



Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)

A cornerstone of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), our nation's special education law, is that **each eligible child with a disability is entitled to a free appropriate public education (FAPE)** that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet the child's unique needs and that prepares the child for further education, employment, and independent living.

Free: requires that the education of each child with a disability must be provided at public expense. There is no cost to you, the parent. However, any incidental fees (such as membership fees for clubs) will be at the same cost for your child as for general education students.

Appropriate: means that each child with a disability is entitled to an education that is "appropriate" for his or her needs. "Appropriate education" is determined on an individual basis and may not be the same for each child with a disability. Each child with a disability will be entitled to an education that is tailored and planned to meet their needs as stated in their Individualized Education Program (IEP).

Public: refers to the public school system. Children with disabilities, regardless of the nature or severity of their disabilities, have the same right to attend the public schools as their non-disabled peers. The public school system must educate students with disabilities, respond to their individual needs, and help them plan for their future.

Education: guarantees that eligible children with disabilities will receive a public education that includes special education and related services as directed by the child's Individualized Education Program (IEP), based on the child's individual needs. The education should prepare the child for the future—further education, employment, and independent living.

Adapted from these documents: *Key Definitions in IDEA* - <https://www.parentcenterhub.org/fapebrief-ref-list-fape/> and *What is and isn't covered under FAPE* - <https://www.understood.org/en/school-learning/your-childs-rights/basics-about-childs-rights/what-is-and-isnt-covered-under-fape>.

What a School is REQUIRED to Do Under FAPE:

- Provide special education and related services to students who need them. Services might include things like speech therapy or counseling.
- Provide these services at no charge to parents.
- Tailor an Individualized Education Program (IEP) to meet a student's needs.
- Educate students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment (LRE). This may mean spending most or all of the day in a general education classroom or it might mean spending that time in a special education classroom. It is based upon the needs of the student.

What a School is NOT REQUIRED to Do Under FAPE:

- Provide services superior to the services students without disabilities receive.
- Provide a specific program or adjust the school setting just because it's your preference. You can make suggestions, but the final decision isn't yours alone.
- Give a child with disabilities preferential treatment or guarantee a spot in an extracurricular activity. Schools have to provide the same treatment to all students.



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