

Understanding Transition to Kindergarten



Matrix Parent Network

We **empower** families of children with special needs to successfully understand and access the systems that serve them.

We want **you** to become successful advocates and role models for your children.



Who are we?



You Will Leave Here Knowing:

- What happens before the transition
- Whether my child be should be assessed for “kindergarten readiness”
- How to prepare for the transition and contribute to the process
- How to review placement options, appropriate programs and visiting the classroom
- How to prepare yourself and your child
- The importance of self-care during the process



Transitions – change is inevitable



- Small or big
- Gradual or marked ritual
- Some we choose, others we don't

How do you approach change?

What are you looking forward to as your child starts kindergarten?

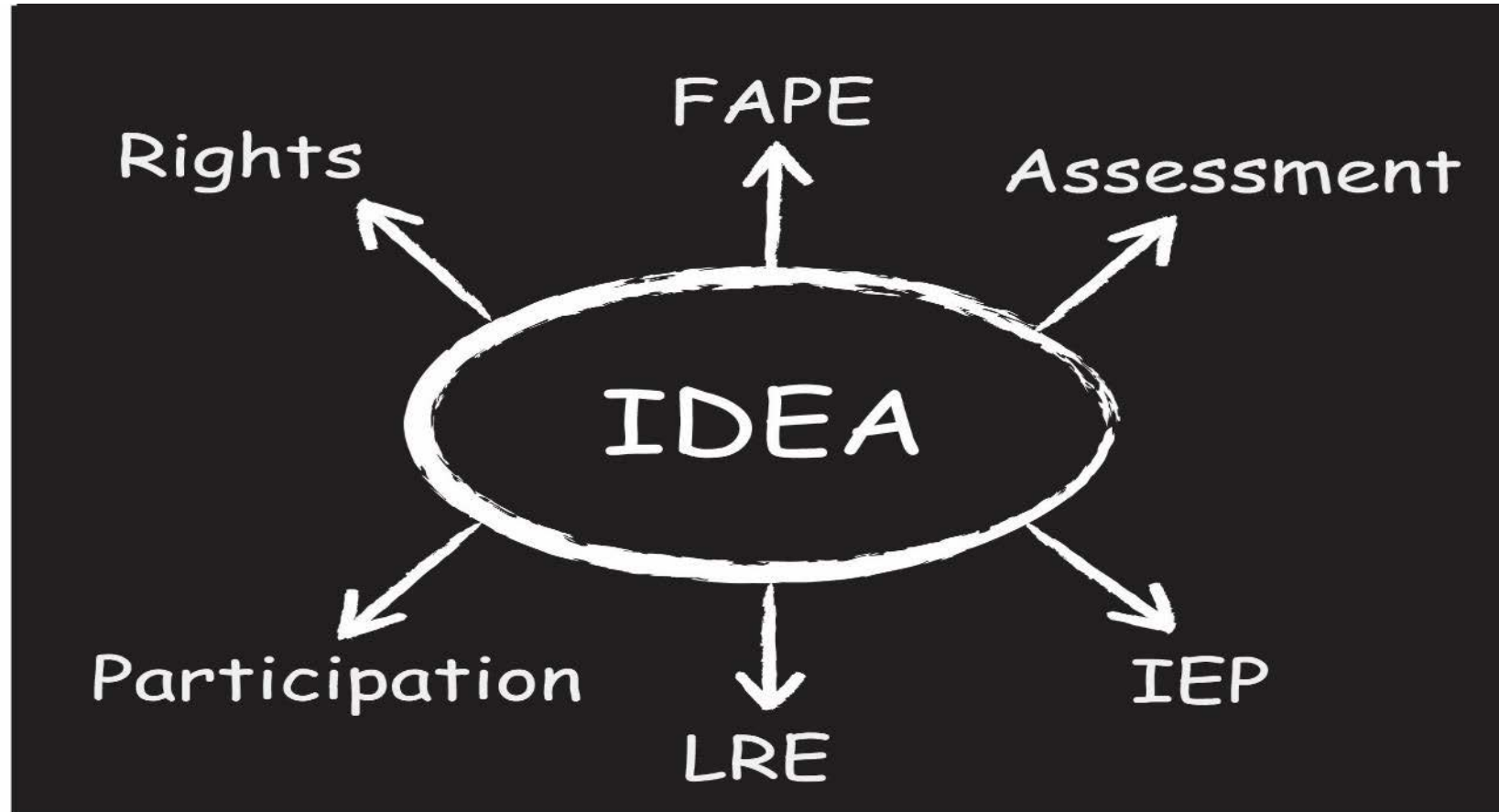
What are you not looking forward to as your child starts kindergarten?

Wow!

Really?

TURN & TALK

Special Education Overview: Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

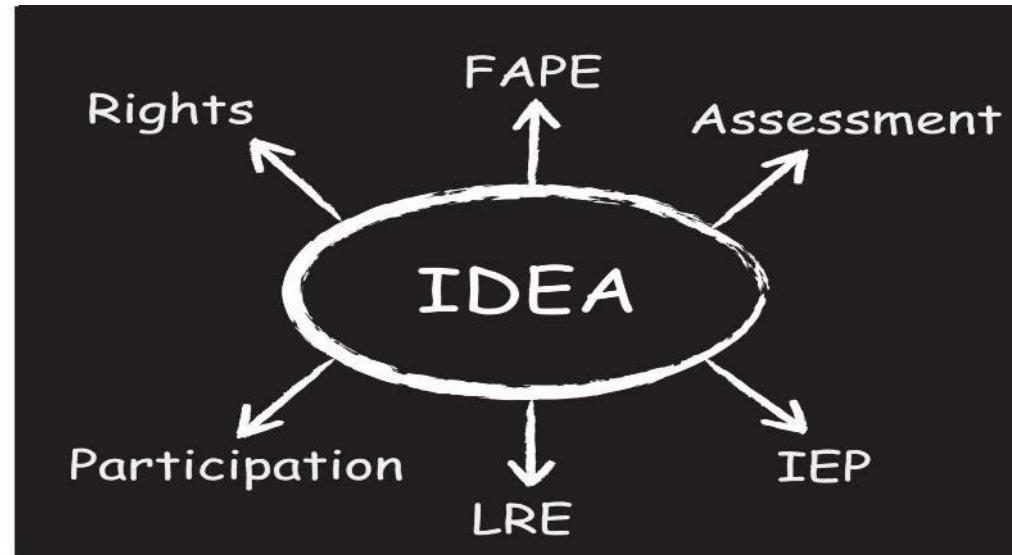


Special Education Overview: Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

Free Appropriate
Public Education

It all starts with
Assessments

Individualized Education
Program: the document,
the meeting, the plan



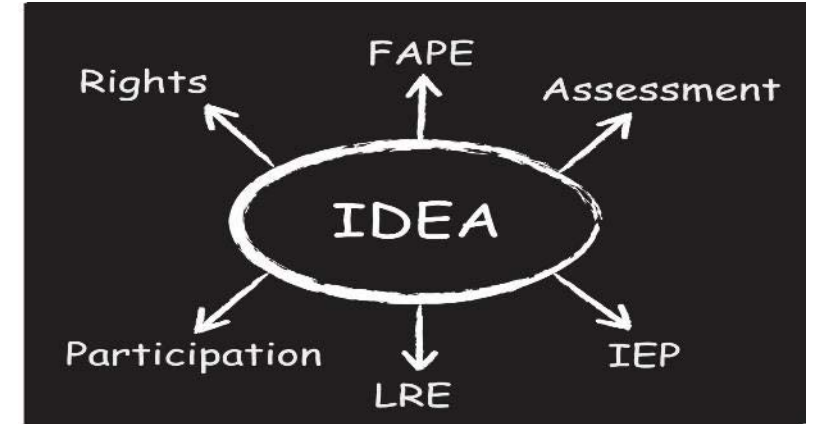
Procedural
Safeguards
document your and
your child's rights
and remedies (to
resolve conflict)

Access records,
participate at meetings,
consent to
changes/services

Least Restrictive Environment
– education with “typical”
peers whenever possible

Special Education Overview (continued)

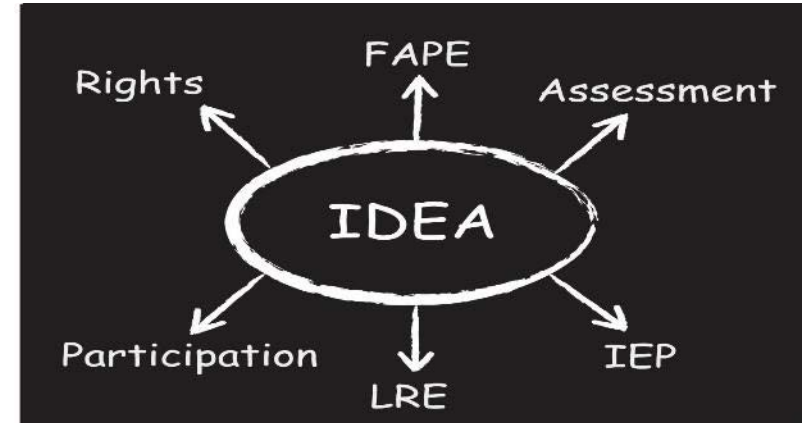
- 13 eligibility categories (and the 14th Established Medical Disability only from 3 – 5 years)



- IEP Process follows a specific order: **Assessment** leads to needs & eligibility; **Needs** lead to goals; **Goals** lead to services; **Services** (related, accommodations, modifications) lead to **Placement**
- More info on the IEP process can be found *See Matrix Individual Education Plan (IEP)*

Special Education Overview (continued)

- Knowledge is Power – becoming familiar with your child's rights will empower you. Learn how to effectively communicate with your team! [Matrix Advocating for Your Child with Special Needs](#)
- Consider joining your county's Community Advisory Committee <https://www.matrixparents.org/cac/> and attend the special education information meetings. Let your voice be heard!



Special Education & Kindergarten

- The local school district is responsible for services & FAPE.
- Usually, special education is provided by the local school district,
- Special education may be provided by the County Office of Education or some other entity.



Your Local school district is ultimately responsible

What happens *before* my child starts kindergarten?



What happens *before* my child starts kindergarten?

- IEP meeting held to discuss the transition to kindergarten (Transition IEP meeting)
- Ask about this meeting in early spring
- If your child will be assessed for kindergarten readiness, team should follow specific timelines assessments could take up to 75 days from parent's consent



How do I know if my child needs an assessment?



How do I know if my child needs an assessment?

- When were the last assessments? Triennial or other?
Your child may not need assessments before placement for kindergarten.
- Questions about your child's progress, present levels or placement?



You can request assessments for kindergarten readiness. These don't have to be specific "kindergarten readiness" assessments – talk to your team – communication, collaboration and cooperation lead to a successful IEP outcome.

How do I know if my child needs an assessment?

- **Check** with your preschool IEP team
- **Ask** what your child needs
- **Record** your observations – be specific
- **Write** down your child's needs and prioritize them ([Parent Questionnaire](#) and [Goal Setting Worksheet](#) may help –link)
- **Share** your concerns with your team - you know your child best!
- **Request** assessments in writing – [sample](#) letter – and keep a copy for yourself



Before the Transition IEP Meeting: Preparation



Before the Transition IEP Meeting: Preparation

1. Request assessments and draft goals before the meeting, in writing, nicely
2. Write down your current observations or concerns about your child; refer to these notes for questions as you review assessments and draft goals
3. If possible, request brief pre-meeting conversations with specialists to ask questions



Before the Transition IEP Meeting: Preparation

4. Organize paperwork: records, reports, work samples, doctors' notes. *Getting Organized – Your Child's School-Age Years*
5. Organize your thoughts; refer to *Matrix IEP Tool Kit: Prep for Annual or Triennial Meeting* may be helpful



The Transition IEP Meeting



The Transition IEP Meeting

What to Expect

The meeting will be:

- Lengthy: may last for more than 1 hour
- Involve both familiar and unfamiliar faces

At the meeting you can:

- Ask for introductions
- Find out how much time is allotted
- Take notes – or have someone with you who will
- Ask questions for clarification/explanation/specifics
- Take breaks if needed



The Transition IEP Meeting

What will be discussed

- **Parent's concerns:** begin the meeting; may be good to come with your concerns written down – or provide them beforehand - so they can be included in the IEP; keep it short and to the point!
- **Child's present levels and presentation of assessment results (if any)**
- **Draft Goals** based on needs from assessments, observations, etc
- **Services:** Discussion of frequency and duration of special instruction and related services (PT, OT, speech, etc.)
- **Placement:** Where the services will take place? What will the program consist of?



To Sign or not to Sign...



To Sign or not to Sign...

*****You do not have to sign the IEP at the meeting*****



- You can consent to part, all, or nothing
- It is perfectly acceptable to take the time you need to review, reflect, ask and answer questions; take it home for a few days, but not too long
- Maybe a need was overlooked – gather supporting info, document your thoughts, ask for another meeting
- Your written consent is required for services to begin
- You can call our Helpline and ask us to review the IEP with you before you sign and agree to the IEP
- You may not have had the opportunity to visit the proposed placement, and would like to do so before signing the IEP

Thoughts on Placement



Thoughts on Placement



- **“Continuum of options”**: IEP team is required by the IDEA to review with you the options available for placement that meet your child’s needs
- The district will make an offer of the **one option** that they believe is most **appropriate** for your child to make progress
- And remember that school districts are required to provide a **free appropriate public education (FAPE)** in the **least restrictive environment (LRE)**

Placement Options

- General education kindergarten class; “pull outs” for services like speech, OT; maybe “push-ins” for support; remember LRE
- Special Day Class; majority of the day spent in class with a special ed teacher and other students with IEPs
- Transitional Kindergarten (TK): The first year of a two-year kindergarten program that uses a modified kindergarten curriculum that is age and developmentally appropriate
- Nonpublic Schools (NPS): private schools certified by the California Department of Education to provide educational placement and services to students whose needs are so exceptional they can not be met in a public school setting



What is the appropriate program for your child?

- Evaluate how your child's strengths and needs fit with a particular program
- Listen to the recommendations of the teachers & specialists who have worked with your child
- Keep an open mind and remember your child's interest, rather than your fixed position
- What worked for your neighbor's child might not be appropriate for your child



Visiting the kindergarten program



The IEP team recommended a kindergarten placement for your child.

Now what?

Visiting the kindergarten program

It may be a good idea to check out the recommendation before signing in agreement on the IEP.

Keep in mind:

- Will your child's needs be addressed?
- Each child is unique. No need to compare students you see in the class to your child
- Teachers can change from year to year – so can class locations



Visiting the kindergarten program

You should be able to get an understanding of the:

- Learning environment and structure of the class
- Type of learning activities
- Level and type of staffing
- Type and extent of family involvement
- Frequency of teacher/parent communication



Parent Observation
Guidelines for
Kindergarten
Programs may help

Visiting the kindergarten program

What if you don't agree with the district's recommendation? What if you don't think this program will meet your child's needs?

- Call an IEP meeting to discuss your thoughts – communication, collaboration, cooperation
- Be as specific as possible about your concerns
- What did you see in the class, what conversation did you have with the teacher, what specifically do you think is not appropriate about the class
- Remember your parent concerns where you outlined your child's needs that you added to the IEP? What about this class does not fit those concerns and needs?



Visiting the kindergarten program

What if we still don't agree with the district's placement offer of FAPE?

There are ways to resolve disputes – remember the remedies part of Procedural Safeguards? May be most appropriate to begin to resolve conflict at the lowest level ...



More on this in our [Resolving Disagreements in Special Education Packet](#)

Or call Matrix Helpline: [800.578.2592](tel:800.578.2592)

When you agree with kindergarten program

You've signed the IEP – agreed to goals, services and placement. Now what?

- Be sure you have registered your child with your school district
- Provide the school with needed records:
 - health reports
 - history of immunizations
 - list of medications which your child takes
 - emergency contact information
- Keep communication with IEP team open & honest
- If you have concerns, bring them up sooner rather than later



Even after you've signed in agreement...

If you have signed the IEP and the IEP isn't working:

- Lack of progress
- Goals are too easy and met too quickly
- Related service needed but hasn't been offered



Request an IEP **in writing** and the school should hold the meeting within 30 days.

But be aware that calling too many IEP meetings may not be the most appropriate course of action ...

What to expect in kindergarten

Programs vary, but all should provide developmentally appropriate instruction and experiences.

Young children learn through:

- play
- interacting with peers
- the environment
- direct instruction from adults



What to expect in kindergarten

For general information on the kindergarten enrollment, age considerations, etc. from CA Department of Education:

<https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/gs/em/kinderinfo.asp>



For info on the CA Common Core State Standards:

<https://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/documents/finalelaccsstandards.pdf>

<https://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/documents/ccssmathstandarAug2013.pdf>

What to expect in kindergarten and beyond

- Recess: with other kindergarteners are other elementary grades?
- Lunch (if extended day): supervision? grouped with older students?
- Bathroom location change: may be expected to manage toileting independently; may be “down the hall”, not in the classroom
- Teacher/parent communication: work out a system; drop off is not a good time
- Parents in classrooms: volunteer opportunities; be there for all students, not just your child
- Special education: eligibility may change; potential exit from special ed during early elementary years; maybe re-enter special ed in later elementary years



Preparing for the First Day



Preparing for the First Day

- **TALK** with your child, give them as much or as little info as appropriate.
- **SHOW** pictures of the actual school site or at least what your child will do at school.
- **VISIT** the school before your child starts. Follow the route to the classroom. If the playground is accessible, plan several outings to it and play there if appropriate.
- **MEET** the teacher and visit the classroom before the first day if possible. Take pictures of the teacher and the room and make a booklet of the photos. If your child cannot benefit from pictures, make up a “Going to School” story and tell it lots of times before school starts.



Preparing for the First Day

- **GET** library books on going to school. *The Kissing Hand* is a popular favorite. Tell stories about when siblings or friends first went to school.
- **LOOK** for picture books about riding a school bus, if your child is going to do that; get a toy school bus for your child to play with.
- **GATHER** clothes or special items for 1st day of school!
- **PLAN** a special event to celebrate going to school.



Tips from parents who've been there, done that

- **GIVE** the teacher a one-page summary about your child: home life, interests, strengths, challenges.
- **PROVIDE** the teacher with a one-page summary on the disability and how it affects your child, especially if the disability is rare.
- **TAKE** pictures of the first day – leaving home and arriving at school
- **CONFIRM** the transport schedule if your child takes a bus



Tips from parents who've been there, done that

- **MAKE** sure any of your child's extra-special needs are covered at school from the very first day: any equipment, diet/snack foods, change of clothes, etc.
- **PLAN** to do something for yourself during school hours on the first day if you can – don't spend all your free time running errands or working. Give yourself a break!
- **CREATE** positive images in your head of your child doing well at school.



Self-care is not selfish

- Transition is an intense experience...but temporary.
- Your child will change and grow, as will your feelings about transition.
- Embrace the moment and appreciate every second with your new kindergartener.
- Seek support both in navigating the process and with your emotions.
- Find a support group – or start your own! Why not go for a hike or get coffee with some parents you meet at drop off?



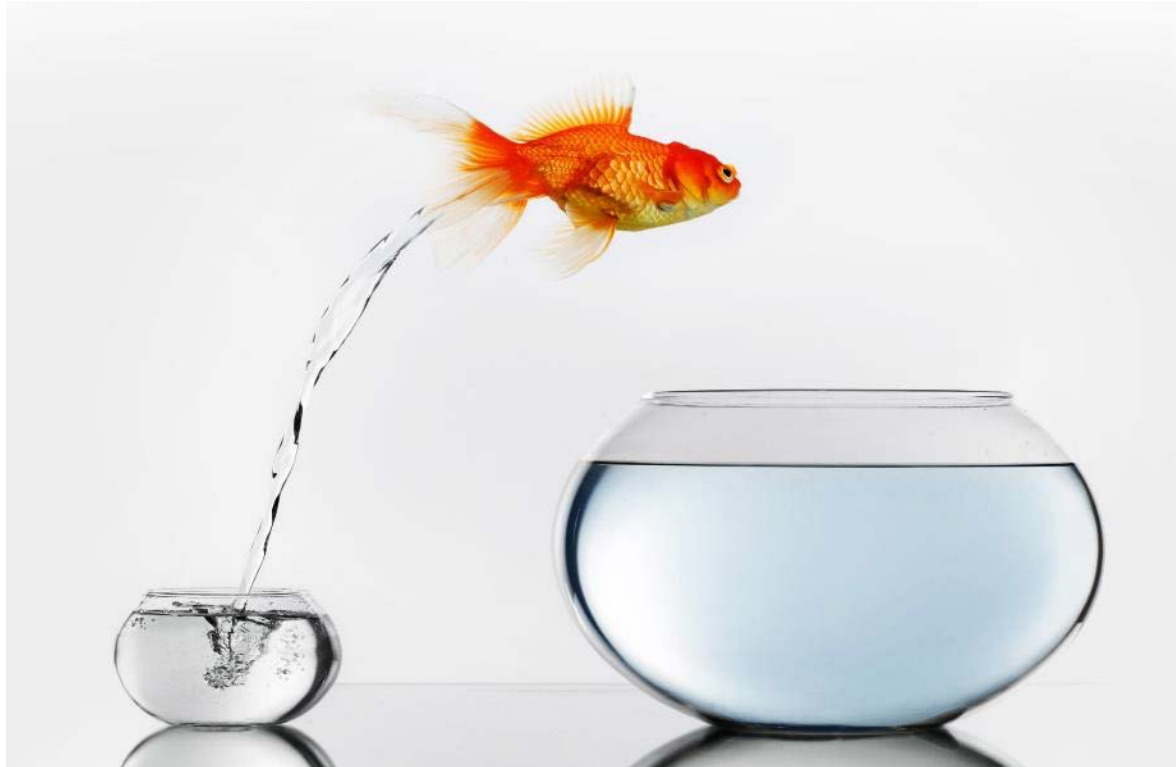
We are our children's role models, they watch how we manage stress, growth and change

Practice self-care:

- Get plenty of rest
- Exercise is a proven way to reduce stress
- Put enjoyable activities, just for yourself, in your schedule
- Eat healthy foods
- Find people who give you encouragement and hope
- Consider a class in Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR)
- Try not to feel guilty
- Be gentle with yourself
- Practice asking for help
- Avoid resentment or frustration
- Make self-care a habit



Hop on in – the water is fine



Going to kindergarten is a big change for your family, but more likely than not, if you prepare yourself and plan with care, it will be a positive experience for your child – and for you.

Skills Checklist



- What have you learned?
- Is there a skill you hope to improve?
- Do you need more resources?
- Do you need more support?

Q & A



Matrix Parent Network & Resource Center

We are Parent Advisors not Attorneys or Advocates

We *do not* give legal advice or advise a course of action. We provide support and information to help parents learn about their rights and options, find referrals and resources and help parents become the best advocate they can be for their child.

1-800-578-2592



www.matrixparents.org

Matrix Parent Network & Resource Center

Federal Parent Training & Information Center

designated by the *Office of Special Education, US Department of Education*, serving families of children birth through 26 in Marin, Napa, Sonoma & Solano counties

California Family Resource Center

designated by *CA Department of Developmental Services*,

serving families of infants and toddlers

California Family Empowerment Center

designated by *CA Department of Education*

serving the underserved in Solano and Sonoma Counties



Matrix Parent Network & Resource Center

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Matrix Parent Network & Resource Center

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in any way you can!

Help Us Help You: Donate

Thank you!!

