

Individualized Education Program: Parent's Role

Be the “captain” of your child’s individualized education program (IEP) team! Being prepared, communicating effectively, and leading by action are all skills that can enable a parent to be the “captain” of their child’s IEP team. As a parent, you have the unique perspective of understanding your child’s world away from school. Your expertise and knowledge of your child’s daily routines, strengths, interests, and challenges are incredibly valuable and should be shared with your IEP team.

Action Items

Below are three ways to prepare for and lead your child’s IEP team.

1. *Create a Written Parent Report*

One way to be prepared and have your voice heard is to create a written parent report for the IEP. Your parent report should set high expectations for your child! Share your dreams for your child (short-term and long-term) and make a list of strengths and interests followed by a list of challenges.

Strengths, Gifts, Abilities: What Does Your Child Do Well?

- Positive personality traits.
- How your child performs at home and in the community (functional and academic).
- Likes: What your child chooses to do with free time? What motivates her?
- Adaptations used successfully at home.

Challenges: What Areas are Difficult for Your Child?

- Specific tasks your child struggles with at home and in the community.
- Dislikes: Things your child does not like to do. What discourages him?
- Difficulty achieving age-appropriate behaviors/skills and keeping up with peers.

2. Create a Student Report

Your child is the IEP team's "most valuable player"! As such, including your child in the IEP process from a young age is an invaluable part of the process. An easy way to start is to work with your child to create a student report. A student report is your child's opportunity to tell her story.

- What do you want to be when you grow up?
- What activities are you involved in outside of school?
- What do you enjoy doing in your free time?
- What are you good at doing?
- What do you want to do better?
- What do you like most about school?
- What do you like least about school?

3. Initiate Communication

Reach out to your child's individual service providers to share ideas and talk about potential services and goals. Two to three weeks before the IEP, e-mail your parent and student reports to the team members (e.g., classroom teacher, teacher of the visually impaired, orientation and mobility instructor, occupational therapist). Ask them to meet with you in person or send you a written update of your child's progress.

- What skills have they been working on?
- Have any assessments been given? Results?
- Have any successes and challenges stood out?
- What goals will you propose for the IEP?

Learn About the IEP Process

The IEP can feel like a daunting document. Taking the time to learn about the IEP and the parent's valuable role in the process can be empowering. Michigan Alliance for Families offers many valuable [IEP resources for parents](https://michiganallianceforfamilies.org/iep) (michiganallianceforfamilies.org/iep).