

Fact Sheet:
Extended School Year

What is Extended School Year (ESY)?

For many students who receive special education services, the regular school year is enough to make sure they get a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). But that is not the case for all students. Some students may need more. Students learn at different rates and retain what they learned at different levels. Extended School Year (ESY) is special education and/or related services that are provided beyond the normal school year. ESY is a required part of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). ESY is provided according to a student's Individual Education Program (IEP) and is at no cost to the family. ESY can include academics, related services and extracurricular activities. Each district must provide ESY to students who need such services. All public schools, including charter schools and alternative schools, must provide ESY when it is needed.

Facts You Should Know:

Each child's IEP team decides if a child needs ESY to receive FAPE, and, if so, what services he or she will get. A school district may not unilaterally limit the type, amount, or duration of ESY. When the IEP team agrees that a student needs ESY, they must also decide:

- What services will be provided.
- When and where services will be provided.
- How often (frequency) services will be provided.
- How long (duration) services will be provided.

The IEP team must consider ESY for each student at least once per year. They must consider each student's individual needs. They may also consider any of the following:

- The severity of the student's disability.
- The age of the child:
 - Children who turn three during the summer must be considered for ESY.
 - ESY can be made available until a student turns 22 or graduates with a regular high school diploma.
- Regression and Recoupment:
 - Will the student lose skills over a break?
 - Will the loss of skills be excessive?
 - Will the loss of skills be more than you would expect of other students?
 - Will the student be able to recover those lost skills and how long will that take?
- Degree of Progress:
 - Did the student make progress on IEP goals? How much progress?
 - Did the student make as much progress as the IEP team expected?
 - Does the student make progress slowly or quickly?
- Is the student showing emerging skills? Is he/she about to breakthrough with some new skills?
- Transitional needs:
 - Does the student need ESY to meet transition or vocation (work) goals?
- Does the student have any behaviors that are making progress slow?

Students who receive ESY must be educated in the least restrictive environment in which the IEP can be implemented. School districts do not have to create programs to provide a full range of placement options for ESY. They must make options available to the extent needed to implement a child's IEP. School districts may not limit ESY to a particular category of disability. The discussion and decision about ESY must be documented on the IEP. This discussion is a new discussion each year – it doesn't matter if a student did or did not receive ESY in the past, it must be considered each year.

ESY is **NOT**:

- Tutoring, summer school, childcare or enrichment programs.
- Limited to certain groups of students or activities.
- Limited to a specific time frame, such as summer.
- Decided by one person. It's an IEP team decision!
- Determined by only one measure.

Tips for Families:

- ✓ Remember, the decision about ESY is an IEP decision. You are part of the team!
- ✓ Attend IEP meetings and school-based meetings where your child's IEP goals will be discussed.
- ✓ Take written notes with you to all meetings so that you can remember what you want to talk about.
- ✓ Review data about your child's performance and progress toward IEP goals.
- ✓ Share your own data, documentation, and information about your child's progress.
- ✓ Document any changes in your child's behavior when there is a break in services, such as holidays and summer break.
- ✓ Offer ideas about community programs and services that might be options for your child's ESY. ESY can be provided at home, in a community setting, or in a school setting.
- ✓ Talk with your IEP team about any behaviors that may interfere with your child learning new skills.
- ✓ If your child is in high school, talk about ESY and how it can help with his or her goals related to transition, employment, community participation and independent living.
- ✓ Look at the data and share your observations with the team members:
 - Is your child making reasonable progress toward his or her IEP goals?
 - Is your child just learning a skill but isn't yet able to use it in various settings?
 - Does the data show that your child loses skills over breaks in school?
 - If your child loses skills, does it take a very long time to re-learn them?
 - Does the data show that your child isn't making enough progress during the school year to meet IEP goals?
- ✓ Talk to people who know your child's needs. Talk to teachers who know your child. Ask them how your child does after vacations and breaks in the school schedule. Share this with the IEP team.
- ✓ Remember: Even if your child received ESY in the past, that does not mean they will need or get it in the future. And, if your child did not get ESY in the past, they may need it now or in the future. That is why ESY has to be discussed each year.
- ✓ ESY may not be right for every child, even if they are eligible. How will your child do? Will he/she benefit from ESY or does he/she need more downtime?
- ✓ If you disagree with the decision about ESY for your child, you may want to ask for mediation or another dispute resolution strategy to try to resolve the disagreement.

Where to go for more information:

Parent to Parent of Georgia

770-451-5484 or 800-229-2038

www.p2pga.org

Georgia Department of Education, Division for Exceptional Children

404-656-3963 or 800-311-3627 and ask to be transferred to Special Education

<https://gadoe.org/special-education/>

Georgia Department of Education Implementation Manual

<https://gadoe.org/special-education/implementation/>

(See chapter 2: Free Appropriate Public Education and chapter 7: IEPs and Transition)

Additional resources: Contact the **Special Education Director** for your school system.