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IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE: STUDENT WORKSHEET FOR IEP MEETING

WELCOME!

We are Psyched that you are here!

We want you to Learn so that you can Do! As school psychologists and behavior analysts, our bottom-line goal is to improve the quality of services we provide to schools and families, and especially for the students we support, in order to best facilitate their learning and development and maximize their future outcomes.

In this document, you will find implementation guidance for our Student Worksheet for IEP Meeting downloadable, which accompanies our Self-Advocacy training webinar. The worksheet is a resource designed to facilitate school psychologists, counselors, special education teachers, classroom teachers, case managers, and other educational professionals in their work with students with disabilities to prepare them for meaningful and active participation in their education.

For any questions, please ask! We welcome and appreciate your feedback.

Importance of Obtaining Student Input:

When developing an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), school teams must consider the student's strengths, which is often determined by the student's teachers. However, this should also involve the student's own perceptions of their strengths. Not only does that give the student some agency in the process, but it also ensures a strengths-based lens when developing IEP goals.

In addition, for transition IEPs (the age at which may vary depending on your state), the law requires that students be invited to their IEP meeting. If the student cannot attend, the team must ensure that their interests and preferences are considered within the IEP planning process.

All special education services and IEPs are required to be individualized, and one way to ensure that this occurs is to include the student's input by asking the student themselves. By engaging in a conversation with the student, you are facilitating their self-advocacy by offering an opportunity for the student to communicate information about themselves, which is an important aspect of being an effective self-advocate.

While many teams have a form that students fill out prior to their transition IEPs, our student worksheet is designed to be completed through a conversation with the student. Many students are able to communicate more clearly in this format than they are by reading and writing responses independently. In general, the eight questions in our worksheet are easily completed in an informal 15- to 20-minute conversation with the student. This handout is also meant to be flexible and semi-structured; feel free to ask additional follow-up questions or utilize additional prompting to clarify any questions as needed.

Directions for the Student Worksheet for IEP Meeting Pages 1 and 2

The first two pages of the handout are designed to be completed prior to the student's IEP meeting. These eight questions ensure that the school team follows the legal mandate to include the student's strengths in the IEP and also ensures that their preferences and interests are considered.

Questions on the first page ask for the student to share a few of their strengths, favorite activities, and recent successes, which can include both school-related and nonacademic endeavors. Asking them what seems harder for them than their peers can open a discussion on their challenge areas.

Questions on the second page focus on the current school year and what is working well for them academically as well as what areas of school are more of a struggle. This allows for further discussion regarding the student's perception of what would be helpful to include in their IEP and what goals they would like to address.

As noted in our training, a student needs to not only know their strengths, but also their needs and what supports will be most beneficial to them. By engaging them in a conversation on the topics presented in these questions, you are actively helping the student build their self-advocacy skills. They will be better able to acknowledge and articulate their needs, which will increase their own insight, self-efficacy, and independence. This process ensures that they are actively participating in their services and will also ensure that they are better prepared for future opportunities to self-advocate.

Directions for the Student Worksheet for IEP Meeting Page 3

The third page of the handout is designed to be completed during (or shortly after) the IEP meeting and reviewed with the student at a later time. This page allows you to summarize the meeting highlights and review the team's decisions as well as updates or changes to the IEP. During the debrief process, you also have the opportunity to talk with the student about their experiences attending the meeting (if applicable) and praise their participation in order to set them up for success for future opportunities to actively engage as a self-advocate in educational, vocational, and/or postsecondary arenas.

Please refer to pages 4-6 for a sample Student Worksheet which provides a completed version as a model for you to follow.

STUDENT WORKSHEET FOR IEP MEETING

Name Oliver Twist

Date 10/19/2023

List a few of your greatest strengths.

Playing drums, knowing a lot about dinosaurs, basketball, and soccer. Memory, I know things back from a long time ago. Knowing a lot about animals.

What are some of your favorite things to do?

Play drums, play basketball, play sports, play outside, be active, watch TV, listen to music.

List a few things that seem harder for you than other students your age.

Math. Sometimes being nice to people. I'm not as fast as the other kids.

Provide a few examples of your recent success, both inside and outside of school.

Getting 100% on my root words packet. Playing drums at a fall festival with my rock band class.

Completed Student Worksheet for IEP Meeting - Page 2

What has gone well this school year?

Sign language club has gone well. Getting good grades.

What has been a struggle this school year?

Math (Q - tell me more about how math has been a struggle?) It's just hard to figure out and understand.

Being nice to people (Q - tell me more about how being nice to people is hard for you?) Like whenever I don't get what I want, I'm just rude.

What do you think would be helpful to include in your IEP?

Math (Q - what would help you with math?) Having the teacher teach me other strategies. (Q - what else?) Extra time, maybe having me do less math work and having it be less hard.

(Q - what would help in terms of getting along with others/being nice?) - some strategies

What are your personal goals for this school year or next school year?

To be a nicer person, for math to be easier, to make more friends.

Completed Student Worksheet for IEP Meeting - Page 3

Meeting Notes:

Oliver's IEP meeting was held 10/26/2023. Oliver attended the meeting and introduced himself to the team members. We started the meeting by allowing him to share his strengths, interests, and successes from this document that he had previously shared with his case manager during the pre-meeting interview. His ELA teacher also added that reading and spelling are other areas of strength for Oliver. His case manager added that he is polite to adults in the school as well as hard-working. Oliver's grandmother shared that he also has a love for animals and takes great care of the two dogs and two cats in their home.

Oliver then shared his challenge areas, and his teachers and grandmother agree that he struggles with math and social skills. Teachers also noted concerns with focus.

The team recommended continuing current services and goals to address these areas. The current accommodations, including extra time for assignments and tests, and allowing Oliver opportunity to correct mistakes after reteaching, will also continue.

The team also discussed Oliver's own goals and his concerns for his IEP. Teachers reiterated to him and his grandmother that he gets extra time for assignments and tests, and that they are currently working with him on strategies related to applied mathematical problem solving and relationship skills. However, given his input, the case manager will investigate whether there are additional strategies for both math and social skills that can also be utilized during the school day.

Mrs. Copperfield stated that as Oliver's case manager, she will touch base with him in approximately one week to debrief his engagement with the IEP process, and provide additional clarification if he has any questions.

The team agreed that Oliver did a great job participating in his IEP meeting. Oliver also stated that he was nervous before the meeting, but proud that he was involved, and is excited to do it again at next year's IEP meeting.

References:

IDEA Regulations, 34 C.F.R. § 300.321 [b] [1] <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/regs/b/d/300.321>

Gibson v. Forest Hills (2013). <https://caselaw.findlaw.com/court/us-6th-circuit/1742288.html>

Yell, M.L. (2019). The law and special education (5th ed.). Pearson.