

WHY GOOD IEP MEETINGS GO BAD – PARENTS, ADVOCATES, AND TEACHERS, OH MY!

(SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS)

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RUM CAKE

Gather ingredients:

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup Chopped Pecans

1—18 $\frac{1}{2}$ ounce package Butter Recipe Cake Mix

1—3 $\frac{3}{4}$ ounce package Vanilla Instant Pudding Mix

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup Light Rum

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup Water

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup All-Vegetable Cooking Oil

4 Eggs

Grease and flour Bundt pan, crumble nuts into bottom of pan.

Place cake and pudding mixes in large mixing bowl.

Add rum, water, oil, and eggs. Mix for 2 minutes.

Pour into cake pan and bake at 325 degrees for 60 minutes.

Before the cake is ready to remove from the oven, prepare the Hot Rum Glaze.

HOT RUM GLAZE

1 cup Sugar

1 stick of Margarine

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup Rum

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup Water

Place ingredients in a small sauce pan and boil for 2 or 3 minutes.

Remove from oven and immediately pour on hot rum glaze (hot rum will cause cake to settle). Cool cake in pan for 30 minutes. Remove to serving plate.

Agendas: don't just write one...use it!

A well written and implemented agenda can set the tone for a good meeting, establish parameters for the meeting and the behavior of the participants, serve as your meeting "itinerary", and ultimately contribute to a positive outcome.

Sample IEP Meeting Agenda

Time (Start)_____ (End)_____

Date _____

Welcome

Introductions

Procedural Safeguards

Purpose of meeting:

1. Discuss and consider the Independent Evaluation,
2. Determine eligibility
3. Review existing IEP
4. Develop annual IEP
 - a. Personal info
 - b. Present levels
 - c. Goals
 - d. Accommodations
 - e. State testing
 - f. Services

Additional Concerns of any team member

Sign and finalize IEP and give copy to parent

Summarize and plan for future

Words to Lose and Words to Use

Words to eliminate from your vocabulary during IEP meetings:

Budget	Money	Funds	Can't
Won't	Best	Maximize	Full potential
Minimum	Vote	We don't have...	
We've always done it that way		That's the way we do it, etc.	

Words to use instead:

Appropriate	Individual	Progress	Consider
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Examples:

When a request is made the school could say, "We can't afford that." (BAD) or "We can't do that." (BAD) or "I don't know if our budget will let us do that this year." (BAD) or "This is what we have to offer." (BAD) or "This is where we start all students." (BAD) ...or..."We feel that what we are proposing is appropriate." (GOOD)

If a person wants something and says that he/she knows that 2 other students receive the same thing the school could say, "We think what we are proposing is what is best for [the child]." (BAD) or "We feel what we are proposing is appropriate for [the child's] individual educational needs." (GOOD)

How you say things is important as you are "considering" requests and writing an IEP that is "appropriate" to the "individual" child's educational needs.

It is OK to be a "broken record". When a question is repeated, we do not have to state the answer in a different way. When we do, we run the risk of misspeaking.

This is NOT meant to appear as though to encourage or condone the intentional misinforming or misleading of anyone at an IEP meeting. The job of the IEP team is to write an appropriate IEP to meet the individual needs of the student. If that has been done, using the correct verbiage is merely telling the truth.

Questions regarding student strengths:

What do you see as some of your child's/the student's strengths?

Do you see the strength that the teacher has observed?

How would you describe some things that your child/the student does well?

What is your child's favorite subject in school?

Do you agree that _____ is one of your child's/the student's strengths?

Questions regarding goals:

Do you think this proposed goal would meet _____'s needs?

Is this goal reasonably attainable by the end of the IEP?

Do you think this goal is appropriate to _____'s needs?

Do you have any ideas as to how we could write this goal to address _____'s needs?

What concerns you most about the proposed goal? (If there is hesitation/opposition.)

Given the data we have on the prior goal, don't you agree that this goal is the next logical step? (Yes, a rhetorical / leading question, but hey, sometimes they are appropriate.)

Do you feel that _____ has the prerequisite skills to be able to make progress towards this goal?

Does this goal address an area of need identified in the present levels?

NOTE: In these questions, I illustrate using the child's name. Always saying "the student" or "your child" sounds sort of impersonal to me. I believe the school should recognize, and refer to, the student as in individual...a real person, not just "the student" or someone else's "child". Every student is "our child" during the school day. I think it will send a positive message to the parent if we use the student's name whenever possible.

Questions regarding accommodations:

What do you mean by _____?

Do you have any data to support the need for that particular accommodation?

Are there alternative ways the same outcome could be achieved?

Is there another accommodation that would be just as effective?

If we were to really think outside the box on this, what would it look like?

What else has been tried so far?

Can you help the team understand why you think that is appropriate or needed?

What do you think will be the outcome if we add the accommodation (or don't add the accommodation)?

How can we address _____'s need related to _____?

Questions regarding services:

Is this service appropriate to _____'s needs?

Is this enough time for us to provide the accommodations and instruction for _____ to make progress towards the goals?

Why did you propose that amount of service (time)?

Can you explain _____?

Can you help us understand _____?

Why wouldn't _____ be an option?

Do you have anything (documentation, doctor report, evaluation results, or data) to share with us to support your service proposal?

NOTE: Sometimes, I will ask questions in an IEP meeting that I already know the answer to. I ask them because I think other team members may benefit from hearing the answer from the teacher or parent.

Questions regarding parent requests:

Can you help us understand what you are asking / proposing?

Have you tried anything at home to address this? What have you tried?

Do you have anything (documentation, doctor report, evaluation results, or data) to share with us to support your request?

Can you tell us more about _____?

What do you mean by _____?

Are there alternative ways that the same outcome could be achieved?

How do you feel about _____?

What concerns you most about _____?

What is a logical next step?

What can you do (at home) or what can we do to make _____ be effective?

Questions regarding behavior:

Do you (we) have data regarding the behavior?

Is there a behavior plan in place and has it been followed?

Do we know what the function of the behavior is?

What interventions have we tried and what was the outcome?

You say _____ (example: he/she has attained 80% on the behavior contract goals), what is that telling us? What is a logical next step?

NOTE: Many times, I will ask questions of the school team. I am always careful to not be critical of the school team in front of the parent, there is time to retrain after the meeting, but sometimes well placed inquiry will help identify, clarify, and help the team address the need (I CAN...remember?). Asking questions can also help keep the meeting moving forward to a positive conclusion...a form of facilitation.

Set the stage for a positive, productive meeting

"Stage" the room for comfort and safety

- "Adult" chairs
- No "improvised" weapons
- Consider the "Buddy System"
- Be prepared with calculated distractions

Useful tools to help you uncover the underlying "need"

- Bracket
- Reflect
- Paraphrase
- Body language
- Open-ended questions
- Soft skills

Guidelines for reconciling differences

- Restate each party's position and empathize with their respective situations
- Discover each party's underlying interests
- Ask for or propose options without asking for commitment
- Build small agreements

12 Tips for Breaking an Impasse

1. Restate all the things they have agreed on so far, praise them for their work and accomplishments, and validate that they have come a long way. Then ask something like: “Do you want to let all that get away from you (or us)?”
2. Take a short break (minutes, not days). Often things look different, and people are easier to work with, when you reconvene.
3. Focus on the future. Remind them that the past is just that...the past. The IEP is a future-oriented document. What do they think is appropriate for tomorrow?
4. Suggest a trial period or plan.
5. Develop criteria for a successful outcome. This might help them see that you just can't jump to their desired outcome without considering other things or without other things being done first.
6. Use brainstorming. (From “out of the box” to “out of this world.”)
7. Shift to another topic.
8. ASK QUESTIONS!!
9. Practice positive advocacy.
10. Reality-check. State facts: “That is not an IEP team decision.” “That goal does not address the area of need.”
11. When all else fails, the system has the responsibility to offer FAPE. Even if it escalates tension, there may come a time when you have to state what the system is proposing and move on. (Parents can file Administrative Complaints, request Mediation, and file for a Due Process hearing if they disagree with what the system proposes.
12. Beg. (Just Kidding. I wanted to have 12.)