IEP Process: The School Administrator's Role During an IEP Meeting
Est. Time: 45 Minutes

Objective

Reflect on practices and procedures related to the school administrator's role during an individualized education program (IEP) meeting, identify areas that need improvement, and set goals to improve in these areas.

Overview

School administrators play a critical role in ensuring that high-quality IEPs are developed and implemented for eligible students with disabilities. Doing so requires a solid understanding of the IEP process, including its associated legal requirements. More, the school administrator is responsible for establishing school-specific procedures and practices related to the process. Specifically, once a student has been deemed eligible for special education services, the school administrator should ensure that procedures and practices are in place for planning and conducting the IEP meeting and implementing the IEP. This activity will focus on procedures and practices relevant for conducting the IEP meeting.

For Your Information

Although some districts may have a special education coordinator or liaison who handles many of the responsibilities associated with the IEP process, the school administrator is still ultimately responsible for overseeing the IEP process and ensuring adherence to the legal requirements. Failure to do so can result in legal ramifications.

The purpose of an IEP meeting is for the IEP team to work collaboratively to identify the special education services and supports that will be delivered to the student, based on her unique needs. This process produces a written record, the IEP itself, which formalizes these services and supports. During the IEP meeting, the school administrator should take steps to ensure that all team members have enough time to:

- Fully engage in the discussion
- Thoroughly discuss and plan all of the IEP components

There are a number of procedures and practices that school administrators can implement during the IEP meeting to make sure these actions occur. It is important for school administrators to periodically examine their practices related to this part of the IEP process to identify areas that might need improvement.

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Activity

1. Complete the attached survey (see Page 3 below) and reflect on the practices currently implemented during an IEP meeting at your school.

2. Based on your survey results, discuss how well your current practices ensure that all team members have enough time to fully engage in the discussion and to thoroughly discuss and plan all the IEP components.

3. Identify two practices from the survey that are in need of improvement (i.e., scored as 2 or lower). Write a SMART goal for each identified area of improvement.

S	Specific	Clearly stated descriptions of each goal element
M	Measurable	Quantifiable by a defined standard that can be observed in some way
A	Actively Phrased	Involving actions that are clearly observable
R	Realistic	Practical but ambitious and challenging and based on relevant information
T	Time-Limited	Involves a specified time-frame within which the skill is anticipated to be mastered

4. For each SMART goal, write at least two action steps with deadlines that will support your successful accomplishment of that goal.

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The following survey includes a list of actions (although not exhaustive) that school administrators can take to help ensure that that all IEP team members have the opportunity to fully engage in a discussion of all the IEP components. Read each statement carefully and circle the number that best represents your *current* practice related to conducting an IEP meeting, not what you have done in the past. There are no right or wrong answers. The best answer is your honest assessment.

	As a school administrator, I (or a designated team member)…	never	rarely	sometimes	usually	always
1	Make an effort to ensure that each member of the team attends the meeting	0	1	2	3	4
2	Assign organizational meeting roles for the meeting	0	1	2	3	4
3	Help parents feel at ease by creating a balanced seating arrangement	0	1	2	3	4
4	Encourage school personnel to engage parents in conversation	0	1	2	3	4
5	Begin and end the meeting on time	0	1	2	3	4
6	Provide a copy of the meeting agenda to every member of the team (or post a visual agenda)	0	1	2	3	4
7	Begin the meeting with introductions that include a description of each person's role, ensuring that all team members are aware of how each individual will contribute	0	1	2	3	4
8	Avoid using professional jargon or specialized language that might be familiar to school personnel but not to parents	0	1	2	3	4
9	Create a climate that encourages collaboration and engagement	0	1	2	3	4
10	Emphasize the importance of the IEP as the blueprint for the student's education and a communication tool for the team members to refer to throughout the coming year	0	1	2	3	4

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As a school administrator, I (or a designated team member)…		never	rarely	sometimes	usually	always
11	If a draft IEP has been developed, ensure that the team understands that they can and should make additions and deletions to the draft IEP document to create the final IEP	0	1	2	3	4
12	Ask the parent open-ended questions that solicit input rather than those that can be simply answered with a "yes" or "no"	0	1	2	3	4
13	Ask the parents for their perspective on their child, including development, strengths, and challenges and encourage them to give voice to any concerns they might have	0	1	2	3	4
14	Frequently ask whether there are any questions or whether further clarification might be required to ensure that everyone understands what is being included in the IEP	0	1	2	3	4
15	Provide adequate opportunity for the team to review, explain, and discuss each component of the IEP	0	1	2	3	4
16	Make sure all of the student's educational needs identified in the evaluation stage are included in the IEP's present levels of academic achievement and functional performance section	0	1	2	3	4
17	Ensure that the team develops challenging, ambitious, and measurable annual IEP goals, based on the identified educational needs of the student	0	1	2	3	4
18	Make sure that the team identifies special education and related services that will help the student achieve all of her annual goals	0	1	2	3	4

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19	Ensure that the team documents how, and how frequently, a student's progress toward his IEP goals will be measured and reported	0	1	2	3	4
20	Make sure that the team identifies placement *only after* specialized instruction, services, supports, frequency, duration, and person(s) responsible have been determined	0	1	2	3	4
21	Ensure that the continuum of alternative placements is considered	0	1	2	3	4
22	Document the reasons for any decision that results in the student's services being delivered outside of the general education setting	0	1	2	3	4
23	Ensure that the information in the IEP is written in such a way that the school's commitment of resources is clear to parents and other members of the IEP team	0	1	2	3	4
24	Help the team adhere to procedural and substantive requirements	0	1	2	3	4
25	Make sure that decisions address the student's individual needs and are based on data	0	1	2	3	4
26	Ensure that all necessary components and content of the IEP have been included	0	1	2	3	4
27	Call for a break if team members appear to be growing frustrated or tired	0	1	2	3	4
28	Ask the team to schedule another meeting to continue the discussion in the event the team is not making progress, or the meeting is running long	0	1	2	3	4

29	At the close of the IEP meeting, ensure the parents have been provided with the annual procedural safeguards notice	0	1	2	3	4
30	Provide the parents with a copy of the IEP at no cost	0	1	2	3	4

For in-depth information about the school administrator's role in the IEP process, view our interactive learning module **IEPs: How Administrators Can Support the Development and Implementation of High-Quality IEPs** (https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/iep02/).