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# Developing Collaborative IEP Teams

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## OPEN COMMUNICATION

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## MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT

- IEPs are the **roadmap** to successful implementation of special education services for children and families
- IEP teams are charged with **narrowing the gap** between general and special education services
- In order for teams to be successful...

## COMMUNICATION MUST OCCUR



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## *Quick Communications for Supporting a Collaborative Environment*

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- Daily, Weekly, Monthly Parent-Teacher Journal
- Emails\*
- Voice Memos\*
- Text Messages\*
- Frequent Progress Reports
- Form Notes
- Student Agendas
- Telephone\*
- Acronyms Cheat Sheet with Definitions
- Documentation of Student Work

\*Collaborative communication with families should be at the discretion of what is easiest for the family.

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## Families: Include Families from the Start

- *BUILD RAPPORT/RELATIONSHIPS WITH FAMILIES*
- Refrain from predetermining decisions without family input
- Understand family's perspective, empathize, build trust

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## Families: Include Families from the Start

- Provide families with draft goals before the meeting
- Provide families with assessment reports before the meeting
- Build family knowledge of special education procedures and law



## General Education Teacher: Elicit their Content Expertise

- *SOLID COMMUNICATION TAKES BOTH TIME AND DEDICATION*
- Provides expertise regarding curriculum content
- General education perspective helps close the gap



## Related Service Personnel: Develop Integrated IEPs

- ***INTEGRATE RELATED SERVICE GOALS WITHIN SPECIAL EDUCATION GOAL PROMOTES GENERALIZATION OF SKILLS***
- Include related service personnel in conversations relating to common goals based on student need



## Other Professionals: Welcome Outsiders to the Team

- **OTHER PROFESSIONALS CAN ADD A UNIQUE PROSPECTIVE**
  - Student
  - Community member (transition planning)
  - Advocate
  - Lawyer
  - Other family members/friends of family
  - Professional Facilitator





## Tip 1: Pre-Meeting Planning

- Allow team members to brainstorm ideas to be incorporated within the IEP
- Sharing ideas ahead of time allows team members to digest the information and prepare for the IEP decision-making process
- Fosters a sense of *full* team involvement

(This includes families)



## Tip 2: Meeting Facilitator

- Can be a team member or a neutral party
- Should not be the person responsible for completing the IEP forms



## Tip 2: Meeting Facilitator (continue)

- The Role of the Meeting Facilitator
  - Keep team members focused and on-track  
(JDL and Associates, LLC, 1999)
  - Developing/sharing agenda
  - Reviewing ground rules
  - Monitoring meeting progress
  - Make sure everyone has an equal voice



## Tip 3: Meeting Agenda

- Development should occur several days prior to meeting
- Development should occur as a team
- All members should agree on agenda items



## Tip 3: Meeting Agenda (continue)

- Serves as an outline to sequence the direction of the IEP meeting (JDL and Associates, LLC, 1999)
- Effective agendas incorporates *all* member needs relating to results, process, and relationship
- Agenda should be posted during meeting



## Sample Agenda Items

1. Welcome
2. Introductions
3. Ground rules
4. Summary of assessment data
5. Strengths and needs
6. IEP development
7. Closure



## Tip 4: Ground Rules

- Communicate clearly and listen carefully (JDL and Associates, LLC, 1999)
- Ask and welcome questions for clarification (JDL and Associates, LLC, 1999)
- Respect the views of others (JDL and Associates, LLC, 1999)
- Share your views willingly (JDL and Associates, LLC, 1999)
- Be open to the ideas and views presented (JDL and Associates, LLC, 1999)



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Jaden's IEP Meeting  
November 17, 2012  
Village Elementary School

1. Welcome
  - ➔ Purpose: To review Jaden's IEP as he moves into the third grade
2. Introductions
  - ➔ Name
  - ➔ Relationship to Jaden
3. Ground rules
  - ❶ Communicate clearly and listen carefully
    - Remember body language and facial expressions
  - ❷ Ask and welcome questions for clarification
  - ❸ Respect the views of others
  - ❹ Share your views willingly
  - ❺ Be open to the ideas and views presented
  - ❻ Have future focus while still respecting and learning from past experiences
4. Summary of assessment data and observations
  - ➔ Updated results and observations from:
    - Ben, Nina, and Jaden Chang, Jaden and his parents
    - Jane Crane, Classroom Teacher
    - Elena Lopez, Special Education Teacher
    - Jamie Chance, Speech-Language Pathologist
    - Shawn Davis, Physical Therapist
    - Molly Spencer, Occupational Therapist
    - Chris McBane, Psychologist
5. Strengths and needs
6. IEP development
  - ➔ Celebrate accomplishments!
  - ➔ Update goals/benchmarks as needed
  - ➔ Jaden is turning 8 years old. We need to discuss changing his eligibility category as developmental delay can only be used until age 8.
7. Closure



## Tip 5: Team Member Essential Knowledge

- Interpretation of the law (IDEIA, 2004)
- Interpretation of assessment
- Curriculum informant



## Tip 6: Jargon Use

- While educators and related service personnel may be used to this type of language, families may not
- Be empathetic to all team members by clearly defining acronyms and educational verbiage
- One way to help members understand jargon is to provide a one page, quick reference guide while continuing to explain the meaning



## Conclusion

- These six tips are a way to build collaboration between families, special education teachers, general education teachers, related service personnel, and other professionals
- Strong communication promotes productive meetings, which in turn produce IEPs reflecting the whole child

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## Conclusion

- These tips can help foster a positive team atmosphere that can be used as a base for successful, collaborative IEP meetings

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## Questions???





## For more in-depth study read:

### Article Reference:

Diliberto, J. A., & Brewer, D. (2012). Six tips for successful IEP meetings. *Teaching Exceptional Children, 44(4)*, 30-37.



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