

Introducing Your Child to the School Community Using a “Student Snapshot” Format

As the expert on your child, you, the parent, have valuable information to share with the people who will interact with your child during the school day. Some school staff members will attend Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings, but many will not have the opportunity to be a part of in-depth discussions about your child. IEP case managers are often reluctant to share student-specific information with other school personnel because of concerns about confidentiality.

If the only information someone has about your child is a special education label, that person may make assumptions about your child that are not accurate. If the person has no information at all, he or she may misunderstand your child's performance and behavior at school. For example, the cafeteria worker may try to engage your child in friendly conversation as he moves through the lunch line. If she is not aware of his hearing impairment, she may view his lack of response as rude and disrespectful behavior and discontinue attempts to talk or interact with your child.

Because families have differing viewpoints on how much information to share and with whom, parents can take the lead when it comes to providing personal information about their child at school. Because time is often in short supply for both you and school personnel, it is important to find a way to deliver information quickly and concisely. Lengthy reports, multiple-page e-mails and prolonged telephone conversations are not efficient and rarely effective. One-page written materials are much more likely to be read and remembered.

Use the template provided to prepare a one-page “Student Snapshot” of your child. The process of completing the form will help you:

- Determine what is most important to you and your child.
- Develop the ability to express those concerns and expectations in clear and concise ways. Examples of the kind of statements to include are given on the template to help get you started.

Tips and Suggestions

- **Keep it simple:** Use only one side of one page. Use bulleted lists rather than paragraphs. Avoid medical terminology and jargon—use everyday or school-related language whenever possible.
- **Prioritize:** Include no more than five or six points in each of the five areas on the template. Don't duplicate the IEP. The “Snapshot” includes only a few of the most essential considerations of which all staff should be aware.
- **Keep it personal:** Be sure to include a current photo of your child. Information should be specific to your child, not about the disability in general.
- **Involve your child:** Be sure to include your child in decisions about what information to share and with whom.
- **Decide who needs a copy of the “Snapshot”:** Consider the following: librarian, secretary, nurse, custodian, cafeteria supervisor, bus driver, after-school child care or activity director, principal, counselor, art and music teacher, playground supervisor, para-professional, classroom teacher. Ask to have a copy included in the teacher's or paraprofessional's substitute folder.
- **Distribute the “Student Snapshot”:** Provide a copy when you introduce your child and yourself to school staff at back-to-school activities. Distribute to the IEP team at the annual IEP meeting. Provide a copy when there is a change in personnel working with your child.

Introducing Joe Smith

Joe Smith at a Glance

Current Interests: Spongebob Squarepants®, playing the drums, Twins' baseball

Likes: Computers, electronics, art and media materials

Dislikes: Noisy environments, touching or tasting unfamiliar foods

Motivated by: Coaching style: setting and reaching goals, "high fives," humor (good-natured teasing); social interaction; grades and awards

Turned off or discouraged by: Stern or angry responses, being singled out publicly

Joe's Strengths to Build Upon

- Good auditory memory; learns best by listening
- Musical: rhythm, rhyme and melodies reinforce learning
- Cooperative: works well in teams or small groups
- Understands limits: able to follow rules
- Uses laptop computer independently
- Supportive and involved family

Joe's Challenges and Ways to Address Them

- No hearing in left ear: Speakers need to sit, stand, and walk on his right side.
- Younger developmental age: Close adult supervision needed for vulnerability and safety, especially during unstructured times like recess, lunch, and hall passing times
- Poor fine motor skills: Needs extra time, adapted materials, and some personal assistance for writing or drawing and self-help activities.
- Poor large muscle coordination and balance: Needs extra time and more space going up and down stairs and moving through halls

Our Long-range School Goals for Joe:

- To participate as much as possible in school with the people with whom he will live in the community as an adult (regular education peers)
- To reach his potential in basic skill areas: reading, math, written language
- To develop age-appropriate behavior and social skills
- To learn what he has to offer others and to feel a responsibility to make a contribution
- To increase his attention span and tolerance for mentally and physically challenging activities

Our Focus for Joe this School Year:

- To make measurable progress in reading, especially decoding
- To learn appropriate conversational skills with peers
- To make a friend with whom to connect outside of school



Introducing _____

_____ at a Glance

Current Interests:

Likes:

Dislikes:

Motivated by:

Turned off or discouraged by:

_____ 's Strengths to Build Upon

-
-
-

_____ 's Challenges and Ways to Address Them

-
-
-
-

Our Long-range School Goals for _____:

-
-
-

Our Focus for this School Year:

-
-
-