As teachers increasingly work in inclusive classrooms, you are likely to have students with disabilities in your class. If they receive special education services, each of those students must have an annually developed Individualized Education Program (IEP). The IEP is developed by a team of professionals and a member of the child’s family. As a teacher, you will have valuable observations to contribute to the team.

Prior to an IEP meeting, give thought to your planned curriculum and your academic objectives for all of your students. Document your observations about the performance, strengths, and challenges demonstrated by the child for whom the IEP is being developed.

- Are the child’s challenges based on a physical, sensory, intellectual, or behavioral disability? Remember that a child may have multiple disabilities.

- Does the child have a previous IEP? If so, review that document before the current IEP meeting.

- Consider any communications you’ve had with the child’s parents/caregivers that might suggest successful strategies in the classroom.

- Identify the key learning goals for the child, given the nature and severity of his or her disability.

- Remember that the IEP team must consider accommodations, including assistive and instructional technology (AT/IT) tools, as part of the IEP process. This requirement is documented in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

- Keep notes before and after the IEP meeting to document the child’s weekly progress and the success of any accommodations, AT/IT tools, and classroom strategies.

- Learn about the principles of universal design for learning (UDL) to make your curriculum as inclusive as possible for all students, including those with IEPs.

- Review the IEP as often as necessary to ensure that the document remains current as the child progresses throughout the school year.

For more information about assistive technology and the IEP, visit the Center on Technology and Disability at www.ctdinstitute.org