

Whether it's Your First IEP or You're a Pro: 10 things to Cover at the Meeting

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Whether it's Your First IEP or You're a Pro: 10 Things to Cover at the Meeting

For some schools, spring is Individualized Education Program (IEP) season. Whether you're sitting down with the team for your first IEP meeting or your fifth, it's always good to have an idea of what you need to discuss before you walk in the door. Keeping in mind that your child's IEP should identify and address his individualized educational needs, here are ten questions to make sure the team covers at a meeting.

1. What's my child's Present Level of Performance (PLoP)?

Every IEP plan has statement of a student's PLoP, but every PLoP should be different. The discussion leading up to its creation includes conversations about any recent evaluations and scores, what teachers are seeing in the classroom and your questions and concerns about your child.

This is the time not only to bring up what you are concerned about, but also what your child is doing well. That's because the statement should include information about your child's strengths, his needs and how his disability impacts learning. For example:

“John is a social fourth-grader who gets along well with other students and is eager to learn. Testing shows his math skills are at grade-level, but that his reading and writing skills are at a 2.7 grade level. John struggles to stay on task and requires frequent redirection. His specific learning disability affects his ability to recall and organize facts and his reading comprehension.”

2. Is my child's eligibility category correct?

There are 13 categories of disability under which students can be eligible for special education. Some children may fit into more than one of these categories. Your child's category should reflect the disability that affects his learning the most. For example, if your child has a learning disability and an orthopedic impairment, the team needs to determine which disability has the biggest impact on his learning.

3. Are my child's goals appropriate?

The question here is whether your child's goals address the needs outlined in his PLoP. Are they SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Time-limited)? In other words, the goals need to explain what skills your child should be learning, who will help, where that will be done and when, how the skill will be addressed and measured and by when it will be accomplished.

4. How will my child's progress be reported?

If your child's goals are SMART, you should already have an idea of how progress is going to be measured. But does everybody know how often you'll be notified and who is responsible for providing you with that information? Make sure to have that conversation!

5. What special education and other services does my child need?

By definition, special education is specially designed instruction to meet your child's needs. Don't leave the table without talking about where your child's education will take place—in the general education classroom, a special education classroom or a combination of the two. Discuss, too, what other services he will need to help, (such as physical therapy or occupational therapy) and how often all of these services will take place.

Most importantly, if you aren't able to envision how it will all work in practice, ask. It's okay ask things like, "Can you explain who will be teaching reading to my child? How does that program work? What will his schedule look like?"

6. What does this mean for my child's graduation path?

Your child's team will discuss how he will participate on statewide tests. That's a good time to make sure you understand whether his program puts him on a path to a regular diploma or a certificate of completion. If you're not comfortable with the answer, be sure to bring up your concerns and ask the team to work toward a solution.

7. What other supports and training should we consider?

This is a crucial question, especially if your child's disability and needs are complex. This conversation can cover things like assistive technology and classroom aides. However, it also is the time to talk about what support the staff working with your child may need. If you think the staff needs training to

learn more about your child's specific disability or how to handle medical needs, ask that to be included in his IEP.

8. Will my child need Extended School Year (ESY) services?

If your child is at risk for losing skills over school breaks, the team should talk about providing services during vacations. Having good progress reporting and data tracking in place can help make this decision easier. If you're able to see a pattern of regression, then it's easier to determine the need for ESY. Keep in mind, too, that if your child's IEP services haven't been provided consistently, you can request ESY to make it up.

9. Does my child need a Behavior Intervention Plan?



A behavior intervention plan is a plan that outlines ways to help your child learn coping strategies and maintain appropriate behavior. If your child is having difficulty, it's important to talk about creating a positive and proactive plan that all the staff can follow. If your child has not had a functional behavior assessment, ask for one and follow that up with a written request. The assessment examines your child's behavior to identify causes. It helps provide information to create appropriate interventions.

10. Do we need to create a transition plan?

If your child is 14 years or older, his IEP needs to include goals and planning for post-high school life. This is called a transition plan. If it's not on the agenda, you may need to schedule another meeting to discuss it in depth.

Of course, if you have other questions or concerns, those should be addressed at the IEP meeting, too. You don't have to limit yourself to answering these ten questions, but making sure they are covered is a good start.

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