Before Your Next Individualized Education Program (IEP) Meeting: Tips for Teachers of Transition-age Students

As the teacher of transition-age students with disabilities, every day you accompany your students on their journey toward self-determination. You help them find the courage and confidence to speak for themselves, dream up their own futures, and learn the skills they need to get there.

Teaching transition-age students requires you to transition, too, from your role leading the classroom to a new role where you follow your students’ lead, as they develop their own personal vision of themselves and forge a path to the future they want.

One of the most important places to follow your students’ lead is in their IEP meetings. These tips from parents of transition-age students are for you:

Don't walk into your next IEP meeting with your shoes on.
Take them off and step inside your student’s shoes for a while.

Don't check your honesty at the door.
Say “I don't get it” if you don't, and give your student another chance to tell you what they're trying to tell you.

Don't say “Trust me.”
Say “I’m listening.”

Don't say “Let me explain.”
Say “Help me understand.”

Don't say “This is just how we do things.”
Say “There must be another way. Let's figure this out together.”

Don't let your student experience that nothing changes when they speak for themselves.
Show them that their input makes a difference in their services and supports.

Don't teach your student that whatever they question, they can learn to accept.
Teach them that their questions are important.

Don't be afraid to say “yes” to your student’s requests.
Help them connect their requests to their rights.

Don't forget what you’ve taught your students since they were little, that knowledge is power.
Listen to your student’s knowledge of their own experience and help them find power in it.

Don’t doubt that class is in session at every IEP meeting your student attends.
And the lesson they're learning is whether their voice matters.

See PACER’s Companion Document: IEP Meeting Checklist for Teachers of Transition-age Students