



IEPs and Evaluations...What's the Difference?

"IEP" and "evaluations" are two important yet distinct parts of your child's education.

An evaluation, according to the law ([20 U.S.C. 1414\(a\), \(b\), and \(c\)](#)), uses valid testing to check if a child has a disability and identifies any educational challenges. If the evaluation shows your child qualifies for special education, an IEP meeting is held within 30 days to create the Individualized Education Program (IEP).

The IEP is like a plan for your child's special education. It outlines the necessary **support** and related **services** that are essential to your child's progress and success in school. It's created by the IEP Team, which includes parents, at least one general education teacher familiar with the child, at least one special education teacher familiar with the child, a school district representative, a person interpreting evaluation results, and possibly others. You may always bring a friend or advocate with you to any evaluation or IEP meeting that you have at a school.

The IEP sets goals, measurable outcomes, and details modified instruction (how does your child's instruction need to change) along with timelines (by when should a child achieve a goal set in an IEP). The IEP Team should ensure that the plan is ready at the start of each school year ([20 U.S.C. §1414\(d\)\(2\)\(A\)](#)). The IEP Team is required to review it at least once a year to see if goals are met, but a parent can call an IEP meeting formally at any time by emailing anyone on the team. The review should consider re-evaluation results, information from parents, the child's anticipated needs, or other relevant matters. Sometimes, a school can forget to do a review, so it's important for parents to set calendar alerts or make note of when you want to email the school to set the review.

If there's a lack of progress in the child's goals, the IEP Team should adjust the IEP. [Arizona laws](#) allow parents or the education agency to request a review in writing, which happens within 45 school days, at a date and time agreed upon by both parties. You can check out our detailed guide on our [website](#) on how to request an evaluation.

You can also reach out to Love Your School for input and support at hello@loveyourschool.org!

More Resources:

[Process For Developing IEPs - Arizona Department of Education](#)

[Evaluations v. IEP Meetings: An Important Distinction – SchoolsKidsLawyer.Com](#)

[A Parent's Guide to Evaluations, IEPs, and More – Learning Disabilities Association of America](#)

[IEP Meeting Basics – Center for Parent Information & Resources](#)