



[HOW TO] **Examine Student IEPs**

Assess IEP quality and alignment
to students' learning goals.

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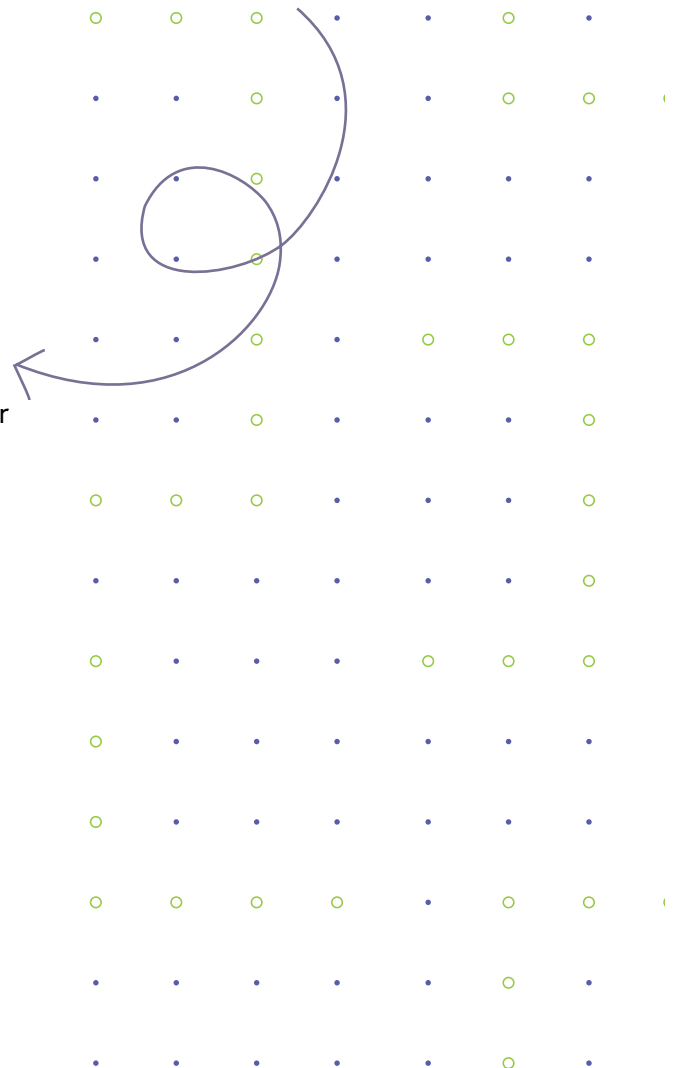
Introduction

Back-to-school physicals are an annual occurrence for many students. During these comprehensive exams, doctors review medical history, update vaccinations, and assess students' overall health and well-being before another year of learning begins.

Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) benefit from regular physicals, too. At least once a year, it's important to review IEPs not only for compliance, but also a plan's potential to produce measurable growth. Follow the steps outlined in this eBook to examine student IEPs with a critical eye for quality and alignment to student needs.

Inside are tips and tools to help you:

- Identify signs that an IEP needs updated or improved
- Create a framework for writing quality IEPs
- Track student service and progress data together
- Analyze and interpret student data to guide decision-making
- Collaborate with general education teachers to improve student services and supports



Symptoms of Misaligned IEPs

During your review, look out for signs indicating that an IEP needs updating or amending.



Lack of Reliable Data

IEPs are required to include data around a student's present level of academic achievement and functional performance. If this information is missing, how can you know with fidelity that the goals, services, and supports written into the IEP are appropriate?



Low (or No) Progress

A quality IEP should result in progress at the end of a 9-week review cycle. If a student is missing goals or shows minimal progress under their current IEP, this is a sign that it's time to make some changes.



Repeated Services and Supports

Do you get deja vu during your review? Many IEPs repeat services and supports for individuals year after year. Or, they apply the same language to every IEP for every student. IEPs should evolve over time — for groups of students and individuals.



Multiple Amendments, Minimal Results

If you see that multiple amendments have been made to an IEP but a student is still struggling to make measurable progress, this is a sign that decisions are being made without being backed up by reliable data.

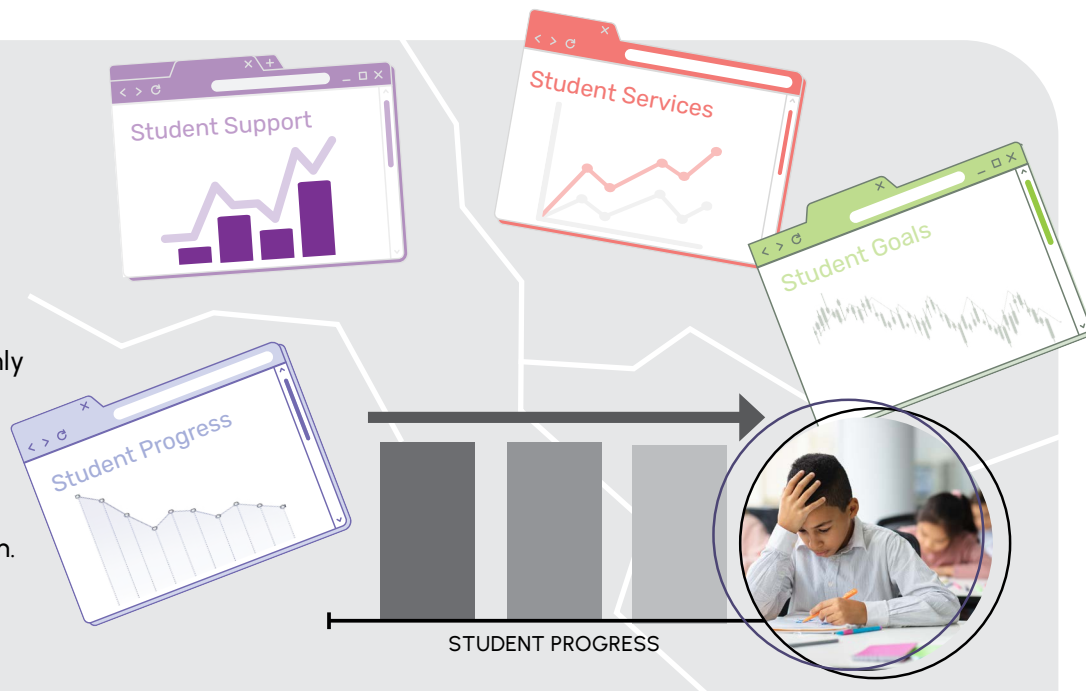


64%

of students receive the same IEP services year-over-year.

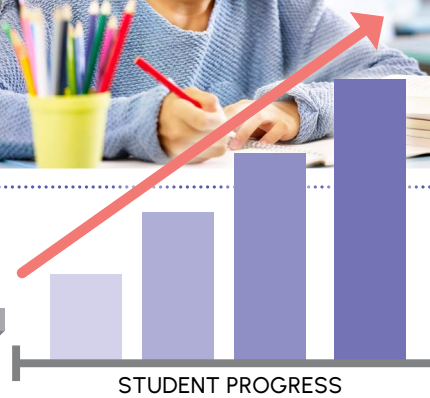
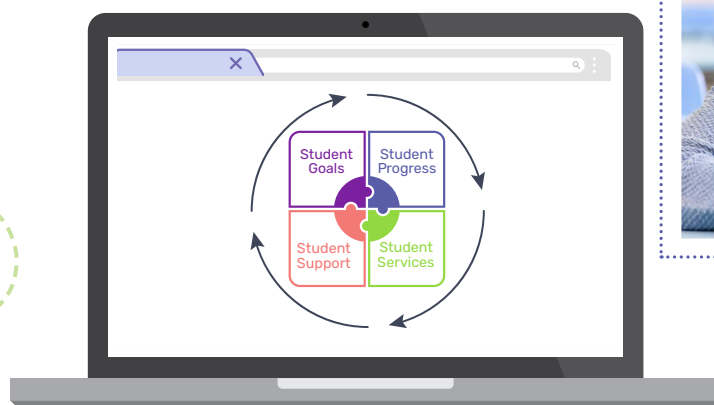
How to Treat IEP Issues

Special education suffers from a chronic lack of time and resources, which can result in reactive IEP reviews. Data around supports, services, goals, and progress are all tracked separately and only connected after services have been fulfilled. With this approach, IEP issues present themselves when it's too late to correct them.



A *proactive* approach to IEP reviews views data together and monitors it often to determine whether measurable progress is occurring. Based on those data, educators can make real-time adjustments to supports and services before minutes are fulfilled to keep students progressing toward their goals.

When service, support, and progress data is tracked together, it's possible to ensure that every service minute spent with a special education student is a service minute spent working toward the goals of their IEP.



The following pages share steps you and your special education team can take to build a system and processes that break down silos, empower collaboration, and support data-driven decision-making that improves student outcomes.

Treating IEP Issues

Build a Framework to Support IEP Quality and Alignment to Student Needs

IEPs and special education students thrive in an instructional environment that includes clearly defined processes and procedures that ensure every member of the special education team understands and can fulfill their required role.

START BUILDING YOUR FRAMEWORK:

1. Create Data Deadlines

Set expectations for how often your team needs to conduct progress monitoring.



Complete progress monitoring **monthly at minimum**.



2-3 times a month is ideal for seeing real trends in student performance.



Build time into the schedule for teams to meet to **review and discuss data**.



Parents are critical members of an IEP team and should be provided with a progress monitoring report every 9 weeks or after every **grading period**. However, they do not need to review data after every **progress monitoring period**.

2. Select the Correct Assessments

Make sure that the progress monitoring assessment used aligns with the specific goals outlined in a student's IEP.



Not all assessments are progress monitoring assessments. While assessments are fixtures in general education classrooms, they are designed to assess grade-level work.

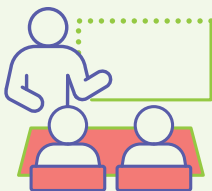
3. Put Together Your Team

Depending on the size of your school or district, multiple people can be responsible for ensuring IEP quality and alignment. Be sure that everyone supporting IEP students understands their role in ensuring services and supports are delivered with fidelity.

Title	Role	Responsibilities
District Special Education Director	Reviews data when there are major concerns or issues around a student's IEPs. Steps in to communicate with parents when appropriate.	Ensure that all stakeholders understand what an IEP is and how it works. Oversee that IEPs are completed in time.
School Special Education Administrator / Case Manager	Oversees a specific group of students with IEPs.	Write IEP. Document student goals. Collect IEP progress data from students and teachers. Track and analyze IEP progress data. Ensure IEP compliance.
Provider	Special education teacher who delivers IEP service minutes to a student or groups of students.	Deliver and record IEP services. Conduct progress monitoring. Record progress toward the IEP goal(s).
General Education Teacher	Offers accommodations and modifications outlined in IEPs to help students access general curriculum at the same level as their peers.	Guarantee delivery of accommodations and modifications. Share necessary data to providers.

4. Offer Ongoing Education

Schedule professional development opportunities for all special education team members, particularly around using the IEP systems you have in place.



Offer **initial training** once each year.



Plan shorter **monthly or bi-monthly meetings** that give team members the opportunity to check in and ask questions.

Create a System for Tracking Data in Tandem

Monitoring IEPs for compliance, quality, and alignment requires more than tracking minutes. Collect as much data as possible around services, supports, goals, and progress. Then connect that information to determine whether an IEP is helping students achieve measurable growth. If not, use those data back up decision-making around IEP amendments.

Data to Collect

Service Minutes

- Amount of time spent on targeted instruction that supports student goals (not just minutes spent in the classroom)
- Total number of sessions
- Meeting frequency (monthly, weekly, daily)
- Location (pull out, push in, self contained)
- Time
- Provider
- Learning goals supported

Supports

- Accommodations
- Modifications
- Assistive technology
- What supports were successful
- What supports were unsuccessful
- Where supports were used
- When supports were used

Goals and Progress

- Specific IEP goals
- How goals should be assessed
- Assessment used
- Assessment score
- Progress (or lack of)



Compare and Analyze IEP Data to Guide Decision-Making

Data are only as good as what you do with them. Once you have a system in place for tracking IEP data, make a plan for regular data reviews with your team. Here's what's on the agenda during those meetings.

- ☐ **Review data after every progress monitoring session** (two to three times per month recommended). Each meeting should include time to:
 - Evaluate the effectiveness of service sessions and supports.
 - Determine if adjustments are needed to help students progress, and what those adjustments should be.
- ☐ **Analyze data for mismatches or flatlines**, always considering goals, services, and supports together. Start by asking: Is the student making progress? If not, work from the goal down to determine next steps.



- ☐ **Make appropriate adjustments or amendments to the IEP.** In some cases, a student may require more time in service minutes. In others, they may need additional or different supports within their current minutes to make that time more impactful. Your data should help you determine which is the case and what needs to be done.

Collaborate with General Education Teachers

Has a general education teacher ever referred to a child as “your student?” Ensuring IEP compliance, quality, and alignment is a team effort that includes general education teachers. They sit in on IEP meetings. They make classroom accommodations. Therefore, special education students should be considered “our students.”

Here are steps for getting general education teachers more invested in special education and encouraging collaboration for the good of your shared students.

- 1. Make sure teachers know what is in the IEP.** Seems simple enough, but many general education teachers don't have access to your IEP system or the IEP itself. Provide printed pages of need, such as services, goals, and supports.
- 2. Invite collaboration.** Take time — even just a few short minutes — to meet and discuss each student. During this time, give teachers the opportunity to ask questions or clarify details of the student's IEP, specifically the accommodations and modifications they need in the general classroom.
- 3. Join parent-teacher conferences** to enforce the idea that you and the general education teacher are a team working to support the student and their goals. Parents will appreciate this united front.
- 4. Host a professional development session** around special education for general education teachers to help them better understand the impact they can have on student learning by providing the supports outlined in a student's IEP. Discuss:
 - What different accommodations and modifications look like
 - How to provide these supports in class
 - Why supports are used

Strategies to Create Inclusive Classrooms

Hear from two experienced educators about their proven framework for providing accommodations and modifications across all grade levels. They also share tried-and-true strategies to build strong partnerships between general and special education teachers that improve outcomes for students.

Watch Now



Keep IEPs in Top Shape with Brolly



After reviewing IEPs to ensure that they are compliant and aligned with student goals, keep them strong all year long with Brolly from Level Data. With Brolly, you can regularly monitor student progress data in tandem with service minutes and supports, and address issues quickly to help students make gains..

Learn more about how Brolly makes it easier and more efficient for special education teams to collaborate and create goal-oriented, data-driven IEPs for every student.

[Learn More](#)

