



FAMILY ENGAGEMENT NEWSLETTER

December 2024
Volume 12 | Issue 12



The Importance of Prior Written Notice

By Wendy Overturf

Many of the calls to the WI FACETS Help Desk are from parents who have concerns about their child's recent IEP meeting. For example, the parents state that they requested a 1-1 aide for their child and that the district rejected that. Another example might be that the district rejected the parents request for an alternative placement. One of the first questions that our Help Desk staff will ask is, "Did the district provide you with prior written notice?" Often, parents are unfamiliar with this term.

What is Prior Written Notice (PWN)

Prior Written Notice is an important [procedural safeguard](#) in special education law under [the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act \(IDEA\)](#). It ensures that parents or guardians of a child with a disability are fully informed in writing about any actions the school district proposes or refuses to take regarding the identification, evaluation, educational placement, or provision of a [free appropriate public education \(FAPE\)](#) for their child.

When is Prior Written Notice Required?

Parents must be provided written notice a reasonable time before a LEA (school district)

- proposes to initiate or change the identification, evaluation, or educational placement of a student or the provision of FAPE to the student; or
- refuses to initiate or change the identification, evaluation, or educational placement of a student or the provision of FAPE to the student.
- an explanation of why the LEA proposes or refuses to take the action;
- a description of each evaluation procedure, assessment, record, or report the LEA used as a basis for the proposed or refused action;

What does Prior Written Notice Include?

Anytime prior written notice is required it must include:

- a description of the action proposed or refused by the LEA;
- an explanation of why the LEA proposes or refuses to take the action;

- a description of each evaluation procedure, assessment, record, or report the LEA used as a basis for the proposed or refused action;
- a description of any other options that the LEA considered and the reasons why those options were rejected;
- a description of other factors that are relevant to a LEA's proposal or refusal;
- a statement that parents have protection under the procedural safeguards of special education law and, if the notice is not an initial referral for evaluation, the means by which a copy of a description of the procedural safeguards can be obtained; and
- sources for parents to contact to obtain assistance in understanding the provisions of special education law.

Notices must be:

- written in language understandable to the general public;
- provided in the native language of the parent or other mode of communication of the parent, unless it is clearly not feasible to do so; and
- if the native language or other mode of communication of the parent is not a written language the LEA must take steps to ensure that
 - (1) the notice is translated orally or by other means to the parent in his or her native language or other mode of communication, and
 - (2) the parent understands the content of the notice. The LEA must maintain written evidence of having complied with the requirements in (1) and (2).

Why Is Prior Written Notice (PWN) Important?

PWN ensures that parents are fully informed about decisions affecting their child's education and have an opportunity to participate in the decision-making process. It also provides a written record that can be useful if there is a disagreement or dispute about the child's special education services. If parents still disagree with the district after reviewing the PWN information, WI FACETS Help Desk staff will inform parents about other [Dispute Resolutions Options](#).

If you have specific questions about prior written notice, or need information about a particular situation, feel free to call the WI FACETS Help Desk at [414-374-4645](tel:414-374-4645) or [877-374-0511](tel:877-374-0511).

UPCOMING WI FACETS EVENTS

[IEP 10: Parent Rights \(pre-recorded\)](#)

Presenter: Ann Zielke, WI FACETS

Date: December 3, 2024

[What is a Free Appropriate Public Education \(FAPE\)?](#)

Presenters: Eva Shaw and Eric Kestin, WI DPI

Date: December 4, 2024

[Comprensión del formulario del Plan de Transición Postsecundaria \(PTP\)](#)

Presenter: Nathaly Silva, WI FACETS

Date: December 5, 2024

[Lista de verificación de transición \(Para estudiantes de 14+\)](#)

Presenter: Nathaly Silva, WI FACETS

Date: December 12, 2024

[IEP 11: IEP Resources \(pre-recorded\)](#)

Presenter: Ann Zielke, WI FACETS

Date: December 17, 2024

[Student Led IEPs: Helping Students Fly](#)

HOME LEARNING



Check out this [online activity calendar for December](#) which is designed for children between the ages of 3-5. It includes many fun activities that promote learning.

Winter Calendar Math

Materials Needed: A calendar, stickers or colored markers.

Activity: Use a [December calendar](#) to practice math skills. Ask questions like, "How many days until the 25th?" or "If today is the 3rd, what will the date be in 10 days?" Use stickers to mark special days and practice counting forward or backward



The First Day of Winter: December 21, 2024

The Winter Solstice marks the beginning of the winter season. It is also the shortest day and longest night of the year. After this day, the days begin to lengthen and the nights begin to shorten, which will continue until the Summer Solstice (around June 21st). Combining winter solstice traditions with bird feeder projects can be a delightful way to celebrate the season while also helping wildlife. Below is a creative idea that blend solstice celebrations with bird feeder activities:

- **Materials Needed:** Pinecones, peanut butter or lard, bird seed, string, and decorative items.
- **Prepare the Pinecones:** Tie a string to the top of the pinecone to use as a hanger.
- **Spread the Mixture:** Cover the pinecone with peanut butter or lard.
- **Add Bird Seed:** Roll or press the pinecone into bird seed.
- **Decorate:** Add winter-themed decorations to the pinecone, like glitter or ribbon, to make it festive.
- **Hang the Feeder:** Place the decorated feeders outside and observe the birds.

Also be sure to check these read alouds related to Winter Solstice

- [The Winter Solstice](#)
- [Winter Solstice](#)



BOOKS - Holiday Gift Guide

From Scholastic Parents - When we give a book, we give kids so much more than what's bound within its covers. We give them whole



New Year's Eve Activities

New Year's Eve is a special time to reflect upon the past year and to celebrate all the amazing goals and dreams that you and your

new worlds: adventure, imagination, magic, learning, laughter, and lifelong memories. Said simply, as gifts – books give more.

Browse the top books of 2024 by age:
[Ages 0-2](#) | [Ages 3-5](#) | [Ages 6-8](#) | [Ages 9-12](#) | [Ages 13+](#)

children have for the upcoming year. New Year's Eve can be a family time, filled with sparkling cider, party poppers, and lots of fun crafts and activities. Check out this list of ten fun [New Year's Eve activities](#) that kids can do with their parents.



December offers many writing opportunities to engage kids and encourage their creativity, writing, and literacy skills.

Holiday Greeting Cards

Have children create and write messages in holiday greeting cards. They can make cards for family members, friends, or even community helpers.

Winter "All About Me" Book

Create a mini book where children write about their favorite winter activities, traditions, and memories. They can include drawings or photos to illustrate their writing.

Thank-You Cards

Start with a blank piece of paper and fold into a card shape. They can decorate the card and then practice writing messages inside. Below are several prompts to help get started.

- "Thank you for the [gift]. I really enjoyed it"
- "I appreciate your kindness and thoughtfulness. It made me feel..."

UPCOMING STATE EVENTS

Training for Home Language Interpreters: Supporting Families through the Special Education Process

For those seeking training for home language interpreters for families at IEP meetings, DPI has partnered with WI FACETS, LEAs, and other organizations to develop a one-day training for home language interpreters who interpret for families at IEP meetings. Language interpretation training is a requirement to meet the provisions outlined in DPI's Providing Language Assistance to Parents guidance document. The training provides increased awareness of state and federal regulations related to the educational rights of students who receive special education through an IEP and who may also be English Language Learners. The training also provides increased knowledge and resources related to legal responsibilities and ethical considerations for translation and interpretation of special education terms and concepts.

There will be a **virtual** training held on Friday, **February 7th, 2025**. Registration is available [here](#).

Please register for either of these upcoming **in-person** training dates:

February 10, 2025 – School District of Reedsburg – [Register with CESA 5](#)

March 7, 2025 – School District of Lomira – (registration information will be available soon at [Home Language Interpreters Wisconsin | Resources | WI FACETS](#).)

WI FACETS is still seeking to partner with at least two more school districts or CESAs in the 2024-25 school year. For more information contact Lori Karcher, lkarcher@wifacets.org

[Virtual Workshop - Executive Function Essentials: Practical Tools for Everyday Life](#)

Join the Autism Society of Greater Wisconsin and the Autism Society of Minnesota for a neurodivergent-friendly look at executive function with tools, tips, and strategies to work with your brain. Whether you are

looking to boost your own executive function or support someone else, this workshop offers tools that can be implemented right away, empowering you to navigate your own life and your own needs with the approaches that work for you.

Date: December 5, 2024, 9am-12pm **Registration deadline is December 4, 2024**

Location: Virtual

[23rd Annual Wisconsin Transition Conference](#)

Join hundreds of your colleagues at the 23rd Annual Transition Conference. In addition to the keynote speakers, the conference will have over 20 breakout sessions to choose and built in networking time.

Dates: February 13-14, 2025

Location: Kalahari Resort and Convention Center, Wisconsin Dells, WI

36th Annual Autism Conference-Save the Dates

Dates: April 3-5, 2025

Location: Kalahari Convention Center, Wisconsin Dells, WI

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

[Information Update Bulletin 24.02 from Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction](#)

Considering Services from a Speech-Language Pathologist for Students with Disability-Related Needs in the Area of Communication (Replaces Bulletin 03.02: Speech and Language Special Education and Related Services.)

This new guidance bulletin was released in September 2024. The purpose of this bulletin is to provide guidance to school districts and individualized education program (IEP) teams when determining appropriate speech and language special education and related services to students with disabilities. This bulletin focuses primarily on speech and language as a related service. It is meant to guide IEP teams in consideration of speech-language as a related service for students with communication needs.

[Act 20: Students with IEPs](#)

Act 20 is a Wisconsin state law that requires schools to assess early literacy skills for students in grades 4K-3. This helps ensure that every child receives the support they need to develop strong reading skills. This resource includes information about Act 20 specific to students with IEPs, particularly students whose disability-related needs impact their early literacy development.

ONLINE RESOURCES: COMMUNICATION



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

The [Individuals with Disabilities Education Act](#) (IDEA) strongly supports the 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 active participants in the IEP process.

[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. Be sure to check out the [Student Snapshot](#) and [Family Profile](#) documents. Both documents will help the school team learn more about the student and their family.

[CADRE's Steps to Success: Communication with Your Child's School](#)

CADRE is the Center for Appropriate Dispute Resolution in Special Education. The linked website highlights some specific communication skills that can help parents be most successful in developing and maintaining a strong partnership with their child's school.

[Working Together Series \(From CADRE\)](#)

The Working Together Series includes five interactive self-directed courses. These courses provide families and educators with several strategies for working together and working through conflict.

[Endrew F. Talking Points \(Worksheet for Parents\)](#)

The Supreme Court's [Endrew F. decision](#) (2017) redefined the meaning of a free appropriate public education (FAPE) for students with disabilities. In short, the Supreme Court ruled that Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) must give students with disabilities more than a de minimis, or minimal, educational benefit. Parents may want to use these talking points at an IEP meeting to identify their concerns and to find ways to talk about them using Endrew F. language.

[Communicating with ELL Families: 10 Strategies for Schools](#)

There are many ways that educators and administrators can connect with families of English language learners (ELLs) and keep that communication strong. This communication can be challenging to figure out, but in many cases, it can make a tremendous difference in students' learning. This website offers some tips for schools, many of which are based on lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic.

[Key Questions to Ask at Your Child's School](#)

Parents have a key role in their child's education and parents can help bridge their child's transition from home to school and give them the best chance at success in learning and in life. This tool provides parents with a set of questions to ask and important issues to consider when approaching their child's teachers, principals, and counselors about their development. Available in both English and Spanish.

[Building Parent-Teacher Relationships](#)

Effective communication is essential for building school-family partnerships. It is the foundation for all other forms of family involvement in education. This website provides strategies that have been effective in improving parent-teacher communications.

[Keeping Your Communications and Records Organized](#)

Check out this "[Communication Log](#)" as one way to keep written documentation of your communications with the school. If you use a binder to keep track of all the documents related to your child, the [IEP Binder](#) is a way to keep track of important dates related to the IEP process as well as communication with the school.

Positive Behavioral Intervention Supports (PBIS)

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports ([PBIS](#)) is a strategy schools use to teach children expected behavior. Check this [article](#) for more detailed information on PBIS.

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) can be a great approach to encourage positive behavior, reduce stress, and create a fun, inclusive atmosphere during family holiday parties. Here are some PBIS tips to help families at holiday gatherings.

PBIS Tips for Family Holiday Parties

Set Clear Expectations

Before the party, discuss with your children the expectations for behavior during the event. Use simple and positive language to outline what is expected, such as:

- "Use kind words when speaking to others."
- "Take turns when playing games or sharing toys."

Reinforce Positive Behavior

- Acknowledge and praise positive behavior frequently. Use specific praise, such as "I love how you shared your toys with your cousin!" or "Great job listening when we were playing the game!"

RESEARCH

Let's Get Parents Ready for Their Initial IEP Meeting

[Read Full Article](#)

Parental participation in the initial Individual Education Program (IEP) meeting is a critical component of the process. Even though parents have rights to be equally involved in making decisions at the IEP meetings, frequently parents aren't prepared to be equal members on the team with school personnel. This study focused on a preparation program for parents who were to be attending their child's first IEP meeting. The research was conducted in three phases through an interview and training process with 298 parents. Phase one consisted of asking parents a series of questions on their knowledge and perceptions regarding the meeting. Phase two involved an intervention of preparing the parents for the meeting. Phase three entailed asking the initial set of questions from phase one to determine gains parents had made in knowledge and attitudes about the meeting. Results indicate parents benefited greatly from the preparation prior to the meeting.

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 [Word document](#). Send submissions to [Wendy Overturf](#). If you are unable to access the form, you may send the information in an email.

Material appropriate for the monthly newsletter include web links to 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.

This monthly update is provided by 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, please email [WI FACETS](#).

The WI FACETS Family Engagement E-Newsletter can be found online www.servingongroups.org/newsletter



This document was produced under grants from the U.S. Dept. of Education, (PTIC-#H328M200017) and WI Dept. of Public Instruction (CFDA# 84.027A/2025-M132-WIFACETS-342) to WI FACETS. The content does not necessarily represent the policy of the U.S. Dept. of Education, WI Dept. of Public Instruction, or WI FACETS. You should not assume endorsement by the U.S. Dept. of Education, WI Dept. of Public Instruction, WI FACETS, U.S. Dept. of Education Project Officer, David Emenheiser; or WI Dept. of Public Instruction Grant Director, Rita Fuller of any product, commodity, service, or enterprise mentioned in this publication. This product is public domain. Authorization to reproduce it in whole or in part is granted. The citation should be U.S. Dept. of Education, WI Dept. of Public Instruction, and WI FACETS, Milwaukee, WI, 2025.





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