

# Understanding an IEP

## Episode 4 – Section II (Present Levels)

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# Episode Outline

Episode 1 – Introduction

Episode 2 – FAPE

Episode 3 – Demographics, procedural safeguards, and medical assistance billing

Episode 4 – Section II (present levels)

Episode 5 – Sections III (transition services) and IV (state/local assessments)

Episode 6 – Section V (goals and objectives)

Episode 7 – Sections VI (modifications/SDIS, related services, supports), VII (educational placement), and VIII (PennData reporting)

Episode 8 – Parent preparation and follow-through

Episode 9 – Live session with families

# Episode 4 – Present levels of academic achievement and functional performance (PLAAFP)

## QR Document (pages 5 of 18)

There are 7 distinct sections in this section of the IEP

1. Present levels of academic achievement
2. Present levels of functional performance
3. Present levels related to postsecondary transition goals (if applicable)
4. Parental concerns
5. How the student's disability affects involvement and progress in the general education curriculum
6. Strengths
7. Academic, developmental, and functional needs related to the student's disability

# Episode 4 – PLAAFP

## Overview

- The PLAAFP is the most important section of the IEP document. This section describes a student's current strengths, weaknesses, and how their disability impacts his/her/their involvement and progress in the curriculum. For many students, this means involvement/progress in the general education curriculum, but may represent involvement/progress in an alternative curriculum. This all depends on the needs of the student.
- A well-written present level section allows an "outsider" reading the document to understand exactly who the student is, how they learn, and what they need to succeed.
- This section “sets the stage” upon which the remainder of the IEP is developed.

# Episode 4 – PLAAFP

- DATA is the “driving force” in this section. Without data, informed decisions cannot be made. Priority needs to be given to data... what teachers/therapists/clinicians can prove over what they think (opinions).
- Data should be taken from multiple sources so the totality of strengths and needs are identified – academic, behavioral, speech/language, occupational therapy, physical therapy, behavior, executive functioning, social, etc.
- If the student is currently receiving special education services, information about the student’s progress toward the annual goals from the previous year must be included.
- If the student has limited English proficiency, a statement of native language performance and of English proficiency level should be included in this section.

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## Part 1 – Present Level of Academic Achievement

- This section of the IEP describes how your child is doing in school, based on current information.
- Think of the IEP as a map for your student... and the present levels section is the arrow pointing to the caption which states, “You Are Here.” It is the responsibility of the IEP team to understand and describe where “here” is.



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## Part 1 – Present Level of Academic Achievement

- This section identifies student performance within the academic curriculum.
- At a minimum, this section should include a description the student's progress within the curriculum and state-approved standards; current instructional levels; classroom strategies, interventions, or additional/alternative instructional materials applied and their results; and a description of how the student is progressing on any academic goals set in the previous IEP.



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## Part 2 – Present Level of Functional Performance

- This section serves the same purpose as the academic achievement section, but focuses on how the student performs in non-academic domains such as related services (i.e., speech, occupational, and/or physical therapies), activities of daily living, social/emotional skills, and behaviorally.
- This section also includes the results of functional assessments, performance data, current skill levels, behavioral observations, and how the student is progressing on any functional goals set in the previous IEP.



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## Part 3 – Present Levels Related to Postsecondary Transition Goals

This section establishes a baseline (strengths, preferences, interests) that informs and justifies the specific, measurable post-school goals, required services, and courses of study for students starting at age 14.

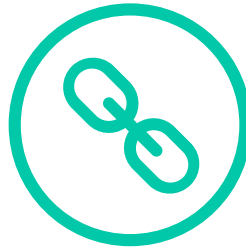


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Key features of this section include:



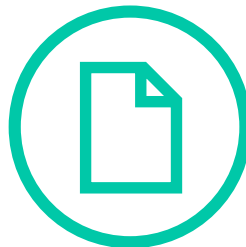
- Ensures the IEP is driven by data regarding what the student needs to move from school to post-school activities (e.g., college, employment, independent living).



- Links the student's current academic and functional performance to the necessary transition services.



- Helps define the necessary courses of study (e.g., academic, technical) to achieve future goals.



- Documents the specific needs of the student, ensuring that transition planning is tailored to their unique vision, rather than a generic plan.

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## Part 4 – Parental Concerns

- The parental concerns section is a dedicated space within the IEP which ensures the voice of the parent(s) is documented.
- Concerns do not have to be negative in nature. Concerns can also be aspects of the programming which are going so well, the parents don't want them discontinued.
- Best practice is for parents to present any concerns to the IEP team before the meeting. If provided electronically, the case manager can simply “cut and paste” the information into the IEP.



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## Part 4 – Parental Concerns

- It is recommended to keep these concerns child-focused, concise, and focused on the data supporting needed services.
- As a parent, please remember you are the “Ph.D.” when it comes to the child/student. NOBODY knows more than you about the student. Your voice is needed in this process; especially if the information presented does not match your experiences with the student.



# Episode 4 – PLAAFP

## Part 5 – How the student's exceptionality affects involvement in general education

The purpose of this section in a Pennsylvania IEP is to establish the direct, evidence-based rationale for all subsequent special education services, accommodations, and modifications.

It connects the student's specific disability to its impact on accessing grade-level curriculum, aiding in the determination of the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE).

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## Part 5 – How the student’s exceptionality affects involvement in general education

This section...

...acts as the foundation for determining what instruction, support, and modifications are necessary for the student to make progress.

...explains how the exceptionality creates challenges in general education, ensuring teachers understand necessary support.

...outlines how the student will be involved in and progress through Pennsylvania Academic Standards.

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## Parts 6 and 7 – Strengths and Needs

- In the section devoted to Strengths, the IEP team will describe or list what the student does well. It should include specific academic and functional strengths more than personality characteristics of the child (i.e., friendly, great smile, likes to learn, etc.).
- In addition, the IEP team must describe the specific needs of the student related to the student's disability and how the disability may make involvement and progress in the general education curriculum and in all grade level standards challenging.
- This section describes the kinds of specialized support and service necessary for the student to access and make progress in the general education curriculum.
- For students reaching transition age (14), the IEP must also include information about the student's needs in regards to post school goals.
- All needs identified by the IEP team must be addressed in subsequent sections of the IEP; primarily the goals/objectives section or the modifications/SDIs section.