

Family Engagement Newsletter

Communication Tips and Conflict Resolutions Options for Parents with Children who have IEPs

By Wendy Overturf

There may be times when parents of students with disabilities have questions or concerns about their child's education or IEP. One of the best ways to avoid conflict is by communicating regularly with school staff. It is much easier to voice concerns to those involved in your child's education if you already have a history of open communication and have previously established good relationships.

- Make sure that you have the contact information for your child's special education teacher. Ask the teacher how the best way is to contact him. For many teachers, email is often the preferred manner. Additionally, this gives you a written record of your correspondence. This [communication options chart](#) is a good way of keeping the contact information for school personnel in one place.
- If you feel that your concern cannot be handled via phone or email, ask to set up an informal meeting with the teacher. Meeting face-to-face is often a good way to work on a solution. Face-to-face meetings also decrease the risk of miscommunication, which is more likely to happen over email or the phone.
- If you are wanting to change IEP services or goals for your child, or you want to meet with all of your child's service providers, you may request an IEP team meeting. Parents have the right to request an IEP meeting at any time and don't have to wait until the annual IEP review. It is best practice to put this request in writing. There is no specific time frame in IDEA for the school to schedule a meeting. Keep in mind that because there may be many individuals involved, it may take several weeks before the team is able to meet due to conflicting schedules.
- At the IEP meeting you can improve understanding and reduce conflict by:
 - * Being a good listener. Ask questions for clarification and reflect the message back to the speaker. Ask if your understanding is correct.
 - * Speaking clearly and efficiently. Make brief notes to remind you of the points you want to discuss. Ask questions to ensure your points were understood. Try not to wander off topic.
 - * Saying how the problem affects your child, and what help you feel your child needs to address the problem more effectively.
 - * Being open to other suggestions about what may help. Be willing to try other options when possible.

In most situations, effective communication strategies will help you resolve potential conflicts with your child's school. However, if you have been through all these steps you may want to consider a facilitated IEP (FIEP). A FIEP meeting is an option for early conflict prevention available to parents of children with disabilities and to school districts. The district and parents can request a trained, impartial professional facilitator through the [Wisconsin Special Education Mediation System](#) to attend the IEP meeting to help keep members of the IEP team focused while addressing conflicts and disagreements that may arise during the meeting. There is no cost to parents or districts.



Statewide Events

[Supporting Neurodiverse Students Professional Learning System](#)

These trainings include regional training sessions, webinars, online discussion groups, book clubs, website resources, a needs assessment with accompanying toolkit and other professional learning opportunities to support educators serving students with disability-related needs in the areas of social and emotional learning including self-regulation, social communication, flexibility, resilience, sensory processing, and executive functioning.

This professional learning system is funded through an IDEA discretionary grant and is provided by a statewide coordinator. All training materials have been developed by the statewide coordinator and DPI and are based on needs identified through a statewide stakeholder process. Additional contributions to the training content were made by an external DPI workgroup.

The training system is beneficial to educators supporting students with autism. These trainings are offered at no cost to parents of students with disabilities. See [flyer](#) for all dates and locations.

Upcoming Trainings:

[Social Communication Training Workshop](#)

Date: December 3, 2019

Location: CESA 8, Gillett, WI

[Supporting Neurodiverse Students](#) (2 days training)

Date: January 21-22, 2020

Location: CESA 8, Gillett, WI

Statewide Events

[Building the Heart of Successful Schools](#)

Highlighting cutting-edge prevention, health, and wellness strategies in order to create positive school climates that build resilience and support students' behavioral and mental health.

Date: December 5-6, 2019

Location: Wilderness Resort and Glacier Canyon Lodge, Wisconsin Dells, WI

[Advanced Training in Collaborative & Proactive Solutions: Moving from Power and Control to Collaboration and Problem Solving Challenges](#)

(with Autism, ADHD, PDD-nos, Anxiety, Attention Deficits, Behavioral Issues & more)

In this two-day intensive training, Dr. Ross Greene will instruct educators and mental health clinicians on how to foster a collaborative partnership between adults and kids in engaging kids in solving the problems that affect their lives.

Date: December 12-13, 2019

Location: Best Western Premier, Neenah, WI

[Reaching High Expectations: Success for ALL. Technology Rich Solutions for Supporting Inclusive Practices](#)

In collaboration with WI DPI, this conference will feature expertise from CAST trainers and educators who are implementing UDL, who share the mindset and the design principles that are working in professional learning and classroom environments. (CAST is a nonprofit education research and development organization that works to expand learning opportunities for all individuals through Universal Design for Learning). This premier UDL conference will inspire participants to advance, amplify, and accelerate UDL in Wisconsin and in the multi-state region. An assistive technology component will be featured. While assistive technology for students with disabilities is decided by an IEP team, many times the technology can be provided as a universal support for any learner.

Date: February 6-7, 2020

Location: Kalahari Resort, WI Dells, WI.



At Home Learning Strategies

[9 Winter Holidays Around the World](#)

No matter which winter holiday your family celebrates, this is a magical season of creating family memories and special activities. It's easy to get so consumed by our own family's holiday though that we forget about the opportunities to learn about other winter traditions and holidays. This website has a brief description of such holidays.



The holiday season also provides great opportunities to expose children to new ideas and information, reinforce skills and knowledge, and encourage creativity, which supports their success in school. As you are shopping, baking and celebrating special traditions, here are some ideas to mix quality time with learning:

- **Create a Budget** — Encourage your kids to write a list of the people they want to buy gifts for. Then have them allocate a certain amount for each person on their list. While shopping for gifts, help your kids keep track of spending and their remaining budget.
- **Cook Together** — Include your children in meal prep and baking for holiday gatherings. It's a great way to have fun and teach kids about cooking and nutrition. While you're cooking, you can practice math and reading skills—and demonstrate cool science concepts through various cooking techniques.
- **Make Holiday Greeting Cards and Gifts** — Have your kids write holiday cards or letters to family and friends. It's a great opportunity for children to practice their handwriting, as well as their grammar, spelling and creative writing skills. Also, making gifts at home is a way to encourage creativity.



Happy Holidays!



Celebrate this season of sharing, with books and reading.

[Books as Gifts - 2019 Booklists from Reading Rockets.](#)

[Children's Picture Books about Winter and Snow](#)

These [rustic tree ornaments](#) are adorable and will have the kids spend time outdoors searching for the right twigs .

Winter Solstice— December 22, 2019

[5 Warm & Wonderful Winter Solstice Books for Kids](#)



[Fun Card Games to Reinforce Math Skills](#)

These classic games are fun, easy to learn, and all you need is a deck of cards. Kids won't even know they're practicing math!

[Preschool Counting Songs](#)

Preschool songs and nursery rhymes that involve counting are a fun way to reinforce numbers and preschool math skills - concepts, like counting, time, measurement, position, volume, temperature.

Online Resources: Communication

[Center for Parent Information and Resources \(CPIR\)](#)

The [Individuals with Disabilities Education Act](#) (IDEA) strongly supports parents' right to be involved in the special education their child receives. As IDEA states: Almost 30 years of research and experience has demonstrated that the education of children with disabilities can be made more effective by... strengthening the role and responsibility of parents and ensuring that families ... have meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children at school and at home. This website provides many resources for parents so that they can be an active participant in the IEP process.

[WI FACETS IEP Checklist](#)

Our new IEP checklist takes you through three steps - preparing for, participating in and following up after the IEP. Be ready with our easy to follow checklist!

[Wisconsin Statewide Parent-Educator Initiative \(WSPEI\)](#)

WSPEI is all about partnerships. Its goal is to help families and school districts find or create the resources that will help them build positive working relationships that lead to shared decision making and better outcomes for the student. It supports increased sharing of information among families, schools, projects, organizations and agencies through networking meetings, conferences, person-to-person contact, and media.

[It Takes a Village to Teach a Child](#)

This website has links to additional resources related to home-school communication and conflict resolution strategies.

[Family School Partnerships 2.0](#)

This is a link to a booklet developed by the National Education Association. *Family-School-Community Partnerships 2.0* outlines ten strategies that are the foundation for creating effective partnerships, like building one-to-one relationships between families and teachers that are linked to learning

[Tips for Parents: Parent –Teacher Conferences](#)

Information on effective parent-teacher conferences. Information is available in both Spanish and English.

[KidSource Online](#)

This website has questions and answers that can help parents get the most out of talking to their child's teacher or with other school staff members.

[Building Parent-Teacher Relationships](#)

This website provides strategies that have been effective in improving parent-teacher communications.

[National PTA Standards for Family-School Partnerships](#)

This website outlines the standards developed by the National PTA for effective family-school partnerships. The website also has links to other resources related to building these partnerships.



Ensure your loved ones receive the gift they treasure most:

Your Presence

Take a Walk with Family

Enjoy the fresh air and a family walk together. Reminisce about the previous year and all that everyone is grateful for. Talk about the family traditions that you enjoyed the best and what you might want to add to next year's festivities.

Read – Every Day!

Literacy is critical for student success and families are the key to the development of children's literacy skills. Winter break is a great time to visit your local library. And reading with children is a great way to spend time together, while helping them to achieve academically.

BONUS!!

Sleep experts agree that a predictable and consistent bedtime routine improves your child's ability to wind down and go to sleep. Having story time before the lights go out is a wonderful way to connect and get ready for sleep.



WI FACETS

Webinars
Trainings
Workshops

Event title links to information & registration for WI FACETS FREE workshops & webinars:

By phone, Sandra: 877-374-0511

All webinars 12:00—1:00 PM
(unless otherwise noted)

[WSEMS: Dispute Resolution Options](#)

Date: December 2, 2019

Presenters: Nissan Bar Lev, CESA 7 and Nelsinia Ramos, WI FACETS

[How to File an IDEA Complaint](#)

Date: December 4, 2019

Presenter: Anita Castro, WI DPI

[Children B-3 with Disabilities and Special Health Care Needs](#)

Presenter:

Dr. Sharon Fleischfresser, DHS

[The Importance of Family Engagement in your Child's IEP Process](#)

Date: December 11, 2019

Presenter: Cheri Sylla, WSPEI

[Bullying](#)

Date: December 17, 2019

Presenter: Bonnie Vander Meulen

[El Camino a la Adultez: Lo que Todo Padre debe de Saber](#)

Date: December 17, 2019

Presenter: Nelsinia Ramos, WI FACETS

To register, contact Nelsinia (414) 374-4645,

nramos@wifacets.org

Learning
Opportunities

Have you missed a webinar or is there a particular topic you are looking for?

Check out our library of [archived webinars!](#)



Interview with Dr. Karen Mapp

Karen L. Mapp, Ed.D., is a senior lecturer on education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education and the faculty director of the Education Policy and Management Master's Program. Over the past twenty years, Mapp's research and practice focus has been on the cultivation of partnerships among families, community members and educators that support student achievement and school improvement.

Have you been looking for a resource on family engagement strategies specific to Wisconsin? Watch this [15-minute exclusive interview](#) with Dr. Mapp, as she answers:

- How do we implement the “Links to Student Learning” in building family engagement at the IEP meeting?
- How do we build a strong “Relational” component that expresses respect and trust between parents and schools?
- How to best create “Interactive” opportunities between parents of students with disabilities and schools?
- How does a state agency/school district best collect data to document family engagement?

Research to Read

How Family, School, and Community Engagement Can Improve Student Achievement and Influence School Reform

Wood, L. & Bauman, E., *How Family, School, and Community Engagement Can Improve Student Achievement and Influence School Reform*, Nellie Mae Education Foundation, (February 2017) (24pp).

[Article Link](#)

ABSTRACT: Engaging parents and community members can help improve student outcomes and advance school improvement, a report from the [Nellie Mae Education Foundation](#) finds. Based on a literature and data review, the report found that the most effective strategies included engaging parents in their children's learning through social networks, empowering parents with opportunities to fill leadership roles, offering classes to parents, and providing families with opportunities to engage with their children's education both at home and in school. Research also suggested that community organizations can help improve student and school outcomes by supporting family engagement, extended learning, and related social services. According to the report, the foundational elements of successful collaborations include a focus on building respectful and trusting relationships, supportive and engaged school leaders, skilled staff that work to align the interests and activities of partners, and thorough data collection and analysis to determine priorities.

This monthly update is provided by the Wisconsin Family Assistance Center for Education, Training & Support (WI FACETS) to share statewide information regarding parent leadership and family involvement. *If you would like to receive this monthly update or if you would like to have your name removed from the distribution list, contact: Wendy Overturf at woverturf@wifacets.org.*



Contributions to the Newsletter

Upcoming newsletter topics: January: Transition

February: Intellectual Disabilities

March: Early Childhood

To submit contributions of articles, events, or resources, you may use the attached word document. Send submissions to woverturf@wifacets.org. If unable to access form, you may send information in an email.

Material appropriate for the monthly newsletter include web links to sources of family involvement/parent leadership resources, advertisements for statewide trainings for parents, youth or parent/educator audiences, information about statewide parent agencies, recent research pertaining to family engagement, and family engagement success articles.

***The WI FACETS Family Engagement E-Newsletter
can be found online at:***

<https://servingongroups.org/resources>



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