

FEP Newsletter Tips for Teachers



March 2022

Family Friendly IEPs

Ideas to consider for a family-centered IEP meeting

Before the meeting:

Go into the meeting with an open and judgment-free mind.

Remember that the student should always be the main focus and is the reason for the meeting. The family should be able to see, hear, and feel this purpose when they come to the meeting.

Consider the seating and the way the room is set up. Make sure the arrangement doesn't isolate anyone. We don't want parents to feel like it's them against everyone else.

Send a reminder email or phone call to the family a couple of days before the meeting.

Is this the family's first IEP meeting? The Initial IEP meeting is crucial. This meeting will set the tone for how future meetings will go and your relationship with the family.

During the Meeting:

Consider using a planned statement to begin your meetings:

"We are here to discuss the needs and strengths of your son or daughter, (NAME). We want to work with you to form a plan that will best support your student and help him or her gain skills in areas of need. In order to do that, we want to hear your concerns about his or her education. We also want to hear about his or her strengths so we can use those to support their learning. We have put together a draft with some ideas, and we need your help to make sure it aligns with your thoughts."

Go around the table and have everyone introduce themselves. This helps families connect with team members and learn their names and roles. If it's a large team, it's helpful to use nametags or name plates.

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When speaking to the parents, use their actual names and not mom and dad.

Start with inviting parents to offer what they see as strengths of their student. Email or call to let them know beforehand. This will give them time to think about it.

Identify the most important thing to be shared in the meeting. We suggest beginning with strengths and focusing most of the time discussing and clarifying specially designed instruction (SDI). Ultimately, a parent wants to know what will be done to help their child.

- Use plain language.
- Instead of using the word “discrepant” Say: “We know that your son, Juan, needs some help in reading.”
- Instead of saying, our assessments show that he is in the 8th percentile, or significantly behind peers- consider-”We worked with Juan to see where he needs the most help.”
- Instead of saying his fluency, decoding, comprehension needs improvement- consider- “Juan needs help reading smoothly so that he can remember what he read.”
- Instead of saying SDI and referring to the graphs, consider, “Special education is designed to help Juan grow in his areas of greatest need. This is why we’re here to make a plan to help your son. Based on our testing, he needs special education in the area of reading. His goal area on this plan is for reading. Specially designed instruction means the time that Juan will receive special education. Our goal for him is:_____. He will be going to the special education teacher for # minutes a day as shown here in our plan. This is the way that we will keep track of his growth to see if we are meeting the goal for Juan’s reading.” (show rubric or graph)
- Ask regularly for questions or the parent’s feedback. Read the parent’s non-verbal cues. Stop when needed to address them. This will save time in the long run because it may save lengthy meetings in the future.



ASK
Resource Center



We encourage you to check out ASK resources upcoming webinars about transition and their upcoming events.
www.askresource.org/events

When and How to Involve Your FEP

Your FEP is just a phone call or email away. As a parent of a child with special needs, we can provide a unique perspective during IEP meetings. We can offer ideas and help the team brainstorm, as well as connect with families by talking through the IEP process with them.

We can also be a mediator for IEP teams and help with conflict resolution, while helping the team build back broken relationships.

It's never too early to invite your FEP to be a part of the IEP team. Don't wait until there is conflict or disagreement. We encourage you to have a conversation about your FEP with the family even if we are not involved yet.

