

The Importance of Data in the Present Levels of an IEP

The Present Levels is the foundation of the IEP. Everything in the IEP flows from this section — goals, services, accommodations, ESY decisions, and progress monitoring. If the present levels are not data-driven, the entire IEP may lack clarity and accountability.

Why Data Matters

- Data makes the IEP legally defensible and compliant with IDEA requirements.
- Baseline data allows measurable and meaningful goals to be written.
- Data clearly shows how the disability impacts progress in general education.
- Service decisions (including ESY) should be supported by documented data.
- Clear baseline data protects your child by making progress measurable.

Parent-Friendly Present Levels/Data Checklist

- Are there clear baseline numbers (percentages, frequency, accuracy rates)?
- Is the data current and not solely from last year's evaluation?
- Does it explain how the data was collected and over what time period?
- Does it explain how the disability impacts progress in general education?
- Does it include academic AND functional/behavioral data (if applicable)?
- Does every goal connect directly to a need identified in the present levels?
- Is there baseline data listed for each goal area?
- Are vague phrases like 'struggles with' or 'making progress' supported by measurable data?

If baseline data is missing, request clarification before the IEP is finalized. The Present Levels should clearly tell your child's story — supported by objective, measurable data.

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