

# Working within the Educational System: What BCBA's Need to Know about IDEA & School Collaboration

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# Hello! I'm Ariane Gauvreau

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- Live in Shoreline, WA with my husband and two children
- Use she/her pronouns



# The Educational System at a Glance

- General education vs. special education
- Federal law → State regulations → District policies
- Key laws BCBA's intersect with:
  - IDEA
  - Section 504
  - ADA (brief mention)

# Special Education Teachers

- **Average caseloads**
  - 8-17 students for teachers supporting students with complex support needs 6-15
  - 20-30 for resource room teachers
  - SLPs and OTs may have 80+ students, consultation is very common
  - Vary greatly by district and union bargaining
- **Average Class Size in WA**
  - 19-24 in K-3
  - 25-30 4-5
  - 24-25 in middle and high school
  - Secondary teachers could have 150+ students
- Sped teachers are also responsible for collaborating with general education teachers...but may not have protected time to do so, or may collaborate with MANY gen ed teachers

# IDEA

- **IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act)** is a federal special education law that ensures eligible students with disabilities receive a **Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)**.
- IDEA is designed to ensure students:
  - Can **access and make progress** in the general education curriculum
  - Receive **individualized supports** based on educational need
  - Are educated with peers **to the maximum extent appropriate**



# Five Core Principles of IDEA

- **FAPE** – Free Appropriate Public Education
- **LRE** – Least Restrictive Environment
- **Individualized Education Program (IEP)**
- **Parent Participation** in decision-making
- **Procedural Safeguards** to protect student and family rights

# Special Education Eligibility Categories and Service Determination

- Special education eligibility is a **legal determination**, not a medical diagnosis
- Eligibility category **does not dictate services or influence an intervention plan**
- A student must:
  - Meet criteria for a disability category **and**
  - Need **specially designed instruction** to access education
- Instead, student services are driven by:**
  - Present level of performance
  - Impact of student's disability of their education
  - IEP goals

# IEPs: What BCBAs Need to Know

- **What Is an IEP?**

- An **Individualized Education Program (IEP)** is a **legally binding document** that outlines how a student with a disability will receive **pecially designed instruction and supports** to access and make progress in school.

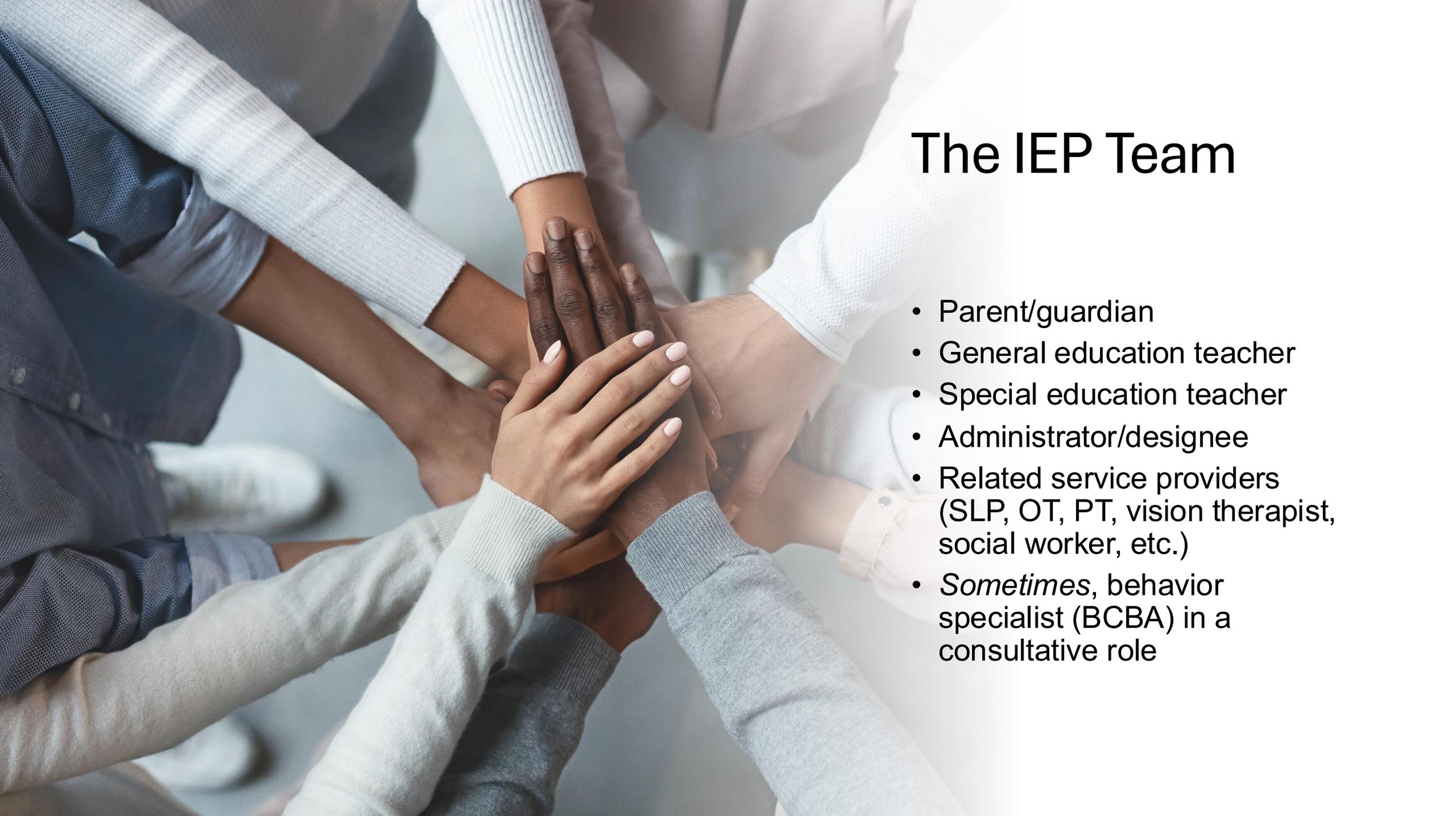
- **What an IEP Includes**

- **Present Levels of Performance (PLAAPF)**
- **Annual goals** (academic, functional, behavioral)
- **Special education services** and related services
- **Accommodations and/or modifications**
- **Behavior supports** (BIP, if needed)
- **Placement** and time in general education

# IEPs and Complex Behavior



- **How IEPs Guide Behavior Support**
  - Behavior goals must link to **educational impact**
  - BIPs are implemented **within the IEP framework**
  - Data collection focuses on **progress toward IEP goals**
  - Supports must align with **Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)**
- **The BCBA's Role on the IEP Team**
  - Contribute data from FBAs and observations
  - Recommend **function-based, feasible supports**
  - Help translate ABA strategies into **school-based practices**
  - Support fidelity through coaching—not enforcement



# The IEP Team

- Parent/guardian
- General education teacher
- Special education teacher
- Administrator/designee
- Related service providers (SLP, OT, PT, vision therapist, social worker, etc.)
- *Sometimes*, behavior specialist (BCBA) in a consultative role

# Services students may receive at school

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- Social Emotional support
- Adaptive
- Fine and Gross motor (OT and/or PT)
- Communication (SLP)
- Reading, Writing, Math
- Vision



# What are schools legally required to do for students served on IEPs?

- Provide access to education, including the general education curriculum.
  - **All students are entitled to access gen ed settings. Students should not “earn” their way into inclusive settings.**
- Implement the IEP as written, including assessing and reporting progress on IEP goals
- Use evidence-based practices

# How BCBA's can support IEP Teams

1. **Understand the IEP** so you support the goals in home/community settings
2. **Ground your recommendations within the IEP** – link supports directly to IEP goals, access to instruction and general education settings, participation in school routines/activities
3. **Suggest realistic, school-based supports** – align strategies/recommendations with classroom routines, available staffing, and existing systems. ***1:1 Paras  $\neq$  more support if we do not have a solid intervention plan in place.***
4. **Be a good collaborator and build relationships with educators** - respect educators' expertise, seek to understand the school context so your recommendations can align, have realistic expectations of teachers' time.
  1. The most effective support is not the perfect plan—it's the plan the team can implement consistently

