

## Abstract

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) has significantly enhanced educational access for students with disabilities through Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). Despite notable progress, challenges persist, including the burden on families to ensure the fidelity of IEPs, frequent legal disputes, racial and cultural disparities, and other issues impacting service quality.

This paper reviews IDEA's evolution, highlighting current issues, including its transformation from a guarantee of “de minimis” education to one that paves the way for diplomas for students with intellectual disabilities.

For the future, we recommend comprehensive changes across logistical, cultural, legal, and legislative dimensions. These include adopting a statewide IEP template, fostering a more inclusive, strength-based educational culture, embracing AI support, and enhancing legal frameworks.

These strategies aim to refine IDEA's implementation to better serve all students with disabilities, improve family and district relationships, and ensure compliance while driving improved educational outcomes.

## Plain Language Summary

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is an American law that ensures students with disabilities receive a Free, Appropriate Public Education.

Through IDEA educational access for students with disabilities has increased through the use of Individualized Education Plans (IEP).

Even with a law that ensures education for students with disabilities, there are still many challenges about how to provide educational services for students with disabilities.

This paper reviews the history of IDEA, outlines the issues and challenges with IDEA, and recommends changes that will make the IEP process easier in the future.