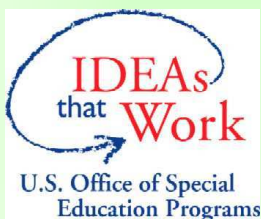


# Tips for the IEP meeting



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The IEP meeting is an important meeting where you, the parents, and the school come together to discuss your child's unique educational needs and create a plan to meet those needs.

It is important to prepare for your IEP meeting so you can be a more knowledgeable, active participant in the decision-making process and help guide your child's educational success.

We hope this information will help both parents and students prepare for the IEP meeting and become the best advocates possible.

**Participate!**

**Participate**

**Participate!**

# Preparation Tips for Your Child's Individualized Education Program (IEP) Meeting

In an IEP meeting, people are more comfortable when they feel that they are prepared. When considering an IEP meeting, apply a two part strategy.



1. Know your rights and responsibilities in regards to the special education and IEP process. This is essential for parents to participate more meaningfully in the meeting. Parents need to be true participating team members who help develop, review, and revise the IEP.

2. Advance preparation is necessary to be comfortable in knowing that your information is based on facts and thoughtful opinions about the needs and strengths of your child and the concerns you have for him/her.

Parents are important members of an IEP team. There are several educational professionals at an IEP meeting who all have their areas of expertise. You as an informed parent are also an expert. Parents are experts on their child and therefore the child's best advocate. An IEP meeting should be a collaboration of experts who come together to develop the most effective plan possible to meet the child's needs.

The following pages will help you gather and record important information that you may find useful at your meeting, as well as give you tips on what to do before and during the IEP meeting.



# Positive Student Profile

This form is to be filled out by the parent to provide a “snapshot” of their child which should be reflected in his/her IEP.

1. **Who is your child?** Describe your child including information such as place in family, personality, likes and dislikes.
2. **What are your child's strengths (abilities)?** Highlight all the areas in which your child does well, including academically and socially.
3. **What are your child's successes?** List all successes, no matter how small.
4. **What are your child's greatest challenges?** List the areas in which your child has the most difficulties.



# Parts of the IEP

There should be written statements of:

1. Present level of academic achievement and functional performance, including how the child's disability affects involvement in and progress in the general education curriculum
2. Measurable annual goals including academic and functional goals, designed to meet the child's needs that result from the child's disability to enable the child to be involved in and make progress in the general educational curriculum, and meet the child's other educational needs
3. How progress towards goals will be measured and when reports of progress will be issued
4. Special education and related services, and supplementary aids and services to be provided to the child or on behalf of the child, and program modifications or supports for school personnel that will be provided to enable the child to advance appropriately toward attaining annual goals and to be involved in and progress in the general education curriculum and to participate in extracurricular activities and other non-academic activities
5. Explanation of the extent the child will not participate with nondisabled children in regular classes or activities
6. Accommodations needed to measure academic achievement and functional performance on state and district-wide assessments. If the IEP team determines alternate assessment is needed, a statement of why the child cannot take the regular assessment and what alternate assessment is appropriate
7. Date services and modifications begin, and their frequency, location, and duration
8. Extended School Year (ESY) services if deemed necessary by the team
9. Transition planning beginning no later than the first IEP to be in effect when the child turns 16, or younger if deemed appropriate by the team





Three little words...



Where's the data?

Special education services for a child should be based on data, not opinion. Evaluation data provides the basis for providing, increasing, decreasing, or discontinuing special education services. Evaluation data is also used to determine a child's placement and the goals and objectives or benchmarks that form the basis for instruction.

One of the most useful questions parents can ask when they have concerns about recommendations made for their child's program is "where's the data?" Any instructional recommendations, proposals to increase or decrease services, proposed placement in an alternative setting, etc., should be supported by data that establishes the need. It's all about your child's needs and...



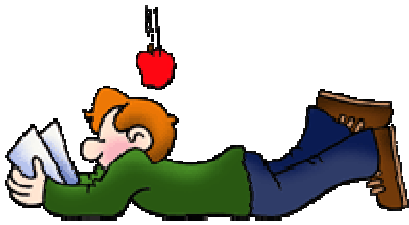
Documentation is key



# Use Questions to Find Answers

As the parent of a child with disabilities, you are a valuable member of your child's Individualized Education Program (IEP) team. You have knowledge about your child from which school personnel and other IEP team members will benefit. Likewise, they have information and professional perspectives that will help you understand your child's educational program. The following questions can help you gather information from others and be an effective member of the IEP team.

- ◆ Would you tell me more about\_\_\_\_\_?
- ◆ That term (or acronym) is unfamiliar to me. Would you please explain it?
- ◆ Would you please explain\_\_\_\_?
- ◆ How will I know this plan is working?
- ◆ Would you please rephrase that so I'm sure I understand?
- ◆ What will the school propose to do about\_\_\_?
- ◆ Could you please share the data to support \_\_\_?
- ◆ Could you give me more specifics about \_\_\_?
- ◆ I think I heard you say\_\_\_\_. Is that correct?
- ◆ How was the progress you mentioned measured?
- ◆ That is interesting. Could you tell me more about it so I'm sure I understand your view?
- ◆ How long will we need to use this intervention to determine if it's successful?
- ◆ What are some other methods?
- ◆ Could you share the research on the effectiveness of that method?
- ◆ What are some other options?
- ◆ What assistive technology might benefit my child?
- ◆ Could you give a few examples of \_\_\_\_?
- ◆ What time of day does \_\_\_ usually happen?
- ◆ When can I expect to receive that report?
- ◆ What was the reason or rationale for\_\_\_\_?
- ◆ I've noticed\_\_\_\_ at home. What do you see at school?
- ◆ What does "disruptive" (or another nonspecific, general term) mean?
- ◆ You say the policy is \_\_\_\_\_. May I please have a copy of that policy to read?
- ◆ Do we all agree that \_\_\_\_\_ (summary statement)?



## Tips - Before the Meeting

- \*Be positive in your approach and expectations
- \*Recognize “old baggage” and leave it outside. Think of the upcoming meeting as a business meeting
- \*Write down your questions, concerns and ideas beforehand so you can take your notes to the meeting
- \*Make an agenda of your main concerns to take to the meeting. This will help keep you on track and so you don't forget to mention something important during the meeting
- \*Identify the real concerns—not the symptoms
- \*Set priorities
- \*Review and know your child's records (educational and medical)
- \*Get any additional records or information that you need and organize it so you can find what you need when you need it
- \*Review (or find out) your rights and responsibilities
- \*Know who is going to be attending the meeting ahead of time so there are no surprises
- \*Recognize the role of professionals
- \*Remind yourself that you are the expert on your child
- \*Form positive approaches to address particular concerns
- \*Anticipate possible areas of disagreement and be prepared to discuss these particular issues
- \*Make plans to bring someone with you for moral support and to help take notes. IEP meetings cover a lot of information and can be overwhelming at times so its helpful to have another set of ears listening to the discussion and taking notes that you can review when you get home
- \*Consider bringing a picture of your child to the meeting (if he/she is not going to be present)
- \*Dress appropriately for the occasion



## Tips - At the Meeting

- \*Arrive early and position yourself at the meeting
- \*Start the meeting with an expression of appreciation setting positive ground rules
- \*Discuss your child's strengths and focus on his/her successes first
- \*Work off the meeting agenda you brought and focus on one concern at a time
- \*Focus on the issue—not personalities (again leave the “old baggage” outside)
- \*Remember to stay focused on your child's NEEDS—this meeting is not about school officials or school resources and it's not about parents either—it's about your child and his/her needs
- \*Ask a lot of questions to gain the information and explanations you need in order to help you make the best decisions for your child
- \*Listen to understand other points of view and perspectives, and ask for clarity when needed
- \*Focus on teamwork and collaboration. You all need to work together to help your child achieve his/her goals
- \*Maintain a professional attitude (remember this is a business meeting)
- \*Speak clearly
- \*Use “I” statements, not “You” statements
- \*Set responsibilities (written in the IEP)
- \*Set time limits when appropriate (written in the IEP)
- \*Ask to take a short break during the meeting if you need one
- \*If necessary, suggest that the meeting be continued at another time
- \*Do not feel pressured to make a final decision and sign off on the IEP at the meeting, especially if it needs to be revised based on the discussion you just had. Ask for an updated draft of the IEP that you can take home and review carefully, along with your notes, to make sure it's consistent with what the team agreed upon and that everything is accurately documented. You should however sign the attendance form for the meeting.
- \*End the meeting on a positive note

# Record Keeping

Becoming an excellent record keeper is an essential part of the special education process. Parents need to save important records in an organized way to use for special education program planning and to keep track of their child's educational progress. The key is to find a system that works best for you!

## **Education records to keep include:**

- All school Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) evaluation reports
- Individualized Education Program (IEP) documents (the current IEP and at least the past two IEPs, and this includes functional behavior assessments and behavior plans)
- IEP progress reports and goal updates
- Notes from IEP meetings and conversations with team members
- Records of telephone calls made, emails sent, and meetings attended
- Records of home-school communication
- Signed release of information forms
- Procedural Safeguards notice (parental rights in special education document)
- Meeting notices
- Copies of evaluations done outside of the school
- Report cards and statewide and district-wide assessment scores and reports
- Samples of schoolwork
- Attendance and health records (including vaccinations and information about any medications, allergies or any other healthcare needs)
- Behavior reports (including bus reports, visits to the office, detentions or suspensions)
- Awards received
- Annual student handbook

# Using the PARENT'S IEP "GROCERY" LIST

Ever go to the store and forget something that you needed? An IEP meeting is far more important and emotionally taxing than any shopping trip. Parents can benefit from making an IEP "Grocery" list. Here you can list concerns to help in planning for the meeting and help you be an active participant on the team when you are there. It also helps to document what happened in the meeting.

*The following are some suggestions for how this list might be used.*

- ◆ *Write down your issues and possible solutions in the first column.*
- ◆ *Write down the team's response to each issue in the middle column.*
- ◆ *Write what the response was to each issue and, if appropriate, who is to be in charge of the agreed upon resolution.*
- ◆ *At the end of the meeting you may choose to have members review this record of the meeting to make sure that the information is correct or to make any corrections while all team members are present.*
- ◆ *The resulting record can be signed by all members present then and a copy may be placed in the student's permanent file. (Parents should keep the original for their own file.)*

*The use of this chart enables several things to happen.*

- ◆ *You will know what issues were presented to the team.*
- ◆ *You will have a record of issues presented, the team's decisions and the reasons for the decisions.*
- ◆ *You can have clarifications made at the meeting.*
- ◆ *You will have a record that might be put into the student's permanent file for future reference.*

# Parent's IEP "Grocery" List

(Adapted from Kerr Law Offices "Parents Resolution Chart")

Name of Child \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Meeting \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's Issue/Solution	Team's Response	Resolved?

This list (is) / (is not) to be placed in the student's permanent special education file.

**SIGNATURES OF MEMBERS**

# RESOURCES

PTI Nebraska

[www.pti-nebraska.org](http://www.pti-nebraska.org)

1-800-284-8520

402-346-0525

Nebraska Department of Education

[www.education.ne.gov/sped](http://www.education.ne.gov/sped)

1-402-471-2471

Nebraska Department of Health and  
Human Services School Health Program

<http://www.dhhs.ne.gov/SchoolHealth/>

Family Voices

<http://www.familyvoices.org/>

NICHCY

[www.nichcy.org](http://www.nichcy.org)

1-800-695-0285

ALLIANCE

[www.taalliance.org](http://www.taalliance.org)

1-888-248-8822

CADRE

[www.directionservice.org/cadre](http://www.directionservice.org/cadre)

1-541-686-5060

*PTI Nebraska  
Mission and Vision*

*Providing training, information and support  
To parents in Nebraska who have children with disabilities  
Or special health care needs;  
Enabling parents to have the capacity to improve the  
Educational  
And  
Health care outcomes  
For their children.*

*Resources are made available to parents and others  
Who have an interest in children with  
Disabilities or Special Health care needs.*

*Parents will develop the skills necessary to effectively  
Participate in  
Planning and  
Decision making  
Relating to  
Early intervention,  
Educational,  
Transitional and Health care services.*

*As a result children will be prepared to lead  
Productive,  
Independent adult lives,  
To the  
Maximum extent possible.*