IEP Process

The following information was taken from: http://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/7690/urlt/0070085-eseparent.pdf

<u> Pre-IEP</u>

In Florida and in Broward County, when a child is having difficulties in school, a team begins a problem-solving process. Members of the team, which can include the parent, identify the difficulties and make changes in teaching strategies (interventions) to match the child's needs. The goal of the team is to find ways to help the child be successful in school. As teaching strategies are put in place, the team monitors the child's progress and makes decisions about changing the type or the intensity of the interventions. Florida provides several levels of assistance to children, or a multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS). The process of **Problem-solving/Response to Intervention (PS/RtI)** is designed to make sure that every child gets the right kind of instruction to meet his/her needs.

*Information gained through the ongoing PS/RtI process helps the team decide whether to make a referral for an evaluation to see if the child has a disability.

*Children who need ongoing intensive or specially designed instruction in school because of a disability qualify for **Exceptional Student Education**. This is often called **ESE** -Exceptional Student Education or sometimes referred to as special education.

To receive ESE services in Florida and Broward County, a child must meet the requirements of at least one of the exceptionality categories listed below and need specially designed instruction. Educators sometimes use the acronyms for the exceptionalities, as follows

- Autism spectrum disorder (ASD)
- Deaf or hard-of-hearing (DHH)
- Developmentally delayed, for three through five Dual-sensory impaired (deaf-blind) (DSI)
- Emotional or behavioral disabilities (EBD)
- Homebound or hospitalized (HH) Intellectual disabilities (InD)
- Orthopedic impairment (OI)
- Other health impairment (OHI)
- Traumatic brain injury (TBI)
- Specific learning disabilities (SLD)
- Speech impairment (SI)
- Language impairment (LI)
- Visually impaired (VI)

• Gifted –In Florida, some children who learn very easily and meet qualification requirements receive ESE Gifted services.

*The eligibility criteria, or requirements, for each of the exceptionality categories listed above are outlined in Florida's laws and rules. Some children have one disability, and others have more than one. One child with a disability may need only a little extra help. Another child may need more services because their learning needs are more intense. Some children will need ESE services for only a short time. Others will need help throughout their school years. Not all children with the same disability have the same needs or require the same services. ESE services are designed to give each child the special help they need. • If the information gained through the ongoing PS/RtI process indicates the need for further information, the <u>child is referred for an evaluation</u>. The following steps are involved when planning and delivering ESE services for a child:

<u>Evaluation</u>

The evaluation process is a way to collect information about a child's present levels, learning needs, strengths, and interests.

Eligibility determination

After the evaluation is finished, the school holds a meeting called an eligibility staffing. A group of people from the school or school district will be at the eligibility staffing. At the meeting, the evaluators and/or other school staff will explain the evaluations and discuss the results with the parent.

The team of people—**including the parent**—will determine if the child qualifies for ESE services.

- This team may include:
- Principal or other school administrator
- Staffing specialist
- ESE teacher
- Guidance counselor
- Speech pathologist
- Regular classroom teacher
- School psychologist
- Other specialists who worked with the child during the evaluation process

***First**, a child qualifies for services only if they meet one of the eligibility criteria in the State Board of Education Rules for ESE, listed below

• Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) • Deaf or hard-of-hearing (DHH) • Developmentally delayed (three through five years old only) (DD) • Dual-sensory impaired (deaf-blind) (DSI) • Emotional or behavioral disabilities (EBD) • Homebound or hospitalized (HH) • Intellectual disabilities (InD) • Language impaired (LI) • Orthopedic impairment (OI) • Other health impairment (OHI) • Traumatic brain injury (TBI) • Specific learning disabilities (SLD) • Speech impaired (SI) • Visually impaired (VI)

*Second, the team must determine if the child needs specially designed instruction and possibly, related services as a result of the disability. There are a number of questions that the team will answer to help figure out if the child qualifies for ESE and to lay the foundation for the individual educational plan. **Does the child qualify?** The team will use the evaluation reports, medical records, school progress reports, test results, progress monitoring information from the **RtI process**, and any other information provided to decide if the child **qualifies for ESE services**.

The team will decide one of the following:

• The child **IS** eligible for ESE services. (The team will develop an IEP to determine what services the school is offering to the child.)

• The child does not qualify for ESE services. However, the problem-solving process will continue. If the child is still struggling, the school will keep working to find ways to help. If the child is doing better, the school will continue to monitor progress to make sure that the child continues to be successful.

• If the child does not qualify for ESE services, but does need accommodations as a result of a disability, the accommodations will be identified in what is called a 504 plan. More information on 504 plans can be found at http://www.fldoe.org/ese/pubxhome.asp.

• There is not enough information to reach a decision and more evaluation is needed.

<u>Developing the first individual educational plan-IEP</u> (IF the child qualifies for ESE services)

Every child with a disability who is eligible for ESE will have an IEP. An IEP is a written plan that tells the parent, the child, the teachers, and other school staff which ESE services the school will provide to the child. The child cannot receive ESE services until the first IEP is developed and the parent gives permission for the services and placement.

IEPs are developed during IEP team meetings. The parent gets a written notice from the school before each IEP meeting. The school highly encourages parental involvement and participation in these meetings and will try to find a day, time, and place that is good for the parent to attend.

The team will discuss, in depth, the following items at the child's IEP team meeting. This discussion is the development of the actual IEP.

The information gathered in the evaluation process, along with the decisions made regarding the needs of the child, will help to develop the IEP and will be included in the document.

<u>1. Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance</u> -The present level statement describes what the child is able to do and what they struggle with in academic subjects and functional skills. There are 4 domains on the IEP that are addressed when developing the IEP. The impact of the disability in each domain, if any, is used to develop goals.

2. Measurable Annual Goals Measurable annual goals – These goals will state what the child needs to learn in order to progress in the general curriculum and to meet other needs related to their disability.

<u>3. Benchmarks or Short Term Objectives</u> –The child's IEP may contain benchmarks or short-term objectives. Benchmarks and short-term objectives are only required for students who are in K and 1st grade or those that take the Florida Alternate Assessment (FAA). For other students, they are optional.

The IEP team makes the decision about including benchmarks and short-term objectives.

4. Description of How The Child's Progress Will Be Measured and Reported to

<u>**Parents Throughout the year**</u>- The school will keep track of how well the child is doing. The IEP must describe how the child's progress toward their annual goals will be measured and how the parent will be regularly informed of that progress.

5. ESE Services, Related Services, Supplementary Aids and Services, and Support

for Personnel – The IEP describes each ESE service, related service-if any, accommodation or modification, support, or supplementary aid for the child. It may also list the title of the person who will make sure that the child receives each service. Services, aids, and supports are help that the child may need in order to benefit from school.

<u>6. Accommodations and Modifications</u> – The child may need changes in teaching or testing in order to make progress and demonstrate what they have learned. The IEP describes these changes.

<u>Accommodations</u> are changes to the way a student accesses instructions and demonstrates what they know.

<u>Modifications</u> are changes in what a student is expected to learn. They may include changes to content, requirements, and expected levels of mastery.

7. Accommodations in the Administration of State- and District-Wide Assessments - The IEP must include a statement about any accommodations that will be made for the child when taking state or district-wide assessments (tests).

8. Florida Alternate Assessment Federal and state laws require that all students <u>be included in statewide testing</u> – Most students with disabilities take the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test® (FCAT or FCAT 2.0– OR whatever the test is at the time) along with general education students. A small number of students with significant cognitive disabilities take the Florida Alternate Assessment (FAA).

9. Placement and the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) -

The IEP team's decisions about where the child will be taught are called "placement" decisions. The team makes this decision based on the child's needs. The IEP team will begin by assuming that the child will be taught in the same classroom and school the child would attend if they did not have a disability (LRE). These different types of placements make up the range of placements. Which school the child attends is based on the district's plan for school zones and on which schools offer the services the child needs. Some types of services may be available in many schools throughout the school district. Other types of services may only be available in a few schools.

***Consent for Services and Placement** - The parent is asked for written consent for placement and services only once-at initial placement or eligibility. This happens after the first IEP is developed. If the child's services or placement are changed later, the school must inform the parent by providing a written notice, but they do not need a parent's permission to make the changes.

After the IEP and Consent

Once the IEP is developed and consent has been given, services should start right away. However, schools often need a few days to get everything ready and to get the schedule finalized with all the service providers before the actual service(s) begins.

After the child has started receiving services, the teachers inform the parents of the child's progress through quarterly progress reports and conferences and if needed, or possible interim IEP meetings.

Matrix of Services

The matrix of services reflects the level of services listed on the child's IEP in each of the following areas: The 4 domains addressed in the present level of performance on the child's IEP are included in the matrix as well as health care.

- Curriculum and Learning Environment
- Social or Emotional Behavior
- Independent Functioning
- Health Care
- Communication

The matrix is completed at the end of each IEP meeting and must reflect the actual services the child will receive in each domain. Services that are checked off on the matrix must be services the child is actually receiving. This matrix is the tool that generates the funds for each ESE child. The matrix should serve as a true reflection of the services being provided and supported by all information documented and included on the IEP.

Annual Review of the IEP

At least once every 12 months (an IEP is valid for 365 days) the parent and the rest of the IEP team will meet to talk about the child's progress in school and to write a new IEP. The school provides the parent with written notice about this meeting. If the parent cannot attend at day/time suggested in the written notice, the parent and the school will attempt to schedule a day/time agreeable to both parties.

The team may begin by reviewing the child's last IEP and other records to learn what progress the child has made. Based on that information, the team will answer questions such as these:

- What are the child's present levels of academic achievement and functional performance?
- Does the child need additional accommodations to be successful in the general curriculum?

• Which annual goals has the child mastered? Which annual goals need to be changed? What new annual goals should the child work toward?

- Do the services or supports need to be changed?
- Does assistive technology need to be added or changed?
- Is there a need for more evaluations?
- Does the child need a different placement in order to make progress?

The parent and the rest of the team will use the newly gathered information to write a new IEP for the child. The team may be able to write the new IEP without more evaluation, or the team may ask the parent's permission to do another evaluation. If more information is needed, a re-evaluation plan will be needed in order to get parent consent.

Interim IEP

An IEP is valid for 12 months, however an interim can be requested prior to the end of the 12 months.

The parent or the school may request an interim review of the IEP. Some of the reasons an interim may be requested are:

- The child is not making as much progress as expected.
- The child is making more progress than expected.
- The child needs services for more time or less time.
- The child's needs have changed.

Re-evaluation

The school must address a possible reevaluation of each child at least every three years to find out if they still have a disability and still need ESE services. As part of the reevaluation process, a meeting is held and the parent is invited to be a part of the team. The IEP team must review existing information about the child. The IEP team may decide to give the child tests or use other methods to collect new data about the child. The school must have written permission from the parent before doing any individual evaluation or testing.

If an evaluation is needed, the consent form will tell the parent, in writing, the following things:

- What they are planning to do during the reevaluation
- Why school staff thinks the child should be evaluated individually

• Any other options the school staff considered and why they did not choose those other options

• The IEP team will also hold a re-evaluation meeting if the parent or the school staff thinks that the child no longer needs ESE services.

By following the guidelines, timelines and procedures set forth by the state of Florida and Broward County, Palm Cove Elementary and their ESE Department facilitate the evaluation and placement of students needing ESE services. The identification of these students in a timely, efficient manner allows our school to provide needed services to the students to help them learn to their full potential. The differentiated instruction and support provided to these children, both identified as ESE and those not, are monitored by the gains of the children receiving these supports. The effectiveness of these supports is monitored closely by data and monitoring instruments built into the ESE Program for those that qualify. The information gathered is used to enhance and perfect supports in place for all children and to maximize the gains of all of our students.