

**New Hampshire Department of Education
Special Education Program Approval and Improvement Process**

*The Mission of Special Education Program Approval Is:
To Improve Educational Results for All Children, Youth and Their Families*

**Focused Monitoring IEP Review Process
“Visiting Team Members Guidelines”**

“Cultivating a Culture of Collective Responsibility”

Important Terms to Consider/Define:

Discussion: Words that take the form of self advocacy.

Synonyms: Debate, persuade

Conversation: Informal talking in which participants can learn from one another or simply enjoy each other's company.

Synonym: Familiar talk

Dialogue: A reflective learning process in which group members seek to understand each other's viewpoints and deeply held assumptions.

Synonym: Think deeply

Inquiry: To explore and discover, to ask questions; to be open to seeing new potentials and possibilities.

Synonyms: Discover, search, systematically explore and study

Decision: To reach group closure on an issue.

Synonyms: Conclusion, closure

Appreciation: To value, recognize the best in people or the world around us; affirm past and present strengths, success, and potentials; to perceive those things that give life to living systems.

Synonyms: Value, prize, esteem and honor

Role of the Visiting Team: “IEP Process Guide”

“It is not the answer that enlightens but the question”
-Eugene Ionesco

The role of the visiting IEP “Process Guide” is a crucial part of the collaborative Focused Monitoring IEP Review Process. The “Process Guide” will act as a “co-facilitator” in generating conversation, dialogue, discussion and robust inquiry questions. All of these will lead the IEP review team in support of taking a critical look at the IEP, including the impact that the tool has upon student achievement, compliance with state and federal special education rules and regulations, and, most importantly, how the team might think differently to strengthen their skills in the writing, implementation and monitoring of IEP’s.

Goals

The supporting goals that the IEP “Process Guide” should keep in mind are:

- To place inquiry at the heart of the dialogue
- To assist the IEP review team in building capacity both internally and externally
- To co-facilitate individual self discovery and self reflection for individuals on the IEP review team
- To support and encourage reflective “team” thinking on the part of everyone at the table
- To encourage the development of an evidence based, positive culture
- To guide the IEP review team through a data driven dialogue
- To build on the positives, and be able to assist the IEP review team in recognizing both areas that would strengthen student achievement, as well as, any areas of non-compliance identified through the IEP Review Process
- To guide the team toward “best practice” in developing and implementing their IEPs

Important Things to Remember:

The IEP Review Process has been designed in support of individual, and team professional inquiry; it is job embedded professional development at its best. The IEP review process provides a framework for beginning a type of action research that intentionally builds on current practice. The process has been designed with the key ingredient of shared learning among the IEP review team, and the role of the process guide is to provide a framework and tools for skilled interaction among all involved. The process is intended to build capacity for IEP review teams to be self reflective. It will also serve as a vehicle for taking a journey to higher levels of competence, confidence and collaboration among all team members with the ultimate goal of improved student achievement. In offering this shift toward inquiry, it is essential that the “IEP Process Guides” ensure that contributions of the IEP review team are evidence based, and that the dialogue revolves around actual data.

As “IEP Process Guides” it will be important that you recognize the power of your questions, and that these questions will influence the actions of the IEP review team as they present their information. The dance of professional inquiry is a shared sense of responsibility in the IEP Review Process, and your questions are critical in assisting the IEP review team to learn from their work, as they reflect upon student achievement. Equally compelling is the impact that the IEP Review Process can have upon future professional learning for the district. Please note that the work of the IEP Review Process is not meant to support “happy talk”. The process is intentionally designed to focus on evidence and data, and to challenge the IEP review team to think in new and advanced ways.

A responsible IEP Process Guide must keep many things in mind as he/she supports the work of the IEP review team. As in any collaborative work, facilitation of the process is crucial, and the IEP Process Guide will be critical in developing the IEP review teams' capabilities for talking together professionally. Conversations must take on consciously organized purpose that will deepen understanding and send the group to either dialogue or discussion. Mutual respect, weighing options, suspending judgment and decision making will be key roles for the "IEP Process Guide".

The following list is intended as both a general reminder of important skills, and a checklist of areas that should be considered as an "IEP Process Guide":

- Pay attention to group dynamics (body language, who is speaking, who is not, reactions of the team, judgmental comments etc.).
- Know when the team is "stumped" or "stuck", and assist them in moving ahead with the process.
- Be able to step back when you sense the team is being emotionally drawn into a difficult discussion, and be prepared to assist in and facilitate the conversation.
- Work for balance among the sections of the IEP document and give precedence to the learning/professional development process.
- Work hard to provide a safe professional environment; a confident community of learners will have a higher learning curve as a result.
- Keep a sense of humor!

Expectations:

As IEP Process Guides, you will be expected to act as an inquiry coach who will enable the IEP review team to transform their inquisitiveness into practice. In doing so you should expect to be prepared to:

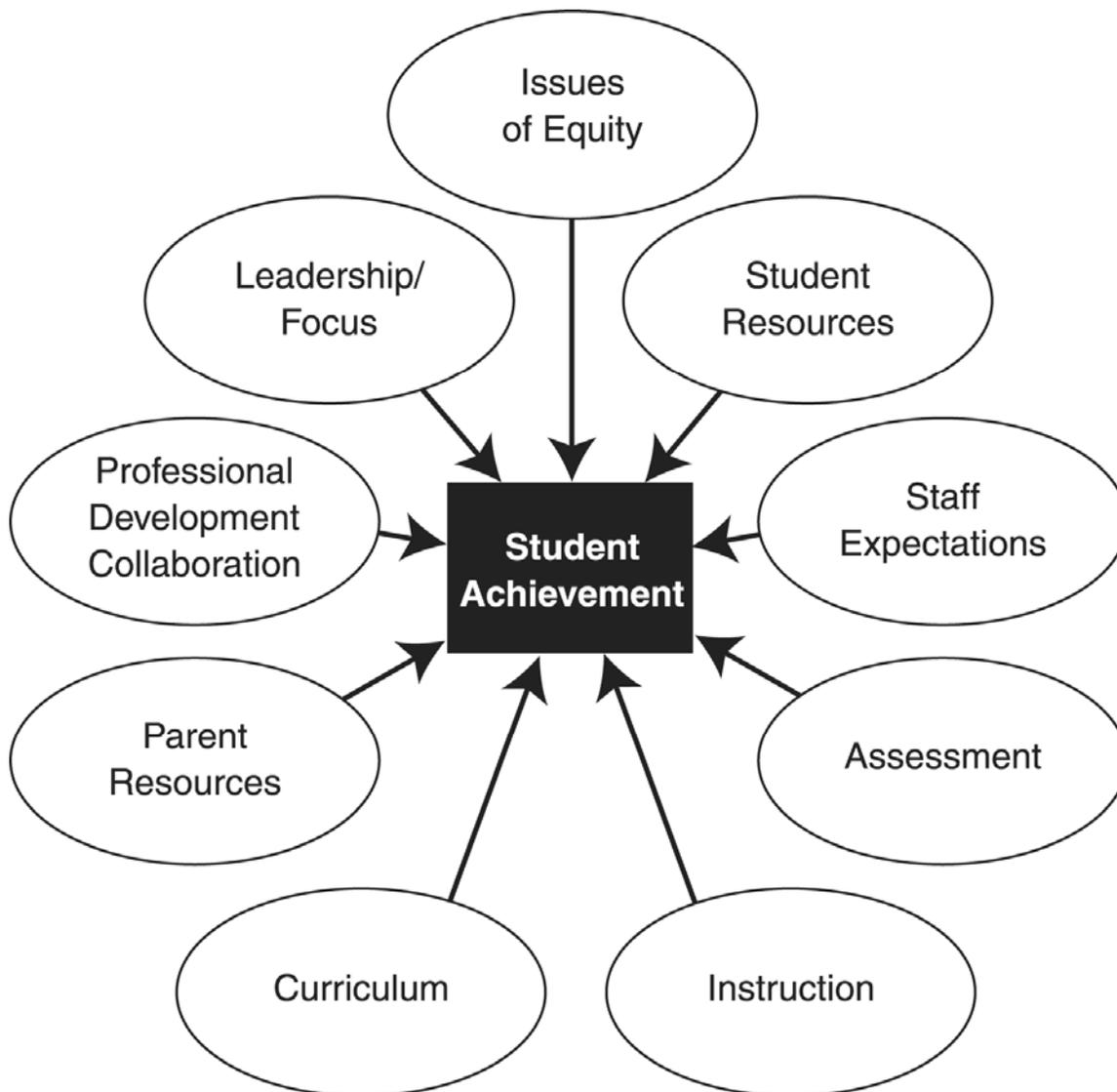
- Co-Facilitate the process with an individual from the district
- Ensure Unity of Purpose for the IEP Review Process
- Listen carefully and actively
- Ask reflective questions
- Assist in unmasking assumptions
- Make connections and construct meaning to information being presented
- Ensure that evidence/data is available to address questions
- Assist IEP review teams in describing, clarifying the information/data being presented
- As needed, consider process feedback
- Mediate and assist in interpretation as needed
- Manage Time and Presentation
- Assist in bringing closure to the IEP Presentation: What did we learn? What do we need to know more about? What questions do we still have?
- Attend to the process and ensure work is accomplished
- Work with the IEP review team to ensure that all paperwork is completed and summarized

Resources Attached:

Some Factors That Influence Student Achievement – 2006 West Ed, Module 3, Activity 3.2

Seven Norms of Collaboration - Garmston and Wellman, 2006 Center for Adaptive Schools

SOME FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT



DEFINITIONS OF FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

A brief definition of each factor appears below.

- **Leadership/Focus** — One or more people vested with the authority to make decisions and prioritize questions and/or tasks, as well as with the ultimate accountability for the quality of the organization's work. Leaders possess the ability to organize and sustain change in a school community, to communicate and carry out a vision, to drive a process of learning together, and to mediate perceptions, values, beliefs, information, and assumptions through continuing conversation.
- **Student Resources** —The students' experiences, understandings, interests, commitments, knowledge, norms, and approaches to learning that they bring with them to the educational environment.
- **Issues of Equity** — The allocation of material and financial resources; the teaching strategies and the classroom environments that help students of diverse language, racial, ethnic, and cultural groups, and learning needs to attain high levels of learning.
- **Staff Expectations** — The beliefs of teachers, administrators, and support personnel about the ability of all students to achieve high levels of learning irrespective of students' socioeconomics, language, or ethnicity or race.
- **Assessment** —A system of common measurements, performances, or tests administered at regular intervals throughout the school year that provide valid, reliable, and useful data on students' performance relative to a standard.
- **Curriculum** — The content knowledge and skills to be learned, including both the formal curriculum (what teachers intend to teach) and the enacted curriculum (what students actually learn).
- **Instruction** —The strategies, actions, and activities that make up the interaction between teachers, students, and content in learning environments.
- **Parent Resources** —The knowledge, skills, and strategic actions that parents contribute to the educational setting at home and at school.
- **Professional Development/Collaboration** — Ongoing, aligned learning opportunities or professional conversations that increase staff knowledge and skills about learners, curriculum, instruction, and assessment, and that lead to increased student learning. This includes teachers working together on a regular basis to review student work and assessment results in order to inform instruction.

Seven Norms of Collaboration

1. Promoting a Spirit of Inquiry

Exploring perceptions, assumptions, beliefs, and interpretations promotes the development of understanding. Inquiring into the ideas of others before advocating for one's own ideas is important to productive dialogue and discussion.

2. Pausing

Pausing before responding or asking a question allows time for thinking and enhances dialogue, discussion, and decision-making.

3. Paraphrasing

Using a paraphrase starter that is comfortable for you – “So...” or “As you are...” or “You’re thinking...” – and following the starter with an efficient paraphrase assists members of the group in hearing and understanding one another as they converse and make decisions.

4. Probing

Using gentle open-ended probes or inquiries – “Please say more about...” or “I’m interested in...” or “I’d like to hear more about...” or “Then you are saying...” increases the clarity and precision of the group’s thinking.

5. Putting ideas on the Table

Ideas are the heart of meaningful dialogue and discussion. Label the intention of your comments. For example: “Here is one idea...” or “One thought I have is...” or “Here is a possible approach...” or “Another consideration might be...”

6. Paying Attention to Self and Others

Meaningful dialogue and discussion are facilitated when each group member is conscious of self and of others, and is aware of what (s)he is saying and how it is said as well as how others are responding. This includes paying attention to learning styles when planning, facilitating, and participating in group meetings and conversations.

7. Presuming Positive Intentions

Assuming that others’ intentions are positive promotes and facilitates meaningful dialogue and discussion, and prevents unintentional put-downs. Using positive intentions in speech is one manifestation of this norm.