



TEAM BUILDING AND THE IEP PROCESS

As we develop the relationship between the school and the family, it is important to build a partnership that result in an effective team.

As members of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team, parents and the school personnel are equal partners. As a team, school personnel and parents need to work together to accomplish the goal of identifying and meeting the child's educational and support needs. Parents should not seek to gain more control, power, or say so, than the other team members. In seeking to do so, parents risk losing the focus on the child, and the goal of designing an appropriate program may not be reached. The team's focus should be on the **needs of the child**.



Some barriers to effective team building include:

- Communication problems
- A lack of understanding of the school system or the IEP process
- Feelings of inferiority
- Not understanding a child's disability
- Not valuing someone's input
- Apathy
- Stereotyping
- Negative attitudes

Different barriers may exist in different circumstances. Consider the barriers you might be bringing into a team meeting. For example, if a teacher comes to a meeting believing everyone knows that "All parents are over-emotional and impossible to work with", that teacher will have difficulty working effectively with parents. If a parent comes to a meeting feeling that "The school really doesn't care about my child", this too will create a barrier to an effective partnership. It is important to recognize barriers and then learn strategies for minimizing each barrier.

Occasionally situations arise in which parents and the school disagrees. If you are in a situation where there are already some negative feelings among team members, try to approach your next meeting with a clean slate, putting behind you the negative things that have happened. At the beginning of a meeting, each person should assume the good faith of the other and the joint commitment to **one goal: meeting the needs of the child**. It can be useful to verbalize the concept of "beginning again" to the other team members.

Teamwork helps to strengthen relationships and to set a positive foundation for future relationships. When everyone is working together to develop individualized educational programs for children, exciting things can happen!

The Utah Parent Center provides training and information on several topics that can help parents to develop communication and advocacy skills. For more information, please call the Center or visit our website at www.utahparentcenter.org and read our most recent issue of our *E-vents* newsletter for upcoming events.

This content is taken from the Utah Parent Center handbook: Parents as Partners in the IEP Process Parent Handbook

If your child has special needs, so do you! We can help!

230 West 200 South, Suite 1101

Salt Lake City, UT 84101-1337

801-272-1051 or 800-468-1160

www.utahparentcenter.org