



# STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN THE IEP

## Helping Students Participate in the IEP Meeting

Students who have not participated in their IEP meetings often view the IEP process with fear or mistrust. They may not see how the goals relate to their needs. Students who participate in the IEP process are generally more committed to working on the IEP goals.

## Steps in Preparing a Student to Participate Appropriately in the IEP Process

1. Explain what the process is and obtain a commitment from the student to participate.
2. Describe an IEP meeting, demonstrate how to participate, and role play with the student.
3. Help the student do a self-inventory and plan for the conference similar to the way parents and teachers do. The student could fill out a simple form.

## Have the student list:

- Learning strengths (list as many as possible)
- Learning weaknesses (If there are a lot, help him/her prioritize and list the most important ones)
- List goals and interests
  - School
  - non-school
  - long-range plans
- Learning instructional preferences
  - How do I learn best? (listening, reading, or doing)
  - What kind of group is best for me? (large, small)
  - What kinds of tests are best for me? (oral, written, un-timed)
  - What kinds of study materials are best for me? (written, taped)
  - What kinds of aids help me? (tape recorder, computer, calculator, friend taking notes for me, "buddy")
  -

As part of the inventory for a secondary student, you could use a chart (sample follows) listing goals she is willing to work on in each class or deficit area.

## Sample of Student Inventory

Class	Skills Needed For This Class	Skills I Need To Improve
English	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Writing sentences</li><li>• Being prepared</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Using commas correctly</li><li>• Being prepared</li></ul>
Study Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Skimming</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Outlining</li></ul>
Social Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Accepting criticism appropriately</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Accepting criticism appropriately</li></ul>

*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](http://www.utahparentcenter.org)

### Preparation:

1. Teach the student how to share his information from the inventory appropriately. Teaching the SHARE process is one method of helping students who need this skill.

The SHARE process:

- S** - Sit up straight
- H** - Have a positive attitude
- A** - Active listening
- R** - Relax
- E** - Eye contact

2. Have the student practice sharing the material. (If this is done in a classroom situation, the students could do this as a group first and give each other feedback).
3. Obtain a commitment from the teacher and others attending the IEP to help the student participate actively. Some suggestions for encouraging student participation are to:
  - Establish the purpose and goals of the meeting.
  - Ask the student relevant questions, such as:
    - What would you identify as your strengths and weaknesses?
    - What skills do you want to improve?
    - What are your goals for school?
    - What are your career or vocational interests?
    - What ways do you learn best?
    - What types of tests are best for you?
  - Listen and attentively take notes.
  - Give the student plenty of time to think and respond. This is crucial.
    - Use the information he provides.
    - Encourage questions and discussion.
    - Summarize the student's goals and plans.
    - Keep eye contact with the student. (Teachers usually tend to look at and talk to the parent which is discouraging to the student.)
  - Follow up with the student after the IEP. Help the student evaluate his/her participation.
    - List at least three things the student did well.
    - List one or two things the student needs to improve.

These techniques can be used either in a classroom situation or with an individual student. Research shows that when a student participates in his or her IEP, he or she likes it and feels it is important. The student will bring up most of the real concerns, and you can add the rest. The student is usually quite accurate. In addition, the teacher gains insight into how the student thinks about his or her studies. Parents also learn about their students as they self-advocate.

An added benefit of a student participating in the IEP is the building of self-esteem and commitment because the student feels like a partner in the process.

*This material is based on notes from a lecture by Candace S. Bos and is used with permission.*

### Student Participation in the IEP Meeting - Tips

- Consider when and how to appropriately involve your child in the IEP process. Help the child develop confidence and become comfortable talking about his or her disability and needs. Teach your child to identify what is helpful, including accommodations. Involving the student at a young age can help him or her learn self-advocacy as well as goal setting and planning skills.
- Consider having non-verbal students participate in the IEP meeting by providing written information about themselves, their needs and goals. For example, some nonverbal students have successfully led their own IEP meetings by creating and using a Power Point presentation. This activity could be included as an IEP goal to teach self advocacy.

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