

IEP Meeting Reflection

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IEP Meeting Reflection**Introduction**

Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) students with particular disabilities are afforded access to special education at no cost to the child or family. One of the major components of IDEA is an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), which is a document that outlines the educational goals of students, how, where, when and how often the educational components will be delivered. An IEP may vary from student to student, depending on the disabilities and needs of the student (Cohen et al., 2009).

The following is a reflection of an IEP review meeting for a male student, grade eleven, at LaSalle Academy, a private, Catholic co-educational college preparatory school. The meeting seemed to be well run, included several parties and considered many factors that will hopefully continue to benefit the student.

Description of Student and Current IEP

The student is currently enrolled in .2 classes, which is essentially LaSalle Academy's designation for a "traditional" classroom. Student population can include students who are strong enough academically to be in honors classes but lack motivation, and students with an IEP or 504 plan. The student reviewed in this case maintains an overall GPA of roughly 74, has a high motivation to learn and a strong work ethic, but is easily frustrated by poor grades. Roughly three years ago the student was diagnosed with Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder.

The IEP currently in place highlights the student's difficulties in mathematics, calls for behavior modifications to help deal with the student's hyperactivity, and also calls for teachers to repeat directions several times verbally and provide written directions

for major assignments such as projects. Within my classroom, the student often comes at the end of the day to review assignments and instructions, as well as map out what he is going to do for particular assignments. For the most part, the student's issues within my class have been related to behavior and hyperactivity. Over the course of the year, he showed great improvement, thanks in part to a behavior modification plan and a bit of maturity.

The transition plan in the student's IEP is clearly stated and maintains some realistic goals. One of the goals was for the student to adhere to the behavior modification plan and begin to self correct his behavior, with the goal of eliminating the modification plan going into senior year. The transition plan also indicates the student's desire to attend a vocational post-secondary school. One of the goals is for the student to identify three possible post-secondary schools by the end of the junior year.

Parties Present at Meeting and Regulations

In accordance with state and federal regulations, the guidance department of LaSalle Academy seemingly followed all federal and state regulations in place to hold an effective review of the student's IEP. Present at the meeting were the student and both parents, all content area teachers, the head of guidance, the student's guidance counselor, class dean, the vice principal of academics, and special education liaison for the city of Providence and finally the student's neurologist and child psychologist who were present at the request of the parent, in order to share the result of the student's latest evaluations. The school was able to produce proof of notification of the meeting for all parties invited to the meeting, in the event that there was a dispute over notification. The school also

provided the parents with a copy of the Rhode Island Special Education Procedural Safeguards Notice so that the parent is aware of their rights under federal and state law.

The beginning of the meeting was quite technical and dealt with a great deal of procedural steps. For example, attendance was taken and participants signed documents that verified their attendance and the parents signed documents that declared that they were aware of their rights. Once the formalities of the meeting were over the meeting took on more of an open dialogue about the student and his progress.

School Personnel Feedback During the Meeting

The dialogue of the meeting began with introductions of all parties and each person representing the school was allowed to speak about the student's progress over the course of the year. All parties started off with something positive to say and all noted some progress over the course of the year. Each teacher noted that there were still some areas of concern, specifically in mathematics, which was not a surprise as much of the IEP highlighted the student's difficulties in math. Many teachers noted that the student had made progress in areas such as organization and actively seeking help for clarifications on directions, as well as. In general there was a strong sense that the student was gaining confidence in asking for help when needed and the parents also echoed the same sentiments. Teachers of all subjects noted that the student's general behavior had improved overall. As each person shared their assessment of the student the parents were generally in agreement with what was said. Overall the parents were happy with the student's progress and were excited about what they heard. The parents also commented that the student seemed to have a more positive outlook on school, although he was still easily discouraged at times of failure. However they noted that such

instances had decreased and the parents attributed much of their child's progress to the faculty and support staff working together to get the student through the school year.

Parental, Medical Professional and Student's Input

The parents, neurologist and child psychologist played an important role in the meeting and were encouraged by the school staff to share their thoughts about the student, his current progress and future accommodations. After the school staff shared their thoughts on the student, the doctors shared the findings of their most recent evaluations of the student. Medical evaluations supported teacher claims that the student had made progress over the course of the year. Medical professionals signaled that they were encouraged by his progress and felt that he was ready to handle more responsibility. One doctor remarked that "...seems to show more maturity and responsibility since the last evaluation and I am confident that there has been enough development that he can begin to be more independent when it comes to planning assignments and understanding directions, without having to depend on teachers and special sets of directions written specifically for him." When this development was revealed, the parents were asked by the head of guidance and the student's counselor if they were willing to remove that part of the accommodation from the IEP and they responded with a resounding "yes."

After hearing the input from school staff and medical professionals, the parent's and student were offered a chance to speak. Both the student and parents were quite happy with his progress over the year and were excited that some of the accommodations currently in the IEP could be removed. The head of guidance asked the parents for their input and asked each teacher if they were in agreement with the requests of the parents. For example, I was asked if I felt the student could go without specific sets of printed

instructions for assignments and I felt there was significant progress over the year and felt that indeed, such a request for removing that specific accommodation from the IEP was feasible.

Overall, it was clear that the parents felt free to question teachers and other school staff. The parents engaged in calm dialogue with all people present at the meeting and did not challenge or disagree with the assessments of teachers, school staff and medical professionals. Members representing the school listened to parents and their input and gave considerations to their thoughts and concerns. It was clear that all parties involved had the best interests of the student at heart throughout the entire meeting.

All parties then focused on the transition of the student into post-secondary education. The current IEP calls for the student to identify possible destinations for post-secondary education. The student and parents still feel as though this is a realistic goal and wish to continue to head toward a vocational post-secondary school. All parties felt that a realistic goal for the upcoming school year is for the student to identify three schools to attend and begin the application process. As a result of the transition discussion, the family and school staff feel that the student is on the right path for post-secondary education.

Meeting Conclusions and Future of Student

The meeting concluded with a newly designed IEP. It was apparent that the student, parents and staff all felt that the environment was a good fit for the student. While many of the accommodations for mathematics remained in place, the accommodation for specialized and written directions was removed for social studies, foreign language, and religion. A behavior modification plan was also left in place in

order to help the student continue to deal with hyperactivity issues. However, the plan was designed to allow for more individual accountability in terms of recognizing poor behaviors, making correct decisions and self correction of behaviors.

Although all parties were comfortable with the removal of the accommodation for directions, it was suggested that the group reconvene at the end of quarter one next year, so it can determine if the accommodation be added into the IEP for senior year. All parties agreed to review the IEP at the end of the first quarter next year. Guidance councilors also advised the parents, summer learning educator and doctors to monitor the IEP over the course of the summer. The IEP is not something that is in place only during the school year and people in contact with the student should monitor the IEP in order to make sure progress is being made (Binswanger, 2009).

Among new accommodations, as requested by the parents and agreed to by the school, the student will partake in a summer learning program for math. The student will also receive special instruction in math during his “free periods” during his senior year. The student is also expected to report to the LaSalle Academy Academic Support Center during free period to receive any other specialized instruction over the course of the day.

General Comments and Conclusions on the IEP Review Meeting

Overall the meeting was well run, organized and productive. It was clear that the representatives of LaSalle Academy were well versed in the process. Records of meeting notification were extensive and present in the event that a participant did not show. The school also asked the parents to sign and acknowledgment that the parents are aware of their rights under federal and state procedural safe guards. The head of guidance, who led the meeting, made it absolutely clear that the parent were encouraged to ask

questions, make sure that they knew what was being discussed at all times and encourage their over all participation during the meeting.

It was also clear through the meeting that all teachers and support staff were considered. Although most of the major accommodations in the IEP were for math, teachers of all subjects were offered the opportunity to provide input during the meeting. It was clear that all facets of the student's educational experience were considered. All areas of the curriculum were addresses and it was clear that there is a focus on the student and his transition into post-secondary education.

In conclusion, it seemed as though the meeting was a success. All parties involved had the opportunity to speak, listen to others, offer input and suggestions. Having been part of IEP review meetings at a previous school that deal with students adjudicated by the Rhode Island Family Court, I had an interesting perspective going into the meeting and also had a strong sense of what to compare it to. It seemed that the meeting at LaSalle was much more efficient, productive and well run than my previous experiences. As a result of my observations, I feel like LaSalle has a strong model to be followed and there are no recommendations for change in the future. However, I feel it is important to note that this is the first IEP meeting I have attended at LaSalle. I am unsure if this is the norm for all meetings, or if there were special circumstances that led the school to be "above average" with this particular family and student.

References

- Binswanger, C.K. (2009). Your kids have grown this summer? Has their IEP grown with them? Steps for updating your child's individualized education plan. *Exceptional Parent* 39 (9), 18-20. Retrieved from Ebsco host.
- Cohen, L.G. and Spenciner, L.J. (2009). Teaching students with ,mild and moderate disabilities. Research-based practices. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.