Extended School Year (ESY) Essentials

Juanita has a goal in her IEP about increasing her reading skills. She has made good progress on this goal but after the summer break, some of the progress is lost. It takes 6 weeks into the new school year until her skills are back to where they were at the end of the last school year.

When Juanita gets Extended School Year services, the orange line shows that she does not lose as many skills and it takes less time for her to re-gain the skills and make additional progress. This is just one example of the reason why some students qualify for ESY.

What is ESY?

Extended School Year services, or ESY, are special education and related services, such as therapies, provided to a child with a disability when the school or preschool program is not normally in session, for example, during summer or holiday breaks.

Some students with disabilities lose basic skills and take a long time to get them back once school begins again. The purpose of ESY services is to prevent this loss of skills. ESY does not support the learning of new skills. The specific services provided will vary according to each student’s individualized needs, for example:

- A student may need math and reading instruction as well as speech therapy
- A student may need social skills instruction and behavioral intervention
- A student may need only social skills instruction
- A student may be “on the cusp” of learning a new skill and needs ESY services so that learning is not interrupted
- A student may not need any ESY services

The IEP team may decide that the student will continue all the services received during the regular school year, or that the student will only receive a portion of services or one specific service. This decision is based on the needs of each student.
Extended School Year . . . continued

**ESY is not**—
- A day care or respite service
- A summer recreation program, even if it provides some educational benefit

**Who can be eligible?**
Preschoolers and school-aged children who have an IEP are eligible. The IEP team must look at the data and determine if the student might need ESY. Every year at the IEP meeting, every IEP team must decide on eligibility for each student.

**How do IEP teams make the decision?**
- There is not a simple formula to decide which students qualify for ESY.
- While there are seven (7) criteria to be considered, students do not need to meet all 7 criteria for eligibility for ESY. (see criteria in sidebar)
- Determination about ESY is a TEAM decision and families are part of the decision-making.
- The IEP team should look at data about the student that has been collected by the school, family and/or others.
- ESY cannot be limited to one type of disability or type of service.

**Timing of ESY determination for “target students”**
If a student is identified as severely disabled (see ESY Criteria above), then decisions about ESY must be made by **February 28th of each year** and issue a Notice of Recommended Educational Placement (NOREP) to the parent no later than March 31st of each year. This date allows time for parents who may disagree with the decision about ESY to have enough time to exercise their rights to appeal the decision. If a parent is not sure whether their child meets the criteria, they can always request an IEP meeting to discuss ESY prior to February 28th.

**What does it look like on an IEP?**
A description of the factors used to determine eligibility must be included. Describe the goals, and if appropriate benchmarks, for the ESY program. Goals are typically extensions of the current IEP goals. Those goals that have been identified by the IEP team as “ESY goals” should be noted as such on the IEP. New goals may be necessary to ensure that appropriate services are provided during the ESY period.

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**ESY CRITERIA**
(Note: “Skills and behaviors” must be related to IEP goals)

- Will the student lose skills or behaviors that they have been taught during program breaks?
- Will the student take a long time to “catch back up” on lost skills or behaviors after a break?
- Is it unlikely that the student will maintain learned skills and/or behaviors due to patterns of difficulties with losing skills and catching up?
- Will a break substantially reduce a student’s chance of EVER learning a critical life skill or behavior?
- Is the student at a critical stage for mastering a skill related to IEP goals of self-sufficiency and independence from caregivers?
- Will repeated breaks in education program result in the student withdrawing from learning?
- Does the student have a severe disability, such as autism, intellectual disability, degenerative impairments with mental involvement and/or multiple disabilities?

*Note: Students who have a severe disability as listed above are considered to be part of the “target group” for ESY consideration.*
Where can a student receive ESY services?
The IEP team determines the appropriate placement for ESY. The IEP team must identify a setting that is the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) for the student. This means that the team must consider opportunities for learning in settings with typical peers. During school breaks, there may not be a school-sponsored activity that provides for learning with typical peers. ESY can be in a non-educational setting if the IEP team determines that the student can receive necessary ESY services in that setting.

The setting for ESY must also allow for teaching and practicing the skills in the IEP goals targeted for ESY. If the goals targeted for ESY are focused on vocational skills, then a teacher going to a summer job placement might provide ESY services. For a student who shows regression in social skills over a break, a speech therapist could provide instruction at a day camp with typical peers. Other settings for ESY might include: tutoring, keyboarding class, camp socialization programs, or summer school.

**ACTION TIPS FOR PARENTS**

- Don’t wait until late in the school year to discuss whether or not your child needs ESY services during the summer break. You can request an IEP meeting specifically to determine ESY eligibility for your child. Be sure to put this request in writing to the school principal or school district special education director and specify the purpose of the meeting. Make certain that important school personnel—those who know your child best—will attend the IEP team meeting.

- List all of the factors you think should be taken into consideration when determining your child’s need for ESY services. Refer to the types of information listed earlier to help compile your list. Take your list to the IEP team meeting. Remember that the determination should be based on a broad range of factors and an array of information.
  - Discuss ESY with your school well in advance, prior to any school break/holiday—even if you already have it set in your IEP. For example, most families use the ESY at summer break (not limited to summer) so address this in December with your TEAM.
  - The TEAM should also be encouraged to take into consideration previous history; accounting for any previous regression.
  - Organize records such as progress reports, clinic, or any other supporting data and school reports. Your own notes and documentation about progress, challenges and other information is data about your child that can be shared and discussed. You want this on hand to support the argument of regression in terms of failure to meet IEP objectives.

**Special consideration for preschoolers:**
Preschool early intervention programs often operate throughout the summer with more frequent, shorter breaks than the lengthy summer break. Many preschoolers who are sensitive to program interruption can tolerate these shorter breaks and can still make reasonable progress in their IEP goals. But if a preschooler cannot receive an appropriate education without ESY, she is entitled to the necessary additional services.

**To learn more about ESY:**
- Read Section VI. E. on Pages 38-40 of the Annotated IEP form at: [https://tinyurl.com/l2vs커](https://tinyurl.com/l2vs커).
- Download or order a copy of “Extended School Year Services in PA”—pages 6-8 are specific information for families. See: [https://tinyurl.com/9basumr](https://tinyurl.com/9basumr).
- View a recorded video of a presentation about ESY on the PaTTAN website: [http://www.pattan.net/Videos/Browse/Single/?code_name=extended_school_year](http://www.pattan.net/Videos/Browse/Single/?code_name=extended_school_year).
- More information on “Services Beyond the School Year for Students With IEPs” can be found at: [https://www.greatschools.org/gk/articles/services-beyond-the-school-year/](https://www.greatschools.org/gk/articles/services-beyond-the-school-year/).
Families are the best advocates for their children with disabilities and special health care needs. PEAL Parent Advisors assist parents and other caregivers by:

- Helping them understand their rights
- Reviewing IEPs and other documents to assist families to provide meaningful input
- Sharing resources about an issue or concern
- Connecting families with other agencies or organizations

Our goal is to guide and equip families to be empowered as equal team members with the confidence to advocate for their children.

**Who are the PEAL Parent Advisors?** We are parents of children with disabilities who have been through the special education process and have experience accessing health care resources. Parent advisors have a deep knowledge of special education laws, effective educational practices and health care systems for children and youth. In this article, get to know two of our Parent Advisors.

**Ana Pacheco** is based in our Philadelphia office and works across PA with many families in the Latino community. Ana is an accomplished disability and education rights advocate. She led the movement for including the Latino community in services and resources for individuals who have intellectual disabilities. Ana also coordinated the Latino Project for statewide training and outreach for the PA Partnership Training for People with Disabilities and Family Members. Ana’s strategy is to work with agencies who support Hispanic families with face-to-face access to families, which is appreciated in the Hispanic culture. Ana’s son, Joel, received special education services and graduated from the School District of Philadelphia in 2010. Ana provides bilingual support for families statewide whose first language is Spanish.

**Kathleen Haigh** works with families in Central Pennsylvania. Kathleen was born and raised in Cumberland County, where her connections and community knowledge are at its best. Kathleen is the mother of twins, a boy and a girl. Her son was diagnosed with autism before the age of three. Kathleen became his advocate and her son was able to attend the same schools and programs as his sister. Both twins graduated from High School last year. Kathleen is on the board of directors of the Autism Society Greater Harrisburg Area and is committed to empowering parents to become the best advocates for their children and themselves.

Parent Advisors educate, and inform families through phone conversations and/or email in order to reach families throughout PA. Individual assistance is only one of the services that PEAL provides — check out our website for a calendar of training and events, as well as other resources. To speak with a Parent Advisor, call us toll free at 1-866-950-1040 or email info@pealcenter.org and our Intake Coordinator will get you connected!

“When families have the information they need, they become better advocates for their children and better IEP team members. You can do this, and PEAL can help.”

- Cindy Duch, Director of Parent Advising, PEAL Center
Many people know PEAL for our work with families, youth and young adults related to understanding rights and inclusive education – but PEAL has another role that may surprise you!

The PEAL Center has served as Pennsylvania’s Family-to-Family (F2F) Health Information Center since 2007. As the F2F, PEAL helps families, youth and young adults who have questions or need assistance with physical and behavioral health care issues. PEAL can provide resources, information and support to families who have a child, youth or young adult with special health care needs.

What does PEAL do as PA’s Family to Family (F2F) Health Information Center?
The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services funds an F2F Health Information Center in each state to help families navigate healthcare systems. PEAL staff understand the challenges that families face because they have first-hand experience navigating health care systems and services.

How can PEAL F2F help me?
PEAL F2F provides one on one support and referrals, training for families, youth and young adults, as well as advocating for and connecting families to health care resources. PEAL can help answer questions about family participation in health care, medical home practices, insurance coverage, screening, navigating systems, and transition to adulthood.

PEAL can assist families of children and youth with special health care needs when they:

→ Are learning about a new diagnosis
→ Need help in figuring out where to start in the maze of health care services
→ Need assistance, support or direction with how to find, coordinate, and/or pay for needed services.
→ Are having difficulty with an existing service or getting a new service

Even experienced families encounter new challenges – insurance plans change, service definitions change, families move to another county. Figuring out all of the pieces can be challenging; PEAL connects you with family members who have tackled these things and figured them out -- this experience can be invaluable.

PEAL Center staff are knowledgeable about many issues related to children and youth with special health care needs. PEAL also partners with other organizations and can connect families with others if we aren’t able to assist. If you have a child with a disability or chronic health condition, call PEAL so we can help you get answers to your questions and connect you to valuable resources.

SUPPORT PROVIDED by PEAL F2F:
- Applying for Medical Assistance for my child
- Responding to denial of services
- Navigating the managed care, behavioral health, and educational systems
- Obtaining Therapeutic Support Staff or other behavioral health services
- Developing a health care plan or emergency plan at school
- Talking to school about a 504 plan that needs to be developed or revised
- Discussing a child’s diagnosis with the school
- Planning next steps when a child has a new diagnosis
- Addressing bullying at school or in the community
- Responding to truancy charges because of child’s medical issues
- Preparing for a child to turn 18 or 21
- Finding a support group
Project MAX, an educational initiative to increase learning opportunities for students with complex needs across PA, is in its final year! For the last five years, the PEAL Center and Hispanos Unidos para Niños Excepcionales (HUNE) have worked together with PA Training and Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAN) to learn and share the tenets of MAX, such as:

→ Presuming competence,
→ Having high expectations, and
→ Providing access to age-appropriate content, aligned to grade level standards.

Since its inception more than 400 individuals from 42 of the 67 counties in PA have participated in the Statewide Parent Network through exhibits, trainings, information sessions, Family Gatherings, and Lunch & Learn webinars. Network members share the belief that through changing the expectations of adults, we can maximize the potential of all students and make real change.

In October 2017, active members in the Parent Network participated in a two-day sustainability and expansion workshop. Through the workshop, attendees established six workgroups that committed to continue the tenets of Project MAX for students with complex needs. One of the results of this workshop is the development of a new name for the network: Families to the MAX: Pennsylvania Statewide Family Network (F2MAX). Since then, F2MAX has grown to include all people interested in maximizing the potential of all children, including any student receiving special education services. F2MAX looks forward to welcoming new families as we expand our focus to students with emotional and behavioral support needs.

Mission of F2MAX: Leading change for children with diverse needs by maximizing opportunities in the home, classroom, and community.

Our Vision: Empower students, families, and communities to believe that all children can reach their maximum potential.

Through family, educational and community collaboration, we can overcome obstacles, promote change and raise expectations for all children. When we work together and believe in the abilities of all students, everyone can learn and be proud of their accomplishments.
Deaf-Blind Project

Deaf-Blindness is a condition of a combined vision and hearing loss, requiring specific instructional strategies that address the presence of both sensory impairments. Under a federal grant, administered through the Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAN), the Pennsylvania Deaf-Blind Project offers a variety of training, technical assistance, and resources to assist educators and families in the areas of assessment, instruction, and family involvement activities.

An annual Family Learning Conference is offered to families to promote connection, support, and learning. The Conference will be held from June 22nd – 23rd in Harrisburg, PA. Come experience sharing, caring, and learning together with staff from PaTTAN and the PA Deaf-Blind Project, as well as other families living with deaf-blindness. Educational Consultants are available at each PaTTAN site to support school teams and two Family Consultants are available statewide, providing local, state, and national resources.

For more information about the Deaf-Blind Project, contact Director, Sue Ann Houser, shouser@pattan.net or Family Consultants: Molly Black, mblack@pattan.net or Patti McGowan, pmcgowan@pattan.net.

Pennsylvania Deaf-Blind Project
Serving Families, Educators, and Service Providers of Children and Youth who are Deaf-Blind

“The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched. They must be felt within the heart. ”
- Helen Keller

Save the Date!
2018
Family Learning Conference
June 22 & 23, 2018
Best Western Premier Hotel & Conference Center
800 East Park Drive, Harrisburg

If your child has both a vision and hearing loss, your family (parents/guardians, siblings and child with deaf-blindness) may be eligible to attend a weekend learning conference (at little or no cost).

Come experience sharing, caring, and learning together with staff from PaTTAN and the Pennsylvania Deaf-Blind Project and other families living with deaf-blindness.

Please be watching for more details in the coming months!

For more information, contact:
Molly Black at 724-863-1283, mblack@pattan.net or Patti McGowan at 724-864-2553, pmcgowan@pattan.net or visit our website at: www.pattan.net (drop-down-Educational Initiative: Deaf-Blind)

PEAL is a partner with the Deaf-Blind Project and participates in the Family Learning Conference in order to share resources and connect with families.
Parent Education & Advocacy Leadership Center educates and empowers families to ensure that children, youth and young adults with disabilities and special health care needs lead rich, active lives as full members of their schools and communities.

The PEAL team works with families, youth & young adults to help them:

- Understand their rights and advocate for themselves,
- Be included and educated in their home schools, and
- Access high quality, coordinated physical & behavioral health care.

The graphic to the right represents the six key strategies used by PEAL to accomplish our work. Contact PEAL to learn more about how we can help your family!

PEAL services are provided at no charge to families as they are funded by federal, state and private grants.

Want to Help the PEAL Center?

Donate to the PEAL Center by signing up to receive the newsletter electronically—saving PEAL $1.50 per issue!

Go to www.pealcenter.org and click on “Join our mailing list” at the top of the page or call 1-866-950-1040.

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