

Planning for a successful meeting with school

Resources



Takeaway Tips

Early Engagement with your school

Understanding the best pathways to communicate with staff and administration within the school is useful on many levels. Establishing an easy and collaborative approach for sharing information for all stakeholders, especially for the student, will improve outcomes for inclusion. It is helpful to identify the most efficient method to communicate information about your student's well-being and learning as early as possible. You may need to communicate information to the classroom teacher about changes to emotional or physical health on a daily or weekly basis.

- **Email communication** is an efficient and quick way to notify staff of possible changes to a student's ability/performance in class. Health updates, changes to care protocol, or to request an appointment.
- **Build relationships with administration/office staff** as these are the frontline people who will also get to know your student. They facilitate many support arrangements for students and have regular access to medications and to sick bay.
- **Instigate 'touch base' meetings** to share any new concerns, achievements or changes with student's primary teacher or learning support teacher. These could be via zoom or face to face even if before or after school for 15 mins. The aim of the meeting is also to discuss upcoming excursions or events which may need school planning.
- **Requesting important school dates well ahead of time** to prepare and plan for school meetings such as Individual Educational Plans. Requesting items be placed on the agenda and preparing your student to articulate any concerns and goals they wish to identify and work towards. Have these dates on your calendar.
- **Proudly communicate your student's strengths, gifts and passions** to parents of other students, and others you meet in the school community. Being approachable and open about your student and their vision for their education.
- **Meet with the Principal** early in the new school year, even if a short introduction or re-introduction. Provide them with an update about your student and your positive approach to collaboration with the school for good outcomes. Do this every year and periodically if possible.
- **Clarify availability of the school counsellor** and learn about the referral process including how to request a session in urgent situations.
- **Use Service providers** such as advocacy groups to discuss any concerns/issues and familiarise yourself with the NSW Education Disability Standards, Disability Discrimination Act and Convention on Rights of Children. These services can provide other resources.

Extra tips for good outcomes including Individual Education Plan (IEP) meetings

- **Organise for a pre- IEP meeting** – either just with the primary contact organising your student's IEP or with staff who will be in attendance for the actual IEP. This is an opportunity to share your thoughts and ideas before the official meeting. This offers an excellent opportunity to resolve some issues during this one-to-one meeting.
- **Starting afresh with the IEP** – it is useful to show you are motivated to work with staff involved in preparing the IEP to ensure it will benefit the student, their learning goals and education. Show your genuine desire to collaborate and find solutions no matter what challenges have come before. Be clear - your goal is to achieve an outcome reflecting a positive and relevant IEP.
- **Be proactive and keep your focus** – planning and preparation is vital. Decide not to be 'reactive' when something is not in your student's interest or clearly outside an inclusive approach. Anticipate and prepare solutions with valid research for issues raised in the IEP meeting. This will illustrate your commitment to your student's vision. Utilising examples of where other schools have implemented similar strategies is powerful.
- **Bring a support person/friend to take notes** – this is a strategy to assist parents to focus on the meeting and know there is a record of what has been agreed on and discussed. The person could be silent during the meeting, also able to observe staff behaviour and attitudes and help you debrief after the meeting. You are entitled to have a note taker/supporter in the meeting.
- **Request to contribute to the IEP agenda and receive it in advance** - this offers a good opportunity to prepare goals/issues you wish to be included in the IEP and feel familiar with agenda items. This allows potential to seek advice and research supporting evidence to validate any requests. Negotiation opportunities improve with prior knowledge of an IEP agenda. A student should always feel they can add agenda items to their own IEP.
- **Vision Statement** - a document which states your vision for your student and their vision for themselves is a clear reference point when new goals are suggested. Reiterating the hopes and dreams of and for your student will keep ideals high, e.g., further education post school, university or Tafe. Reinforce goals and outcomes that reflect participation congruent with the peer group. Refer to the vision statement during the IEP, attach a new vision if needed. Email the statement to those staff attending the IEP meeting. A student can also write their vision for their future.
- **Student attends the IEP Meeting** - this is the student's IEP meeting and concerns them. Whenever possible the student should attend and be given the opportunity to contribute or lead discussion. Using augmentative communication can ensure a student's voice is heard. Providing food alters the atmosphere during the meeting and it can become more welcoming for all.
- **Goals that are relevant, meaningful, and achievable for the student** - these should be clear, achievable, and determined with the student's input. It is very useful to align goals with the student's National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Plan so that there is not too much being worked on at the same time. Goals will change, develop and require regular reviewing. Congruently, when an NDIS review is due, seek reports and input from the teachers at school. This makes for a much more workable situation for all.



- **Expectations of Families/Allies** - there is an expectation that families and allies will and should advocate for their student at the IEP. Every family brings insights regarding their student. Ability also by families/allies to see 'lapses of inclusion' resulting in segregation where professional interventions or decisions may not have worked. If a family feels they cannot advocate for themselves, they can contact an advocacy organisation for assistance and maybe even a regular contact person through their NDIS plan be that a therapist, Support Coordinator or Plan manager.
- **Pressure to agree to an action** - it is fair and reasonable to resist agreeing to a request in the IEP if the family/ally/ is not comfortable or has concerns. Have it noted in the minutes that it had not been agreed by student/family or ally. For example, pressure to provide care and transport for excursions etc. Take time to consider any new issue and agree to get back to school within 24 - 48hrs with your response. You may decide in this time on a better solution.
- **Recognising it is not win/lose, sometimes it is less than perfect** - it is helpful to use strategies during the meeting that allow everyone to feel they have won. There may be issues you are willing to accept as being handled in a 'less than perfect way'. It is possible to make changes that effect good inclusion strategies without formalising them on the IEP. Maintaining a positive and collaborative relationship during primary and secondary school years is key.
- **Remember, the view of the student/family/ally counts** - the insights and vision of your student, their family and allies count equally if not more than those of the staff. Never doubt the importance of being the advocate for your young person. When blocks are presented regarding funding, ask what school funding would be relevant for this issue? What is

needed? How can we make this happen? Be solutions focused and proactive with assistance in the decision making. It is your right and the right of your young person.

- **Challenging issues** - if issue is urgent contact disability advocate organisations to clarify The Department of Education policies and get advice to best approach.
- **Use networks** - such as circles of support, can assist when facing challenges with school discrimination other parents on similar journey to look at solutions.

Websites to address Q and A

Useful resources for Individualised Educational Planning Meetings

[Your Child's IEP - Guide for Families on Personalised Plans for Learning and Support - Australian Alliance for Inclusive Education \(allmeansall.org.au\)](http://allmeansall.org.au) - A detailed information guide on what IEP's are, their importance, preparing for them and what is involved in these meetings.

[Using funding supports effectively » Family Advocacy \(family-advocacy.com\)](http://family-advocacy.com) - A brief guide to effective use of funding supports in an NSW Department of Education Mainstream School with links to information on other school systems. Including the process of applying for this funding, integrated funding and Learning and Support.

www.family-advocacy.com/assets/Uploads/Downloadables/e2c45cdfa7/11116-Parents-Individual-Education-Planning-Report.pdf - A complete report on IEP's including changing them to change outcomes, background on inclusion, instructions on how to fill an IEP out and templates for planning with prompts of crucial aspects to consider.

[The NDIS and personalised learning and support in NSW public schools](#) - a diagram explaining the link between NDIS goals and personalised learning goals at school. How the IEP meeting can assist with collaboration and linking for the benefit of the student.



Collaboration and partnerships with school

www.family-advocacy.com/ordinary-lives/school-years/building-good-relationships-with-the-school/ - A brief webpage from Family Advocacy around building positive relationships between families and schools including 2 short clips. Also includes marketing techniques of your young person including examples of strength-based portfolios from real life examples.

www.family-advocacy.com/ordinary-lives/school-years/building-good-relationships-with-the-school/family-involvement-in-meetings-planning-and-decision-making/ - A website from Family Advocacy highlighting the importance of Family involvement in meetings, planning and decision making and how this can be achieved. With links to further resources on how to go about this and practical examples that can help with this process.

[Home :: Inclusive School Communities](#) – This is a South Australian Group who offer some valuable resources.

Parent Perspective Tool 3: The Necessity of Negotiation and Compromise with your Child's School :: [Inclusive School Communities](#) - A tool kit which covers negotiation and compromise with your child's school.

[Circles of Support Guide & Workbook Digital Edition | belongingmatters](#) - a free downloadable digital resource and guide. This guide aims to provide you with information about Circles of Support, ideas about how you might create a Circle of Support and examples of how others have brought together a voluntary group of people committed to assisting a person with a disability to achieve their goals and safeguard their interests into the future.

Creating a vision for your young person

[Resources: Developing a Vision » Family Advocacy \(family-advocacy.com\)](#) - An article discussing the importance of building a vision for your young person. Within this there is a worksheet/framework to personalise vision building and goal setting to your child.



NSW Department of Education

[Personalised planning \(nsw.gov.au\)](#) - An article from the NSW Department of Education identifying your young person's needs and practical tips for how you can work with your child's school.

[Educational options \(nsw.gov.au\)](#) - The Department provides a range of options to support students with disability and additional learning and support needs across the high school years.

[Adjustments to teaching and learning \(nsw.gov.au\)](#) - Adjustments enable students with disability and additional learning and support needs access to syllabus outcomes and content on the same basis as their peers. This personalised approach to teaching and learning delivers rigorous, meaningful, and dignified learning programs. Students, parents and carers and schools work together to develop tailored, personalised programs to help students get the most out of their school life.

[Collaborative curriculum planning | NSW Education Standards](#)

This is further information by NESA (New South Wales Education Standards Authority) outlining the processes of Collaborative Curriculum Planning. It describes determination of the most appropriate curriculum options and adjustments for a student with a disability. Parents/carers and student should play a significant role in this determination.

Information on the National Disability Standards for Education

www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/disability-rights - The Disability Discrimination Act, 1992 (DDA) is designed to ensure that people with a disability aren't treated less fairly than people without a disability. It covers a range of life areas, including access, education, employment, activities and sport. If a person with disability feels they have been discriminated against, they can make a complaint to the Australian Human Rights Commission.

[Disability Standards for Education 2005 \(legislation.gov.au\)](http://legislation.gov.au) - Disability Standards for Education (2005) in detail.

[NCCD - Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on schools with students with Disability](#) - Looks at the process by which different schools use data to access funding for students with disabilities.

Other websites

[D.D.A. guide: Getting an education | Australian Human Rights Commission](#) - A brief online guide to Disability Education rights including what should educators do, access, admission, harassment, course changes and more.

[Education - Australian Centre for Disability Law](#) - Learning together Tools. This is an extremely useful toolkit for families, with excellent ideas, workshops, and practical tips for getting support from school and working collaboratively.

Parent suggestions

[Home - How I Learn | Student Questionnaire](#) - Profiles for young person to fill out before meetings or when transitioning.

[Positive Partnerships | Planning Matrix](#) - Positive Partnerships planning matrix for school meetings. Used to help parents, carers and teachers identify unique strengths and challenges individual children face and highlight strategies which can be used to further support them.

Questions from Webinar

Is a student on an IEP required to enrol in LifeSkills in High School?

Schools may direct students with IEPs to be placed in LifeSkills classes as early as year 7. This is not necessary as students can still achieve adjusted 'learning outcomes' within the mainstream curriculum quite appropriately regardless of intellectual ability.

Some students do commence 'LifeSkills' curriculum for selected subjects, it is however important for parents /carers to see what this will look like. Will the student be removed from the mainstream classes and involved in activities like 'shopping' or tasks which limit learning?

By years 10-12 schools frequently escalate pressure to place students with IEPs in the LifeSkills courses. This is due to 'stage 6' learning in year 11-12 having more fixed assessment outcomes. Schools are concerned NESA (NSW Education Standards Authority) accreditation may be impacted. Many parents are comfortable supporting their students to continue in mainstream, even if marks are low.

This is an issue well worth discussing with an advocacy organisation regarding your student.
[Family Advocacy \(family-advocacy.com\)](http://family-advocacy.com)

