

# Special Education Basics: The Individualized Education Program (IEP)

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December 9, 2025

# Formed Families Forward - who we are...

- A family-led resource center in Northern Virginia supporting foster, adoptive and kinship families who are raising children, youth & young adults with specialized needs, and professionals who work with our families.
- We offer free training, consultations to families, events, resources, and systems navigation. Also - peer support groups; Resource Directory; *Learning Your Way* self-paced classes; youth classes, videos and other resources.
- Family partner to Virginia Tiered Systems of Supports (VTSS; a

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# Upcoming Trainings:

## RAISING KIDS with BIG BAFFLING BEHAVIORS

a course for caregivers

DEVELOPED BY ROBYN GOBBEL, MSW

**ABOUT THE COURSE**

You'll develop the confidence to stay connected to your kids even in the face of the most bizarre and baffling behaviors.

**SECTION 1**  
How to Become the Expert in Children's Behaviors.

**SECTION 2**  
Now, Let's "Fix" Those Behaviors.

**SECTION 3**  
Why Knowing Isn't Even Half the Battle.

Based on the best seller

RAISING KIDS WITH BIG, BAFFLING BEHAVIORS: BRAIN-BODY-SENSORY STRATEGIES THAT REALLY WORK

You can experience what parents and caregivers describe as a life-changing new way to reframe and change children's behaviors.

**3 CORE TENETS**

- 1 Behavior is just a clue.
- 2 We all need connection to survive.
- 3 Regulated, connected kids who feel safe behave well.

**Tuesdays, Feb. 3- March 24**  
**7:00 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. Virtual**  
**\$250, includes materials**  
**<https://bit.ly/BBBwinter26>**

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## FASD WEBINAR SERIES

Winter 2026

Register at [www.FormedFamiliesForward.org](http://www.FormedFamiliesForward.org)

**FASD 101: Understanding Symptoms and Providing Support webinar**

Tues. January 6 7 - 8 PM

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) can impact multiple brain domains including executive function, affect & emotional regulation, attention, memory, language, cognition, academic performance, motor skills, sensory, and adaptive functioning. While children and youth with FASD have amazing strengths, the lasting impacts of prenatal exposure can present unique challenges for parenting and educating this population. This webinar will offer strategies for navigating those challenges grounded in brain-first approaches that can be used at home and at school.

**Diagnosing FASD webinar**

Tues. January 13 7 - 8 PM

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASDs) are a group of conditions that can occur in a person exposed to alcohol in utero. This exposure can result in a wide range of physical, behavioral, mental, and academic challenges. While FASDs are recognized as one of the leading known causes of developmental disabilities, they remain largely undiagnosed or misdiagnosed. Join Dr. Ali Sturgill to learn more about the process of diagnosing FASD across the lifespan.

**The Role of Occupational Therapy (OT) in Supporting Those with FASD webinar**

Tues. January 20 7 - 8 PM

We often hear that those diagnosed with FASD benefit from academic support and mental health therapies. Did you also know that they benefit from occupational therapy? Join Drs. Misty Pruner and Tracy Jirikowic as they discuss what occupational therapy is and what research says about the role it plays in supporting those with FASD across the lifespan.

**FASD Virginia: Exploring a New Resource for Families webinar**

Tues. January 27 7 - 8 PM

This webinar will introduce a new website developed in collaboration with Formed Families Forward, UVA Children's Hospital, Center for Family Involvement, and professionals and caregivers from across VA. We have gathered resources for families, educators, and health care professionals who want to know more about FASD and how to best support those impacted by it. This webinar will walk you through the website and the resources that are available in VA.

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Register at [bit.ly/LYWsummerfall25](https://bit.ly/LYWsummerfall25)

- Free, on-line, on-demand learning
- Self-paced & interactive
- Certificates of Completion
- 7 Courses Available:
  - Special Education 101
  - Constructive Communication & Collaboration
  - Special Education Dispute Resolution
  - Trauma 101
  - Kinship Care
  - Other Health Impairment
  - Positive Parenting

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# Support Groups

## Formed Families Together

Peer Support  
Groups



INTERESTED IN JOINING?  
REGISTER AT  
[HTTPS://BIT.LY/FFTGROUUPS](https://bit.ly/FFTGROUUPS)  
OR LEARN MORE AT  
[FORMEDFAMILIESFORWARD.ORG](https://formedfamiliesforward.org)

We provide a safe space for foster & adoptive parents & kinship caregivers to share their experiences, concerns, frustrations, & resources!

Formed Families Together support groups are led by trained peer leaders with personal & professional experience.

**VIRTUAL GROUP  
MEETS VIA ZOOM  
1ST SUNDAYS  
FROM 7:30 TO 9 PM**

**IN-PERSON GROUP MEETS  
3RD WEDNESDAYS IN  
FAIRFAX CITY,  
FROM 7 - 8:30 PM**

Hosted By  
**FORMED FAMILIES FORWARD**

Are you raising a child  
for a family member  
or friend?

Join other KINSHIP  
caregivers for **FREE**  
support groups!



- Virtual group on first Thursdays of each month, 6:30 - 8 PM
- In-person group at Fairfax County Community Centers on third Thursdays, 6:15 - 8 PM. Dinner and child care provided.
- Learn more and register at <https://bit.ly/FFFkinSG>



6/2024

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Fairfax Kinship Peer Support Groups are hosted, facilitated and administered by Formed Families Forward, through a contract with Fairfax County Department of Family Services. In-person groups are offered at Fairfax Community Centers, with support from Fairfax County Neighborhood and Community Services.

FFF is committed to nondiscrimination on the basis of disability in programs, services and activities. Reasonable accommodations provided upon request.



FAIRFAX COUNTY  
DEPARTMENT OF  
**FAMILY  
SERVICES**



FAIRFAX COUNTY  
NEIGHBORHOOD AND  
COMMUNITY SERVICES

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# POLL

What's your role(s)?

- Adoptive parent
- Kinship caregiver
- Foster or resource parent
- Birth parent
- Professional
- Other

Chat in any additional roles.



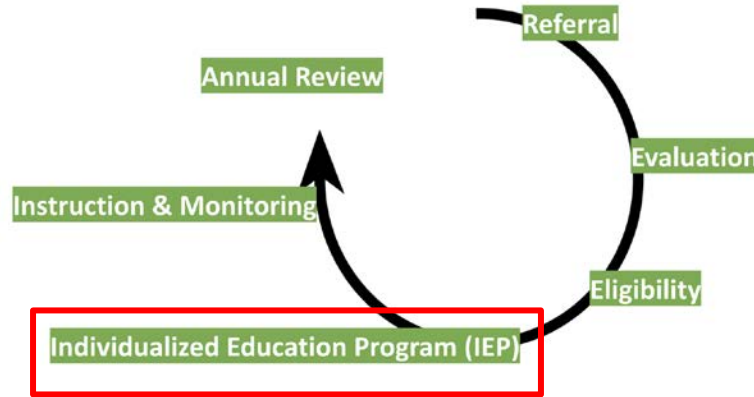
# Plan for Our Time

- Legal foundation for IEPs
- Meeting rules and parent rights
- Trauma-informed IEPs
- Components of an IEP
- Tips for formed families



# IEP Development

- For students who qualify for special education services, the next step is to develop an **Individualized Education Program or IEP**.





# What is an Individualized Education Program (IEP)?



- Outlines the special education services and support a student with a disability will receive (written program)
- Guarantees a free, appropriate public education (FAPE)
- Mandated and guided by federal law: the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
- Created by a multidisciplinary team (includes family)

# IEP Timelines

- For a child **NEW to special education**, the IEP must be developed within **30 calendar** days of the initial determination of eligibility.
- **Reevaluations** in Virginia: IEP must be developed within 30 calendar days of eligibility group determines child remains eligible, if the IEP team determines changes are needed to the IEP, or if the parent requests it.
- Following the IEP meeting, a **copy of the IEP** must be provided within 10 days.



# The IEP Team

- Regular Education Teacher
- Special Education Teacher
- School Psychologist
- School Social Worker
- Related Service Provider(s)
- Administrator or Designee
- As appropriate: Secondary transition services participants;  
Part C/early intervention services participants
- Parent ★



# Parent Participation - What IDEA Says!

Parental participation is the “very essence of the IDEA,” and when schools fail in the obligation to include parents in the IEP process, it is very likely that FAPE will be denied.

*Amanda J. v. Clark County School District, 2001, p.892*

# Who is a parent under the IDEA?

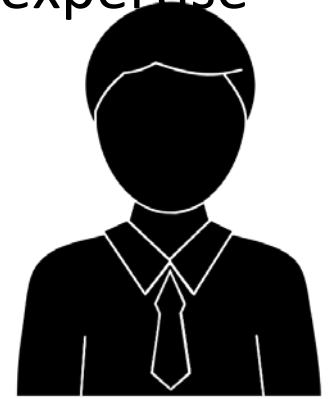
- A biological or adoptive parent
- A foster parent
- A guardian
- An individual acting in the place of a biological or adoptive parent (including a grandparent, stepparent, or other relative)
- If none of above can serve, a surrogate parent appointed by school
- An emancipated minor



(§ 20-124.6 and § 22.1-213.1 of the Code of Virginia; 34 CFR 99.4 and 34 CFR 300.30)

# Who Else?

- Others who have **knowledge or special expertise** about the child
  - The person inviting another individual makes the decision that the invited person has knowledge or special expertise about your child
- The student
  - When appropriate
  - When discussing transition
  - NLT beginning the school year they turn 14 in VA





# Attendance Requirements

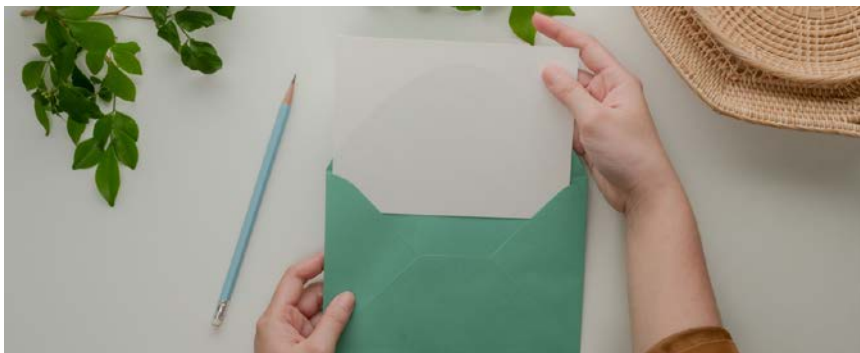
## 2 Exceptions:

1. If team member's area of expertise is not being discussed or modified; parent & school division agree
  - a. Parent consents (in writing)
  
1. If the parent and the school division consent to the excusal
  - a. Team member will submit input (in writing)
  - b. Parent consents (in writing)



# Prior Written Notice

District must provide PRIOR WRITTEN NOTICE of IEP meeting (date, time allotted & participants).



School must: Notify parents of meeting early enough they will have opportunity to attend; scheduling meeting at a mutually agreed on time and place

# What if the meeting date/time does not work for you?



- Notify district ASAP if you need alternate date/time
- Meeting may be held without parents if school has record of attempts to include them
- Teams can meet by alternate ways: Speakerphone, Teams, Zoom, etc.

# Meeting Preparation

- Provide written notice at least 24 hours in advance:
  - if you plan to audio record the meeting
  - if you plan to bring an attorney
- Remind school to provide all written materials (draft goals) & assessment reports **before** meeting
- Gather/organize independent reports
- Get availability of people you will need to attend
- Request a translator, if needed
- Make a list of questions/concerns
- Know your rights!



# Know Your Rights Game

**Procedural Safeguards Notice**  
Required Under IDEA Part B



# Each Child's IEP Must Contain:

“A statement of the **special education** and **related services** and **supplementary aids and services** based on peer-reviewed research to the extent practicable, to be provided to the child, or on behalf of the child, and a statement of the **program modifications or supports for school personnel** that will be provided to enable the child –

- (i) To **advance** appropriately toward attaining the annual goals;
- (ii) To **be involved** in and make progress in general education curriculum...and to participate in extracurricular and other nonacademic activities; and
- (iii) To be **educated and participate with other children** with disabilities and nondisabled children..”



# In Developing the IEP, Team shall consider...

- Child's strengths
- Parents' concerns
- Evaluation results (initial or most recent)
- Academic, developmental and functional needs
- PLUS...Special Considerations: **SPECIAL FACTORS**

# Special Factors

- Behavior intervention and supports
- Language needs if child uses language other than English
- Instruction in Braille and the use of Braille
- Communication needs
- Need for benchmarks or short-term objectives
- Language and communication needs if child is deaf or hard of hearing
- Need for assistive technology and services

# Trauma-Informed IEP Checklist



## Trauma-Informed IEP Checklist

Find more Critical CrossRoads videos and resources by scanning the QR Code or visiting <http://bit.ly/3Gzgj31>



### BEFORE THE IEP MEETING

- ☐ The team asks for and honors our family's input about how our student is performing.
- ☐ The trauma our family and student has experienced is treated as private. Members of the IEP team do not ask repeated questions about the trauma experiences. Details are not shared without our permission.
- ☐ We receive copies of any assessments and documents the team will review. Questions about the assessments have been answered before the meeting.
- If our student is going to attend the meeting, the student is prepared to actively participate and made to feel like it is a safe environment. Preparation includes explaining the purpose of the meeting, reviewing the agenda, visiting the meeting room and deciding where to sit. Our student is encouraged to share their own challenges and strengths.
- ☐ If our student will not attend the IEP meeting, they provide input in another way that is safer for them.
- ☐ Meeting is set for a time and place that works for our family. Advance notice and a proposed agenda of the meeting is provided. Parking, how to access building, and other logistics are clear.
- ☐ We invite family members, friends and professionals who know our student to the meeting.

### DURING THE IEP MEETING

- ☐ Introductions happen at the start of the meeting. Name tags include the role of all participants. Our family is asked about how they prefer to be addressed.
- ☐ The meeting agenda is reviewed by the team and our family can ask questions or suggest changes.
- ☐ Our family can share information about our student's strengths.
- ☐ Our family can share how trauma impacts our student's ability to learn, manage feelings and interact with others. We are clear when we can or cannot answer specific questions about trauma experiences.
- ☐ We can ask questions and know who will answer them and when if not in the meeting.
- ☐ We are given time to review the drafted IEP and not made to feel we must consent during the meeting. Another IEP meeting can be scheduled to review edits.

### DETAILS OF THE IEP

- The IEP names specific trauma triggers and includes ways our family and professionals use to support positive behavior. Behavioral goals build lagging skills. Behavioral consequences are immediate, brief and related to what occurred.
- The accommodations and modifications in the IEP add to our student's sense of safety. They may increase predictability and routine, minimize transitions, offer sensory opportunities, build supportive peer relationships and develop self-esteem.
- ☐ Our student's IEP goals are ambitious and challenging and cover all areas of concern including academic, social-emotional and behavioral.
- ☐ The team considers how our student will be taught in the least restrictive environment with peers who do not have disabilities, to the maximum extent possible.

### MONITORING THE IEP AFTER THE MEETING

- School staff reaches out and communicates openly about how our student is performing. We are invited to help problem solve when things are not going well and to celebrate when they are! Tools like 'Check In, Check Out' or problem solving meetings are used to strengthen two-way communication and monitor progress. Connections with outside providers are made as needed.
- ☐ We are encouraged to request another IEP meeting if our student's needs are not being met.
- ☐ We get regular reports on our student's progress towards their IEP goals.
- ☐ Our experiences at home are treated as important information as the team monitors progress.

# Essential Components of an IEP

- Present Levels of Academic Achievement & Functional Performance (PLAAFP) OR Present Levels of Performance (PLOP)
- Measurable Annual Goals
- Description of Special Education Services and Supports
- Methods for Measuring and Reporting Progress
- Participation in General Education Curriculum
- Accommodations and Modifications
- Transition Planning (for students aged 14 and above)

# The PLAAFP or PLOP Statement

“A statement of the child’s present levels of academic achievement and functional performance, including—

- (i) **How the child’s disability affects the child’s involvement and progress in the general education curriculum** (i.e., the same curriculum as for nondisabled children); or
- (ii) For preschool children, as appropriate, how the disability affects the child’s participation in appropriate activities.”

# PLAAFP/PLOP should include:

- Baseline information
- Main areas of concern (academic/functional)
- Parents/caregivers' concerns
- Results from the evaluation (baseline data)
- Student's strengths
- Student's instructional preferences



Source: PROGRESS Center at the American Institutes for Research



# Test Questions for PLAAFP/ PLOP Statement

Does it provide a snapshot including both strengths and areas of need?

Is family input present and clearly considered?

Are statements supported by data? Are multiple sources of data used?

Are the data understandable to the family/student/teacher?

Are PLAAFP/PLOP summary statements present for each skill area included?

Could you write observable & measurable individualized goals based on PLAAFP/PLOP?

If you removed the student's name, could someone who knows the student well identify the student based on reading this PLAAFP/PLOP statement?

Source: IEP Quality Project, University of Illinois

# Test Questions for PLAAFP/PLOP

## Statement

Rodney is a 12 year old, 7th grade student who was diagnosed with a learning disability in math in 5th grade. At that time, he was earning Ds and Fs in math class and received a score of “Fail/Below Basic” on the end of year SOL math assessment. He continues to have problems in his math and science classes. Rodney is a strong reader and is performing well in his English and History classes.

Does it provide a snapshot of strengths and areas of need?

Is family input present and clearly considered?

Are statements supported by data? Are multiple sources used?

Is the data understandable to the family/student/teacher?

Are PLAAFP/PLOP summary statements present for each skill area?

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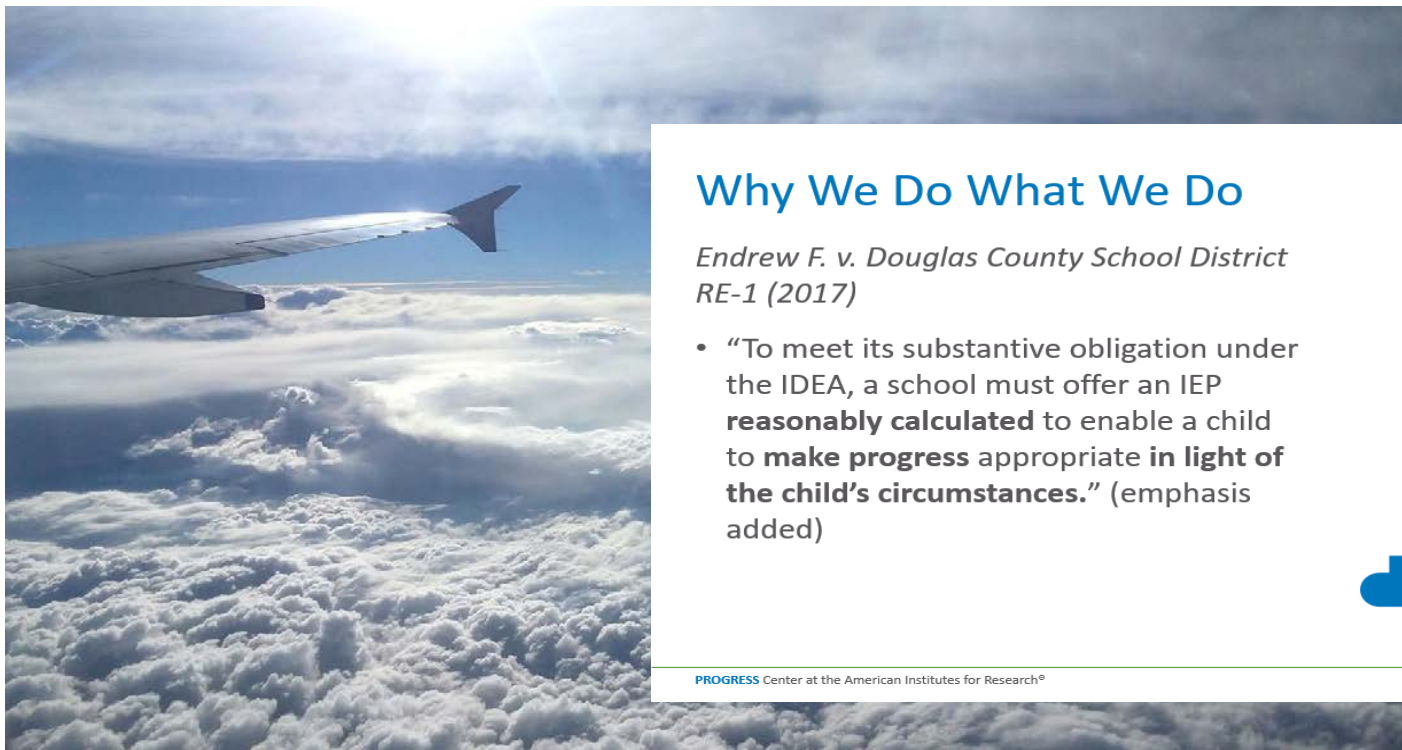
IEP Quality Project, University of Illinois

# Measurable Annual Goals

Each child's IEP must contain the following:

- (i) a statement of measurable annual goals, including academic and functional goals designed to –
  - (A) Meet the child's needs that result from the child's disability to enable the child to be involved in and make progress in the general education curriculum;
  - (B) And, meet each of the child's other educational needs that result from the child's disability.

# High-Quality Goals Set High Expectations



# High-Quality IEP Goals are

S



Specific

M



Measurable

A



Attainable

R



Relevant

T



Time Based

# High-Quality Goals are Individualized

## Sample Goals and Goal Banks

- Sample goals and goal banks may contain the technical components of a compliant goal, but they are unlikely to be the right fit for students.



# High Quality Behavior Goals are Written to Increase Desired Behavior

Behavior goals should be designed to increase desired replacement behaviors.

Not the most productive goals:

- X Will refrain from....
- X Will remain in assigned area
- X Will not.....

# High-Quality Academic Goal Examples

- By June 8, 2020, when given an equation shown on a graph and the use of a graphing calculator, Stephen will graph linear equations and inequalities with two variables with 85% accuracy in 3 out of 5 attempts.
- Chloe will tell fictional or personal stories, sequentially and with three or more details, using appropriate sentence structure and at least 5 word utterances over 2 of 3 opportunities across 5 data days, as measured by teacher/therapist observation & data collection by April 2020.

**SPECIFIC \* MEASURABLE \* ATTAINABLE \* RELEVANT \* TIME-BASED**

Source: Virginia Department of Education *Standards-Based Individualized Education Program Technical Assistance Document*

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# Better Behavior Goal Examples

- Given a class discussion on assigned reading material, Erin will squeeze stress ball and wait silently for 20 seconds for others to comment before adding to discussions, in 4 of 5 weekly trials by the end of 2<sup>nd</sup> grade.
- Given a task and a list of materials, Jim will gather 100% of the needed items to complete the task on 4 of 5 tries evaluated by teacher checklist monthly by the end of year.

**SPECIFIC \* MEASURABLE \* ATTAINABLE \* RELEVANT \* TIME-BASED**

# Rate This Goal!

Given a text, John will accurately summarize the main idea and key details with 90% accuracy across three consecutive trials per quarter.

# High Quality SMART Goal Example

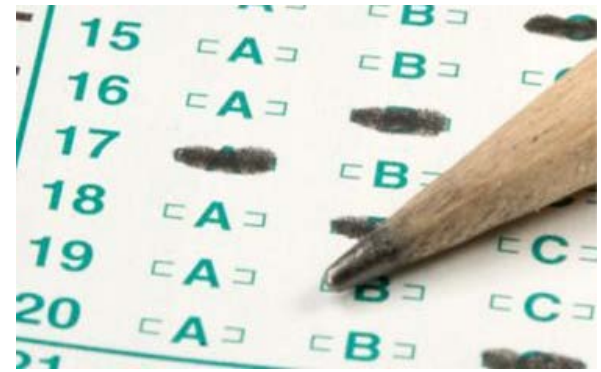


By June 2025, given a 3rd grade text and a graphic organizer, John will accurately summarize the main idea and key details in writing with 90% accuracy across three consecutive trials per quarter.

# Special Education Services and Supports

- **Instruction, Aids, & Services** provided to enable the student to:
  - Attain annual goals
  - Participate in general education, extracurricular, and other non-academic activities
- **Related Services** - developmental, supportive or corrective services required for the student to benefit from special education:
  - OT, PT, Transportation, Counseling, Speech & Language Therapy, Audiology, Interpreting Services, Early Identification, Diagnostic Services, School health, Assistive Technology, Orientation/Mobility training, Rehabilitation counseling, Parent counseling/training

# State & Division Assessments



- For state and division assessments: The IEP should contain a statement of any individual appropriate **accommodations or modifications** that are necessary to measure the child's academic achievement and functional performance.

# Accommodations & Modifications

- IEP team determines if child needs a particular device or service, including an **intervention, accommodation, or other program modification for FAPE**, should be child's on IEP.
- General ed teacher to assist with determination of **supplementary aids and services, accommodations, program modifications or supports** for school personnel that will be provided for child.



Weekly Schedule Fall 2014 v10

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8		7:30a Walk Nishi 8a Shower 8:45a Leave for UNH		7:30a Walk Nishi 8a Shower 8:45a Leave for UNH	
9		9:00-10:45a ENGL 220: Fairy Tales		9:00-10:45a ENGL 220: Fairy Tales	
10				11-12:15 ENGL 311 Psycho: CMB	
11		11-12:15 ENGL 311 Psycho: CMB		11-12:15 ENGL 311 Psycho: CMB	
12				12:00-1:00 ENGL 101 F.L.C. Theatre	Grocery Shop #GivviesDad
1		12:00-1:00 ENGL 101 F.L.C. Theatre		12:00-1:00 ENGL 101 F.L.C. Theatre	
2	2:15p Leave for UNH	2:15p Leave for UNH	2:15p Leave for UNH	1:45p 2:15p 2:15p leave for UNH	
3	3-4p Core Writing Office Hours HUM 217		3-4p My Office Hours		
4	4-5p My Office Hours		4-5p Core Writing Office Hours HUM 217	4-7:00p ENGL 680 Modernism and the American West HUM 224	
5	5:30-6:45 ENGL 301 Writing Women HUM 105		5:30-6:45 ENGL 301 Writing Women		
6					
7					
8					

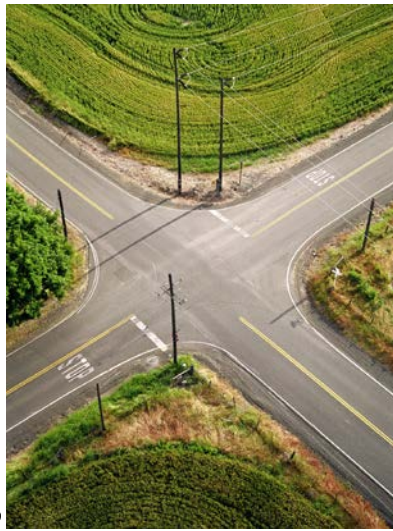
Saturday:  
• Lesson plans for 110/220  
• Read for 511/Damico/Carroll for week  
• House clean

Sunday:  
• Grades  
• My work: articles, research  
• Laundry

# Secondary Transition

Transition services should:

- Begin by the time the student reaches age 14
- Be based on the child's needs, taking into account the child's strengths, preferences, and interests
- Include courses of study needed to reach those goals



\*By the year the child turns 16, the IEP shall also include a statement, if appropriate, of **interagency responsibilities or any linkages**

# IEP Transition for Formed Families

## IEP Transition Planning In Virginia Tips To Know For Youth (Age 14 And Older) With IEPs Who Are In Foster Care



### A WAZE To Adulthood Fact Sheet

Thank you to **Formed Families Forward** for their partnership in this resource

Children and youth with disabilities who are in foster care are in a unique position. Often many individuals and agencies are involved with their care, education, and transition planning. The individualized education program (IEP) team should be aware of the following:

**1. There are additional people, outside of those mentioned in IDEA, who may be a part of the IEP Transition Planning team.**

- Foster or Resource Parents
- Birth Parents, where appropriate
- Youth's Foster Care Case Manager or Service Worker
- Youth's Independent Living (IL) Coordinator

**2. Who signs consent for the IEP?**

**For students under the age of 18:**

- The birth parent if termination of rights has not occurred; otherwise, the foster or resource parent can sign consent.
- A court can designate another individual to serve as special education decisionmaker. In most cases, this should not be the foster care worker.

### Did You Know?

#### Education and Training Voucher Program (ETV)

ETV is available for youth who have experienced foster care and are at least 14 years of age and not yet 26 years of age. ETV provides up to \$5,000 per year for post-secondary

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# IEP: Placement

## LAST part of IEP Meeting- Least Restrictive Environment- LRE

- Appropriate placement is one in which the student has a reasonable expectation of achieving IEP goals.
- Placement is a “set of services” provided to the student.  
**NOT** a place for the student to go!
- Watch for “label and sort” offers. LRE must be protected.
- Be vigilant. **ASK:** Where is the data to support removal from typical learning environments?

# Some Final Tips for Formed Families

- Request draft goals in advance
- Seek input from others (outside providers, DSS, family, etc.)
- Consider a trauma impact statement in the PLAAFP
- Remember: goals should be ambitious
- Make sure your voice is heard and included in the IEP
- Ask for an IEP meeting if adjustments are needed

# Resources

- Our Resource Directory- <https://formedfamiliesforward.org/resource-directory>
- Va Special Education Regulations <https://www.doe.virginia.gov/programs-services/special-education/regulations-laws-policies>
- VA Family Special Education Connection <https://vafamilysped.org/>
- Virginia Family Special Education Connection <http://vafamilysped.org/>
- [PEATC.org](http://PEATC.org), statewide parent training & info center
- Center for Family Involvement at VCU <https://cfi.partnership.vcu.edu/>
- Parent/Family Resource Centers in many divisions

# Q & A



# Formed Families Forward – Stay in Touch!

**PLEASE COMPLETE THE EVALUATION.**

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*Thank  
You!*

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