

Family Engagement During the Special Education Evaluation Cycle



Build trusting relationships



Acknowledge and support family health and well-being



Foster and value diverse ways of engaging



Partner to support student growth, learning, and well-being

Ongoing

Affirm the value of parent/caregiver insights and refer to them as a core member of the decision-making team

Allow time and space for family questions and processing

Arrange for transportation or childcare for meetings

Connect families with other families who've "been there" through the SEPAC or other parent/caregiver organizations

When family needs and concerns are raised, actively support connections to community resources including health and human services

Arrange for translation and interpretation when needed

In partnership with cultural ambassadors, identify cultural differences around education and family engagement to support mutual understanding

Provide ongoing parent/caregiver education about developmental and educational milestones

Offer information for all families on the range of available supports for children when they are struggling

Host or provide information about Basic Rights in Special Education workshops and trainings about specific disability types

Pre-Evaluation

Meet with family to hear their concerns

Identify a key person to answer questions and stay in communication

Ask the family how they want to be communicated with

Explain the special education evaluation process and what they are consenting to

Ask family about inviting additional family members to attend meetings

As you get to know families, don't make assumptions about food security, education levels, financial needs, housing status, access to outside supports

Ask the family how they want to engage with the process – offer options including meeting format, location, time and virtual vs. in-person

Accept variety of methods of engagement as valid.

Share with families how special education systems and staff can work together with families to support a struggling child

Refer them to FCSN and their SEPAC

Family Engagement During the Special Education, cont'd



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During Evaluation

Preview the purpose of meetings and ensure they understand their right to accept, reject, partially accept IEP

Use plain language and explain specialized terms, offering resources with more information

Accept emotions as a natural part of the process and affirm that parents/caregivers want what's best for their child

Ask family about availability before scheduling upcoming meetings

Welcome family to invite additional family members to attend meeting

Share information in a variety of ways including verbal, written, diagrams/infographics and question-and-answer

Suggest family bring a notetaker

Share reports and data in advance to support their full participation in decision-making

Provide information about how the student is doing compared to age/grade-level expectations

Describe post meeting timelines and parents' responsibilities

Post Evaluation

If student is found eligible:

- Introduce specialist staff and ongoing contact person
- Allow family to visit and ask questions about placements

If found not eligible:

- Actively connect them with non-special education resources related to any concerns identified during the process.

Regular follow up with family *even if there are no issues*

Regardless of the outcome of the process, lend support to families in accessing community resources (e.g., warm hand off, going to an appointment, following up, and addressing barriers to engagement, including access to and familiarity with technology).

Engage families as brokers or partners for other families newer to the process

Support parent/caregiver leadership in school and district policies related to disabilities and learning differences

Develop the IEP collaboratively

Connect what you learn about the student to informational resources or support groups where family can learn more

Collaborate with families to enhance their understanding of local, state, and national education, health and human services systems and processes for accessing services