
Introduction

Blueprint of IEPs for ELs and Other Diverse Learners

IEPs for ELs and Other Diverse Learners provides practitioners contemporary information and skill sets necessary to develop and implement culturally and linguistically responsive Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). This book is purposefully titled to reflect the unique features and needs that students in the process of acquiring English as a second language bring to the IEP process, in addition to the features and needs of other diverse learners who are English proficient. “Approximately half of all culturally and linguistically diverse PreK–12 students have limited English language proficiency and are classified as English language learners” (Navarrete & Watson, 2013, p. 1). Specifically, IEPs for English language learners must address the English language development aspects of teaching and learning, in addition to attending to academic, social, and cultural features that diverse non-English learners bring to the special education instructional environment. Therefore, readers will acquire knowledge and skills to meet the IEP expectations of both English learners (ELs) as well as other diverse students with disabilities who are English proficient.

The Individualized Education Program has been in existence since PL 94–142 was signed into law during the mid-1970s. Throughout the past several decades, an IEP has been used as a mandated educational blueprint framing the instruction for all learners found eligible for special education services. Though its use in educational settings to inform families, educators, and students about necessary services is well intended, over the years, the IEP has become more of a legal mandate rather than an instructional tool to meet academic and social-emotional needs of students with disabilities. However, if developed properly, an IEP is a highly valuable instructional tool containing clearly articulated goals, objectives, services, accommodations, and supplemental supports necessary to deliver effective teaching and learning to a student with a disability in the least restrictive environment along with age and grade-level peers.

Our purpose for writing this book is to provide guidance to practitioners in the development of an Individualized Education Program for English language and other diverse students properly placed into special education with an identified disability. Though much of the material in this highly practical book is appropriate for any learner’s IEP, specific attention focuses

on ways to make the IEP culturally and linguistically responsive. Therefore, the central focus of this book is to guide educators in the development and implementation of an Individualized Education Program for all diverse learners who are properly identified as having a disability and placed for special education services.

UNDERLYING ASSUMPTIONS OF THE IEP DEVELOPMENT STAGE

In developing the contents of this book, several assumptions are made relative to the referral, assessment, eligibility decision making, and placement of English language and other diverse learners for special education services:

1. Learner was properly referred and assessed within the special education comprehensive evaluation process consistent with mandated procedures identified in the 2004 reauthorization of the Individual with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA).
2. English language proficiency level was properly identified using a nationally accepted assessment instrument (e.g., WIDA ACCESS) with results incorporated into the special education assessment process to reduce bias.
3. Multiple forms of assessment were used in the evaluation of the placed English language or other diverse learner to make certain that a culturally and linguistically responsive process framed the eligibility and placement decision.
4. Eligibility decision-making team included members with expertise in the education of English language and other diverse learners.

The extent that one or more of the above four assumptions is not met limits practitioners' abilities to generate an informed IEP for English language and other diverse learners. Therefore, framed within the above referral, assessment, and placement assumptions, the task of generating a culturally and linguistically responsive IEP ensues. As stated, although the chapters of this book include discussion and presentation of items required of any IEP, the primary emphasis is on ways to make the IEP appropriate for and responsive to all diverse learners and their families.

TOPICAL AREAS AND TERMINOLOGY

Key features of a culturally and linguistically responsive IEP examined in this book include these items:

- Documentation of present performance levels that incorporate culturally and linguistically diverse qualities and strengths

- Incorporation of language development in the annual goals and short-term objectives
- Emphasis on continued development of English academic language proficiency
- Determination of involvement in general class curriculum in culturally responsive ways
- Use of responsive monitoring practices to measure achievement and affective progress of English language and other diverse learners
- Interrelated significance of the role and function of English language development in IEP goal attainment is evident

Throughout the book, the development and implementation of an IEP for English language and other diverse learners within a multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) is examined, detailing its potential for framing effective education for all students with disabilities. Below is a listing of the chapter structure of the book's material:

- Understanding a Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Multi-Tiered System of Supports (Chapter 1)
- Essential Components of IEPs for English Language and Other Diverse Learners (Chapter 2)
- Role and Function of Academic Language in IEPs (Chapter 3)
- Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (Chapter 4)
- IEPs and the Development of Measurable Annual Goals Using SMART Principles (Chapter 5)
- Delivering Appropriate IEP Services (Chapter 6)
- Special Considerations and Diversity (Chapter 7)
- IEP Progress Monitoring and Diverse Needs (Chapter 8)
- Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Transition Planning and Services (Chapter 9)
- Guidelines for Successful IEP Meetings for Diverse Learners (Chapter 10)
- Putting the IEP Pieces Together (Chapter 11)

Given the various perspectives and definitions associated with terminology and features connected to IEPs, we define a few select terms as used throughout the book:

Term	Description
Accommodation	Learner completes the exact same task, addressing same standard as others while being provided changes to time, format, setting, schedule, and/or presentation without altering what the test measure or assignment requires.
Benchmark	An IEP learning target specifying knowledge and skills students acquire relative to a broader standard.
Content Objective	IEP statement that describes the content knowledge/skills to be acquired by the students through completion of lessons and units of study.

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Term	Description
Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CLD) Learner	A student who brings diverse ethnic, cultural, and/or linguistic qualities to the teaching and learning environment possessing English language proficiency that may range from emerging to full proficiency levels.
Culturally and Linguistically Responsive	Incorporating and valuing learners' diverse characteristics, backgrounds, languages, experiences, and home teachings into the planning and delivery of an IEP and associated instruction.
Diverse Learner	Term used interchangeably with the term <i>CLD learner</i> .
English Learner (EL)	A student who has a home language other than English and who is in the process of acquiring English as a second or other language.
Language Objective	Objective that specifically addresses the functions of language (e.g., compare, contrast, evaluate), vocabulary relevant to the lesson, and form (e.g., adjective, sentence structure) in the four domains (listening, speaking, reading, writing).
Modification	Adjustment to assignments or tasks that may alter a standard or expectations of what is completed or measured (e.g., an alternate task in which the learner addresses only part of a standard or achievement expectation).
Other Diverse Learner	Culturally and linguistically diverse student who is bilingual and/or English proficient.

NOTE: Several different features and strengths characterize diverse learners, and as such three types of terminologies are used throughout this book when referring to diverse students, depending on the particular topic of discussion or area of emphasis:

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CLD) is used when the topic of discussion pertains to any diverse learner irrespective of first or second language proficiency levels.

English Learner (EL) is used when the topic of discussion pertains specifically to an individual in the process of acquiring English as a second language.

English Language and Other Diverse Learners is used when the topic of discussion pertains to both individuals in the process of acquiring English as a second language as well as other diverse learners who are either bilingual or fluent English speakers.

Additional terminology is defined when introduced throughout the chapters. Though specific content, components, and visual layout of an IEP varies across school districts, several features are mandated by law (IDEA, 2004; Shinn & Shinn, 2000). We begin our discussions by examining a culturally and linguistically responsive MTSS in Chapter 1, followed by required IEP elements presented in Chapter 2.