

Maryland Charter School Network

Education Plan

Module II

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Using documents originally published by:

- Foundation Center
- Illinois Charter School Resource Guide
- Maryland Public Charter Schools Model
Policy and Resource Guide 8/2003
- The Massachusetts Charter School
Handbook
- New Jersey Charter School Application
- Northwest Regional Educational
Laboratories



Module IV.

Education Plan

Topics

- A. School Theme - Grade Levels
- B. Geographic Area
- C. At-Risk
- D. Educational Philosophy
- E. Curriculum
- F. Pedagogy
- G. Alignment with State Standards –
Maryland Voluntary State Curriculum
- H. Special Education and LEP

A. School Theme – Grade Levels





School Theme - Grade Levels

Provide for each year of the charter that you are seeking, the grades that the school would serve, the number of students to be served in each grade, the number of children expected in each class, and the total number of enrolled students.

If providing a kindergarten, please indicate the minimum age that the school will require a child to have attained to be eligible for enrollment.



Theme

Describe:

- The innovative strategies for learning and teaching that the charter school will employ to promote high student achievement and the process for measuring the efficacy of these programs. Include any supporting research-based data and/or indicators that provide evidence that the strategies promote high student achievement.
- Provide the school calendar for the first school year listing opening and closing school dates, holidays, vacations, etc.
- Outline the school day schedule.



Theme

Describe

- Describe the process for curriculum development, supervision, continual assessment and revision of the educational program
- Explain how limited English proficient learners, disabled students and students who enter the school below grade level will benefit from the curriculum.
- Describe the meaningful and sustained professional development opportunities that will be provided to teachers in the area of curriculum and how these opportunities will promote higher levels of student achievement.



Reviewers may look for evidence of:

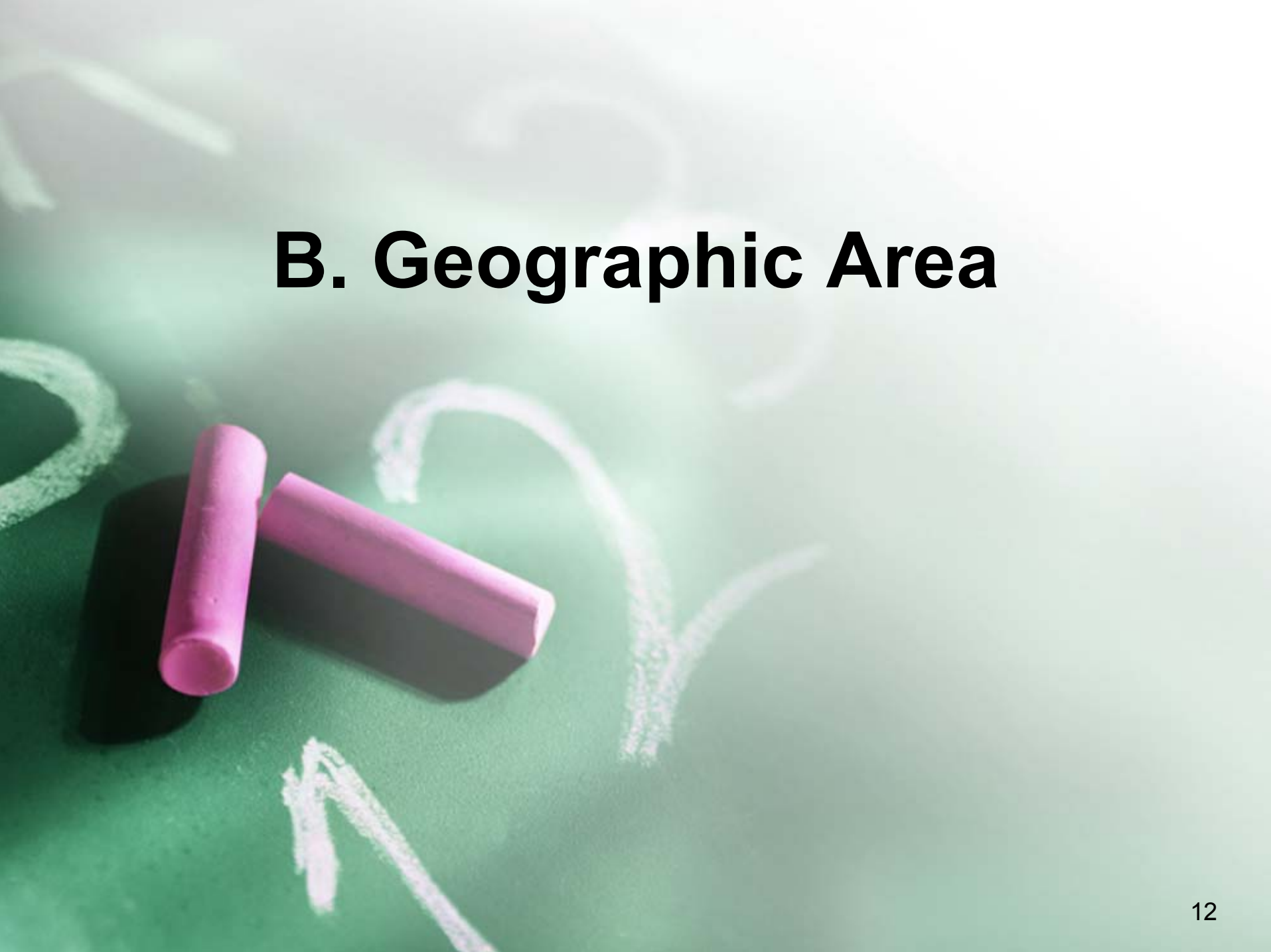
- A curriculum plan that is consistent with the mission of the school and that challenges students to perform at high levels
- Curricula that are aligned with Maryland Voluntary State Curriculum
- Clearly stated and measurable objectives, content and skills that are ambitious yet realistic for each grade
- Effective teaching strategies that support the innovative strategies described
- Program models and delivery strategies that are suitable for limited English proficient students and students with disabilities



Admissions Policy and Criteria

- Outline the grade levels for the charter school.
- Describe the student admissions policies
- Define any policies that will focus admissions to area(s) of concentration reflecting the mission and goals of the charter school.
- Describe how the policies will be non-discriminatory.
- Describe the recruitment and enrollment process that the charter school will use to select students if there are fewer applicants than number of spaces available.
- Describe the random process that the charter school will use to select students if there are more applicants than there are spaces available.
- Describe the waiting list process.

B. Geographic Area





Geographic Area

Per SB 75 § 9-102 (3) a charter school “Is open to all students on a space available basis and admits students on a lottery basis if more students apply than can be accommodated.” However a charter school is also located in a specific community with all that this selection implies.

Describe the targeted area for the school in terms of:

- Name of community (if applicable)
- Neighborhood characteristics
- Demographics
- Socio-economic factors
- Any historical context
- Reason this community was chosen

C. At-Risk



See Educational Equity and Access in Module I.

If the proposed charter school includes particular methods, strategies or programs for meeting the needs of students at-risk of academic failure, describe the challenges faced in educating the targeted population and describe such methods, strategies and/or programs.

Include any diagnostic methods or instruments that will be used to identify and assess those students who are performing below grade level as well as the processes/programs/tools to be used in providing them with remedial instruction.



See Educational Equity and Access in Module I.

A charter school should expect to attract a significant and even, perhaps, a disproportionately large number of children at risk of academic failure who already are several years behind academically.

Describe the processes/programs/tools that you intend to use to provide remedial instruction to those children in order to permit them to meet the performance standards of the proposed school.

Provide the proposed school's methods and strategies for serving students with disabilities in compliance with all federal laws and regulations.

Legal Issues arising from IDEA

- The charter school application should describe the methods and strategies for servicing students with disabilities in compliance with all federal laws and regulations.
- For purposes of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), a MD charter school is a school within a local educational agency (LEA), i.e., a school within a school district.
- A charter school can choose to provide the special education and related services mandated by each enrolled child's IEP, or it can arrange to have such services provided by the district or by contract with a qualified third party. The application should indicate which entity the charter school contemplates would provide the required services. It is likely, of course, that the charter school will provide some services while calling upon the district to provide the remainder.
- The federal regulations implementing the IDEA, 34 CFR § 300, are available on line at

www.ideapractices.org/idearegsmain.htm

D. Educational Philosophy



Educational Philosophy

Often charter schools organize around a particular educational philosophy that unites the school community and provides the foundation for the curriculum.

The Core Knowledge Sequence, the Ten Common Principles of the Coalition for Essential Schools, and the Edison Project's ten educational keys are the among the "off-the-shelf" materials charter school applicants have selected.

Educational Philosophy:

Following are brief illustrations of how each of these educational philosophies drives curriculum.

- The Core Knowledge Sequence offers a planned progression of specific knowledge in history, geography, mathematics, science, language arts, and fine arts. It represents a first and continuing attempt to state explicitly the core of shared knowledge children should learn in grades K through 6. It is a guide to content from grade to grade, designed to integrate instruction in the classroom. The educational philosophy underlying this curriculum is that broad content knowledge, more than cognitive skill development, should be the focus of education.

Educational Philosophy:

- The Coalition of Essential Schools espouses a contrary approach, in which cognitive skill development and “doing a few things well” are more important than covering a host of topics. Adolescents are encouraged to use their minds well, master a number of essential skills and areas of knowledge, individualize and personalize their goals, and motivate their own learning situations—a student-directed rather than teacher-directed education.

Educational Philosophy:

- The Edison Project's educational philosophy falls somewhere in the middle. Edison's curriculum stresses both academic skills and broad content knowledge. In part it attempts to accomplish its objectives through longer school days, an extended school year, and accelerated learning.

Edison's curriculum is designed to cut across five "domains": *cognitive; creative; physical; character and values; and practical skills.*

The curriculum is "infused with 'The Greats': great works of human imagination and invention; great performances of music, art, and drama."

E. Curriculum



Curriculum

A curriculum, which includes the educational program, student activities, and assessment strategies, should agree with and amplify the school's mission statement. It is your educational philosophy made real.

Curriculum should be diversified and balanced to help students as they proceed through levels of performance in all learning areas.

Keep in mind that curriculum, teaching, and evaluation are interrelated—they support and reflect one another. Designing one component without thought to the others can do your school a disservice.



Recommend:

- The careful consideration of the choices available and a close alignment of the material you choose with the Maryland Voluntary State Curriculum.
- Work from a high quality existing curriculum – do NOT try to reinvent the wheel. You can modify the curriculum to match the school’s philosophy and mission.
- Identify sources of curriculum.
- If using Maryland Voluntary State Curriculum, which are a set of standards – how will the educational program be delivered?



Some Practical Steps Toward Developing Your Curriculum:

- Decide what a student needs by the end of school.
- Decide what a student needs by each level and how those levels can connect for continuity.
- Align these needs with the Maryland Voluntary State Curriculum
- Write interdisciplinary curriculum units around an essential question.
- Write units that are linked directly to assessments.
- Design ways to tell if the curriculum is actually working with regard to objectives.
- Allow enough time for staff to develop and improve the curriculum.
- Accommodate the autonomy and individual styles of teachers.
- Consider how your curriculum fits with those of other schools your students may come from or go to.



In designing your curriculum, draw on available resources and materials, such as the following:

- Maryland Voluntary State curriculum
- National Council of Teachers of Mathematics guidelines
- Core Knowledge Sequence
- Coalition of Essential Schools
- New American Schools
- Central Park East's Senior Institute
- Accelerated Schools
- Montessori
- Paideia
- Marva Collins Education Method
- Edison Project
- SABIS International
- Foxfire
- Waldorf
- Calvert Schools
- Carnegie Basic Schools
- International Baccalaureate
- American Advanced Placement courses
- Expeditionary Learning
- Modern Red Schoolhouse
- Nova Learning, Inc.
- Advantage Schools, Inc.
- Beacon Education Management Services

F. Pedagogy





Pedagogy:

Provide an outline of teaching approaches, tools, methods, etc.

- **Is the school using progressive education methods? Or Direct Instruction? Or Back-To-Basics.**
- **Is the school using whole language or phonics or a blend?**
- **Is the school using an arts or music or ecology infused approach?**

Attributes of High Achievement Schools

Guiding Questions

Common Focus:

Describe the specific academic, intellectual goal(s) on which your school community will be focused. Include efforts that focus on literacy and reading.

Describe the process and participants involved in defining these goals. What research-based instructional approach or model will your school use to support these goals?

How will you align your use of time, tools, materials, and professional development to support your goals?



Attributes of High Achievement Schools

Guiding Questions (cont'd)

High Expectations:

How will you develop the belief among your staff members that all students can learn at high levels and meet state standards?

How will this belief be communicated to the students?

How will high expectations be reflected in your classrooms and implemented school-wide?

What will the academic rigor and level of learning look like in your classroom?



Attributes of High Achievement Schools

Guiding Questions (cont'd)

Personalized:

Describe your planned school structure and how it is designed to provide personalized attention for each student.

How will each student be provided a powerful and sustainable adult relationship and an adult advocate/mentor?

How will personalized instruction be offered for each student that includes input from the student, parents, and teachers?

How will it be used to monitor student progress?



Attributes of High Achievement Schools

Guiding Questions (cont'd)

Respect and Responsibility:

Describe your planned school environment. To what degree will it be safe, ethical, and studious?

Describe the shared understanding and the common set of expectations you will create among students, staff, and parents? What are they?

How will the school community regularly revisit the expectations?

How will the staff teach and model respectful and responsible behavior?

How will the students participate in the development and maintenance of a respectful, productive school environment?



Attributes of High Achievement Schools

Guiding Questions (cont'd)

Performance Based:

How will students demonstrate competencies and how will they be promoted to the next instructional level at your school?

What kind of performance-based assessment (portfolios, exhibits, demonstrations, group projects) will your teachers use in their individual classrooms?

How will they be used to monitor student achievement?

To what extent will you have consistent school-wide standards?

What kinds of support opportunities will be provided to accelerate learning for all students?

How will data be used to inform instruction, scheduling, and to communicate to students their progress?



Attributes of High Achievement Schools

Guiding Questions (cont'd)

Time to Collaborate:

How will the schedule be structured to support ample and ongoing time for teachers to plan, collaborate, and develop skills to support school goals?

How will teachers collaborate horizontally and vertically to ensure powerful student learning?

How will professional development be structured/scheduled to result in meaningful adult learning that will have a significant and positive impact on student learning?

What kind of structured partnerships will exist with parents, the business community, and higher education to support adult and student learning?



Attributes of High Achievement Schools

Guiding Questions (cont'd)

Technology as a Tool:

What kinds of engaging and imaginative curriculum will teachers use that is supported by technology?

Give examples of how technology will be infused/integrated into curriculum content to support/enhance teaching and learning.

How will technology be used to gather, organize, and interpret data in order to improve classroom practices?

How will technology be used to publish your progress to parent and engage the community in continuous improvement?

G. Alignment with State Standards – Maryland Voluntary State Curriculum



Academic Standards:

- Allow for a sequenced curriculum across the entire school.
- Inform the public so that teachers, parents, and students know what is expected at the end of the school year and by graduation.
- Do not mandate instructional practice.
- Describe what students should know and be able to do in core subjects at critical points in their education career.
- Describe desired results of schooling. They specify, for example, what students should know and be able to do by the time they graduate from high school. Whether developing student outcomes for the first time or reviewing previous ones, the process of developing standards at the school level includes four key steps.
- Include content-based and performance-based benchmarks.



Developing Academic Standards:

Step 1: The charter school standards team (which could comprise a group of parents, teachers, and administrators) reviews the school's mission to reflect on what its purpose is, whom it hopes to serve, and what its expectations of those students are.

Step 2: The team develops a list of exit outcomes, or "graduation standards," of those qualities and skills it feels its graduates should achieve.

Step 3: The team creates a list of interim skills and "benchmark" outcomes that allow the students to demonstrate their progress in attaining the exit standards.

Step 4: Teachers develop lists of specific academic skills that students will demonstrate in each subject area and class.

H. Special Education and LEP



IEP and IDEA

Each public school child who receives special education and related services must have an Individualized Education Program (IEP).

Each IEP must be designed for one student and must be a truly *individualized* document. The IEP creates an opportunity for teachers, parents, school administrators, related services personnel, and students (when appropriate) to work together to improve educational results for children with disabilities.

The IEP is the cornerstone of a quality education for each child with a disability.

IEP and IDEA

To create an effective IEP, parents, teachers, other school staff--and often the student--must come together to look closely at the student's unique needs.

These individuals pool knowledge, experience, and commitment to design an educational program that will help the student be involved in, and progress in, the general curriculum.

The IEP guides the delivery of special education supports and services for the student with a disability.

Without a doubt, writing--and implementing--an effective IEP requires teamwork.

IEP and IDEA

The IEP process is one of the most critical elements to ensure effective teaching, learning, and better results for all children with disabilities.

It is required by our nation's special education law--the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, or IDEA.

IEP and IDEA

The IDEA requires certain information to be included in each child's IEP. It is useful to know, however, that states and local school systems often include additional information in IEPs in order to document that they have met certain aspects of federal or state law.

The flexibility that states and school systems have to design their own IEP forms is one reason why IEP forms may look different from school system to school system or state to state. Yet each IEP is critical in the education of a child with a disability.

The Basic Special Education Process Under IDEA

The writing of each student's IEP takes place within the larger picture of the special education process under IDEA.

The following is a brief outline of how a student is identified as having a disability and needing special education and related services and, thus, an IEP.

The Basic Special Education Process Under IDEA

Step 1. Child is identified as possibly needing special education and related services.

“Child Find.” The state must identify, locate, and evaluate all children with disabilities in the state who need special education and related services. To do so, states conduct “Child Find” activities.

A child may be identified by “Child Find,” and parents may be asked if the “Child Find” system can evaluate their child.

Parents can also call the “Child Find” system and ask that their child be evaluated.

Or—



The Basic Special Education Process Under IDEA

Step 1 (cont'd). Child is identified as possibly needing special education and related services.

Referral or request for evaluation. A school professional may ask that a child be evaluated to see if he or she has a disability.

Parents may also contact the child's teacher or other school professional to ask that their child be evaluated. This request may be verbal or in writing. Parental consent is needed before the child may be evaluated.

Evaluation needs to be completed within a reasonable time after the parent gives consent.



The Basic Special Education Process Under IDEA

Step 2. Child is evaluated.

The evaluation must assess the child in all areas related to the child's suspected disability.

The evaluation results will be used to decide the child's eligibility for special education and related services and to make decisions about an appropriate educational program for the child.

If the parents disagree with the evaluation, they have the right to take their child for an Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE). They can ask that the school system pay for this IEE.

The Basic Special Education Process Under IDEA

Step 3. Eligibility is decided.

A group of qualified professionals and the parents look at the child's evaluation results. Together, they decide if the child is a "child with a disability," as defined by IDEA. Parents may ask for a hearing to challenge the eligibility decision.



The Basic Special Education Process Under IDEA

Step 4. Child is found eligible for services.

If the child is found to be a “child with a disability,” as defined by IDEA, he or she is eligible for special education and related services. Within 30 calendar days after a child is determined eligible, the IEP team must meet to write an IEP for the child.

Once the student has been found eligible for services, the IEP must be written. The two steps below ***summarize*** what is involved in writing the IEP.

This guide will look at these two steps in much greater detail in the following section.

The Basic Special Education Process Under IDEA

Step 5. IEP meeting is scheduled.

The school system schedules and conducts the IEP meeting. School staff must:

- contact the participants, including the parents;
- notify parents early enough to make sure they have an opportunity to attend;
- schedule the meeting at a time and place agreeable to parents and the school;
- tell the parents the purpose, time, and location of the meeting;
- tell the parents who will be attending; and
- tell the parents that they may invite people to the meeting who have knowledge or special expertise about the child.

The Basic Special Education Process Under IDEA

Step 6. IEP meeting is held and the IEP is written.

The IEP team gathers to talk about the child's needs and write the student's IEP. Parents and the student (when appropriate) are part of the team. If the child's placement is decided by a different group, the parents must be part of that group as well.

Before the school system may provide special education and related services to the child for the first time, the parents must give consent. The child begins to receive services as soon as possible after the meeting.

The Basic Special Education Process Under IDEA

Step 6 (cont'd). IEP meeting is held and the IEP is written.

If the parents do not agree with the IEP and placement, they may discuss their concerns with other members of the IEP team and try to work out an agreement.

If they still disagree, parents can ask for mediation, or the school may offer mediation. Parents may file a complaint with the state education agency and may request a due process hearing, at which time mediation must be available.

The Basic Special Education Process Under IDEA

Here is a brief summary of what happens after the IEP is written.

Step 7. Services are provided.

The school makes sure that the child's IEP is being carried out as it was written. Parents are given a copy of the IEP. Each of the child's teachers and service providers has access to the IEP and knows his or her specific responsibilities for carrying out the IEP. This includes the accommodations, modifications, and supports that must be provided to the child, in keeping with the IEP.



The Basic Special Education Process Under IDEA

Step 8. Progress is measured and reported to parents.

The child's progress toward the annual goals is measured, as stated in the IEP. His or her parents are regularly informed of their child's progress and whether that progress is enough for the child to achieve the goals by the end of the year.

These progress reports must be given to parents at least as often as parents are informed of their non-disabled children's progress.

The Basic Special Education Process Under IDEA

Step 9. IEP is reviewed.

The child's IEP is reviewed by the IEP team at least once a year, or more often if the parents or school ask for a review. If necessary, the IEP is revised. Parents, as team members, must be invited to attend these meetings. Parents can make suggestions for changes, can agree or disagree with the IEP goals, and agree or disagree with the placement.

If parents do not agree with the IEP and placement, they may discuss their concerns with other members of the IEP team and try to work out an agreement. There are several options, including additional testing, an independent evaluation, or asking for mediation (if available) or a due process hearing. They may also file a complaint with the state education agency.

The Basic Special Education Process Under IDEA

Step 10. Child is reevaluated.

At least every three years the child must be reevaluated.

This evaluation is often called a “triennial.” Its purpose is to find out if the child continues to be a “child with a disability,” as defined by IDEA, and what the child’s educational needs are.

However, the child must be reevaluated more often if conditions warrant or if the child’s parent or teacher asks for a reevaluation.

LEP and ELL Students

Describe the program design, methods and strategies for serving students who are English Language Learners (ELLs) and Limited English Proficiency (LEPs) in accordance with federal law, including Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1974. Describe:

- the process for the identification and placement of students whose first language is not English and the methods for determining the kinds of assistance that these students may need;
- the manner in which the applicant will ensure that ELL/LEP students are not misplaced or tracked inappropriately in other classes (including those programs or classes designed to serve students with disabilities);

LEP and ELL Students

- exit criteria and related objective assessment instruments and subjective methods that will ensure the appropriate student placement and monitoring of a student's progress over time;
- a description of the educational soundness of the program model pursuant to which ELL/LEP students will be provided services, including the authorities upon which the applicant relies to demonstrate that the program is likely to meet the educational needs of all ELL/LEP students;
- a statement that affirms that all students, regardless of language proficiency, will be provided the necessary curriculum and instruction to allow them to achieve to the high standards set for all students in the school;
- the planned implementation of the program model, including information regarding the allocation of resources to the service of all ELL/LEP students including

LEP and ELL Students

- how staff, curricular materials, and facilities will be used,
- a statement that affirms that ELL students will not be excluded categorically from curricular and extra-curricular activities because of an inability to speak and understand English,
- planned evaluation of the program model over time, including the identification of benchmarks of success (and the corresponding bases for their establishment); the uses of standardized and other assessments; and the related disaggregation of data that will facilitate a program review and the measurement of progress of ELL/LEP students over time; and
- planned outreach to parents in the community, including strategies for communicating with parents who are not proficient in English.

LEP and ELL Students

For legal requirements regarding providing instruction to ELL students, you may review the following publications of the United States Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights:

- “Office for Civil Rights Policy Regarding the Treatment of National Origin Minority Students Who Are Limited English Proficient,” dated April 6, 1990 (and attaching “The Office for Civil Rights’ Title VI Language Minority Compliance Procedures,” issued originally December 3, 1985); and
- “Identification of Discrimination and Denial of Services On the Basis of National Origin,” dated May 25, 1970.
- “Policy Update on Schools’ Obligations Toward National Origin Minority Students With Limited-English Proficiency (LEP students),” dated September 27, 1991;
- Each of these publications is available at <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OCR/docs/laumemos.html>.

End Module II

