

# “Taking Charge” of IEP Meetings- for new School Principals And Other IEP Team Leads

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# The Dream vs the Reality

## *The IEP Meeting....*

- A collaborative, creative brainstorming team on behalf of students

-or-

- Accusatory and adversarial
- Fraught with legal challenges
- Boring
- Complicated

# The Role of the IEP Team Lead

- Run the agenda
- Follow all steps
- Make sure parents are heard
- Make sure professionals are heard,  
and are not attacked
- Assist the team in coming to consensus
- Make final decisions on behalf of the district

# The IEP Process

1. Clarify meeting purpose
2. Make introductions
3. Review all reports and progress
4. Establish current performance (“Present Levels”)
5. Determine eligibility (if appropriate)
6. Develop transition to adult life plans

7. Set goals for year
8. Decide accommodations or modifications needed
9. Select Special Education services to address goals
10. Overall description of program- offer of FAPE
11. Complete required documentation and signatures

# Meeting Purpose

1. Initial/ Triennial- Must establish eligibility and need
2. Annual review- Review progress and set new goals, change services if needed
3. Other:
  - New assessment
  - Manifestation Determination Review
  - Parent or teacher request for review
  - Sharing new assessment results

# Required Members at all IEPs (or it's not legal)

- Representative of the district
- Parents
- Special Education Teacher or Specialist
- General Education Teacher
- Anyone who has conducted assessment
- The student if over 15

*Can use an Excusal*

# Representative of the District must be . . .

- Qualified to provide or supervise the provision of special education
- Knowledgeable about the general education curriculum
- Able to commit the resources of the district

# Introductions

- Sets tone for the meeting
- Parents must know who everyone is and their role
- Sit parents next to someone who is trusted (often the Case Manager)
- Establishes that you are in charge of keeping the meeting on track, and observing professional courtesy

# Review all Reports

- Reports must be reviewed by qualified person
- Everyone should have a copy of the report as it is being reviewed
- Allow people to ask questions and express concerns
- Make sure the specialist clarifies any “jargon”
- The report can be modified if all agree

# Reports Prior to the Meeting

- Assessor can review with parents prior to the meeting
- Parents can have copies of reports prior to the meeting (if completed)

# Review of Progress

- Review all the existing Annual Goals
- There should be data supporting each of the goals
- Allow parents to respond to progress reports

# Present Levels of Performance

- *Start* with parent input (considers their concerns)
- Review *all* areas
- Celebrate areas in which student is doing well!
- Performance expressed in terms of what the student can and can't do- scores don't belong here

# Present Levels, continued

- Easy place to add comments parents make (note “parent reports” if not all agree)
- Be sure to put in the latest statewide test scores
- Note any areas in which goals are needed

# Impact of Disability

This phrase should be the one that interprets for all other educators *how* the disability impacts progress in core curriculum. The team should *not* decide placement and services, but what challenges the student faces, or how the disability makes learning difficult.

# Determine Eligibility

- For initials and triennials only
- Establish presence of a disability (13 categories)
- Establish *need* for Special Education services
- For Specific Learning Disability, there is a form

# Transition to Adult Life

- Required for all Special Education students 15 and older
- Case Manager should have done lots of preliminary work
- Student should speak if able
- Sets the tone for the whole rest of the IEP, in terms of what student wants to do

# Annual Goals

- In all areas in which there are concerns/student is behind
- Get input from parents
- “Guideposts” to outcomes
- Must be measurable and quantifiable
- Must have baseline
- Must be clear who will work on
- Helps confirm “Educational Benefit”

# Description (including baseline)

Required elements:

1. Progress on last year's goal/reason for goal- This explains why we have a goal in this area
2. Description of behavior or skill- this is the skill we will measure in the goal
3. Current accuracy, consistency, and how measured

# Annual Goal

- By (date)
- Student name
- Setting/conditions
- Skill or behavior (same as baseline)
- Accuracy (how well)
- Consistency (over how much time/trials)
- How measured

# Accommodations and Modifications

- Allowances the student needs *across the school day*
- State Assessments
- Accommodations: **Do not** substantially alter the construct of test/assignment/course
- Modifications: **Do** substantially alter the construct
- The team decides- general education teachers must help

# Special Education Services

- Necessary to meet goals
- Consider all adults available in the educational setting
- Multidisciplinary
- Frequency, duration and location
- Provider
- Eligibility  $\neq$  Services!

# Offer of FAPE

- Before the meeting ends, you must have in writing what you are proposing to offer.
- The representative of the district makes the final decision on behalf of the district
- “Overall Description of Program” describes the student’s school day, the services s/he will receive, where and by whom.
- Put this in writing even if you anticipate that parents will disagree.

# Required Documentation

- Make sure everyone who attended signs
- Parents must sign that they were in attendance.
- If parents don't want to sign in agreement, let them think about it for a few days, but set limits.
- Get parents to indicate everything they are in agreement with

# If Parents Disagree

- OK to try to compromise within reason during the meeting
- If not willing to change something, put it in writing and let parent indicate disagreement
- Make a plan to meet again as soon as possible to discuss that area
- Check with Special Ed. Administration for advice on how to proceed.
- Follow up with “Prior Written Notice to Parents of Action”

# Solving Disagreement

- Request further assessments
- Bring in other experts
- Consult with district office Special Education Department
- Try to come up with a “win-win” solution
- Agree to a “short term” trial (either your idea or parents’)

# If Team Members are Inappropriate

- If your staff is inappropriate:
  - Ask for a break
  - Speak to them outside the meeting
- If it's the parents or an outside party:
  - Ask for professional courtesy
  - Refer back to agenda
  - Ask for a break
  - Stop the meeting and plan to reconvene

# Parent Action

- CDE Complaints
- OCR Complaints
- Due Process
  - Resolution Session
  - Mediation
  - Hearing

# If Parents Request Due Process

- Assist them in accessing the required paperwork (on SELPA website)
- Let your district Special Education office know asap
- Resolution Session will be the next step- many things will be resolved at this level

# In Summary.....

- 98% of all IEPs will be collaborative, productive meetings
- Parents will appreciate your caring and involvement
- Staff will appreciate your leadership and protection
- Be prepared for the ones that are challenging, and get help if needed!
- Keep informed of changes in special education information