Extended School Year (ESY) Eligibility Explained

Ensuring Access, Preventing Regression

Purpose

Extended School Year (ESY) services prevent substantial and significant skill regression during long breaks from school. ESY is *not* summer school. Rather, it's a continuation of special education designed to maintain essential skills so students can continue progressing toward IEP goals. This worksheet helps teams understand eligibility, documentation, and decision-making for ESY through a data-informed, student-centered lens.

Understanding ESY

Term	Definition	Example
Extended School Year (ESY)	Special education and related services provided **beyond the regular school year** based on individual student need.	A student receives reading intervention for six weeks in July to maintain decoding skills.
Purpose	Prevent *significant regression* and support *recoupment* of critical skills after breaks.	Maintain functional communication or behavior regulation.
Legal Basis	Guaranteed under IDEA. Must be considered annually for every student with an IEP.	Teams document discussion in every IEP meeting.

Key Principle: ESY Is About Regression, Not Advancement

- ESY supports **maintenance**, not acceleration.

- The focus is on **preventing loss**, not achieving new goals.

- Services should be **individualized**, not automatically assigned or denied.

Determining ESY Eligibility

Eligibility is a **team decision** based on data; *not* based on a label, grade level, or placement.

Criterion	What It Means	Data Examples
Regression/Recoupment	Student loses critical skills over breaks and needs excessive time to regain them.	Progress monitoring data, teacher logs before and after winter/summer breaks.
Emerging Skills	Student is on the verge of mastering a new, essential skill that may be lost without continuity.	Goal data showing rapid but fragile progress.
Critical Skills	Skills essential to safety, independence, or access.	Communication, toileting, behavior regulation.
Interfering Behaviors	Behavioral or emotional challenges that significantly impact learning.	FBA/BIP data showing regression patterns.
Special Circumstances	Unique family or medical factors affecting skill retention.	Extended absences, health-related interruptions.

Data Sources for ESY Decisions

- Progress monitoring charts and work samples.

- Teacher and service provider logs.

- Behavior frequency data pre- and post-break.

- Attendance and health records.

- Family input and home observation.

- Comparative data from previous summers or extended breaks.

*(**Tip**: Start tracking "regression/recoupment" data during winter break—not just summer.)*

Documenting ESY Decisions in the IEP

Section	What to Include	Example
Team Discussion Notes	Summarize data review and rationale.	"Student required 6 weeks to regain decoding accuracy after break."
Service Description	Specific skill area, provider, and setting.	"30 minutes/day of speech therapy to maintain articulation accuracy."
Duration	Start and end dates (aligned with district schedule).	"July 8 – August 16, 4 days/week."
Frequency & Location	How often and where the services will occur.	"Provided in small-group setting at district ESY program site."

ESY vs. Summer School

Feature	ESY	Summer School
Purpose	Maintain skills to prevent regression	Recover missed content or improve grades
Eligibility	Based on IEP team data and decision	Based on academic need or open enrollment
Staffing	Certified special educators and related service providers	General education teachers
Funding	Provided at no cost to families under IDEA	May require tuition or district funding

Curriculum	Focused on individualized IEP goals	General curriculum review or enrichment

Common Myths & Facts

Myth	Fact
"All students with IEPs get ESY."	ESY is individualized—only for those meeting eligibility criteria.
"ESY is only for academics."	ESY may focus on behavior, communication, or self-care.
"Students must fail to qualify."	The goal is prevention; consistent progress data can still indicate risk of regression.
"ESY must be in summer school."	Services can occur at home, community sites, or virtually if appropriate.

ESY Planning Checklist

Task	Completed?
Review data for regression and recoupment.	☐
Gather input from all service providers.	☐
Include family perspective in discussion.	☐
Document rationale clearly in IEP notes.	☐
Outline start/end dates, frequency, and setting.	☐
Communicate finalized plan to family in writing.	☐

Family Collaboration Tips

- Explain ESY early—don't wait until spring meetings.

- Share examples of data used to make the decision.

- Invite families to share observations from previous breaks.

- Emphasize the purpose: maintaining progress, not labeling regression as failure.

Case Example

Scenario: Student with ASD loses toileting independence after winter and summer breaks.
Data: Logs show 3–4 weeks needed to recoup skill each time.
Team Decision: Provide ESY focusing on functional independence and visual schedule use.
Outcome: Student maintains toileting routine after summer with minimal reteaching.

Action Starter

- Review your current caseload or program.

- Identify 2–3 students who may require ESY data collection this winter.

- Start tracking baseline "pre-break" and "post-break" data for academic or functional skills.