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# What's So Important about IEPs

Tags: [HSLDA](#) [special needs](#) [struggling learner](#)

## Homeschooling a struggling learner

Homeschooling allows parents of children with learning challenges, and/or gifts and talents, to incorporate their child's strengths and interests while they work together at the student's pace to "catch-up" on basic

skills.

Many parents opt to withdraw their children with special needs--those who have already been under an IEP (Individualized Education Plan) in a formal school setting--in order to homeschool them. Other parents never enroll their children in any formal school setting because they suspect that those children would struggle and likely "fall through the cracks" if they were not homeschooled.

However, some homeschool support groups may require that parents secure an IEP for these children. When HSLDA members call me about developing an IEP, I often introduce them to the Clinical Teaching Cycle Model which was developed by Janet Lerner, Ph.D., specifically for teaching children who have learning problems.

Here are the five components of her model and my comments about them:

### 1. Diagnose

Have your child evaluated by an educational psychologist or another professional such as a learning disability specialist, reading specialist, speech and language pathologist, occupational therapist, or physical therapist. The professional should give you a written report explaining your child's strengths, areas of need, and also recommendations for addressing those needs.

### 2. Plan

Based on your child's test results, the professional may work with you to develop a customized plan of remediation, the IEP. This plan contains specific goals, the time frame for accomplishing each goal, and the materials, resources/curriculum you will need.

### 3. Implement

Put the IEP into practice.

### 4. Evaluate

After utilizing that plan for a period of time, the teacher may realize that some of the goals are either too difficult or elementary for the student, or that other materials will have to be used for teaching. Therefore, some changes to the IEP are necessary. This leads to the next step.

### 5. Modify

Adjust the IEP to allow more time for meeting goals or for more realistic expectations. The modified IEP will now include goals which are appropriate and, therefore, will more likely be attained by the student.

There are many advantages for having an IEP (sometimes called SEP--Student Education Plan):

1. It provides a written record of the skills your child has mastered and of the skills yet to be mastered. It can help you focus on specifics and not feel overwhelmed by impossible thinking--that you have to do it all.
2. It provides the teacher with a plan for teaching, whereby you can make appropriate adjustments to your child's school

- program such as giving her the extra time needed to do assignments or reducing the number of items to be worked.
3. It can include provisions for your child to demonstrate his learning in ways other than just paper-and-pencil tasks. For instance, "draw a picture to explain what was happening in the story." (You'll be able to determine if he grasped the main idea of the story.)
  4. It provides a tailor-made program that suits the needs of your child as well as the pace appropriate for meeting those needs. You now have justification for not trying to whiz through the texts and assignments.
  5. It allows you to incorporate other needed therapies (such as speech and language) as part of the student's school program.
  6. It can give some concrete evidence of the child's progress. Both student and teacher can see how far the pupil has come.

**NOTE:**

Recently, two different families have told me that their formal requests to allow their homeschooled, college-bound sons to have extended time for taking the SAT has been denied. Both of these students had been formally tested (within the past two years) by a professional, and the test results and written reports indicated that the student should be allowed extended time for taking tests.

If a formal IEP had been developed years ago for those students (based on testing at that time) and followed all along, it is likely that those students would now be permitted to have the needed extra time for taking the SAT.

Resources:

- The Student Education Plan--A Preparation Guide by Judith Munday
- The IDOC--Individualized Documentation by Sharon Wallace and Julia Hoch (This was formerly the ISEP - The Individual Student Education Plan)
- The IEP Manual--Individual Education Planning for the Handicapped Student by Jim and Debby Mills (This is published by NATHHAN)

Please watch for a follow-up e-newsletter in the near future on how to write an IEP/SEP.



**This resource is provided by the Home School Legal Defense Association's Struggling Learner's newsletter as a service to the homeschooling community.**

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