

Extended School Year (ESY) Services: What Parents Should Know

(Bison Bridge Behavioral Insights Parent Resource — K–12 Edition)

What Is Extended School Year (ESY)?

Extended School Year (ESY) services are special education and related services provided **outside the regular school year**. These services are offered **at no cost to families** when the IEP team determines they are needed for the student to make meaningful progress.

ESY is not the same as summer school. It is not meant to help a child catch up. It is designed to **prevent serious loss of skills** that would take a long time to recover.

Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), ESY services must be considered based on **individual needs** and are **not limited to academic skills**. According to federal regulations (34 CFR § 300.106), ESY services may include goals related to behavior, communication, self-help, and other non-academic areas if they are necessary for the child to receive a free appropriate public education (FAPE).

Who Qualifies for ESY?

Not every student with an IEP qualifies. The IEP team must decide if the student is at risk of:

- **Significant regression** of critical skills over a break
- **Slow recoupment** or difficulty regaining those skills
- **Loss of behavior, communication, or independence skills** that are essential for learning

What Does “Significant Regression” Mean?

Significant regression refers to a substantial decline in previously learned skills during extended breaks, such as summer vacation. It is more than typical forgetting. It involves losing key abilities in areas such as communication, behavior, motor skills, or academics, to the point that the student will not quickly recover without support.

How Is It Measured?

- Review of past progress monitoring or progress reports
- Comparison of performance before and after long breaks
- Teacher or therapist observations
- Data showing the number of weeks or months it takes for the student to return to their prior level of functioning

Typically, if it takes longer than **6 to 8 weeks** to recoup lost skills, this may be considered significant.

The decision must be based on **data**, not just a diagnosis or parent request.

What Might ESY Look Like?

ESY services can be different from the regular school year. They are based on **individual needs** and goals, such as:

- A few hours per week of instruction or therapy
- Services at school, in the home, or community-based settings
- Individual or small group work

The focus is usually on maintaining previously learned skills, not teaching new ones.

When Is ESY Decided?

The IEP team typically discusses ESY during the **annual review meeting**, especially in the winter or early spring. Parents can also request a meeting earlier if needed.

The IEP must include:

- A statement on whether ESY is needed
 - What services will be provided if approved
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What Parents Say



- “I thought ESY was just for academics, but it helped with behavior and routines.”
 - “The data showed my child really did lose skills over long breaks.”
 - “It gave my child consistency and confidence heading into the next year.”
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Parent Reflection Space

- Does my child lose skills during long breaks from school?
 - How long does it take them to catch back up?
 - Has the school collected data that supports a need for ESY?
 - Have I shared my concerns with the IEP team?
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Important Reminder

ESY decisions are based on individual student needs. You are a full member of the IEP team and can ask for data, share your observations, and help decide what supports will help your child maintain progress through the year.

To learn more, visit www.ksde.org or ask your school for written guidelines on ESY.