

Definitions and Resources LEGISLATION

IDEA Sec 601 (P.L. 108-446) stipulates the following:

- (A) having high expectations for such children (*those supported by IEPs*) and ensuring their access to the general education curriculum in the regular classroom, to the maximum extent possible, in order to--
 - (i) meet developmental goals and, to the maximum extent possible, the challenging expectations that have been established for all children; and
 - (ii) be prepared to lead productive and independent adult lives, to the maximum extent possible;
- (B) strengthening the role and responsibility of parents and ensuring that families of such children have meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children at school and at home..."

The purposes of this subpart are to ensure that--(1) children with disabilities and their parents receive training and information designed to assist the children in meeting developmental and functional goals and challenging academic achievement goals, and in preparing to lead productive independent adult lives; (2) children with disabilities and their parents receive training and information on their rights, responsibilities, and protections under this title, in order to develop the skills necessary to cooperatively and effectively participate in planning and decision making.

DEFINITIONS:

- **Community** is a multifaceted term that recognizes educational supports are provided in a variety of settings besides the home or school setting and captures the relationship based and bidirectional foundation of interactions between family and school (Warren et al., 2009).
- **Family** is a term that is inclusive of all adults who interact with school systems in support of their child, to include biological, adoptive, and foster parents; grandparents; legal and informal guardians; and adult siblings (Turnbull et al., 2015; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services/U.S. Department of Education, 2016). The term family is an enduring relationship, whether biological or non-biological, chosen or circumstantial, connecting a child/youth and parent/caregiver through culture, tradition, shared experiences, emotional commitment, and mutual support (Goode & Jones, 2007; Turnbull et al., 2015; United Advocates for Children of California, 2005).

- **Family engagement** means building relationships with families that support family well-being, strong family/parent-child-youth relationships, and ongoing learning and development of family members and students alike. It refers to the beliefs, attitudes, behaviors, and activities of families that support their children’s positive development from early childhood through young adulthood. Family engagement happens in the home, school, and community. It is a shared responsibility with all those who support a students’ learning (adapted from National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement for the Office of Head Start, 2011).

- **School** encompasses the variety of personnel who support students from preschool through graduation within school districts and the Area Education Agencies (AEAs). Personnel include, but are not limited to, educators (teachers, therapists, various AEA staff, nurses, paraprofessionals, family liaisons, after school staff, etc.), administrators, and support staff (cooks, bus drivers, maintenance workers, secretaries, etc.) Currently, the Specially Designed Instruction (SDI) work is focusing on schools and personnel supporting students with IEPs ages 3 through grade 6 while the Search for *Promising Practices* in Family and School Partnerships will address students with IEPs, ages 3 through 21.

- **Partnership** refers to a relationship in which families (not just parents) and school personnel agree to build on each other’s expertise and resources, as appropriate for the purpose of making and implementing decisions that will directly benefit students and indirectly benefit other family members and school personnel (adapted from Turnbull et al., 2015, pg. 161).

- Research shows that initiatives that take on a **partnership orientation** create the conditions for engagement by families and schools to flourish. This includes conditions in which student achievement and school improvement are seen as a shared responsibility, relationships of trust and respect are established between home and school, and families and school staff see each other as equal partners (Patrikakou et al., 2005). **Family and School Partnerships** establish intentional coordination, consistency, and continuity across families and schools to ensure success of students with disabilities. These conditions are accomplished through joint problem-solving, two-way communication, and shared decision-making. These strategies are enhanced by testing assumptions, setting high expectations and establishing mutual respect (modified from PEC Design Team, 2015).

References

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