**Parent Handout: Understanding IRPs vs IEPs**

# What Is an IRP?

IRP = Individualized Reading Plan (sometimes called Intervention Plan).

Not the same as an IEP (Individualized Education Program under IDEA federal law).

It is a general education intervention plan, usually offered when a child is struggling with reading and the school:

* • does not find the child eligible for special education yet, or
* • is trying to use RTI/MTSS (Response to Intervention / Multi-Tiered Systems of Support) first.

# Typical Components of an IRP

Screening or benchmark results (e.g., DIBELS, MAP).

Reading skill deficits identified (decoding, fluency, comprehension, etc.).

Specific interventions (extra small groups, pull-outs, computer programs).

Timeline and improvement goals.

Progress monitoring reviews (often every 6–9 weeks).

# Key Distinction

IEP (Special Education):

* • Legally binding under IDEA.
* • Provides specialized instruction, related services, accommodations, and parental rights.
* • Enforceable through due process.

IRP (General Education):

* • Local, school-based plan.
* • No legal protections.
* • Can be changed or stopped without parent consent.
* • Short-term and less intensive.

# Why Schools Use IRPs

Support for students below grade-level benchmarks.

To show “general education interventions” before evaluating for special ed.

Sometimes, unfortunately, used instead of IEPs for children who do have disabilities like dyslexia — which can be a legal dispute.

* Important: An IRP does not guarantee evidence-based structured literacy (e.g., Wilson, Orton-Gillingham, Barton).

# Advantages of an IRP

Quick Help – Can be put in place faster than an IEP.

Flexible – School can adjust interventions easily.

General Education Support – Keeps child in the classroom with extra help.

Regular Progress Checks – Reviews every 6–9 weeks.

# Disadvantages of an IRP

Not Legally Binding – Parents have no due-process rights.

Limited Services – Only addresses reading; no related services or accommodations.

No Guarantee of Evidence-Based Instruction – Interventions may be generic.

Can Delay Special Education – Sometimes used to stall IEP evaluations, violating Child Find obligations.

# Why Schools Choose IRPs Over IEPs

Cost/Resources: Cheaper, fewer specialized staff required.

Flexibility: No legal oversight or compliance.

RTI/MTSS Data Collection: Schools often say they must “try interventions first.”

Avoiding Labeling: Keeps district from formally acknowledging a disability, which triggers legal obligations.

# Key Takeaway for Parents

An IRP can be useful as short-term support, but it cannot replace an IEP when a child has a disability like dyslexia.

If your child needs specialized instruction, long-term structured literacy, or legal protections, an IEP (or at least a Section 504 plan) is the correct pathway.

**REMEMBER:** If your school offers an IRP instead of an IEP, ask in writing:

* • How will this address my child’s diagnosed disability?
* • What evidence-based program will be used?
* • How will progress be monitored, and what happens if progress is not made?