

# Tips for Engaging Your Child in the Individualized Education Program (IEP)



## PATHFINDER SERVICES OF ND

There are many benefits for students who actively participate in their IEP process, however, current research indicates that only 10% of students are actively engaged and take a leadership role in this process. For most students, they may attend their IEP meeting but offer little input. This process can be overwhelming, yet the IEP is their plan to assist them in being successful throughout school and when transitioning into adulthood. How a youth is engaged is dependent on many factors; age, developmental level, needs, strengths, and preferences. Engagement will look different for each youth, yet, it is important that they are involved.

Here are some tips to assist parents on how they can engage their children in the IEP process.

### Understand the Special Education Process

- The IEP process can often be overwhelming and confusing. The more you understand, the better you are able to advocate for your child and assist them in taking a more active role.
- If you have questions about the IEP process, reach out to the special education teacher at your child's school. You can also contact Pathfinder Services of North Dakota. PSND can help you gain knowledge about the IEP process, your rights and answer any questions you have.

### Start early

- The earlier that a child can be engaged in their IEP, the better. Parents will know best when to involve their child. A younger child may be able to take on small tasks to be engaged in the IEP process. They can introduce team members and how they are connected to themselves (mom, teacher, principal). They could also talk about some of their strengths and challenges in school. As the child becomes older and/or more confident, they can assume more roles.

### Working with the School

- Connect with your child's special education teacher to understand if they do any prep work with your child on their IEP. If not, discuss with the teacher that you would like your child to be engaged in the process.

### If Your Child is Hesitant or Scared of Participating

- Work with your child prior to the meeting to identify what their strengths and challenges are in school. Even if they do not attend, at first, you can share their thoughts.
- After the IEP meeting, review what occurred with your child. Ask for their input.
- Continue to engage your child in prepping for upcoming IEP meetings and follow up, until they are willing to attend and take on a small task.

## Additional Tips

- ➔ Explain the IEP in terms that are developmentally appropriate for your child
- ➔ Reinforce to your child that the IEP is their plan and their thoughts and involvement are important.
- ➔ Ask your child if there is someone at the school that they want at their IEP meeting that they feel comfortable talking to. Create a chart at home that shows the goals and objectives of the IEP so you and your child can visit regularly about their progress. Identify what is working and what struggles your child may be experiencing.
- ➔ Work with your child so that they understand the accommodations that are in place within their IEP.
- ➔ Have your child help prepare the agenda for IEP meeting.
- ➔ Celebrate! Celebrate with your child when they have met an objective or achieved a goal!
- ➔ Prior to the meeting, walk through goals and objectives of their IEP.
- ➔ Together you and your child can create a list of questions and or concerns about the IEP which you can then take to the meeting.
- ➔ Have your child explain their disability and how it impacts them.
- ➔ Encourage your child to give input on how their accommodations are working.
- ➔ Have your child share their work with the IEP team. As they get older, they could also create a portfolio.
- ➔ Have older children assist in identifying goals and objectives.
- ➔ Have your child share their future goals. This can be done every year and at every age.

When involving your child, make sure that they are comfortable in how they are engaging in the IEP process. Every student has different strengths, needs and comfort levels, so adjusting their role to match their preference is important.



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