

# Independent Study Programs (ISP): FAQs

Frequently asked questions around Independent Study Programs (ISP) and student's with IEPs

## 1. Who can enroll in an Independent Study Program?

Answer: All students may enroll so long that they meet the requirements of your enrollment procedures. Students cannot be denied enrollment for having an IEP- even if it does not have ISP as the FAPE recommendation.

## 2. What are some factors to consider in determining whether or not independent study is an appropriate offer of FAPE?

Some factors to consider in determining if ISP is an appropriate offer of FAPE might include:

- Will the student be able to meet their goals in the ISP setting
- Can they access the supports and services they need
- Can the student work independently
- Can they succeed in an ISP model
- Can their social needs/ goals be met in the ISP setting
- What are the students study skills, history, progress
- Do the students' skills align to the curriculum
- What accommodations are needed and to what level
- What is the severity of the disability and can the ISP program support the needs
- Can the student access the curriculum
- Is the student making progress at home

## 3. If you have students on IEPs that are of concern in the Independent Study setting, what can be done?

If the ISP setting is a concern for the team, some considerations might be:

- Compare and contrast the current setting with other environments- focusing on student benefit/ best interest
- Reach an understanding of differences
- Schedule an IEP to discuss the concerns and possible solutions
- Consider more or less restrictive environments
- Keep in communication with the family around progress
- Document why ISP may or may not be an appropriate program

## 4. What are barriers that you face serving student with IEPs in an ISP setting? What are some strategies you have used to address them

Some barriers that schools might face serving students on IEPs in an ISP setting include:

- Students are only required to attend in person every so often (perhaps every ten days) which makes it difficult to meet with the student to gather information needed and assess them
- It can be difficult to get all team members together in person
- Grading can be a challenge with the minimum amount of work samples that are being submitted

- It can be difficult to monitor student behavior and how they are doing
- Attendance to services- students do not always show up for their in person services
- It can be difficult to find service providers and make up missed sessions
- It can be difficult to monitor students ability to complete grade level instruction and decide whether it is lack of ability or lack of proper instruction
- It can be difficult to locate an appropriate setting if ISP is not appropriate
- Sometimes students live far away and we offer virtual services but they are not appropriate so it is hard to find a provider to serve the student

Some strategies to address these barriers include:

- Develop school policies around attendance, work completion and services
- Develop/ research grading guidelines
- Access your local SARB board for attendance concerns
- Develop positive relationships with community schools and programs
- Hold conference calls often
- Schedule an IEP to discuss concerns
- Keep logs and data around services, progress and attendance, as well as work completion
- Offer appropriate FAPE

### **5. Who are the required members of the IEP team? How do you prepare for the meeting and how do members attend?**

Required team members are one general education teacher, one special education teacher, an administrator or designee and the

parent. In addition, any service provider providing services to the student (speech pathologist, behaviorist, ERMHs provider, OT, PT, etc.)

Team members might attend in person, however it is common in the ISP setting to attend via telephone, Skype, Facetime, Blackboard or other video conferencing provider. Meetings get scheduled early on with a meeting notice sent out so all members know it is coming.

- Team members often collect and submit information by:
- Collecting comments before the meeting from those working with the student via email
- Hold pre-staffing meetings
- Send draft reports to team and parents prior to the IEP meeting
- Have a conversation prior to the IEP with the student and family and other team members
- Send out provider input forms prior to the IEP meeting to be sent back
- Hold conference calls throughout the year to collect information
- Draft IEPs are sent to the parent prior to the meeting
- Send out a survey prior to the IEP so that the input can be included in the IEP prior to meeting

### **6. What does the continuum of services look like in your program?**

Answer: While your ISP may not have a variety of settings, they are still responsible for providing the appropriate environment for the IEP student that provides a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). This might mean looking at contracting with a local district or neighboring charter school to purchase a seat in a classroom, contracting with a nonpublic school or a residential facility. The recommending LEA is financially responsible.

The preceding are some common questions asked around independent study programs with answers or strategies to address each question. These are by no means an exhaustive list. Thanks to our partners who shared their practices to help develop this resource to assist other Independent Study Programs.