



Working Together as an Effective Individualized Education Program (IEP) Team

Clear parent and professional communication and effective partnership are important in building an IEP team. It takes trust, respect, and effort to communicate clearly.

Trust can be established or reestablished by:

- Defining small steps or actions to be taken. It is helpful to put these things in writing
- Setting dates for items to be completed and reviewed
- Holding people accountable to follow through on commitments

Using good communication skills makes you a more effective advocate for your child. This includes asking questions and working with the school when issues are complicated. You are also demonstrating and teaching your child lifelong skills of working with others to achieve positive outcomes.

One key to effective communication in the special education process is being prepared to become actively involved in the planning of your child's educational program. It's also important to listen to other opinions. Here are some helpful tips:

- Prepare for the meeting. Know why you are meeting and who will be there
- Be a part of the agenda. Bring your concerns to the case manager to be listed
- Consider using PACER's "[IEP Team Meeting Planner](#)" ([PHP-c184](#)) to list and track your concerns
- Share your knowledge of your child with the team. What you see at home may be completely different from what they see at school
- Listen with respect when others speak, and expect the same in return
- When you speak, focus on specifics, not generalities. Be positive. It is important to verbally summarize your understanding of what you heard, and always keep the emphasis on your child's needs

Having a sound understanding of special education and your rights as a parent will make you a better communicator. Knowledge is power. Learn more by calling PACER Center, attending PACER workshops, and accessing the resources at [PACER.org](#)

In summary, you can disagree with others and voice your opinions without being disagreeable. Working together, parents and professionals can find answers that neither might find alone. Be sure to base discussions on facts, data, and examples. Try to resolve any issues as quickly and cordially as possible.

PACER resources:

[PHP-a19, Working Together: A Parent's Guide to Parent and Professional Partnership and Communication Within Special Education](#)

[PHP-c241, Tips for Talking with Your Child's School](#)

[PHP-c198, Top 10 Tips: Ideas to Improve Parent-to-Professional Communication From PACER Parent Advocates](#)

Online webinars and archived livestreams: [PACER.org/livestream/archive.asp](#)

