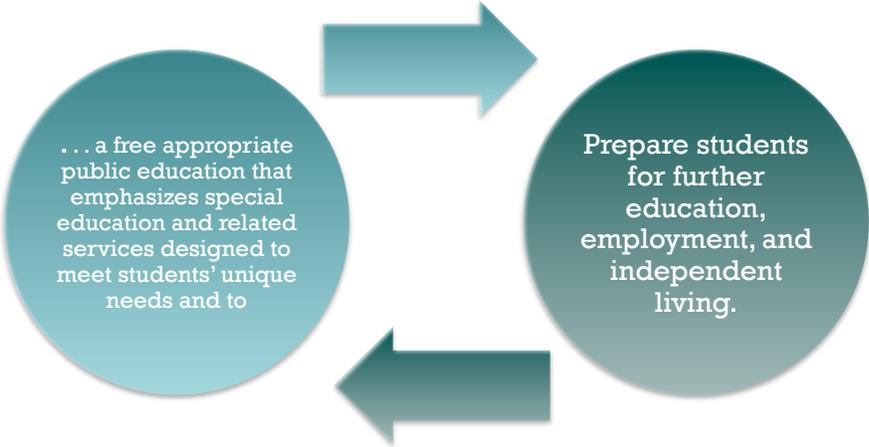


5 Things to Know, Think and Care About at IEP Meetings

Molly L. Whalen, Executive Director, DC Association for Special Education (DCASE) and Parent Advocate, mwhalen@dcase.org

October 2017

+ What is the purpose of Special Education?



... a free appropriate public education that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet students' unique needs and to

Prepare students for further education, employment, and independent living.

(c) Molly L. Whalen, mwhalen@dcase.org

October 2017

+ What is special education, really?

It is individualized instruction specially designed to meet the unique learning needs of a student.

Special education is a service not a place.

What does special education do for a student?

Ensures access to general education curriculum, protects the student's rights

(c) Molly L. Whalen, mwhalen@dcase.org

October 2017

+ KNOW:

1. YOU the parent are a key member of the IEP meeting – you can even run it! You can stop it at any time, you can ask any question, you can request data, you can ask for clarification – YOU have the power to advocate.
2. The school must invite you to the meeting (3 attempts), provide draft documents by a designated time before the meeting, provide documents in your native language (and provide translation!), and give you PWN (prior written notice) before taking action.
3. EVERY IEP meeting will be emotional at one time or another – embrace the emotion – understand where it is coming from!
4. YOU can bring anyone you want to the IEP meeting (friend, neighbor, relative, attorney); YOU can invite anyone to an IEP meeting (PE teacher, Art teacher, BCBA, etc.)
5. YOUR student should be in the meeting! As early as possible – but definitely by age 12-13! More on Student Led IEPs:

http://dc-transition-guide.frameworked.com/page/studentled_iep_toolkit_introduction

(c) Molly L. Whalen, mwhalen@dcase.org

October 2017

+ The Family Role

We tend not to look at family involvement in terms of specific roles and responsibilities:

- Setting expectations
- Help youth set goals for themselves
- Responsible for specific tasks
- Active participation on IEP team

(c) Molly L. Whalen, mwhalen@dcase.org

October 2017

+ The Youth Role

This tends to be the forgotten component:

- Active participation on IEP team
- High expectations for themselves
- Responsibility to set a vision and communicate it
- What is my disability and how does it impact me?

(c) Molly L. Whalen, mwhalen@dcase.org

October 2017

+ THINK:

1. Start from a place that everyone wants what is best for the student, we may just have different perspectives.
2. Think about how to start the meeting: Tell me something good! (10/90); use photos, food, and share how you feel as a parent (“hopes and dreams”).
3. Talk to the IEP team, share your concerns. Think about if the team members understand this: “Do you know what I want, and do you want to fulfill the goals of what I want?”
4. You can disagree! Just remember that the end goal is to get to agreement to keep focused on moving forward.
5. Need a second opinion – ask for it and get it!

(c) Molly L. Whalen, mwhalen@dcase.org

October 2017

+ KNOW & THINK ABOUT:

Parent’s Rights:

- mediation
- state complaint
- due process complaint

The school and state’s obligations:

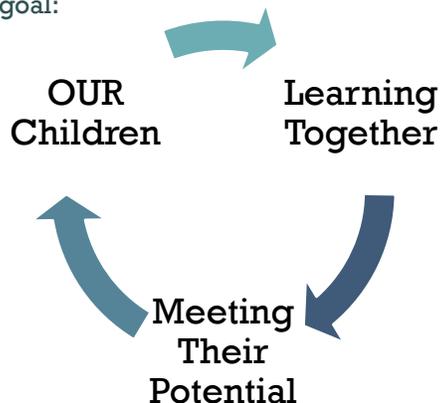
- arrange mediation
- investigate your complaint
- conduct a due process hearing

(c) Molly L. Whalen, mwhalen@dcase.org

October 2017

+ CARE:

1. What is our common goal:



(c) Molly L. Whalen, mwhalen@dcase.org

October 2017

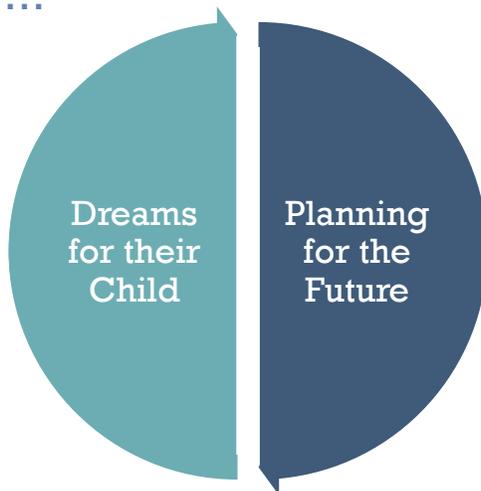
+ CARE:

2. You must care about your child's future – where do you want him/her to be not just in this school year but 3 years from now, 5 years, as an adult?
3. Transition Plans should be driving every IEP – especially after age of 14 – start the IEP meeting with it!
4. Involve Long Range Goals for: Education/Training, Home Living/ Independent Living, Employment, Recreation & Leisure, Community Participation, Health Care, Financial Benefits & Resources
5. It is YOUR child's future – your role as a parent is to involve them! This means your student needs to know they have a disability. Parents can help involve students by:
 - Preparing them to lead part of their meeting
 - Start simple – have them introduce who is on their team
 - Create a list of their strengths and challenges
 - Creating reasonable goals – that your student agrees with!
 - Talking about their future and their goals

(c) Molly L. Whalen, mwhalen@dcase.org

October 2017

+ A few more thoughts on what parents
NEED to know about Transition
planning...



(c) Molly L. Whalen, mwhalen@dcase.org

October 2017

+ **Transition planning tips for
parents**

Talk to your child about

- ✓ Awareness of their disability and self-advocacy for help/support.
- ✓ Keep the focus on your child – what do they want their life to look like
- ✓ Put supports in place for things you know they struggle with (i.e., cooking, METRO, shopping).
- ✓ Talk to your school for ideas or to share what is successful

Find Supports

- ✓ Mentors, internships, afterschool programs, summer clubs, summer employment, etc.
- ✓ Connect with other parents, create a network,

Start NOW!

(c) Molly L. Whalen, mwhalen@dcase.org

October 2017

+ Share One Good Idea

What is something you did in an IEP meeting that made it productive?

-
-
-

What is something you did in an IEP meeting that you wish you didn't do?

-
-
-

+ What Does it Take?

- Communication is the Key – Think about HOW you say it, *“It doesn't matter what you say, it matters what they hear”*
- Establishing and maintaining an effective line of communication between professionals and families/youth continues to be a challenge
- Building Trust
- Administrative support and buy-in
- Understanding of joint and individual roles and responsibilities
- Effective formal and informal communication structure
- Use of data decision making. This includes feedback from youth and families

+ WHY?

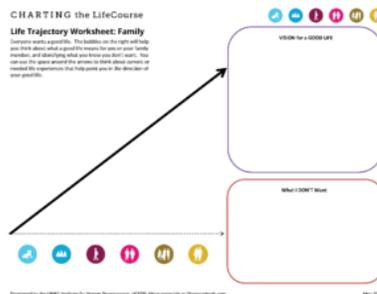
- Partnering with families can improve outcomes
- Partnering with families should be a core ethic of how a school does business
- Staff need training on how to effectively partner with families
- Staff should be held accountable to this expectation
- High expectations is a great common ground to start
- Families also need guidance on how best to fulfill their role as partners
- All of this should be focused on the youth identifying and reaching their goals

(c) Molly L. Whalen, mwhalen@dcase.org

October 2017

+ Impact of Family Engagement:

- Students with one or more parents who participated in the IEP meetings during the 11th and 12th grades are **SIGNIFICANTLY MORE LIKELY TO BE ENGAGED IN POST-SCHOOL EMPLOYMENT.**
- Students with parents who had **HIGH EXPECTATIONS** were more likely to be engaged in post-school employment and employment.



(c) Molly L. Whalen, mwhalen@dcase.org

October 2017

+ Resources:

- Center for Parent Information and Resources:
www.parentcenterhub.org
- Wrightslaw: www.wrightslaw.com
- Special Education Thursday Webcasts:
<http://www.aje-dc.org/programs-3/special-education-thursdays/>
- National Parent Center on Transition and Employment
www.pacer.org/transition
- National Technical Assistance Center on Transition:
www.transitionta.org
- LifeCourse Toolkit: www.lifecoursetools.com
- National Resource Center for Supported Decision Making:
www.supporteddecisionmaking.org