


Facilitated Individualized Education Program

by Kacey Gregson, Director of Dispute Resolution

It is no secret that the individualized education program (IEP) team process can be adversarial and that when emotions run high, power struggles and irrelevant discussions can derail a meeting and take the focus off the student. When relationships between the school and the family are strained, facilitated IEP may be the answer.

Facilitated IEP is a process in which a student's IEP is developed in a structured meeting developed by a collaborative team. The team includes all required IEP team members who share the responsibility for the meeting process and results, and decision-making is managed with effective facilitation skills. The meeting is led by a trained facilitator, whose role is to guide the meeting process and keep the meeting participants on track, as well as to encourage active participation amongst the team members. The facilitator helps to ensure that the team members focus on one issue at a time and that the tone of the meeting remains civil and constructive. An effective facilitator understands how to build agreement within the IEP team. The facilitator does not offer an opinion on any of the discussion items, but serves as a neutral observer who keeps all participants on track and on point, and who helps team members effectively communicate with each other and practice reflective listening.

A facilitated IEP meeting will have an agenda and ground rules. The facilitator will begin by welcoming the team, stating the purpose of the meeting, allowing each team member to introduce him or herself, and defining the roles that each team member will fill. The facilitator will review the meeting agenda, define the expected outcomes for the meeting, and explain the meeting ground rules. Ground rules for the facilitated IEP meeting generally include the following: (1) communicate clearly and listen carefully, (2) respect the views of others, (3) share your views willingly, (4) ask and welcome questions for clarification, (5) be open to the ideas and views presented, and (6) honor time limits and stay on task. If the team is able to reach consensus and successfully develop the student's IEP, the facilitator will end the meeting by confirming the agreements the team made during the meeting, completing the paperwork, gathering signatures as appropriate, and conducting any needed debriefing.

The facilitated IEP process results in efficient, guided IEP team meetings that emphasize effective communication and reflective listening, building understanding and agreement amongst the team. Benefits of the facilitated IEP process include building and improving stronger relationships between team members and increasing participation by parents and general education staff through clear articulation and understanding of roles. By focusing on the IEP content and the process, the team can work together to make a difference for the student.

What Is Child Find?

by Amy Dill, PIN Specialist, and
Becky Raabe, AZ FIND Coordinator

Child find is a component of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act 2004 (IDEA '04) that requires states to locate, identify, and evaluate all children with disabilities aged birth through 21 who are in need of early intervention or special education services. This includes children who are highly mobile, such as migrant or homeless children, children suspected of having a disability even though they are advancing from grade to grade, private school students, and home-schooled students. The Arizona initiative for child find is referred to as AZ FIND.



Some children have more difficulty learning than others. They may have trouble achieving milestones in one or more of the following developmental or academic areas:

- ❖ Vision and Hearing
- ❖ Motor Control or Coordination
- ❖ Behavior or Social Skills
- ❖ Speech or Communication Skills
- ❖ Cognitive or Academic Skills

The earlier you express your concerns, the sooner your child's needs will be identified and the sooner he or she will receive the help needed to succeed. Anyone can refer a child birth through age 21 for early intervention or special education services. The referral can come from a parent, foster parent, teacher, counselor, friend, relative, or the student who finds learning difficult. If you have concerns about your child's

development or progress in school, contact the Arizona Early Intervention Program (AzEIP) at www.azdes.gov/azeip, or call either 1-888-439-5609 or (602) 532-9960 or your local school.



AzEIP screens children ages **birth to 2 years 10 1/2 months** to determine if early intervention services are needed. An AzEIP specialist will come to your home to talk with you about your concerns and observe your child. If your child is found eligible, a plan will be designed to include strategies, activities, and supports to achieve desired outcomes related to your child's development.

For concerns regarding your child **ages 2 years 10 1/2 months through 21 years**, contact your local school district. For students attending a charter school, contact the charter school that your child attends. Public schools use a screening process to check your child's development and academic progress. If an evaluation is needed, you will be a part of the evaluation team. You will be involved in the decision-making process to determine if your child is eligible for special education and related services. Eligible students are entitled to a free and appropriate public education (FAPE). All information contained in the screening or evaluation is confidential. For children attending private schools, contact your principal for a referral to the appropriate public education agency.



For additional assistance and resources, please visit the AZ FIND website at www.azed.gov/special-education/az-find/. Available resources include printable brochures and posters, training materials, sample forms, public awareness materials, and facts for families.

Parents as Partners: Effective IEP Team Skills

by Kathy Gray-Mangerson, PIN Specialist

Parents as Partners: Effective IEP Team Skills is a free training available through the Parent Information Network (PIN). This training can be presented individually or as the third installment in a three-part series that includes: (1) Participation in the Special Education Process, (2) Participation in the Individualized Education Program (IEP) Process, and (3) Parents as Partners: Effective IEP Team Skills.

This training was recently revised and improved. The content covers a parent's responsibilities as an equal member of the IEP team. Having a child in special education requires a familiarity with the federal laws that protect the child. Some of the most important laws covered in this session include the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), and No Child Left Behind (NCLB). During Parents as Partners: Effective IEP Team Skills,



participants learn about the specifics of preparing for the IEP meeting in advance by reviewing the individual components of the document, monitoring progress on the current year's goals, learning about the procedural safeguards notice (PSN), and prioritizing a list of questions and concerns.

The most important section emphasizes the need for collaboration between the IEP members. The team's job is to build positive relationships between its participants that will lead to the best outcomes for the student. Parents will learn about the principle of consensus, a process for group decision making. *Consensus* is defined by the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* as "the judgment arrived at by most of those concerned." Team members are most effective when they are willing to give up a central position and join with others to discover new ideas and solutions.



The group exercises in this training cover ideas and strategies a parent can use to become an affective communicator with the child's school. The recommended process for resolution of issues is to follow the chain-of-command within the district or charter starting with the child's teacher and working one's way to the governing board if necessary. Sometimes a team cannot come to an agreement despite everyone's best efforts. In that situation, parents may want to exercise their Dispute Resolution options. A brief overview of the State Complaint process, Mediation, and Impartial Due Process is covered.

The Parents as Partners: Effective IEP Team Skills training is a great way for parents to learn how to be effective members of their children's IEP teams. This training can be scheduled by contacting your local PIN Specialist, listed on page 4, or by calling toll-free 877-230-PINS (7467).

SELECT Classes

by Amy Grey, SELECT Program Coordinator

SELLECT (Special Education Learning Experiences for Competency in Teaching) is a federally funded program sponsored by the Arizona Department of Education and offered in cooperation with Northern Arizona University. SELECT classes provide state-of-the-art information about special education, disabilities, and special education law in Arizona. SELECT courses are recommended for special and general education teachers, administrators, related service personnel, paraeducators, and parents. Certified school personnel can take SELECT classes for renewal hours. SELECT classes can be taken for university credit for those teachers or administrators who are required by their school districts to have official transcripts and for those who may need to transfer hours out of state. The classes can also be taken for professional growth contact hours for free. For more information, please call 520-879-7924 or 928-523-1809 or e-mail SELECT@nau.edu. More information is available on our SELECT website: <http://nau.edu/SBS/IHD/Programs/SELECT-Program/>.

The Importance of Social Skills

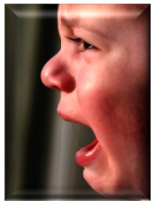
by Jill Anne Castle, PIN Specialist

When parents are considering the success of their child's future, often social inclusion and acceptance is a major concern. Although in special education academics are the main focus of most IEP meetings, lack of friends and inappropriate social interaction is what keeps most parents up at night with worry.

All areas of life require social skills in order for an individual to flourish, including school, family, work, and navigating the community in which one lives. It is a crucial key to success because most environments involve social situations. There are often ways to compensate if your child has physical or academic challenges. However, there is no satisfactory accommodation that can be made if your child can't relate to others.



Often as parents, we feel if a child is educated in an inclusive setting and given opportunities to learn from typical peers, the child will. Unfortunately, it doesn't appear to be this straightforward; extra help may be required. If our children could pick up social cues and skills from simply being with others, they would have learned from interactions with their parents and siblings long ago.



There are many reasons for socially inappropriate behaviors and lack of acceptance. Some reasons are obvious handicaps that create a distance in understanding. Often times, those challenges can be met with disability awareness activities and creative solutions within the school environment. However, when the child's personal lack of social skills interfere, the answer may be more difficult and require intervention and additional support.

Many children with communication challenges do not understand how to use interrogatory conversation. Asking questions is the primary ice breaker in most social situations. It is also the way an individual gathers information for further conversation. Asking questions is an essential practice in increasing the number of exchanges two people can have before the conversation ends. Many children with disabilities tend to make statements instead of asking questions, which leaves little room for preliminary or continued conversation.

Other children may lack the ability to control their responses; therefore, anything they think of comes out whether it's appropriate or it even relates to the conversation. Blurting out responses due to impulsivity can also create an abundance of both interpersonal and educational challenges.

Here is a list of "dos and don'ts" to consider when looking at your child's social well-being:

- When assessing your child's strengths and areas of need, use a variety of social situations to get the complete picture.
- If your child has a specific habit that is socially inappropriate, work out a secret signal to gain their attention and remind them.
- Enroll your child in activities that promote your child's strengths and self-esteem. If your child already has challenges in school, use outside programs where the child isn't known and get a fresh start.
- Focus on one skill at a time and reward for small steps and progress rather than waiting until the skill is mastered.
- Teach your child to look good and dress neatly. Keep up with current trends as much as possible.
- Teach your child how to give compliments and extend invitations. These are basic courtesies that aid in attracting others.
- Don't force the child to participate in situations she or he isn't comfortable in, such as large groups or activities that are too hard for the skill level.
- Don't assume your child understands directions, sarcasm, or the use of complex verbiage. Ask questions to gain perspective.
- Don't scold or punish when a child does something socially inappropriate. Take the opportunity to discuss strategies or give examples of what to do next time. Demonstrations and role playing can be very effective.
- Don't expect behavior that you yourself as a parent are not willing to model. Children learn from what they see us do, not necessarily what they are told.

Social competence as well as emotional well-being can be exceptionally challenging to master for a child with disabilities of any kind. It is an ongoing process that requires patience, examples, problem solving, and a positive approach. Developing these skills will help a child to succeed in every area of life and most of all, achieve stronger self-esteem and overall satisfaction with the person they have become.

The Social Side of Learning Disabilities (DR 28) is available in both English and Spanish from the Parent Information Network Clearinghouse. You may also want to check out the PIN Media Lending Library. It includes several titles on social skills



including Rick Lavoie's, *Learning Disabilities and Social Skills: Last One Picked, First One Picked On*. This DVD can be viewed with Spanish audio and subtitles. To request this DVD or others, contact your local PIN Specialist for a media request form. Contact information can be found on page 4.



SAVE THE DATE!

Arizona's Twelfth Annual Transition Conference
 Facing the Future: Who's in Your Network?
 October 15-17, 2012

More information about scholarships and registration coming soon.

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Printed in Phoenix, AZ by the Arizona Department of Education. Copies: 200, Total Cost: \$271.74, Unit Cost: \$1.36, Date: 6/12

PRSRST STD
 U.S. POSTAGE PAID
 PHOENIX, AZ
 PERMIT NO. 673

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