



# **DEVELOPING “NEW ERA” IEPs FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

## **TOOLKIT for Parents and Advocates**

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We thank them for their support and guidance.**

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### **EDUCATION LAW CENTER**

1315 Walnut Street, 4th Floor, Philadelphia, PA 19107

Phone: 215-238-6970 Fax: 215-772-3125

TTY: 215-789-2498

1901 Law & Finance Bldg., 429 Fourth Avenue

Pittsburgh, PA 15219

Phone: 412-391-5225 Fax: 412-391-4496

TTY: 412-467-8940

**e-mail: [elc@elc-pa.org](mailto:elc@elc-pa.org)**

**website: <http://www.elc-pa.org>**

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## TOOL 1

### LEGALLY IDENTIFIED DISABILITIES FOR SCHOOL AGE CHILDREN

Under the IDEA 2004, a “child with a disability” is a child who has one or more of the following:

1. **Mental Retardation**
2. **Hearing Impairments (including deafness)**
3. **Speech or Language Impairments**
4. **Visual Impairments (including blindness)**
5. **Serious Emotional Disturbance**
6. **Orthopedic Impairments**
7. **Autism**
8. **Traumatic Brain Injury**
9. **Other Health Impairments**
10. **Specific Learning Disabilities**

20 U.S.C. § 1402(3)(A). The federal regulations also include deafblindness and multiple disabilities. In addition, for a child ages 3 to 9, developmental delay can be the disability. 34 CFR 300.8.

**Other Health Impairments** include chronic or acute health problems such as *asthma, attention deficit disorder or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, diabetes, epilepsy, a heart condition, hemophilia, lead poisoning, leukemia, nephritis, rheumatic fever, and sickle cell anemia* when they result in limited alertness with respect to the educational environment and adversely affect a child’s educational performance.

34 C.F.R. § 300.8(c)(9)

The **Federal Regulations** implementing IDEA have specific definitions for all the disabilities listed above. To view the Federal Regulations, go to [www.pattan.net/files/fedregs/part300.pdf](http://www.pattan.net/files/fedregs/part300.pdf) and scroll down to § 300.8 titled “Child with a disability”.

#### **Questions to Ask/Things to Think About at an IEP Meeting:**

- Does my child have a legally identified disability and, because of that disability, require special education and related services?
- What kind of specially-designed instruction (adaptations to the content, methodology and/or delivery of instruction) and related services will my child need to make meaningful educational progress?
- **Tip: Talk about your child’s educational needs based on the evaluation(s) before allowing a discussion of available district services and programs**

## TOOL 2

### IDENTIFYING STUDENTS WITH SPECIFIC LEARNING DISABILITIES

Under the IDEA 2004, a school district does **not** have to take into consideration whether a child has a *severe discrepancy* between achievement and intellectual ability when determining if the student has a **Specific Learning Disability**.

20 U.S.C. § 1414(b)(6)(A)

To identify a student with a Specific Learning Disability, a school district may use a process that determines if the child responds to *scientific, researched-based intervention* as a part of the evaluation procedures.

20 U.S.C. § 1414(b)(6)(B).

This technique is commonly referred to as **Response to Intervention** or **RTI**. The jury is still out on whether RTI is better than the significant discrepancy model for identifying students with specific learning disabilities. Some experts endorse RTI, while others do not. Under the federal regulations, a school must adopt criteria for the evaluation process either based on response to intervention or another research-based practice. 34 CFR § 300.307-311.

Here are some **resources** for more information:

U.S. Department of Education Information Resource Center: 1-800-872-5327 (will direct you to the Department best suited to answer your questions)

National Center for Learning Disabilities: 888-575-7373; [www.ld.org](http://www.ld.org)

Alternative Approaches to the Definition and Identification of Learning Disabilities: Some Questions and Answers - [www.aimsweb.com/](http://www.aimsweb.com/)

Responsiveness to Intervention: A Blueprint for Practitioners, Policymakers, and Parents in Teaching Exceptional Children [www.advocacyinstitute.org/resources/TEC\\_Rtlblueprint.pdf](http://www.advocacyinstitute.org/resources/TEC_Rtlblueprint.pdf)

Response to Instruction in the Identification of Learning Disabilities: A Guide for School Teams - [www.nasponline.org/](http://www.nasponline.org/)

#### **Questions to Ask/Things to Think About at an IEP Meeting:**

- Does my child have problems with oral expression, listening comprehension, written expression, basic reading skill, reading comprehension, mathematical, calculation, or mathematical reasoning?
- Does my district use a severe discrepancy model or a RTI model to identify students with specific learning disabilities?

- If using a RTI model, what scientific research-based interventions are being used to evaluate my child? Who is administering these interventions? How is my child's response being measured? Where can I get more information on these interventions?
- **Tip: Do your own research about what interventions are available to identify and help students with specific learning disabilities. Your district may not be aware of best practices that would be appropriate for your child.**

## TOOL 3

### PENNSYLVANIA'S ACADEMIC STANDARDS

Pennsylvania has established **academic standards** for various elementary, middle school and high school grade levels in the following areas:

1. **Arts and Humanities**
2. **Civics and Government**
3. **Economics**
4. **Environment and Ecology**
5. **Family and Consumer Sciences**
6. **Geography**
7. **Health, Safety and Physical Education**
8. **History**
9. **Mathematics**
10. **Reading, Writing, Speaking, and Listening**
11. **Science and Technology**
12. **Career Education and Work (added in July of 2006)**

These academic standards are mandated by **Chapter 4** of our State education regulations (found at 22 Pa. Code §§ 4.1 – 4.83; Appendices A – D).

To take an example, Pennsylvania has set academic standards for **Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening** for **grades 3, 5, 8, and 11** in the following areas:

1. **Learning to Read Independently**
  - a. Purposes for Reading
  - b. Word Recognition Skills
  - c. Vocabulary Development
  - d. Comprehension and Interpretation
  - e. Fluency
2. **Reading Critically in All Content Areas**
  - a. Detail
  - b. Inferences
  - c. Fact from Opinion
  - d. Comparison
  - e. Analysis and Evaluation
3. **Reading, Analyzing and Interpreting Literature**
  - a. Literary Elements
  - b. Literary Devices
  - c. Poetry
  - d. Drama
4. **Types of Writing**
  - a. Narrative
  - b. Informational

- c. Persuasive
- 5. **Quality of Writing**
  - a. Focus
  - b. Content
  - c. Organization
  - d. Style
  - e. Conventions
- 6. **Speaking and Listening**
  - a. Listening Skills
  - b. Speaking Skills
  - c. Discussion
  - d. Presentation
- 7. **Characteristics and Function of the English Language**
  - a. Word Origins
  - b. Variations
  - c. Application
- 8. **Research**
  - a. Selection
  - b. Location of Information
  - c. Organization

A specific **Learning to Read Independently** standard for a student in **Grade 3** is:

- Read text using self-monitoring comprehension strategies (e.g., predict, revise predictions, reread, use text organization including headings, graphics, and charts, and adjust reading rate).

A specific **Learning to Read Independently** standard for a student in **Grade 11** is:

- Identify, describe, evaluate and synthesize the essential ideas in text. Assess those reading strategies that were most effective in learning from a variety of texts.

You can access Pennsylvania's academic standards online through the **Pennsylvania Department of Education** at [www.pde.state.pa.us](http://www.pde.state.pa.us) (click the "Pre K-12" tab at the top of the page, then click on "Assessment", and "Standards") or call PDE at 717-783-3958 and request a copy.

**Questions to Ask/Things to Think About at an IEP Meeting:**

- What are the academic standards set forth in my district's curriculum for my child's grade level? How closely is the district's curriculum tied to Pennsylvania's academic standards for my child's grade level?
- Does my child's IEP have academic goals that allow him/her to participate in the general curriculum and obtain the appropriate State academic standards?
- **Tip: Trying to include all the State academic standards and those in the district's curriculum would be overwhelming and unproductive. Pick a few that are most important to ensuring your child makes meaningful educational progress. Make sure the goals are measurable and progress is reported to you in a timely fashion.**

## TOOL 4

### PENNSYLVANIA'S ASSESSMENT ANCHORS

Pennsylvania has established **assessment anchors** for various elementary, middle school and high school grade levels in **Reading and Mathematics** (draft assessment anchors for 2007 are now in place for **Science** too).

The **purpose** of the assessment anchors is to identify the most important **academic standards** that are tested on the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment exam (**PSSA**) and to help parents and teachers prepare students to take the PSSA. Parents and teachers can use the assessment anchors as a tool to understand how to make connections among academic standards, the PSSA, the district's own curriculum and the instruction provided by the school's teachers.

The assessment anchors provide guidance to parents and teachers on what specific content a student must learn to become proficient or advanced in mastering the state academic standards as measured by the PSSA.

To take an example, the assessment anchors for **Reading** are tied to the state academic standards for **Learning to Read Independently, Reading Critically in All Content Areas, and Reading, Analyzing and Interpreting Literature**. The assessment anchors have two "reporting categories": 1) **Comprehension and Reading Skills** and 2) **Interpretation and Analysis of Fiction and Nonfiction Text**.

A **Reading Assessment Anchor** to measure **Comprehension and Reading Skills** for a student in **Grade 3** is:

- Understand fiction text appropriate to grade level.

To master this goal, the Assessment Anchor breaks down the content skills as follows:

- Identify the meaning of vocabulary.
  - Identify meaning of multiple-meaning words used in text.
  - Identify a synonym or antonym of a word used in text.

You can access Pennsylvania's assessment anchors online through the **Pennsylvania Department of Education** at [www.pde.state.pa.us](http://www.pde.state.pa.us) (click the "Pre K-12" tab at the top of the page, then click on "Assessment", and "Assessment Anchors") or call PDE at 717-783-3958 and request a copy.

Certain **accommodations on the PSSA** are allowable for students with disabilities, English language learners, and all students. You can access the *2006 PSSA Fact Sheet: Accommodations for All Students* and the *2006 Accommodation Guidelines for Students with IEPs, Students with 504 Plans, English Language Learners and All Students* at PDE's website [www.pde.state.pa.us](http://www.pde.state.pa.us) (click the "Pre K-12" tab at the top of the page, then click on "Assessment", and "Testing Accommodations") or call PDE at 717-787-4234 and request a copy.

### **Questions to Ask/Things to Think About at an IEP Meeting:**

- Is my child taking the PSSA?
- If my child is taking the PSSA, do his/her IEP goals align with the grade level academic standards that will be tested? Are the specialized instruction and related services being provided to my child tailored to support and advance academic learning towards these standards and in the general curriculum?
- Are my child's teachers familiar with the State assessment anchors? Have they received training on how to use the assessment anchors? Are they using them to provide instruction in their classrooms?
- What accommodations are appropriate for my child when taking the PSSA?
- **Tip: The majority of children in Pennsylvania, including children with disabilities, will take the PSSA (with and without accommodations). If your child is struggling with Reading, Math or Science, ask his/her teachers to meet with you and discuss the assessment anchors that correspond with the State academic standards that will be tested in these areas. Use the assessment anchors to develop IEP goals that will improve your child's skill level on these standards.**

## TOOL 5

### **PENNSYLVANIA’S EARLY LEARNING STANDARDS, PROPOSED PRE-KINDERGARTEN REGULATIONS AND PROPOSED KINDERGARTEN STANDARDS**

Pennsylvania supports a **standards-based approach to pre-kindergarten and kindergarten programs**. Research-based standards are essential to building a foundation that effectively provides children with skills and gives them the confidence to succeed in school and in life.

Pennsylvania’s **Early Learning Standards** (pre-K) were developed as a joint project of the **Departments of Education and Public Welfare** as part of the Governor’s commitment to early childhood education and care. They are meant to guide the development of pre-kindergarten programs and were developed by a **Task Force** consisting of early childhood practitioners and administrators, policy analysts and researchers, and university faculty.

The **Early Learning Standards** cover nine (9) **Key Learning Areas**:

- 1. Approaches to Learning**
- 2. Creative Arts**
- 3. Language and Literacy**
- 4. Logical-Mathematical**
- 5. Personal Social**
- 6. Physical – Health**
- 7. Program Partnerships**
- 8. Science**
- 9. Social Studies**

Each Key Learning Area has its own set of **Standards**. To take a specific example, a **Literacy Standard** within the Key Learning Area of **Language and Literacy** is:

- Develop and expand awareness of concepts of print.

**Indicators** of this standard include:

- Demonstrate an understanding that symbols represent objects, events or people.
- Demonstrate an understanding that illustrations and print convey meaning.

You can access Pennsylvania’s **Early Learning Standards** online through the **Pennsylvania Department of Education** at [www.pde.state.pa.us](http://www.pde.state.pa.us) (click the “Pre K-12” tab at the top of the page, then click on “Early Childhood”, and “Standards”) or call PDE at 717-783-9783 and request a copy.

Pennsylvania is in the process of developing and enacting **Early Childhood Regulations** that establish quality public pre-K programs that promote the Early Learning Standards noted above. You can access the **State Board of Education’s** most recent proposal for the Early Childhood Regulations at:

[http://www.pde.state.pa.us/stateboard\\_ed/cwp/view.asp?Q=117155&A=3](http://www.pde.state.pa.us/stateboard_ed/cwp/view.asp?Q=117155&A=3) or call the State Board of Education at 717-787-3787 and request a copy.

Pennsylvania has also developed **Standards for Kindergarten** (still in draft form). The Kindergarten Standards cover twelve (12) **Key Learning Areas**:

1. **Arts and Humanities**
2. **Family-School-Community Partnerships**
3. **Health, Safety and Physical Education**
4. **Mathematics**
5. **Personal Social**
6. **Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening**
7. **Science and Technology**
8. **Environment and Ecology**
9. **Civics and Government**
10. **Economics**
11. **Geography**
12. **History**

Each Key Learning Area has its own set of **Standards**. To take a specific example, a **Learning to Read Independently Standard** within the Key Learning Area of **Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening** is:

- Discriminate words and sounds.

**Examples** of this standard include:

- Tell whether environmental sounds are the same or different.
- Tell whether speech sounds are the same or different.

You can access the *working draft* of **Pennsylvania's Standards for Kindergarten** online through the PDE at [www.pde.state.pa.us](http://www.pde.state.pa.us) (click the "Pre K-12" tab at the top of the page, then click on "Early Childhood", and "Standards") or call PDE at 717-783-9783 and request a copy.

#### **Questions to Ask/Things to Think About at an IEP Meeting:**

- Is my child functioning at a pre-literacy skill level?
- What Early Learning and/or Kindergarten Standards could be incorporated as goals into my child's IEP to allow him/her to make meaningful educational progress?
- How can these goals be worked on in the context of the general education curriculum within the regular education classroom?
- **Tip: Assume that all educational goals can be worked on in the regular classroom using general education materials. Then decide what specialized instruction, related services, supports and/or accommodations will be needed to ensure that your child can make meaningful educational progress in this environment.**

## TOOL 6

### PENNSYLVANIA'S ALTERNATE ACADEMIC AND ACHIEVEMENT STANDARDS

Pennsylvania has established **Alternate Academic Standards** and proposed **Alternate Achievement/Performance Standards** for **Reading** and **Mathematics** for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities.

The Alternate Standards describe what students with the most significant cognitive disabilities should know and be able to do at various elementary, middle and high school grade levels. The **purpose** of the Alternate Standards is to provide the targets for instruction and student learning essential for success in school and life. The Alternate Standards are **not a curriculum** – but tools that schools can use to develop a curriculum that will meet local students' needs. Parents and teachers can use these tools to develop individualized educational goals and programs.

To take an example, the **Alternate Academic Standards for Reading** focus on 3 key areas with specific skill subsets:

1. Leaning to Read Independently
  - Word Recognition Skills
  - Vocabulary Development
  - Comprehension and Interpretation
  - Fluency
2. Reading Critically in All Content Areas
  - Detail
  - Inferences
3. Reading, Analyzing and Interpreting Literature
  - Literary Elements

An Alternate Academic Reading Standard for a student in **Grade 3** is:

- Use knowledge of phonics, word analysis, syllabication, picture and context clues to decode and understand new words during reading.

**Skills** related to this Standard are:

- Orients toward set of objects.
- Matches identical items from array of 3-5 or in connected display.
- Locates item named from array of 3-5 or in connected display.

The proposed **Alternate Achievement/Performance Standards** describe 3 different levels of skill attainment (Level A, Level B, and Level C) in Reading and Mathematics for students in Third, Fifth, Eighth, and Eleventh grades.

For example, a **Third Grade** student performing at **Level A in Reading** can:

- Match objects; select an item when given the name; select an object based on how it is used; determine in which category an object belongs; and match 2 objects that are used in similar ways.

The Alternate Standards are tied to the Pennsylvania Alternate System of Assessment (**PASA**). To participate in the PASA, students must meet **6 specific criteria** established by the Pennsylvania Department of Education:

1. By September of the present school year, is the student in grade 3, grade 5, grade 8, or grade 11?
2. Does the student have significant cognitive disabilities?
3. Does the student require intensive instruction to learn?
4. Does the student require adaptation and support in order to perform and/or participate meaningfully and productively in the everyday life activities of integrated school, home, community, and work environments?
5. Does the student require substantial modifications of the general education curriculum?
6. Does the student's participation in the general education curriculum differ greatly in form and/or substance from that of most other students (different objectives, materials or activities, for example)?

Each **IEP Team** will determine if the PASA is an appropriate choice for the student using the 6 criteria listed above. To be eligible to take the alternate assessment, the student must meet all 6 criteria – if the answer to any of the criteria is “no,” the PASA may not be the appropriate assessment for the student.

For more information about the PASA and to access Pennsylvania's Alternate Academic Standards and proposed Alternate Achievement/Performance Standards online, go to the **Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAN)** website at [www.pattan.net](http://www.pattan.net) (click “Teaching & Leading”; “Assessment & Progress Monitoring”; “PA Alternate System of Assessment (PASA)”; and “Assessment”) or call the regional office to request specific information (King of Prussia: 800-441-3215; Harrisburg: 800-360-7282; Pittsburgh: 800-446-5607).

#### **Questions to Ask/Things to Think About at an IEP Meeting:**

- How can the Alternate Academic Standards and/or Alternate Achievement/Performance Standards be used as tools to develop academic goals in my child's IEP? How can this be done in the context of the general education curriculum?
- Does my child meet all the criteria to take the PASA, or would the PSSA with accommodations be more appropriate?
- **Tip: Children who take the PASA are entitled to have short term objectives/benchmarks in their IEPs – make sure they are tied to the Alternative Standards and the district's curriculum to the maximum extent appropriate for your child.**

## TOOL 7

### BEHAVIORAL, EMOTIONAL AND SOCIAL SKILL DEVELOPMENT

Pennsylvania has developed statewide resources to provide effective **behavior supports** to school districts, individual schools, classrooms, and students. The Pennsylvania Training & Technical Assistance Network (**PaTTAN**) works with local intermediate units to meet the technical assistance and training needs of Pennsylvania's school districts in this regard.

*Curriculum* drives the educational program that is individualized for students with **emotional/behavioral disabilities**. A key issue for an IEP Team is to design an effective program that is aligned with **standards** and that assists the student to *learn and socialize with typical peers* to the greatest extent possible.

Techniques designed to promote a **positive classroom environment**, along with **effective instruction techniques** will help all students make the most progress towards their goals. PaTTAN has adopted **ES [emotional support] Quality Program Indicators** for *children with emotional and behavioral disorders* which look at the following areas:

1. **School Environment and Resource Management:**
  - School resources, communication systems, organizational structures, general physical arrangements, and overall climate are employed systematically to structure the total environment to provide necessary support to both students and staff. IDEA requirements are met (i.e., adequate Evaluation, IEP development, placement, behavior, discipline), and all needed services are listed on the IEP and delivered with integrity and consistency.
2. **Behavior Support:**
  - Proactive behavior support systems assist students in developing prerequisite behaviors for learning and assuming increasing responsibility for their behavior.
3. **Affective Education:**
  - Systemic instruction is provided to help students acquire information, attitudes and skills that will encourage appropriate behavior and mental health. These services are based on evaluation, individualized according to identified needs, included in the IEP and delivered with integrity, consistency, and monitoring of progress.
4. **Individual Processing:**
  - Students receive individualized assistance and support to help them internalize and personalize information about alternative ways to behave and to view their beliefs, themselves, and the world. These services are based on evaluation, individualized according to identified needs, included in the IEP and delivered with integrity, consistency, and monitoring of progress.
5. **Academic:**
  - Academic instruction addresses individual learning needs allowing maximum participation in the general curriculum.

**6. Career/Life Skills/Transitions:**

- The program includes systems that develop skills necessary for productive, meaningful life outside of school. These systems provide the link between the skills a student gains in his/her school experience and application of those skills in the nonacademic settings.

To take a specific example, a Program Goal under **Behavior Support** is:

- Procedures and modifications are utilized to assist students in following classroom rules.
  - The teacher is aware of and uses nonverbal cues.
  - The teacher uses nonverbal strategies (i.e., contingent attention) to redirect problem behavior.
  - Problem-solving strategies are used to encourage responsibility.
  - The teacher offers behavioral choices to encourage responsibility.
  - Some variances of behaviors are allowed based on individual level of internal control to meet rules and behavior expectations.

In addition to school-wide support, students with disabilities are entitled to their own **Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP)** if needed to ensure meaningful educational progress. A BIP is based upon a **Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA)** and is an outline of procedures and strategies that support the development of replacement behaviors (skills) for a student's problem behavior(s).

**Components** of a BIP include:

- 1. Assessment Summary**
- 2. Annual goal(s) and Short-Term Objectives**
- 3. Antecedent (prevention) Strategies**
- 4. Replacement Behavior (teaching and maintaining)**
- 5. Consequence Strategies**
- 6. Data Collection for Progress Monitoring**
- 7. Long-Term Antecedent (prevention) Strategies to remediate the educational skill deficits(s) related to the behavior of concern**
- 8. Crisis Plan**

Pennsylvania **prohibits** the following aversive techniques of handling behavior for students with disabilities:

- 1. Corporal punishment**
- 2. Punishment for a manifestation of a student's disability**
- 3. Locked rooms, locked boxes or other locked structures or spaces from which the student cannot readily exit**
- 4. Noxious substances**
- 5. Deprivation of basic human rights, such as withholding meals, water or fresh air**
- 6. Suspensions constituting a pattern [that amounts to a legal "change of placement"]**

7. **Treatment of a demeaning nature**
8. **Electric Shock**

22 Pa. Code § 14.133(e)

**Restraints**, including **mechanical restrains**, may be employed in very limited and specific situations. 22 Pa. Code § 14.133(c) – (d)

Developing **social skills** is related to and as important as learning appropriate behaviors. Social competence has been strongly associated with successful school performance, transition to school and work settings, better job opportunities, and improved overall interactions with others.

Social skills are those specific behavioral strategies that allow one to *initiate and maintain positive interactions with others, develop friendships and support networks, and cope effectively with the environment*. Social skills can be taught through **modeling/coaching, role playing, providing feedback and reinforcement, generalization, and self talk**.

For more information about ES Quality Program Indicators and BIPs, go to the **PaTTAN** website at [www.pattan.net](http://www.pattan.net) (click “Teaching & Leading”; “Behavior”; “Assessment” and “indicators of program quality” or “Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP)”) or call the regional office to request specific information (King of Prussia: 800-441-3215; Harrisburg: 800-360-7282; Pittsburgh: 800-446-5607). You can also access PaTTAN materials on social skill development.

**Questions to Ask/Things to Think About at an IEP Meeting:**

- Does my child’s behavior affect his/her ability to make meaningful educational progress or disrupt the learning of other students?
- Does my child have a BIP included as part of the IEP? Is it based on an appropriate FBA? Does it contain all the necessary components?
- Does my child need to work on the development of social skills with peers and/or adults at school? Are social skill goals included in the IEP?
- **Tip: Most students with emotional/behavioral disabilities can learn the same academic content as their typical peers with the right learning accommodations. Reading and math are two subjects that are critical to a student’s overall success.**

## TOOL 8

### RESEARCH BASED PRACTICES

IDEA 2004 and NCLB require school districts to teach children with disabilities using programs and practices grounded in **scientifically based research**. To say that an instructional program or practice is grounded in scientifically based research means there is **reliable evidence** that the program or practice works.

*Scientifically based research* includes research that:

1. Employs *systematic, empirical methods* that draw on observation or experiment;
2. Involves *rigorous data analyses* that are adequate to test the stated hypotheses and justify the general conclusions drawn;
3. Relies on measurements or observational methods that provide valid data across evaluators and observers and across multiple measurements and observations [*valid measurement and replicability*]; and
4. Has been accepted by a **peer-reviewed** journal or approved by a panel of independent experts through a comparable rigorous, objective, and scientific review.

20 U.S.C. § 6368(6)(B)

IDEA 2004 specifically requires that the **IEP** 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.

20 U.S.C. § 1414(d)(1)(A)(i)(IV)

The **United States Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences (IES)** established a **What Works Clearinghouse** to provide a central, independent and trusted source of scientific evidence on what works in education for parents, educators, policymakers and other interested parties. Parents may be able to use this information to find out about program and curricula selection at their child's school.

The seven topics chosen for systematic review in the first year of the *What Works Clearinghouse* reflect a wide range of the most pressing national education issues. They are:

1. Interventions for Beginning Reading;
2. Curriculum-based interventions for Increasing K-12 Math Achievement;
3. High School Dropout Prevention;
4. Peer-Assisted Learning in Elementary Schools: Reading, Mathematics and Science Gains;
5. Programs for Increasing Adult Literacy;
6. Interventions to Reduce Delinquent, Disorderly and Violent Behavior, in and out of School; and

7. Interventions for Elementary English Language Learners: Increasing English Language Acquisition and Academic Achievement.

To access the information in the What Works Clearinghouse and other information on scientifically based research under NCLB and IDEA 2004, go to the USDOE website at: [www.ed.gov](http://www.ed.gov)

**Questions to Ask/Things to Think About at an IEP Meeting:**

- Are the related services, supplementary aids and services, and specialized instruction being provided to my child based on peer-reviewed, scientifically based research?
- Are they effectively teaching my child so that he/she is making meaningful educational progress?
- If not, what other scientifically based research options are available that may be appropriate for my child?
- **Tip: New methodologies still in the experimental phase and highly controversial methodologies (among experts) will probably not meet the scientifically based research standards. Parents will most likely not be able to get their school district to provide such a methodology to their child as part of FAPE.**

## TOOL 9

### HIGHLY QUALIFIED TEACHERS AND PARAPROFESSIONALS

NCLB and IDEA 2004 require public school **teachers**, including special education teachers, to be **highly qualified**. Teachers who instruct students in **core academic subjects** must be highly qualified in the subjects that they teach.

To be *highly qualified*, a teacher must have:

1. A bachelor's degree;
2. Full State certification, as defined by the State; and
3. Demonstrated competency, as defined by the State, in each core academic subject he or she teaches.

20 U.S.C. § 7801(23)

*Core academic subjects* are:

1. English
2. Reading or Language Arts
3. Mathematics
4. Science
5. Foreign Languages
6. Civics and Government
7. Economics
8. Arts
9. History
10. Geography

20 U.S.C. § 7801(11)

**Special education teachers** must meet the same highly qualified requirements as regular education teachers in addition to obtaining full State certification as a special education teacher. The special education certification must not be waived on an emergency, temporary, or provisional basis. 20 U.S.C. § 1402(10)(B)

There are some **variations** in the highly qualified requirements depending upon whether a teacher is new or not new to the profession; teaches elementary school as opposed to middle or secondary school; is a special education teacher who teaches core academic subjects exclusively to children who are assessed against alternate achievement standards; or is a special education teacher who teaches 2 or more core academic subjects exclusively to children with disabilities.

**Paraprofessionals** who work in a Title 1 schoolwide program and/or who work in a Title 1 targeted assistance program and are paid with Title 1 funds, must have:

1. A secondary school diploma; and
2. Completed 2 years of study at an institution of higher education; or
3. Obtained an associate's (or higher) degree; or
4. Met a rigorous standard of quality and can demonstrate, through a formal State or local academic assessment, knowledge of and the ability to assist in instructing, reading, writing, and mathematics (or, as appropriate, reading readiness, writing readiness, and mathematics readiness).

20 U.S.C. § 6319(c)

If a *paraprofessional working with a special education student* does NOT provide any instructional support (such as a person who solely provides personal care services), that person does not have to meet the highly qualified requirements under NCLB.

For more information about highly qualified teachers and paraprofessionals under NCLB and IDEA 2004, go to the **United States Department of Education** website at: [www.ed.gov](http://www.ed.gov) (or call 1-800-872-5327 to request information) and the **IDEA Partnership website** at [www.ideapartnership.org](http://www.ideapartnership.org). You can find information specific to Pennsylvania on the **Pennsylvania Department of Education** website at: [www.pde.state.pa.us](http://www.pde.state.pa.us) (click on "Teaching in PA") (or call 717-787-3356 to request information).

### **Checklist for Finding Out if a Teacher (or Paraprofessional) is Highly Qualified**

1. Ask the teacher about his or her credentials.
2. Ask the principal to schedule an appointment when you can come to the office and review the file in which the verification of teacher qualifications is kept.
3. Contact the appropriate district administrative office (e.g., Human Resources) to make arrangements to review the verification file if necessary.
4. Write a letter to the principal (with copies to the superintendent and at least one school board member) specifically requesting the qualifications of one or more of your child's teachers.
5. If you do not receive a response or the requested information, file a written complaint with PDE. Complaints should be addressed to: Jim Sheffer, Chief, Division of Federal Programs, Pennsylvania Department of Education, 333 Market Street, Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333.

### **Questions to Ask/Things to Think About at an IEP Meeting:**

- Is my child being taught by highly qualified teachers? Is this impacting his/her ability to make meaningful educational progress?
- **Tip: You may want to use the need for instruction by a highly qualified teacher as a key factor in determining the appropriate educational placement for your child.**

## TOOL 10

### SAMPLE LETTER REQUESTING TEACHER AND PARAPROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

[DATE]

[SCHOOL PRINCIPAL]  
[SCHOOL BUILDING ADDRESS]

RE: Request for Information Regarding Professional Qualifications

Dear [SCHOOL PRINCIPAL]:

I am writing to request information pursuant to the Parents Right-To-Know provision within Title 1 of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) at 20 U.S.C. § 6311(h)(6)(A).

My child, [CHILD'S FULL NAME], is in the [GRADE LEVEL; e.g., third grade] and is taught by [TEACHER'S NAME]. Please send me the following information:

1. Whether [TEACHER'S NAME] has met Pennsylvania qualification and licensing criteria for teaching [CORE SUBJECT AREA THAT TEACHER TEACHES; e.g., math] to [YOUR CHILD'S GRADE LEVEL; third grade] students;
2. Whether [TEACHER'S NAME] is teaching under emergency or other provisional status through which Pennsylvania qualification or licensing criteria have been waived; and
3. The baccalaureate degree major and any other graduate certification or degree held by [TEACHER'S NAME] and the field of discipline of the certification or degree.
4. If [TEACHER'S NAME] is a special education teacher, the information about qualifications both for special education and for any academic subject where [TEACHER'S NAME] serves as the primary instructor.

My child also receives instructional support from a paraprofessional. Please send me the professional qualifications of [PARAPROFESSIONAL'S FULL NAME].

NCLB requires you to respond to my request with a timely manner. 20 U.S.C. § 6311(h)(6)(A). Please send the requested information to me within 10 school days at the following address: [YOUR MAILING ADDRESS].

Thank you for your assistance. I look forward to your timely response.

Sincerely,  
[YOUR NAME]

cc: [DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT/ SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER]

## TOOL 11

### EDUCATION IN THE LEAST RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENT (LRE)

IDEA 2004's **Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)** mandate requires that, to the **maximum extent appropriate**, children with disabilities must be educated with children who are not disabled. A child with disabilities can only be removed from the regular educational environment (e.g., put into a special education classroom or a separate school) when education in regular classes with the use of *supplementary aids and services* cannot be achieved satisfactorily. 20 U.S.C. § 1412(a)(5)

In Pennsylvania, there is a **two-part test** for determining whether a school is in compliance with the IDEA's mainstreaming requirement (the **Oberti** test):

**Part 1:** Can education in the regular classroom, with the use of **supplementary aids and services**, be achieved satisfactorily?

Factors:

1. **Has the school district made reasonable efforts to include the child in a regular classroom? Must be more than "token gestures".**
  - a. Has the school considered the *whole range of supplemental aids and services*, including resource rooms and itinerant instruction, speech and language therapy, special education training for the regular teacher, behavior modification programs, and any other available aids or services appropriate to the child's particular disabilities?
  - b. Has the school made efforts to modify the regular education program to accommodate the child?
2. **Compare the educational benefits the child will receive in a regular classroom (with supplementary aids and services) and the benefits the child will receive in the segregated, special education classroom.**
  - a. Pay special attention to those unique benefits the child may obtain from integration in a regular classroom which cannot be achieved in a segregated environment (e.g., the development of social and communication skills from interaction with nondisabled peers.)
  - b. A determination that the child might make greater *academic* progress in a segregated, special education class may not warrant excluding that child from a regular classroom environment.
3. **Are there possible negative effects the child's inclusion may have on the education of the other children in the regular classroom?**
  - a. Is the child so disruptive (i.e., excessively disrupting the class) that the child may not be benefiting educationally in that environment? Remember, an IEP with appropriate aids and services may prevent disruption that would otherwise occur.

- b. Will the disabilities demand so much of the teacher's attention that the teacher will be required to ignore the other students?

**Part 2:** If placement outside of a regular classroom is necessary for the child to benefit educationally, has the child been **mainstreamed to the maximum extent appropriate**?

Factors:

1. **Has the school district attempted to place the child in regular education for some academic classes and in special education for others?**
2. **Has the child been mainstreamed for nonacademic classes?**
3. **Are there opportunities for the child to interact with nondisabled students during "free" periods like lunch and recess?**

The **Gaskin** settlement ensures that **IEP teams** consider the *regular education classroom* with *supplementary aids and services* before considering a more restrictive placement. To support the inclusion of all students in regular education placements, the **Pennsylvania Department of Education** is responsible for:

- Forming and supporting an Advisory Panel;
- Monitoring school districts for LRE compliance;
- Providing professional development training and technical assistance to school districts and other local education agencies to increase their knowledge and capacity to include all students; and
- Creating a mini-grant program to support the development and expansion of inclusive practices.

For more information about inclusion and the *Gaskin* settlement, go to the PDE website at: [www.pde.state.pa.us](http://www.pde.state.pa.us) (click on "Pre-K – 12 Schools" and "Special Education") (or call 717-783-6913 to request information).

**Questions to Ask/Things to Think About at an IEP Meeting:**

- Is my child being taught in a regular education environment to the maximum extent appropriate?
- What supplementary aids and services are necessary to ensure that my child can make meaningful educational progress in a regular education setting? Is the current IEP appropriate?
- **Tip: With the right supplementary aids and services, most children with disabilities can make progress and learn in a regular education environment. Most skills (academic, social, emotional, behavioral, etc.) can be worked on in a regular education setting with modifications to the educational program and/or curriculum. Find out if your district has tapped into the technical assistance, training, and other support available through PDE.**

## TOOL 12

### AN IEP CHECKLIST

An IEP can be of any length and can contain any amount of information. However, the number of pages to the IEP is less important than the usefulness of the information provided. Here is a quick review of the major sections of an IEP and some of the questions that parents and school districts should ask as they develop an IEP for a child:

#### AN IEP CHECKLIST

- CURRENT EDUCATIONAL LEVELS** - What are the student's current levels of academic achievement and functional performance (including social and daily living skills)? What can we learn from the latest school district and private evaluations? What insight can the parents or the other team members contribute from their experiences? What were the child's scores in the last state or district-wide assessment (PSSA or PASA), and what do those scores tell the team about the child's strengths and weaknesses? Can the child learn and progress in the general education curriculum, or will her program be geared to different learning standards?
- MEASURABLE ACADEMIC AND FUNCTIONAL ANNUAL GOALS** - What does the IEP Team, including the family, want the student to learn this year, starting from the goals/assessment anchors that reflect what all children of her age should be learning (that is, what goals are needed for the child be involved and progress in the general education curriculum)? Do the goals reflect all of the student's disability-related needs? Can this student take the state (PSSA) or district-wide assessments in one or more areas that is given to all students? Does the student need accommodations to take the PSSA? Is the student so severely cognitively impaired that she should be taking the alternate assessment (PASA)?
- SHORT TERM OBJECTIVES** - For children who take the PASA (or who are otherwise tested against achievement standards that are lower than the usual achievement standards) the IEP must contain a description of the benchmarks or short-term objectives the child should meet throughout the year.
- SPECIFIC SPECIAL EDUCATION TO BE PROVIDED** - What specialized instruction, methods, and strategies will be used by school personnel to help the child make progress towards his or her goals, to be involved and make progress in the general education curriculum, and to participate in extracurricular and nonacademic activities? Where will the services be provided?
- TYPE, AMOUNT & FREQUENCY OF RELATED SERVICES** - What types of related services, such as transportation or physical, occupational, or speech therapy, does the child need? How often will it be provided? For how much time each session?
- SUPPLEMENTARY AIDS, SERVICES AND MODIFICATIONS** - Are changes to

the program or extra supports needed to help the child succeed in regular education classes? For example, does the child need more time to take tests? Or is a special education teacher needed to help the regular teacher modify the curriculum or to provide extra support directly to the child? What extra help will be provided to the child and to the child's teachers so that the child can advance toward annual goals; be involved *and progress* in the general curriculum; be educated with non-disabled peers; and participate in state and district-wide assessments? All aids and services needed for the child to succeed in the regular class must be listed on the child's IEP and provided by the district. A student with a disability should not simply be "dumped" into a regular education class without supports.

- DATES SERVICES BEGIN & END** - Will all the services begin immediately? Will all the services continue through the school year?
- HOW TO DETERMINE IF THE CHILD IS MAKING PROGRESS** – Are the annual goals and short-term objectives really measurable? How will the IEP Team measure the progress the child makes? How and when will parents be informed of the child's progress?
- PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES WITH REGULAR EDUCATION STUDENTS** – If the child cannot be in regular classes for the full school day, during which parts of the school day will the child be with children who are not disabled?
- AMOUNT OF SPECIAL EDUCATION** - Does the child need special education services for only some of the day? Most of the day? All of the day? Remember, many children can and do receive special education services within a regular education class.
- TYPE OF PLACEMENT** - What type of special education service does the child need (for example, a resource room or itinerant support)? What type of special education "support" does she need (e.g., learning support, life skills support)?
- LOCATION** - What school is recommended for the child? Can the services on the IEP be delivered in that school? Is there any reason the IEP cannot be implemented in the school the child would attend if not in special education? Is the placement as close to home as possible? The law has a preference (although not an absolute requirement) for the child to receive services in the class and school he or she would attend if he or she did not have a disability, and at a school as close to home as possible.

**IF NEEDED BY YOUR CHILD, HIS OR HER IEP MUST ALSO DESCRIBE:**

- BEHAVIOR PROGRAMS** – Does your child have behaviors that interfere with her learning or the learning of other students? Does your child need a functional behavior assessment or a behavior plan in the IEP? If the child has emotional or behavior problems in school, what sets off those problems? What alternate skills need to be taught to help the child reduce challenging behaviors and increase appropriate ones? If problems do occur, how will they be handled? The IEP Team must consider and include

in the IEP strategies to help students with behavior problems that interfere with their learning or the learning of others. The behavior components of IEPs must reflect individual students' needs and be based on positive - not negative (not punishment-focused)- approaches.

- HELP FOR CHILDREN WITH LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY** - If the child is not fluent in English, the IEP Team must consider the child's language needs that relate to the IEP.
- HELP FOR CHILDREN WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS** - For a child who is blind or visually impaired, the IEP must provide for instruction in Braille and the use of Braille unless, after appropriate evaluation, the IEP Team determines that it is not appropriate.
- HELP FOR CHILDREN WHO ARE DEAF OR HARD OF HEARING** - For a child who is deaf or hard of hearing, the IEP Team must consider the child's language and communication needs.
- ASSISTIVE DEVICES AND SERVICES** - Does the child need special equipment or technology, such as a communication device or a special desk? Does the child - or do his or her teachers - need training on how to use assistive technology devices? Does the parent need training or supports?
- VOCATIONAL PROGRAM** - If the child is nearing high school age, is vocational training appropriate?
- EXTENDED SCHOOL YEAR (ESY)** - Does the child need a summer program to attain or maintain key skills? All children with a disability must be considered for ESY eligibility as part of their annual IEP meeting. **For children with especially severe disabilities, this consideration must take place before the end of March.**
- ADAPTIVE PHYSICAL EDUCATION** - Are special gym classes needed?
- TRANSITION** - If the child will turn 16 during the upcoming year (and sometimes for younger children, for example, those who are considering different types of high school settings) what skills will the child need for adult living? Are the needed skills being taught? Does the IEP contain measurable post-secondary goals based on age-appropriate transition assessments related to training, education, employment, and, where appropriate independent living skills? Does the IEP include transition services (including courses of study) needed to help the child achieve the transition goals?
- HEALTH CONCERNS** - Does the child have any medical or health problems that need special attention for the child to attend school or to learn properly? Districts do not have to provide medical treatment if the treatment is of a type that can be performed only by a physician. However, districts do have to arrange for medical evaluations if necessary to diagnose a child's disability or to determine what kind of special education or related services the child needs. And many services that can be provided by medically trained

personnel – including nursing care and other “school health” services – must be provided when needed in school (although often the services are funded through Medical Assistance).

# TOOL 13

## SAMPLE ANNOTATED IEPs

### Education Law Center Sample Annotated IEP:

#### **INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM (IEP) FORMAT**

{With Questions on Standards, Assessments, Teacher Quality, Research-based Practices, Parent Involvement, and Assistive Technology}

\*\*\*\*\*

#### I. SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS THE IEP TEAM MUST CONSIDER BEFORE DEVELOPING THE IEP.

Is the Student Blind or Visually Impaired? Is the Student Deaf or Hearing Impaired?

- COMMUNICATION NEEDS.
- ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY, Devices and /or Services
- LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICENCY
- BEHAVIORS THAT IMPEDE HIS/HER LEARNING or that of OTHERS
- TRANSITION SERVICES
- OTHER (Specify)\_\_\_\_\_

STATE ANNOTATION: Assistive technology device means any item, piece of equipment, or product system whether acquired commercially off the shelf, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain or improve the functional capabilities of a child with a disability. An assistive technology device does not include a medical device surgically implanted or replaced. Assistive technology service means any service that directly assists a child with a disability in the selection, acquisition or use of a device. This includes any special equipment or technology that children may need to help them participate in school, including state and local assessments, and the services required for assessment and implementation of these devices.

1. Does the child need assistive technology to be in the least restrictive environment (LRE)?
2. Does the child need assistive technology to meaningfully participate in the general curriculum?
3. Does the child need assistive technology to participate in activities?
4. Does the child need assistive technology to access educational/print materials?
5. Does the child need assistive technology to access auditory information?
6. Does the child need assistive technology for written communication/computer access?
7. Does the child need assistive technology for augmentative communication?

## II. PRESENT LEVELS OF ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AND FUNCTIONAL PERFORMANCE

STUDENT'S PRESENT LEVELS OF ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT:

STUDENT'S PRESENT LEVELS OF FUNCTIONAL PERFORMANCE:

HOW THE STUDENT'S DISABILITY AFFECTS INVOLVEMENT AND PROGRESS IN GENERAL EDUCATION CURRICULUM (Strengths; Academic, Developmental, Functional Needs Related to Child's Disability; Effect on Involvement and Progress In General Education Curriculum)

1. What is the gap between the child's current achievement levels and the advanced or proficient achievement levels established by the state in each subject for the appropriate grade level?
2. Did the child make progress toward reaching these goals during the last year in each subject?
3. Can the achievement gaps and rate of academic progress be improved by changing elements of the child's IEP?
4. Would more evaluation help to clarify these issues and possible solutions?
5. Has the child received the same high expectations and an opportunity to learn according to the same academic standards as other students in his or her grade?
6. Over the next school year, will the child learn under the same academic standards and curriculum as other students?
7. Are modifications in curriculum and standards needed to help the student for one or more academic subjects, such as math, English, reading, science, or social studies?

## III. PARTICIPATION IN STATE AND LOCAL ASSESSMENTS

- Student will participate in the PSSA without accommodations.
- Student will participate in the PSSA with the following accommodations:
- Student will participate in the Pennsylvania Alternate System of Assessment (PASA).
- If the IEP Team determines that the student will participate in the PASA, the team must explain both why the child cannot participate in PSSA and why the PASA is appropriate.

1. How will each teacher measure (assess) the child's academic progress during the school year? How will that information be reported to families? [Possible measurements include homework, daily questioning, active demonstration, occasional quizzes, review exams, research projects, and state standardized tests. Do not rely only on standardized tests to measure progress.]
2. What accommodations and supports will the child need to ensure that different progress measurements accurately reflect the knowledge and skills he/she is learning? Can these regular accommodations and supports be used when the child takes state assessments?
3. How did the child perform on state assessments when they were last given? How can these results be used to improve the classroom learning of the child in each subject? [Attach copies of the results to the IEP.]
4. Will the child learn the knowledge/skills needed to perform this year with grade-level proficiency on state assessments? If not, how can the IEP be changed to improve the child's academic achievement in each subject area?

IV. STUDENT'S TRANSITION SERVICES. Desired outcomes for post-school education, employment, and independent living. Transition services/activities. Agency linkages.

V. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES, including academic and functional goals for academic subjects, specific skills, and behavior:

MEASURABLE ANNUAL GOALS: \_\_\_\_\_

For each goal, describe the expected level of achievement, how the child's progress toward meeting this goal will be measured, when periodic reports on progress will be provided to parents, and what data and analysis the progress reports will contain.

1. Will the child's academic goals be different in any way from the academic goals and expectations for other students in his or her grade? What are the specific knowledge, skills, and levels of achievement expected of my child?
2. For each subject, try to incorporate the state academic standards into the child's goals in the IEP in appropriate ways. Which standards are most important for the child over the next year? Do Pennsylvania's Assessment Anchors help to establish academic priorities? Does the school district use its own academic standards and pacing guides and do these items conform to the state standards and anchors? [Attach to the IEP a copy of the standards, anchors, and pacing guides for each subject.]
2. What accommodations/supports will my child need to meet these standards?
3. How will the teachers use the academic standards in each subject, raise academic expectations, and challenge my child with rigorous content knowledge and advanced skills at the appropriate grade level?

SHORT TERM OBJECTIVES - Required for children with disabilities who take alternate assessments aligned to alternate achievement standards (PASA).

VI. SPECIAL EDUCATION / RELATED SERVICES / SUPPLEMENTARY AIDS AND SERVICES / PROGRAM MODIFICATIONS: *(For each item, describe location, frequency, projected beginning date and anticipated duration)*

A. PROGRAM MODIFICATIONS AND SPECIALLY DESIGNED INSTRUCTION:  
*(Specially designed instruction may be listed with each goal/objective.)*

B. RELATED SERVICES: List the services that the student needs in order to benefit from or access his/her special education program:

C. SUPPORTS FOR SCHOOL PERSONNEL Provided for the child:

D. EXTENDED SCHOOL YEAR: The IEP Team has considered and discussed ESY services and determined that (indicate whether student is eligible for ESY and the basis for determination):

*Annual Goals and Short Term Objectives to be addressed in ESY Program:*

1. To meet more challenging academic standards, does the child need: (a) a less restrictive environment; (b) a better curriculum; (c) improved modifications and supports; (d) assistive technology; or (e) new training and supervision for teachers? Are different accommodations or supports needed for each academic subject?
2. Are the teachers for the child "highly qualified" under NCLB and IDEA?
3. What is the specific level of knowledge and certification of the child's teachers in each academic subject? [Nationally certified; graduate degree; college major; passed a subject area PRAXIS exam; HOUSSE certified; highly qualified but not certified under HOUSSE.]
4. Do the teachers for the child have the level of knowledge and certification needed to help the child meet his or her annual IEP goals, to learn under state academic standards, and to perform at a proficient level on state assessments?
5. If the teachers may not have an adequate level of knowledge or certification, what options for services or placement would provide the child with more qualified teachers? What supports, training, and supervision are needed for the child's teachers?
6. For my child's mainstreamed classes, what supports will the teacher(s) need to properly and fully address the special needs of my child? [Consultation or team teaching with special education teacher; professional development classes in teaching students with disabilities; extra supervision such as lesson plan reviews and observations.]
7. For my child's special education classes, what supports with the teacher(s) need to give my child full and proper access to the academic and achievement standards for my child's grade level? [Consultation or team teaching with regular education teacher; professional development classes in academic content; extra supervision such as lesson plan reviews and classroom observations.]

VII. LEAST RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENT (LRE). EDUCATIONAL PLACEMENT

Type of Service, Type of Support, ex: Full-time learning support \_\_\_\_\_

Explanation of the extent, if any, the student will not participate with non-disabled children in the regular class and in the general education curriculum: \_\_\_\_\_

IEP Questions About Research-Based Practices

1. What is the research behind each element of the child's IEP? If the school is not basing its IEP decisions on research, then what is the reason for these decisions?
2. Does the child's school receive Title I funds? Is the school failing to make adequate yearly progress? Under one or both of these conditions, how is the school using research to improve the education of children with disabilities?
3. Can parents identify programs, services, or accommodations that – based on research – will improve the child's education? If the school district's approach is not research-based, parents can then propose through the IEP process that the school adopt and implement their proposal for a research based approach. Copies or summaries of the research may be provided to IEP members and attached to the IEP.

## IEP Questions About Parent Involvement

1. Are parents receiving regular, two-way, and meaningful communication with teachers and administrators about their child's education?
2. Are parents having parent-teacher conferences, frequent progress reports, and reasonable access to staff?
3. Is the school allowing parents to volunteer, participate in their child's class, and observe classroom activities?
  - ❖ How can better arrangements be made for these areas of parent communication and participation? Could the parent help to identify potential IEP problems by observing the classroom and seeing the teacher's methods for academic instruction and student behavior modification?
4. Are parents able to examine: (a) the education records of their child at school; and (b) a file in the school office containing the professional qualifications of their child's teachers and paraprofessionals?
  - ❖ How can better arrangements be made for these areas of information sharing?
5. Have parents received the proper written notice about their rights regarding: (a) the parent consent and agreement needed by the school for most special education decisions; (b) the parent right to participate in most special education meetings for their child; and (c) the parent rights to make complaints, request mediation, request due process hearings, and file appeals in court about special education issues?
6. Has the school provided parents with prior written notice about special education decisions, actions, and changes?
7. Has the school given timely notice to parents if their child has been taught for four or more consecutive weeks by a teacher who is not highly qualified?

## **Pennsylvania Department of Education Sample Annotated IEP:**

You can access PDE's Annotated IEP by going to the **Pennsylvania Training & Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAN)** website at:  
[www.pattan.net/files/Forms/English/AnnIEP\\_072205.pdf](http://www.pattan.net/files/Forms/English/AnnIEP_072205.pdf) (or call PDE's Bureau of Special Education at 717-783-6913 to request a copy).