

INTRODUCTION

The Principal's Role in the Special Education Process

Principals across the country are faced with many challenges associated with educating students with disabilities. Since the passing of the No Child Left Behind Act in 2001, principals have faced new requirements to include students with disabilities in the same academic standards, assessments, and accountability systems as all other students. Principals are also expected to understand and implement a range of new policies, including how to identify students with disabilities, how to ensure that they are fully included in the general education curriculum, and what to consider in disciplining them. To meet these and other new requirements and to ensure that students with disabilities are provided with high-quality educational opportunities, principals need an understanding of the legal foundations and entitlements for students with disabilities and their families as well as a solid understanding of what practices and processes constitute effective special education.

The Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is the primary disability law that guarantees the educational rights of students with disabilities from birth to age twenty-one. The law was first passed in 1975 as the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (Public Law 94-142) and has since been reauthorized and amended numerous times. In 1997, the name of the law was changed to the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act, which it retains today. IDEA not only defines the educational rights of students with disabilities to an individualized education program (IEP) at no cost to the parents but also outlines the responsibilities of the state and school district to ensure that each student with a disability is receiving a free appropriate education in the least restrictive environment. While some readers may be familiar with the term *individualized education plan*, we use *individualized education program* to be consistent with the current terminology used under IDEA and IDEA-related laws.

Under IDEA, special education is defined as individualized instruction and services that are designed to address the unique learning needs of each student with a disability and enable him or her to progress in the general education curriculum. Special education is not a place or a program; it is specialized instruction, accommodations, and supports that are tailored for each student with a disability. The nature of these supports, as well as the settings where instruction takes place, must be carefully designed based on a student's needs.

Studies on school leadership suggest that students with disabilities attending schools led by principals who provide administrative support for special education are more likely to progress in the general education curriculum and have enhanced outcomes (DiPaola & Walther-Thomas, 2003). Effective principals who clearly understand the needs of students with disabilities; the statutes, regulations, and requirements of IDEA and No Child Left Behind (NCLB); and the instructional challenges that educators who work with students with disabilities face are better prepared to provide building-level support and positively impact special education outcomes. These well-informed leaders can facilitate the development of appropriate student placements, the use of effective research-based practices, and the development of a school culture that promotes a sense of collegial support among general and special educators (DiPaola & Walther-Thomas, 2003).

Since 2001, responsibility for special education has dramatically shifted from the central office to the school. This means that the principal must provide the leadership and oversight for all aspects of educating students with disabilities and is essential to ensuring school-level compliance with the law. Yet only a few states include knowledge of exceptional children in their principal licensure requirements (Education Commission of the States, 2008). As a result, many principals are learning about special education law and the students it serves on the job. It is our hope that the information in this book will facilitate this learning process and help principals and school leaders meet the demands to improve the educational outcomes of students with disabilities.

In this book, we first describe the legal foundations and entitlements surrounding special education, provide information on the best-practice research for serving students with disabilities and other diverse learners, and provide strategies for implementing inclusive programs. The remaining chapters will address key issues related to the implementation of the law and how principals can work to facilitate effective implementation of educational programs that support all students in the building.

Chapter 1, *Understanding the Basic Rights of Students With Disabilities*, introduces key provisions of the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act, such as free appropriate public education (FAPE), least restrictive environment (LRE), related services, and the rights of students with disabilities and their parents as defined in the procedural safeguards of IDEA. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA), and Title I of the No Child Left Behind Act are described.

Chapter 2, *Determining Who Is Eligible for Special Education*, explains how students are referred for evaluation for special education, the evaluation process, and how eligibility decisions are made and by whom. An early intervention model called response to intervention (RTI) is described as well.

IDEA requires an individualized education program for every student who is eligible to receive special education and related services. Chapter 3, *Developing and Implementing an Individualized Education Program*, provides readers with detailed information about the process of developing an IEP, its key components, and the role of the principal in the development and implementation process.

IDEA and NCLB define how students with disabilities are to be included in statewide assessment and accountability systems. In chapter 4, Assessing and Teaching Students With Disabilities, we discuss the requirements regarding assessment and provide information about accommodations and modifications. Barriers to developing an inclusive school are discussed, and promising approaches for improving student achievement are provided.

Chapter 5, Discipline and Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports, explains the processes, as defined under IDEA, for disciplining a student with disabilities. Terms such as *manifestation determination*, *functional behavioral assessment*, and *behavior intervention plan* are described, and suggestions to avoid discipline problems are offered.

Finally, in chapter 6, Encouraging Parental Involvement, we focus on parents and ways to involve them in the individualized education of their students. Ways for schools to engage parents and build effective relationships are suggested. The book ends with a list of online resources, a guide to significant changes that appear in IDEA 2004, and a glossary of terms used in special education.

Understanding the Basic Rights of Students With Disabilities

The Individuals With Disabilities Education Act is the primary U.S. federal policy that defines which students are eligible for special education supports and services and protects students with disabilities against discrimination (see appendix B, beginning on page 71, for a summary of key legal provisions in IDEA 2004). This federal law guarantees all students, regardless of their disability, a free appropriate public education (commonly referred to as *FAPE*). To be eligible under IDEA, a student must first be determined to have a disability that is consistent with one or more of the categories specified in the law, and the disability must have an adverse effect on educational performance that necessitates specially designed instruction to meet the unique needs resulting from the disability. Only students who meet the eligibility requirements are entitled to FAPE.

Questions Principals Ask

- What are FAPE, LRE, and related services?
- What rights do students and their parents have?
- What is required under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)?
- How do Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans With Disabilities Act affect schools?

Visit <http://nichcy.org/laws/idea> for a wealth of information about IDEA, including summaries of requirements, statutes and regulations, and training materials.

Free Appropriate Public Education

A free appropriate public education includes specially designed instruction in addition to appropriate related services (for example, speech and language services, occupational therapy, technology, and so on) without cost to parents or students. The individualized education program defines what is considered appropriate for each student with a disability. To create an IEP, a team of individuals referred to as the IEP team (which includes the parents, selected school personnel, and,

when appropriate, the student) meets to review the student's evaluation data and determine the appropriate services and instructional strategies that will support the student in the classroom (see chapter 3 for more information about developing an IEP and selecting members for the IEP team).

The IEP is a critically important legal document as well as the foundation for educating a student with a disability. The process for developing the IEP and who should be involved in developing the IEP are carefully prescribed in law as part of the guarantee of FAPE. The IEP represents a contract between the school system and the student's parents or guardians. We will discuss this important document in more detail in chapter 3.

What is considered FAPE for any given child is to be determined by the IEP team. However, defining what is considered appropriate has been subjected to a number of legal decisions. The U.S. Supreme Court case *Board of Education v. Rowley* (1982) ruled that schools are responsible for providing an individualized education to students eligible under the law. However, the court also stated that the law did not intend *appropriate* to mean maximizing the fullest potential of each child with a disability. The court further defined FAPE as an education that is delivered in compliance with the student's individualized education program and is "reasonably calculated to enable the child to receive educational benefits" (*Board of Education v. Rowley*, 1982).

Additional guidance on implementing IDEA's statutes and regulations is provided at <http://idea.ed.gov> by the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) and the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) within the U.S. Department of Education.

Least Restrictive Environment

IDEA also requires that students with disabilities be educated in the least restrictive environment and with their nondisabled peers "to the maximum extent appropriate" (Assistance to States for the Education of Children With Disabilities, 2009). The 1997 and 2004 amendments to IDEA emphasize that IEP teams must first consider providing special education in the general education classroom and may only consider other settings if the student cannot receive an appropriate education even with special supports and services. For most students, the general education classroom is the appropriate setting. However, some children may require other settings, and the IDEA regulations require that school districts must be able to provide instruction in the following settings: general classrooms, special classrooms, special schools, home, and hospitals and institutions.

Where a child is educated is based on multiple factors such as academic achievement, progress in the general education curriculum, and teacher and parent input, and it is the responsibility of the IEP team to evaluate all the data and document why a student might receive special education outside the general classroom. According to OSEP's 29th Annual Report to Congress, during the 2004–2005 school year, 96 percent of students ages six through twenty-one served under Part B of IDEA were educated in general education classes for at least some part of the school day. More than half of all students ages six through twenty-one served under Part B of IDEA were educated for 80

percent or more of the school day in general education classes (U.S. Department of Education Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, 2007).

Under IDEA, more restrictive placements can be considered appropriate when the safety of the student with a disability or of the other students in the school environment is threatened or when the student with a disability is so disruptive that the education of the other students is significantly impaired. In these instances, documentation of the student's behaviors to support the more restrictive placement is essential. Exactly what documentation might be required will depend on your local district's policies, but most likely the IEP will require that the team indicate why it has decided to remove a student from the general education classroom. For instance, the statement might include evidence about specific behaviors such as vocal outbursts or aggression that may require a smaller, more controlled environment for learning to occur. These decisions are to be reconsidered at least once a year, and there should be evidence in the IEP that the interventions and supports that the student might require have been attempted in a general classroom.

Related Services

Under IDEA 2004, *related services* are defined as services that enable an individual student with a disability to benefit from special education. They are different from special education, which is specially designed instruction. IDEA includes the following items in its definition of related services an individual student may need to benefit from special education:

- Transportation
- Speech and language services
- Physical therapy
- Occupational therapy
- Interpreting services
- Audiology services
- Psychological services
- School health services
- Technology
- Recreation

This list is not exhaustive. However, IDEA does exempt surgically implanted devices and medical services unless those services can be provided by a trained layperson, including a teacher, school nurse, paraprofessional, or similarly trained individual. Related services are determined by the IEP team and specified on the IEP document.

state certification and meeting the same requirements as general educators if he or she teaches core academic subject matter (such as English, reading or language arts, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, art, or history and geography) at middle and high school levels. Teachers of students held to alternate achievement standards in middle and high school should be certified or qualified in “subject matter knowledge appropriate to the level of instruction being provided” (“Q and A,” 2007).

These requirements have implications for where and from whom a student with a disability receives his or her instruction. Middle or secondary students with disabilities must receive instruction in the previously mentioned content areas from teachers—special or general education—who are considered qualified by their state to teach that content. The “generic” special education teacher cannot be the primary instructor in these areas. It can be very difficult to find a teacher who is qualified in certain content areas such as algebra, geometry, or the physical sciences *and* in teaching students with disabilities. This requirement has led to increased use of co-teaching and collaborative models (which we discuss in chapter 4) that enable teachers to share expertise and collectively determine how best to deliver the content to every student.

Defining a Highly Qualified Special Education Teacher

In general, to be considered a highly qualified special education teacher, IDEA requires the following (Assistance to States for the Education of Children With Disabilities, 2010b):

- Full state certification or licensure as a special education teacher
- No waiving of certification or licensure requirements on an emergency, temporary, or provisional basis
- A minimum of a bachelor's degree

However, there are different requirements for special education teachers who teach core academic subjects, alternative achievement standards, and multiple subjects. Please visit <http://nichcy.org/schools-administrators/hqt> for more information about the federal requirements for highly qualified special education teachers. For a list of additional resources that contain information on staff development and qualified personnel, see the section on qualified personnel in appendix A (page 68).

Visit go.solution-tree.com/specialneeds for links to the websites mentioned in this book.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans With Disabilities Act

In addition to IDEA, two civil rights laws that prohibit discrimination on the basis of an individual's disability include (1) Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and (2) the Americans With Disabilities Act. Any student with a documented disability is covered under Section 504, but not all of these students are eligible under IDEA.

Section 504

Section 504 protects both children and adults with disabilities from discrimination in institutions receiving federal funds. Under Section 504, administrators, teachers, school psychologists, and other school personnel are required to identify students with disabilities and provide these students with educational opportunities equal to the educational opportunities offered to their nondisabled peers. To qualify for protection under Section 504, an individual must be considered a handicapped person. Although the original definition of individuals protected under Section 504 was relatively narrow, the law was amended in 1974 to define a handicapped person as "any person who has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more of such person's major life activities, has a record of such an impairment, or is regarded as having such an impairment" (U.S. Department of Education, 1996).

The definition in Section 504 is much broader than the definitions of the disability categories provided under IDEA. Under this definition, students protected under Section 504 range from those with Tourette syndrome, asthma, AIDS, and diabetes to students with alcohol and drug problems. Thus, students who are eligible for IDEA services are also protected under Section 504 but not all students who are eligible for Section 504 services will be eligible to receive services under IDEA. Essentially, the definition of a disability in Section 504 encompasses all students who have an impairment that affects a major life activity.

The protection from discrimination provided through Section 504 also includes participation in extracurricular activities and architectural accessibility. Section 504 not only protects the rights of students at the preschool, elementary, secondary, and postsecondary levels in the classroom but also applies during school district programs such as afterschool care and summer programs (Yell, 2006). Persons who qualify under the protections of Section 504 may not be discriminated against in programs receiving federal assistance and are entitled to reasonable accommodations to facilitate their participation. A few examples of reasonable accommodations that schools may be responsible for providing include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Changes to the classroom environment such as seating arrangements, reduction of visual or auditory distraction, or use of study carrels or partitions
- Changes to the testing environment such as extending the amount of time to take the exam, providing the test orally, allowing for open-book testing, or allowing the student to dictate answers on a tape recorder
- Use of a student's behavior intervention plan
- Provision of textbooks and materials with enlarged print, highlighted textbooks, or books on tape
- Changes to homework and in-class assignments such as providing extra time to complete assigned work, allowing for written assignments to be delivered orally, or segmenting long assignments into discrete shorter tasks

Section 504 Key Provisions

In contrast to IDEA, there are no federal funds available under Section 504 to assist school districts and other institutions in meeting the requirements of the law.

Under Section 504, students with disabilities are entitled to:

- Protection from discrimination in elementary, secondary, and postsecondary schools
- School programs, structures, and activities that are physically accessible
- Facilities and services that are comparable to general education facilities and services in instances when the school operates a separate facility for students with disabilities

The Office for Civil Rights (OCR) in the U.S. Department of Education investigates complaints with a goal of reducing and eventually eliminating discrimination against students with disabilities. If a school district is found to be violating the requirements of Section 504, OCR will encourage the school district to enter into a corrective action agreement in order to address the problem. However, in the rare case that a school district refuses to comply with the requirements of Section 504, OCR has the right and responsibility to begin enforcement action whereby the case may be referred to the Department of Justice, or the OCR may terminate Department of Education financial assistance to the school.

The provisions of Section 504 are sometimes used as a basis for providing services for students who have learning difficulties but who do not have an IDEA-eligible disability. Some services provided under Section 504 include adaptation or modification of testing conditions such as providing exams in alternative locations, extending the allotted testing time, providing oral exams, and other reasonable accommodations (see chapter 4 for explanations of testing adaptations and modifications). However, Section 504 does not require schools to change the nature of their programs to accommodate individual students. And, as under IDEA, students who qualify for Section 504 protections may not be suspended, expelled, or otherwise punished for manifestations of their disability (see chapter 5 for an explanation of IDEA's discipline requirements).

Evaluation and Placement

In order to be protected under Section 504 and receive services, students must be evaluated and placed. Placement decisions are determined by a team of individuals (convened by the principal) who know the student, know how to interpret evaluation data, and know the variety of placement options available in the school or school district. Although the specific members of the team can vary by student, the team generally includes a general education classroom teacher and other school personnel with expertise that could be beneficial to helping the student such as a building nurse, the school psychologist, a social worker, and so on. As in IDEA, the team is required to use information from a variety of sources and base all placement decisions on the individual needs of the student. Once a student is identified as needing services under Section 504, the school should develop an individual plan to ensure appropriate accommodations are available to the student. Although a written document is not mandated by law, it is generally suggested as best practice to develop one and an individualized education program similar to that outlined in IDEA may be used as the Section 504 plan. The purpose of the 504 plan is to explicitly define accommodations

or modifications needed by the student in order to successfully participate in the general education setting. Accommodations might include monitoring of blood sugar levels, provision of wheelchair ramps, a peanut-free lunch environment, or a tape recorder or keyboard for taking notes in the classroom setting. The 504 plan is a legally binding document that encourages consistency of accommodations and services provided to the student as well as accountability.

Procedural Safeguards

As Mitchell Yell (2006) explains, parents are entitled to a number of specific rights under Section 504, including the following:

- Right to be notified of procedural rights under Section 504
- Right to be notified when their child is referred, evaluated, and placed
- Right to notification when eligibility is determined
- Right to an evaluation that uses information from multiple sources and is conducted by knowledgeable persons
- Right of the student to have access to equivalent academic and non-academic services
- Right of the student to receive an appropriate education in the least restrictive setting, which includes accommodations, modifications, and related services
- Right to file grievance with the school district
- Right to an evaluation prior to making a significant programming or placement change
- Right to be informed of proposed actions affecting the program
- Right to examine all relevant records and request changes
- Right to receive information in the parents' native language or primary mode of communication
- Right to periodic reevaluations
- Right to an impartial hearing when a disagreement occurs
- Right to be represented by counsel in the hearing
- Right to appeal the hearing officer's decision (p. 137)

To ensure that the rights of parents are upheld, schools are responsible for establishing a system of due process procedures to protect the rights of parents of students with disabilities. Schools are encouraged, but not required, to use the procedural safeguards of IDEA as a guide for ensuring the procedural safeguards of Section 504 are met.

For more information on Section 504, including information on evaluation, placement, procedures, and discipline, visit the Council of Educators for Students With Disabilities website (www.504idea.org/Council_Of_Educators/Resources.html).

Americans With Disabilities Act

Congress enacted ADA in 1990 to protect against discrimination of individuals with disabilities. While many ADA provisions are similar to those defined in Section 504, ADA provides even broader antidiscrimination coverage by protecting individuals in both public and private sectors (Marshall & Patterson, 2002). Although most provisions of ADA are already covered under IDEA and Section 504, there are a few additional situations in which ADA affects school operations. For example, under ADA, school districts must ensure that all school events are physically accessible to students with disabilities. Therefore, school districts are required to provide a barrier-free school environment including access to specialty areas of the school such as auditoriums and athletic stadiums (La Morte, 2005). Although there are no direct funds attached to ADA, many federal agencies offer grants to support training and technical assistance on ADA requirements. Also, businesses, organizations, and schools that are working on removing architectural or transportation barriers could be eligible for a tax credit. Visit www.ada.gov/publicat.htm for more information about ADA regulations, organizations that provide technical assistance, and funding opportunities that are available to help support the implementation of ADA regulations.

The purpose of this chapter was to provide a general overview of IDEA and its key provisions and provide a basic structure for understanding special education policies, including not only IDEA but also Section 504 and the ADA. In the next chapter, we turn our focus to the detailed process of determining student eligibility for receiving special education and related services and to the role of the principal throughout the eligibility and evaluation process.

Developing and Implementing an Individualized Education Program

An IEP is a written document that is developed according to specific procedures and timelines, sets forth specific educational goals for a student with a disability, and specifies exactly what special education and related services the school will provide to enable the student to meet those goals. The IEP, developed by a selected team of school personnel, the parents of the student with a disability, and, when appropriate, the student with a disability (the IEP team), establishes what constitutes an appropriate education for each student with a disability and is a legal contract between the school and the student's family. This document also specifies where the student will receive special education (the least restrictive environment) as well as how he or she will participate in assessments and which accommodations will be provided.

The IEP is the foundation to ensure that each student with a disability receives a high-quality education program that includes individualized instruction and services that target their unique learning needs. Each IEP is a truly individualized document. The IEP process is designed to facilitate the involvement of teachers, parents, school administrators, related services personnel, and students (when appropriate) to create an educational plan that will directly address the student's strengths and needs (Küpper, 2000). The following list illustrates the multiple purposes and functions of the IEP process and resulting document.

As Bauer and Shea (1999) explain, an IEP:

- **Defines the educational program** that will enhance educational results for the student and facilitate successful progress in the general education curriculum

Questions Principals Ask

- What is an IEP, and why is it important?
- What is a standards-based IEP?
- How must an IEP be developed?
- What is the role of the principal in IEP development and implementation?

- **Is a communication vehicle** that enables parents and school personnel to jointly determine both the student's needs and the appropriate special education and related services
- **Provides parents and school professionals with the opportunity to resolve any differences** with respect to expectations or goals for the student
- **Provides documentation of resources** that have been committed to provide the student with the specified special education and related services
- **Is a management tool** to ensure that students are given the special education and related services they need
- **Is a monitoring document** used by authorized personnel from various government levels to determine whether students are actually receiving the free appropriate public education on which the parents and schools have agreed
- **Is an evaluation device** to measure the student's progress toward projected outcomes

What Must an IEP Include?

As noted in chapter 1, the IEP is the most important document in special education because it is the document that clearly defines the unique learning needs of a student. The IEP document is based on the results of evaluation and assessment data collected about the performance of the student with a disability. It is a legal document that defines the individualized education program for a student with a disability and describes how the school will provide the needed accommodations and modifications to facilitate the student's progress in the general education curriculum.

General Requirements

To help schools and professionals in the development of these documents, IDEA requires that each IEP document contain specific information, including the following (Assistance to States for the Education of Children With Disabilities, 2006b; Küpper, 2000):

- **A statement of the student's present levels of performance and individual needs, including both academic achievement and functional performance.** The IEP must specify how well the child is doing in school according to evaluation results, class assignments and other products, and observations made by teachers, parents, and other school personnel. Academic, behavioral, and extracurricular or social areas should be addressed. The IEP should specify how the disability affects involvement in the general curriculum and educational performance.
- **Annual, measurable goals that meet the student's educational needs that result from his or her disability.** These goals must enable the child to be involved in and progress in the general curriculum and meet any other educational needs resulting from his or her disability, should specify what the student can reasonably attain in a school year, and should

be linked to the state general education curriculum standards. Goals may be academic, address social or behavioral needs, or relate to physical needs or other educational needs.

- **A description of how the student's progress in meeting annual goals will be measured and when reports of student progress will be provided to parents.** Parents of students with disabilities must be regularly informed of their child's progress toward his or her IEP goals. The progress reports must be provided at least as often as parents of students without disabilities are informed.
- **A statement of special education and related services that will be provided.** The IEP must list the special education and related services and supplementary aids and services to be provided to, or on behalf of, the child. The IEP must also indicate the date when services will begin as well as the location and how often the services will be provided.
- **A statement of all supplementary aids and services that will be provided to help the student meet his or her annual goals, be involved and progress in the general curriculum, and participate in extracurricular and other nonacademic activities.** These aids and services should be based on peer-reviewed research, whenever practical. This section of the IEP includes program modifications and accommodations or supports for school personnel that will be provided for the child.
- **Participation with children who are not disabled.** The IEP must explain the extent, if any, to which the child will not participate with children without disabilities in the regular class and in extracurricular and nonacademic activities.
- **A statement of all necessary accommodations to ensure the student is able to participate effectively in state- and districtwide assessments.** The IEP must state what accommodations or modifications in the administration of state or district achievement assessments are needed in order for the student to participate in the assessment.
- **If the student will not take the regular state- and districtwide assessments, a statement explaining why the student must take an alternate assessment.** If the student will not participate in a particular state or district assessment (or a part of the assessment), the IEP must state why the assessment is not appropriate and how the child will be assessed.
- **A statement of transition service needs.** Beginning at age sixteen (or younger if the IEP team determines appropriate), the IEP must include measurable postsecondary goals related to training, education, employment, and, where appropriate, independent living skills. The IEP should also specify the transition services (including courses, participation in a vocational education program, or other programs) required to help the student reach the postsecondary goals. With parental permission or student permission if the student is age eighteen or older, community agencies may be invited to attend IEP meetings to discuss transition.

- **Age of maturity.** Beginning at least a year before the student reaches majority under state law, the IEP must indicate that the student has been informed of any rights that will transfer to him or her upon reaching the age of maturity.

Numerous examples of IEP goals and forms can be viewed on the Family Village School website (www.familyvillage.wisc.edu/education/iepsamples.html).

Although IDEA does not require principals to be active participants throughout the development process of the IEP, it is critical that you are knowledgeable about and engaged in discussions about the procedures, timelines, and logistics. It is important for principals to ensure that the learning needs of students with disabilities are met and that teachers and other school personnel feel supported.

Setting

The IEP document also states where a student with a disability will receive his or her education. While IDEA does require school districts to make available a continuum of services and settings, it strongly supports placing students with disabilities in the general education classroom for as much of their educational day as possible. Further, the IEP must document the supplementary aids and services required for the student to receive an appropriate education as well as personnel that will be responsible for implementing the identified services and aids (Etscheidt & Bartlett, 1999).

IEP teams must begin with the general curriculum as the preferred course of study and the general classroom as the preferred setting. If participation in the general education classroom and curriculum cannot be accomplished with supplementary aids and services, then a different setting may be offered. If a student with a disability will not be educated in the general education classroom, the IEP team must support that decision by providing clear and detailed documentation that, even with various accommodations and modifications, the student is unable to progress in the general education curriculum. It is important to remember that regardless of where a student with a disability is educated, access to the general education curriculum must be provided by a highly qualified special educator. Special factors that the IEP team must consider in developing an IEP include:

- Appropriate strategies for a student whose behavior interferes with his or her learning and that of others, including positive behavior interventions and supports (PBIS) to address the student's behavior
- Language needs of a student with a disability who also has limited proficiency in English
- Instruction in Braille for a child who is blind or visually impaired, unless instruction in Braille is not appropriate
- Communication and language needs for children who are deaf or hearing impaired, including opportunities for direct communications with peers and professional personnel in the child's language and communication mode (for example, signing)

- Assistive technology devices and services, such as augmentative communication, special feeding equipment, computer technology, and so forth

Supplementary Aids and Services

Supplementary aids and services and program modifications and supports are intended to facilitate a student's inclusion in general education classrooms and other school settings, including extracurricular activities. They are also intended to help students meet their IEP goals.

According to Etscheidt and Bartlett (1999) the following should be considered when identifying supplementary aids and support services for IEPs:

- **Physical dimension.** Alternations to the physical classroom environment, such as room or seating arrangements or changes to classroom lighting, that support the student with a disability in the general education classroom
- **Instructional dimension.** Aids and services related to lesson planning and delivery, methodology, and assessment, including adaptations and modifications in lesson presentation, assignments, assessment, learning structures, organization and study skills, activities and curriculum, and assistive technology
- **Social-behavioral dimension.** Aids and services that would enhance appropriate behavior and reduce disruptive, interfering behaviors
- **Collaborative dimension.** Aids and services that pertain to personnel resources, such as one-on-one paraeducator assistance, co-teaching, resource room assistance, teacher consultation, and teacher training
- **Other dimensions.** Additional factors unique to the student not included in the previous dimensions. This "what else?" dimension facilitates identifying other aids and services that might be appropriate.

Developing IEP Goals

The IEP must state the individual educational goals for a student and the program modifications or supports that will be provided. The goals and supports must be related to how the student will be involved and progress in the general curriculum.

Standards-Based Goals

In the past, IEP goals and objectives focused on identifying skill deficits and strategies to alleviate those deficits. Today, IEP teams are expected to develop IEPs that will enable students with disabilities to learn the same content as other students and to show that they are achieving standards. As a result, IEP teams are now using state grade-level content standards to drive the IEP planning process. Most often, teams select state standards as IEP goals and then identify strategies for helping the student meet these goals. Some key questions for the IEP team to consider when developing a standards-based IEP are: