more effectively in the IEP process and to assist you and your child’s teacher in planning to meet your child’s needs.

Although completion of this form is not required, your input is very important in the development of your child’s IEP. Feel free to complete only the questions you believe apply to your child’s educational needs. You may want to ask your child some of these questions, as well.

1. Present Level of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAPF)

<p>What are some of the best ways your child learns? What are some ways you motivate your child?</p>	
<p>What are some successes your child has had this year (school, home, in the community)?</p>	
<p>What are some of your child’s strengths, gifts and talents?</p>	
<p>Describe the needs of your child at school -- consider academic, communication, behavioral, physical, social and/or emotional needs.</p>	

Describe any concerns you have about your child's education, safety and/or future.	
Do you feel there is need for additional information to identify/support your child's learning needs or area(s) of disability? If so, please explain.	

2. Special Considerations: Federal and State

Requirements These areas are required to be addressed and discussed during the IEP meeting:

	YES	NO
Is your child blind or visually impaired?		
Is your child deaf or hearing-impaired? Use an assistive hearing device?		
Does your child exhibit behaviors that impede his/her or others' learning?		
Does your child have limited English proficiency?		
Does your child have communication needs?		
Does your child need assistive technology devices or services?		
Is your child eligible for extended school year (ESY) services?		
Are transition services required (age 16 and older)?		
Has there been a transfer of rights (age 18)?		
Are state assessments administered for your child?		
Are district-wide assessments administered for your child?		

3 & 4. IEP Goals and Services Summary

<p>Based on the needs identified in Section 1, what would you like to see your child accomplish this year?</p>	
<p>What long-range goals do you have for your child?</p>	
<p>What do you think your child needs to reach their goal? Where do you think your child should receive these services? (i.e. general education classroom, resource room, special education classroom, SSD school) For more information, visit: www.ssdmo.org/cool_tools/fcrc_parent_handbook.html</p>	
<p>What, if anything, needs to be different for your child in the classroom? (Ex: extended time for tests, specialized seating). For more information on accommodations or modifications, visit: www.ssdmo.org/cool_tools/fcrc_parent_handbook.html</p>	

(continued, next page)

5. Transportation

<p>If transportation is a related service, what accommodations and/or modifications are needed?</p>	
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6. Regular Education Participation/Placement Considerations

<p>Do you feel that your child's participation with non-disabled peers in the general education setting is sufficient? If not, please explain.</p>	
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D. Checklist of adaptations and modifications

Adaptations and modifications are any changes or adjustments made in the educational program to meet your child's unique needs and compensate for difficulties. Think about the changes that might be helpful to your child and build competence and independence in learning. (Ask to see Alternate Form I of the IEP Forms for a list of possible adaptations/modifications.) These changes are decided on by the IEP team and may be made in the following areas:

Curriculum/instruction

- Give both oral and visual instructions
- Vary working surface (floor, board, other)
- Simplify/shorten directions
- Provide sequential directions
- Have student repeat directions
- Check for understanding
- Use manipulatives
- Teach calculator use
- Modify lesson or unit — partial participation (adapt materials, multilevel curriculum, curriculum overlapping, substitute curriculum)
- Teach functional tasks
- Highlight relevant words/features/sections
- Use rebus (picture) directions
- Increase prompts and cues during guided practice or increase amount of guided practice
- Increase allocated time
- Reduce required classwork or homework (% , evens, odds) and provide alternative practice opportunities of important skills
- Use reinforcers
- Increase or decrease wait time
- Provide tutor
- Provide peer tutor
- Provide peer reader
- Provide frequent review
- Have student summarize
- Provide mnemonic devices
- Use color coding
- Tape record directions
- Tape record lessons
- Preteach vocabulary or concepts
- Provide discussion questions before reading
- Use of index cards
- Assign only one task at a time
- Provide daily or weekly assignment sheets
- Shorten project assignment into daily tasks
- Use verbal cues (“Don’t write this.” “This is important.” Write this.”)
- Provide unsupported study time
- Partner activities
- Cooperative groups

- Community-based instruction

Environment

- Seat in front
- Seat near teacher
- Seat away from glare of the window
- Reduce visual distractions
- Provide a slant board
- Scheduling considerations
- Supervised lunch periods
- Minimize transitions
- Provide consistent structure
- Provide time-out/personal space
- Provide opportunities for movement
- Locker location
- Use study carrel
- Seat near someone who will be helpful and understanding
- Change groupings
- Alter location of supplies for easy access/minimum distraction

Test taking/student response

- Needs extended time
- Needs test read out loud
- Needs vocabulary explained
- Allow use of calculator
- Assist with recording of answers
- Short answer (no essay)
- Allow creative spelling
- Limit choices in multiple choice
- Provide work bank
- Fill in first letter of answer or cue
- Provide examples of test questions and answers on the test
- Indicate number of letters in answer
- Provide formulas
- Allow notes
- Provide notes
- Allow multiple retakes
- Allow sample or practice tests
- Allow taped responses
- Allow the test to be taken orally
- Allow use of taped reading materials for book reports, etc.
- Mark on test, not computer form
- Minimum distraction testing setting
- Provide tests in segments/allow breaks
- Allow test to be taken in a separate room
- Use alternatives to testing (oral reports, bulletin boards, poster, demonstration, recording)

Supplemental aids/tools and/or services

- Calculator
- Multiplication table
- Spellchecker
- Dictionary
- Vocabulary list
- Essential fact list
- Study guide
- Recording Device
- Recorded reading materials
- DVDs
- Second set of texts for home
- Provide written detailed instructions
- Access to a computer/word processor/iPad
- Communication board/device
- Augmentative communication device
- Special grip pencil
- Use of a timer
- Braille
- TTY (teletypewriter)
- Amplification equipment
- Interpreter
- Note taker (a buddy with carbon paper)
- Larger type
- Magnifying equipment
- Noise buffers (ear plugs, headphones)

Behavior/Social

- Needs daily/weekly home contact
- Provide time-out area
- Provide positive reinforcement
- Provide choices
- Functional assessment
- Positive behavior support plan
- Reduce/minimize auditory and visual distractions
- Define limits (behavioral/physical)
- Individualized contract
- Post rules and consequences
- Give verbal cues/prompts and non-verbal signals/prompts before problems
- Teach behavior skills
- Peer supports

Transportation

- Special lift bus
- Special equipment
- Special assistance
- Smaller bus
- Air conditioning required

- Seat belts or shoulder harness
- Aide on bus
- Positioning

Self-help

- Assistance for toileting
- Assistance with grooming
- Assistance with dressing
- Assistance with eating/drinking
- Assistance in class
- Accessing lockers

Mobility

- Assistance going to classes
- Extra time to go to classes
- Use of elevator
- Proximity considerations in scheduling

School-related extracurricular activities/programs that may require adaptation/modification/planning

- Clubs
- Driver's education
- Sports programs
- Extended day programs
- Social events
- Work experience
- Field trips

Other considerations

- Monitoring of medication
- Special equipment
- Special supplies
- Positioning
- Emergency plans (medical, fire)
- Health issues

This list was adapted and compiled from the following: Kailua Intermediate School, Kim Sherman; Klein High School 504/Student Services Team; Nebraska Network for Children & Families Checklist; Classroom Accommodations for LD Students, Montgomery County Public Schools, Rockville, Maryland, 1984

E. Keeping good records

As the parent of a child with a disability, you will have gathered a tremendous amount of information about your child from various professionals and service agencies. Each time you seek services for your child, you will be asked to supply this information.

As the primary decision maker, observer and advocate for your child, it is to your benefit to keep good and up-to-date records. One way to keep your information organized would be to purchase a loose-leaf binder with tabbed dividers. Sections may include:

- Background information
- Developmental history
- Your child's medical history and medical reports
- Family health history
- Educational history
- Educational, psychological and therapy reports
- Samples of your child's IEP and school progress reports
- Samples of your child's past and present work
- Copies of records from outside agencies
- Copies of letters you have written and received
- A record of your contacts with schools and agencies (personal visits, phone calls)
- Your long-term goals and short-term objectives

You may want to take your notebook with you when you go to your child's school for an IEP meeting or when you visit a new agency or service provider.

So remember...KEEP YOUR NOTEBOOK UP-TO-DATE. If you have lost or misplaced records, you may review the school's records. The district will make one copy of items in your child's file for you so you can have a complete record.

Adapted from Harbor Regional Center for Developmentally Disabled Citizens, Inc.: Parents, Team Up With Your School, A Handbook to Help Your Special Child

F. Self-Advocacy: Student participation in the IEP process

It is important to encourage your son or daughter to take part in, or even take charge of, his or her IEP meeting. It is important for your child to realize that it is his or her plan and that his or her opinions are valued.

By law (IDEA), students must be invited to participate in their own IEP beginning no later than age 16, or younger, when appropriate. Students can be involved at younger ages, and it makes good sense to do so. When your son or daughter reaches the age of majority (18), parent procedural rights transfer, and he or she becomes the educational decision-maker.

What students gain from participation:

- Learn more about their strengths and skills and how to tell others
- Learn more about their disability and how to talk about it to others
- Learn what accommodations are and what might help them succeed
- Learn how to speak for themselves
- Develop skills necessary for self-determination and decision-making
- Learn about the goals and objectives that form the basis of their education, and why this is important to them
- Motivation by meeting goals and the development of future goals important to them

Make certain your child knows exactly what the purpose of the IEP is and that he or she is expected to put forth their best effort in reaching the goals of the plan.

Before the meeting you may want them to practice describing their disability, their strengths, their needs, the accommodations that would help them achieve in class, their goals for the future and the goals and objectives they feel are most important to work on.

The forum can be a positive experience when your child understands that he or she can have some input in the meeting and that growth in self-confidence may occur as a result of participation. The more times your child is able to speak for him or herself, the easier it will become in the future.

If your son or daughter has some long- or short-term plans, encourage him or her to communicate these to the IEP team.

From PACER Center, The Pacesetter "IEP: Involving the Student is Important For a Successful Plan," and NICHCY "Helping Students Develop Their IEPs"

III. At the IEP meeting

A. Hints for the meeting

B. What happens at the meeting

C. Special education meeting planner

A. Hints for the meeting

1. Remember, diagnostic tests do not present the total picture. Your most important job is to make sure that the others at the IEP conference never forget that you are talking about a real child. Make sure the focus of the discussion is on your child's strengths as well as needs.
2. Usually your child's special education teacher or administrator will act as chairperson or group leader for the IEP meeting.
3. Ask for introductions if the person chairing the meeting does not have everyone introduce themselves. If you are not sure what each person's role is at the meeting, ask him or her to explain. Use the Special Education Meeting Planner (see section III.B.—pg. 44) to assist you in remembering names and roles.
4. Each person has something to share and should have a chance to say what he or she thinks. Stick with the issue at hand; i.e., your child's education. Do not be sidetracked by irrelevant issues such as your past experiences or the district's lack of funds.
5. If you do not understand something that is said, ask to have it explained. Do not hesitate to ask for clarification of any detail.
6. You are free to disagree with any part of the IEP. If you disagree, try to do so in a helpful way; make suggestions instead of getting angry or upset.
7. Be flexible enough to accept minor revisions, but be firm about the major issues.
8. The program for your child should be built on services that relate to strengths and abilities, special problems and learning needs...not to his or her category of disability. If you do not agree that this is what the program does, speak up. Changes can be made if you state your views and ideas.
9. Share relevant information about your child using the parent participation form, which has questions relating specifically to the various components of the IEP. Inform the committee of any activities or significant events that may influence your child's performance in school.
10. Make sure your child's medical history is up-to-date and that the committee knows if there are any special needs or services provided by other sources.
11. Participate in developing your child's goals and objectives.
12. Take note of what nonacademic school activities are included in the program of your child. Do not forget areas such as lunch and recess and other areas such as art, music and physical education.
13. Be sure all services that are necessary to implement your child's educational program will be written into the IEP.

14. Ask yourself if what is planned corresponds to your knowledge of your child's ability and needs.
15. Make sure team members talk with, rather than about, your child if he or she is in the meeting. Maybe your child can suggest a goal and/or objective or benchmark and take responsibility for it.
16. When you feel teachers and school personnel are doing a good job, compliment them. Praise, when deserved, is a great thing!
17. You can expect the teachers to carry out informal assessment on a continuing basis. They should be willing to keep trying new methods if your child is not making progress.
18. If you are not sure you are in agreement with the IEP, you may ask for the IEP to be reconvened, or see Section IV.C.—pg. 50 for information on due process procedures.
19. If the group needs more time to complete the IEP, there can be more than one meeting.
20. Your child's progress must be reported to you as frequently as that of a child without disabilities. The IEP, as a whole, must be reviewed once a year. You also may request a team meeting at any time.
21. Remember...you have the right to ask questions and request changes either during the conference or later.

B. What happens at the IEP meeting

1. All of the participants are introduced and listed on the signature page and your contact information is reviewed and updated if necessary.
2. The purpose of the meeting is stated
3. Parents are asked if they have any questions regarding the Procedural Safeguards
4. IEP Preparation & Participation Form for Families is incorporated
5. Progress is reviewed on current goals and, if required, benchmarks/objectives
6. Present Level of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance page is completed
7. Special Considerations page is completed
8. Goals and Progress Report pages is completed
9. At the conclusion of the writing all other parts of the IEP, the Services Summary page and General Education Participation/Placement/Progress Reporting pages are completed

10. If the meeting is an IEP/Reevaluation, the appropriate forms and procedures are completed
11. The Notice of Action form is completed if the IEP results in a proposed change of placement, change in the type/amount of services or if a re-evaluation assessment is requested
12. The Majority Age Notice is completed if appropriate
13. The meeting is concluded by reviewing the student's placement and answering any IEP issues or questions
14. Parents are told that they will receive a copy of the IEP within 20 calendar days of the meeting
15. Parents are informed during any initial or annual IEP meeting to expect a survey request electronically regarding their impressions of the IEP meeting. If email address was not provided or available, then a card with a link to the survey is offered.

C. Special education meeting planner

Even though the input of many people is necessary to create a good educational plan for students with disabilities, meeting with six or more strangers can be very stressful. It may be helpful for you to write out the names of each person at the meeting. Use of this meeting planner may help with that task and help decrease some of the stress associated with the meeting.

Write the date and purpose of the meeting in the space that represents the table. You may need this information later to help you recall what was said at the meeting, or you may need it during the meeting to help you focus your thoughts or comments.

In the spaces marked “participants,” put the name and number of the person seated in chair No. 1, etc. Add their title on the next line and if you do not know it, feel free to ask.

On the line marked clue, put anything that may help you remember who’s who. (For instance, “red blouse” or “gray hair.”) The number of the seat has already been filled in for you. If the person sitting in the No. 1 chair is the resource room teacher, you might fill in the first line as “Mrs. Jones,” and on the second line “resource room teacher,” and on the third line, “purple suit.”

Meeting Planner

2

3

4

5

1

Date: _____

Goal of Today's Meeting:

6

10

9

8

7

Participants:

Name: _____ Ph.# _____
Title: _____
Clue: (1) _____

Name: _____ Ph.# _____
Title: _____
Clue: (6) _____

Name: _____ Ph.# _____
Title: _____
Clue: (2) _____

Name: _____ Ph.# _____
Title: _____
Clue: (7) _____

Name: _____ Ph.# _____
Title: _____
Clue: (3) _____

Name: _____ Ph.# _____
Title: _____
Clue: (8) _____

Name: _____ Ph.# _____
Title: _____
Clue: (4) _____

Name: _____ Ph.# _____
Title: _____
Clue: (9) _____

Name: _____ Ph.# _____
Title: _____
Clue: (5) _____

Name: _____ Ph.# _____
Title: _____
Clue: (10) _____

IV. After the IEP meeting

A. Evaluating the IEP meeting

B. After the conference

C. Due process rights

D. Forms

E. Parent resources

A. Evaluating the IEP meeting

The following is a checklist designed to assist you in evaluating the quality of the IEP developed for your child at the IEP meeting. (Not all of these questions may apply to your child.)

YES NO NOT SURE

1. Do I understand where my child presently functions in relation to each goal and objective?
2. Are written goals clear and understandable?
3. Are written goals reasonable, realistic and linked to standards?
4. Can I answer each of the following questions for each goal:
 - What is to be done?
 - When will it be done?
 - How will I know when the goal is completed?
5. Does it appear that the individual needs of my child are reflected in these goals?
6. Did I provide input into the development of such goals?
7. Are the written goals the ones I feel are most important?
8. Do the teachers who will be working with my child agree with and support the written goals?
9. Will my child receive appropriate related services, supplementary aides and adaptations?
10. If any of these services are written into the IEP, is the beginning date and estimated duration of the services specified?
11. Has a date been set to review my child's progress toward the goals?
12. Have other major agencies or persons who provide services to my child been notified of the IEP meeting?
13. Have I signed release forms and requested that copies of my child's IEP be mailed to other persons or agencies that serve my child?
14. Has some effort been made by members of the IEP team

to coordinate the school plan with other outside agencies that provide services to my child?

15. Have professionals developed a communication plan to make sure that instruction is coordinated and not duplicated for my child?
16. Have all appropriate school placement alternatives been considered (consultation, inclusion, resource, self-contained)?
17. Have I visited the classroom that is being recommended for my child? Or, have I made some effort to become familiar with the recommended placement?
18. Does the recommended placement allow my child the greatest interaction with children in regular education classrooms?
19. Do I feel my child might learn more in a different classroom or type of program? Why?
20. Do I agree with my child's diagnosis?
evaluation?
placement?
21. Is the educational programming (IEP) being carried out?
22. Has Transition Planning been addressed for my 16-year-old or older son/daughter?

If you have answered "yes," the IEP committee has been successful in creating the most beneficial program for your child. If you have answered "no" or "not sure," you need to ask questions and further inquire to relieve your doubts in order to reach a definite "yes" answer. If you have any concerns about numbers 20 and 21, you may want to talk to administrators and teachers in charge of your child's program.

B. After the conference

- Maintain close contact with your child's teacher. Two-way communication is a key to making any program work. Some families have regular meetings, some have a daily or weekly notebook, some have regular telephone calls and some email. Share information and suggestions. Be supportive. There should never be any surprises on your part or on the school's.
- Ask for suggestions on how you can continue to practice and reinforce what is going on in school.
- Continue to keep good records (see section II.E.—pg. 37) and document any unaddressed needs.
- During the year, keep a list of anything you want to consider for your child's next IEP.
- If you think teachers or other team members are doing a good job, tell them. Let them know when they have done something you appreciate.
- You have known your child a long time. If you have discovered hints that help your child learn, share them. Offer to help teachers and others adapt materials or programs.
- Remember that other people such as the school bus drivers, janitors, lunchroom workers and secretaries may help your child in informal ways.
- Get involved in your child's school. Join the PTA/PTO, go to school plays and other activities, volunteer in the library. The more you are involved and the more people see you, the better you will get to know each other. This sometimes makes it easier to work together for your child.
- Go over your child's IEP every few months. Are the services stipulated in the IEP being provided? Are you satisfied? Is your child happy?
- **If the IEP is not working:**

Ask for a meeting of all the people involved. If you feel it is necessary, ask for a team meeting to change the IEP. You may do this at any time.

Talk with your child's teacher if you have any questions or if there are any problems. If the problem is not being resolved, **put it in writing**. Direct your letter to the Special School District area coordinator, principal or director of special education for your district or school.

Do not get personal: Mention the problem and not the person. For example: My child has not received speech and language services for three weeks, or, My child has not received the assistive technology evaluation we agreed upon.

Focus on your child's needs for services, appropriate goals and objectives or benchmarks, placement, etc., to achieve a full and meaningful life.

Be specific about times, dates, meetings, phone calls used to try to resolve the issue previous to your letter.

- Check out the resources listed at the end of this section. Become familiar with the services and agencies that can assist you in making your child as successful as possible in school and in the community.
- Participate in training sessions or workshops offered by the school districts or other community agencies. SSD's Parent Education & Diversity Awareness Program offers approximately 50 other workshops during the school year designed especially for parents. Call Parent Education & Diversity Awareness for a calendar – 314-989-8460
- Find out who the parent advisory council representative is in your building or district. He or she should be able to help you with questions and networking within your school. Call Parent Education & Diversity Awareness for more information on **Parent Advisory Councils (PAC)**.
- Call Parent Education & Diversity Awareness and ask for additional items from the **Parent Handbook** menu.
- Call Parent Education & Diversity Awareness to visit the **Family & Community Resource Center** at Special School District Central Office. **Parent Education & Diversity Awareness:**

West—989-8438

South and Central—989-8108

North—989-8194

C. Due process rights

The school district must give you written notice (Notice of Action Proposed or Refused) before it:

1. Proposes to initiate or to change the identification, evaluation, or educational placement of your child or the provision of a free appropriate education (FAPE) to your child; **or**
2. Refuses to initiate or to change the identification, evaluation, or educational placement of your child, or the provision of FAPE to your child.

If you disagree with your child's identification, evaluation, reevaluation, IEP or placement, you have the right to due process.

Due Process Hearing Procedures:

1. Mediation - prior to filing for due process (optional) — also will be offered, and if agreed to by both parties, a session will be scheduled **within 15 days and held within 30 days** from agreement to mediate. You and the district will need to agree on a mediator.

At the mediation session:

- You and the district may bring 3 persons each to the mediation session, or more by agreement
- No attorneys can be present at mediation session
- You and the district have a right to end the mediation at any time
- Both you and the district will receive a copy of the written agreement reached as a result of the mediation
- The agreement is legally binding

2. Impartial Due Process Hearing: General — you may initiate a due process hearing if you do not agree with an action proposed or refused by the district. The due process hearing request must involve an alleged violation of no more than **two years** before the date you knew or should have known about the alleged action. The written request can be mailed or faxed to the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and a copy must be sent to the district.

MO DESE
Attention: Compliance Section/Special Education
Post Office Box 480
Jefferson City, MO 65102

Or FAX to: 1-573-526-4404

The request should include the child's name, address, name of the school and district the child attends, a description of the nature of the problem including facts relating to the problem and your proposed resolution of the problem if known. To request a form you can use to provide this information, call 1-573-751-0602 or Relay Missouri at 1-800-735-2966 or download from the website - <https://dese.mo.gov/special-education/due-processchild-complaint>

Within two (2) business days of the filing of the complaint, the Office of Special Education will forward the complaint to the Administrative Hearing Commission for a hearing. All further documentation must be filed with the Administrative Hearing Commission by fax or mail.

- **Mediation - after filing for a hearing (optional)** — will be offered and if agreed to by both you and the district, a session will be scheduled **within 15 days and held within 30 days** from the agreement to mediate (see 1. Mediation above).
- **Resolution meeting** – (both parties can agree to waive) — will be convened by SSD **within 15 days of your request for a due process hearing**. The meeting will have a decision-making representative of the district. The district will only have an attorney present if you bring one.
- **Resolution period** – If the complaint is not resolved **within 30 days**, the due process hearing may be held. If it is resolved, both parties sign a legally binding agreement.

3. Administrative Hearing Commission — **Within 15 days** of receiving the complaint SSD must notify the Administrative Hearing Commission if it believes the request is insufficient and the Administrative Hearing Commission must respond back **within 5 days** if the panel determines the request meets IDEA requirements. If determined insufficient, an amendment can be made to the complaint **no later than 5 days** before a hearing is held.

The panel has **45 days** from the date of the state's receipt to set the date and location, give notice, conduct the hearing, and render and mail the findings. In an expedited hearing resulting from a disciplinary action, the hearing must be held **within 20 school days** and the decision rendered and mailed **within 10 school days** of the hearing.

Before the due process hearing:

- Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) will inform you of any free or low-cost legal or other relevant services
- The district will send you a response that specifically addresses the issues raised in your complaint **within 10 days** of receiving your request for a due process hearing
- Your child will remain in his or her current placement (except as provided under the Discipline section) unless you and the district agree otherwise

At the hearing, you and the district both have the right:

- To have an attorney or other individuals to assist you
- To explain your side, ask witnesses questions, cross-examine witnesses and show your evidence
- To require witnesses to attend
- To prevent the introduction of evidence, evaluations and recommendations not disclosed to you five days before the hearing
- To obtain a written or electronic verbatim record of the hearing at no cost

- To obtain written or electronic findings of fact and decisions of the hearing
- To have your child, the subject of the hearing, present
- To open the hearing to the public

5. Civil Action — If you do not agree with the Administrative Hearing Commission’s decision, or if you feel the hearing was unfair, you may appeal the findings and decisions in either state or federal court. Before filing a civil action, due process hearing procedures must be exhausted.

6. Child Complaint — If you or an organization believes the district has violated any state or federal regulations or statutes relating to the IDEA, a signed written complaint may be filed with DESE. Your complaint will be investigated and resolved within 60 days and you will receive a written decision that addresses each allegation in the complaint and contains findings of fact and conclusions. Decisions are final.

Each state must have written procedures for receiving, investigating and resolving such complaints regarding the administration of programs funded through the U.S. Department of Education. Complaints should be filed with:

Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE)
 Division of Special Education Compliance
 C/O Child Complaint Coordinator
 Post Office Box 480
 Jefferson City, MO 65102-0480

Or FAX to: 573-526-4404

D. Forms

Many forms have been developed by parents and educators to ease the transition into special education and to assist in the communication from school to home and home to school.

You might want to work with your child’s teachers to develop such forms, or contact Parent Education & Diversity Awareness for the following forms developed by the Wisconsin School Inclusion Project:

IEP At-A-Glance

Parent Preferences for Home-School Involvement

Student Profile Adaptations Profile

E. Parent resources — after the IEP

1. **Parent Program at Special School District—Parent Education & Diversity Awareness** (<https://ssdfcs.ssdmo.org/groups/ssdparenteducationdiversityawareness/> or https://www.ssdmo.org/cool_tools/fcrc.html)

Parent workshops are free and open to the public. To find a complete list or topics please visit the SSD Website. Some topics include: Transition, Behavior Strategies, Social Skills, Educational Supports, Special Education Process and Community Resources (**Call 314-989-8108 for a schedule.**)

Family & Community Resource Center — provides information, research and referral on every disability and disability-related area for parents, students, teachers and other professionals and community members. The center houses approximately 3,500 books, 250 videos, newsletters, disability awareness curricula, posters, 40 resource packets, pamphlets and brochures from support organizations, and catalogs from various vendors. Publications include the Parent Handbook, Transition Guidebook and IEP Guidebook for Parents. (**Call 314-989-8438 or 989-8431.**)

Parent Advisory Councils (PAC) — created to assist parents in networking, becoming informed about their child's special education services and Special School District, improving communication between SSD and the local district, and creating a positive awareness for students with disabilities. To accomplish this at the Building-level (B-PAC), parents meet with principals, area coordinators and teachers; at the District-level (D-PAC), parents meet with their district's special education director, local district superintendent or liaison. The SSD Parent Advisory Council (SSD PAC) is made up of three parents elected from each local district and each SSD building. It meets monthly to address the rights and concerns of families of children with disabilities and consults with the SSD Superintendent, Board of Education and Governing Council. (**Call 989-8108 for more information.**)

2. **MPACT (Missouri Parents Act)** — Missouri's Training and Information Center for Parents of Children with Disabilities provides information, networking, workshops and other services for parents to assist them to become more active in decisions regarding their child's special education. Call **800-743-7630** for more information <http://missouriparentsact.org/>
3. **Missouri Protection & Advocacy Services (P & A)** — organization has trained advocates and a legal staff to assist you with information and referral, counseling/professional assistance, administrative remedies, negotiation/mediation and legal services at no charge. Call **800-392-8667** for more information. www.moadvocacy.org/
4. **Legal Services of Eastern Missouri** — Children's Legal Alliance provides free educational advocacy to qualifying low-income children with disabilities who are not receiving appropriate services and those who have been illegally or improperly

excluded from school. Call **314-534-4200** or go to www.lsem.org/ for information.

5. **The Recreation Council of Greater St. Louis** — a clearinghouse for information regarding recreation and leisure opportunities for St. Louis area residents with disabilities. Call **314-726-6044** for more information.
<http://www.recreationcouncil.org/>
6. **Learning Disabilities Association of Missouri-St. Louis Affiliate (LDA)** — organization provides phone referrals, parent support groups, educational advocacy, seminars and symposiums, resource library, newsletter and workshops for learning disabilities and attention deficit disorder. Call **314-966-3088** for more information.
www.ldastl.org/
7. **St. Louis Regional Office/Missouri Department of Mental Health** — provides evaluation and case management services to residents who have mental retardation or some other developmental disability. After eligibility is determined, arrangements are made to obtain services (certain therapies, training, residential placement, resources, respite and more) within available resources of the division. Call **314-587-4800** for more information. www.dmh.mo.gov/
8. **MO-FEAT (Missouri Families for Effective Autism Treatment)** — an organization of parents and professionals throughout Missouri with the mission to provide education, advocacy and support for families and the autism community and to promote early diagnosis and effective autism treatment. Call 636-527-FEAT (3328) www.mo-feat.org
9. **Missouri Developmental Disabilities Resource Center** — information and referral service assists individuals and families in accessing services, provides computer searches, printed materials, resource packets and materials on loan. Call **800-444-0821**.
www.moddrc.org/
11. **Easter Seals Midwest** — provides family support, parent and professional training, supported employment, residential and adult services. Call **314-567-7705** for information. <http://www.eastersealsmidwest.org>
12. **St. Louis Arc** — supports people with developmental disabilities and their families with early intervention, recreation and leisure supports, residential and employment support, respite services. Call **314-569-2211**. <http://www.slarc.org/>
13. **Paraquad** — provides independent living services for individuals with physical disabilities, advocacy, youth and family programs and community programs. Call **314-289-4200**. www.paraquad.org
14. **Bridges Community Support Services** — offers individualized services for persons with brain injury, cognitive and developmental disabilities, psychiatric illness, ADHD and obsessive compulsive disorder. Call **314-781-7900**. www.bridgescss.com/

15. **Sharing Our Strengths (SOS)** — Missouri's parent-to-parent/peer support network for parents of children with developmental disabilities or special healthcare needs, individuals with disabilities, and professionals. Call 800-773-8652. www.sharingourstrengths.com/
16. **National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) of Metropolitan St. Louis** — provides support, education, advocacy and research for families and friends of people with serious mental illnesses. Call **314-962-4670** for more information. www.namistl.org.

These are just a few of the many resources available in our community, statewide and nationally. Please refer to the Resource Section in the SSD Parent Handbook for a more comprehensive list of resources in our area.

SSD Parent Program:

Parent Education & Diversity Awareness Family & Community Resource Center

Central and South - 314-989-8108

**(Affton, Bayless, Brentwood, Hancock Place, Kirkwood,
Lindbergh, Ladue, Maplewood-Richmond Heights, Melville,
Webster Groves, Valley Park, Southview School, South Technical
School and Vocational Skills Program)**

West - 314-989-8438

**(Parkway, Pattonville, Ritenour, Rockwood, Litzinger and
Neuwohner Schools, JDC, Lakeside)**

North and Central - 314-989-8194

**(Clayton, Ferguson-Florissant, Hazelwood, Jennings, Normandy,
Riverview Gardens and University City, Northview and
Ackermann Schools, North Technical High School)**