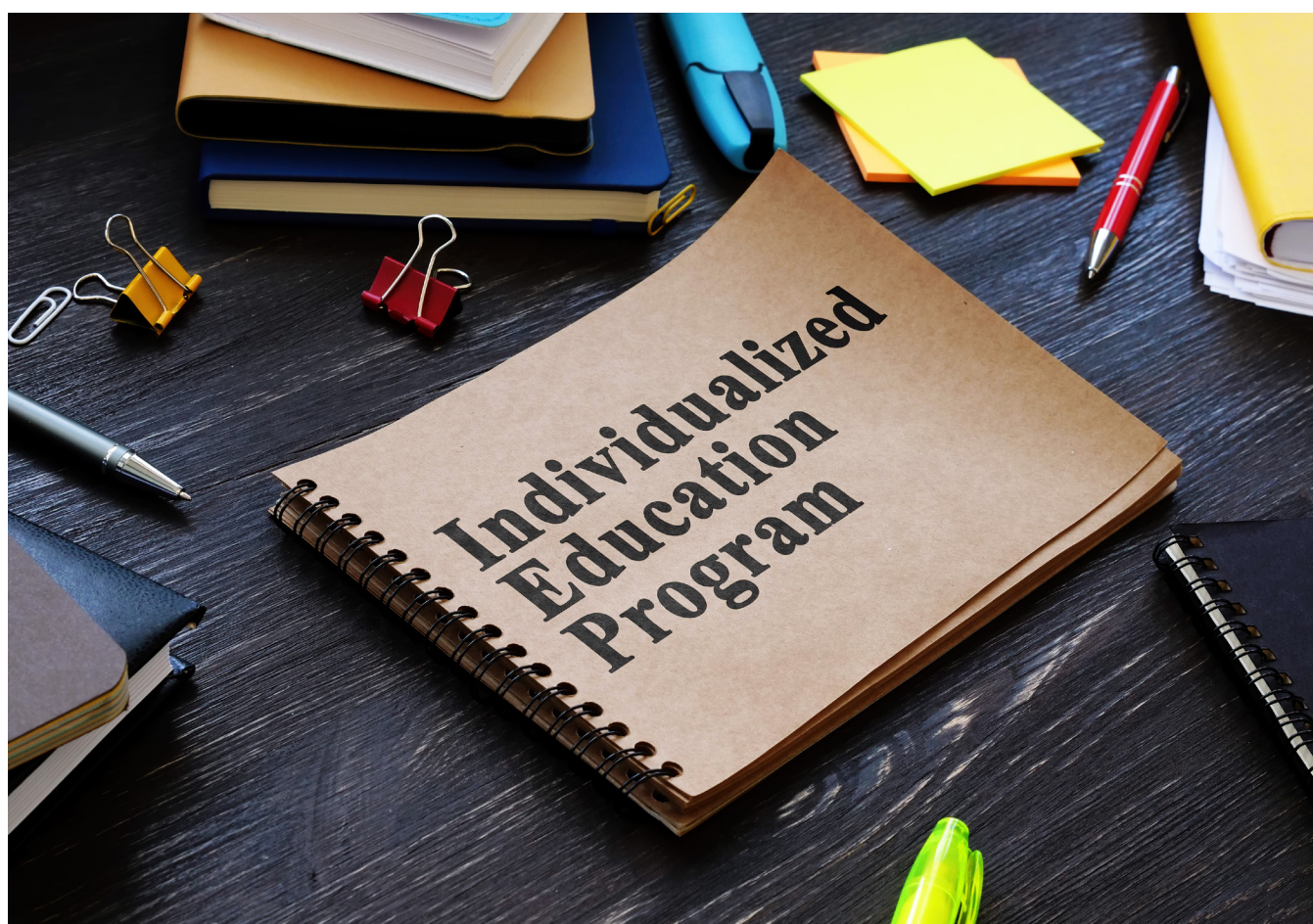




Getting to Know Your IEP

Facilitator Guide



About the Activity

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) outlines seven required components of an individualized education program (IEP) ([Section 300.320](#)):

1. Present levels of academic achievement and functional performance (PLAAFP) statement
2. Statement of measurable annual goals
3. Monitoring plan
4. Statement of services and aids
5. Explanation of educational setting
6. Participation in State or districtwide assessment
7. Dates, frequency, location, and duration of services

Activity Overview

- **Purpose:** Build confidence in participants' understanding of the IEP document by ensuring that they are able to identify where the required components appear in the local IEP document
- **Suggested time:** 25–65 minutes
- **Suggested audience:** General and special educators, administrators, special education staff, preservice educators
- **Materials:** Participant handouts, copies of blank IEP documents, highlighters or markers, IEP Tip Sheets
- **Prerequisite knowledge:** Understanding of the IEP components

Although these components are essential parts of the IEP, where they appear in the IEP document varies significantly across the nation and can be challenging to identify. This activity is intended to help educators and administrators review and analyze their local IEP document to ensure they understand where each required component appears. It is important to remind participants that their state may require components beyond those required by IDEA or may use language that differs from the language in IDEA (e.g., present levels of educational performance [PLEP] or present levels of performance [PLOP] instead of PLAAFP). In addition, depending on the age and needs of the child, additional information such as transition services must be included in the IEP document.

Before the activity, we recommend that participants become familiar with the required components of an IEP as outlined in IDEA. The PROGRESS Center has developed an [IEP Tip Sheet](#) series that briefly reviews this information for each IEP component. For participants who are less familiar with the IEP components, facilitators may find it helpful to use the activity, [Strategies for Analyzing PROGRESS Center IEP Tip Sheets](#) with the PROGRESS Center's [IEP Tip Sheet: An Overview of the IEP](#) prior to completing this activity. It may be worthwhile to require participants to complete the self-paced course [IDEA and the IEP: From Compliance to PROGRESS](#) and/or provide training on the IEP.

Activity Objectives

By completing this activity, participants will be able to

- identify where the required IDEA components of an IEP appear in their local IEP document, and
- make better use of the IEP to develop and implement high-quality educational programming.

Facilitating the Activity

This section presents an overview of the process and materials needed to facilitate the activity.

- Review the structure and purpose of the activity.
- Review the structure of the local IEP or an example IEP document to ensure you can help participants identify where the seven required components of the IEP are in the document.
- Schedule time to facilitate the activity. Depending on timing and group structure, prioritize and customize the activity to meet the needs of your audience.
 - This guide offers two different structures. The 50- to 65-minute session includes time for the group to reflect and check for understanding after each step of the activity. The 25- to 35-minute session includes time for reflection once participants have completed all seven steps. Additional ways to consider structuring the activity are provided.
 - This activity can be completed by individual participants or in small groups. For those who are less familiar with the IEP, participating in a small group may be beneficial.
- Ask participants to bring the necessary materials or provide materials for them to use. Because the activity asks participants to identify at least seven different parts of the IEP, we recommend that there are seven differently colored markers, pencils, highlighters, or stickers available, one for each component of the IEP. If you do not have access to these materials, consider what instruction you will provide to participants so they will be able to uniquely identify each component (e.g., underlined solid line, underlined dashed line, double underline, star).

Materials

Each participant will need the following:

- Copy of blank IEP document
- Copy of participant handout
- Seven highlighters, markers, and stickers/sticky notes of different colors (if this is not available you can provide alternative instructions to indicate different steps)
- [IEP Tip Sheets](#) (especially *IEP Tip Sheet: An Overview of the IEP*)



Sample Structure for a 50- to 65-Minute Session

| Step | Description of step |
|---|--|
| Set the stage (5 minutes) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set the activity purpose by reviewing why this activity is important and the primary activity objectives. Reinforce that this activity is not designed to be evaluative of the IEP document structure. It is intended to be a learning experience to help participants better understand the IEP document. Review materials necessary for the activity. Encourage participants to use the “reflections and notes” column in the participant handout while completing the activity. As needed, orient participants to the related IEP Tip Sheets including IEP Tip Sheet: An Overview of the IEP to help them identify components of the IEP. If necessary, direct participants to the section and subsections in the IEP document. |
| Step 1: PLAAFP statement (5–7 minutes) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask participants to review the IEP document and indicate the section(s) for the PLAAFP statement using a highlighter, marker, or sticker. After participants have had time to identify the PLAAFP statement, review as a group where they found it in the IEP document. Ask participants to share how easy or difficult it was to identify. |
| Step 2: Measurable annual goals (5–7 minutes) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask participants to review the IEP document and indicate the section(s) for the measurable annual goals using a different color highlighter, marker, or sticker. After participants have had time to identify the measurable annual goals, review as a group where they found them in the IEP document. Ask participants to share how easy or difficult they were to identify. |
| Step 3: Monitoring plan (5–7 minutes) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask participants to review the IEP document and indicate the section(s) for the monitoring plan and for communicating progress to parents using a different color highlighter, marker, or sticker. After participants have had time to identify the monitoring plan, review as a group where they found it in the IEP document. Ask participants to share how easy or difficult it was to identify. |
| Step 4: Statement of services and aids (5–8 minutes) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask participants to review the IEP document and indicate the section(s) for the statement of services and aids using a different color highlighter, marker, or sticker. Remind participants that the statement of services and aids includes four parts: special education, related services, supplementary aids and services, and program modifications. After participants have had time to identify the statement of services and aids, review as a group where they found it in the IEP document. Ask participants to share how easy or difficult it was to identify. |



| Step | Description of step |
|---|--|
| Step 5: Explanation of educational setting (5–7 minutes) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask participants to review the IEP document and indicate the section(s) for the explanation of educational setting using a different color highlighter, marker, or sticker. • After participants have had time to identify the explanation of educational setting, review as a group where they found it in the IEP document. Ask participants to share how easy/difficult it was to identify. |
| Step 6: Participation in State and districtwide assessment (5–7 minutes) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask participants to review the IEP document and indicate the section(s) for the participation in state and districtwide assessment using a different color highlighter, marker, or sticker. • After participants have had time to identify the participation in assessment, review as a group where they found it in the IEP document. Ask participants to share how easy or difficult it was to identify. |
| Step 7: Dates, frequency, location, and duration of services (5–7 minutes) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask participants to review the IEP document and indicate the section(s) for the dates, frequency, location, and duration of services using a different color highlighter, marker, or sticker. • After participants have had time to identify the dates, frequency, location, and duration of services, review as a group where participants found them in the IEP document. Ask participants to share how easy or difficult they were to identify. |
| Step 8: Overarching reflection (10 minutes) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As a whole group, have participants reflect on and discuss the activity findings. The following are potential questions to consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Were some components of the IEP difficult to find? If so, which components? – Were some sections not highlighted? (Review the component to ensure it does not fit in an IDEA element.) – How did this activity help you better understand the components of the IEP? – How did this activity help you make better use of the IEP to develop and implement high-quality educational programming and communicate and collaborate with other educators, the student, and their family? |

Sample Structure for a 25- to 35-Minute Session

| Step | Description of step |
|--|---|
| Set the stage (5 minutes) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set the activity purpose by reviewing why this activity is important and the primary activity objectives. Reinforce that this activity is not designed to be evaluative of the IEP document structure. It is intended to be a learning experience to help participants better understand the IEP document. • Review materials necessary for the activity. • If necessary, orient participants to the section and subsections in the IEP document. |
| Complete Steps 1–7: Identify IEP components (10–15 minutes) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask participants to review the IEP document and use a highlighter, marker, or sticker to indicate each unique component of the IEP. Encourage participants to use the “reflections and notes” column in the participant handout while completing the activity. As needed, orient participants to the related IEP Tip Sheets including IEP Tip Sheet: An Overview of the IEP to help them identify components of the IEP. • If it would be beneficial for participants, consider chunking the activity into three groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Steps 1–3: PLAAFP statement, measurable annual goals, monitoring plan. – Steps 4 and 7: Statement of services and aids; dates, frequency, location, and duration of services. – Steps 5 and 6: Explanation of educational setting and participation in assessment. |
| Reflection (10–15 minutes) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As a whole group, have participants reflect on and discuss the activity findings. The following are potential questions to consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Were some components of the IEP difficult to find? If so, which components? – Were some sections not highlighted? (Review the component to ensure it does not fit in an IDEA element.) – How did this activity help you better understand the components of the IEP? – How did this activity help you make better use of the IEP to develop and implement high-quality educational programming and communicate and collaborate with other educators, the student, and their family? |

Alternative Option

If time is limited, consider focusing on a couple of key parts of the IEP (e.g., PLAAFP statement, measurable annual goals, statement of services and aids) rather than all seven components.

Key Ideas to Reinforce While Facilitating the Activity

This section summarizes some key ideas that are important for facilitators to emphasize while facilitating the activity.

- Participants need some prior knowledge of the IEP components to full benefit from the activity. If participants are struggling to identify the required components of the IEP, consider providing the PROGRESS Center [IEP Tip Sheets](#) to participants as a resource or stop and teach key concepts about the IEP components. The tip sheet, [An Overview of the IEP](#) may be especially helpful for participants to refer to during this activity.
- This activity is *not designed* to be evaluative of the IEP document structure. When working with local educators, maintain the focus on where the required IEP components are found in the document rather than the quality of the document.
- When facilitating the activity, consider reinforcing how this knowledge will enable better development and implementation of the IEP and communication with other staff members, students, and families.
- While states may use different language and add additional requirements to the IEP, every compliant IEP will have the seven IDEA IEP components. It is helpful to have participants identify what information is necessary for educational programming for the student and what is required by the State for reporting purposes.

After the Activity

Following the activity, facilitators may find it helpful to:

- Encourage participants to analyze connections across the parts of the IEP using the [Looking for Connections: Ensuring the Parts of the IEP Work Together](#) activity.
- Share the following resources to help participants learn more about the IEP:
 - PROGRESS Center [IEP Tip Sheets](#)
 - PROGRESS Center [Self-Paced Learning Courses](#) focused on the IEP.

PROGRESS Center

at the American Institutes for Research® ■

www.promotingprogress.org



1400 Crystal Drive, 10th Floor
Arlington, VA 22202-3289
202-403-5000 | www.air.org



Notice of Trademark: "American Institutes for Research" and "AIR" are registered trademarks. All other brand, product, or company names are trademarks or registered trademarks of their respective owners.