

# Student Involvement in the IEP

## At-A-Glance

### LEGAL ESSENTIALS

- Students of transition age **MUST** be invited to IEP meetings [34 CFR § 300.321(b)(1)]
- IEP must reflect student's "strengths, preferences, and interests" [34 CFR § 300.43(a)(2)]
- Student participation is key element of appropriate transition planning
- In Oregon, transition planning begins as early as age 14, or even earlier, when determined appropriate by the IEP team.
- Prior to the transfer of procedural rights, parents determine the level of student involvement in IEP meetings.

### BENEFITS OF STUDENT INVOLVEMENT

- Student ownership and motivation
- Self-determination and self-advocacy skills
- Relevance of IEP goals and services
- Post-school outcomes and success
- Student understanding of rights and accommodations

### INVOLVEMENT BY AGE/STAGE

| Age/Grade            | Key Expectations   | Examples  |
|----------------------|--|---|
| <b>Elementary</b>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attend part of meeting</li> <li>• Share basic preferences</li> <li>• Begin understanding strengths</li> </ul>                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student shares "Three things I'm good at" with the team</li> <li>• Student creates drawing of favorite activities for the meeting</li> <li>• Student answers: "What helps me learn best?"</li> <li>• Student shows work samples they're proud of</li> <li>• Student uses happy/sad faces to indicate preferences</li> <li>• Student introduces themselves to team members</li> </ul>           |
| <b>Middle School</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participate in goal-setting</li> <li>• Describe accommodation needs</li> <li>• Learn about IEP components</li> </ul>          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student completes "This is how I learn best" inventory</li> <li>• Student reviews draft goals and gives feedback</li> <li>• Student creates slideshow about strengths and challenges</li> <li>• Student explains which accommodations help and why</li> <li>• Student prepares 2-3 questions to ask during meeting</li> <li>• Student practices using simple disability explanation</li> </ul> |
| <b>High School</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead portions of meeting</li> <li>• Active role in transition planning</li> <li>• Understand disability and rights</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student leads introductions and meeting agenda</li> <li>• Student presents on progress toward previous goals</li> <li>• Student explains post-graduation goals and plans</li> <li>• Student leads discussion about job/college interests</li> <li>• Student articulates needed accommodations for transition</li> <li>• Student summarizes key decisions at meeting conclusion</li> </ul>      |

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### STUDENT PARTICIPATION ESSENTIALS

| Before Meeting   | During Meeting   | After Meeting   |
|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invite student with appropriate notice</li> <li>• Prepare student for participation</li> <li>• Identify how student will contribute</li> <li>• Create supportive materials if needed</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create welcoming environment</li> <li>• Directly address student, not just about student</li> <li>• Actively seek student input</li> <li>• Use student-friendly language</li> <li>• Document student's direct statements</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review decisions with student</li> <li>• Confirm student understands outcomes</li> <li>• Connect goals to student's expressed interests</li> <li>• Plan for increased involvement next time</li> </ul> |

### KEY STUDENT CONTRIBUTIONS

- **Strengths & Talents:** What I'm good at
- **Preferences:** What works for me
- **Interests:** What I care about
- **Needs & Challenges:** Where I need help
- **Future Goals:** What I want after high school
- **Accommodations:** What helps me succeed

### PARTICIPATION OPTIONS (INDIVIDUALIZE TO STUDENT)

- Verbal input during discussion
- Prepared presentation (slides, portfolio, etc.)
- One-page personal introduction
- Pre-recorded video or audio
- Written statements or completed forms
- Visual supports (pictures, diagrams, etc.)
- Communication devices or assistive technology

### QUICK INVOLVEMENT INDICATORS

- Student can explain the purpose of their IEP
- Student's language appears in IEP document
- Student shows increased participation over time
- Student's priorities are reflected in goals
- Student demonstrates self-advocacy skills
- Student understands their accommodations

### COMMON PITFALLS TO AVOID

- Discussing student as if they're not present
- Using jargon or complex language
- Limiting student input to "yes/no" responses
- Focusing only on deficits rather than strengths
- Allowing adult voices to dominate discussion
- Expecting same participation style from all students

**Remember:** Student involvement is a process that develops over time, with the ultimate goal of student self-advocacy and self-determination.