21 Best Practices for Successful IEP Meetings

with
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Introductions
The Basic Premise

IDEA requires schools and parents to work together collaboratively towards consensus for the benefit of children without ever showing them how!

This training is designed to help bridge that gap.
Workshop Objectives

To enhance the skills necessary to conduct effective IEP meetings for the benefit of children with special needs.
Interviews with leaders of parent organizations reveal a number of frequently voiced concerns.
Parent Leaders’ Concerns

1. Getting parents involved in training and activities is very difficult.
2. IEP team members often have differing objectives and constraints – financial, staffing, available resources, and time.
3. Parents often feel alone with their many feelings, and school staff may be insufficiently aware or supportive.
4. Parents may not get evaluation reports ahead of time, so they are often unprepared for and upset by what they hear at IEP meetings.
5. The IEP process is often complicated, confusing, and poorly understood.
6. Staff attending IEP meetings frequently have other commitments and can’t give adequate time to the meeting.
Parent leaders’ concerns

7. Meetings are often scheduled at the convenience of school staff rather than parents.
Parent leaders’ concerns

8. Parents of children with special needs have often had a history of negative experience with school staff.
9. Confidentiality is breached, especially in smaller communities where participants know each other in a variety of contexts.
Parent leaders’ concerns

10. Parents often feel intimidated by the presence of several school personnel and don’t see themselves as equal partners on the IEP team and in their child’s education.
Parent leaders’ concerns

11. General classroom teachers often have a limited understanding of the IEP process and may see the child with special needs as a burden and intrusion.
Parent leaders’ concerns

12. IEP meetings lack a clear structure, including introductions, agenda, and objectives. Tangents are common, as is running out of time.
Seeds of Conflict

1. Process is not well understood.
2. Perception of one against many.
3. Lack of structure.
4. Lack of time.

Question:
How do the parent concerns fit with the “weasel words” (FAPE, LRE, IEP, etc.)?
Maybe DPHs don’t always address the real issues?
Good and Bad Meetings

Think of meetings you have attended that you really enjoyed.

What made them effective? What did you like about them?
Good and **Bad** Meetings

Think of any meetings you have attended that you dreaded.

What made them ineffective and what did you **not** like about them?
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<tr>
<th>The Good</th>
<th>The Bad and the Ugly</th>
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There’s only one list.
Good and Bad Meetings

How can we use these insights to make our IEP meetings the best that they can be?
Characteristics of Ideal IEP Meetings

1. pre-conferencing occurs to assure adequate preparation by all participants
Characteristics of Ideal IEP Meetings

2. pre-conferencing with parents occurs when difficult issues are anticipated
Characteristics of Ideal IEP Meetings

3. evaluation results are reviewed in advance
Characteristics of Ideal IEP Meetings

4. child care has been arranged in advance
Characteristics of Ideal IEP Meetings

5. chairperson meets informally with parents before the formal meeting (to welcome, answer questions, cover procedural safeguards, etc.)
Characteristics of Ideal IEP Meetings

6. all participants are introduced to each other

See checklist
Characteristics of Ideal IEP Meetings

7. A written agenda is visible to all participants, on paper or posted.

Any additions?
Do we agree?
Characteristics of Ideal IEP Meetings

8. round table seating in a comfortable setting, free from noise and distractions
Characteristics of Ideal IEP Meetings

9. refreshments are provided to promote comfort and a welcoming atmosphere
Characteristics of Ideal IEP Meetings

10. each member is time conscious
Characteristics of Ideal IEP Meetings

11. the chairperson budgets the available time and politely redirects participants who wander
Characteristics of Ideal IEP Meetings

12. guidelines (rules) are agreed
phones, focus, time, respect, leaving, owies, etc.
Characteristics of Ideal IEP Meetings

13. an atmosphere of mutual respect exists
Characteristics of Ideal IEP Meetings

14. participants share in and contribute to a common purpose
Characteristics of Ideal IEP Meetings

15. breaks are taken as needed
Characteristics of Ideal IEP Meetings

16. the meeting has a clear purpose; and roles and responsibilities are clear for tasks occurring before, during, and after the meeting.
17. the outcome of the meeting is restated at the end for clarity and any necessary correction.
Characteristics of Ideal IEP Meetings

18. A written “parking lot” is established for issues to be addressed at a later date, rather than letting them get lost.
Characteristics of Ideal IEP Meetings

19. an “open door” exists for airing and sharing between meetings
Characteristics of Ideal IEP Meetings

20. Closing remarks as SOP

What if every meeting ended with a short “debrief”:

- Anything anyone would like to say before we close for today?

- How do we feel about today’s meeting – anything we should do differently next time?
IEP COMMITTEE MEETING EVALUATION

This evaluation form is intended to help us work more effectively together and do our best possible work as a team for the benefit of our student. Thank you for caring enough to share your honest thoughts and feelings.

1) On a scale of 1-10, with 10 high, please indicate your overall satisfaction with today’s meeting by circling one of the following:

   1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10

2) What did you find most worthwhile or commendable about this meeting?

3) How might this meeting have been improved, or what might we do differently next time?

4) Any additional comments?

See handout
Characteristics of Ideal IEP Meetings

21. the meeting ends on a positive note, and participants are thanked for their time and contributions

Great job! Thanks, y’all!
The IEP "Environment"

Stage setting

The meeting

Before  During  After

Concluding
Resources for further study....

Brookes Publishing Co.
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Resources for further study....

Articles and videos at

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Questions?

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