

Utah Special Education Program Improvement Planning System (UPIPS) School Psychologist Interview Guide

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

TIPS: Focus on the things that are great about the special education program in your school or the school that you serve; for example, teaming and collaboration both within special education and with general education, administrative support, available resources, staff development, parent involvement and support, creative or unique programs and techniques that you have implemented, ways that you are incorporating motor activities into students' educational activities. This is your chance to BRAG!!!

2. Child Find

a. Who are two people who can make referrals for a special education evaluation?

TIPS: A parent/guardian or an LEA staff (e.g., general education teachers, building principal, school-wide assistance team members) can initiate referrals for evaluation for special education services.

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

TIPS: Unless your salary is paid partially or in full with general education funds, you may not provide any services to a student prior to referral for special education services. Although prereferral interventions are no longer required of general educators under IDEA, Response to Intervention (RTI) information is a requirement of No Child Left Behind and needed by the general educator to demonstrate that a student's difficulties are not due to a lack of appropriate instruction in math and/or reading.

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

TIPS: Unless your salary is paid partially or in full with general education funds, you may not provide any services to a student prior to referral for special education services. If you are paid with general education funds, however, and are asked by a student's teacher to be involved in assisting the student, you could collaborate with the teacher on appropriate and positive classroom interventions on the student's behalf.

3. Evaluation and Eligibility

a. Who are the required members of the evaluation/eligibility team?

TIPS: The evaluation and eligibility team is required to include parents/guardians and school personnel determined by the LEA. This may include, but is not limited to such school personnel as a general education teacher, a special education teacher, and/ or another person knowledgeable in educational assessments, a school psychologist, a speech-language pathologist, an occupational and/or physical therapist, audiologist, and/or other specialist for

vision, behavior, hearing. An LEA and parents/guardians may choose to have other individuals with special knowledge or expertise regarding the student be team members.

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

TIPS: Describe the assessments that you administer such as the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for students and/or other cognitive ability measures, the Woodcock-Johnson Psycho-educational Battery or other norm-referenced academic assessments, the Achenbach or other social/behavior rating forms, and functional scales. Discuss the ways in which you present information to student's parents/guardians, whether through individual conferences, at the eligibility determination/ IEP meetings, etc., as well as how you share preliminary and conclusive information with other IEP team members.

c. Describe two ways that you or the team obtain parental input to the evaluation process.

TIPS: Have the student's parents/guardians complete home social/behavior checklists and rating scales, functional scales, and formal or informal interviews. Review the results with them prior to the edibility meeting and relate how you review and/or follow-up on assessment information from other providers shared with the evaluation team by parents/guardians.

d. How does the evaluation team summarize evaluation results?

TIPS: All assessment methods and their corresponding results are identified on the Eligibility Results Summary form (ERS) completed through using the district's IEP Goalview program. In addition, psychologists write a Psychological Evaluation Report based on their assessment results, this report is one component of the student's special education file.

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

TIPS: Discuss your role in collecting, analyzing, and summarizing evaluation data for the group, unless that is to be done by a different member of the team. You can also mention your discussion with parents/guardians and other members of the team the types of data gathered and whether or not additional data are required. At the eligibility meeting, team members all play a role in determining if the student is a student with a disability based on the summarized data, unless additional assessment measures were needed.

f. What are two factors you must consider when selecting assessments to administer to a student?

TIPS: The suspected disability of the student so that assessment tools can be determined since student's must be assessed in all areas of their suspected disability, this includes but may not be limited to cognitive, academic, social/behavioral, functional, and developmental. Only assessment tools that are valid and reliable should be used so that sufficient information is gathered to identify and discuss the student's needs and strengths. Tests must be administered in a student's native language or other mode of communication and may not be discriminatory based on a racial or cultural basis.

k. What assessment tools and training opportunities have been made available to you so that you can select and use instruments that are technically sound and valid?

TIPS: If you are a licensed school psychologist, you have received thorough training in the selection and administration of an array of psycho-educational assessments as well as regularly scheduled trainings provided by your district. You may wish to discuss additional training that you have received especially on new or revised instruments, both within and outside (e.g., conferences, symposiums) your department/district.

4. IEP

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

TIPS: The required members of the IEP team are the student's parent(s), the LEA, at least one general education teacher of the student, a special education teacher, 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 must be completed and the person's IEP input information must be attached.

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

TIPS: As a school psychologist, you will most likely be part of the IEP team. Besides explaining the psych-educational assessments used and the student's performance relate to academic or social skills. You may also be part of a positive behavior supports team in which you, special education teachers and related services collaborate with parents/guardians regarding a student's behaviors in the school setting and how to change them.

c. On a scale of 1-5 with 1 being low, how involved are you in the IEP meeting?

TIPS: Think across all of the IEP meetings you attend in a year's time. Consider your involvement in the evaluation and determination of eligibility process for special education students and your input on student's PLAAFPs, goals and classroom modifications, accommodations, and/or services provided.

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

TIPS: Do you have team meetings at your school(s) on a regular basis? If so, specify how frequently they occur, whether or not they are structured, have agendas, are work sessions, have assignments, etc. Does your school have early out times so that staff can collaborate? Do you and your team members keep in touch through e-mail, voice mail, memos, text messages, etc. because of your assignments across schools? Do you make certain your relevant information is in the student's special education file?

5. U-PASS Data

a. Discuss two considerations when deciding how a student with disabilities will participate in the U-PASS testing program(s) (unless preschool, K or over 18).

TIPS: First, one should consider the age and grade level of the student to determine for which U-PASS assessments is required. Next, one must consider the nature of the student's program and whether it is basically an academic or a functional program. If the student is in a functional program, the Utah Alternate Assessment may be the assessment of choice for his/her participation in U-PASS. Most special education students are in academically based programs even though they may be working below grade level in some areas. Third, one will want to consider what if any testing accommodations will be used for the student taking the general U-PASS assessments in the core curriculum areas, these accommodations must be identified on the student's IEP and allowable according to the U-PASS testing program and its specific subtests. For example, reading directions aloud to students might be ok in some math subtests but not in any reading subtests. Since the time of day may be important as well as the location and the student's familiarity of the tester to the student one should also consider who will be administering the test, where, and when.

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 amount of special education and related services that a student receives depends upon the IEP goals that have been written to address the student's educational needs. The variety, breadth, and depth of the goals help the IEP team determine how much instructional time will be required to assist the student in meeting his/her goals.

d. 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 and the IEP team ensure each student with a disability participates with non-disabled peers to the maximum extent appropriate?

TIPS: Special education personnel use a variety of ways to keep students working with their non-disabled peers. In some schools, general and special educators co-teach certain classes, special education or related service pullout may be restricted to just the core areas in which the student has demonstrated difficulties, paraeducators or peer tutors may be used to provide

extra support to student with disabilities in general classes and general and special educators may collaborate on teaching methods or techniques to keep students with disabilities in the general classroom. Computer software, audio texts, and pre-teaching techniques often help the student with a disability stay up with his/her general education class.

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, behavior 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 they work.

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

TIPS: Do the special education students 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 way? How is progress toward these school-wide goals being measured? How are student efforts being recognized?

c. What are your priorities for improving your school's/LEA's special education program?

TIPS: If you set annual goals for improving your special education work or program, discuss these. Are these goals developed cooperatively with others at your school—colleagues in school psychology, general and special education, school administrator(s), students, parents/guardians, related services? How are you measuring goal attainment?

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 by both your school and by departments at the district level. Sometimes training needs are related to curriculum updates, district policy, and Utah State Office of Education mandates. Sometimes educators and related service providers 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 training for all educators, special education staff, and/or some for specialists (e.g., school psychologists) 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.

10. Student Progress

a. How often are parents given reports on their child's progress on IEP goals? What does the report include?

TIPS: Parents/guardians of students in special education are entitled to reports of their students' progress on IEP goals as often as parents/guardians of non-disabled students receive reports of their student progress in general education. Describe how often reporting periods occur in your schools and what you include in the report, if anything, that goes to parents/guardians.

c. What are three things you do if a student isn't making sufficient progress to achieve his/her IEP goals by the end of the year?

TIPS: If you are providing services through social and/or behavior goals to a special education student who isn't making sufficient progress, hopefully you will not wait until the end of the year to address them. If a Behavior Intervention Plan is in place, you will need to look at data from its implementation to see what may need revision or adjustment. If motivation is an issue and there is no program of positive behavior supports in place, you may want to consider developing and implementing such a program. You can observe the student to gather additional data and ensure the student is getting sufficient practice opportunities. You may want to consult with the student's teachers, related service providers, and/or their parents/guardians to gain some insight and assistance. In some instances, it may be necessary for the IEP team to reconvene and make adjustments to the student's IEP goal that is of concern.

11. LRBI/Discipline and Safe Schools Data

a. When should an IEP team conduct a Functional Behavior Assessment (FuBA) and write a Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP)?

TIPS: According to federal and state mandates A FuBA/BIP is required on the 11th day of a students' disciplinary removal (change of placement), and when a safe school violation occurs AND the behavior is determined by the IEP team to be a manifestation of the student's disability. If a safe school violation is found not be a manifestation of the student's disability, a FuBA/BIP are completed as appropriate. It is best practice however, to be proactive when a student is known to have behavior problems and conduct and implement a FuBA/BIP prior to disciplinary actions result in a change to the student's placement.

b. When is it mandatory to conduct a manifestation determination?

TIPS: A manifestation determination must be conducted within 10 school days of any decision to change student's placement due to a violation of the school's code of conduct that

resulted in either more than 10 days of removal (change of placement) or a safe school violation and subsequently a district hearing. This may be one behavioral occurrence (e.g., code of conduct, safe school violation) or multiple occurrences that within the year have accumulated to 10 or more school days. The manifestation determination must be completed by the student's IEP team within 10 school days of the aforementioned situations.

c. What is your involvement in the IDEA disciplinary procedures for students with disabilities?

TIPS: Discuss your role in manifestation determination meetings and in developing FuBAs and BIP, and types of data collection systems you use. Do you give your school's administration suggestions and/or ideas on disciplinary actions?

13. Extended School Year (ESY)

b. What are two things to consider to determine if a student is eligible for ESY?

TIPS: The IEP team will want to consider both retrospective and predictive data when determining eligibility for ESY services. Retrospective data typically indicates regression and recoupment with respect to students' skills. If regression is so serious over a break in instruction that recoupment means basically beginning instruction anew or at a significantly lower level, then a student may require ESY to maintain FAPE. The student may also require ESY if they are at a critical point in instruction, which would be lost if their current skill level was not maintained. Predictive data takes into account the severity of the student's disability; his/her overall rate of progress in skills of self-sufficiency and independence that would be unlikely to continue without ESY. Predictive data may also be used to identify students unable to remain in their current least restrictive placement without ESY services.

14. Procedural Safeguards

a. What are five of the IDEA Procedural Safeguards or parents' rights?

TIPS: There are numerous procedural safeguards, which can be reviewed more thoroughly in the Utah State Board of Education Special Education Rules. Here is a listing of them by topic: parental opportunity to examine their student's records, parent participation in meetings regarding their student's special education program, the right to an independent educational evaluation if dissatisfied with the LEA's evaluation, written prior notice whenever the LEA proposes or refuses to initiate or change the identification, evaluation, educational placement or provision of FAPE to a student, provision of procedural safeguards notices to parents/guardians, parental consent when the LEA proposes to identify, evaluate, place or change the placement of a student, the right to file a complaint against an LEA with the state office of education, the right to mediation, the right to file a due process complaint, the right to file civil action, the right to confidentiality of student information and transfer of parental rights at the age of majority.

15. Rules

a. What training have you had related to the state special education rules?

TIPS: Describe who provided training to you on the state special education rules and when it occurred. You may have had training on the rules at your in-state college or university or through a teacher induction program. Generally, the special education district staff provide yearly training to all special educators and district/school administrators, with more specific follow-up trainings for specialized staff throughout the year.

16. Parent Involvement

a. What are two ways that parents are involved in placement decisions?

TIPS: Since IEP teams generally make placement decisions, it is important that parents/guardians participate in IEP meetings in which such decisions are made. Sometimes, IEP teams in conjunction with other specialized teams within a district make placements in special classrooms, schools, or programs and parents/guardians must be involved with that process as well.

b. Describe five areas in the overall special education process in which parents are involved in determining educational needs and provisions of services for their child.

TIPS: Parents/guardians are involved in the identification process when their student is evaluated for special education. They have the right to present evidence of their own regarding the student, evidence from individuals with special expertise regarding the student such as a health care provider and help determine what evaluations will be completed with their student. Parents/guardians also assist in the determination of whether their student is a student with a disability. If the student is identified as a special education student, parents/guardians are involved in developing educational and behavioral goals for their student, determining types of services, determining accommodations for general classroom settings, determining the student's type of participation in statewide assessment programs. Parents/guardians are also actively involved in determining the placement of their student for special education services. Parents/guardians are involved in annual IEP meetings for their students where decisions are made about services, goals, and accommodations for the student. For secondary students, parents/guardians are involved in transition meetings, meetings with outside agency personnel and developing postsecondary and vocational goals for their students.

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?

