

## IEP Meeting Participation Using the *Self-Advocacy Strategy* (1)

**Objective:** To teach adolescents to **use self-advocacy procedures during the IEP conference.**

### Setting and Materials:

Setting: Instruction takes place in the high school

Materials: The Educational Planning Strategy (Van Reusen, Bos, Schumaker & Deshler, 1987) is used.

### Content Taught

The IEP Participation Strategy (IPARS) includes five steps to promote active student IEP participation:

**Inventory** your learning strengths, weaknesses to be improved, goals and interests, and choices for classroom learning.

**Provide** your inventory information during the conference.

**Ask** questions

**Respond** to questions

**Summarize** your IEP goals

The steps in “IPARS” are designed to prompt a self-instructional process when the student uses the strategy to prepare for and participate in IEP conferences.

1. The first step of the strategy, the Inventory step, requires each student to complete an inventory sheet of his/her learning strengths, weaknesses to be improved, goals and interests, and choices for classroom learning. The completed inventory sheet is to be used by the student as a reference during the conference.
2. The second step of the strategy, providing information in an IEP conference, focuses on strategies related to communicating during an IEP conference. Examples include: tell yourself to participate; actively listen; use eye communication; use a positive and pleasant tone of voice; and demonstrate acceptance or non-acceptance of what is being discussed through the use of body posture and simple agreement or disagreement statements.
3. The third strategy step, Ask questions, involves specific behaviors related to how and when to ask questions during a conference. Students should ask questions using the what, which, why, when, who, or how openings to begin a question when they need clarification or additional information. Students should be instructed to use a pleasant tone of voice and eye contact, and to allow the person to respond before asking another question.
4. The fourth strategy step, Respond to questions, entails listening carefully to what is being discussed, checking understanding of what is being asked, using the inventory sheet as a reference in providing a response, if appropriate, to the question; providing a response using a full statement; providing an “I do not know” or “I really have not given it much thought”

response when an answer to a question is not available; and maintaining eye contact with the person who asks the question while providing a response.

5. The fifth strategy step, Summarize your IEP goals, entails summarizing the goals to be targeted during the next school year. This step is designed to allow students and all other conference participants to check their understanding and agreement with these goals and activities that have been identified to meet the student's unique needs.

### **Teaching Procedures**

Teaching focuses on two phases: awareness and practice.

During the awareness phase, the teacher completes each of the following steps with students:

1. Inform the student about the nature and purpose of the strategy
2. Describe each step of the IPARS strategy
3. Provide a rationale for the use of each step
4. Describe the characteristics of the conference
5. Provide examples of how the steps of the strategy can be used before or during the conference
6. Identify the behavioral components of each strategy step
7. Model the steps of the strategy for the student
8. Have students complete an inventory sheet that includes their strengths, weaknesses, goals, and learning aids

During the practice phase, instruction follows this sequence:

1. Students verbally rehearse the strategy steps until they have completely mastered them (to 100%).
2. After mastering verbal rehearsal, students role-play a simulated IEP conference to apply the strategies. The role-plays should be tape recorded and reviewed by the teacher and student. The teacher gives feedback on each of the student's responses during the playback. Students should make at least three positive, relevant responses during a role-play session in order to have reached mastery.

The student should achieve mastery before the actual IEP conference is scheduled. Prior to the IEP conference, the teacher should meet individually with the student for 20 minutes to do the following:

- Review the IEP conference proceedings
- Have the student state the steps in the IPARS strategy

- Remind the student to use the inventory sheet during the conference
- Role-play for a few minutes so the student can practice responding to questions and comments

### **Method of Evaluation**

Method 1: The students' verbal responses to 10 probe questions measure their ability to respond to IEP related questions:

1. What do you think are your strongest study or learning skills?
2. Can you tell me what you think are your weakest study or learning skills?
3. What skills do you want to improve or learn over the next year that will help you do better in school, or get along better with other people?
4. Can you tell me about any activities or materials that teachers have shared with you in the past that have helped you learn your school subjects?
5. Are there any after school activities, such as sports, jobs or clubs, in which you want to become involved?
6. Many students at your age have begun to think about careers or jobs they might like after they finish high school. Upon graduating from school, what kind of job or career would you like to pursue?
7. What types of study or learning activities work best for you?
8. What size learning or study group works best for you?
9. I'm sure you've taken a lot of tests during your years in school. Can you name or describe the type of test items on which you do best when taking tests over material you have learned?
10. Is there anything we've overlooked or something you'd like to say about school, or any other area you are concerned about?

Method 2: The goals written in the IEP should be reviewed to determine the number of goals that were stated by the student during the IEP conference.

**Lesson Plan Based on:**

VanReusen, A.K., Deshler, D.D., & Schumaker, J.B. (1989). Effects of a student participation strategy in facilitating the involvement of adolescents with learning disabilities in the individualized educational program planning process. *Learning Disabilities, 1*, 23-34.

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