Developing Collaborative IEP Teams

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OPEN COMMUNICATION = 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
Quick Communications for Supporting a Collaborative Environment

- 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.
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
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
COMMUNICATION

- Pre-Meeting Planning
- Meeting Facilitator
- Meeting Agenda
- Ground Rules
- Essential Knowledge
- Limit Jargon
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)

Have future focus
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
   1. Communicate clearly and listen carefully
   2. Remember body language and facial expressions
   3. Ask and welcome questions for clarification
   4. Respect the views of others
   5. Share your views willingly
   6. Be open to the ideas and views presented
   7. 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.
Conclusion

• These tips can help foster a positive team atmosphere that can be used as a base for successful, collaborative IEP meetings
Questions???
For more in-depth study read:

**Article Reference:**

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