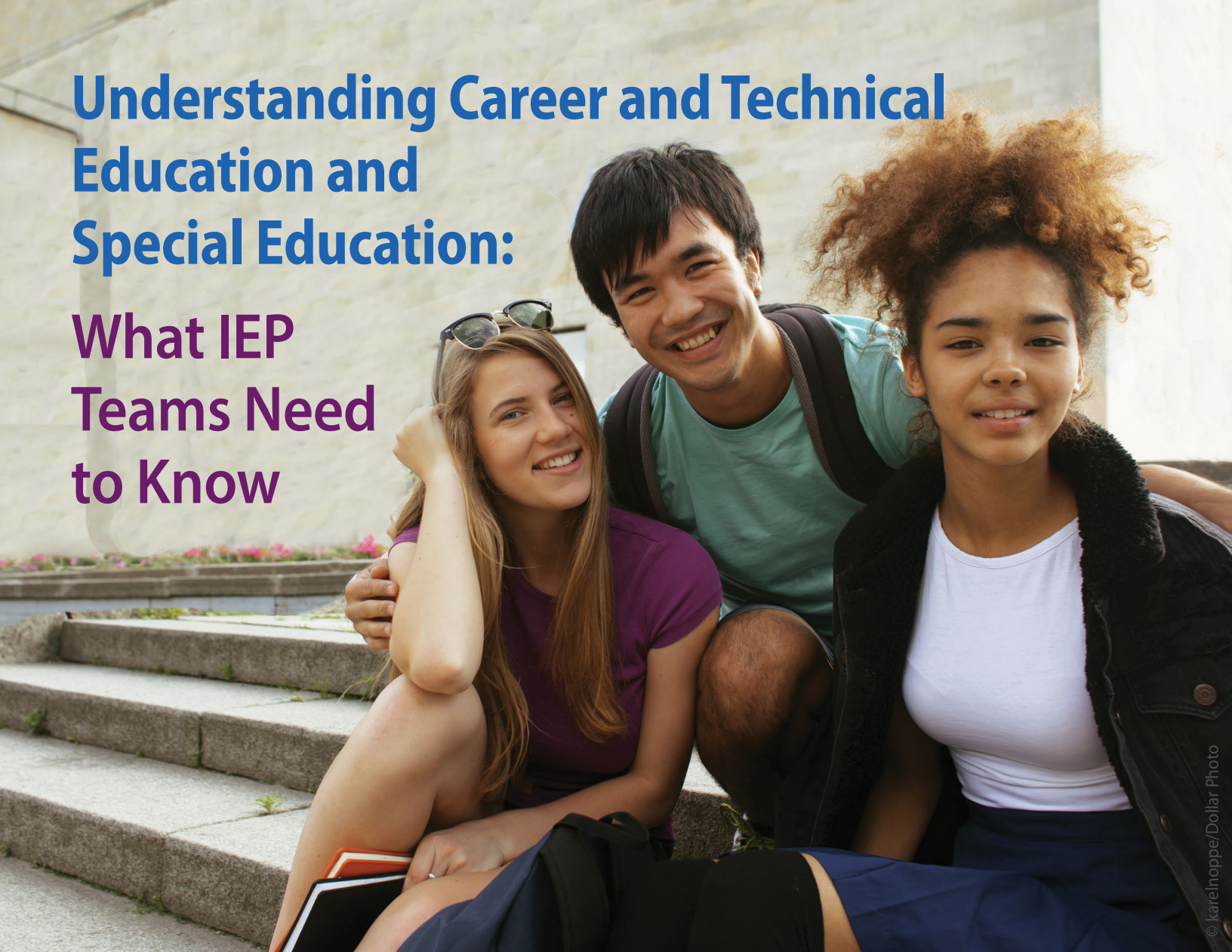


Understanding Career and Technical Education and Special Education:

What IEP Teams Need to Know



The purpose of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team is to decide on the educational placement for an individual student. For a secondary student with a disability, one option for vocational skill training is enrolling in a career and technical education (CTE) program at a

Career and Technical Center (CTC) or high school. There, secondary students with disabilities can pursue employment and continued education or training as a goal after high school. To make certain that a CTE program is the appropriate choice, the student, the student's family, and the rest of the

IEP team should ensure that the student's interests, strengths, and needs are aligned with the available CTE programs. All IEP team members should be aware of the following information regarding special education and CTE programs.

Special Education Considerations

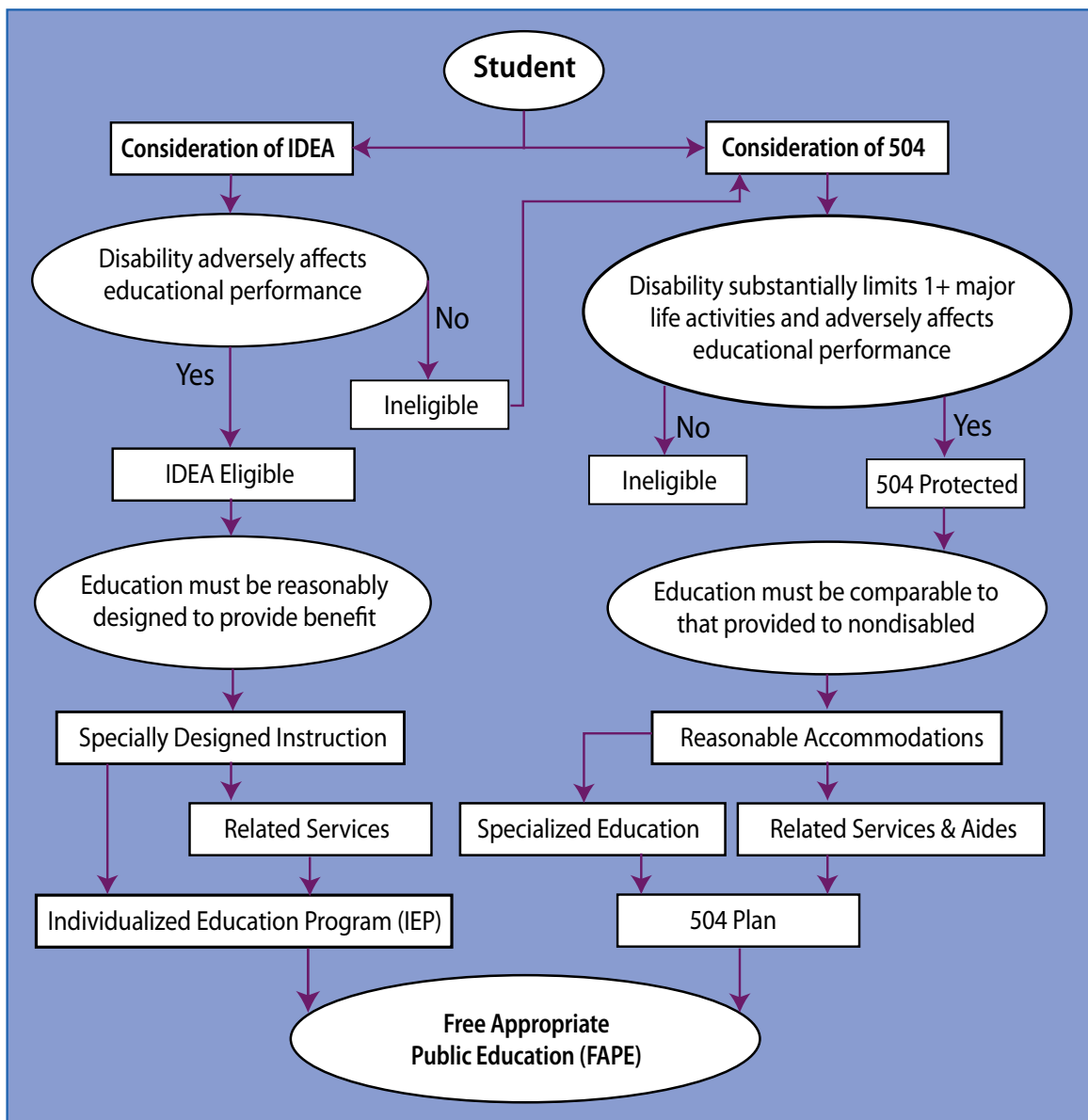
Who are students with disabilities?

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) ensures a free and appropriate public education for students with disabilities who fall within one of the thirteen disability categories as listed in IDEA (i.e., intellectual disability, emotional disturbance, orthopedic impairment, hearing impairment, deafness, speech or language impairment, visual impairment (including blindness), autism,

traumatic brain injury, other health impairment, specific learning disability, deaf-blindness, or multiple disabilities). Students can qualify for special education services if they 1) have a disability and 2) require specially-designed instruction.

Students with disabilities who do not meet the specific criteria under the IDEA may be afforded rights under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 if they

have a mental or physical impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. Section 504 requires that reasonable accommodations be made for students in order for them to participate in the general curriculum. An IEP is not required. Rather, the accommodations are documented in a plan, typically referred to as a 504 Plan or 504 Service Agreement. See the flow chart below for more information.



Adapted from Minnesota Department of Education. (2011). Compliance Manual for Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. [Online]. Available: <http://tinyurl.com/pxooumy>

What is an Individualized Education Program?

An Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a written agreement between the local educational agency (LEA) and the student's parents, guaranteeing the services that will be provided to the student under the IDEA. The IEP has two general purposes: 1) to establish measurable annual goals for the student and 2) to detail the special education and related services and supplementary aids and services that the public agency will provide to, or on behalf of, the student. The IEP includes specifically-designed instruction, related services, measurable annual goals, assessment data, transition services, and other information required by law. If needed, the IEP may contain a behavior support plan and other services to be provided to the student.

What is Specially-Designed Instruction?

Specially-designed instruction (SDI) is the adaptation of the content, the methodology, or the delivery of instruction to the student. SDI must meet the "unique needs" of the student that result from his/her disability. It must also ensure access to the general curriculum, including that of the CTE program, so that the student can meet the educational standards of the program. It is important that the CTE instructor understand the SDI as identified in the IEP and know how to implement it.

What are measurable annual goals?

Annual goals are statements of what a student can reasonably be expected to accomplish in a year's time. They must also be able to be observed and counted. The goals must directly relate to areas of need identified in the IEP section titled

Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance. The "present level" section summarizes the student's current achievement and states how the student's disability affects involvement and progress in the general curriculum, which includes the curriculum of the CTE program.

What considerations are used in determining a student's educational placement?

It is the responsibility of each public agency to ensure that, to the maximum extent appropriate, students with disabilities, including those in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with students who are not disabled. Special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of students with disabilities from the general educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in general education classes, even with the use of supplementary aids and services, cannot be achieved satisfactorily. The following questions must be reviewed and discussed by the IEP team members as they begin to determine the student's educational placement, including possible involvement in a CTE program. It is important to remember that the student's parents must be part of any group that makes decisions about the educational placement of their child:

- What supplementary aids and services were considered? What supplementary aids and services were rejected? Explain why the supplementary aids and services will or will not enable the student to make progress on the goals and objectives (if applicable) in this IEP in the general education class.

Examples of SDI in a CTE Environment

- Extended test time (30 minutes for a cosmetology quiz instead of the 20 minutes allotted to others)
- Alternative note taking (using a tape recorder or obtaining notes from another student)
- Graphic organizers (a problem/solution map in a plumbing program)
- Frequent comprehension checks by the CTE instructor
- Modeling of behavior (demonstrating the proper way to use a mortar tool in masonry)
- Visual prompts (using pictures to list recipe steps in a culinary arts program)
- Preferential seating (in the front of the class or away from noise and distraction)
- Alternative assessments (demonstrating understanding instead of giving an oral report)
- Use of 18 point font for greater visibility
- Student task analysis (asking the student to list the steps he/she should follow to complete a process in a carpentry program)

- What benefits are provided in the general education class with supplementary aids and services versus the benefits provided in the special education class?
- What potentially beneficial effects and/or harmful effects might be expected of the student with disabilities or the other students in the class, even with supplementary aids and services?
- To what extent, if any, will the student participate with nondisabled peers in extra-curricular activities or other nonacademic activities?

The purpose for reviewing and discussing these questions is to ensure that the IEP team has given adequate consideration to placement of the student in the general education classroom with supplementary aids and services; this would include placement in a CTE program.

What assessment information is included in the IEP?

The IEP should include assessment data about each need identified in the student's evaluation report. For instance, if the student has a need in reading, you would expect to see information about the student's current reading level. If the student has a need in computation, the results of assessments in math should be present. Assessments can be formal, informal, or the result of observations or interviews.

When is a behavior support plan included in the IEP?

If a student has a behavioral challenge that impedes the student's learning or that of others, the student's IEP will include a behavior

support plan. CTC staff is expected to implement this plan by using the positive behavior interventions and strategies identified in the plan. These may include rewarding the student for positive behaviors, encouraging the student to use anger management techniques, or other methods. LEA staff should ensure that CTC staff are aware of any existing behavior support plan and understand the interventions and strategies.

What are transition services?

Transition services are a coordinated set of activities that are meant to improve both the academic and functional achievement of the student, as well as facilitate the student's movement from school to post-school activities. These post-school activities might be employment, post-secondary education, vocational training, or independent living. The IEP for the secondary-aged student is a preparation plan for these post-school activities. Some examples of transition services are job coaching, apprenticeships, and vocational classes. Transition services must include post-school goals so that the IEP team can plan the appropriate activities and services.

What are post-secondary goals?

These goals provide information to the IEP team about the student's interests, strengths, and preferences, and reflect the student's goals for life after high school in the areas of post-secondary training, employment, and independent living. They are based on a variety of assessments appropriate to the individual student. Having this information allows the IEP team to determine whether or not more assessment is needed, what

instruction should be provided, and what experiences would most benefit the student. Some examples might be competitive employment, post-secondary vocational training, or continued career and technical education.

Career and Technical School Considerations

What is Career and Technical Education?

The key to a successful and productive society is found in maintaining a highly qualified, skilled, and educated workforce. Career and technical education (CTE) is dedicated to providing secondary students with the training and skills they need to be successful and competitively employed after graduation or to advance to post-secondary education. The goal of CTE is to prepare learners for careers that require additional education after high school in order to meet the workforce needs of our commonwealth. Programs are aligned with 16 career clusters, such as architecture and construction, human services, information technology, manufacturing, and business management and administration. Pennsylvania has 86 CTCs and approximately 135 LEAs offering career and technical education programs. It is required that state-approved CTE programs are offered as a sequence of courses supplemented by work-based experiences such as cooperative education or internships. The work-based experiences are offered during the senior year, as long as a student meets the local requirements.

How are state-approved CTE programs held accountable for their students' success?

The IDEA and the Improving America's Schools Act mandate that students with disabilities be included in state- and district-wide assessments. If a student with an IEP participates in the Keystone Exam statewide testing, then that student will also participate in the statewide secondary occupational competency testing program. For most CTE programs, this will be the National Occupational Competency Testing Institute (NOCTI) assessment for each corresponding CTE program. For selected Machining programs, the National Institute for Metalworking Skills (NIMS) assessment is used. The NOCTI and NIMS technical assessments include multiple choice and performance components. Every LEA has the expectation that their students achieve proficiency or higher on both the state academic and occupational assessments.

Is career and technical education only for students planning to get a job immediately after high school?

No, career and technical education provides a foundation of skills that enables high school graduates to be competitively employed immediately after high school. However, nearly two-thirds of all CTE high school graduates enter some form of post-secondary education, from a 1-year certificate program to a 4-year degree program at a major university. The state-developed CTE Programs of Study require that CTE students continue their education beyond high school to include at least two years of post-secondary education in the same or related career area in order to receive college credit under a

statewide articulation agreement. CTE programs are rigorous, both academically and technically, in order for graduates to be successful at the post-secondary level.

How do students with disabilities benefit from CTE programs?

National Longitudinal Transition Survey 2 (NLTS2) data show that about 60 percent of youth with disabilities hold jobs at some time during high school and gain valuable experience in the world of work. NLTS2 findings show that

students who were enrolled in occupationally-oriented CTE programs were significantly more likely than nonparticipants to do well on school and post-school outcomes. These students had significantly lower absenteeism from school and a lower probability of dropping out of school. CTE training was related to a higher likelihood of finding a paid job and of attending a post-secondary CTE school in the early years after high school.

The Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (Act) provides continuing federal support for rigorous CTE programs that prepare students for today's competitive workforce. The Act envisions that all students will achieve challenging academic and technical standards and be prepared for high-skill, high-wage or high demand occupations in current or emerging professions. The Act provides an increased focus on the academic achievement of career and technical education students, improves state and local accountability and strengthens the connections between secondary and post-secondary education.

Just as the IDEA requires states to report student improvement on specific indicators, the Perkins Act also requires states to report student improvement on specific indicators. Annually the Perkins Act requires states to report on 8 secondary indicators, including:

- Academic Attainment - Literature (Keystone Exam)
- Academic Attainment - Math (Keystone Exam)
- Technical Skill Attainment - (NOCTI/NIMS Assessments)
- Secondary Student Achievement of High School Diploma
- Student Graduation Rate (NCLB)
- Secondary Placement
- Nontraditional Student Participation
- Nontraditional Student Completion

For more information about the Perkins Act, visit the PDE website at <http://tinyurl.com/pde-perkins-act>

Who decides if a student should consider CTE?

This decision is part of the IEP process and is made by the IEP team, including the student. The team bases their decision on the results of an assessment of the student's interests, strengths, and preferences. Transition planning (preparing for a student's post-school life) occurs within the context of the IEP. If the student has employment as a post-secondary goal, the team considers whether or not the student would benefit from a CTE program, or receive employment training through an alternative method such as work-based learning activities. CTCs offer rigorous academic content tied to technical subject matter that can be challenging for many students.

When is a representative from the CTC considered as part of the IEP team?

If a student is considering attending a CTE program or is currently enrolled in a CTE program, a representative from the CTC will participate as a member of the IEP team. IEP team meetings, when scheduled by the LEA, must give timely notice to the career and technical education representative assigned and shall be attended by the career and technical education representative. This is required by Pennsylvania School Code (Chapter 339.21(5)(6)).

What should the IEP team discuss if a CTE program is being considered?

- Has the student expressed an interest in attending a CTE program? Make arrangements for the student to visit the CTE program. If possible, the student should

visit programs in different career clusters targeted to the student's specific interest areas. As part of the IEP process, the student, parents/guardians, and teacher should review the competencies, requirements, and task lists for the desired CTE program, including CTE curricula and task requirements as outlined in the state developed Programs of Study. There should be a match between these and the student's interests and aptitudes as

in any state-approved CTE program. Ensure that students with disabilities follow the same process.

- Establish a procedure for communicating with CTE staff after the student enrolls in the program. This will allow CTE staff to discuss progress toward the student's IEP goals, as well as to problem-solve collaboratively. It is important that specific and detailed information related to

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determined by an assessment prior to CTE enrollment. As needed, accommodations and adaptations should be identified.

- Does the IEP include appropriate present educational level data such as reading and math levels, functional performance information, and mobility? Are present education levels able to be met in the CTE program? Will the student's current specially-designed instruction, modifications and accommodations enable the student to be successful in the CTE program?
- Review the application process used for students without disabilities planning to enroll

specially-designed instruction and behavior support plans be communicated to CTE staff so that IEP goals can be accomplished.

There are many factors for the IEP team to consider when deciding whether a CTE program is the appropriate choice for an individual student. With effective assessment of the student's interests, strengths, and preferences, and a complete understanding of the proposed CTE program, the IEP team can determine the most appropriate option for each student.

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

Tom Wolf
Governor

