



## Northern Lights Special Education Cooperative

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# Sample Procedure and Script for the Facilitator of a Needs-based/Student Centered IEP Meeting

## PREPARATION

It will be important for the facilitator to contact the student's parents ahead of time to ask their permission for you to conduct the meeting in a new and different way. You can describe to them in general terms how this will be a needs-based meeting where the team will focus on determining their child's educational needs.

Explain that the school will be interested in knowing what they as parents feel are important needs of their child. You may opt to send them a parent input form (see sample form included) for them to use in preparation for the IEP meeting. It will help them think about their child's strengths and needs, and they can use it during the meeting to remember the things they would like to bring up.

In the case of an IEP on a child who is involved with several regular education teachers, you can solicit their input by sending them a teacher input form (sample included), so that whether they are able to attend the meeting or not, their perspective can be made known to the team.

Touch base with the other key team members about use of this meeting style. Develop an agenda with input from others, and/or distribute them ahead of time so that changes can be made before the last minute.

Ask for the assistance of a recorder and a time keeper, and make sure they are clear about what you expect them to do. If you have run meetings with those people before, you will probably have already developed a style of operating together that is predictable. It takes practice and experience to feel comfortable with this style. It is a team-building process in and of itself, the meeting style helping to advance team members toward a greater level of collaboration.

Make sure the room, chairs, and supplies needed are gathered and ready for a punctual meeting beginning. You may want to consider having refreshments.

## DESCRIPTION OF MEETING - SAMPLE SCRIPT

"My name is \_\_\_\_\_, and I will be facilitating (or have been asked to facilitate) this IEP meeting. We will be doing this meeting in a slightly different way than some of you may be used to. \_\_\_\_\_ (Parents) have given me permission to run what we call a needs-based IEP meeting."

"First of all, the purpose of the meeting is to determine as a team what we think \_\_\_\_\_ (student's name) needs to learn. By the end of the meeting, we should have determined the priority learner outcomes for \_\_\_\_\_ (student's name), and agreed upon service needs necessary. A smaller group of team members will arrange to convene again soon to translate the information we come up with today into the written

IEP in the form of needs statements, goals, and objectives. A rough draft can then be circulated and sent home for approval by all team members.”

“When we generate \_\_\_\_\_ (student's name) needs, we will follow the rules of brainstorming. This means that we will:

- take turns speaking one at a time around the circle
- only one person will be talking at a time
- whatever is said will not be judged, discussed, responded to in any way other than possible clarification for the recorder
- all ideas will be written down by \_\_\_\_\_ (recorder's name), who will serve as our recorder today.
- anyone has the option to PASS when it is their turn. You may find that your thought has already been expressed by another team member,
- just because you PASS once, we will not assume you have no more ideas the next time around.

Sometimes the brainstorming process stimulates ideas as we go. Because we want to remain focused on (student's name) educational needs, we will record any ideas which are important, but might be off our central task of today's meeting, in what we call the PARKING LOT. This way, we will remember things we need to address at another time. Sometimes the issues recorded in the PARKING LOT relate to program needs or ways we can meet the needs of the student. If so, we will refer to them during our discussion”

NOTE: Consider posting the rules of brainstorming on a piece of poster board, especially if these rules are new to the team.

“Often, as most of you know, it is easy for a group of people to get off on various tangents. As the facilitator, I may need to redirect the meeting/discussion in order to adhere to our agenda. Is it alright with all of you that I do so if needed (response)? (Name) has agreed to be the time keeper. They will watch the clock and remind us when the time is up for any task listed here on the agenda. If we need more time, the team can then decide what to do next. We may wish to complete the task by assigning extra time to it today, or we might start an agenda for another meeting if necessary. The one area we will need to complete without stopping prematurely is the generating of needs. If we can stay on task here today, I believe we can brainstorm until we exhaust the needs, and then make service decisions based on those needs.”

## **GROUNDING**

"We will begin with a GROUNDING activity. The purpose of this is to introduce ourselves to each other, and get each of our voices out there. It helps establish the atmosphere we need for brainstorming by promoting team member equality through turn-taking and active listening"

"I would like each of us to take a turn to say who we are, and then tell us about one strength of (student's name) or something positive about him/her. I'll start. I am (facilitator's name) and I see (student's name) as having particular strength in his social interaction with peers. He always has a lot of kids around him during recess, and he seems to enjoy himself". (Team members then take their turns.)

Other grounding ideas might include:

- share with us what you feel would be the best possible outcome of this meeting, and then what would be the worst possible outcome.
- tell us how you feel about being here today.
- give us an example of something (student's name) has accomplished this past year.
- give us a brief (one minute limit) summary of how (student's name) is functioning in the domain in which you interact with him/her. This one can be used when you want to briefly address the PLEP, but keep the meat of the meeting focused on needs.
- tell us how student's name has enriched and enhanced your classroom. This is a good one to ask regular ed teachers

## **BRAINSTORMING NEEDS**

“Thank you. Now we will begin the brainstorming process to generate needs” (facilitator can begin, or ask one of the teachers to start). Then, the facilitator keeps the order going around; encouraging members to express ONE need at each turn. You may want to post the list of eight educational need areas from the IEP form just to help remind team members of the various domains while they are brainstorming.

NOTE: Use of the PARKING LOT can be felt by the speaker as a judgment of their idea, as though what was said is not “good enough”. You may wish to save the use of the parking lot for obvious off-task discussions which need to be stopped. If team members generate ideas during brainstorming that are not exactly student needs, you can always sort them out later during regrouping of needs. For example, a team member may say something like “he needs an assistant in the regular education classroom”. Later, when regrouping, you can group all of those statements which are possible program needs or solutions into a category together. This will eliminate sending anyone's ideas to the PARKING LOT which might inhibit the brainstorming process. Those

PARKING LOT comments will often contribute to the discussion about how the needs can be met. The brainstorming process can be considered finished when all team members have PASSED once. The facilitator can then ask one more time if there are any other needs people can think of. If not, it is time to re-group and consolidate the needs.

## **RE-GROUPING NEEDS**

If the ideas have been recorded on separate sheets of paper and taped to the wall, the re-grouping process will be easiest. (Chart paper is a bit more cumbersome because you cannot move individual ideas around). Start with one needs comment, and ask the group if there are any others which seem to relate to that one. As people give their input, the recorder can move items to form columns. The recorder may need to listen fast at this point, as people express themselves more randomly. The nice thing about taping individual sheets up is that the team can view them and change them again if it seems that a different grouping makes more sense. The recorder should assign a number to each column and that same number onto each of the corresponding sheets assigned to that column. This will prevent a mix-up when the papers are removed from the wall.

Once grouped to the team's satisfaction, the facilitator may ask the parent to choose the highest priority need to begin discussing. Discuss the needs in the order chosen by the parent. Once chosen, the facilitator asks for ideas about how we can meet the need. The recorder then jots down ideas, with a

different color of marker, directly onto the need sheets. If there are parking lot items which apply, bring those into the discussion.

NOTE: If there are many need areas identified for a given student, you may opt to have the team prioritize those needs. One way is to give each team member five dot stickers to place on need areas of most importance. The parents can be given 10 to honor their preferences (or, each member can place a certain number of X marks on the sheets). All team members can go up and place their dots (or Xs), whether they be all on one need, or distributed evenly. This activity makes it clear when there are need areas which are less important at the time.

The team may decide to leave those out for now so more pressing matters can be focused on in the IEP. The case manager can save those lower priority need ideas, as they may surface again at a later time. The IEP needs to be a realistic reflection of what is possible to accomplish in one year.

IMPORTANT for the facilitator to remember: After all of the needs/learner outcomes have been discussed, the facilitator will need to ask the question about whether those needs can be met within the student's primary educational setting by existing staff, or are the skills and expertise of related service providers NECESSARY in order for those needs to be met. It is a team decision, with the participation of related service professionals, as to whether OT or PT is required, as well as what kind and how much. Their participation in the student's educational plan has to be directly related and necessary to at least one of the learner outcome areas. Related service professionals do not submit their own independent sheet of goals and objectives, but support the team derived and prioritized goals. The decision as to whether or not related services are needed is to be made annually.

## **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

This wrap-up phase can be used to summarize and determine what the team will do next. Clearly defining what the team needs to do from here and who will do what by when should be decided and recorded. For one, the smaller group of team members who will write the EEP will need to identify themselves and determine a meeting place and time for completion of the task. For this and other identified assignments, you might consider using a meeting minutes sheet to send out to all members after the meeting so everyone knows what the action plan will be and who is responsible for what parts. Use of this type of minutes can increase team accountability and efficiency by defining clear expectations for everyone.

## **WRITING THE IEP**

The process of translating the brainstormed material gathered at the team meeting into a written IEP may take some time, especially if you are new to doing this process in a group. It gets easier the more often you do it, just like anything else, and eventually becomes much quicker as you naturally start thinking in a very logical flow from PLEP to NEED to GOAL to OBJECTIVE.

You will likely find that the time spent is well worth it in at least a couple of ways. First, your IEP will reflect what the team said and what they prioritized in a collaborative process. It is usually shorter (fewer goals and objectives) but much more meaningful and user-friendly. Secondly, if it is written by a group of two or more team members, you'll find again that the process itself is team-building. The team members involved gain a greater understanding of the whole child's

needs as well as the perspectives of one another. The "burden" of the IEP is shared as is the accountability when team members assist the case manager.

*Procedure and Script written and compiled by Laurie Rogers Hiawatha Valley Education District  
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