



UNDERSTANDING THE TOOLS OF YOUR CHILD'S EDUCATIONAL TEAM

BY MARCIA LAUS, M.ED.

Navigating conversations between the various providers of care for your child with special needs can be overwhelming. Between healthcare professionals, educational providers, and supportive service agencies, it may be difficult to stay involved in important conversations regarding your child's care, particularly during Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meetings.

TOOLS FOR SCHOOLS : FULLY PARTICIPATING IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF YOUR CHILD'S GOALS AND SUPPORTS

Understanding the components of various support plans and evaluation measures available to children with special needs, such as an IEP, a Functional Behavior Assessment, or a Positive Behavior Support Plan, can help you when decisions are being made regarding your child's academic and developmental goals.

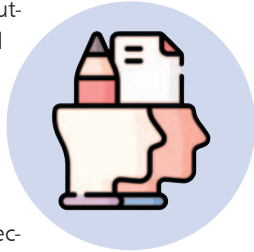
1. LET'S START BY EXAMINING THE IEP

Every student with specialized needs has an IEP which is created in collaboration with you, the parent/caregiver, as well as your child's educational team.

Understanding the components of the IEP can help you in discussions about your child's current functional performance levels, their goals for areas of improvement, and how these goals will be achieved.

An IEP typically contains the following components:

- **Present Level of Performance:** This is a summary of your child's current levels of academic and functional abilities.
- **Measurable Annual Goals:** As the name indicates, these goals are written annually and will encompass goals appropriate for your child. These are written with measurable, observable outcomes.
- **Progress Monitoring:** This section outlines how progress towards goals will be measured and tracked, and how progress will be shared with you and other members of your child's educational team.
- **Specially Designed Instruction/Related Services:** This section indicates all services or support aids provided for your child.
- **Duration of Services:** This includes a schedule of how long your child will receive services as well as: the frequency, location, and starting date for services to be provided
- **Participation in Classrooms with Nondisabled Children:** This portion of the IEP indicates that your child's educational team is striving for programs for your child in the "least restrictive environment"; outlining how much time your child will spend with nondisabled students.
- **Testing Adaptations:** This indicates any accommodations that will be made for your child during state and district assessments required to measure academic and functional performance.
- **Transition Services and Goals:** Typically beginning at the age of 14 or 16 (depending on your state), your child's IEP will include a section which indicates post-secondary goals and plans to help your child prepare for their transition.



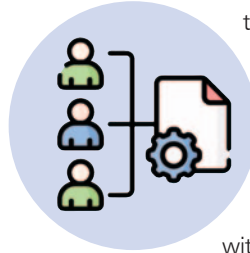
2. FUNCTIONAL BEHAVIOR ASSESSMENT

A Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) is an evaluation process that may be part of an IEP, as necessary. The function is to identify interfering behaviors in order to plan intervention strategies to better support learning.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) states that any member of a child's IEP team can request a Functional Behavior Assessment if behaviors are interfering with the child's learning or the learning of others.

Remember, you are a member of your child's IEP team.

The results of the Functional Behavior Assessment should be objective, action-oriented, and measurable. The goals and interventions resulting from the assessment should be fact-based with sufficient data to support them. These results and recommendations will be documented in your child's IEP.



3. POSITIVE BEHAVIOR SUPPORT PLAN

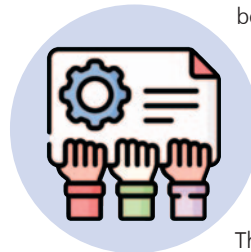
Sometimes the results of a Functional Behavior Assessment recommend the use of a Positive Behavior Support Plan (PBSP), also known as a Behavior Intervention Plan.

The PBSP documents these main components:

- A definition of each interfering behavior with baseline data indicating: the frequency, duration, and/or intensity of the behavior
- Measurable goals to change the behavior(s)
- A detailed plan outlining how to teach and reinforce the new skills to redirect the interfering behavior(s)

The behavior plan goals and intervention strategies will also be incorporated into your child's IEP.

The educational team will report on progress and document any changes to strategies and present levels.



RESOURCE LINKS

The Watson Institute helps children with special needs achieve their fullest potential in all aspects of their lives.

<https://www.thewatsoninstitute.org/functional-behavior-assessment>

<https://www.thewatsoninstitute.org/behavior-intervention-plan>



Having this information about the various components of your child's Individual Education Plan, Functional Behavior Assessment,

and Positive Behavior Support Plan can help you fully participate in the development of your child's goals and supports. •

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Marcia Laus, M.Ed. began her career as a teacher of children with Autism at LEAP Preschool in 1982. Later, as a Family Service Coordinator for LEAP, Mrs. Laus co-authored the LEAP Preschool Parent Training Curriculum and began training activities with early childhood providers across Pennsylvania. When LEAP came to the Watson Institute in 1995, Mrs. Laus developed the training curriculum for the LEAP Preschool Replication Project and supervised it for four years. Mrs. Laus is currently the Program Director of the Watson Institute Social Center for Academic Achievement (WISCA) program and is an Educational Consultant with the Training and Consultation department at Watson, providing training and feedback to school districts. Mrs. Laus has an Advanced Consultant Certification for TEACCH and participates as a trainer of TEACCH workshops. Mrs. Laus was a Temple Grandin Award Finalist and has conducted numerous workshops and presented at local, state, and national conferences.