



Working with Parents of Children with Disabilities Through the IEP Process

Category: Special Education

Workshop Overview

Following is a general overview of this workshop, including desired participant outcomes, an explanation of the workshop's alignment with the Learning Forward Standards for Professional Learning, and resources that are included in print and electronic form.

Category: Special Education

Duration: Full workshop – 3 hours

Desired Outcomes:

Participants will...

- Understand how to effectively prepare parents of children with disabilities for the IEP process and support them throughout.
- Determine how to hold effective IEP meetings and continue involving parents after these meetings.
- Recognize how community support can empower parents of children with disabilities to be active participants throughout the IEP process.

Learning Forward Standards for Professional Learning:

- **Learning Communities:** Occurs within learning communities committed to continuous improvement, collective responsibility, and goal alignment.
- **Learning Designs:** Integrates theories, research, and models of human learning to achieve its intended outcome.

Resources in this Binder:

- Handouts:
 - Workshop Agenda
 - Attendee Notes
 - Activity Sheet: Special Education Glossary
 - 3-2-1 Evaluation Form
 - Certificate of Completion
- “Think About It” Exercise
- Ready, Set, Go Planning Activity





Topic Outline

Understanding the general flow of topics to be covered is an important part of giving a strong presentation. This allows the presenter(s) to lead effective group discussions and speak extemporaneously. Following are the main topics covered in this PowerPoint presentation. As you prepare to give the workshop, you may want to refer to this page often.



Main Topics:

1. Preparing parents for the IEP process
2. Facilitating successful IEP meetings
3. After IEP meetings

Subtopics:

1. Preparing parents for the IEP process

- a. Changes in parental roles
- b. Possible barriers parents might encounter
- c. Supporting parents prior to the IEP process

2. Facilitating successful IEP meetings

- a. Getting ready for an IEP meeting
- b. On the day of the IEP meeting
- c. Effective communication skills

3. After IEP meetings

- a. End of the IEP meeting
- b. Tips for writing IEPs
- c. Follow-up after IEP meetings
- d. Supporting parents during transitions
- e. Utilizing community support

Presentation Outline



This outline is designed for you to see the PowerPoint presentation at a glance. Note that slide numbers and the approximate amount of time needed per slide are shown in the right two columns. **The times in bold print show the approximate total time needed for that topic, while non-bold print times show the approximate amount of time an activity will take within that topic.** You might consider keeping this page within reach during the presentation.

Section of Presentation	Slide #	Timing (mins)
Getting Started		
Introduce self, co-teacher, participants	1	5
Explain materials issued to participants		
Cover objectives (from Workshop Overview)	2-3	
Part 1 – Preparing Parents for the IEP Process		
Changes in Parental Roles	4-14	55
Possible Barriers Parents Might Encounter	5-6	(5)
	7-10	(15)
Activity – Barriers Parents Might Encounter	7	(10)
Supporting Parents Prior to the IEP Process	11-14	(15)
Discussion – “Parent to Parent Support”	14	(10)
Break		
Part 2 – Facilitating Successful IEP Meetings		
Getting Ready for an IEP Meeting	15-21	60
	16	(10)
On the Day of the IEP Meeting	17-18	(15)
Effective Communication Skills	19-21	(15)
Activity 2 – Converting Yes/No Questions	21	(20)
Break		
Part 3 – After IEP Meetings		
End of the IEP Meeting	22-30	60
	23	(5)
Tips for Writing IEPs	24	(10)
Activity 3 – Special Education Glossary	25	(15)
Follow-Up After IEP Meetings	26	(5)
Supporting Parents During Transitions	27	(10)
Utilizing Community Support	28-30	(5)
Activity 4 – Parent Resource Packet	30	(10)
Author Info and References	31-34	5
Total of 3 hours (not including breaks, author info, and references)		

Helpful Tip! This workshop can be broken up into shorter sessions so that you can adapt the presentation according to your time constraints.

Slide 18

PDXPERT FACILITATING SUCCESSFUL IEP MEETINGS

On the Day of the IEP Meeting

- 3. State the purpose of the meeting and review the meeting agenda.**
- 4. Discuss and not just report.**
- 5. Manage meeting time wisely.**

THE MASTER TEACHER

State the purpose of the meeting and review the meeting agenda.

The IEP team facilitator should first state the purpose of the meeting (e.g., whether it's an initial meeting, a 3-year re-evaluation, or a meeting to create an addendum to the IEP).

The meeting agenda should have been sent to parents prior to the meeting. However, it's important to review the agenda to make sure that everyone is aware of what will be discussed. This is also a great opportunity to check in with parents and see if they have additional items to add to the agenda.

Discuss and not just report.

The purpose of an IEP meeting is to provide professionals and parents with an opportunity to collaborate and discuss the most appropriate services and placement for the child with a disability. However, many parents report that discussions often don't take place and their opinions are not always valued (Lo, 2008). Professionals should not use the meeting to simply report information to parents. Parents must be encouraged to take active roles in meetings. Discussions are integral.

Manage meeting time wisely.

IEP meetings usually last about an hour. Meeting breaks should be considered, especially for longer meetings.

IEP meetings that require interpretation services can last more than two hours because it takes extra time for interpreters to convert oral messages back and forth between professionals and parents.

PDXPERT FACILITATING SUCCESSFUL IEP MEETINGS

Effective Communication Skills

3. Ask open-ended questions.
4. Utilize interpretation services effectively.

THE MASTER TEACHER

Besides paying attention to the use of interpreters and the use of acronyms and terminology, we should also pay attention to cross-cultural communication.

Ask open-ended questions.

We all know that when we communicate with others, we have to check for understanding. Often we, as educators, ask parents if they understand what was discussed in meetings. When parents respond yes or nod, we automatically assume that parents understand the information and then move on to the next item.

However, as mentioned previously, a nod does not always mean yes. This also applies to the word, “yes” (Su, 1993). Many parents are reluctant to say “no” to professionals or to make requests because professionals are often seen as authority figures and these behaviors are considered disrespectful (Chan & Chen, 2011). So instead of asking yes/no questions, ask open-ended questions. For example, instead of saying, “Do you have any questions about Jimmy’s reading evaluation results?” you can say, “Which parts of the evaluation results do you think accurately measure Jimmy’s reading performance?”

Utilize interpretation services effectively.

*In our field, the terms “interpreter” and “translator” are often used interchangeably. However, they have very distinct meanings. **Interpreters** are those who can convert oral messages from one language to another, while **translators** are those who can replace written messages in one language with the same messages in another language. Not many professionals have the skills to take on these two roles.*

The language barrier is a challenge that prevents CLD families from participating in IEP meetings. With the shortage of bilingual special education professionals, interpreters are often used in meetings to bridge the communication gap between these families and schools. Hiring quality interpreters is crucial. Family friends, relatives, or siblings of the child should NEVER be used as interpreters.

“Think About It” Exercise

Have staff complete this exercise to begin implementing what they learned during the workshop. Distribute this document to staff by attaching the file to the Next Day Follow-Up Email, or make copies for the staff.



1. List two strategies that you have used to prepare parents of children with disabilities for the IEP process. Have you had success with these strategies? Why or why not?

2. What are the long-term effects on students with disabilities when their parents are prepared for the IEP process? What is the impact on you when the parents of your students with disabilities are prepared for the IEP process?

3. What challenges do you experience when involving parents of children with disabilities in the IEP process? How can your school principal or colleagues assist you?
