

# IDEA, Inclusion and Getting Parents Involved

**Mary LaCorte from North Carolina's Parent Training and Information Center (Region 2 RPTAC) invites us to share strategies, activities and resources for effectively involving parents in IFSP and IEP meetings.**



Mary LaCorte is Assistant Director and PTI Program Director at the Exceptional Children's Assistance Center (ECAC)

Do you remember feeling excited about the provisions within the (then) new Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004? It's hard to believe infants and toddlers who began receiving services just after the new law was reauthorized are now beginning 1st grade!

Parent participation is woven throughout IDEA and it is clear that US Congress intended for parents and educators to work together collaboratively. Research shows that parents are a child's first and most important "influencers". Much effort is made to help parents understand their rights and the "special education" processes, yet many parents feel ill-prepared to effectively and meaningfully participate in their child's IFSP or IEP meetings.

Looking back, how are we now assisting parents better?

## **Community Questions**

- What strategies/activities do you use to help parents feel welcome and effectively participate in planning their children's lives and education?
- Do you share materials with parents explaining parent rights and/or how to prepare for and participate in an

IFSP/IEP meeting?

- What kinds of information and resources do you provide to families with low/no literacy skills, or non-English speaking families?

Tech Tip: You can include links/URLs to resources in your comments. They will become automatically hot linked after your comment is saved.

Add Comment

## Looking forward to comments

There are lots of ideas, materials and strategies out there. What is working for folks? Here is a 2-page guide the National Professional Development Center on Inclusion put together for involving families in state planning meetings based on recommendations from families.

[http://community.fpg.unc.edu/\[...\]/view](http://community.fpg.unc.edu/[...]/view)

Others?

Reply

## What resources does Head Start/EHS have to offer?

Hi Mary,

This is such an important topic. Thank you for bringing it up. A resource that some faculty have used to help prepare students in working with families is the CONNECT module on Family-Professional Partnerships. Here is a link [http://community.fpg.unc.edu/\[...\]/module-4](http://community.fpg.unc.edu/[...]/module-4).

Since Head Start has such a long history of addressing family involvement, I wonder if we might look at resources they have developed that have been effective. Ideas out there for good Head Start resources?

Reply

## HS resources a la SpecialQuest

Pam and Mary,

The SpecialQuest materials were developed, with funding from the Office of Head Start and the Hilton Foundation, to support Early Head Start programs, their community partners (e.g., early intervention), and families to provide high quality inclusive services. All of the materials were designed to incorporate the perspective of families who have young children with disabilities. One volume, *Building Relationships with Families*", focuses on families as partners and leaders. You can explore the Library at [www.specialquestlibrary.org](http://www.specialquestlibrary.org) or at [http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.go\[...\]/media-training-library.html](http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.go[...]/media-training-library.html)

I will pull out a few sessions, resources, and activities that are particularly relevant to this discussion and post them separately.

Reply

## **The Other Side of the Table**

I've been "in the field" of early childhood for over 20 years, but in the last few years I have been on the other side of the table. Even with all of my background in typical development, curriculum and teaching, early intervention and early childhood special education - coming to the table as a parent has been daunting. I'm so glad to see this conversation surfacing.

Reply

## **The Other Side of the Table**

I think it is a great eye opener to experience a system from both sides of the table. As a parent I have found the special education system to be daunting even with my background as a parent advocate and my knowledge of IDEA. It is so hard to leave the emotional side of you behind. As a parent you always want what is best for your child and it can be difficult to accept the premise that a school only has to provide benefit to a child but does not have to maximize their potential. I have learned a lot as both a parent and a professional as I began to work with families on how to develop communication skills in order to work effectively with the school district. A working knowledge of both IDEA and ADA also goes along the way.

Reply

## **Resources for Engaging Parents**

What a great topic for conversation! I know there are educators who really have a talent for building relationships with families and including them in planning, and I hope they will share strategies here.

This can be especially challenging for educators who work with families with limited English skills; local Parent Training & Information centers can help. You can find them on NICHCY's State Organization Search (<http://nichcy.org/state-organization-search-by-state>).

For English-speaking educators and support personnel who work with Spanish-speaking families, NICHCY's "NICHCY en español for English speakers" (<http://nichcy.org/espanol/publicaciones/temas-english>) offers a wealth of resources that you can download and share.

Reply

## **IDEA, Inclusion and getting parents involved**

I observed a preschool classroom and one child was nonverbal and there were no resources being used for the child. I viewed the "Welcome to My Preschool Video" in my on-line class at East Carolina University and I thought that it was excellent. Many parents do not know about technology that is available for their child and by showing the video at parent meetings or including the link to resources for parents. Boardmaker is another good technology tool that can be used to help preschool children who are nonverbal. I think it is great that you are trying to help parents and "getting parents involved." The link is:  
[www2.edc.org/ncip/videos/ec.htm](http://www2.edc.org/ncip/videos/ec.htm)  
The video, Welcome to My Preschool: Communicating with Technology, is available individually, or as part of a five video series.

Reply

## **preparing for IFSP/IEP team meetings**

We have found that providing tools to parents to help them prepare for a team meeting is helpful. We have a number of handouts tht are available to download on our website at [www.pacer.org](http://www.pacer.org)

Reply

## **IDEA, Inclusion and Getting Parents Involved**

I browse some sites today and I found that your site has a good representative articles that anyone could understand its main idea easily. You are superb writer and I like your post so much. Thanks for giving valuable information and tips related to this current topics. I just can't wait for your next post. Have a great job to create more high quality content. <http://www.babiesdaycare.net>

Regards,

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Reply