

# A Montana Student's Guide to an I.E.P.

## What is an I.E.P.?

An IEP, or Individualized Education Plan, is a written document that describes the educational plan for a student with a disability.

This is only for students through grade 12. After you graduate from high school, your IEP is closed.

Among other things, an IEP talks about:

- your disability
- what skills you have
- what skills you need to have or work on
- what classes you might take in the coming school year
- what modifications or accommodations the teachers of those classes should provide
- what goals you have or are thinking about for after high school graduation

IEPs are written at least **once a year** and will change as you get older and are taking different types of classes or as your needs change. You, your parents and your school, may asked to change your IEP more often if it is necessary.

## Why do I have an IEP?



Students with disabilities who qualify for IEPs are able to have an individualized approach to their education. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a federal law that requires each student who qualifies for an IEP to have access to public education in a way that meets their needs in school.

The IEP is to make sure that everyone knows what your education plan is for the year. This includes what classes you are taking, how much support you are getting from your Special Education teacher(s) and what accommodations you will need while in school.



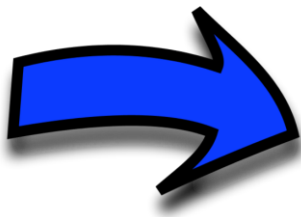
## Who writes the I.E.P.?

Because you qualify for an IEP, your Special Education teacher is in charge of making sure that your IEPs are written each year and that they are followed by you and the school. They keep all the records of this year's IEP as well as all of the past IEPs. IEPs are legal documents and your Special Ed teacher will have a file that has all the IEP and eligibility paperwork in it, in case you ever need a copy.

However, even though your Special Education teacher is in charge of making sure the IEP is written and put into place, an IEP is written as part of a **team meeting**, where the people on the team talk about and decide what would help you be a successful student and work toward your transition goals.

The IEP team includes:

- You
- Your parent(s) or guardian(s)
- At least one (1) general education teacher
- At least one (1) Special Ed teacher
- Administrator (principal, superintendent, or designee)
- If applicable, Speech/Language Therapist, Occupational Therapist or Physical Therapist
- School Counselor
- People from transition service agencies (like Voc. Rehab., Developmental Disabilities Services, etc.)
- Other people you would like to invite who know your strengths and needs and can support you



### **IEP= INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PLAN**


This is a plan that happens every year that is made to help school work best for **YOU**. Since it is your plan, you should be involved!

## How long does an I.E.P. last?

This will depend on how many questions people have and how much needs to be decided, but the average length of time is an hour.



There is no set length to the meetings. If there is a lot of discussion and you or others need a break—that is OK!

Anywhere you see this star:  you will be reminded to do some work before your I.E.P. meeting.

## **What is in my I.E.P.?**

There is a set form that Montana Office of Public Instruction (OPI) gives teachers to fill out for every student in Montana that has an IEP.



The form has these main sections:

### ● **STRENGTHS, EDUCATIONAL CONCERNS AND PREFERENCES**

➤ This is where you, your parents and school staff can talk about what your strengths and interests are, as well as anything that is an education concern for you.



➤ **BEFORE THE MEETING**—think about what you enjoy doing for hobbies, what classes you most enjoy in school and what you would like to do after high school

### ● **TRANSITION SERVICES**

➤ This is the part of the IEP that helps make sure your educational plan supports what you goals are for after high school



➤ **BEFORE THE MEETING**—think about what you would like to do as a career, where you would like to live, if you would like to go to college or technical school after high school or go straight to a job. Also, are there skills you want to learn for living on your own, like how to start a bank account, balance a checkbook, do laundry, invest money, find a place to live, etc.?

### ● **PRESENT LEVELS OF ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AND FUNCTIONAL PERFORMANCE & MEASURABLE ANNUAL GOALS**

➤ This is the part of the IEP that addresses your goals for the academic year. Present Level of Performance means how are you doing now? A measurable annual goal is what you can work on to improve in that area. These are usually related to academic areas (like math, reading and writing), but can also include transition (employment and independent living) goals and behavior (how well do I get along with others and respond to social stressors) goals.



➤ **BEFORE THE MEETING** -- talk to your Special Ed teacher to find out the areas that your IEP will have goals in and talk to them about what your goals for school are. You can work together to set these goals and work on them throughout the school year.

## ● SUPPLEMENTARY AIDES AND SERVICES

- This is the part of the IEP that talks about what supports help you be successful in your classes—these are called accommodations and modification.



**Accommodations:** These are tools that can help you learn the same material and meet the same expectations as your classmates. The curriculum is the same as other students in the classroom. For example, if you have difficulty reading, you might listen to the audio version of the text rather than reading it. Or, if you have a hard time concentrating with other noises in the room, you could wear headphones while working to block classroom noises/distractions.

**Modifications:** If you are not able to do the same work as your peers in particular subjects, you may need changes, or **modifications**, to the curriculum. For example, a student could be assigned shorter or easier reading assignments that still challenges you, but is doable. Kids who receive modifications are *not* expected to learn the same material as their classmates.



- **BEFORE THE MEETING** – Think about what is helpful to you when you are working on school work, listening in class, working on assignments or group projects, etc. Ask you teachers or other specialists if there is assistive technology that can help you in school. These are the things you will want to talk about and ask for in this section.

## ● TRANSFER OF RIGHTS TO THE ADULT STUDENT

- In Montana, educational rights transfer to the student at **age 18**. That means, unless there has been a court action to transfer your educational rights to another adult (this is rare), that you now have the right and responsibility to be the decision-maker regarding your education.
- Now, instead of your parents signing your forms, you will be the person that signs all your educational documents. You decide who to invite to your IEP meeting. You sign any consent forms for evaluation, etc.



- **BEFORE THE MEETING**—This should be something that you and you IEP team talk about way before your 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. You should be part of decision making and participating in your IEP so that by the time you turn 18, you understand what you education plan and goals are and you know who will support you as you make some important decisions.