

Utah Special Education Program Improvement Planning System (UPIPS) General Education Teacher Interview Guide

1. What are the best things about your school's special education program?

TIPS: Think of the things that are positive about your school's special education program, such as collaboration between general and special education staff, integration of students in special education into general education academic and non-academic programs, a smooth and timely referral process, creative and/or unique programs developed at your school to benefit students with disabilities, level of support afforded to general educators by special education, etc. This is your chance to BRAG!!!

2. Child Find

a. Prior to referral for special education services, what are three things you would do for a student in your class experiencing academic difficulties?

TIPS: Describe any accommodations and/or interventions that you implement for students with academic difficulties. This might include such things as the use of special materials, small group instruction, peer tutoring, the use of different instructional methods or materials, curriculum modifications or AIMS/TAT involvement, etc. Remember that No Child Left Behind and current special education law reflect requirements for effective, research-based instruction in all classrooms and encourage a Response to Intervention (RtI) approach to instruction especially for students who exhibit learning problems.

c. Prior to referral for special education services, what are three things you would do for a student who is experiencing social/behavioral difficulties?

TIPS: Describe any accommodations or interventions that you implement for students with social/behavioral difficulties such as individual or classroom management programs, TAT team collaboration, individualized contracts, seeking assistance from special educators or district consultants, etc. Remember that No Child Left Behind and current special education law reflect requirements for effective, research-based instruction, including social/behavioral programs, in all classrooms and encourage a Response to Intervention (RtI) approach to instruction.

d. What are two of your responsibilities when making a special education referral?

TIPS: It would be appropriate to discuss tasks such as contacting a student's parents/guardians about your concerns and the pending referral for special education evaluation, summarization of data collected from interventions or accommodations implemented to address the student's difficulties, completion of requisite paperwork for the referral (Response to Interventions Form) and forwarding it to the appropriate person in the process, summarization of assessment data that you currently have such as classroom performance data, CRT results, progress monitoring (e.g., DIBBLES) results, observations of the student's academic and behavioral performance, and/or any other relevant data.

k. How have you been trained on the referral process?

TIPS: Describe how you have received information about the special education referral process whether from your principal, your school's special education team, school district in-service, or other professional development sources.

3. Evaluation and Eligibility

b. Describe two ways in which you participate in the evaluation process.

TIPS: As a general education teacher, data that you provide about the student's performance in the general curriculum via classroom tests, assignments, projects, as well as CRT results, curriculum-based assessment results, and diagnostic instruments are invaluable. In addition, you may have observations of student behaviors including interactions with adults and peers, work and study skills that will be very useful to the evaluation team.

e. What is your role in the eligibility determination meeting?

TIPS: You, along with the student's parents/guardians and other members of the eligibility team review all of the evaluation data collected on the student and determine whether or not the student is a student with a disability under one of the federal/state disability classifications. Each disability classification has requisite assessments and criteria against which a particular student's assessment results are evaluated. The general educator's role is especially important as s/he has spent more time interacting with the student than any other school-based team member.

4. IEP

a. Who are the required members of the IEP team?

TIPS: The required members of the IEP team are the student's parents/guardians, the principal/LEA (may be another school district representative appointed by the principal), at least one general education teacher of the student (preferably one teaching a core subject), a special education teacher (usually one who will serve the student), a individual who can interpret the instructional implications of evaluation results if no other team member is able to do so, the student (when appropriate), and other individuals as appropriate.

Note: If a required IEP team member will not be present during an IEP meeting, prior written permission must be obtained by both the student's parents/guardians and the LEA by completing the IEP Excusal Form with the excused person's IEP input information attached.

b. Describe two of your responsibilities in the IEP process.

TIPS: General education teachers assist IEP teams in developing present levels of academic achievement and functional performance (PLAAFPs) in reference to core/state standards and how the student's disability affects progress in the general curriculum from which meaningful academic goals can be written. General educators assist in determining meaningful behavior goals for students across school settings and assist with accommodations, modifications, and supports/services needed in general education settings and in assessments.

c. On a scale from 1-5, with 1 being low, how involved are you in IEP meetings?

TIPS: If you are involved in the evaluation and determination of eligibility process for special education students in your school and your input is solicited for PLAAFPs, goals and classroom modifications, accommodations and/or services at IEP meetings, you could rate your involvement as a 4 or 5 which is the aim of No Child Left Behind and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), 2004 Reauthorization.

d. How do you coordinate/collaborate with other members of the IEP team to implement the IEP?

TIPS: Evidence of collaboration would be regularly scheduled staff meetings with school/district team members or frequent one-to-one contact with one or more special educators regarding student progress, informal contacts with special educators through e-mails, notes, progress charts, etc. regarding implementation of the student's IEP.

f. How are you informed of your responsibilities regarding IEP implementation?

TIPS: If you attend student initial and annual IEP meetings this will be a primary method of gaining information and input on your role in implementing IEPs. Your special education team may also provide you with written reminders on special education students in your class and the accommodation/modifications that should be made. There may also be follow-up IEP meetings or IEP reviews, which you should attend to participate in any changes made to the IEP. Contacts with special educators and school administrators may be necessary if you are unable to attend follow-up meetings to the IEP.

5. U-PASS Data

a. What are two ways you help the IEP team decide how a student with disabilities will participate in the U-PASS testing program (unless preschool, K, or over 18)?

TIPS: As the student's general education teacher, you have access to the student's CRT results, classroom observations of his/her performance on assessments, such as curriculum imbedded and unit tests, weekly quizzes and check-ups. You will know a great deal about the kinds of errors the student makes as well as the kinds of items answered correctly, his/her test-taking skills, and the need for accommodations in order to demonstrate what he/she has learned. This information will assist the IEP team to determine which tests the student should take and what accommodations are needed.

b. Describe three things to do for students with disabilities when statewide tests (CRTs & others) are administered.

TIPS: Provide accommodations, as identified in the student's IEP (testing addendum). These accommodations are typically the same ones provided for the student on general education classroom work, also identified in the student's IEP (accommodations./modification) and are allowed by the publisher of the CRT. These may include but are not limited to shortened work periods and frequent breaks, use of an assistive device such as a calculator, and/or being in a small group of students during testing.

c. Describe two ways that you have used data provided by U-PASS testing results.

TIPS: Both general and special education teachers use U-PASS data in a number of different ways. This may include making curriculum adjustments, identifying students who need extra instruction or practice, forming instructional groups of students having similar re-teaching needs, and summarizing data for parents/guardians.

6. Access to the General Curriculum/LRE

a. How does the IEP team determine the amount of special education and related services a student needs?

TIPS: The IEP team considers assessment data from statewide CRTs, the general educators, curriculum-based assessments, classroom observations, eligibility for special education assessments, the student's IEP goals and actual/ or projected rate of progress given his/her educational needs. Once the team has deemed a student eligible for special education, then the breadth and depth of his/her needs is estimated from all of the data regarding the student's progress in the general curriculum. Goals are developed to guide the services for the student. The student must receive enough special education services to progress toward meeting the standards of the general education curriculum.

b. How does the IEP team determine placement?

TIPS: IEP team members determine the special education setting in which a student will receive special education services based on his/her IEP goals and where (setting) those goals can best be addressed. Settings may include the general education classroom with resource and/or itinerant special education services, a special education classroom or school, a home or hospital setting, or combinations of these. Special education rules dictate that students should not be removed from their general education classroom unless the nature or severity of their disability is such that education in general education classes, even with supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily. Thus, a student may not be removed from a general education classroom only because of needed modifications to the general education curriculum.

c. List two ways you ensure each student with disabilities participates with non-disabled peers to the maximum extent appropriate?

TIPS: If the student receives resource and/or itinerant services for a core subject, they should be delivered at the same time that his/her non-disabled peers receive instruction in that subject so that he/she does not miss instruction in other areas not covered by the IEP. In any area of the curriculum whether core or supplemental, a student in special education should participate even if accommodations must be made to assist the student. Special education students are afforded the same opportunities as their non-disabled peers to participate in all aspects of classroom and school programs whether on special projects, field activities, assemblies, ceremonies and class or school productions.

7. Paraeducators

b. How is supervision provided for paraprofessionals when they are assigned to your program?

TIPS: The educators to whom paraeducators are assigned provide the first level of supervision with support from building administration. If a paraeducator in the special education department at your school works in your classroom during certain times are you responsible for any evaluations procedures? If so, describe when and what you do when supervising them. Do you conduct observations of their work, use a checklist, or rating system in evaluating their work? Do you provide verbal and/or written feedback to them based on your observations? How is corrective feedback given?

8. Student Success

a. What is your school/LEA focusing on to improve success for all students?

TIPS: If your school has reading, math, writing, science, behavioral, and/or other goals for all students, discuss what those are, what data were used to identify them, how they were selected and by whom. Does your school use a Response to Intervention (RtI) model, A Positive Behavior Supports program (PBS), or something similar to increase performances of all students? If so, describe how it works.

b. How do these activities include provisions for students with disabilities?

TIPS: Do the students in special education at your school participate in activities related to the school's goals in their general education classrooms, the special education classroom, in after school programs, out of school? Are the goals the same for them or modified in some ways? How is progress toward these school-wide goals being measured? How are student efforts being recognized?

9. Professional Development

a. How are professional development needs determined in your school or LEA?

TIPS: It is likely that professional development activities are determined both at the school and district level. Sometimes training needs are related to Utah State Office of Education mandates such as updated special education rules. Sometimes educators and related servers identify their own training needs or interests and seek out conferences and workshops offering appropriate training. Describe how it works for you, specifically.

b. Who are the groups of people included in the training?

TIPS: Specify whether or not you participate in some training for all special education staff and some for general educators only.

c. What professional development opportunities are provided for you in your school or LEA?

TIPS: Describe conferences, workshops, or other professional development activities, both within and outside of your school/district, to which you are sent or encouraged to attend.

21. What additional resources and/or training are needed to improve the special education program in your school or LEA?

TIPS: Consider your desires for improving your program and what, if any, training would assist with that. Are there more global areas of training needed in areas such as reading, math, and positive behavioral support programs?