

Parents Individual Education Plan (IE) Report

You know your child best! Parents' perspectives and intimate knowledge of their child are critical when writing an Individualized Education Program (IEP). Use of this form will help you prepare for your child's IEP meeting.

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Instructions for using this report

Before filling out this report, make several copies of it. Keep a couple for yourself, as working copies. Give other copies to husband/wife, brothers and sisters, friends who knows your child well, and any other people who can positively contribute personal knowledge of your child (Sunday school teacher, babysitter, relatives, and other friends - both adult and children you'll be surprised at the different perspectives others have of your child. These all combine to create a more complete picture of who your child really is! Have others complete the forms and return to you. Then, compile all the information into one report you take with you to your child's IEP meeting.

Don't forget to involve your child in this process! If possible, discuss all parts of this form with him/her and have them contribute to it in anyway he/she can. Remember, it's the child's education, the child's life!

Think of this form like you would a grocery list! Post it on your refrigerator door and add things to it when you think about it! Don't wait until the night before the meeting to fill this out.

Compile all the reports written by your family and friends into one "final report." Make copies of this final report and give to all the members of the staffing team, before the meeting. If that's not feasible, give them copies at the meeting and refer to it often during the meeting. Consider asking the staffing team coordinator to attach your report to the final, official staffing report. Your input on this IEP report is as valuable as the information from any professional report about your child!

About Inclusion...

What is inclusion? Inclusion is children with disabilities attending the school they would attend if they didn't have a disability, in general education, age-appropriate classrooms, with supports for the teacher(s) and the student, where all children are active participants in both academic and extra-curricular activities.

When planning for your child's education, don't talk to educators about inclusion for your child UNLESS your child is already attending a truly inclusive school! For too many educators, the word "inclusion" is loaded with negative connotations (too expensive, not done at this school, your child's not ready, etc., etc., etc.). Instead, WRITE inclusion into the IEP. In the following pages, write your child's needs in a way that they can only be met in an inclusive setting! Write the goals so that they can only be met in an inclusive setting.

Remember, too, that children with disabilities should not have aides; teachers should have aides. When children have aides, it's just as if you (the parent) were going to school with your child every day! If your child has an aide in a general education classroom:

- the classroom teacher usually will not take responsibility for your child; your child becomes the responsibility of the aide;
- your child will have a difficult time making friends, because the children don't want to play with an adult around all the time;
- no one else - students or teachers - will learn what your child needs, what he/she can do, or how to educate him/her.

When the teacher has an aide, the teacher directs the aide on when, how, what to help the student with. The aide should be as invisible as possible. Have other children help your child as much as they can; this is only natural. There are many ways children can help. Also, there should be many times when the teacher is directly working with your child and the aide is working with others in the class. When a teacher has an aide, instead of a student, the two educators can co-teach, break the class into groups to teach, etc. Most teachers love the idea of the aide being theirs instead of a student's!

Changing the meeting to change the outcomes.

Before the Meeting

Work to repair any deterioration in your relationships with people who will be at the meeting. Put aside your ego; remember what this is all about: your child's future. Your job is to be in partnership with educators; not to fight with them. Educate them! Resist the temptation to "get even," don't take things personally restrain yourself and maintain your equilibrium and dignity! Take a teacher to lunch!

Have informal (on the telephone, if necessary) pre-IEP meetings with everyone involved. Get a feel for what they'll be saying at the meeting. "Fore warned is fore armed." Ask for any copies of their reports ahead of time. Don't go to the meeting not knowing what's going to happen!

Develop relationships with other parents who are viewed as "leaders" in your school: PTA/PTO folks, committee members, active volunteers, etc. Cultivate them and educate them about you, your family, inclusion, etc. Make allies of them.

Surround yourself with friends and family and "role play" what you think will happen at the meeting. We seem to always be caught off-guard, not having the proper response when someone says something we feel is inappropriate, cruel, wrong, etc. Practice for these times; come up with "responses" that you can pull up when needed. Be prepared!!!

Complete this report and give copies of it to everyone ahead of time. This "final" report will be a compilation of all the reports you've distributed to others.

Plan the Meeting

Move the meeting from the traditional school site to a more neutral setting: your home (yes, your home!); the school library, cafeteria, or your child's classroom; or another community setting that's agreeable to all. Most educators don't like these meetings any more than parents do. So make it different: make it as pleasant as possible. Have refreshments! You bring them or ask others to bring some! Make it festive!

Wherever you have the meeting, don't sit around a table. It's a barrier you don't need. Sit in a circle. Change the dynamics for a different outcome. Sit next to the most powerful person there.

At the Meeting

You run the meeting! Ahead of time, tell the person who sets up the meeting that you'd like to open the meeting.

- Welcome everyone to the meeting, thank them for coming, tell them you're excited about working with all of them as a wonderful team to help your child, etc., etc., etc., and pass out refreshments.
- Ask everyone to please put on a name tag with first names only (get rid of the titles). You bring the name tags and markers.
- Tell everyone that you'd like to start the meeting by having each of them say something wonderful (positive, good, whatever term you want to use) about your child. This will take them by surprise, so tell them they can pass if they need time to think about it; you'll come back to them when they're ready.
- Pass out your summary report (this form or some variation of it) and give a brief synopsis of what you see for your child's long-term future. Let this be the driving force behind everything that happens at the meeting. Think big, think long-term!
- Have one or two people with you who aren't KNOWN as disability advocates (the previously mentioned parent leaders). Their support will help influence decisions made at the meeting; their presence gives you credibility. Your supporters should not sit next to you, but should sit in between the educators.
- Be prepared to compromise. ALWAYS have one or more things that you'll "give up." This makes you appear "reasonable" which, in turn, makes educators more willing to be reasonable.
- Go in to the meeting knowing that you'll be satisfied if the outcome is "what you can live with." This is the basis of consensus building: it's not that everyone gets everything they want, it's that everyone "can live with" the decisions/arrangements agreed upon.

Getting What Your Child Needs at the Meeting

- Be positive. Try not to talk about the past and what the school has/hasn't done. Let go of the past and stay focused on the future. Always start with a clean slate.
- If your opinions are ignored or dismissed, be a broken record. DON'T argue their points; that gets you off your points! Keep repeating, without escalating your words or tone of voice, what you believe about your child's strengths, needs, etc.
- DON'T get suckered in to any argument, whether it's about you, your child, the school, etc. You're not there to argue; you're there to educate!
- Be prepared to compromise in the short-run to ensure long-term success. Lay your cards on the table about what you can "give up" and what you can't.

Finally, and Perhaps, Most Importantly

About 90% of what goes on at IEP meetings has little or nothing to do with you or your child!!!! This has been verified by many teachers! The dynamics and outcomes of IEP meetings have less to do with you and/or your child than they do with the nature of the people attending and the positions/places they represent. I have witnessed, and have been told by educators, that what happens at an IEP meeting has to do mostly with the relationships between the other people attending!

Parents do not know, and usually never will know, about the internal politics and goings-on within our schools. Contrary to our feelings, all the folks from the school who attend IEP meetings are not "on the same side" nor are they of one mind! Within every school are principals who don't like a certain teacher and vice-versa; classroom teachers who don't like special educators and vice-versa; long-term relationships between staff members that ebb and flow; personal differences and life experiences between all staff members; and more.

Often, what happens at IEP meetings are skirmishes between educators that we, and our children, just happen to get caught in the middle of! You may know about a certain educator who agrees with you, but then at the meeting, this person appears to be against you! What happened? Somewhere along the line, this person was told to keep quiet by a superior. This is just one of many examples of what can/does happen.

What can you do about it? You can keep this in the back of your mind and use this knowledge to your benefit. Learn all you can about the individuals who are coming to the meeting and their relationships with others. Explore what you can do to help build bridges between them and/or exploit the dynamics for your child's benefit.

This is why you should not take personally what goes on at the meeting and why you must know that it's NOT you against them. The meeting is truly not only about you/your child. Educators are often fighting as much with each other as they are with you. Use this to your advantage!

After the Meeting

Write thank you notes to everyone who attended ... especially to the ones you like the least. YOU make the effort to keep the lines of communication open. How can anyone ever treat you with disrespect when you always respect them?

Continue to build positive relationships with educators at school. Go the extra mile - isn't your kid worth it? Always remember that's what it's all about; not you and your feelings and your ego, but about your child's future.

Remember that we cannot change others. We can only change ourselves. But when we change the way we are/ behave/ act, others will change, as well. Keep your dignity, maintain your composure, and hold your head high!

We have the law on our side, with our due process rights. However, if you decide to sue, plan to move. If someone sued me, I'd do what I HAD to do because of what the law said, but I sure wouldn't care anything about doing more than that and I surely wouldn't want to be nice to them. Would you? If you plan on living in your community for a long time, build relationships, don't tear them down.

Your child's future depends on your actions today!

Planning Notes

IEP Planning Report

Student:

Age:

Address:

Telephone:

Parents:

Date:

Strengths

The IEP meeting should always start on a positive note - discussing your child's strengths. Staffing teams sometimes refer to this as "Current Level of Functioning" or "Current Level of Achievement." In any case, your opinions of your child's strengths are important.

In order for a child to be appropriately served by Special Education Services, each child must be viewed as a "whole child," with gifts, talents, and abilities. Focus on the positive, not simply the negative (deficits). A child's strengths should be a part of any IEP and these strengths should be drawn upon when developing goals and objectives.

Strengths should be identified in all five areas described on page 1. In addition, strengths should not be limited to only academics and/or physical abilities. They can, and should, include interests, skills, hobbies, personal traits, etc.

Needs

Special Education Services are based on a child's strengths and needs. These needs must be explored for all five of the areas listed on page 3. Needs must be very specific and written in plain English!

When thinking of your child's needs, don't be limited by what you think may or may not be available at the school. It's called an IEP because a program must be individualized to each student. The program designed must "fit" the child; the child is not supposed to fit into the existing school program!

What does a student need in order to benefit from special education services? Needs should be detailed, comprehensive, and, again, represent all five of the areas previously outlined on page 1.

Examples:

- Benjamin needs to learn to move around the classroom and the school building independently in his wheelchair.
- Dylan needs to learn communication skills using a picture board (communication device) to help him talk.
- Emily needs to learn how to read.
- Matt needs to be able to model typical peer behavior.
- Nicole needs to learn typical 4th grade science.

List needs for your child. Start each need with the child's name!

Annual goals

Where do you want your child to be one year from now? What are your family's dreams and goals? What's important for your child to learn or to do, from the perspectives of the child, the parents, and the family?

Goals should not be written on the basis of what grade the child is in, what school the child is in, or any other factor. Goals should be individualized to the child and should have a strong correlation to the needs stated. Goals should be written in plain English, easily understandable to anyone who reads them. Remember that goals should be activities the child can accomplish. They should not be isolated behaviors or skills. Reference the "Writing Goals" information on the next page. Goals also need to address all five areas listed on page 1.

Examples:

- Benjamin will move around his homeroom, go to and from art, music, PE, lunch, and recess in his wheelchair daily, without assistance from an adult.
- Dylan will use picture-symbols to make choices: about his lunch selection, his free-choice activities in class, and about what games to play at recess.
- Emily will read an "Easy Reader" book of her choice and describe what the book is about after reading it.
- Matt will tell his friends and teachers when he's angry, upset, or needs help, with words instead of gestures.
- Nicole will perform 4th grade science experiments with help from her peers.

List goals for your child. Start each strength with the child's name!

Writing IEP Goals

(From the Schools Project, Specialized Training Program, University of Oregon).

A goal is an activity.

- Ben will go to the library with the third graders twice a week with a support person in the room.
- Valerie will work in the school office three times a week doing sorting, collating, and filing.

The goal is not an activity if it designates performance of isolated skills or behaviors. The following are not appropriate goals:

- Sue will read at a 3.5 grade level.
- Bill will learn the value of coins.
-

A goal describes change in the student's competence.

Phil will prepare three different uncooked snacks following picture recipe cards without any help in home economics twice a week.

A goal does not describe a student's competence if it describes staff behavior rather than student behavior. The following are not appropriate goals:

- Monica will maintain adequate dental hygiene.
- Dianne will have more opportunities to be integrated.

IEP goals should describe answers to these three questions:

1. How will the student's competence change as a result of instruction?
2. When, where, or with whom will the student do the activity?
3. What kind of help or support will the student need?

Make sure the goals include the following critical features:

1. The goal is an activity.
2. The goal says what the student will do.
3. The goal describes the natural conditions under which the student will do the activity.

SHORT TERM OBJECTIVES

How will a child achieve his/her annual goals? Through short term objectives. These are the "steps" a child will use in reaching the goals. Most goals will have more than one short term objective and the objectives usually build on one another. Once the child has mastered the first objective, he/she moves on to the next, until the goal has been achieved.

Short term objectives must be measurable. How will they be measured? By teacher anecdotal notes, teacher observation, parent observation, testing, etc.? Short term objectives need to have timelines that are met. Parents play an important role in meeting with school personnel to monitor the timelines and the progress. Objectives should be written in plain English. Refer to the "Writing Short Term Objectives" information on the following page. Here's one example:

Annual Goal - Benjamin will move around his homeroom, go to and from art, music, PE, lunch, and recess in his wheelchair, daily, without assistance from an adult.

Short Term Objectives

1. Benjamin will take his papers from his desk to his teacher's desk using his wheelchair; measured by teacher observation; by October 1st.
2. Benjamin will go with his peers, from his homeroom to the art room and back, using his wheelchair; measured by teacher observation; by November 1st. (These objectives would continue in increments until the goal is met.)

List annual goals your child. Then list appropriate objectives

Annual Goal

Writing Short Term Objectives

(From the Schools Project, Specialized Training Program, University of Oregon).

Short term objectives need to answer the following questions:

1. What are the specific conditions under which the student will perform the skill? How will the student know to perform the skill? When or what will prompt the student in naturally occurring situations to perform the skill?
2. What are the specific behaviors the student will perform?
3. How will you measure the student's performance in order to know that she has learned the skill?

Short term objectives should satisfy these critical features:

1. The objectives are driven by the IEP goal.
2. The objectives are observable and measurable and easily understood by everyone.
3. The objectives result in ordinary and individually meaningful outcomes.

Double check objectives by asking:

1. Is the objective related to the IEP goal?
2. Is the objective clear, concise, easily understood, and written in everyday language?
3. The objectives represent a broad range of skills that can be taught within the context of the activity, rather than simply being a task analysis of the activity goal?
4. Do all of the objectives say clearly what the student, not the teacher, will do?
5. The objectives support the student's positive image and involvement with peers who do not have disabilities?

RELATED SERVICES

Related Services can include therapy services (physical, occupational, vision, hearing, speech/language, etc.), transportation, counseling services, assistive technology, interpreters, and more.

There is no set formula for the delivery of Related Services; the formula should be individualized to the child's needs and goals. Related Services are whatever the staffing team decides the child needs to be successful. Related Services delivery should not be decided by "what the school typically offers," e.g. physical therapy one time a week for 30 minutes. Related Services need to be relevant to the student and his/her academic day. "Pull-out" isolated therapies are no longer considered useful techniques, because too often, the child can't "generalize" skills learned in isolation into the entire academic day. Occupational therapy, for example, might be hand- writing or keyboarding skills taught within the realm of language arts in the classroom. Physical therapy, for example, might be provided during regular ed PE and/or recess, as opposed to isolated, one-on-one therapy in a separate room.

Parents need to understand that assistive technology has been part of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act since 1990. Assistive technology can be defined as any device that enhances a person's independence. Computers, communication devices, wheelchairs, etc., are just a few examples of assistive devices. There is no official published list of "approved" assistive technology devices. Again, if a need is expressed and the staffing team agrees, the assistive technology should be provided. In addition, if necessary, the device(s) may be provided to the child to take home daily, on weekend/holidays, and over summer vacation if the device needs to be used at those times to continue to enhance learning/independence.

What are some Related Services your child might need?

CHARACTERISTICS OF SERVICE

- Who will provide services, instruction, modifications, adaptations? A therapist, classroom teacher, special ed teacher, teacher's aide?
- What will they be? Therapy? Curriculum modifications? Physical adaptations to a classroom? A modified desk? Adaptive PE? A communication device?
- A computer?
- When will they be delivered? How often and for how long?
- Where will the delivery of services or modifications take place? In the regular classroom, the special ed room, in Music, Art, PE, recess, or at lunch?
- How will services or modifications be delivered?

These are all questions that must be addressed in the IEP, written in plain English. Here are some examples:

- The school will provide cooperative learning groups to enable Matt to learn teamwork and model appropriate behavior.
- The school will provide physical therapy two times each week when Benjamin is in general PE class.
- The school will ensure that Nicole's science lessons are modified for her reading level.
- The school will provide picture/symbol cards for Dylan to use in all areas of his school day (academics, lunch, recess, PE, music, art).
- The school will provide a computer for Benjamin to do his writing work with.
- The school will provide a teacher's aide to assist Dylan with toileting.

What are some services, modifications, adaptations your child will need?
