



IEPs, 504s and ETRs

Karla Fitch, MSW, LSW (she/her) – Connecting for Kids

About Me



- Karla Fitch, MSW, LSW (karlafitch@connectingforkids.org)
 - Parent – just like you!
 - 13th IEP meeting – coming this fall! 🤖
 - Masters Degree in Social Work with a certificate in school social work



I'm a parent and a social worker – but I'm not an advocate or legal expert. If you think you might need an expert in education law, an Ask Us 1:1 is a great way to get help! connectingforkids.org/AskUs

The Elephant in the Room

A large elephant is the central focus of the image, shown in profile facing right. The elephant's skin is wrinkled and textured, and its large ears are visible. The background is a blurred savanna landscape with some sparse vegetation. The entire image has a dark, monochromatic overlay, making the white text stand out.

- Meetings can be STRESSFUL!
 - Hearing how your child struggles
 - Lots of professionals
 - Lots of knowledge

The Legal Backdrop

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

- Prohibits discrimination in employment, transportation, public accommodations, communication, and state/federal services.
- 1990

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act

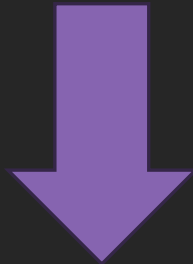
- Guarantees the rights of people with disabilities to access benefits or services in settings that receive public funding.
- 1973

Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA)

- Ensures free and appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE) for children (0-21) with disabilities.
- 1974, 1990, 2004

A road less traveled...

- How Special Education Services Start:
 - Transition to School-Aged Services (from Help Me Grow/Bright Beginnings)
 - Teacher/staff Referral
 - Request for Evaluation



All paths lead to the MFE



The MFE

- **Multi-factored:** Looks at all factors (development areas) that make it hard to learn
 - Team includes teachers/staff from different fields – **and YOU!**
 - Evaluation can take up to 60 days to complete
- Requires planning and consent
- Result: Evaluation team report (ETR)

The MFE TEAM:

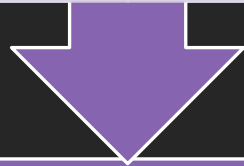
Parents/guardians
Gen Ed. Teacher(s)
Special Ed. Teacher(s)
School Psychologist
School Social Worker
Occupational Therapist
Physical Therapist
Speech Therapist
School Nurse

ETR & Eligibility Determination

ETR: Comprehensive report of what the MFE team learned

Usually includes a section from each person on the team

Presented to the family at a meeting



Eligibility Determination: MFE team decides whether the child meets criteria for one of the disability categories identified in part B the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act



Medical vs Academic Diagnosis

- Medical Diagnosis
 - Result of evaluation and diagnosis by a medical or mental health professional
 - Considered in the MFE, but not the basis for eligibility
- Academic Diagnosis (disability category)
 - Result of the MFE and eligibility determination
 - Can be different from a medical diagnosis
 - Means that the school modifies (changes) your child's education.

504 Plan (simplified)

- Comes from section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act
- Available to any student with a disability who attends a federally funded preschool, grade school or college
- Includes:
 - Accommodations to help the student access the same education as their peers
 - Special services the student needs to access education (for example, nursing care)



Individualized Education Program - IEP (simplified)

- Comes from IDEA
- Available to students (ages 3-21) in federally funded schools who are found eligible through the MFE process
- Includes:
 - Accommodations to help the student access their education
 - Special services (nursing, OT, etc.)
 - Modifications to what/how the student will learn along with goals and objectives for learning
- Driven by the ETR

WHO?

Ages 3-21

Attend a
federally funded
school

Have an eligible
diagnosis

IEP Meetings, Goals, and Objectives (oh my!)

- Success depends on your child's team – and that team includes you!
- Success Tips:
 - Keep the communication open!
 - Ohio Coalition and parent mentors are amazing resources

The IEP TEAM:

Parents/guardians
Your child (if appropriate)
Gen Ed. Teacher(s)
Special Ed. Teacher(s)
School representative
Person(s) who can interpret
assessment results
Other people with
knowledge about your child

But what about...?

Behavior Improvement Plans (BIP)

- Behavior impedes learning
- Team agrees to complete a functional behavioral assessment (FBA)
- Results of the FBA drive the BIP

Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)

- Tier 1: All students
- Tier 2: Small groups of students
- Tier 3: Individual students

- Tier 3 is does not equal “special education!”

Resources

- Before we hit the Q&A and small groups, I want to make sure that we touch on a couple of resources that are available to help you learn more.

The screenshot shows the 'SCHOOL CONCERNS' page. At the top, there is a navigation bar with 'HOME', 'REGISTER', 'RESOURCES', '2023 ANNUAL FUNDRAISER', and 'ABOUT'. Below the navigation bar, the page title 'SCHOOL CONCERNS' is displayed. A short paragraph explains that school concerns often arise from learning problems, behavior, or bullying. The main content area features a large image of three children talking. Below the image are three circular icons: 'Red Flags' (a red flag), 'Solutions' (a lightbulb), and 'Resources' (a folder). Each icon is accompanied by a brief description and a 'Learn More' link.

The screenshot shows the 'Connecting for Kids FAMILY GUIDE TO SPECIAL EDUCATION' page. The page features a large orange house icon with a bell. Below the icon, the title 'Connecting for Kids FAMILY GUIDE TO SPECIAL EDUCATION' is prominently displayed. A paragraph explains that special education varies by child and that the guide covers important aspects. Below this, there are four columns, each with a title and a 'Learn More' button: 'Getting Started' (helping struggling children), 'Evaluation' (school learning about strengths and needs), 'Individualized Education Programs' (meeting child's needs), and 'Resource Room' (getting help).

The screenshot shows a video player for a presentation titled 'HOW TO COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY WITH THE SCHOOL'. The video is presented by Karla Fitch, MTSC, of Connecting for Kids. The video player includes a progress bar, a play/pause button, and a speed control. Below the video player, there is a 'Description of Presentation' section, which explains that the presenter will walk attendees through a family communications binder and demonstrate ways to use it throughout the year.