

Center for Autism and Related Disabilities

University of Florida/Gainesville

IEP Series Part 4: Components of the IEP Transcript

Hello and welcome to the fourth in a series of five presentations on the ins and outs of the IEP process. This series was developed to introduce the concept of IEPs to families who are navigating IEPs for the first time, but it may also serve as a reference guide for those who need a reminder or a “brush up” on specific components of IEP planning. It has been divided into five parts so that viewers have the option of watching which ever parts are useful to them. We hope you find this series helpful. So let’s get started.

Before we begin, I think it’s important to share a short disclaimer about the intended audience for this series. The content presented here was written with families of children who are eligible for IEP services. However, we welcome and encourage anyone who has an interest in IEPs and their development to participate. Hopefully professionals will find that learning about IEPs from the family’s perspective is a useful way to help ensure family participation and satisfaction with the process.

Each of the five presentations in this series will cover a specific, and relatively succinct range of topics so that participants can choose the topics that address their specific interest. The purpose of this presentation, the fourth in the series, is to familiarize you with the components of the IEP document. Although different school districts, and certainly different states, often have their own formats, the components of the IEP are mandated by IDEA, the special education law. Therefore, even though the IEP document may be structured differently, you should expect to see each component represented.

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- Special considerations on the IEP
 - Domains
 - Evaluation results
 - PLOPs
 - Goals and objectives
 - Assessment measures used
 - Special and related services
 - Supplementary aides and services
 - ESY
 - Accommodations and modifications
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- LRE
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In this series, we hope you will take home several important points. We hope that by the end of this presentation you will be able to identify the 4 parts of a learning objective, give an example of an accommodation, give an example of a modification, and explain what is meant by LRE. Let's get started.

The first part of an IEP is often the special considerations section. This is a check-off box section that allows the IEP team to denote any important notes specific to the child. They include:

Does the child's behavior impede upon his or her learning or the learning of others?

Does the child currently have a functional behavioral assessment or behavior intervention plan?

Does the child demonstrate limited English proficiency?

Is the child blind or visually impaired?

Does the child have special communication needs?

Is the child deaf or hard of hearing?

And

Is the child in need of assistive technology devices or tech services.

There are five domains that must be considered on a child's IEP. This does not mean that there will necessarily be goals and objectives for each of the five; that is determined by the kind of needs your child has. It simply means that the team must consider whether your child has needs in each area and if so, goals and objectives are created for each area.

The five domain areas on Florida IEPs are:

- Curriculum and learning
 - Examples: reading, writing, math
- Independent functioning
 - Examples: dressing, eating, transitioning
- Communication
 - Examples: expressive language, receptive language, pragmatics
- Social/emotional behavior
 - Examples: coping, emotion regulation, asking for help
- Health care

○ Examples: seizures, medications, feeding

As we have discussed earlier in this series, the IEP team must conduct an initial assessment to determine eligibility for services and therefore, the need for an IEP. This evaluation must also take place at least every three years. A student is evaluated on each of these areas. READ.

- Developmental testing
 - Occupational therapy
 - Physical therapy
 - Speech and language therapy
 - Assistive technology
 - Behavior
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The present levels of performance section is completed by documenting what the child can currently do. Independent skills are considered mastered, while semi-independent skills are considered “emerging.” Emergent skills usually make good candidates for goals and objectives. One way to think about present levels is to think about areas of strength and areas of need across each domain.

Here are a few examples of statements for the present levels section of the IEP. READ

- What is your child currently able to do
 - Independently, semi-independently (with minimal prompting)
 - Ask: what is your child’s educational strengths and weaknesses?
 - Ask: what skills or areas of learning need to be improved?
 - “Sara can identify 12/26 upper case letters by pointing and 8/26 upper case letters expressively (verbally).”
 - “Given a number line, Demarcus can complete single-digit addition problems. He requires verbal and gestural prompts to complete single-digit subtraction problems.”
 - PLOPs serve as the “jumping off point” for goals and objectives
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- When people think of IEPs, they are typically thinking of the goals and objectives section. This is kind of the heart of the IEP, as it is the place where the skills that your child will work on are listed and described. The goal is the best guess about how much your child will learn over the course of one year, whereas the objective is a smaller milestone, sometimes called a stepping stone or benchmark, to reach the larger goal. For example, Jason will improve his ability to answer wh-questions is a goal, whereas, Jason will answer “where” questions

given a simple conversation with a familiar person involving directions to a destination, answering 4 of 5 questions correct over 10 opportunities is an objective because it is a smaller step toward reaching the larger goal. By breaking down the goal into smaller objectives, it helps the team keep track of and measure small steps of progress toward larger outcome goals.

One of the hardest parts of writing the goals and objectives section is determining how many objectives to include. Sometimes it's tempting to write too many objectives so that your child is working on a lot of skills at the same time. But sometimes more is not better because as the number of objectives go up, the amount of time to work on each objective goes down, therefore making it less likely that your child will master that objective. It is important to ask yourself: will my child have lots of opportunities to PRACTICE this skill so that it can be learned AND will he or she have lots of opportunities to USE the skill so that it won't be forgotten. In other words, how important is this skill for my child? Will he or she need it across time and across environments? You can also ask yourself, will my child need this skill as a stepping stone to other skills? If so, it is likely a good candidate to be included on the IEP.

Here are some additional questions that can help you determine your current priorities for your child.

- What would make your child more independent?
- What would make your family's home life easier?
- What would help you access the community more readily?

The trick is to identify a reasonable number of goals and objectives. Too many, and your child may not have enough time to practice them to mastery. Too few, and your child will not be challenged to reach his or her potential this year.

Hopefully you can turn to the rest of the IEP team to help guide this decision.

Other important questions:

Is it observable and measureable: Meaning, can everyone watch the behavior and take data on whether, or to what extent, it occurred?

Is it masterable: Is it written in a way such that the student is likely to master or achieve it?

Are there multiple opportunities to teach the skill? Otherwise it might not be that important right now....

Is it functional: will it serve my child now and in the future? Is it a "must have" instead of a "nice to have?"

A measureable goal or objective has FOUR parts:

- A measurable goal has the following parts:
 - Who- learner
 - What- learner behavior
 - Under what conditions- teacher behavior, when, and for how long
 - Criteria- how do you know it's mastered- what is an acceptable level of performance?
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Your child's name should be included in each objective. This sounds obvious, but sometimes objectives are written to describe what the teacher will do. By requiring the child's name, it ensures that the objective describes what the child will do.

The behavior is what the child will do. It must be observable so that multiple instructors can determine whether the skill is being demonstrated. It is helpful if specific examples of behaviors are included. It is important that the team regularly checks in to make sure that everyone is "counting" the behavior in the same way. This helps avoid what we call "observer drift" which means that sometimes, over time, observers get a little sloppy about how they record what they see.

For example, instead of saying that Samantha will identify words, you would want to say that she will "identify by pointing to the correct word." If there is more than one acceptable response, you would want to say that she will identify by pointing or circling the correct word, for example.

Here are some additional questions to ensure that your behavior is, in fact, observable and measurable.

- Can you count the number of times the behavior occurs?
- Will a stranger know what to look for when you tell him/her the target behavior?
- Can you break down the target behavior into smaller components, each of which can be more specific and measurable than the original target?

The next part of an objective are the conditions. Conditions, sometimes also called the "given," are the conditions or situations during which the skill will be tested. It may also describe materials or modifications made to materials. Level of prompting is also included here.

- Verbal request or instructions
 - ✦ Josh, pick up the blue cup.
- Written instructions or format

- ✦ Draw a line to the items that match.
 - Demonstration
 - ✦ This is how you pick up the blue cup.
 - Materials to be used
 - ✦ Blue cup, red cup
 - ✦ Worksheet with ten items that match
 - Environmental setting or timing
 - ✦ In the lunchroom
 - ✦ During independent work time
 - Manner of assistance
 - ✦ Independent
 - ✦ With partial physical assistance
 - ✦ With verbal prompts
 - Conditions are usually written at the beginning of the objective, as in, “When given a math worksheet with ten single-digit math problems and a number line, Michael will....” However, this same phrase works just as well when written at the end of the objective, as in, “Michael will... when given....”
 - You can think of the conditions as drawing a picture of the situation under which the child will perform the skill.
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The criteria is the minimum acceptable standard of performance to be considered mastered. It may involve a description of accuracy, such as percentage correct, frequency, such as how often the child performs the skills given a certain number of opportunities to do so, duration, or how long the behavior happens.

We like to say that the criteria should be sufficiently ambitious, meaning not too easy, but reasonable, meaning it is written in a way that is masterable by the end of the year.

It is important to keep in mind that sometimes percentages are used when they are not appropriate. For example, it is better to say that the child will respond by saying hello to someone’s greeting 8 out of 10 opportunities than it is to say 80% of the time. Although the ratio and the percentage technically mean the same thing, the ratio tells you that you must provide 10 opportunities (in other words, someone must say hi to the child ten times) in order to be able to assess if they can perform the skill. Put another way, you can’t count opportunities that don’t exist.

Similarly, it is probably not appropriate to say that the child will look before crossing the street 80% of the time. What about the other 20%? I'm pretty sure that 20% is dangerous too.

So here's what it looks like. I like to tell people that when you are writing goals and objectives, pretend that a substitute teacher is going to be implementing and taking data on each one. Does each objective provide enough information so that someone who doesn't know the child very well can teach and assess the child's performance on each objective? If it doesn't, the objective needs to be more specific.

So, to review,

<i>Component</i>	<i>Description</i>
Student	The child
Condition	Also known as the GIVEN Teacher behavior: When and for how long Additional materials and support Any manner of assistance (prompting, demonstration, etc.)
Behavior	What will the student do? Student response Operational (observable and measurable) Anyone watching should be able to see
Criterion	Measurement How do you know the behavior is mastered? What is an acceptable level of performance? Minimum standard of performance – sufficiently ambitious but reasonable

Here are a few examples of objectives that are written to include all four components.

- **Social Skills**

Given a 4-cell voice output device within arms reach, Sarah will respond to a greeting from a peer during free play and playground times by pressing the “Hello” button on the device at least four out of five presented opportunities for a period of two weeks.

- **Communication Skills**

Given a field of four, 2D color photos on a choice board presented within arms reach, and the teacher’s question, “What do you want for snack,” Jorge will indicate his choice of snack by pulling the photo off of the board and handing it to a teacher at least four out of five snack times for a period of two weeks.

I have highlighted the conditions in red, the learner in green, the observable behavior in purple, and the criterion for mastery in orange.

And here are a few more.

- **Adaptive Skills**

Given a short-sleeved shirt that is two sizes too big and the direction, “Please put on your shirt,” Renee will put on the shirt (right-side-out and facing front) with no more than one partial physical prompt from a teacher on 8 of 10 opportunities for a period of one month.

- **Academics: Reading**

Given a headset, CD player, and age-appropriate read-along book during independent reading, Mitchell will listen to the story and turn the pages for a minimum of ten unsupervised minutes for 5 consecutive school days.

- **Academics: Math**

After reviewing the picture menu during a fast-food mealtime simulation, Jack will select a food item and remove the appropriate amount of money from his wallet given no more than one verbal prompt on 8 of 10 opportunities for a period of one month.

Here are a few tips for writing goals and objectives.

First, try to avoid dead man goals. What does this mean? This means that if a dead man can do it, it’s probably not an appropriate goal. For example, you would not want to write a goal that describes Alexis sitting in her chair quietly for 10 minutes. Why? Two reasons. First, we always want to write what the child should be doing actively. It would be my guess that we are writing a goal about Alexis sitting in a chair quietly because she usually doesn’t sit in her chair and/or doesn’t sit quietly. Instead, you would want to write a goal that reflects what you DO want her to do: sit and read, sit and write, etc. Secondly, when is it ever the case that we want a child to just sit and wait and not do anything for 10 minutes? Never, I hope.

Another way to think about dead man goals are those that use the phrase “refrain from.” We don’t to write about a child “refraining from” behavior, even if it’s inappropriate behavior like

calling out or even aggression or self injury. In these cases, we are hopefully teaching the child a replacement for the inappropriate behavior. So instead of saying, "Max will refrain from hitting his head with his hand" we would write a goal about the replacement behavior, such as, "Max will use big mac switch to get the teacher's attention."

Another tip is to remember your year long timeline. It can be tempting to think long term because you want to work on reaching your long term goals for your child, but when goals are written too broadly, they never get mastered.

Don't forget to indicate how many times, for how long, when, under what conditions, or given what supports or materials. This is the part where you are painting the picture of how the skill will be taught and assessed. You usually can't be too generous with information here.

Remember to think about function over form. For example, if it is not really that important how your child asks for help, as long as it's appropriate, you might want to include several forms: raising hand, pressing a button, touching his nose, etc.

And finally, a good litmus test is: WHY does my child need to know or do this and does he need to know or do it right NOW? How will it help him get to his long term goals?

Another consideration are the learning -domains. Acquisition is the initial understanding of a concept or skill, but fluency (doing the skill with ease), maintenance (doing the skill over time), and generalization (doing the skill across different settings, materials, and people) are also important. Sometimes one objective might address acquisition while another objective under the same goal might address another level of learning.

The premise of this short activity is that the words listed here are NOT appropriate for an IEP because they are not specific enough. So, if you see the word "understand" on an IEP, how could you revise it to be something measureable and observable?

How can a person demonstrate understanding? In other words, how can you SEE that someone understands something? Perhaps they could point to the answer, circle it, hand you a picture with the answer, draw a picture, press a button on a voice output device, etc.

Similarly, how could you measure cooperation? We often use the word cooperation to mean comply, so what does compliance look like? Follows a direction given no more than one prompt after the initial direction has been given? Follows a direction within 5 seconds of the direction being given?

How about distinguish? If by distinguish we mean to tell the difference between two things, a person might demonstrate this by matching like objects, verbally explaining the similarities and differences of items, or cutting and pasting items in the correct columns.

Learning can be defined in so many ways; therefore we want to be clear what we mean when we want someone to demonstrate learning. Examples might be that they can recite something

they have memorized or repeatedly complete an activity (like a puzzle) without prompts on a specific number of consecutive occasions.

Data collection is important because it helps everyone monitor progress, or lack of progress. I like to tell people that I don't really care what your data sheet looks like as long as it is easy to use, easy to understand, and it gathers the information you need.

It is also important to take data only on the information you plan to analyze later. There is no point collecting data for behaviors or skills unless you plan to look for patterns. Otherwise, it's just piles and piles of raw data, which really don't mean much.

Data should drive decision making, so it's important that the team understands its value and is committed to collecting it.

There are a lot of ways in which we can collect data.

Frequency is the number of times something happens, but it is usually best recorded as a rate, or the number of times something happens within a given period. For example, if I tell you that a behavior occurred four times, it doesn't mean much if I don't also tell you that the behavior occurred four times in 2 minutes versus four times in 2 hours.

Accuracy usually refers to correctness. It can be black and white, like accuracy with multiplication facts, or it can be on a spectrum, like the accuracy of writing letters of the alphabet.

Intensity refers to how BIG the behavior is. We usually use intensity when measuring challenging behaviors, but not always. We often document this on a scale, say from 1 to 5, so that we can see patterns over time.

Duration is a measure of how long something lasts. We can measure the duration of a meltdown, for example, or we can measure the duration of a conversation. In the case of a conversation, we could also choose to measure the number of conversational turns instead of the duration. If we did that we would be measuring frequency, or number, of turns.

Self-initiations are measured when we want to specify behaviors that the student demonstrated spontaneously, or without a specific request or direction. Similarly, we might want to measure the number of prompts the child needs in order to successfully complete a task.

So obviously it can be a challenge to write goals and objectives. If you run into issues, you can ask yourself the following questions.

If your child is not demonstrating learning, assess the reinforcement. Is it powerful enough? Is it being delivered consistently and often? Is the reward being offered something the child actually wants? Also, Is the goal perhaps not at the student's instructional level?

Are there enough opportunities for your child practice the skill? Is instruction being provided across the day in all relevant settings? We know kids learn faster and remember their skills longer when they have a lot of chances to practice and when they have multiple opportunities to use their new skill over time. Think of a subject you learned in high school that you don't use on a daily basis, perhaps the facts associated with world history. Now think of a subject that you use every day, such as English grammar. You are probably more motivated to learn and remember skills that you know you will have to use daily rather than those that you won't likely need so often.

Another important question is, are the instructors being consistent. While it is OK, and in fact good, for instructors to slightly modify how they teach so that kids can learn to be flexible given different teaching styles, we still need to make sure that everyone is presenting information in relatively the same way, giving prompts in the same sequence, and providing feedback in a predictable manner.

The answers to these questions can help you determine why your child is not mastering skills in the IEP.

The assessment measures section of the IEP is a place to denote how progress will be documented? Who will be responsible and what types of assessments will be used. Examples include test taking, tests with accommodations, portfolio review, and video assessment.

In addition to how your child's progress is measured, it is important to also note how often assessment will take place.

Here is a list of the special and related services your child may be entitled to depending on the results of his or her evaluation. For each service, the IEP must indicate when the service will begin and end, how often the service will be provided, and where the service will be provided.

Here are some other considerations where your child might need some additional support.

It's a good idea to consider these ahead of time so that you can be prepared to discuss those that you think would benefit your child at the IEP meeting.

- Classroom aide assigned to the classroom
- Delivery of instruction
- Assignments and tests
- Personalized assistance
- Schedules and routines
- Assessment

- Seating arrangements
 - Removal of barriers
 - Behavior management
 - Student groupings
 - Planning and monitoring
 - Assistive technology
 - Collaboration and consultation
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- Classroom aide assigned to your child
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We touched upon accommodations and modifications in a previous presentation, but we will spend some additional time on them here. An accommodation refers to a change to how your child is being taught and/or how your child's performance will be demonstrated. It often involves the addition of some sort of support or learning tool. There are four types of accommodations: presentation, response, setting, and scheduling. Let's review each now.

Here is a list of examples of presentation accommodations. You can see by reviewing this list that the purpose of a presentation accommodation is to change how the learning content is presented to the child. Some examples, like providing visual cues, creating personal word lists, and providing copies of verbal instructions may require a bit of extra planning and work ahead of time, but as you can see, none of them are very time consuming, expensive, or disruptive to the rest of the class. Other things, like highlighting or decreasing the number of problems the child has to complete, can take place in the moment and are often easy for a teacher or paraprofessional to implement.

Keep in mind that this is just a short list of presentation accommodations; there are many more options available.

Here are some examples of response accommodations. Response accommodations are changes to how the child responds, or demonstrates his or her understanding of the content. In this list you can see options such as having another student, or scribe, record the child's responses, having the child circle or point to a response, and using tools such as calculators, graphic organizers, and other visual supports. Adapted materials, such as writing implements or paper, would be included in this category.

Setting accommodations refer to changes to the environment that help the student be successful in class. Examples include seating, posted rules, lighting and noise accommodations, and predictable routines.

Here are some scheduling accommodations. These refer to how the child's time and/or schedule are managed. Examples include offering extended time to take tests, scheduling breaks throughout the day, using timers, and using schedules.

The examples we just reviewed were accommodations. The other category of support is known as modifications, or changes to what your child is being taught. In other words, the content that your child is learning differs from what the other students are learning in general education. The idea is to try to match what your child is learning to what the other kids are learning as much as possible. For example, your child would work on writing skills, not math, when the rest of the students are working on writing. Here are some examples. [READ]

- Class is learning to sound out words; your child is learning to identify letters
- Class is learning two-digit addition; your child is learning single-digit addition
- Class is learning the life cycle of a plant; your child is learning to identify parts of a plant
- Class is learning to write a 5-paragraph essay; your child is learning to write a complete sentence

It is important to note that your child's IEP may list accommodations, modifications, or both.

The least restrictive environment, or LRE, is part of federal law which states that your child must be served in the setting which is least restrictive, or most like the typical setting with typical peers, but which still meets his or her needs. We always start by assuming that this is the general education setting. If the IEP team (including you) determines that your child's needs cannot be met in the general education setting, then they "move up the ladder," so to speak, from least to more restrictive until the appropriate placement has been determined.

If your child spends any part of the day away from the general education setting, whether it is 10 percent, 50 percent, etc., the IEP must state how much time he or she is spending outside of general education and why.

There are three areas or times of day that must be considered and accounted for on the IEP: regular classroom time, extra curricular activity time, and non-academic activity time.

Regular classroom participation includes:

- Regular classroom participation
 - Full participation in general education
 - Homeroom
 - Math class

- Art, PE, and music
- Computer lab
- Language arts

Extracurricular activities include

- Basketball team
- Pep squad
- Safety patrol
- School clubs

And non-academic activities include:

- Non-academic activities
 - Lunch
 - Assemblies
 - Recess
 - Parties

If your child is not going to participate in some of these things, it must be a team decision, and the rationale must be documented on the IEP.

OK, let's take a minute to test your knowledge. Here are four IEP objectives. Each of the four is missing one component. See if you can figure out what part is missing in each example.

- Given a 100 word reading passage at the 2.5 grade level, Lavonne will orally read the passage.
- Gavin will complete 5 math problems with 100% accuracy.
- Given flash cards depicting action scenes, Michelle will master "wh" questions by getting 4/5 correct consecutively for two weeks.
- The teacher will provide a number line for the completion of math activities.

We have reached the end of the fourth part in our series on IEPs. I wanted to leave you with a few resources for navigating IEPs. Here are two books we highly recommend as well as a well-known website with a lot of information about IEP law and development.

We hope you have enjoyed this presentation, and we invite you to take advantage of the other presentations in this series as well.

Thanks so much.