



Special Education Process, Programs and Services in Ontario

Special Education programs and services include accommodations and modifications to a student's educational program that are different from those given to the general student population. Accommodations and modifications are explained further below, but generally they refer to changes in instruction, the classroom environment, or student assessment. In Ontario, to become identified as requiring Special Education services, a student and his/her parents must go through the Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) process to develop an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) that will specify strategies to help the student learn successfully. The IPRC process is described below. This process may be different outside of Ontario.

Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC)

The Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) consists of the principal, teacher, Special Education teacher, other professionals and parents. This

team works to identify a student's exceptionality and then creates an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) that will drive the student's classroom learning. For students who have been identified as exceptional, the IEP must also indicate the student's placement, which includes⁶⁴:

- A regular class with indirect support
- A regular class with resource assistance
- A regular class with withdrawal assistance
- A special education class with partial integration
- A special education class full-time

Working with an IPRC is the only process by which a student can be identified as "exceptional" and therefore become entitled to Special Education programs and services. Your child may still be able to receive extra help through the school and have an IEP, but the IPRC is the official method of legally entitling students to Special Education. The IPRC may be delayed until the child has been assessed, but an IEP can still be put in place.

A parent can start the IPRC process by writing a letter to the principal requesting an IPRC review. A parent is entitled to be present and participate in all IPRC discussions. A parent also has the right to have a representative at an IPRC meeting to speak on the parent's behalf, or provide support. Check in with your local Learning Disabilities Association to see if they have this service available.

After making its decision, the Chair of the IPRC must send a written decision to the parent. A parent may take home and review the IEP that is presented by the IPRC before signing; it must be signed within 15 days, and the decision will be implemented after 30 days. The committee meets annually to update and change the IEP, as necessary.

Individual Education Plan (IEP)

An Individual Education Plan (IEP) is "a written plan developed for an exceptional student that describes the adaptations (accommodations and modifications) and services to be provided" to a student to ensure a successful learning environment.⁶⁵

An IEP will identify a student's current level of functioning, long- and short-term goals, instructional strategies and accommodations to be made for the student, and assessment procedures required for the student. It will also identify the team members and their roles in the completion of the Individual Education Plan.⁶⁶ An IEP is completed and signed within 30 school days of placement in a Special Education program. IEPs help the teacher understand a child and what they need to be successful, and help the student to set goals and outline the steps to these goals.

The IEP process involves the following five phases:

1. Gather information
2. Set the direction
3. Develop the IEP as it relates to the student's special education program and services
4. Implement the IEP
5. Review and update the IEP⁶⁷

For further details, please see Appendix 1: Overview of the IEP Process



Accommodations, Modifications and Alternative Expectations

A student's IEP will specify whether their learning will require accommodations (AC), modifications (MOD) or alternative expectations (ALT).

Accommodations: are strategies, supports and services to help the student with their learning.⁶⁸ This may come in the form of assistive technology or more time to complete a task. There are no changes to the student's grade-level curriculum, just strategies put in place to help with learning. Any accommodations are categorized on the IEP as instructional, environmental, or assessment accommodations.⁶⁹ See Appendix 2:

Examples of Accommodations for examples of each of these types.

Modifications: are changes made to the expectations of the curriculum to meet a student's needs. A teacher may teach different curriculum content to a student, change the expected amount of material that they are required to learn, change the level of thinking required, or lower the grade level expectations. For example, a Grade 5 student with an identified exceptionality may work on the Grade 3 math curriculum.

Alternative expectations: help students to learn skills that are not actually part of the Ontario Curriculum. Examples of this include: "speech remediation, social skills, orientation/mobility training, and personal care programs."⁷⁰

