

IEP 101 for Parents

- 1. What is an IEP?** IEP stands for Individual Education Program. The IEP is the document that describes (among other things) the specially designed instruction and accommodations your child will receive.
- 2. Are IEP meetings held only once a year?** IEP meetings are held at a minimum of once a year, but may be held more often. Any member of the IEP team, including the parent, may call an IEP meeting.
- 3. How do I call an IEP meeting?** The best way is to contact your child's special education teacher, or speech-language pathologist (SLP) if your child is only receiving speech-language services, and tell them you would like to call an IEP meeting.
- 4. Is an IEP meeting the best way to address any concerns I might have?** It depends. Often the best first step is a conversation with the special education teacher. That conversation might address the concern, or lead to a way to address it without getting the whole team together. At other times it makes the most sense to meet with the entire IEP team.
- 5. What if I want to invite someone to the IEP meeting?** That's fine, but please let the special education teacher know ahead of time who you plan to invite so we can have that person on the invitation and be ready to have you sign permission for that person to view confidential information (the IEP).
- 6. There is so much jargon in special education – how do I keep from getting lost?** You are right – there is a lot of jargon, and sometimes we do a poor job of explaining. It's our job to make sure you are informed. If we forget to explain a term you are not familiar with, please remind us. We will appreciate it!
- 7. There is so much information presented at the IEP meeting. Can I get draft documents ahead of time to review?** Yes! Please ask your special education teacher far enough in advance to allow for this, and recognize that all documents before the meeting are a draft, subject to changes based on the discussion at the meeting. It's also helpful to give input on annual goals to the special education teacher ahead of the meeting.
- 8. What are "procedural safeguards?"** Procedural safeguards describe the rights you and your child have in the special education process and how you may exercise those rights. The safeguards come in a booklet, and you are given a copy when you first start the special education process and annually at each IEP. The safeguards are written in legalistic language and can be difficult to understand at times. Please don't hesitate to ask questions and we will do our best to answer.
- 9. Where can I go to learn more?** We have helpful links on our district special education website: <http://bellingshamschools.org/specialeducation>