

TESTED TIPS FOR IEP MEETINGS

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What IEP Conveners Can Do (Pre-Meeting)

- Explain crucial nature of parent's involvement and what will happen at the meeting
- Invite parents to bring anyone they wish
- Explain who will be there from the school and why. Ask the parent(s) if anyone has been left out
- Schedule convenient time and location, and ample time for meeting – very disruptive to have people coming and going
- Establish if parent(s) need help with transportation or childcare
- Invite parents to review relevant documents prior to meeting, encourage classroom visits
- Keep parents advised of progress on an ongoing basis – an IEP meeting is a bad place to spring a surprise

What IEP Conveners Can Do (During Meeting)

- Make parents feel welcome
 - Greet at door
 - Cup of coffee?
 - Same size chairs for everyone
 - Brief pre-meeting chit-chat and acclimatization
- Everyone introduce themselves and explain why they are there
 - Everyone be addressed with the same degree of formality
- Speak in clear, plain language – avoid jargon and discipline-specific terminology
- Have specific materials available that are referred to
- Focus on the child's individualized needs – not your program, classroom, or resource limitations
- Listen carefully
- Maintain confidentiality – don't discuss other students
- Don't hurry
- Be honest and trust that the parent is also
- Be willing to say "I don't know"
- Involve student for at least a portion of the meeting if they can contribute and always if 18 or over

What IEP Conveners Can Do (Post-Meeting)

- Review and evaluate
 - What worked
 - What didn't
 - Incorporate into future meetings
 - Consider building meeting tip file for each child – sources of anger, joy etc.
- Send home thank you note
- Write down specific suggestions about things parents can do at home to help

Preparing Parents for an IEP – A Few Suggestions

- Prepare notes about what they want to learn/find out at the meeting
- Prepare notes about what they want their child to learn in school
- Bring a picture of your child if they won't be attending
- "If this were your child...?" – questioning strategy
- Ask for additional time to consider important decisions if you're uncomfortable making them on the spot at the meeting or want to get additional input.
- Look for opportunities to express gratitude to teachers and related staff
- Bring someone along as a source of support
- If compromising, define how and when to evaluate if compromise is working
- Try to remain calm
- Saying "I don't know what you mean" is a demonstration of confidence and competence