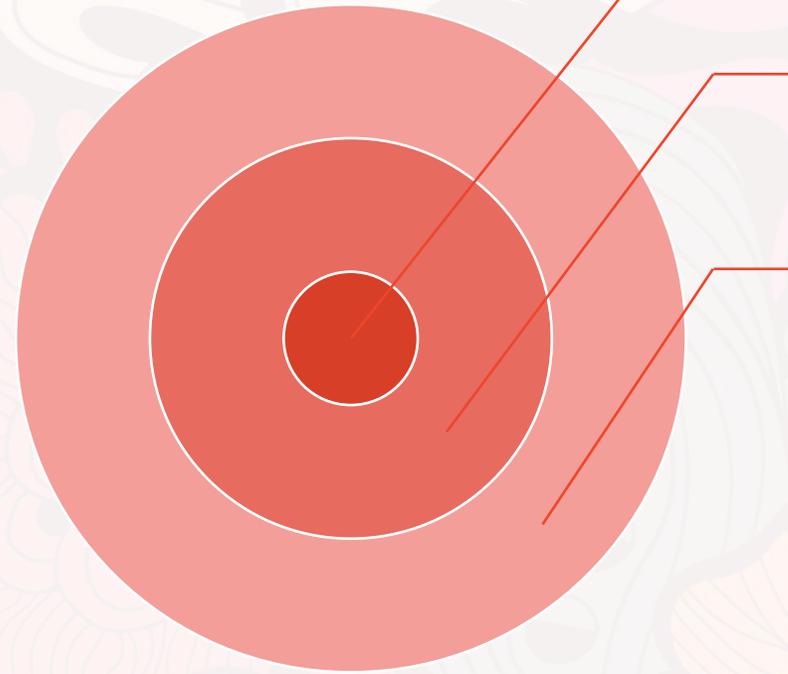




WLWW WELCOME PACKET

We Are So Glad You Are Here!

Our Guiding Principles

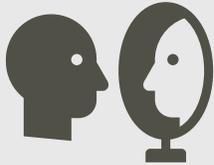


Student
Voice and
Participation

Instructional
Practices

Inclusive
Culture

Student Voice and Participation



Developing Independent Learners

At the heart of student learning is—of course—the student. We believe each student develops resilience and self-efficacy by engaging in *productive struggle* with relevant tasks and receiving specific feedback. We believe students learn best when they are supported to assess their own learning, use data to set learning and Individualized Education Program (IEP) goals, and monitor their learning progress. As students grow into ever more independent learners, we recognize the importance of all students having opportunity to develop skills to identify and manage their social-emotional regulation and to practice self-determination.



Students Involved in IEPs

IEPs are intended to identify and support student learning to specific goals and to maximize student's access to general education curriculum and peers. In WLWV, IEPs are developed collaboratively with students, creating true ownership of learning, and increasing the success of each student. Every IEP meeting includes meaningful participation by the student and students are actively involved in planning for transition. We like to use this article to frame the importance of involving students in their IEP.

[Click here](#) to jump to discussion of why inviting students into their IEP is **so** important!



Every Student Effectively Communicates

A cornerstone of our work is the unrelenting goal that each student has the tools and opportunities to communicate effectively about their learning, needs, interests, and preferences in their school and in their community and that each student develops strong peer learning partnerships as a result.

Instructional Practices



Student Engagement and Purpose

We know that student engagement is critical to student learning. Our engagement strategies capitalize on students' strengths, maximize student talk, and ensure all students are active participants in their learning. We also know that students learn best when they understand what they are learning, why they are learning it, and how they will demonstrate what they have learned. The purpose of all evaluation is to support each student to know themselves as a learner.



Curriculum and Pedagogy

Special Education services and supports are just that: services and supports. Special Education is not a place that students go. Students who receive Special Education services and supports continue to be general education students and continue to be provided access to grade-level content, culturally responsive teaching, high-cognitive tasks, opportunities for meaning-making, and explicit instruction in their general education learning community.



Universal Design

Learning activities and environments are planned through the lens of [Universal Design for Learning \(UDL\)](#) and WLWV's [7 Components of Inclusive and Equitable Learning Communities](#). Viewed from these lenses, co-planning and co-teaching are *critically* valuable to how we provide instructional opportunities for your student and deliver the Specially Designed Instruction (SDI) identified by their IEP team.

Inclusive Culture

Belonging

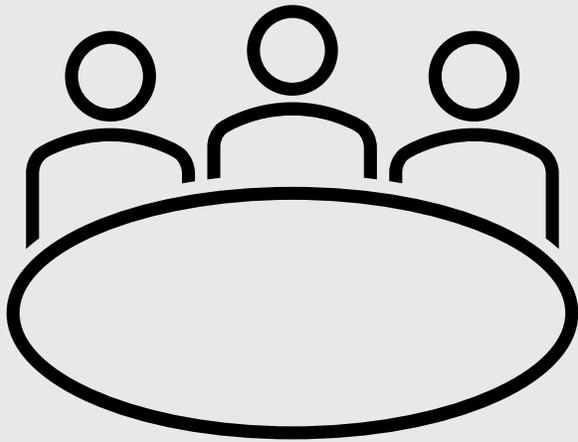
A sense of belonging is *crucial* to the human experience. This drives our conviction that every student deserves opportunity for inclusion at their neighborhood school. We believe each school team has the capacity to provide a full range of supports to meet each student's academic, behavior, communication, social-emotional, and independent living skill needs. This ensures that each of our K-12 schools is comprised of a rich and wonderfully diverse student population.

We understand that students continue to develop a sense of belonging through self-selected co-curricular activities. All students in WLWV are afforded opportunities to participate in co-curricular activities and our goal is for all student groups—including student leadership groups—to reflect the rich diversity of each school's student population.

[Click here](#) to learn more about our amazing Unified Sports programs! Check with your student's school for more information about enrichment and other co-curricular activities available.



Partnership and Collaboration



Parents/Guardians are their children's best advocates. Parents know their children better than anyone else and have a longitudinal view on their child's success that is unique and important. Developing positive and collaborative working relationships with parents is one of the most important steps that we can take to support each student's success.

Parents/Guardians are an important part of their student's IEP team and are invited to participate in all meetings involving their student's education.

Parent involvement is also valued system-wide. We'd love to invite you to join our District and Parent Collaboration Group. Please [click here](#) for the most current information on how to join!

Partnership and Collaboration

Trusting relationships are at the heart of effective teaming and collaboration. We strive to communicate effectively to produce collaborative decisions that support your student's learning and progress toward their IEP goals. Just as we immensely value your student's voice in their own IEP, we know how valuable your insights into your student's world are, too. You are your student's first teacher, strongest advocate, and a *critical* member of their IEP team.

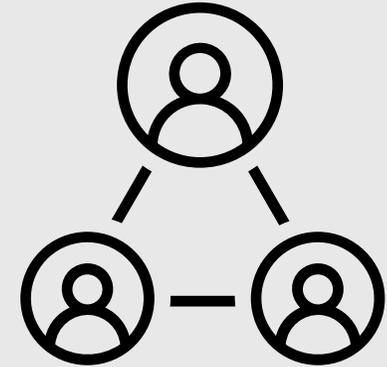
There may be times when communication presents as challenging and collaboration feels difficult. We encourage you to reach out first to your student's Learning Specialist when it seems things just aren't going quite right. We also encourage you to read the *Procedural Guidance Notice* ([Parents' Rights booklet](#)) provided by the Oregon Department of Education. You may tire of us presenting this information to you—we offer it at every IEP meeting—however, we want to make sure that you feel empowered and supported in our work together. As stated at the beginning of this document, ***we are so glad you are here!***

Lastly, please also consider browsing our [district Student Services webpage](#). Here, you can find additional information pertaining to our commitment to collaboration and additional layers of support that you may find helpful.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [FACT Oregon: Empowering Families Experiencing Disability](#)
- [Parent Rights "at a Glance"](#)
- [Columbia Regional Programs supports for families of children with Autism during Distance Learning](#)
- [Connect to your Student Services District Department](#)





Why Is This Cake on Fire?

Inviting Students Into the IEP Process

Jamie L. Van Dycke

James E. Martin

David L. Lovett

The Birthday Party

Imagine being a small child and hearing your parents talk about your birthday party. You hear the excitement in their voices as they talk and plan, starting with a theme for the party, deciding whom they will invite, and then figuring out who will do each job. As the time draws closer, you hear more and more conversations about your birthday party, and so you know it is coming soon. And then your birthday comes and goes, but no one ever invites you to your party. *Maybe they just forgot to invite me, you think.*

The Next Year . . .

The next year, you again hear your parents discuss your birthday party. Once again, you hear the excitement in their voices as they talk and plan, choose a new theme for the party, decide whom they will invite, and then finally, appoint someone to be in charge of each job. Again, as time draws closer, you

hear more and more conversations about your birthday party and so you know it is coming soon. And again your birthday comes and goes, but no one ever invites you to your party. *It must not be important for me to be there, you think.*

The Following Year . . .

The following year, you once again hear your parents talk about your birthday party. You barely notice the excited tone in their voices as they decide on another new theme, make the invitation list, and divide the jobs. As the time draws closer, you barely listen to the increased conversations about your party. Again your birthday comes and goes, but no one ever invites you. *Now you think that birthday parties are not important at all.*

Several Years Later . . .

Several years later, when you become a teenager, you barely catch a snippet of a

conversation about your birthday party. But since you have never been invited to your parties, you know that your presence there is not important. You believe that birthday parties are not important at all, so you do not pay any attention to the birthday plans.

But this time, you receive an invitation to your party! You are surprised, confused, and even scared. You ask your parents why you received an invitation this year. They say,

Well, you are a teenager now, and you are old enough to help with everything that a birthday party involves. Each year, we start with a theme for your party and decide the best ways to represent that theme. Then we make the invitation list and decide who will do the different jobs. Now that you are a teenager, we thought that you would like to become involved!

But you respond by saying,

Why would I want to become involved now? If these birthday parties were supposed to be my birthday parties, why wasn't I invited all along? Why didn't I have a chance to select themes that interest me? Why didn't I get to help decide whom to invite? And why didn't I get to help choose who would do the different jobs?

"We thought that you were not old enough to help."

"Now I am so old that I do not know how to help with any of it; you have been doing it for me for all these years. Just keep on doing it without me."

Now . . .

Imagine this scenario again, only this time, insert individualized education program (IEP) meetings in place of birthday parties.

The IEP Meeting

Students with disabilities hear their teachers and parents talk about their IEP meetings, they hear about goals, and they hear about what they are doing wrong and the problems that they are having. They hear about plans and services and who will work on each job. They hear about who will attend the IEP meeting. But students rarely receive invitations to attend when they first begin to hear about these meetings. At first, students may believe that someone just forgot to invite them. In the years that follow, when they still do not receive invitations, students may think that attending their own IEP meetings is not important since no one shares any information about the meeting. They may decide that an IEP meeting is an opportunity for adults to talk negatively about all the problems that students are having in school and divide up the necessary jobs.

The First Invitation

By the time that students become teenagers, they may have decided that IEP meetings are not important at all since no one has invited them or included them in the planning phase. In fact,

some students may be ashamed for anyone to know that they have an IEP. When students reach middle school or high school and finally receive their first invitation to attend an IEP meeting, they may not be interested at all—and they make statements similar to those in the birthday party example: "Now I am so old that I do not know how to help with any of it; you have been doing it for me for all these years. Just keep on doing it without me."

Questions We Should Ask

As educators, parents, and service providers, we should be asking the following questions:

- Do we encourage students to become involved in their IEP meetings?
- Does this involvement begin at an early age?
- Do we encourage students to become involved in designing the "themes" of their IEPs?
- Do we allow students to help decide whom to invite to their IEP meetings?
- Do we give students opportunities to be responsible for the goals in their IEPs?
- Do students know that the IEP meetings are for them and that the intent of the IEP process is to design a plan—a blueprint—that will help them be successful in school and in life?

Do students know that the intent of the IEP process is to design a plan—a blueprint—that will help them be successful in school and in life?

Behaviors We Should Expect

The 1997 Amendments to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) recognized students as important members of the IEP team (Martin,

Huber Marshall, & Sale, 2004; Storms, O'Leary, & Williams, 2000; Test et al., 2004). The 2004 IDEA amendments continue to emphasize the importance of transition planning and require that the IEP team develop measurable post-secondary goals in the IEP on the basis of the student's assessed needs, strengths, preferences, and interests (Council for Exceptional Children, 2004). The implication is that educators need to invite students not only to be a part of the IEP meeting but also to be a part of the IEP process, so that they can learn about and communicate their needs, preferences, and interests. Students should be involved with the IEP planning process and should

- Have an informative role in developing and writing their educational performance description (the Present Levels of Educational Performance, or PLEP).
- Aid in developing measurable post-secondary goals in their IEPs.
- Help identify the accommodations, modifications, and supports that they need.
- Be responsible in the achievement of coordinated transition activities, postschool linkages, and post-secondary goals (Mason, Field, & Sawilowsky, 2004; Mason, McGahee-Kovac, Johnson, & Stillerman, 2002).

Are We Inviting Students to Speak or Just to Attend?

Expecting students to exercise active roles in the IEP process means doing much more than just inviting them to attend the meetings. We must encourage them to participate actively in the IEP conversations. In Year 1 of a 3-year research study conducted by Martin, et al. (2006), researchers observed 109 middle and high school IEP meetings to determine who talked in typical teacher-directed IEP meetings. In those meetings, students only talked during 3% of the IEP meeting time. Special educators spoke 51% of the time, family members spoke 15% of the time, general educators and administrators each spoke 9%, support personnel spoke 6%, and multiple conversations occurred during 5% of the meeting time. Finally, during 2%

Why Is This Cake On Fire?

In thinking about the importance of student participation in the IEP, we have been inspired by this article from *Teaching Exceptional Children*. The authors—Jamie Van Dycke, James Martin, and David Lovett—compare the IEP meeting to a birthday party. Imagine how a child would feel if they heard the adults around them preparing for a birthday party, and then going to the party without inviting the child. When the child eventually gets invited to attend their birthday party as a teenager, they may be confused and even frustrated. (The article title suggests that a child who has never been to a birthday party may wonder why there are burning candles on top of the cake...)

The authors imagine the child responding, “Why would I want to become involved now? If these birthday parties were supposed to be *my* birthday parties, why wasn’t I invited all along? Why didn’t I have a chance to select themes that interest me? Why didn’t I get to help decide whom to invite?”

The grown-ups reply: “We thought that you weren’t old enough to help.” And the child replies, “Now I am so old that I do not know how to help with any of it; you have been doing it for me for all these years. Just keep doing it without me.”

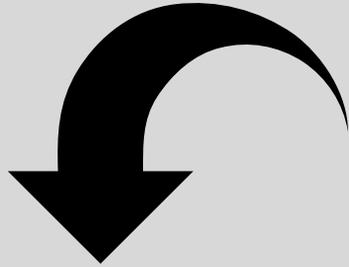
Why Is This Cake On Fire?

Of course, this is an absurd situation—no one would plan and host a birthday party and then decide not to invite the person having a birthday. However, the comparison to the IEP meeting can be helpful. The law requires students to be involved in their IEP process starting at age 16. But we believe it is critical for students to engage in the IEP at a much younger age. According to the authors, “by the time students become teenagers, they may have decided that IEP meetings are not important at all since no one has invited them or included them in the planning phase.”

If the IEP is to be truly individualized around each student, we need to maximize opportunities for students to communicate their unique preferences, interests, needs and strengths. The IEP meeting is a great opportunity to do that. The starting assumption is that all students should be present for at least some of their IEP meeting. Ideally, students would take a leadership role in the meeting as well, facilitating introductions, sharing examples of work they are proud of, highlighting growth they have made, providing input about goals, and giving feedback about what accommodations help them access the classroom instruction.

Students can begin providing input about their goals and accommodations as early as Kindergarten. Of course the method and format of student input may vary based on the individualized needs of the student.

As one primary school student in WLWV told their IEP team, “If I’m not at this meeting, how will I know what my goals are? If I don’t know what my goals are, how will I meet them?” Please feel free to contact your case manager if you have questions about how to support your child’s involvement in their IEP.



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