

The Parts of an IEP

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Abstract

This paper explains the major components of an Individualized Education Program (IEP) and their importance in supporting students with disabilities in a school setting. It breaks down key sections of an IEP. Each section is discussed in terms of what it includes, how it benefits both the student and the teacher, and how school counselors can contribute to the IEP process. The paper highlights the counselor's role in supporting emotional, behavioral, and academic development as part of a collaborative team effort.

Keywords: IEP, school counseling, special education, student support, academic accommodations, annual goals, measured progress, least restrictive environment, related services, student development

The Parts of an IEP

Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance

This part of the IEP is basically a summary of where the student is right now, both academically and in everyday functioning. It includes things like test scores, teacher observations, and how the student behaves or communicates in different settings (Winterman & Rosas, 2014). It helps show what the student is doing well and what areas they're struggling with.

For teachers, this section is helpful because it gives them a starting point for instruction. For counselors like me, it's useful because it gives insight into whether emotional or behavioral issues are making learning more difficult. Knowing this helps me figure out how to support the student in a way that works alongside their academic goals. If a student is having trouble managing their emotions, for example, I can plan counseling sessions that target those challenges while staying connected to their school progress.

Measurable Annual Goal

These are the specific goals that the IEP team wants the student to reach within a year. The goals are always based on the current abilities of the student, and should be written in a way that allows progress to be tracked clearly. They usually focus on one skill or area of need, like improving reading fluency or building better peer relationships (Winterman & Rosas, 2014).

These goals help teachers know exactly what they should be working on with the student. For counselors, this is where I can support students through social or emotional goals. If a student needs to learn better coping strategies or how to interact more appropriately with classmates, I can provide counseling that's aimed at helping them reach those goals.

Measured Progress

This section explains how the school will track whether the student is making progress on the annual goals. It includes how often the progress will be reviewed and what kind of information will be used to show whether the student is improving. That could be things like classwork, behavior charts, or check-ins with staff (ECACorg, 2011).

This helps everyone stay on the same page about how the student is doing. Parents can see whether things are improving, and teachers can adjust their instruction if needed. As a counselor, I might help collect data if the goals are related to emotional or behavioral issues. I can also share my own observations during team meetings to give a fuller picture of how the student is doing overall.

Special and Related Services

This section lists any additional services the student will get outside of regular classroom instruction. This could include speech therapy, physical therapy, or counseling services (IRIS

Center, 2025b). Each service is described in detail, including how often it happens and where it will take place.

This section matters because it shows what extra support the student needs to be successful. If counseling is one of the services included, that means I have a direct role in helping the student. I'll work with them one-on-one or in a group setting, depending on their needs, and make sure I'm documenting the progress they're making. Being part of this team means I'm helping the student grow in areas that affect both their learning and personal development.

Participation in the Least Restrictive Environment

This part explains the amount of time the student will be spending in general education classes compared to the time spent in special education settings. The goal is to keep students with their peers as much as possible while still giving them the support they need (Your Special Education Rights, 2013b).

It's important because students usually do better when they're included with others their age. Teachers need to know how this is set up so they can prepare for the student's needs. As a counselor, I can support this by helping with classroom strategies that make inclusion smoother. I also work with students to help them feel confident and prepared for being in general education environments. If issues come up, I can help the team decide if any changes are needed.

Accommodations and Modifications

Accommodations are changes in how a student learns the material, like extra time on tests or using audio books. Modifications change what the student is expected to learn, such as using simpler texts or adjusting grading expectations (Your Special Education Rights, 2013a).

Both are there to give students access to learning in a way that works for them. Teachers use them to adapt their lessons, and counselors can help make sure the student understands what supports are available. I also help students learn how to advocate for themselves so they feel confident asking for what they need. Sometimes I'll talk with teachers if accommodations aren't being used properly or if something needs to be adjusted.

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