

IEP Components Series

Supplementary Aids and Services

IDEA's Exact Words

Let's start with IDEA's full requirement for identifying the supplementary aids and services a child will need and specifying them in his or her IEP. This appears at §300.320(a)(4) and stipulates that each child's IEP must contain:

(4) **A statement of** the special education and related services and **supplementary aids and services**, based on peer-reviewed research to the extent practicable, to be provided to the child, or on behalf of the child, and a statement of the program modifications or supports for school personnel that will be provided to enable the child—

- (i) To advance appropriately toward attaining the annual goals;
- (ii) To be involved in and make progress in the general education curriculum in accordance with paragraph (a)(1) of this section, and to participate in extracurricular and other nonacademic activities; and
- (iii) To be educated and participate with other children with disabilities and nondisabled children in the activities described in this section... [§300.320(a)(4)]

The Short Story on Supplementary Aids and Services

Supplementary aids and services are often critical elements in supporting the education of children with disabilities in regular classes and their participation in a range of another school activities. IDEA's definition of this term (at §300.42) reads:

Supplementary aids and services means aids, services, and other supports that are provided in regular education classes, other education-related settings, and in extracurricular and nonacademic settings, to enable children with disabilities to be educated with nondisabled children to the maximum extent appropriate ...

Speaking practically, supplementary aids and services can be accommodations and modifications to the curriculum under study or the manner in which that content is presented or a child's progress is measured. But that's not all they are or can be. Supplementary aids and services can also include direct services and supports to the child, as well as support and training for staff who work with that child. That's why determining what supplementary aids and services are appropriate for a particular child must be done on an individual basis.

Examples from the Field

The definition of "supplementary aids and services" was new in IDEA '97. Since then, the field has fleshed out the definition through practice. Numerous states have developed IEP guides that include both the regulatory definition of "supplementary aids and services" and examples to guide IEP teams in their considerations of what a student might need. Here are some examples that the New Mexico Public Education Department (2004) provides online that you may find illuminating:

Supports to address environmental needs (e.g., preferential seating; planned seating on the bus, in the classroom, at lunch, in the auditorium, and in other locations; altered physical room arrangement);

Levels of staff support needed (e.g., consultation, stop-in support, classroom companion, one-on-one assistance; type of personnel support: behavior specialist, health care assistant, instructional support assistant);

Planning time for collaboration needed by staff;

Child's specialized equipment needs (e.g., wheelchair, computer, software, voice synthesizer, augmentative communication device, utensils/cups/plates, restroom equipment);

Pacing of instruction needed (e.g., breaks, more time, home set of materials);

Presentation of subject matter needed (e.g., taped lectures, sign language, primary language, paired reading and writing);

Materials needed (e.g., scanned tests and notes into computer, shared note-taking, large print or Braille, assistive technology);

Assignment modification needed (e.g., shorter assignments, taped lessons, instructions broken down into steps, allow student to record or type assignment);

Self-management and/or follow-through needed (e.g., calendars, teach study skills);

Testing adaptations needed (e.g., read test to child, modify format, extend time);

Social interaction support needed (e.g., provide Circle of Friends, use cooperative learning groups, teach social skills);

Training needed for personnel.

Making the Short Story Longer

As said above, considering the supplementary aids and supports that a child needs should take into account the academic, extracurricular, and nonacademic environments available to, and of interest to, the child. That pretty much covers the gamut of school settings where children might be engaged in learning, interaction, and development, doesn't it?

The last two elements—*extracurricular and nonacademic*—are actually new to IDEA in 2004. Consistent with the inclusive nature of the legislation, the final Part B regulations have added the phrase “in extracurricular and nonacademic settings” to the definition of supplementary aids and services and, thus, enlarged the scope of where supplementary aids and services must be provided, as appropriate to the child's needs.

Considering NIMAS

And while we're on the subject of supports that really do support children, what about the role that NIMAS can play? NIMAS is a new and exciting addition to IDEA intended to greatly *improve access to instructional materials* for blind or other persons with print disabilities—textbooks and workbooks, for example. (NIMAS stands for National Instructional Materials Accessibility Standard.)

Now, following the standard set by NIMAS, print materials can be rendered into a wide range of accessible formats, including Braille, large print, audio text, or digital text. For students who are blind, or who cannot use standard print materials, having access to a format they *can* use will be a huge leap forward, educationally.

Statistics from the 26th Annual Report to Congress

Given the importance of supplementary aids and services in supporting children's access to the general curriculum and to the range of school environments, let's take a look at what types of supplementary aids and services children with disabilities are actually receiving. According to the SEELS School Program Survey[1] and as reported in the *26th Annual Report to Congress* on the implementation of IDEA (U.S. Department of Education, 2006), about 85% of elementary or middle-school children with disabilities in regular education language arts classes have some type of support indicated on their IEP or 504 plan. Looking at the specific accommodations and supports they receive, we find that:

- 61.9% are provided extra time to take tests or complete assignments.
- 36.8% are given shorter or different assignments.
- 35.3% have tests read to them.
- 33.4% take modified tests.
- 33.3% receive feedback more frequently than other children.
- 30.4% receive slower-paced instruction.
- .7% are provided physical adaptations.

Other learning supports provided to these children in language arts classes include the following:

- Progress monitored by special education teacher: 51.9%
- Teacher aides, instructional assistants, or other personal aides: 27.5%
- Learning strategies/study skills: 24.2%
- Peer tutor: 22.9%
- Books on tape: 14.5%
- Use of computer for activities not allowed other children: 11.2%
- Reader or interpreter: 10.3%
- Behavior management program: 9.8%
- Communication aids: 3.2%

Suppose a Child Needs...

Suppose a child needs a specific supplementary aid or service that's typically provided in separate environments, not in the regular education classroom? Does this mean that the needed supplementary aid or service doesn't have to be provided? Or that the child's placement may then be somewhere other than the regular educational environment?

No, to both questions. As mentioned above, the public agency is responsible for providing the supplementary aids and services that the IEP team determines the child needs and lists in the child's IEP in order to enable the child to be educated in regular education settings with nondisabled children to the maximum extent appropriate. The fact that supplementary aids and services often play a decisive role in whether or not the child can be satisfactorily educated in the regular educational environment makes it all the more important that the public agency meet its responsibility to provide them. If the IEP team has determined that the child can be satisfactorily educated in the regular classroom with the support of a given supplementary aid or service, those aids or services must be specified in the child's IEP and must be provided to the child. (71 Fed Reg. 46588)

Concluding Words

A fair amount of time and space has been devoted to this discussion of supplementary aids and services. For many children with disabilities, these are pivotal elements in their participation in school-related settings, activities, and learning opportunities.

References

New Mexico Public Education Department. (2004). *A sampling of supplemental supports aids & services*. Retrieved May 13, 2007, at <http://www.ped.state.nm.us/seo/library/qtrly.0204.lre.handouts.pdf>

U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, Office of Special Education Programs. (2006, April). *26th annual (2004) report to Congress on the implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (Vol. 1). Washington, DC: Government Printing Office. (Available online at: <http://www.ed.gov/about/reports/annual/osep/2004/index.html>)

¹ The Special Education Elementary Longitudinal Study (SEELS) was a study of school-age children funded by OSEP and was part of the national assessment of the 1997 IDEA. From 2000 to 2006, SEELS collected data at three points in time through school staff, direct assessments, and parent interviews to provide information about the experience of children with disabilities. For more information and to view SEEL results, visit: www.seels.net/

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