Family Engagement Newsletter

College and Career Ready IEPs (CCR) Five Step Process-Step 1 in Detail
By Wendy Overturf

In the November 2017 newsletter, the overview of the Five Step Process for the CCR IEP was explained. In this issue, more details are given about Step 1. Our hope is to help parents to better engage in the IEP process.

**Step 1: Understand** how the student is doing academically and otherwise. The IEP team gathers information about the student’s academic and functional skills compared to the expectations for other students in the same grade. The family and student share their point of view on the student’s strengths, interests, and needs.

**What does this discussion look like at the IEP meeting?**
The team will review the academic standards and functional expectations for the grade in which the student is enrolled. If the child is pre-school aged, the early learning standards will be reviewed. There should be discussion of the areas the student is performing; at, below, or above grade-level standards. Reading level achievement should also be discussed. This information is gathered from several sources including recent evaluations, IEP goal progress, observations, and current state, district and classroom assessments. While the school personnel need to present the explanations in “plain language”, it is important for parents to ask questions if they don’t understand what the information means.

The IEP team should also discuss behaviors and functional skills that may be needed to help the student reach grade-level standards. Examples include such skills as the ability to interact with peers, the ability to work independently, organizational and technology skills.

While it is important for parents to understand areas in which their child may be performing below grade-level, it is also important the child’s strengths are discussed. The child’s strengths can be used to help improve performance in other areas.

Listed below are some of the questions that might be used for discussion at the IEP team meeting. Whenever it is appropriate, the student should be a part of these discussions.

- What are the student’s interests/talents that could be used during instruction?
- What positive relationships does the student have with classmates and adults and how were these developed?
- What high expectations does the IEP team have for this student in the areas of grade-level academic content standards and functional expectations?
- What are some of the student’s behavioral needs that might affect peer or adult relationships?
- What concerns do the parents or student have about the student’s progress in school? Is there anything the parents would like to share about their family (e.g., culture) to help the IEP team know the student better?

All this information will be used by the IEP team to help develop IEP goals. In the January 2018 issue, we will review Step 2, where the IEP team looks at how the student’s disability affects his or her academics and behavior.
At Home Learning Strategies

Communication Over the Holidays

Writing Prompts: Expressing oneself through writing is an important skill for kids to learn. Over winter break, see what your child can create with these writing prompts.

- What does your snowman do at night?
- Christmas brainstorm
- 30 December journal prompts

Holiday Newsletter: A great way for children to communicate with family members over the holidays while being creative is to create a holiday newsletter. Check out this guide full of tips to make a newsletter that stands out.

- Sending cards: Your child can get involved in sending cards to friends and family. Check out these creative tips for cards kids can craft themselves or with help.

- Saying thank you: Not many kids get excited about writing thank you notes. These tips for writing thank you notes for children ages 3 – 18 may help! Or, try this guide from Hallmark that lays out a formula for writing notes.

- STEM Challenge Cards: Struggling to think of math and science ideas to keep your child busy outside of school? These 25 days of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) challenges will keep your child busy over the holidays with fun activities that promote STEM skills.

- Holiday Building Fun: Does your child love Legos or other building tools? Check out this idea list and activity calendar with building suggestions to fill the holiday season.

- Reindeer Number Line Activity: Check out this cute reindeer-themed counting activity for younger kids. It starts with a cute craft and turns to a fun learning game.
Online Resources: Communication

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.

Center for Parent Information and Resources (CPIR)
This link will provide a multitude of resources related to parent involvement in the IEP process.

It Takes a Village to Teach a Child
This website has links to 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.

Count on Families! Engaging Families in Math
This website has some ideas and resources for families to grow children’s mathematical learning and for educators to guide families in the process.

Tips for Parents: Parent –Teacher Conferences
This website has information about effective parent-teacher conferences. Information is available in both Spanish and English.

Bridging Home-School Communications: Helping Parents Begin Conversations with Teachers
This website has a variety of suggestions to assist parents in developing more effective ways to communicate with teachers.

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.

Parent-Teacher Talk
On this website are examples of actual conversations parents can have with teachers regarding concerns parents may have about their child.

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.
**Instructional Trends**

**Psychology Principles and UDL**

The American Psychological Association came out with a document called the "Top 20 Principles for Pre-K – 12 Teaching and Learning," which sets out to share psychological principles that are useful in teaching and learning, and to give examples for how they could impact classroom practice. These principles align well with UDL principles. The document focuses on five topics:

- How students learn
- How students are motivated
- Learning contexts
- Classroom management
- Student assessment

Our focus on communication this month aligns with two of the principles outlined in the document. Principle 13 is that "Learning is situated within multiple social contexts." The focus of this principle is that each learner in the classroom is part of various social contexts, each of which is influenced by culture. A student is not only a member of a classroom and a school, but of a family, a neighborhood, a community, and society as a whole. The child’s culture: language, believes, values, norms, etc. further influence each of these contexts. Taking this information about each individual learner into account can increase the effectiveness of instruction. Connections between family and community and school facilitate shared understanding about learner needs.

Principle 14 is that “Interpersonal relationships and communication are critical to both the teaching–learning process and the social-emotional development of students.” Educators can pay attention to the “relational aspects” of a classroom by:

- Creating a safe and secure environment
- Making sure the classroom has a shared understanding of vocabulary, values and norms
- Providing clear behavior expectations and opportunities to learn social skills
- Giving opportunities for all students to have meaningful social interaction

In order to be successful at complex interactions, students need to be taught positive communication skills and be given opportunities to practice them, which can be incorporated into the curriculum.

**Research to Read**

**The Role of Mothers’ Communication in Promoting Motivation for Math and Science Course-Taking in High School.**


[Article link](#)

In the context of concerns about American youths’ failure to take advanced math and science (MS) courses in high school, we examined mothers’ communication with their adolescent about taking MS courses. At ninth grade, U.S. mothers (n=130) were interviewed about their responses to hypothetical questions from their adolescent about the usefulness of algebra, geometry, calculus, biology, chemistry and physics. Responses were coded for elaboration and making personal connections to the adolescent. The number of science, technology, engineering and mathematics courses taken in 12th grade was obtained from school records. Mothers’ use of personal connections predicted adolescents’ MS interest and unity value, as well as actual MS course-taking. Parents can play an important role in motivating their adolescent to take MS courses.
Contributions to the Newsletter

Upcoming newsletter topic: January: Transition
February: Intellectual Disabilities

To submit contributions, you may use either the attached word document for contributing articles, events, or resources. Send submissions to woverturf@wifacets.org. If unable to access form, send 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.

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