

Effectively Communicating with Your Child's Educational Team

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Effective Communication:

The common denominator is student-centered positive outcomes.

Members of effective teams must depend on one another and support each other for the common goal, the child's educational needs.

A truly collaborative approach involves equal parity and common goals. As parents and professionals tackle the important needs of a child, they must acknowledge each other's perspectives. All participants can work together to provide a more positive experience for all team members and thus design effective interventions to enhance children's well-being.

Communication with the case manager to share concerns is helpful: What does the parent see? How are things at home? Is there something that the parent wants to be addressed as well? Home life and school life can sometimes look quite a bit different.

District planned communication

Already established communication opportunities:

- Welcome Letter provided at the start of the year
- Curriculum Night- September
- Conferences- November and April (Elementary only)
- Progress Reports- November, February, April and June
- District Assessment Updates (Fall, Winter, Spring)

Special Education Specific Communication Opportunities

Already established communication opportunities:

- Goal updates provided with progress reports
- Special Educators join conferences
- Annual Review Meetings
- Re-evaluation Meetings (every 3 years)
- Transition meetings (ec-k, 4th-5th)

Individualized communication opportunities:

- Individualized plans developed between parents and school team

Know your child's team

It takes a Village:

- General Education teacher
 - General Education Curriculum Expert
 - Has a strong understanding of peer dynamics
- Learning Behavior Specialist (LBS)
 - Case Manager of IEP and assigned goals
 - Liaison between Home and School team
 - Facilitator of the Problem Solving Process
- Speech Language Pathologist (SLP)
 - Case Manager of IEP and assigned goals and/or a Related Service
 - Collaborates with Educational team
- Occupational Therapist (OT)
 - Related Service
 - Collaborates with Educational team
- Social Worker (SW)
 - Related Service
 - Collaborates with Educational team
 - Can provide support through permission outside of an IEP
- Specials Teachers
 - Special Curriculum Expert

Know your child's team

It takes a Village:

- Vision
 - Case Manager of IEP and assigned goals and/or a Related Service
 - Collaborates with Educational team
- Adapted Physical Education
 - Related Service
 - Collaborates with Educational team
- School Psychologist
 - Leads the Evaluation and re-evaluation process
 - Assist with program development
 - Facilitator of the Problem Solving Process
 - Local Education Agency (LEA) at IEP meetings
- Coordinator
 - Supports the development and implementation of special education
 - Facilitator of the Problem Solving Process
 - Local Education Agency (LEA) at IEP meetings
- Building Administration
 - Manages placement and building based needs
 - Facilitator of the Problem Solving Process
 - Local Education Agency (LEA) at IEP meetings

Establish how to communicate as a team

Communication is Key:

- Establish a way to communicate that is effective and manageable for the team:
 - Be honest about your style of preferred communication:
 - Email
 - Weekly newsletters
 - Monthly Newsletters
 - Consider alternatives:
 - Remind App (text message app.)
 - Shared Google Doc
 - Understand teacher limitations:
 - Teachers will try to get back to you within 24 hours
 - Teaching your child is our top priority and planning time is precious
 - Coordinators and administration are also available to help facilitate and problem solve as needed.

Home and School Communication Guidance

What you might expect from your case managing Learning Behavior Specialist (LBS). It's an individualized approach.

For students who spend a majority of their day in General Education

- As needed contact by email, phone, or other method as determined by parent/guardian and Educational Team. Exceptions may include updates regarding concerns, success, etc.

For students who spend a portion of their day receiving Special Education and are able to communicate important elements of their school day

- Weekly-Monthly based on individualized needs and the age of the student. Can be in the form of emails, phone calls, or journals.

Home and School Communication Guidance

For students who receive special education services and supports for most or all of their day. These students may be unable to communicate important elements of their school day

- Daily-Weekly based on individualized needs and the grade level of the student. Can be in the form of emails, Google-site, phone calls, or journals.

Certainly, individual circumstances vary, and plans may be adjusted accordingly.

This will be determined by the student's IEP team, and based on need and unexpected circumstances (spike in behavior, school refusal, medical concerns, etc.) Communication can be in the form of emails, phone calls, or journals.

IEP meetings & Communication

Communication prior to an IEP Meeting might include Conferencing, use of the Parental Input form/pre planning emails/phone calls, and then creating a draft IEP for parents to review are collaborative strategies that produce valuable outcomes including:

- **Open communication between parents and teachers**
- **Effective and focused IEPs**
- **Efficient IEP team meetings**
- **Greater trust and respect among parents, teachers, and students**
- **Group norms/Facilitator/Notes**

Meetings can/will include special education teachers, general education teachers, physical therapists, speech and language specialists, adapted physical education specialists, nurses, psychologists, administrators, or any other professional providing specific services to the student.

How do I share concerns?

- Start with the people working with your child.
- Approach with a questioning stance and keep the focus on your child.
- Be open to hearing teacher perspectives; sometimes we need to consciously practice being open.
- Focus on and seek agreement regarding student needs.
- Look for simple concrete next steps.
 - Identify a time frame and agree to revisit the conversation.

What do I do if my child's team is not listening to me?

- Before a meeting:
 - Share your concerns in writing.
 - Describe your concerns concretely and concisely.
 - Ask for a short-term “trial” of a service or support that is in contention
- In a meeting:
 - Ask for a break.
 - Ask the team to review areas of agreement.
 - Try to identify a next step that evolves from agreement.
 - Ask for additional data collection and reconvene in a set amount of time.

General reminders for facilitating positive interactions

- Understand that a child may present differently between the home and school settings
- Work to facilitate a culture that practices and values honest and open feedback
- If you don't understand something, please ask
- All decisions should consider both a student's strengths and identified area(s) of need.
- Remember that the IEP is a fluid document and we can change programming and supports to flexibly meet a student's needs
- Learning occurs as a process, not necessarily as a product of each individual task or classroom assignment

General reminders for facilitating positive interactions

- Think it through before hitting “send”
- Tone matters
 - and it’s hard to read tone in an email
- Keep an open mind
- Never miss an opportunity to provide positive feedback
- Always assume positive intentions
- Transparency is key
- Really seek to actively listen → be present.
- Reflect
- Be objective
- Stay connected

Questions?

