

PACER Center and
the National Center on Secondary Education and Transition

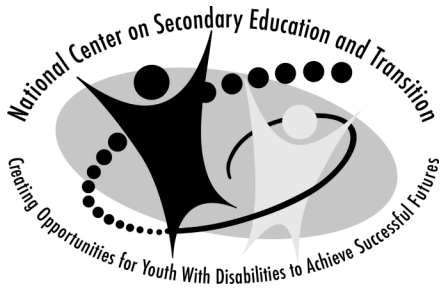
present a

Capacity Building Institute

Student-Led IEPs: How to Make it Work

January 23, 2002
Washington, DC

Proceedings



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Overview

The National Center on Secondary Education and Transition (NCSET), in partnership with PACER Center, hosted a Capacity Building Institute on Student-Led IEPs, January 23, 2002, at the Hyatt Regency Capitol Hill in Washington, DC.

Staff from NCSET and PACER designed this institute because many students with disabilities are not involved in their IEP assessment and planning process. Although research supports the self-determination of all youth and IDEA requires that youth with disabilities ages 14-21 be invited to their IEP meetings, many youth remain uninformed. Parents and teachers also struggle with how to involve youth, how to talk about the youth's disability, and how to teach the leadership skills needed to effectively participate in IEP meetings. Youth need to learn about their strengths and skills; their disability and how it will affect their future dreams; what accommodations might help them in the classroom, on the job, and in the community; how to speak for themselves; and how their dreams translate into goals and steps to take throughout their life. Using the IEP planning process is one way to work with youth with disabilities to help them better understand their disability and learn to advocate for themselves.

This institute provided an opportunity to present information from some of the key authors and practitioners of Student-Led IEPs. Participants were Parent Training and Information Center (PTI) staff, many of whom are parents of children/youth with disabilities or family members. PTI staff will use this information for future parent training workshops, publications, and for individual advocacy. Informed parents are often the catalyst for change. Bringing this information to PTIs broadens the scope of knowledge and skills among families throughout the country. They can then work with youth at home, in their schools, and communities.

One of the quality indicators for best practices in transition is the team training approach. The presenters included professionals at the federal, state, and local level, a parent, and three youth and adults with disabilities. Their perspective added depth and richness to the information, as well as a live example of how to involve youth in the IEP planning process. Suzanne Ripley, director of NICHCY and parent of two sons with disabilities, opened this institute with an overview and rationale for student-led IEPs.

In this proceedings document you will find the institute agenda, a brief overview of the institute purpose, guiding questions, and institute outcomes. There is also a summary of presentations given.

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Agenda

- 7:45-8:45 Continental Breakfast
- 9:00-10:00 New Directors Orientation
This hour is for those participating in the CBI who need a short time with the New Directors
- 10:00-10:05 Welcome
Kris Schoeller, National Center on Secondary Education and Transition
- 10:05-11:00 Introduction
Suzanne Ripley, Director, NICHCY
- 11:00-12:00 Creating a Local Process and Program for Student-Led IEPs
Marcy McGahee-Kovac and students
- 12:00-1:00 Lunch (On your own)
- 1:00-2:30 Arizona's Collaboration for Student-Led IEPs
Laura Love, Mary Slaughter, Teacher, Parent, and Student
- 2:30-3:45 Creating Strategies for State and Local Student-Led IEPs
- 3:45-4:00 Sharing Ideas
Group

Institute Purpose, Guiding Questions, and Intended Outcomes

Purpose

This Capacity Building Institute was designed to provide participants with information and skills to implement policies and effective strategies at the state and local level so that students will be successful in participating and leading their own IEP meetings and planning for successful and fulfilling lives as adults.

Guiding Questions

- How will student learn about their strengths, skills, and needs?
- How will students learn to know the impact of their disability: what accommodations are needed and how to communicate them to others?
- How will students of all ages learn to advocate for themselves, make decisions, take responsibility, and become active leaders in their IEPs?
- What state and local supports are needed to implement at the individual school level?
- How can parents, school personnel, and other agencies work together to help students acquire self-determination and advocacy skills they will need in order to speak for themselves?

Intended Outcomes

- Learn from the youth, parent, and teacher perspective on the value and outcomes of student-led IEPs
- Receive materials and tools to use at the local level with youth and families to promote student-led IEPs
- Learn process and practices at the state and local level to promote active participation in the IEP for students with disabilities
- Learn how parents, school personnel, and other agencies can work together to help students acquire self-determination and advocacy skills they will need in order to speak for themselves
- Begin the develop a process for implementation at the state and local level

Introduction

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Suzanne Ripley from NICHCY introduced the day's topics. NICHCY became actively involved in best practices in the area of student-led IEPs when it became clear that a disparity existed between research and practice. NICHCY embarked upon developing materials to bridge this gap, shifting the practice from the student being invited to their IEP meeting to being the leader of it.

After NICHCY identified the need to focus on student-led IEPs, Suzanne met Marcy McGahee-Kovac, who was working on this issue in an area high school. The two began interviewing students with disabilities to get their perspective on student-led IEPs. Information from these interviews has been incorporated into NICHCY's materials and trainings on the topic.

Suzanne believes that one outcome of student-led IEPs is improvement of the relationship between the student and his/her teacher(s). The relationship is improved because teachers become better informed about the student's learning needs.

Suzanne is interested in the developmental perspective—what needs to occur for kids at ages 8, 10, and 12 that facilitates them leading their IEPs at age 14. School administrators have reported that students who are included in their IEP meeting and were able to contribute in some way were sent to the principal's office less often and demonstrated less behavioral concerns.

The parent's role in student-led IEPs is to encourage the child to attend their IEP meetings, and when they do attend, to let them talk while the parent steps back from the leadership role.

NICHCY has several publications on student-led IEPs available on its Web site:
<http://www.nichcy.org/pubs>.

Creating a Local Process and Program for Student-Led IEPs

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Marcy introduced the presentation and her work on student-led IEPs in Arlington. She has partnered with NICHCY to develop materials which present the student-led IEP model used in her high school. Marcy turned the presentation over to the students to share their perspectives.

Jackie presented three steps to self-advocacy: 1) accept your disability, 2) understand what you want for your future, and 3) elicit help to carry out your future plans.

Next, Holly presented six key steps and processes in effective student-led IEPs: 1) review last year's IEP and write goal; 2) send invitations; 3) review the laws; 4) state your strengths, weakness, needs and interests; 5) request accommodations needed; and 6) write transition plan.

Marcy started a discussion of the role elementary-aged children can play in their IEP by showing a video of a first grader involved in his IEP. With elementary-age children, the focus should include: 1) introductions, 2) things that are easy for the student, 3) things that are hard for the student, 4) what teachers can do to make things easier, 5) what the student wants to learn, 6) what the student enjoys outside of school, and 7) what the student wants to be when they grow up.

According to Marcy, there are three stages before the actual student-led IEP. These include: 1) student rereads their plan, 2) student explains disability, and 3) student lays out what accommodations are needed. Overall, student-led IEPs require the commitment and involvement of a large team including children, parents, school administrators, teachers, and support staff.

Arizona's Collaboration for Student-Led IEPs

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In 1998, Mary Slaughter, Executive Director of Arizona's PTI, attended a presentation on student-led IEPs given by Marcy McGahee-Kovac and her students. Mary was inspired by the presentation and returned to her state to make student-led IEPs happen in Arizona. Mary contacted Laura Love, Director of InterAct Arizona, to gain financial support for implementing student-led IEPs in Arizona. In a somewhat unusual partnership, Mary and Laura worked together to sponsor a student-led IEP kickoff workshop given by Marcy.

One elementary and one high school in Arizona were identified as pilot sites for implementing student-led IEPs. Marcy was brought back to conduct school-wide in-services for students. These in-services presented the model of student-led IEPs and allowed time for the students to ask questions of Marcy's students. During these in-services the group began to film Marcy, her students and the Arizona students, teachers, and parents talking about student-led IEPs. This filming was later put together as a promotional video to increase awareness of student-led IEPs throughout the state.

Next, a local interagency advisory group and a youth leadership group for the high school site were formed. Each met monthly to discuss experiences with student-led IEPs. From the interagency advisory group came a new initiative at the College of Education, Arizona State University West: self-determination coursework and internships at the student-led IEP pilot sites for undergraduate special education students. Currently, there is a growing group of new teachers who have gone through this curriculum and are getting jobs in other Arizona districts.

In 1999, pilot site participants began to give presentations on student-led IEPs at conferences throughout Arizona. At this time, more districts began student-led IEPs, and the Arizona Rehabilitation Services Administration added student-led IEPs into the youth transition programs managed by vocational rehabilitation.

In 2000, Arizona's student-led IEP team presented at national conferences and began to develop an advisory council with training products. The Arizona Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities established a strategic goal of 1,000 students involved in student-led IEPs by 2005. The

year 2001 brought more presentations at national conferences as well as a new initiative: offering technical assistance to other states interested in student-led IEPs.

This year, 2002, Arizona's student-led IEP team still presents at national conferences and is beginning to apply the student-led IEP model to client-led Individual Plans for Employment (IPEs) in Vocational Rehabilitation.

Arizona's Infrastructure Supporting Student-Led IEPs

In creating this infrastructure it is important to consider a model that is inclusive of all ages, disabilities, and cultures. The Arizona Student-Led IEP Advisory Council is the leadership structure for this initiative. This council consists of interagency membership of state and local partners including representatives from Arizona State University West College of Education, Parent Training and Information Centers, students and parents from pilot sites, local education agencies, Arizona Department of Education, Developmental Disabilities Council, Rehabilitation Services, and others. This committee meets bimonthly and serves as a clearinghouse for student-led IEP activities in the state and oversees the development of technical assistance products and support.

The technical support structure of Arizona's initiative includes both a trainer cadre and a product development group. The trainer group gives presentations at local workshops and state and national conferences and consults with local education agencies and other states. The product development group focuses on toolkits for teachers, parents, and students as well as instructional videotapes and CD-ROMs. Technical supports currently available include a promotional videotape about student-led IEPs and a self-determination toolkit for parents, both available through RAISING Special Kids. The student-led IEP advisory council is in the process of developing and updating numerous other materials, including a toolkit for teachers and students and introductory materials for families.

Benefits to Implementing Student-Led IEPs

Benefits for students who lead their own IEP meetings include: developing an understanding of their strengths and needs while building on ability to be a self-advocate in school and in life; learning about their disability, including how to talk with others about it; learning about civil rights under many different laws; learning about accommodations and what types they need to succeed; developing the skills necessary for self-determination and independent decision-making; and becoming more involved in their education and transition planning.

Benefits for teachers include: interacting with students in a different way, making IEP meetings more personalized, and reducing paperwork as student assists or takes over writing portions of the IEP.

Benefits for parents include: becoming more involved in IEP development and implementation, their child experiencing fewer behavioral disruptions in school, seeing their child become more interested in education and decision-making, and feeling less afraid about their child's future due to witnessing the self-determination and self-advocacy skills learned through the student-led IEP process.

Implementing Student-Led IEPs

There are many different ways to implement student-led IEPs while meeting the unique needs of the school, classroom setting, and student. Creative ideas for implementing student-led IEPs include: creating a special class on student-led IEPs and self-determination, including instruction on these

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topics in special education or general education curricula, creating after-school clubs, and offering students opportunities to come to the teacher for assistance before or after school.

Students may take on many different roles in a student-led IEP. The variety of roles provides the opportunity to adapt the student-led IEP process to the unique needs of the student. Less complex roles students may play include: introducing self and others they know at the meeting, talking about what they like or do not like at school, signing their IEP, sharing what they'd like to about their disability, and finding pictures to portray their activities and preferences. More advanced roles include developing and disseminating invitations to the meeting, writing sections or all of the IEP, facilitating sections or all of the IEP, asking teachers about classroom progress and performance, and taking responsibility for implementing IEP objectives.

Teachers may get started with student-led IEPs by asking the student to:

- invite all meeting participants;
- introduce all persons at the IEP meeting;
- bring their transcript or progress report to meeting and share with others;
- bring results for vocational interest survey and share information;
- write present level of performance in their own words;
- calculate percentages of data for use in present level;
- talk about hopes and dreams for the future; and
- play the taskmaster of the meeting, keeping track of time and taking notes.

Resources

Item Name	Authors, Date	Available from...
Helping Students Develop Their IEPs (booklet and audiotape)	2002	http://www.nichcy.org/pubs/stuguide/ta2book.htm
A Student's Guide to the IEP	McGahee, 2002	http://www.nichcy.org/pubs/stuguide/st1.pdf
Student-Led IEPs: A Guide for Student Involvement	McGahee, Mason, Wallace, & Jones, 2001	http://www.cec.sped.org/bk/catalog2/iep.html
A Practical Guide for Teaching Self-determination	Field, Martin, Miller, Ward, & Wehmeyer, 1998	http://www.cec.sped.org/bk/catalog2/self.html#P5231
Self-Determination Strategies for Adolescents in Transition	Field, Hoffman, & Spezia, 1998	

URLs current as of 11/3/05

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