

IEP Meeting Assignment

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Jacob's MAP meeting and IEP meeting were both highly collaborative. Both meetings included a broad range of individuals who came together to help Jacob identify and achieve his goals. The MAP meeting was incredibly interactive as each person, Jacob, and his family members, including grandfather and cousin, were equal participants with the array of professionals in the room. Creating an open dialogue where everyone feels safe and welcome to participate is a huge step to a positive and productive generation of ideas. Each family and professional team member shared their thoughts on Jacob's strengths and needs. By starting with dreams and then strengths, the mood was upbeat and a bit playful as they approached the needs. This seemingly allowed the conversation to retain a positive and productive tone despite identifying things Jacob needed to work on. The conversation then let the team see what was written before them and where they needed to focus their efforts for the goals and supports. These, in turn, become the framework for the IEP.

Beginning with Jacob's dreams seemed to have centered the conversation for all the participants, but especially Jacob and his family. It is a reminder for all as to why they were there and what they wanted to achieve. Following the focus on dreams for Jacob, the group shared his strengths. Once again, this was an excellent way to acknowledge to Jacob and his family that this child has value and is good at many things. While we might all have things to work on, so too do we all have things we are good at. While the dreams and strengths were not all necessarily directly related to what will eventually end up in the IEP, they were necessary additions to frame the conversation and to support the participants. Finally, as the group headed into the conversation about Jacob's needs, they were in a creative and positive frame of mind. As they

identified things that Jacob struggled with these were directly counterbalanced on the overflowing category of strength on the visual before them. This dichotomy helped Jacob stay positive and recognize such things as being excellent at math but working on his reading, which would help him with those challenging word problems. Finally, having the needs focus the goals and the strengths focus the supports was a natural pulling together of the collaboration. Jacob's strong visual skills supplied natural aids for social skills, behavior, and organization with tools like social stories, graphic organizers, and visual schedules.

Looking at the MAP meeting overall, it seems that each deliberate step was vital to a positive, productive outcome for the IEP. The professional staff had built trust with the family and had checked in with the participants so that they knew what to expect. The lead had sprinkled some pre-solicited answers on the MAPS form ahead of time to get the conversation started and likely to help Jacob feel heard and safe. The vital players were in the room, covering each aspect of Jacob's world at school and home. The focus evolved from meta future dreams to the daily minutia that would get him there. The IEP meeting that followed leaned on much of the conversation that had previously taken place. The IEP document included the goals and supports that were generated in the MAP meeting, and the conversation referred back to many of the previously shared strengths and learning needs. Even as the IEP was being reviewed and explained, the voices of the group incorporated additional suggestions (like a lunch bunch to address social skills) by relying on those strengths (like adult interactions and relationships).

The MAP meeting created the buy-in, understanding, and positivity for the IEP. It allowed for the family to play an integral role in the process and help to build a communal understanding of the steps and the outcome. Creating the visual as a group, using drawings

(which addressed Jacob's visual learning) gave them an artifact to keep for future reference and referral. The IEP meeting on the other hand, while collaborative, it was, perhaps by necessity, focused more on reports from each party. There was far less give and take. The lead primarily read through the IEP. I can imagine that if the MAP meeting hadn't taken place beforehand the IEP meeting might have been a bit overwhelming for the family as it quickly jumped into reports from the professionals. Hearing from a doctor that Jacob is good at visual learning feels less personal than hearing that from his family and teachers. However, having such a report to confirm, from a professional, that the first group had already recognized was affirming. I think perhaps the IEP meeting might have benefitted from displaying the visual of the MAP meeting with an intro that would reference the MAP meeting being the foundation of the IEP. This might have served as a stronger foundation to the discussion rather than starting the conversation over in brief. This also might have helped the family to make the direct connections between the goals and needs with the technical references (like DIBELS, etc.).

The identification of the goals and supports clearly took place before the IEP meeting. This meeting seems more like a summary of the given info, with a few solicited additions, than a meeting to generate the content of the IEP. The notable exception was the generation of ideas regarding the visual schedules. This became a point of collaboration and idea generation. This was a good opportunity for everyone to feel heard and to participate in the solutions. However, the rest of the plan was brought to the table already set. While the family seems to be on board for the solutions and summary, I can imagine that without the tone setting MAP meeting, the IEP meeting might have been felt very differently.